

Murder on Break-up **The futile struggle of a village**

A Documentary by Kai Christiansen

The film "Murder on Break-up" describes the chronology of an announced murder. Bremen in 2005: After breaking up with his wife Corinna, 40-year old Michael, a forwarding agent, is increasingly consumed by his desire to win her back. He harasses her, besieges and pursues her. Michael turns into a stalker. Neighbours and friends try to help and mediate. Corinna is protected around-the-clock by the villagers. They accompany her to work, pick her up. Someone phones her or checks up on her at regular intervals. But the stalking won't cease. Police officers and psychologists are at their wits' end; they don't want to or can't interfere. Everyone is convinced that one day Michael will carry out his threats: He will destroy her if she won't return to him. For nine months, the protective ring succeeds in keeping Corinna safe from the harassment by her ex-husband. Then he ambushes her at work and stabs her to death with a knife – 16 times. The film recaptures the development of how a happy family with two children turns into the nightmare scenario of a horror film. For the first time, relatives and friends speak out in front of a camera of their months-long struggle to prevent the worst – and yet to fail.

It happened on 7 March 2005: In a Hotel in the city of Bremen 40-year old Michael, a forwarding agent, stabs his former wife Corinna, aged 38. The film "Murder on Break-up" recaptures the events leading up to this act. A murder which everyone expected to occur, yet which no-one managed to prevent. In the small town of Etelsen near by Bremen, Corinna and Michael and their two daughters for many years lead a happy family life. A small idyllic haven next to palace gardens, many other young couples helping each other out to take care of the children. Very soon it becomes clear that Corinna is a gregarious person with a large circle of friends, while Michael is more of a loner. After being married for 14 years the couple separates because Michael has met another woman. But suddenly the tables are turned. The amicable separation turns into a dispute. Michael wants to reverse the separation, he besieges and pesters Corinna. After leaving the communal home his behaviour becomes obsessive. He waylays her and begins to stalk her by terrorizing her by phone. Corinna's brother and Michael's brother both describe their attempts to defuse the situation and to mediate between the former couple for the sake of their common children. But the situation deteriorates, the pursuit intensifies. The neighbours get organized, arrange passwords over the phone, drop in regularly at Corinna's place, accompany her to work and pick her up. Eight times the police are called and register the complaints, but they have no real means of restraint. The neighbourhood friends witness scenes in which Corinna is held down, abducted and threatened. Time and again, Michael is brought to his senses, but his misconduct intensifies. An attempt to have him committed to a psychiatric ward fails. In Bremen, a witness to whose attention it comes that Michael wants to kill his wife and is on the look-out for a weapon, informs the police. But the report is not forwarded. The police in Bremen are not aware of the incidents in the neighbouring village in Lower Saxony. Corinna told her friends that she would have to die first before something could happen. Her premonition turns to certainty. Recorded by security

cameras, Michael ambushes Corinna at her work place, a hotel in Bremen. He stabs her 16 times, killing Corinna on the spot. Michael is arrested a few hours after the deed. Six months later, relatives face her brother, her brother-in-law, her boyfriend and her neighbours and have to testify as witnesses. The children have left the village and have been taken in by a foster family. Michael is sentenced to 13 years imprisonment. He denies having ever been a stalker. There are no therapy opportunities for stalkers in Germany. "Murder on Break-up" is a stirring, emotional film which traces in the cold winter days of 2006 a crime that occurred a year before and which provides for the first time an opportunity for its witnesses to talk about it in front of a camera.