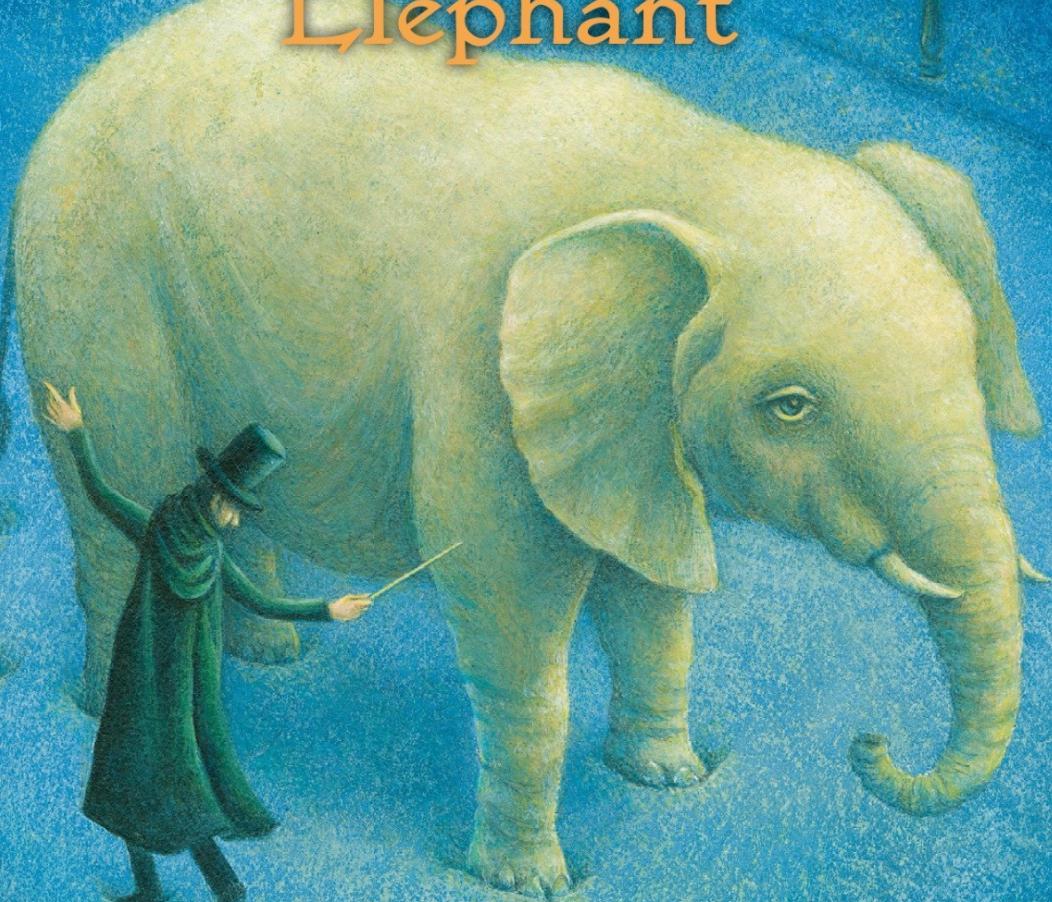


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Kate DiCamillo

#1 NEW YORK TIMES BEST-SELLING AUTHOR
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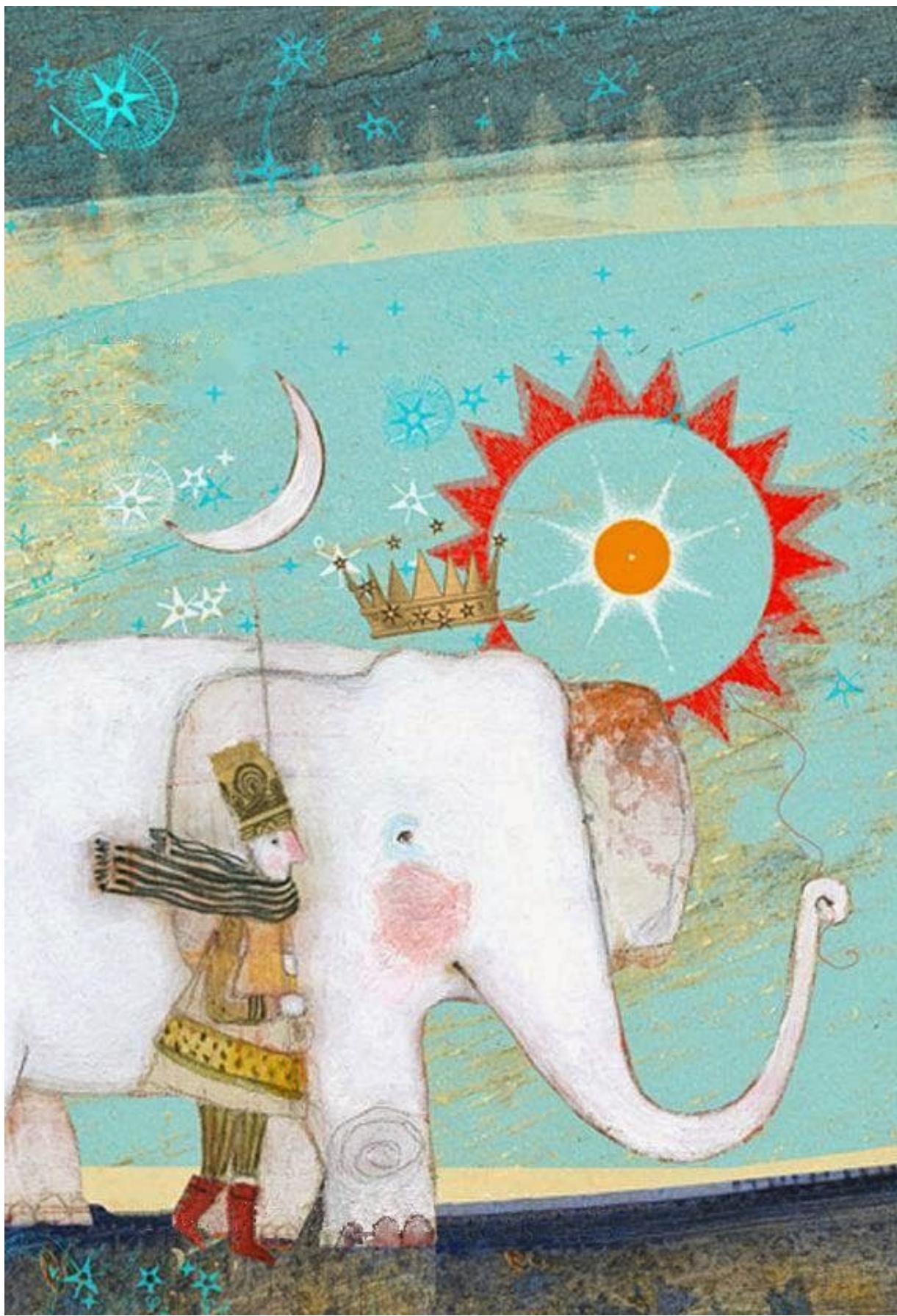
The Magician's
Elephant



ILLUSTRATED BY YOKO TANAKA

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Chapter Thirteen



- **LEO MATIENNE** opened the door of his apartment. He was barefoot.
 - A napkin was tied around his neck, and a bit of carrot and a crumb of bread were caught in his mustache.
 - The smell of **mutton** stew wafted out into the cold, dark street.

- "It is **PETER AUGUSTUS DUCHENE!**" said **LEO MATIENNE**.
 - "And he has his hat on his head. And he is here, on the ground, instead of up there, acting like a cuckoo in a clock."

- "I am very sorry to disturb you at your dinner," said **PETER**.
 - "but I must see the magician."

- "You must do what?"
 - "I need for you to take me to the prison
 - so that I may see the magician.
 - You are a policeman, an officer of the law;
 - surely they will let you inside."

- "Who is it?" said **GLORIA MATIENNE**.
 - She came to the door and stood beside her husband.
 - "Good evening, **Madam MATIENNE,**" said **PETER**.
 - He took off his hat and bowed to **GLORIA**.

- "And a good evening to you," said **GLORIA**.
 - "Yes, good evening," said **PETER**.
 - He put his hat back on his head.
 - "I am sorry to disturb you at your dinner,
 - but I need to go to the prison immediately."

- "He needs to go to the prison?" said **GLORIA MATIENNE** to her husband. "Is that what he said?
 - Have mercy! What kind of request is that for a child to make? And look at him, please.
 - He is so skinny that you can see right through him. He is . . . what is the word?"

- "Transparent?" said **LEO**.
 - "Yes," said **GLORIA**, "exactly that. Transparent.
 - Does that old man not feed you? In addition to no love, is there no food in that attic room?"

- "There is bread," said **PETER**.
 - "And also fish, but they are very small fish,
 - exceedingly small."

- "You must come inside," said **GLORIA**. "That is the thing which you must immediately do. You must come inside."

- "But —" said **PETER**.
 - "Come inside," said **LEO**. "We will talk."
 - "Come inside," said **GLORIA MATIENNE**.
 - "First we will eat, and *then* we will talk."

- There was, in the apartment of **LEO** and **GLORIA MATIENNE**,
 - a wonderful fire blazing, and the kitchen table was pulled up close to the hearth.
- "Sit," said **LEO**.
 - **PETER** sat.
 - His legs were shaking and his heart was beating fast, as if he were still running.
- "I do not think that there is much time," he said.
- "I do not think that there is enough time, truly, to dine."
 - **GLORIA** put a bowl of stew in **PETER**'s hands.
 - "Eat," she said.

- **PETER** raised the spoon to his lips. He chewed. He swallowed.
- It had been a long time since he had eaten anything besides tiny fish and old bread.

- And so when **PETER** had his first bite of stew, it overwhelmed him. **The warmth of it, the richness of it, knocked him backward;**
 - it was as if a gentle hand had pushed him when he was not expecting it.
- **Everything he had lost came flooding back:**
 - the garden, his father, his mother, his sister, the promises that he had made and could not keep.

- "What's this?" said **GLORIA** Matienne.

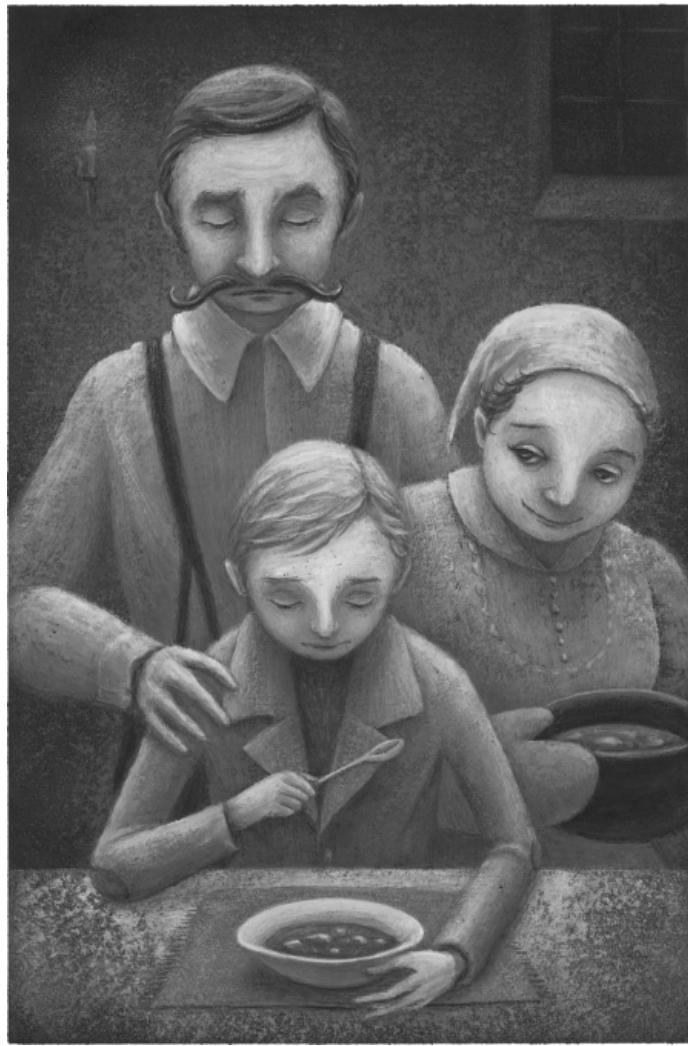
- "The boy is crying." "Shhh," said **LEO**. He put his hand on **PETER**'s shoulder.
- "Shhh. Don't worry, **PETER**. Everything will be good. All will be well. We will do together whatever it is that needs to be done. But for now, you must eat."

- **PETER** nodded.

- He raised his spoon. Again he chewed and swallowed, and again he was overcome. He could not help it.
- He could not stop the tears; they flowed down his cheeks and into the bowl.

- "It is very good stew, **Madam MATIENNE**," he managed to say.
- "Truly, it is excellent stew." His hands shook; the spoon rattled against the bowl.

- "Here, now," said **GLORIA MATIENNE**,
- "don't spill it."



- *It is gone,*
thought **PETER**.

- *All of it is gone! And there is no way to get it back.*

- "Eat,"

- said **LEO MATIENNE** again, very gently.

- **PETER** looked the truth of what he had lost full in the face.
- And then he ate.

- When **PETER** was done,
◦ **LEO MATIENNE** sat down in the chair beside him and said,

- "Now you must tell us everything."

- "Everything?" said **PETER**.

- "Yes, everything,"
◦ said **LEO MATIENNE**.

- He leaned back in his chair. "Begin at the beginning."

- **PETER** started in the garden.

- He began his story with his father throwing him up high in the air and catching him.
- He began with his mother dressed all in white, laughing, her stomach round like a balloon.

- "The sky was purple," said **PETER**. "The lamps were lit."

- "Yes," said **LEO MATIENNE**.

- "I can see it all very well. And where is your father now?"

- "He was a soldier," said **PETER**,

- "and he died on the battlefield.

- **VILNA LUTZ** served with him and fought beside him.

- He was his friend.

- He came to our house to deliver the news of my father's death."

- "**VILNA LUTZ**," said **GLORIA MATIENNE**,

- and it was as if she were uttering a curse.

- "When my mother heard the news, the baby started to come: my sister, **ADELE**."

- **PETER** stopped. He took a deep breath.

- "My sister was born, and my mother died.

- Before she died,

- I promised her that I would always watch out for the baby.

- But then I could not, because the midwife took the baby away and **VILNA LUTZ** took me with him, to teach me how to be a soldier."

- **GLORIA MATIENNE** stood. "**VILNA LUTZ!**" she shouted. She shook a fist at the ceiling.

- "I will have a word with him."

- "Sit, please," said **LEO MATIENNE**.

• **GLORIA** sat.

• “And what became of your sister?” said **LEO** to **PETER**.

• “**VILNA LUTZ** told me that she died. He said that she was born dead, stillborn.”

• **GLORIA MATIEN** gasped.

• “He said that. But he lied. He lied. He has admitted that he lied. She is not dead.”

• “**VILNA LUTZ**!” said **GLORIA MATIEN**.

• Again, she leaped to her feet and shook her fist at the ceiling.

• “First the fortuneteller told me that she lives, and then my own dream told me the same.

• And the fortuneteller told me, also, that the elephant — *an* elephant — would lead me to her.

• But today, this afternoon, I saw the elephant, **LEO MATIENNE**, and I know that she will die if she cannot go home.

• She must go home. The magician must return her there.”

• **LEO** crossed his arms and tipped his chair back on two legs.

• “Don’t do that,” said **GLORIA**. She sat down again.

• “It is very bad for the chair.”

• **LEO MATIENNE** came slowly forward until all four chair legs were again resting on the floor. He smiled. “What if?” he said.

• “Oh, don’t start,” said his wife. “Please, don’t start.”

• “Why not?”

• From somewhere high above them, there came a muffled *thump*,

• the sound of **VILNA LUTZ** beating his wooden foot on the floor, demanding something.

• “Could it be?” said **LEO**.

• “Yes,” said **PETER**.

• He did not look up at the ceiling. He kept his eyes on **LEO MATIENNE**.

• “What if?” he said to the policeman.

• “Why not?” said **LEO** back to him. He smiled.

• “Enough,” said **GLORIA**.

• “No,” said **LEO MATIENNE**,

• “not enough. Never enough. We must ask ourselves these questions as often as we dare.

• How will the world change if we do not question it?”

• “The world cannot be changed,” said **GLORIA**.

• “The world is what the world is and has forever been.”

• “No,” said **LEO MATIENNE** softly,

• “I will not believe that. For here is **PETER** standing before us, asking us to make it something different.”

- Thump, thump, thump went **VILNA LUTZ**'s foot above them.
- **GLORIA** looked up at the ceiling. She looked over at **PETER**.
 - She shook her head. She nodded her head. And then, slowly, she nodded it again.
- "Yes," said **LEO MATIENNE**, "yes, that is what I thought, too."
- He stood and took the napkin from his neck. "It is time for us to go to the prison."
- He put his arms around his wife and pulled her close. She rested her cheek against his for a moment, and then she pulled away from **LEO** and turned to **PETER**.
 - "You," she said.
- "Yes," said **PETER**.
 - He stood straight before her, like a soldier awaiting inspection, and so
- he was not prepared at all when she grabbed him and pulled him close,
 - enveloping him in the smell of mutton stew and starch and green grass.
- Oh, to be held!
- He had forgotten entirely what it meant.
 - He wrapped his arms around **GLORIA MATIEN** and began, again, to cry.
 - "There," she said.
 - She rocked him back and forth.
 - "There, you foolish, beautiful boy who wants to change the world.
 - There, there. And who could keep from loving you?
 - Who could keep from loving a boy so brave and true?"