

Once upon a time, in Persia, in the time when it was "a land of princes and poets" lived a girl named Settareh. She had been given this name, which meant "Star" because of the configuration of the stars at her birth. The child was born with a star-shaped mark on her left cheek. The little one had "scarcely opened her eyes to see or her mouth to cry" when her mother was taken by death. The infant was fed but not nurtured. She grew up lonely, and, as soon as she was old enough to walk, was left to fend for herself. The years passed, and despite being forced to live on scraps, she grew to be a lovely maiden. Even clothed in the castoffs of her stepsisters and aunts, her beauty shone through. "The brows above her



"His only companion was a turtledove." Floreczak, R.

dark eyes arched as gracefully as the path of an arrow, and her long black hair gleamed like polished ebony." This made her stepsisters mad with envy. They mocked her for her birthmark, telling her to stop playing in the mud. Settareh scrubbed then, as hard as she might, but the mark remained. There came a day that the girl's father came to visit the quarters of the women. The occasion was No Ruz, the Persian New Year. Father came to announce that Prince Merhdad was celebrating with a feast. All the women of the house were invited, and so must have new clothes. Father gave a gold coin to each, including to Settareh. Now "each girl and woman, no matter her age, covered her head with a cloak so that no stranger might look on her face. Then, like a flock of blackbirds," the womenfolk flocked to market. There, donkeys and goats added to the cacophony of sounds. Street sellers called out their wares and many voices jabbered at once. The smells of cinnamon and ginger filled the air, and travelers from Red Sea and China displayed their finely woven rugs. The scent of roasting almonds filled the air. Settareh followed her nose to the source, and traded part of her gold coin for a paper twist of hot spiced nuts. The small silver coins of her change would be enough — she thought — to buy cloth for the New Year. She walked on, and that's when she saw an old woman shivering with hunger. The lady's robe was tattered and her eyes without hope. Settareh felt the coins in her hand...she did not need cloth as badly as the old one needed food. Swiftly, she put most of her coins into the old woman's hands. "Good fortune come to you!" was the grateful response. Well, thought Settareh to herself, she might still be able to buy a bit of cloth for a pretty new sash. But the very next stall held something that held her eyes. A jug, of such a color blue as to pierce Settareh's very heart with beauty. She had to have it! The merchant was a kind man. He could see the effect that the blue color had on this girl, and so he sold her the jug for her remaining coins. How Settareh's sister's laughed when they saw how she had squandered her money! The fool of a girl was the only female in the house who would not have a stitch of new clothing for No Ruz. And the holiday was only eight days away. "Already the snow that iced the Alburz Mountains was melting" in the sunshine of the coming spring. Settareh sat and listened to the turtledoves calling in the pomegranate trees. She stroked her blue jug, and said aloud, "I wish you were filled with jasmine blossoms." Suddenly, the air filled with their scent. The jug was magic! She could feel the jug's vibrations in her fingertips. Now she asked the jug for something to eat. At once, sweet figs and apricots appeared before her. When she said she was cold, "a warm shawl of the softest goat hair" snuggled over her. A *pari*, a kind of fairy, was in the jar! When the girl confided her loneliness to it, the turtledove flew down to keep her company. At length, the eve of No Ruz came. Alone at home, after her stepmother and stepsisters, aunts and cousins and grandmothers had all left for the palace, Settareh drew out her jug. She politely asked for No Ruz clothing, and "the jug in her hands grew warm and began to jiggle." Suddenly a "dark red silk dress, the color of pomegranate seeds, was spread before her. Beside it lay a golden pendant to hang about her neck, and turquoise

Australia
Baba Yaga
bilingual
birds
Brazil
Brussels
Calvino
Cambodia
Canada
caterpillar
caterpillars
cats
Catskin
China
Corsica
cow
Cox
Creole
crocodile
Czechoslovakia
Denmark
dog
easy-reader
England
Finland
fish
flowers
France
frog
Germany
Greece
Grimm Brothers
Hawaii
Holland
Hungary
India