



# Get Well Soon! My (un)Brilliant Career As A Nurse

*Kristy Chambers*

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Falling into the nursing profession, Kristy Chambers spent almost a decade working with a wide range of people, ranging from drug addicts to cancer patients. Dark, humorous, honest, and compassionate, this memoir illustrates the incredible work nurses do and the many challenges they face. A tribute to the wonderfully brave people Chambers met during her career, this book portrays both joyous and difficult experiences.

## Get Well Soon! My (un)Brilliant Career As A Nurse Details

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# **From Reader Review Get Well Soon! My (un)Brilliant Career As A Nurse for online ebook**

## **Olwen says**

I was late for work because of this book. Frequently doubled-over in laughter too. It's hilarious - and scary!

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## **Tony says**

A ball achingly funny book that made me feel better about my own career choices.

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## **Shelleyrae at Book'd Out says**

Despite the pile of books of have awaiting review when I spotted this book on the new acquisitions shelf at my library I couldn't resist. In *Get Well Soon!*, Kristy Chambers shares both the good and bad of her '(un)Brilliant Career As A Nurse'.

It is unrealistic to ascribe a saintly demeanor to nurses yet it is a societal perception that lingers beyond the legend of Florence Nightingale. Many may be shocked by Kirsty Chambers frank admissions of a career chosen by default rather than passion and her struggle with its daily challenges.

In her various nursing roles, Kristy has to deal with an inordinate amount and type of body fluids, a variety of personalities and situations that are often simultaneously tragic and absurd.

Chambers dry, 'gallows humor' - the sort used by law and medical personnel faced with difficult circumstances, can be a little confronting and I am almost ashamed to admit how often I laughed out loud at the misfortune of others, particularly the poor man whose bowel contents 'redecorated' a bathroom interior.

Yet I was also moved by the stories of patients struggling to recover from serious sickness, mental illness and injuries, and those who do not survive the ravages of disease. Confronted daily by death and suffering, I am not really surprised Chambers drinks a little too much.

*Get Well Soon!* is a boldly honest journal of Kristy Chambers experiences as a nurse. I laughed, cringed, winced and laughed some more.

This memoir will not suit someone who is easily offended by crude language, or tends to take everything a bit too seriously, but if you are considering nursing as a profession, I suggest your read this first.

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## **Melanie Hunt says**

When I had surgery last year to remove some fibroids from my uterus I developed a new appreciation for nurses. The nurses that took care of me during my four day stay at the RBWH were just the bomb as far as I was concerned – caring, meticulous, friendly and utterly professional. I was so grateful, in fact, that I promised myself I'd buy a card to express my gratitude and send it to the nurses on Ward 6A just as soon as I could walk without feeling like someone was shoving knitting needles into my womb. Regrettably, I never did send that card. I said thank you a lot though, so hopefully they knew I was appreciative of their care and attention. I remember remarking, unoriginally, to one young nurse as she checked my sanitary pad, which was wedged where sanitary pads are supposed to be wedged, that 'I could never be a nurse'. She smiled and said something to the effect that checking the markings on a sanitary pad was pretty mild on the scale of things nurses are asked to do. I didn't ask her to elaborate, but I could well imagine.

Well, that's wasn't true. I couldn't well imagine, but thanks to Kristy Chambers's discomfiting, frank and blackly funny memoir *Get Well Soon!*, I need no longer imagine. Chambers lays bare all the horrors of nursing in squeamish, unrelenting detail – the tampon incident should really come with a reader caution (I dry retched) – but it's her flat out honesty about her own failings and humanness that make this memoir such an addictive and enjoyable read.

Chambers is the nurse who 'could never be a nurse'. She doesn't pretend to be immune to the fluids, solids and all the other detritus in between the human body is capable of excreting. She finds it just as gross and stomach churning as the rest of us, but boy, the stories she could tell you... And she does tell. Yes, you may come away with some images in your mind you probably wish you could scorch with a blowtorch, but any connoisseur of poo stories will tell you this is top notch material. Plus the rest – imagine an inanimate object, any inanimate object, is it smaller than a chair? Well, Chambers has got an Emergency Room story about that object – vase, carrot, Russian nesting dolls – being stuck up someone's arse.

But *Get Well Soon!* is not just a litany of the gross and profane. It's a book about characters – most of the chapter titles are named after patients – or real people, rather, who have left an impression on Chambers for better or for worse. There are the cancer patients who died while Chambers was working in the Bone Marrow Transplant Unit – just try sparing your tears when 16-year-old Sarah dies of leukaemia – the addicts and personalities who populate the Detox ward, and then there's the fucked-up, heart-breaking sadness of the mentally ill who turn up regularly in Emergency. This is humanity at its most wretched, disgusting and sorrowful, but it's Chamber's own humanity and compassion that comes through in the telling, even if she doesn't spell it out. She doesn't waste words on sentimentality and her humour is justifiably wry. In essence she's hugely likeable and if you're not prudish or too squeamish you'll love Chambers and her guided tour into nursing land. Every page, however, was a reminder of why I wouldn't be a nurse for quids. Chambers will tell you though, in her blessedly honest way, that money – a decent income, that is, that comes with a respectable job – was the reason she became a nurse. It wasn't a calling, she's not a modern Florence Nightingale, she's just a regular girl who took up nursing and this what she saw.

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**Maree Larkin says**

This was a very poor attempt at humor by a very poor writer on a subject that isn't at all funny.

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## **Kristen Farragher says**

I tried! But I couldn't!

Any nurse who can unashamedly say things like 'maybe the first girl who starved herself to death got a trophy, or a sash' in regards to mentally ill teenagers suffering from anorexia is an absolute disgrace to the profession. I also enjoyed how she weighed up the pros and cons of being either a teacher, or a nurse, 'so it became a matter of deciding who I least wanted to spend time with: teenagers or sick people.'

It makes me sick to think that there are nurses out there like this, treating loved ones like shit for the sake of making a steady income. If you don't love helping people and if you can't find a shred of empathy within yourself for those who are unwell then don't become a nurse.

Worst book I've ever read.

0 stars.

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## **Courtney says**

Well, there are people who hated this book and are outraged about the attitude of this author/nurse, because a lot of people believe that all nurses are perfect little Mother Therasas with a stethoscope and 3-month-old urine on the soles of their shoes.

I did not laugh while reading this book, but not because it's lacking in humour. It's definitely funny and the humour is just my type - black, dark and rotten. I didn't laugh because this shit is my life. It was like reading my diary. If you don't adopt that type of humour, you can't be a nurse. This is why nurses have dry, weird senses of humour. It's also why people read these things and very quickly become horrified and disgusted and think "oh my what a horrible person!". Let me just say: when you're a nurse you deal with buckets upon buckets of shit every day, sometimes thrown IN YOUR FACE (In your face. Just needed to repeat that. They throw actual human poo in your actual face. One time a lady rubbed it in my hair). You deal with constant streams of hateful abuse, you find yourself exhausted and unappreciated most of the time, you never get paid enough, you have to deal with the reality of dead people all the time - people you have loved dearly and cared for intimately - you get frustrated because some people aren't interested in their health and expect the health industry to patch up their arteries and please would you stop lecturing me about my diet and lifestyle? Pass me a goddamn lemonade already. Gimme a break love I've just had triple CABGs.

Then you write a book about all of this madness and people hate it because it's far too real, honest and light-hearted. You just can't get a break.

Chambers speaks about things AS THEY ARE. As a nurse you just have to accept some things as they are and get on with your job. Some of us go into nursing because we know we will be fantastic nurses and love the work we do. Others have no idea, they just want a secure job and shift work seems appealing. Please understand that very few of us are evil, even if we are joking about the things our mental patients say or (perhaps inappropriately) making grim jokes about illnesses. We are just trying to get through our shift and come to terms with the horrors we see every day. Humour is good like that.

This book is not for everyone, but it's very refreshing for those of us who do this work day in and day out. It's real. It's actually the most realistic introduction to nursing for those who have no idea that I have come across thus far.

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## **Simone says**

I really struggled with deciding just what to rate this book - it is probably more a 2.5 than a 2, but couldn't quite give it a 3.

I was looking forward to this book as I thought it sounded like an interesting and humorous take on the nursing profession. It certainly wasn't what I expected!

Can I say up front there is nothing wrong with the way the book is written - the writing is good and has an easy to read style. Although it jumped over the place a bit in terms of time and place, the way the chapters are arranged made it easy enough to follow. It was the content I struggled with - the whole time I was reading I was battling between really admiring Kristy and also getting very annoyed with her.

Right from the beginning Kristy reveals that she did not choose nursing with any kind of real thought. Very early into the book she reveals herself as a bit of slacker who has never had much direction in life. This theme is amusing enough to begin with, but it begins to grate as it is constantly reinforced throughout the book. By the end I just wanted to tell her to get over herself - that she wasn't the only person in the world who had struggled with a career choice and that she was the only person who could figure that out. The world didn't owe her a living just because she ended up in a job she didn't really like.

On the flip side, I had to admire that Kristy had chosen the more difficult areas of nursing, such as working with anorexia patients and in emergency and drug and alcohol units. There is very little that is "nice" about this kind of nursing and kudos to her for caring for those that the rest of the world don't spend much time thinking about.

Back to the other side of the fence, I found it quite disrespectful the way Kristy spoke about some of her patients. Being well acquainted with many nurses I really do understand that nursing can be a very messy, smelly, difficult job. I know that cleaning up vomit and poo is not fun. But it is all part of the job and I'm certain that sick people do not take any joy in knowing that the nursing staff have to clean up after them. While I know that many nurses do use the words "piss" and "shit" rather than their milder forms, it was quite confronting to be bombarded with those terms all the time. I just found that to be a little bit immature and again something that was reinforced just a bit too often.

Good on Kristy for first of all studying nursing (a degree is no mean feat) and staying in the profession, despite her apparent apathy for it. Good on her too for taking on the difficult stuff and literally getting her hands dirty. But if she really doesn't like it, then she should explore a new career direction rather than trying to get the world to feel sorry for her.

Going by other reviews, you're probably going to either love this book or hate it. Or you might be like me and torn about just how you feel about it. Maybe I shouldn't have read it so soon after *Bush Nurses*, which celebrated the difficulties of nursing in a much more positive way.

I am glad I stuck it out to the end, but am still not totally sure how I feel about this one!

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## **Bill Porter says**

I found this book to be cynical, disrespectful and in part, outrageous. I enjoyed it immensely.

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## **Susan says**

This is the first ever memoir by an Australian nurse and it is a mixture of David Lynch-calibre weirdness, heart-shattering sadness and side-splitting comedy.

It is rare that I laugh out loud while reading a book, but Get Well Soon! had me laughing so much I was shushed on the train by another passenger. It also made me cry (again in a public space). This book should carry a warning to be read only in the privacy of one's own home!

From the angry girls in the anorexia ward to the sozzled sailors in detox, from the radioactive Russian in Oncology to the foreign bodies in Emergency (this chapter needs to be read to be believed), Kristy tells it all with refreshing honesty, heart and compassion (and a fair degree of revulsion).

Watch out for it in September!

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## **Helen Patrice says**

Dear Kristy:

I only managed about 25 pages of your book. I sincerely hope that you stop being angry at the world for having to work for a living and find something you enjoy doing.

Sorry, I can't finish reading your book. If you'd stuck to telling the stories and stopped being angry, I might have done.

Signed,

Constant Reader

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## **Wilhelmina says**

Apparently this is the second book Chambers wrote, as she shredded her first book, which "was no great loss for the literary world, only the trees." She should have shredded this book also before it was published.

Hopefully this author has found a fulfilling job elsewhere and is no longer working as a nurse....because she is a disgrace to her profession, if what she is writing is all true, which, I highly doubt.

It was a difficult book to read due to the amateur writing, but I slogged through it trying to find something redeeming about this book. But there is nothing.

Certainly working as a nurse is a challenging profession but Chambers with her very limited experience as a

nurse, has painted most patients and fellow staff as idiots. And although there are patients and staff who are idiots, perhaps if she treated them with more respect, she would see that each person is unique.

One of those books which one is happy to return to the library, and hope they lose the copy.

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### **Abigail Popiel says**

While the idea of the book is definitely promising, the execution was sub par. I would have thought that nursing had far more positive experiences than the ones that were spoke about in the book. There was an overarching negative tone to the whole book - not to mention that its language was uncouth at best.

Such a shame, because the book had the potential to be enjoyable, if only it had been written a little differently.

Nevertheless, I did take one positive quote from it:

"A lot of people passed away as the sun came up. It was like a signal, or a kiss. This day was not for you, but you left this planet, this plane, at its most beautiful. The world was sending you off with gentle fanfare, in a bright pink-and-orange-hued dawn."

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### **Maddison says**

I spent most of this book cringing, because this woman should certainly not be a nurse. The pleasure and amusement she seems to find in the suffering of the people she encounters is painful to read.

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### **Kathryn says**

I enjoyed reading this, especially from the viewpoint of a fellow health professional. However, I was disappointed by the crudity of the language, although I do understand that this is how the author speaks. She makes the comment at one point that she restrains her language at work, and as a reader, I would have appreciated the same courtesy as she extends to her patients. One of her main jobs is working as a drug and alcohol nurse and I suspect she enjoys this work because she can empathise with her patients, since she sounds like a bit of a rough diamond herself.

Also disappointing was her attitude of resentment at having to work for a living - she states this in the beginning and it is more or less present throughout the book. I understand that she tells her audience this to explain her ambivalence toward nursing, but seriously - we all need to work to pay the bills! I totally sympathise with being in a job you don't like and the short professional attention span (enjoying a job for 12 months or so and then getting frustrated with it), but the author's continual complaints did get a bit draining, especially in the beginning (maybe I got used to it after a while!). We are also treated to an account of the authors own alcohol and cigarette abuse - to drown out the sorrows of working in the nursing profession.

This book had its humourous moments and its horrendous moments (the treatment described for cervical cancer springs to mind as an example of the latter). Having worked in a hospital, there are things that sound very familiar, although the author has certainly seen a bit more of life than I have - and there are some things



I'm glad not to have seen!

Overall, I did enjoy this book, but I think this book had greater potential than was actually realised, which is always a little sad. The bare bones were good, but I think they could have been fleshed out better. I would have enjoyed this read much more if there had been less foul language, less attitude and less description of the author's alcohol use.

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