When one loves one's Art no service seems too hard. That is our premise. This story shall draw a conclusion from it, and show at the same time that the premise is incorrect. That will be a new thing in logic, and a feat in story-telling somewhat older than the great wall of China.

Joe Larrabee came out of the post-oak flats of the Middle West pulsing with a genius for pictorial art. At six he drew a picture of the town pump with a prominent citizen passing it hastily. This effort was framed and hung in the drug store window by the side of the ear of corn with an uneven number of rows. At twenty he left for New York with a flowing necktie and a capital tied up somewhat closer.

Delia Caruthers did things in six octaves so promisingly in a pine-tree village in the South that her relatives chipped in enough in her chip hat for her to go "North" and "finish." They could not see her f--., but that is our story.

Joe and Delia met in an atelier where a number of art and music students had gathered to discuss chiaroscuro, Wagner, music, Rembrandt's works, pictures, Waldteufel, wall paper, Chopin and Oolong.

Joe and Delia became enamoured one of the other, or each of the other, as you please, and in a short time were married--for (see above), when one loves one's Art no service seems too hard.

Mr. and Mrs. Larrabee began housekeeping in a flat. It was a lonesome flat-something like the A sharp way down at the left-hand end of the keyboard. And they were happy; for they had their Art, and they had each other. And my advice to the rich
young man would be—sell all thou hast, and give it to the poor—janitor for the privilege of living in a flat with your Art and your Delia.

Flat-dwellers shall indorse my dictum that theirs is the only true happiness. If a home is happy it cannot fit too close—let the dresser collapse and become a billiard table; let the mantel turn to a rowing machine, the escritoire to a spare bedchamber, the washstand to an upright piano; let the four walls come together, if they will, so you and your Delia are between. But if home be the other kind, let it be wide and long--enter you at the Golden Gate, hang your hat on Hatteras, your cape on Cape Horn and go out by the Labrador.

Joe was painting in the class of the great Magister—you know his fame. His fees are high; his lessons are light—his high-lights have brought him renown. Delia was studying under Rosenstock—you know his repute as a disturber of the piano keys.

They were mighty happy as long as their money lasted. So is every-- but I will not be cynical. Their aims were very clear and defined. Joe was to become capable very soon of turning out pictures that old gentlemen with thin side-whiskers and thick pocketbooks would sandbag one another in his studio for the privilege of buying. Delia was to become familiar and then contemptuous with Music, so that when she saw the orchestra seats and boxes unsold she could have sore throat and lobster in a private dining-room and refuse to go on the stage.

But the best, in my opinion, was the home life in the little flat— the ardent, voluble chats after the day's study; the cozy dinners and fresh, light breakfasts; the interchange of ambitions—ambitions interwoven each with the other's or else inconsiderable—the mutual help and inspiration; and--overlook my artlessness--stuffed olives and cheese sandwiches at 11 p.m.
But after a while Art flagged. It sometimes does, even if some switchman
doesn't flag it. Everything going out and nothing coming in, as the vulgarians say.
Money was lacking to pay Mr. Magister and Herr Rosenstock their prices. When one
loves one's Art no service seems too hard. So, Delia said she must give music lessons
to keep the chafing dish bubbling.

For two or three days she went out canvassing for pupils. One evening she
came home elated.

"Joe, dear," she said, gleefully, "I've a pupil. And, oh, the loveliest people!
General--General A. B. Pinkney's daughter—on Seventy-first street. Such a splendid
house, Joe--you ought to see the front door! Byzantine I think you would call it. And
inside!

Oh, Joe, I never saw anything like it before.

"My pupil is his daughter Clementina. I dearly love her already. She's a
delicate thing-dresses always in white; and the sweetest, simplest manners! Only
eighteen years old. I'm to give three lessons a week; and, just think, Joe! $5 a lesson. I
don't mind it a bit; for when I get two or three more pupils I can resume my lessons
with Herr Rosenstock. Now, smooth out that wrinkle between your brows, dear, and
let's have a nice supper."

"That's all right for you, Dele," said Joe, attacking a can of peas with a carving
knife and a hatchet, "but how about me? Do you think I'm going to let you hustle for
wages while I philander in the regions of high art? Not by the bones of Benvenuto
Cellini! I guess I can sell papers or lay cobblestones, and bring in a dollar or two."

Delia came and hung about his neck.
"Joe, dear, you are silly. You must keep on at your studies. It is not as if I had quit my music and gone to work at something else. While I teach I learn. I am always with my music. And we can live as happily as millionaires on $15 a week. You mustn't think of leaving Mr. Magister."

"All right," said Joe, reaching for the blue scalloped vegetable dish. "But I hate for you to be giving lessons. It isn't Art. But you're a trump and a dear to do it."

"When one loves one's Art no service seems too hard," said Delia.

"Magister praised the sky in that sketch I made in the park," said Joe. "And Tinkle gave me permission to hang two of them in his window. I may sell one if the right kind of a moneyed idiot sees them."

"I'm sure you will," said Delia, sweetly. "And now let's be thankful for Gen. Pinkney and this veal roast."

During all of the next week the Larrabees had an early breakfast. Joe was enthusiastic about some morning-effect sketches he was doing in Central Park, and Delia packed him off breakfasted, coddled, praised and kissed at 7 o'clock. Art is an engaging mistress. It was most times 7 o'clock when he returned in the evening.

At the end of the week Delia, sweetly proud but languid, triumphantly tossed three five-dollar bills on the 8x10 (inches) centre table of the 8x10 (feet) flat parlour.

Sometimes," she said, a little wearily, "Clementina tries me. I'm afraid she doesn't practise enough, and I have to tell her the same things so often. And then she always dresses entirely in white, and that does get monotonous. But Gen. Pinkney is the dearest old man! I wish you could know him, Joe. He comes in sometimes when I am with Clementina at the piano--he is a widower, you know--and stands there
pulling his white goatee. 'And how are the semiquavers and the demisemiquavers progressing?' he always asks.

"I wish you could see the wainscoting in that drawing-room, Joe! And those Astrakhan rug portieres. And Clementina has such a funny little cough. I hope she is stronger than she looks. Oh, I really am getting attached to her, she is so gentle and high bred. Gen. Pinkney's brother was once Minister to Bolivia."

And then Joe, with the air of a Monte Cristo, drew forth a ten, a five, a two and a one—all legal tender notes—and laid them beside Delia's earnings.

"Sold that watercolour of the obelisk to a man from Peoria," he announced overwhelmingly.

"Don't joke with me," said Delia, "not from Peoria!"

"All the way. I wish you could see him, Dele. Fat man with a woolen muffler and a quill toothpick. He saw the sketch in Tinkle's window and thought it was a windmill at first, he was game, though, and bought it anyhow. He ordered another—an oil sketch of the Lackawanna freight depot—to take back with him. Music lessons! Oh, I guess Art is still in it."

"I'm so glad you've kept on," said Delia, heartily. "You're bound to win, dear. Thirty-three dollars! We never had so much to spend before. We'll have oysters tonight."

"And filet mignon with champignons," said Joe. "Were is the olive fork?"

On the next Saturday evening Joe reached home first. He spread his $18 on the parlour table and washed what seemed to be a great deal of dark paint from his hands.
Half an hour later Delia arrived, her right hand tied up in a shapeless bundle of wraps and bandages.

"How is this?" asked Joe after the usual greetings. Delia laughed, but not very joyously. Clementina," she explained, "insisted upon a Welsh rabbit after her lesson. She is such a queer girl. Welsh rabbits at 5 in the afternoon. The General was there. You should have seen him run for the chafing dish, Joe, just as if there wasn't a servant in the house. I know Clementina isn't in good health; she is so nervous. In serving the rabbit she spilled a great lot of it, boiling hot, over my hand and wrist. It hurt awfully, Joe. And the dear girl was so sorry! But Gen. Pinkney!-- Joe, that old man nearly went distracted. He rushed downstairs and sent somebody--they said the furnace man or somebody in the basement--out to a drug store for some oil and things to bind it up with. It doesn't hurt so much now."

"What's this?" asked Joe, taking the hand tenderly and pulling at some white strands beneath the bandages.

"It's something soft," said Delia, "that had oil on it. Oh, Joe, did you sell another sketch?" She had seen the money on the table.

"Did I?" said Joe; "just ask the man from Peoria. He got his depot to-day, and he isn't sure but he thinks he wants another parkscape and a view on the Hudson. What time this afternoon did you burn your hand, Dele?"

"Five o'clock, I think," said Dele, plaintively. "The iron--I mean the rabbit came off the fire about that time. You ought to have seen Gen. Pinkney, Joe, when--"

"Sit down here a moment, Dele," said Joe. He drew her to the couch, sat beside her and put his arm across her shoulders.
"What have you been doing for the last two weeks, Dele?" he asked. She braved it for a moment or two with an eye full of love and stubbornness, and murmured a phrase or two vaguely of Gen. Pinkney; but at length down went her head and out came the truth and tears.

"I couldn't get any pupils," she confessed. "And I couldn't bear to have you give up your lessons; and I got a place ironing shirts in that big Twenty-fourth street laundry. And I think I did very well to make up both General Pinkney and Clementina, don't you, Joe? And when a girl in the laundry set down a hot iron on my hand this afternoon I was all the way home making up that story about the Welsh rabbit. You're not angry, are you, Joe? And if I hadn't got the work you mightn't have sold your sketches to that man from Peoria.

"He wasn't from Peoria," said Joe, slowly.

"Well, it doesn't matter where he was from. How clever you are, Joe--and--kiss me, Joe--and what made you ever suspect that I wasn't giving music lessons to Clementina?"

"I didn't," said Joe, "until to-night. And I wouldn't have then, only I sent up this cotton waste and oil from the engine-room this afternoon for a girl upstairs who had her hand burned with a smoothing-iron. I've been firing the engine in that laundry for the last two weeks."

"And then you didn't--"

"My purchaser from Peoria," said Joe, "and Gen. Pinkney are both creations of the same art--but you wouldn't call it either painting or music.

And then they both laughed, and Joe began:

"When one loves one's Art no service seems--"
But Delia stopped him with her hand on his lips. "No," she said-- "just 'When one loves.'"

(http://www.literaturecollection.com/a/o_henry/29/)
APPENDIX 2

THE GOLD FRAME

R.K. Laxman

The modern Frame Works was actually an extra-large wooden packing case mounted on wobbly legs trucked in a gap between a drug store and a radio repair shop. Its owner, Datta, with his concave figure. Silver-rimmed glasses and a complexion of seasoned timber, fitted into his shop with the harmony of a fixture.

He was a silent, hardworking man. He gave only laconic answers to the questions his customers asked and strongly discouraged casual friends who tried to intrude on his zone of silence with their idle gossip. He was always seen sitting hunched up, surrounded by a confusion of cardboard pieces, bits of wood, glass sheets, boxes of nails, glue bottles, paint tins and other odds and ends that went into putting a picture in a frame. In this medley a glass-cutter or a pencil stub was often lost and that was when he would uncoil from his posture and grope impatiently for it. Many times he had to stand up and shake his dhoti vigorously to dislodge the lost object. This operation rocked the whole shop, setting the pictures on the walls gently swinging.

There was not an inch of space that was not covered by a picture; gods, saints, hockey players, children, cheap prints of the Mona Lisa, national leasers, wedding couples, Urdu calligraphy, the snow-clad Fujiyama and many other co-existed with a cheerful incongruity like some fabulous world awaiting order and arrangement.

A customer standing outside the shop on the pavement, obstructing the stream of jostling pedestrians, announced, ‘I want this picture framed.’ Datta, with his
habitual indifference, ignored him and continued to be engaged in driving screws into the sides of a frame.

‘I want a really good job done, no matter how much it costs.’ The customer volunteered the information, unrolling a faded newspaper and exposing a sepia-brown photograph of an old man. It was sharp and highly glazed in spite of its antiquity.

‘What sort of a frame would you like? Datta asked, still bent over his work. ‘The best, of course. Do you expect I would stint where this great soul is concerned?’

Datta gave a side glance and caught a glimpse of the photograph; just another elderly person of those days, he told himself; a standard portrait of a grandfather, a philanthropist, a social worker, with the inevitable whiskers and top-heavy cascading turban it could be any one of these. At least half a dozen people came to him every month bearing similar portraits, wanting to demonstrate their homage to the person in the picture in the shape of a glittering frame.

The customer was describing the greatness of the old man; extravagant qualities of nobility, compassion and charity were being generously attributed to him in a voice that came close to the chanting of a holy scripture.’ …. if this world had just a few more like him, believe me, it would certainly have been a different place. Of course, there are demons who may not agree with me. They are out to disgrace his name and destroy his memory. But he is God in my home!’

‘What sort of a frame do you want? Datta interrupted. ‘plan, wooden, lacquer, gold, plastic or just enamel painted?’ He waved a casual hand towards the pictures on the wall. The customer silently surveyed the various frames. After some time Datta heard him mumble, ‘I want the best. . .’
‘I don’t have any second-rate stuff in my shop,’ Datta said.

He was shown a number of samples; plain, decorative, floral, geometrical, thin, hefty and so forth. The customer was baffled by the variety.

He examined the selection before him for a long time as if he was unsure of his judgement and was afraid of enshrining his savior for ever in some ugly cheap frame.

Datta came to his rescue and recommended one with a profusion of gold leaves and winding creepers and, in order to clear any lingering doubt he might still harbor in regard to its quality, added: ‘It is German! Imported!’

The customer at once seemed impressed and satisfied. Datta next asked, ‘you want a plain mount or a cut mount?’ and watched the puzzled look return. Again he helped the main out by showing his various mounts and suggested that a cut mount looked more elegant.

‘All right, let me have a cut mount then. Is that a cut mount? He asked, pointing to a framed picture on the wall of a soulful-looking lady in an oval cut mount. ‘I like that shape. Will it cost much?’

‘No. Frame, mount, glass all will cost seventeen rupees. ‘The customer had expected it would be more. He pretended to be shocked all the same and tried to bargain.

Datta withdrew to his corner without replying and began to cut a piece of plywood.

The customer hung about uncertainly for some time and finally asked, ‘when will you have it ready?’ and barely heard the reply over the vibrating noise of the saw on the plywood, ‘two weeks from today.’
Datta had learnt by long experience that his customers never came punctually. They came days in advance and went away disappointed or came months later, and some never turned up at all and their pictures lay unclaimed in a box, gathering dust and feeding cockroaches and silver fish. Therefore he made frames for those who came to him and visited him at least twice before he actually executed their orders.

Ten days later the tall, rustic-looking man appeared and enquired, ‘Has the picture been framed? I was passing by and thought I could collect it if it was ready.’ Datta cast a side look at him and continued with his work. ‘I know I have come four days early,’ the customer grinned nervously. ‘Will it be ready by Tuesday?’ Datta merely nodded without shifting attention from a tiny nail which he, with precise rhythmic strokes, was driving into a frame, but sensed the man’s obsessive attachment to the photograph. He told himself there would be trouble if he did not deliver the order on the promised date.

Next morning he made that his first job, keeping aside all the others.

The photograph was lying on a shelf among many others. He took it and carefully kept it on a wooden plank on the floor. Then he looked for the pencil stub for marking the measurements. As usual it was missing. He swept his hand all round him impatiently, scattering fragments of glass and wood.

False shapes that he mistook for the pencil harassed him no end and stoked his anger.

Frustrated in all his attempts to find it, he finally stood up to shake the folds of his dhoti, an ultimate move which generally yielded results. But he shook the folds so violently that he upset a tin containing white enamel paint and it fell right on the sacred photograph of the old man, emptying its thick, slimy contents on it.
Datta stood transfixed and stared at the disaster at his feet as if he had suddenly lost all faculty of movement. He could not bring himself even to avert his eyes from the horror which he seemed to be cruelly forced to view. Then his spectacles clouded with perspiration and helpfully screened his vision.

When at last he fully recovered his senses he set about rescuing the picture in such Desperate hurry that he made a worse mess of it. He rubbed the picture so hard with a cloth that he peeled off thin strips of filmy coating from its surface. Before he realized what he had done half the old man’s face and nearly all of his turban were gone.

Datta helplessly looked at the venerable elder transformed into thick black specks sticking to the enamel smeared on the rag in his hand.

He sat with both hands clutching his head; every nerve in his head throbbed as if it would tear itself apart if he did not hold it down.

What answer was he going to offer to the customer who had a fanatic devotion to the photograph he had just mutilated beyond recovery?

His imagination ran wild, suggesting nightmarish consequences to his own dear self and to the fragile inflammable shop.

He racked his brain for a long while till sheer exhaustion clamed his agitated nerves and made him accept the situation with a hopeless resignation. Meanwhile the plethora of gods, saints and sages gazed down at him from the walls with a transcendental smile and seemed to offer themselves to him to pray to. With a fervent appeal in his heart he stared at them.

In his state of mind it did not register for quite a while that a particular photograph of a person on the wall had held his attention rather more than it was
qualified to do. It was an ordinary portrait of a middle-aged man in a dark suit and striped tie, resting his right arm jauntily on a studio prop made to look like a fluted Roman pillar. Datta was amazed to see that he had a faint likeness to the late lamented old man. The more he gazed at the face the more convincing it appeared to him. But he dismissed the odd resemblance he saw as one of those tricks of a thoroughly fagged-out mind.

All the same, at the back of his mind an idea began to take shape; he saw the possibility of finding an acceptable substitute! He brought down the old wooden box in which he had kept all the photographs unclaimed over the years. As he rummaged in it, panicky cockroaches and spiders scurried helter-skelter all over the floor. Unmindful of them Datta anxiously searched for the brownish photographs of the old man’s vintage. Soon there was a pile before him; he was surprised he could pick up so many which qualified to take the old man’s place.

But he had to reject a lot of them. In most of the portraits the subjects sported a very conspicuous flower vase next to them, or over-dressed grandchildren sat on their laps and therefore had to be rejected.

Luckily, there was one with which Datta felt he could take a fair risk; the print had yellowed a bit noticeably but he calculated that the total effect when put in a dazzling gold frame would render it safe.

After a couple of hours concentrated work he sat back and proudly surveyed the old man’s double, looking resplendent in his gold frame. He was so pleased with his achievement that he forgot he was taking perhaps one of the greatest risks any frame-maker ever took! He even became bold enough to challenge the customer if his faking was discovered. ‘Look, my dear man,’ he would say, ‘I don’t know who has
been fooling you! That’s the picture you brought here for framing. Take it or throw it away!’

The days that followed were filled with suspense and anxiety. Datta feared that the customer would surprise him an unguarded moment making him bungle the entire, carefully-thought-out plot. But the man turned up promptly a couple of days later. At that moment Datta was bent over a piece of work and slightly stiffened as he heard the voice, shrill with expectation, ask, ‘is it ready?’

Datta’s heart began to race and to compose himself he let a whole minute pass without answering. Then he put aside the scissors in his hand with slow deliberation and reached out to take the neatly wrapped package in a corner.

‘Ah, it is ready!’ the customer exclaimed with childish delight, at the same time mumbling flattering tributes to Datta for his promptness and so on. He spread his arms widely with dramatic exuberance to receive the photograph as if it was actually a long-lost person he was greeting.

But Datta took his time removing the wrapper form the frame. The customer waited impatiently, filling in the time showering more praises on his worshipful master who was to adorn the wall of his home.

Datta finally revealed the glittering frame and held it towards him.

The customer seemed visibly struck by its grandeur and fell silent like one who had entered the inner sanctum of a temple. Datta held his breath and watched the man’s expression. With every second that passed he was losing his nerve and thought that in another moment he would betray the big hoax he had played.

Suddenly he saw the customer straighten, the reverential look and benevolent expression vanished from his face.
‘What have you done?’ he demanded, indignantly. For Datta the moment seemed familiar for he had already gone through it a thousand times night and day since he splashed the white paint on the original photograph.

Several times he had rehearsed his piece precisely for this occasion.

But before he could open his mouth the customer shouted with tremendous authority in his bearing, ‘Now, don’t deny it! Clearly remember asking for a cut mount with an oval shape. This is square. Look!’
APPENDIX 3

A POT OF TEA

Agatha Christie

The Author Agatha Christie, also known as Dame Mallowan, was born in Devon, England, on September 15, 1890. Without doubt, she remains one of the most popular writers in the English language, and in fact, UNESCO states that she is the most translated author in the world today.

She is famous for her mystery stories, where the crimes are unearthed by either of her two great creations - Hercule Poirot or Miss Jean Marple. She has written over eighty titles under this Genre but has also gone on to write plays and, in fact one of her plays, The Mousetrap, has been running successfully since 1952. Writing under the pseudonym Mary Westmacott, she wrote several very popular romantic novels.

She died on September 12, 1976.

A note on the Story

A pot of tea is a rather unusual, but simple story by the mistress of crime. Indeed this is a lightly written comic short story of a couple who have just about entered the world of crime-detection and set up their own firm. Desperate to get hold of clients they find an unusual method of hooking their first client and get to’ solve’ the strange case of missing girl. Who is this girl? How did the Detective Agency solve the problem for their client? Let us read on to find out.

MR AND MRS Beresford took possession of the offices of the International Detective Agency a few days later. They were on the second floor of a somewhat dilapidated building in Bloomsbury. In the small outer office. Albert relinquished the role of a Long Island butler, and took up that of office boy, a part which he played to
perfection. A paper bag of sweets, inky hands, and a tousled head was his conception of the character.

From the outer office, two doors led into inner offices. On one door was painted the legend ‘Clerks’. On the other ‘Private’. Behind the latter was a small comfortable room furnished with an immense business-like desk, a lot of artistically labelled files, all empty, and some solid leather-seated chairs. Behind the desk sat the pseudo Mr Blunt trying to look as though he had run a Detective Agency all his life. A telephone of course, stood at his elbow. Tuppence and he had rehearsed several good telephone effects, and Albert also had his instructions.

In the adjoining room was tuppence, a type writer, the necessary tables and chairs of an inferior type to those in the room of the great Chief, and a gas ring for making tea.

Nothing was wanting, in fact, save clients.

Tuppence, in the first ecstasies of intiation, had a few bright hopes.

‘It will be too marvellous’, she declared. ‘We will hunt down murderers, and discover the missing family jewels and find people who’ve disappeared and detect embezzlers.’

At this point Tommy felt it his duty to strike a more discouraging note.

‘Calm yourself, Tuppence and try to forget the cheap fiction you are in the habit of reading. Our Clientele --- if we have any clientele at all ---will consist solely of husbands who want their wives shadowed, and wives who want their husbands shadowed. Evidence for divorce is the sole prop of private inquiry agents.’

‘Ugh!’ said Tuppence wrinkling a fastidious nose, We shan’t touch divorce cases. We must raise the tone of our new profession.’
‘Ye-es,’ said Tommy doubtfully.

And now a week after installation they compared notes rather ruefully.

‘Three idiotic women, whose husbands go away for the weekends,’ sighed Tommy. Anyone come whilst I was out at lunch?’

‘A Fat old man with a flighty wife,’ sighed Tuppence sadly. ‘I’ve read in the papers for years that the divorce evil was growing, but somehow I never seemed to realize it until this last week. I’m sick and tired of saying, ”We don’t undertake divorce cases.”

We’ve put it in the advertisements now,’ Tommy reminded her. ’So it won’t be so bad.’

‘I’m sure we advertise in the most tempting way too,’ said Tuppence in a melancholy voice.’All the same, I’m not going to be beaten. If necessary, I shall commit a crime myself, and you will detect it.’

‘And what good would that do? Think of my feelings when I bid you a tender farewell at Bow street—or is it Vine street?’

‘You are thinking of bachelor days,’ said Tuppence pointedly.

‘The old Bailey, that is what I mean,’ said Tommy.

‘Well,’ said Tuppence,’ something has got to be done about it. Here we are bursting with talent and no chance of exercising it.’

‘I always like your cherry optimism, Tuppence. You seem to have no doubt whatever that you have talent to exercise.’

‘Of course,’ said Tuppence, opening her eyes very wide.

‘And yet you have no expert knowledge whatever.’