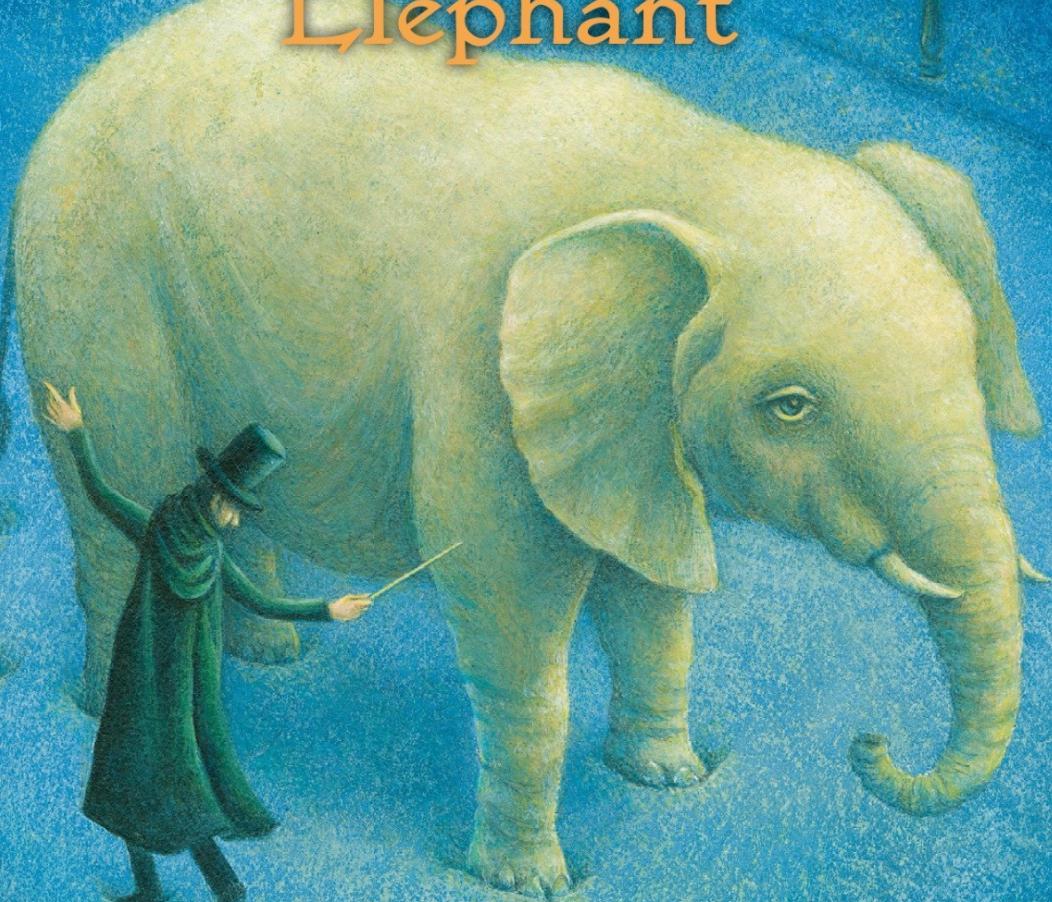


2022 martedì giugno 28 - mardi - juni 28 → juli 03

Kate DiCamillo

#1 NEW YORK TIMES BEST-SELLING AUTHOR
KATE DiCAMILLO

The Magician's
Elephant



ILLUSTRATED BY YOKO TANAKA

Chapter Fifteen




Arte & Sintonia

born in 1964
published in 2009

- Madam LAVAUGHN was often kept awake at night by shooting pains in her legs.

- And because she was awake, she insisted that the whole household stay awake with her.
- Further, she insisted that they listen again to the story of how she had dressed for the theater that night, how she had walked into the building (Walked! On her own two legs!)

entirely and absolutely innocent of the fate that awaited her inside.

She insisted that the gardener and the cook, the serving maids and the chambermaids, pretend to be interested as she spoke again of how the magician had selected her from among the sea of hopefule.

- “Who, then, will come before me and receive my magic?”

Those were his exact words," said **Madam LAVAUGHN.**

- The assembled servants listened (or pretended to) as the noblewoman spoke of the elephant falling from nowhere, of how one minute the notion of an elephant was inconceivable and the next the elephant was an **irrefutable** fact in her lap.
- "Crippled," said **Madam LAVAUGHN** in conclusion,
 - "crippled by an elephant that came through the roof!"
- The servants knew these last words so well,
 - so intimately, that they mouthed them along with her, whispering the phrases together as if they were participating in some odd and **arcane** religious ceremony.
- This, then, is what was taking place in the house of **Madam LAVAUGHN** that evening when there came a knock at the door, and
 - the **butler** appeared beside **HANS ICKMAN** to announce that there was a **policeman** waiting outside and that this **policeman** absolutely insisted on speaking to **Madam LAVAUGHN.**
- "At this hour?" said **HANS ICKMAN.**
- But he followed the **butler** to the door, and there, indeed, stood a **policeman**, a short man with a ridiculously large mustache. The **policeman** stepped forward and bowed and said,

• "Good evening. I am **LEO MATIENNE**. I serve with Her Majesty's police force.

• I am not, however, here on official business. I have come, instead, with a most unusual personal request for **Madam LAVAUGHN.**"

• "**Madam LAVAUGHN** cannot be disturbed," said **HANS ICKMAN.**

• "The hour is late, and she is in pain."

• "Please," said a small voice.

• **HANS ICKMAN** saw, then, that there was a boy standing behind the **policeman** and that he held a soldier's hat in his hand.

• "It is important," said the boy.

• The manservant looked into the boy's eyes and saw himself, young again and still capable of believing in miracles, standing on the bank of the river with his brothers, the white dog suspended in midair.

• "Please," said the boy.

• And suddenly it came to **HANS ICKMAN**, the name of the little white dog, **ROSE**.

• She was called **ROSE**.

• And remembering it was like fitting a piece of a puzzle into place.

• He felt a wonderful certainty.

• *The impossible*, he thought, *the impossible is about to happen again.*

• He looked past the policeman and the boy and into the darkness beyond them.

◦ He saw something swirl through the air.

◦ A snowflake. And then another. And another.

• "Come in," said **HANS ICKMAN**. He swung the door wide.

◦ "You must come inside now. The snow has begun."

- It had indeed begun to snow. It was snowing over the whole of the city of **BALTESE**.
- The snow fell in the darkened alleys and on the newly repaired tiles of the **opera house**.
- It settled atop the turrets of the prison and on the roof of the **APARTMENTS POLONAISE**.
- At the home of the **countess QUINTET**,
- the snow worked to outline the graceful curve of the handle on the elephant door, and at the cathedral,
- it formed fanciful and slightly ridiculous caps for the heads of the **gargoyles**, who crouched together, gazing down at the city in disgust and envy.



- The snow danced around the circles of light that pulsed from the lamps lining the wide boulevards of the city of Baltese.
- The snow fell in a curtain of white all around the bleak and **unprepossessing** building that was the **ORPHANAGE OF THE SISTERS OF PERPETUAL LIGHT**,
- as if it were working very hard to hide the place from view.
- The snow, at last, fell.
- And as it snowed, **BARTOK WHYNN** dreamed.
 - He dreamed of carving.
 - He dreamed of doing the work he knew and loved: coaxing figures from stone.
- Only, in his dream, he did not carve gargoyles, but humans.
 - One was a boy wearing a hat; another, a man with a mustache; and another, a woman sitting, with a man standing at attention behind her.
- And each time a new person appeared beneath his hand, **BARTOK WHYNN** was astonished and deeply moved.
 - "You," he said as he worked, "and you and you. And you." He smiled.
- And because it was a dream, the people he had fashioned from stone smiled back at him.

- As the snow fell,

Sister MARIE, who sat by the door at the **ORPHANAGE OF THE SISTERS OF PERPETUAL LIGHT**, dreamed, too.

- She dreamed that she was flying high over the world, her habit spread out on either side of her like dark wings.

She was terribly pleased, because she had always, secretly, deep within her heart, believed that she could fly.

And now here she was, doing what she had long suspected she could do, and she could not deny that it was gratifying in the extreme.

- Sister MARIE** looked down at the world below her and saw millions and millions of stars and thought,

- I am not flying over the earth at all. Why, I am flying higher than that. I am flying over the very tops of the stars. I am looking down at the sky.*

- And then she realized that no, no, it was the earth that she was flying over,

and that she was looking not at the stars but at **the creatures of the world**, and that they were all, they were each —

beggars, dogs, orphans, kings, elephants, soldiers — **emitting pulses of light**.

The whole of creation glowed.

- Sister MARIE**'s heart grew large in her chest, and her heart, expanding in such a way, allowed her to fly higher and then higher still — but **no matter how high she flew, she never lost sight of the glowing earth below her**.

"Oh," said **Sister MARIE** out loud in her sleep, in her chair by the door, "how wonderful. Didn't I know it? I did. I did. I knew it all along."