

ADAM KAY

TWAS
THE
NIGHTSHIFT
BEFORE
CHRISTMAS

Festive hospital diaries from the multi-million-copy bestselling author of

THIS IS GOING TO HURT

Twass the Nightshift Before Christmas

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Adam Kay



My publishers remain very keen that neither they nor I go to prison as a result of my books. To best achieve this, names, dates, personal information and clinical details have been changed. In my last book, I substituted all real names for the names of minor Harry Potter characters. This is not something I will be doing again.*

* This time they're all from **Home Alone**.

First Christmas

Twass the Christmas

I had a urology job

Where bloke after bloke

did weird shit to his knob

Monday, 20 December 2004

Patients generally have quite a few cards on their bedside tables and windowsills at this time of year, what with all the Get Well Soons and Merry Christmases.

Patient CG is recovering after a bowel resection, and his cubicle looks like a branch of Clintons.

On the ward round, my registrar Cliff chimes in with 'Someone's popular!' a milli-second too soon for me to lean in and whisper, 'Someone's wife just died . . .'*

* Here are the medical ranks, and the corresponding level of servant as listed in Mrs Beeton's 1861 **Book of Household Management**:

House Officer – Scullery-maid/Stable boy

Senior House Officer – Maid/Groom

Registrar – Upper Housemaid/Footman

Senior Registrar – Housekeeper/House steward

Consultant – Master/Mistress of the house

Wednesday, 22 December 2004

Sharing what I think is a top-level anecdote in the doctors' mess. I'm delighted with my story of the twenty-year-old guy whose half-arsed attempt at a costume for his Christmas party landed him in A&E.* It must have seemed a genius idea at the time, but he clearly didn't run it past anyone with common

At this stage I'm a house officer. According to Mrs B, the scullery-maid or stable boy would perform functions too menial or mucky for other members of the household – a fairly uncanny description of a house officer's role. Their annual salary was between £5 and £12 – again, not far off.

* Fancy bloody dress. No one's heart has ever leapt at that particular line on the party invite – you'll end up either being the only person who's dressed up or the only person who hasn't. Or you'll pitch it colossally wrong, spunking an entire morning and two hundred quid in the National Theatre hire shop while every other guest has dug out some devil horns or a cardboard Prince Charles mask. And how the fuck is anyone meant to take a shit while dressed as Spider-Man?

sense. He had wrapped his arms, legs, torso and head in layer upon layer of tinfoil, made a couple of holes for his eyes and one for his mouth, then dispatched himself to the party as a turkey. Several hours later, he collapsed, having desiccated himself to the human equivalent of a Ryvita, and requiring hospital admission for intravenous rehydration.

Disappointingly, no one is particularly impressed by my turkey tale.* One of the Senior House Officers, Frank, tries to salvage it for me: 'Had he also crammed two kilos of stuffing up his arse?' Alas not.

Frank counters with the story of a similar patient he had last year, who decided to cover every surface of his skin with gaffer tape. 'Wasn't for a party though . . .' he adds.

I ask why, then remember why most people do most things, and thus find myself introduced – at the tender age of

* Doctors are a tough crowd at the best of times, and stories of patient idiocy are a bit like antibiotics: they lose their power in a population overexposed to them.

twenty-four – to the sexual kink of mummification.

Not much has changed in the three millennia since the process was pioneered by Ramesses and his pals, though these days people leave a couple of nostril holes for breathing. (And a third, rather larger hole on the reverse side.) Though, as this patient discovered, gaffer tape has its limitations as a mummification material. Upon 'emergence', as is apparently the term for unwrapping, it not only exfoliates effectively but also does a pretty thorough job of removing all body hair. Oh, and it circumcises.

Saturday, 25 December 2004

So here it is, Merry Christmas, everybody's having fun. Somewhere else. I'm ringing in my first 25th December on the wards by doing an impression of a smiley doctor off the telly, but it grates any time a patient or colleague wishes me a happy Christmas.

On the drive into work, the biscuity-voiced radio presenter gives a shout-out to everyone working over Christmas, and I almost beep my horn in solidarity, before remembering I'm British. Then back to wondering if the car park will be free of charge today (obviously not).

I bustle in, look up at the labour ward board and sigh. 'Has anyone referred room eight to psych yet?'

Megan, one of the midwives, sighs back at me louder and tells me to take another look at the patient's info.

- 18 years
- Declined vaginal examination throughout labour as claimed to be '**virgo intacta**'
- For psych referral as claims child is 'son of god'
- Overseas patient: Nazareth
- Excessive number of visitors in room
- Baby male infant delivered at 00.00. Condition: stable