

Barely a Girl

By C. Jade Wyton

After receiving another rejection letter from an orphanage, barring her from adopting a child, Maggie is overwhelmed the grief of her medical condition and seeks comfort in one of her father figures, Doll.

Contains descriptions of body and gender dysphoria related to medical conditions and disability. Also contains mentions of infertility, child abuse, and medical abuse.

~~~~~

Another rejection letter.

Maggie bit her lip, thumbing at the piece of paper in her hand as a miserable rock sank from her heart to her gut.

*That was eighty-six rejections they'd received since that horrible diagnosis.*

A snuffle, and she felt herself holding back tears as she read the reasoning:

*Her.*

It was always her.

Her job, her memory problems, her want to stay unmarried— It was always *her* fault they were rejected!

Another sniff, and Maggie squeezed her hands into fists; crumpling the letter as she trembled out a guilty sob.

It was a wonder Edmund didn't *hate* her.

Maybe he would, when he got home from work.

She knew she should have waited until he got home before she opened the letter, but....

*She'd needed to know.*

*She'd needed to know!*

Eighty-six orphanages. Eighty-six rejections.

And it was always her fault.

If she wasn't barren, they could have had a child by now.

Maggie gave another sniff, blinking back her tears and swallowing another sob, before she rose to her feet and —feeling like she was in a daze— made her way out of the apartment.

~~~~~

Maggie stood at Eulogy's door, her feet planted firmly on the ground and her hands tightly clasping the letter she'd received. It had been over ten minutes since she'd arrived at the apartment, but she still couldn't bring herself to knock.

Instead she just stood there stiffly, tears rolling down her cheeks as she stared at the worn metal number that hung below the peep-hole. The voice in her head repeating, over and over and over.

It's your fault.

It's always your fault.

Over, and over, and over.

It's your fault!

Stupid, stupid child.

Everything is always your fault!

The door opened and Doll almost walked into Maggie as they made to hurry into the hall— They looked up from their bag *just* in time to pause and look down at Maggie with that blank-faced mask. But, their body language said everything, as their hands reached forward and gently took Maggie's own.

'Another rejection?' they asked, softly.

Maggie just nodded.

'Come inside, Maggie.'

~~~~~

Sobbing, wheezing, wailing.

Maggie couldn't stop herself as she snuggled tight under Doll's arm.

'*Why?*' she squeaked out. '*Why can't I just be normal?*'

'Nobody is normal, Maggie,' Doll said, softly.

'But I'm even *less* normal than is normal!' Maggie sobbed. 'I have *nothing!* It's just— I just want to— I....'

A hand ran through Maggie's tufted head-fur, and she buried her face back into Doll's side to cry again.

'Am I even actually a *girl?*' she sniffled, her voice muffled by Doll's clothes.

'There's nothing down there. Just a... just a *dent* and an extra *kidney*. What even *am* I? I'm not a boy— I'm barely a girl— I'm like one of those....'

*One of those dolls.*

She bit back the words, realising in time how awful a thing it would have been to say aloud to Doll. She didn't want to hurt someone she loved so much....

'Maggie,' Doll gave Maggie a comforting squeeze. 'Listen to me. It's not about what you have, or what you don't have. It's about how you feel; how you show yourself to the world. You're a girl if you say you are. Do *you* think you're a girl?'

'I want to be a girl,' Maggie sniffled. 'But I don't know if I feel like one. Not right now.'

'That's alright,' Doll comforted. 'Sometimes that happens. You can think about it. And you can always change your mind.'

'What if Edmund hates me?'

'Why would Edmund hate you?'

'*Edmund likes girls,*' Maggie said, quietly. 'And... I mean. I know he likes boys, too. But if I'm not a real girl, and I'm not a boy at all.... What if he stops liking me? What if he leaves me?'

'Edmund *loves* you,' Doll reassured. 'Because you're *you*, not because you're a girl.'

'But *who* am I, Doll?'

'Only you can answer that, Maggie.'

~~~~~

‘Why did he do this to me?’

The words left Maggie’s mouth before she knew what she was saying, as Doll took her empty water cup and placed it on the coffee table.

‘Who do you mean?’ Doll asked, taking their place beside Maggie again. ‘Edmund?’

‘No,’ Maggie shook her head. ‘Not... not Edmund.’

‘Who?’

‘The doctor,’ Maggie answered, her brow furrowing.

‘Maggie, it’s not the doctor’s fault,’ Doll sighed. ‘He just diagnosed you—’

‘No, not that doctor,’ Maggie’s eyes took on a vacant look as she turned to Doll. She barely saw her friend as she stared ahead; instead her vision was filled with different thoughts, bouncing all around in her memories. ‘The other doctor. The one who worked for my mother.’

Doll’s hand took Maggie’s, then, and squeezed them tight. ‘*What doctor?*’ they whispered.

‘He used to look after us, when Mother was away,’ she said absently. ‘He didn’t like us. I remember our room he gave us. It was cold. And empty. And when Mother would visit, they would talk about....’

A horrified look, one of deep, primal fear overtook Maggie, and she immediately pushed the memory away as she rose to her feet and hurried to the bathroom; locking herself in before Doll could follow.

~~~~~

Maggie didn’t look up as she heard the bathroom door click shut. She wasn’t sure exactly how Doll had managed to get it open, and she didn’t care to see as she sobbed into her knees.

Softly, Doll padded over and crouched beside Maggie; their hand finding her shoulder and petting it comfortingly.

‘You’re going to be alright,’ they promised. ‘I know things are hard. And the memories feel like they’ll never stop hurting. But you’re going to be alright. You have a lot of people who love you. A lot of people who want to help you. You understand?’

Maggie nodded, sniffing and wiping her eyes. Then, she averted her gaze from Doll’s as another haunted look took her over.

‘Maggie?’

‘I saw his body,’ she said, quietly. ‘While I was running away from the fire.’

‘Whose?’

‘I don’t remember his name. But he was dead, lying on the ground with the others.’

‘The others?’

‘The other children. They didn’t make it. I was the only one Blathe was able to save,’ Maggie held her arm, tears welling in her eyes. ‘I remember Mother hurt me. She grabbed my arm so tight she ripped the skin off. And then she chose my sister.’

‘Chose your sister?’

‘To keep forever.’

Doll was quiet for a long, long moment. Then they said, quietly; ‘My parents chose my sister, too.’

~~~~~

Maggie couldn’t stop giggling, as Doll ruffled her cheek-fluff and wrestled her onto the couch.

‘Doll! Doll, stop!’ she laughed, trying her best to wiggle away as Doll grappled her and playfully messed up her feathered wings. ‘That tickles, Doll!’

Doll didn’t stop; instead, they beckoned Baby over to sit on Maggie and hold her down, just so they could ruffle her unimpeded.

‘Baby, *no!*’ Maggie squealed as the large beast lay down over her and purred. ‘Don’t *help* Doll! Whose side are you on, traitor!’

Doll, with Baby’s help, continued teasing Maggie; and Maggie couldn’t say she didn’t love it.

She had almost completely forgotten about being upset, as Doll bent down to give her a kiss-like nuzzle with their mask.

Then the apartment door opened, and all three heads turned to watch as Eulogy stepped into the room.

He undid one button on his jacket, put his keys in his pocket, opened his mouth to greet his family— And let out a cry as he was mobbed by two purring felines.

—END—

If you enjoyed reading, please consider supporting me and my work at
cjadewyton.com