

## **STAGE IV SYNOPSIS**

When the threat of early death comes knocking, one woman, her husband, son and sister are launched on a quest for life's meaning. *Stage IV*, a 85 min. documentary, takes us on an intimately honest, even humorous journey where Anne 47, who is a gifted educator, independent wife and attentive mother transforms her imminent dying as an opportunity to ask – Why am I alive? It is Anne and her eventual acceptance and profoundly clear understanding of the answer - that differentiates this story. You actually witness, indeed experience her transformation from resisting her fate to yielding, and in that process, revealing a new dimension of consciousness.

Filmmaker Rudkilde followed Anne, and the four additional central characters between 2004 and 2008. Chris - her husband; Liam - their 9 year old son; Jill - Anne's faithful sister and Dr. Sitarik - Anne's oncologist, are all integral to the unfolding journey and have their own views of life's purpose. All key moments of this character-driven story are told through intimate verité footage, building suspense as to Anne's fate and intercut with candid interviews revealing contradictions, confessions and revelations. By January 2008, Anne is no longer responding to medication and she decides to give up chemotherapy. As she shares her experience of physical pain, she also revises priorities, expresses regrets, and asks for forgiveness. Anne says: "We are all going to die, and if we are lucky enough to get a warning, it is a final opportunity for ourselves and for those around us, to grow, and find meaning in all that is and was, a possibility of discovering the reason for our visit here on earth. Besides invigorating wisdom, *Stage IV* also offers several opportunities for comic relief; from how to fit the much too large Christmas tree through the door to reflections on a sex-life without breasts and Anne wanting to dig her own grave and build her own coffin.

Anne's declining health stop the characters in their tracks and introduce their separate set of crisis': Will Jill dare to go on a year long trip to Panama? In awe we witness the grace with which Dr. Sitarik eventually has to tell Anne she has 2-6 months left to live. "You feel like you should just throw everything down and spend as much time with your wife as you possibly can." says Chris. But even under the threat of a short life together, spousal challenges go on and during some difficult moments we wonder if the marriage will last. Their son Liam is asking challenging questions: "When is Mom going to die?" Liam gives us an awe-inspiring glimpse into a child's perspective on this scary world. We witness Anne's heroic fight for time and her yielding to death as she traverses more emotional and enlightening territory than most of us pack in a lifetime.

*Stage IV* flows between lightness and sadness, courage and fear, love and anger in a turbulent yet ultimately serene journey of awakening to the present moment.