

THE CHILD OF THE SKY

SOMAYEH HOSSEINI (BAHAR)

***“In the name of GOD the
beneficent, the merciful”***

THE CHILD OF THE SKY

Text and Illustrations by

SOMAYEH HOSSEINI (BAHAR)

***“This book is offered to all those in
whose souls the blossoms of God's
love shine brightly... May their steps
be stronger in rising to the divine
rainbow...!”***

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It was night, and Setareh, as she did every night, allowed her soul to drown completely in the beauties of the sky. Setareh slept with her bed right under the window, to be able to best see her heavenly friends in the sky. Before falling asleep, she always spoke to all the stars in her heart and waved to the kind moon high above. In their light, she shared sweet dreams and indescribable joy!

So it's no wonder that right from birth, her mother had told her lovely and happy stories about the world of the sky, and gave her special child the name Setareh which in her country means star!



And it was not surprising to anyone that by the time Setareh was only ten years old, she knew

all the places of the planets and so many of the stars!

But her love and affection for the sky was not the only thing, her parents felt, that made their child different. It was that she was exceptionally good and kind. Everyone around her, especially the elders, noticed. Setareh's words were gentle and pleasant, and she loved to help.

One night, after a long day studying at school and finishing her homework, Setareh was waiting in her bedroom for her mother to come tell another one of her beautiful stories.

But as soon as her mother opened the door, Setareh saw a most unusual and strange smile on her face, and, she imagined, she would hear something she had never heard before!

And she was right! That night, at last, her mother was telling her the legend of the child of heaven, the one she had promised to tell Setareh for so long.

This old story was passed down from generation to generation by mothers to their children, and Setareh's grandmother had told it to her mother when she was a child herself. Now it was Setareh's turn!

And now Setareh remembered that there was a rule for telling this legend – and she smiled! According to this rule, a mother could only tell the story to the kindest child in the family. Of course, Setareh realized, she was an only child, but her mother, as no one else, certainly knew her heart!

Setareh was very happy and excited, and immediately went to her father and told him that tonight my mother wants to tell me a very important and mysterious story. Father hugged her and said, "You are so lucky, my sweet, lovely girl. Now go to your mom quickly so you don't miss any of the story."

Mother was ready to begin. "Setareh," she shared as if it were a secret, "from ancient times to the present day, it has been said that this myth is true. However, it may be that most of the

stories that have ever been told have also turned to myth...”

Setareh could barely contain her feelings then. She asked her mother not to wait any longer and start the story right away.

And so, by the name of God, she did. “Once upon a time, when the sun gave life and light to everyone, there was a boy who had a very difficult childhood.



One day the people of the Village of the Sun found him living all alone in the mountains and on the plains. No one knew where his parents were. He was only seven years old, but it seemed he was accustomed to living in this way among all the animals and plants.

Soon people started calling him the kindest one of the plains because, whenever they saw him, he was helping animals and caring about plants growing there, and he spent all his time doing things full of love and affection for others.

Finally, one bright morning, a farmer and his wife decided they would save the boy from his loneliness. Although they were poorer than other people, their hearts were full of purity and love.

As the sun rose, the couple got ready and left to find the boy. They searched the whole forest and plain until the sky gradually became darker. But they could not find the kindest one of the plains.

They were tired and exhausted and could not walk anymore. They sadly went home and told each other they'd go out again the next morning after they had rested.

But suddenly, when they were eating breakfast, the doorbell rang! They were very surprised because no one ever came to their house that early in the morning – and no one they knew from the village would ever bother to ring the bell!

Then the doorbell rang again and the farmer opened the door. He could not believe it, but the person standing behind the door was the kind boy!



He greeted the farmer with a basketful of colorful fruits and vegetables and said: “You both came looking for me yesterday. I came here myself so that you do not have to go all that way.”

The farmer thanked the boy for his gift and invited him to come inside. But as the family gathered around, the question still remained in everyone’s mind: Just how did he know they had been going out to the forest looking for him?

Suddenly he turned to face them all and smiled. “There’s no need to be so surprised. You see I am familiar with the language of animals and plants. Yesterday, when I returned from the top of the mountain, they told me about you. So here I am. Now may I ask, “Why did you come for me?”

At that moment, hearing the kind boy's voice, the children felt that they were all awakening from a deep asleep. The farmer's wife turned to the boy and said: “We have been worried about your life in the wilds for a long time and we have been waiting for an opportunity to save you.”

As tears of joy came to the kind boy's eyes, the farmer quickly added: “Although we are not very rich, we would love to take care of a wonderful child like you.”

The kindest one of the plains was very happy! He thanked them and accepted their offer, but told them that because he had so many friends in the mountains and forests, he should go there from time to time to see and help them.

That night, after a while, he fell into a peaceful sleep in the farmers’ house. The next morning, as soon as the sun rose, he woke up earlier than everyone and started doing all the housework for them. When the farmer and his wife woke up, they were amazed to find that the little boy had even prepared lunch!

Then he did all the outside chores, including taking care of the animals and the garden. So, for the first time in what seemed like forever, the hardworking farmers were able to stay home and get some rest.



Every day after, the boy's generous help only increased, and all the neighbors and villagers began talking about him. The sweet song of his goodness was being sung everywhere!

Wherever he went, he tried to solve people's problems and planted the seeds of happiness and joy instead of sorrow and sadness. He was a blessing of light, especially for the poor.

He was friendly with the sea, the sky, the trees, and he looked on nature with special love and pleasure.

In a very short time, the kind boy found a very special place in the hearts of all the people, as precious as the sun in the sky. They believed that he was not simply a young boy, but also the wisest person in the village.

So it came to be that the farmer and his wife came to love the kind one of the plains as if he were one of their own children, and everyone loved him very much, too. Because of his goodness, he was so dear to all of them!

So in their joy, they never thought that this great blessing of God, the one they spoke of as a

sweet legend, might one day disappear from them!

But one night, he had an awfully weird dream. He dreamed he was walking in a dark green forest filled with a most pleasant fragrance. When he reached the middle of the forest, a luminous and beautiful butterfly came to him!

As soon as he reached out his hands to catch it, he suddenly woke up and realized he was asleep, and it was all a dream. After that he had a very strange feeling and realized that this dream had a special meaning for him. It was a message from heaven!

The next morning, he began to do his work as usual, but suddenly he felt terribly tired and decided to take a break. He saw a beautiful tree far in the distance, and he went toward it to sit under its shade.



He did not know why, but a feeling of great sadness fell upon his heart. Then he remembered all the bitter days when his parents were very ill and no one could do anything for them!

They lived in a remote farmhouse, far from any village. Oh, what memories he had of the day he lost his mother and father and he was deprived of their blessings. And that was why he had lived alone since he was very young!

Then he remembered more. He remembered all the days and nights that passed when he really needed the warm and kind embrace of his parents. How much he longed to play with them or just look in their eyes again. How much grief he felt in his heart until one day he decided to

always make his heart happy by being kind and helping others. It truly did make life easier for him!

But here he was feeling sad and heartbroken again. What was going on inside him, in his soul? he wondered.

Suddenly he noticed something incredible. Right in front of his eyes, he saw the same butterfly he had seen in his dream last night!

The butterfly was so bright and shining that no language could describe it! He moved towards it without any hesitation, but the butterfly flew away fast into the green forest.

The boy started running and followed the shining butterfly, but the way the butterfly was leading him was to a part of the forest he had never seen before.



Suddenly the butterfly stopped flying and flitted to the ground, and the kind one of the plains rushed to help.



But just as he reached his hands to it, the brilliant butterfly vanished from his sight.

It was hard to believe, but it was true. There was no trace of the butterfly!

Little by little, the boy saw, a small hole was opening in the same spot on the ground where the butterfly had landed. And then, color by color, a bright rainbow began to come out from it.

Who could have imagined it, but in just a few minutes, the rainbow had grown so big that it stretched from one end to the other all the way across the whole top of the sky!

But what else was happening? It seemed that there was a shining, golden staircase a child like him could climb straight up to the rainbow, too!

He stared in wonderment as his mind took it all in. Just a few moments ago he was resting under the shade of a tree, and now, the most amazing



butterfly in the world had brought him to the stairway of this strange and mysterious rainbow that reached the very highest points of light in the blue above!

He took a deep breath and looked up. With a heart full of love and hope in the merciful God, he chose to take the first step to the rainbow.

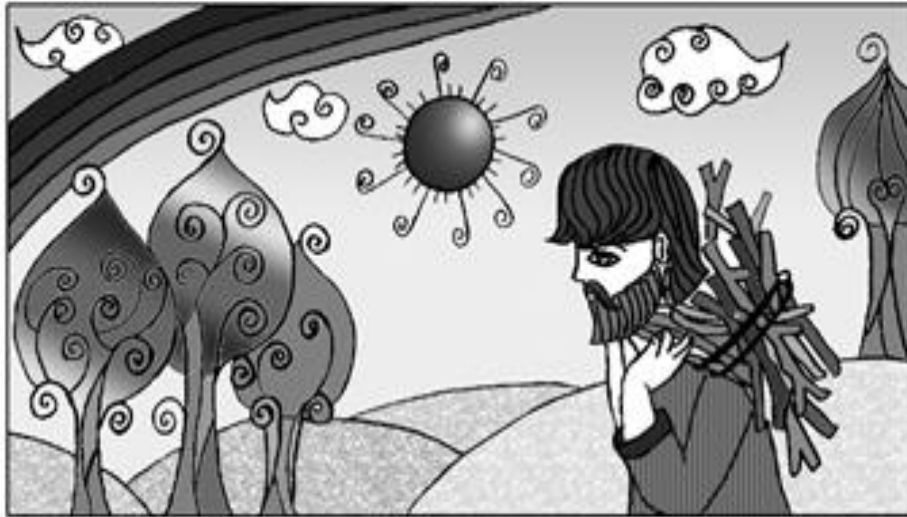
Happiness and joy surrounded his whole soul. He was only worried in his heart about the farmers' family and the rest of his friends, that they would not be able to see him anymore.

But deep from his heart, he heard a loud voice asking him to climb the rainbow, and telling him simply to not think of anything else.

So he began to climb. The stairs to the rainbow, he discovered, were so soft it felt like he was walking on clouds and was being lifted up by them. He was delighted! It was how he had always dreamed flying would be!

As the boy was ascending the stairs, a woodcutter from a nearby village who often came to this thick green forest because the best and strongest trees grew there, suddenly saw him and the rainbow from afar.

He rubbed his eyes and shook his head, but the child and the golden staircase and the rainbow were still there.



So he hurriedly threw down all the firewood and started running as fast as he could towards the rainbow.

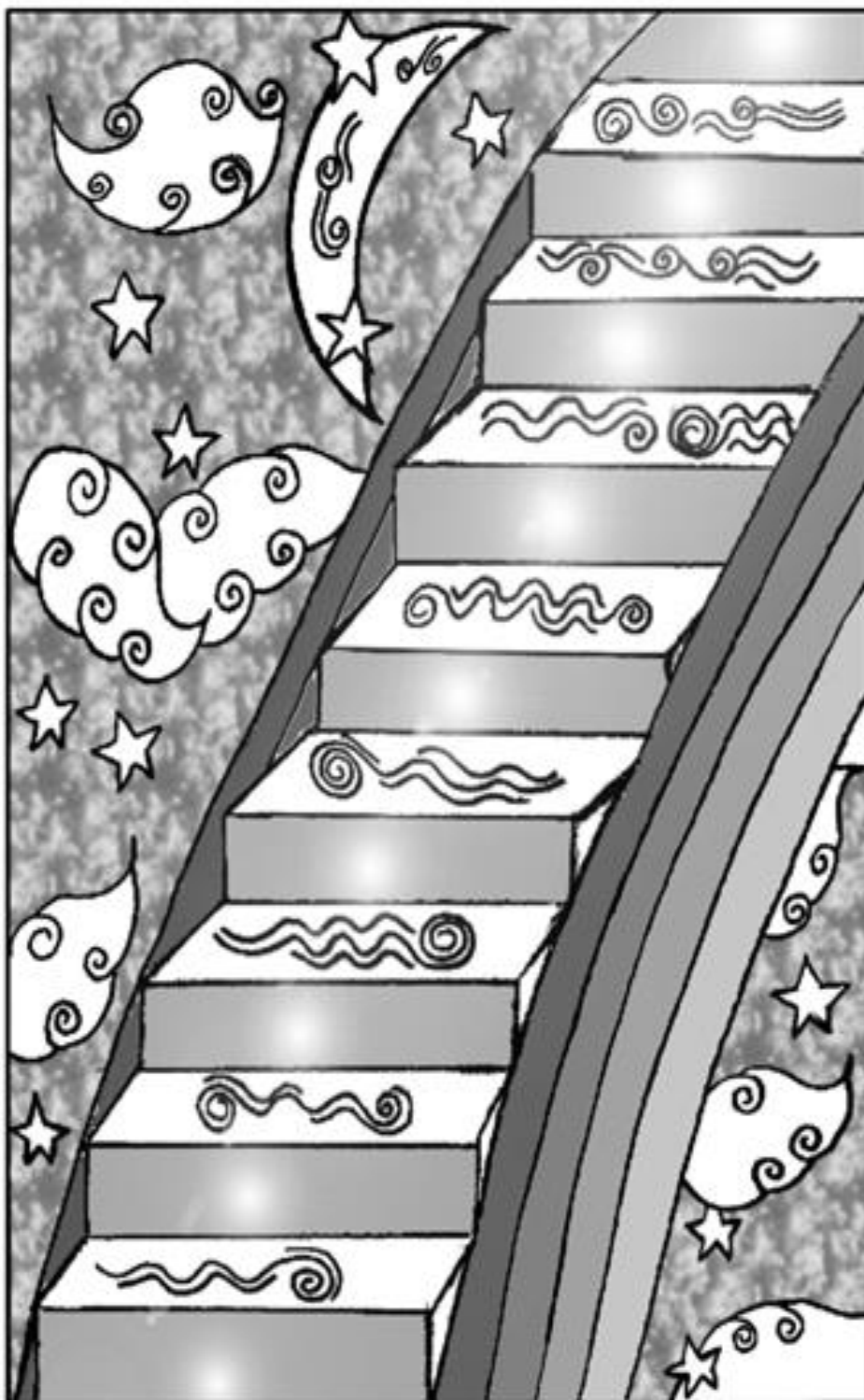
But he was too late. By the time the woodcutter got close, the boy had just taken the last step on the staircase, and the woodcutter could see nothing more of him.

But for the boy it was an entirely different story. There, at the very top, his eyes fell upon the most spectacular and enchanting scene he could have ever imagined!

He was right in the middle of the clouds, and before him was a bright blue sky with dreamy and glorious birds, huge planets, and thousands of other wonderful things the likes of which seemed far beyond his understanding.

Then a gentle and kind voice trembled in his soul's ear, a great voice full of love, saying to the boy: “Do not worry about anything anymore. This is your invitation to heaven because of all the good deeds you have done. You have never been disappointed and discouraged, the kindest child!”

After these great words were spoken, a great silence spread everywhere. The boy took a deep breath and stepped into the sky!



When the woodcutter finally arrived, he saw that the rainbow had already begun to disappear, but unbelievable as it seemed, the boy on the golden stairs had completely disappeared too. The innocent child must have gone to heaven!

The woodcutter instantly returned to the village and told everyone what he had seen, but none of them believed his words. They said that something like that could not possibly be true!

Still, as time went on, more and more of the people of the Village of the Sun came over to feel the same way as the woodcutter, and eventually they all did. After all, they had the best proof. Their beloved kindest one of the plains had never returned!

And from then on, whenever they spoke of him, they called him “the child of heaven or simply “the child of the sky”. Yes, that’s how they felt in their hearts!

And the story was told that on that glorious day when the rainbow had shone, the kind boy received the greatest reward for all his good

deeds. He continued to live in the bright blue sky and all his childhood dreams were fulfilled one by one. And so it is that still today the legend of the child of the sky is being shared with the children just as I am sharing it with you.

It was late at night when Setareh's mother finished telling the story. She had expected her daughter to fall asleep right after, but Setareh only stared at the night sky and its bright stars with open eyes.

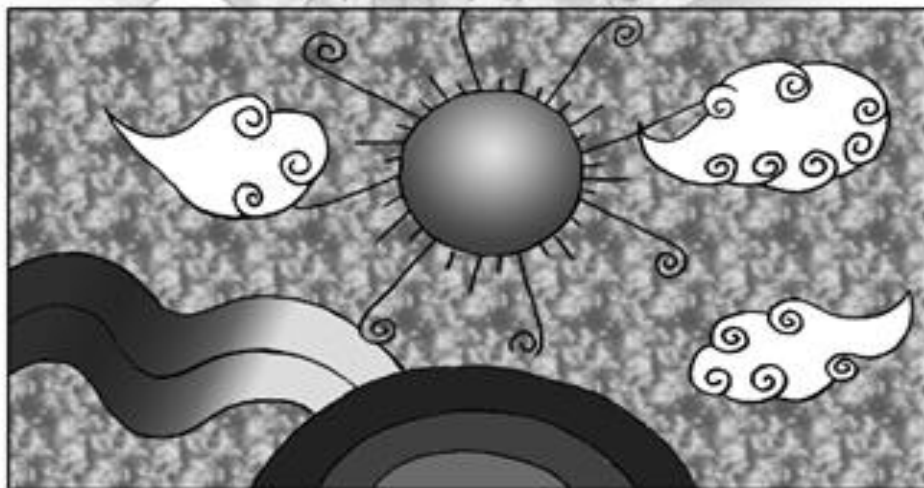
She immediately said to her mother: "I do not know why, but I feel strange, as if I have known the kind boy for a long time!"



Her mother looked at her with a lovely and calm face and said: “I do not know, but maybe the reason is that you are as good as him, and, of course, your grandmother also believed that this legend was true.”

Then she whispered, “Good night, Setareh.” and left her bedroom.

A few days passed since the story was told, but Setareh still had the incredible dream of her mother's story in front of her eyes, and at night she fell asleep by imagining the child of heaven...



Setareh was thinking about the story so much that she didn't even care whether or not her mother told her another new one again.

Then, on a sunny morning, Setareh woke up ready to do her daily tasks, when something inside her made her stop. She suddenly felt that something was wrong with her mother. Instead of greeting Setareh with her usual contented face, her mother seemed upset and anxious.

At the same time, the phone rang and mother answered. It was Setareh's aunt calling to invite them for the weekend. But Setareh was surprised. Mother did not accept her sister's invitation and told her that she was not feeling well.

Was that the reason? Was she really not well? After her mother said goodbye, Setareh asked her, "Has something happened? Are you alright?"

"It is nothing, my daughter," her mother replied quietly. I just do not know why I am so particularly worried and afraid today. But please be very careful at school today." Then she



embraced Setareh and Setareh gave her a big hug in return.

As her father prepared to go to work, Setareh gathered her things for school and said goodbye to her mother.

But mother was not her usual self, and this time asked both of them to be especially careful. Even though their country had been at war, and for several weeks the bombs and missiles of the invaders had been falling in other parts of the city, mother had not spoken this way before.

Setareh promised again. She knew herself the terrifying sound of the red alert alarms and the horrible feeling of waiting with her parents in the shelter around the corner for everything to go back to normal.

What sorrow and grief there was for the families who had lost loved ones – and for all the people! But life had to go on, no matter the awful conditions, until peace was made, everyone said.

That day at school, Setareh was constantly thinking about her mother, and she missed her

mother and father very much. She wanted school to be finished as soon as possible so that she could return to them.

Class hours passed slowly and she was counting the seconds until the final school bell rang. All day long she felt her mother's anxiety in her own heart.

Suddenly, there was a very loud noise everywhere around her. It was the sound of a huge explosion. In a flash, fear and panic started to overwhelm all the students in the class.

Quickly more explosions followed, and Setareh and all her classmates rushed to the school shelter, the teachers making sure that no one was left behind.

Setareh was glad for that, but as she huddled close to her friends, still she was only wishing to be home with her mother and father once more!

Moments later, everything calmed down and all the horrible sounds of the explosions ended.

All the students came out of the school shelter and left the school together with their teachers.

Everyone wanted to see what had been hit by the bombs, but when Setareh opened her eyes fully at last, she could not believe what had happened. She thought maybe she was dreaming, but when she realized that she was awake, she saw that half of the townhouses around their school had been destroyed!

As soon as the teachers closed the school to allow students to go home and help the injured, Setareh just started running, running faster than in any race she had ever run in school.

As she flew toward home, she was shocked to see how many houses had been struck by fire and how many people were hurt. Setareh began to cry.

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Then she finally reached the alley where their house was located. There were several houses still burning and Setareh could no longer breathe.

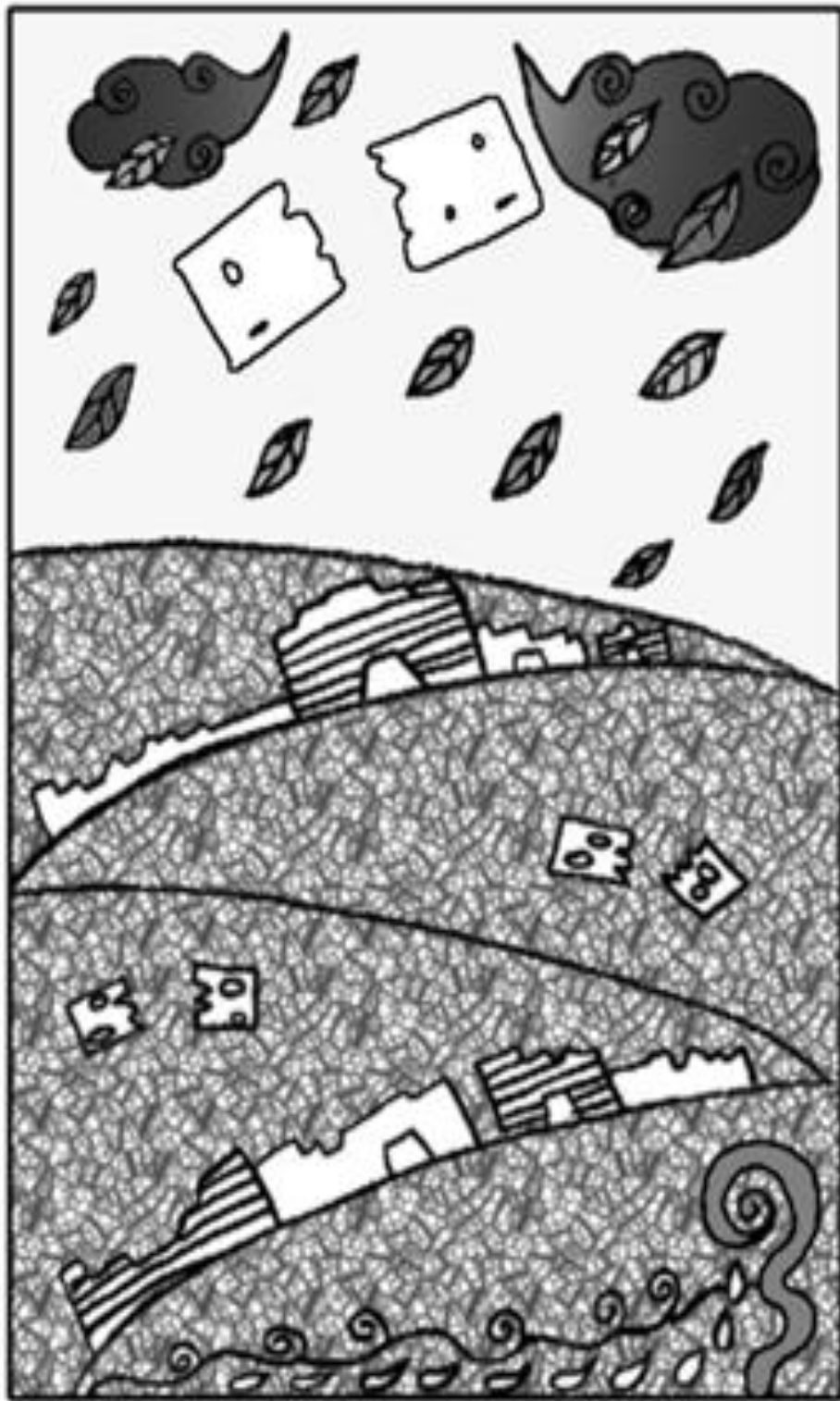
Her scream was heard throughout the neighborhood. A woman quickly came to

Setareh and took her hand. Setareh only knew her a little, but she went along.

The kind neighbor immediately brought Setareh to a hospital near their home and said, “Unfortunately, in today's accident, your house was badly damaged and I'm really sorry to say that your parents were seriously injured. All I know is that they were carried to this hospital about half an hour ago.”

Then she hugged Setareh and left. The hospital was very crowded, and all the nurses and doctors were moving briskly through the corridors. No one stopped to talk to her, they were so busy with all the patients who had flooded in.

Setareh, who could no longer hold back her tears, began to search in all the rooms, but didn't find any trace of her parents at all.



A nurse who noticed her sadness and grief came to her and asked her to wipe her tears. Setareh could barely speak, her throat nearly closed from so much suffering. Then she cried out: “Where is my mother? I can't find her, and I do not know about my father at all!”

The nurse with a compassionate face said: “Tonight we will be informed of the condition of the wounded people and, also, unfortunately about those who have been killed. It is better to wait until the end of the night.”

Setareh was very disappointed and sad. She went to a corner of the hospital and sat on a bench. She cried and cried until her eyes became too heavy to keep open and she fell asleep.

Then the night came, a night when the sky was darker than ever, as if the sky and the moon themselves were feeling the same great sorrow as the people of the earth!



In a dream, Setareh imagined she saw the very last star twinkling in the black above, then she woke up. The noise of the crowd in the hospital was still very loud.

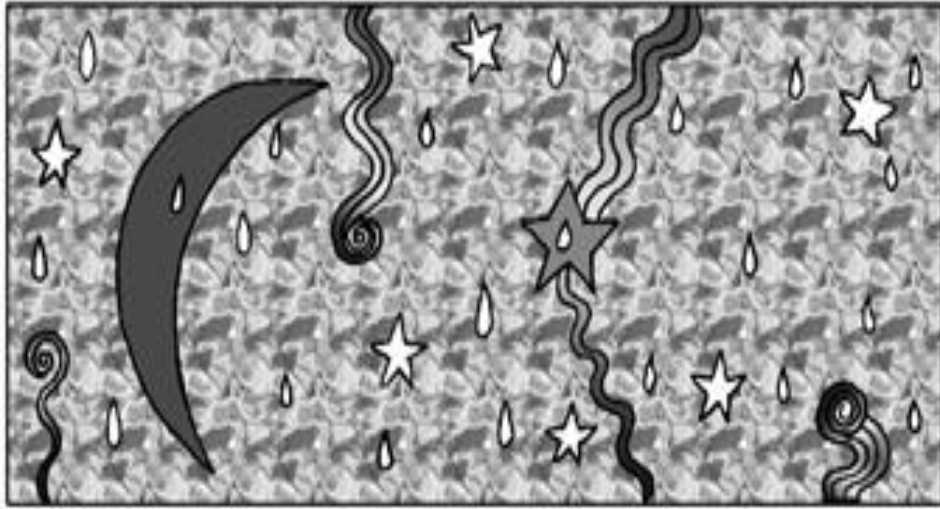
But, Setareh suddenly realized, she could not remember exactly what had happened or why she was there!



Until she saw the kind nurse, and after that she remembered all the painful events of the day before.

The list was relatively long in the nurse's hands, and she asked Setareh for her parents' name.

A few moments after Setareh answered the nurse's face changed.



A strange fear filled Setareh's mind, and she started running towards the nurse and shouting: "Where are my mother and father?"

At the same time, the nurse stood up and said to Setareh: "My daughter, do you have any close family in this city?"

Setareh said: "No, there is only my aunt, and she is not too close. But please tell me. What happened to my parents?"

Then one of the doctors who was passing by stopped and said: "In the morning a bus will come here that will take you to the house of your nearest relatives. Unfortunately, you have lost your parents in this accident."

Setareh's grief and sadness overcame her again, only this time they almost blocked her breathing entirely.

The nurse immediately embraced her and said: “God is very merciful and compassionate, and you should never despair.”

Still, Setareh was ready to cry like the rainiest of rainy clouds. All she wanted to do then was to gaze at the beautiful sky once more, just as she had looked at them every night at bedtime with her parents.

But it turned out that the rest of that night was the bitterest and hardest one of all for her. Every time she looked up at the sky, she saw no light, but only remembered the most beautiful memories with her mother and father, and found herself going through them, one by one, in her mind. Setareh thought perhaps her heavenly friends had also abandoned her for good.

She didn't want to believe that these sad events had happened, and wondered if it was all just a terrible nightmare. But then she remembered her mother's morning worries and knew that the whole story was true.

In a while, Setareh fell asleep again on the same hospital bench she had in the beginning. This time, forgetting all her sorrows, she had sweet dreams of her parents.

But early in the morning, she was awakened by the hospital staff. They were asking all children and homeless families to get on a bus that would be taking them away.

Setareh could hardly think any more. She had not eaten anything because of the heavy sadness she felt in her whole soul. How was it she was leaving on her own without her parents?

Finally, Setareh walked slowly to the bus, but before getting on, she turned her head to look at the city, imagining perhaps one last dreamy memory of living with her parents might heal her broken heart!

Just then she saw two beautiful, delicate dandelion wisps flying in the wind in front of her tearful eyes.

In that moment, she remembered what her father always said about dandelions, that they never

fail to take our prayers with them as they go off into the sky. They also bring messages from close and distant friends, he revealed with a wink, so dandelions can fulfill all of our hopes and wishes too!



She said in her heart that each of these dandelions must have come from her mother and father! But as soon as she tried to catch them, they both started moving swiftly away from the bus.

Setareh ran towards them, feeling somehow that they were both leading her and she should follow.

She was far from the bus, but now she only cared about the dandelions. When she finally got close and reached out to them, they gently settled in her hands. It was as if that were where they were meant to be.

In her heart, Setareh began to pray, a prayer to God that these dandelions would reach her parents and the day would come when all three of them would live together happily and peacefully like before!

And she wished that one day there would be no such thing as war and the destruction of the precious lives of children and human beings for any reason, for there was no reason in the world even for enemies to do such things to the innocent!

And with all her heart, she prayed that God would bring light to the souls of the aggressive ones who destroy people's homes and try to deprive them of peace.

After saying all this, she opened her eyes to blow the dandelion seed puffs as high as she could to the blue sky.



And then, as they rose, she saw above her a miraculous sight - a beautiful shining rainbow with a golden staircase leading up to it, just like the one in the legend of the child of the sky that her mother had told her only a few nights ago!

Suddenly Setareh realized that there were no more traces of dandelions in the air anymore. She felt they must be on their way delivering her message!

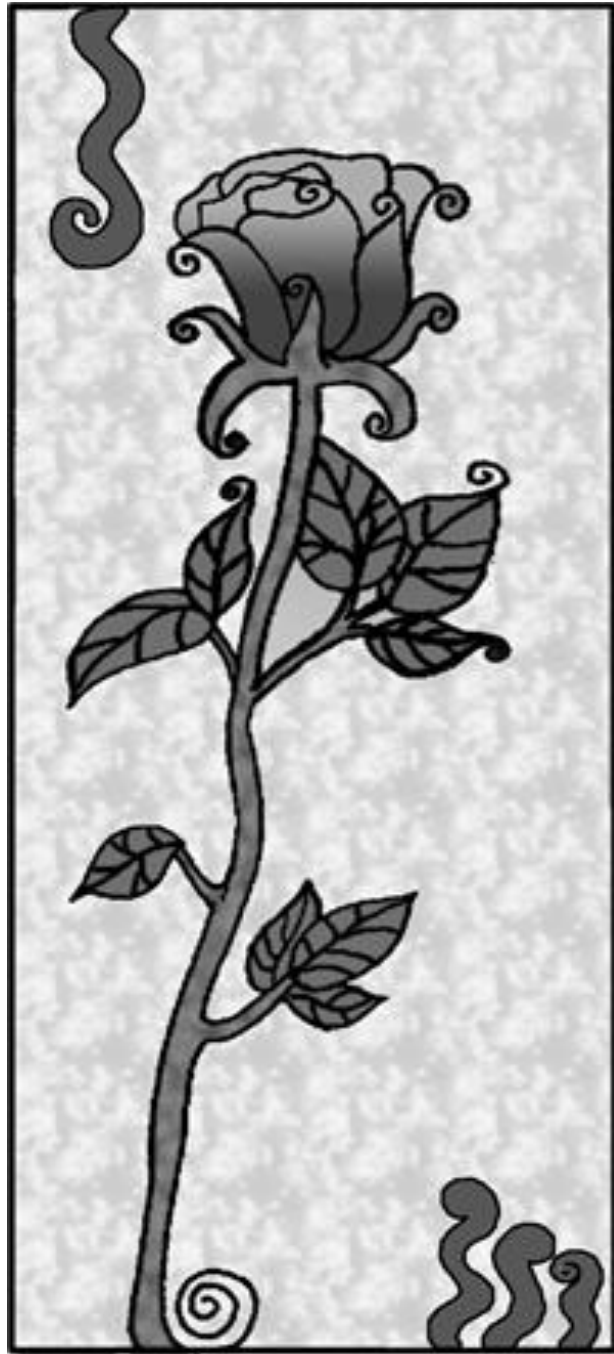
Then Setareh heard a voice calling to her soul, inviting her to climb the rainbow herself!

As she bravely took the first step, joy and smiles instantly blossomed in her heart, and all her sorrows were replaced by hope and love!

The higher she climbed, the more she felt free, and her heart was filled with lovely images of her mother and father.

She vividly remembered her mother's story, the one her mother's mother had told her, and so on for so many ages, about the kindest one of the plain and the reward that God had provided for him and all other good and kind-hearted humans.

Now she stepped into the same sky that she had always dreamed about, the one with all her beautiful friends, the stars and the moon, and with each step Setareh said: "My merciful God! I love you. I love you always!"

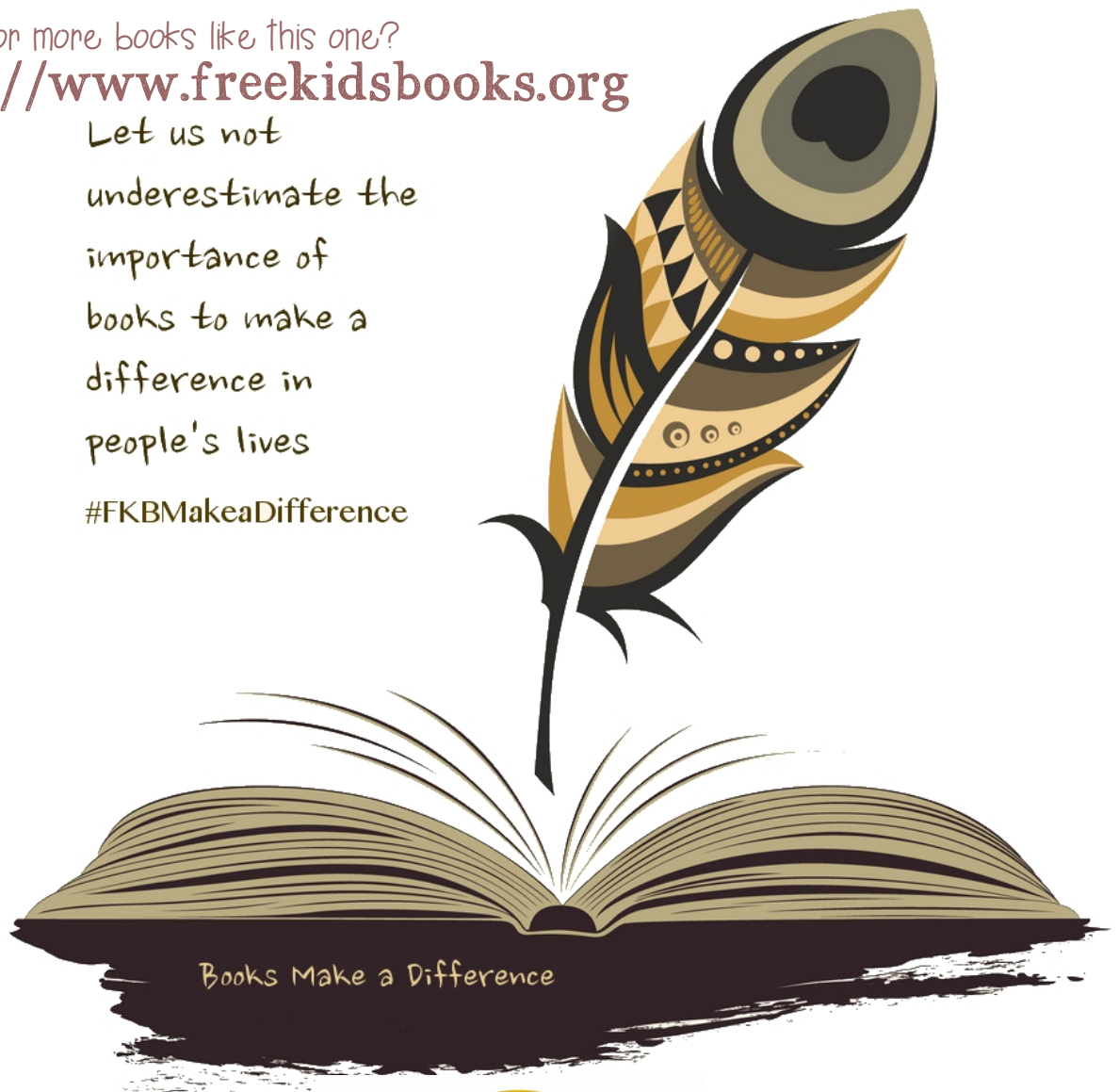


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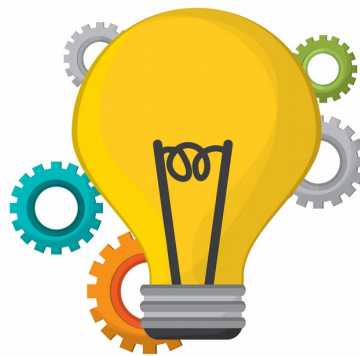
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