

## CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE



TECHNICALLY, OF COURSE, HE WAS not alone. Lucius Clarke's shop was filled with dolls – lady dolls and baby dolls, dolls with eyes that opened and closed and dolls with painted-on eyes, dolls dressed as queens and dolls wearing sailor suits.

Edward had never cared for dolls. He found them annoying and self-centred, twittery and vain. This opinion was immediately reinforced by his first shelf-mate, a china doll with green glass eyes and red lips and dark brown hair. She was wearing a green satin dress that fell to her knees.

"What are you?" she said in a high-pitched voice when Edward was placed on the shelf next to her.

"I am a rabbit," said Edward.

The doll let out a small squeak. "You're in the wrong place," she said. "This is a shop for dolls. Not rabbits."

Edward said nothing.

"Shoo," said the doll.

"I would love to shoo," said Edward, "but it is obvious that I cannot."

After a long silence, the doll said, "I hope you don't think that anyone is going to buy you."

Again, Edward said nothing.

"The people who come in here want dolls, not rabbits. They want baby dolls or elegant dolls such as myself, dolls with pretty dresses, dolls with eyes that open and close."

"I have no interest in being purchased," said Edward.

The doll gasped. "You don't want somebody to buy you?" she said. "You don't want to be owned by a little girl who loves you?"

Sarah Ruth! Abilene! Their names went through Edward's head like the notes of a sad, sweet song.

"I have already been loved," said Edward. "I have been loved by a girl named Abilene. I have been loved

by a fisherman and his wife and a tramp and his dog. I have been loved by a boy who played the harmonica and by a girl who died. Don't talk to me about love," he said. "I have known love."

This impassioned speech shut up Edward's shelf-mate for a considerable amount of time.

"Well," she said at last, "still. My point is that no one is going to buy you."

They did not speak to each other again. The doll was sold two weeks later to a grandmother who was purchasing her for a grandchild. "Yes," she said to Lucius Clarke, "that one right there, the one with the green dress. She is quite lovely."

"Yes," said Lucius, "she is, isn't she?" And he plucked the doll from the shelf.

Goodbye and good riddance, thought Edward.

The spot next to the rabbit stayed vacant for some time. Day after day, the door to the shop opened and closed, letting in early morning sun or late afternoon light, lifting the hearts of the dolls inside, all of them thinking when the door swung wide that this time, this time, the person entering the shop would be the one who wanted them.



Edward was the lone contrarian. He prided himself on not hoping, on not allowing his heart to lift inside of him. He prided himself on keeping his heart silent, immobile, closed tight.

I am done with hope, thought Edward Tulane,  
And then one day at dusk, right before he closed  
the shop, Lucius Clarke placed another doll on the  
shelf next to Edward.