

# **Gold Fox Conjecture**



**a series of poems by Adam Stone  
based on Radiolab episodes  
listened to in January 2010**

**Gold Fox Conjecture** is a limited edition chapbook by Adam Stone. Written in January 2010, but lost in a notebook until January 2020. It was written after listening to a series of Radiolab episodes, with the intention of slamming the whole journey in a Champion Of Champions Slam. But only two of the poems were ever read. This chapbook is purely for the audience at The Dirty Gerund 1/20/2020

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The cover font is **Walbaum Display Heavy**.

The rest of the book is set in Georgia.

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# **I Never Know Where I'm Going Until I Get Back**

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“not everything is Sisyphean. no one ever wants to imagine themselves as the boulder.”

—Hanif Abdurraqib

“It Is Once Again The Summer Of My Discontent & This Is How We Do It”



## 180 Seconds

The sink's sworn enemy is the dish

How it rinses

soaps

rinses again

but the dishes come back crumb filthy

noodle crusted

This is how god sees us

mouth full of cracked mugs

plates stained too long to ever be clean again

In 1898

two Oxford archaeologists named Grenfell and Hunt

started digging just south of Cairo in Oxyrhynchus Egypt

They found two undisturbed mountains of trash

1,000 years old

The first scrap of paper they found

was a lost scrap of The New Testament

*He who knows the all*

*but fails to know himself*

*loses everything*

The Logia Fragment

The lost words of Christ

There were seven hundred boxes of papyrus

recovered from Oxyrhynchus

Lost biblical verses

Trojan war stories that contradict Homer

Satires

They have yet to jigsaw together the contents of even

one box's worth

*The kingdom of the father*

*is spread out upon The Earth*

*and men do not see it*

As of 2001

there were still 1,966 american soldiers  
missing in action in vietnam

Most presumed dead

Some till interned in labor camps

A few stayed behind by choice

We do not have time for their stories

There are parts of us that go missing every second

Skin cells flake memories

Your dna is choking your past

Mary sue campbell woke up on tuesday

august 24, 2010

and the calendar didn't look right

strange truck in the driveway

the furniture out of place

and every ninety seconds the world reset

The sink's worst enemy is the dish

a mouth full od cracked mugs

God is buried in 10,000 years of trash

every ninety seconds

We do not have time to tell his story

Global transient amnesia

resets your brain every ninety seconds to three minutes

It can last for up to twenty-four hours

Your brain can not manufacture new memories

Mary sue campbell woke up on tuesday

a fragment of paper

a loop of cassette tape

*What day is it?*

Tuesday

He who knows the loop

but fails to know tuesday

loses skin cells slake memories

I am a sink full of chipped pint glasses

lukewarm suds and no hope of clean

I wake up every tuesdau lost in my own skin

I will dig and i will dig

I will never understand enough of me

to tell you my own truth

You will always be a stranger to yourself  
never know your every angle  
no matter how many mirrors you tile on your wall

This is the curse of oxyrhyncus  
This is the life of a ceramic plate  
Every morning we rinse clean the sins of our yesterdays  
only to lose ourselves in tomorrow's dirt

## Nineteen

There were nineteen stairs between sleep and the outside world .  
as you eyerubbed your way to another sixty hour work week .  
Nineteen stairs as you carried the drunk of him up to the abstinent  
cold of your anniversary bed . You didn't realize the thermostat  
was broken . so you piled on blankets . while down in the base-  
ment the pipes froze to bursting

Eighteen stairs were silent . The fourth one creaked . You hung a  
photograph of rain above it . because jeffrey loved art . but hated  
portraits . He thought the faces followed him . he told his sister the  
stair creaked because it had been collecting all the rain since you  
moved in

She stopped visiting

There were nineteen stairs between drinks with friends . and the  
first night home to an empty bed . Nineteen stairs down to *why  
didn't he call* ? Nineteen stairs to worry overtaking anger .  
Nineteen down to file the police report when nobody could gps his  
now

It was morning . when the doorbell rang . The pizza had taken so  
long . you'd forgotten you ordered it . Still . you tipped the delivery  
boy as if it were still warm . as if it could satiate your hunger

You turned up the stairs and smiled at the clear blue skies above  
the fourth stair . It was the first time you smiled since he  
disappeared

You were halfway through the pizza before you wondered where  
the rain went

You stumbled down seven stairs to the photograph . The frame  
was tilted . The clouds were threatening . but barren . so you  
stared . as though you could will the rain to return

You must have been dreaming . so you shuffled up the twenty-nine  
stairs . Tremored open face on your bed . as though sleep could  
claim you

Once morning splintered through your blinds . you let the tide of  
cars beneath your window erode the bed from under you . You  
walked down sixty-four stairs . None of them creaked

The picture was raining again . or raining still . The frame was straight . You wiped the relief from your eyes . That's when you noticed his face in the clouds . Jeffrey who had evaporated in the night . and never returned . Jeffrey whose sister couldn't decide if you or you house had eaten herb brother . Only that something had swallowed his innocence . and yours was the name she knew

There were sixteen stairs back up to the kitchen . You closed every door between you and that picture . but you couldn't stop seeing his face in that cloud

You turned on the television . Opened a box of books jeffrey brought to look impressive . but hadn't needed to read enough to ever unpack

You needed something to look at that wasn't the sky . You picked a book at random . Every page was blank . You pulled out a second . a third . a nineteenth . Every page of every book was blank . Every time you blinked . the hieroglyphs of jeffrey's face neoned your retinas

There were two hundred and fiftyseven stairs back to the painting . each one sopping with ink . as though every word jeffrey never read tried to river their way after him

You carried the box to the top of the stairs . pressed each page of each book into the ink . Each formerly blank piece of paper . now footprinted with every nightmare alone . every cloud faced sister . every time you stammered his name to the police

Minutes hoired into days . until every page was filled with words you wished he could hear . apologies you couldn't pronounce on your most level mouthed nights . Then you tilted your head back to howl . but your mouth was an empty bookshelf

# Lineage

Your grandfather as conceived  
when The Challenger exploded  
This is not why his eyes sparkled  
You are why his eyes sparkled

Your grandfather met your grandmother  
when Lincoln was shot  
He was the nurse that held The President's wrist  
She was John Wilkes Booth

Amelia Airheart's propellers  
dusted to clouds when your grandparents were married  
She refused to come back for the heartache

Don't believe anything  
your mother tells you  
about your history

You are descended from Model A exhaust fumes  
Twentieth Century film reels  
Berlin barbed wire

Your grandfather was Benjamin Franklin's kite

Jeffrey  
these are the spiders of your DNA  
Your mother is just the thrashing fly at the center  
All her dreams are lilypad stems  
All her desires are bridge trolls

She did not leave  
because you did not love her enough

Jeffrey  
when you turn twenty-seven  
you will roll over on to your lover's pillow  
Your head will fill with his dreams  
They will be of nothing but your happiness

Jeffrey  
you were born running  
to your mother's nowhere  
Chasing storm clouds

Your mother was an Exit Sign  
Your father was No Trespassing

You will leave him at twenty-seven  
because you will never be beautiful enough  
to equal his dreams

Your lover is an ink blot  
He is Arthur Conan Doyle's rock garden  
He will spend the rest of his life  
treadmilling your footprints

He will never find you

He'll lay night after night  
entwining your pillow  
never resting his head there

You are the smoke that fell to ash on his Pompeii

It will take your sister years to find you again  
Your brow creased elder  
Daughter of a shotgun and a welcome mat

She will find you on a grassy knoll  
sniping another confused dreamer  
She will hold you like a Chrysanthemum seed  
in the roof of a divine mouth

It will feel like enough

The asylum was once a colosseum  
where Oedipus debuted  
Your doctor is a sandbag  
Your eyes are curtains

You are destined to be watched  
There will be headlines at your funeral  
your sister will mail your obituary  
to the address of your former lover's apartment  
He will be years gone

Your lover's house was Chicago  
you were a cow with a cramped leg

Your lover left the house for Vietnam in 1973  
He never came back

# The Truth

I'm going to be honest with you  
Everything I've told you so far is a lie  
Except for The Truth

Consider my words the  
farm fresh eggs on the menu of a restaurant  
eight hours away from the nearest farm  
The vine ripened tomatoes  
at a grocery store in Alaska

Every ninety seconds the truth resets

Lieutenant Adam Stone writes letters to Ellen Chase  
The mother he's never met  
The woman who gave him up for adoption

Once a week  
he bicycles to Laos to update her on his life

This is the only time he's used English  
since his lover disappeared twelve years ago

This is A Lie

Sometimes you can speak  
while remaining silent

Lieutenant Adam Stone won't shut up  
about the abstract

politics

religion

God is a sink full of dirty dishes

He is Vietnam's foremost expert  
on things that can't be proven

*Dear Mom*

he writes

*I am a sink full of chipped pint glasses*

*lukewarm suds with no hope of clean*

*I wake up every Tuesday in someone else's skin*

*I dig and I dig*

*but never understand enough*

*to tell you my whole truth*

The truth is a setup with no punchline  
a punchline with no setup

My name is Adam Stone  
I've never been to Vietnam  
There are twenty-seven stairs between my front porch and  
my apartment

They all creak

I am not a sink full of chipped anything  
i wait tables at book stores  
I tend bar at poetry readings  
There are twenty-seven creaking stairs to my apartment  
I once jammed a couch in my stairwell for  
two hours because I believed I could will it to fit  
I once jammed my leg in a couch for three hours  
until four firemen sawed the arm off  
while I stood with just a towel around my waist  
in front of two EMTs  
who told me with a straight face  
that I was not the weirdest thin they'd seen that day

This is the actual I swear to sink truth

I've never written a letter to my mother  
because I'm not sure how to introduce myself  
I've forgotten more love than I can feel

I think that's the truth

## The Nonchalant Cow

Dmitri Belyaev curled the tails of foxes by accident  
did not mean to flop over their ears  
thin their bones

He bred the wild out of foxes in five generations  
shrunk their teeth to docile  
patterned their once monochrome fur

He did not set out to prove that  
ferocity was physical

People who need things from me  
say I have a kind face

My mother tells me I look meaner  
now that I've started shaving my head

How do we ask our children not to  
judge books by their covers  
when science tells us  
wolves are only wolves when their ears are pointed  
that nothing flaccid can hurt you

An heiress can wait tables sixty hours a week  
for a whole summer  
and still not understand  
what it feels like to work for a living

Maybe science hasn't evolved enough  
to know the true nature of fox ears or  
flaccid wolves

Goldbach Conjecture says that  
any even number is the sum of two prime numbers  
except human beings haven't even remotely named all  
the numbers to infinity  
so we can neither prove The Goldbach Conjecture as true or un-  
true  
so it is  
until we can prove it  
both

My senior year English class was reading  
The Things They Carried by Tim O'Brien  
when my great uncle's remains were found  
in Vietnam

I remember watching a cross become a diamond  
by human hands  
An etching of mortality

I remember Taps at the funeral  
a box

I have ninety second windows into my eighteen  
(not yet nineteen)  
year old understanding of grief

I remember the blinking of truth in the shifting  
landscape of O'Brien's Vietnam

My grandfather  
newly returned from a vacation in Paris  
proudly tells us that he demanded every restaurant  
server to speak to him in English  
because *they needed to know the proper language*

We never talked much

That night we ordered Chinese food  
and my fortune was blank

Radiolab episodes listened to during the creation of this chapbook:

The Greatest Hits Of Ancient Garbage (Sep 2007)

Strangers In The Mirror (June 2010)

S2E4: Where Am I?

S6E4: The New Normal

S6E5 Numbers

S10E3: Loops

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