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Thriller

Flashblind
Paul Bernstein
Zova Books
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Flashblind is a first-rate medical thriller written by an actual medical doctor. As the plot unfolds, geneticist Jake Holder discovers that his brother, Sean, has inherited a rare disease that renders his body incapable of repairing the damage from even trivial amounts of ultraviolet radiation, making it impossible to spend time in daylight. Worse still, he has developed advanced melanoma, a deadly skin cancer similar to that which affected his mother. In his quest to save his brother's life, Jake moves back to his hometown in New Mexico in order to conduct research at Los Alamos National Laboratory, the infamous site of the Manhattan Project.

As his investigation progresses, there appears to be a link between the government's Cold War-era radiation experiments, his father's untimely death, and his brother and mother's maladies. In addition to suggesting a way to repair Sean's defective DNA, it might also revolutionize medicines for both cancer and aging. Clearly such discoveries would have world-altering consequences, making whoever controls them inordinately wealthy and powerful. Jake's work places him on a collision course with a biotech company looking for the same things.

Fascinating and informative, *Flashblind* entertains while exploring important ethical considerations. Over the last half-century, the US Government has conducted more than 4,000 radiation experiments, many so unscrupulous by today's standards that they are hard to believe. These include not only the Manhattan District experiments, but also the Boston Project, Rochester Experiment, California Experiment, The Green Run, Operation Crossroads, and the Flashblindness Experiments of 1951 that influenced the book's title. Government-sponsored radiation experiments are not the only incidents when informed consent is vitally important to patients.

The book has it all: action, intrigue, suspense, and even a bit of romance. Solid characterization, believable dialogue, and a healthy dose of realism drive this medical drama.

Author Dr. Paul Bernstein is a medical historian, Head and Neck Surgeon, and the Medical Director of a large health care organization headquartered in San Diego. This expertise makes the novel credible, readable, and very hard to put down. He has written nine novels and won awards in the London and San Francisco book festivals.

Lawrence Kane