

EDWARD ENDED UP AT THE DUMP.

He lay on top of orange peel, coffee grounds, rancid bacon and rubber tyres. The first night, he was at the top of the rubbish heap, and so he was able to look up at the stars and find comfort in their light.

In the morning, a short man came climbing through the rubbish. He stopped when he was standing on top of the highest pile. He put his hands under his armpits and flapped his elbows.

The man crowed loudly. He shouted, "Who am I? I'm Ernest, Ernest who is king of the world. How can I be king of the world? Because I am king of rubbish. And rubbish is what the world is made of. Ha. Ha,

ha! Therefore, I am Ernest, Ernest who is king of the world." He crowed again.

Edward was inclined to agree with Ernest's assessment of the world being made of rubbish, especially after his second day at the dump, when a load of rubbish was deposited directly on top of him. He lay there, buried alive. He could not see the sky. He could not see the stars. He could see nothing.

What kept Edward going, what gave him hope, was thinking of how he would find Lolly and exact his revenge. He would pick *her* up by the ears! He would bury *her* under a mountain of rubbish!

But after almost forty days and nights had passed, the weight and the smell of the rubbish above and below him clouded Edward's thoughts, and soon he gave up thinking about revenge and gave in to despair. It was worse, much worse, than being buried at sea. It was worse because Edward was a different rabbit now. He couldn't say how he was different; he just knew that he was. He remembered, again, Pellegrina's story about the princess who had loved nobody. The witch turned her into a warthog *because* she loved nobody. He understood that now.

He heard Pellegrina say: "You disappoint me."

Why? he asked her. Why do I disappoint you?

But he knew the answer to that question too. It was because he had not loved Abilene enough. And now she was gone from him. And he would never be able to make it right. And Nellie and Lawrence were gone too. He missed them terribly. He wanted to be with them.

The rabbit wondered if that was love.

Day after day passed, and Edward was aware of time passing only because every morning he could hear Ernest performing his dawn ritual, cackling and crowing about being king of the world.

On his one hundred and eightieth day at the dump, salvation arrived for Edward in a most unusual form. The rubbish around him shifted, and the rabbit heard the sniffing and panting of a dog. Then came the frenzied sound of digging. The rubbish shifted again, and suddenly, miraculously, the beautiful, buttery light of late afternoon shone on Edward's face.

CHAPTER TWELVE



EDWARD DID NOT HAVE MUCH time to savour the light, for the dog suddenly appeared above him, dark and shaggy, blocking his view. Edward was pulled out of the rubbish by his ears, dropped, and then picked up again, this time around the middle, and shaken back and forth with a great deal of ferocity.

The little dog growled deep in its throat and then dropped Edward again and looked him in the eye. Edward stared back.

“Hey, get out of here, you dog!” It was Ernest, king of rubbish and therefore king of the world.

The dog grabbed Edward by his pink dress and took off, running.

"That's mine, that's mine, all rubbish is mine!" Ernest shouted. "You come back here!"

But the little dog did not stop.

The sun was shining and Edward felt exhilarated. Who, having known him before, would have thought that he could be so happy now, crusted over with rubbish, wearing a dress, held in the slobbery mouth of a dog and being chased by a madman?

But he was happy.

The dog ran and ran until they reached a railway. They crossed over the track, and there, underneath a scraggly tree, in a circle of bushes, Edward was dropped in front of a large pair of feet.

The dog began to bark.

Edward looked up and saw that the feet were attached to an enormous man with a long, dark beard.

"What's this, Lucy?" said the man.

He bent and picked up Edward. He held him firmly around the middle. "Lucy," said the man, "I know how much you enjoy rabbit pie."

Lucy barked.

"Yes, yes, I know. Rabbit pie is a true delight, one of the pleasures of our existence."

Lucy let out a hopeful yip.

"And what we have here, what you have so graciously delivered to me, is definitely a rabbit, but the best chef in the world would be hard-pressed to make him into a pie."

Lucy growled.

"This rabbit is made of china, girl." The man held Edward closer to him. They looked each other in the eye. "You're made of china, aren't you, Malone?" He gave Edward a playful shake. "You're some child's toy, am I right? And you have been separated, somehow, from the child who loves you."

Edward felt, again, the sharp pain in his chest. He thought of Abilene. He saw the path leading up to the house on Egypt Street. He saw the dusk descending and Abilene running towards him.

Yes, Abilene had loved him.

"So, Malone," said the man. He cleared his throat. "You are lost. That is my guess. Lucy and I are lost too."

At the sound of her name, Lucy let out another yip.

"Perhaps," said the man, "you would like to be lost

with us. I have found it much more agreeable to be lost in the company of others. My name is Bull. Lucy, as you may have surmised, is my dog. Would you care to join us?"

Bull waited for a moment, staring at Edward; and then with his hands still firmly around Edward's waist, the man reached one enormous finger up and touched Edward's head from behind. He pushed it so it looked as if Edward were nodding his head in agreement.

"Look, Lucy. He is saying yes," said Bull. "Malone has agreed to travel with us. Isn't that swell?"

Lucy danced around Bull's feet, wagging her tail and barking.

And so it was that Edward took to the road with a tramp and his dog.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

