

****THAMM, Shane** *My Private Pectus*
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Jack has a secret – his concave chest (*pectus excavatum*) - about which he is so embarrassed that he refuses to take his shirt off, thus making his life very difficult as a member of the school rugby team. Jack's tense dad is not only the assistant rugby coach but also ex-army and urgently pushing Jack to join up, while ridiculing his desire to be a motor mechanic. Tensions rise as Jack battles his aggressive father, leans towards a tentative romance with an unpopular girl and faces the ridicule of his team mates. The crisis comes at a big eighteenth birthday party, with its frenetic mix of drugs, drinks and sexual experimentation leading to the collapse of a friend. The party is a catalyst for change as Jack gains new insights into relationships and a new independence.

This well-written and engrossing novel vividly conveys their world through the voices of teen boys - the casual cruelty (physical and verbal); boasting of sporting exploits; vicious gossip about girls and sex; obsessions about their

physical appearance. Yet beneath the bravado we see adolescents reaching for maturity as they search to find their voice and their place in the wider adult world. Recommended for secondary readers. CM