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Dreams to Remember

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Dreams to Remember

Senior Project Submitted to
The Division of the Arts
of Bard College

by
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Annandale-on-Hudson, New York
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Dreams to Remember

Dreams to Remember is a hybrid short film, somewhere between documentary and narrative fiction, offering a peek into the mind of my aging father, Peter. Eight years ago, Peter was diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease, and subsequently Parkinson's disease. As Peter's body withers and his mind begins to betray him, he seeks refuge and redemption in his dreams.

Dreams to Remember's candid narration, recorded in documentary style interviews with Peter, tell a story of struggle, grief, and mortality. Juxtaposing the frailty and solitude of life's final chapter, preposterous dream sequence vignettes inject Peter's humor and desires, allowing Peter to rewrite his descent into a bittersweet love letter to the man he was and the man he wanted to be.

Peter struggles with his body's failure to keep up with his wild imagination. His arms cannot throw the ball he taught his sons to catch. His fingers forget the notes he hears echoing. His feet cannot keep the beat of the dance he taught his daughter, but when he dreams, when he tells the story of himself, he can re-inhabit the man he remembers.

I grew up with a father who never wanted to burden his children with truth. A professional film editor and lifelong lover of film, literature, and music, Peter took it as his duty to spin tall tales and entertain his family. Hiding the pain, financial anxiety, and cruel details of life, Peter lent a rosy lens through which his children could dream of a kinder, more magnificent world. A bittersweet investigation of the storyteller who raised me, *Dreams to Remember* allows the viewer to both pry for earnest admissions of the cruelty of existence and become intoxicated by the extravagance of what life can be with the help of a little imagination.

It was important for me to formally address the elephant in the room, through my work, finding closure in my father's account of his own end of life experience. However, I wanted this to be a portrait of a man, not of a disease. As Peter has declined and become more reliant on the help of his family, it has become more difficult for him to hide his pain, yet he continues to crack jokes, spread love, and dream big.

I was extremely hesitant to define this work as a documentary, because I find it impossible to separate my subjective interpretation of my father from his own experience of self. With that in mind, I consider this piece to be a portrait of a portrait. It is not a direct account, but a collaborative celebration of the storyteller who raised me.