

INSIDE BACK COVER — author photograph + story

Layout note: the black-and-white author photograph (taken four days before surgery, 2017) sits above or beside this text. The photograph runs silent on the front/rear cover; the story is revealed here, inside. Keep this passage on the café, the unspoken gap, and the hope of being heard — distinct from the surgery account in the cancer chapter.

A photograph taken four days before surgery.

That afternoon, my wife and I sat in a café in Scarborough and talked openly about nothing at all. The road ahead. The anticipation of the surgery. Recovery. Life after.

We both chatted confidently. The gap was never spoken about that day. Not *will it work*. Not *will I survive*. Not *what about the kids*. Not *will I ever speak again*.

Well — I did. And now I am.

I hope someone reads this. And I trust that they'll hear it.