
Perfect Strangers ★★★

(2013) 69 min. DVD: \$23.99 (\$39.99 w/PPR). Jan Krawitz. Closed captioned.

Jan Krawitz's informative and suspenseful documentary toggles between two women in different states. Organ donors (live ones anyway) don't often choose to help a stranger, but Bay Area massage therapist Ellie isn't a typical organ donor. Ellie decides to donate a kidney after discovering that demand consistently outstrips supply, registering with a website that connects donors and recipients. Ellie takes to Kathy, a hospice nurse living 500 miles away whose family has a history of kidney systolic disease. Kathy herself has been on dialysis for two years, and her brother received a transplant, but anti-rejection drugs weakened his immune system, and he later died of cancer. Before her diagnosis, Kathy and her husband, Jim, had been building a house, but they had to put that project on hold. When doctors ruled out Jim as a match, Kathy turned to the Internet. Ellie's son, Mark, is not surprised that his mother has offered to be an altruistic kidney donor, noting that it's in her nature. Unfortunately, her blood match with Kathy presents serious complications, so they end up calling off the transplant. After three years, Ellie finds an anonymous recipient, at which point Krawitz expands the narrative to include a third subject, while Kathy continues to wait another three years before she finally receives some good news. By focusing on these unique relationships, *Perfect Strangers* not only underscores the need for more organ donors but also highlights the human capacity for beneficent selfless behavior. Recommended.
Aud: C, P. (K. Fennessy)