

# **PERFECT STILLNESS**

JANE MILLER

## **CHARACTERS**

**ANNIE:** Early 30's  
**TIM:** Early 30's  
**HARRISON:** 40ish

Version 8  
6/14/2008  
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***TIM IS SITTING IN A ROOM IN A FUNERAL HOME. HE IS SITTING AT A DESK WRITING ON SOME NOTE PAPER. NEAR THE DESK, IS A CASKET ON A STAND. A FEW SECONDS PASS. ANNIE SITS UP IN THE CASKET.***

**ANNIE:** How long that time?

**TIM:** 28 Seconds. I think.

**ANNIE:** I'll need to get better than that.

**TIM:** Why?

**ANNIE:** My eternal journey. I'd better be able to lie perfectly still for longer than 28 seconds. How long do you think you could do it for?

**TIM:** I've never tried to do it.

**ANNIE:** You should. You should try to do it. Master it. Perfect stillness.

**TIM:** I don't want to do it. I have to work on this.

**ANNIE:** I'll keep practicing.  
**(PAUSE)**  
Where is that guy? Shouldn't he be here by now?

**TIM:** Why are you in such a hurry? I don't want to see him. I'd be happy if he never came back.

**ANNIE:** Not ever? I think that's slightly unrealistic, Sweetheart.

**TIM:** If he comes I am not sure I am even going to let him in. I locked the door.

**ANNIE:** Timmy.....

**TIM:** I think I've finished.

**ANNIE:** Really? Is it done? Are you sure?

**TIM:** I think it's finished. It's been difficult but I think its okay.

**ANNIE:** Well done. I knew you could do it. Can I see?

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**TIM:** Is that normal?

**ANNIE:** Is this?

**TIM:** I'll read it to you....It is a draft....Keep that in mind.

**ANNIE:** Absolutely. Understood.

**TIM:** I've never done this before.

**ANNIE:** I've never done this before.

**TIM:** This is going to be strange.

**ANNIE:** I know but imagine how much worse it will be on Wednesday. Through the tears....

**(TIM STARTS TO READ)**

**TIM:** When I think of Annie, I feel an incredible feeling of love and warmth. She was always so happy and so-

**ANNIE:** Sweetheart. Can I just stop you there? "Always so happy?" Isn't that overdoing it a little? I mean obviously I was happy....at times. "Always so happy" makes me sound like some kind of giggling idiot...

**TIM:** Too much?

**ANNIE:** It's really sweet...But...Cut it. I think. What do you think?

**TIM:** Okay. I'll go on. When we met Annie was 21 and I was instantly attracted to her. We met at a pub where I was having a few drinks with my cousin and she was with some girlfriends-

**ANNIE:** Actually that's not completely accurate....

**TIM:** What? You were 21.....

**ANNIE:** Well yes....Yes....I wasn't with some girlfriends. I was actually with a guy from work. We had been out a few times. When I met you that night I gave him the push.....

**TIM:** What? You said you were with some girlfriends....you even pointed to a group of girls.....

**ANNIE:** I know. I didn't want you to lose interest. I really liked you so I told him we should call it a night...Actually, I told him I had a headache and then I went out and waited 10 minutes while he left, and came back in. I thought it would be a bad idea to tell you that in case you lost interest. It didn't make me look very good...

**TIM:** All these years you have always said you were with some girlfriends that night....

**ANNIE:** Timmy, it was a white lie. A flattering fib. Flattering to you....Anyway, go on with the rest of it.

**TIM:** Okay. We met at a pub where I was having a few drinks with my cousin and she was with....a guy from her work. She was absolutely the most gorgeous girl I had ever seen and from the night we met we were never apart for-

**ANNIE:** You're not going to say we were never apart? Are you? Tim. That's an exaggeration. We've been apart plenty of times in 12 years. Half the mourners will spend the next 10 minutes adding up the times that they know we've been apart.  
It will detract from the impact of the whole eulogy.

**TIM:** What then?

**ANNIE:** How about – “rarely”? We were rarely apart? It sounds better. Romantic, but anchored in realism.

**TIM:** Anything else?

**ANNIE:** Don't be cranky. I am just looking for factual accuracy.

**TIM:** Let's move on to another part....Annie had many interests. So many hobbies. She loved music, reading murder mysteries, bushwalking, and tennis and collecting teapots.

**ANNIE:** I hoped this wouldn't come up...I want us to go out with total honesty. I never liked collecting teapots.

**TIM:** What has got into you?

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**ANNIE:** Death..... Death got in to me. I died.

**TIM:** You love collecting teapots.

**ANNIE:** You bought me that first one and I said I liked it and then you kept buying them. After the first 6, I didn't have the heart to say anything. Before I knew it there were 50 of them dotted around the house. The low point was when you started telling other people to buy them.....

**TIM:** Because I thought you loved them...

**ANNIE:** I just don't want there to be any secrets. Not now.

***MR HARRISON, THE FUNERAL DIRECTOR KNOCKS***

**HARRISON:** Mr Gardener.

**ANNIE:** He's here. You'd better unlock the door.

**TIM:** Not yet. **(TO HARRISON)** I... I need a couple more minutes. If that's okay?

**HARRISON:** **(FROM THE OTHER SIDE OF THE DOOR)**  
Of course. I'll come back.

**ANNIE:** **(CALLING TO HARRISON)**  
He's ready now.

**TIM:** I'm not ready. I don't care how ready he is. I can't do this.

**ANNIE:** You can.

**TIM:** You keep saying that. I'm not sure I can.

**ANNIE:** Timmy.....

**TIM:** I am just not sure how I'll manage

**ANNIE:** You will. It will be fine....After a while....Admittedly a long while.

**TIM:** We were happy....Weren't we?

**ANNIE:** Yes. I think we were. *(PAUSE)*  
On the whole...

**TIM:** On the whole?

**ANNIE:** Mostly.

**TIM:** Mostly. We were mostly happy? We were more than that. Weren't we?

**ANNIE:** We loved each other....We weren't always happy. Nobody is always happy....We were mostly happy.

**TIM:** That sounds pretty bloody half hearted. I think of us as being happy. Together.

**ANNIE:** We were. We were mostly happy together.

**TIM:** We were together 12 years

**ANNIE:** 12 mostly happy years.

**TIM:** Do you think you'd have been happier with someone else? Is that what you are saying?

**ANNIE:** I don't think that's the case. Obviously now I'll never know for sure but I never met anyone and thought "I'd be happier with you".

**TIM:** Annie.....I need something.....You never give an inch....

**ANNIE:** I want there to be total honesty. If not now, when?

**TIM:** Christ.

**ANNIE:** Alright. Tim. We were happy, very happy....

**TIM:** Thankyou.

**ANNIE:** Mostly very happy....

*(PAUSE)*

It's just that I think that total honesty is incredibly liberating. And I think...at this time ...why have any baggage?

**(PAUSE)**

Anyway...are you putting anything in? With me? Am I taking anything "on the road"? So to speak

**TIM:** I don't know. I brought a rose from the garden.

**ANNIE:** What about our wedding vows? That poem you wrote for our wedding. The one we had framed.

**TIM:** I could put that in. Are you sure you want it?

**ANNIE:** Yes. I usually hate that sort of thing but that poem.... I've never told you this but it was really beautiful. I mean really amazing.....Sometimes...on those rare days when we weren't mostly happy, I read that poem and felt really loved.

**TIM:** I didn't write it.

**ANNIE:** What?

**TIM:** I didn't write it. I mean I wanted to write it. I wish I had written it. I sat there for days before the wedding looking at a bloody blank page.... Then I was sorry I'd said I'd write something. I felt it Annie. I really felt it. I just couldn't write it.

**ANNIE:** Who wrote it?

**TIM:** Mum copied it out for me ... from a wedding on a show she used to watch during the day.

**ANNIE:** A soap opera? A day time soap opera?

**TIM:** Day time, night time...What does it matter? I think it was day.

**ANNIE:** Which one?

**TIM:** I don't know. I never asked.

**ANNIE:** God Timothy. Your mother wrote our wedding vows.

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**TIM:** Not wrote. Copied. You said total honesty.....

**ANNIE:** Our wedding vows were from a soap opera. Wedding vows I absolutely treasured were from a fucking soap opera.

**TIM:** Not all of it. Just the recitation.

**ANNIE:** For 12 years you let me weep over words that came from a soap opera character's mouth?

**TIM:** Annie. I swear to God I felt all of those things. I still feel them. Anyway how often were you reading them? Monthly or weekly? What? Every day? How often were those "rare" days?

**ANNIE:** Where did my eulogy come from?

**TIM:** That's all original. That is totally me.

**ANNIE:** Well, perhaps you'd better watch an episode of The Bold and the Beautiful before Wednesday because it's not quite up to your earlier standard.

**TIM:** I wish I hadn't said anything. But you said .....Go out with no secrets. That's what you said.

**ANNIE:** I know what I said.

**TIM:** No secrets.... I can't win. Can I ever win, Annie?

**ANNIE:** Win? I'd say that given where we are I'm the loser here. Wouldn't you? Anyway shouldn't you let Harrison or whatever his name is, in.

**TIM:** Fine.

**ANNIE:** Fine.

**TIM:** I'm just going to unlock that door and let him in and then....you won't see me again.

**ANNIE:** Technically, *you* won't see me...again.

**TIM:** Fine. That's it.

**ANNIE:** Finished.

**TIM:** The last time.

**ANNIE:** Goodbye.

**TIM:** *(GOES TO OPEN THE DOOR. TURNS THE HANDLE)*

It's not locked.

**ANNIE:** It's not locked.

**TIM:** I thought it was locked.

**ANNIE:** Timmy. You need to open it....He's waiting. I'm waiting.

**TIM:** You really never liked teapots?

**ANNIE:** I want to know I was as honest as I could be. In the end.

**TIM:** I thought I knew everything about us. I liked that.

**ANNIE:** We're still us. You're still you and I can't be different now...

*(THERE IS ANOTHER KNOCK ON THE DOOR)*

Timmy, we can't stay here forever. Let him in.

**TIM:** While I'm talking to Harrison I can time you....Practicing perfect stillness. Okay?

**ANNIE:** Tim, it's the last -

**TIM:** Okay?

**ANNIE:** Okay.

*ANNIE LIES BACK DOWN*

**TIM:** *(OPENING THE DOOR)*

Mr Harrison. I'm ready.

***HARRISON ENTERS***

**HARRISON:** Mr Gardener. Tim. It's a terribly difficult time. I know its small consolation but if I may say - your wife looks very lovely and peaceful.

**TIM:** She does. She was beautiful.

***(PAUSE)***

And happy. She was *always so happy*.

**HARRISON:** Do you mind if I ask...How you met?

**TIM:** No. Not at all.  
We met at a pub. I was having a few drinks with my cousin and she was with some *girlfriends*. She was really gorgeous. And you know, from that night we were never apart. *Never apart*. Not in 12 years.

***LIGHTS DOWN.***