

[My Private Pectus](#) by Shane Thamm (Ford Street Publishing)

REVIEWED ON BUZZ WORDS Sept 1 09

PB RRP \$19.95 Reviewed by Jenny Mounfield

Jack has PE — Pectus Excavatum, a condition that causes a sunken chest — and I don't mean the kind that pirates covet. As if this isn't enough to deal with, his father, once a great footballer, insists Jack join the school footy team. Football is a game he has no interest in, especially as it's one that invariably ends with a change-room filled with bare-chested males. Then there's the problem of girls: How will he ever get a girlfriend with such an obvious deformity?

Being seventeen is never easy, but for someone like Jack, disappointment and humiliation seem to lurk around every corner. But it's not all bad. There's Gez, his best mate, and Gez's brother, Ryan, who has entrusted Jack with keys to his unit so that he can come around whenever he wants to work on Gez's car. And, of course, there's Gez's eighteenth birthday bash up the coast to look forward to.

On reading the back cover blurb: 'A story about footy, cars and a young man who discovers that revealing his greatest secret is the only way to hold onto the people he loves' I groaned inwardly.

But what a surprise this story was! Thamm's dry, no nonsense, almost factual narrative creates a refreshing contrast to complex, well-rounded characters that I actually found myself caring about.

If I only had one word to describe this story it would have to be: 'honest'. Thamm's honesty and insight into the male condition no doubt come from his years of experience working in high school outdoor education--as well as his study of masculinities as part of an Arts degree at Brisbane's QUT.

And while on the subject of honesty, it should be noted that Thamm has glossed over nothing. This story contains drug and alcohol use, language that may be viewed by some as inappropriate, and sexual themes. However, it should also be noted that the author has in no way glorified these subjects, and,

in fact, one incident in particular at Gez's eighteenth should serve as a timely warning for many.

An ode to manhood, *My Private Pectus* is bound to attract a predominately male readership, though girls should be encouraged to give this one a go as well, if only in the name of research.

Frank, hard-hitting and edgy: *My Private Pectus* should be compulsory reading for anyone who wants to understand what it means to be male.