Surprise, I didn’t expect to see you. Okay. We’re not talking now. Just showing you these things to show they’re there. There we are. It’s over there. You can see, it’s untouched in all of these years.

00:01:19
AARON:
Yeah. Can I, can I smell one can?

00:01:22
JOHN:

00:01:30
AARON:
But John, we need to resolve this.

00:01:30
JOHN:
We need to resolve this, but not now. Write me letter. Write me more of a… I told my lawyer about my, about all of this.

00:01:36
AARON:
I’ve written you… I’ve written you a lot of letters.

00:01:38
JOHN:
I know, but I…

00:01:38
AARON:
…and phone calls.

00:01:39
JOHN:
I don’t know what you want.

00:01:41
AARON:
Then what do you want me… You don’t want to talk to me about this. You want me to just avoid it?

00:01:44
JOHN:
All of this stuff is not the film. The film, Howard Brookner’s film is something else.

00:01:48
AARON:
I’d like to just talk to you about it. I don’t know why this has to be a problem.

00:01:54
JOHN:
I can’t deal with you now. You see I’m in the middle of…

00:01:57
AARON:
John, you’ve avoided me all the time. You’re doing it again.

00:02:05
AARON (VO):
I had been searching for my uncle Howard’s first film. A documentary he made 30 years ago about William Burroughs.

00:02:15
GRAPHIC:
Aaron Brookner

00:02:17
[MUSIC]

00:02:17
WOMAN 1:
Aaron, Aaron, Aaron, don’t eat there.

00:02:24
MAN 1:
Aaron, I don’t want you eating on the couch.

00:02:25
WOMAN 1:
No, that’s not a very good… I mean the couch isn’t clean because the pillows have been all over the floor. We don’t need a little…

00:02:41
MAN 1:
Howard, where’s Howard?
00:02:44
WOMAN 1:
I don't know. There he is.

00:02:46
MAN 1:
Howard, can you shoot…

00:02:48
MAN 2:
Burroughs, you’re taking a picture of Burroughs, huh?

00:02:52
WOMAN 1:
Alright Steve, there’s something else here…

00:02:56
AARON (VO):
James Grauerholz, the heir to William Burroughs, told me there was much more than the film and sent me an inventory of Howard’s archive, everything my uncle had shot over the five years it took him to make the movie. The archive had been stored by Howard in 1983 in the Bunker, Burroughs’ former home in New York City, owned today by the poet, John Giorno.

00:03:21
[TRAFFIC, HONKING]

00:03:21
GRAPHIC
1. BUNKER

00:03:28
JOHN:
Hello.

00:03:29
AARON:
Hi John, it's Aaron.

00:03:30
JOHN:
Hi, Aaron. I can’t see you. I can’t see you, sorry.
AARON: Can we have a coffee? Please?

AARON:
My main reason why I want this stuff is, I’ve seen the notes of all the footage, the log notes and there’s a lot of Howard in there. I mean, it’s Howard at 25 years old in between takes, talking to Burroughs, talking to these great artists who he was asking questions... You know, you can learn a lot about someone and what they’re interested in by what questions they’re asking. You know? What did he really want to know?

[Music]

HOWARD: Aaron, come and look. What you see through there is what I see through here. See. That’s what I see. See, here’s me.

[Background voices]

HOWARD: Here, do you want to take a picture of me?

WOMAN 2: What would I do without you?

GRAPHIC: UNCLE HOWARD

[Sound of door opening, keys]

ELAINE: Yes, dear.
AARON: Thank you.

ELAINE: What can I do for you?

AARON: Can you show me this book?

ELAINE: What book?


GRAPHIC: Elaine Brookner
Howard’s Mother

ELAINE: Burroughs - a portrait of William S. Burroughs, directed by Howard Brookner. [LAUGHS] You want me to read the dedication?

AARON: Yeah.

ELAINE: This book is dedicated to our grandson, Howard. We are very proud of his success. Grandma Sarah and Grandpa Max. [LAUGHS]
AARON: So, what's in the book? Is it all about Burroughs?

ELAINE: Yeah, yeah. This is somebody who wrote a column in the local newspaper, filmed over a period of five years, Howard Brookner's portrait, my gosh...

AARON: Did you know it took him five years?

ELAINE: I didn’t realize. Yeah, I knew it was going on and on and on, but you know, I didn’t realize the length of time. The story began when young Brookner worked on his Master’s degree thesis at New York University. The theme was: The Life and Times of Beat Generation, author William Burroughs of St. Louis and the portrait that Howard did follows the novelist, Burroughs, from the Midwest to North Africa, from the heights of the Nova Convention to the depths of the Bunker, touching on the salient and disturbing facts of his life.

AARON: But you didn’t want him to go to film school, grandma, right?

ELAINE: You know, it just seemed law was more practical for him, but he said, “No, well, my friends all decided I should go to NYU’s Film School.” [CHUCKLES] And so, what can I say to that? They all decided that he should go to the film school, so he went. It was what he wanted to do. If he was going to die young, I'm glad he did what he wanted to do and he was very happy about making films, very happy.

BURROUGHS: He was looking at something a long time ago. Changed place – Sad image circulates through backward time...

AARON (VO): Growing up, Howard was my hero. I looked up to him more than anyone else.
00:07:29
AARON:
When his life ended, he became a sort of myth. I would gather pieces of his life, albums of music he liked, books he read, photos he took, but I never expected to find out he had left behind an archive.

00:07:47
BURROUGHS:
Music of East St. Louis Toodle-Oo. Warm spring wind blows, faded pink curtains in through the open window, a child reads a letter. Dear Mom and Dad, I am going to join the wild boys. When you read this, I will be far away.

00:08:07
JAMES:
In late '82, Howard got hooked up with the BBC to complete his film. They sent a crew with Howard here to William’s home on Leonard and interviewed him, did some readings in the bedroom, looking at some cut ups and typing.

00:08:30
GRAPHIC:
JAMES GRAUERHOLZ
Literary Executor and Heir to William S. Burroughs.

00:08:30
JAMES:
And then for the end of the film, it was a…it must have been in January, but it was a…not a snowy day like this one really. And William and I sat in the afternoon cocktail hour, you know, Magic Light, Magic Hour, we were just sitting here in the afternoon sun and watching it go down out there in the backyard. And then, Howard did that last shot of William walking through the backyard to the end of the fence and end of the movie.

00:09:06
SINGER:
It’s a long, long while from May till December

00:09:13
BURROUGHS:
Yeah, this is nice, to come back and settle down with one’s cat.

00:09:18
SINGER:
And the days grow short.

Transcribed by: Word of Mouth
BURROUGHS:
One’s asparagus beds and birdseed, I mean grass seed…

JAMES:
Hah, it’ll be birdseed if we don’t get it in pretty soon.

BURROUGHS:
Hunting and fishing, you know.

AARON:
And did Howard make it out here after he finished making the movie?

JAMES:
Yes. Yes. That is the last time I saw him. And it was a long time to go and I… I have never felt that Howard was dead and gone. Howard has been very much alive for me and in me and of course, William is alive, it goes without saying. I talk to William everyday, 17 years later. But, Howard… Howard’s was an unfinished story and the giant pile of film on the Bowery in the Bunker in the caretaking of John Giorno, long after Howard had left this… the earthly world, that held so much of his spirit and it was… it was locked away, ah, by destiny.

AARON (VO):
James wanted to help. He believed John had gotten used to having Howard’s archive for so long, he didn’t know how to let it go. Many called John and stressed the importance of getting the films out of the Bunker. They could be damaged and they belonged to Howard.

[DOORBELL]

AARON (VO):
I remained determined to see what Howard had made.
Hi John, it’s Aaron.

00:11:19
JOHN:
Come in.

00:11:21
AARON:
Thanks.

00:11:23
AARON (VO):
After many months, he finally agreed.

00:11:29
AARON:
John, we did it.

00:11:30
JOHN:
Yeah, we did it! Make yourself at home…

00:11:33
AARON:
Thanks.

00:11:35
JOHN:
It hasn’t been dusted, you know, for decades…not decades, occasionally I vacuum here, like this and so, and I usually just do where you…I should have been more careful, that shouldn’t have been like that, but hopefully.

00:11:50
AARON:
Ah, it’s alright.

00:11:50
JOHN:
Ah.

00:11:51
So, how long has this been here?
JOHN: Well actually Howard put here some of the boxes that were collapsing, but that’s 30 years ago, see he, literally, these shelves… But I was thinking, it’s always like this here, you know, it’s not very hot and it’s sealed and occasionally gets…

AARON: Yeah.

JOHN: But it’s air…you know, it’s like a store…it’s not…it’s not so bad.

AARON: No.

JOHN: And the things like these cans that haven’t been opened in 30 years.

AARON: Amazing.

JOHN: So, it’s all of this over to obviously not here.

AARON: Yeah.

JOHN: And here. Not there. And these are the really great…this is the whole Bacon thing. I think these are the audiotapes…
00:12:28
AARON:
Mm-hmm.

00:12:28
JOHN:
And maybe this is the… I don’t… wherever the film is here.

00:12:33
AARON:
Alright.

00:12:34
JOHN:
Great, well help yourselves.

00:12:35
AARON:
Um… [LAUGHS] Are you going to… well first John we should…

00:12:38
JOHN:
I’m going to be upstairs.

00:12:39
AARON:
You’re going to be upstairs? Okay. I’ll give you a knock when we’re settled and everything.

00:12:42
JOHN:
Okay.

00:12:42
AARON:
Thanks, John.

00:12:58
AARON:
The Bunker.

00:13:17
[MUSIC]
The Bunker, New York City


The Bunker here, it has virtually no windows and uh...but as soon as I saw it, I said that it was suitable for my purposes and it's quiet and secluded. And it's very warm in winter and very cool in summer because of the walls are thick and it's well insulated. Well, actually, I don't have a hard and fast schedule, but if I'm working and working well, I usually get started on my work, I get up about nine and I'm ready to work by ten or 10:30 and I will work through more or less, until uh, six in the evening. I don't usually work at night.

Can you remember the first time that...what it was like when James met William?

Yeah, he...uh...it was here.

You just come out with it... wait a minute; you're in the way!

I was so glad to have that...let me do this.

Right over my head.
Uncle Howard

AS BROADCAST TRANSCRIPT
SEPTEMBER 30, 2015
TRANSCRIBED BY : AJ PROCESSING

00:14:39
BURROUGHS:
Okay, want me to shoot?

00:14:44
HOWARD:
Um… I can’t see the typewriter.

00:14:49
BURROUGHS:
Oh, you have to see it.

00:14:52
MAN 4:
Ok.

00:15:03
SINGER [ROWLAND S. HOWARD]:
Take the wheel of the world.
And drive, drive, drive, drive, drive.
Quick as a gun.
Blind like a ghost
I catch most things in my blood
You all lose between rooms.

00:15:48
BURROUGHS:
Well…aren’t you wasting footage?

00:15:54
HOWARD:
Yeah.

00:15:54
BURROUGHS:
Yeah.

00:15:57
JIM:
So, are you going up to the Bunker?

00:15:59
AARON:
Yes.

00:16:01
JIM:
I haven't been in it in over 30 years, I don't think…

00:16:04
GRAPHIC:
Jim Jarmsch
Filmmaker, Sound Recordist on “Burroughs”

00:16:04
[SIRENS]

00:16:07
JIM:
Maybe I should just go home. It's freaking me out.

00:16:11
AARON:
Shall we wait another 30?

00:16:12
JIM:
We better not. We better do it now, thanks. I definitely don't recall William having a bicycle. You can't carry as many weapons as you can just walking.

00:16:38
[KNOCK]

00:16:40
AARON:
How would that be?

00:16:44
JIM:

00:16:54
AARON:
Yeah.

00:16:55
JIM: Oh, man. The Bunker.

00:17:08 AARON: I want to show you something in here.

00:17:16 JIM: Oh wow, is this the film?

00:17:19 AARON: It’s everything you guys shot.

00:17:22 JIM: Oh, man. Wow. Boy, I’m so surprised it exists. You know? I thought it was gone for so long. Wow. Doesn’t smell too bad. Wild tracks. And when we say wild, we mean wild tracks. You can’t imagine what might be on some of those.

00:18:03 AARON: Here look: talking about drugs, walking around to old haunts.

00:18:09 JIM: Man, in Colorado we were…we stayed in a ghost town, you know?

00:18:14 AARON: Yeah.

00:18:14 JIM: Oh man, outside of Boulder up in the mountains. We stayed in these cabins and uh…Burroughs claimed that he saw these aliens.

00:18:25 MAN 5: Do you have any contact with extraterrestrials? Admit it.

00:18:31
Uncle Howard

AS BROADCAST TRANSCRIPT
SEPTEMBER 30, 2015
TRANSCRIBED BY : AJ PROCESSING

BURROUGHS:
Well um, I think that the earth is exclusively populated by extraterrestrials, just like America. [LAUGHS] Except for the Indians, probably the blacks were the original natives on this planet and the rest were extraterrestrials. A series of waves. Waves of invasion.

00:18:51
JIM:
We have no reason to believe these aliens are any more benevolent than the nastiness of the humans. I would not trust them. I would assume that they are not, that they are malignant and dangerous. You know this kind of stuff [LAUGHS]. He wasn’t looking for ET, you know. This is like a wealth of history…

00:19:18
AARON:
So much stuff.

00:19:19
JIM:
This is amazing!

00:19:21
AARON:
You and Howard must have gotten really close making this film.

00:19:25
JIM:
Yeah, we did. I mean, you know, I loved Howard, he was an amazing character. At first, it took me a few years to figure out how to read Howard too because he was a little inscrutable and uh, very clever, you know? But yeah, he was very complicated in a way, Howard. But no, I got…I got to know him pretty fast and very close, you know. And I still think of him all the time, you know, I miss him a lot. I know there was one scene in particular, because I remember seeing rushes where, I think Howard was filming and smoking a joint with some really amazing people, maybe Gysin and then it would come around, so when I came back to the camera, like you’d see me giving it to someone and then it would come to the camera, behind the camera. It was really good. 1978, whatever!

00:20:26
JIM (on film):
86 Double Sticks.

00:20:29
Uncle Howard  
AS BROADCAST TRANSCRIPT  
SEPTEMBER 30, 2015  
TRANSCRIBED BY : AJ PROCESSING

HOWARD:  
Just read it.

00:20:31  
BURROUGHS:  
Just read it?

00:20:33  
HOWARD:  
Yeah.

00:20:34  
BURROUGHS:  
Make no mistake. Proposition 6 is simply a prelude to similar repressive action against other minorities. Arthur Thom Robb, Editor of The Torch, published in Bass, Arkansas, applauds, quote: “The courageous Anita Bryant endorses and demands the death penalty for all homosexuals.” The passage of Proposition 6 could open a Pandora’s Box, from which would emerge such irresponsible political adventurers as Thom Robb, dedicated to destroying the very constitution which men like Senator John Briggs pretend to reverence and uphold. Beat six on the seventh.

00:21:21  
[GUNSHOT]

00:21:22  
JAMES:  
I can’t believe it.

00:21:23  
BURROUGHS:  
High.

00:21:24  
JAMES:  
Is it?

00:21:25  
BURROUGHS:  
Yep.

00:21:26  
HOWARD:  
Jim, slate…
00:21:28
JIM:
What are you rolling?

00:21:31
[MUSIC]

00:21:57
[SIRENS]

00:22:09
HOWARD:
Fuck, shit piss, 359.

00:22:15
JIM:
Fuck, shit piss.

00:22:17
HOWARD:
359.

00:22:18
JIM:
359.

00:22:21
JIM:
Rolling.

00:22:22
HOWARD:
Roll camera, 101.

00:22:38
BURROUGHS:
We'll see you... are you going up to the place?

00:22:43
HOWARD:
Yeah we're going up...

00:22:46
Transcribed by Word of Mouth
TOM: Everything that we were trying to do in film school, you know, this idea of making a film just the way you want to make it. In some ways, that all came out of the punk movement, where they all came out of the same idea. The norms, the structured, rigid architecture of the system. Fuck it. Really, and then…and you don’t have to feel like you are some sort of, you know, expert at what you’re doing. You know, it’s more about what you feel and the passion that you bring to it. You know, there was Burroughs who was kind of like the grandfather of this, this mysterious force who in his own way, broke all those boundaries and yet somehow, the freedom that he kind of presented, was really exciting to a lot of people, you know, my generation.

FRANK ZAPPA: This ass talk has a sort of gut frequency; it hits you right down there like you got to go.

JULIA HEYWARD: I heard that in the future, I mean, this is what I heard.

JOHN GIORNO: And if I wasn’t a fucking Buddhist, if I wasn’t a fucking Buddhist, I’d love to put a gun in my mouth, I’d love to put a gun in my mouth…

STEWART MEYER: That period in New York where the dope scene, the music scene and the rock and roll scene, the art scene, the literary scene was all melting together there… You had all those bands at CBGB’s, you know. And they were cross-pollinating the scene.

PATTI SMITH PLATING GUITAR

PHILIP GLASS PLAYING ELECTRIC KEYBOARD

ALLEN GINSBERG, PETER ORLOVSKY AND BAND: It started in secret they were fighting yesterday Clandestine secret army of the CIA.
00:25:58
LAURIE ANDERSON:
We are going down. Down, down.

00:26:03
BRION GYSIN:
Is good baby no junk, no junk is good baby, good baby no junk is, baby, no junk is good.

00:26:10
[APPLAUSE]

00:26:12
DARRYL PINCKNEY:
Howard was very aware that the Lower East Side really took to the whole sort of beat thing as their predecessors, antecedents, all that.

00:26:24
BURROUGHS:
This piece is entitled, Sex and Death. I tell you, anybody, anybody could unleash this virus and it’s very simple. We all know how simple it is. It’s a sex word and virus cut in with death word. Sex word and image cut in with death word and image. That’s all there is to it. Yeah, we can do it. But what about Washington on our orders? Just one test tube and sput.

00:27:13
STEWART:
Yeah. Oh, okay. That’s Howard in my office and this is what I used to call him. Schmekelstein. Schmekel is a schmeker.

00:27:25
AARON:
Dr. Schmekelstein.

00:27:26
STEWART:
Dr. Schmekelstein.

00:27:29
AARON:
What’s on the table there, is that dope?

00:27:30
STEWART:
Oh yeah, oh, Howard’s shooting up there.
At that time, there was dope all over the city, man. You know, there was big wide open markets, like you see in Baltimore now.

AARON:
Oh, this is the Dr. Nova Heroin bag?

STEWART:
Yeah. Dr. Nova was right around the corner. So, I remember me and Howard would walk off Bowery onto Rivington and there would be a guy sitting on a stoop and if he was there, then they were open; if he wasn't there, then they weren't open. Um, but you know, the first time I scored on the street, it was with Howard. Well, Burroughs couldn't score on the street, so it would be either me or Howard. Burroughs looked like a chalky white fucking banker or a cop, you know. And he wore those suits, so, you know, a Puerto Rican guy looking at a suit on the street asking to buy dope is… it’s not going to happen.

AARON:
He doesn’t look like a junkie.

STEWART:
No, he doesn’t. He never looked like a junkie, I must say. Oh man, this is totally compulsive, I mean, it’s just… Well, you know, some of these are…uh, crazier than others. Uh, I mean this one is…I can barely read it.

Below we see him in the guise of best man, as he was known during the wedding celebration for Lord and Lady Lymph.

STEWART:
Oh, that's what he called me and my wife.
AARON: Right, because you...

STEWART: Yeah, cause in the Burroughs movie, I play Dr. Lymph, Benway’s appalled assistant. So after that, he addressed us as Dr. and Lady Lymph. Yeah, yeah, yeah. That’s right, that’s right, yeah. Man, you start...you know, you start triggering this shit and it goes on and on.

HOWARD: This is Dr. Lymph’s operation.

CREW MEMBER: You going to need any blood?

HOWARD: No, this is Dr. Lymph cutting open the wound.

CREW MEMBER: Ok.

CREW MEMBER: No face?

HOWARD: Yeah, no face. William, you stand over there.

STEWART: Howard just knew how to be around the guy without making him nervous, you know. First of all, he didn’t insinuate himself that much. He kept the focus on the subject. And it was just, they liked each other. That really helps, you know. There was a real affinity there. There was definite strong affinity, you know.
Alright.


Howard was a little nervous in the beginning, ah, being around William, you know, and...and actualizing this idea of his, which is, I'm going to talk to you on film. We are...we're going to watch you. This is...my concept is, you know, to make a film about you and once you really commit to that, you're kind of vulnerable because you know, Burroughs could look at Howard at times and say, “You know what?”...not that he ever did, but I mean I think the potential was, he could look at him sometimes and say, “What are you doing? This is stupid. I'm not going to do this. Get out of here.”

HOWARD: [LAUGHTER] Look at this!

HOWARD: You got...you got to say it like that till the next shot.

BURROUGHS: Yeah, I know.

HOWARD: [LAUGHS] Ready?

STEWART: The incision is ready, doctor.

BURROUGHS: Doctor Benway forces the cup into the incision and works it up and down. Blood spurts all over the doctors, the nurses and the wall and the cup makes a horrible sucking sound.
JACKIE CURTIS:
I think he’s gone, doctor.

00:31:21
BURROUGHS:
Well, it’s all in a day’s work.

00:31:24
STEWART:
Howard got under the skin. Don’t forget Uncle Bill was a WASP. You were never on farting terms, you know. There was always a bit of formality in the air, but Howard got closer to penetrating it than it was likely, you know. Got much closer than you’d expect.

00:31:45
BURROUGHS:
I think we’ve got to get Centre Street.

00:31:48
HOWARD:
Well, we’re closer now. We’re closer...

00:31:50
BURROUGHS:
Centre Street is...

00:31:52
TOM:
As the days went on, Howard got more and more confident and he just stayed with it and I think his real, real achievement is that he got Burroughs to trust him. And I don’t get the sense that Burroughs trusted too many people.

00:32:36
SUBWAY ANNOUNCER:
West Fourth Street. Broadway and Lafayette, Coney Island.

00:32:42
JIM:
Burroughs was a very suspicious, let’s say paranoid person. He was suspicious even of his own fame, while at the same time sculpting it a bit himself, you know. Ah…but he saw, obviously he saw something in Howard that he found amusing, because Howard had this kind of mischievous, you know...some unflinching in the face of perversity quality and I know Burroughs liked that. Howard was an attractive young guy. I think
Burroughs probably appreciated that, you know. But more, I think he just liked that Howard was very interested, knowledgeable and fun to be around.

00:33:28
HOWARD:
Keep filming.

00:33:29
BURROUGHS:
…ready to come to the surface.

00:33:32
[SIRENS]

00:33:33
HOWARD:
Could you put your arms around each other, just?

00:33:36
HOWARD:
William do you remember the opening lines from Howl?

00:33:40
ALLEN GINSBERG:
Oh my.

00:33:41
HOWARD:
Could you recite them?

00:33:43
BURROUGHS:
I’ve seen the best minds of my generation starved…

00:33:48
ALLEN GINSBERG:
Destroyed by madness.

00:33:50
BURROUGHS:
Destroyed by madness
ALLEN GINSBERG:
Starving.

00:33:54
BURROUGHS:
Starving.

00:33:55
ALLEN GINSBERG:
Mystical.

00:33:55
BURROUGHS:
Mystical.

00:33:57
MAN 15:
No, no, no naked. Actually I found the…

00:33:59
BURROUGHS:
Naked.

00:33:59
MAN 15:
I found the original, uh…

00:34:00
BURROUGHS:
Yeah.

00:34:01
MAN 15:
I had originally written “starving, mystical, naked” and I crossed out mystical and I wrote “hysterical”, “starving, hysterical, naked.” I found the original manuscript.

00:34:10
BURROUGHS:
Yes, absolutely.

00:34:10
MAN 15:
Well, I’m flattered that we can remember three words…
00:34:13
BURROUGHS:
Very good, very good.

00:34:14
MAN 15:
Of my uh, choice prose.

00:34:16
[SIRENS, MUSIC]

00:34:41
[DOORBELL]

00:34:48
SARAH:
Hi.

00:34:50
HOWARD:
Hi.

00:34:51
SARAH:
Oh my God! What is that?

00:34:53
HOWARD:
It’s a movie camera.

00:34:54
SARAH:
Really? I’m going to be in the movies?

00:34:56
HOWARD:
Yeah. How are you?

00:34:58
SARAH:
Ah...
00:35:02
[KISSING SOUND]

00:35:03
MAX:
Hahaha, look who’s here.

00:35:05
HOWARD:
Gramps!

MAX:
00:35:07
Everything on, all of it?

00:35:08
SARAH:
I was waiting for the movie camera.

00:35:10
MAX:
All alone?

00:35:17
HOWARD:
Well, what do you want to say?

00:35:17
SARAH:
I love you.

00:35:20
HOWARD:
Now listen, you have to speak very clearly.

00:35:23
SARAH:
Oh. I love you, Howard.

00:35:26
HOWARD:
Okay. Now, tell me something, where did you two…
MAX: Oh you do, do you?

GRAPHIC: Howard’s Grandparents

HOWARD: Where did you two first meet?

SARAH: We met in New York City on First Avenue between First and Second Street. I was 15 years old and he was 17 years old. We had a daughter and a son, they’re both married and from this marriage, we have four grandchildren and four great grandchildren. And now we’re waiting for Howard Brookner to get married and give us another great grandchild. [LAUGHS] End…end of story.

MAX: He’s very slow.

AARON: So, was Brad how Howard told you that he was gay? He told you about Brad?

ELAINE: Yeah.

AARON: Or you knew before?

ELAINE: No, I think it was…was with…uh…telling us about Brad that he told us.

AARON: And what did you and grandpa think?
ELAINE: We were very sad to hear it because we knew that it’s a problem, you know. So, we were very sad and also the thought that he would never have children, you know, that kind of thing. So, uh, we went upstairs to our room and I was crying and…and grandpa was very sad, cause we knew his life would not be so good because of it, you know. There was no understanding of, uh, of…of homosexuals in that time.

BRAD: The night that I first saw him at a gay bar in 1978,

AARON: It’s incredible.

BRAD: Yeah, with this kind of horror script writing. But, so I know… so here is Howard’s date book from that year. See, I think I just saw it today maybe. Let’s see… there is that. There…so then we had our date, first date. I think it was this, June 24th, it says Gooch and then it said, you know, cookout, I told you and then I think… It’s amazing it’s like - as someone who does biography - I mean, it’s always amazing when it’s like oh, this really happened. I didn’t just make it up… and this is like Howard with a little question mark on the 24th.

ELAINE: I met Brad. He had told me about him, you know, that uh…he and Brad were so happy that they met each other and I think he even said something about walking holding
hands someplace in the village, yeah. And then grandpa and I were going on a trip. It may have been a long trip and we needed somebody to stay with the dogs, so Howard and Brad were going to do that. So, I was very nervous about meeting this, thinking it’s an older man taking advantage of my young son, you know, that kind of thing. And then Brad steps off the plane looking so gorgeous and young and… [LAUGHS]

00:39:26
BRAD:
You know, it was like your grandparents, ironically, who were then trying to tell us that we shouldn’t do that and that we should live together, which is a very advanced position, especially given how against Howard being gay they were.

00:39:44
AARON:
Were they?

00:39:46
BRAD:
Oh, yeah. That was a huge thing. Yeah. I mean, a lot of Howard’s stuff deals with that. So, yeah, his parents, especially his mother really wanted him to get married and they would always call it his problem, like he would go to Miami and then they would have dinner and talk about his problem and how they wanted to send him to a therapist and I think his rabbi in Great Neck had originally told him about this when he was in high school. Um, so…

00:40:17
AARON:
About his problem in high school?

00:40:18
BRAD:
Yeah. And then, um, I mean that there’s some gay…it had come up. So this was a big thing and then Elaine…you know and then Elaine would always, about 29 times, I’m surprised you haven’t heard this story? About how, oh, when I saw that face, who could…who could be upset or something, you know. [LAUGHS] So that went a long way to…still, what they really wanted was for Howard to get married and be a lawyer and…right, but, they accepted it.

00:40:51
[HONKING]

00:40:52
BRAD:
So, the first place we lived was at there at the front.

00:40:55
AARON:
By which letter?

00:40:57
BRAD:
Well the O, remember there were these photographs you sent me of my birthday party?

00:41:00
AARON:
Yeah.

00:41:01
BRAD:
Birthday party and you can see the O?

00:41:04
[MUSIC]

00:41:16
BRAD:
We were kind of having first love at age 25 or something. And hadn’t really had that kind of adolescent love affair in an open way that kids had in high school. And we came to New York to do that. We were the first generation where that was really open and available. It really was a romantic time.

00:41:55
ANDY WARHOL:
Drawing too?

00:41:56
VICTOR BOCKRIS:
He hates drawing.

00:41:58
ANDY WARHOL:
Can you do a drawing?

00:41:58
BURROUGHS:
Oh yes, sure.
ANDY WARHOL:
Oh my god. Oh, more, more. Oh my God.

BURROUGHS:
There we are.

ANDY WARHOL:
Thanks a lot! How great!

STEWART:
Howard saw a gay father in Burroughs, who approved of everything he was. He was okay with Burroughs and I think Howard had a really good family life. I think he was like, you know, a well adjusted guy, but I… as a gay guy, he probably felt that stigma, even in his own family of, you know, they would prefer it if I wasn’t, you know. Well here was Uncle Bill who couldn’t care less, you know, he actually thought it was kind of nice, you know. He kind of approved of it.

HOWARD:
Bill, I’ll call you up.

STEWART:
Uncle Bill was a magician. It was like being around somebody who’s creating something beautiful and magical all the time, you know. And that might have been mutual, that might have been what William saw Howard capable of doing that, you know. You know, all the qualities that you want from somebody who’s going to be locking your image into eternity there because that’s what it is. Somebody does a documentary on you that you approve of and are cooperating with, you’ve got to have some real courage and faith in them, you know.

ALLEN GINSBERG:
He was a writer, a very good writer…
00:43:36
BURROUGHS:
A good writer…

00:43:37
ALLEN GINSBERG:
A very good writer, very American.

00:43:39
BURROUGHS:
Later he became quite well known.

00:43:41
ALLEN GINSBERG:
Very famous. Yes, yes, yes, very famous.

00:43:44
JAMES:
So, in October 1983, there I am at Lincoln Center with William and Howard in this celebrity box on the side of the theater and this montage of me being a big shot or how it looks, screens and unlike the time I viewed it in the screening room, this time there was a full house of people going, rrrrrrrrrrrrr, rhubarb, rhubarb, like, you know, who’s that guy? He’s an asshole. So that was in my face when I looked at Howard and he just gave me the smirk.

00:44:19
AARON (VO):
Burroughs: The Movie, got great reviews. It played in dozens of cities and cinemas all over the US, Europe and Japan. Finally, Howard’s career was taking off and my grandparents got over him not becoming a lawyer. He was traveling a lot, but I remember him being very present, bringing back toys and always playing with me. They were happy times.

00:44:51
SARA:

00:44:54
GRAPHIC:
Hisami Kuroiwa  Sara Driver
Film Producer  Filmmaker

00:44:58
HISAMI: Right?

SARA: Yeah.

HISAMI: And that is also then.

AARON: Can you show us?

HISAMI: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

SARA: It was the Pia Film Festival. Was me and Jim, Howard and John Waters, Spike.

HISAMI: Cinqué.

SARA: Cinqué Lee, Spike’s brother.

HISAMI: Jacob.

SARA: Jacob Burckhardt.

HISAMI: And Andy Horn.
SARA: And Andy Hohn. Right.

AARON: Did you all have movies you were showing?

SARA: Yeah, we were all showing movies. Jim was showing Permanent Vacation, I was showing You Are Not I, Spike was She's Got to Have It...

HiSAMI: Mm-hmm.

SARA: I don't remember what John Waters was showing.

HiSAMI: Polyester.

SARA: Polyester, which was heavily censored.

HiSAMI: Yes. So, in that area, there are tiny, tiny like, you know the bars and drinking joints. That's where like we all go and hang out with those people and you talk and become good friends. And of course, that's is a gay bar space. So John and you know like, those boys said, "Hisami, I need to go in those places. Can you go?" I said, "why not? I'm becoming a boy, I go." So this is the place. Inside, I have other pictures, but I don't think I can...I'm not allowed to show.

SARA: Oh, you're allowed, I think.
HISAMI: Well, it’s somewhere, you know, they actually, those boys in the… you know, they went so crazy, they started stripping and I was like… so crazy! Everybody was so shocked! You know? But…

00:46:29
SARA: Who was shocked? The American filmmakers?

00:46:31
HISAMI: Yes!

00:46:33
SARA: [LAUGHS]

00:46:34
HISAMI: Because you know, it’s kind of shocking, no? But, we still had a great time.

00:46:40
[MUSIC]

00:46:41
JIM: Kyoto with Howard was like we were tripping for several days. It was just so strange and interesting. Howard had this idea of like, okay, let’s just start out and go off into the city without keeping track of where we are and just follow our instincts and then figure out how to get back later. Because there are no signs in English; there’s nothing, you know. You’re so open because everything is foreign and I don’t know, it opens up some part of your imagination, that…and that lingers, even when you’ve returned and found your way back, there’s some little chemical change in your brain that I find really interesting, but that kind of came from Howard, I realized.

00:47:37
WOMAN 4: Did you arrive today or…

00:47:40
AARON: Uh, last night, actually, yeah.
00:47:41
WOMAN 4:
And how was the trip?

00:47:42
AARON:
It was long, but it was fine.

00:47:54
AARON (VO):
While Burroughs was still playing all over, Howard began shooting his next film, a documentary on Robert Wilson called The Civil Wars. The film had been released in the mid-80s to an international audience, then it disappeared. I tracked it down to an archive in Hamburg.

00:48:14
WOMAN 4:
Do you want to go in on the right side?

00:48:18
AARON:
Yeah, why am I going into a toilet?

00:48:17
[MUSIC]

00:48:28
WOMAN 4:
This one. This one.

00:48:38
AARON:
I got the negative of The Civil Wars and the print in English and German. That’s when Bob is in the airplane, that’s how it starts. And you can see his glasses and his profile there.

00:49:06
SINGER [OTIS REDDING]:
I was born by the river
In this little old tent
Just like this river
I’ve been running ever since
It’s been a long, long…
00:49:33
ROBERT:
I’ve been working on it over five years now…

00:49:35
ROBERT:
It would be six years when it’s presented in Los Angeles. It’s like a comet that falls, something that happens once. It can never happen again.

00:49:44
SINGER [OTIS REDDING]:
It’s been too hard living, oh man…

00:49:49
ROBERT (CIVIL WARS VO):
Ueberroth who’s the Chairman of the LA Olympic Committee, proposed that they cancel the Civil War project and it’s…it’s unbelievable to me that ah…he could say something like that because he doesn’t know how much effort has gone into this project. All the effort from people in Germany, Italy, France, Holland to…to make this thing possible. That, I don’t think they realize that.

00:50:20
ROBERT:
No, I just am still trying to save this Civil Wars project. I’ll be so damned glad when it’s over, but I’m not letting go.

00:50:31
[MUSIC]

00:50:38
ROBERT:
Two

00:50:37
ACTORS:
[SPEAKING GERMAN]

00:50:56
ROBERT:
Stop. Let’s do that much again.

00:50:58

Transcribed by: Word of Mouth
ROBERT:
From the end of…or with Milan’s text.

ROBERT:
I knew Burroughs and had seen his film Burroughs and admired it very much. I think it was a masterwork and still is, of course.

ROBERT WILSON:
So when Howard said he wanted to do this, I was a little skeptical because I… I am not so comfortable with that kind of situation, someone documenting me and… so, but anyway, knowing Howard, thought it would be okay. Because I trusted him.

ROBERT:
Howard had a tremendous respect for the people that were around him; he was a real team player. He was clear in what he wanted, laying out a kind of map and a frame, but at the same time he was incredibly free, you know, he would see something spontaneously and immediately go in that direction, so it was a combination of many…many different personas that he could identify with different situations, especially in my life and…

ROBERT (on film):
Six thousand five hundred people out there…
00:52:22
ROBERT:
We had fun together. I think that was the most important thing.

00:52:27
ROBERT (on film):
It has to be really projected in a big way.

00:52:31
ROBERT:
Some people you connect with and some people you don’t. Maybe you can call it love, trust.

00:52:44
HOWARD:
This is video diary. Tuesday, March 3rd, 1987, 12:29 PM…AM. Today we buried Grandpa Max, also known as gramps. And… we went to my grandma Sarah’s house tonight… this morning. She gave me this ring. She said that she gave it to him when he was graduated from pharmacy school. And it says, “from Sarah.” Front it’s got MF. Got a few stones and I remember him always wearing it, so it’s funny to see it on my hand. And I was very sad that grandpa died and I was thinking how much sadder it would be if the funeral were for someone young, not somebody who had lived their full life.

00:54:14
[BELLS]

00:54:29
DARRYL PINCKNEY:
It was just unreal because nobody really knew much about it.

00:54:37
MICHAEL SCALISI:
It was completely riveting, that era in New York, but also frightening.

00:54:44
KIM MASSEE:
Suddenly being with somebody or making love with somebody was… became dangerous. That was a concept that we didn’t have.

00:54:53
REPORTER 1:
They are dealing with some new deadly sexually transmitted disease…
REPORTER 2: …has triggered an epidemic, a rare form of cancer.

REPORTER 3: The condition severely weakens the body’s ability to fight disease.

STEWART MEYER:
I was losing friends, you know, where I’d ask: ‘hey, where’s so and so?’ ‘Oh, he’s gone.’
On the street, it was every five minutes. If you didn’t see somebody for a while, they didn’t move to Oklahoma, they were in the fucking hospital or dead.

REPORTER 4:
It’s a disease first detected in the gay community that has now spread beyond that, a disease experts are now calling a national epidemic.

REPORTER 5:
One-third have died and none have been cured.

REPORTER 6:
The federal government has been accused of discrimination by lack of funding for research.

ROGER GAIL LYON:
This is not a political issue, this is a health issue. This is not a gay issue, this is a human issue.

REPORTER 7:
There are estimates by the end of 1992, 263,000 Americans will be killed by this disease.

REPORTER 8:
It is a race against time.
BRAD: So, this is it.

00:56:06
AARON: Okay.

00:56:07
BRAD: Let's see, alright. Okay. This seems to be all me... In terms of Howard's stuff... Why don't you look in here, because these are actually tapes, right? I'll look... I think this isn't going to lead to anything.

00:56:47
AARON: What are all of these tapes that you have?

00:56:55
BRAD: These are all interviews that I did, like for the Frank O'Hara book.

00:56:59
AARON: Oh, look at this.

00:57:00
BRAD: What's that?

00:57:04
AARON: This is a video eight tape, HB Birthday, 4/30/87.

00:57:08
BRAD: There you go. [LAUGHS] It worked, magic.

00:57:14
AARON: Hey, that's Jim.
00:57:30
BRAD:
Yeah, that’s Jim.

00:57:34
AARON:
That’s Howard.

00:57:33
BRAD:
That’s Lindsey Law.

00:57:36
AARON:
Yeah, that’s Lindsey Law, you’re right.

00:57:40
BRAD:
And that is Howard’s lawyer.

00:57:44
AARON:
Silberman?

00:57:45
BRAD:
Yeah. Did you ever meet with him or did you just…

00:57:48
AARON:
I… I talked to him, yeah.

00:57:53
BRAD:
That’s Tom DiCillo.

00:57:54
AARON:
Yeah, Tom… there’s Jim again. That’s Hisami.
That’s Sharon DeLano. Oh wow. That’s Paula Court. This is good, all of these characters.

00:58:13
AARON:
Sara.

00:58:17
BRAD:
There is that guy, Bill, who was Chris Cox’s boyfriend who died of AIDS. I mean, a lot of these people died of AIDS within a year or two of this film.

00:58:37
[MUSIC]

00:58:50
HOWARD:
I… I have this urm, purple bruise on my toe, purple mark at the bottom of my toe, so I immediately thought…uh-oh. I went to the doctor. I just…No… My doctor said not to, she said it’s not accurate, it just isn’t, they give false positives, false negatives, it just isn’t, you know, you could get a positive or a negative reading and it could be or not be accurate.

01:00:05
MAN 17:
Excuse us.

01:00:05
GRAPHIC:
GET RID OF….
BODY ACHES
STRESS & TENSION
. ACUPRESSURE
. SWEDISH
. REFLEXOLOGY
. ENERGY BALANCE
BY LOUIS

01:00:07
GRAPHIC:
HEALING
HANDS

Transcribed by: Word of Mouth
LINDSAY: I worked with a lot of first time directors. I used to always try to steer them towards simple stories.

LINDSAY: I mean, in terms of scenes with just a handful of actors and…

LINDSAY: And things that are controllable and Howard’s first movie, I mean…

LINDSAY: …has singing, dancing, tons of extras, it’s a period piece…
01:00:41
GRAPHIC:
LINDSAY LAW
Executive Producer, “Bloodhounds of Broadway”

01:00:42
LINDSAY:
…and you know, it was immensely complicated and he wasn't overwhelmed by it at all.

01:00:50
HOWARD:
You see Randy over there…

01:00:57
TOM:
I must say, I was really impressed, ah, with…with Howard’s transition to that. I mean, just the fact that he was talking to Madonna, literally, picked up the phone and he was calling her and talking to her. Oh, we’re going to do this and here’s what I’ll need. Moving through it, finding ways to get little pieces of something accomplished everyday. That was incredibly impressive to me and it helped me a lot.

01:01:36
JIM:
It was kind of amazing because it was actually a bigger production than anything I had done, I mean in terms of the crew and stuff, probably not by much, but back then, even a little was, you know, noticeable. So I remember being…wow, this is like a real film, like a professional film, you know. Maybe Uncle Howard will be like successful in Hollywood.

01:02:08
HOWARD:
Cut, nice one.

01:02:12
MAN 18:
Retake right away everybody, one more time.

01:02:14
LINDSAY:
We were in the final stages of signing contracts and things like that. We were getting ready to create contracts and he obviously had an interest in, you know, what...how is this going to work? What are the logistics of a contract and the financing and does the money all come in at once... whatever, you know, he just wanted to go through that.
And he then asked the question, “Well, what happens with final cut?” Howard, you’ve made two documentaries, but you’ve never made a dramatic feature film and there’s no way in the world a studio gives final cut to somebody who doesn’t have a track record. This is only your first film. And he said, “Yes, but what if it’s my only film?” And at the time I didn’t know what that meant at all, but um…and I said well, but still, I mean, they’re…um…they’re not going to let Playhouse or you have final cut. It will be in their hands. Which, indeed, I’m fairly sure, it was…but that line went, you know, right by me at the time. I didn’t know what he meant by what if it’s my only film.

01:03:15
HOWARD:

01:03:58
HOWARD:
Okay, let’s do one. Now Randy, look at the money. You’ve never seen so much money in your life, so you might like jump up and click your heels…

01:04:08
BLOODHOUNDS CREW MEMBER:
We’ll let you know when we find out. LA has got it…

01:04:12
AARON:
Were you the only one who knew that he was HIV positive?

01:04:16
BRAD:
Yeah.

01:04:17
AARON:
When he started the movie?

01:04:18
BRAD:
For a year, yeah. And Howard tried AZT and it, you know, clouded his thinking and you know, weakened him a little. So, he realized that he didn’t…or it, it was almost like a choice. I mean, he didn’t see how he was going to be able to make this film in that kind of condition. You know, it’s like being drugged or stoned or something, I mean in the…you know, the negative rather than the positive version of that.
01:04:53
HOWARD:
I know why…

01:04:55
BRAD:
Not doing the AZT bothered me, the gruelingness of the schedule bothered me because he would call me from the, you know, van on lower Fifth Avenue when they were filming and it was in the winter and it was snowing and there…and his voice was stripped. He was really getting by on three hours of sleep, you know, for a few months and it was this winter of sub-zero temperatures.

01:05:40
HOWARD:
How’s it going on the set?

01:05:49
BRAD:
Howard’s decision not to do AZT, the, you know, the decision to make the film, period, which is just an incredibly taxing thing to do. I mean, all that was gambling with AIDS. It was a test of how committed he was to this.

01:06:09
HOWARD:
Could cut to a reaction. No, there is no reaction.

01:06:15
[SCREAM]

01:06:25
HOWARD (onscreen in bloodhounds):
…sends greetings for the new year from Brooklyn.

01:06:30
RUTGER HAUER:
Uhh… Take the knife…

01:06:39
ACTOR 3:
We’d better get you to a hospital Brain.

01:06:41
ACTOR 2:
No, got to keep this quiet, take me home.

01:07:02
AARON:
What if the government had funded research for AIDS before it became an epidemic? Maybe better drugs would have been available to Howard when he was shooting Bloodhounds of Broadway. Maybe he would have survived and made more films. I remember walking home from school one evening with my dad and passing by Commerce Street in the West Village. There was fake snow and old-fashioned cars and Howard in the middle of it all making his film.

01:07:40
MEMBER OF FILM CREW:
Just come this side of the car…

01:07:50
AARON:
The next day, Howard invited me to stay with him on set. He brought me over to sit with him while he directed Madonna and Randy Quaid.

01:08:05
GRAPHIC:
ME

01:08:07
[SHOUTING]

01:08:15
MADONNA:
That’s the daffy guy who gives me all the bracelets!

01:08:22
AARON:
Because of Howard, I wanted to make movies. Making films is what Howard knew and he kept going at all costs. That way of pushing was what allowed him to do so many things in such a short amount of time, affecting so many people along the way.

01:09:12
FREDERIC:
He had shot a movie about William Burroughs and back in the early 80s, I was running a small chain of art-house for experimental films. He had come from New York to find a venue for his film, for his movie in Paris.
At that moment, I had very little money, so I told him that we were only able to show the film and make some advertising and try to have some press. And it went along rather well, in fact, but the film was so good and I had a feeling that Howard was someone important, that he had the charm, the elegance, the intelligence, the culture and also a real talent. He used to stay at the Hotel Louisiane always. And the Louisiane is a very famous hotel in Paris. In its way it's a bit like the Chelsea Hotel in New York.

This is what I say why it's fun to open this sort of box of Pandora, whatever...because it's...I mean, it's very far away. All of these people that were people that touched me, inspired me, that...

You know, that have contributed to making who I am now, and yet it's...it's...it's just memories, it's interesting. I don't think he was probably with me any different than he was with anybody else, that's...that was my feeling. When he introduced his film at the festival, he didn't announce that he also liked men and that he...you know, whatever, I didn't...I had no idea. I was more interested in him and his mind. It wasn't about a...I mean, it was a sexual relationship, but it wasn't that...well actually, it was a very passionate relationship, which is strange. And without even discussing it, we knew when it was time for him to go.

Did you love each other?
Yeah. Yeah, definitely.

01:11:42
RICHARD:
He had charm.

01:11:45
GRAPHIC:
Richard Shone
Writer

01:11:45
RICHARD:
It’s an old fashioned word, but he really had it, not excessive baroque charm, you know, he...he, just his physical presence and the way he was relaxed so often and easy, you know. Um, there was a charm to that, yeah. God, we had a good time. The eighties, how we were… how did he do all this? He was out every night in London, you know, till 1, 2 and he was filming or doing something the next day. We went to the biggest nightclub in London, Heaven. He adored that, he loved people watching. He was a bit of a voyeur, I would say, just looking at everybody doing their thing. He loved that. He’d stand with a bourbon or something like that and watch. Then he’d disappear and follow somebody… and, you know. [LAUGHS] I’ll see you later, darling. Darling. [LAUGHS] Yes, da…that’s it, darling. [LAUGHS]

01:12:47
LINDSAY:
He got Matt Dillon to play a lowlife character in Bloodhounds by taking the actor to Umberto’s Clam House in Manhattan for lunch and presenting him with an envelope. Inside were photographs of the gangster Joey Gallo lying murdered on the floor of the restaurant. It’s perfect. It’s perfect. No, Matt would have loved that. Once Colombia was in on it, we were going to have a meeting on the budget, of all things, in terms of making sure Howard understood, okay now, this budget allows for, you know, this many extras or this…whatever, to make sure he completely understood that and Howard said, “You know where I think we should have this meeting?” I forget the name of it, but um, I said where? And he said, “I want the three of us to go to…” and although I can’t remember the name of it, it was a male hustler bar in the east 50s and I said, Howard, why? He said, “Because I just think it’s...would be amusing for Columbia Pictures to realize that they’re going to pay for a receipt from a hustler bar on the east side. I just think it would be a funny idea.” I said, okay, and that’s where we had our first budget meeting.

01:13:51
SARA:
We had a feeling when we were young, we could do anything. We could be in a rock and roll band and not even know how to play music. We could make art and we didn’t even know how to start, but we would just jump in. Howard and Tom DiCillo and Jim and myself and Spike and all of us who were making film...Amos Poe, everybody, we were all very interested in trying to find new ways to tell stories on film and very excited by that idea. And Howard was somebody who was unstoppable and he was a risk taker. He took a lot of risks. That’s why he made such beautiful work.

01:15:02
KIM:
To me, it was like an eye, the way he saw the world, the way he saw it and the way...and the way he laughed at it and everything that you see without words, exactly, everything in a Bob Wilson film had that feel, when you just saw an artist at work and somebody who was just...and the way he showed it, the way he didn’t talk about that last scene, he’s on the phone finding out that it’s all collapsing and you just see what’s...what’s going through his head, the whole collapse of everything. And then this sort of lost soul walking through his drawings, like, not only it’s over, but why? I mean, you put so much energy into your film, your project and then it’s...it’s just...it’s dead, I mean it’s gone.

01:16:04
DAVID:
He was in LA and I remember he phoned up that the deal had gone through. He was really happy and I said, I can’t believe it.

01:16:13
GRAPHIC:
David Pinckney
Writer

01:16:13
DAVID:
He said, neither can I. I said, I can’t believe it and he said, neither can I and you know, the phone calls from LA were really up. And then when he told me he...you know, had HIV, he was in New York, we were walking down the street and um...I’d come out of the rehab where I had been tested, so I was okay and I told him. He said, “Don’t brag.” I said what? He said, “Don’t brag.” And he told me. It was terrible. It was really terrible. We were just walking along and stopped, I didn’t know what to say and you know Howard walked with a slight, left foot slightly out.. and so he just nudged...nudged me with his foot and said “I’ll be okay.” You know, but his expression was different, everything was already different.
ELAINE:
He told us about it and...but at the time, he immediately showed us something in the paper about...that they were working on cures and that sort of thing. So, he said, oh they'll find a cure, but at that time, he didn't say but not in time for me, but later on, he said it, yeah. Pretty awful, pretty awful.

01:17:56

BRAD:
Gamble worked out, in the sense that he did the film, but then, the virus crossed this barrier, blood-brain barrier, he had lost vision in one eye, had already, you know, it was already in his brain.

01:18:17

RICHARD:
I've spoken twice recently to Brad, since I heard that Howard had had a stroke. Details from his boyfriend, Donny were sparse, but things sounded very bad. I then called Brad last Friday and he told me the facts. It is terrible. And Friday night and the weekend were numb with the stupidity and pain of it all, everyone truly upset... I can't read it... all my friends, Peter took it very badly. I don't think I can do that. Oh, God. You see what he meant, you know. This is what? 30 years ago?

01:19:08

JAMES:
I remember, I was in San Francisco and I remember talking with Howard on the phone and he, at this point, had a... I don't know, a speech impediment from the cytomegalovirus. He couldn't talk properly. And he sounded pretty cheerful, just halting in his speech and I was, you know, verklempt and I was saying, "Howard, oh my God, you're so brave." And he said, "I'm not brave. I'm just normal and I'm dying." And uh, I couldn't reply to that right then.

01:20:06

[MUSIC]

01:20:14

BRAD:
My assumption was always, we were in this together and I finally went and had the test, this HIV test and it came back negative and told him this news. I started crying and Howard was so happy and he started like laughing. And so it was the...like the opposite of what you would think the reaction should be. Right? And you know, and I was crying because we weren't going to be together. We'd been doing things pretty much together for ten years.
CHILD: Apple juice?

WOMAN 9: This is apple juice. I just put it in here, an old seltzer thing so I could carry it.

AARON (VO): I knew Howard was dying, though I didn’t really understand what that meant. I knew it was a sad thing, but nothing really felt sad around Howard. He was always surrounded by people who loved him. Those were some of my warmest memories.

HOWARD: Wait a second, Diane, spread the light evenly.

[CHEERING CROWD] Five, four, three, two one!

ANNOUNCER: Happy New Year! Look at them go! They’re dropping the balloons. Here we go!

ELAINE: I have tonic water if you want.

HOWARD: I’ll have coke, I mean I’ll have coffee.

ELAINE: Coffee?

HOWARD: With milk and no sugar.
01:22:05
ELAINE:
Milk and no sugar.

01:22:10
SARAH:
Oh, there we are. [SINGING] Every heart…

01:22:12
HOWARD:
Hello.

01:22:13
SARAH:
[SINGING] …beats true on the red white and blue and there’s a never a boast or a brag and should old acquaintance be forgot, keep your eye on the grand old flag.

01:22:23
[NEWSPAPER HEADLINES]
Director’s Race with AIDS Ends Before His Film Opens
A Director’s Race With AIDS Ends Before His Movie Opens

01:22:37
GRAPHIC:
Paula Court
Photographer

01:22:38
PAULA:
It seemed impossible, like I could conjure like oh, this…that didn’t happen or…ah, he’s going to wake up. I remember the cars going. You were a little boy in one of the cars, ahead of me and I didn’t want to get out of the car. I didn’t want to proceed with the death, all the rituals of death and I did go and I…I did not want to go, but one goes.

01:23:23
TOMBSTONE:
Howard Eric
BROOKNER
BELOVED SON
DEAR BROTHER
UNCLE, GRANDSON
LOVING FRIEND
MAN 19:
Grandma, why don't you tell Aaron what that stone’s for.

SARAH:
Oh, when you go to visit someone that died, put a little stone there and that tells them that you visited them and they’re very happy, see?

MAN 19:
You get a stone…

WOMAN 10:
Here, Aaron.

SARAH:
Find a little stone and he’ll know that you were here. See? Little stone for a boy, see? And he will know that you were here because he loved you.

GRAPHIC [HANDWRITING] and VO:
Dear Mom & Dad
Today is May 22.
It’s grey and misty.
Two days ago
my doctor told me
I have AIDS.
By now
you already
know this
and I am no more.
The worst part of all this for me was knowing what my death could do to you.
Death is not so bad for the dying – it is much worse for the living.
So, please do not be too sad
do not let this ruin your lives.
for if I continue to live,
I live in your memories
and your hearts
and also in the films I made
You know it isn't so bad
to live a short life,
as long as you do
what you want with it –
and I did.
This is what is important in life:
DO WHAT YOU WANT TO DO.
USE YOUR LIFE TO FULFILL YOURSELF, TO
GO AS FAR AS YOU CAN,
REGARDLESS OF THE RISKS.
This is what I did,
and so I was happy
content in the end.

01:25:22
[LAUGHTER]

01:25:30
JEAN BROOKNER:
Keep your right eye open, do you see us?

01:25:34
HOWARD:
See us?

01:25:34
AARON (CHILD):
Uh-huh.

01:25:35
JEAN BROOKNER:
Do you see, what am I doing?

01:25:36
HOWARD:
Maybe we’re too close.

01:25:38
JEAN BROOKNER:
Maybe. What are we doing?

01:25:40
HOWARD:
What are we doing, Aaron?

01:25:41
AARON (CHILD):
Wave.

01:25:42
JEAN BROOKNER:
Waving?

01:25:47
BURROUGHS:
The early navigators, you know, when they suddenly found there was a whole unknown world out there, they could go and explore and they…their motto was “navigare necesse est vivere non est necesse”, “it is necessary to travel and it’s not necessary to live”, this is very dangerous, you see and it’s a challenge, a great challenge to the youth, or the youthful spirit in all of us. And I think that we are here to go!

01:26:26
BRAD GOOCH (VO):
If Howard were alive and Robert Mapplethorpe were alive and all these people, all these guys, most of them died, who if they had lived, we’d have a very different culture. I don’t know what it would be, but different and New York would be different.

01:26:54
AARON:
Towards the end, I would visit Howard at Saint Vincent’s Hospital. That place was Ground Zero for the AIDS epidemic in New York. Strangely, though, when I would see the hospital over the years passing by, it would make me feel good because I thought of Howard. Then seeing it torn down and turned into luxury condos, felt like a memory of Howard was being taken away.

01:27:26
ANDREW BROOKNER:
Say goodbye.

01:27:28
JEAN BROOKNER:
Bye. Aren’t you coming with us, Howard?

01:27:30
HOWARD:
No.

01:27:31
JEAN BROOKNER:
No?

01:27:32
ANDREW BROOKNER:
Say goodbye, Aaron.

01:27:33
AARON (CHILD):
I’m going in Howard’s car.

01:27:35
ANDREW BROOKNER:
Bye, camera. Come on. Are you coming with us?

01:27:40
JEAN BROOKNER:
Come on.

01:27:41
AARON (CHILD):
I’m going home with Howard.

01:27:42
JEAN BROOKNER:
Howard, you have to come with us. There’s no room for you in the other car.

01:27:45
HOWARD:
Let’s go.

01:27:48
HOWARD:
Hey, give me your hand.
AARON:
Memories are like dreams. Very beautifully, they exist in our minds. When we write things down or take a picture or record something, we are archiving them. Howard left an indelible mark on me and on so many who knew him. With what he left behind, he lives on in a place where there is no AIDS, Saint Vincent’s is not a luxury condo, and the Chelsea Hotel is still a Bohemian folly. In that space, Uncle Howard will live forever.

01:28:31
HOWARD:
Today is Friday and Luis died yesterday, my agent. It made me very, very sad, been sad all day, for one reason is, I never got a chance to thank him for getting me this film. So, I’m just going to miss him, I miss talking to him. I feel a sorry for his parents. I guess I’ll just play something loud, outside is a beautiful sunset, though. Put on some music for him.

01:29:25
[MUSIC]
SINGER:
Let me inside you
Into your room
I’ve heard it’s lined
With the things you don’t show
Lay me beside you
Down on the floor
I’ve been your lover
From the womb to the tomb
I dress as your daughter
When the moon becomes round
You be my mother
When everything’s gone
And she will always carry on
Something is lost
But something is found
They will keep on speaking her name
Some things change
Some stay the same

01:30:33
HOWARD:
That was the sunset. This song is for Luis.

01:30:41
SINGER:
Let me inside you
Into your room
I've heard it's lined
With the things you don't show
Lay me beside you

01:30:59
GRAPHIC:
Directed by
Aaron Brookner

Down on the floor
I've been your lover
From the womb to the tomb
I dress as your daughter
When the moon becomes round
You be my mother
When everything's gone

01:31:18
GRAPHIC
Producer
Paula Vaccaro

And she will always carry on
Something is lost
But something is found
They will keep on speaking her name
Some things change
Some stay the same

01:31:40
GRAPHIC:
Executive Producer
Jim Jarmusch

And she will always carry on
Something is lost

01:31:46
Co-producers
Sara Driver
Alex Garcia
But something is found
They will keep on speaking her name
Some things change
Some stay the same
And she will always carry on
Something is lost
But something is found
They will keep on speaking her name
Some things change
Some stay the same

01:32:48
[MUSIC]

01:32:48 – 01:36:50
END CREDITS