Clarion Review

General

Brain Warp
Gilbert m Snider
Gilbert M. Snider
iUniverse
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Five Stars (out of Five)

“Alcoholic vagrants die sometimes on the streets of New York City. It’s not unusual,” colleagues tell Peter Branstead, a neurologist at St. Mark’s Hospital in Greenwich Village. But when homeless men continue to show up at his hospital with what appears to be super-accelerated Alzheimer’s disease, Peter suspects something sinister. His amateur sleuthing skills lead him to a deadly plot involving anti-Alzheimer’s drugs, the Ukrainian Mafia, and the political stability of Eastern Europe.

As Peter investigates, he discovers that someone is testing an almost undetectable poison on the vagrants of Greenwich Village. The matter becomes an international one when he learns that the president of Ukraine shows symptoms identical to those that he has seen in the dead homeless men. Suddenly the neurologist’s friends are targeted by Ukrainian thugs who want to intimidate him, while Peter himself is whisked off to save the Ukrainian president from the insidious machinations of the Ukrainian Mafia.

Educated at the University of Michigan and St. Vincent’s Hospital in New York City, Gil Snider, like his protagonist, is a neurologist. He works in Chesapeake, Virginia. *Brain Warp* is his first novel, but it demonstrates the skill and readability that one would expect from a more seasoned writer.

A joy to read, *Brain Warp* is an exemplar of the medical thriller genre. Much of the novel's success is due to its main character. Though he studies the complex workings of the brain, protagonist Peter functions well as an Everyman. He is an avid bicyclist with a curious mind and a tender heart for his girlfriend and other friends. Peter's heroics, including a nail-biting bicycle race through the winding streets of the Ukrainian capital, seem realistic; although, for those who want them, ass-kicking secret agents do appear.

Structurally speaking, *Brain Warp* evinces a high level of skill. Snider keeps his large cast organized while the two major plot threads—one in New York City, one in the Ukraine—move at an engrossing clip and eventually intertwine. Plot twists and turns keep characters in jeopardy and the audience engaged. Finally, the science is believable enough to be read as cutting-edge and menacing, but not so complex as to lose non-technical readers. Fast, addictive, and skillfully plotted, *Brain Warp* delivers a high-quality yarn that bodes well for the author's second novel, currently in progress.