

## **SONG NOTES, THE GREEN WORLD**

Escaping from the city to the ecstatic sights and scents of nature, “the green world,” is a metaphor for the journey that is love.

The characters in these stories travel down a river, up a mountain, to a kingdom under the sea. They fall for each other instantly, in a year, or cyberspace; they rediscover a love they feared was lost or lose each other over and over in a time loop. None of them are living together in cozy connubial bliss. They are often apart, connecting on the phone, online, in voice messages, or in a mystical manner that defies explanation.

I often have conversations with my friends about how we might find hope and solace in a world that is often frightening and heavy with despair. The inevitable conclusion is that we do what we can to make the world better, even in the smallest way, and that we focus on the beauty in life, however transient; the humans and animals we cherish; and the work each one of us has been given to do.

For a quarter-century now, I have been overwhelmingly fortunate to work as a lyricist and singer with people I admire to the skies and treasure as friends. A small circle of them have collaborated with me on my recording projects as an artist. This is our latest shared creation.

### **1. THE GREEN WORLD**

This lyric takes place inside the mind of the singer. She fantasizes about her lover and imagines taking a trip with him to someplace beautiful and pastoral. She also laments the challenges that people she knows are facing, many of them more isolated than usual. She looks up random information online (the reference to flying seeds is about the samaras of a maple tree, also called “helicopters”), and compulsively checks the weather on her phone. Eddie Arkin’s arrangement is complex, involving mystical background vocals, a Queen-inspired bridge, marimba, and shredding guitar.

### **2. DISAPPEARING UNIVERSE**

I read Kurt Vonnegut’s *Slaughterhouse-Five* decades ago. There’s a segment that has played in my head now and then over the years, about a conversation that the protagonist Billy Pilgrim has with a Tralfamadorian (alien) regarding the inevitable end of the universe. I decided to carry it over into a story about a doomed love affair that always begins again. The singer tries to change the course of events, but ultimately, accepts the circular motion like a ride on a merry-go-round as she sings “La la la la la ...” Russell Ferrante and I had a lot of fun writing this time-traveling song, which is one of the two tracks on TGW that uses marimba.

### **3. UNLIKE MY EX-WIFE**

I have been on various dating sites, senior and otherwise. This lyric covers some of the recurring themes I’ve noticed in men’s profiles (guy friends I’ve made through the sites have their own horror stories).

Family and friends are important. They like being outdoors. They are allergic to drama. Understandably, many people at a certain stage in life are pissed off about some previous relationship. They never say so, but you can tell. The song takes a little left turn at the end, with the appearance of an ex-girlfriend named Darlene. Shelly Berg's intro is what one might call 21<sup>st</sup>-century ragtime.

#### **4. EVERYBODY HERE LOVES YOU**

On November 14, 2021, Michael Valerio called to tell me some devastating news. Michael Shapiro, our dear friend and the drummer for countless albums of mine, had died. Eddie and I wrote this song for him.

The lyric begins with a Zoom call, describing what you see when the other person's phone is lying face up in front of him. The timeline jumps back to a time when a group of musicians and a singer are in a recording studio together. At the lyric's end, the musicians gather for a Happy Hour jam session to honor their lost bandmate, at the imaginary intersection of Century Boulevard and Vine Street.

[Eddie - Since Mike was especially known for his expertise in Latin rhythms, we chose a bolero as a basis of this composition. Musically, the song begins with a vocal chorale sung by Lorraine along with solo violin setting a mood of remembrance, as we wanted this composition to emotionally portray a friend and colleague whom we all miss very much.]

#### **5. CANOE**

At the height of the pandemic, holed up in my Rochester apartment for weeks on end, I came to especially treasure the brief in-person encounters I had with strangers—at CVS, at a dentist's office, in an Uber or Lyft. One day an Uber driver told me a story about an extreme canoeing trip he took. He described the stages of the physical effort, ending with "On the fourth day, you're a canoeing monster." I apologetically interrupted him so I could repeat what he said into my phone. Later, I read some stories about whitewater canoe and kayak trips and mixed various information.

[Eddie - When Lorraine gave me the lyrics to "Canoe" I was at first a little baffled about how to treat this musically. I wanted to include the humor and capture the metaphorical canoeing references as a glimpse into the currents and ups and downs of a romantic relationship. I came up with two elements that occur throughout as a basis for this song, namely, an electric guitar riff with an eighth note digital delay repeat and a string trio playing pizzicato lines to create a feeling of the current and motion of a boat moving through water.]

#### **6. WANTING**

The music for "Wanting" is Russell's take on a traditional four-part invention. The lyrics are about the miracle of finding your heart's desire amid a chaotic world. Rapture and fear mingle as both lovers open completely to each other, hardly daring to hope that they are worthy of the gift they have been given.

"A homicidal diatribe at someone turning left" is a reference to an incident involving a musician friend of Eddie's. He was trying to turn left into traffic from a parking lot in LA, and a man a couple of cars back began screaming at him from his car window because the maneuver was taking too long.

The first 12 lines of both “A” sections in “Wanting” are in haiku form.

## **7. ANOTHER LAYER OF NUANCE**

The phrase “another layer of nuance” is part of a remark an ex-boyfriend of mine made once.

This song begins with an argument. Two people avoid a breakup, but not for long; their relationship finally ends for good. The singer reflects tenderly on the characteristics of her beloved—his intelligence and compassion, his habits—first with joy, then with melancholy when she realizes that he is lost to her.

## **8. THE SEAFLOOR**

I’ve been working with bassist Michael Valerio for a long time now, and when he came to Rochester a few years ago we discussed the possibility of writing a song together. Mike is insanely busy in the studios in LA but every now and then we’d text each other to discuss ideas. One day I saw a YouTube video that was just layered voices and theremin, and asked him what he’d think of doing something with theremin. This was the idea that lit a flame. “Theremin and bass quartet!” he texted me. It later turned out to be seven tracks of bass, three of them percussive, with Mike hitting the bass with the heel of his hand to emulate a bass drum, rubbing the front of it for a snare brush sound, and tapping it for a backbeat. Joanne Pearce-Martin, a dear friend of Mike’s who is the pianist for the LA Philharmonic, played theremin.

## **9. SPLAT!**

My other Shelly Berg song was conceived as a kind of mashup of Antonio Carlos Jobim’s “Water of March,” a stream of disconnected-yet-connected images and emotions, and Eddie Harris’s “Freedom Jazz Dance,” from which I borrowed the rhythm of the chorus. This song has a featured tenor saxophone, Marcus Strickland. It’s the last lyric I wrote and the last I sang. The final words, in the fade, are “It’s a fabulous anecdote/For our Zoom wedding reception.”

The melody for “Splat!” is very tricky, and I don’t read music. Shelly thoughtfully sent me a demo at two tempos to help me practice. “I know you can do it,” he said. My co-writers are all exquisitely sophisticated, and I learn something with every musical outing.

## **10. SOMETHING TO LOOK FORWARD TO**

The title for this song was taken from a quote by the author and feminist Rita Mae Brown: “Happiness is pretty simple—someone to love, something to do, something to look forward to.” There is a second inspiration for the lyric, Wendy Cope’s poem “The Orange,” which ends with the lines, “I love you. I’m glad I exist.”

This was my first collaboration with the great pianist and composer Arturo O'Farrill. We began writing the piece in Arturo's office at UCLA and completed it a year later at his home in Brooklyn, recording it together in New Jersey in May of 2024. The recording process was an adventure, as both of our performances changed significantly with every take.