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PORTUGAL – TRADITIONAL TALES

THE STONE SOUP

A friar arrived at farmer's door and begged for food but they didn't want to give him anything. The hungry friar almost in a fainting state said:

- I'll see if I can cook a little stone soup.

And he picked up a stone from the ground, dusted it off, and looked at it to see if it was good for soup. The people who lived in the house laughed at the friar and that odd situation. The friar said:

- So, you've never eaten stone soup?

I can just tell you that it's very good. They answered:

- We really want to see this.

That's what the friar wanted to hear. After having washed the stone, he said:

-If you could lend me a small pan.

They gave him a clay pot. He filled it with water and placed the stone inside.

-Now will you let me place this clay pot near the fire, the friar asked.

They allowed him to do so. As soon as the pot began to sizzle, he said:

-With a little fat, the soup would be exquisite.

They fetched him a piece of fat. It boiled, boiled, and the people in the house were stunned at what they were seeing. While tasting the soup the friar said:

-It's a little bland it needs a little bit of salt. They also gave him the salt. He seasoned it, tasted and added:



-Now, with a little cabbage, the angels would eat it.

The owner of the house went to the garden and brought him two fresh cabbages. The friar wiped them clean, and ripped them with his fingers, laying the leaves in the pot.

When the cabbages were already at boiling point, the friar said:

-Oh, a small piece of chorizo that would be just perfect.

They brought him a piece of chorizo; he put it in the pot, and while it was cooking, he took some bread from his bag and prepared to eat slowly. The soup smelled heavenly.

He ate with pleasure. When the pot was empty and the stone was at the bottom; the people of the house, who had been watching, asked:

-Friar, what about the stone?"

The friar replied:

-The stone? I'll wash it and I'll take it with me for another meal.

And so, he ate in a place where they would not give him anything.



Extraído de Teófilo Braga, Contos Tradicionais do Povo Português, 1883

DRAMA PRESENTATION VERSION

THE STONE SOUP

Act I

Scene I

NARRATOR

Once upon a time... in Southern Portugal... there was this street with small white and blue houses, like so many other streets in Alentejo. It was high summer and the heat was unbearable. Under a merciless sun, a poor Franciscan friar wandered from village to village, wearing his humble dark brown garments and leather sandals. He moved slowly as if he had to drag his big fat belly. He seemed to be looking for someone, his head turning right and left and occasionally cleaning the sweat off his forehead with a white cloth. He felt exhausted and hungry. His stomach was so empty that he couldn't take one step further.

A woman appears at the door with some corn to feed her chickens outside.

WOMAN – Come here, chicken, come here. Have your corn! Good morning, sir!(She throws the corn and looks around. She says hello to the friar).

FRIAR – Good morning and God bless your soul, kind lady! Is the landlord in?

WOMAN- (shouting for her husband as if he was in the yard.) – Husband! Husband! Come over here. The friar wants to see you, hurry up!

(The husband appears at the door, with a cap on his head, a big moustache and in his working clothes.)

MAN –Jesus, woman, stop yelling! Hello, dear friar! God has blessed us today with your visit to our humble house.

FRIAR – Good day, Sir. May God be with you and your family! In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, Amen!

WOMAN – Amen! Lord all mighty, you look so tired!

FRIAR – (scratching his head) – I promised the good Lord all mighty that I would get to the convent beyond those hills before Sunday but I got lost and now I'm tired and really hungry!

MAN – Oh, don't say! What a shame! I'm afraid we can't help you. God have mercy on your soul, friar! Keep your faith and God will provide! Or maybe if you try my neighbour next door... maybe... Goodbye!

FRIAR – (He picks a stone from the floor, dusts off the dirt and looks at it as if he was approving the stone to be used for the soup) -If you excuse me, my good man, I was wondering if you could lend me a pot and... I swear to God and the angels above that I will make the most heavenly soup you have ever tasted. One pot is all I need, my good man, and with this delicious stone, I'll make the best stone soup in the whole universe.

The couple starts laughing at the friar, with their hands on their bellies, and start speaking loudly to one another.

MAN - Are you out of your mind? The man has gone crazy!

WOMAN – Aw, the poor man! It must be the heat...

FRIAR - Don't tell me you have never tried stone soup?! That's unbelievable! It's the most delicious treat on earth.

WOMAN - Yeah, yeah, right...

MAN - Oh sure, of course... We want to see that...

FRIAR – Just a big pot of water by the fire... and now let me add this beautiful shining stone... and it's almost ready! (...) Hum, it smells so good! Now if you could bring me a little bit of fat, it would be fit for a king! (...) What lovely weather! This year you will be blessed with a good harvest! (he rubs his hands, showing satisfaction).



The woman brings the dutch oven with water and gives it to the friar.

The friar washes the stone very slowly.

MAN - (smiling and fixing the cap) With the grace of God and the effort of our hands...

FRIAR – A pinch of salt and it would taste even better! (...)

And some cabbage, ah, it would be divine! Could you bring some, please?

WOMAN - Brings two cabbages. The friar wiped them clean and took them with his fingers, laying the leaves in the pot.

The friar puts the stone inside the dutch oven.

FRIAR – Splendid! You know in Africa, which is where I come from, they don't have cabbages like this! Being a missionary is very hard... And a little chorizo? Do you think we could have some for the soup?

WOMAN - I'll chop some and add it to the soup.

FRIAR -Wonderful! Oh, look! It's bubbling. Let's see how it tastes. (...) Let's pop some bread in and it's ready to go! Let me wash the stone and put it in my pocket!

The couple looks to the Dutch oven full of curiosity and shaking their heads in a sign of disapproval.

The friar tastes the soup.

FRIAR – (smelling the aroma of the soup, starts eating slowly, shaking his head in sign of approval). Wonderful! Oh, look! It's bubbling. Let's see how it tastes. (...) Let's pop some bread in and it's ready to go!

WOMAN - What about the stone, dear Friar?

FRIAR – The stone, I'll wash it up and put it in my pocket for next time.

NARRATOR: And so the clever friar had his soup where no one was expecting him to.

Tzófilo Braga, *Contos Tradicionais do Povo Português*, 1883 (Adapted)