



MJ & Her Smarty-Phants

By

David Frank Gordon

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About the Author



David Frank Gordon is an English writer who has made Northern Ireland his home. Whilst locked-down and furloughed in 2020, he had the idea to put his everyday experiences in Co Armagh onto paper and created 'MJ and her Smarty-Phants', a series of children's stories about a ten-year-old girl, whose cuddly toy elephants come to life after helping an elderly magician cross the road. Every time the clock strikes 5 am, the mischief begins.



MJ AND HER SMARTY-PHANTS – LIVE AT FIVE

MARGARET-JAYNE woke up and got out of bed to get ready for school.

“Brush your teeth!” Shouted Mum cheerily from downstairs.

“One minute,” replied Margaret-Jayne. “I need see to my Elephants first.”

Downstairs, Mum laughed and shook her head.

Margaret-Jayne folded her bed sheets back to reveal three cuddly Elephants.

“You go first Ellie,” she said, placing a large light-grey elephant carefully on the pillow.

“Now you, Eric.” And she placed a smaller dark grey elephant next to Ellie. “And last but not least, Emilio.” She said smiling, placing a light grey, somewhat rotund elephant with big tusks on the pillow next to Eric.

“Breakfast’s ready!” Shouted Mum from downstairs.

“Be good elephants!” Said Margaret-Jayne and dashed down the stairs.

“Don’t be late for School!” Shouted Mum, as Margaret-Jayne ate her porridge.

Margaret-Jayne left the house and started the short walk to school. She passed the park which was busy with mums with prams and bigger boys and girls who were clearly going to be late for school. As she walked past the shops, she spotted an old man, smartly dressed with a bright bow tie, trying to cross the road at the Zebra Crossing. It wasn’t one of the crossings with traffic lights and he wasn’t having much success as the traffic was not slowing down and instead was whizzing past at high speed. Margaret-Jayne stopped next to the man, who was clearly very distressed.

“The trick to crossing the road is to put one foot on the crossing and then stare at the driver of the next car.” Said Margaret-Jayne.

“Thank you,” said the man and together, they both put one foot on the crossing and stared hard at the next car driver and indeed, he slowed down and stopped.

“See?” Said Margaret-Jayne. “Now it’s safe to cross.” And they both crossed the road.



“Thank you very much, young lady,” said the man in the bright Bow Tie. “My name is Mr Magick.”

“And I’m Margaret-Jayne, but I much prefer MJ,” replied MJ.

“Thank you very much, MJ for giving me five minutes of your time,” said Mr Magick. Thanks to you, I won’t be late for the Doctor now. And to show my appreciation, I’ve given you a present.” Mr Magick winked, turned towards the Doctor’s Surgery and walked away. MJ wondered what he meant. “Surely it should be I’m GOING to give you a present?” she thought to herself. But those thoughts quickly left her head as she hurried to school.

When home time came, MJ dashed home and went into the house.

“It’s on the kitchen table!” Shouted Mum.

“What is?” Replied MJ.

“A box addressed to you,” said Mum.

And indeed, there was a box on the table, a small brown box, decorated with stars and glitter, tied with a red ribbon in a neat bow. A label tied to the box had “To Margaret-Jayne with thanks” written on it. She grabbed the box and ran upstairs to her room where Ellie, Eric and Emilio were still sitting in a neat line on her pillow.

“Hello, Elephants!” Said MJ. “I’ve got a parcel – I wonder what it is?”

With that, MJ sat on her bed, untied the ribbon and opened the box. Inside was a note which read,

“Live at Five! You haven’t lived until you’ve worn one of Mr Magick’s Bow Ties.”

A smiley winking face was drawn on the note. MJ lifted out the note and underneath were three Bow Ties. One Black, one Blue and one Green.

“Ooh.” Said MJ. “What should I do with these?” She pondered for a minute. “I know!” She said, clicking her fingers and then turned to the Elephants.

“The black tie for you, Ellie.” said MJ, putting the black bow tie around Ellie’s neck. “And Blue for you, Eric.” And Eric had the blue bow tie fitted. “And last but not least, Emilio . . . you get the green one.” When the green bow tie was tied around Emilio’s neck, MJ placed all the Elephants in a neat row on her pillow.



“There.” Said MJ. “Now you’re the best-dressed elephants in the land – you’re real Smarty-Phants!” She giggled.

MJ then went downstairs, ate her tea and did her homework. Much later, at bedtime, MJ climbed the stairs, got ready for bed and rearranged the elephants. As the oldest elephant, Ellie took the senior position on the pillow. Eric went under her arm as he was the snuggliest. And as Emilio was the heaviest, he was placed on the foot of the bed to keep the sheets on.

Then MJ went to sleep

“Bong!” went the Grandfather Clock. “Bong!” it went again. And again, until five bongs had bonged.

“All clear!” Said Ellie, looking left and right. “Eric, come on out!”

“But I’m snuggling,” Replied Eric from beneath the sheets.

“I’m down here!” Shouted Emilio from the foot of the bed.

“Well, get up here then!” Replied Ellie, beckoning him towards her.

When the three elephants had gathered around the very snoozy MJ, Ellie grabbed a handful of sheets. “Grab a handful each,” she said and after three . . . pull!”

Ellie counted to three, then all three elephants pulled. The sheets came away and MJ was propelled out of the bed and onto the floor with a thud.

“Ow!” cried MJ.

“Shhh!” replied Ellie. You’ll wake Mum up!”

MJ looked up and couldn’t believe her eyes. “Ellie, Eric, Emilio – you’re all . . . alive?”

“Live at five,” Replied Ellie. “Now, get your dressing gown and slippers on, we’re off to the park.”

“Is that wise?” Asked Eric.

“Someone might observ-icate us!” Said Emilio, nervously, making up a completely new word.

“Wusses.” Replied Ellie. “Let’s go and have some fun!” With that, Ellie jumped off the bed, pulled the bedroom door open and disappeared through it.



MJ was so curious that she couldn't help but follow Ellie down the stairs. Eric and Emilio followed nervously behind.

"Huh! The door's locked!" Snapped Ellie.

What shall we do?" Asked Eric, looking concerned.

"Cross your trunks!" Replied Ellie, stretching out her trunk skywards. "We'll get to the park that way!" Each elephant followed suit until their trunks were crossed like Musketeers' swords.

"But I don't have a trunk!" said MJ, disappointedly.

Ellie examined MJ's face very closely and touched MJ's very small nose.

"Hmmm," she said. "Then point your nose like our trunks!"

MJ knelt down, leaned in and poked her nose gingerly into the mingle of trunks.

"Ele-portation!" cried Ellie and with that, each bow tie started to glow. As MJ watched, the bow ties glowed so bright that it hurt her eyes. The light was so bright that she couldn't see anything, so closed her eyes tight shut.

"There!" said Ellie.

MJ opened her eyes to see that the bright light had gone and they were no longer in the house!

MJ looked around at very familiar surroundings. "We're at the shops near the park?" she gasped.

Follow me!" cried Ellie and scampered towards the park gates, with Eric following close behind. MJ noted how light it was at 5am and how it was so very quiet and absolutely no one was about.

"Wait for me!" puffed Emilio, who was lagging behind. "I'm heavier than the rest of you."

"You're heavier than ALL of us!" Laughed Ellie, who came to a sudden halt outside the shops, where the Greengrocer's daily delivery of fruit and vegetables was in boxes outside the front of his shop.

"Snack time!" Cried Ellie and the next thing, her trunk was firmly inside a box of fresh, juicy apples.



“That’s very naughty-ficitious,” panted Emilio, as he finally caught up.

“We shouldn’t take other people’s property,” added Eric.

“Too late!” Snorted Ellie, who by this time had a number of apple-shaped bulges up her trunk.

Absolutely dumbfounded, MJ could only watch as Ellie used her trunk to pop a succession of juicy apples into her mouth. When Eric and Emilio continued telling her off, Ellie snorted a couple of fresh apples up her trunk and with a mighty blast, popped them out of her trunk like cannonballs, causing Eric and Emilio to take cover.

“I thought we were going to the park?” Interjected MJ. The park was clearly in view and MJ could see that the swings, the slide and the roundabout were all empty. MJ had been to the park many times before and there was ALWAYS a long wait to get on the swings. The bigger boys and girls always hogged the rides. MJ was overcome with a desire to go on the swings and off she trotted towards the park gates.

“Wait for us!” Trumpeted Ellie and one by one, the elephants followed MJ into the park.

“I’m going on the slide!” Cried Ellie.

“It’s the roundabout for me!” Said Emilio.

“Would you like me to push you? Asked Eric as MJ sat on the swing.

“Ahh-ee-ahhh!” Cried Ellie from the very top of the slide, beating her chest, just like a Jungle man.

“Shhhhh!” Said Eric as he pushed MJ.

“Yes, shhhh!” added Emilio, from the spinning roundabout. “Someone might hear us.”

“We are the ‘phants. . .” Cried Ellie from the very top of the slide. “We are the ‘phants, we are, we are, we are the ‘phants!” then launched herself down the slide. Not a wise move, as she picked up speed as she slid, going faster and faster and couldn’t stop herself at the bottom. As a result, Ellie shot off the end of the slide, she tumbled several times along the ground.

MJ froze with shock at the sight of Ellie as she tumbled and tumbled and finally came to a halt in a cloud of dust.



“Ellie, are you all right?” asked MJ, clearly concerned.

“Ha ha ha ha ha ha” Laughed Eric and Emilio, rolling about on the ground.

Ellie clearly was fine as she popped another two high-speed apples out of her trunk towards the two giggling elephants, causing them to duck quickly.

“I’m thirsty!” Snapped Ellie and suddenly shot off towards the park gates. MJ and the other two elephants followed, with Emilio puffing and panting, bringing up the rear.

“Where are you going?” Asked MJ.

“You’ll see!” replied Ellie. as she turned out of the park and scampered towards home, but before she got there, she suddenly ran into one of MJ’s neighbour’s driveway.

“What are you doing?” hissed MJ, “That’s Richard James’ house – we live in the next house!”

It soon became clear what Ellie intended, as she reached the front door and her trunk penetrated the foil on top of one of the bottles of milk on the doorstep.

“Sclurrrrrrrrrrrp!” Came the slurping noise as the bottle was quickly emptied.

“That’s very naughty!” Said Eric.

“Yes, a very bad exemplification.” agreed Emilio.

“So what?” Sneered Ellie.

MJ saw red. “You’re a very bad elephant,” she said. “What will Richard James put into his cup of tea at Breakfast?”

“Ner ner nee ner ner!” trumpeted Ellie.

With that, MJ lifted up Ellie under the arms to give her a good telling off.

“That’s it,” said Ellie angrily. “You’re getting trunked!” And with that, she pointed her trunk at MJ’s face and hosed her down with a pint of fresh milk.

“Wake up!” Said Mum. It’s after eight and you’ll be late for school!

Mum gave MJ a shake. “Your hair’s all wet! What have you been up to?”

MJ jumped out of bed with a start.

“Mum, it was the elephants”



But Mum had gone back down the stairs and when MJ looked around, Ellie, Eric and Emilio were sitting neatly on her pillow, all resplendent in their coloured bow ties.

MJ gulped down her breakfast and ran quickly to school. She passed the park and the shops, which were very busy indeed, with lots of people on the footpaths and lots of cars on the road.

“It was just a dream,” she thought to herself.

MJ was just in time as she arrived at her class. The teacher was taking in the last night’s homework from all the children. Still rushing, MJ opened her bag and out, onto the floor, tumbled her homework, followed by a dozen fresh, juicy apples.



MJ AND HER SMARTY-PHANTS AND THE TWELVE DAYS OF TUSKMAS

MARGARET-JAYNE or MJ as she prefers to be known, is a little girl who is eight, lives near the park and owns three cuddly Elephants called Ellie, Eric and Emilio. She was an ordinary girl with ordinary toy elephants until she met an extraordinary man called Mr Magick and helped him to cross the road. He presented her with three magical bow ties, which when worn by the elephants, brings them to life when the clock strikes five. Through a quirk of fate, she now has four elephants, the last of which, only has one arm and one eye and is called Nelson. He wears an eye patch made from spare material from another one of the gang's bow ties.

"Morning Elephants!" Said MJ, as she drew back the curtains. A strong shaft of Winter sunlight immediately entered the room, illuminating the cuddly creatures seated on her bed. "Guess what I'm doing today?" She exclaimed. "I'm making a Wigwam for Baby Ray for Christmas!"

MJ looked through a big bag of materials at the end of her bed. "Poles, string and cloth," she said to herself. "It's December the 12th, I've got 12 days to get it done, I just need Mum to help me with the sewing."

"Are you ready yet?" Shouted Mum from downstairs.

"Ready for what?" Replied MJ, frowning.

"I have to go to the Dentist at 10 O'clock," shouted Mum.

"Coming!" Responded MJ. "I just have to get the Elephants ready!"

The elephants, still seated neatly on her bed were gathered up.

"Nelson, Emillio, Eric and "

MJ suddenly stopped as she discovered a long thread coming from one of Eric's tusks.

"Eric!" She cried. "You're coming apart!"



And indeed, on closer examination, she saw that the stitching around Eric's tusk had come undone, leaving a small hole.

"Oh dear Eric," We'll have to get that looked at!"

Grabbing Ellie, the final Elephant, MJ carefully made her way downstairs with her rather large armful of elephants. Mum locked the door behind them, then they both went to the car and very carefully indeed, MJ belted all her elephants into the back seat, before getting into the front seat herself.

"Chug chug chug!" went Mum's car as she turned the ignition key.

"Oh please, not now!" Cried Mum.

"Is the car broken?" Asked MJ, looking concerned.

"I hope not!" Replied Mum. "Let's try again"

"Vroom!" Went the car as mum turned the key.

"Thank goodness!" Said Mum.

Finally, they could set off for the Dentist.

On arrival, Mum parked at the back of the Dentist's Surgery and walked to the front, accompanied by MJ and her rather large armful of elephants.

"Good morning," said the Receptionist, "Please take a seat – Mr Tasker will be ready for you in a few minutes."

Mum and MJ sat down in the waiting area. MJ had her elephants sitting on her knee. She looked around – the surgery had been decorated for Christmas with tinsel and glittery decorations everywhere and a huge Christmas Tree in one corner. Even the Grandfather Clock in the opposite corner had tinsel wrapped around it. However, amongst all this glittery-ness, one wall was completely blank and MJ became curious.

"Excuse me," said MJ to the Receptionist, "Your surgery looks lovely and very festive,"

"Thank you," Replied the Receptionist, smiling.

"But I wondered," continued MJ, "Why that one wall is completely blank?"



“We had asked a local artist to come in and paint a welcome message on the wall, but she’s not well at the moment,” explained the receptionist. “She came in the other day and left her paints and ladder, but she hasn’t come back.”

“Ah,” said MJ.

“Your elephants are lovely,” whispered the Receptionist.

MJ smiled, very pleased that her elephants were being complimented.

Mr Tasker peered around the corner. “Who’s next?” He asked smiling.

“That’ll be me,” said Mum, getting to her feet.

“Step this way,” said Mr Tasker, smiling. “No need to be nervous.”

“I’m not nervous in the Dentist’s,” said MJ to the Receptionist. “I like coming here because everyone is so nice.”

“Thank you!” Replied the Receptionist.

In Mr Tasker’s Surgery, he was adjusting the Dental Chair, so he could get a good view of Mum’s teeth. Now wearing a mask and safety glasses, he didn’t look like Mr Tasker any more.

“Pop these on,” he said, handing Mum another pair of safety glasses. “Open wide, please”

“One, two, three, four, five,” He counted. “Six is a Distil, Seven is a Buckle”

In the waiting room, MJ was sitting patiently, planning how the Wigwam for Baby Ray would look.

“Zebra stripe pattern, with big pockets on the inside,” She thought.

Then Mum reappeared with Mr Tasker close behind.

“No work required,” said Mr Tasker. “Keep brushing your teeth and we’ll see you in six months!”

Mum, MJ and Elephants went outside and as usual, MJ belted them into the back, before getting into the front.

“Chug chug chug,” Went the car.

Mum tried the key again.



“Chug chug chug,” Went the car again.

“Oh no!” Exclaimed Mum, looking aghast.

“Chug chug” Went the car for a last time and then stopped making any noises at all.

“Have we broken down?” Asked MJ.

“I think we have.” Replied Mum. “Come on, we’ll go back in and ring for a taxi.”

MJ climbed out, opened the rear door and started unbuckling her elephants to take them back inside. The receptionist looked up as they entered, looking surprised.

“That was a quick six months!” She quipped.

“Our car has broken down,” said Mum glumly. “Could we ring for a taxi?”

“Of course, you can,” Replied the Dentist. “And you can wait here in the warm for it arrive.

They tend to take quite a long time to come round here.”

Whilst Mum rang, MJ seated each of her Elephants smartly on a seat in the waiting room.

They waited and waited and waited.

After an hour, Mum said, “Go outside and have a look, would you?”

MJ went outside and looked. She looked up the street, she look down the street, but no taxi could be seen anywhere. She was just about to go back inside, when she heard a toot.

A taxi pulled up and the driver lower his window. “Are you for near the park?” He asked.

“We are!” Replied MJ. “My Mum is inside.”

“You need to hurry up,” Said the driver, “I’m finishing for the day in ten minutes.”

Worried that they would be stuck at the Dentist all day, MJ sprinted to the door, opened it and shouted through.

“Mum, the taxi’s here and he has to go now!”

Quickly, Mum grabbed her bag and coat and dashed outside, taking MJ by the hand as she did so. In a flash, the two of them were in the taxi and on their way home.

“You’re very lucky, Missus,” said the Taxi Driver. “I knock off in ten minutes and you’re my last run of the day.”

“We’re very grateful,” replied Mum.



It wasn't until they got home that MJ remembered that Eric's tusk needed stitching. "Mum," she said, then suddenly realised that she'd left her elephants in the Dentist's Waiting Room!

"Oh no!" she cried. "They're all alone in the Dentist's Surgery!"

"Oh dear," said Mum, "and I don't have the money for another taxi today."

MJ thought about the situation for a minute.

"I really like the Dentist," She thought. "And the Receptionist was nice and said my elephants were lovely,"

"They'll still be there in the morning when we go for the car," said Mum.

MJ nodded. That night she went to bed and although Eric wasn't there to snuggle, she didn't worry one bit about them. They were in a lovely place.

"Tick tock, tick tock" Went the clock in the Dentist's surgery.

Then it started to chime. "Ding-dang ding-dong," sounded the Westminster Chime. "Ding-dang ding-dong" it continued. "Ding-dang-dang- dong," it went and began to whirr.

"Bong!" It finally went. Until five bongs had bonged.

"Where are we?" Said Emilio, opening his eyes.

"We're at the Dentist's," snapped Ellie. "MJ dashed off home and forgot us,"

"What's all that stuff on the walls?" Asked Eric sleepily.

Ellie shrugged her shoulders and looked at Emilio. "Dunno," said Emilio.

Then Nelson chirped up.

"It's for the twelve days of Tuskmas," He explained.

"Tuskmas?" Asked all the others in unison, looking shocked.

"Yes, Tuskmas." Repeated Nelson. "This is the time of year when the Santaphant looks at his list of who all the good Elephants are - and brings them lots of presents."

"The Santaphant? Presents? Super!" Exclaimed Emilio, excitedly.

Ellie gulped. "Er, and what does the Santaphant bring to elephants which haven't been good?" She asked, looking worried.



“He doesn’t,” Snapped Nelson. “If you’re on the Santaphant’s naughty list, he takes something you love, off you.”

“I’m too snuggly to be on the Santaphant’s naughty list,” gushed Eric.

By now, Ellie was feeling very nervous indeed.

“What might the Santaphant take off a naughty elephant?” She asked, a slight wobble in her voice.

“Well,” began Nelson, “If you’re really, really naughty....” then Nelson left a long pause, “He’ll take your trunk.”

All the elephants looked horrified at this news. Ellie, the naughtiest elephant of the bunch, looked super-horrified.

“Pah!” exclaimed Ellie. “That’s nonsense! How could the Santaphant take your trunk? That’s just silly.”

Nelson leaned in towards Ellie. “Where do you think my arm went?” He hissed into her ear and winked.

Ellie’s eyes and mouth opened wide in horror. She had been very naughty all year through and well she knew it.

“I want to keep my trunk!” she wailed.

“Well, you’ve got the twelve days of Tuskmas to show how good you can be,” Snapped Nelson, smugly. “Now I’m going to the kitchen to find something to eat.”

A few seconds after Nelson left the room, Ellie finally composed herself and knew she had to do something good. She looked at Eric and smiled.

“Eric,” she began, “That’s a nasty looking hole in your tusk,” doing her best to feign concern.

“Is it?” replied Eric.

“Yes, it is,” said Ellie. “Come into the surgery and I’ll have a look.

“No, I’m sure it’s fine,” argued Eric nervously.

But it was too late. Ellie bundled him into the surgery and pushed him into the Dental Chair. Whilst Eric was wondering what was going on, Ellie had donned a mask and safety glasses and was pushing on the controls which make the chair tilt backwards.



“Pop these on,” said Ellie, giving Eric a pair of safety glasses. Then she was shining a very bright light into Eric’s face.

“That hurts my eyes!” Cried Eric.

“Don’t be a cissy!” snapped Ellie, then remembered she was being good for once. “I mean relax, whilst I have a look,” said Ellie soothingly. “One is fine, however two has a cavity which needs filled.”

Ellie looked round at Emilio. “You can assist,” she said, tossing Emilio a mask and another pair of safety glasses. Emilio put them on enthusiastically.

“Wheeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeee!” went the Dentist’s Drill as Ellie neared it to Eric’s tusk.

Eric looked terrified and started to dribble.

“Can I have some suction here?” Demanded Ellie.

“Coming up!” exclaimed Emilio, using his trunk to clean Eric up.

“Wheeeeeeeeeeee-arrrrrrrrrrr!” went the drill, as Ellie applied it to Eric’s tusk.

“Filler and tool,” demanded Ellie.

Quickly, Emilio handed over both items and Ellie filled the hole in Eric’s tusk very neatly indeed.

“Bite on this and we’ll do a quick X-Ray,” snapped Ellie.

A few minutes later, Ellie held up a large negative to the light, which showed an outline of Eric’s trunk and his tusk which now perfectly filled.

“My tusk feels really good!” beamed Eric.

“My pleasure,” replied Ellie. “I’m a really good elephant, aren’t I?” She added, glancing around the room to see if any Santaphants were listening.

Nelson then sauntered into the Surgery. “There’s nothing to eat in the kitchen,” he declared in disappointment. “Just some raw potatoes!”

“I’ve an idea!” exclaimed Ellie, grabbing the dental tool and scampered out of the surgery to the waiting room. Then turned to Nelson.

“Give me that raw potato,” she said.



Once he handed it over, she sliced in half with the dental tool and then started to carve away the flesh on either half.

“Eric, Emilio,” she snapped, “Open those tins of paint and open those step ladders,” The boys did as they were told.

“There!” Said Ellie proudly, once she had finished carving. Turning the two halves of the potato uppermost, she showed how she had carved very ornate elephants into the potato flesh.

“Wow!” gasped the gang in unison.

Ellie dipped the fleshy side into the paint and carefully pressed it against the blank surgery wall, leaving a perfect impression of an elephant with big tusks on the magnolia wall.

“Get to work, gang!” She said.

At Nine o’clock sharp, Aaron, MJ’s Sister’s Boyfriend, drove round to MJ’s house to collect Mum and MJ and drive them round to the surgery. When they got there, Aaron popped the bonnet and attached a set of jump leads.

“Try it now,” he said.

Mum turned the key and the car started first time.

“I’ll just run in and get the elephants,” shouted MJ.

“Aren’t those your elephants in the back of the car? Enquired Aaron, pointing at the back seat.

And indeed they were – seated neatly with seatbelts already fitted.

“Wow!” exclaimed MJ. “And where did that paint come from?” she demanded, hands on hips, as she noticed splatters of red, blue and yellow paint on their arms and trunks.

Mr Tasker the Dentist then walked by and waved. MJ and Mum waved back.

Mr Tasker gasped as he entered the waiting room to see the once blank wall, now filled with a picture of an elephant with very large tusks, made from the images of lots of mini elephant impressions in red, yellow and blue, with the word “WELCOME” in magnolia across the elephant’s back.

“Wow!” said Mr Tasker. “That is absolutely fantastic!” he cried, out loud.



A tiny tear of emotion appeared in his eye. He had been nick-named “Tusky” Tasker by his pals at Dental College when he was younger and he wondered first, how the artist had known of this and second, how she had got in at night!

“Mr Tasker?” said the Receptionist from behind the front desk.

“Yes?” he replied.

The receptionist held up a file with an X-Ray inside.

“Do we have a new client called Mr Eric Elephant?” She asked, looking puzzled.

Mr Tasker, still overwhelmed by his elephant mural, thought about it for second, opened his surgery door and got a surprise as he looked down.

“Where have all these pieces of raw potato come from?” he asked.



MJ AND HER SMARTY-PHANTS SPEND CHRISTMAS DAY WITH BABY RAY

MARGARET-JAYNE or MJ as she prefers to be known, is a little girl who is eight, lives near the park and owns three cuddly Elephants called Ellie, Eric and Emilio. She was an ordinary girl with ordinary toy elephants until she met an extraordinary man called Mr Magick and helped him to cross the road. He presented her with three magical bow ties, which when worn by the elephants, brings them to life when the clock strikes five. Through a quirk of fate, she now has four elephants, the last of which, only has one arm and one eye and is called Nelson. He wears an eye patch made from spare material from another one of the gang's bow ties.

It was the 22nd of December. Mum was wandering about the house, going from room to room, muttering to herself. Christmas was just around the corner and MJ wondered what she was doing. After all, the tree was up, all the decorations were hanging very smartly indeed and the house was well and truly completely Christmassy.

“That’ll have to go,” muttered Mum “and that can’t stay there,”

MJ was busy wrapping Christmas presents for her elephants. So they wouldn’t know what they were getting, she had turned them around and they were sitting with their backs to her as she wrapped.

“You’ll have to put your elephants on a high shelf,” said Mum, as MJ wrapped her final present.

“Whatever for?” asked MJ. “My elephants don’t like heights. They sleep on my bed and sit on the settee.”

“Baby Ray is coming tomorrow,” Replied Mum.

“Is that why you’re walking round every room?”



“Exactly,” replied Mum.

“To decide where he’s sleeping?” asked MJ.

“No,” replied Mum. “He’s toddling now, he can walk, so we need to move everything within his reach, either into a cupboard or to somewhere that little hands can’t reach.”

“Little hands?” asked MJ, puzzled.

“Your sister says that Baby Ray grabs the baubles, pulls them off the tree and runs off with them. In short, anything less than three feet off the ground has to be moved.”

“Your ornaments?” asked MJ.

“Need to be put away,” replied Mum

“The bookcase?”

“Needs to have the bottom three shelves emptied.”

“The Christmas Presents?”

“Have to be moved to on top of the sideboard.”

MJ gasped as she realised what was next.

“Oh, Mum no, no, no!” Wailed MJ, as the realisation struck her.

“I’m sorry, yes.” Replied Mum

“Not the Christmas tree?” she moaned.

Mum nodded glumly.

MJ was sad. As far back as she could remember, the Christmas Tree went up in the corner of the room and then everyone adorned the tree with glass baubles and tinsel, until it looked really festive. Once that was done, all the carefully wrapped presents were placed at the base, ready for opening on Christmas morning. She and Mum had spent ages doing this and having great fun at the same time. But now, the priority was on damage limitation.

“We’ll move everything later,” said Mum. “First we need to put all of the Christmas food shop into the fridge.”

“I’ll help!” announced MJ enthusiastically, jumped up and followed Mum into the kitchen.

“Sausages and bacon into the fridge,” said Mum, “Stuffing into the larder and Onions and Potatoes into the veggie bin.”



“Check!” replied MJ and started putting things away.

“What’s this?” asked MJ finding a square, heavy package.

“Oh,” said Mum, that’s the Cheese Board. Take the wrapping off and put it into the fridge.”

MJ nodded and took the outer wrapping off.

“Ooooh!” she gasped. “Look at all that lovely cheese!”

There were several types of cheese on the board. Austrian Smoked Cheese, Stilton Blue Cheese, French Brie, Goat’s Cheese and Red Leicester.

“No sampling before Christmas,” replied Mum, wagging her finger, “especially not the Stilton, that’s my favourite!”

The rest of the afternoon was spent moving everything out of Baby Ray’s reach. Eventually, it came to the tree.

“Could we not just take the baubles and tinsel off the bottom, so there’s nothing left for him to grab?” Asked a sad looking MJ.

“That’s actually a very good idea!” said Mum and together, they removed all the tinsel and baubles from the bottom part of the tree.

“Ah well,” said Mum, mournfully. “Two thirds of a Christmas Tree are better than none.”

Finally, the presents were stacked neatly in the hall cupboard, ready to be put out on Christmas morning.

The following day, Mum and MJ drove to the Butcher to pick up a Turkey, big enough to feed her, MJ & her Sister JC, her boyfriend Aaron and of course, Baby Ray. MJ insisted they get a slightly bigger one than ordered just in case there were any hungry elephants in the house, which made Mum laugh out loud in the shop.

“I can’t wait for them to arrive!” said MJ excitedly, when they were driving home again. “I hope Baby Ray likes the Wigwam I’ve made for him!”

“Darling,” replied Mum soothingly. “He’s just a baby, so don’t get your hopes up.” She added. “He might not even realise what it is.”

“I suppose so,” sighed MJ.

“Ding dong!” Went the doorbell later that day, then the front door opened.



“It’s only us!” shouted Julie-Caroline, MJ’s older sister.

“Hello, JC!” shouted MJ, “where’s Baby Ray?”

“In his car seat,” replied JC. “I’ll just get him out.

“Where’s Aaron?” asked MJ.

“He’ll be down later,” replied JC. “He’s bought a motorbike and once he’s fitted an electric start on it, he’ll be right over,”

“Oooh, a motorbike!” gasped MJ, “how exciting!”

JC helped Baby Ray from his car seat and held his hand as he toddled into the house.

MJ knelt down in front of him and tickled his tummy. “You’re such a clever boy!” she gushed. But Baby Ray had spotted Mum’s sewing box on the chair in the front room and like lightning, he was off. In seconds, his tiny hands had grabbed the box, but before MJ could say “please don’t empty Mum’s sewing box all over the floor,” Ray lifted the box and tipped the contents all over the floor.

“Oh no,” said Mum, “I just put it down for five minutes,”

“I’ll clear it up Mum,” replied JC. “There’s some rusks in his bag, MJ - take him into the kitchen and mash one up with some milk. That’ll keep him busy for a few minutes”

“Righto!” Replied MJ, taking Baby Ray by the hand and leading him into the kitchen.

“Wabbabbadadda?” said Baby Ray

“And you’re talking too!” gasped MJ. “You really are a clever boy!”

MJ opened the bag and found the rusks and his plastic plate. “Let’s get you some milk,” she said.

Then came a shout from the Front Room. “Don’t turn your back on him!” called out JC.

But it was too late. When MJ opened the Fridge for the milk, that’s exactly what she did.

“Wabbadaamaada” gurgled Baby Ray and as MJ turned around, still holding the milk, she was absolutely horrified to see him with his hands in a kitchen drawer.

“Baby Ray, no!” she called out.

But it was too late, he grabbed a food mixer and a colander from the drawer and ran off with them, laughing. MJ quickly put the milk down on the table and ran after him, grabbing



the food mixer cable, which stopped him in his tracks. “Don’t be naughty!” scolded MJ, but Baby Ray wasn’t giving up his utensils easily and clung onto them for dear life. When MJ finally got them out of his clutches, her sigh of relief was short lived, as he quickly escaped and shot back into the kitchen and after grabbing the milk carton, which had been placed far to close to the edge of the table, and was now happily pouring it all over the kitchen floor.

“Oh no!” exclaimed MJ, grabbing the now empty bottle of milk from Baby Ray and adding it to her armful of kitchen items. But this left her no hands left with which to grab the very speedy Baby Ray. And now he was off again. This time into the Front Room where Mum and JC had just finished clearing up the sewing box.

“Ray don’t you dare!” shouted JC. But Baby Ray had spotted Mum’s mobile phone on the chair where the sewing box had once sat and faster than a speeding bullet, tiny hands had grabbed it and he ran off, yet again. This time towards the toilet.

“No no no!” shouted JC as everything went into slow motion “Stop him!”

But it was too late. Just before JC could grab him, Baby Ray tossed the phone into the toilet and laughed.

“Did you put up the travel cot?” asked JC.

“I did,” replied Mum, now holding a mop as well as wet mobile phone.

“Baby jail for you mister!” laughed JC, carrying him out of the room and up the stairs.

“Wabbadaababaaaa,” gurgled Bay Ray happily.

“Mum,” wailed MJ, “he’s so fast – he’s like a supersonic Octopus!”

“Don’t worry,” said Mum, “I think I hear reinforcements coming.” And indeed, the sound of a motorbike came nearer and nearer, until it roared up the drive.

MJ dashed to the door to see Aaron’s motorbike. She was somewhat taken aback when she went outside and saw it.

“It’s old!” she blurted.

“It’s a classic,” replied Aaron, frowning, somewhat hurt by her assertion.

“It’s classically old then,” grinned MJ.



“It’s a 1957 BSA 250cc motorcycle with sidecar attachment,” replied Aaron proudly.

And then it was bedtime. MJ looked in on Baby Ray who was sleeping peacefully in his cot.

“Awwwww,” she thought to herself. The hours quickly came and went.

“Bong!” went the clock in the hall.

“Bong!” it went again, until five bongs had bonged.

Ellie looked around and hissed to the others. “I’m hungry,” she whispered.

“Ooh!” gasped Emilio. “You need to be careful – there’s only 2 days of Tuskmas left to prove how good you are to the Santa-phat!”

“Say bye-bye to your trunk,” said Nelson, smugly.

“Nonsense,” scoffed Ellie. “There’s no such thing – who’s coming to fridge with me?”

“I’m too busy snuggling,” replied Eric from under the duvet. The others just turned their heads and looked the other way. There was no way that they would be naughty on the night before Tuskmas.

“Suit yourselves!” she snapped and hopped off the bed and scampered downstairs to the kitchen.

“Losers!” laughed Ellie as she got stuck into the Blue Stilton in the cheese board. “Oooh – tangy!” she said to herself as she shoved the last of it into her mouth. Then she heard a very strange creaking noise.

“What was that?” Ellie asked herself. The creaking noise happened again, so Ellie decided to investigate. She looked around the kitchen – nothing. She looked in the living room - nothing. She unlocked the front door and looked outside, apart from an old motorbike, there was nothing. She went back inside and heard the noise again. Ellie then scampered up the stairs to get help.

“Quick!” She said, “I think there are burglars in the house!”

“What’s that stain-ifying you around your mouth?” Asked Emilio.

Ellie wiped her mouth and saw the Blue Stilton.

“Blue cheese,” replied Ellie, licking her fingers, ensuring she schlurped up the remaining cheese.



“Oh dear,” said Eric, “That’ll give you nightmares!”

“Did I mention that we have burglars?” snapped Ellie, hands on hips. “I need help!”

With that, the elephants all hopped off MJ’s bed, in order to investigate. Then the creaking noise happened again.

“It’s in the spare bedroom!” hissed Ellie. “Eric, Emilio – you go in and investigate. Nelson and I are right behind you!”

Eric looked and Emilio and the two of them tip-toed to the spare bedroom door. They looked at each other again and nodded. Very quietly indeed, Ellie whispered, “One two” but instead of saying “three”, chose instead to push Eric and Emilio through the door.

The second they entered the room, it became obvious what the creaking noise was. Baby Ray was awake and was trying to swing his leg over the top of the travel cot, in order to affect a baby Jail Break. Eric turned to warn the others, but it was too late. Baby Ray swung his leg right over the top and the momentum flipped him over the top and he was able to lower himself to the floor. Seeing the very snuggly Eric, Baby Ray ran at him and grabbed him by the trunk.

“What’s the situation?” whispered Ellie tactically from outside the spare bedroom. “Whoooooaaaaaaa!” cried out Eric, as Baby Ray swung him round by the trunk and launched him out of the bedroom.

“Bump, bump, bump, bump,” came the sound of Eric, as he tumbled down the stairs.

Emilio thought better of courage, given the ruthless efficiency which Eric was disposed of, and turned to skedaddle. However, Baby Ray quickly grabbed him by the tail and dragged him out of the bedroom – backwards.

“Help me!” mouthed Emilio as Baby Ray headed along the hall. Ellie quickly grabbed the only bit of Emilio that was pointing towards her – his trunk. The tug of war which then ensued was no fun for Emilio.

“Oooooh!” he cried. “I’m being stretch-ified!” as both Baby and elephants tugged and pulled.



Baby Ray spotted the stairs, let go of Emilio's tail, and he was down them like a flash, using Eric as a trampoline at the bottom. Pursued by the other elephants, Baby Ray ran into the living room and saw the tree.

"Wabaaababa-wah?" He gurgled, before running straight at the Christmas Tree, intent on scaling it. Just then, he was rugby-tackled by Nelson. Sadly, not having sufficient arms to complete the manoeuvre, Ray was still able to reach the tree and topple it, scattering the pursuing elephants. Then Baby Ray spotted a serious error on Ellie's part. She had left the front door open! Quick as a flash, he out of the door and into the drive.

"After him!" shouted Ellie. But now, Baby Ray had seen Aaron's motorbike and was already clambering up it. With the elephants in hot pursuit, Baby Ray swung on the handlebars, pressed on the electric start and set the motor running. As he dropped into the sidecar giggling, Eric, Emilio and Ellie clambered on different bits of the motorbike, attempting to capture the renegade baby.

"Grab him!" snapped Ellie, accidentally stepping on the gear lever and putting it into gear with a crunch.

"Vrooom!" roared the motorbike as it set off, with 4 elephants and a baby on board. Luckily, the steering lock was still on and all the bike could do was to go round and round and round in circles.

"I feel sick!" cried Eric, as the bike continued to circle, faster and faster, digging a deeper and deeper trench in Mum's front garden. Eventually, the petrol ran out and the bike came to a halt.

The next morning, Mum came down to find the front door wide open and Baby Ray asleep on the living room floor, snuggling with all of MJ's elephants.

Aaron was very angry that someone had attempted to pinch his motorbike but gave himself a pat on the back that he'd remembered to put the steering lock on. Mum was pretty upset about her garden and roses though. The rest of the day was spent stuffing the Turkey, preparing the vegetables and keeping a VERY close eye on Baby Ray.



Around midnight on Christmas Eve, when almost everyone was asleep, Mum tiptoed downstairs to get her sewing box sneaked into MJ's room and very quietly indeed, gently removed Nelson and took him into her room.

"There you go Nelson," said Mum when she had finished sewing. "It's not quite the right colour, but Merry Christmas anyway," then just as quietly and gently as she had taken him, she carefully put him back.

"Bong!" went the clock in the hall.

"Bong!" it went again, until five bongs had bonged.

"Everyone up!" said Eric excitedly and very uncharacteristically. Usually, he liked to snuggle with MJ for much, much for longer. "It's Tuskmas!"

Lots of elephant heads then popped up.

"Has the Santa-phanth arrive-arised?" asked Emilio, looking round the room.

"No such thing," scowled Ellie, secretly feeling to see if her trunk was still there. And thankfully, it was.

"He's been, he's been!" shouted Nelson, "Look, look!!"

All the elephants looked. Then they looked again.

"You've got "gaspd Eric, his eyes open very wide indeed, ". . . . two arms!"

This was very exciting for Nelson. However, his new arm was light blue and the other one was light grey, same as the rest of him, but hey! He had two arms again. He shook hands with all the other elephants, flexed his new muscles and demonstrated just about everything you could do with a second arm. "Watch this! Watch this!" he would say, as he demonstrated pointing, waving, beckoning, clapping and conducting imaginary music. After 45 minutes of showing off, the other elephants' mood had turned from excitement to boredom and eventually, after several minutes of "air guitar," annoyance.

"What's next?" snarled Ellie. "Will he demonstrate scratching his bum with it?"

The other elephants sniggered.

"What?" asked Nelson, who indeed, was just about to scratch his bottom with his brand new, light blue arm.



Just then, the clock in the hall went “Bong!” and continued to bong until no less than six bongs had bonged. What happened next was totally unexpected.

There was rumble of thunder, a sudden strong gust of wind whistled through the room, blowing all MJ’s Christmas cards off the top of her chest of drawers and then there was a flash of light, for which Nelson could use his new arm to help him shield his one remaining eye from the intensely bright light, then there was a puff of grey smoke and the room fell silent.

“Approach and your wish may be granted!” echoed a booming voice from within the smoke. “or not, if I don’t feel like it.” The voice added.

The smoke began to clear, revealing a sight which made the elephants all gasp.

A large grey elephant wearing red glittery sunglasses, a red glittery baseball cap worn backwards and a giant glittery red bow tie, had materialised in the room. Numerous gold bracelets adorned each wrist and each finger had a chunky gold ring on it. Around his neck was a chunky gold chain with a big, golden elephant-shaped pendant hanging from it.

“It’s the Santa-phiant!” exclaimed a very excited Eric.

The Santa-phiant was seated somewhat regally in a large glittery wooden throne, with carved elephant feet, giant tusks for arms and big carved elephant ears protruding from either side of the throne’s high back.

“Your Majesticality,” said Emilio, bowing and scraping somewhat. “Welcome to our humilitious abode,”

The Santa-phiant held up a long piece of paper. “Emilio,” he boomed. “Your work towards what could be the first ever Elephant Dictionary has caused you to have been entered on my” now the Santa-phiant paused dramatically, “. . . . good elephant list,” he continued, nodding.

“Phew!” said Emilio quietly.

“Let your wishes be granted,” added the Santa-phiant, opening his arms wide.

“What about me?” asked Eric. “I’m very snuggly.”

“Eric,” boomed the Santa-phiant. “you are indeed the most snuggly of elephants,”



“Thank you, your Lordship,” gushed Eric.

“Be quiet,” boomed the Santa-phunt, holding up a hand. “I haven’t finished,” Eric looked sheepish, then stared at his feet.

“Your snuggl-osity has put you” the Santa-phunt paused again, “. . . . on the good elephant list,”

“Thank you!” beamed Eric.

The Santa-phunt opened his arms wide again. “Let your wishes be granted!” he boomed once more.

Ellie by this time had quietly made her way to the back of the room and was shuffling towards the door.

“Don’t you go anywhere!” boomed the Santa-phunt and quickly pointed a finger towards the door. The door immediately slammed shut before Ellie could escape through it.

“Ellie, stand before me,” boomed the Santa-phunt, pointing at the floor. Nervously, Ellie shuffled forward past the other elephants who were now staring, open mouthed.

The Santa-phunt produced a small piece of paper.

“Ellie,” he began. “This is the naughty list and there’s one name on it.”

Ellie gulped. “Is it my name?” she asked, quivering.

The Santa-phunt frowned and pointed at Ellie. “You are the naughtiest of elephants who’s just eaten Mum’s favourite cheese and I’m going to make an example of you!”

Ellie gulped again. “Are you going to take away my trunk?” she sobbed.

“No,” replied the Santa-phunt, shaking his head.

The group of elephants breathed a sigh of collective relief.

“Trunk AND tusks!” announced the Santa-phunt and continued to point at Ellie, and as he did so, his golden elephant pendant began to glow, brighter and brighter.

“Oh no!” gasped the elephants.

“Stop!!” shouted Nelson, using both his arms to push his chums out of the way, so that he could stand between the Santa-phunt and Ellie, who was now quaking with fear.

“How dare you!” boomed the Santa-phunt.



“Because she’s my friend!” shouted Nelson, “and I’ll defend her to the end!”

The Santa-phat looked very angry indeed. But Nelson wasn’t finished.

“She needs her trunk and tusks to be a proper and official elephant and I’ll give you my arm back if it saves her from your mean and horrible forfeit!”

The elephant pendant continued to glow very bright indeed.

The Santa-phat held up one hand to silence Nelson.

“Let your wish be granted.” hissed the Santa-phat and with that, there was a rumble of thunder, a gust of wind which once more, whistled violently through the room, followed a very bright flash . . . and as suddenly as he had arrived, the Santa-phat was gone.

“My word!” said Mum on Christmas Day morning, “what’s happened in here?”

The tree was back where it was, all the baubles had been replaced and all the presents had been taken from the cupboard and neatly stacked under the tree. It even looked like someone had dusted and hoovered. The Mum noticed that MJ’s elephants were all sitting in a neat row on the settee.

“How did you all get there? Asked Mum, mystified. The she spotted something very odd indeed. “Nelson?” she asked. What’s happened to you?” Indeed, Nelson only had one arm again.

“I spent an hour stitching you last night!” said Mum, “Where’s your new arm gone?”

But then she looked again. The light blue arm which she had made especially for Nelson was still there. His original remaining grey arm was the one that was now missing.

Mum shook her head in disbelief and put Nelson back on the settee. Then she took the notion for a snack, went into the kitchen and opened the fridge. What she saw, REALLY annoyed her.

“Who’s eaten all the Stilton Blue cheese?!” she shouted.

Later, MJ put up Baby Ray’s Wigwam in the front room and ushered him in to receive his lovely present. MJ was absolutely delighted to see him run inside and squawk excitedly.



However, 2 seconds later, he ran out again, after spotting Aaron's mobile phone on a chair arm and in a flash, grabbed it and ran towards the toilet again.

On Boxing Day, about 1 minute after five bongs, Nelson turned to Ellie and said, "You know, you've done the right thing. Tidying up Mum's living room is bound to get you onto the Santa-phants' good elephant list for next year."

Ellie nodded and put her hand on Nelson's shoulder. "And what you did for me has got you onto MY good elephant list FOREVER."

MJ AND HER SMARTY-PHANTS & THE GREAT PAVLOVA MYSTERY

MARGARET-JAYNE or MJ as she prefers to be known, is a little girl who lives near the park and owns three cuddly Elephants called Ellie, Eric and Emilio. She was an ordinary girl with ordinary toy elephants until she met an extraordinary man called Mr Magick and helped him to cross the road. He presented her with three magical bow ties, which when worn by the elephants, brings them to life when the clock strikes five.

Mum was busy in the Kitchen. She had decided to make a special dinner for St Valentine's Day of Roast Beef, Yorkshire Puddings and vegetables. It was a big job, so she decided to start the day before, which was a Saturday and just heat the food up before everyone sat down.

She took the beef joint out of the wrapper and looked up how long was needed.

"20 minutes for every pound and 20 minutes extra," she thought to herself. "and I'll keep the juices for some lovely gravy,"

She took a roasting bag, which was actually made for roasting chicken and put the beef joint inside. Auntie Jean had told her about that little trick.

"Keep the meat nice and moist," she said out loud.



“Do you need me to help?” shouted MJ from the Living Room.

“Would you like to peel the carrots and parsnips?” replied Mum.

“Okay!” shouted back MJ.

MJ organised her elephants so they were sitting neatly on the sofa.

“Now, elephants,” she began. “Stay out of trouble whilst I’m helping Mum in the kitchen,”

Ellie, Eric and Emilio, sat on the sofa silently.

MJ went onto the kitchen and stood on a small step by the sink. Once up, she took the peeler and a large carrot and peeled it.

Mum nodded in approval.

After a few minutes, all the carrots and parsnips were peeled, and MJ was looking very pleased with herself. Mum took her sharp knife and cut the vegetable into thick slices. Next, she took a head of Broccoli and cut it into florets.

“I’ll put them into a pan of water for the morning, so I only have to switch the cooker on,” said Mum.

Next they peeled the potatoes and put those into another pan of water.

“Now,” said Mum, “that’s the beef in the oven, vegetables all pared and the potatoes ready to be boiled and mashed.”

“What’s next?” asked MJ.

“Dessert,” said Mum. “Grab your elephants, we’re going to the supermarket,”

MJ didn’t need to be told twice. In two shakes of an elephant’s tail, she had buckled the whole gang in the back of Mum’s car.

When they arrived, MJ volunteered to be Chief Trolley Pusher, took Mum’s pound coin and ran to get a trolley. Mum knew why.

Within a few minutes, Mum was walking around the supermarket looking at the shelves, whilst MJ pushed the trolley, with Ellie, Eric and Emilio sitting neatly in the baby seat.

Other shoppers looked at MJ and smiled.

“What a lovely girl,” one said to another.



“Eggs,” said Mum, “Caster Sugar, cream of Tartar, Vanilla Essence, tinned fruit, double cream,” said Mum.

MJ licked her lips. “Are we having . . . “

“Pavlova,” said Mum. “And a big one at that!”

MJ was delighted. Mum’s Pavlovas were thick and crisp and gooey and creamy – all at the same time, with a rich topping of fruit.

As they made their way to the checkouts, MJ stopped to look at the Valentine Cards on display.

“Are you getting a card?” asked MJ.

Mum laughed.

“What’s funny?” asked MJ, looking a little puzzled.

“That you would think that a single Mum has time for romance!” she chuckled.

“You don’t?” replied MJ.

“No,” said Mum, “I’ve my job and then there’s you and the house to look after!” she chortled.

“But Mum,” replied MJ, “you’re nice looking and you’re a great cook!” she added. “Men would really like you!”

Mum shook her head and laughed a little more, as they left the aisle with all the cards, flowers and chocolates in it.

Once home, Mum took out her giant food mixer and placed it on the work surface.

MJ put the elephants in a row on the kitchen table, so they could see.

“I have a special job for you,” said Mum, handing MJ the eggs.

“What? What?” asked MJ excitedly.

“Watch,” said Mum, taking a table knife and tapping an egg on one side firmly, cutting the shell into two pieces. MJ looked on amazed, as Mum tipped the yolk from one shell half to the other, making sure that the egg whites went into a bowl and the yolks went into a mug.

“That’s how meringues are made. Now you have a go,” said Mum.

“Right,” said MJ nervously and tapped an egg with the table knife.



“A little harder,” said Mum.

To Mum’s surprise and MJ’s total shock, she cut the egg perfectly in two and almost expertly, cupped the yolk so that the egg whites went into the bowl.

“That’s really good,” exclaimed Mum. “Now do another four,”

With varying levels of success, MJ finally had all the egg whites in the bowl and the yolks in the mug. Mum used a teaspoon to lift out the tiny pieces of shell out of the bowl, so no-one gets any crunchy surprises when the Pavlova is served.

Next Mum measured out 30 tablespoons of caster sugar and allowed MJ to whisk the meringue mixture.

“Watch for firm peaks!” said Mum, smiling.

“Is that right?” asked MJ once the egg whites were well . . . peaky.

“Lift the bowl above your head and turn it upside down,” said Mum grinning. “If the mix doesn’t fall out the bowl, you’ve done it right,”

“And if I’ve done it wrong?” asked MJ, looking worried.

Mum laughed. “You’ll need to wash your hair!”

But MJ had done it right and the mix stayed firmly in the bowl. Mum added the caster sugar and MJ whisked it a little more. Then there was a final whisk, once mum added half a teaspoon of Cream of Tartar and a teaspoon of vanilla essence.

“Ooh, there’s quite a lot in there,” said Mum, looking in the bowl. “We can probably make two Pavlovas!”

“Yum, yum!” exclaimed MJ.

Mum took a few sheets of greaseproof paper and cut them into circles with her scissors. Placing each one on a baking tray, Mum carefully spooned the mix thickly onto each sheet, ready to put them in the oven.

“The beef will be finished shortly, then the meringues can go in.

MJ looked on fascinated. She had seen Pavlovas in the shops before looking fabulous, but now she was helping to make one herself.

“Right,” said Mum, we’ll go and watch a Valentine’s type film on the TV whilst we wait.



Mum got a bit carried away and after the first romantic film and several hankies, she took the beef out and put the meringues in. Then she returned to the living room for some more weepy film.

When they returned to the kitchen, Mum whipped the cream and spooned it very thickly onto each meringue base and then topped them with a second piece. More whipped cream was placed on top and finally, the tinned fruit was placed on top.

“There,” said Mum, standing back to admire her handiwork. “All done,”

MJ gasped at the sight of the finished Pavlovas. “They look just like you get in the Cake Shop,” said MJ.

Mum smiled. “Another film?” she asked.

Now everything was done, they went back to the sofa and soon, it was bedtime.

MJ went through her usual bedtime routine. Ellie was placed on MJ’s pillow, Emilio, the heaviest elephant, went at the foot of her bed and Eric went under her arm as he was the snuggliest.

“Bong!” went the clock in the hall.

“Bong!” it went again, until five bongs had bonged.

Ellie jumped off the pillow and put her arms up in the air.

“Give me a P” she said, “Give me an A,” she continued, “Give me an L, give me an O, give me a V, give me another A,” she cried.

“Put them together and what have you got?” she concluded triumphantly.

“PALOVA?” asked Eric sleepily from under the duvet.

“Perhaps it’s a type of Russian knitwear,” chortled Emilio. “You forgettified the first V!”

“Hee hee hee,” giggled Eric.

Ellie didn’t like being laughed at and scowled.

“Get out of bed and come down to the kitchen,” she snarled.

Still giggling, Eric and Emilio scampered out of MJ’s bedroom and followed Ellie down to the kitchen, where the two magnificent Pavlovas were sitting on the counter, each covered by a large bowl. Ellie removed the first bowl.



“Wow,” drooled Eric at the sight of the creamy and fruity dessert.

“That looks splendilicious,” gasped Emilio.

“Knife!” snapped Ellie, hand outstretched.

Eric hopped onto the counter, opened a drawer and took out a large cake slice, which he handed to Ellie. In a few seconds, Ellie cut the Pavlova into 24 slices.

“Are they all for us?” drooled Eric.

“None of them are for us,” replied Ellie, “They’re for Mum,”

Eric and Emilio looked at each other.

“Mum won’t eat 24 slices,” protested Eric.

“No,” added Emilio, “She says that confection-ations go straight to her hips,”

Ellie shook her head in frustration.

“No, I mean they’re to help Mum,” she cried.

“Help her to do what?” asked Eric.

“What’s your favourite thing in the whole world?” asked Ellie, hands on hips.

“That’s easy,” replied Eric. “I like snuggling best,” he added, smiling to himself and closing his eyes.

Ellie leaned in towards Eric.

“Do you think that Mum might like snuggling too?” she asked, somewhat pointedly.

“I don’t have the time to snuggle Mum and MJ,” he wailed.

“They could share-ify you?” suggested Emilio.

“No, no, no!” snapped Ellie, getting more and more annoyed. “I mean we use the Pavlova to help to find someone for Mum to snuggle with!”

Eric and Emilio looked at each other, nodded and said, “aaaaahhhh,” in unison.

Ellie hopped to another drawer and pulled out some paper plates and a roll of clingfilm.

“We put each slice on a plate, cover it with cling film and put them on each doorstep down the street,” she explained. “Then we put a note on each plate to say where it came from,” she added.



“Good idea!” exclaimed Eric. “Everyone will love the Pavlova so much, that one of them will love Mum too!”

“I’ll put the Pavlova on the plate,” said Ellie, “Eric can wrap them and Emilio, you put a post-it on each saying it’s from Number 7.”

“Then we deliver-ise each slice!” cried Emilio.

“Exactly,” replied Ellie, arms folded, feeling very pleased with herself.

Within the hour, each slice had been placed on a plate, roughly wrapped by Eric, who incidentally, had done a thorough job of accidentally wrapping himself, and then each plate had a yellow post-it popped onto it by Emilio, each one saying, “Happy Valentine’s Day from Number 7.”

“Right,” said Ellie, “let’s go!”

The elephants each sat on top of each other until the latch could be reached, then Ellie opened the door. Each elephant took 8 plates and balancing them precariously, set off on their clandestine Valentine’s mission.

Once the deliveries were done, mysteriously there was still one slice left.

“Haven’t we done every house?” asked Eric, scratching his head.

“Every house but one,” replied Ellie.

“Which?” asked Emilio, looking puzzled.

“Ours, silly!” snapped Ellie.

“So that extra piece is” began Eric.

“Ours!” replied Ellie.

Once back inside, the elephants almost got into a trunk fight over the last piece of Pavlova, but in a few seconds, it was gone, and the plate vacuumed clean.

“Morning elephants!” said MJ sleepily, once she’d woken up. She noticed that something wasn’t quite right.

“Eric!” she cried, “why are you covered in clingfilm?”

Then she looked down the bed.



“Emilio,” she asked, “why have you got a post-it on your head?”

She turned to look at Ellie beside her on the pillow. She looked very closely indeed.

“Ellie – you’ve got,” she began, but then looked at each elephant. “you’ve ALL got cream on your trunks!” she cried. “What have you been up to?”

But there was no time to find out.

Mum needed help in the kitchen and the house had to have all the ornaments put away, because Baby Ray was coming with JC and Aaron and he had a tendency to “snatch and run”. Soon, all the vegetables were on the boil, the beef was sliced and the juice was used to make tasty gravy. MJ helped by mashing the potato. She also added some salt and pepper, then added an egg to the potato, mashing it into the mix furiously until the potato was nice and creamy, without the calories that butter would add.

“Ding-dong!” went the doorbell.

MJ opened the door to find her sister JC and boyfriend Aaron. Baby Ray was in Aaron’s arms. They came in and as soon as Aaron put Baby Ray down, he was off like lightening, looking for objects such as ornaments, remote controls, mobile phones and elephants to grab.

“Hah!” said MJ triumphantly, as Baby Ray was unable to reach any of his usual goodies, as MJ had placed them all on top of the sideboard out of his reach.

“Lunch!” shouted Mum.

Everyone came into the dining room and tucked into the roast beef.

“This is lovely Mum,” said JC.

“Mmmmmm,” said Aaron, his mouth full.

Baby Ray was sitting in his high-chair and was stuffing as much food into his mouth as would fit, until he looked like a giant Hamster.

“Oh, Ray,” sighed JC, “you don’t have to put it all in at once!”

Mum and MJ smiled.

Once the main course was finished, Mum went into the kitchen and lifted the first bowl. Very carefully, she cut 4 large slices of Pavlova and a small slice for Baby Ray.



“Wow, Mum!” gasped CJ, “that looks delicious!”

Total silence was observed as the Pavlova was devoured.

“Happy Valentine’s Day,” said Aaron, handing CJ a small, gift-wrapped box. She opened it in excitement to find a lovely silver bracelet.

“Thank you, Aaron!” she cried, lifting her wrist up for everyone to see. “And happy Valentine to you!” handing over a very large box. Aaron opened it and looked very pleased indeed as he lifted a Motorcycle Helmet from inside.

“Didn’t you get any presents, Mum?” asked CJ, spooning the last of the Pavlova into Baby Ray’s mouth.

“Mum is a single parent and doesn’t have time for romance,” replied MJ, in her stead.

“Exactly,” said Mum, smiling.

“Ding-dong!” went the doorbell, again.

“I’ll get that,” said Mum, getting up from the table.

“Strange,” she said to herself, as she opened the door to find no-one there. Then she looked down.

A beautiful red rose and two white envelopes were on the doormat. She picked them up and went inside.

“Ooooooh!” cried CJ as Mum entered with the rose and envelopes. MJ gasped with surprise.

Mum opened the first envelope, to find a Valentine’s Card, smiled an embarrassed smile to everyone, who was by now very curious indeed. She looked at the words in the card, looked puzzled, then got up from the table.

“Where are you going?” asked CJ.

“The kitchen,” said Mum. Once in the kitchen, she reached towards the second bowl on the work surface and gasped when she lifted it. There was no Pavlova there!

Shaking her head, she returned to the dining room and sat down. “I seem to be missing a Pavlova,” said Mum.

MJ stifled a gasp with her hand. “Elephants!” she thought to herself.

“What does the card say? Who’s it from?” interjected CJ, enthusiastically.



“Well,” said Mum. “It says, Roses are Red, Violets are Blue, thanks for the Pavlova, left on my doorstep by you! And it’s signed with a G.”

“Ooooooooooh!” cried JC again. “Mum, you have an admirer!”

“So it seems,” said Mum, her cheeks flushing a little.

“Maybe it’s Gordon from number 12?” suggested JC, “he’s quite dishy!”

“Maybe or maybe not,” said Mum, now well embarrassed by all the attention and the thought of Gordon from No 12.

“What does the second card say?” asked JC, now overwrought by excitement, brought on by the romantic mystery.

“I don’t know,” replied Mum.

“Aren’t you going to open it?” asked MJ, her eyes open wide.

“No,” replied Mum, “I’m not,”

MJ folded her arms in annoyance. “And just why not?” demanded MJ.

“Because,” began Mum smugly, handing MJ the envelope,

“It’s addressed to you. . . .”

MJ AND HER SMARTY-PHANTS AND THE MYSTERY OF THE VALENTINE’S CARD

MARGARET-JAYNE or MJ as she prefers to be known, is a little girl who is eight, lives near the park and owns three cuddly Elephants called Ellie, Eric and Emilio. She was an ordinary girl with ordinary toy elephants until she met an extraordinary man called Mr Magick and helped him to cross the road. He presented her with three magical bow ties, which when worn by the elephants, brings them to life when the clock strikes five. Through a quirk of fate, she now has four elephants, the last of which, only has one arm and one eye and is called Nelson. He wears an eye patch made from spare material from another one of the gang’s bow ties.



MJ, Mum and MJ's Sister were having tea when a Valentine Card arrived through their letter box. Everyone immediately thought it was for Mum, but it turned out it was addressed to MJ!

"Open it!" said JC, leaning over. Mum leaned in too, for a better view of the 'grand opening'. MJ examined the envelope and put it down on the table. She could feel all eyes upon her and on top of that, her cheeks were burning with embarrassment.

"Erm," stuttered MJ, "I'll read it later!"

With that, she grabbed her Elephants and quickly ran upstairs to her room.

"What's the matter with her?" asked JC.

"First valentine's card," Replied Mum, sipping her coffee. "I was a gibbering wreck when I got my first one,"

"Mmmm, me too," agreed JC. "I'm still embarrassed thinking about how I threw myself at that boy. . . "

Mum and JC looked at each other in shared horror.

"Oh dear," they said in unison. "Poor MJ," then both giggled.

Upstairs, MJ was examining the crisp, white envelope, but there were no clues. The only markings were a hand-written, "To Margaret-Jayne," on the front.

"No-one calls me Margaret-Jayne except people at School," she thought to herself.

She gave it a little more thought and then placed the envelope under her pillow.

"I'll open it tomorrow after school," she said to herself.

All was still in the house that night, until the clock in the hall went "Bong" and then "Bong" again, until five bongs had bonged.

"I dunno about the rest of you," said Ellie, reaching carefully under MJ's pillow, "But I want to know who this card is from."

"Yes," agreed Emilio, "It's important-tacious that MJ has an admirer who will keep her in the manner she is accustomed to,"

"How will we find out without opening the envelope?" asked Eric, from his snuggly position in MJ's bed.



“Follow me!” snapped Nelson, grabbing the envelope. “I’ll share a secret with you!” and enigmatically tapped his trunk.

Nelson led the way out of MJ’s bedroom and the others scampered behind, following Nelson down the stairs and into the kitchen. The others watched as Nelson hopped onto a stool, then onto the work surface and switched the kettle on.

“Good idea!” said Ellie. “A nice cup of tea and a biscuit,”

“Not tea,” replied Nelson, “watch this”

As the water in the kettle boiled and steam began to shoot out the spout, Nelson began to waft the back of the envelope into the plume of steam. As the kettle steamed and Nelson wafted, very slowly, the sealed flap of the envelope began to open!

“Dah-dah!” sang Nelson triumphantly, once the envelope was fully open.

“Wow!” exclaimed Eric, “Where did you learn to do that?”

“Well,” began Nelson, “It was during the time I was an operative for the CIA, but I’m not allowed to talk about it,”

The other elephants looked at each other and shook their heads at yet another one of Nelson’s tall stories.

“But isn’t steamification hot and dangeriferous?” asked Emilio, pointedly.

“Yes,” replied Nelson, quick as a flash. “Bad things can happen with hot steam,” Nelson paused, “Like when I was on a mission in the volcanoes of Central America and my arm got too near to a steam vent”

Ellie had had enough of Nelson’s storytelling and grabbed the envelope from him.

“Let’s see who it’s from,” said Ellie and carefully took the card from the envelope. The gang all gasped as they saw a big red love heart on the front of the card.

“Open it up,” cried Eric.

As Ellie opened the card, the gang all jostled for position behind her, in order to get a better view.

“Ooh,” exclaimed Emilio, “there’s some poem-ification inside!”

“Read it out!” cried Nelson from the back.



“Ahem,” said Ellie, clearing her throat. “Roses are red, Violets are blue, the best thing in this street is you,”

“Is it signature-ised?” asked Emilio.

“There are just initials,” replied Ellie. “It says, lots of love, GK.”

“Who’s GK?” asked Eric.

“Is he a nice boy?” asked Emilio

“How much pocket money does he get?” asked Nelson, winking.

Ellie licked the envelope flap and resealed it. She sat on it for a minute to make sure.

“Here’s the plan,” said Ellie. The other elephants leaned in towards her to listen.

“Nelson, take charge of the envelope and as you’re the smallest,” Said Ellie. “You can climb into MJ’s schoolbag and find out who GK is when she goes to school in the morning.”

“No problem,” replied Nelson, “I once hid from the KGB in a mailbag aboard a train behind the Iron Curtain,”

“Shut up, Nelson!” replied Ellie, Eric and Emilio in unison.

The next morning, MJ had brushed her teeth and was quickly munching through her breakfast.

“I’m off to school now Mum,” she shouted, once her glass of milk was finished.

“Not without your schoolbag, you’re not!” Replied Mum.

“Oooh, silly me!” exclaimed MJ and ran up the stairs to grab her bag. Seconds later, she ran out of the house with her schoolbag and onto the street.

“Hello,” said a small boy with blonde hair waiting at the end of her street, “I’m your knight in shining armour,”

“I beg your pardon?” replied MJ, not knowing what he was talking about.

“I’m George Knight,” he replied, “I live in the same street as you,”

“Oh,” replied MJ.

“That bag looks heavy,” the boy continued. “Perhaps I could carry it for you?”

“Oh,” replied MJ and thought for a second. She quite liked the attention. “You may,” she continued.



George took her bag and was clearly struggling with carrying both her bag and his own.

“I can carry it myself if you like?” said MJ,

“No, no,” replied George. “I can manage,”

The two of them walked to school and George told her how he and his Dad had recently moved into the street and how he liked girls with red hair. This made MJ blush, but she didn't tell him to stop. They entered the school building and went to the pegs to hang their coats up.

“What else do you like about girls?” she blurted, somewhat loudly, before she could stop herself.

“He likes. . . girls!” came another voice, quite sarcastically, from behind a row of coats.

A large boy with dark curly hair and his shirt tails hanging out pushed through the other children, who by now, were all listening. MJ knew who he was.

“Oh, go away, Noel Nash,” she snapped. “You're a bully,”

“Ner ner, Ginger Nut,” snarled Noel Nash, sticking his tongue out at MJ.

“Excuse me,” said George, “But you don't talk to ladies like that,”

“I'll do what I want,” said Noel Nash. “I'm bigger than you.” Then Noel Nash looked closely at George. “Why have you got two schoolbags?”

Before George could answer, Noel Nash grabbed MJ's bag from him and opened it.

“Give me my bag, Noel Nash!” cried MJ.

But Noel Nash didn't give her the bag. Instead, he reached in and to MJ's surprise, pulled out Nelson.

“Nelson!” exclaimed MJ, “How did you get in there?”

“Nelson, how did you get in there,” repeated Noel Nash in a silly voice, screwing his face up.

“Give him back!” shouted MJ, but Noel Nash just held Nelson in the air and being bigger than MJ, he was holding Nelson well out of MJ's reach.

“What else is in here?” said Noel Nash, stuffing Nelson into his pocket, then reaching into her bag once more.

MJ made a grab for Nelson's trunk which was sticking out of Noel Nash's pocket.



“Give the bag back,” demanded George, looking angry.

But what Noel Nash did next, stopped them both in their tracks.

“What’s this?” sneered Noel Nash, pulling out an envelope.

MJ and George both recognised the envelope instantly. MJ and George both blushed.

Noel Nash opened the envelope.

“Give it back!” snapped MJ, but Noel Nash read it out instead.

“Roses are red, Violets are blue,” read out Noel Nash in the same silly voice. “The best thing in this street is you,”

“Give her the card back,” demanded George.

“He loves her!” sneered Noel Nash.

The other children who were watching all laughed.

“Give it back!” repeated George.

“Here,” said Noel Nash, holding out the card. But as George reached out to take it, Noel Nash ripped it in half and dropped the pieces on the floor.

“Can Nelson swim?” sneered Noel Nash, taking Nelson out of his pocket and holding him up out of MJ’s reach.

“Give him back!” snapped MJ.

But Noel Nash didn’t give him back. Instead, he strode to the visitors’ toilet door, opened it and to MJ’s horror, he tossed Nelson into the toilet and flushed it.

“Nelson!” shrieked MJ and pushed past Noel Nash and quickly reached into the toilet to grab Nelson’s leg before he disappeared around the U-Bend.

“Don’t go near her!” shouted Noel Nash. “She’s had her hands down the toilet!”

“Uuuuugh!” went some of the other children.

Just then, the school bell rang and on hearing it, all the children ran to their classes.

George came over and gave MJ a handful of paper towels. “You can dry him with these,” he said.

“Thank you,” said MJ.

All day, MJ seethed about what had happened. She was very angry indeed.



At the end of the school day, MJ left her classroom and waiting outside was George Knight and he had something for her.

“I used some sticky tape to fix the card,” said George, handing over the repaired card.

“Thank you,” replied MJ, taking the card. “I hadn’t actually opened it yet,”

MJ and George walked home together, and George carried her bag again, whilst MJ carried Nelson, still wrapped in paper towels.

“See you tomorrow,” said George, handing MJ her bag.

MJ smiled and walked down the path to the front door. Mum was in the kitchen and wanted to know why Nelson was soaking wet. When MJ told her what had happened, Mum was very angry indeed and rang the school. Principal Whyley promised he would get to the bottom of things.

Mum wrapped Nelson in a tea towel and put him on the radiator until he was dry. MJ took Nelson upstairs to her room and put him with the others. Then she took the repaired card out her bag and put it on her dressing table. She smiled warmly as she thought about George Knight.

“You smell of pine disinfectant!” said Ellie, pinching her trunk, just after 5 Bongs had sounded.

“Bullying is abhon..... er abhorn abhort... er wrong,” stuttered Emilio.

“We need to take action against Noel Nash,” replied Nelson angrily.

“How do we find him?” asked Eric.

“The phone book,” replied Nelson. Tossing a large book onto the bed. “Look up the name Nash,”

There was only one Nash in the phone book from MJ’s village. The elephants noted the address and crossed their trunks.

“Ele-portation!” cried Ellie and with that, the bow ties and eye patch began to glow until the light became brighter than bright and then - they were gone. They re-materialised instantly outside a small bungalow set on its own.

“Look!” said Nelson, “The kitchen window is open!”



Very quietly, the elephants scampered towards the kitchen window and one by one, they hopped onto the windowsill and squeezed through the gap, into the kitchen.

There was a big bowl of chopped onions on the work surface, covered with cling film, presumably to keep the smell from escaping into the house.

The elephants crept through the house until Nelson as lead scout, spotted a door with “Noel’s Room” written on it. Nelson also found the toilet and made sure that each elephant visited before opening the door to Noel Nash’s bedroom.

Nelson looked around the door and saw that the room was decked out in Heavy Metal Band posters and sure enough, he saw a mop of curly hair sticking out of a bed in the corner. He turned to the others and gave a thumbs-up signal.

In they went, one by one and Nelson pointed towards the bed. Very quietly, Ellie lifted the bedclothes at foot end of the bed and on the count of three, Eric and Emilio tipped the bowl of chopped onions into the bed.

In his slumber, Noel Nash felt the cold and wet feel of the chopped onions and he woke up a little.

“Wassatt?” he said sleepily, rolling over onto his back.

“It’s me,” said Nelson, hopping onto his chest. “Remember me?”

Noel Nash’s eyes widened instantly as he looked up at Nelson. He certainly remembered Nelson, but not a walking, talking Nelson. He lay there, dumbfounded.

“Elephant got your tongue?” asked Ellie, grabbing one arm.

“Answer the question!” said Eric, grabbing the other.

Emilio jumped on his legs, so only his head could move.

“You put me down the toilet,” said Nelson angrily, poking Noel Nash’s chin.

“This isn’t happening!” cried Noel Nash.

Nelson leaned towards his face. “Oh yes, it is!” whispered Nelson, menacingly.

“I’m sorry, I’m sorry!” wailed Noel Nash. “I won’t do it again!”

“Too late!” snapped Nelson.

“You’re getting trunked!” said Ellie, nodding.



With that, Nelson let go with the trunkful of toilet water he'd just extracted from the toilet and hosed him down.

"Waaaaahhh!" shrieked Noel Nash.

Next, Ellie launched her trunkful of toilet water, then Eric and finally Emilio, until Noel Nash was completely soaked.

"Leave MJ alone," warned Nelson, "Or we'll be back,"

"And be respectificacious to elephants," added Emilio, wagging one finger.

"Waaaaahhhhhh – Mum!" wailed Noel Nash.

"What is it?" asked his Mum sleepily as she opened the door and switched on the light.

"Elephants attacked me!" he blubbed.

"You've having a dream," soothed his Mum as she sat on his bed. "Your bed's soaking!" she exclaimed. "And smells of onions!" she added. "And how did all your Heavy Metal posters get ripped in half?" she demanded, looking around the room.

"It was elephants!" sobbed Noel Nash.

The next morning, George was waiting for MJ and they walked to school together. When they got there, the Principal, Mr Whyley, was waiting for them.

"My office, please," he said, guiding them in the right direction.

When they entered the principal's office, Noel Nash was already sitting in there, with his shirt tails hanging out, looking very sullen.

"Poooo," said MJ, "what's that smell?"

"Onions," replied George "and it's coming from him!" pointing at Noel Nash.

"Perhaps he's going to a Fancy Dress party?" suggested MJ,

"As a Cheese and Onion Sandwich?" chuckled George

Noel Nash couldn't think of anything to say, so just sulked instead.

Principal Whyley came in and closed the door. Smelling the strong onion odour, he opened a window.

"I've had phone calls from parents telling me you've been helping yourself to other people's property, Noel." said Mr Whyley. "Have you?"



“I haven’t,” snarled Noel Nash, folding his arms defensively.

“You did!” snapped MJ.

“She’s lying,” said Noel Nash. “Prove it,” he added, curling his top lip.

“It was this bag here,” responded MJ, handing Mr Whyley her bag.

“Did you take her bag, Noel?” asked Mr Whyley.

“I didn’t,” replied Noel.

“He did,” interjected George.

Mr Whyley began to unzip MJ’s bag, then reached in.

Noel Nash’s face went white and his eye bulged wide as Mr Whyley suddenly produced Nelson from the bag. As Nelson’s one eye made contact with Noel Nash’s terrified gaze, he began to feel sick with fear.

“I have one more serious question,” said Mr Whyley. But he didn’t need to ask it.

“I’m sorry!” blurted Noel Nash, “I’m really sorry,” he sobbed, “I won’t do it again!”

“Right,” said Mr Whyley. “Detention for one hour every night this week.” He then turned to MJ and George. “You can go to your classes. If there are any more instances of bullying, tell me,” he added.

That afternoon, MJ took George round to her house for tea and biscuits with the elephants.

Mum and JC peeped around the door nosily.

“Awwwwwww,” whispered JC, her eye to the crack. “Aren’t they just adorable?”

Mum nodded.

In the living room, MJ handed George a biscuit. “It was very nice of you to send me a card,” said MJ.

“You’re welcome,” replied George.

“But,” added MJ, “I don’t think I’m ready for a boyfriend – could you be my friend instead?”

“I can,” replied George smiling.

MJ laughed and added, “But you can still tell me what you like about me!”



MJ & HER SMARTY-PHANTS AND THE PRESIDENTIAL ELEPHELECTION

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MARGARET-JAYNE or MJ as she prefers to be known, is a little girl who is eight, lives near the park and owns three cuddly Elephants called Ellie, Eric and Emilio. She was an ordinary girl with ordinary toy elephants until she met an extraordinary man called Mr Magick and helped him to cross the road. He presented her with three magical bow ties, which when worn by the elephants, brings them to life when the clock strikes five. Through a quirk of fate, she now has four elephants, the last of which, only has one arm and one eye and is called Nelson. He wears an eye patch made from spare material from another one of the gang's bow ties.

“Bah!” moaned MJ, pointing the remote at the television, “there’s nothing but news programmes on the TV!”

Mum was getting very frustrated with MJ changing channels one after another. “For goodness’ sake, pick a channel and stick with it!” cried Mum, now exasperated with the continuous click, click, click of the remote.

The announcer on the final channel was very smartly dressed in a suit and tie, sitting at a desk with lots of coloured flags in the background. “We’ll be bringing you more news of the election after this short break,” he said, smiling and shuffling his papers, as the camera cut away from him.

MJ looked puzzled and turned to Mum.

“What’s an election?” she asked.

Mum smiled. “It’s where people cast votes to choose who they want to be their leaders,” she replied.

“Ah,” said MJ and pondered for a minute. “Did you ever cast a vote?” MJ asked.

“I did,” replied Mum. “Many times,”

MJ thought for another minute. “Who did you vote for?” she asked.

“That’s private,” replied Mum. “You should never ask someone to tell you who they vote for,”

MJ frowned. “Why not?” she asked.



Mum sighed. “Because people get awfully upset if they find out that you voted for someone different to who they voted for,”

“Why is that?” asked MJ.

Mum stood up. “That’s something you don’t need to worry about until you’re eighteen!” she said with a chuckle.

MJ still didn’t really understand, but Mum was now in the kitchen making herself a cup of tea, so MJ decided to go to bed. When she opened her bedroom door and switched the light on, it immediately illuminated her four cuddly elephants, which were neatly arranged on the bed.

“Tomorrow,” she began, “we’re going to have an election to decide who the leader of my elephants is!”

But none of the elephants answered. They just sat neatly where she had left them. MJ got undressed and into bed, putting Emilio at the end of the bed to keep her duvet steady, Ellie had pride of place on the pillow, with Nelson next to her and Eric as always, went under her arm because he was the snuggliest. And as quick as a flash, MJ was asleep.

“Bong!” Went the clock in the hall.

“Bong!” It went again, until five bongs had bonged.

“Just so everyone’s clear,” snarled Ellie, staring at each elephant menacingly. “I’m the leader of this gang, so don’t get any ideas about an election!”

“It’s actually an Elephelection,” replied Emilio. “People have elections, we have elephelections,”

“Whatever,” sneered Ellie.

“Who’s the leader of all elephants?” asked Eric from below the covers in MJ’s sleepy and snuggly grip.

“There isn’t one,” snarled Ellie, now getting very annoyed with any suggestion that someone else was in charge of her.

“Actually, there is,” piped up Nelson.

“Who? Who?” asked Eric and Emilio together.



“The greatest elephant in the world,” replied Nelson.

“Who? Who?” Squealed Eric and Emilio together.

“He’s a genius with an IQ of 150 and everyone loves him,” continued Nelson.

Ellie shook her head. “It’s another tall story,” she sneered dismissively.

“And he’s the richest elephant in the world,” added Nelson.

It was too much for Eric, who quickly wriggled free from his snuggly position in MJ’s bed.

“Who is it?” he cried.

Nelson pointed to the dark corner of the room by MJ’s bookcase and whispered.

“Donald Trunk,”

With that, there was a sudden rumble of thunder, a bright flash of light and wind blew through the room, causing MJ’s books to flutter. The elephants shielded their eyes until all became calm and the light had died down.

“We’ve been invade-ified!” cried Emilio fearfully and hid behind Eric.

There, in the corner of the room were two sinister looking elephants wearing dark suits, dark bow ties and sunglasses, who quickly ran around the room looking under the bed, behind the bookcase and the curtains. Once they had seemingly finished looking for whatever, they silently moved back to the corner and faced MJ’s elephants.

The tense stand-off lasted only seconds, when the sound of Wagner’s Ride of the Valkyries, punctuated the silence, becoming louder and louder, until a second bright flash of light heralded the end of the music and the appearance of a large orange elephant, in a grey suit with blonde wavy hair and an oversized red bow tie.

“It’s Donald Trunk!” gasped Eric.

“Call me Mr President,” said Donald Trunk, stepping forward and handing each of the gang a badge with his picture on it and shaking their hands in greeting.

One of the security elephants stepped forward quickly with a hankerchief and wiped Donald Trunk’s hand after each shake.

“What’s he doing?” hissed Ellie.

“He doesn’t like other elephants touching him,” whispered Nelson.



“So,” began Donald Trunk, “Tell me what you all like most of all?”

“Lemon Drizzle Cake!” laughed Nelson loudly, pointing at Ellie.

Donald Trunk frowned. “Vote for me and I’ll get you all the Lemon Drizzle Cake you can eat,” he said winking. “I’m the best at getting things people want.”

Ellie raised her eyebrows. “I like the sound of that!” she replied, smiling.

Donald Trunk clicked his fingers. In an instant, a security elephant brought out a large plate of sliced Lemon Drizzle Cake, which was quickly devoured by the gang.

“Vote for me and I’ll make sure only the best elephants get the best cake,” continued Donald Trunk.

Emilio put his hand up.

“You have a question?” asked Donald Trunk. “I’m really good at answering questions,”

“Yes I do, Mr President,” replied Emilio and gulped.

“Go ahead,” replied Donald Trunk.

Emilio cleared his throat. “What constitutes the ‘best’ elephants?” He asked nervously and quickly put his hand down.

Donald Trunk leaned forward. “We are,” he replied sternly. “We African Elephants with big ears are the best,”

“We are?” asked Emilio.

“We need to keep the Indian Elephants with small ears away,” continued Donald Trunk.

“They eat our food and take our jobs,” he added. “Vote for me and I’ll build a wall to keep them out.” He said menacingly.

Then he pointed his finger. “And what’s more,” he said, “I’ll get them to build it for me. I’m really good at making deals.”

The security elephants began to applaud, so MJ’s elephants felt obliged to join in.

After a minute, Donald Trunk held up his hand to stop the applause. “What’s your name?”

He said, looking directly at Eric. “And what do you do?”

“I’m Eric and I snuggle,” replied Eric proudly.

“Get me a book, would you?” said Donald Trunk, pointing at the bookcase. “A big one.”



Eric thought nothing of it and hopped off MJ's bed and scampered to bookcase and pulled out the biggest book. He liked being helpful.

"Put it just there," said Donald Trunk pointing at the floor. Eric obliged.

"Get me another," said Donald Trunk.

Eric smiled, nodded and went to get another and another and another.

Then Donald Trunk started to chant. "Build . . . that . . . wall, build . . . that . . . wall," he said slowly.

"Build that wall!" joined in the security elephants, clapping in time with the chant, until all the elephants were chanting and clapping, whilst Eric continued to pile MJ's books up across the room.

"Build that wall!" puffed Eric as his pile of books crossed the room and got higher and higher. After a few minutes of piling, all the books were gone from the bookcase and Eric could no longer see what was going on at the other side of the now very high pile of books. He started to get worried.

Donald Trunk held up his hand and the chanting and clapping stopped. He clicked his fingers again and another plate of Lemon Drizzle Cake appeared, care of a security elephant. The gang soon got stuck in and the plate was empty. From behind the books, Eric peered through a gap in the books to see his pals getting stuck into tasty cake.

Donald Trunk pointed to the pile of books.

"Once my wall was built, did you get more cake?" he asked.

Ellie, Emilio and Nelson looked at each other. Yes, it was very clear that they had.

"Eric might snuggle," continued Donald Trunk dismissively. "But his snuggly habits stop all the rest of you from having the opportunity to snuggle." He added. "He's taken a job which is rightly yours."

Eric continued to look through the crack and wondered why only he was on the wrong side of the wall. Suddenly Eric realised that Ellie, Emilio, Nelson and Donald Trunk had similarly sized big ears. Eric reached up and felt his own ears to discover that they were much smaller than everyone else's.



“I’m an Indian Elephant!” gasped Eric. “My ears are little - I had no idea!”

His shoulders slumped in sad realisation. “Then I’m not a best elephant!” he moaned to himself.

On the other side of the wall, the security elephants were passing out voting forms.

“Vote for me,” said Donald Trunk, handing out pens with his name printed along the edge.

“I’ve done everything I said I would. “I’ve got the best elephants the best cake, given you the opportunity for new jobs and I’ve not only built a wall, but got the Indian Elephant to build it for me.”

Ellie, Emilio and Nelson looked at each other. He was right – he had done everything he said he’d do. They looked at the voting forms and lifted their pens and signed the forms. Donald Trunk grinned.

Eric still peering through the crack, began to cry. He was separated from his friends who had seemingly forgotten about him, he wasn’t a best elephant, and he was stuck behind a wall of his own making.

“Please help me someone,” he sobbed.

Just then, there was another sudden flash of light and a gust of wind which sent books flying and punched a big gap in Eric’s wall.

Donald Trunk looked terrified and screamed, “Save me!”

Instinctively, the security elephants quickly pushed Donald Trunk under the bed out of harm’s way, where he covered his head with his hands.

“It can’t be” gasped Nelson as a another figure began to form next to Eric.

“It is!” cried Nelson, as he recognised the new elephant in the room. She was a light grey elephant and wearing a cream twinset skirt and a blouse with matching bow tie shaped fasteners and in her small ears was a set of matching pearl earrings. Her arms were folded and she looked very angry.

“Who? Who?” Squealed Emilio.

Nelson pointed at the figure and cried. “It’s Hilary Clintusk!”

When Donald Trunk heard the name, he peered through his fingers.



“Come on out Donald,” said Hilary Clintusk, looking under the bed. “You’re perfectly safe.”

“I knew that,” replied Donald Trunk, as the security elephants pulled him out and dusted him down.

“No you didn’t!” Exclaimed Ellie. “You were shouting for someone to save you!”

“No I didn’t!” Snarled Donald Trunk. “I’m very brave. Very brave - my security team overreacted.”

Hilary Clintusk pointed at Eric. “And what may I ask is poor Eric doing behind this wall of books?”

Eric gasped. “She knows my name!” he said to himself.

“He isn’t one of the best elephants,” replied Donald Trunk. He’s taken their jobs and eaten their cake.

Ellie, Emilio and Nelson gasped as they realised, they’d been manipulated by Donald Trunk.

Hilary Clintusk sighed. “Donald,” she began. “If snuggling was an Olympic sport, Eric would win the gold medal every time. Yet you say he not one of the best elephants?”

“She’s completely rightificatious!” cried Emilio. “Eric’s really good at snuggling,”

The others nodded in agreement.

Whilst the standoff continued, Ellie turned to Nelson and whispered, “Where do you actually know Donald Trunk from?”

Nelson leaned towards her and hissed back, “When I was Head Butler at Trunk Tower in New York,”

Ellie decided to ignore that probable whopper.

“And who told you he was the world’s greatest and richest elephant and a genius?” she asked.

Nelson scratched his head with his one hand. “Well,” he replied, “he did so himself.”

“And regarding eating their cake,” continued Hilary Clintusk, “Are you really serious?”

“We always share cake,” interjected Ellie. “Everyone gets the same.”



Donald Trunk held up his hand to silence Ellie. “Listen ladies,” he said smugly, “don’t concern your pretty little heads with such complicated matters. Leave it to the guys” And patted Ellie on the head.

Ellie was furious at this condescending behaviour and angrily ripped up her voting form. She looked at Hillary Clintusk and asked, “Can I change my vote?”

Hillary Clintusk smiled. “Of course, you can,” she replied and handed Ellie a fresh form.

“Me too!” said Nelson, ripping his form up and throwing the shards onto the floor.

“No litterfication!” cried Emilio and instead drew a line across his form, folded it up and put it in the bin.

Then Eric made his presence known by stepping through the gap in the books.

“I want a hundred forms!” he declared. “One for me and the rest for everyone I know!”

As the gang filled out the new forms in favour of Hilary Clintusk, Donald Trunk looked on angrily.

“This elephelection is rigged!” he exclaimed. “Ten minutes ago I was winning and now I’m losing? There’s been widespread voter fraud!”

“Nonsense, Donald,” replied Hilary Clintusk. “You just counted the votes far too early.”

Donald Trunk looked angry and began to glow even more orange with rage.

“My team of lawyerphants will get this fraudulent activity struck down by the courts!” he snarled, but in an instant, his rage was replaced with fear.

“Bang!” came a sudden sound and everyone ducked.

“Help me!” cried Donald Trunk and was immediately pushed under the bed once more by his security elephants.

Everyone looked up to see what had made the sound – except Donald Trunk, whose hands were covering his head yet again.

All eyes were now on Eric.

“Oops,” said Eric, grinning from the top of the wall he’d built. “Did I accidentally drop a heavy book onto the floor?”

Ellie, Emilio and Nelson began to laugh.



Under the bed, Donald Trunk was not happy being pulled out for a second time by the security elephants.

“What are you doing under there Donald?” asked Hillary Clintusk. “You look ridiculous.”

Once extricated, Donald Trunk sent his security elephants to the corner of the room, where suddenly, Wagner started to sound once more.

“I’ll see you in court!” snarled Donald Trunk, now standing behind the security elephants.

“And I always win!”

“Bye-bye Donald,” replied Hillary Clintusk, laughing.

There was a flash of light and a roar of thunder and as quickly as he’d arrived, Donald Trunk was gone.

Hillary Clintusk turned towards the gang. “Ellie,” she began. “You, Nelson and Emilio were misled, but you realised your error and supported your friend Eric when he needed it.”

The elephants were absolutely delighted that she knew their names and beamed big smiles.

Then once more, Emilio had his hand up.

“You have a question for me, Emilio?” she responded.

“Why do we have elephelections and how should we votify?” he asked.

“That’s two questions Emilio,” she replied, “but I’ll happily answer both.”

The elephants all leaned forward in anticipation.

Hillary Clintusk smiled. “We have elephelections to choose who we want to lead us,” she began. “We listen to what each of them have to say and then once we’ve heard all the arguments, then we make a decision.”

“But how do we decide?” asked Ellie.

“You already have,” replied Hillary Clintusk.

“We have?” asked Ellie, bewildered.

“You saw how your friend was being mistreated and made your decision based on that,” she replied. “You should always vote for what’s best for you, your family and your friends.”

“Good luck,” said Ellie and shook her hand.



“Yes, good luck,” said the others and did the same. This time no security elephants with handkerchiefs were present.

Hillary Clintusk smiled and waved and, in an instant, she was enveloped in a flash of light and was gone.

The elephants hopped back onto MJ’s bed.

“Er, does anyone else want to snuggle MJ tonight?” asked Eric, holding the duvet edge up.

Ellie stepped forward and put her hand on his shoulder.

“No Eric,” she replied. “This is something that you’re really good at and we know MJ appreciates it. Each elephant patted Eric on the back before Ellie held up the duvet for him to make his way back.

“Come on!” said Mum briskly as she opened MJ’s door, “You’ve got to get up for school!” and pulled the curtains open. As daylight filled the room, Mum gasped.

“What have you been doing?” cried Mum. “Why are all your books on the floor and pieces of paper everywhere? And what are all those crumbs?”

MJ opened a sleepy eye. “Sorry Mum, what?” she replied.

You’ll have to clean all this up once you get back from school!” snapped Mum as she left the room.

MJ sat up and saw an empty bookcase, a wall of books stretching across the room and pieces of torn paper on the floor, mixed together with lemony scented crumbs.

“Looks like I won’t have time to hold an elephant election,” she said under her breath.

She swung her legs out of the bed, leaned down, picked up a piece of paper and read the writing on one side of it.

“I wonder who Donald Trunk is?” she said to herself.

“Hurry up and get dressed!” called Mum from the kitchen.

MJ put her feet on the floor and had taken only two paces, when a sharp pain shot through her foot.



“Owww!” she cried in pain, and quickly sat back down on the bed and rubbed her painful sole. Then she spotted something strange glinting on her carpet. Instinctively, she leaned down, picked it up and held it up to the light.

“How on earth did a pearl earring get into my room?” she said out loud.



MJ AND HER SMARTY-PHANTS AND THE CASE OF THE BAD MAGICIAN

MARGARET-JAYNE or MJ as she prefers to be known, is a little girl who is eight, lives near the park and owns three cuddly Elephants called Ellie, Eric and Emilio. She was an ordinary girl with ordinary toy elephants until she met an extraordinary man called Mr Magick and helped him to cross the road. He presented her with three magical bow ties, which when worn by the elephants, brings them to life when the clock strikes five. Through a quirk of fate, she now has four elephants, the last of which, only has one arm and one eye and is called Nelson. He wears an eye patch made from spare material from another one of the gang's bow ties.

MJ was serving Tea to her Elephants in the Living Room, when Mum came in with a big smile on her face. She had a large poster in one hand.

"Ellie, here's a biscuit for you," said MJ passing over a chocolate digestive to Ellie, who was first in a neat row of Elephants. Next was Eric, then Emilio and finally, Nelson. Each Elephant had a teacup, a saucer and a plate in front of them. MJ was being Mother.

"Guess who's on at the Town Hall?" asked Mum, wryly.

"The Mayor?" replied MJ with a giggle.

"No, silly!" laughed Mum. "Which act is performing at the Town Hall this Friday and Saturday?"



“I give in,” replied MJ, putting the biscuits down.

“Only that nice man who sent you the Bow Ties,”

“Mr Magick?” gasped MJ, wide eyed.

“The very same,” replied Mum, unrolling the poster so MJ could see.

“Oh wow!” exclaimed MJ, inspecting the poster carefully.

“For two nights only,” she read out. “Mr Magick – Conjuror to Kings, Countesses and Maharajahs”

“Directly descended from Merlin, the Master Magician of the Court of King Arthur,” continued Mum, “Show commences 7pm, Tickets 50p.”

Mum and MJ looked at each other.

“That’s a bit cheap for all that history and expertise,” said Mum, raising an eyebrow.

“I’ve got 50p!” beamed MJ, but then screwed her face up. “I wonder what they charge for Elephants?”

Mum laughed.

MJ counted the days until Friday finally arrived. “Let’s get the Elephants in the car Mum,” exclaimed MJ, excitedly.

Mum smiled and unlocked the car doors. Very carefully, MJ placed each elephant in the back seat and buckled them in. Ellie went on the left, Emilio on the right and in the middle went Nelson and Eric – as Nelson was the smallest and Eric was the snuggliest, they fitted together nicely in the middle under the lap seatbelt.

“Now,” began Mum, I’m going to drop you at the Town Hall and meet your Auntie Jean for Tea. We’ll be in the Restaurant right opposite the Town Hall entrance if you need us.

“Righto, Mum,” beamed MJ, not really listening, as she was really looking forward to seeing Mr Magick again.

Mum parked the car and MJ excitedly unbuckled each Elephant from the back of the car.

“Are you ready to see the show, Elephants?” she asked, as she clutched all four elephants to her chest.



Mum, MJ and Elephants made their way to the Town Hall. On arrival, MJ dug around in her pockets for the 50p, whilst simultaneously hang on to her Elephants and eventually found it, to her relief.

“Phew!” gasped MJ, triumphantly showing Mum the 50p piece.

“Off you go,” said Mum, “I can see your Auntie Jean in the restaurant, sitting at a table by the window.

“Bye, Mum,” said MJ, “See you after the show.”

“That’s 50p,” said the lady in the box office.

MJ handed over her 50p piece. “How much for Elephants?” she asked.

The lady in the box office smiled. “Elephants are free tonight,” she replied. “As long as they sit on your knee.”

“Coolio,” replied MJ and took her ticket out of the lady’s hand.

“A12,” she read from the ticket, as she walked into the hall.

“A12, A12, A12,” she repeated, looking at the numbers painted on the sides of each row of seats.

“Where are you sitting,” asked an Usherette with a torch.

“A12,” replied MJ, holding out the ticket, with some difficulty, as she still had an armful of elephants.

“Oooooh!” replied the Usherette, “You’ve only got the VIP seat, right in the middle of the front row.”

“Wow!” replied MJ, eyes open very wide.

“Step this way,” said the Usherette, with a curtsy.

As MJ was led to her seat, the other show goers started to whisper, guessing who she might be, to be escorted to the best seat in the house, right in front of the centre of the stage.

“She’s a Norwegian Princess,” whispered one woman, rather loudly.

MJ gulped on hearing that and then quietly smiled to herself. She quite liked the attention.

About 20 minutes later, the house lights started to be turned down and the safety curtain went up. Indian Sitar music started to play.



“Ladies and Gentlemen,” Boomed a voice over the speaker system, “Conjurer to Kings, Countesses and Maharajahs,”

MJ looked around the room and saw that there weren’t that many people in. “It’s not even half full!” She thought to herself.

“Back from a sell-out tour of Abyssinia, Samarkand and Tibet,” Continued the voice, “That Master Magician, direct descendant of Merlin - Wizard to the Court of Camelot, King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table, please welcome the mesmerising, mystical, Mr Magick!”

The audience applauded and MJ clapped very loud indeed. Then she suddenly stopped clapping.

The man who entered the stage was not the man she helped across the road! He was much younger, not more than 25 and was dressed in a oriental silk robe, under which you could clearly see denim jeans and training shoes. On his head he wore a black and red silk Mandarin hat.

MJ leaned down towards her elephants and whispered, “That’s NOT Mr Magick!”

“Ladies & Gentlemen,” said the young Mr Magick, “I will now astound you with” and then everything went quiet. His microphone had stopped working. He started tapping his lapel where the microphone was pinned, but nothing happened.

The audience started to chuckle.

Put on the spot and somewhat embarrassed, he gave his microphone a mighty whack.

“Weee,” whistled the microphone really loudly.

“Ooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooh!” responded the audience, screwing their faces up to the painful noise. Thankfully, the microphone then started to function normally.

“Sorry about that,” grimaced the young Mr Magick. “Now I will defy gravity by keeping no less than ten plates spinning on ten spikes!”

Half-hearted applause rippled sporadically around the hall.



As more mystical music played, young Mr Magick set the first plate on the first spike and set it spinning. MJ's heart was in her mouth as he stepped back gingerly, ready to fix any problem.

"Ooooooooooh!" went the audience.

A moment later, he set plate number 2 spinning, then a third plate and a fourth. A round of more enthusiastic applause came from the audience. It was sadly short-lived. Now filled with confidence, he set plates numbers 5, 6 and 7 spinning, but forgot to check plates 1 & 2.

"Ooooooooooh!" went the audience, knowing what was about to unfold.

Suddenly, young Mr Magick was faced with holding plate number 8, but not having enough hands to rescue numbers 1 & 2.

"Crash!" went plate number 1.

"Crash, crash!" went plates 2 and 3. As he vainly tried to rescue plate number 4, he gave it far too much spin and sent it flying into the audience.

"Ooooooooooooooh!" Went the audience.

A series of many crashes followed as other plates fell off their spikes, followed by a loud cheer from the audience.

"Oh dear!" thought MJ, putting her hands over the elephants' eyes to save them the pain and embarrassment.

On the stage, young Mr Magick, decided to rescue his act with some card tricks.

Dramatically Fanning out a pack of cards on one hand towards audience, he exclaimed, "Ladies and Gentlemen, pick one card from the pack and memorise it,"

The audience had the house lights in their eyes, so everyone leaned forward to get a better view. Spotting their difficulty, young Mr Magick, leaned forward to give the audience a better view. However, he leaned so far forward that he lost his balance, and in an attempt to steady himself, threw one arm out, where his second pack of cards was secreted and sent them flying like confetti into the first three rows.

Another loud guffaw emanated from the audience and MJ could see that people were starting to wipe away tears of laughter.



Trying to compose himself, young Mr Magick, came up with a plan.

“For my next trick,” he declared, “I need the help of a volunteer,”

The audience went very quiet, all hoping that he didn’t pick them.

“Perhaps,” continued young Mr Magick, “There is a Norwegian Princess amongst us?”

MJ’s eyes bulged as she realised that he meant her!

“She’s at the front!” called out a man from the back.

“There she is!” called out another, pointing at MJ.

“Give her a round of applause!” called out young Mr Magick and out of pure relief, the audience obliged.

Before she knew it, she was being led up the steps to the stage by Mr Magick, to rafts of applause.

What happened next made MJ gasp with horror.

Grabbing a huge Bow Saw from the table and holding it aloft, he announced, “I will now saw an elephant in half!”

The audience gasped. “Put your elephants into the glass tank,” he continued, pointing mystically at a hinged glass tank of the table

“Not on your Nelly!” cried MJ, clutching her elephants closer and taking a step back.

This brought another huge laugh from the audience.

Quickly putting down the saw and taking out a watch on a chain from his pocket, he began to spin it in front of MJ’s eyes.

“You are in my power,” said young Mr Magick, gesturing dramatically with his free hand.

“Give me your elephants,” he added, “They will come to no harm,”

“I said no way!” cried MJ, which generated another huge outburst of mirth from the audience.

“What a star!” responded young Mr Magick, pointing and MJ and applauding, trying to divert attention from his series of failed tricks.

“Norwegian Princess,” said young Mr Magick, “I will now disappear and rematerialize elsewhere in the room.” He pulled on a large black silk cloth to reveal a large cupboard



centre stage. Opening the door, he said, “Your Highness, please check that this is an ordinary cupboard.

MJ gingerly looked in the cupboard, turned around and nodded.

Young Mr Magick stepped into the cupboard and turned dramatically towards the audience.

“Your Highness,” he continued, “Please close the door and turn the magic key.”

MJ closed the door but couldn’t turn the key as she had an armful of elephants. As young Mr Magick was in the cupboard and didn’t have the saw with him, she felt safe enough to put the elephants on the table, next to a bottle labelled ‘Magic Ink’ and returned to the cupboard. She turned the magic key. As soon as it went “click” the house lights turned off, leaving the whole room in darkness.

“Ooooooooooooooh!” went the audience.

5 seconds later, the house lights came back on, but nothing happened.

30 seconds later, nothing was happening at all.

“Unlock the door!” called out someone from the audience.

MJ stepped forward and turned the key. There was a rumble, then the door started to vibrate and bang. Suddenly, the door flew open and out fell young Mr Magic. Trying to steady himself, he grabbed a corner the table and the elephants and magic ink all went flying into the air. Also, a white Dove secreted in his robe went flying into the audience and landed on a small child’s head.

MJ looked in horror as the magic ink bottle lid came loose and cascaded all over her prone elephants.

“You’ve inked my Elephants!” she cried.

This was too much for the audience, who were now crying with laughter. This increased in intensity when the white Dove suddenly pooped on the child’s head.

“Waaaaaaahhhhh!” cried the child, generating concern from his Mum and giggles from the rest of the audience.

The strangest thing then happened. The audience stood and applauded. Young Mr Magick bowed deeply and then turned to an angry looking MJ and applauded her with a big smile,



which brought a huge cheer from the audience. As the safety curtain came down, MJ looked at her somewhat inky elephants.

“I’m so sorry,” said young Mr Magick. “There’s a washing machine backstage, I can clean them up in there.

“You’re not Mr Magick,” declared MJ haughtily, her arms folded. “I’ve met Mr Magick and that’s not you. He was old and very smartly dressed. You’ve got jeans and trainers on.”

“That’s my Granddad,” he replied. “He’s had a fall and he’s in Hospital,” he continued, looking sad. “He’s really not well, so rather than let people down, I decided to do his show myself.”

“But you’re rubbish,” blurted MJ, realising that she’d just been very rude.

“Indeed, I am,” he replied meekly, “and I’ve got another show to face up to tomorrow.”

“Oh dear,” replied MJ. Then her eyes lit up when she spotted a familiar brown suitcase in the corner of the room, painted with a wand and stars, bow ties and Mr Magick’s name in big sparkly letters. “That’s his case!” she cried.

“Yes,” replied young Mr Magick, “But I don’t have the keys for it.

Suddenly, there was a knock on the door and it opened to reveal the Usherette and Mum.

“Where’s this Norwegian Princess I’ve been hearing about?” said Mum wryly.

“Let me get these elephants cleaned and you can collect them tomorrow.” He suggested.

Mum looked at the inky elephants. “Good idea,” she replied, “but don’t tumble dry them.”

“Noted,” said young Mr Magick – then he had an idea. “Why don’t you all come to the show tomorrow?”

“Lovely!” said Mum, not seeing MJ shaking her head discreetly at her.

MJ and Mum departed, leaving young Mr Magick to load up the washing machine with inky elephants. At the end of the cycle, he was delighted to see that all the ink was gone and the elephants were pristine and unstained. Remembering what Mum had said, he sat each elephant on the radiator and left them to dry.

“Night, night boys,” he said, as he switched the light off and climbed into a camp bed in the corner of the dressing room and eventually went to sleep.



“Bong!” went the town hall clock.

“Bong!” it went again, until five Bongs had bonged.

“Ow!” shouted Ellie, jumping off the hot radiator. “My Bum’s on fire!”

“Mine too!” cried Eric, hopping down very quickly.

“This is most ignite-icacious!” declared Emilio, making up yet another word.

“It was hotter than this when I was in the Sahara Desert,” fibbed Nelson, casually.

“To business!” declared Ellie. “Where’s that rubbish magician who set our butts alight?”

Eric jumped onto the dressing table and switched a lamp on. “I can sense some snuggling going on,” he smiled. And indeed, snuggled up in his camp bed was young Mr Magick.

Ellie winked and motioned to Nelson. “One, two three,” she said and then with a mighty yank, the two elephants pulled the sleeping bag from around him.

“Wassgoingon?” cried young Mr Magick, as he was propelled onto the hard floor with a thud.

“We might ask you the same question,” replied Elle, hands on hips.

“Elephants?” gasped young Mr Magick. “Just a minute,” he continued, hand on forehead.

“I’m dreaming,”

“Your act,” said Ellie.

“Is the focusiation of baddish-ability,” added Emilio.

“You could definitely hide those cards better,” added Nelson. “When I was in MI5”

“Shhh!” Shushed Ellie, not wanting to be party to yet another of Nelson’s tall stories.

“So what do you suggest, O elephants of my dreams?” asked young Mr Magick sleepily.

“Open the case!” said Ellie, as Eric obligingly trotted over carrying Mr Magick’s case.

“I don’t have the key!” cried young Mr Magick.

“But we have tusks,” said Ellie winking. “Nelson, open the case.”

Nelson slipped a tusk into the first lock, which opened with a big click. “I used to pick locks when I was in a Prisoner-of-War Camp,” he explained.

The other three elephants shook their heads at this latest fib.

“Hey presto!” shouted Nelson triumphantly as the second lock clicked open.



Young Mr Magick opened the case lid and a warm glow emanated from within.

“Oh my word,” he said. Reaching inside, he pulled out a black satin tailcoat, matching trousers, a stiff collared white shirt, a black and white wand and a silk top hat.

“Is there enough room inside that tiny case for all that stuff?” observed Eric. The other elephants looked at each other and shrugged.

Ellie leaned into the case. “There’s two envelopes here,” she cried excitedly.

“What’s in them?” cried the other elephants.

“A rainbow-coloured bow tie and a note in each,” replied Ellie, perusing one. “Elephants, we’ve got work to do.”

“Get your act sorted out,” snapped Ellie at young Mr Magick, as she opened the door. “The answers are all in that case.”

With that, the four elephants scampered out of the dressing room. Young Mr Magick shook his head and climbed back into bed.

Outside, the elephants gathered under a streetlight.

“Where are we going?” asked Eric.

Ellie held up an envelope. “To the hospital,” she replied. “Everyone cross their trunks,”

All four elephants raised their trunks skywards and crossed them over.

“Ele-portation!” cried Ellie. The elephants were suddenly bathed in an ever-increasing glow, until it became a bright light and then, they were gone.

The next morning, young Mr Magick awoke to see everything as he left it. And there were four elephants sat on the radiator.

“What a strange dream!” he said, scratching his head. Just in case however, he went over to his Granddad’s case and tried to undo the locks, but it was firmly locked. “Yep, a very strange dream,” he added.

For the rest of the day, he prepared his tricks, and practiced and practiced, but there was much improvement. Then there was a knock at the door. It was the usherette.

“You’ve nearly sold out!” she beamed.

“What?” gasped young Mr Magick.



“Only six seats left on the front row,” she replied.

“Save them for my guests,” he sighed, remembering his promise to MJ’s Mum and at the same time fretting that all his tricks would go wrong.

The Usherette smiled, “It seems that the whole town has heard about a hilarious magician, and they all want to see his terrible tricks!”

“Oh, that’s a relief,” fibbed young Mr Magick.

After setting the stage up, he looked at his watch and saw it was a quarter to six. Not long to the show start, so he went down to his dressing room and got out his silk gown and Mandarin’s silk hat. Just then, there were two loud clicks from his Granddad’s case as the locks flew open and the lid slowly rose to reveal its contents. Once more a warm glow filled the room.

Young Mr Magick edged forward and peered nervously into the case. The familiar tailcoat, shirt, trouser, patent leather shoes and Top Hat were all there, but on top of them all was an envelope. Taking the envelope out, he opened it to reveal a rainbow-coloured bow tie and a note. He opened it and recognised his Granddad’s handwriting.

It said, “Tricks fixed at Six – one of Mr Magick’s Bow Ties can only improve your image!”

He looked at his watch – it was now ten minutes before six. Very quickly he disposed of his jeans and trainers and put on the clothes in the case. They were very loose at first, but seemed to gradually shrink until they became a a perfect fit! The bow tie was last. Just as he tied it, the Town Hall Clock went “Bong” and “Bong” again, until six bongs had bonged. The rainbow coloured bow tie began to glow brighter and brighter and thoughts began to fill his head.

“Of course!” young Mr Magick cried, his eyes bulging. “Of course! It’s all so logical!”

Mum and MJ arrived at the very busy Town Hall to be met by the Usherette and given their tickets.

“There are six tickets here,” said MJ to the Usherette, looking confused.

“Yes,” replied the Usherette. “Your other four guests are already seated.”



Mum and MJ looked at each other and shrugged, but it became very clear who the other seats were for, when MJ saw Ellie, Eric, Emilio and Nelson were already in their seats.

“It’s the Norwegian Princess,” whispered someone very loudly, as MJ and Mum were escorted to their seats and some spontaneous applause broke out.

MJ sat down and noted that the Magic Cupboard had gone, but there was a huge gong in its place. The table had a large square object on it obscured by a black silk cloth.

The lights suddenly went out making the audience gasp with anticipation.

Then a bright spotlight shone on an immaculate young Mr Magick, dressed in his top hat and tailcoat, brandishing a black and white wand, which he pointed at MJ.

“Ladies and Gentlemen,” he began, “I will now not only transport four inanimate objects into my Crystal Case,” whipping of the black cloth to reveal the clear case. “But I will also bring them to life!”

Suddenly the spotlight was extinguished and the darkness which enveloped was almost immediately pierced by four coloured spotlights, each focusing on Ellie, Eric, Emilio and Nelson as they sat on the front row.

The spotlights suddenly went out, causing the audience to gasp once more. The audience drew another sharp intake of breath as the coloured spotlights returned mere seconds later to reveal four empty seats where the elephants had once sat.

“My elephants!” cried MJ, wide eyed, immediately remembering the Bow Saw from the night before.

“Observe,” boomed young Mr Magick’s voice as the Crystal Case suddenly glowed to reveal all four Elephants inside. A huge round of applause rippled from the audience.

The lights went out once more and a spotlight picked out the huge gong, centre stage.

“Observe once more,” boomed young Mr Magick, picking up the soft mallet with which to strike the gong.

Bong! Resonated the huge gong.

Bong it went once more, until five gong bongs had bonged.

The lights went out once more and then suddenly everyone including MJ gasped.



As the light on the Crystal Case glowed brighter and brighter, the Elephants began to move and then to dance and then to MJ's amazement, to sing.

"We'll go where we want to, we'll do what we want to, we'll see just who we want to see,"

"We'll laugh when we want to, we'll cry when we want to, we're free as a fish in the sea,"

"We, we, we are the Smarty-Phants,"

"Oh yeah, we, are the Smarty-Phants,"

The audience were enthusiastically applauding at the dancing, singing and supposedly alive elephants. Just then the music stopped, the lights went out once more and seconds later, the four coloured spotlights returned to show all four elephants sitting back in their seats. The crowd were on their feet applauding. MJ was just relieved that her elephants were back.

After the show was over, Mum and MJ met young Mr Magick in the lounge.

"Has there been any improvement in your Granddad?" asked MJ.

"There's not," replied young Mr Magick, "But you know what? I'm not as worried now."

It was nearly time to go home, so Mum, MJ and the elephants made their way back to the car.

Up at the hospital, Mr Magick was still in bed and remained motionless. The nurses were concerned about his lack of progress and had silently prepared themselves for the worst.

"Ting!" went the clock in the Hospital visitor's room.

"Ting!" it went again until nine tings had tinged.

"Nurse!" shouted Mr Magick croakily, sitting up. "Could I have a cup of tea?"

The nurse ran over and immediately took his pulse. "You had us all worried there," she said. Then she noticed something strange.

"That's a rather splendid rainbow coloured bow tie you've got around your wrist, where did it come from?" She asked.

"Delivered by friends," he replied enigmatically. "Delivered by friends."



She went over to the Tea Trolley and poured a hot steaming cup. As she placed his cup of tea by his bed, she noticed a note next to an envelope that she'd not seen before. She picked it up to study it.

In neat handwriting the note read, "Fine by Nine. You'll always feel better wearing one of Mr Magick's Bow Ties."



BOOK 24 - MJ & HER SMARTY-PHANTS AND THE TSAR LOSER

MARGARET-JAYNE or MJ as she prefers to be known, is a little girl who lives near the park and owns three cuddly Elephants called Ellie, Eric and Emilio. She was an ordinary girl with ordinary toy elephants until she met an extraordinary man called Mr Magick and helped him to cross the road. He presented her with three magical bow ties, which when worn by the elephants, brings them to life when the clock strikes five. Through a quirk of fate, she now has four elephants, the last of which, only has one arm and one eye and is called Nelson. He wears an eye patch made from spare material from another one of the gang's bow ties.

Uncle Bill came to visit. MJ was looking out of the window when he arrived and got all excited. Uncle Bill ALWAYS brought a present with him for her. She ran to the front door and opened it. Uncle Bill was opening the back of his Jeep.

"Did you bring me anything, Uncle Bill?" she asked wryly.

"I might have!" replied Uncle Bill with a wink.

This made MJ even more excited. "What is it? What is it?" she cried, jumping up and down with excitement.

Uncle Bill turned around with his arms full of a strange looking machine.

MJ gasped. In his hands was a large rectangular, black body, with four arms and propeller in each corner.

"It's a Drone!" she exclaimed loudly, clapping her hands together in pure glee.

Mum poked her head through the door.

"What's a Drone?" asked Mum.



“You fly them!” replied MJ and Uncle Bill in unison.

“Where?” asked Mum.

“Let’s go into the back garden and I’ll show you,” replied Uncle Bill.

A curious Mum and very excited MJ followed Uncle Bill into the back garden, where he carefully placed the drone on the ground.

“Stand back,” said Uncle Bill and ushered everyone away from the drone. Then MJ and Mum got a better look at a box he was holding. It had switches, an antenna, a joystick and a big screen in the middle.

“You fly it with this,” explained Uncle Bill, “This switches the engines on, the joystick steers it left and right, up and down and the antenna communicates with the Drone.”

“Wow!” exclaimed MJ.

Mum frowned. “What’s the screen for?” she asked.

Uncle Bill smiled. “That’s the best bit,” he replied. There’s a camera under the drone and you can see all the footage on the screen.”

“So you can see my house?” asked Mum.

Uncle Bill nodded. “And everything else under it,” he replied.

Uncle Bill flicked a switch on the control box and the propellers began to spin. Faster and faster they went, until it buzzed like a bumblebee.

“Prepare for take-off!” shouted Uncle Bill and with that, the buzzing became much higher pitched and all of a sudden, the drone shot upwards until it was as high as the house, causing Mum and MJ to gasp.

“Come and look!” shouted Uncle Bill, pointing at the screen on his control box.

MJ peered into the screen. “That’s us!” she cried with joy.

“My hair looks terrible,” quipped Mum, clearly horrified.

“Look,” shouted MJ, “I’m waving to us!”

Her waving hand could be seen quite clearly on the screen.

Uncle Bill smiled. “Watch this!” he said and to MJ’s surprise, her hand filled more and more of the screen.



“Oh,” said Mum. “You can zoom in them?”

“Right,” replied Uncle Bill, nodding. “The camera has a very clear lens and sharp focus. You can use it from really high up and see everything.”

“Go higher!” cried MJ Gleefully. Uncle Bill obliged and sent the drone skywards.

“Now watch the screen,” said Uncle Bill and with a twist of the joystick, he sent the drone over the street, so you could see every house and garden in the street.

“Oooh, look at that!” said MJ.

“I see Mrs Boyd’s washing is still out on the line,” commented Mum. “It’s going to rain today, she’ll need to take it in soon.”

“Can I have a go?” Asked MJ.

“Of course,” said Uncle Bill, “I’ll show you what to do.”

For the next few minutes, Uncle Bill showed MJ how to send the drone up, down, left and right.

“This is fun!” cried MJ. “Can my elephants go up on it?”

Uncle Bill scratched his chin. “If they’re not too big,” he replied.

With that, MJ shot off to her room and returned with an armful of elephants, which she seated carefully on the garden table, whilst Uncle Bill landed the drone in the garden.

Once the propellers stopped spinning, Uncle Bill looked at the elephants.

“Hmmm. He’s too big,” said Uncle Bill, pointing at Emilio. “And that one too,” that was levelled at Eric. And this one as well,” added Uncle Bill, looking at Ellie.

“Now this one is the right size exactly,” said Uncle Bill, pointing at Nelson. “Not too heavy for the drone.”

MJ jumped for joy.

“But we’ll need to secure him to the drone so we don’t accidentally lose him.” Added Uncle Bill.

“I’ve got some string in the kitchen,” said Mum and nipped away to fetch it.

When Mum returned, Uncle Bill placed Nelson on top of the drone and cut a length of string to tie him in place.



“He won’t be able to see anything,” protested MJ, hands on hips.

“Pardon?” asked Uncle Bill.

“He needs to be looking downwards,” replied MJ, “or all he’ll see is sky.”

“Of course,” said Uncle Bill, shaking his head, and turned Nelson onto his front. Once tied in place, the countdown could start.

“Nelson’s already been to the moon,” said MJ.

Mum smiled at Uncle Bill and he winked back.

“Stand back,” said Uncle Bill and flicked a switch to turn the propellers on. Once again, the buzzing increased in volume until it sounded like a swarm of Bumblebees.

Quite slowly, the drone lifted off and made its way to rooftop level.

“I can see Nelson’s trunk!” cried MJ, pointing to a corner of the screen which indeed, did feature the tip of Nelson’s trunk.

“Can I try?” asked Mum.

“Of course,” replied Uncle Bill and handed her the control box.

MJ looked horrified. “Just be careful with Nelson,” she cried. But Mum wasn’t listening. She was too busy swooping, diving and accelerating.

“Er, let’s bring it down now,” suggested Uncle Bill nervously.

“No problem,” said Mum and pulled on the joystick, causing the drone to swoop towards them, somewhat quickly.

“You need to slow the descent,” said Uncle Bill, now starting to panic.

“Duck!” shouted MJ.

“Bzzzzzzzzzz!” went the drone as it shot past them and flew into Mum’s Blackberry bush.

“Nelson!” cried MJ, as the drone came to an abrupt stop in the prickly fruit bush.

“Sorry,” said Mum, somewhat sheepishly and handed the control box to Uncle Bill.

There were several “Ows” and “Ooches” as Uncle Bill extracted the drone, and Nelson from the prickly Blackberry Bush. The drone was eventually placed on the garden table and Nelson untied and returned to MJ.



Mum thought for a minute. “Drones can be quite dangerous,” she said. “Are there any laws to regulate their use?”

“Not at the moment,” replied Uncle Bill. “But the government is appointing a ‘Drone Tsar’ to oversee those who fly them.”

“What’s a Tsar?” asked MJ, looking puzzled.

“A Tsar is someone who’s in overall charge of something,” replied Uncle Bill. They have a lot of power and influence.”

“Ahhhhh,” replied MJ. “Like a King.”

A little later in the kitchen, Mum tried to make up for her lack of drone-manship with some tea and buns.

“Have a custard doughnut,” said Mum, “I made them last night,” handing over a large tray of doughnuts, dusted with sugar.

“Mmm,” said Uncle Bill and bit into the large doughnut. But as he bit, a large squirt of yellow custard shot out of the opposite side of the doughnut and onto the floor.

MJ laughed out loud.

“Looks like I put far too much custard inside them,” said Mum. “They’ll all have to go,”

“But you’ll have no desserts then?” said Uncle Bill, licking his lips.

“I’ll be picking the blackberries in a couple of days and making a big crumble,” replied Mum.

Uncle Bill and MJ both liked the sound of that and imagined hot crumble with cold custard.

A little while later, Uncle Bill had to go to work and left the drone to be collected the next day.

At bedtime, MJ said goodnight to her elephants and began to dream a lovely dream about being a famous drone pilot.

All was quiet in MJ’s house, until the clock in the hall went, “Bong!” and “Bong!” once more, until five bongs had bonged.

“I’m hungry,” said Ellie. “Let’s go down to the kitchen.”

“I’m famished,” added Emilio. “I wonder if there’s any lemon drizzle cake?”



Eric poked his trunk out of the bed where he, once again, was in MJ's sleepy grip. "Bring me some?" he asked.

"Either come down with us or take a chance that there'll be some left!" sneered Ellie.

Eric didn't need to be told twice. He squeezed out of the bed and joined the others as they hopped down the stairs.

"You're very silencious, Nelson," said Emilio. "Everything ok?"

"He's still airsick from today," snapped Ellie.

"No," replied Nelson. "It's not that," He shook his head. "I just thought I saw something from the air. Something from the time I was arrested by the KGB in St Petersburg,"

"Hah!" sneered Ellie. "He's making up stories again!" Ellie pushed the kitchen door open and stopped in her tracks at the sight which unfolded in front of her.

The kitchen was bathed in light from the fridge door which was wide open. Six menacing looking elephants wearing steel helmets painted white, blue and red had surrounded the fridge and were barring the way to it.

"Hey!" shouted Ellie. "This is our fridge – who are you?"

Nelson pushed his way to the front and whispered into Ellie's ear.

"These are Ruskiphants." Explained Nelson. "The personal bodyguard of the Tsar."

"Who's the Tsar?" whispered Eric Nervously.

Just then, on the top of the kitchen counter, another elephant appeared, wearing a fur hat with a white, blue and red badge on the front and a matching bow tie. And he was eating their lemon drizzle cake!

"Hello, Nelson." He said, nodding.

"Who is it?" asked Eric.

"The Tsar." Replied Nelson grimly. "The Putiphant."

"The Putiphant?" exclaimed Ellie, Eric and Emilio in unison with a gasp.

One of the Ruskiphants stepped forward as the Putiphant munched on the lemon drizzle cake.



“We claim this lemon drizzle cake in the name of the Tsar,” said the Ruskiphant in a heavy accent. “It is from an ancient family recipe, so it rightly his,”

“Piffle!” retorted Ellie. “Mum made it the other day. It’s from MJ’s family cookbook, not his!”

There was a brief conversation between the Ruskiphants and they looked up at the Putiphant. The Putiphant nodded and waved his hand.

The Ruskiphant stepped forward once again.

“In the name of the Tsar, we claim this kitchen, Fridge and all cakes within. We also lay claim to garden and all fruits being grown there,”

“Not on your nellie!” snorted Ellie. “This is MJ’s house, we’re MJ’s elephants and those are MJ’s cakes!”

This initiated another conversation between the Ruskiphants and another nod from the Putiphant. The Ruskiphant stepped forward again and handed a piece of paper to each of the Smarty-Phants.

“This is referendum,” said the Ruskiphant. “You vote yes, we take kitchen, garden, fruits and cakes.”

“And if we vote no?” asked Nelson pointedly.

“We honour result,” replied the Ruskiphant. Behind him, the other Ruskiphants began to giggle.

“What are they laughing at?” Asked a very worried Eric.

“Everyone vote yes, always,” replied the Ruskiphant, with a wink.

Erc put his hand up. “Why is it so cold in here?” he asked, shivering a bit.

“The fridge door is open,” replied Nelson.

“No,” butted in the Ruskiphant. “We switch off gas, until after referendum.”

“Right!” snapped Ellie angrily. “Grab a pen – everyone vote no!”

Each elephant took it in turns to tick the NO box on the sheet of paper and handed the documents back to Ellie.



“The answer is a resounding NO,” said Ellie smugly and stuffed the sheets into the hand of the Ruskiphant. He then hopped onto the kitchen counter and held them out to the Putiphant. The Putiphant popped the last piece of cake into his mouth and brushed his hands together to get rid of the crumbs. Once done, he took the sheets and looked at each one in turn. Then he whispered into the Ruskiphant’s ear. The Ruskiphant nodded and hopped back onto the kitchen floor.

“You have voted NO,” announced the Ruskiphant.

“Hooray!!” replied the Smarty-Phants together, rejoicing at the unanimous result.

“Ahem,” coughed the Ruskiphant. “You have voted NO; means no, you don’t mind us taking your kitchen, cakes and garden.”

What?” cried Ellie angrily

“And now Tsar will tour new territories, beginning with garden and blackberry bushes.”

“He hasn’t changed a bit,” sighed Nelson.

The Ruskiphant leaned over to Ellie. “Tsar, he like Blackberries, no likey Custard Doughnuts. Yuk!”

“Niet!” snarled the Putiphant, sticking his tongue out in disgust.

And with that, the door was opened for him and he marched out into the garden together with his bodyguards.

“What are we going to do?” cried Eric. He’ll eat everything and we’ll starve!”

“We must seek out a workifyable solution!” replied Emilio.

“And do what?” snorted Ellie dismissively.

“We need help,” interjected Nelson, scratching his chin with his one hand.

“Who from?” snapped Ellie.

“Someone I met in Berlin,” replied Nelson enigmatically. “We need to cross trunks and try to summon him,”

They all nodded in agreement and each elephant stretched out their trunks until they were crossed.

“Ready?” asked Nelson and took a deep breath “Stopannexation!” he cried.



There was a sudden blue flash, then a rumble of thunder followed by a cloud of yellow smoke, which slowly began to disperse, until eventually an outline could be seen. From within the cloud, was an elephant with a black goatee beard, wearing a green t-shirt and a blue and yellow bow tie.

“Who is it?” whispered Eric.

Nelson smiled. “The only one who can help rid us of these cheeky invaders,” replied Nelson.

“And that is?” added Eric, dying to find out.

Nelson paused dramatically. “The Zelenskiphant!” He cried. “Master tactician and strategic thinker.”

“Dobroho Ranku, Nelson,” said the Zelenskiphant in a strong accent. “You need me to help you get rid of invaders?”

“Yes!” butted in Ellie. “They’ve stolen all the lemon drizzle cake!” She shook her head. “We usually do that!”

“Where are invaders now?” He asked.

“In the garden,” replied Nelson, “pinching Mum’s blackberries – look!”

The elephants climbed onto the windowsill and looked. There was the Putiphant munching on blackberries picked by his bodyguards, who were all grimacing from the pain caused by the thorn pricks in their hands.

“Hah!” scoffed the Zelenskiphant. “Putiphant no pick blackberries. He hate thorns nearly as much as he hate custard!”

“How will we get rid of them?” asked Nelson. “There’s not enough of us,”

“We attack from air first,” replied the Zelenskiphant, pointing at the drone on the garden table. “You fly?”

“I can,” agreed Nelson, glancing over at the doughnuts on the tray. “Does he really hate custard?”

“Very much,” he replied. “Custard make him cry like big baby,”

Now the plan was being formed, Nelson opened the back door, Eric and Emilio grabbed the tray of doughnuts and Ellie brought the string. The Zelenskiyhant watched from the window



with the drone remote control at the ready. As he watched, the others trotted out to the garden and quietly climbed onto the table and loaded up the drone with Nelson and the doughnuts. Finally, Ellie tied Nelson to the drone and gave the thumbs up signal.

The Zelenskiphant flicked the on switch and the drone began to buzz. The Ruskiphants turned round and looked to see what the noise was but couldn't see where it was coming from. Distracted by the Putiphant wanting more blackberries, they ignored the danger.

"We have lift off!" cried the Zelenskiphant and pushed the joystick upwards. The drone buzzed louder and shot into the sky above the rooftops. Very carefully, he manoeuvred the drone until he could see the Putiphant and his bodyguards in the screen. Looking up, he could see Nelson waving to go lower, so very carefully, he made the drone descend until he got another thumbs up sign from Nelson.

Waiting for exactly the right moment, Nelson readied his doughnuts.

"Buns away!!" shouted Nelson, dropping one, two, three, four doughnuts towards the targets below.

Hearing Nelson shout, the Ruskiphants all looked up – at exactly the wrong moment.

One, two, three, four doughnuts found their targets. "Splat! Splat! Splat! Splat!" went the doughnuts on their heads and the sticky yellow custard squirted everywhere.

Unable to see, the Ruskiphants ran into each other and fell over.

"Go!" cried the Zeleskiphant and the kitchen door opened once more, this time Ellie, Eric and Emilio grabbed two doughnuts each and ran out into the garden, towards the blackberry bushes and let rip.

"Splat, Splat!" went the first two shots, and finding their targets, all the bodyguards were now incapacitated in a sticky yellow mess.

"Surrender, Putiphant!" shouted Ellie.

The Putiphant took a final mouthful of blackberries and brushed his hands. Looking indignant. "Niet!" he shouted.

Ellie drew her arm back to send her payload on its way. But Nelson was ahead of her.

"Buns away!" he shouted once more from above. And foolishly, the Putiphant looked up.



“Splat! Splat!” Went Nelson’s final delivery, right on target in the Putiphant’s face. Custard went everywhere and the Putiphant began to feel sick. Now in a panic, the Putiphant tried to run, but unable to see through the sticky custard, he ran straight into the thorny Blackberry bushes.

“Ow! Ow! Ow!” cried the Putiphant, now all tangled in thorns.

Now surrounded, the Ruskiphant bodyguards put their hands up to surrender.

“Get your boss out of the Blackberries and clear off!” snapped Ellie, still holding a doughnut in a menacing manner.

Demoralised, with their heads down, the Ruskiphants began to extract the Putiphant from the thorns. Once done, Ellie stepped forward.

“Now get going and don’t come back!” Snarled Ellie. “Stay out of other people’s property!” There was a flash of lightning, a rumble of thunder, followed by white, blue and red smoke and suddenly, they were gone.

“Good riddance to bad rubbish!” snapped Ellie and led the others back into the kitchen.

“Thank you Zekenskiphanth,” said Ellie, shaking his hand. The Tsar has lost the battle and taken his bodyguards home with him.”

“Invaders gone – good!” Retorted the Zelenskiphanth. “If you need again, you call.”

He saluted smartly and then there was a flash of lightning, a rumble of thunder, followed by a plume of yellow smoke and as quick as he’d arrived, the Zelenskiphanth was gone.

“We are the champions,” sang Ellie.

“All thanks to Nelson,” added Eric.

Emilio looked left and right. “Actually, where is Nelson?” he asked.

“Bzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz,” went the drone above the garden.

“Morning elephants!” said MJ sleepily as she awoke.

MJ smiled as she looked at Ellie on the pillow, Emilio on the end of the bed and Eric under her arm.

She suddenly sat up straight. “Where’s Nelson?” she said out loud.



A while later, Uncle Bill arrived to collect his drone. But it wasn't on the garden table.

"Where's it gone?" he asked, completely puzzled.

Mum and MJ came out to help him look.

"Surely no-one's stolen it?" asked MJ, looking worried

"There it is!" shouted Mum, pointing at the blackberry bushes. The three of them walked forward towards the blackberries, where the drone was clearly lodged.

"Ugh!" cried Uncle Bill as he stepped on a custard doughnut.

"Ugh!" cried Mum as a big squirt of custard landed on her foot. "How did they get there?"

"Nelson!" cried MJ as she spotted him tied to the drone. "How did you get here!"