

Leonard Cohen's Famous Blue Raincoat

Written by bluelover

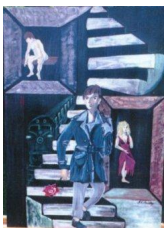
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Sometime in the early 1970s, a thief stole Leonard Cohen's old raincoat from Marianne Ihlen's New York apartment. (Marianne Ihlen was a Norwegian woman who was the muse and girlfriend of Leonard Cohen.) God only know what happened to it, but the thief almost certainly had no idea he was stealing an object that belongs in the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, if not the Smithsonian. It was that very coat that inspired Cohen to write one of his most beloved and mysterious songs. It's written in the form of a letter, possibly to the narrator's brother, who stole his lover, Jane.

Famous Blue Raincoat

The lyric tells the story of a love triangle between the speaker, a woman named Jane, and the male addressee, who is identified only briefly as "*my brother, my killer.*" The exact nature of these relationships however, is far from clear.



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The song is deeply, almost embarrassingly, personal, an epistolary song about a wounded man who cannot help forgiving the friend. The overpowering emotion of the song inhibits another look at the lyrics, but Cohen's autobiography immediately suggests problems with this common interpretation. Specifically, it is Cohen's life that is being described both as the narrator and the other man. It is the friend in the song not "*L. Cohen*," the narrator, who has a "*famous blue raincoat*."

But as the real Cohen noted in liner notes to the 1975 collection "The Best of Leonard Cohen," the blue raincoat was his.

"I had a good raincoat then, a Burberry I got in London in 1959....It hung more heroically when I took out the lining, and achieved glory when the frayed sleeves were repaired with a little leather."



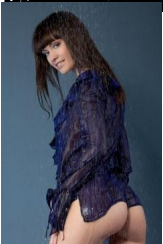
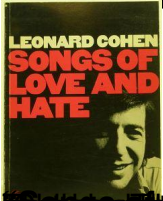
Blue Raincoat

In a 1994 BBC Radio Interview Cohen remarked: "*The trouble with is that I've forgotten the actual triangle. Whether it was my own . . . of course. I always felt that there was an invisible male seducing the woman I was with; now, whether this one was incarnate or merely imaginary I don't remember. I've always had the sense that either I've been that figure in relation to another couple or there'd been a figure like that in relation to my marriage. I don't quite remember (but I did have this feeling that there was always a third party, sometimes me, sometimes another man, sometimes another woman).*"

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