

## Jim Thompson's Spiritual Poetry Class #58

Wednesday, June 23, 2021

5 pm PT

Dear Friends:

We must be in summer hours as I am on vacation next week so we will not have class next Wednesday, June 30, 2021 **BUT** we have class this Wednesday, June 23, 2021 (tomorrow or tonight depending on when you read this)!

Here are some poems I am excited about:

- **I Want to Be Jeff Goldblum** by Adam Scheffler. You don't have to love actor Jeff Goldblum (as I do) to appreciate this poem but it helps. And there is a kicker at the end that transports a fun poem into a great poem, imho.
- **Unconditional Belief in Heat** by Anna Journey. A poem about the stories we tell ourselves to keep up the pretense that we have "permanence," as the poet puts it.
- **Anthropocene** by Nomi Stone. What percentage of the hatchlings "make it past?" Although this poem is kind of upbeat, the situation the planet is in (along with the humans who are on it) is not. Nonetheless, I really like this poem. And, if it gives us the strength to keep fighting, then all is to the good. Could the names of the children in the poem be true or is it a case of poetic license?

Here's the link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81374816274?pwd=eG1PRUxoWC9iTjFaTHFBNTBrNklvQT09>

Passcode: **704824**

Note: This link and passcode are good for classes through July 28, 2021.

+ + Jim

# I WANT TO BE JEFF GOLDBLUM

—Adam Scheffler

**I WANT TO SWEET-TALK** everyone I meet.

I want to have a silver tongue.

I want each time I sit down to write a poem to think,

*This is going to be a Jeff Goldblum poem.*

I want to murmur and stutter like butter like velvet.

I want to be the nice Jewish boy that I already am, but raised to an art form.

I want to wear dark glasses and leopard-print suits,

be so affected even I can't tell if I'm full of shit

As I dodder on exposing an inner vacuousness

that, admit it we all have, but

That I, Jeff Goldblum, in my best moments, rise above.

I want you to sneer at me, then laugh and feel good in spite of yourself.

I want my former costar Glenn Close to call me "charm personified."

Let me wake in the middle of the night, feeling a pulsing throbbing

desert of bare worry in my chest,

And say to myself, *It's okay, honey, you're Jeff Goldblum,*

and be 100 percent correct.

Let me be injured and carried on the back of a pickup truck as it floors it

away from a tyrannosaur.

I want objects in the mirror to be closer than they appear and I want to be that

mirror.

I want to save the world from aliens, with Will Smith.

I want to be a smarmy sea captain whose white whale is Bill Murray.

I want to slowly morph into a fly, growing hundreds of compound eyes,  
and becoming more and more grotesque, less and less lovable, until  
my lover puts me out of my misery,

But then wake up from it all like a bad dream

and then win best actor at the 1986 Saturn Awards.

But I fear I will never be Jeff Goldblum.

I fear I am no more Jeff Goldblum than I was ten years ago, that

I have made zero progress, Goldblum-wise.

Though I have watched all seventy Jeff Goldblum films, I have not  
grown an inch taller or more charming.

That is the tyranny of fandom, of being a fan,

Which is to wave cool air over a being who disregards you,

Who lolls about eating grapes in Egypt

And can't really help you except to enjoy them better.

And I know if I live a million years I will never ever be Jeff Goldblum.

That there is only a terrifying stretch of *me*-ness waiting for me day

Upon day until I wear out.

## Unconditional Belief in Heat

—Anna Journey

I would've stabbed the man's hand  
had he not jerked it away—this is what I usually say  
toward the end of the story. The man

had pried back the right vinyl side panel  
of my living-room window's A.C. unit, ripped  
the accordion-style flap from its mounting track,  
and began palming the wall inside  
my first-floor apartment. My ex

had left at the beginning of summer and Natalia  
wouldn't move in until spring, so I lived alone  
that June in Richmond, in the back bottom suite  
of a shoebox-shaped fourplex  
set perpendicular to the street. In the story

I've told for almost twenty years,  
I'm a junior in college towelling my wet hair  
as I walk from my bathroom through the hall,  
headed to my bedroom, at two in the morning.  
I notice a flicker of motion from the living-

room window: a human hand  
flopping, like live tilapia, through  
the side panel's bent vinyl, the limb shoved in  
up to the elbow. I charge at the arm, yell,

*I see you, motherfucker*, and the hand  
jerks back. The man flees. When I call 911  
and reach, incredibly, a busy signal, I phone Ed instead,  
who will drive over, remove his old A.C. unit, take it  
to his new place. Until Ed arrives, I hover  
near the pried-back vinyl

gripping a butcher knife. I would've stabbed  
the hand that tried to steal my A.C. This is how  
I tell it: I once thwarted a thief and he's lucky  
I let him keep all his fingers. Last night,

on the phone with my best friend, I retold  
the story and Alicia paused, then said,  
*He wasn't after your A.C.* Twenty years ago,  
she must've said the exact same thing to me,  
but I'd brushed it off, positive

I'd terrified a thief. It was June in Richmond  
and I was young and held an unconditional belief  
in a heat made utterly obscene  
from humidity. It got so hot I could imagine  
someone getting high and thinking, *Goddamn,*  
*I need some A.C.* My living-room window faced

a small side lawn that abutted the back garden  
of a rich person's town house: a low wall  
of calico brick from the nineteenth century  
with an overhanging fringe of dogwoods that had  
by that point in summer expanded into a fat

green canopy. At two in the morning  
no one would've seen him climb in—quick  
flicker between the brick and my window.

I know years ago Alicia said the same thing,

but I had to stop believing in my own  
permanence to hear her. But I still  
believe in—deep summer, Virginia—  
that heat.

# Anthropocene

—Nomi Stone

Nesting, the turtle seems to be crying even though she is simply secreting her salt. Her dozens bud limbs inside amniotic pillows

as she leaves every egg in a cup of sand the size of her body, shaped like a tilting teardrop — and both cryings

are mentioned by scientists. My niece Eve is startle-eyed when you feed her avocado and when you feed her sweet potato. She lives mouth first:

she would eat the sidewalk and piano, the symmetrical petals of the Bradford pear, as if she could learn which parts of the world are made and how,

and yesterday she put her mouth on the image of her own face in the mirror. Larkin says what will survive of us is love,

but the scientists say that the end of the decay-chain is lead and uranium and after that, plastics. Just now the zooplankton are swallowing micro pearls of plastic

and the sea is aflame with waste caught in the moon's light. Here is the darkening hour and here, the shore, as she droplets her eggs,

bright as ping pong balls, into the sand. She can't find the spot. The beach is saltined with lights, neoned with spectacular

globes of light, a dozen moons instead of the one moon. Still, she lets them go and one month later, tiny turtles hatch. They seem groggy,

carrying their houses of bone and cartilage to the ocean, scrambling toward the horizon alongside the earth's magnetic field.

Less than one percent of the hatchlings make it past the seagulls and crabs, so Noah spent a summer dashing them to the water.

But my poem is not about the moment when a bird dove and bore into the underflesh and into Noah's memory.

My poem is about how we are gathered around Eve in the kitchen as she eats a fruit she has never tried before

and each newness in the world stops the world's ending in its tracks.