

Excerpt from *For the Love of Maggie O'Die* by Cle Curbo

Emerging from the elevator lobby and rounding the corner to the hallway, Ryger stopped dead in his tracks. Farther down, at his office door, a brown-haired waif curled up on the carpet, feet bare, and maybe nothing under her coat, as he had been so many months ago. Perhaps he resembled her back then. A cruelly fated waif. He took a deep breath. Whatever had happened to him might now be happening again to someone else. Empathy. That's what he felt. He couldn't help it. Maybe here was a chance to find out about a story close to his. Maybe he would get some answers to his mystery—maybe here was someone who had the same past.

He shook his head. He was getting way too ahead of events. However close to his situation this appeared, his fear brain warned him. If someone had heard his story, they could set up this whole repeat scenario. Well, it might be tough, but he would not let himself be taken in by empathy, or by some waif, or whoever might be clever enough to repeat his one-time condition. Curious, though. He wondered how anyone knew what he looked like since only Pat and Gerry had seen him. Maybe that was enough to spread the word like so much secret syrup from mind to inquiring mind. Odd. His situation was odd, and it was hardly likely that anyone could be in the same state of amnesia he'd been in. The state he was still in.

Then it hit him. This was where he existed, in the state of uncertainty between truth and fabrication. He had lived here for the last seven or eight months. He threw his shoulders back and straightened up—just another day in the search for truth.

He continued his slow approach and stopped at the feet of the would-be Cara. She was on her side in a fetal position. As Gerry had said, she had on a coat like his when he had first arrived. He remembered that night when Gerry had let him in. Gerry had called him by a name unfamiliar to him. Ryger Deacon. He was Ryger Deacon. So what? It was still just a name.

He stood and examined her, peaceful in sleep. Strands of dark brown hair draped across her face. He placed a hand on her shoulder. She woke and sat up.

