

YOUR WATERLOO

Written by

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Based on "I Killed Betty Davis" by Larry Cohen

Draft 2.2

INT. MOVIE THEATRE - NIGHT

**SUPER: Los Angeles, 1987**

A lonely theatre, only a few patrons present.

The film is 1987's *Deadly Illusion*.

In the back is LARRY COHEN - mid-forties. He's a Jewish New Yorker, handsome, the shadow of a strong moustache always on his upper lip. He wears a plaid dress shirt, and he's tired.

The film fades into credits, the words "Written and Directed by Larry Cohen" emblazoned on the screen.

Cohen gets up quickly and moves to the exit.

EXT. MOVIE THEATRE - NIGHT

It's cold in LA, and Cohen shivers as he heads out of the theatre and down the street.

In the near distance, the neon sign of a bar flashes.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

Cohen sits at the bar, nursing a beer.

On the TV behind the counter, the Golden Globes are playing.

Behind Cohen, PETE SABISTON - 40s, athletic, clothes way too nice for this part of town - walks into the bar. He sees Cohen and heads over.

PETE

Larry, why the hell would you do that to yourself?

Cohen doesn't turn.

COHEN

Hi, Pete. How'd you find me?

PETE

This is the closest bar to the theatre, and I'm not an idiot. Are you a masochist, did you need to see empty seats first hand? Did you

-

COHEN

Pete, why isn't anyone seeing my movies? Am I over the hill?

Pete sighs. He sits down next to Cohen.

PETE

You're not over the hill, Larry.

COHEN

I make good pictures. I always have.

Cohen takes a drink.

PETE

I know that. Everyone knows that.

Cohen slams his glass down on the counter. He looks to Pete.

COHEN

Then why isn't anyone seeing them?  
You're my agent, you should know!  
Tell me what I'm doing wrong!

Pete looks away.

PETE

It's just ... look there's just not a market for your kind of films. No one wants to *think* in a horror movie. They want to see tits and blood and nothing underneath. You're just ... Out of fashion.

On the TV, the crowd applauds as a 70 something BETTE DAVIS shuffles on stage. She looks older than she is. She looks like death, and the crowd quiets at her appearance.

COHEN

Out of ... Pete, I feel like you're saying I'm done.

PETE

Larry, you and I both know that's bull. You just got to move with the times, that's all. Make something new. What about comedy? Your movies have always been funny, maybe just switch the ratio so that funny is the main ...

But Cohen isn't really listening anymore. He's staring at the TV, where Davis is smiling, cracking jokes. Cohen motions to the TV, drawing Pete's attention and shutting him up.

COHEN

Are you seeing this?

Pete squints at the TV, registers, a mild shock.

PETE

Jesus Christ. Is that Bette Davis?  
She looks like shit.

COHEN

Are you joking? She looks  
magnificent.

And we cut to the screen from Cohen's POV. In his eyes, Davis is young, striking, a glowing icon of Hollywood Royalty. When she smiles, the whole crowd laughs and screams out.

DAVIS

You know, I saw Warren Beatty  
earlier tonight. I said hello, but  
he was distracted by his reflection  
in a puddle. Hope he didn't drown.

Cohen laughs. His eyes light up.

COHEN

Pete? I got to go. I have an idea.

He stands up, leaving Pete with an empty glass.

EXT. COHEN'S HOUSE - DAY

A classic mansion in the hills.

The postman rings the doorbell.

INT. COHEN'S HOUSE - DAY

Cohen opens the door, takes the package, hands the postman a fiver, closes the door.

He turns, tearing open the cardboard to reveal Davis' autobiography, *This 'N That*. He opens it.

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Cohen sits up in bed, reading. He closes the book, finished.

Beat.

He puts the book on his night stand and pulls off his covers.

INT. STUDY - NIGHT

Cohen at his desk, feeding paper into a typewriter.

Hands to lips, the motions of a prayer.

He writes.

TITLE PAGE: "WICKED STEPMOTHER"

And he writes.

MONTAGE - STUDY

And he writes, through the day, through the night, coffee and dinner all at the same table.

He considers. He laughs to himself. He smiles with giddy joy.

COHEN (V.O.)

It's a perfect vehicle, Pete.

PETE (V.O.)

Vehicle for who?

COHEN (V.O.)

For Davis, you idiot!

PETE (V.O.)

For WH -

COHEN (V.O.)

It's fantastic, you'll love it. A young woman comes back from vacation only to find that her father has a new wife, and, drum roll please, she's a witch! Literally a "Wicked Stepmother." And that witch - that's Bette!

INT. PETE SABISTON'S OFFICE - DAY

Pete closes his eyes, telephone in hand. He takes a deep breath.

PETE

Look, Larry, I'll admit that's not a bad idea -

COHEN (O.S.)

It's a great idea! It's just what you wanted! More comedy! New! Relatable!

PETE

OK, well, first of all - Bette Davis is not new. She's not timely. She's basically a walking corpse.

COHEN (O.S.)

Whoa whoa whoa we must have seen different broadcasts -

PETE

AND secondly, secondly, even if you somehow got a studio to insure her, she would never, ever agree to be in a Larry Cohen picture. And before you start, it's not you, it's just that you make genre movies, and if Bette is anything like her reputation suggests, she's a bitch, and she's got class.

Long pause.

PETE (CONT'D)

Larry?

COHEN (O.S.)

I already sent the script to her manager.

Pete breathes out a long breath again.

COHEN (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Pete?

PETE

Sorry Larry, I'm just going to put you on hold for a second.

Pete presses a button on the phone console, then another.

SUSAN (O.S.)  
Yes Mr. Sabiston?

PETE  
Yeah, hi Susan, sorry to bother  
you. Could you bring me a fuck-ton  
of cigarettes?

INT. HAROLD SCHIFF'S OFFICE - DAY

A red-faced large man smokes a cigar. This is HAROLD SCHIFF  
In one hand, he holds Cohen's script. In the other, a phone.

SCHIFF  
Sabiston? Yep, just got it today,  
real page turner, yeah. Cohen  
though, isn't he that guy who made  
that killer ice cream movie? And  
the killer flying lizard movie,  
yeah. Mhm, well, I'll get back to  
you after I've talked to Ms. Davis.

He hangs up, then, without a second glance, tosses the script  
in the trash.

INT. CORVETTE - DAY

Fading leather seats. Cohen drives down the coast.

His car-phone rings. He picks it up.

COHEN  
Hello? Pete?

His face drops.

EXT. COASTAL ROAD - DAY

The car slams to a stop, brakes screeching.

Cohen steps out and screams at the ocean.

INT. MANSION - NIGHT

It's a huge party, cocktail attire. Jewels and actors.

Cohen walks with a visibly exhausted Pete.

COHEN  
We just can't give up.

PETE

Look, I'll do what I can, but -

A party-goer yells out to the duo as they walk:

GUEST

Larry! You look like shit! Haha!

Cohen smiles and fakes a laugh, but he hisses through gritted teeth:

COHEN

I hope his wife bites off his cock while he sleeps.

PETE

As I was saying, Larry, I'll do what I can, but I really think you should put your energy elsewhere.

COHEN

I see what you're saying, but I like my energy where it's at. I think it's the best idea I've ever had, I really do.

PETE

Larry, you've been saying that for months.

COHEN

Good months.

PETE

Exhausting months. Let's face it, her manager won't talk to you, her manager's manager won't talk to you, all my connections have gotten us jack -

Cohen grabs two cocktails off a roving waiter's plate.

COHEN

Drink, Pete?

He hands Pete a drink, then downs his, placing his empty glass on the next waiter's plate.

COHEN (CONT'D)

Pete, I completely get what you're saying. And I get how tiring this must be. I know you've been trying. You have always been there for me. You're a brother.

(MORE)

COHEN (CONT'D)

And, as a brother, I need you to understand me.

(Beat)

I need this. I need Bette Davis.

Suddenly, laughter emanates from behind the duo. They slowly turn to find ROBERT OSBORNE - 50s, white hair, sly grin - holding a cocktail in each hand. He sees their faces and laughs again.

COHEN (CONT'D)

(To Pete)

Who's that?

PETE

(To Cohen)

I think he hosts the movie channel.

Osborne puts one of his drinks on a table and puts out his hand for a shake.

OSBORNE

Robert Osborne. I *do* host the movie channel. Now, what do you want with Bette Davis?

PETE

Why do you care?

OSBORNE

Because I live next door to the old bat.

For a long beat, Cohen and Pete just stare, open mouthed. Then, Cohen arches back and lets out a big hyena cackle.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Cohen sleeps.

The bedside telephone rings and Cohen rockets up, ready to go.

He looks at the ringing phone. Nerves, anticipation, worry.

He picks the phone up brings it to his ear.

COHEN

Hello?

EXTREME CLOSE UP - TELEPHONE SPEAKER

where the five holes making up this circle are as big as moons on the horizon.

In slow motion, cigarette smoke spirals out of each of the holes, great monsoons of wind and dust.

COHEN (V.O.)

Pete, she loved it. She loved the script.

PETE (V.O.)

She called you?

COHEN (V.O.)

Middle of the night. I didn't care. She was flattered, Pete, flattered. She invited me over for a cocktail to talk. *Bette Davis*.

PETE (V.O.)

That's great, Larry, that's really great.

COHEN (V.O.)

I want you to come.

Beat.

PETE (V.O.)

Larry, I -

COHEN (V.O.)

Pete, I see this woman, and I see it all coming back. If she can have a career in her 70s, with her reputation ... And this movie, it's going to be big. With Bette, no matter what, there's a camp appeal there that will at least make this big on VHS, and that's to say nothing of her original fans who will flock to the theatre to see their old icon on the big screen. We hire some hot young thing for the daughter, make it a bit spicy .. It's a hit.

(Beat)

I've thought about this, Pete. I'm not going crazy. Come with me. See her as I do. Help me negotiate. Be my agent.

The smoke sputters out of the phone, swirls and spirals becoming jagged, the ashes of a dying world against a black nothing.

PETE (V.O.)  
(Sighs)  
Fine.

COHEN (V.O.)  
I'll pick you up at three!

And he hangs up as we slowly

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. DAVIS'S HOUSE - DAY

A large, sprawling condo, but it may as well be a mansion. Everything white, marble or faux marble, barely a hint of mess - save for the ashtrays spaced evenly across every flat surface.

A large stairwell directly across from the front door, clean bannisters.

KATHRYN SERMAK - 20s, trim, radiating efficiency - opens the front door, revealing Cohen and Pete. Kathryn steps back and motions for the men to follow. They cross the threshold.

DAVIS (O.S.)  
Larry, is that you? From your pictures, I wouldn't have thought you'd be handsome.

The men look up at the stairs.

Davis stands at the top, cigarette in hand and smiling. She's wearing a slim black number. She's frail, her cigarette trembling and her face sallow. Still, she's radiant.

DAVIS (CONT'D)  
That's Kathryn, by the way. My wonderful assistant, who, unlike my children, doesn't hate me.

Davis descends the stairs as she talks. It's cliché, sure, but she's Bette Davis, and it just feels like the classiest thing in the world.

She stops halfway down the stairs.



DAVIS

- and of course he could get whatever young starlet he wanted. Anyone would die for a chance to get a flash of his smile. So in-between takes, Flynn's trailer would just be rocking back and forth, back and forth, almost off its hinges!

Cohen, Pete, and Kathryn laugh hard, Cohen rocking in his seat.

DAVIS (CONT'D)

Now, of course, I never would -

But she starts coughing, unable to finish. Her whole body shakes and shivers, the ash from her cigarette toppling into her lap. She manages to settle, and in a deeper rasp than usual:

DAVIS (CONT'D)

Kathryn, would you mind getting us all some drinks?

KATHRYN

Of course.

PETE

I'll help out.

Pete jumps up and walks with Kathryn out of the room.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Pete follows Kathryn into the kitchen as she prepares a jug and some glasses.

Pete gently takes her arm.

PETE

Kathryn?

She casually but firmly removes her arm from his grasp.

KATHRYN

Yes?

PETE

Is she OK?

KATHRYN

What do you mean?

PETE

She can barely walk. Please be honest with me when I ask you, is that woman fit to be on a film set?

Kathryn collects the glasses on a tray and doesn't look at Pete.

KATHRYN

Bette knows what she's doing, and I don't think she'd take too kindly to you asking me if she's going to drop dead on your movie.

(Beat)

Also, don't touch me again.

INT. PARLOR - DAY

Cohen and Davis stare at each other.

DAVIS

Larry.

COHEN

Bette.

DAVIS

You write this part for me?

COHEN

Of course.

DAVIS

(Chuckles)

No one's written a part for me in years.

COHEN

For years, everyone has been a fool.

She gives him a knowing look. Then, she snarls.

DAVIS

You know it's all nonsense, right? Those rumors swirling around about me screwing with Lillian Gish on *Whales of August*? It's a total lie. Miss Gish was stone deaf. She couldn't have heard the cues if I'd shouted them through a bullhorn.

Cohen smiles.

COHEN  
Even if they were true, I wouldn't  
care.

Davis nods, slipping back into the couch.

Long beat.

DAVIS  
Let's make a movie.

Kathryn and Pete return and Cohen looks at Pete with this  
huge grin.

COHEN  
Pete, we're making a movie.

Pete manages a smile back.

BLACK:

COHEN (V.O.)  
Marrrrttyyy!

INT. CORVETTE - DAY

Cohen on the phone, grinning like a madman.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

On the phone

COHEN  
Philiippppaaa!

INT. PRODUCTION OFFICES - VARIOUS - DAY

Cohen shakes hands with a Suit

And another

COHEN (V.O.)  
Marty would you believe me if I  
told you I got a picture up and  
running?

And a another.

Clapping them on the back.

Buying coffees.

COHEN (V.O.)  
You're damn right, Philippa, Bette  
Fuckin' Davis - what? Nonono, I've  
met with her, she's in perfect  
health. She's up and about all the  
time!

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

The phone rings, startling Cohen awake.

He picks it up.

COHEN  
Hello?

DAVIS (O.S.)  
Larry, I think my character should  
have red hair.

Click. Hangs up. Cohen blinks himself awake, unsteady.

COHEN (V.O.)  
We just need a bit of funding. Not  
too much.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

Cohen with another Suit, smiling, charisma.

COHEN  
No matter what, her camp appeal  
will make this big on VHS.

INT. ANOTHER OFFICE - DAY

COHEN  
We're pulling from a few different  
sources, so it's really not that  
big of an investment.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Ring! Startled again. The phone:

COHEN  
Bette, I -

DAVIS

She has to be smoking. She's a smoker. I feel it. For the character.

Click.

INT. PETE SABISTON'S OFFICE - DAY

Pete on the phone:

PETE

Larry, get over to New York right now. I don't know what happened, but Harold Schiff got nervous and he doesn't want Bette doing the picture anymore.

EXT. THE SKY - DAY

A passenger jet soars.

INT. HAROLD SCHIFF'S OFFICE - DAY

Cohen bursts in through the door of Schiff's office, secretary ineffectually trying to stop him from behind. Schiff spins in his chair, almost chokes on his cigar.

Cohen throws his arms wide, toothy smile.

COHEN

Harry, my God it is good to see you!

EXT. THE SKY - DAY

Passenger jet soaring the other direction.

INT. DAVIS'S HOUSE - DAY

Davis, pacing as best she can, as Cohen follows, pleading.

DAVIS

No, no, no. This is humiliating.

COHEN

Bette, please, it's just for insurance purposes!

DAVIS

I refuse to let some young doctor  
feel me up just because you don't  
TRUST me!

COHEN

Bette, of course I trust you! It's  
the studios who don't trust *anyone*.  
It's just a physical. We're  
supposed to start shooting in a  
week, and we can't if you don't go!  
Bette, I'm begging you.

She stops, turns, gives Cohen a once over. Sighs.

DAVIS

Fine. Only for you, Larry.

(Beat)

And don't forget, you're coming  
over for dinner next Friday.

SMASH CUT:

INT. DAVIS'S HOUSE - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Candlelight over a small table, food on the plates, Davis and  
Cohen.

Soak this in. It's romantic, you know.

In between bites, Cohen smiles.

COHEN

Where's Kathryn?

DAVIS

I sent her away for the evening.  
She needs a break from my  
screeching.

Cohen chuckles and lifts his wine glass. He motions for a  
cheers, Davis lifts hers.

COHEN

To you, Bette.

DAVIS

And to you.

Clink. Drink. Settle.

DAVIS (CONT'D)

Tomorrow morning, huh?

COHEN  
(Nods)  
You nervous?

DAVIS  
Of course.

COHEN  
I'm not.

Davis puts her wine glass down, and she just stares at the beaming Cohen, who is still just so happy to be sitting across from her. She laughs.

COHEN (CONT'D)  
What's so funny?

DAVIS  
Nothing, nothing.

Beat.

DAVIS (CONT'D)  
Are you not worried?

COHEN  
About what?

DAVIS  
Me, Larry. I mean, look at me, hear me - please don't smell me ... You think they'll still want me? You think people want to see me?

Cohen's face had fallen to the sound of her doubts, but, after a moment of reflection, the edges of his mouth curl up.

COHEN  
Bette, when I was a kid, I used to beg my parents to take me to your movies.

DAVIS  
Yeah, Larry, I'm old, I -

COHEN  
Nonono, listen. Listen to me. I, I remember ... I'd never seen someone whose very existence demanded to be projected on a huge screen!

(MORE)

COHEN (CONT'D)

*Dark Victory*, I remember *Dark Victory*, I remember the end and you climbed into that bed and I sobbed - I was a young boy and I sobbed - and not just because I felt for the character, but because I felt that it was a crime for you to be off the screen! You were made for the movies, Bette!

(Beat)

And, goddamnit, we'll make the audiences remember that.

Beat.

She chuckles.

DAVIS

We're crazy, you know that?  
Absolutely nuts.

COHEN

We're in Hollywood. It's expected.  
You should know better than anyone.

She smiles, they eat.

Davis doesn't look up:

DAVIS

You know, a younger me would have gone after you.

COHEN

Really?

DAVIS

No. You're far too poor.

He laughs, she laughs, they laugh. Beat.

Davis picks up her glass again.

DAVIS (CONT'D)

One more. Let's hope we like each other at the finish as much as we do at the start.

The clink their glasses as we

CROSSFADE TO:

INT. FILM SET - DAY

A bustling film shoot inside a New England mansion. First AD corraling the crew.

Davis rising out of her chair with great effort, moving into the light.

Cohen looking into the monitor, motioning to roll.

CROSSFADE TO:

INT. DAVIS'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Cohen helps Davis up the staircase, one step at a time, his hand on her arm.

CROSSFADE TO:

INT. FILM SET - DAY

Cohen intent on the monitor.

A slate comes into the monitor's frame, claps.

Rack focus onto Davis, smoking a cigarette just off centre, leaning against the actor playing her husband.

CROSSFADE TO:

INT. DAVIS'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Cohen takes the exhausted Davis in his arms and he gently places her into the bed.

CROSSFADE TO:

INT. FILM SET - DAY

Through the monitor, Davis speaks, inaudible.

But she stops, coughing.

She moves away from her co-star, gone from his support.

CROSSFADE TO:

INT. DAVIS'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Cohen stands up, Davis's eyes already closed.

CROSSFADE TO:

INT. FILM SET - DAY

Cohen watches as Davis falls out of frame.

He jumps out, running past the monitor.

CROSSFADE TO:

INT. DAVIS'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Cohen shuts off the light, and he walks out.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. TV STUDIO - DAY

Couches, desk, a talk show. Smiling HOST mid-interview.

HOST

- it's down to this: is it true  
that Larry Cohen mistreated you?

Davis sits on the couch, finger to her lips with an imaginary  
cigarette.

DAVIS

It's true. That man was awful to  
me, awful. I suffered *abuse*.

The crowd gasps. The Host nods gravely.

HOST

Ms. Davis -

DAVIS

Oh, please, darling, call me  
'Bette.'

The Host grins, glean in their eye.

HOST

Well, Bette, I really want to  
express my admiration for your  
bravery in this situation.

DAVIS

If being brave means simply standing up against injustice, well, then I guess that's what I am. Because that's what it was: *injustice*. Listen here, I was on that set for one week - *one week* - and I have never been so humiliated. I have dealt with so many directors, but, with Larry Cohen, I finally met my Waterloo.

The program stops, static. Paused. Rewind.

INT. TRAILER - DAY

Cohen stands in his trailer, rewinding the taped special, staring intently. He presses play.

Behind him, a knock at the door.

COHEN

(Without turning)  
It's lunch, I'm busy!

The door opens anyway. It's Pete.

PETE

Larry.

Cohen turns around, confused. He pauses the tape.

COHEN

Pete, the hell are you doing here?

Pete shrugs.

PETE

Just checking in, seeing how you're going.

Cohen tries to position himself in front of the TV.

COHEN

It's fine. It's great. I think it's a better movie without her.

PETE

Yeah? The re-writes weren't too hard?

COHEN

No, no. Barbara was already playing her daughter, you know, so we just changed it so that she's a younger form of Bette.

Pete nods. He peers over Cohen's shoulder.

PETE

How many times have you watched that?

COHEN

I, um, hm -

He gives up.

COHEN (CONT'D)

Yeah, a lot. Too many.

PETE

Why are you doing that yourself?

Cohen looks down at his shuffling feet. He turns back to the screen.

COHEN

If I wasn't done before, I sure am now. I abused an old lady.

PETE

No, you helped an old lady, and she screwed you over. You know you didn't do anything, right? You know that she's just trying to save face

-

COHEN

It doesn't matter what *happened*, Pete! The world thinks I did God knows to her.

Beat. Cohen paces.

COHEN (CONT'D)

You know what the worst part is? She didn't even tell me in person. One day she's just gone and I get a note from her fucking dentist.

(Beat)

I just want to know what happened.

Pete walks over to Cohen and takes the remote from his hand. He turns off the TV.

PETE

You tried sending her a letter?

COHEN

Pete, I've called her so many times, Kathryn told me to go to hell.

PETE

Yeah, but have you sent her something with the written word? She's from a different era. She might find a letter ... romantic.

Pete puts the remote down and pats Cohen's back. He turns to go.

COHEN

Pete.

Pete stops.

COHEN (CONT'D)

I should've listened to you.

Pete shakes his head, then smiles.

PETE

Yeah, but how could you? You were in love.

(Beat)

I'll give you a call in a few days, Larry.

He walks out, closing the door behind him.

Cohen stands in the silence for a moment before opening a drawer and grabbing the Yellowpages. He runs through it until he finds what he's looking for, then picks up the phone.

COHEN

Yeah, hi, I want to get some flowers delivered. Mhm, yeah local. Can I send a message with them?

EXT. DAVIS'S HOUSE - DAY

A delivery man rings the doorbell.

Davis's weathered hand reaches out and takes a bouquet of flowers.

INT. DAVIS'S HOUSE - DAY

The door closes.

The flowers shuffle forth, and Davis pulls a note from the bouquet.

INSERT - NOTE

"With love, Your Waterloo"

CROSSFADE TO:

INT. MOVIE THEATRE - NIGHT

Cohen sits just as he did at the start, in a lonely theatre with only a couple other patrons.

On the screen, a scene from *Wicked Stepmother* in which Davis's character, Miranda, is smoking a cigarette inside a house, while her step-children protest.

STEVE (STEP-CHILD)

Uh, perhaps Dad didn't mention it,  
but we don't smoke in our house.

MIRANDA

Good for you, it's a nasty habit.

She takes a drag.

STEVE

No, what I mean to say is, you are  
polluting our air.

MIRANDA

Well, I'll try never to exhale.

Davis's line readings are stilted. She pauses in strange places. And she looks so frail.

In the seats, Cohen looks around for a non-existent reaction.

He gets up.

EXT. MOVIE THEATRE - NIGHT

Cohen puts his hands in his pockets, shivering from the cold.

He passes a newspaper rack and stops, taking a coin from his pocket.

He takes out an issue of *The Hollywood Reporter*, and there, on the front page:

"DAVIS RECANTS - Under Oath, actress Bette Davis reveals that she left Larry Cohen's *Wicked Stepmother* due to a cracked dental plate, not any mistreatment on behalf of the director."

Cohen reads impassively.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Cohen is but a small, bath-robed silhouette in front of his enormous TV screen, which is playing Davis's *Dark Victory*.

Suddenly, the film stops, and the TV cuts to a weary Robert Osborne in the studio.

OSBORNE

Ladies and Gentlemen, I regret to interrupt our broadcast of *Dark Victory* to deliver some unfortunately relevant news. It has just been reported that Bette Davis has died in a Paris hospital.

Cohen sits up in his seat.

OSBORNE (CONT'D)

She had leukemia. According to her assistant, Kathryn Sermak, Ms. Davis had known about the cancer for months but was trying to keep it a secret. Ms. Davis was -

But Osborne chokes up, holding his face in his arm. He wipes his eyes.

OSBORNE (CONT'D)

Bette was my neighbor and dear friend for many years. I can guarantee that she maintained her inimitable wit until her last -

Cohen shuts off the TV.

He stands, his ratty bathrobe trailing off the couch behind him.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. COHEN'S HOUSE - DAY

A home in the hills, leather, silk-screen prints, cannisters of film neatly arranged. A large TV in between two bay windows.

It's a sunny day, and Cohen looks put together, happy even. He's on the phone.

PETE (O.S.)

Buddy, it's coming together.

COHEN

Yeah, I'm really excited.

Cohen stares out of his bay windows, down at the popping city.

PETE (O.S.)

I'll be honest with you, I'm surprised that Earl Jones signed on - he's a busy man.

COHEN

Well, I guess killing Bette Davis ended up being a career boost.

PETE (O.S.)

(Laughs)

I told you, you're coming ba -

The doorbell rings. Cohen is startled.

COHEN

Sorry, Pete, someone's at the door. I'll call you back in a minute, OK?

He hangs the phone back on the wall receiver, then walks to the door.

He opens it, revealing Kathryn, facing away.

She turns to Cohen's surprised face. She smiles shyly, nervously.

KATHRYN

Hi, Larry.

COHEN

... Hi, Kathryn. Long time no see.

KATHRYN

Yeah, I guess it is.

An awkward silence. Cohen is just baffled by Kathryn's presence.

COHEN

Do you want to come in, or -

KATHRYN

No, no, I just ...

Kathryn rifles through her hand bag and takes out an envelope. She hands it to Cohen, who takes it hesitantly.

COHEN

Is this ...

KATHRYN

You had made quite the impression on her. She just ... it's not in her nature to, to ...

Her lip trembles, she looks away.

KATHRYN (CONT'D)

I'm sorry, it's -

COHEN

It's OK, I understand.

She stifles herself, taking a deep breath, another. She sets her shoulders straight, and she looks up at Cohen with a forced confidence.

KATHRYN

She never got around to it, but I'm sure she meant to send this to you. I hope it helps.

(Beat)

Goodbye, Larry.

She turns and walks towards her car.

Cohen calls out after her.

COHEN

Did she ever even go to that doctor's appointment? I mean, they would have caught the disease, right? She shouldn't have even been able to get on the set.

Kathryn stops, and she chokes out a laugh. She looks back at Cohen.

## KATHRYN

You knew her. She went, but she managed to charm and bamboozle whatever young doctor was unfortunate enough to walk in. They never even touched her.

Cohen shakes his head in disbelief as Kathryn gets in her car and drives off.

He walks back inside and closes the door.

## INT. COHEN'S HOUSE - DAY

Cohen opens the letter as he walks, dropping the envelope to the ground.

He unfolds the paper within and stops, his face still and fragile.

We move down the back of the letter as Cohen reads, eventually settling at a cigarette burn in the bottom right corner.

FADE OUT.