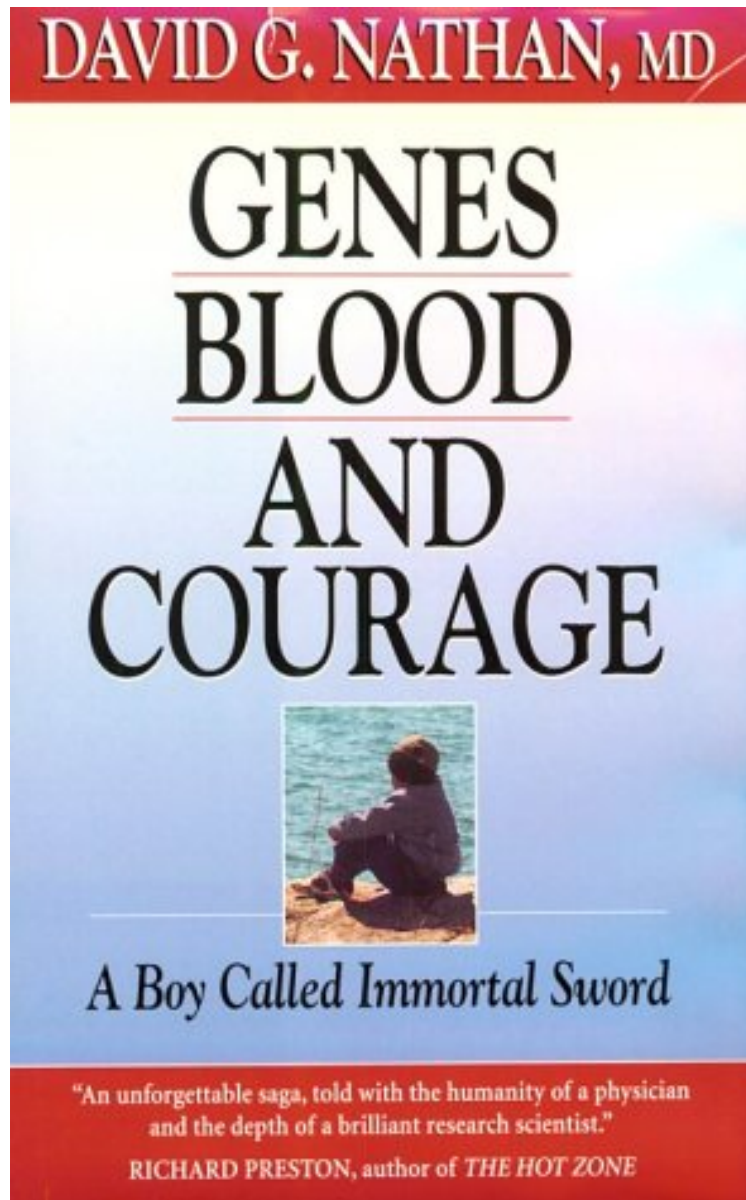


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Genes, Blood, and Courage: A Boy Called Immortal Sword

David Nathan

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David Nathan : Genes, Blood, and Courage: A Boy Called Immortal Sword before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Genes, Blood, and Courage: A Boy Called Immortal Sword:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. The writing was clear and easy to followBy AngelyneDid Genes,

Blood, and Courage meet your expectations? Yes, absolutely yes. I am a teaching assistant in a class where this book is a required reading, and it is required for several reasons. The science is really well explained by the first person who did the work. The writing was clear and easy to follow, which, I must tell you, is a rarity in science and medicine. This is a good read for doctors, future doctors, health professionals, and patients with rare diseases. 9 of 9 people found the following review helpful. outstanding
By A Customer
Although when I bought the book, I expected more of a focus on the boy of the title "Immortal Sword", I found it was much more than a description of a child's struggle with thalassemia. While Immortal Sword served as the focal point for the book, this was really an account by the author (the physician who treated the boy) of his developing interest in understanding thalassemia and the search for more effective treatments. The author is a gifted writer able to explain complicated medical concepts in a concise and simple way to a lay audience. One can also sense his dedication to his patients (he even plans a surprise birthday party for Immortal Sword-- how many doctor's become close enough to their patient's to do that?). Although thalassemia is not a commonly discussed disease like sickle cell, it can be devastating and does affect certain ethnic groups--particularly mediterranean in origin-- more than others. Overall, a very interesting book from the humanistic standpoint of understanding this disorder's impact on the lives of the sufferer as well as tracing the medical development in the understanding of the disorder and its treatment.

David Nathan was stunned when he first saw Dayem Saif at Children's Hospital in Boston in September 1968. Dayem was then a six-year-old with the stature of an average-sized boy of two. He wore baby shoes on his tiny feet and was unable to walk without holding his mother's hand. His color was dark yet pasty and his face horribly misshapen. The child was being ravaged by thalassemia, a life-threatening inherited disease of the blood, and one of the leading causes of disfigurement, disability, and death in children worldwide. Without effective treatment, Dayem would almost certainly die before his twentieth birthday. *Genes, Blood, and Courage* is David Nathan's absorbing story of the thirty-year struggle to keep Dayem alive. "Immortal Sword" is the English translation of Dayem's Arabic name, and under Nathan's care Dayem, indeed, seems immortal. Despite his continual reluctance to follow his doctor's orders and the repeated hospitalizations that result, Dayem--the misshapen, stunted boy--survives to become a handsome, successful businessman. In *Genes, Blood, and Courage* Nathan goes beyond his struggles with this seemingly immortal patient to describe in detail the emergence, over the past twenty-five years, of an entirely new force in medical care called molecular medicine. As Dayem's case illustrates, this new area of human genetic research--in which Nathan is a leading clinical investigator--promises tremendous advances in the rational diagnosis, prevention, and treatment of inherited disorders, such as thalassemia and sickle cell anemia, and even of acquired illnesses such as cancer and infectious disease. *Genes, Blood, and Courage* is a celebration not just of Dayem's triumphs but also of the tremendous accomplishments and potential of the American biomedical research enterprise in the late twentieth century.

From Library Journal
In discussing the advances being made in the treatment of the genetic blood disorder thalassemia, most common in the Mediterranean and Middle East, physician Nathan's very readable and engrossing account focuses on his own contributions as a researcher/clinician and his experiences in particular with one of his patients. First encountered as a frail, stunted child, Dayem Saif (whose Arabic name translates as "Immortal Sword") had a sharply limited life expectancy. Despite his rebelliousness and adolescent noncompliance with Nathan's orders, Saif survived his illness and is now a successful businessman. At a time when funding for medical research is under siege even as significant advances in molecular biology are being realized and reaching the clinical stage, the human aspects of increasingly technical and complicated medicine are important to understand. Although it would have been helpful to represent a somewhat broader spectrum of patients, especially those who don't share Saif's wealthy and cosmopolitan circumstances, this book will interest not only those affected by this disease but also anyone who wants to understand the new advances in contemporary medicine. Highly recommended.
?Mary Chitty, Cambridge Healthtech, Waltham, Mass.
Copyright 1995 Reed Business Information, Inc. An absorbing, clearly told tale of modern science linked to a moving and morally complex story: of a real person struggling not just to survive but also to reconcile that exhausting task with the conflicting yearning for a normal life...When he deals with medical ethics and the value to science of such techniques as fetal tissue research and genetic engineering, Dr. Nathan's opinions, formed as they are by the real battle with real disease, count for a great deal. His defense of genetic engineering against the well-intentioned opposition it has created is especially eloquent...Dr. Nathan predicts that after another decade of hard work, gene transfer therapy will be able to cure inherited diseases like thalassemia. Meanwhile, *Genes, Blood and Courage* is a fascinating account of the mileposts on the long journey that have been reached so far. --Richard Bernstein (New York Times)
Genes, Blood, and Courage...is a hybrid-part medical detective story, part philosophy, part human narrative, part memoir. The work sets us to ruminating about the evolution of three-and-a-half billion years of life on our planet--on natural selection and its ability to subtract, on mutation and its ability to add...At the same time, this complex work is built upon a beautiful, elucidating narrative structure--the story of a child with thalassaemia whose experiences we follow through 27 years of treatment, through the transforming work of molecular biology and genetics that has come to inform the practice of medicine in new and extraordinary ways today. This narrative, like the shape of the double

helix--the spiral backbone of DNA--provides the structure for the scientific and ethical debates of our time...For the reader who is not versed in the medical sciences, the strong narrative threads sustain the reader's interest. For those who wish to track the recent history of support for basic science and medical research in terms of current efforts to limit spending in these areas, there is much to be learned here. For those who wish to take the long view, to consider the remarkable journey of living things during the long history of life on this planet, the study of thalassaemia and its survival in the population where it confers protection against malaria is a fascinating tale. --Myra Sklarew (Nature)This medical and scientific drama is so engagingly written that to open the pages will ensure its reading...There is no doubt that Nathan has written a remarkable book that demonstrates the compatibility, indeed necessity, of combining hard science, medical technology and human compassion. The peaks and valleys of emotion that accompany success and failure in the treatment of chronic disease have never been better described. His account highlights over and over again that clinical investigation, anchored firmly in molecular biology, will inevitably lead to better understanding of human disease. --Alexander G. Beam (Nature)Nathan's very readable and engrossing account focuses on his own contributions as a researcher/clinician and his experiences in particular with one of his patients...At a time when funding for medical research is under siege even as significant advances in molecular biology are being realized and reaching the clinical stage, the human aspects of increasingly technical and complicated medicine are important to understand...This book will interest not only those affected by this disease but also anyone who wants to understand the new advances in contemporary medicine. Highly recommended. (Library Journal)This is a heart-warming, instructive and very readable book...[It] shows medicine at its best. Its author seems to combine compassion, humor, and understanding with an iron determination to keep his patient alive and well in the face of almost insuperable medical and temperamental obstacles. At the same time, Nathan tried to probe ever more deeply into the molecular lesions responsible for the disease, always hoping that the next results of his research will lead to a cure. So far, disappointingly, they have failed to do so, but hope is not lost. I found the book a pleasure to read and now think of its author as an old friend. --Max Perutz (Times Higher Education Supplement)The trials and tribulations of treating Dayem emphasize the two very different disciplines of patient-based medicine and laboratory-based research: those laboratory experiments that point the way towards a cure often do not take into account the psychological makeup of the patient or the sheer impracticality of unconventional treatment in daily life. Nathan's experience allows him to combine these two issues brilliantly. *Genes, Blood, and Courage* is admirably written, stimulating, and accessible to all. --Clare Thompson (The Lancet)The strength and beauty of this book come from the interweaving of Dayem's story from 1968 to the present with the medical and scientific struggles of his physician, David Nathan, Robert A. Stranahan Professor of Pediatrics at Harvard Medical School...A very human medical detective story unfolds, allowing readers to follow the excitement of the advances in the study and treatment of thalassaemia major. --Elias Schwartz, M.D. (New England Journal of Medicine)David Nathan, a leading American haematologist, has written a remarkable and compelling book which fuses human narrative with exemplary science writing...[A] humane and important book. --D. H. Bevan (Annals of Human Genetics)[A] fascinating book. --Ed Edelson (Helix)This extraordinary account describes the struggle to discover the causes and appropriate treatment of beta thalassaemia...This book will help educate the general public on the importance of clinical research, and will empower aspiring and veteran researchers to continue their search for the causes and cures of hereditary disorders. (Choice)About the AuthorDavid G. Nathan, M.D., is the Robert A. Stranahan Professor of Pediatrics, Harvard Medical School, and Physician-in-Chief, Children's Hospital, Boston.