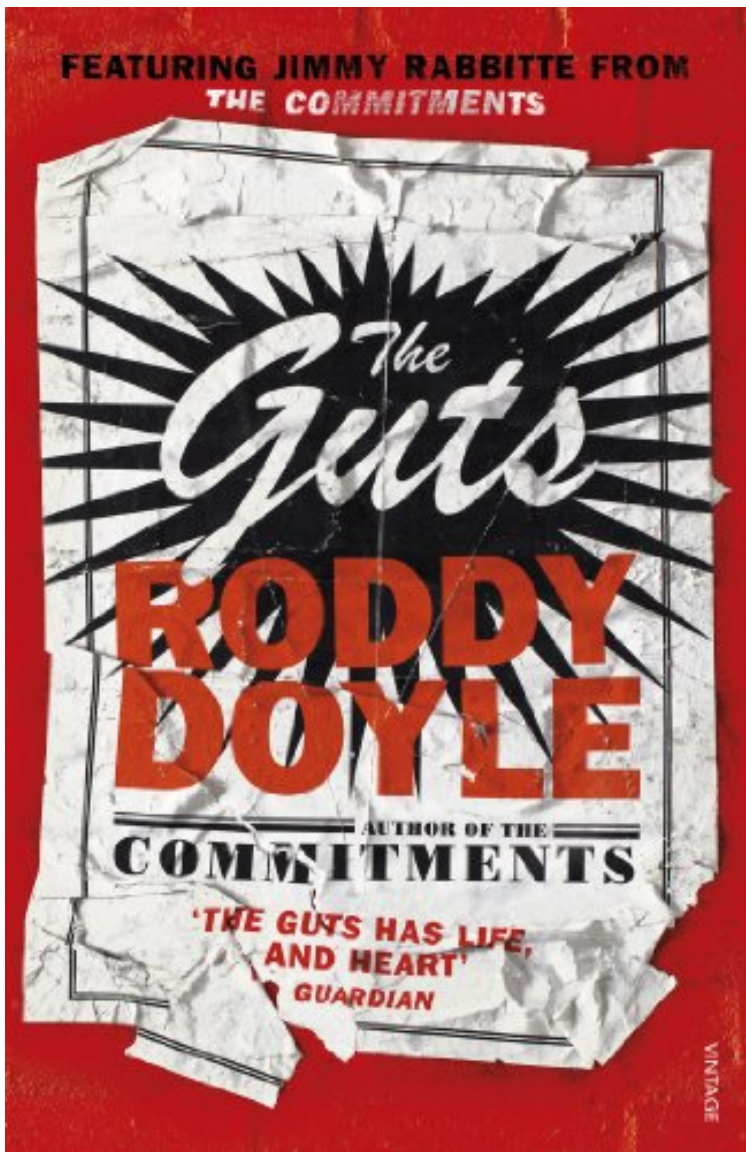


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The Guts



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Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurLonglisted for the 2015 IMPAC Dublin Literary AwardJimmy Rabbitte is back.The man who invented the Commitments back in the eighties is now forty-seven, with a loving wife, four kids ... and bowel cancer. He isnt dying, he thinks, but he might be.Jimmy still loves his music, and he still loves to hustle. On his path through Dublin he meets two of the Commitments Outspan, whose own illness is probably terminal, and Imelda Quirk, still as gorgeous as ever. This warm, funny novel is about friendship and family, about facing death and opting for life.Includes the short story Jimmy JazzExtrait***This excerpt is from an advance uncorrected proof.***Copyright 2013 by Roddy DoyleDyeh do the Facebook thing?Wha dyeh mean?They were in the pub, in their corner. It wasnt unusual any more, having a pint with his father. In

the early evening, before he went home after work. Hed phone, or his da would phone. It wasnt an organised, regular thing. It had started the day his da got his first mobile. His first call was to Jimmy. Hows it goin? Da? Yeah, me. How are yeh? Not too bad. Im after gettin one o the mobiles. Great. Im usin it now, like. Congratulations. Will we go for a pint? To celebrate. Grand. Good. Yeah. Jimmys da had still been working when he got the phone. But hed retired a while back. Theres fuck-all work, hed told everyone when hed made the announcement on Stephens Day, when Jimmy had dragged the kids to his parents house to collect the presents and kiss their granny. So I might as well just stop an call it retirement. Jimmys own job was safe he thought. Well, said his da now in the pub. Facebook. Yeh know it, yeah? I do, yeah, said Jimmy. What dyou make of it? I dont know. Yeh dont know? No, said Jimmy. Not really. But youve kids. I know tha, said Jimmy. Ive four of them. Is it the four you have? said his da. I thought it was three. No, said Jimmy. Its been four for a good while. Ten years, like. This was what Jimmy liked. It was why he phoned his da every couple of weeks. His da was messing, pretending he didnt know how many grandchildren he had. It was the way hed always been. A pain in the hole at times but, today, exactly what Jimmy wanted. Its Darren has the three, is it? said his da. His name was Jimmy as well. No, said Jimmy, the son. Darren has two. Far as I know. Darren was one of Jimmys brothers. Ah now, yeh see but, said Jimmy Sr. I knew there was somethin. He put his pint down. Shes pregnant. Fuck, thought Jimmy. Fuck fuck fuck it. Is she? he said. Thats brilliant. Yeah, said Jimmy Sr. Darren phoned your mother this mornin to tell her. Shes three months gone. Ma is? Fuck off. Melanie. Melanie was Darrens wife although theyd never got married. His fuckinlifepartner. Theyd been trying for another baby for years. Thered been so many miscarriages, it had become a rule between Jimmy and his da: no more jokes about Melanies miscarriages. Their other two kids The two that managed to hang on in there. Theyd broken the rule once or twice. The other two kids were twelve and ten. Shes well on her way so, Jimmy said now. Yeah, said his da. Fingers crossed. He sniffed the top of his pint. I dont think I could cope with another miscarriage, he said. He drank. Anyway, he said. Facebook. Yeah. What is it? Exactly. I dont know much about it, said Jimmy. His da had a laptop at home. He knew how to google. Hed booked flights online. Hed backed a few horses, although he preferred the walk to the bookies. Hed bought a second-hand book online, about Dublin during the War of Independence. Hed nearly bought an apartment in Turkey but that had been a bit of an accident. Hed thought he was clicking to see inside the place a tour but hed stopped when the laptop asked him for his credit card details. He knew hed gone wrong or it was a scam. But the point was, his da knew his way around the internet. So Jimmy didnt know why he was pretending to be completely thick. Why dyeh want to know? he asked. Ah, for fuck sake, said his da. Every time I ask a fuckin question. Whats wrong with yeh? I ask a fuckin question and some cunt says why dyeh want to know. Youre askin the wrong cunts, said Jimmy. Must be. Wha questions? Wha? What questions have yeh been askin? Well, said his da. I asked a fella in Woodies where the duck-tape was. An, granted, he didnt say why dyeh want to know. He said, wha dyeh want it for. I told him I wanted to fuckin buy it. He just wanted to help. Thats not the fuckin point. There was a time when hed have just said, over there or I havent a clue. He wouldnt have asked me why I wanted it. Thats the problem. Somehow or other hes become an expert on duck-tape. The shops are full of experts. The countrys full of fuckin experts. Tha havent a fuckin clue. Facebook. Yeah. Its a social network. Whats tha? How come every time I say somethin some cunt asks me a question? Tou-fuckin-shay, said Jimmy Sr. Listen, said Jimmy. Your phone there. Your mobile. Yeah. Your contacts. Your friends an their numbers. Your kids. All the numbers yehd want. Facebooks a bit like tha, except with pictures. So its just a list o peoples numbers an emails? No, said Jimmy. Theres more to it than tha. But thats the start. The foundation of it, I suppose. Friends. Youre going for a pint, dyeh phone the lads to see if theyre goin? No point, said Jimmy Sr. I know the answer. Just go with me on this one, Da, said Jimmy. Im tryin to educate yeh. Go on. Youre goin for a pint, like. An you want to know if your buddy, Bertie, will be there. Dyeh phone him? No, said Jimmy Sr. Not any more. Yeh text him, yeah? Yeah. An he texts back. He never fuckin stops. His mobile buzzed and crawled an eighth of an inch across the table. Theres the cunt now. He picked up the phone and stared at it. He took his reading glasses out of his shirt pocket, put them on and stared at it again. Your mother, he said. She wants milk. He put the phone down and took off his glasses. She used to be able to walk to the shops herself, he said. She was very good at it. He texts yeh back, said Jimmy. Yeah, or somethin. An you text him. Grand. Thats righ, said Jimmy Sr. Tha sounds like a day in my life. Well, thats social networkin, said Jimmy. More or less. Its like a club but yeh have your own room, for the people yeh want to meet. Except theres no room an yeh meet no one. Unless yeh want to. A club. Thats the best way to see it. Grand. Why? Why wha? Jimmy watched his da look across to the bar, squint, wait, and lift his hand, one finger up. Did he see me? Think so. Jimmy Sr was

having another pint. He knew Jimmy wasn't. Why did yeh ask about Facebook? Somethin Bertie told me, said Jimmy Sr. Somethin he heard. Its illegal if its Bertie. No, said Jimmy Sr. Its not. Its fuckin immoral but. Youll have to tell me now. Im goin to tell yeh. Ive every intention of tellin yeh. Is he workin on my pint over there? Jimmy pretended to look across at the bar and the barman he didnt know behind it. He is, yeah, he told his da. Grand. Are yeh goin blind? No. But no. Its like everythin else. Jimmy knew what his da meant and it was a good place to give him his own news. But he couldnt do it. He wasn't ready. Bertie, he said. Fuckin Bertie, said his da. He told me his youngest fella, Gary I think it is. Hes about the same age as your Marvin. Seventeen. Abou tha, yeah. A year or two older. A little fucker, by all accounts. Anyway, he told Bertie and Bertie told me that he Gary, like gets off with older women on Facebook. I heard about that alrigh. Did yeh? I did, yeah. Wha sort of a fuckin club is tha? A good one, said Jimmy. If its what youre into. Theyre called cougars. What are? The older women tha prey on the younger men. Jesus, said Jimmy Sr. Veronica watches tha one. Wha? Cougar Town. On the telly. And thats what its about, is it? I thought it was like Born Free or somethin. Whats Born Free? A film, said Jimmy Sr. Before you were born. One o those nature things. Africa, lions, a load of shite. Andy Williams sang the song. Wheres tha cunt with my pint? He was squinting across at the bar again. Does he know hes supposed to be bringin it down? Jimmy asked. He should. Stay there. Jimmy went up to the bar, paid for the pint, waited for his change, and brought the pint back to his father. Good man. He waited till Jimmy was sitting again. So, he said. This Cougar Town thing is about oul ones chasin after young lads? I think so, said Jimmy. Ive never seen it. He was lying. He loved it. Courteney Cox still gave him the horn. Yeh dont think Mas up to anythin like tha, do yeh? he asked. This conversation isnt goin the way I wanted it to, said Jimmy Sr. No, I dont. Shed tell me. Would she? No. Youre safe enough, Id say, said Jimmy. Shes seventy-one, for fuck sake. Thats not old. Ah, it is. The cougars, theyre late 30s, early 40s. Youve seen it. No, I havent fuck off. Just the pictures in the paper. Anyway. This Facebook thing. Its the young lads, Gary an tha, whore chasin the older birds. The older birds are chasin them as well. Thats what I meant by social networkin. Are yeh thinkin of givin it a go yourself? No, Im not. He smiled. But Because, if you are, said Jimmy. I have to tell yeh. Most o the women older than you are actually dead. Well, at least I wouldnt have to talk to them. An just so yeh know. He sat up, moved his pint an inch. What I said earlier. Abou goin blind an tha. Everythin deterioratin when yeh get older. He waited, made sure Jimmy was paying proper attention. Go on, said Jimmy. I still wake up with a hard one, said his father. Do yeh? said Jimmy. Dont blush, he told himself. Dont blush. Every mornin, said Jimmy Sr. Includin Sundays. Thats great. Well done. Fuck off. Jimmy Sr picked up his pint, took a swig, put it back down. I know, he said. Youre my son an all. So its a strange thing to be tellin yeh an it isnt even dark outside. I wouldnt have told yeh twenty years ago. I wouldntve dreamt of it. But whatre yeh now? Youre wha? Forty-seven? Bang on. Well then, I thought Id let yeh know, said Jimmy Sr. I noticed yeh grunted there when you were sittin down. An theres a lot more of your forehead on view than there used to be. Happens to us all. Its desperate. Men are hit particularly bad. So, but. It isnt all bad, is what Im tryin to say. Father to son, like. Dyou know wha, Father? Wha? Thats the first time youve ever spoken to me like tha. Father to son. Is tha right? Yeah. No. Fuckin yeah. Youre not annoyed, are yeh? No, Im not. Grand. But tell us, said Jimmy. Wha do yeh do with your hard one? Youre missin the point, son. Thats a different conversation. An I dont think its one well ever be havin. Grand, said Jimmy. They said nothing for a bit. How come Bertie has such a young son? Jimmy asked. Ah Jaysis, said Jimmy Sr. He rode his missis. Its no great mystery. Still though, said Jimmy. Hes quite old to be havin a teenager for a son. He watched his father shrug. One of the shoulders was slower coming back down than the other and he seemed to be in a bit of pain as the second shoulder settled. Bertie be a bit younger than me, said Jimmy Sr. Not that much, said Jimmy. One of his kids, the mad one. Jason. He was a year behind me in school. He must be forty-five or six now. He must be, said Jimmy Sr. Where is he these days? Over there, said Jimmy Sr. The fat guy in the Arsenal jersey? Thats him, said Jimmy Sr. Hes let himself go since he came off the heroin. Still lives at home. Hate tha. Dont be talkin. Its not natural. The state of him. Bertie says he has an Arsenal duvet cover an all. Theyre not a bad team. Theyre overrated. Ah, its sad. He did time, yeh know. Portlaoise. Thats righ. Gun but no bullets. Still, he had the gun. Walks into a credit union with it. So, fuckm. He deserved what he got. But anyway. He picked up his pint. There was about half of it left. Hang on, said Jimmy. He went up to the bar to order another pint for his da. He wanted to stand, just for a bit. He was restless, angry. Not really angry nervous. He looked at Berties Jason. He didnt look like a man to be scared of, a man whod done time for armed robbery. He was sitting beside two other guys now they looked a bit frightening but he wasn't really with them. They were much younger than Jason, harder, firmer, shouting quietly at each other. Fuckin did. Fuckin didnt, fuck off, mn. He waited

for the pint and paid for it. He took the change. Thanks. And he went back down to his da. There yeh go. Good man, said Jimmy Sr. He put the empty glass on the table to his left, and put the new one on top of his beer mat. So. Young Jason. Yeah. He gets out. But the familys gone. Where? No, not gone anywhere. Just not his anymore. She doesnt want annythin to do with him. A lovely bird, by the way. Youd never guess it, looking at George fuckin Clooney over there in his Arsenal gear. Fuckin lovely. Kids? Two. I think. They dont want to know him either. She did a great job while he was away. Im not bein sarcastic. She did a great fuckin job.

Bertiell tell yeh himself. Yeh fancy her. I do, yeah, said Jimmy Sr. Absolutely. I walk past her house every day. I sit on her wall. Jimmy laughed. Shes gorgeous, said his father. An she has the two kids, boy an a girl, one of them in Trinity College doin law for fuck sake, and the other one in London, workin in a bank that actually lends money. An that makes her even more gorgeous. He picked up his pint and knocked back about half it. So Bertie an his missis are lumped with poor Jason. Jesus. Yeah, said Jimmys da. Its rough. They looked across at Jason. Its not the fact tha hes there in the house, said Jimmys da. Thats not too bad. Theres only him an the young lad, the Facebook fella. The rest are gone, so theres plenty o room. Its not that. Its more the fact of him. Remindin them. Hes a fuckin disaster. A fat middle-aged teenager. Thats harsh. Im quotin his father.

An I see what he means. Every family has its fuck-ups, said Jimmy. I know, said his da. I know tha. Im not bein judgmental. Well, I am. But I know. Leslie was the name hanging, swaying, right in front of them. They both knew it; they both saw it. Les was Jimmys other brother. Hed walked out of the house after a row with his mother, twenty-two years before. I know, said Jimmys da. He sighed. Yeh do your best, he said. We all do.

Bertie as well. But fuck. Im sure they love him. They probably love him. They try to. But its his lifestyle. They were laughing again. The boom bypassed him. It fuckin did. An judgin by the head on him over there, hes missin the recession as well. Id say just sayin recession would take a lot out o poor Jason. Whats he on? Jimmy asked. Hes on somethin. Fuck knows, said Jimmy Sr. He took a slug from his pint. He put the glass

back on its mat. She goes into his room, Berties mott. An she comes out cryin. Why doesnt she just stay out? Thats what I said, said Jimmy Sr. An Bertie says she cant help it. She feels guilty. Shes a woman, yeh know yourself. Hows your own woman? Shes grand. Hows Ma? Grand. Are yeh havin another? No, said Jimmy. Im drivin. Fair enough. I have cancer. Good man. Im bein serious, Da. I know. Jimmy was shaking. He hadnt noticed while he was working himself up to tell his father. But he knew it now. He pressed his hands down on his thighs, made his arms stiff. He wondered if his eyes were bloodshot, because they felt like they had to be. Jesus, son. Yeah. Wha kind? Bowel. Bad. Could be worse. Could it? So they say, said

Jimmy. They? The doctors an tha. The specialists. The team. The team? Yep. What colour are their jerseys? Jimmy couldnt think of an answer. Its terrible, said his da. Yep. When did yeh find ou? A few days ago, said Jimmy. Monday. God. Jimmy relaxed his arms. The madness was gone; they seemed to be his again.

His father was fidgeting, like hed found something sharp hed been sitting on. Then Jimmy knew what he was doing. He was trying to get nearer to Jimmy without actually moving. Without making a show. He leaned across the table and put his hand on Jimmys arm. He kept it there. Its not natural, he said. Cancer? said

Jimmy. I think it is. Its Stop bein so fuckin reasonable. It isnt natural for a father a parent, like to hear tha kind of news from his child. Well, I had to tell yeh. Sorry, Jimmy. Sorry. Im makin a mess of it. He took his hand off Jimmys arm, and put it back. What I mean is, it should be the other way round. Dyou know wha I mean? I do, yeah. Jimmy Sr took his hand away and sat back into his chair. How did Aoife take it? Wha? Aoife. How was she when yeh told her? I didnt tell her, said Jimmy. Wha? I cant. You have to. I know. Fuck the drivin. Have a pint. No. Jimmy wiped his eyes, although he wasnt crying. Im afraid to eat or drink annythin, he said. I kind of expect it to be agony. Is it? No. Not at all. How did yeh find out? Blood, said Jimmy. I was bleedin. God

Nothin spectacular. Just, yeh know Jimmy watched his father wipe his eyes. Hewascrying. Sorry. Youre alrigh. Who else have yeh told? No one, said Jimmy. Im the first? I thought Id tell you. Get it done, the first time. Then itd be easier. Ill be able to tell Aoife. Im flattered. Sorry. Youre grand, said Jimmy Sr. Iamflattered. Weird, wha. I was goin to tell Ma but somethin made me swerve towards you instead. Itll kill her. You always

say tha. Fuck off. Its true, yeh do. Even tha time when I said the Beatles werent as good as the Stones. But look it, your mother loves the Beatles. She couldnt give a shite about the Beatles. Youre right, said Jimmy Sr. Truth be fuckin told, it was the Bee Gees tha made your mother giddy. The early stuff, yeh know. Could be worse. It fuckin could. So Jimmy watched his father brush his thighs with his open hands. Wha now? Chemo, said Jimmy. Fuck. Yep. What is it? Exactly? Im not sure yet, said Jimmy. I started googlin but I stopped. Frightenin, said his da. Yeah, said Jimmy. But borin as well. Borin? Yeah. How is it fuckin borin? Jesus, son, yeh dont have to pretend. Im not. Cancers borin? No, said Jimmy. Just readin about it. He realised he knew the feeling: he was enjoying himself. A weight one of them, a big one had been lifted. He definitely

felt lighter. Even if you have it? said his da. Especially if you have it, said Jimmy. Literally lighter. And light headed. He was tempted. He could leave the car in the car park, have a few pints, walk home or get a taxi and risk the smashed windscreen or wing mirror. So anyway, said his da. Wha happened? Okay, said Jimmy. I went to the specialist cunt an he gave me the good news. Its early days, so they should be able to deal with it. Surgery an Surgery? Yeah, said Jimmy. Did I not mention surgery? No, yeh didnt. Well, yeah, said Jimmy. An operation. Theyre takin it out. Your bowels? Most of them it. About 80 per cent. For fuck sake. But the chemo thing, said Jimmy. He tells me Ill be havin chemo. An other things I dont remember. I listened. But Too much to take in. Thats it, said Jimmy. But anyway. He mentions chemo. An he shakes my hand an brings me to meet the team. An its all grand. Theyre great no messin. Very reassurin. Although thats shite, because it hadnt sunk in. Its fuckin weird I was kind of delighted. Grateful, like. But anyway, Im in good hands. So. He really was enjoying himself. I went back to work, he said. Thats a bit strange but, is it? said his da. A bit of a fuckin under-reaction or somethin. I dont think so, said Jimmy. I know what yeh mean. But no. I was numb, Da. I hadnt a clue. So I went back. I was hungry on the way back. Starvin. Did yeh drive? I did, yeah. No one told me not to. But I was grand. I got back to work. Bought a sandwich an a packet of Tayto Maybe your last. Fuck off. Dyeh want a pack now? No, said Jimmy. No, yeah. Id love one. Thanks. His father groaned as he stood. Jimmy watched him straightening as he walked across to the bar, hitching up his jeans with a finger in the loop where the belt went at the back. He watched him wave across at Berties Jason, watched him pat some guy at the bars shoulder Jimmy didnt know the guy. He watched his da order a pint and two bags of crisps, watched him head over to the jacks, watched the guy at the bar opening one of the Tayto bags. Hed go soon. Home. Hed talk to Aoife hed tell her. It wouldnt be too bad. It would be fuckin terrible. He felt fine, though. He was grand. He watched his da coming back from the jacks. He was slower was he? Of course he was. The man was seventy-four or something. He watched him pay for his pint and the crisps. He watched him push the open bag at the guy at the bar. He heard them laugh. He saw the barman shove a fresh bag across the counter. He saw his da take it. He lobbed one of the bags at Jimmy as he sat down and parked his new pint. The arse and the glass landed at the exact same time. Whatre yeh grinnin at? said his da. Nothin. Yeah, maybe. Where were we? Me bein bored, I think, said Jimmy. Thats right. Fuck sake. Go on. So, like, I bought a sandwich an the Tayto Its all comin back. Jimmy opened the bag he had now and took out a good big one. An I sat at me desk, he said, an I googled chemotherapy. An I clicked on the first link, the Wikipedia one, an I read. It was somethin like this, listen. Chemotherapy is the treatment of a disease with chemicals by killing micro-organisms or cancerous cells, an so on. An I just thought, I cant read this shite. Im with yeh. It wasnt that I couldnt take it in. I didnt want to take it in. It was borin. Ignorance is bliss, maybe. Maybe that too as well, yeah. But Ill tell yeh. There was a picture on the Wikipedia page, like. A woman gettin her chemo. She had the scarf, yeh know the baldness. Sittin back in a big chair. Was she good lookin? Park tha for a minute. She was wearin big mittens, on her hands, like, and these wine cooler yokes, padded tubes. On her feet. To reduce the harm to her nails. An was tha borin? No, said Jimmy. No. Tha frightened the shite out o me. Yeh dont want to damage your nails. Fuck off, Da. Its not its. If it can damage fingernails, whatll it do to the rest of me? Toenails are even harder. I know, said Jimmy. I could cut meat with mine. Me too, said Jimmy Sr. I broke the fuckin nail scissors tryin to cut them. Howre the crisps goin down, by the way? Grand, said Jimmy. Why? Well, said Jimmy Sr. Wha yeh said earlier. You said yeh were afraid to eat annythin. Oh, yeah. Yeah. No. Im grand. I thought crisps might be a no, said Jimmy Sr. They look like theyd rip the hole off yeh. Just the look o them, yeh know. Here, said Jimmy. Dyeh want the rest of them? He held out the bag. No, youre grand, said his da. I need water, said Jimmy. The salt. He stood up and went across to the bar. Hed go home in a few minutes. The barman was looking at the golf on the telly over the door to the toilets. Jimmy waited. He counted the tellys. There were seven of them. All on, sound down. Golf, news, golf, singing, rugby league, ads and golf. The barman looked away. When youre ready. Yeah? He looked foreign, Polish or Latvian or that part of the world. But he wasnt foreign. Could yeh give us a glass of water, please? The barman sighed and turned away. That proved it, Jimmy decided. The cunt was a Dub. The barman came back with a pint glass of water. Jimmy took it. Thanks. Nothing from the barman. The ignorant prick. He went back to his da. Ill have to go in a minute, he said. Yeah, said Jimmy Sr. Ill tell Aoife tonigh. Wont be easy. No. Fuckin hell, son. I know. Dyeh want me to tell your mother? No, said Jimmy. No. Thanks. Ill tell her myself. Tomorrow probably. Theres the kids too fuck. Howll yeh manage tha? I havent a clue, said Jimmy. Theres probably a book. Or a website. How to tell your kids you have cancer. Fun with cancer dot fuckin com. He smiled. Im gone, he said. He took the car key from his pocket. Seeyeh. His father stood up too. Ill come with yeh. To the house? No, said Jimmy Sr. The car park just. Ill see yeh to your vehicle. I thought

you were here for the night. No, said Jimmy Sr. No. I think those days are gone. You're a new man. I'm an old fuckin' man, said Jimmy Sr. I can't have a few pints anymore without havin' to get up to go to the jacks three or four times a night. So I have my pints earlier than I call it a day, earlier, if that makes sense. An, fuck it, I'm happy enough. What about the lads? The lads, said Jimmy Sr. The lads are kind of a distant memory. But that's a different story. Not for tonight. Come on. We'll get you home. They walked to the exit. Jimmy let his da lead the way. His da waved at someone in a corner the pub had more corners than New York but Jimmy couldn't make out who it was. The place was fuller than it had been. It was still quiet enough but most of the tables were occupied. It felt foreign, in a way. He didn't know who was who, or what was going on. He didn't go to places like this any more. Not that he couldn't catch up. There wouldn't be much training needed, or upskilling, to get back in the swing. Not the drinking, the reading, the knowing. The guy beside the cigarette machine was definitely waiting for someone. The way he was standing; he half expected to get thrown out. And Jimmy half recognised him. He'd gone to school with his brother or his father. And the woman sitting on her own with her vodka parked exactly in the centre of her table, like it might be someone else's. Jimmy knew her. Imelda? She looked at him. Jimmy Rabbitte! For fuck sake! She laughed and stood and opened her arms and he marched in there between them and felt her hands slide across his back. He was late with his own hands, getting them to move. She kissed his cheek, about half an inch from his lips. Then she stepped back, nearly into the table behind her. She laughed again. Let's see yeh. She smiled at him. You're lookin' well, Jimmy. So are you, he said. Ah well. She was looking well. She might have been a bit pissed Jimmy wasn't sure and a few kilos heavier, but Imelda Quirk would never not look well. His da was at the door. Yeh righ? he shouted. Just a minute, Jimmy shouted back. Yeh goin' somewhere? said Imelda. Yeah, said Jimmy. Yeah. Home to my wife, to tell her I have cancer. Fraid so. Typical Jimmy, said Imelda. Always runnin'. He didn't know what to say he hadn't a clue. Get out your phone, she said. Wha? He could feel his da looking at him. But he looked across to the door and his da wasn't there. Your phone, Jimmy, said Imelda. Not your mickey. He laughed. He wasn't blushing, and that made him ridiculously happy. He took his mobile from his pocket. Ready? she said. You're givin' me your number. You're still a fuckin' genius. He laughed again. She recited the number, quickly. Get tha? No bother, he said. He saved the number. Phone me, she said. When you want to. Will do, he said. Great seein' yeh. It must be twenty years. Don't fuckin' start, she said she smiled. I was still in primary school twenty years ago. Is that understood? Loud an' clear, said Jimmy. I'm gone. Ill phone yeh. He probably wouldn't. He had cancer, kids, a wife he loved. Grand, she said. She was sitting down again. There'd be no kiss goodbye, no hug. Tomorrow maybe, he said as he left. It's up to you, Jimmy. His da was leaning against Jimmy's car and the alarm was going. He'd heard it inside when he was talking to Imelda. Now though, it was loud and his. He pointed the key and clicked. It stopped. Did yeh fuckin' jump on it? No, said his da. It went off the minute I fuckin' looked at it. I was only walkin' over. Anyway, said Jimmy. I'm gone. Grand, said his da. To face the music. It must feel like that, does it? A bit, said Jimmy. But look it. Thanks. You're grand, said Jimmy Sr. He rubbed his hand across his mouth. It hasn't sunk in, he said. I know. Ill say nothin' at home. No. Thanks. Well Jimmy's da put his hand out, high. He touched Jimmy's neck. Fuckin' hell, son. I know. Go on. I'm goin'. Phone me, said Jimmy Sr. Any time, righ? Yeah, said Jimmy. Thanks. He opened his door. D'you want a lift? No. You're grand. Ill walk. Righ. Good luck. Jimmy got into the car. It was warm. There'd been heat in the sun, although it was getting dark now. He waited till his da was walking away before he shut the car door. He filled the dishwasher. He took a white wash out to the line and hung the clothes in the dark. He kept an eye on the kitchen window while he did it, to see if Aoife was alone in there. She wasn't. He watched her, angry and gorgeous, giving out shite to Mahalia. He came back in she was gone. He made tea. He didn't drink it. He emptied the dishwasher. She came in, followed by Brian, then Mahalia. He tapped Brian on the shoulder. Come here. You as well, May. He brought them in to the telly. He pointed at it. That's a television. Brian laughed. Now, said Jimmy. You sit in front of it. That's right, good man. Perfect. He held up the remote. Have yeh seen one of these before? Yep, said Brian. Good man again, said Jimmy. You can watch it for half an hour, okay? I already had my half-hour, said Brian. You're too honest, Smoke, said Jimmy. I told yeh. Be a bit sneaky. Sneaky. That's right, said Jimmy. Have you had your telly today yet, Smokey? No! Have you not? Well, here yeh go. Jimmy lobbed the remote at him, and Smokey that was Brian caught it. I don't want to watch telly, said Mahalia. Jimmy kept forgetting she was thirteen although she looked it. He'd never get used to it. His oldest child, Marvin, was a seventeen-year-old man. The youngest, Brian, was too big to be picked up. Just do me a favour, May, said Jimmy. Stay here for a bit. I need to talk to your mother. Begging forgiveness, are we? said Mahalia. Somethin' like that, he said. Good luck with that, she said. Is that eye shadow you're wearin'? Did you just ask me to do you a favour, Dad? I did,

yeah. The eye shadow is my business then, said Mahalia. You dont need it, yeh know. Thats not an argument. I love you. So you should. He left them there. Brian wouldnt budge and Mahalia loved being involved in the messy, stupid world of the adults, even if involvement meant staying out of the kitchen for half an hour. But Aoife was gone. There was a kid with his head in the fridge and he wasnt one of Jimmys. Who are you? The kid stood up and, fair play to him, he blushed. Im hungry, he said. Good man, Hungry, said Jimmy. But whatre you doin pullin the door off my fridge? The kid looked confused, his red got redder. Jimmy felt like a bollix. Jimmer said you wouldnt mind. Or Missis your wife, like. Are you Mister Rabbitte? Yeah. Jimmer said she Missis Rabbitte, like wouldnt mind if I, like, got something to eat. Jimmer was young Jimmy, another of Jimmys sons. The kids face had gone past red; he was turning black in front of Jimmy. He was holding a chicken leg. Will I put it back? He was an old-fashioned young fella. Did you eat any of it? said Jimmy. Kind of, said the kid. He looked at the leg. Yeah. Youd better eat the rest of it so, said Jimmy. Thanks. Wheres Jimmy? Your son, like? Yeah. Upstairs. Grand. Were doin a project, said the kid. Whats your name? Garth. What? Garth. And whats the project about, Garth? Supertramp. Wha? The group, like. You mean, the group tha were shite back in the 70s twenty years before you were born and are probably even shiter now? No way are they shite, said Garth. Who listens to them? I do, said Garth. Jimmy liked Garth, and he liked the feeling that he liked him. And tell us, Garth? he said. Are you some kind of a born-again Christian, tryin to convert my son to Supertramp? No way, said Garth. He converted me. He what? He says the CDs yours. It isnt. He says it is, said Garth. Its old looking and the price on the sticker is in old punts, like, not euros. Aoife walked in. Tell Garth here, said Jimmy. Garth was turning black again and he was trying to put the chicken leg into his pocket. Tell him what? That I hate Supertramp, said Jimmy. You dont, said Aoife. I do! Dont listen to him, Garth, said Aoife. He loves them. Or he used to. She walked across the kitchen. Garth was trying to get away from her. He looked like he was going to climb up into the sink. Go on then, Jimmy said to Aoife. Name one Supertramp song. She hadnt a clue she never had. Dreamer, said Aoife. The Logical Song, Breakfast in America, Take the Long Way Home, Its Raining Again. I think thats the order theyre in on the Greatest Hits collection you used to play all the time. Is your dad a music fascist too, Garth? Dont know. Jimmy gave up. There was no point in trying to talk to Aoife now not about Supertramp; fuck Supertramp about the cancer. He went in and sat with Brian for a while. He sent Brian up to bed, then sent Garth home, and the others went to bed. It was running taps and the toilet flushing for about an hour, and quiet shouts, and a loud thump that must have been Marvin giving young Jimmy a dig or young Jimmy giving Marvin a dig. He hadnt seen either of them all night but the house was full of them. And he could hear Mahalia singing. He sat in the dark and listened to the life above him. Ill miss this. He hadnt felt it coming and he got rid of it quickly. Sentimental shite. Now he lay on the bed with Aoife. She was crying onto his chest. And he liked it. I bet Supertramp have a song about cancer, he said. Fuck off you. I never liked them. She lifted her head. You did. Okay. She put her head back down. Youre such a baby. Its why you love me. He heard her gulping back her tears, trying to stop. Sorry, he said. She said nothing. I had to tell you. I knew, she said. Knew? Yes. She patted his stomach. How? said Jimmy. Did someone phone you? Theyd no right. No. They spoke softly. The bedroom door was open, a bit. In case Brian woke. I just knew, said Aoife. You werent yourself. So I had cancer? Something was wrong. It was in your face. I shouldve told you. Yes. I was goin to. Why didnt you? I was goin to tell you that I was goin for the test, said Jimmy. Then I decided I suppose to wait till after. If it was clean She hit him. He hadnt he could never have expected this. It was like shed driven her fist right through him. Jeee-zuss! He got his hand to her shoulder and shoved her away, almost over the side of the bed. Shit He reached out to grab her. But she wasnt falling. They were both breathless and scared. Her hair was shorter these days but it was still hanging over her eyes. The silence was loud and colossal. A mobile phone buzzed. Fuck ! Theyd both jumped the shock. Yours, said Aoife. She exhaled, and breath lifted her fringe. It doesnt matter, said Jimmy. Go on, she said. It doesnt matter, I said. Its only a fuckin text. Its your dad, she said. Hes the only one who texts you this late. There was no hostility in what she said. He found the phone and she was right. It was from his da. Wayne fuckin Rooney!! Is anything wrong? Aoife asked. No, said Jimmy. Not really. Its grand. Im sorry. Me too. She was on her knees, on the side of the bed. Jimmy leaned across and she let him hug her. Her face was wet. He kissed it. He didnt cry, and that seemed good. Id better answer him, he said. He knew she was looking at him, looking for difference or slowness or bloodstains. He picked up the phone. He wrote, or whatever it was called texted. Complete cunt. He sent it back to his da. He put the phone on the floor, and lay back. I know I should have told you, he said. Its okay. I thought it would go away. Fuckin stupid. Once I did the right thing an made the appointment. I understand. It was stupid. So are lots of things. I suppose. Anyway. I didnt want to worry you. Thats the truth.

Then I found out. He stopped for a while. He was grand. And I was stunned, he said. Fuckin. When I went back to work after. And I eventually had to talk this fuckin twit wonderin where an order was supposed to go. When I opened my mouth there was no jaw. I couldnt feel it. Like Id been at the fuckin dentist. As if goin to the here we go oncologist. Impressed? Good lad. As if goin to the fuckin oncologist hadnt been enough, I had to drop in on the dentist on the way back. But your man didnt notice. Is he really a twit? No. No, hes grand. Hes young. Oh, that. Yeah. So anyway. I came home. And I was goin to tell you. That was the plan. I even stopped off at SuperValu an bought a bottle of wine. Remember? Yes. I had it all mapped out. The two of us in the kitchen. Some fuckin hope. Brian had a match. Thats right. I drank the wine while you were gone. Thats right. Well, I opened it. You drank it. Okay. Not all of it. Grand. Anyway. I wasnt pissed. You were all over me, said Jimmy. Later, like. He looked at her. You rode a man with cancer. Jesus. And I couldnt tell you after that. I wouldnt have believed you. Thats music to my fuckin ears. Now he cried. He couldnt help it. Actually, he wanted to. He felt no better and he felt no worse but it seemed natural, some- thing shed have wanted to see. Reassurance. And then he couldnt stop for a while. Can I not just text everyone? No, said Aoife. It wouldnt be right. But last night you said Shed said this after shed made him come in about three seconds. You said I was to think about nice things, said Jimmy. It was Saturday morning. The kids he hadnt told them yet; Jesus were either out or still in bed. Brian was on a sleepover and the mother of his pal, Ryan, was bringing them both to the football. The father was in England, working. Jimmy would go and watch the second half and bring them back here. But now Jimmy and Aoife were alone. I said that? said Aoife. Look on the bright side, you said. That kind o shite. And now Ive to He picked up the sheet of paper, the list. Ive to go from door to door. From Barrytown He was going there today, later, to tell his mother. He looked at some of the names. to Castlepollard. His sister, Linda, lived there. It was in Meath or Westmeath, miles away. Ive to tell He looked at the list again. He pretended to count. fifteen or sixteen people that I have cancer. And Ive to do it in a rush so no one feels upset because I told him or her before I told him or fuckin her. She was smiling and he loved it. Ive to travel the length and breadth of fuckin Ireland and tell them all. And this is goin to cheer me up? Ill come with you, she said. No. I want to. No, he said. Im not doin it. Its mad. How then? Dont know, he said. She took the list. Ill phone Sharon and Linda and Tracy, she said. They were Jimmys sisters. It makes sense, he said. Is it okay? Yeah, she said. No, youre right. But you didnt put my side on the list. I wasnt finished, he lied. Well have to go to my parents. Okay. Ill phone the others. She added names to the list, the brother Jimmy thought was a wanker, the sister who was mad and getting madder. Sound, he said. Ill phone lets see. Darren. Shes pregnant, by the way. I know. Who told you? She did. Melanie? Yeah. I met her. I thought you didnt like her. Whats that got to do with anything? Jesus, Jimmy, grow up. I hope to, he said. Haha. Anyway, I do like her. She just annoys me. Grand. Sometimes. Okay. It wasnt too bad. If hed been asked what it was like, that was what hed have said. He had his mother coming up, and the kids. Telling them was going to be dreadful. And his boss hed have to tell her. Although she wasnt really his boss. But anyway, other than that, it really wasnt too bad. He had no dates yet; he wasnt counting down the days. He was in limbo for a while, and it was okay. Mahalia was going to look after Brian and his pal, Ryan. Her first big professional job. Five euro for the hour, or however long it took. Will we go to my parents after? said Aoife. Ah Christ. It makes sense. Okay. We can go for a coffee on the way. Fuckin wonderful. She smiled. Mahalia wasnt having it. Five euro for most of the day, nearly? No way, like. Ah look I have a life, like. I know, said Jimmy. Ten euro. He watched her face. A tenner was a fortune. The excitement, the little grin it was lovely. Fifteen, she said. Hed bargained her down to twelve, and now they himself and Aoife were on their way to Barrytown. He was driving. Can you manage? shed asked when they were walking out to the car. I remember where my parents live, hed said. I grew up there. I mean, I thought you might be a bit anxious. Im grand. And I dont want to die on the way, shed said. Fuck off now. He drove onto the roundabout and indicated left the turn-off for Barrytown. He decided to avoid the shopping centre. It was Saturday afternoon. Although it was never busy. It had started to look like a monument to a different era a couple of years after it had been built, when Jimmy was still a kid. When his Uncle Eddie from Australia had seen it the first time, hed thought it was the local jail, all the barbed wire on the roof. It wouldnt be busy now but Jimmy didnt particularly want to see it. Whens best to tell the kids? Before The X Factor, said Aoife. They laughed. Seriously but, said Jimmy. Tonight, said Aoife. We can make sure theyll all be there. Chinese, said Jimmy. Special occasion. I want to tell the boys first though. Marv and Jimmy. Yes. Im right, yeah? Yeah. He drove past his old school, then left, onto the green. No one here. Its lovely, said Aoife. No kids any more. All grown up and gone. They sat outside his parents house, holding their door handles. When are you going to tell your friends? said Aoife. He thought about this. I dont have any. Ah, you do. Ah, I dont. You do. I dont know, he said. I havent

really thought about it. And that probably proves Im right. I dont really have any. You do. Okay. Maybe he was imagining it. But maybe there was some sort of a scent off him; the cancer was doing it. His wife wanted to ride him. He was sure of it. It was a biological thing, his body sending out the message; he had to reproduce before he died. There was sex in the air, in the car definitely. Hed start the car, before anyone in the house noticed. Hed drive them up to Howth summit, or down to Dollymount. It was a miserable day; there'd be no one there. They'd do it like two kids half their age. Or to a hotel, one of the ones called the Airport this or Airport that. The one beside Darndale was nearest. A room for the afternoon. And he wouldn't remind her about his vasectomy. Wed better go in and tell my mother Im dyin, he said. * * * How did she take it? Darren asked him. Not too bad, said Jimmy. It was true. His mother their mother hadn't torn her hair out. Shed cried. They'd all cried. Hed told her hed be fine. The success rate he was beginning to like the language the success rate was encouraging. She already knew her chemo and her radiation. Her brother, Jimmys Uncle Paddy, had been through it and survived. The surgery, though, was news. He realised it as he told his mother: he hadn't told Aoife. Hed told his father but hed forgotten Aoife. She went pale as he spoke. He thought she was going to faint. He really had forgotten. He couldn't believe it, but it was true. They'll take out 80 per cent of your fuckin bowels? Said his da. Just stop it, said his mother. Wha? The language, she said. For once. Just stop it. Right, said his da. Sorry. They said it wont make any difference, Jimmy told them. Ill be able to eat everythin as normal. With whats left. Yeah. Aoife still looked wrong. The 20 per cent, said Jimmys da. Fair play, said Jimmy. You were always good at the subtraction. It wasnt working. His laughter in the face of bad luck. There was no one smiling. Look, he said. Its not life and death. That particular part. The operations nearly just routine. Its part of the journey through my treatment. He picked one of the buns on the table, to prove he was still able to eat. It was a low point the low point. Hed fucked up. He hadn't told Aoife. I forgot, he said, to only her. She nodded, once. Weird, he said. She nodded. It was grand, he said now to his brother, Darren. He was sitting on the stairs in Aoifes parents house. He didnt know where Darren was. He could hear voices in the background. Where are yeh? Liffey Valley. Hate tha. Give me cancer any day, said Darren. Im a lucky man. It was Jimmy whod phoned Darren. Hed forgotten to tell Aoife he really had; he kept testing himself and now he felt the urge to tell everyone, to get it out there as quickly as possible, so everyone who needed to know would hear about it properly. Yeh shoppin? Kind of, said Darren. With Melanie. Yeah. Hows she doin? Grand. Great. Congratulations there, by the way. Thanks, yeah. I was goin to phone you. I know. Youre grand. Da told me. Darren and himself werent close, but that meant nothing. They were brothers. Jimmy decided: he was going to find Leslie. So yeah, said Darren. Everythings grand. Shes had to give up the kick-boxin and the crack cocaine. Other than that, its business as usual. Great, said Jimmy. We should meet up for a pint. They wouldn't. Yeah, said Darren. When? The air was full of the unexpected. Jimmy reminded himself: he had cancer. He was telling the people who mattered and they were responding. Dont know, said Jimmy. When suits you? Wednesday? said Jimmy. Okay, said Darren. After work? No, said Jimmy. Before. That'd be good, said Darren. Jimmy didnt actually know if Darren drank, if he was a drinker the way their father was a drinker. He doubted it. Or if he was a wine drinker, a bottle or two at home with Melanie although she wouldn't be drinking now. Shed be guzzling the infusions, some blend of rhubarb and nettle that guaranteed the kid would be a fuckin genius. Whats that? he said. I lost yeh there. About six, said Darren. Ill come in straight after. Straight after what? Work. Oh grand, said Jimmy. You still have a job so. I have, yeah, said Darren. Ive hidden it. Good man. Darren was a lecturer, out in Maynooth. You? said Darren. Im grand, I think, said Jimmy. Nostalgias always big in a recession. Fuck off, said Jimmy. Am I right, though? You might be, yeah. Ill tell you all about it when we meet. And you can stick it in one of your fuckin lectures. Where? In the middle. I dont care. Where'll we meet? I dont mind. Wheres good near you? Dont know really, said Jimmy. Ill ask some of the younger ones in work. Then we can go somewhere different. That makes sense, said Darren. And look. What? said Jimmy. Im sorry yeh know? Youre grand, said Jimmy. Thanks. Ill let you get back to your shoppin. Duvet covers, said Darren. Brilliant. Ill photograph them for yeh, send you the jpeg. Lovely, said Jimmy. Wednesday so. Yeah, great, said Jimmy. Ill text you the pub. He stayed on the stairs for a while. He could hear the rest of them in the front room. Talking low, just a bit above whispering. He thought he heard a sniffle. Aoife, maybe, or maybe her mother. Hed stay put for another minute. * * * He followed the boys into the bedroom and closed the door. Listen, lads, he said. Ive a bit of news. Jesus. The three of them stood in a huddle between the radiator and the bed. The boys were taller than Jimmy now. He felt like the kid. Dont worry about this, he said. Itll be fine. He looked from face to face. Ive got bowel cancer. They stared at him. They were waiting for the punchline but they knew there wouldn't be one. Jimmy was the worlds biggest bollocks. What hed just done was illegal or it fuckin should have

been. The boys were still waiting to be rescued. So, said Jimmy. So. I wanted to tell yis. Jesus, lads, Im sorry about this. Its cool, said young Jimmy. And that saved Jimmy; he could go on. Itll be grand, he told them. Itll be a bit I dont know inconvenient. For a while just. Its cancer, said Marvin. Yeah. Thats not inconvenient, Dad. Yeah, said Jimmy. Yeah. Come here. He put an arm around each boys shoulders. He had to reach up to do it. He felt himself going, falling over, but they held him. Ill be grand, he said. They were stiff there, angry, frightened. Jimmy was talking right into the side of Marvins head. Its not the worst of them, he said. The cancers, like. And weve found it early enough. Whats that mean? Its confined, said Jimmy. It hasnt spread, you know. He could feel the boys trying to control their breath, trying not to push away. It can be beaten, he said. How? said Marvin. He was the stiffest, the angrier one. Well, said Jimmy. Chemo and surgery. Whats chemo? young Jimmy asked. Chemotherapy. I know. What is it? Chemicals, said Jimmy. I suppose thats the simplest way to I dont know. They were still clinging to one another. He wanted to sit down. They nuke the bad cells the chemicals, you know. Basically. Sounds good, said young Jimmy. Im lookin forward to it, said Jimmy. Itll be like goin mad in a head shop. The boys tried to laugh. Im really sorry about this, said Jimmy. He let go of them. They seemed to expand, to rise above him. He wanted them back. But he sat on the bed. They stood there in front of him. They were awkward, polite, lovely. And separate they stood like young men who didnt really know each other. They waited for permission to go. Ill be grand, said Jimmy. Marvin nodded. Young Jimmy was going to cry. Itll just be. Keep an eye out for your mam. For fuck sake, said Marvin. Jimmy laughed, delighted. He held his hands up. Sorry, he said. Yis hungry? They were starving. They were always fuckin starving. Sort of, said young Jimmy. Me too, said Jimmy. But Ill be tellin May and Brian about it the news, yeh know. Downstairs. But I wanted to tell you first. I thought you could handle it. Man to man, said Marvin. He was an angry kid. Theres no good way, Marv. Spouse. Boys, said Jimmy. I love you. Love you too, young Jimmy whispered. Yeah, Marvin whispered. Jimmy got up off the bed and hugged them again. They let go a bit, properly. They cried a bit. The snot flowed. Check your shoulders, lads. They were back down and dry-eyed in time for the arrival of the Chinese. They all sat around the table. It was a bit of a squash it had been since the older pair had taken off and become the worlds tallest Rabbittes, or Egan-Rabbittes. Aoife glanced at Jimmy. He shook his head; hed wait till theyd finished eating. Young Jimmy looked pale, although he was still ploughing into the Chicken Cantonese Style. Whatre you havin, May? he asked. Mahalia had come home two days before, a vegetarian. Leave her alone, said Aoife. I was only askin, said Jimmy. Im curious. Its okay, said Mahalia. Chicken with lemon sauce but Im taking the bits of chicken out. Ill have them. Me! Brian shouted he often had to. She said me. Didnt you? Yeah, said Mahalia. Another problem. Brian was a bit heavy. They had a fat kid on their hands. It kept Aoife awake. But Jimmy knew she wouldnt object tonight. Fill them all with sugar and monosodium glutamate; sedate the fuckers. That was the plan. I dont know what to eat yet, said Mahalia. So before you tell me theres, like, bits of chicken in the sauce, I know, like. I wasnt goin to say anythin, said Jimmy. I respect your decision. Okay. And so do the chickens. Has anyone noticed, said Mahalia, that weve one of the funniest dads in, like, the whole country? Yep. Yep. Brian looked at Jimmy and smiled, just to let him know that he wasnt being treacherous, before he went Yep. Poor Jimmy, said Aoife. Poor me. Can weve ice cream? Theres animal fats in ice cream, said Marvin. Fuck off. Mahalia! Sorry. Hang on, said Jimmy. Hang on. He waited. Forks down. Brian. Good lad. He waited a bit longer. He smiled at Aoife, at young Jimmy and Marvin. Ive somethin to tell yis. What? Im gettin there. Mahalia had bawled. Shed thrown herself at him before hed got to cancer. But it had worked out fine. It was easier to work his way backwards, to explain why he wouldnt be dying. Shed believed him he thought she had. Theyd have to see because hed been crying too as he spoke, as hed stroked her head the way hed always done, as shed cried through his jumper and shirt. Aoife had cried. Young Jimmy had cried. Marvin had allowed himself to cry hed stood up first and walked halfway to the hall. Brian hadnt. He sat watching everything. He didnt blink. He held his fork, waiting for the okay to get on with his dinner. Alright, Smoke? Yeah. Good man. Maybe hed just believed Jimmy. He was still young enough; the older boys had been the same. Theyd believed everything hed told them. The word cancer meant nothing to him. Fried rice did, though. Its a phase, he said later, in the bed. Hell be grand. He didnt believe it. And he didnt believe it when Aoife seemed to be agreeing with him. Yeah. You agree. Yeah. You dont. No, I do. Well, I fuckin dont. Oh, fuck off, Jimmy. Im just trying to put it off. Put what off? Everything. Im tired. So am I. I know. Strange, though. Brian? No, said Jimmy. Yeah, but no. I mean, the day. What about it? It was nice, said Jimmy. I enjoyed it. Me too. Spent the whole day tellin people I love that Ive cancer, and I enjoyed myself. Her head was on his chest again. You still tired? he asked. Oh God. He couldnt get out of the car. He couldnt move. It wasnt sudden the feeling. It had been there since hed woken up. It was getting worse. It wasnt

depression. Although he didnt know.It wasnt black.It didnt have a colour or weight.Hed never understood static electricity, how or why it happened, why one door handle was a shock and another, the same design, wasnt; why Mahalias hair had stood up straight whenever hed pulled off that green jumper shed had when she was a little thing. He didnt think hed ever been interested in why it happened. It just did.This was the same as static. It was how hed have started to describe it.The car park was small. There was space for eight cars. Noeleens car wasnt there yet.He hadnt told her. He would, today.Tomorrow.He was in no fit state to tell her today.Hed touch something, the wrong thing, and hed die. That was how hed start, if he was trying to explain it. But, actually, he didnt have to touch anything. That was what paralysed him. Earlier, in bed, he woke up thinking hed died. He was waking into his last thought. If he woke up properly, hed be gone; hed never even have existed.It would go away. He just had to wait.Terror. That was it.Hed be grand. The dread would be gone it was going; he knew it was nothing. Hed just wait another minute.Hed be angry then. He had the routine. Hed get rid of that too. Hed slam a door, fire off an email reply to some fuckin eejit and have to apologise later.Fuck it. Fuck it.He had the radio on. He could hear the news; he could separate the words. Gaddafi was dead that was the biggie. Hed remember that. Sitting rigid in his car, in the car park behind work, and hearing that Gaddafi had been killed how wasnt clear; a grenade, a bullet or a bayonet maybe all three. Where the fuck would you buy a bayonet these days?Hed go in in a minute. Face the day. Try to sell a few records. He might even tell Noleen. Get it over with.Hed see. Probably not.Hed watch the news later, at home. Hed make Brian watch with him, and Mahalia. A big day. The death of a dictator. Maybe not, though Brian would want another Chinese, to celebrate.Poor oul Muammar. Jimmy wouldnt be selling him any Irish punk or post-punk hits of the 70s and 80s. A lost opportunity. Gaddafi could have died plugged into his iPod, listening to the Halfbreds or the Irregulars.There was a thought.Jimmy would go in now and stick it up on the homepage: Gaddafi died listening to Irish punk. Get a few laughs, shift a few units.In a minute.Revue de presse"Doyle's Jimmy Rabbitte reappears, dealing with cancer, mortality, and love. . . . I was undone by the emotional clarity of the writing itself, and by the calm, but never static, way Doyle has of presenting a scene." --The New York Times Book "Quintessential Doyle. . . . both laugh-out-loud funny and disarmingly moving . . . [It] contains some of the snappiest, wittiest, most believable, and exhilarating dialogue in fiction. . . . To make a story about middle-aged men battling cancer a largely effervescent lark without a trace of sentimentality is a notable achievement." --The Boston Globe "Roddy Doyle is a great master of dialogue, which is his narrative medium-- the main way he tells. And it's impossible for anyone, I would think, not to laugh out loud at the wit and shock of it. . . . If [The Guts] has a unifying theme, it is the awareness of death, and the fresh perspective on life thrown by its advancing shadow." --The New York of Books "Doyle's collected works are a superlative study of family, aging, and the dignity of the working class--and his latest novel is a worthy addition. . . . The novel revisits an area Doyle explored previously in The Van: what it means to be a man at middle age." --The Atlantic