

Food Fables

Stone Soup



In a time and place long ago, there were hard-times in which people hoarded whatever food they could find, hiding it even from their friends and neighbors. One day a wandering traveller came into a

village and began asking questions as if he planned to stay for the night.

“There’s not a bite to eat in the whole town,” he was told. “Better keep moving on.”

“Oh, I have everything I need,” he said. “In fact, I was thinking of making some stone soup to share with all of you.” He pulled a cauldron from his wagon, filled it with water, and built a fire under it. Then, with great ceremony, he drew an ordinary-looking stone from a velvet bag and dropped it into the water.

By now, hearing the rumor of food, most of the villagers had come to the square or watched from their windows. As the traveller sniffed the “broth” and licked his lips in anticipation, hunger began to overcome their skepticism.

“Ahh,” the soldier said to himself rather loudly, “I do like a tasty stone soup. Of course, stone soup with *cabbage* -- that’s hard to beat.”

Soon a villager approached hesitantly, holding a cabbage he’d retrieved from its hiding place, and added it to the pot. “Capital!” cried the soldier. “You know, I once had stone soup with cabbage and a bit of salt beef as well, and it was fit for a king.”

The village butcher managed to find some salt beef . . . and so it went, through potatoes, onions, carrots, mushrooms, and so on, until there was indeed a delicious meal for all. The villagers offered the soldier a great deal of money for the magic stone, but he refused to sell and traveled on the next day.

The moral is that by working together, with everyone contributing what they can, a greater good is achieved.

- *We can all work together, cooperate and end up better off.*
- *If you want to get people to do something, don’t tell them how desperately they are needed. Don’t try to appeal to their sympathy and kindness. Instead,*

create the impression that you are giving them the opportunity to be part of your success.

- *(Nail Soup version) Beware of strangers offering nothing in exchange for a little something.*

Dog and Meat

A dog seized some meat from the butcher shop and ran away with it until he came to a river. When the dog was crossing the river, he saw the reflection of the meat in the water, and it seemed much larger than the meat he was carrying. He dropped his own piece of meat in order to try to snatch at the reflection. When the reflection disappeared, the dog went to grab the meat he had dropped but he was not able to find it anywhere, since a passing raven had immediately grabbed the meat and gobbled it up. The dog lamented his sorry condition and said, ‘Woe is me! I foolishly abandoned what I had, in order to snatch at a phantom, and thus I ended up losing both that phantom and what I had to begin with.’

This fable is about greedy people who grasp at more than they need.

The Fox and the Crow



A Fox once saw a Crow fly off with a piece of cheese in its beak and settle on a branch of a tree. “That’s for me, as I am a Fox,” said Master Reynard, and he walked up to the foot of the tree. “Good-day,

Mistress Crow,” he cried. “How well you are looking today: how glossy your feathers; how bright your eye. I feel sure your voice must surpass that of other birds, just as your figure does; let me hear but one song from you that I may greet you as the Queen of Birds.” The Crow lifted up her head and began to caw her best, but the moment she opened her mouth the piece of cheese fell to the ground, only to be snapped up by Master Fox. “That will do,” said he. “That was all I wanted. In exchange for your cheese I will give you a piece of advice for the future.

The moral of the fable is “Beware of flatterers.”