

THE HOLE IN THE MAP
Music, Russell Ferrante/Lyrics, Lorraine Feather

Slightly below the Equator,
Beneath a scalding sun,
Waits a counterfeit paradise
And sure oblivion,
Or so they told our hero
In 1925,
As he went back to the river
That ate so many alive.

It starts as a trickle in the clouds and snow,
With more than an America still to go,
Steamrollers into the sea,
Wide as New York City.
Passable only in the worst of the heat,
In the winter it rises 40 feet.
The green hell is a heady trap,
So don't fall down
The hole in the map.

You'd bet such a forest would feed you;
You would lose that bet.
You thought you learned about fortitude
As a gentleman cadet!
The painful pranks, the floggings,
Were bliss compared to this,
As you hack through the lianas
Where hanging boas hiss.

There are bugs that'll kill you with a single bite,
Turn your cotton britches to threads in a night,
Homicidal gnats no bigger than seeds,
Cyanide-squirting millipedes.
Still you know you love it and you won't be swayed,
Though you never are fully unafraid.
Hits your heart like a thunderclap,
So don't fall down
The hole in the map.

Back in the comfort of Devon,
You sweeten your tea and sigh,
Free now to sleep till eleven,
And watch the old world go by.
You smile at your civilized heaven,
And say that at last, you'll stay,
But just by the gates
The Amazon waits,

To quietly drag you away,
Drag you away,

Back to the river.
It's passable only in the worst of the heat,
In the winter it rises 40 feet.
The green hell is a heady trap.
Don't fall

There are bugs that'll kill you with a single bite,
Turn your cotton britches to threads in a night,
Homicidal gnats no bigger than seeds,
Cyanide-squirting millipedes.

OFF-THE-GRID GIRL

Music, Eddie Arkin/Lyrics, Lorraine Feather

*He packed his bags in Bellingham,
Took the water taxi to where I am.
We'd lie by the brook; his yellow dog,
Chasing butterflies while I wrote my blog.
It warned the outside world to stay away,
To stay away.*

He would never pass the deep, dark winter here.
He made that clear.

We've got these rats as big as cats,
Slugs as long as your arm,
A nasty nest of rattlesnakes
Down by the onion farm.
We brought them in to eat the rats,
Which, as I stated, are big as cats.
All they did was multiply and grow.
It's a very scary place to be,
Unless you're an off-the-grid girl
Like me.

Forget about the ferry route;
It won't be dropping you here.
Forget those touched-up listings
On the walls of Windermere,
Or Coldwell Banker, or John L. Scott,
One barren plot is all we've got.
Extended stays are scarcely apropos,
But there's a cabin in the shadow of the penitentiary
Just right for an off-the-grid girl
Like me.

It's curtains for our aquifer.
Salt pours from every tap.

Not much can grow but nettles,
And they'll sting you in a snap,
But if you're coming anyhow,
Get all your vaccinations now.

I'll tell you something
(Keep it on the down-low):

There's a nasty pox for which there's no immunity,
Unless you're an off-the-grid girl
Exactly like me.

I've kept his books beside the bed.
I've let him stay inside my head.
He'd walk by the table where I sold
The beets of purple, the plums of gold.
I guessed a Harvard cap and gown.
I knew he played his money down.

WHERE IS EVERYBODY?

Music, Eddie Arkin/Lyrics, Lorraine Feather

There's a jukebox blasting in this dive, but there's
Not a soul to jump and jive.
Where is everybody?
No one to jump, no one to jive,
No way to spend my buck eighty-five.
Where is everybody?

There's a whole lotta no one on this street.
Not a single bird goin' "Tweedle-ee-oo-deet."
Where is everybody?
Suddenly I got way too much time to kill.
The whole scene is weirdsville.

"Calling all cars,
Calling all cars,
There's a maniac loose in town.
If we were there,
And there were people to scare,
You can bet we would bring him down."

Who's that woman with the frozen grin?
Man, the chick's only a mannequin!
Where is everybody?
Put a U.S. nickel in a pay phone.
One friendly voice, and I wouldn't be
So alone!

*"The number you have dialed
Is not a working number.
The number you have dialed*

Is not a number."

Who could be ringin' that old church bell?
Who turned on the water in that jail cell?
Where is everybody?
Betcha they been hidin' somewhere.
Gonna jump out and give me
A whale of a scare.

Women and men,
Will I see them again?
I'm hoping I do, and soon.
With no human race,
It's like bein' in space,
Askin' that great big moon,
"Where, where, where,
Where is everybody?"

*Somebody, anybody, tell me why
My mind has gone so silly.
Could be that third shot of rotgut rye,
Or the four-alarm chili.*

THE USUAL SUSPECTS

Music, Russell Ferrante/Lyrics, Lorraine Feather

There were two bad hats they didn't kill.
He was the one I'd squeeze.
I told the guy, "Get ready to spill
Like the Exxon Valdez."

Leaned on him heavy—not much time.
In two hours tops, he'd fly.
For a mook who stuck to small-time crime.
He had a lotta friends up on high.

Whenever we haul in the usual suspects,
He's not the one you take seriously.
Arms like a girl,
Whines like a pup,
A noticeable hitch in his giddy-up.
He told me everything, but nothing at all.

There was a top-notch, first class entry man,
Seriously sick in the head.
He was the man who whispered the plan,
So this grifter said,

When he talked about the
Bully from Queens, mean as a snake,

And the pimped-up marble-mouth,
And the fortyish, former cop-on-the-take,
Who took it hard when the job went south.

*He was gonna hang up his spurs. He'd been puttin' it to this uptown lady lawyer, according to
Chatty Cathy,*

Who had fun bein' one of the usual suspects—
Got to behave notoriously.
Dumb as a sock,
Weak little wretch
Who never even rated a composite sketch,
See, he was usually nothing at all.

So I get this tip and I drop a name,
And he drops his cigarette.
That was the moment that changed the game,
But I didn't really get it yet.

He tells me a story, wasn't any bull,
But he leaves out the final twist.
He says, "The slickest trick you'll see The Devil pull,
Is makin' like he doesn't exist."

Whenever we round up the usual suspects,
He's not the one you take seriously,
The kinda con who wasn't ever played by Richard Conte.
A year ago they collared him for Three-Card Monte.
Guy gave me everything, but nothing at all.

FIVE

Music, Tony Morales/Lyrics, Lorraine Feather

One night in June, I was visiting my girlfriend,
When suddenly there came a little voice from behind—
Phoebe announcing that she could do a backbend.
My friend tried to shush her, I really didn't mind.
"Oh mommy, mommy, I gotta tell you one other thing," she said,
Her face upside-down and red.
"Okay, young lady, then you'd better get your butt back to bed."
She said:

"I can count to five, I can count to five, I can count to five,
I can count to five, I can count to five, I can count to five."

What a clever little girl!
Where in the world did you learn to count to five?
I'm blown away by your new ability,
Pointing out that you are one.
And she and I make three;

Kitty and the turtle make five, make five.

*You know Melissa, I really can't ignore
The way she counts to five when the music is in four.
She's a darling thing, a gem of a child,
But this obsession with five, it must be driving you wild!
She's got five dolls, five braids on her head,
Five pairs of shoes at the foot of her bed.
I can't imagine where all this ends, but honey,
Maybe you should talk to her five best friends about it.
Uh-oh, here she comes again.*

"One two three four five, one two three four five,
I can count to five, I can count to five, I can count to five, I can count to five."

What a pleasure, little girl,
Hearing the confident way you count to five!
You say the numbers with such authority,
Pointing out that you are one,
And she and I make three,
Kitty and the TV make five, make five.

"I can count to five [13 X],
All the way to five."

SWEET MIRIAM

Music, Eddie Arkin/Lyrics, Lorraine Feather

Written on a New York sidewalk,
One thousand feet of purple chalk,
Is a madman's letter to the girl who split in zero zero.
He never ever begs for money.
Though the guy's defacing public property,
The five-oh let it go,
So they too can read his tale of woe.

"Dear love of mine,
Once again, I see the sun shine.
Does it still shine on you,
Sweet Miriam?
Ten years since we kissed,
But as long as I believe you still exist,
I can survive, sweet Miriam.

"Though I loved and I lost and the cost was terrible,
Almost unbearable,
I feel no regret.
People pass and I guess they see me,
As being on the fringes of humanity,
'Cause I work till creeping night

To get this one thing right,
My letter to you,
Sweet Miriam.
When it's done,
You're gonna come on home."

One day I walked by and there was no letter, just drawings of the two of them in the park, ice skating, stuff like that. Once he did ... did kind of a flow chart of how their affair fell apart. But mostly, it's him talking to her.

"We had it, we had it,
We had that deep connection,
Far beyond the extremes
Of physical affection.
To think you might share it with someone else,
I can't describe the hurt.
If somehow you turned into a ray of light,
Or a speck of dirt,
Or even if you were plankton
Floating in the sea,
I'd know you,
I would need you near me.
Oh please, oh please, forgive my delirium,
Sweet Miriam.
Come on home.

"Today,
Once more, I'll wipe it all away.
Sweet Miriam,
Come on home."

OUT THERE

Music, Shelly Berg/Lyrics, Lorraine Feather

You shook my hand, rather leery,
And I imagine that you found me cold.
I knew your taste for the eerie.
You knew of course,
That everyone had told me you were "out there."

I thought your pain had you blinded,
Spurning the obvious in asking why.
You said I had to be reminded
Of what the "I" stood for in "the FBI,"
And venture out there.

Shoulder to shoulder, improbably together,
The oddest couple in the Feds' employ ...
The world we traveled grew darker by the day.
A grave informant and a dog-faced boy

Were waiting out there.

Time can't just disappear.
It's a universal invariant.

Crime doesn't sleep.
You came to wake me in Room 203.
We quickly threw on our wet-weather gear,
The pattern less than evident to you and me.

Once I compared you to Ahab,
Your vengeance coloring all you chose to do,
Megalomaniacal in your twisted view,
And then you asked if I,
Then you asked if I,
Asked me if I was coming on to you.

Your hair was rumpled and spiky,
Your hazel eyes curiously probing mine.
You'd wormed your way into my psyche.
It took me aback, but the temptation was divine,
To linger out there.

Mystery to mystery ...
What if you should love me?
What of my sanity and common sense?
Weird lights above me, a rabbit hole below,
I thought I understood the final consequence
Of being drawn down into space,
Knew it meant vanishing without a trace,
Forever out there.

GET A ROOM

Music, Shelly Berg/Lyrics, Lorraine Feather

It's pretty obvious
You're not my type,
But when we're together, people snipe,
"Get a room, get a room, get a room."

I'm not your destiny,
Uh-uh, no way,
But time and again, we hear 'em say,
"Get a room, get a room, get a room."

You're careful and cautious and so polite.
I don't care whose cage I'm rattlin'.
This isn't a matter of left and right,
Like Jim Carville and Mary Matalin.

You've always been the one
Whose chops I bust.
The cop on the corner mutters, "Just
Get a room, get a room, get a room."

We explain to him that opposites
Sometimes repel,
As a couple construction workers yell,
"Get a room, get a room, get a room!"

That little accent I do,
Never seems to amuse you.
Tell me all about spring break in Baltimore.
I've only heard it nine times before.

It's highly unusual
For you to show up in my dreams,
But even my cranky parrot screams
"Get a room, get a room!"

She goes "Oo woo woo woo woo woo woo woo,
Get a room, you two."

I lack the particular outs and ins
Of women you refer to as goddesses.
You speak, I don't ever hear violins,
Or even the ripping of bodices.

Smart-asses
Think they're wise,
Total strangers roll their eyes.
The schoolkids
Won't let it lie,
No mercy
When we pass by!
They point, they laugh, time after time.
Sometimes they chant
This jump rope rhyme:
They go
"Ah ah, eh eh, say boom boom boom.
Ah ah, eh eh, get a room, get a room, get a room."

Oh, oh, oh,
Liar, liar, pants on fire,
My face wasn't either turning red,
That time your mother said,
"Get a room, get a room."

Oo woo woo woo woo woo woo woo,
Just get a room, you two."

Snowed in, in Fargo,
No one's flyin', whaddya know,
Work trip, dead beat,
Nothin's free but the Honeymoon Suite.
Big bucks, no choice.
Then I hear a familiar voice,
Hear you, near me,
Sounding pitiful as can be:
"Is there any way I could possibly
Get a room, get a room, get a room?"
And the rest is history.

COWBIRDS

(Based on "Nocturne, Op 54 #4," by Edvard Grieg)
Music, Russell Ferrante and Edvard Grieg/Lyrics, Lorraine Feather

I wake up to the sound of the cowbirds,
Their burbling, beautiful cry.
You can see them all day at the cherrywood feeder.
They started appearing in early July.

They are stocky and glossy,
Certainly bossy,
But no more than the jays.
As they finish their feeding,
I begin reading
Of their curious ways.

They gather no moss,
They carry no leaves,
To fashion fine homes
In the trees or the eaves.
A cowbird roams the woods until
She finds a nest that fills the bill,
Snug in a tower of green.
She stays awhile but doesn't brood.
She won't return to offer food.
She simply flees the scene.

Her young one hatches quickly,
And does what he's wired to do.
With a purposeful thrust of his juvenile legs,
He starts to dispose of the resident eggs,
Make short work of the slumbering finches or phoebes,
Who drop to the ground without any sound,

Or he leaves them quite alone!
Soon a stranger arrives to fill his gaping beak,
As if he were one of her own.

The tale will be told in the course of a week.
The latecomers, fragile and small,
Will get little or nothing at all.

The dusk is alive with the call of the cowbirds,
The striking display of their wings.
I watch them hold court by the cherrywood feeder,
And quietly ponder the nature of things,

How stars that have died can collide in the night,
Make such a grand show as they spatter,
How sunsets that bring up a groan of delight
Are filled with particulate matter,

How it hardly seems fair
That some birds get the boot,
So others can live and grow fat.
There's a metaphor there,
But it's low-hanging fruit,
So maybe I'll leave it at that,

As a stout baby cowbird falls asleep
To the piteous cheep of a ghost,
And the sound of his mama's mantra:
"May we ever outnumber our host."

I TOOK YOUR HAND
(Based on "Fellini's Waltz," by Enrico Pieranunzi)
Music, Enrico Pieranunzi/Lyrics, Lorraine Feather

It was barely twilight when the string quartet began to play.
At the stroke of twelve, the dancers failed to pull their masks away.
Then I saw you weren't the same as anyone,
And the very room began to shine.
I was trembling badly, but I took your hand in mine.

Though in all my life I never once believed in second sight,
Something odd indeed, but just as real, came over me that night.
All at once my mind was filled with photographs
Of a thousand moments yet to be.
I was on the ocean;
I was drifting toward the land.
I loved you when I took your hand.

I seemed to see you as the years flew by,
And hoped you understood
They could not ever dim your beauty.
Of course, it would have been insanity
To say that to a stranger,
As you were to me,

No more than a stranger.

I could dimly see the dancers crossing hands and circling 'round,
Only faintly hear the music, as it languidly unwound,
But I swear I saw the heart and soul of you,
And I heard each halting word you said,
As we touched, no more than it's polite to do,
And your warmth went rushing to my head.

Then you asked if I would like to dance.

I said no, said no.

I wanted so to dance,

But I could hardly stand,

When I took your hand.

INDIANA LANA

(Based on "Jubilee Stomp," by Duke Ellington)

Music, Duke Ellington/Lyrics, Lorraine Feather

Indiana Lana was a runner out of Gary, Indiana.
Never was a runner who could beat the time of Indiana Lana.

When she was only one,

She jumped up and began to run.

She ran around the apple tree,

Until you couldn't even see a blur.

"Now, get her!"

Soon the baby Lana was the dinner table talk of Indiana,

Our budding champion!

Oh baby, how she could cover ground,

Quicker than a rabbit, with a habit

Of passing every car in Indiana.

"Way to go, Lana!"

How that little girl ran around.

Once she started movin',

Couldn't hardly stop.

She raced her brother's pickup truck

To the bait and tackle shop.

The boys all found it funny,

Till it hurt their pride

To see that squirt smoke everybody's ride.

High school brought her Track and Field,

And though she'd always fly,

Something never quite appealed,

And Lana told me why:

Pontiacs and Oldsmobiles

Were really more her speed.
She needed horsepower at her heels
To revel in her lead.

One day, at the end of May,
She jogged up to Thunder Bay,
Then thought it might be fun
To run down to Indianapolis Town.

Got to the place
Where there was a race,
Onto the speedway,
Into the lead, hey,
I don't jive,
She won the Indy Five.

Indiana Lana was a runner out of Gary, Indiana.
Never was a Hummer who could beat the time of Indiana Lana.
She yelled "First place or bust!"
Then made those racecars eat her dust.
She ran around the track, and back
Around the track, and back around the track.
"You go, girl!"

Who began again to be the dinner table talk of Indiana?
Our home-grown champion!
Oh baby, how she could cover ground,

Quicker than a rabbit, with a habit
Of passing every car in Indiana.
"Way to go, Lana!"
How that little girl ran a-
How that little girl,
How that little girl,
How that little girl ran around!

TO LIVE ANOTHER DAY
Music, Eddie Arkin/Lyrics, Lorraine Feather

Free at last
From the jaws of a nightmare ...
It dropped you here,
Where you lie trembling in the dawn.
You feel those little aches and pains,
The battles hovering ahead,
But then again, a moment previous,
You knew that you were dead.

Icy rain
Strikes every window.

The room is cold;
The clocks are blinking off and on.
You seem to vaguely recollect
That storm got ugly in the night.
You find it absolutely glorious
To meet the morning light,
To live another day.

Your mind plays a pleasant reprise
Of odd moments of joy,
Like when you knew
It was better she left you,
Or realizing for God's sake,
It was only the flu;
Or, you were scared, there, going in,
But then it really didn't matter what they thought of you.
Maybe it really doesn't matter what they think of you.

Outside your door
Are the streets of the city.
They've been your world
Since you arrived here as a boy.
You love them like a lover
You'd forgive most anything,
Can scarcely bear to contemplate
The cherry trees in spring,

You doubt you'll stay forever
In this elevated state.
You try to memorize the feeling,
To believe it's not too late,
To live another day.

You close your eyes and you recall
When dull defeat or alcohol
Have left you oversensitive,
And far too quick to bruise.
You chose to take what life will give,
To live another day.

AHH

**Music, Nino Rota/Lyrics, Lorraine Feather
(Based on "Rosa Aurata," by Nino Rota,
from the film *Juliet of the Spirits*)**

Town to town,
We caravan.
We move our world by night,
Hobo clown,
And cannon man,

And families bound by flight.

I dream another dream of you.
I feel the hunger of your stare,
As I am twirling by my hair.
I know I never will forget
The broken rope, your strangled cry,
Until I found the nylon net.

Once, I was a stranger to this life,
As green as any First of May.
You were a beast in gold lamé;
You bore the mark of careless claws.
Your need was deep, as mine is now,
To feel the thrill of wild applause.

*Look at all the people out there tonight, darling.
I think we have a full house. I'm so excited.*

“For their love
We walk the wire,”
So said my dear papa.
“Miles above,
We fashion fire.
The crowd goes ‘Ahh ...’”