



The Family That Couldn't Sleep: Unravelling a Venetian Medical Mystery

By D. T. Max

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The first symptoms begin after just a few sleepless nights, with shaking, sweating and overwhelming anxiety. They end only after months of agonising open-eyed deterioration when the victim finally falls into a coma-like state of exhaustion and then dies. Fatal Familial Insomnia is a rare, inherited disease that has afflicted one noble Venetian family for centuries, striking at random and passing from generation to generation like a deadly dynastic curse. The cause? A rogue protein called a prion, which is impossible to destroy and is also responsible for Mad Cow Disease and scrapie in sheep. In this ground-breaking work of scientific detection, D. T. Max pins down this most mutable and maddening of enemies and tells a story that is at once enlightening and spell-binding.

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