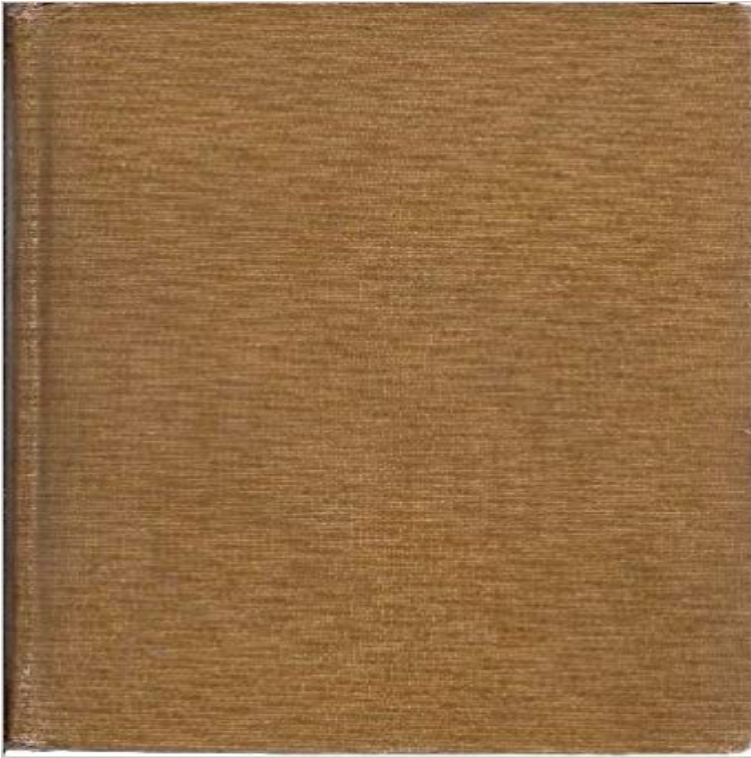


# Gladiator



I see thee in the hemisphere advanced and made a constellation there! --From Ben Jonsons Mr. William Shakespeare \*\*\* a selection from the first chapter: ONCE upon a time in Colorado lived a man named Abednego Danner and his wife, Matilda. Abednego Danner was a professor of biology in a small college in the town of Indian Creek. He was a spindling wisp of a man, with a nature drawn well into itself by the assaults of the world and particularly of the grim Mrs. Danner, who understood nothing and undertook all. Nevertheless these two lived modestly in a frame house on the hem of Indian Creek and they appeared to be a settled and peaceful couple. The chief obstacle to Mrs. Banners placid dominion of her hearth was Professor Banners laboratory, which occupied a room on the first floor of the house. It was the one impregnable redoubt in her domestic stronghold. Neither threat nor entreaty would drive him and what she termed his stinking, unchristian, unhealthy dinguses from that room. It never occurred to Professor Danner that he was a great man or a genius. His alarm at such a notion would have been pathetic. He was so fascinated by the trend of his thoughts and experiments, in fact, that he scarcely realized by what degrees he had outstripped a world that wore picture hats, hobble skirts, and straps beneath its trouser legs. However, as the century turned and the fashions changed, he was carried further from them, which was just as well. On a certain Sunday he sat beside his wife in church, singing snatches of the hymns in a doleful and untrue voice and meditating, during the long sermon, on the structure of chromosomes. Mr. Danners thoughts turned to Professor Mudge, whose barren pate showed above the congregation a few rows ahead of him. There, he said to himself, sat a stubborn and unenlightened man. And so, when the weekly tyranny of church was ended, he asked Mudge to

dinner. That he accomplished by an argument with his wife, audible the length of the aisle. They walked to the Danner residence. Mrs. Danner changed her clothes hurriedly, basted the roast, made milk sauce for the string beans, and set three places. They went into the dining-room. Danner carved, the home-made mint jelly was passed, the bread, the butter, the gravy; and Mrs. Danner dropped out of the conversation, after guying her husband on his lack of skill at his task of carving. Mudge opened with the usual comment. Well, Abednego, how are the blood-stream radicals progressing? His host chuckled. Excellently, thanks. Some day Ill be ready to jolt you hidebound biologists into your senses. Mudies left eyebrow lifted. So? Still the same thing, I take it? Still believe that chemistry controls human destiny?

Almost ready to demonstrate it, Danner replied. Along what lines? Muscular strength and the nervous discharge of energy. Mudge slapped his thigh. Ho ho! Nervous discharge of energy. You assume the human body to be a voltaic pile, eh? Thats good. Ill have to tell Cropper. Hell enjoy it. Danner, in some embarrassment, gulped a huge mouthful of meat. Why not? he said. Look at the insectsthe ants. Strength a hundred times our own. An ant can carry a large spideryet an ant is tissue and fiber, like a man. If a man could be given the same sinewshe could walk off with his own house. Ha ha! Theres a good one. And you would make a splendid piano-mover, Abednego. Pianos! Pooh! Consider the grasshoppers. Make a man as strong as a grasshopperand hell be able to leap over a church. I tell you, there is something that determines the quality of every muscle and nerve. Find ittransplant itand you have the solution.

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