

The ambulance chaser

by Richard Beasley

By Olivia Holm

Most lawyers I have spoken to have read and enjoyed *Hell Has Harbour Views*. They will be pleased to know that Beasley has followed up his first effort with another, equally enjoyable, to accompany it.

I first became aware of this book when I spotted a brief review in an in-flight magazine. Apart from its name (which was a good start and bound to be a dig at personal injury lawyers and insurance companies, an area close to home), it was the author that caught my attention. I was instantly intrigued as to what this theme would have to offer.

I didn't realise how difficult it would be to get my hands on a copy. I was eventually able to track down what was perhaps the last copy of this book in Canberra. Surely a good sign that it would be just as entertaining and enjoyable as *Hell Has Harbour Views*.

Beasley sets the scene by introducing the hero of the book. Chris Blake – ex-human rights and ambulance-chasing barrister, disbarred and bankrupted after investing in his father's herbal treatment business, has just secured his first job after being struck off the roll. The job – claims officer. The organisation – South Pacific Group Insurance, the world's fastest-growing insurance company. A far cry from Blake's previous life, but a job nonetheless. South Pacific was a company that had taken off in the wake of the HIH collapse and filled a void by insuring those that others wouldn't.

To retain a link with his former life,

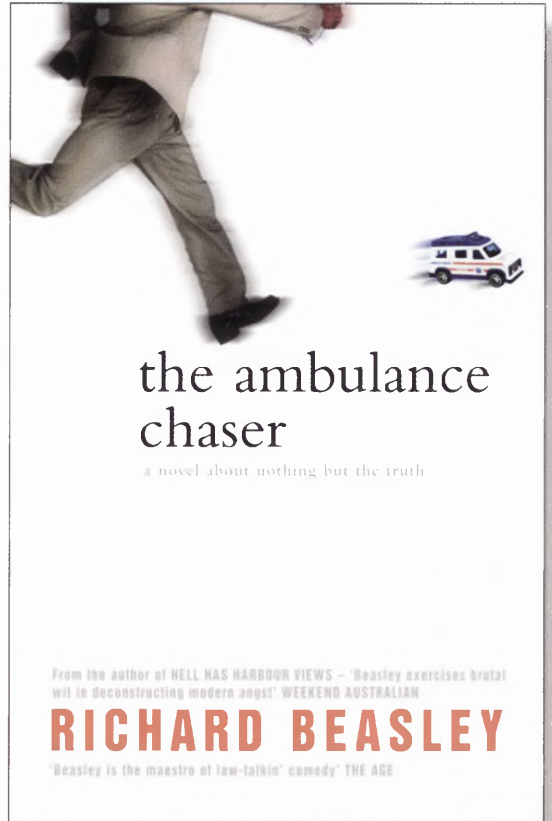
Blake volunteers at the Randwick South Legal Centre providing legal advice every Thursday to some colourful members of the community. Beasley's hilarious descriptions of these encounters conjure up feelings of empathy in those of us who have had to deal with such scenarios involving those seeking justice in an unfair world. Although, I must admit, unlike Blake, no one has ever sought advice from me about obtaining an apprehended violence order against a cat for the attempted murder of a budgerigar.

While volunteering at RSLC Blake meets Gabby, the Catherine Zeta-Jones look-a-like Hasbian (you will have to read the book!) who ultimately becomes his partner in attempting to unravel the dirty secrets behind the SP Group.

They develop an incredible theory. Are plaintiffs/claimants dying at times convenient to South Pacific in respect of the payout of their claims? Their efforts result in the accumulation (through dubious means) of overwhelming evidence pointing straight to the top of the organisation. These deaths were more than just good timing – they were planned.

Blake embarks on a plan to expose South Pacific for what is really going on; after all, he has nothing to lose and potentially everything to gain (even a new girlfriend if he plays his cards right).

There are some similarities between *The Ambulance Chaser* and *Hell Has Harbour Views* – the lawyer who seems



to have found himself in an unenviable position, the players at the top putting on the squeeze to satisfy their own objectives, and the unmistakable run of bad luck with the opposite sex – it is nonetheless enjoyable. The fact that Beasley includes reference to recent events (the HIH collapse and the Enron debacle) gives the book a sense of 'real time'. Beasley's ability to describe not only situations, but people in a humorous and light-hearted way had me laughing out loud at times and turning the pages in search for more.

Sure, it is no legal thriller with complex twists and turns, but I wasn't expecting it to be, and to be honest, not what I wanted. For me, it was one of those enjoyable books that you can just pick up at any time to read, and read it quickly. Because, let's face it, at the end of a long day at the office, sometimes that is all you really want. ■

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