

"The characters, human and animal, are sad and honest and true. I could not put this novel down, and only when I finished it could I breathe again."

—KIM ECHLIN, author of *The Disappeared*

A BEAUTIFUL TRUTH

A NOVEL



COLIN McADAM

Colin McAdam's A BEAUTIFUL TRUTH

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BEAUTIFUL TRUTH

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WE ARE NOT DESCENDED FROM
APES. WE ARE APES.



The two
narratives that
comprise Giller
Prize finalist
Colin

McAdam's *A*

Beautiful

Truth (Soho

Press,

September 2013) are like few that I've
encountered. McAdam possesses a
startling talent, which was evident in his
first two novels, *Some Great Thing* and

Fall, but it is in this third novel—one that he began work on in 2009—that McAdam has achieved brilliance.

A Beautiful Truth's twinning plots focus on the lives of humans and chimpanzees, both independent of each other as well as when they coexist. In the first narrative we meet Judy and Walter Ribke, two affluent Vermonters that have adopted a chimpanzee as a surrogate son, affectionately naming him Looee. It is a sometimes sad and often charming story about an unlikely family trying their best despite the often confusing reality of their situation. And yet it is also fraught with undeniable tension, as the fragile nature of their adopted son's

domesticity is tested daily. Always present is the fear that Looee, particularly as he enters adolescence, might lose control of his urges.

In the second narrative we meet a troop of chimpanzees that are part of a language experiment at the fictive Girdish Institute in Florida. The description of the work at Girdish is fascinating and thoroughly researched, as McAdam brilliantly renders the interior lives of these remarkable chimps and the scientists studying them. The work at the institute has proven that chimps have memories, understand signification in language, and can solve complex problems with both logic and emotional intelligence. The group at

Girdish is very much like us: political, altruistic, quick to anger, and often as quick to forgive.

A Beautiful Truth is a powerful and haunting meditation on ape-kind. The wide-ranging engagement of this novel encompasses nearly the entirety of the lives of captive chimps, from their brutal role in medical research to their stunning ability to communicate and learn human words, making McAdam's novel as much related to Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle* as it is to William Golding's *The Inheritors*.

Best regards,

Paul Oliver

Marketing & Publicity Director, Sohc
Press



Save the Chimps

SPEAKING OUT FOR THEM

www.savethechimps.org

**SAVE THE CHIMPS AND SOHO
PRESS
ANNOUNCE FUNDRAISING
PARTNERSHIP**

New York, September 3, 2013: The world's largest chimpanzee sanctuary, Save the Chimps, and the New York-based book publisher Soho Press have launched a promotional campaign with the goal of raising funds and spreading

awareness for the Florida sanctuary.

Save the Chimps was founded by Dr. Carole Noon in 1997 and is now home to nearly 300 chimps. Their mission is to provide and build support and permanent sanctuary for the lifelong care of chimpanzees rescued from research laboratories, entertainment, and the pet trade.

The two parties united over the message of Soho Press author Colir McAdam's third novel, *A Beautiful Truth*, which prominently features chimpanzees in several different storylines, including roles in domestic settings as well as in linguistic and medical research facilities. Many of the

chimps who call Save the Chimps home were rescued from situations similar to those described in the novel.

"Save the Chimps is honored to partner with Soho Press as they help educate animal lovers and everyone about chimpanzees," says Save the Chimps Executive Director Jo Sullivan

"A Beautiful Truth does an amazing job at telling the stories of chimpanzees in captivity today and it also helps people understand why these amazing souls should be loved, respected and protected in their natural habitat. We hope everyone reads this book and comes to see Chimpanzees as we do."

Soho Press has pledged a portion of all proceeds from sales of the novel (in

electronic and print formats in all sales channels) to Save the Chimps to help cover their operating costs, but buying the book directly from Save the Chimps gets the sanctuary the most money.

Colin McAdam is doing two launch-week events with Save the Chimps. The first is at the Vero Beach Book Center on *A Beautiful Truth*'s publication day, September 17th. The second is at Save the Chimps facilities for their "Member Day" where both the author and the chimpanzees will be on hand. Interested parties can purchase a copy at either event or preorder the book on Save the Chimps' website.

"I am thrilled," McAdam says of

hearing about the partnership. “I did a lot of research for *A Beautiful Truth*, including spending time with chimpanzees in similar situations as those at Save the Chimps. It makes me happy that the story can make a real difference. This really is a lovely partnership.”

There is a second fundraising and awareness campaign planned by the two companies next spring, which involves bookstores and librarians. The proceeds are in benefit of Save the Chimps for the lifetime of the Soho Press edition of McAdam’s *A Beautiful Truth*.



Save the Chimps

SPEAKING OUT FOR THEM

www.savethechimps.org

ABOUT SAVE THE CHIMPS

A portion of all sales of this book goes to **Save the Chimps**.

Save the Chimps was founded by Dr. Carole Noon in 1997 and is now the world's largest chimpanzee sanctuary. Located in Ft. Pierce, Florida, the sanctuary is now home to nearly 300 chimps rescued from various situations, including medical research. Its mission is to provide and build support and

permanent sanctuary for the lifelong care of chimpanzees rescued from research laboratories, entertainment, and the pet trade.

For more on Save the Chimps and what you can do to help their cause (or just to look at the amazing chimpanzee paintings), click [HERE](#).

A BEAUTIFUL TRUTH

by Colin McAdam

one

Vermont

Judy and Walter Walt Ribke lived on twelve up-and-down acres, open to whatever God gave them, on the eastern boundary of Addison County, four feet deep in the years of rueful contentment. Judy was younger than Walt, her dreams had an urgent truth, and five years had passed since they removed a cyst from her womb that was larger than a melon. Her uterus collapsed and for a year she awoke to formaldehyde dawns feeling sick and lonely and hopeless, no more

chance of a child.

Time passed and Walt stayed near. She held his hand when she sat or when she slept. They painted the house a lighter blue.

On various nights in various ways Judy said do I feel old Walter, and he said you're too young to be old. Come here.

Walt and his partners, Larry and Mike, had built or bought more than half of the commercial space in southeast and central Vermont. They provided the roofs, walls and drains around bakeries, cheese shops, notaries public and all the unimaginable businesses sprung from the minds of people who could not conceive of working for other people. Walt

believed in doing your own thing, finding your own way. The rent came monthly, businesses closed and opened. Walt made other investments, he gave thanks and shared his wealth. Paint for the church, in perpetuity. Books and shelves for the beetle-eaten library.

There were wealthy couples you read about where the man worked and the woman shopped and other people mocked or reviled them. Walt was in love, and held close the fact that there is nothing more natural or right than buying the world for the woman of your dreams. Try to name the value of that smile to Walt and his life-worn heart.

And Judy wanted little. She did not spend her days buying furniture and

curtains. When dresses and shoes appeared in her wardrobe they had usually been sought for and bought by Walt. Before the operation she had wanted one thing, and after the operation she tried to get used to not wanting. They said the desire for children would naturally dissipate, but a man who loses a leg does not stop wanting to dance or kick.

In her rational moments she allowed herself to want nothing more than spending time with a child. It didn't have to be her own, it didn't have to be beautiful or smart, it just had to be near for her to care about it and give her that taste of renewal and possibility that children represent. She was calm about

her desire, but every now and then, alone, she yearned like a prisoner yearns for friends beyond the wall.

I need a purpose she said.

She volunteered to visit people who were dying.

I'll keep Mr. McKendrick company on Thursday nights. They say he has three months.

That'll be good for him said Walt.

I don't know.

And good for you.

It's a purpose.

Your beautiful face every Thursday. He'll be cured, Judy. He'll live forever.

I'm young said Judy.

You're beautiful.

I just want to make you proud she

said.

They bought paintings and a car and a dog named Murphy, but with every purchase and passing Sunday was a feeling that life was a collection of gestures and habits and it was hard to find surprises when most surprises were planned.

That sad light in Judy's eyes was becoming a settled part of her, and maybe, Walt thought, that's life.

His first wife had been killed in their car near Binghamton, a truck driver slept at the wheel. A lake of grief still sat in his chest and it would never properly be plumbed, but the one thing he could think of, the one fact which he could find the fortitude to contemplate, was that the

trucks would never stop. He found a lesson in that. Those goods that people want or think they need, hurtling across the country. You can stand still and scream at the trucks but they'll run you down; you can hop on and go where they go; you can find all sorts of ways to avoid them. You can adjust, instead of accepting, and you can make your own world.

Walt had wanted a baby with his first wife but she was taken away so young. With Judy he had never doubted it would happen, but it hadn't and now it wouldn't. He was more than happy with the thought of looking at Judy till he died, but as for what she had to look at: Walt was getting jowly from beer and

his great love of cheese. When he thought about the idea of having a child, that modern human ability to choose to have a child, and when he thought about beauty and how things can change, he could see how, maybe for a man, a child might be a way to make these moments last—some way to prolong a beauty that can't be preserved. But he simply understood it as love. He wanted what she wanted, and was sad that he couldn't provide it.

They looked into adoption for a time, but the options were limited and waiting lists long. Walt said we'll figure it out.

One of the buildings they owned in the county was a bar called Viv's. Walt met Larry and some of the others there

most Thursdays, especially once the season began. Viv's was in easy driving distance from Willamette Valley where white-tailed deer would rut. The bar was a place where Walt and his friends could relax or celebrate or pay inarticulate respect to the thrill and regret of hunting for meat.

Out of season they found other things to talk about, and Viv was always good at gathering newspapers and magazines. He encouraged the exchange of facts, he said, not opinions, because opinions are like sperm: there are way too many of them, most amount to nothing, and they're more fun to deliver than to receive.

Viv usually had some newfound

knowledge to announce, and in February 1972 he passed a copy of Life magazine to Walt and said now the monkeys are talking.

Walt looked at the article and it changed his life with Judy.

“Conversations with a Chimp” it was called.

He saw a photo of a chimpanzee sitting on a carpeted floor, apparently in conversation with a man. Walt read the article and learned of a group of chimps in Oklahoma who had been taught to speak in sign language. They could talk about things they saw and things they wanted to eat. They spoke spontaneously.

One of the chimpanzees, a girl, was

walking with the man in the picture one day and watched a plane fly overhead. She looked up at the man and signed YOU ME RIDE PLANE.

Walt found that amazing and read that part aloud.

There was a photo of a baby chimpanzee in a diaper, sitting on a woman's lap. And on the cover of the magazine was a picture of a beautiful woman who was involved with Howard Hughes. Walt measured all beauty against that of Judy and found the woman lovely, but wanting. There is no happier feeling.

As he drove home, the thoughts of Judy, the photo of the chimpanzee in the diaper, the beer and the bleakness of

February all swam in his head in a lonely and protozoan soup, till lightning struck, an idea was born, and Walt began making inquiries into how he could acquire a chimpanzee.

He had no idea where to look, what to expect, what a chimp was or whether he could in fact buy one. He thought of zoos, wondered how zoos got their animals. He thought about all the people he knew in husbandry, the friends who traded livestock, the hundreds of acquaintances involved with animals in one way or another. Judy had been at Shelburne, buying Walt some cheese. He remembered she had watched some kids getting excited about the new llamas. That was about the most exotic animal

he had heard of in Vermont.

Where do you see chimps he asked Viv, and Viv said you see them at a circus sometimes, don't you.

So Walt kept his eye out for circuses.

He had spent a few years now trying not to go near things or bring up topics that would make Judy think of children. He hadn't wanted to upset her.

He went alone to a circus in Burlington and there was indeed a chimpanzee who came out a few times with a clown. The clown juggled bananas and the chimp tried to jump and reach them without joy, so he pulled the clown's pants down, revealing pink bloomers, and the clown dropped all the bananas. The chimp looked like he was

laughing and so did everyone else. It was pretty funny. And at the end of the show the chimp bowed and jumped into the arms of the clown and it was also pretty cute.

Walt waited till the crowd had left and asked a guy if he could speak to the clown or the fella who played the clown or whatever you call him, and the guy said he's out in the blue trailer. Walt went through to the street out back and knocked on the pale blue door.

The fella appeared, half clown half man, and said yeah with lipstick lips.

Walt introduced himself and said he had a question, and the clown said I charge a hundred for a birthday and the kids can't touch the monkey cause he

bites.

Walt explained that he was interested in the chimpanzee and wanted to know where he could find one.

Are you a clown.

No.

Wait right there for a second.

Walt heard a terrifying noise which soon became part of his daily life. He was invited in, and there in a cage on the floor in the corner was the chimpanzee from the show.

Settle down there buddy settle down.

The chimp looked simultaneously bigger and smaller somehow, and the second wave of noises was less of a shock to Walt. The chimp was in a pink dress.

The clown said she doesn't like people coming into the house. She's in a mood.

She's a girl.

Past few months or so she gets all moody.

Walt felt a strange combination of embarrassment and curiosity. He wanted to look closer, but felt he should look away.

What's her name.

I call her Buddy. They're all different. Buddy here is a good one.

Walt said hey Buddy, somewhere between the way he would talk to a horse and the way he would talk to a unicorn.

I can't rent her out or anything. But I

can get you one for twelve grand.

Christ.

Sometimes as low as ten. I don't have that kind of money myself and if I did I wouldn't be a clown. You know. This is a chimpanzee. It's not a racehorse but it's not a dog. I can't tell you where I can get one, but it's not a simple thing.

Walt stared at his lipstick.

They're not born here, you see. It costs me. They travel. I travel.

The chimpanzee was looking at Walt and looking at the clown and she put her hand through a gap between the bars.

She wants to touch you.

She seemed small again. Her face wasn't as pale as others Walt had seen in photos. He looked at her fingers and

something stirred in him. They seemed long and you could almost imagine them on a grandmother.

She's pretty goddamn strong. You might not want to touch her.

Walt saw no threat and softly repeated hey Buddy. He was low on his worsening knees and reached towards the cage and gently put the back of his own finger against the back of the chimp's and held it there. Buddy.

She moved her finger slightly to manipulate Walt's and the clown said be nice to the man, he's a friend, be nice, and she looked at Walt with whiteless eyes and scratched a little mole on the side of his finger.

She's cleaning you. It's a thing they

do.

Walt looked at her and her eyes looked at his finger. Walt looked down at his finger and while he was smiling inside and thinking this animal's cleaning me with a woman's finger, she gathered some spit and Walt felt the splash on his face.

The clown said hey be nice now dammit.

Walt looked at her and she laughed like she laughed in the show.

I'll be.

Buddy stood up and made a gesture and the clown said okay, come out, but be nice.

She slipped the dress over her head and revealed a homemade diaper.

I keep a bat or a stick around, but I'm guessing if you're not in the trade you won't be teaching so many tricks. I put her in the cage when there's visitors or when she goes to bed and whatnot. She calls it her bedroom.

She talks.

I talk. I call it her bedroom.

I read about one who knew sign language.

Yeah, she knows signs. Tell daddy to fuck off.

She raised her finger.

Doesn't mean they're ready for high school.

Buddy walked over to the couch with her arms up like she was walking through waist-deep water. She got up on

the couch and sat just like a person would sit and Walt looked at her feet. They looked like hands.

The clown went to the fridge and grabbed a can of beer which he tossed across the room to her. She made a sort of coughing noise and opened the can with her teeth.

I'd offer you one but there's only one left.

He opened it and chugged it and so did she.

When she neared the end she caught the last drops with prehensile lips, looked at Walt like she was telling him a joke and didn't care what he thought of it, got up from the couch and went to the fridge where the clown said there's no

more.

She looked at him like she was making sure she understood properly. Walt watched her flip through a magazine while the clown talked business. It seemed like everything she did was either funny or impossible.

While driving home, Walt reflected on his day and acknowledged that it was always going to be slightly odd to talk to a clown about a chimpanzee. But his mind was trying to catch up to greater things—the feeling of confusion had less to do with negotiating with a clown and more to do with the simple vision of that hairy little girl sitting on the couch across from him. Was she a person or a pet. The longer Walt drove, the more he

realized that what he predominantly felt was excitement. This was an opening. She had seemed so energetic, so full of stories somehow. Were they all like that. Were girls and boys different. She was eight and the clown said that was different from an eight-year-old girl, but maybe not so different except for the menses and some peculiarities, he reckoned. He didn't actually know exactly what age she was.

What would Judy think.

Walt had finalized nothing. He and the clown had agreed that Walt would get in touch in a while and the clown would make some inquiries and try to line up the right chimp. The younger the more expensive he said.

Walt wanted to think for a while and not necessarily surprise Judy with a baby chimpanzee but maybe try to find the right way to tell her about the idea. She was waiting with a roast chicken when he returned and she was the picture of his idea of home and there was gratitude in his heart. Please don't take those eyes away from me or let them get any sadder.

A month or so later he met the clown at a diner in Burlington. He wore no makeup and his name was Henry Morris. He could line up a chimp, probably a boy, might even need bottle-feeding.

Walt was nervous, but resolved.

He talked Henry down to six thousand dollars, not knowing that Henry

would pocket three of those six. Henry himself did not know that his connection in Sierra Leone, a German named Franz Singer, paid only thirty dollars for the chimps he sold for three thousand.

In Outamba-Kilimi a mother chimpanzee had been walking with her baby clinging to her chest and a shotgun blast sent bone through the back of her eyes. She was several meals for Liberians across the border, her punctured skull was ground into a paste which a man in Hong Kong bought to heal his broken arm, and her baby was put in a sack and delivered to Franz Singer's farm outside Freetown.

Nights of hunger and bony moons, steel and the rubber teat.

Singer's chimpanzees were renowned for being free of shotgun pellets, less work when they arrived. They flew in crates, Pan Am cargo, neither colonists nor slaves.

Henry met the crate.

Walt told Judy he had bought a baby chimp, and Judy looked at the painting above the mantel, oil of the lake in summer. It was night but she felt the warm breath of the sun through her dress and thought life isn't what you see it's what you think.

They slept with their bodies close that night, their minds going miles down separate roads which they never dreamt were separate.

Judy had seen enough hours and days

to know that when things are truly strange their strangeness doesn't appear until after the strangeness has passed. She thought of this when she was sitting on the living room floor looking into the eyes of Looee, who was holding her fingers on the bottle with hands that had grown so much in just a few months.

The deal between Walt and Henry had been that Henry would find an appropriate place to present the chimp to him and Judy. That seemed the hardest part to Henry. He had done this a few times now. He knew to buy a small cage, rent a pickup, drive to Newark, slip cash to the right people. The laws about exotics didn't exist in those days and quarantine was a matter of money. He

knew exactly what he would do with the chimp but he couldn't think of how to present it back in Vermont. He got his shoes shined at the airport in Newark by a really nice guy named Louis. He told Louis with the right sort of wink that he was staying at the Radisson and Louis recommended a girl who gave Henry a ten-dollar handjob that he would have paid double for. He wanted to kiss her but when he leaned forward she recoiled. He drove back to Vermont and thought there's that jungle gym in the park for the kids, I'll arrange that we all meet there.

two

Florida

The World needs fruit. The World needs sleep. The World needs touch and the quick pink heat.

Podo rules the World. Podo chooses his moments.

He limps and others limp to be like him. He eats his breakfast with loaded hands, and alms drop and scatter like seeds from a shaken tree. He greets his friends and assesses the day and the day bows down to black Podo. He takes Fifi by the hips while she sucks on an orange.

He will play with children and pin their mothers.

Podo runs to the greybald tree and swings around it once and twice and does something else without thinking

what it was, and it is always something to behold, fast Podo.

Outside are grass and dirt and swollen birds, high summer, there is concrete and society. Armpit heat and guilty meat, and friends who come and go.

Look to Podo if the food is taken from your mouths. Look to him if you think all food can be yours.

He wants Fanta.

He will pound the eyes of detractors. Show him your rosé.

A bird flies over the World.

Fifi watches Mr. Ghoul. Mama likes Fifi.

Fifi likes Mama. Magda slaps Bootie.

Bootie likes Burke and hitting Magda, his mother. Podo is pinning Magda and neither really wants it.

Bootie and the new one are jumping all over Magda and Podo.

Bootie slaps Podo on the leg. Podo is busy, sharp Podo.

Bootie and the new one want to understand. They want it to stop, continue.

The new one is looking at Magda's rosé getting pin, pin, pinned by Podo, and Bootie is thinking about slapping or biting the swinging balls of Podo.

Podo thinks a thought that he can taste and the World swells hot and dark.

He has finished.

Magda walks away without looking

over her shoulder. Bootie and the new one are bewildered.

Podo feels the oa, grateful Podo. Magda feels safe.

He is huge, black Podo, and he walks with black hair raised, and daylight blue and slick on his body, and his shoulders are widening, legs surprising, he coils and uncoils with prowess and venerable grace.

There is oa in the ground and oa in the wind and everyone knuckles and bows, how-do.

Mr. Ghoul spends the morning eating onions.

Purchase the entire book, [HERE](#).

Praise for Colin McAdam's *A BEAUTIFUL TRUTH*

"McAdam's language reaches into that mysterious place where a word ends and a feeling begins. *A Beautiful Truth* is a story about love and beauty and our dreams for our children and our inescapable loneliness. The characters, human and animal, are sad and honest and true. I could not put this novel down, and only when I finished it could I breathe again." —**Kim Echlin, author of**

The Disappeared

"Haunting. Heartbreaking ... it is a tale of empathy and honesty, deftly told and beautifully rendered." —**Will**

Ferguson, Scotiabank Giller Prize-winning author of *419*

“The portrayal of chimpanzees as individuals with memories isn’t just a fictional device; the commonality of human and chimpanzee conceived here is achieved not by eliminating the traits that divide them but by illuminating the differences that unite them ... With concise language, this heartbreaking tale of loneliness and remembrance reminds us that understanding is a process of growth and experience.” —*Library*

***Journal*, STARRED REVIEW**

"Weighty themes underlie McAdam's spartan prose depicting the inner lives of

research chimps ... Brimming with ambition, McAdam delivers a thought-provoking foray into the not-so-dissimilar minds of our ape relatives.” —*Publishers Weekly*

“[A] sure-handed and mature work, expertly weaving together shifts in voice and point of view and making use of a poetic language full of direct, sensual metaphors ... There are no platitudes about the power of love and our need to feel for one another, but rather an understanding of how sad and damaging a business love frequently is.” —*The Toronto Star*

“Kafka’s sketch [“A Report to an

Academy"] is an enduring satire on the kinship between humans and primates. McAdam's novel is an earnest, daring and insistent attempt to show the moral implications of that kinship." —*The*

Globe and Mail

"It's to McAdam's credit that Looee is such a living, breathing character, so rich in mind and trajectory that he elicits much empathy ... Maybe one of the most striking aspects of the novel is what this juxtaposition illuminates. Whether animal or human, the basic patterns of everyday life, the repetition, the need for contact, affirmation and love, are the same." —*National Post*

"[A] gut punch of a novel ... that's going to get a lot of people talking. And crying." —*Toronto Life*

"[*A Beautiful Truth*] deftly explores the mind of a domesticated ape ... a serious, thoughtful piece of work." —*The Telegraph*

"The narrative [of A BEAUTIFUL TRUTH] doesn't just show humans interacting with primates. Inventively, McAdam, gives them a narrative voice and point of view ... the effect is jarring. McAdam has had to create a new language." —*The Scotsman*

COLIN MCADAM ON TV AND RADIO

LISTEN: Colin McAdam
interviewed on Public Radio
International's "To the Best of Our
Knowledge."

READ: *TheTimes Literary
Supplement* reviews *A Beautiful Truth*,
calling it "research [that becomes]
rhapsodic lamentation."

WATCH: Colin
McAdam interviewed live on Canada
TV discussing the personal experiences
that led him to write *A Beautiful Truth*.
(Trouble viewing? Go
here: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?
v=VO2CymTE6IQ](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VO2CymTE6IQ))

READ: "I Fell for an Ape,"

McAdam's exquisite account of meeting Pepper, a middle-aged chimpanzee residing in a Montreal facility. Originally published in Salon Magazine.

FALL 2013 BOOK TOUR

Edinburgh International Book

Festival

Edinburgh, Scotland

Saturday, August 24, 2013

10:15 a.m.

Vero Beach Book Center

Vero Beach, Florida

Tuesday, September 17, 2013

7:00 p.m.

Malaprop's

Asheville, North Carolina

Wednesday, September 18, 2013

7:00 p.m.

Union Avenue Books

Knoxville, Tennessee

Thursday, September 19, 2013

6:00 p.m.

Save the Chimps Member Day
Vero Beach Chimpanzee Sanctuary
Saturday, September 21, 2013
11:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.

SubText: A Bookstore
St. Paul, Minnesota
Sunday, September 22, 2013
6:30 p.m.

Third Place Books
Lake Forest Park, Washington
Monday, September 23, 2013
7:00 p.m.

Green Apple Books
San Francisco, California
Tuesday, September 24, 2013
7:00 p.m.

Book Soup
Los Angeles, California

Wednesday, September 25, 2013

7:00 p.m.

New York Public Library

Jefferson Market Branch

Thursday, October 3, 2013

6:30 p.m.

Texas Book Fair

Austin, Texas

Saturday & Sunday, October 26-27,
2013

Purchase A BEAUTIFUL TRUTH from
the retailer of your choice:

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For additional ordering information,
please see below.

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attn. Desk Copy Request

MEET THE AUTHOR



I was born in Hong Kong, and as a child I lived in Denmark, England, Canada and Barbados. I moved back to England to get a PhD at Cambridge—the thesis was on politically-skewed translations of Ancient Greek in England

in the 17th century, and it stops all conversations.

I moved to Sydney, Australia, after that where I lived for several years and wrote my first novel, *Some Great Thing*, which was first published in the UK. I moved back to Canada—Montreal—when that came out and have been a full-time novelist ever since (around ten years). I live in Toronto now. *Some Great Thing* was about a builder and a civil servant. My next novel was called *Fall*, and was about teenage boys in a boarding school. *A Beautiful Truth* is about chimpanzees. They're all different from one another, but there is a continuity that might only be clear to me.

From my travels I think I became

interested in territorial behavior, in how and why people claim to be different from others, and also in the psychologies that drive some people toward each other and some further apart. I ultimately wanted to look at this at an animal level, and as I read about other great apes I realized that most answers to human questions can be found within the biology and behavior of apes. I think of myself as an ape and have learned to see the world in quite a different way after doing the research for *A Beautiful Truth*.

I met some remarkable chimpanzees while I was doing the research, at a sanctuary outside Montreal. I had connections with some, moments where I realized these were two very similar

animals looking at each other through a protective fence. The connections deepened when I learned their histories: the fact that many of them had been in cages at biomedical labs for decades. It was all the more remarkable that some of them wanted to reach out and groom me.

I spent a long time going through the medical files of some of them—particularly one named Pepper. It was on these that I based Looee's experiences in the lab, in the novel.

The novel is really a collection of true stories. I think people are instinctively inclined to believe it is a fantasy because it involves "animals." All the behavior in the novel is based

on documented chimp behavior and on behavior that I witnessed among the chimps I met. The depiction of what happens to Looee in the lab is not the half of what happened to Pepper in reality.

Meeting the chimps made me rethink everything I knew about psychology, empathy, will, politics and cruelty. I don't think we can talk about being human without first acknowledging and exploring the fact that we are a species of ape. That novel was my attempt to look squarely at what other apes are like.

ABOUT THE VIDEO

The chimpanzee starring in the video you just saw is Ayumu, and he is doing a memory exercise. Ayumu has proven that chimpanzees have the incredible ability to memorize and place a sequence of numbers in the correct order after seeing them for less than a second. This task is nearly impossible for a human to do. Go ahead, TRY IT.

Ayumu was born on April 24th, 2000, to parents Ai and Akira at the Primate Research Institute at Kyoto University. He is a part of the renowned Ai Project (named after his mother)

directed by Dr. Tetsuro Matsuzawa. The project seeks to better understand chimpanzee intelligence.

For more videos and information about Ayumu and the Ai Project, please click [HERE](#).

This video was made possible by special permission from Dr. Tetsuro Masuzawa of Kyoto University's Primate Research Institute and Ayumu, for being such a star.



"The characters, human and animal, are sad and honest and true. I could not put this novel down, and only when I finished it could I breathe again."

—KIM ECHLIN, author of *The Disappeared*

A BEAUTIFUL TRUTH

A NOVEL



COLIN McADAM