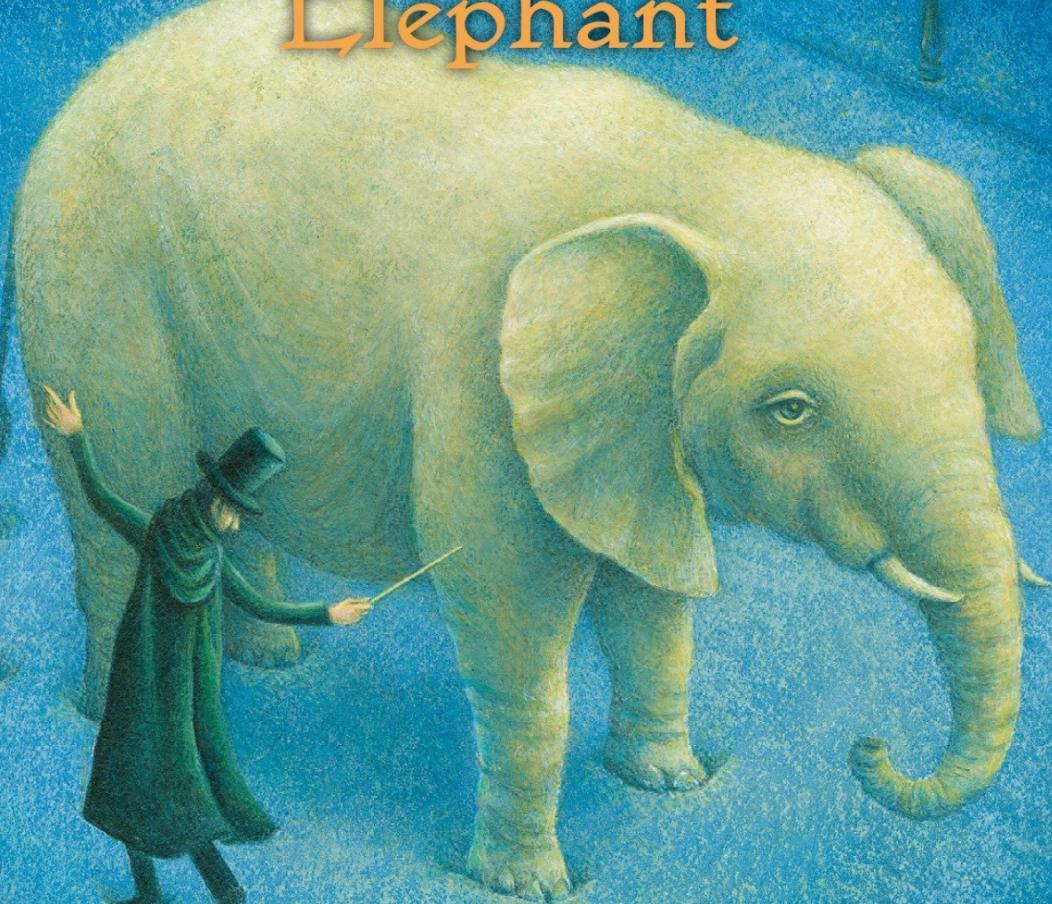


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Kate DiCamillo

#1 NEW YORK TIMES BEST-SELLING AUTHOR  
**KATE DiCAMILLO**

The Magician's  
Elephant



ILLUSTRATED BY YOKO TANAKA

## Chapter Fourteen



born in 1964  
published in 2009

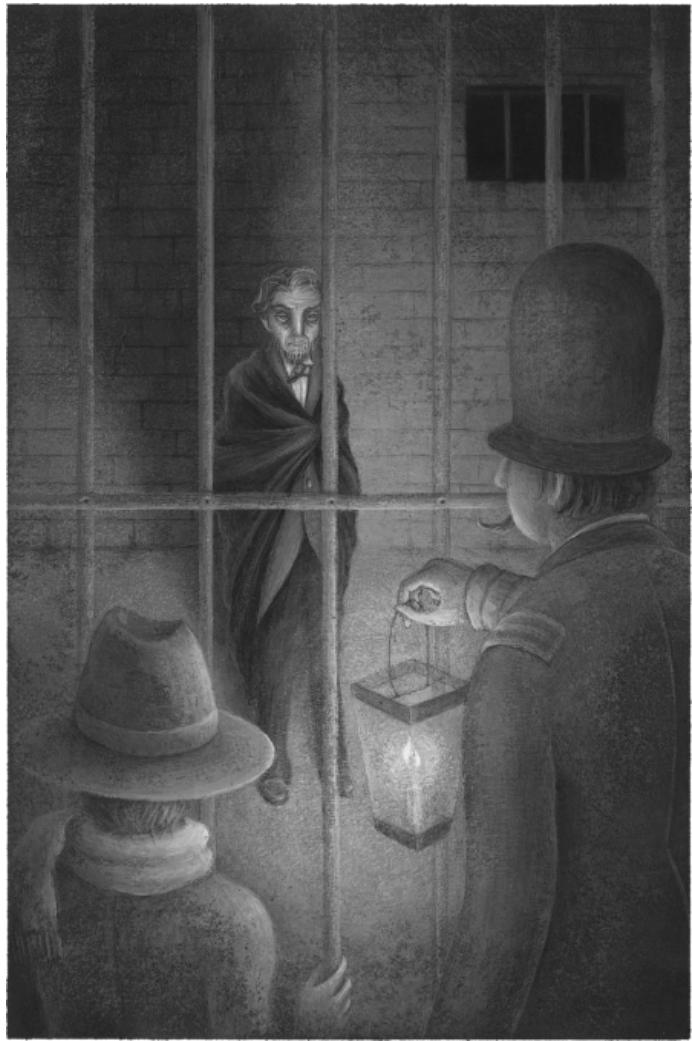
- In the house of the **countess**, in the dark and empty ballroom,  
the elephant slept.
- She dreamed she was walking across a wide savanna.
- The sky above her was a brilliant blue. She could feel the warmth of the sun on her back.
- In her dream, the boy appeared a long way ahead of her and stood waiting.

- When she at last drew close to him, he looked at her as he had done that afternoon.
- But he said nothing. He simply fell into step beside her.
- They walked together through the tall grass, and the elephant, in her dream, thought that this was a wonderful thing, to walk beside the boy.
- She felt that things were exactly as they should be, and she was happy. The sun was so warm!

- In the prison,
  - the **magician** lay upon his cloak, staring up at the window, hoping for the clouds to break and the bright star to appear.
- He could no longer sleep.
  - Every time he closed his eyes, he saw the elephant crashing through the ceiling of the **opera house** and landing on top of **Madam LAVAUGHN**.
  - The image bedeviled him to the point where he could get no rest, no **respite**.
  - All he could think of was the elephant and the amazing, stupendous magic he had performed to call her forth.
- At the same time, he was achingly, devastatingly lonely, and he wished, with the whole of his heart, to see a face, any human face.
  - He would have been delighted, pleased beyond measure, to gaze upon even the accusatory, pleading **countenance** of the crippled **Madam LAVAUGHN**.
    - If she appeared beside him right now, he would show her the star that was sometimes visible through his window.
    - He would say to her,
    - “Have you, in truth, ever seen something so heartbreakingly lovely?
    - What are we to make of a world where stars shine bright in the midst of so much darkness and gloom?”
- All of which is to say that the **magician** was awake that night when the outer door of the prison clanged open and two sets of footsteps sounded down the long hallway.
- He stood.
- He put on his cloak.
- He looked out through the bars of his cell and saw the light of a lantern shining in the darkened hallway. His heart leaped inside him. He called out to the approaching light.
- And what did the **magician** say?
- You know full well the words he spoke.
- “I intended only lilies!” shouted the **magician**.
- “Please, I intended only a bouquet of lilies.”

- In the light from the lantern that **LEO MATIENNE** held aloft, **PETER** could see the **magician** all too clearly.
- His beard was long and wild, his fingernails ragged and torn, his cloak covered in a patina of mold.
  - His eyes burned bright, but they were the eyes of a cornered animal:
  - desperate and pleading and angry all at once.
- **PETER**’s heart sank. This man did not look as if he could perform any magic at all, much less the huge magic, the tremendous magic, of sending an elephant home.
  - “Who are you?” said the magician.
  - “Who has sent you?”
- “My name is **LEO MATIENNE**,” said **LEO**, “and this is **PETER AUGUSTUS DUCHENE**, and we have come to speak to you about the elephant.”
  - “Of course, of course,” said the magician.
  - “What else would you speak to me of but the elephant?”
- “We want you to do the magic that will send her home,” said **PETER**.
  - The magician laughed; it was not a pleasant sound.
  - “Send her home, you say? And why would I do that?”
- “Because she will die if you do not,” said **PETER**.
  - “And why would she die?”
- “She is homesick,” said **PETER**.
  - “I think that her heart is broken.”

- “A homesick, brokenhearted magic trick,” said the magician. He laughed again.
  - He shook his head. “It was all so magnificent when it happened; it was all so wondrous when it occurred, you would not believe it; truly you would not. And look what it has come to.”
  - Somewhere in the prison, someone was crying.
    - It was the kind of strangled weeping that **VILNA LUTZ** sometimes gave himself over to when he thought that **PETER** was asleep.
  - *The world is broken*, thought **PETER**, and it cannot be fixed.
  - The magician kept still, his head pressed against the bars.
    - The sound of the prisoner weeping rose and fell, rose and fell.
  - And then **PETER** saw that the magician was crying, too; great, lonely tears rolled down his face and disappeared into his beard.
  - Maybe it was not too late after all.
    - “I believe,” said **PETER** very quietly.
  - “What do you believe?”
    - said the magician without moving.
      - “I believe that things can still be set right.
      - I believe that you can perform the necessary magic.”
  - The magician shook his head. “No.” He said the word quietly, as if he were speaking it to himself. “No.”
  - There was a long silence.
- **LEO MATIENNE** cleared his throat, once, and then again. He opened his mouth, and spoke two simple words.
  - He said, “What if?”
    - The magician raised his head then and looked at the **policeman**.
    - “What if?” he said.
      - “‘What if?’ is a question that belongs to magic.”
  - “Yes,” said **LEO**,
    - “to magic and also to the world in which we live every day.”
  - So: what if? What if you merely tried?”
    - “I tried already,” said the **magician**.
    - “I tried and failed to send her back.”
    - The tears continued to roll down his face.
      - “You must understand:
      - I did not want to send her back;
      - she was the finest magic I have ever performed.”
  - “To return her to where she belongs would be a fine magic, too,” said **LEO MATIENNE**.
    - “So you say,” said the magician.
  - He looked at **LEO MATIENNE** and then at **PETER**
    - and then back again at **LEO MATIENNE**.
  - “Please,” said **PETER**.
    - The light from the lantern in **LEO**’s outstretched arm flickered, and the magician’s shadow, cast on the wall behind him, reared back suddenly and then grew larger.
    - The shadow stood apart from him as if it were another creature entirely, watching over him, waiting anxiously, along with **PETER**, for the magician to decide what seemed to be the fate of the entire universe.
  - “Very well,”
    - said the magician at last.
    - “I will try. But I will need two things.
    - I will need the elephant, for I cannot make her disappear without her being present.
    - And I will need **Madam LAVAUGHN**. You must bring both the elephant and the noblewoman here to me.”



- “But that is impossible,” said PETER.
- “Magic is always impossible,” said the magician.
  - “It begins with the impossible and ends with the impossible and is impossible in between. That is why it is magic.”