

# CHAPTER FOURTEEN



AT FIRST, THE OTHERS THOUGHT that Edward was a great good joke.

“A rabbit,” the hoboes said, laughing. “Let’s chop him up and put him in the stew pot.”

Or when Bull sat with Edward carefully balanced on his knee, one of them would call out, “Got yourself a little dolly, Bull?”

Edward, of course, felt a surge of anger at being referred to as a dolly. But Bull never got angry. He simply sat with Edward on his knee and said nothing. Soon, the men became accustomed to Edward, and word of his existence spread. So it was that when Bull and Lucy stepped up to a campfire in another town, another state, another place entirely, the men knew Edward and were glad to see him.

“Malone!” they shouted in unison.

And Edward felt a warm rush of pleasure at being recognized, at being known.

Whatever it was that had begun in Nellie’s kitchen, Edward’s new and strange ability to sit

very still and concentrate the whole of his being on the stories of another, became invaluable around the hobo campfire.

“Look at Malone,” said a man named Jack one evening. “He’s listening to every dang word.”

“Certainly,” said Bull, “of course he is.”

Later that night, Jack came and sat next to Bull and asked if he could borrow the rabbit. Bull handed Edward over, and Jack sat with Edward upon his knee. He whispered in Edward’s ear.

“Helen,” Jack said, “and Jack Junior and Taffy — she’s the baby. Those are my kids’ names. They are all in North Carolina. You ever been to North Carolina? It’s a pretty state. That’s where they are. Helen. Jack Junior. Taffy. You remember their names, okay, Malone?”

After this, wherever Bull and Lucy and Edward went, some tramp would take Edward aside and whisper the names of his children in Edward’s ear. Betty. Ted. Nancy. William.

Jimmy. Eileen. Skipper. Faith.

Edward knew what it was like to say over and over again the names of those you had left behind. He knew what it was like to miss someone. And so he listened. And in his listening, his heart opened wide and then wider still.

The rabbit stayed lost with Lucy and Bull for a long time. Almost seven years passed, and in that time, Edward became an excellent tramp: happy to be on the road, restless when he was still. The sound of the wheels on the train tracks became a music that soothed him. He could have ridden the rails forever. But one night, in a railroad yard in Memphis, as Bull and Lucy slept in an empty freight car and Edward kept watch, trouble arrived.

A man entered the freight car and shone a flashlight in Bull's face and then kicked him awake.

"You bum," he said, "you dirty bum. I'm sick of you guys sleeping everywhere. This ain't no motel."

Bull sat up slowly. Lucy started to bark.

“Shut up,” said the man. He delivered a swift kick to Lucy’s side that made her yelp in surprise.

All his life, Edward had known what he was: a rabbit made of china, a rabbit with bendable arms and legs and ears. He was bendable, though, only if he was in the hands of another. He could not move himself. And he had never regretted this more deeply than he did that night when he and Bull and Lucy were discovered in the empty railcar. Edward wanted to be able to defend Lucy. But he could do nothing. He could only lie there and wait.

“Say something,” said the man to Bull.

Bull put his hands up in the air. He said, “We are lost.”

“Lost, ha. You bet you’re lost.” And then the man said, “What’s this?” and he shone the light on Edward.

“That’s Malone,” said Bull.

“What the heck?” said the man. He poked

at Edward with the toe of his boot. “Things are out of control. Things are out of hand. Not on my watch. No, sir. Not when I’m in charge.”

The train suddenly lurched into motion.

“No, sir,” said the man again. He looked down at Edward. “No free rides for rabbits.” He turned and flung open the door of the railcar, and then he turned back and with one swift kick, he sent Edward sailing out into the darkness.

The rabbit flew through the late spring air.

From far behind him, he heard Lucy’s anguished howl.

Arroooooooooooooo, ahhhhrrrrrrrooo, she cried.

Edward landed with a most alarming thump, and then he tumbled and tumbled and tumbled down a long dirty hill. When he finally stopped moving, he was on his back, staring up at the night sky. The world was silent. He could not hear Lucy. He could not hear the train.

Edward looked up at the stars. He started to say the names of the constellations, but then he stopped.

“Bull,” his heart said. “Lucy.”

How many times, Edward wondered, would he have to leave without getting the chance to say goodbye?

A lone cricket started up a song.

Edward listened.

Something deep inside him ached.

He wished that he could cry.

## Questions: Chapter 14

1. Why is Edward's heart opening 'wider, and wider still' as he listens to the names?

Edward knew what it was like to say over and over again the names of those you had left behind. He knew what it was like to miss someone. And so he listened. And in his listening, his heart opened wide and then wider still.

2. What does Edward wish for the first time as the man kicks Lucy?

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3. '*Bull,*' his heart said, '*Lucy*'. Explain how the author creates so much sadness at the end of this chapter.