

THE

UNFINISHED

LIFE OF

ADDISON  
STONE

A NOVEL

ADELE GRIFFIN



“Some people wonder if they dare disturb the universe. Other people smash their universe to pieces just to see how it looks the next morning. For those of you who never knew her, take this book. Read her life. Be inspired to be more.”

—LINCOLN REED, ADDISON STONE’S FORMER BOYFRIEND

“I don’t believe in magic, but Addy lives right here in these pages—in the memories of all of us who knew her best.”

—LUCY LIM, CHILDHOOD BEST FRIEND

“From the moment she stepped foot in NYC, Addison Stone’s subversive street art made her someone to watch. And her violent drowning left her fans and critics craving to know more. I conducted interviews with those who knew her best—including close friends, family, teachers, mentors, art dealers, boyfriends, and critics—and retraced the tumultuous path of Addison’s life. I hope I can shed new light on what really happened the night of July 28th.”

—ADELE GRIFFIN

# DAILY NEWS

NEW YORK CITY'S HOMETOWN NEWSPAPER

Monday, July 29

## ADDISON STONE, WELL-KNOWN ARTIST, DIES AT 18

AP TOP NEWS JULY 29 AT 4:59 A.M. EST

**NEW YORK CITY (AP)** - The New York City Police Department confirmed that they are investigating the death of artist Addison Stone. Her body was recovered early this morning in the East River near the Manhattan Bridge. Initial reports indicate that the victim fell while attempting to plaster a billboard at the Manhattan Bridge overpass.

"We were on the bridge, and we saw her fall," said Michael Frantin, who had been out celebrating his one-year wedding anniversary with his wife, Ginny. "She was wearing this silvery-white dress. It happened so fast. Like seeing a shooting star."

Earlier that night, the young woman had attended a party held by Carine Fratepietro at her gated estate, Briarcliff, in the Hudson River Valley. Following an argument with one of the guests, Stone departed abruptly. "She was upset," said another guest, Alexandre Norton, adding that Stone had been in a turbulent relationship with artist Lincoln Reed, best known for works that have dealt with an array of political and social themes, most

particularly chemical warfare.

A friend of the family, who did not want to be identified, said that Stone, who previously lived with her family in



ERICKSON MCAVENA

Peacedale, R.I., had occasionally talked about taking her life and had attempted suicide at least once in the past.

Lt. Keith Buschhueter of the NYPD confirmed that the 911 hotline had received several frantic calls just before 2:30 a.m. Wednesday morning. Stone was unconscious and unresponsive when they arrived, Buschhueter said. He added that while this was an ongoing investigation, there were no signs of foul play. He described Stone's death as "an unsupervised tragedy."

"It appeared that she was not wearing a proper harness, nor taking precautions while working from a height of more than 20 feet," he said. "It is

possible that these actions were deliberate."

Stone rose to fame both through her painting and her incendiary public antics. Her artwork was sold through Berger Galleries, but she often painted in public spaces such as bridges, water towers and abandoned buildings. She was perhaps best known for the controversial **Project #53**, the theft of her own portrait from the Whitney Museum, which occurred earlier this spring.

Addison Stone had been awarded the W.W. Sadtler Grant as well as a grant through the Maynard Foundation to study at Pratt Institute, her father, Roy, told the *New York Daily News*. Her works had been displayed in galleries and museums in New York, Los Angeles, Europe and Asia. "My daughter had everything in life to look forward to," said Stone. "I keep waiting for her to call and say this whole thing was just another one of her crazy stunts."

# PROLOGUE

**I MET ADDISON STONE ONLY ONCE.** She had enrolled as a freshman in my creative writing workshop at Pratt Institute. There were only six other students in my class, and as a visiting instructor, I was happy we'd be such a tight group. Fifteen minutes into the session, I'd figured this "A. Stone" person wasn't attending. So when a girl skittered in, late and unapologetic, I was annoyed.

She was striking: tall yet delicate, with pale skin and dark eyes and two braids like a pair of flat black ropes past her shoulders. The scars on her wrists caught me off guard. She didn't speak, not even to apologize for being late. Perhaps most telling, she scraped back the only empty chair so that it stood outside the circle I'd arranged. When she sat, her paint-spattered arms dropped at her sides as if she had no use of them.

We'd been making introductions, so I started over for her benefit. We went around the circle again: a few sentences each about who we were and where we'd come from. When we got to Addison, she shook her head.

"I'm not here yet," she said softly. Startled, some of the other students looked to me for a reaction. Who did this girl think she was? I had none. I was thinking, *Who'd remember anything else about that day except for the girl who told them she wasn't there?*

Before they left, I gave an assignment: pick a memory and describe it in the voice of yourself at the age you lived through it. One paragraph or one page—no more. Due in my inbox by five o'clock on Friday. At 5:13 on Friday, Addison's essay hit:

*I'm last. I'm late. I pull my chair away for comfort. I'm invisible and exposed. My words establish my walls. My whole life I'm two people. I am I, and I am Her. I've been asked to pin down a moment. But do I care about my past? Why would I want to look behind when I'm hurtling forward so fast? I'm mostly scared I can't catch up with me. I am always almost out of time.*

*A moment later, my inbox pinged with Addison's next email.*

*I'm dropping the class.*

*And that was it.*

Of course I never forgot her. When I heard that Addison had left Pratt after one semester, I was disappointed, but like everyone else on the faculty, I kept an eye on her career. I silently cheered when her self-portrait was accepted into the Whitney Biennial; I was fascinated by her prank *Project #53*. Then by next July, she was dead. A brilliant artist, all that potential, erased. It was heartbreaking and pointless.

I'd been blocked trying to come up with my next book idea, and as I learned more about my former student, I couldn't shake the fact that Addison Stone's life had all the ingredients of a perfect novel.

Ultimately, I have to credit Julie Jernigan's explosive *Art & Artist* magazine cover story "Who Broke Our Butterfly?: The Last Days of Addison Stone" for kick-starting me to dig for a deeper truth—as it hinted that either one of two famous young men to whom she'd been linked romantically, Zachary Fratepietro and Lincoln Reed, might be culpable.

Every time I read that single cryptic paragraph Addison had dashed off for my class, I wondered if in some way she'd been asking for me to find her all along.

I decided to go looking. With a year off from teaching, I threw myself into my research. I taped hundreds of interviews from people whose lives were connected to Addison's. Her story took me from Sag Harbor to California, from Europe to Nepal, and of course to Peacedale, Rhode Island, where Addison spent her childhood. She began to obsess me. In every gallery and café, on every street corner it seemed there was another Addison doppelgänger.

I kept thinking, ridiculously, that the closer I got to her past, the greater the chance I'd have of stealing a moment out of time with Addison herself—even if we were only brushing past each other on a city street. She was everywhere and nowhere.

And as police reports emerged that both Lincoln and Zach were in lower Manhattan that night, and that neither of them had an alibi that would clear their presence at or near the time of Addison's death, I grew more curious, even suspicious. Both proved difficult to reach. Neither wanted to talk.

What did they have to hide?

This question became my central mystery to solve.

After months of sifting, compiling, editing, and transcribing thousands of hours of the voices that knew Addison best, this biography pulls back the curtain to reveal the truth as I see it. The acknowledgments that appear at the end of this book can't begin to do justice to the generous commitment of the many people involved—including those who wished to remain anonymous. I am also hugely grateful to the contributions of photographs and memorabilia, the visuals of Addison's world that allowed us such vital intimacy.

To her family, friends, fans, or the reader who is new to all that was Addison, I hope you find her here.

—ADELE GRIFFIN

## STONE IN SPRING

by Christa Waring

ADDISON STONE is used to being stared at. I am staring at her now, and so is most of the crowd feigning nonchalance in the perennially over-packed Café Rouge in the West Village. We have agreed to meet for coffee before she zips uptown to Frost Gallery to see “a new friend’s” opening, and Stone is prompt, which surprises me—though it probably shouldn’t. Long and lean in black pants and a perfectly distressed charcoal T-shirt, Stone’s model-thin good looks are at immediate odds with her cheerful decision to order an iced café mocha plus a double-fudge gluten-free cupcake. “Does anyone really know what gluten is?” she asks. “I



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I’m young,  
I’m a student,  
I have a ways to go.

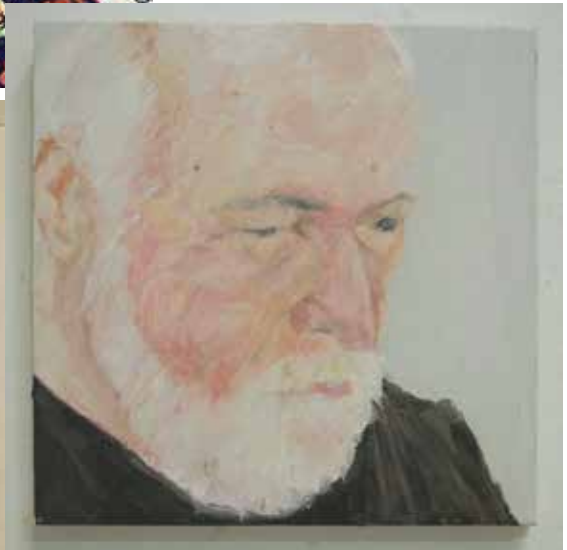
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know you’re supposed to banish it.” Stone’s sweet tooth is contagious, it seems, as I change my own order, adding a slice of lemon cake to complement my green tea. But daytime desserts seem a fitting pleasure for a young woman with an outsized appetite for this city. Stone is having a moment, having blasted into our consciousness last summer with her painting *Talking Head*, the runaway star of the Berger/Fratepietro glitz-fest. We needed to know more. We needed to know everything. So who is Addison Stone? She is, foremost, an artist. “I’m young, I’m a student, I have a ways to go,” she acknowledges, but even she seems to know this definition of herself is not quite correct. Working mostly in oil on canvas, Stone’s painterly portrait

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## An Interview between editor Daniel Ehrenhaft and Adele Griffin

- I already know the answer to this one (dinner is involved), but I must ask, anyway: What was the genesis of *The Unfinished Life of Addison Stone*?

This has to be one of my favorite genesis stories. *The Unfinished Life of Addison Stone* is a New York art fable with its own New York publishing “back fable.” You and your lovely wife, Jessica Wollman, came over to our home for a dinner that ended up being one of those go-late, talky nights about every topic from the Edgar Awards to Edgar Winters (true! as you know!). At some point we were discussing our enchantment with books about bands—The Velvet Underground, The Ramones, The Sex Pistols.

You mentioned *And I Don't Want to Live this Life* and I mentioned *Ciao! Manhattan*, the George Plimpton / Jean Stein biography of Edie Sedgwick. I confessed that I'd always wanted to write a modern Edie story, only this time starring a Banksy-type stunt artist. “That’s an amazing idea,” you said. “Do this book now, and with us!” And I agreed—although on Saturday night, I was playing pretty fast and loose with proclamations and cheesecake dessert.

Monday morning, my agent, Charlotte Sheedy, called to tell me there was a contract draft from you in her inbox. That same day, you sent me very encouraging note to take this risk. It was my, “if not now, when?” *carpe diem* moment. I jumped.

- Related, what (or who) were your biggest influences in putting the novel together?

When I was writing *Addison*, my mind kept holding on to two moments; a spring day in 1986 and again in 1996. The '86 memory was a high school field trip to SoHo. I'd never been to SoHo before. That day, I ate my first sushi roll, I saw Keith Haring graffiti, and I bought a dress for five dollars from Antique Boutique (and wore it out of the store). But mostly I went to gallery spaces and stared and stared at art. I never wanted to go home.

Ten years later, spring of 1996, I was back in SoHo, on 65 Bleecker Street, for my first meeting with Charlotte Sheedy, of whom I'd known only as this legendary New York figure. I was so nervous and excited that I had to press paper towels against my palms in the bathroom beforehand.

Both of these moments feel long ago, overlaid in the value of re-remembering. But I kept crawling back into them, to feel that original surge that I'd preserved in amber. *Addison Stone* is a fantasy, she's that mythic story about a small town girl who moves to the big city. And I needed every day that Addison lived in New York to be a shot of breathtaking newness. I wanted the reader to feel the adrenalin of each moment, the singular experience of being young in a city and thinking that it might swallow you up, or it might have been invented just for you.

- The art feels so authentic, both for its caliber and because the pieces reflect Addison's

**growth and struggles through time—so uncannily that it’s eerie. How did you go about finding such amazing work, and who contributed?**

All I knew going into the *Addison* project was how much I wanted a reader to see an artist with technical skills matched by an ability to use art as a window to her psyche. I ended up using five different artists to tell Addison’s story; from a young undergrad currently enrolled at Pratt Institute, all the way through to the phenomenal portrait work created by Michelle Rawlings while she was a graduate student at the Rhode Island School of Design (RISD). The professor at RISD who put me in touch with Rawlings thought that her work was brilliant while it also captured Addison’s raw vulnerability. I did, too—to the point that, after the art came in, I found myself rewriting text to create a deeper synergy between Addison’s mind and the art Rawlings had created.

**• What was it like working with Giza LaGarce, the model who portrays Addison?**

I met Giza through a mutual friend, who brought her to one of my very nerdy *Game of Thrones* parties—where we have grog and stew and watch the show. Giza showed up in braids and a long dress, and was stunningly *Thrones-y*. I’d been working on a first draft of *Addison*, and I hadn’t even thought about featuring a visual Addison; the original idea was to showcase the art. Suddenly there was Addison Stone in my kitchen, and she was every bit as ethereal and charismatic as Edie Sedgwick. That’s when I saw an entirely fresh component of the book, as an intimate biography.

Giza herself is all sunshine, so my husband, my assistant, and I were always saying sad things to her during the photo sessions, so that Giza could sink deeper into the spirit of troubled, fragile Addison. It got to be a bit of a joke—how to depress Giza. That noted, Giza’s lovely personality and her thoughtful commitment to this project absolutely sprang Addison to life.

**• Did you find yourself reflected in Addison as you worked on this novel? As a teen, or at any time of your life?**

When I read *Ciao! Manhattan*, I was twelve years old and I’d lived my whole life on Army bases. The glamor and beauty and decadence of that memoir was pure fantasy for me—I didn’t know anybody who knew anybody who might have known any those people. But the life of the mind is so wildly peculiar. As readers, we have such a fascinating capacity to vault into other lives.

I finished Edie’s story shivering because I was so sure that in some way, I had been there, too. I saw myself as friends with Edie and her friends—Andy Warhol, Patti Smith, Lou Reed, and seventh grade me—all hanging out together in the Factory. I want Addison Stone to be that same intensity. I want people to leap into this story as a full immersion experience. That’s what I tried to catch back. That’s the way I love to read.

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