**The lucky stone**

Long ago in a country

 far away, but maybe also yesterday in a town here very close by, there was a man on a long wide road. The man had been a soldier in the army of the king, or maybe it was the sultan. The war was over, peace was signed, and everyone would be able to start their everyday life.

The man was on his way home. But it would be a long journey, and it led him to places he had never been. He pulled through rough regions, large sand plains, and through strange cities. In the area where the man was walking he slowly saw some increasing signs of habitation. He saw some houses, pieces of farmland, and he also saw people. But there was something strange going on, because every time there was a cluster of houses, there was a piece of undeveloped land. And then a group of houses with plots of land. And then again, this went on all the way along the road. There were only paths from the road to the groups of houses, but not between the pieces of land. The man came closer and closer to the city, he noticed though, because the groups of houses and plots were closer together, and it became more and more.

There were some people on the road as well. But the people were never alone, always in groups. As he passed a group of people he gave a friendly greeting, but that was never answered. And if groups of people passed each other, he saw that they never greeted each other. Also the people who worked on the land didn’t greet each other. The more he looked around, the stranger it seemed. Because at first glance it all seemed ordinary people, but the group of people looked alike, they wore exactly the same clothes, they had the same hair. And so it was with the houses, the houses of a group had the same shape, same colour roofs. Even on the land they grew the same vegetables. When he looked closely, he saw that the people who worked on the land with houses with green roofs, had greenish hair and wore green clothes. And that on that land of that group only grew green cabbage.

The people looked tired and thin. The houses were old. And the land, although there were growing crops, looked bare. It appeared to the man that there was much poverty in this particular country.

It became more crowded along the way because the man was now near the city. A city, it did not really look like one city. They looked like four, five, six different towns. Groups of houses together with empty shops and workshops. There was once been something of a plaza, but the square was empty and dusty, near the houses were a lot of people, but no one was on the square. Again, in this city of cities, he saw nothing but things of the same colour together.

The man had a long journey behind him, and he still had far to go. He was looking for a place to rest and he wanted some food because he was hungry, he had nothing left in his old soldier-bag. The man dared not to walk to someone, because he saw that the people here in this city within the towns were poor. And besides, if he walked up to someone, the person walked away quickly. The man went to the middle of the square, to something that looked like a bench. He looked around him, he watched the sun at the sky, and thought deeply.

While he did so, he saw from the corner of his eye that very careful from every town, in the city with towns, a child came running into the square. Very carefully they came closer. He saw something in the eyes of the children he had not seen in the eyes of the big people: they seemed curious. Without saying a word the children stopped a few meters ahead of him, and sat down on the ground. They did not speak with him, and certainly not with each other. They were kids with green hair and green shoes and green clothes, and children with red hair.

The soldier spoke to one of the children, he said: "I'm hungry, your father and mother may have something to eat?" - "Oh, we do not have much, we only eat carrots, because they are ours and we should never give it to other people.." And another child answered exactly the same, only that child ate only leeks. And another child, only ate tomatoes or onions. More was not there. The man saw that the kids were hungry.

From the corner of his eyes he saw that adults came to the children. It seemed like they came to collect their children. But here again he saw that they were carefully curious. They looked at him. And the man looked at the people, to himself, and then he understood he had a green pants, but a red jacket, and a white scarf and an orange cap. It seemed as if the people thought, how can that be, all the colours on one body.

The man got up, stood on the bench and he said, "Dear people, I come from far, and I'm hungry, but I see that you are too I have here in my soldier-bag a very special stone, it is a miracle stone. I received this stone from an old wise man who told me where the sun shines that it is a place where happiness can come. "And then use the stone," the old wise man said . With this stone, I can make a bowl of food, soup, for example. And there's plenty for everyone! The soldier saw that people did not really believe him , but he spoke quietly. "Does anyone have a pan for me?"

One of the children ran home, along his father and his mother, and returned with a large pot. Another child got water from the stream that run along the city with towns. A third child, gathered wood. And a fourth child made a fire. Meanwhile it became very crowded on the square. People stood uncomfortable together with their groups.

The man took the stone and put it in the pan with water, which slowly began to steam and cook. With a spoon the man tasted from the pan. "Well, that tastes good" he said cheerfully. "There is really only a little bit of salt I need, and the soup is good." One of the children looked at his mother, but without saying anything, he ran home and came back with a bowl of salt. The man put the salt in the pan, and tasted after a moment. "Ah, how great, it tastes all right!

“But I could use something sweet in it”. A child with orange hair, ran home and came back with a hand full of carrots, a bit old, but still quite good to eat. The man took a spoonful of the soup and let someone with green hair taste it, "Yes that is quite nice, I could also use .... ……." - "Leeks !," shouted his son, "leeks from us." And he immediately ran home and came back with a bunch of green leek. Now all the people came close to the pan, and everyone tasted And everybody said:.. "Yes, fine, but ...." And everyone made sure everything that was needed got in the soup. The pot became fuller and fuller, and on the square rose a fine mist of fragrant soup.

"So, the soup is ready!" said the man, "Now we have to eat him!" The people, men, women and children ran away and came back with green spoons, yellow soup bowls. There was even someone with a table. With red tables, blue chairs. Everything was placed in a beautiful circle in the middle of the square. The bowls on the table.

And the man gave the people a full bowl of soup. And he served the multi-coloured soup in a green bowl, put a brown spoon in it and took it to an orange table. The people had now become a lot happier, they walked together and they were no longer so careful to sit together. Everyone began to eat, and you could hear it everywhere: "Oh, what is this good," - "Oh that tastes good, and he did all that with his lucky stone".

All feasted on the delicious soup, they did not have such a soup for a while. They ate together around the empty pan. Only the soup stone was still there. The man stood up and wanted to leave. "The soup stone is still in the pot" a child said. "You should keep that, and you might be able to make another 1000 bowls of soup, if you do it as we have done it now." - "That's a real lucky stone" said a boy with red hair against a girl with blue eyes.

The man laughed when he heard that, while he left the square. Once outside the city, he looked for a nice round stone, put it in his soldier-bag and walked away whistling a tune.