

CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN



SEASONS PASSED, AUTUMN AND
winter and spring and summer. Leaves blew in
through the open door of Lucius Clarke's shop, and
rain, and the green outrageous hopeful light of spring.
People came and went, grandmothers and doll collec-
tors and little girls with their mothers.

Edward Tulane waited.

The seasons turned into years.

Edward Tulane waited.

He repeated the old doll's words over and over
until they wore a smooth groove of hope in his brain:
Someone will come. Someone will come for you.

And the old doll was right.

Someone did come.

It was springtime. It was raining. There were dogwood blossoms on the floor of Lucius Clarke's shop.

She was a small girl, maybe five years old, and while her mother struggled to close a blue umbrella, the little girl walked around the shop, stopping and staring solemnly at each doll and then moving on.

When she came to Edward, she stood in front of him for what seemed like a long time. She looked at him and he looked back at her.

Someone will come, Edward said. Someone will come for me.

The girl smiled and then she stood on her tiptoes and took Edward off the shelf. She cradled him in her arms. She held him in the same ferocious, tender way Sarah Ruth had held him.

Oh, thought Edward, I remember this.

"Madam," said Lucius Clarke, "could you please attend to your daughter. She is holding a very fragile, very precious, quite expensive doll."

"Maggie," said the woman. She looked up from the still-open umbrella. "What have you got?"

"A rabbit," said Maggie.

"A what?" said the mother.

"A rabbit," said Maggie again. "I want him."

"Remember, we're not buying anything today. We're looking only," said the woman.

"Madam," said Lucius Clarke, "please."

The woman came and stood over Maggie. She looked down at Edward.

The rabbit felt dizzy.

He wondered, for a minute, if his head had cracked open again, if he was dreaming.

"Look, Mama," said Maggie, "look at him."

"I see him," said the woman.

She dropped the umbrella. She put her hand on the locket that hung around her neck. And Edward saw then that it was not a locket at all. It was a watch, a pocket watch.

It was his watch.

"Edward?" said Abilene.

Yes, said Edward.

"Edward," she said again, certain this time.

Yes, said Edward, yes, yes, yes.

It's me.