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Leonard Cohen, 1969SuzanneWritten by Leonard Cohen Once created, a great song can exist independently of its creators, taking on a life of its own as it rises to iconic status within the cultural landscape. Such is the case with Suzanne, the haunting composition that has become one of Canadian singer/songwriter Leonard Cohens best-known works. A look into Suzanness history reveals how, in the making of art, the real people who serve as inspiration, unfortunately, though perhaps inevitably, get left behind. Leonard Cohen was already well-known by the time of the songs ascendance, but not as a performer. Born to a Jewish family in Montreal in 1934, Cohen published his first book of poetry at the age of 22. His experimental novel, Beautiful Losers (which one critic described as the most revolting book ever written in Canada), was published in 1966 and soon gained a reputation as a benchmark of countercultural expression. According to writer Judith Skelton Grant, who published in 1966 and soon gained a reputation as a benchmark of countercultural expression. Literature, Suzanne began life as a poem. It was given substantial revisions by the time of its first presentation as a song, by Judy Collins on her 1966 album, In My Life. Since then it has been recorded by dozens of artists, becoming as much of a 1960s standard as Respect or Yesterdaya masterwork that defines one era and continues to inspire our own. Artistically, the songs brilliance lies in its pairing of a spare, hypnotic melody with evocative lyrics: Now Suzanne takes you down/To her place near the river/You can hear the boats go by/You can spend the night beside her/And you know shes half crazy. In Cohens version, first recorded on his 1968 album, Songs of Leonard Cohen, the mood is underscored by a lilting female chorus and Cohens own subtle, insistent guitar playing. Cohen delineates his enigmatic title figure, who wears rags and feathers from Salvation Army counters, so sharply that we seem to know everything we need to about her. Within the context of the song, she is a complete and satisfying creation. Still, the question demands asking: Is there any benefit, for us as listeners, in knowing something about the real Suzanne verdal, the beautiful, free-spirited wife of an artist Cohen knew in Montreal during the early 1960s, a time when that city was an epicenter of bohemian culture in North America. Like the songs character, Verdal did indeed feed Cohen oranges that come all the way from China; together, the pair savored the dazzlingly beautiful view, offered by Verdals waterfront apartment, of the St. Lawrence River. Other details proffered within the song speak to a romantic longing that, seemingly, remained unfulfilled: And you want to travel with her/and you want to travel blind for youve touched her perfect body/with your mind. I was the one that put the boundaries on that, Verdal told CBC reporter Paul Kennedy in 2006, adding, Somehow, I didnt want to spoil that preciousness, that infinite respect that I had for him I felt that a sexual encounter might demean it somehow The hunger two gifted and beautiful people have for one another illuminates the lyrics, giving them a spark that seems to resonate from the inside. On a human level, the song is about the mysterious forces that bring people together and, then, just as inexplicably, move them apart. Undoubtedly, Suzanne, as a work of art, must be taken on its own terms, but Verdals own story demands attention as well; it is, in effect, the story, the real-life experience that can be found, if we are willing to peel back the songs layers. Retaining her bohemian identity, Verdal went on to travel the world, going from Montreal to France to Texas, and, finally, by the early 1990s, to Los Angeles, where she worked as a choreographer. A nasty fall and subsequent injury ended her career as a dancer; by the time of the CBC interview, Verdal was living in a converted truck in Venice Beach, California. Photographs reveal her as older, but beautiful, still dressed in the kinds of ragsfrom Salvation Army counters that, long ago, she began transforming into a personal fashion statement. You know, she said, whats kind of bittersweet and poignant is I came here with high goals and I didnt achieve much of those goals. Perhaps, because it has survived so fullyas a lasting, unimpeachable entity Suzanne can be appreciated as a statement of human frailty as moving as any song ever written. It represents a special moment in time, created by two people whose mutual attraction was not fulfilled in a physical sense, but in an emotional, and, perhaps, deeper, way. The human figures who gave birth to that moment have moved on, underscoring how the artistic works we create will, if they are to enjoy a deep and long-lasting appreciation, outlive us. Unlike people, great songs do not age. This song is about Suzanne Verdal, a woman Cohen had a memorable affair with. She was the former wife of the Quebec artist Armand Vaillancourt. In Cohen's 1975 Greatest Hits album, he explained: "I wrote this in 1966, Suzanne had a room on a waterfront sheet in the port of Montreal. Everything happened just as it was put down. She was the wife of a man I knew. Her hospitality was immaculate. Some months later, I sang it to Judy Collins over the telephone. The publishing rights pilfered in New York City but it is probably appropriate that I don't own this song. Just the other day I heard some people singing it on a ship in the Caspian Sea. "In a 1994 BBC Radio Interview Cohen said: "The song was begun, and the chord pattern was developed, before a woman's name entered the song. And I knew it was a song about Montreal, which was the harbour, and the waterfront, and the sailors' church there, called Notre Dame de Bon Secour, which stood out over the river, and I knew that there was a harbour, I knew that there was Our Lady of the Harbour, which stretched out her arms towards the seamen, and you can climb up to the tower and look out over the river, so the song came from that vision, from that view of the river. At a certain point, I bumped into Suzanne Vaillancourt, who was the wife of a friend of mine, they were a stunning, both of them, a handsome man and woman, everyone was in love with Suzanne Vaillancourt, and every woman was in love with Armand Vaillancourt. But there was no... well, there was no possibility, one would not allow oneself to think of toiling at the seduction of Armand Vaillancourt's wife. First of all he was a friend, and second of all as a couple they were inviolate, you just didn't intrude into that kind of shared glory that they manifested. I bumped into her one evening, and she invited me down to her place near the river. She had a loft, at a time when lofts were... the word wasn't used. She had a space in a warehouse down there, and she invited me down, and I touched her perfect body with my mind, because there was no other opportunity. There was no other way that you could touch her perfect body under those circumstances. So she provided the name in the song." >> Suggestion credit: Shannon - Kathleen, GA, for above 2 Judy Collins was the first to record this, releasing it on her 1966 album In My Life. Cohen released it on Songs Of Leonard Cohen, which was his first album, and many other artists have since recorded it, including Nina Simone, Neil Diamond, Joan Baez, Anni-Frid "Frida" Lyngstad (in Swedish) and Pauline Julien (in French). In 2006, the Canadian Broadcasting Company (CBC) found Suzanne Verdal, who inspired the song. She was a dancer and traveled around the world, but in the '90s, she hurt her back and was living in a homemade camper in Venice Beach when they found her. She revealed that Cohen lost touch with her by the time he recorded it, although she did meet him briefly after one of his concerts in the '70s, where he commented that she gave him a beautiful song. Responding to Cohen's quote, "It's not just the copulation. It is the whole understanding that we are irresistibly attracted to one another, and we have to deal with this. We are irresistibly lonely for each other, and we have to deal with this. We are irresistibly lonely for each other, and we have to deal with this. We are irresistibly lonely for each other, and we have to deal with this. the boundaries on that because Leonard is actually a very sexual man and very attractive and very attracted to him, but somehow I didn't want to spoil that precious relationship, and I felt that a sexual encounter might demean it somehow. That precious relationship produced a great piece of art." >> Suggestion credit: Rory - Davis, CA Suzanne Verdal said in The Guardian, December 13, 2008: "Leonard was a friend of my husband, Armand. We were all hanging at the same places in Montreal - Le Bistro, Le Vieux Moulin, which was the place to dance to jazz. Black turtle-neck sweaters, smoke, beatniks and poets - it was that bohemian atmosphere in the 60s. Leonard spent hours at the Bistro. He was quite a bit older than me but he saw me emerging as a schoolgirl, working three jobs to subsidize my dance classes. By 1965 I had separated from Armand and was living with our little girl. Leonard would come over and I would serve him jasmine tea with mandarin oranges, and light a candle. It sounds like a seance, but obviously Leonard retained those images, too. I was living in a crooked house, so old with mahogany and stained glass. I loved the smell of the river and the freight trains and boats. Out of my window was total romance. Leonard was a mentor to me. We would walk together and we didn't even have to talk. The sound of his boots and my heels was weird, like synchronicity in our footsteps. He felt it, I felt it and we got such a rush just grinning at each other. We were never lovers of the flesh but on a very deep level we were. I had the opportunity more than once but I respected his work and what he stood for so much, I didn't want to spoil it. Also, Leonard is an incredibly sexual man! He's very attractive to women and I didn't want to be just one of the crowd. I left Montreal for the States in '68 and when I came back people said, 'Have you heard the song Leonard's written about you?' In my wildest dreams I didn't know it would be huge. I felt flattered, but I also felt there was an invasion of privacy. After that, things changed course. I stayed true to the 60s. He became this big pop icon and was not accessible any more. It hurt. The song is bittersweet for me. Sometimes I'll be in a restaurant and hear it and I'll be overcome." Ever wonder why Suzanne feeds him tea and oranges? It's not as exotic as it sounds. Said Cohen in Song Talk: "She fed me a tea called Constant Comment, which has small pieces of orange rind in it, which gave birth to the image." Judy Collins recalled to Uncut in 2014 how she came to record this song by a then-unknown Leonard and Cohen: "(Cohen's manager) Mary Martin was an old Canadian friend of mine who was always mentioning Leonard and Cohen: "(Cohen's manager) Mary Martin was an old Canadian friend of mine who was always mentioning Leonard and Cohen: "(Cohen's manager) Mary Martin was an old Canadian friend of mine who was always mentioning Leonard and Cohen: "(Cohen's manager) Mary Martin was an old Canadian friend of mine who was always mentioning Leonard and Cohen: "(Cohen's manager) Mary Martin was an old Canadian friend of mine who was always mentioning Leonard and Cohen: "(Cohen's manager) Mary Martin was an old Canadian friend of mine who was always mentioning Leonard and Cohen: "(Cohen's manager) Mary Martin was an old Canadian friend of mine who was always mentioning Leonard and Cohen: "(Cohen's manager) Mary Martin was an old Canadian friend of mine who was always mentioning Leonard and Cohen: "(Cohen's manager) Mary Martin was an old Canadian friend of mine who was always mentioning Leonard and Cohen: "(Cohen's manager) Mary Martin was an old Canadian friend of mine who was always mentioning the martin friend of mine who was always mentioning the martin friend of mine who was always mentioning the martin friend of mine who was always mentioning the martin friend of mine who was always mentioning the martin friend of mine who was always mentioning the martin friend of mine who was always mentioning the martin friend of mine who was always mentioning the martin friend of mine who was always mentioning the martin friend of mine who was always mentioning the martin friend of mine who was always mentioning the martin friend of mine who was always mentioning the martin friend of mine who was always mentioning the martin friend of mine who was always mentioning the martin friend of mine who was alway his books. And one day in 1966 she said, 'What if I sent Leonard over to see you? Because he's written some songs.'""The first night came to my apartment, he was charming, shy. I don't think he knew what he was doing, and he never sang a note. He said, 'oh, I'm embarrassed too...'""He came back the next afternoon and sang me 'Suzanne,' 'Dress Rehearsal Rag' and 'The Stranger Song.' and the next day he came back and sang 'Suzanne' again and I recorded it shortly thereafter. There was no question immediately that it was a classic. There's a spiritual center to it that's authentic. The authenticity is what really grabbed me. "In 1969, Cohen met another Suzanne: a 19-year-old named Suzanne Elrod. They had a passionate and tumultuous affair that lasted about 10 years. The couple never married, but Elrod gave birth to his two children, son Adam and daughter Lorca. The name Suzanne derives from the Hebrew name Shoshannah, meaning "lily". This association with the delicate and fragrant flower lends the name an air of purity, beauty, and grace. Additionally, the name is linked to the biblical figure Susanna, who was falsely accused of adultery but was later vindicated. This connection imbues Suzanne Origins Hebrew (Shoshannah). Symbolic Representation The lily, which is associated with the name Suzanne, symbolizes innocence, purity, and beauty. It represents the divine and the eternal, as lilies are often used in religious ceremonies and artwork. Additionally, the lily's delicate petals suggest a fragility and vulnerability that is inherent in the human condition. Personality Traits The name Suzanne evokes a gentle and feminine emotion. It suggests a person who is kind, compassionate, and loving. There is a subtle strength to the name, reminiscent of the enduring a calming and harmonious atmosphere. Key Personality TraitsSuzanne is predominantly a girl's name with a strong feminine identity. Among 237,517 people named Suzanne, 237,487 are female and 30 are male resulting in a 99.987% female distribution. This pronounced gender imbalance underscores the name Suzanne's strong feminine identity. Data ExplanationThis data is sourced from actual birth records, ensuring that the statistics provided are accurate reflections of real naming trends. The percentage has been rounded up for easier readability, but the underlying figures are grounded in factual data, not estimates. This ensures that the information is both reliable and user-friendly, giving a clear and truthful picture of the name Suzanne's gender association. Popularity Suzanne classified as an ubiquitous name and ranks 337 in the Namedary database. It has remained stable over time, and remained stable recently. The chance of meeting someone named Suzanne is nearly 0.07%, or about one in 1,000+ people. Popularity and Usage Trends for Suzanne Based on the latest data from 2021 (57), 2022 (82), 2023 (10), Suzanne's year-to-year percentage change in popularity is 80.00%. The name Suzanne was most popular in 1962, making up 0.18% of baby names (or about one in 500+ babies), and reached its lowest point in 2021 with a usage rate of 0.0003%. Country-Specific PrevalenceSuzanne Popularity by Country-RankPopularityAustralia1340.2%New Zealand1600.16%United States3490.07%United Kingdom6330.02%Canada7920.02%People named Suzanne are predominantly found in Australia (AU), particularly in New South Wales (NWS), where it makes up 0.21% of the population. Data SourceThe data in this section was gathered from a variety of sources, including:To enhance readability percentages are rounded up. Values less than 0.0015% have been omitted.NameSuzannePronunciationsooz-ansuzannesoo-zanSuz-anneIPA NotationsuznSyllable Count: 2 SyllablesTranslationPronunce(PinYin): s shnFeng ShuiWoodMetalSuzanne: Name to Numerology ConversionSUZANNE315155Applying the rules of numerology (Pythagorean numerology): Suzanne's Soul Number (Heart's Desire Number): Number 8Embrace your true self when you have achieved financial independence, secured a stable job, and established your own home. You aspire to become a business-minded leader, guided by high ideals and an attitude of abundance. You desire equity, empowerment, and abundance in both your personal and professional life. Suzanne's Expression Number (Personality Number): Number 10You exude a heightened sense of humor; slightly lighthearted, yet serious. Avoid misplaced jokes and superficial banter. Adapt to diverse life scenarios. Strive for greater resolve to fulfill life's commitments, maintaining a balance between seriousness and lightheartedness. Suzanne's Destiny Number (Life Path Number): Number 1You possess the willpower, strength, determination, creativity, discipline, and independence to rise to a leadership position. You have the ability to master your destiny and life path. You thrive in positions of power and maintain strong independence. Famous People Named Suzanne Suzanne Pleshette (actress) Suzanne Pleshette (actress) Suzanne Pleshette (actress) In conclusion, the name Suzanne Suzanne Pleshette (actress) Suzanne Pleshette (actress) Suzanne Pleshette (actress) In conclusion, the name Suzanne Pleshette (actress) Suzanne P connection to the biblical Susanna adds strength and resilience. The emotion of the name is gentle and feminine, suggesting kindness, compassion, and tranquility. The symbolism of the lily reinforces the name's association with innocence, purity, and the divine. Overall, Suzanne is a meaningful and emotionally resonant name that conveys a sense of grace, strength, and beauty. by SMF AI Published January 1, 2024 Updated April 24, 2024 Article Contents: Lyrics Suzanne takes you down to her place near the riverYou can hear the boats go by, you can spend the night beside herAnd you know that shes half-crazy but thats why you wanna to be thereAnd she feeds you tea and oranges that come all the way from ChinaAnd just when you mean to tell her that you have no love to give herThen she gets you on her wavelengthAnd she lets the river answer that youve always been her loverAnd you want to travel blindAnd then you know that she will trust youFor youve touched her perfect body with your mindAnd Jesus was a sailor when he walked upon the waterAnd he spent a long time watching from his lonely wooden towerAnd when he knew for certain only drowning men could see himHe said all men will be sailors then until the sea shall free themBut he himself was broken, long before the sky would openForsaken, almost human, he sank beneath your wisdom like a stoneAnd you want to travel with him, and you want to travel blindAnd then you think maybe youll trust himFor hes touched your perfect body with his mindNow, Suzanne takes your hand and she leads you to the riverShes wearing rags and feathers from Salvation Army countersAnd the sun pours down like honey on our Lady of the harborAnd she shows you where to look among the garbage and the flowersThere are heroes in the seaweed, there are children in the morningThey are leaning out for love and they will lean that way foreverWhile Suzanne holds the mirrorAnd you want to travel blindAnd then you know that you can trust herFor shes touched your perfect body with her mind Full LyricsLeonard Cohens Suzanne unfurls like a delicate but profound watercolor of vast human emotion. Underneath the melody and simple guitar lies a labyrinth of symbolism and metaphor, inviting listeners into a contemplative state. Cohen doesnt just write songs; he paints sonic landscapes that allow for a multitude of interpretations, and Suzanne is a masterpiece rippling with spiritual and emotional undercurrents. While deceptively serene, the melancholic strumming and Cohens raspy voice evoke a complexity that has captivated fans and scholars alike. Unpacking the lyrics reveals layers of love and divinity, breaking and healing, all converging in the essence of this song. Lets dive into the depths of Suzanne and explore the beauty and wisdom that lies within its verses. The Enigmatic Muse: Who Is Suzanne?Suzanne, the titular figure of the song, is both a muse and an enigma, a vivid character sketched with a few poignant lines. Her real-life counterpart, Suzanne Verdal, was known to Cohen, yet the song extends beyond the personal. Suzanne represents a free spirit, a siren drawing the narrator to the waters edge, enveloping him in a world of sensory magnitudea realm where tea and oranges embody exotic experience and desire. Cohens lyrics bridge the tangible and ethereal, imbuing Suzanne with an otherworldly quality. This complexity turns her into a metaphor for the divine feminine, a guiding force leading the narrator through a journey of self-discovery and connection. A Spiritual Odyssey. The lyrics navigate through the secular and sacral, exploring the profane grace of human connection. As Cohen alludes to Jesus as a sailor, the song wades into waters of redemptive suffering and the quest for enlightenment, positioning Jesus not as an unattainable figure but as a contemplative soul just out of reach. The voyage becomes a metaphor for faith and doubt, with the sea as the unifying force between the sacred and the profane. Cohen suggests that faith, like love, is a journey that requires one to travel blind. The divine touch is not physical but psychological, a profound understanding that transcends bodily existence. Fleeting Perfection in a Broken WorldThe contrasting images of perfect body versus a broken world speak to the transient nature of beauty and wisdom amidst human imperfection. Cohen hints at a saviors vulnerability, a bruised deity resonating with our own fragility. These lyrics pull us into a space where beauty is fleeting, and the search for meaning is riddled with existential cracks. Cohens use of the word perfect juxtaposed with the tactile nature of mind presents an ephemeral ideal. This perfection is imagined, understood, and felt, but never physically attained, echoing a Platonic idealism within the grasp of the spiritual rather than the corporeal. Tapping Into Our Collective Longing: The Songs Memorable LinesAnd the sun pours down like honey on our lady of the harbor. In this vivid display of lyricism, Cohen captures an image so sweet and radiant it has scorched itself into the minds of listeners. The words cast a golden glow over the mundane, finding beauty among the forgotten, a theme that permeates the songs entirety. This line signifies more than just a moment of tranquility; it evokes a universal longing for warmth and light in a world often shadowed by despair. Its in these snapshots of serenity that people find an anchor within Cohens lyricsphrases that resonate with the collective souls desire for love, beauty, and redemption. A Mirror to the Soul: The Legacy of Suzanne Cohens Suzanne does not merely reflect reality; it holds a mirror up to the soul, challenging the listener to seek the heroes among the seaweed. The song has etched its legacy not because it answers our existential queries but because it compels us to ask moreof ourselves, of love, and of life. Suzanne is a song that grows with its bearer, shifting and settling into the crevices of individual experience. Its an anthem for those who look for love in unlikely places and see divinity in the mundane. Cohens masterful storytelling and poignant lyrics continue to touch perfect bodies with minds eager to explore the depth of their own humanity. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow Our systems have detected unusual activity from your IP address (computer network). This page checks to see if it's really you sending the requests, and not a robot. Please check the box below to regain access to AZLyrics.com. SUZANNE "Suzanne Verdal perches in the doorway of the little gypsy cabin she and her son built on the back of a truck". Suzanne left Montreal in 1992 with his son Kahlil. Narrator: Now, "You Probably Think This Song Is about You" and a trip back to the early 60s in Montreal to meet a young dancer married to Armand, a handsome sculptor. She became the muse of dozens of Beat poets but for one, Leonard Cohen, she became extra special. Suzanne takes you down to her place near the river you can hear the boats go by you can spend the night beside her And you know shes half crazy Suzanne: The Beat scene was beautiful. It was live jazz and we were just dancing our hearts out for hours on end, happy on very little. I mean we were living, most of us, on a shoestring and inspiration and pure moments and quality times together on very little or no money. Saunders: Do you remember exactly when you met Leonard Cohen? Where were you that night, do you remember? Suzanne: It was maybe several months into my relationship with Armand, which was mostly based on being dancing partners together. And he would watch us dancing, of course. And then I was introduced to Leonard at Le Vieux Moulin, I think in the presence of Armand, in fact. But we didnt really strike a note together until maybe three or four years later. Saunders: So Leonard Cohen saw you when you were a young girl in love? Suzanne: Oh very much so. He got such a kick out of seeing me emerge as a young schoolgirl I suppose, and a voung artist, into becoming Armands lover and then wife. So, he was more or less chronicling the times and seemingly got a kick out of it (laughs). Saunders: When did you then strike up this friendship that Leonard Cohen describes in song? Suzanne: With Leonard, it happened more in the beginning of the sixties. When I was living then separated from Armand, I went and was very much interested in the waterfront. The St. Lawrence River held a particular poetry and beauty to me and (I) decided to live there with our daughter, Julie. Leonard heard about this place I was living, with crooked floors and a poetic view of the river, and he came to visit me many times. We had tea together many times and mandarin oranges. and she feeds you tea and oranges that come all the way from China And just when you mean to tell her that you have no love to give her then she gets you on her wavelength and she lets the river answer that your have no love to give her that you have the song "Suzanne", was a poetic account of the time he spent with her in the Summer of 1965. Suzanne: One of our mutual friends mentioned to me, Did you hear the wonderful poem that Leonard wrote for you or about you and I said no, because I had been away traveling and I wasnt aware of it. But apparently it got into the attention of Judy Collins, who urged Leonard to write a song based on the poem. Saunders: When you heard the song as opposed to hearing the poem, did you instantly think, thats me? Suzanne: Oh yes, definitely. That was me. That is me still, yes. Saunders: What did you instantly think, thats me? Suzanne: Oh yes, definitely. terms too in a sense, and thats a little unfortunate. You know I dont think I was quite as sad as that, albeit maybe I was and he perceived that and I didnt. Saunders: He writes, you know that she's half crazy but thats why you want to be there. Did that mean half crazy with unhappiness or just eccentric, bohemian? What did he mean, do you think? Suzanne: Well, that could be. The half crazy could pertain to the sadness, but I think it was because I was so on a creative drive and the focuses were so strong in spite of any private grief I may have about my break up with Armand and the wheres and whys. There was so much other wonderful things happening. There was the activism. I was already becoming aware of recycling at a very young, young age and I might be a pioneer in that because I was going to the Salvation Army and getting old dresses and old pieces of just cloth and making something quite wonderful out of them to dress myself, my child, and to make wonderful clothes. Saunders: Again this is put in the song but then he says, just when you mean to tell her that you have no love to give her, then she gets you on her wavelength and she lets the river answer that youve always been her lover. What does that mean? Is that something about your level of particular intimacy between you? Suzanne: Well, I think the river is the river of life and that river, the St. Lawrence River that we shared, tied us together. And it was a union. It was a spirit union. Now Suzanne takes you to the river she is wearing rags and feathers from Salvation Army counters And the sun pours down like honey on our lady of the harbour And she shows you where to look among the garbage and flowers Suzanne: He was "drinking me in" more than I even recognized, if you know what I mean. I took all that moment for granted. I just would speak and I would move and I would encourage and he would just kind of like sit back and grin while soaking it all up and I wouldnt always get feedback, but I felt his presence really being with me. Wed walk down the street for instance, and the click of our shoes, his boots and my shoes, would be like in synchronicity. Its hard to describe one of the typical evenings that you spent with Leonard Cohen at the time the song was written? Suzanne: Oh yes. I would always light a candle and serve tea and it would speak about life and poetry and wed share ideas. Saunders: So it really was the tea and oranges that are in the song? Suzanne: Very definitely, very definitely, and the candle, who I named Anastasia, the flame of the candle was Anastasia to me. Dont ask me why. It just was a spiritual moment that I had with the lightening of the candle. And I may or may not have spoken to Leonard about, you know I did pray to Christ, to Jesus Christ and to St. Joan at the time, and still do. Saunders: And that was something you shared, both of you? Suzanne: Yes, and I guess he retained that. And Jesus was a sailor when he walked upon the water and he spent a long time watching from his lonely wooden tower and when he knew for certain only drowning men could see him he said All men will be sailors then until the sea shall free them but he himself was broken long before the sky would open forsaken, almost human he sank beneath your wisdom like a stone Saunders: After youd heard this very intimate song, when did you meet Leonard Cohen again, after youd heard it, and how had your relationship changed, if at all? Suzanne: It did change. He became a big star after the song was launched and he became a songwriter. As you may or may not know, it launched him as a songwriter, I suppose. Our relationship did change with time. I traveled, went to the U.S., and wed see him and bump into him. In Minneapolis for instance, he did a concert there and he saw me back stage and received me very beautifully, Oh Suzanne, you gave me a beautiful song. And it was a sweet moment. But then there were some bittersweet moments that perhaps I dont wish to divulge right at this time. Saunders: You feel that you moved apart after the song? Suzanne: Yes, and I dont quite understand. I stayed true to art for arts sake but he moved on and I stayed true to the cause, as it were. And I guess, I dont know if that intimidated him or embarrassed him or made him uncomfortable. Saunders: The song is about the meeting of spirits. Its a very intimate lyric, very, very intimate lyric, very, in the spirits moved apart. Suzanne: This is it. Saunders: It seems very sad that the spirits moved apart. Suzanne: Yes, I agree and I believe its material forces at hand that do this to many the greatest of lovers (laughs). Saunders: So would you say in a way, in the spiritual sense, you were great lovers at some level? Suzanne: Oh yes, yes, I dont hesitate to speak of this, absolutely. As I say, you can glance at a person and that moment is eternal and its the deepest of touches and thats what wed shared, Leonard and I, I believe. Saunders: Did either of you ever try to take it a stage further and make it more physically intimate or become lovers? Did either of you ever want to? Suzanne: Yes, he did, coming from Leonard, it did. Once when he was visiting Montreal, I saw him briefly in a hotel and it was a very, very wonderful, happy moment because he was on his way to becoming the great success he is. And the moment arose that we could have a moment together intimately, and I declined. And you want to travel blind and you know that she will trust you for youve touched her perfect body with your mind Saunders: Do you think he resented the fact at all that you turned him down when he did fancy you? Suzanne: Ill never really know because there is a part of me that doesn't understand the male gender, so I cant speak about that part (laughs), so I cant speak on that side. There are heroes in the seaweed there are children in the morning they are leaning out for love Saunders: Leonard Cohen finally ended up embracing spiritualism in the Mt. Baldy Zen Monastery in California, only a few miles down the road from where Suzanne now lives with her seven cats and works as a dance instructor and massage therapist. and you want to travel blind you know that you can trust her for shes touched your perfect body with her mind Saunders: Do you at all resent the fact that he, if you like, milked you for all the artistic inspiration and then moved on, having created this lovely thing from you? You can almost be said to have created this lovely thing from you? You can almost be said to have created this lovely thing from you? You can almost be said to have created this lovely thing from you? You can almost be said to have created this lovely thing from you? You can almost be said to have created this lovely thing from you? You can almost be said to have created this lovely thing from you? You can almost be said to have created this lovely thing from you? You can almost be said to have created this lovely thing from you? 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You can almost be said to have created this lovely thing from you? You can almost be said to have created this lovely thing from you? You can almost be said to have created this lovely thing from you. course, use that. Thats their material. You must do this and being used is not even part of it at the time. That doesn't exist. What came later was not remaining friends with Leonard and not knowing why. And thats why there was some ill feeling there or some sadnesses that were not there at the beginning at all. Now the words have more meaning in a sense, because theres a kind of detachment in the song that I hear now, that I didnt hear then. Does that make sense to you? Saunders: It does, indeed. I was going to say, he is almost your audience. Suzanne: Thats right, absolutely. Its like an observer, and not the participant any more, yes. Saunders: Leonard Cohen recently described the song as the best of his whole career. He likened it to a 1982 Chateau Le Tour, a good bottle of wine. What does the song mean to you now, as you look back on it? Suzanne: Not recently. Theres a little bit of a bittersweet feeling to it that I retain. I guess I miss the simpler times that we lived and shared. I dont mean to be maudlin about it, but weve kind of gone our different ways and lost touch and some of my most beloved friends have departed from this planet into the other spheres. And theres sometimes a very real homesickness for Montreal and that wonderful time. Saunders: So it almost has become a symbol of your youth, if you like? Suzanne: Oh absolutely, and for many of us, I hold dear this time, very much so. 1998 by BBC Radio 4 and Kate Saunders. Thanks also to Lizzie Madder for the tape! Photo from Montreal Gazette, Peter Martin; Thanks to Alan and Monique Powell for help Suzanne is the first track on Leonard Cohens 1966 collection Parasities of Heaven. It was then first recorded by Judy Collins, also in 1966. Suzanne had a room on a waterfront street in the port of Montreal. Everything happened just as it was put down. She was the wife of a man I knew. Her hospitality was immaculate. Some months later I sang it to Judy Collins over the telephone. The publishing rights were pilfered in New York City but it is probably appropriate that I dont own this song. Just the other day I heard some people singing it on a ship in the Caspian Sea. One of Cohens best known songs, it has featured in many film soundtracks among others Herzogs Fata Morgana, Altmans McCabe & Mrs. Miller, and von Triers Breaking the Waves. It also appeared in Ken Keseys 1992 novel I Am a Hotel. There are multiple live versions in Cohens official discography, and both studio and live versions were released numerous times since 1967.

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