



## **The First Family**

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A riveting new medical thriller from the critically acclaimed novelists.

Cam Hilliard is, in addition to being the President's sixteen-year-old son, a chess prodigy. A year into President Hilliard's second term Cam inexplicably stops playing the game he loved and becomes withdrawn. The First Lady is convinced that the senior White House physician is wrong in diagnosing Cam's issue as a psychological one, and she demands that Dr. Lee Blackwood be brought on to provide a second opinion. Lee's opinion is dismissed, until Cam's spleen ruptures and it becomes obvious that something is horribly wrong.

Lee informs the President and First Lady that to make a diagnosis they need to find other people with the same symptoms to conduct additional testing. From there, it's possible to identify the gene defects and correlate those to the missing enzymes. Only then can a diagnosis be made and treatment begun. For now, they must face the harsh reality that Cam's genes are producing a mutation that appears to be entirely new to science.

As Lee delves into this medical mystery, he comes to believe Cam is not the first case of this presentation of an inborn error of metabolism. But when two young people Lee has found, each with exceptional gifts, are murdered, Cam's condition suddenly takes on a terrifyingly new dimension. Is someone out to murder the President's son? If so, why? As Lee searches for answers he will uncover unimaginable secrets and dark betrayals that breach the highest levels of security.

## **The First Family Details**

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## From Reader Review The First Family for online ebook

### Patrice Hoffman says

When Netgalley notified me my wish had come true to receive an advance readers copy of *The First Family* by Michael and Daniel Palmer, I was quite happy (to say the least). I've read books by the father/son duo independently of each other, but I have never had the pleasure of reading a title written by the two of them. Both authors are favorites of mine. The way they compose their medical thrillers always grabs my attention and barely lets up the whole ride through.

*The First Family* is no different. Cam Hilliard is suffering from some unknown symptoms that cause his mother, the First Lady of the United States Ellen Hilliard, to call in reinforcements. She turns to Cam's trusted secret service detail Karen who enlists the help of her ex-husband. On paper he's a family doctor, but in all actuality he's a great diagnostician. He's house... but less asshole. Much less asshole.

Dr. Lee Blackwood is immediately drawn in by Cam's case since his symptoms don't seem to fall neatly into any medical boxes he can decipher. Also, the first family's doctor seems to be thwarting all Lee's attempts at diagnosing the problem. He wants to chalk Cam's odd behavior to being depressed. Lee isn't so convinced.

So... like most thrillers, things get a little crazy. People start dying and there's a mysterious puppet-master pulling the strings. This puppet-master will stop at nothing to ensure that Lee does not get to the bottom of whatever Cam's true medical problems are.

Because I'm used to their writing, individually, it was nice to see that the story flowed seamlessly. There were no moments I felt pulled from the story because the writing didn't match or the plot just didn't fit. Although I did lose a little steam midway through this novel, it wasn't due to the authors since they managed to maintain tension throughout the novel. I lost steam because it's hard being working full-time, going to school part-time, and reviewing. Time gets away from me, yet each time I returned back to reading *The First Family*, I was immediately drawn back in for the little time I did have to devote to it.

Ultimately, *The First Family* was a fun, thrilling read. Michael and Daniel Palmer kept me guessing the whole way through. I won't deny that I expected them to deliver a great read and it's more than refreshing that they delivered. I definitely recommend this title to those who are familiar with their work. For those who are unfamiliar, I say hold on tight and enjoy the ride.

*Copy provided by St. Martin's Press via Netgalley*

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### Rosa says

Thank you to St Martin's Press for granting my wish on Net Galley in return for an honest review.

This review is also published on my blog :  
<https://onewordtoomuch.wordpress.com/...>

I love this book so much, I finished it in 4 days (happens with the books I love). I can't wait to turn the next page to see what's going on the next chapter. The one thing that stops me is my heavy eyelids or running out

of battery.

*This is a thrilling story with a flair of drama and fast paced action. Mostly the action is on the medical premises but all the details are pictured in perfect words that make me feel in the middle of the action itself.*

**The story** about the first family is very intriguing. I've always been curious about the life behind the White House closed doors. Were they as any regular family only with the most prestigious job in the world? How do you deal with all the pressure? This book somehow pictured the first family as any normal family, with crisis, drama, and lots of love. There were also some political stuff, but mostly it's about human ego.

As the story goes, there's a disease that happen to a couple of kids including the president's son. At first, nobody sees the connection, but 1 doctor (Lee Blackwood) is working hard to reveal the mystery. Here's where things get interesting. The official doctor is trying to keep him at bay but he won't give up. With the help from his ex-wife who is a secret service agent, first lady and his son, Lee tried to unravel the mysterious illness, since lives is at stake here.

Nearly at the end, Lee got the answer, and here's where the plot is twisted. I didn't predict that the case is actually quite simple. The clues have been thrown all over the place and make me guess who's making these kids sick and who's trying to kill them. I'm not going to tell it here, since it's going to be a spoiler.

**The characters** have quite strong attitude. Each of them has their own ego and interest. Sometimes they fight and argue. But their story intertwined beautifully and strongly that will leave you a good impression. There is a lot of emotional battle inside and between the characters. I like it. It's what makes us human being. This is the point where this story feels real.

**Recommend** for those who like fast paced story with a background of medicine, unsuspected twisty plot, and quite a lot of human emotion.

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### **Tim says**

A decent ending brought this story to 3 stars. Fact is, there was too much unnecessary violence and death or my rating could have been higher. 6 of 10 stars

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### **Kristen says**

In Michael and Daniel Palmer's The First Family, this gripping medical thriller is so twisted and shocking, that it would have you at the edge of your seat. It all started with Cam Hilliard, the president's son and chess prodigy. Lately, he haven't been himself and seem depressed among other exhibiting symptoms. For Karen Ray, a Secret Service Agent who's in charge of his safety had become concerns and informed Cam's parents. But she also had to butt heads with Dr. Fred Gleason, who would do anything to keep her and her ex-husband, Dr. Lee Blackwood, away from finding out the truth and his own secret. For Lee, he started to

connect the dots between Cam's condition and other similar cases that seem to be connected to the TPI, a private institute that educated child prodigies from art to chess. And Susie Banks was one of those students, after she almost died in her home from carbon monoxide poisoning and lost her parents in the process. There's a hidden killer lurking in their presence who would do anything to knock them out of the equation. For Karen and Lee, they would stop a prevailing danger from escalating and keep everyone safe, when the shocking truth who was behind it and what connected them together would blow you away...

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### **Brenda - Traveling Sister says**

The First Family is an intelligent and chilling medical suspense thriller that was a little too heavy on the medical part for me and this affected my enjoyment for this story. I wanted the story to move forward more quickly and found the heaviness to slow down the story for me and I became lost with what was going on. Even though this was not the right kind of thriller for me I still recommend to readers who like a medical side to their thriller.

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### **Donna Hines says**

Imagine if you will the Presidents son is under your watch 24-7 and becomes ill from a mysterious illness and your neck is on the line if anything happens to him.

Ok, now just imagine that it's not only Cam Hilliard whose sick along with several other young individuals with similar ailments.

Could there be a pharmacy of underground dealings with the black market in operation?

Is someone targeting the presidents son for political reasons and or gains?

Is the entire family at risk or is this isolated to just the 16 yo son?

Whatever is going on you can be sure Karen ( secret service agent) will go to bat to protect the First Family but at what cost?

What if it's an internal situation and the family is at risk of illness or worse sudden death.

As the symptoms escalate so too does the excitement in this new thriller by Michael Palmer.

Those at the top didn't just fall there but perhaps they had help and it may just have been in the form of a lil pill to improve cognitive function.

I enjoyed the mystery and intrigue and the finale was exceptional and not what I expected.

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### **Amrita says**

The First Family started off well enough and brought to mind some of Robin Cook's books. But somewhere in the middle, it lost both the pace and the plot and there was no coming back. Most of the plot twists were too far-fetched and the final reveal was disappointing.

\*Received an ARC from NetGalley in exchange for an honest review.

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## **Judy Collins says**

Another Winner by Daniel Palmer! *Review to follow.*

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## **Kaceey - Traveling Sister says**

**3.5\***

I've read a number of Michael Palmer's earlier books, but this was my first from his son Daniel.

Set in Washington, centering on the Presidents' family. When the President's son Cam starts showing vague signs of illness, the White House physician strangely doesn't seem a bit concerned. Both the President and First Lady insist on a second opinion. Specifically, they ask for Dr. Lee Blackwood, a family physician with a practice based conveniently in Washington. He also just happens to be the ex-husband of Karen, part of the secret service detail protecting the first family. When Lee becomes alarmed at the symptoms the presidents' son is presenting, he quickly concludes that Cam may not be the only one falling ill. Is there a great deal more to this illness? Is there a reason Cam was targeted? And who's next?

This book started off with a bang, but then stalled out a bit midway through. In my humble opinion, I believe the potential for something else bigger and better was missed. (But that's just me?)

But give it a try! If medical and political thrillers are your cup of tea you may end up really enjoying this one.

Thank you to NetGalley, St. Martin's Press and Michael & Daniel Palmer for an ARC to read in exchange for an honest review.

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## **Denise says**

Enjoyable medical thriller despite the necessity to suspend disbelief at some of the implausibility of activities, events, and coincidences, as well as the liberties taken with privacy and confidentiality laws surrounding medical records. I had a few issues but I kept reminding myself that this was fiction and just kept on reading.

Dr. Lee Blackwood is like "Superdoctor" and also happens to have a wife who's the Secret Service detail for the First Family and a son who is ex-military. All of these connections come in handy when he's asked to diagnose teenager Cam Hilliard -- the First Son. Seems that his unusual symptoms have led the President's physician to suggest psychiatric intervention and Cam says he's not depressed. Of course Dr. Blackwood finds something else...AND there happens to be another person, a talented violinist -- who may have a similar condition. NO SPOILERS but this all ties in with complicated science, neurophysiology, brain enhancers and genetics.

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### **Sue says**

I have always been a big fan of Michael Palmer's books. I am glad his son is continuing on in his footsteps. I loved The First Family.

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### **Zoe says**

Descriptive, entertaining, and action packed!

The First Family is a scientifically intriguing medical thriller that takes you into the heart of the White House and delves into the effects of alternative medicine, training, and practice on higher-level cognitive skills.

The writing is crisp. The characters are intelligent, protective, and relentless. And the plot is an engaging tale about greed, corruption, friendship, politics, mysterious illnesses, violence, and murder.

The First Family doesn't keep you on the edge of your seat or feature a lot of suspense, but it's still a compelling read that fans of stories filled with Secret Service drama, medical analysis and scientific jargon will definitely enjoy.

Thank you to St. Martin's Press and NetGalley for providing me with a copy in exchange for an honest review.

All my reviews can be found on my blog at <https://whatsbetterthanbooks.com>

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### **Janet says**

I received a DIGITAL Advance Reader Copy of this book from #NetGalley in exchange for an honest review.

From the publisher -

The President's teenaged son is threatened by a potentially fatal illness that is rooted in dark secrets from a long-buried past.

President Geoffrey Hilliard and his family live in the ever-present glare of the political limelight, with relentless scrutiny of their daily lives. The White House is not an easy place to grow up, so when the President's son Cam, a sixteen-year-old chess champion, experiences extreme fatigue, moodiness, and an uncharacteristic violent outburst, doctors are quick to dismiss his troubles as teen angst. But Secret Service agent Karen Ray, whose job is to guard the president's family with her life, is convinced Cam's issues are serious – serious enough to summon her physician ex-husband for a second opinion.

Dr. Lee Blackwood's concerns are dismissed by the president's team – until Cam gets sicker. Lee must make a diagnosis from a puzzling array of symptoms he's never seen before. His only clue is a patient named Susie Banks, a young musical prodigy who seems to be suffering from the same baffling condition as Cam. Hospitalized after an attempt on her life by a determined killer, Susie's jeopardy escalates as Cam's condition takes on a terrifying new dimension.

Is someone trying to murder the President's son?

As Lee and Karen race for a cure to Cam's mysterious and deadly disease, they begin to uncover betrayals that breach the highest levels of national security.

Returning to the same Washington, DC setting of *The First Patient*, *The First Family* is a riveting new medical drama from acclaimed novelist Daniel Palmer, in the tradition of his late father, New York Times bestselling novelist Michael Palmer.

I am SO HAPPY that Daniel Palmer is taking over the Dr. Blackwood character from his much missed, greatly loved, late father Michael Palmer's books. I loved Michael's work – ask my husband about the vacation where I ignored him as I read "The Fifth Vial" ...one he read it after our return he understood! It was nice to revisit the character of Lee Blackwood as well – this story kept me totally engrossed just like that time I was on vacation. I highly recommend it to any mystery fan!

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### **Kim says**

Thanks to NetGalley and St. Martin's Press for providing an eARC in exchange for an honest review.

4 1/2 Stars

I loved the medical thrillers of Michael Palmer and although he sadly passed away in 2013, his son Daniel, a respected writer himself, has been doing a wonderful job completing his unfinished manuscripts. *The First Family* is the third book after *Trauma* and *Mercy* that I've read by the father/son duo and I enjoyed it every bit as much as the first two. My only criticism is that the medical terminology is a bit much at times and slows down what otherwise is a non-stop thrill ride. There's also some eyebrow raising implausible situations featured in the story. But with relatable characters you can't help but connect with and the way both writers manage to make things like complicated genetic anomalies, brain enhancers, and neurophysiology fascinating, these are minor complaints. If you enjoy edgy medical thrillers filled with plenty of mystery and suspense, I can't recommend *The First Family* highly enough!

Also reviewed at <http://cadburypom.wordpress.com>

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### **Debbie says**

*The First Family*  
Michael Palmer & Daniel Palmer

#### **STORY 5-**

Palmer's latest medical thriller is one he\*1 heck of a who-done-it dropping readers smack dab into the middle of a whopping mystery and leaving his audience scratching their heads trying to connect the dots and discover this evil villain until the very end. The author's incisive medically induced narrative validates the content and the wide range of characters both titans and mere mortals alike ooze authenticity - a real winning combo. Dr. Blackwood is an especially compassionate character endearing himself to a wide audience range who fondly remembers their own family practitioner and whose candor about his profession makes this a pseudo cautionary tale about the monetization of the medicine.

**NARRATION 4-**

This was my first experience with the narration of Fred Berman but it won't be my last because his announcer type style was perfect for this novel. He kept the emotion to a minimum but added a well-timed sigh/gasp etc... when needed keeping a perfect pace for this swift-moving story. His male voices were excellent and his female voices were good. The only thing that could have been better would have been deeper distinctions between the players.

#### SYNOPSIS:

When chess prodigy and the sitting US President's son Camden Hilliard is suddenly afflicted with strange medical ailments both physical and mental the first family's personal physician is quick to attribute it to simple teenaged anxiety and depression. However the Secret Service agent who's been protecting Cam for many years, Karen Ray isn't so sure and asks her ex-husband and family doc extraordinaire Lee Blackwood to take a look at Cam. While investigating these strange ailments Lee stumbles across another case involving a young woman and violin prodigy with similar problems who happens to attend the same pricey exclusive after school academy but who's barely hanging on to life after suffering a tragic accident. When near fatal accidents keep happening to this girl Lee and Karen are convinced someone's trying to kill her and are also convinced both she and Cam are suffering too similar symptoms to be coincidental. But trying to convince the President and First Lady that they know better than the White House doctor will be an uphill battle at most.

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