

### *Specific Gravity*

J. Matthew Neal

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Reviewed by Cherie Fisher for Reader Views (10/07)

The author J. Matthew Neal has a winner with his first book. This thriller has it all: murder, espionage and romance, all in a high-technology setting. I was almost instantly engaged by the book and did not want to put it down until the very end. Neal's experience as a physician gives him the insight that leads to this first-class thriller.

Dr. Alex Darkkin, a brilliant oncology radiologist, is very unsatisfied with his life. To make a change he decides to take a temporary position at a hospital in San Diego where his sister Wendy is a pediatrician. He quickly gets more than he bargained for. As he is reviewing past cases, he decides to take a look at test results from the recently deceased pharmaceutical executive John Markham. What he finds is very disturbing – the test results have been altered to cover something up. Alex joins forces with his sister's best friend, Bonnie Mendoza, who is very gifted even though she is hearing impaired. She has won international physical competitions, is renowned as a forensic scientist, an accomplished escapist to raise funds for charity. Whew! That's a lot to put into one character.

The story is one of the most bizarre murder plots that I have ever read. I won't ruin the story by telling you what the murder weapon was, but the cast of characters involved were very colorful to say the least. The only shortfall I found in the story was that sometimes the terminology was a little over my head. The author could probably have explained a little less and the story would still have been just as engaging. I was able to quickly go through these parts and still find the story very engaging.

Overall, I found this to be a very well-written book for the first time author. I really hope he plans to expand on these characters and that we will see them again in another thriller. I would highly recommend this people who enjoy thrillers, especially techno thrillers. If "Specific Gravity" is an example of the author's talent, I think that this will be the beginning of a long successful career.