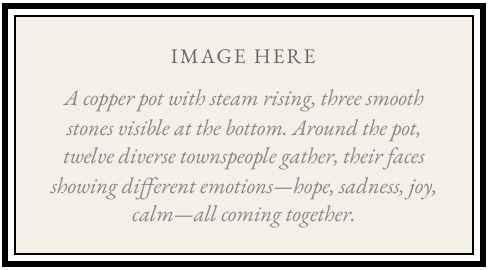
Stone Soup

The Township of Treasured Terms

VOLUME FOUR



Stone Soup

A Classic Tale Reimagined

The Township of Treasured Terms

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IMAGE HERE

Decorative title page illustration: an ornate border featuring faces expressing different temperaments, with a steaming pot at the center and hands reaching toward it.

STORY

An Old Classic Folktale, Retold for Today

DEDICATION

For all who have forgotten that the feast was never in the stone, but in the gathering.

And to all our children and grandchildren who have enjoyed this story, dad's stones, and the soup we've shared together.

Charles Dickens understood that a single word could capture the whole of a person's temperament. When Pip encountered a 'sanguine' stranger or a 'melancholy' benefactor, readers knew exactly what kind of soul they would meet. These temperament words—vivacious, phlegmatic, querulous, wistful—are portraits painted in a single stroke. They deserve to be remembered.

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IMAGE HERE

A quiet township street at dusk. Houses with curtains drawn, a few solitary figures walking alone, heads down. The atmosphere is peaceful but lonely.

Once, in a township not far from here, people lived as though their hearts had been quietly separated from one another.

It was not that they were unkind. It was simply that they had forgotten how to be together. The hopeful stayed hopeful alone. The sorrowful stayed sorrowful alone. The joyful, the calm, the thoughtful... all carried their temperaments in isolation, as though feelings were meant to be borne in private.

The township had grown quieter over the years. Doors stayed closed. Conversations grew shorter. Laughter, when it came, echoed in empty rooms.

One evening, just as the sun began to set, a traveler arrived at the edge of the township. He was a man whose face bore the kindness of someone who had listened to many stories and the patience of one who had waited for many meals to simmer. On his back he carried a massive copper pot, burnished by years of use.

He set the pot down in the center of the town square, unpacked a small camp stove from inside it, and knelt beside it as though preparing to do something very important.

A few curious townspeople paused to watch from their windows, but no one came out.

IMAGE HERE

The traveler kneeling beside the copper pot in the empty town square, unpacking his stove. A few shadowy faces visible in windows watching from a distance.

From the copper pot, the traveler produced a large wooden spoon and a small bottle of oil, setting them aside. Then he placed the pot over the stove and lit a small flame beneath it.

Reaching into a leather pouch at his side, he carefully removed three smooth, round stones. He held them for a moment, as though they were precious, and placed them gently into the empty pot.

Clunk. Clunk. Clunk.

He stirred the stones slowly with the wooden spoon.

Clink, clank, rattle.

Then he poured a thin stream of olive oil over the stones. From his pocket, he drew a weathered wooden box marked "S" and "P." He poured a bit of salt into his palm and tossed it over the stones, then added a few pinches of ground black pepper.

IMAGE HERE

Close-up of the traveler's weathered hands placing three smooth stones into the pot. The wooden spoon rests against the pot's edge. Oil glistens on the stones.

IMAGE HERE

Mr. Sanguine approaching the traveler with a warm, hopeful expression. The traveler looks up from the pot with a gentle smile.

From a nearby house, a man stepped out and approached the traveler. His expression was bright, his step light.

"Good evening, friend," said Mr. Sanguine (SANG-gwin). "I see you are making something. What manner of dish requires... stones?"

The traveler smiled. "I am making stone soup."

"Stone soup?" Mr. Sanguine (SANG-gwin) tilted his head, his eyes wide with curiosity. "How extraordinary! I have never heard of such a thing. Soup... from stones?" He peered into the pot, fascinated rather than doubtful. "Well, I choose to believe it will turn out wonderfully. I have an onion at home. I am certain it will help."

When Mr. Sanguine returned, he brought a medium-sized yellow onion, already peeled and diced.

"I prepared it at home," he said cheerfully. "I had a feeling this would be something special."

The traveler added the onion to the pot and stirred. The scent of onion warming in oil began to drift through the square.

From across the way, a woman emerged slowly from her door. Her face was thoughtful, her steps measured.

"Stone soup," murmured Mrs. Melancholy (MEL-un-kol-ee), more to herself than anyone. "What a peculiar notion... and yet, how strangely beautiful." She paused at the edge of the gathering. "I remember when we used to gather. There was a time when this square was full of voices."

IMAGE HERE

Mrs. Melancholy standing at her doorway, looking wistfully toward the pot. Mr. Sanguine is adding onion to the pot. The traveler stirs gently.

Mrs. Melancholy (MEL-un-kol-ee) disappeared into her house and returned with three stalks of celery and a small knife.

"I had these," she said softly. "They have been waiting for something... though I did not know what."

With slow, reflective motions, she held each stalk over the pot and sliced it into pieces, letting them fall gently into the warming oil.

The celery joined the onion, and the aroma deepened.

A door opened farther down the lane. A man with spectacles and a book tucked under his arm approached slowly, pausing to observe the pot with quiet attention.

IMAGE HERE

Mrs. Melancholy handing celery to the traveler. The Pensive Scholar approaching in the background, book under arm, watching with contemplative interest.

IMAGE HERE

The Pensive Scholar pressing garlic with a small hand press over the pot. His expression is thoughtful and intent. The steam rises with increased fragrance.

"I have been considering this," said The Pensive Scholar (PEN-siv), stroking his chin. "Stone soup. The very idea is paradoxical... stones cannot nourish. And yet..." He gazed into the pot with deep concentration. "It occurs to me that what you are doing is not merely cooking. It is... gathering."

"You are quite right," the traveler said.

The Pensive Scholar (PEN-siv) reached into his coat pocket and produced four cloves of garlic. He pressed them methodically with a small hand press he had brought, then added the crushed garlic to the pot.

"Wisdom," he said, "is often found in paradox."

The aromatics sizzled together now, filling the square with an irresistible fragrance. The traveler poured water from a jug into the pot. Steam rose in fragrant clouds.

Thud, thunk, thud. The sound of the stirring stones was softer now, muffled by the liquid.

By now, several more townspeople had gathered near the pot. Among them was an elderly man who stood with his hands clasped calmly behind his back, watching without comment.

"What do you think, Old Phlegmatic (fleg-MAT-ik)?" asked Mr. Sanguine. "Stone soup! Have you ever heard of anything so novel?"

The old man shrugged slightly. "I have seen stranger things. No need for alarm. I will contribute."

Old Phlegmatic (fleg-MAT-ik) walked steadily to his home and returned with three potatoes, already scrubbed and cubed. He placed them into the simmering broth with care, his expression unchanged.

"Potatoes are reliable," he said simply. "Unlike stones... but we shall see."

IMAGE HERE

Old Phlegmatic standing calmly beside the pot, adding cubed potatoes with a steady hand. Several townspeople now gathered in a loose circle around the pot.

A child came running from a nearby house, skipping and laughing.

"What is happening?" cried Young Ebullient (ih-BUL-yunt), eyes wide with excitement. "Is it true? Soup from stones? How marvelous! How impossible! How wonderful!"

The child peered into the pot with unbridled amazement. "I can see them! The stones are really in there!"

Young Ebullient (ih-BUL-yunt) raced back home and returned with three bright orange carrots. With cheerful energy, the child sliced them into rounds and dropped them into the pot with a splash.

"These will make it beautiful!" the child exclaimed, watching the orange rounds bob around the mysterious stones.

IMAGE HERE

Young Ebullient, a joyful child, adding bright orange carrot rounds to the pot with a big smile. Water splashes slightly. Other townspeople smile at the child's enthusiasm.

IMAGE HERE

Aunt Querulous adding cabbage to the pot with a skeptical expression, arms folded. Young Ebullient stands nearby, grinning. The traveler stirs patiently.

From the far end of the square, an elderly woman shuffled forward, muttering under her breath.

"Stone soup," grumbled Aunt Querulous (KWER-uh-lus). "Preposterous. Utterly preposterous. In my day, soup required proper ingredients. Stones are for walls, not for eating."

But she carried a small bundle of cabbage nonetheless, shredded into thin ribbons.

"I suppose," Aunt Querulous (KWER-uh-lus) said with a heavy sigh, "someone must bring sense to this nonsense. Cabbage, at least, belongs in soup."

She dropped it into the pot and folded her arms, still frowning... though perhaps a little less than before.

A man approached from the shadows, carrying a basket. He said nothing, only nodded once to the traveler.

Mr. Taciturn (TAS-ih-turn) reached into the basket and withdrew a handful of mushrooms, sliced thin. He placed them gently into the pot, still silent.

The traveler nodded back.

"Thank you," he said.

Mr. Taciturn (TAS-ih-turn) stepped back into the circle of townspeople and stood quietly, watching. His presence, though wordless, felt solid.

The soup simmered. The scent grew richer still.

IMAGE HERE

Mr. Taciturn silently adding mushrooms to the pot. His expression is calm and reserved. The traveler meets his eyes with a respectful nod.

A woman with bright eyes and an animated step hurried forward, carrying a basket on her arm.

"Stone soup!" exclaimed Mrs. Vivacious (vih-VAY-shus), clapping her hands together. "I heard someone say stone soup and I simply had to come see for myself! How enchanting! How utterly original!"

She reached into her basket and produced two large, ripe tomatoes, diced into vibrant red chunks.

"These will bring color and life," she said, adding them to the pot with a flourish. "Oh, look at all of you gathered here! Come, everyone... draw closer! This is marvelous!"

Mrs. Vivacious (vih-VAY-shus) moved among the crowd, drawing more people near, her energy contagious.

IMAGE HERE

Mrs. Vivacious gesturing animatedly as she adds bright red tomatoes to the pot. Townspeople are smiling, drawing closer together. Children are starting to play nearby.

IMAGE HERE

Miss Effervescent adding peas to the pot with one hand, holding a bottle of sparkling cider in the other. Her expression is joyful and animated. Children are playing in the background.

A young woman arrived next, practically dancing as she approached. Her smile was bright, her manner bubbling with joy.

"Isn't this marvelous?" said Miss Effervescent (ef-er-VES-unt), clapping her hands together. "I just love what is happening here!"

She poured a cup of fresh peas into the pot, then held up a bottle.

"And when we eat," said Miss Effervescent (ef-er-VES-unt), "we shall toast with sparkling cider! I brought enough for everyone."

She set the bottles aside and stood near the pot, her enthusiasm lifting the spirits of everyone around her.

A man shuffled forward from the edge of the square, his shoulders hunched, his face drawn.

"I suppose I will add something," muttered Mr. Morose (muh-ROHS) without enthusiasm. "Though I cannot see what difference it will make."

He held out a small bundle of fresh thyme, rubbing the leaves between his fingers to release their scent before dropping them into the pot.

But as the fragrance rose, Mr. Morose (muh-ROHS) paused. He glanced around at the gathered faces... and his frown softened, just slightly.

IMAGE HERE

Mr. Morose adding thyme to the pot with a gloomy expression that's just beginning to soften. Miss Effervescent stands nearby, smiling encouragingly at him.

At the edge of the gathering stood a small child, looking longingly at the pot and the people around it.

"I wish..." whispered Little Wistful (WIST-ful), barely audible. "I wish I had something to give."

The traveler turned and smiled gently at the child.

"What is in your hand?" he asked.

Little Wistful (WIST-ful) looked down and opened a small, clenched fist. Inside was a handful of fresh parsley, picked from the garden.

"It is not much," the child said.

"It is perfect," the traveler replied.

IMAGE HERE

Little Wistful standing shyly at the edge of the crowd, holding out a handful of parsley. The traveler kneeling to the child's level, smiling warmly.

IMAGE HERE

Little Wistful scattering parsley, face glowing. The crowd grows quiet at the mention of meat.

Little Wistful stepped forward and scattered the parsley over the top of the soup. The child's face, once longing, now glowed with belonging.

The soup was beautiful now... colorful and fragrant. Surely nothing more was needed.

But the traveler stirred thoughtfully. "The soup is wonderful," he said. "Truly wonderful. But if someone happened to have a bit of meat..."

A silence fell over the crowd. Meat was precious in the township. No one spoke.

Then, a hearty laugh echoed across the square.

"Ho ho!" boomed Uncle Jovial (JOH-vee-ul), striding forward with a broad smile. "What a fine gathering this has become! I could not stay away."

He carried a cloth-wrapped bundle, which he unwrapped to reveal cubed chicken, seasoned and ready.

"I prepared this earlier," said Uncle Jovial (JOH-vee-ul) warmly. "I had a feeling today would be special."

He added the chicken to the pot. The soup, now full and rich, simmered gently.

A murmur of wonder passed through the crowd.

IMAGE HERE

Uncle Jovial adding chicken to the pot with a big, warm smile. The crowd around the pot has grown large now, people standing shoulder to shoulder.

IMAGE HERE

The entire crowd gathered in a circle around the pot, heads bowed in prayer. Little Wistful stands between adults, hands folded. The traveler stands respectfully with head bowed.

The traveler stirred the soup one last time, then lifted the spoon to taste it. He closed his eyes and nodded.

"It is ready," he said.

Old Phlegmatic spoke calmly. "Before we eat, we should give thanks."

The crowd grew still. Even Aunt Querulous bowed her head.

Old Phlegmatic spoke simply. "Heavenly Father, we thank You for this meal, and for bringing us together. Amen."

"Amen," the traveler said softly.

The traveler carefully removed the three stones from the pot and set them aside. Then he ladled the soup into bowls that had been brought from nearby homes.

People sat together in the square... on steps, on benches, on the ground. Children ran between them, laughing. Voices overlapped in conversation. Uncle Jovial's laughter rang out. Mrs. Vivacious drew reluctant neighbors into the circle. Mr. Taciturn sat quietly, but his small smile said everything.

Miss Effervescent poured sparkling cider, and they raised their cups.

"To the gathering," someone said.

"To the gathering," they all replied.

IMAGE HERE

The townspeople seated close together in the square, eating soup from bowls, children playing underfoot, people laughing and talking. Uncle Jovial lifting his cup in a toast. The atmosphere is warm, lively, and full of life.

IMAGE HERE

The traveler standing before the seated crowd, holding the three stones in his open palm. Townspeople listening intently, faces reflecting understanding and connection.

As the evening deepened, the traveler stood to leave. The townspeople quieted and turned to him.

"These stones are ordinary," the traveler said, holding them up. "But they were never meant to stay alone. Each of you is much the same... formed with something particular, something your own.

Like threads in a tapestry... when held apart, they seem small. But when woven together, each finding its place, something beautiful appears.

Some call it providence. Others call it grace. But it is how God made the world to work. When threads find their place in the tapestry, the pattern reveals itself."

The traveler handed the three stones to Old Phlegmatic.

"These belong here now," he said. "A reminder of what happened tonight."

Then he repacked his pot with the stove, jug, and oil, fastened it to his back, and walked quietly to the edge of the township.

When he was out of sight, he knelt by the roadside and picked up three new, ordinary stones. He held them up to the fading light and whispered, "Very special stones... from a very special place."

And he continued on his way.

IMAGE HERE

The traveler kneeling by the roadside at dusk, holding three new stones up to the light. The township glows warmly in the distance behind him.

Behind him, in the township square, people lingered long into the night. They had forgotten, for a time, that they were meant to be separate.

Mrs. Melancholy smiled through her tears. Mr. Morose laughed at one of Uncle Jovial's jokes. Little Wistful sat contentedly among the others, no longer longing.

"The soup," someone said softly, "brought us together."

"Yes," said The Pensive Scholar, nodding slowly. "It reminded us that we were made for this... for God, and for each other."

IMAGE HERE

The townspeople still gathered in the square under evening lanterns, talking and laughing together. Mrs. Melancholy smiling, Mr. Morose chuckling, Little Wistful sitting happily among adults. The empty pot sits to the side, the three stones placed reverently beside it.

The wonder was never in the stones.
The secret is remembering our uniqueness and individual purpose, created to be woven together in fellowship with God and one another.
Each temperament, each disposition, each way of being... these are gifts meant to be shared, not carried alone. When we bring them together, we discover the way we were always meant to live.

IMAGE HERE

A warm, glowing image of the three stones resting on a cloth, surrounded by the ingredients that made the soup—onion, celery, garlic, potatoes, carrots, cabbage, mushrooms, tomatoes, peas, thyme, chicken, parsley—arranged in a circle like a wreath.

Stone Soup

A Recipe for Fellowship

This soup, like the story it comes from, works best when shared. Each ingredient represents a gift from a neighbor. The wonder lies not in any single addition, but in the coming together of many hearts.

PREP TIME	COOK TIME	SERVINGS
30 minutes	1 hour 15 minutes	8-10 generous bowls

Ingredients

- 3 clean, smooth stones (for tradition and remembering)
- 2 tbsp olive oil (from the traveler's flask)
- Salt and pepper (from the traveler's weathered wooden box)
- 1 large onion, diced (from Mr. Sanguine)
- 3 stalks celery, sliced (from Mrs. Melancholy)
- 4 cloves garlic, minced (from The Pensive Scholar)
- 1 lb chicken breast or thighs, cubed (from Uncle Jovial)
- 3 medium potatoes, peeled and cubed (from Old Phlegmatic)
- 3 carrots, peeled and sliced (from Young Ebullient)
- 2 cups cabbage, shredded (from Aunt Querulous)
- 8 oz mushrooms, sliced (from Mr. Taciturn)
- 2 large tomatoes, diced (from Mrs. Vivacious)
- 1 cup fresh or frozen peas (from Miss Effervescent)
- 2 tsp fresh thyme leaves (from Mr. Morose)
- 2 tbsp fresh parsley, chopped (from Little Wistful)
- 8 cups chicken or vegetable broth
- Sparkling cider for toasting (brought by Miss Effervescent for celebration)

Instructions

1. In a large pot, heat the olive oil over medium heat. Season the chicken with salt and pepper, then brown on all sides until golden, about 5-7 minutes. Remove and set aside.
2. In the same pot, add the onion, celery, and garlic. Sauté until softened and fragrant, about 5 minutes.
3. Add the three stones to the pot along with the broth. Bring to a gentle boil.
4. Add the potatoes and carrots. Reduce heat and simmer for 15 minutes.
5. Add the cabbage, mushrooms, and tomatoes. Simmer for another 15 minutes.
6. Return the chicken to the pot along with the peas and thyme. Cook until the chicken is cooked through and vegetables are tender, about 10 minutes.
7. Taste and adjust seasoning with salt and pepper. Stir in the fresh parsley just before serving.
8. Remove the three stones (they've done their work of bringing everyone together).
9. Ladle into deep bowls. Serve with warm bread and butter. Toast with sparkling cider to celebrate the fellowship.

The wonder was never in the stones. It was in the gathering... in the shared gifts, the patient waiting, and the discovery that what we bring together becomes more than the sum of its parts. This is how we were made to live.

Words to Remember

The Characters & Their Meanings

Mr. Sanguine *(SANG-gwin)*

Optimistic or positive, especially in a difficult situation; cheerfully confident.

"Despite the setback, she remained sanguine about their chances of success."

Mrs. Melancholy *(MEL-un-kol-ee)*

A deep, pensive sadness; thoughtful sadness.

"A melancholy settled over him as he looked at old photographs of happier times."

The Pensive Scholar *(PEN-siv)*

Engaged in deep or serious thought.

"She sat by the window in a pensive mood, contemplating her future."

Old Phlegmatic *(fleg-MAT-ik)*

Having an unemotional and calm disposition; not easily excited.

"The phlegmatic captain kept his crew calm during the storm."

Young Ebullient *(ih-BUL-yunt)*

Cheerful and full of energy; enthusiastically excited.

"The ebullient crowd cheered as the team scored the winning goal."

Aunt Querulous *(KWER-uh-lus)*

Complaining in a petulant or whining manner.

"His querulous complaints about the weather annoyed everyone on the trip."

Mr. Taciturn *(TAS-ih-turn)*

Reserved or uncommunicative in speech; saying little.

"The taciturn farmer worked alongside his hands, saying nothing but missing nothing."

Mrs. Vivacious *(vih-VAY-shus)*

Attractively lively and animated.

"The vivacious host made sure everyone was having a wonderful time."

Miss Effervescent *(ef-er-VES-unt)*

Vivacious and enthusiastic; giving off bubbles.

"Her effervescent personality made every party more fun."

Mr. Morose *(muh-ROHS)*

Sullen and ill-tempered; gloomy.

"After losing the game, he was morose for days until his friends cheered him up."

Uncle Jovial *(JOH-vee-ul)*

Cheerful and friendly; good-humored.

"The jovial innkeeper welcomed travelers with a warm smile and a hearty meal."

Little Wistful *(WIST-ful)*

Having or showing a feeling of vague or regretful longing.

"She cast a wistful glance at the playground, remembering her own childhood."