

theatre alibi

Teapot *The Stories*

by Daniel Jamieson

Digging up the Teapot

One fine day when the sun was shining so brightly that people walking outside laughed at each other because their hair shone like the fluff on dandelion clocks, a man looked out of his window and said, "Turnips!" he'd planted them a while back and today, he felt, was the perfect day to dig the first few up. "Turnips, lovely turnips!" In fact, so eager was he to dig them up and see how big they'd grown he didn't bother to get out of his pyjamas but put on his dressing gown and his gumboots and hurried into the garden.

He took out his radio, which he always played while he was digging. Overhead seagulls flew in circles high above, singing and screaming to each other. But the man heard neither the radio nor the seagulls. "Turnip soup or boiled turnips with lamb chops?" he wondered as he started to dig. He dug along the row of turnips, heaving them out of the ground and putting them in a pile one by one. One, two, three, four... "Oh! You beauty!" Each one seemed bigger and more perfect than the one before. "Mashed turnip with butter and salt and pepper and big juicy sausages!" But when he reached the fifth one he found it wouldn't come out of the ground. It seemed much bigger than the others, and much deeper in the ground. He spat on the palms of his hands, threw all his weight on the handle of his fork and heaved down as hard as he could. All of a sudden the earth gave, the handle of the fork shot down and the man fell on the ground. When he got to his feet he saw it wasn't a turnip he'd heaved out of the ground but a teapot. A dark blue teapot with a flower painted in gold on the side of it. Though cakes of earth still clung to its surface, he could see it was a lovely old thing, although the spout was slightly chipped.

But as he stood there holding the teapot, something even stranger started to happen. That teapot began to hum. He could feel it in his hands at first, then the hum got bigger and he could hear it coming out of the spout, less of a hum now, more of a chatter, like a thousand tiny birds in a nest. Maybe there was a nest of some sort in the teapot, he suddenly wondered. He pulled at the lid of the teapot. It was wedged in place with lumps of mud and it wouldn't budge until suddenly it popped off in one go. The sound got a good deal louder now it was free of the lid. It was a strange sound, a mixture of several things. There was definitely music, and something like the purring of a cat, but loudest of all was a noise like the chatter of a room full of tiny people, all speaking at once. He peeped into the teapot. Nothing. It was completely empty except for a bit of dust. Nervously, he held it to his ear like a seashell. The sound came to his ear as if carried to him from far, far away on an underground stream...



Waiting for the Baby to Arrive

Far away through the years another woman stood listening to a teapot, stood listening to that same dark blue teapot painted with a golden flower.

"Seagulls! I can definitely hear seagulls, Doctor Bradham, and some strange, tinny music."

"Really, Mrs Gray, I don't know how you can hear yourself think in here, let alone mysterious seagulls in teapots!" In the village hall a jumble sale was in full swing to raise money for the new church bells. Doctor Bradham had agreed to help by running a stall. Now he was starting to wish he hadn't. The noise of all this hard bargaining echoed so loudly round the hall it was starting to give him a headache.

"Doctor Bradham? Doctor Bradham!" shouted a woman over Mrs Gray's shoulder.

"Yes Mrs Handleford?"

"How much for this dog on wheels?"

"A shilling Mrs Handleford?"

"Daylight robbery, Doctor Bradham! His back's all worn!"

"Well then... sixpence?"

"Fair enough."

"Thank you."

"It was strange", said Mrs Gray to Doctor Bradham, still listening to the teapot, "I felt the sound through my hands when I picked up. Now I can hear it. Definitely seagulls!"

"I wouldn't worry Mrs Gray. All sorts of strange things happen to ladies when they're going to have a baby. Hearing things in teapots is probably just one of them".

They both looked at her tummy. It was very big indeed. Inside it was a baby just about ready to come into the world. "Any sign of the baby arriving yet?"

"Not yet."

"Well, I want to hear about it the moment there is, you hear, even if it's the middle of the night..."

"Doctor Bradham? Doctor Bradham!" shouted a woman over Mrs Gray's other shoulder.

"Yes Mrs Salter?"

"This Peter Rabbit book..."

"Erm... A shilling?"

"No, no, no Doctor Bradham, the spine's half off and some bad child's scribbled in it with a crayon."

"Oh dear. Well... thruppence then?"

"That's more like it."

"Thank you, Mrs Salter." Poor Doctor Bradham mopped his brow.

"Had enough already, Doctor Bradham?"

"This bartering business is rather tiresome, Mrs Gray. I'm dying for a cup of tea and there's still another hour to go. Do you want to buy your magic teapot?"

"We've a perfectly good one already at home. I'd better not... Oh!"

"What is it?"

"The baby just gave an enormous kick!"

"It must want you to buy that teapot!"

"Yes, I think it might! How much?"

"Erm... A shilling?"

On her way home Mrs Gray dropped into the post office to pick up her *Woman's Weekly*.

"Morning Mrs Gray."

"Morning Mrs Trout."

"Any sign of the baby yet?"

"No."

"Nice teapot!"

"A shilling at the jumble sale." She looked at it dreamily a moment.

"I see that Amy Johnson has finally made it to Australia", said Mrs Trout, pointing at the cover of *Woman's Weekly*.

"Imagine! Flying all that way in an aeroplane, and on your own!"

"Ten thousand miles, they say."

"She had to land twice in the desert and mend the wings with sticking plasters."

"My Lord! I hope she didn't cut her finger after that. She would've been up a gum-tree!"

"Bye for now Mrs Trout."

"Bye dear."

Now she sat at home in her comfy chair in the farmhouse kitchen. She had a nice bit of sponge cake on a plate beside her. She had her *Woman's Weekly* magazine on her lap. She poured her first cup of tea from her lovely new teapot and brought it to her lips to drink. But then she caught sight of that picture of Amy Johnson. Amy Johnson wore a flying helmet and a beaming smile. Amy Johnson stood by her own aeroplane. Amy Johnson had flown all the way to Australia from Croydon Airport on her own. Olivia imagined herself flying to Australia. She didn't have a flying helmet so she pulled on the tea cosy instead. She didn't have a plane, so she imagined she flew in her comfy chair. She could hear the engine sputter, then roar into life. She could feel a giddy swoop as she curled into the air and left the runway far below. Over the arm of the chair she could now see herds of zebra scattering before her on the African savannah, then flocks of parrots squawking and fluttering from branch to branch in the jungle top, then dolphins leaping in an endless ocean where the wind whipped white crests on every wave, as she flew further and further from Manor Farm in her imagination... Then Ted came in. Ted was her husband. He was a farmer and a fisherman. He spent half his life on the sea and half his life in the fields. He saw Olivia with the tea cosy on her head, and laughing to himself, came up beside her and said, "Alright, love?"

"Oh! You gave me a fright! I was just checking the tea cosy was... was warm enough."

"Any sign of the baby?"

"No."

"Nice teapot!" Ted picked up the teapot and looked at it.

"Only a shilling at the jumble sale."

"Fair price", nodded Ted.

"Do you want a cup of tea dear?"

"No thanks, just had one."

"Do you want a bit of cake?"

"Now you're talking!" Olivia got up laboriously and cut Ted a piece of cake.

"Don't you think I look a little like Amy Johnson?"

"Who?" said Ted. Olivia showed him the cover of her *Woman's Weekly* magazine.

"Her."

"Who's Amy Johnson?"

"Ted! She's just flown an aeroplane all the way to Australia on her own!"

"Oh. How's she getting back?"

"Go on!" She shooed him off, laughing, "You're dropping crumbs on the floor."

Ted said as he went out of the back door, "Young Findlay is coming to exercise Barley Baron." Barley Baron was Ted's horse. "Old Charlie Tremlett is coming to watch. I'll be saddling up in the stable." Then he went out the back door. The geese in the farmyard began to cackle. "Go on! Out the way!" shouted Ted at them.

"Those geese are a menace," Olivia said to herself.

She'd just sat herself down, put her feet up, taken her *Woman's Weekly* on her lap, and raised her cup of tea to her lips when there was a knock on the front door. Up she got slowly to open the door. It was Old Charlie Tremlett so she ushered him in. "Charlie."

"Mrs Gray. Any sign of the baby?"

"Not yet."

"I've come to watch the horse."

"Ted's saddling him up in the stable."

"Nice teapot." Charlie picked up the teapot and admired it.

"A shilling at the jumble sale."

"A shilling? Couldn't you knock 'em down?"

"I thought it was a bargain. Cup of tea?"

"No thanks. Just had one."

"Piece of cake?"

"Ooh, don't mind if I do Mrs Gray!" So Olivia cut him a piece of cake.

"Charlie?" Olivia held up the cover of her *Woman's Weekly* by her face.

"Mrs Gray?"

"Do you think I look a little like Amy Johnson?"

"No, Mrs Gray, no." Said Charlie matter-of-factly, munching his cake and dropping crumbs on the floor.

"Crumbs!" said Olivia crossly and sent Charlie out of the back door.

"Sorry Mrs Gray..." She shut the door. The geese cackled at Charlie. "Go on with you!" he shouted at them.

"Serves him right!", said Olivia to herself.

She sat down again and raised her tea to her lips when there was another knock on the door. Up she got again. It was young Findlay.

"Findlay."

"Mrs Gray. Any sign of the baby yet?"

theatre alibi Teapot Teacher's Notes

"Well yes, actually, it sent me a postcard from Dartmouth saying it would be along any day now. No Findlay. Not yet."

"I've come to exercise Barley Baron."

"Ted's already up at the stables."

"Nice teapot!" said Findlay picking up the teapot.

"Jumble sale. A shilling."

"Only a shilling? You'll have that for years, Mrs Gray."

"Cup of tea?"

"Just had one thanks."

"Cake?"

"If there's any spare." Olivia cut him a slice. He picked up her *Woman's Weekly* from the table and looked between the cover and her face. "Mrs Gray," he said shyly, "has anyone ever told you, you look just like Amy Johnson?"

"Go on, you charmer!" She laughed, giving him his cake. He went out of the back door. "Such a nice boy." Said Olivia to herself when she'd shut the door. The geese didn't cackle.

"Chuck-chuck!" said Findlay.

"Even the geese like young Findlay."

Down she sat and picked up her tea once more and put her *Woman's Weekly* on her lap. She looked at the picture of Amy Johnson and put a hand on her tummy. "Some of us get to fly to Australia, and some of us get to have a baby. I suppose it doesn't really matter, so long as you have an adventure of one kind or another." But when she finally brought her cup to her lips to take her first sip of tea from her new teapot, she stopped with a puzzled look on her face. She put her hands on her tummy and sat still a few moments. Then she nodded to herself and clambered out of her chair. She called out of the back door. "Ted?" The geese all gathered round and cackled at her. "No, you silly things, I've fed you once already today. Ted?"

"Yes?" he called from the stable door.

"Send Findlay for Doctor Bradham. He's at the jumble sale."

"Why?"

"The baby's coming."

"Are you sure?"

"I'm sure."

"Now?"

"No, next Wednesday. Yes, now."

"Run Findlay." Ted came in at the back door. "Are you alright my dear?"

"Yes."

"Let's get you upstairs."

A moment or two later, Old Charlie Tremlett came indoors. Judging that no-one would disturb him, he cut himself a large piece of cake and gobbled it up. He spied Olivia's undrunk cup of tea. He'd just raised it to his lips when Doctor Bradham let himself in the front door. Charlie put the teacup down with a clatter on its saucer. Doctor Bradham was out of breath.

"Doctor Bradham." Said Charlie Tremlett with a mouth still full of cake, spraying a fountain of crumbs in front of him.

"Charlie."

"Mrs Gray is upstairs."

"Rightyho."

"Best be off." Charlie Tremlett slipped away with crumbs on his chin.

Doctor Bradham was mopping his brow with his handkerchief and preparing himself to go upstairs when he noticed Olivia's cup of tea. He licked his lips thirstily. He looked guiltily at the stairs – he knew Olivia was waiting. Suddenly he snatched up the cup of tea and gulped it down in one big gulp. Then upstairs he went. So it was that Doctor Bradham had the first cup of tea from Olivia's new teapot.



An Unusual Friendship – Blinky & the Teapot

Olivia's baby was a little boy. They called him Jack. Round about the time baby Jack was born, the cat had a litter of kittens too.

Kittens take a while to open their eyes. After ten days all the kittens had opened their eyes and see how full the world was, all the kittens except one. This kitten was black and white with a white spot on its nose. This one kept its eyes tight shut as small pink clams.

One day Olivia Gray took up this kitten on the kitchen table and, pouring some cold tea from the teapot onto a rag, she carefully wiped the kitten's eyes to encourage them to open. And sure enough, in a moment it was blinking its eyes open for the first time and squinting in the brightness of the day. "Blinky! That's what I'll call you!" said Olivia, deciding to keep him when the other kittens were given away.

"Mew", said Blinky, by way of thanks. He was looking across the kitchen table when his eyes cleared. "What are you looking at?" laughed Olivia, for Blinky was certainly looking at something. Do you know, the first thing Blinky properly saw in his life was Olivia Gray's teapot. For that reason, Blinky believed from that day on that the teapot had given him the gift of sight. I suppose, in a way, it had.

As soon as he was big enough, one morning when Olivia was out feeding the pigs, Blinky jumped on the table and spoke to the teapot. "Thank you my dear Mr Teapot for opening my eyes to the world." The teapot sat modest and quiet, graciously accepting the thanks. "Without you I wouldn't have known the look of the dew on the green grass in the morning or the moon in the night sky." But the teapot was quiet and thoughtful, as if reminded of some sadness. Blinky noticed this and said, "Mr Teapot, I've been meaning to ask, why is it that you gave me the gift of looking at the world but that you yourself sit here all day long with nothing more interesting to look at than these four walls?" The teapot gazed at the drab curtains through its spout and was sunk in silent despair. "Oh, my poor Mr Teapot, I've understood. You stay here because you can't move. How terribly sad." To Blinky, the teapot seemed to brood a little less, that someone had, at least, recognised his situation.

theatre alibi Teapot Teacher's Notes

"I know! The answer is simple! As you gave me the gift of sight, I will give you the gift of all I see. Every evening I will come back here from my explorations and tell you exactly what I've seen. I won't stop, Mr Teapot, until we've seen it all!"

So, each day, Blinky went out and looked at the world and saw all sorts of things that nobody else saw.

He looked in the farmyard and saw young Findlay sitting on the step with a mug of tea, letting the geese nuzzle his hair.

He looked in Doctor Bradham's kitchen window and saw Doctor Bradham on his hands and knees feeding crumbs to the mice.

He looked in Doctor Bradham's orchard and saw Charlie Tremlett stealing Doctor Bradham's apples.

He looked in the oak wood and saw Olivia taking the shortcut home, get hit on the head by an acorn and plant it in the ground.

He looked in the nursery and saw a dragonfly sail straight in the window and land right on baby Jack's nose.

He looked on the beach and saw Ted mending his nets, singing Al Johnson all out of tune at the top of his voice, with a choir of big fat seagulls singing along around him.

And each evening, after everyone else had gone to bed, Blinky jumped on the kitchen table, curled around the teapot and purred to it everything he'd seen. The teapot thanked Blinky with its wordless warmth.

One night with a full moon shining on them both through the kitchen window, Blinky said to the teapot, "Well Mr Teapot, my old friend, I've looked high and low and I think I can safely say that you and I have seen everything round here that is worth seeing." But the teapot was suddenly a little thoughtful and stared out of the window through its spout at the moon. "What's the matter?" said Blinky, following its gaze. "Is there something you think we haven't seen? You can see the moon from where you sit." But then suddenly Blinky understood what the teapot was driving at. "The top of the moon. The top of the moon that nobody every sees. You want to know what the top of the moon looks like. Right then. For you, Mr Teapot my friend, I shall take a look at the top of the moon!"

But Blinky was putting on a brave face for the teapot. He hadn't the faintest idea how he could get to see the top of the moon, but he did know it would involve getting very high indeed – higher than the moon itself. And the only thing in the world that Blinky was truly scared of was heights. But for the teapot Blinky would do anything.

All the next day Blinky sat curled on a chair by the fire thinking how to see the top of the moon. He was watching the smoke climb up the chimney when an idea suddenly came to him. "Of course! Smoke isn't scared to climb right up in the air. And smoke is just smoke. I'm sure it can see the top of the moon from up there. Why don't I just follow the smoke?!"

When the house was quiet, the fire had turned to ashes and the moon had risen, Blinky swallowed his fear and started to climb up the inside of the chimney. The chimney was still hot, choked with soot and dark as a cave of black velvet deep underground, but up above Blinky could see the moon calling him on like a saucer of milk in the sky. Up and up he climbed until, at last, his head poked out of the chimney pot right on top of the chimney. Down across the thatch of the roof he could see Barley Baron, Ted's horse, drowsing standing up in the home pasture with the moon shining on his glossy coat. But when Blinky looked up, he saw he was still beneath the moon. And now his paws began to lose their grip on the inside of the chimney pot. "M-I-A-O-O-O-o-o-o-o...!", went Blinky as he bounced all the way back down the inside of the chimney and landed with a *plumph* in the still-hot ashes of the fire. "MIAOW!" he screeched as he leapt out of the fireplace with his coat all smoking.

"What on earth is going on?" said Olivia coming down the stairs in her dressing gown. "What is it dear?" called Ted from upstairs. Little Jack had woken up and started to cry in his cot. Olivia turned on the light and saw Blinky lying dazed on the hearthrug. "My goodness! There's a strange black cat come down the chimney. Puss? Puss?" Blinky was so covered with soot she didn't even recognise him until she saw the white spot on his nose. "Blinky!" Poor Blinky. He was in so much trouble. Olivia scrubbed him there and then in the old tin bath full of cold water. It was past midnight by the time she grumbled up to bed and Blinky was left alone with the teapot once more. The moon had gone behind the clouds. Blinky curled around the teapot. "Just a minor setback, Mr Teapot, I shall soon be telling you about the top of the moon." The teapot tactfully said nothing.

All the next day Blinky wandered in the high oak wood on the hill over the house thinking how to see the top of the moon. He was quite lost in thought, watching the leaves scatter in the wind when an acorn hit him on the head. He looked up to see where the acorn had come from. The treetops were bowing in the west wind. He could just see, way up there, all the tiny acorns clinging to the branches. "That's it! Acorns aren't scared to grow in the treetops. And acorns are just acorns! I'm sure they can see the moon from way up there. Why don't I just climb up there with the acorns?"

So, that night, when the house was quiet and the moon had risen, Blinky went up to the high oak wood. The wind rushed in the treetops and swung them to and fro. Blinky swallowed his fear and started to claw his way up the biggest oak tree of all. Up and up he skittered, clinging to the rough bark for dear life. The higher he went the more the tree swayed and groaned, and the wind whipped at his fur, but up above the moon beckoned, so Blinky climbed on until he clung to the topmost branches of the tree, where the acorns clung.

Down below, the village spread behind the farmhouse, and smoke rose from each chimney. But when Blinky looked up, he was still beneath the moon. He began to climb down but when he got half way the moon went behind a cloud, the wind blew up and rain began to lash against the oak tree. Blinky was so cold and scared he couldn't move another inch and clung that way until morning came. When young Findlay came whistling through the oak wood to the farm at seven, he heard a wailing overhead. "Hello? What's that? Blinky! What are you doing up there, you daft cat?" In an instant he was up the tree and had fetched Blinky down and carried him home in his coat. He was set by the fire with a saucer of hot milk. "He was up the chimney yesterday. I think he's gone a bit screwy", said Olivia to Findlay. Later, when she'd gone out into the village, Blinky jumped up to the teapot. "Not much longer, Mr Teapot, tonight we shall know what's on top of the moon." A puff of reassuring steam rose from the teapot's spout.

In the afternoon, when Blinky had taken a nap and recovered his strength, he wandered down to the beach, to think how he might see the top of the moon. There was Ted setting off in his boat fishing. Blinky watched the big, fat gulls stretch their necks and scream at one another, then fly off over the sea. "That's it! Gulls aren't afraid to fly and gulls are just stupid fat gulls. I'm sure they can see the top of the moon from up there. All I need to do is fly up with the gulls!"

So, that night, when the house was quiet and the moon had risen, Blinky went down to the beach and looked among the boats for gulls. Soon he spotted a great, black-backed gull roosting in the bow of a boat called Lana Louise. Blinky swallowed his fear and crept up on the huge, sleeping gull. When he was right behind it he paused, crouched and leapt on its back. "CREEEE!" it screamed with terror, and spreading its wide, black-backed wings it flew into the air with Blinky clinging to its back. Up and up it flew out over the sea. Every time Blinky miaowed in its ear it screamed and flew higher. Down below, the sea glimmered in the moonlight like a beaten sheet of dirty silver. Across it, Blinky could see a solitary fishing boat heading home late. It looked like a little shoe on the floor of a vast, empty room. A faint wisp of Al Jolson rose up from it on the breeze.

But when Blinky looked up, he was STILL beneath the moon. And yet he felt so close, he felt he could almost reach out and touch it. "For the sake of my friend, Mr Teapot, I must take this chance. And after all, to live under the moon and not try to look beyond isn't much of a life for a cat." And putting fear beneath him, he leapt at the moon.

At that moment on the farmhouse kitchen table far, far below the teapot began first to hum, then to ring, then positively to sing out with a delightful music, because from where the teapot sat you could just glimpse against the dark sky a darker little shape sail right over the moon.

Ted was gratefully steering his boat for the lights of home when he chanced to look up into the night sky. It was full of stars tonight and the face of the moon was unusually bright and clear. He was just about to look once more along the

sea road home when a tiny shape fell across the moon in the sky. He knew from the shape it was no bird. He followed it down the night sky as it wheeled and turned through the stars. He turned off the boat's engine and drifted while he watched. As it came closer to the sea he thought he could hear a sound... no, surely not... like the singing of a cat. It landed with a soft *Ploosh* in the sea not two hundred yards from his boat. To his amazement, when he fished it out of the water he discovered that it was a cat. "Blinky? What in the world are you doing flying around out here?"

But poor Blinky was limp as a damp tea towel. Ted wrapped him an old woolly jumper and headed straight for shore. When he'd safely pulled his boat ashore he took Blinky straight to the farm and told Olivia the strange story of how he'd found Blinky. Poor Blinky. He was breathing but that was about it. Olivia put him by the fire in an old cardboard box wrapped in a blanket, but he wouldn't stir. In fact, for three days and three nights he lay still. Young Findlay came and asked after him, so did Doctor Bradham, even Charlie Tremlett. Each night the teapot grew cold on the kitchen table without Blinky to curl round it. But still he lay with his eyes shut tight as small pink clams. On the third day, in desperation, Olivia took Blinky up on the kitchen table, poured some cold tea from the teapot onto a rag and carefully wiped his eyes. Suddenly then, very slowly Blinky stirred, stretched his legs, yawned as wide as only cats can and groggily opened his eyes. The first thing he saw sat in front of him on the kitchen table was the teapot! It took a while, but the first night he was strong and able, when the house was quiet and the moon had risen, Blinky jumped on the table, curled round his old friend and began to purr to the teapot exactly how it looked on top of the moon. And the teapot quietly hummed with pleasure to hear.



How the Teapot got its Chip

One day the spout of the teapot got chipped. Not so important, you might say, but a chip on the spout of a teapot changes it for good. Instead of pouring tea nice and straight into a teacup, once the spout is chipped the tea might pour anywhere: onto the saucer; onto the table; onto your lap – everywhere it seems but into the teacup. So, you see, the chipping of a teapot spout is important – it changes the course of tea forever.

Here's how it happened.

Early one morning Young Findlay saddled up Barley Baron and rode him through the farmyard. Barley Baron was Ted's racehorse and it was Findlay's job to give him a good run along the sands every morning to keep him tip-top fit. Now, Barley Baron was a big, strong horse but a bit nervous, a bit highly strung, as they say. If anything put the wind up him it was birds, any birds big or small, flapping about in front of him. That morning there was a big, shiny-black crow pecking at potato peel on top of the dung heap in the farmyard. "Cawwww", it said defiantly before flapping past Barley Baron, over the gate and off above the home pasture.

"Neighhhhh!" Barley Baron backed and stamped his front hooves.
"Wo boy, wo-o-o-o!" Findlay had a job to calm him down before they could set off down the lane to the beach. Clip-clop, clip-clop.

Very picturesque, but what's that got to do with the teapot, you ask. All will be revealed, I tell you. All will be revealed.

Next out in the farmyard that chilly morning was Ted with his breeches tucked in his gumboots and his braces over his vest. He shivered over to the woodpile, yawning a snatch of Al Jolson as he went, took up his axe and started to cut kindling for the fire. He'd just split a few logs when he stopped to listen to a car come up the lane. It pulled up at the farmyard gate and Doctor Bradham shouted from its window, "Got a minute Ted?" Ted laid down his axe on one end of a rotten old table that's stood in the farmyard for donkey's years and went over to the gate. "Old Mrs Trout's been taken ill in the night. Can you lend me a hand and get her from her bed to the car?"
"Certainly can." Said Ted and climbed in Doctor Bradham's car. Then they were off up the lane to Mrs Trout's.

A very good deed, I hear you say, but is it connected to the teapot? Oh yes, it certainly is, I tell you. It certainly is.

The next person on the scene was old Charlie Tremlett. He'd been catching rabbits in the fields with his ferret, Horatio, since dawn. Now he cut through the farm on his way home for breakfast. Seeing there was nobody about, he suddenly thought how much he'd like a big, fat, fried goose egg for breakfast. Looking all around, he crept to the door of the shed where the geese slept. As guilty as a dog in a butcher's, he laid his hand on the latch and prepared to go in and steal a goose egg. Little did he know, the geese had been waiting impatiently since dawn to get out into the farmyard and start the day's cackling, nibbling and pecking passers by. When Charlie opened the door, they all came out like twelve white cannon balls out of one gun and chased him right to the farmyard gate, which Charlie vaulted over with an agility unusual in a man of his age.

Yes, yes, mildly amusing maybe, but the teapot, the teapot, you say. I'm coming to that, I tell you, I'm coming to that.

Olivia came down yawning into the farmhouse kitchen with young Jack in her arms, who in turn carried Blooper in his arms, a teddy bear not much smaller than he was. She sat the child on a chair with a piece of bread and butter to chew, then took the teapot from where Blinky curled round it, and carried it out the backdoor to the dung-heap in the farmyard to empty out the old tea leaves.

Blinky yawned as wide as only cats can, stretched, jumped off the table to follow his beloved teapot into the yard and get a sniff of the morning air too.

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Jack, two years old and well-able to toddle, slipped off his chair and followed his beloved Blinky out into the farmyard, holding up his bread and butter in one hand and Blooper dragging from the other.

When Olivia went out, she was puzzled to find the geese out of their shed and saw the door swinging open. Afraid that a fox might have got in to them in the night, she went to investigate. On her way she put the teapot on the other end of the rotten old table where Ted's axe lay. Inside the goose shed, once she saw nothing was wrong, Olivia was tempted to gather up the night's eggs, such a pleasure she'd always found hunting for them.

Blinky crossed the farmyard and sat on an upturned log to give his face its morning wash.

Little Jack tottered down the back door step dragging Blooper, bump, bump down behind him. "Blink-blink-blink..." he said, pointing his bread and butter at the cat. Little Jack wasn't normally allowed in the farmyard on his own.

Unfortunately all the geese heard his little blink-blink-blink and turned toward him all at once. Then all their greedy eyes caught sight of his tasty piece of bread and butter all at once, and all at once they waddled towards Jack as fast as their fat bottoms would allow them, honking and squonking louder and louder.

Poor boy. His eyes widened, his face went pale, his little feet went up and down, his bottom lip began to quiver and a funny sound came out of his mouth like he'd never made before, a sort of "Weeeee," like a kettle whistle, and he held the bread and butter over his head where all the geese pecked at it not caring if they pecked his little hand at the same time.

"What on earth is that racket...?" said Olivia appearing at the goose shed door with an apron full of big fat goose eggs. "Oh my!" she screamed when she saw little Jack in the middle of all the geese and dropped all the eggs on the toes of her boots.

YES, YES, YES you cry, all very exciting I'm sure, but how does the teapot get a chipped spout? Now you'll see, you impatient old grump, I say, now you'll see.

Because, clip-clop, clip clop came Barley Baron up the lane at precisely that moment, all sweating and panting from his gallop along the sands. Round the corner into the farmyard he came, straight into the gaggle of honking geese. Barley Baron was a big strong horse but you may recall, if anything put the wind up him it was a bird flapping in front of him. Finding himself in front of twelve noisy geese all of a sudden was more than he could bear. His eyes nearly popped out, his nostrils flared, his lips curled, he let out a terrific squeal and reared into the air.

Poor young Findlay was thrown up and back and off the horse and flew through the air, crashing down on his back at last right in the middle of that

rotten old table. Remember the teapot on one end and the axe on the other? Well, up they both flew catapulted off the breaking table high in the air, spinning and twisting, the golden flower on the teapot and the razor sharp blade of the axe glinting in the morning sun. Findlay watched them, Blinky watched them, Olivia watched them as they rose and fell straight in the middle of the gaggle of geese.

“AIAAAAGH!” screamed Olivia, rushing forward, then “AIAAGH!” again as she saw a little body holding the teapot in its arms, its head sliced clean off by the axe.

“WAAAA!” cried Jack standing by, frightened to hear his mummy scream. “Oh my baby.” Said Olivia, sweeping the child in her arms with relief for now she saw, the little body on the ground clutching the teapot with its head chopped off was poor Blooper the Teddy Bear.

Miraculously no-one was hurt. They all gathered round the kitchen table for a strong cup of tea. Even the teapot seemed unscathed thanks to Blooper. Olivia put five spoons of tea in the teapot and filled it with boiling water. “Never mind dear,” Olivia consoled Jack, “Mummy sew Blooper’s head on good as new.”

But when Olivia picked up the teapot and started to pour the first cup of tea, tea went everywhere: all over the saucer; the table; her lap – anywhere but in the cup. It was then that Ted came in through the door. “What?” he said, looking round at their pale faces. “You all look like you’ve been to Hell and back!”

“It seems we’ve chipped the spout of the teapot Ted.” Said Findlay.

Then one by one they all started to laugh!



The Recipe for Success

Olivia bought a new teapot. A brown one. It wasn’t nearly so nice as her old one but at least it poured straight. She didn’t throw away her old teapot though. She put it on the windowsill and every time she cut out a recipe, or a picture, or found anything that interested her, she put it in the teapot. Blinky still curled round this teapot rather than the new one, even though it wasn’t warm anymore. “There’s loyalty for you!” thought Olivia every time she saw the two of them together.

Jack, nine years old now, was learning to play the piano. Soon was his first exam. He practised and practised, and then practised some more. He stayed up late to practise and he got up early to practise. One night, as Olivia was going to bed late she looked in on Jack and he was even practising in his sleep! – His arms were sticking out straight from under the covers and his fingers were playing the notes in the air.

The day before the exam, Jack played his piano piece for his teacher, Monsieur Derain. When he had finished there was a long pause. Monsieur Derain stopped his metronome, which wagged and ticked on top of the piano. "Will I pass, Monsieur Derain?" said Jack nervously. "I don't know my child, I don't know. You 'ave worked very 'ard but sometimes it is not enough. Sometimes there is something missing, some special ingredient... We don't all 'ave the recipe for success."

Jack went home on the bus. Tears trickled down his face at the bus stop, which made his glasses steam up. Luckily nobody noticed, but when he got on, the bus driver said in a very loud voice, "Alright son? Looks like you need some windscreen wipers there!" which made everyone turn and look at Jack. He blushed purple and sat at the back of the bus, staring hard out of the window to avoid anyone seeing his face. The bus drove along the sea-road but Jack could hardly see the waves, which normally cheered him up and reminded him of happy summer days on the beach. This afternoon an autumn fog swirled along the coast, the bus windows were steamed up and so were his glasses. Everything looked unclear to Jack. How could he work so hard and not have the recipe for success?

When Jack got through the back door, old Mrs Trout was sat at the kitchen table enjoying a cup of tea and a piece of cake with Olivia, Jack's mother.

"How did the piano lesson go, dear?"

"Alright."

"Goodness!" said Mrs Trout, "It doesn't look like it. You've got a face as sorry as a smacked bottom!"

"Take no notice dear." Said Olivia kindly and gave Jack a piece of cake. He sat by the fire and ate it glumly.

"I know it's here somewhere... Here!" Olivia had her old teapot on the table and all the recipes were spread out around it. "'Quince Marmalade – to every pound of quince put three quarters of a pound of sugar.'"

"That's right! I just couldn't remember if it was three quarters of quince or three quarters of sugar. Mmmm. Delicious Mrs Gray!" said Mrs Trout munching on a big mouthful of cake. "You're such a good cook. What's your recipe for success?"

"My recipe for success? Ah, now Mrs Trout, that's a secret recipe! I keep it well hidden in my old teapot here!" They laughed together and Olivia put all her recipes back in the teapot. Then she put the teapot back on the windowsill where the cat jumped up and curled round it.

"Whatever's the matter now, child?", said Mrs Trout to Jack. "You look like you've seen a ghost." Jack was sat bolt upright, staring at the old teapot on the windowsill and didn't even hear Mrs Trout. On either arm of the armchair his fingers played his exam piano piece.

"Piano exam tomorrow...", whispered Olivia, by way of explanation for her son's strange behaviour.

"Oh... of course! Well, the best of British luck Jack", said Mrs Trout standing to leave, but Jack was still staring at the teapot. "I'll see you at the Women's Institute Mrs Gray", she whispered theatrically, tip-toed to the door and let herself out.

"That's where it is!", Jack was thinking, "The recipe for success is in that teapot."

The clock had just chimed twelve when Jack crept down into the kitchen in his dressing gown and slippers. It was dark – he hadn't turned on a light so as not to wake another soul. Carefully he closed the door at the bottom of the stairs. The fog had lifted outside and the night had turned frosty. Crisp blue moonlight fell in at the window and lit up the old teapot on the windowsill with the dark shape of the cat curled round it. When Jack lifted up the teapot, Blinky miaowed with surprise. "Shhh!" whispered Jack and stroked him 'til he purred. He jumped down, sat on the hearthrug and started to wash his face. Jack put the teapot on the table and lit a candle – he didn't want to risk putting on the electric light in case it shone under the door.

Delicately, he lifted the teapot lid and emptied out everything inside onto the kitchen table in the circle of candlelight. There were all sorts of bits and pieces, a picture of Blinky, a lock of Jack's hair as a baby, a picture of Amy Johnson, a little white paper bag of some sweet spice... all sorts of things as well as the recipes. The recipes were mostly cut from magazines, were yellowing, carefully folded and curled to fit the shape of the inside of the teapot. He unfolded them and flattened them one by one in front of him, squinting at them through his glasses. "'Ginger cake... champagne from rhubarb... how to salt nuts... snow mints... hot ham sandwiches... success... success!" He swallowed with nervousness and held the yellow, curling piece of paper up to the candlelight. In his hands was the recipe for success and he intended to follow it tonight!

He put all the other bits and pieces back in the teapot then began to read the recipe. "'The recipe for Success. The recipe for success is simple to follow, and yet make sure no ingredient is missing or the recipe will surely fail. First make sure the oven is good and hot...'" He opened the Rayburn door – the fire had burnt down low inside so he poked it and put on more coal lump by lump so as not to make any noise. The fire began to flicker. He shut the door and it roared up inside the stove. He returned to reading the recipe by the candlelight. "'Get a large mixing bowl...'" He found one out of the cupboard, "'...and into it put a good measure of hard work, true grit and bitter determination.'" Hard work, true grit and bitter determination? Surely his mother didn't keep unusual ingredients like that in her cupboard? But if she had the recipe for success, his mother must have the ingredients. So, Jack took the candle to the cupboard and pulled out all the tins and pots and bags one by one; bicarbonate of soda, candied peel, self-raising flour, vanilla essence, cochineal, muscovado sugar... he started to feel quite cross with his mother – all these strange little odds and ends of things she kept, some of them years old by the look of them, and probably way past their best.

But Jack took it all back because there, right at the back of the cupboard, hidden he felt sure from the prying eyes of the likes of Mrs Trout, was a brown paper bag labelled in his mother's writing, "HARD WORK". Also, a tin labelled "TRUE GRIT" and a bottle with "BITTER DETERMINATION" written on. He put them on the table by the mixing bowl and stacked all the other ingredients

back in the cupboard as best he could before returning to the recipe. ““A good measure?” How much is a good measure?” He rummaged in the bag of hard work first, pulled out a lump and held it up to the light – it looked something between a lump of brown sugar and a piece of coal. He bit it. His teeth barely dented the lump and it left a taste on his tongue like sawdust. “Hard work certainly is hard!” He emptied the bag into the mixing bowl where it made a clatter. Luckily, nobody in the house seemed disturbed.

Next, he opened the tin of true grit, dipped in a finger and tasted it gingerly, spitting it out pretty quick. It crunched between his teeth just like the sand in a sandwich eaten at the beach on a windy day. “True grit certainly is gritty.” He emptied the whole tin into the bowl with a dry *pschoot*. A cloud of dust rose up and Jack had to fight to stop himself coughing. He drank a glass of water and returned to the recipe.

Now he came to the little bottle of bitter determination. He held it up to the candlelight. It was dark green in colour. The lid was stiff as if it hadn't been opened for a long time. He got a tea towel and twisted the lid with all his might 'til it came off at last. He sniffed the bitter determination – it smelt like ink. Nervously he took a little swig then spat it out. It tasted like ink. “Bitter determination certainly is bitter.” His tongue was all green. He poured the whole bottle into the mixing bowl.

““Add a little milk and stir the mixture to a smooth paste.” Stir until a smooth paste?” He lifted up a spoonful of the mixture and dropped it back in the bowl with a thud. “Surely it's impossible.” But that's what the recipe for success said, so he had to follow it. He poured in a little milk from the milk jug, rolled up his sleeves and stirred like mad. The hard work, true grit and bitter determination squelched and crunched around the bowl without showing any sign of mixing to a smooth paste for half an hour. Jack's arm began to ache so much he had to stir with the other hand, but then that arm began to ache too so he swapped back again. He tried stirring very fast, then very slow and hard, trying to squash the lumps of hard work with the back of the spoon. At last, when he thought he would go mad, the mixture turned into a smooth, green paste.

““Pour the mixture into a cake tin and cook for half an hour in a hot oven.”” So he found out a round cake tin, poured in the mixture and carefully put it in the hottest part of the oven. Olivia kept a clockwork timer on a shelf with her cookery books. But when Jack took it down and set it for half an hour it began to tick so loudly he was afraid it would wake everyone in the house. He searched for something to muffle it. The first thing that came to hand was a tea cosy, which he stuffed the timer inside. Now he couldn't hear the timer at all and began to fear that it had stopped. Yet when he opened the mouth of the tea cosy it was still ticking louder than ever. The only way he could hear it but not let its loud ticking fill the house was to put the tea cosy on his head.

The timer tick-tocked so loud in the tea cosy, soon it felt to Jack like the noise was right inside his head. Then all his worries began to march round and round inside his head in time to the tick-tock of the timer, like it was Monsieur Derain's metronome. His piano scales ran up and down, higher and higher,

over and over. He heard Monsieur Derain's voice saying, "We don't all have the recipe for success..." then Mrs Trout's saying, "You've got a face as sorry as a smacked bottom." And then the words of the recipe for success itself, "Make sure nothing's missing or it will surely fail." Louder and louder it all went round in his head until the bell rang and drowned it all.

Jack snatched the tea cosy from his head with relief and turned off the timer inside it. He took up the oven gloves from the rail and got the cake tin out of the oven. The mixture had risen into a plump, golden cake that looked and smelt delicious. "I've done it! I've followed the recipe for success...! But now he read the last part of the recipe. "Mix a tablespoon of pure enjoyment with a little water and ice the cake with it. When the icing has set, slice and enjoy the taste of success." Pure enjoyment? He hadn't seen any in the cupboard. But surely his mother kept some in the house, if she had the recipe for success? Jack searched high and low, but without success. He sat at the kitchen table in front of the recipe. The words swam in front of his eyes once more – "The recipe for success is easy to follow and yet make sure no ingredient is missing or it will surely fail..." Without pure enjoyment the recipe for success was bound to fail, and so he would fail his piano exam. He began to cry and his glasses steamed up once more.

It was then that he heard the door to the stairs quietly close in the gloom. He hadn't heard it open, but open it must have. Who was there? His glasses were so steamed up he couldn't see through them. Quickly he polished them on his dressing gown and returned them to his nose. There stood his mother. Jack looked round and saw all the mess he had made, and his mother's teapot with all the secret recipes spread all around it. "I'm sorry, I'm sorry!", said poor Jack, his voice all choked with tears. "I know I shouldn't have... but Monsieur Derain said I didn't have the recipe for success and when you said it was in the teapot... I thought if I followed it... because the exam's tomorrow... but it won't work 'cause I can't find any pure enjoyment..."

"Shhh. There, there." Said Olivia and hugged her son but he was inconsolable, so Olivia went to the teapot, rummaged inside, pulled out the little, white paper bag and held it up in front of Jack's face. At last he stopped his sobbing and read from the packet, "PURE ENJOYMENT".

"I keep it in the teapot so I can find it nice and easily. It's my special ingredient. I put a little bit in most things I make, you see. Here, taste a bit." She held the open bag up to Jack. He looked at it doubtfully – all the other strange ingredients he'd tasted tonight were horrible. He dipped a finger in the bag. It came out covered in fine, white powder. He looked at it. "Go on!" said Olivia. So Jack put the end of his finger in his mouth and tasted it.

It tasted something like sherbet, something like icing sugar, something like lemon meringue and yet it tasted different to anything he'd ever tasted before. It was delicious. And somehow, a little taste of pure enjoyment made everything seem alright. He looked at all the things around him in the kitchen in the moonlight, in the candlelight - the kitchen table, the cat, the old blue teapot, his mother – everything he'd seen a thousand times before and yet

now everything he saw made him happy. "Go to bed, dear. Get some sleep. You've got a big day tomorrow. I'll ice your cake for you. Don't you worry." Olivia kissed Jack goodnight and he went to bed, where he fell more fast asleep than he had for weeks.

At breakfast, Jack's mother didn't mention a thing about the night before. Nor was there any sign of a cake. Jack looked at the teapot on the windowsill and it didn't look like it had moved a bit. He began to think maybe he'd dreamt it all. And then it was time to leave for school and his music exam. "Mum...?" said Jack hesitantly as Olivia wrapped his school scarf tightly round his neck for him.

"Very good luck in your music exam, dear. You know your father and I don't give two hoots whether you pass or not. We still love you. You're father hasn't got a musical bone in his body and I still love him!"

"Thanks, Mum."

"By the way dear, there's a nice piece of cake in your lunch box for you", said Olivia and gave Jack a big wink.

Now Jack was sat outside the music room which had a big sign on the door which said, "MUSIC EXAM – QUIET PLEASE" His stomach was full of butterflies – he hadn't felt hungry all day, and hadn't even looked in his lunch box. But suddenly he remembered the cake and felt a pang of hunger. He opened his lunch box. The cake was golden sponge and the icing was a beautiful white with a hint of lemon yellow. He bit into it and it was, quite simply... "Mmmm!" – delicious!

"Jack Gray?" said Monsieur Derain, sticking his head round the door. "The examiner will see you now." Jack put the rest of the cake away, licked the icing off his fingers and went inside. Monsieur Derain and the examiner sat behind a table. The piano stood open and waiting. He put his music on the music stand and looked at the notes. He had played that piece of music hundreds of times before, all badly, he now realised. He looked at his fingers. All at once he realised how beautiful the music really was and his fingers tingled with wanting to play it as he'd never played it before.

Jack played his piano piece. And as he played, for no apparent reason, the picture of his mother's old teapot floated into his mind on a wave of music. At that very moment back in the farmhouse kitchen, Jack's mother was holding the teapot in both hands as she placed it back on the windowsill. Suddenly she felt it hum very faintly through the palms of her hands, as it had done years ago, the day Jack was born. Gently she lifted the lid and held the teapot to her ear. Very distantly, as if the sound was carried to her on an underground stream, she could hear music. At first she didn't recognise it, then she realised it was Jack's piano study. She smiled and hummed the music to herself as she gazed out of the window.

At the end there was a long pause, then the examiner said, "Young man, you played that absolutely beautifully. Tell me, what is the secret of your success?" Jack turned on the piano stool and looked at the examiner. Suddenly a smile lit up his face like the sun coming out from behind a cloud and he said, quite simply, "Enjoyment, Sir. Pure Enjoyment".

Then the War Came

Then the war came and everything changed.

One afternoon Jack was walking down the cliff path to fetch his father home for tea from painting his fishing boat. It was a slightly foggy afternoon about five o'clock, just beginning to get dark and he was all wrapped up against the cold. Suddenly something made him stop and look out to sea. He could just hear, far out in the fog, the sound of aeroplanes coming. Louder and louder the sound grew. It was clear the planes were coming straight towards Jack but because of the fog he couldn't see them until right the last moment. In an instant they burst out of the fog, right down low over the sea, right in front of him. They must've made a mistake in the fog because they were too low and were trying desperately to climb up to avoid the cliffs. One of the planes, the middle one, came over so low, Jack could see the pilot's face in the cockpit as the plane roared overhead.

A while later, signs went up all around the village. "What does it mean?" Jack asked his mother as they stood staring at one of the notices pinned to a telegraph pole.

"It means we have to leave the farm for a while, because of the war."

"Why?"

"Because the army need to use the village and the beach for practice."

"Practice for what?"

"Fighting the war, I suppose."

"Where will we go?"

"I don't know dear. Maybe your Uncle Richard's farm, if they'll have us."

It all happened in such a rush after that. Everyone had to pack up and leave the village within a few weeks. Doctor Bradham filled his car with his books and drove off one day with old Mrs Trout squeezed in the front seat. Young Findlay rode Barley Baron away to Uncle Richard's farm. The geese went to market and were all sold. The farmyard seemed very quiet without them.

Jack's family were almost the last to leave. How strange and quiet the village seemed that last day. Everything was packed in boxes and carried out of the farmhouse 'til it was quite empty and the big lorry parked in the farmyard was completely full. So full, there wasn't room for another thing, it seemed. But all day, nobody could find Blinky the cat. Jack had looked all around the farm for him but he wasn't to be seen anywhere. And now, Olivia and Ted were climbing into the lorry and it was time to leave. "Come on Jack," said Olivia, "Blinky's a farm cat – he can look after himself. There'll always be plenty of mice for him to eat. He can look after the place for us 'til we come back."
"I'll just have one more look."

Jack ran round the outside of the house, looking in the farmyard and in the vegetable garden. He didn't find Blinky but he did find old Charlie Tremlett digging up their turnips, bold as brass, and putting them in his knapsack.

"Hello young Jack, thought you'd all gone", he said guiltily.

"Not yet."

"No point wasting good turnips!"

"I suppose. You haven't seen Blinky, have you?"

"Can't say I have." Jack started to leave.

"No need to mention a few turnips to anyone."

"No."

"You'll go far son, I can tell."

Jack ran into the farmhouse and went from one empty room to another. How it echoed with nothing in it! He was just about to give up when he came back into the kitchen and there was Blinky sat on the windowsill licking his paws.

"Miaow?" he said, as normal as anything.

"Blinky!" He looked at Jack, then, as if to show him, he walked forward and nuzzled the old, blue teapot. "The teapot!" How had everybody forgotten it? It had sat there so long, somehow everyone had overlooked it. Now it sat alone in the empty farmhouse with only its old friend the cat for company.

Holding the teapot in his hands, Jack ran out to the lorry and held it up to his mother. The engine had already started. "Leave it!" ,shouted his mother from the window. "There's no room. We'll find it when we come back." At that moment Jack caught sight of Charlie Tremlett going out of the farmyard over the fields, his knapsack bulging with turnips.

"But someone might steal it!"

"Hide it then. But be quick. We have to leave!"

Jack ran back into the farmyard. Where could he hide the teapot? He could think of nowhere that felt safe enough. Then he remembered Charlie Tremlett digging the turnips in the old vegetable garden. He ran round and there was the old fork still stuck in the ground. He dug furiously with it in the middle of vegetable patch. Blinky came out of the house, sat nearby and watched him. When he'd dug a good, big hole he kissed the teapot and put it in the ground. Then he turned the earth carefully back into the hole and pressed it flat with his feet. He stood still a moment, feeling strange and empty, like he'd made the teapot vanish into thin air, and missing it now it was gone like an old friend who'd had to leave suddenly without saying goodbye. But then, quite unmistakably, he heard a humming noise, or rather felt it through the soles of his feet. It was a tune he recognised – it was his piano study. He realised then that it was coming from the ground under his feet, that it was coming from the teapot. Blinky came and sat on the patch of freshly dug earth beside Jack and looked at him. "You want to stay, don't you Blinky?" said Jack stroking his head.

"Miaow." He said definitely.

"Alright. You stay and take care of our teapot."

"Miaow."

"Goodbye you funny old thing, goodbye."

Jack turned at the gate of the old vegetable garden and looked back. On the freshly dug patch of earth under which the teapot lay, Blinky was already curled just as he used to curl around the teapot itself, and was already drowsing in the afternoon sun, purring contentedly. Then he ran and jumped in the lorry and they drove away. They never did come back. After the war the family moved to a farm far away. When Jack grew up he moved to another

country and started a family of his own. But every now and again, maybe when he was digging in his garden, or stroking a cat or maybe making a pot of tea, he wondered if anyone ever did find that teapot buried in the ground...



The man stood in his garden with a pile of turnips at his feet and a muddy old teapot held to his ear. Then he brought it down in front of him, rubbing away some of the mud with the sleeve of his dressing gown, looking at the gold flower with a smile on his face. "That spout's a bit chipped, isn't it? You know, I've got just the thing indoors to fix that. Then, I think, Mr Teapot, you and I deserve some nice, hot tea." Then he took the teapot inside to wash it up just as clean and beautiful as it ever had been.

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