

## Synopsis

This is a literary novel, voice-driven, powered by the prose — the rhythm and technique — of accent, sociolect, place. It is working-class. It is not council-estate chic. It concerns Travis Barnes, his life and his death and the familial faultlines that ran through him and his family, reaching out to the far end of all of them like a train-map.

We open with Travis, aged thirteen, finding his father dead. Lawrence Barnes had cancer but had also been lying to Trav, told him that he was all clear. When Travis finds his father's body, his son, upon seeing a pyramid of pain-pills on the bedside table, assumes suicide.

This is narrated to us by Jay, Trav's best friend. He is harvesting Trav's life's work (journals and notes &c.) in order to write the novel his friend could never finish. After taking us through the aftermath of Lawrence's death and the early rust of Trav's depression, which he tries to stave off with writing, Jay gives us a potted history of the Crosskeys — the adopted and deeply troubled family of Stella Crosskey, Trav's mother. Therein lies a secret that will fissure the Crosskey clan, and explain more about the hereditary pain those — and those around them — consistently seem to suffer.

A decade later, Jay has surrendered the story to Trav himself, who is back home in Birmingham after years away, educating himself. Fucked both mentally and fiscally, the only place Travis Barnes can reasonably stay is with his grandfather, Big Neville Crosskey, dying of cancer in the old family home. It's here, in his grandfather's office of imponderable secrets, that Trav finds out the truth, both about himself and his family.