



# This Living and Immortal Thing

*Austin Duffy*

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## **This Living and Immortal Thing** Austin Duffy

'My life is in your hands, doctor, they would sometimes say, which it never was...'

This Living and Immortal Thing inhabits a world of medicine, research, cancer and death. Its disillusioned and darkly funny narrator is an Irish oncologist, who is searching for a scientific breakthrough in the lab of a New York hospital while struggling with his failing marriage and his growing alienation within the city's urban spaces. Tending to the health of his laboratory mice, he finds comfort in work that is measurable, results that are quantifiable.

But life is every bit as persistent as the illness he studies. As he starts a new treatment on his mice, he meets a beautiful but elusive Russian translator at the hospital, his estranged wife begins to call, his neighbours are acting strangely and his supervisor pressures him to push ahead professionally. And always there is the pull of family; of the place he considers home.

Shot through with Duffy's haunting, beautiful descriptions of the science underlying cancer, which starkly illustrate the paradox of an illness at whose heart is a persistent and deadly life force, This Living and Immortal Thing shows how the cruelty of the disease is a price we pay for the joy and complexity of being in the world.

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