

THEY TRAVELLED ON FOOT. THEY travelled in empty freight cars. They were always on the move.

“But in truth,” said Bull, “we are going nowhere. That, my friend, is the irony of our constant movement.”

Edward rode in Bull’s backpack, slung over Bull’s shoulders with only his head and ears sticking out. Bull was always careful to position the rabbit so that he was not looking down or up, but was, instead, forever looking behind him, at the road they had just travelled.

At night, they slept on the ground, under the stars.

Lucy, after her initial disappointment about Edward being unfit for consumption, took a liking to him and slept curled up beside him; sometimes she even rested her muzzle on his china stomach, and then the noises she made in her sleep, whimpering and growling and chuffing, resonated inside Edward's body. To his surprise, he began to feel a deep tenderness for the dog.

During the night, while Bull and Lucy slept, Edward, with his ever-open eyes, stared up at the constellations. He said their names, and then he said the names of the people who loved him. He started with Abilene and then went on to Nellie and Lawrence and from there to Bull and Lucy, and then he ended again with Abilene: Abilene, Nellie, Lawrence, Bull, Lucy, Abilene.

See? Edward told Pellegrina. I am not like the princess. I know about love.

There were times, too, when Bull and Lucy gathered around a campfire with other tramps. Bull was a good storyteller and an even better singer.

"Sing for us, Bull," the men shouted.

Bull sat with Lucy leaning against his leg and Edward balanced on his right knee and he sang from



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somewhere deep inside himself. Just as Edward could feel Lucy's whimpers and growls resonate through his body at night, he could also feel the deep, sad sound of Bull's songs move through him. Edward loved it when Bull sang.

And he was grateful to Bull too, for sensing that a dress was not the right kind of clothing for Edward.

"Malone," said Bull one night, "it's not my desire to offend you or to comment negatively on your choice of garb, but I'm forced to tell you that you stick out like a sore thumb in that princess dress. And also, again, with no wish to offend you, the dress has seen better days."

Nellie's beautiful dress had not fared well at the dump or in its subsequent ramblings with Bull and Lucy. It was so torn and dirty and full of holes that it barely resembled a dress any more.

"I have a solution," said Bull, "and I hope that it meets with your approval."

He took his own knitted stocking cap and cut a big hole in the top of it and two small holes in either side of it and then he took off Edward's dress.

"Look away, Lucy," he said to the dog, "let's not

embarrass Malone by staring at his nakedness." Bull slid the hat over Edward's head and pulled it down and poked his arms through the smaller holes. "There you go," he said to Edward. "Now you just need some trousers."

These Bull made himself, cutting up several red handkerchiefs and sewing them together so that they formed a makeshift covering for Edward's long legs.

"Now you have the proper outlaw look," said Bull, standing back to admire his work. "Now you look like a rabbit on the run."

CHAPTER FOURTEEN



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

"A rabbit," the men said, laughing. "Let's chop him up and put him in the stewpot."

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 arrived at 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 campfire.

"Look at Malone," said a man named Jack one evening. "He's listening to every darn 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, OK, 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 railways for ever. But one night, in a railway 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 torch 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 hotel."

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 carriage. 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 carriage, and then he turned back and with one swift kick 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.

Arroooooooooo, 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.