

bracelets to wear on her wrists." For her feet, "two small diamond studded anklets to sparkle at her ankles." Now she slipped into the new garb, thanked the *sari*, and said, "I am ready to go." At once, she was outside of the palace. As she gracefully dashed up the marble stairway, she noticed a man. He "stared boldly back at her, smiled, and stroked his beard." Settareh ran on, and came to the feasting room. She kept her head turned so that no one, not even her stepsisters Nahid and Leila would recognize her. The sound of zithers and lutes reverberated as platters of "roast lamb and whitefish, spiced cucumbers, sweet oranges and tart rhubarb" were passed along the table. There were even goblets of fresh snow,

brought down from high on the mountain. Time flew, and Settareh knew she had tarried too long. Her stepmother would beat her if Settareh were not home before she got there. She ran through the streets so quickly that she did not notice when one of her anklet's tinkled into the gutter. A moment later, it was washed into the canal along the streets. At home, the girl quickly put on her greasy old dress. But the diamond anklet was washed along on the current, until it lay in the shallows. Here it sparkled in the sunshine. So brilliantly did it shine that it seemed the sun blazed from the river bed itself. That morning a horse, owned by Prince Merhdad himself and brought to drink at the river, whinnied and neighed, stamping and refusing to drink. The stable boy could not force it to, but came to see what troubled it. That's when he saw the bangle! Quickly, he dived for it and brought it up, giving it over to the horse master. He, in turn, gave it over to the prince. Now Merhdad was intrigued. He determined that he must find the girl who wore the anklet. But when he told his mother of these thoughts, she said, "How can a man look for a maiden!" The lady announced that she herself would seek this girl. She began a door to door search, commanding each young woman in residence to try on the jeweled anklet. None could slip it on, not even the slimmest.

Finally the prince's mother arrived at Settareh's house. Here Nahid and Leila stepped forward confidently. They had "cleverly oiled their feet" but still, the anklet would not go on. That is when Settareh stepped forward, dressed in her lush red and turquoise. "Please allow me, Exalted One," she said courteously to the royal mother. And the anklet slipped right on! And Settareh lifted her skirt then, and showed its mate! So the prince's mother said, "Come, the prince awaits you at the palace." So Settareh begged for a moment to fetch her things. She ran to grab the jug, but Leila was following, and forced her to reveal its secret. Once at the palace, the prince's mother "gave Settareh a mirror so that she might gaze on the prince's face without the embarrassment of facing him" directly. It was the man who had smile at her on No Ruz. He was the prince! He beamed now at his pretty bride, telling

her that the star mark on her cheek had been foretold by his astrologer. As custom required, a celebration lasting thirty nine days commenced. On the fortieth day, the marriage would take place. But Nahid and Leila were jealous. Now they had thirty nine days to plot revenge on their fortunate sister! So the girls arranged that one would distract Settareh, while the other snatched the sari's jug. They begged the genie to help them kill their arrogant sister: the jug became boiling hot and shattered. Now those wicked girls gathered the razor sharp splinters of it. Knowing that the color was Settareh's favorite, they came to her and insisted on styling her hair. "First, they washed it in scented rose water and then they brushed it until it shone." Then they told her

that as a married woman, she must keep her hair pinned up, and so they each pushed a lovely blue pin into Settareh's glossy plaits. "Ouch!" she cried as they stabbed her, once, twice, three times, four times, five times.

On the sixth jab, the girl vanished. She had been transformed into a "small gray turtledove" which gave its mournful call and flew away. When Prince Merhdad sought his bride, she was nowhere to be found. "Settareh has flown, but we are here. Why not choose one of us?" suggested Leila. The prince was sickened by the suggestion, and took to his chamber. He would see

no one, and took not a bite of the tempting dishes sent to his room. But he did have one companion. A little gray turtledove alighted on his window sill each

day. One day, he tentatively stroked the little bird with his fingers. He felt something sharp under the soft feathers. Gently he pulled the tip, and a blue shard of glass came forth. Mystified, he felt all over the bird's little body. Five more pins did he draw from the quivering chest, and with the last one, the bird transformed into his missing wife! Now the wedding vows were exchanged and the celebration began anew. The bride and groom "sat on a gilded couch as one

thousand matched pearls were showered over them." As for Nahid and Leila, their evil hearts festered with jealousy, and "they were so filled with rage that their hearts simply burst." But Settareh and Merhdad were "just at the beginning of happiness."

Indonesia
Iran
Iraq
Ireland
Italy
Japan
Jewish
Kenya
knife
Korea
Latvia
lizards
magic bones
Mexico
mice
mortar
Nigeria
Norway
original
Perrault
Philippines
pineapple
Poland
Portugal
Puerto Rico
pumpkin
rabbits
Republic of Georgia
ring
Russia
Scotland
sheep
silver
silver and gold
snakes
South Africa