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SALT IN MY SOUL (USA 2021) ***

Directed by Will Battersby



If you want a good cry and feel good film at the same time SALT IN MY SOUL will do the trick.

Mallory suffers from Cystic fibrosis. (CF) is a genetic disorder that affects mostly the lungs, but also the pancreas, liver, kidneys, and intestine. Long-term issues include difficulty breathing and coughing up mucus as a result of frequent lung infections.

Based on the posthumously published bestselling memoir of the same name, this documentary takes one inside the mind of a young woman, Mallory (playing herself in the film) who tries to live a full life while dying. Mallory Smith was diagnosed with cystic fibrosis at the age of three. In her twenty five-year battle with the deadly disease, she carved out a life that most of us don't come close to. Using Mallory's posthumously published 2500-page secret diaries, hundreds of hours of newly discovered footage, and audio recordings, the film offers Mallory as the narrator of her own extraordinary chronicle.

The emotional film follows Mallory's life quite closely - made even more emotional with the red person playing herself. There is archive footage showing her to be looking really fit and normal, tall and athletic doing swims and athletics. Mallory also has the typical boyfriend, trying to lead the typical normal.

It is sad to see photos of Mallory in hospital when she contracted a severe infection causing her to be hospitalized for weeks, close to death. With dedicated nurses on her side and a very diligent Thai doctor who tries everything, she miraculously survives, just before entering Stanford University. The film centers on a medical trial that turns out so successful that she stayed out of the hospital for 16 months.

Mallory burns bright. Her friend says on camera that she wishes Mallory would not burn so bright as brighter lights burn out faster. Mallory was diligent, never wasted time and lived her life to the fullest.

The film offers some important lessons for audiences. One is the importance of keeping a journal. It is from Mallory's journal that her life can be inspirational to many. Another lesson is good heartedness. Mallory was always smiling and had immense positivity in her dealings. Yet every decision Mallory makes has a life or death implication. But she does not want this to show in her dealing with others. Mallory wants to give something back to life and to be able to make a difference in her life.

The film is also quite technical in terms of medical terminology. But there is a lot to learn about c.f. like c.f. patients cannot be close to each other as they can infect each other.

It is also touching to see Mallory fall in love. With a guy called Jack who she had met at a party. A musical interlude is inserted at this point, pointing to optimism.

SALT IN MY SOUL may not win the Best Documentary award but this is one film that is made with heart and perhaps the most inspirational documentary to be seen this year.