

## Chapter 1

### Why Chemistry For Nurses?

Julie Otis entered the door of the science building and turned left in the wide hall. Avis Perry, her roommate, skipped lightly beside her. "Science buildings always smell, don't they?" Avis observed, sniffing. "Like - well, like science buildings!" She laughed gaily.

Julie laughed, too. "I hadn't thought of it before, but this does smell like a science building. But we may as well stop joking. You know that this nurses' chemistry lab is supposed to be serious business."

Avis grinned, and her eyes twinkled. Julie knew that there was no hope that this happy-go-lucky roommate of hers would sober down for much of anything, let alone chemistry lab.

Julie thought back a week to the day she arrived at Brookdale College. She had been hanging the blue draperies when Avis had danced into the room. Julie had been delighted to find that Avis was also taking prenursing. She had told Avis that she was taking this course because she had always wanted to go as a missionary nurse to India.

But what a lighthearted reply Avis had given: "Such noble ideals! I'm afraid I can't measure up to that. I just took a notion in my senior year of academy that I'd like to be a nurse. Nurses always look so cute in their neat white uniforms and their perky caps. Don't you think so?"

Julie had had to admit that she had not even thought of that side of nursing. Her idea of nursing had always been one of service to others. But Avis was such a dear, even if she was so impulsive that you could never know what to expect. Julie was glad that most of their classes were scheduled to come at the same times.

But this chemistry! She settled herself in the lecture room for the brief discussion and demonstration that Miss Matson, the chemistry instructor, had said would come before the lab

each week. Avis immediately began chattering to the girl in front of them, since they were a few minutes early. Julie opened her book. Chemistry wasn't her favorite subject, by any means. Of course, she had made good grades in chemistry in academy; but why take it again?

Anatomy was different - that was the class for prenurses. She almost laughed aloud when she thought of that first morning in anatomy class. It was the first class of the day for most of the prenurses, and the large lecture room was filled. She had heard that ninety girls and two young men had enrolled in prenursing, and she was sure most of them were in that anatomy class. The teacher had walked into the room as the bell rang. He glanced over the waiting group, and then opened the door of a tall cabinet.

What should he pull out but a skeleton! "Meet Mr. Bones!" he said.

Julie brought her thoughts back to the present as the chemistry instructor placed several pieces of glassware on the table. Julie sighed. Glass tubing, Bunsen burners, and flasks again.

After a few words of explanation about the equipment the students would use, the instructor took the group to the laboratory at the end of the left wing of the building. Julie saw that it was a pleasant place to work, high-ceilinged and sunny. She and Avis chose places side by side near the window, for in that way they could work together whenever partners were the rule of the day.

Julie and Avis put their equipment on the lab table and checked it with the lists they had been given. They went to the stockroom with their breakage tickets to get other supplies they would need.

Julie began arranging test tubes, beakers, and other equipment neatly in the locker. She liked to have things in order.

A gust of wind blew her pile of filter papers across the table, into the sink and onto the floor. "I don't see why we

need to study chemistry to be nurses,” she sputtered to Avis, trying to capture the papers.

“What did you say?” asked a voice behind her.

Julie turned around. Standing behind her was a young man with blond hair as curly as lamb’s wool. He had laughing blue eyes and a sport shirt like a tropical garden.

Avis giggled.

“I’m Chuck Dalton, lab assistant for this class,” the young man said. “Did I hear you say you didn’t think this class was important?” He tried to look severe, but Julie knew from the twinkle in his eyes that he was only teasing.

“Well, yes,” Julie admitted. “I did say something like that.” She grabbed the rest of the filter papers as another gust of wind caught them.

Chuck leaned over and picked up the papers that had blown to the floor.

“I don’t see why nurses need to study chemistry,” Julie said. “What good is it? After all, we’ve already had academy chemistry.”

“In this lab,” Chuck said, “you will learn to be exact and careful in your use of chemicals. Medicines - drugs - are chemicals. The doctor depends on the nurse to be exact and careful in her use and administration of medicines. The life of the patient may depend on it.”

“You are very convincing, Professor Chuck,” Julie said. “But I’m sure we’ll learn to be careful with medicines while we are taking our nurse’s course - and who ever heard of a nurse mixing medicines in an Erlen-meyer flask or over a Bunsen burner?”

Chuck laughed. “Going to be an independent sort of nurse, aren’t you? But there are other reasons why chemistry is important to you. As a nurse, you will handle many kinds of scientific apparatus. You get a good basic training in the use of scientific equipment in this lab. The equipment you will use will be different, but the ability to use it will be the same.”

Julie smiled. “You almost convince me. Any other reasons, Professor Chuck?”

The lab assistant scratched his head and frowned. "Yes, there is another. My dad is a doctor, you see, and he once said that he thought nurses lead too narrow a life. He said they are trained so intensively in the art of nursing that they neglect their general education. I think you'll find that chemistry helps to give you a well-rounded education."

There was a call from the other end of the room. "Lab assistant!"

Chuck glanced up. "Coming!" He looked at Julie again. "Ready to have your check sheet signed?"

"I think so," said Julie. "Though, of course, I'll need a few more filter papers."

Chuck put his initials on Julie's and Avis's check lists.

"Thank you for the lecture," said Julie, smiling. "We'll try to profit by it this year."

Avis laughed merrily. "We'll be your most devoted chemists, Professor Chuck! You wait and see!"