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 The Resurrection of the Lord
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 "A Bunny Story"
 John 20:1-18

Edward Tulane was very pleased with himself. He had an extraordinary wardrobe of handmade silk suits, custom shoes made from the finest leather, and a wide array of fine hats. He stood almost three feet tall and was made almost entirely of china. He had beautiful long ears made of real rabbit's fur, and a perfectly shaped rabbit's fur tail. His arms and legs were jointed so they could be bent, giving him much freedom of movement.

Edward was a work of art, made a master craftsman in France. Pellegrina had commissioned his existence for her granddaughter, Abilene Tulane. Edward sat at the Tulane's dining table during meals, though all he could see was the tablecloth. He seldom listened to the conversation, since he found it dull and boring, and loathed the condescending manner in which the adults spoke to him when Abilene insisted he hadn't heard part of their conversation. In fact, Edward cared for no one, loved no one, though he was glad Abilene cared for him and kept him well-dressed and well-groomed.

Abilene dressed Edward each morning as she dressed herself for school. She sat him in a chair by a window overlooking Egypt Street where they lived, wound his beautiful gold pocket watch, set it on his knee, and there he sat, waiting for her to return from school. Each night before bed, she would put him in his nightclothes before Pellegrina came to tuck them both into bed.

One night, Pellegrina told a bedtime story about a beautiful princess who loved no one. She ran away from love, stumbled onto an old witch who demanded to know whom she loved. When the princess stomped her foot and scoffed at love, the witch said, "You disappoint me" and turned her into a warthog. Abilene was appalled at a story with no happy ending, but Pellegrina said there can be no happy endings when there is no love. As she took Edward from Abilene and tucked him into his bed that night, she whispered to him quietly, "You disappoint me."

The next day, the Edward left with the Tulane's for a voyage on the Queen Mary to celebrate Abilene's eleventh birthday. Most everyone aboard ship admired the china rabbit and commented on his fine craftsmanship and beautiful wardrobe, all except for two young boys who thought him silly. While Edward thought to himself how dashing he must look, with his silk scarf billowing in the sea breeze and his fine boater sitter jauntily on his head, one of the boys grabbed him from Abilene, and then began *The Miraculous Journey of Edward Tulane*.¹

As the boys fought over him and tore his clothes from him, Abilene screamed, and the gold pocket watch fell to the deck of the ship. Edward went flying through the air, and before he realized what was happening, Edward Tulane went overboard. For the first time in his life, he was afraid.

Edward lay on the bottom of the sea for a very long time before a storm whipped up the ocean, churning the waters from below. He felt something catch him as he was sinking again, and found himself in a fisherman's net. Lawrence, the grizzled old fisherman, decided to take "it" home to his wife. Edward was so grateful to be off the ocean floor that he didn't even object to being called "it." But when Nellie called him "Susanna" and dressed him in lace and ruffles, he was horrified. But then he recalled his many months at the bottom of the ocean and decided it didn't really matter. Edward sat in a highchair tall enough to see over the table, and took

¹Kate DiCamillo, *The Miraculous Journey of Edward Tulane* (Cambridge: Candlewick Press, 2006).

strolls in the evening, sitting on Lawrence's shoulder. And he found himself actually listening to Nellie's stories. And for a long time, life was sweet.

Then one day, Lolly came to visit. Lolly was the old couple's daughter. She'd heard what they were saying about her parents in town and decided that Edward had to go. One evening after dinner, she shoved the rabbit into a garbage can, stuck him in the truck, and drove him down to the garbage dump. For the first time, Edward felt a pain in his chest, and his heart called out to Nellie and Lawrence.

Edward spent the next months lying under a pile of dirty, rancid, decaying garbage. He heard Pellegrina's voice, "You disappoint me." And he thought of Lawrence and Nellie. But as he lay there with the weight of the filth on his chest, he heard a noise. Suddenly, the light of the sun burst through his rotting tomb and a dog grabbed him by the ear. Lucy took off with Edward in her mouth until Bull snatched the rabbit away. He explained to Edward that he and Lucy were "lost," and invited the rabbit to join them since he appeared to be lost as well.

Bull named him Malone, and they set out together. They traveled on foot and in empty rail cars. Bull decided he needed new clothes, more fitting for the life of a hobo. Bull cut two holes in his stocking cap and slipped it over Edward's head to serve as a hobo shirt, and from several red handkerchiefs, Bull fashioned him a pair of pants. Edward became fond of Bull and Lucy, but each night as they sat around campfires singing songs with other lost souls, Edward thought of the people who loved him: Abilene, Lawrence and Nellie, Bull and Lucy, Abilene. Soon, other hobos asked Bull if they could borrow Malone. They whispered the names of their own loved ones in the rabbit's ears, the people that they missed, and Edward listened. His heart opened wider, and for seven years, Edward was happy to be a tramp.

One night as they settled into an empty freight car in Memphis, they were discovered by an angry railroad man. The man kicked Lucy, grabbed Edward by the foot and hurled him into the air. Edward landed with a thump at the bottom of a long, dirty hill. His heart ached as it called out, "Bull," "Lucy." And Edward Tulane wished he could cry.

An old woman tripped over Edward in the morning, picked him up, and stuck him in her basket. And he didn't even care. Edward's heart grew hollow and filled with despair. When she finally stopped walking, the old woman pulled Edward from her basket and attached him with wire to a pole in her vegetable garden. "Go ahead and scare 'em off, Clyde. You got to act ferocious." The crows screamed in his ears and pecked at his face as the sun beat down on him. That night, he told the stars that he had been loved. But the stars seemed to mock him, and he was all alone. "You disappoint me," he heard Pellegrina say.

The next day, the woman brought a boy with her to help weed the garden. Bryce waved at Edward when the old woman wasn't looking. "Git back to work," she hollered at him, but when the day was finally over, Bryce told Edward he'd be back. "It's too late," thought Edward, "I'm nothing but a hollow rabbit."

But when night fell, he did come back, and he pulled the rabbit down from the pole. Edward felt a rush of relief followed by an immense joy. "Perhaps it is not too late for me to be saved," he thought.

Bryce took Edward back to a little shack. Inside, there were two beds and a kerosene lamp. When they went in, Bryce lit the lamp and whispered, "Sarah Ruth. Get up now, honey. I brung you something." A little golden-haired girl, no more than four years old, sat up in one of the beds and started coughing. "That's okay," he told her. "You go ahead and cough," and he rubbed her back until she finally stopped. "Close your eyes," he said, and she obliged him. Bryce held Edward so he was standing straight and tall at the foot of the bed. When Sarah Ruth opened her eyes, Bryce moved the rabbit's china arms and legs and it looked as if Edward was dancing. Sarah Ruth clapped her hands and laughed out loud which brought another fit of coughing. "He's yours," he told her, and put Edward in her arms.

She cradled him gently, like a baby, and looked down at him with so much love. Edward felt his whole body flood with warmth. “Jangles,” she called him, and loved it when he danced for her. She held him in her lap when she played with her box of buttons, and sometimes, when she had a particularly bad coughing fit, she would squeeze him so tight, he thought he would crack in two. Once upon a time, Edward would have found this whole thing intrusive, clingy, and annoying, but now he found that he wanted to take care of Sarah Ruth, to protect her, to do *more* for her.

Several months later, Sarah Ruth refused to eat. Her breathing grew ragged and her coughing brought blood. “Breathe,” Edward thought. But one bright autumn morning, her breathing stopped. Bryce held her and wept until their father, who seldom came home, tore her from his arms, wrapped her in a blanket, and took her to bury her. Alone in the shack, Bryce rummaged for a few things through his tears, grabbed Edward, and took off for the city. “How could this be?” thought Edward. “I loved her, and now she is gone.” How could he bear to live in a world without Sarah Ruth, thought Edward.

In the city, Bryce played the harmonica and Edward danced. People threw money into a hat until Bryce determined that they had enough money to eat. Bryce ordered just about everything on the menu at the diner. When the bill finally came, and he lacked the money to pay, Neal, the cook and owner, demanded his due. When Bryce offered to play his harmonica while the rabbit danced to pay for his meal, Neal grabbed Edward by the feet, swung him around and struck his head on the edge of the counter. There was a loud crack. Bryce screamed, and the world went black....

“Ah, there you are,” said the toymaker. “All fixed. Your head was broken, but I brought you back from the world of the dead.” “But my heart is broken,” thought Edward. Bryce had collected the twenty-one pieces which had once been Edward Tulane’s head and taken them, along with the rest of his china body, to Lucius Clarke to be mended. The toymaker agreed to fix the china rabbit, better than he found him...but for a price. Since Bryce had no money, Lucius Clarke would keep the rabbit. Bryce would have to give him up forever in order for Edward to be healed. “Bryce,” thought Edward.

Edward endured months of deriding by the other dolls sitting on the shelf with him, dolls who thought themselves better than he, dolls who thought they knew better or more, or who had been loved more deeply. Edward had no interest in being sold to some little girl. Love. He had known love. He had been loved by a little girl named Abilene, by a fisherman and his wife, by a hobo and his dog, by a little boy and his sister who died. He had no desire, no hope. Love. Edward was done with love. It was too painful.

“But that’s dreadful!” said the old china doll who had been placed on the shelf by Edward one day. “You disappoint me,” she said. “If you have no intention of loving or being loved, the whole journey is pointless. Her words made Edward think of Pellegrina, of warthogs and princesses, of listening and love, of spells and curses. Was it possible to love again? “Open your heart,” the old doll told him. His heart stirred for the first time in a very long time. Seasons came and went and turned into years. Edward Tulane repeated the words of the china doll over and over in his head until one day, when the door of the toymaker’s store opened.

A little five-year-old girl came in with her mother. “Look, Mama! A rabbit!” “A what?” said her mother. “Look at him, Mama! I want him,” she said. “I see him,” said her mother, and placed her hand on the locket around her neck. Edward saw then that it was not a locket, but a pocket watch. His pocket watch. “Edward?” said Abilene. “Yes!” thought Edward. Yes, it’s me!”

The *Miraculous Journey of Edward Tulane* is a beautiful story of love and redemption—of the rich and haughty, the proud and arrogant, the poor and needy, the lost and lonely. Each of them learned about love and giving, but none so much as Edward Tulane. Edward’s pride and arrogance kept him from love and from loving, from accepting the love that was given to him and from returning that love in whatever ways he could.

Through the miseries and downfalls of his life, he was allowed to see love, to know love, and to finally learn how to love. His sin had finally been put to death and love had conquered the cold, hard tomb of his heart.

This Easter morning, we recall the dreadful curse from which our Lord was raised by the power of love, by the God who has conquered sin and death, who is able to take us from our tombs of pride and arrogance, from the garbage dumps and empty fields, from our tormentors and the pain of death, and raise us to new life, to live and to love because we too have been loved.

And today of all days, and each day hereafter, let us raise our voices in praise of the one who saves us, who has loved enough to give up his very own life so that we might be healed, so that we might live. And let us share that love and that Easter joy with all God's precious children. Alleluia! Amen.