

THE REAL STORY OF STONE SOUP

Narrator Ting (girl) Kuai (boy) Pong (boy) Uncle 1 Uncle 2

Uncle 1: *You have probably heard of the old folktale about stone soup. A hungry soldier tricks some stingy villagers into making him a big pot of soup. The truth is that stone soup was invented here in China, and without any sly tricks. Here is the **real** story.*

It all began when I hired those troublesome Chang siblings to help me on my fishing boat. Nice kids, but L-A-Z-Y and, I'm sorry to say, somewhat stupid. The only good thing is I could get with not paying them very much. Even with three of them, I did most of the work, and I kept the hardest job for myself. I steered the boat.

One summer day, after a full morning of fishing, I decided to stop early for lunch.

Uncle 1: Time to eat boys! Dock the boat.

[Chang kids tie up boat]

Narrator 1: After the Chang kids get the boat tied up, they got to work while Uncle relaxed.

Uncle 1: Ting! Gather firewood.

Ting: Yes, Uncle.

Uncle 1: Pong! Prepare the cooking pot and clean the fish!

Pong: Yes, Uncle.

Uncle 1: Kuai! Get some fresh water.

Kuai: But the cooking pot isn't here, Uncle.

Uncle 1: What do you mean the pot isn't here? Where is it?

[Chang kids look at each other and shrug.]

Uncle 1: You boys forgot the cooking pot? How could you?

Ting: It's your pot, Uncle. You should have remembered it.

Uncle 1: You stupid potato heads! What are we to do now?

Pong: *(Trying to apologize)* Sorry, Uncle. We left in a hurry this morning, and we –

Kuai: *(Interrupting)* We don't really need a pot to cook lunch. *(Whisper something to his siblings.)*

Uncle 1: How are we supposed to cook lunch? With a hole in the ground?

Narrator: No sooner had the words left Uncle's mouth than they started digging a hole in the sandy beach.

Uncle 1: What are you doing?

Kuai: Cooking lunch, of course.

Narrator: Kuai began to line the hole with banana leaves. Meanwhile, Ting and Pong started a huge fire next to the hole.

Kuai: Now we need some stones.

Uncle 1: For what?

Kuai: *(Without answering, pick up a nearby rock and hold it to his ear.)* This is a fish stone.
(Throw the rock into the fire.)

Uncle 1: Come now. Even you can't be foolish enough to believe—

Ting: (*Interrupting*) Shh! (*Holding a stone to her ear.*) I need to hear what it is telling me. Aha!
This is a fine vegetable stone. (*Toss the rock into the fire too.*)

Narrator: Ting tossed the rock into the fire too.

Uncle 1: (*Pick up a couple stones and try listening to them.*) I don't hear a thing. (*Turn to the kids*)
If you are so clever, what kind of stone is this? (*Hand a stone to Pong.*)

Pong: (*Listen to stone for a moment.*) Aha! Uncle, you are brilliant. You picked out a yummy egg stone.
(*Toss the stone in the fire.*)

Kuai: We need something to carry water from the river and to eat the soup with.

Pong: Oh, Uncle, could you use your mighty ax to make some bowls from bamboo stalks?

Uncle 1: (*Grumbling*) Ai yo! I have to do all the work! And besides, I would trust you with my sharp ax.

Narrator: With a few quick chops, I made four bowls from a thick stalk. The kids used the bowls to fill the hole with water.

Uncle 1: Now we have a puddle and a fire. How do you expect to get the water over the fire?

Ting: Leave that to us.

Pong: Uncle, you made the BEST bowls in the village with just an ax. Could you use your *graceful* knife to make some chopsticks to go with them?

Uncle 1: (*Grumbling*) Ai yo! You lazy kids want me to do all the work.

Narrator: Nevertheless, Uncle carved out some chopsticks and gave each kid a pair skillfully carved chopsticks.

[While Uncle is busy carving chopsticks, **Ting** sneaks a fish into the soup while Kuai & Pong stir.]

Uncle 1: How long does it take stones to cook?

Ting: (*Using her chopsticks, pick a stone out of the hot fire and offer it first to Kuai.*)

Kuai: (*Whisper to the stone*) Fish, fish, fish. (*Then blow on it.*)

[**Ting** drops the stone into the hole. – *SPLASH!*]

Ting: (*Using her chopsticks, pick a stone out of the hot fire and offer it first to PONG.*)

Pong: (*Whisper to the stone*) Fish, fish, fish. (*Then blow on it.*)

[**Ting** drops the stone into the hole. – *SPLASH!*]

Narrator: Bubbles of steam shot off the stone as it sank to the bottom. The steam carried a wonderful fish smell.

Uncle 1: I see pieces of fish floating in the soup. You kids did tell the truth—it really was a fish stone!

Kuai: (*Gently stir the soup*) Hmm, this is turning into a tasty soup. If only we had a little salt, it would be a soup fit for a schoolmaster.

Uncle 1: Ting, get the salt off the boat.

Ting: It's your salt. You get it.

[While **Uncle** gets the salt, **Ting** secretly puts vegetables (mushrooms & onions) in the soup while Kuai & Pong stir.]

Narrator: As Uncle returned with the salt, Ting picked up the second stone and held it before his brothers.

Ting: (*Using her chopsticks, pick a stone out of the hot fire and offer it first to Kuai.*)

Kuai: (*Whisper to the stone*) Vegetables, vegetables. (*Then blow on it.*)

[**Ting** drops the stone into the hole. – *SHOOSH!*]

Ting: (*Using her chopsticks, pick a stone out of the hot fire and offer it first to PONG.*)

Pong: (*Whisper to the stone*) Vegetable, vegetable. (*Then blow on it.*)

[**Ting** drops the stone into the hole. – *SHOOSH!*]

Narrator: More steam leaped into the air. The aroma was so yummy, Uncle's stomach growled like an angry tiger.

Uncle 2: (*Excitedly*) I smell vegetables!

Kuai: (*Stirring the soup, stir in the salt.*) This is a wonderful vegetable stone. If only we had a little sesame oil, then this soup would be fit for an emperor.

Uncle 2: (*Excitedly*) Just a moment! I'll be right back with the sesame oil.

[While **Uncle** leaves to get the sesame oil, **Ting** secretly puts eggs in the soup while **Kuai** & **Pong** stir.]

Narrator: When Uncle returned with the sesame oil, Ting was holding up the last stone.

Ting/Kuai/Pong: (*Shouting*) Egg, egg, egg!

Narrator: Each blows hard on the stone one at a time

Uncle 2: What are you shouting at the stone, you potato heads?

Ting: Egg stones don't hear very well. (*Then drops the stone in the soup.*)

Narrator: As Ting dropped the stone in the soup -- *SHOOM!* – The hot stone brought the soup to a wild boil.

Uncle 2: (*Unbelieving but excited*) Look! Threads of egg are floating to the top.

Narrator: A luscious fragrance filled the air. Even monkeys came closer to get a whiff.

[**Kuai:** *Drizzle the sesame oil in the soup*]

Ting: *Fills one of the bamboo bowls with soup and serve Uncle.*

Narrator: Uncle could hardly wait to taste the soup. He lifts the steaming bowl to his lips.

Uncle 2: (*Lift the bowl to his lips and take a sip*) Mmmmmm . . .Tastes good! Tastes good! I must tell you that I have never tasted such a wonderful soup!

Narrator: The fish from the fish stone was tender and fresh. The wild mushrooms and onions from the vegetable stone were flavorful. The threads of egg from the egg stone were cooked just right.

Uncle 2: Thanks to the bowls and chopsticks I made, now you kids can enjoy the soup, too.

Narrator: The rest of the afternoon they were happy. From that day on, Uncle always carried rocks in his pockets and told everyone the secret of making stone soup.

Uncle 2: And that, my friends, is how I invented the *real* stone soup.

Narrator: Now you too know the secret to making stone soup – remember to whisper to fish and vegetable stones and yell at egg stones.