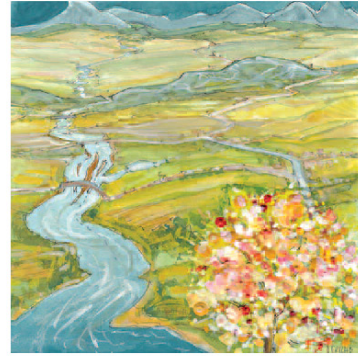


The following story is from the book

*The Central Figures*

*Bahá'u'lláh*

*Volume Two*



These stories are lovingly provided to download as a convenience to teachers or communities otherwise unable to acquire the book. Each book in this storybook series also includes an appendix with questions for discussion and reflection, a glossary of words and phrases used in the stories, a bibliography, and an index.

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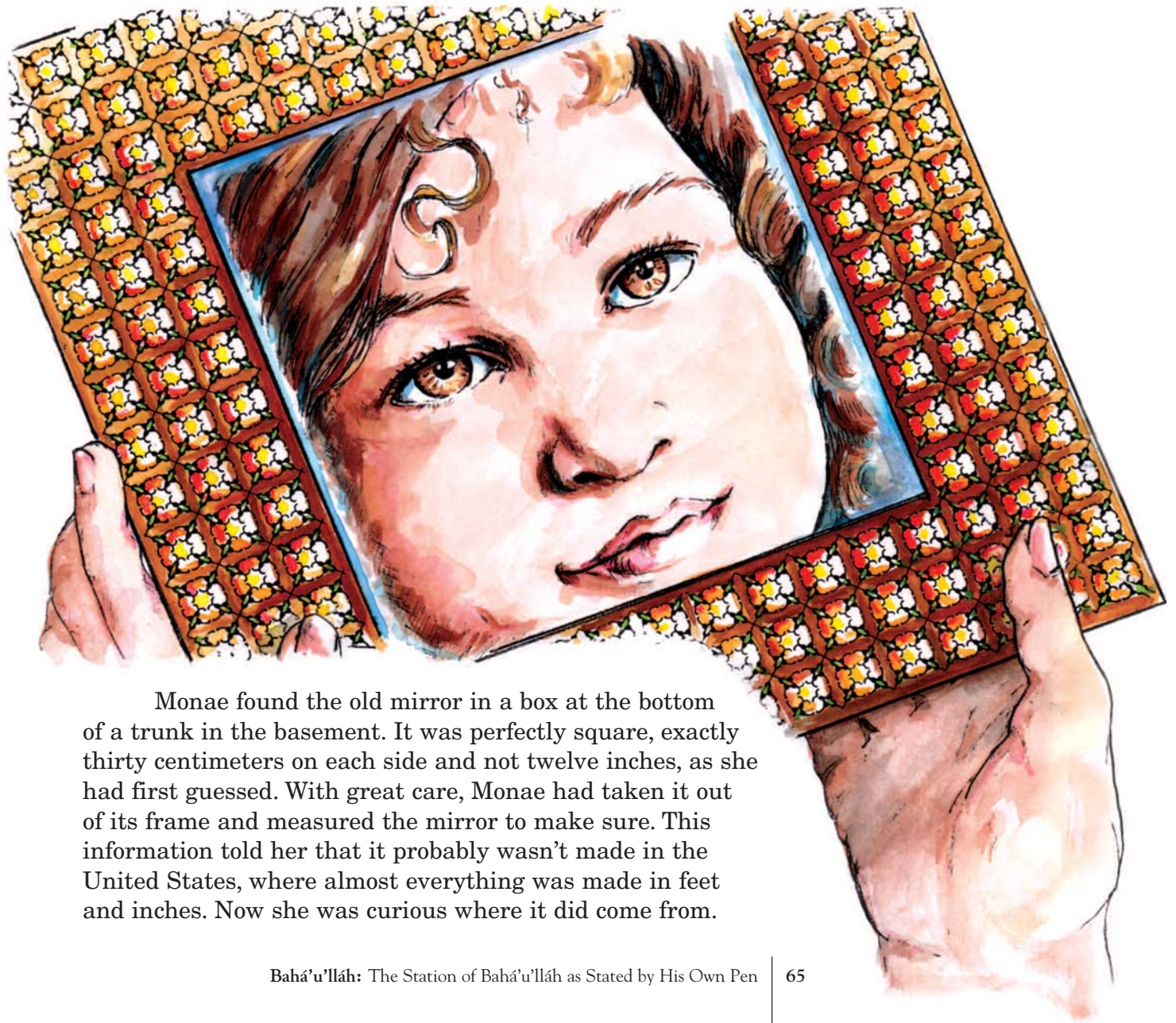
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# The Mirror in the BOX

*Written by Joseph Sheppherd  
Illustrated by Carla Trimble*



Monae found the old mirror in a box at the bottom of a trunk in the basement. It was perfectly square, exactly thirty centimeters on each side and not twelve inches, as she had first guessed. With great care, Monae had taken it out of its frame and measured the mirror to make sure. This information told her that it probably wasn't made in the United States, where almost everything was made in feet and inches. Now she was curious where it did come from.



When she showed it to her mother, she said she didn't know anything about it or where it came from. She did, however, comment that the frame looked Persian. The silvered back of the mirror had blistered and peeled in places, and it looked hundreds of years old. Monae wondered how she could find out how old it actually was, as she was determined to solve the mystery. She had learned in her fifth grade science class that glass wasn't really a solid, but rather a very slow moving liquid and that window panes in old houses were thicker at the bottom because over the centuries the glass had flowed in the direction of gravity. Monae checked this out. She measured the glass very carefully, but the mirror was the same thickness on each edge. Either it was not as old as it looked, or it had been stored lying flat in its box.

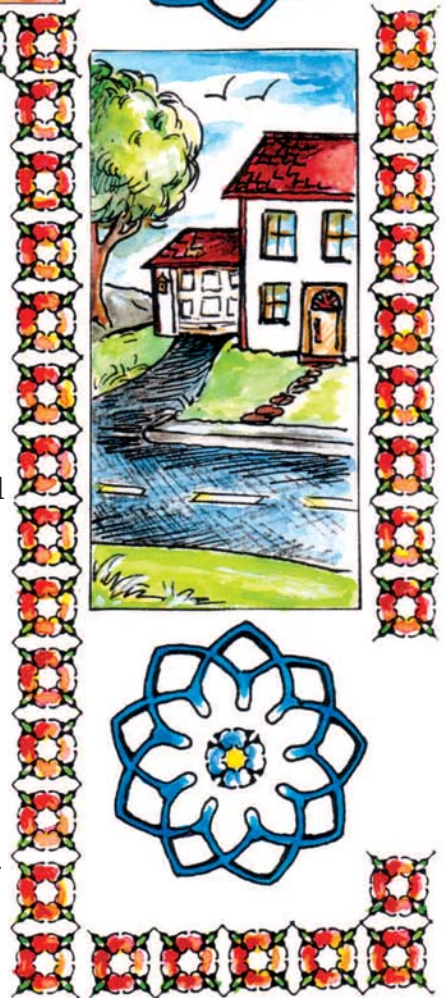
Monae examined the box. It was obviously built to fit the framed mirror. There were little brass latches that kept the lid tightly closed, but it had no lock. She gently put the mirror back in its frame. There were no hooks or marks on it to indicate that the frame had ever hung on a wall or stood upright on a table. Whereas the wooden box was plain, the beautiful thin frame of the mirror was decorated with an intricate inlay of tiny colored bits of ceramic and brass, which made a repeating mosaic of geometric designs. Monae had just learned the word in her geometry class for shapes that repeated themselves in a design: tessellation.

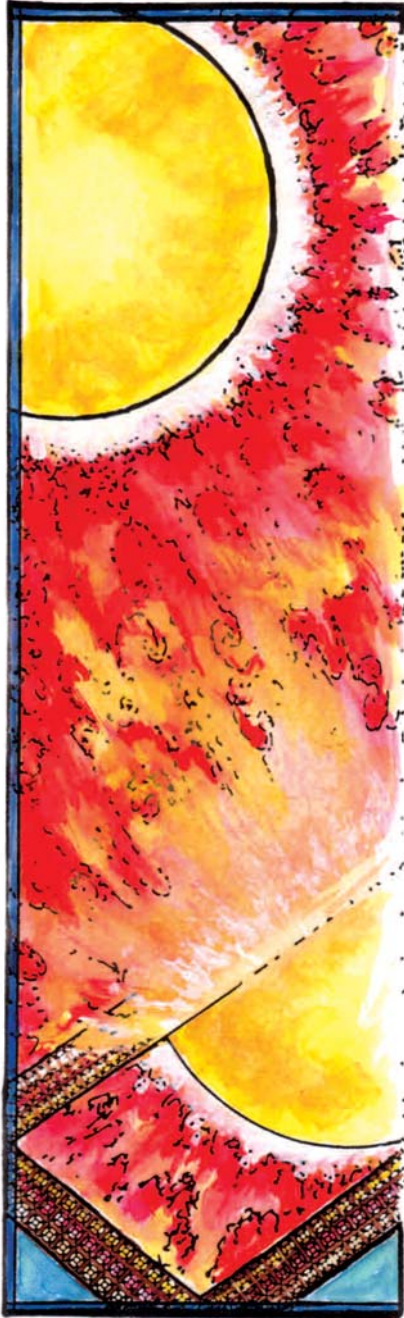
Closing the box, she asked herself why anyone would keep such a beautifully framed mirror in a box. There was no date or writing on it anywhere, not on the back of the mirror nor on the frame or the box itself. All she had was the one clue, that the frame looked Persian.



Monae had always been told that she was part Persian and that she was a fifth generation Bahá'í. This meant that her mother, her grandparents, her great-grandparents, and her great-great-grandparents had all been Bahá'ís. Back then, her ancestors lived in Persia, now called Iran, but somewhere along the line her family had moved to America. Since then, little by little, they had stopped speaking Persian as their first language. Her mother spoke a few polite words of Persian, but Monae only spoke English. Monae's grandfather was the only one in her family who still could read and write Persian.

The next time she went to visit her grandfather, Monae took the box with the mirror in it with her. He lived far away over the mountain range to the west, and the only time she saw him was during summer vacations. When Monae took the mirror out of the box, her grandfather got very excited. He identified the frame as being from the city in Iran called Isfáhán, where they used to make beautiful inlaid ornaments like this frame. He knew all about the mirror in the box. He had thought it had been lost years before, because he had not seen it for so long. The mirror had belonged to his grandfather.





Monae was delighted to discover that the mirror was an heirloom. More than a hundred and twenty years ago, her grandfather's grandfather had been an early Bahá'í teacher. He had traveled around the country on foot teaching people about Bahá'u'lláh and reading to them from His holy books. Back then, most of the people in Persia were illiterate and needed to have things explained to them verbally. The mirror was the symbol her relative had used to explain the relationship between God and His Messengers. The box protected the mirror as he traveled.

Monae's grandfather told her that this mirror was how the man had taught one of Bahá'u'lláh's books: *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, the Book of Certitude. Monae held the mirror as her grandfather explained: "He used to show them that understanding the Messenger of God is like describing the sun. People can talk about the sun's light and warmth, but in the end words fail to convey its reality. He used to explain that both the sun and the Messenger of God can be described with the analogy of the mirror."

Monae closed her eyes and tried to imagine her great-great-grandfather explaining this to people with his traveling mirror. "Like a perfect mirror placed in the sunlight, Bahá'u'lláh, like all the past Messengers, reflects the Glory of God. Bahá'u'lláh and these Messengers are not God, just as the reflection in the mirror is not the sun. Although the bright reflection and the sun itself appear equal, both shedding their light and warmth upon us, they are separate. It is impossible for us to approach the sun without being burned, but we can draw near to the sun's reflection in the mirror and understand something of its light and power of the sun. In the same sense, the Messenger is the intermediary between God and man, the mirror in whose reflection we can see the attributes of God."

Monae hugged her grandfather. She was thankful she had asked her questions now, because he was very old, and if she had waited, she might never have known. The story of the mirror in the box would have been lost. When she returned home, Monae wrote down everything she had learned on a piece of paper and placed it inside the box. This way, her children and grandchildren would know how the first Bahá'í in their family had taught the Faith to others. ★

