

The unfortunate Persian crow...

Suzan Massoumi

Faculdade de Letras
Universidade do Porto

ی کی بود ی کی نبود ، غیر از خدا هیچکی نبود ...

قصه ما به سر رسید ، کلاغه به خودش نرسید



Yeki bood yeki nabood... One was and one wasn't.

Gheyr az khodâ hichki nabood ... apart from God, there was nobody...

With these two sentences, the Persian fairytales began. In my language, these two sentences are equivalent to: "once upon a time... "

Excited as I was to discover the new stories of my grandmother, great-aunt or my mom, I never let them start telling the story:

"And why «One» was but not «the other»?"

Then he/she had to feel very lonely, wasn't it? Would you say from now on that «one» and the «other» they both "existed" and they were living together? It's not fair: neither this «one» nor the «other» would be happy about this..."

I never got the answer I was looking for, just the riposte from granny: "you don't need the fairytale; you don't even let me start it..." And my mom, who was much more patient with me, would explain that, in reality, the «one» and «the other one» were actually living together - it was just that this sentence sounded better like this.

But my questions never stopped. I think that it wasn't just me asking these questions, but another million Persian kids.

"Then if you say that «one» existed, then God was not alone. At that point why do you say that there was nothing else but God?"

And again their justifications would never satisfy me – and I was not pleased with their reply that they wouldn't begin telling the tale unless I keep quiet until its end.

Then I would promise not to talk until the tale was finished, thinking about what could happen next... And each tale ended with another upset:

"[...] Gheseyeh mâ be sar résid, kalâgheh be khunash na-résid..."

Our story is over, but the crow's journey back home is never over...

And again, poor grandma, poor mom and poor me... with all the questions about the unfortunate crow who was victim of an unknown Persian storyteller who created this sentence to finish each fairytale, leaving all us poor Persian kids in sadness and tormented by a great deal of questions about this pitiable crow and its dreary fate...

