

Stone Soup

Long ago, there lived a poor farm boy named Pell. One day he set out on foot to see the world. After walking many miles, he came to a village he had never seen before. Pell was very tired, so he stopped to rest a while. Many people were gathered about the village square. They looked sad. Their clothes were ragged. Pell could see that they were very poor.

“Good day,” said Pell in a friendly voice. “Can you tell me where a stranger can get a bite to eat? I am very hungry.”

“We are hungry, too,” said an old man. “We have very little food for ourselves.”

A thin little lady nodded her head. “We are all hungry,” she agreed. “We have almost nothing to eat.”

Pell smiled. “Then it is a good thing for you that I came along.”
“Why is it a good thing?” asked a tall man.

“Because I can help you,” said Pell. “I shall be glad to feed all of you.”
The tall man looked down at Pell’s hands. “How can you feed us when you carry no food?” he asked.

Pell dug into his pocket. He took out a small, round stone. He held it up for all to see. “I have here a soup stone,” he said. “It is a stone that makes very fine soup.”

The village people gathered closer around Pell. They stared at the stone in surprise. “How can a stone make soup?” asked one of the women.
“I will show you,” Pell told her. “But I will need a pot of boiling water.”
“Come with me to my house,” said a man. “I will give you a soup pot and some water.”

They all followed the man to his house. He went inside and came out with a small iron pot. “Will this do?” he asked.

“No, no,” said Pell. “That is much too small. Bring me a great big pot. Then I can make enough soup for everyone in the village.”

The man went inside again and came out with a huge iron pot. Everyone watched with interest as Pell built a big fire and filled the pot with water.

Very soon, the water in the big black pot was boiling. Pell dropped his soup stone into the water. "It must boil for an hour," he said. "Of course, the soup would taste better if it had a bit of garlic."

"I have some garlic," said another man. And he hurried to get it.

Pell stirred the pot with a long spoon. "If only we had an onion or two," he said. "Onions are fine in stone soup."

A woman spoke up. "We have very little food at our house, but we do have a few onions. I will get them."

"Good," said Pell. He stirred the soup pot with his long spoon. "I always like potatoes in my stone soup, he added. "It gives me something to chew on."

An old man with a long beard stepped forward. "I have a few potatoes at my house," he said. "I was saving them for my supper, but you are welcome to them."

He hobbled off, and soon came back with the potatoes.

In a little while, the soup in the pot was bubbling and boiling. Pell stirred and stirred with his big spoon. "It's a pity we have no pumpkins," he remarked. "I find that a little bit of pumpkin gives stone soup a delicious taste."

A little lady in a bonnet turned to Pell. "All I have at home is one pumpkin. I was saving it for myself, but you may have it for the soup." And away she went to get the pumpkin.

Very soon, the good smell of soup was making everyone very hungry. But Pell looked into the pot and shook his head. "The soup is still too thin," he remarked. "Some more vegetables would make it just right."

"Maybe I can help," said a woman with a kind face. "Children, run to the garden! There may be a few vegetables still left."

The children went running all in a row. Soon they came back with some carrots, tomatoes, beans, kale, rainbow chard and lots of herbs!

Everyone began to help. They chopped up the vegetables and dropped them into the bubbling pot.

“How good it smells!” said the hungry people.

“When will the soup be ready?” asked the hungry children.

Pell dipped in the spoon and took a sip. “It’s ready now,” he announced, “and it is soup fit for a king!”

Soon, everyone was eating hungrily.

“Never have I tasted such fine soup!” remarked a tall man. “Delicious, delicious!” agreed all the others.

When everyone had eaten their fill, they turned to Pell, and said, “Thank you, thank you! You are lucky to have such a wonderful soup stone.”

“I am going to give you my wonderful stone,” Pell told them. “Then you need never go hungry again.”

The village people were smiling and happy. An old woman spoke up. “All we need is this wonderful soup stone. And a little something from each of us to put in the pot.”

After a while, Pell said to the people of the village, “I must go now.” Then he set off down the road while everyone waved a happy good-bye.

After he had walked a mile or two, Pell stopped to pick up another small round stone from the ground. He put it in his pocket.

“I may have to show people in the next village how to make stone soup,” he said to himself. Then he went along down the road humming a happy little tune.