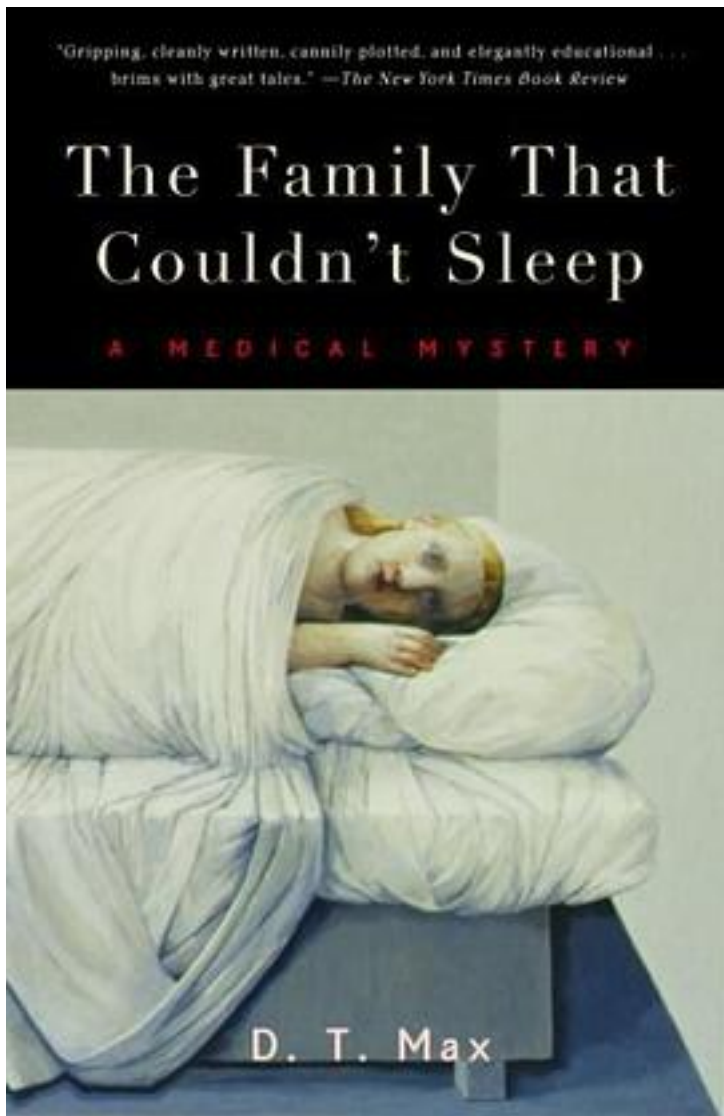


The Family That Couldn't Sleep



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著者:D.T. Max

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For two hundred years a noble Venetian family has suffered from an inherited disease that strikes their members in middle age, stealing their sleep, eating holes in their brains, and ending their lives in a matter of months. In Papua New Guinea, a primitive tribe is nearly obliterated by a sickness whose chief symptom is uncontrollable laughter. Across Europe, millions of sheep rub their fleeces raw before collapsing. In England, cows attack their owners in the milking parlors, while in the American West, thousands of deer starve to death in fields full of grass.

What these strange conditions—including fatal familial insomnia, kuru, scrapie, and mad cow disease—share is their cause: prions. Prions are ordinary proteins that sometimes go wrong, resulting in neurological illnesses that are always fatal. Even more mysterious and frightening, prions are almost impossible to destroy because they are not alive and have no DNA—and the diseases they bring are now spreading around the world.

In *The Family That Couldn't Sleep*, essayist and journalist D. T. Max tells the spellbinding story of the prion's hidden past and deadly future. Through exclusive interviews and original archival research, Max explains this story's connection to human greed and ambition—from the Prussian chemist Justus von Liebig, who made cattle meatier by feeding them the flesh of other cows, to New Guinean natives whose custom of eating the brains of the dead nearly wiped them out. The biologists who have investigated these afflictions are just as extraordinary—for example, Daniel Carleton Gajdusek, a self-described

“pedagogic pedophiliac pediatrician” who cracked kuru and won the Nobel Prize, and another Nobel winner, Stanley Prusiner, a driven, feared self-promoter who identified the key protein that revolutionized prion study.

With remarkable precision, grace, and sympathy, Max—who himself suffers from an inherited neurological illness—explores maladies that have tormented humanity for centuries and gives reason to hope that someday cures will be found. And he eloquently demonstrates that in our relationship to nature and these ailments, we have been our own worst enemy.

Advance praise

“*The Family that Couldn't Sleep* is a riveting detective story that plumbs one of the deepest mysteries of biology. The story takes the reader from the torments of an Italian family cursed with sleeplessness to the mad cows of England (and, now, America), following an unlikely trail of misfolded proteins. D. T. Max unfolds his absorbing narrative with rare grace and makes the science sing.” —Michael Pollan, author of *The Omnivore's Dilemma* and *The Botany of Desire*

“Much has been written about prions and Mad Cow Disease—nearly all of it is worthless. Thankfully, from the world of journalism comes D.T. Max to set things right. Throw all those other “Mad Cow” books in the trash: This is the book to read about prions—or whatever you want to call them. It's a riveting tale, told by someone with a very special understanding, derived in part from his own strange ailment. Find a cozy spot, clear your schedule and dive in.”

– Laurie Garrett, author of *Betrayal of Trust* and *The Coming Plague*

“D. T. Max deftly unfolds the mysterious prion in all its villainous guises. Although scientists do not fully understand these proteins—how they replicate and wreak such havoc in their victims’ brains—The Family That Couldn’t Sleep reveals their historical, cultural, and scientific place in our world. Prepare to be enlightened, entertained, and frightened.”

—Katrina Firlik, MD, author of Another Day in the Frontal Lobe

“A great book. D.T. Max has drawn the curtain on a cabinet of folly and malady that will stagger your imagination.”

— Philip Weiss, author of American Taboo

“D.T. Max has combined the enthralling medical anthropology of Oliver Sacks with the gothic horror of Stephen King to produce a medical detective story that is as intelligent as it is spooky. The villain of The Family That Couldn’t Sleep is the prion, a tiny little protein that causes some of the most terrifying, brain-mangling, creepy diseases known to man. Always fascinating—how could it not be, given that its characters include cannibals, mad cows, madder sheep, a Nobel prize-winning pedophile, and, most poignantly, an Italian family cursed by fatal insomnia?—Max’s book is also a gripping account of scientific discovery, and a heartfelt meditation on what it means to be cursed with an incurable, and brutal, illness.” — David Plotz, author of The Genius Factory

From the Hardcover edition.

作者介绍:

麥克斯 (D.T. Max)

出生於紐約市，1984年畢業於哈佛大學。曾任華盛頓廣場出版社、Houghton Mifflin出版社，及《紐約觀察家周報》編輯。過去八年，主要為《紐約時報雜誌》寫作，其餘作品散見《紐約客》、《華爾街日報》、《舊金山紀事報》及《芝加哥論壇報》。

潘震澤

國立台灣大學動物系學士及碩士，美國密西根州韋恩州立大學生理學博士。曾任國立陽明大學生理學研究所教授兼所長，並獲國科會傑出獎、慶齡基礎醫學獎等榮譽。現任教美國奧克蘭大學護理學院。

近年關心科普讀物譯介，著有：《科學論文寫作與發表》、《科學讀書人》及《生活無處不科學》；譯有：《天才的學徒》、《人體生理學》、《誰先來》、《幹嘛要抽菸》、《基因組圖譜解密》、《為什麼斑馬不會得胃潰瘍》、《器官神話》、《睡眠的迷人世界》、《DNA圖解小百科》、《生命的線索》、《基因煉獄》、《夢的新解析》、《虛擬的解剖刀》及《死亡也可以治療》等書；並擔任《科學人》編譯委員。

楊宗宏

畢業於國立台灣大學動物系。美國加州大學聖地牙哥分校的斯科利浦斯海洋研究所（Scripps Institution of Oceanography）海洋生物學博士。其後在台灣大學醫學院、史丹佛大學霍布金斯海洋研究站（Hopkins Marine Station）以及科羅拉多大學的健康科學中心（University of

Colorado, Health Science Center) 從事蛋白質功能、物性和化性的研究。對生化、生理、生態和演化皆有涉獵，先後在國際專業期刊中發表了近二十篇相關論文。過去十二年來在聖地牙哥的生物製藥公司，從事蛋白質藥物的研發工作。閒暇時，從事科普著作的翻譯。

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