

The perfect stranger

A MEMOIR OF LOVE
AND SURVIVAL **P. J.
Kavanagh**

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The Perfect Stranger

P. J. Kavanagh

The early years of poet P.J. Kavanagh's life – which took him from a Butlin's Holiday Camp to Switzerland and Paris, to a battlefield in Korea, to Oxford and Barcelona, and finally to Java – made little sense to him, until 'something extraordinary happened': his meeting with Sally, 'the perfect stranger'.

This tender, funny and quite unsentimental record of the uniqueness of human love is as much a celebration of joy – despite its abrupt and shocking conclusion – as it is a poet's tribute of thanks.

Author Information

Patrick Joseph Kavanagh was born in 1931 and is a poet, lecturer, actor, broadcaster and columnist. His father was the scriptwriter, Ted Kavanagh, of *It's That Man Again*.

While studying at Merton College Oxford, and starting to write poetry, he met and later married Sally Phillips, the daughter of novelist Rosamund Lehmann. She died of poliomyelitis while they were living in Java, where he was teaching for the British Council. His memoir about their relationship, *The Perfect Stranger*, won the Richard Hillary Memorial Prize.

Quotes and Reviews

'One of the best memoirs I have read – a brilliant self-portrait of a born writer with a humorous, poetic and genuinely religious outlook on life.' Richard Ingrams

'A fine memorial to youth and love – perhaps to the youth and love of all our generation.' Michael Frayn

'A book that haunts you for years.' Patrick Marnham

'it's hard to think of a memoir by a male author that describes the experience (of falling in love) with as much honesty, passion and precision.' David Nicholls 'the book that saved me' *The Guardian*

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