even while his body's cage tightened. He spoke his last word, “Mom”, in 1939 at the age of 20. His mother checked him into Bainbridge hospital shortly thereafter, as she was still working and he could not care for himself while she was out.

An EEG becomes the next voice to attest to Leonard’s mental acuity. Sayer uses a strobe light for the first section of the test, and it produces absolutely no results. The response comes at the end, when Sayer says, “Leonard”. If you choose to read this, as I do, as Leonard’s mind finally finding some release, some means of contact, this is his first word, the first direct sign of his agency, in the film. The second comes when Sayer, having collected all the Bainbridge patients who appear catatonic until thrown a ball, is sitting in a circle with them as they pass a ball around. All the other patients throw the ball to the person directly opposite them. Leonard throws it to Sayer. And Sayer seizes the opportunity. He enlists the ward’s nurses and orderlies in a campaign to find what engages these people, and in so doing, he slowly brings their personalities out. One woman is moved by opera, others find their groove in swing and—memorably—Hendrix. Several engage with each other over a game of cards, as long as a nurse plays the first one to get them going. Bert makes it clear that human contact can also reach these people, allowing them to become mobile. All of these findings reflect the medical staff’s genuine desire to know more about these patients and their disease; they experimented with different stimuli—all from the realm of normal living. Many of the patients engaged. Uplifting! Amazing! Until you remember that, in the decades those people had been sitting in wheelchairs, no one on the staff had bothered to try to treat them like interactive equals. They had been fed, cleaned, put to bed, and woken up. But they had not been treated like humans. For a ward of people with no voices, it took a good physician and several excellent nurses to treat them first as people with histories, preferences, and desires.

Leonard’s first words come from this attention and diligence. Sayer brings a Ouija board to his bedside, hoping he will spell his name. Instead, he hijacks the pointer and spells “Rilke’s panther”. This poem, about a wild panther stuck in a cage, mirrors Leonard’s experience with encephalitis lethargica. Sayer reads about Leonard’s imprisonment at the zoo, watching a panther pace in an excruciatingly small, concrete-floored cage. “His powerful strides are like a ritual dance/around a center where a great will stands paralyzed.” Sayer reads the words while the camera closes tightly on the panther, and both the doctor and the cat stand in for Leonard’s still missing voice, bringing his narrative ever more clearly into definition. Then the camera turns to Leonard sitting frozen in his wheelchair, mouth open, eyes turned elsewhere. “At times the curtains of the eye lift without a sound and a shape enters/slips through the tightened silence of the shoulders/reaches the heart and dies.” Time in Leonard’s cage has passed in a different way than it has for people still capable of making their will known, but it can be measured in the failed attempts to communicate with medical staff who did not notice and the slow acceptance—heart death—that comes with knowing you are truly alone. Sayer is the first person to aggressively invade that quiet space, to navigate around Leonard’s prison, listen at the walls for any sound coming from within. Unlike Leonard’s mother, who quietly accepts her son’s limited interaction as all that is left of him, Sayer hopes to break through the walls and bring Leonard out. To do so, however, he needs to figure out a treatment that might work. He turns to neurological research on another disease that causes increasing aphasia and dyskinesia, Parkinson’s, and the use of a