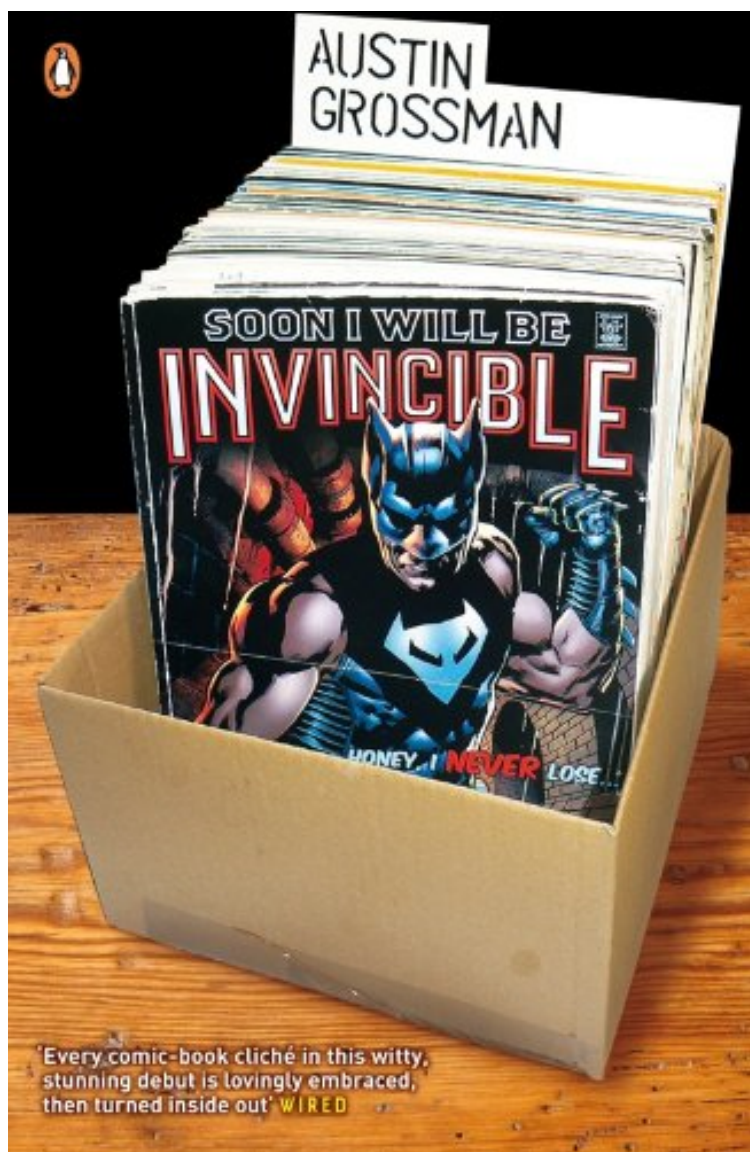


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Soon I Will be Invincible



Par Austin Grossman
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Par Austin Grossman : Soon I Will be Invincible before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Soon I Will be Invincible:

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Description :

Prsentation de l'diteur Doctor Impossible; evil genius, mad scientist, diabolical time-traveller, wannabe world dominator has just broken out of prison. Again. After twelve foiled ploys (doomsday devices, mass mind-control, robot armies, insect armies, alien invasions, etc.), he's not about to be foiled again. Fatale, a patchwork woman of skin and alloy built by the NSA to be the next generation of warfare, is suddenly given the chance every superhero dreams of: to join the Champions, the once-famous group of beautiful young superheroes who have been newly reunited to stop Dr Impossible. We watch as Fatale becomes part of a team its greatest hero missing, its members struggling with their damaged pasts as they come together in the face of unthinkable evil. Soon I Will Be Invincible is a wildly entertaining adventure about good and evil,

bursting with attitude and humour, that features a cast of superheroes and supervillains with remarkably human emotions, and who inhabit a world strangely similar to our own.

CHAPTER ONE FOILED AGAIN

This morning on planet Earth, there are one thousand, six hundred, and eighty-six enhanced, gifted, or otherwise-superpowered persons. Of these, one hundred and twenty-six are civilians leading normal lives. Thirty-eight are kept in research facilities funded by the Department of Defense, or foreign equivalents. Two hundred and twenty-six are aquatic, confined to the oceans. Twenty-nine are strictly localized powerful trees and genii loci, the Great Sphinx, and the Pyramid of Giza. Twenty-five are microscopic (including the Infinitesimal Seven). Three are dogs; four are cats; one is a bird. Six are made of gas. One is a mobile electrical effect, more of a weather pattern than a person. Seventy-seven are alien visitors. Thirty-eight are missing. Forty-one are off-continuity, permanent migrants to Earth's alternate realities and branching timestreams. Six hundred and seventy-eight use their powers to fight crime, while four hundred and forty-one use their powers to commit them. Forty-four are currently confined in Special Containment Facilities for enhanced criminals. Of these last, it is interesting to note that an unusually high proportion have IQs of 300 or more—eighteen to be exact. Including me. I don't know why it makes you evil. It's just what you find at the extreme right edge of the bell curve, the one you'd get if six billion minds took an intelligence test and you looked at the dozen highest scores. Picture yourself on that graph, sliding rightward and downslope toward the very brightest, down that gradually gentler hill, out over the top million, the top ten thousand—all far smarter than anyone most people ever meet out to the top thousand—and now things are getting sparser—the last hundred, and it's not a slope at all now, just a dot every once in a while. Go out to the last few grains of sand, the smartest of the smartest of the smartest, times a thousand. It makes sense that people would be a little odd out here. But you really have to wonder why we all end up in jail. Wake-up for me is at 6:30 a.m., half an hour earlier than the rest of the inmates. There's no furniture in my cell—I'm stretched out on the painted green rectangle where I'm allowed to sleep. The way my skin is, I hardly feel it anyway. The facility is rated for enhanced offenders, but I'm the only one currently in residence. I am their showpiece, the pride of the system, and a regular feature on the governors' tours for visiting dignitaries. They come and watch the performance, to see the tiger in his cage, and I don't disappoint. The guard raps on the plexiglas wall with his nightstick, so I get up slowly and move to the red painted circle, where they run a scan, X ray, radiation, and the rest. Then they let me put on clothes. I get eight minutes while they check the route. You can do a lot of thinking in eight minutes. I think about what I'll do when I get out of here. I think about the past. If I had writing materials, I might write a guidebook, a source of advice and inspiration for the next generation of masked criminals, bent prodigies, and lonely geniuses, the ones who've been taught to feel different, or the ones who knew it from the start. The ones who are smart enough to do something about it. There are things they should hear. Somebody has to tell them. I'm not a criminal. I didn't steal a car. I didn't sell heroin, or steal an old lady's purse. I built a quantum fusion reactor in 1978, and an orbital plasma gun in 1979, and a giant laser-eyed robot in 1984. I tried to conquer the world and almost succeeded, twelve times and counting. When they take me away, it goes to the World Court—technically I'm a sovereign power. You've seen these trials—the Elemental, Rocking Horse, Dr. Stonehenge. They put you in a glass and steel box. I'm still dangerous, you know, even without my devices. People stare at you; they can't believe what you look like. They read out the long list of charges, like a tribute. There isn't really a trial—it's not like you're innocent. But if you're polite, then at the end they'll let you say a few words. They'll ask questions. They'll want to know why. Why did you . . . hypnotize the president? Why did you . . . take over Chemical Bank? I'm the smartest man in the world. Once I wore a cape in public, and fought battles against men who could fly, who had metal skin, who could kill you with their eyes. I fought CoreFire to a standstill, and the Super Squadron, and the Champions. Now I have to shuffle through a cafeteria line with men who tried to pass bad checks. Now I have to wonder if there will be chocolate milk in the dispenser. And whether the smartest man in the world has done the smartest thing he could with his life. I stand by the door in a ring of armed men while my cell is checked by three specialists with a caseful of instruments. From the tiers come yells, shouts of encouragement, or catcalls. They want to see a show. Then I march, past their eyes, followed by two men in partial armor with bulky high-tech sidearms. They have to wait until I pass before their morning lineup. There's a lot of prison talk about my powers. Inmates believe my eyes can emit laser beams, that my touch is electrical or poisonous, that I come and go as I please through the walls, that I hear everything. People blame things on mistolen silverware and doors left unlocked. There is even, I note with pride, a gang named after me now: the Impossible. Mostly white-collar criminals. I'm allowed to mingle with the general population at mealtimes and in the recreation yard, but I always have a table to myself. I've fooled them too many times by

speed or misdirection. By now they know to serve my food in paper dishes, and when I turn in my tray they count the plastic utensils, twice. One guard watches my hands as I eat; another checks under the table. After I sit down, they make me roll up my sleeves and show my hands, both sides, like a magician. Look at my hands. The skins a little cool about 96.1 degrees, if you're curious and a little rigid: a shirt with extra starch. That skin can stop a bullet; it stopped five of them in my latest arrest as I ran up Seventh Avenue in my cape and helmet, sweating through the heavy cloth. The bruises are still there, not quite faded. I have a few other tricks. I'm strong, much stronger than should be possible for a mammal my size. Given time and inclination, I could overturn a semi, or rip an ATM out of a wall. I'm not a city-wrecker, not on my own. When Lily and I worked together, she handled that part of it. I'm mostly about the science. That's my main claim to life in the Special Containment Wing, where everything down to the showerheads is either titanium or set two inches deep in reinforced concrete. I'm also faster than I should be something in the nerve pathways changed in the accident. Every once in a while a new prisoner comes after me, hoping to make his reputation by breaking a prison-made knife against my ribs, a stolen pencil, or a metal spoon folded over and sharpened. It happens at mealtimes, or in the exercise yard. There is a premonitory hush as soon as he steps into the magic circle, the empty space that moves with me. The guards never step in maybe its policy, to alienate me from the prison population, or maybe they just enjoy seeing me pull the trick, proof again that they're guarding the fourth-most-infamous man alive. I straighten a little in the metal chair, set my single plastic spoon down on the folding table. After the whip crack of the punch, there is silence, ring out, the sighing collapse. The heap of laundry is carried away and I'll be left alone again until the next tattooed hopeful makes his play. Inside, I want to keep going, keep fighting until the bullets knock me down, but I never do. I'm smarter than that. There are stupid criminals and there are smart criminals, and then there is me. This is so you know. I haven't lost any of what I am, my intrinsic menace, just because they took away my devices, my tricks, and my utility belt. I'm still the brilliant, the appalling, the diabolical Doctor Impossible, damn it. And yes, I am invincible. All superheroes have an origin. They make a big deal of it, the story of how they got their powers and their mission. Bitten by a radioactive bug, they fight crime; visited by wandering cosmic gods, they search for the lost tablets of so-and-so, and avenge their dead families. And villains? We come on the scene, costumed and leering, colorfully working out our inexplicable grudge against the world with an oversized zap gun or cosmic wormhole. But why do we rob banks rather than guard them? Why did I freeze the Supreme Court, impersonate the Pope, hold the Moon hostage? I happen to know they've got practically nothing in my file. A few old aliases, newspaper clippings, testimony from a couple of old enemies. The original accident report, maybe. The flash was visible for miles. That's what people talk about when they talk about who I am, a nerd with an attitude and subpar lab skills. But there was another accident, one that nobody saw, a slow disaster that started the morning I arrived there. Nowadays it has a name, Malign Hypercognition Disorder. They're trying to learn about it from me, trying to figure out whose eyes are going to be looking out at them from behind a mask in thirty years. I have a therapist here, Steve, a sad-eyed Rogerian I'm taken to see twice a week in a disused classroom. Do you feel angry? What did you really want to steal? The things I could tell him secrets of the universe! But he wants to know about my childhood. I try to relax and remind myself of my situation if I kill him, they'll just send another. It could be worse there are stories villains tell one another about the secret facilities out in the Nevada desert, the maximum-intensity enhanced containment facilities, for the ones they catch but are truly afraid of, the ones they can't kill and can only barely control. Fifty-meter shafts filled with concrete, frozen cells held to near absolute zero. Being here means playing a delicate game in the lions' jaws. I mustn't scare them too badly. But Steve has his questions. Who was the first one to hit you? When did you leave home? Why did you want to control the world? Do you feel out of control? The past creeps in, perils of an eidetic memory. It's a danger in my line of work to tell too much; I know that now. And last time I told them everything, giving it all away like a fool, how I was going to do it, how escape was impossible. And they just listened, smirking. And it would have worked, too. The calculations were correct. By the time the bus came that morning it was raining pretty hard, and the world was a grayed-out sketch of itself, the bus a dim hulk as it approached, the only thing moving. Inside the bus shelter, the rain drummed hollowly on the plastic ceiling, and my glasses were fogging up. It was 6:20 a.m., and my parents and I were standing, stunned and half-awake, in the parking lot of a Howard Johnson's in Iowa. I knew that it was a special morning and that I should be feeling something, that this was one of the Big Events in a person's life, like marriage or a bar mitzvah, but I had never had a Big Event and I didn't know what it was supposed to be like. An hour earlier, my alarm had gone off; my mother stuffed me into a scratchy sweater that was starting to itch in the late September warmth. We trooped out to the car and

drove through the gray, silent town, the deserted city center, and turned into the lot by the mighty I-80. When my mother cut the engine, there were a few seconds of silence as we listened to the rain rapping on the ceiling. Then my father said, Well wait with you at the bus stop. So we dashed across the steaming asphalt to the plexiglas shelter. The rain sizzled down and cars and trucks swooshed by, and we stood there. Maybe someone said something. I was thinking about how that fall everything would start without me at Lincoln Middle School. In a few days, everyone I knew would be meeting their new teachers, and the accelerated math class would be starting geometry, doing proofs. In June, we had gotten a letter from the Iowa Department of Education, offering to send me to a new school they were starting called the Peterson School of Math and Science. The year before, they gave a standardized test during homeroom, and everyone who scored in the top half a percentile got a letter. They gave me a talk about whether I would miss my friends or Mr. Reynolds, my math teacher. I told them I would go. I didnt think about how weird it was going to be, waiting for a bus with my clothes in bags. The kids at school would remember me as the kid who never talked, who drew weird pictures and always wore the same clothes, and cried when he dropped his lunch, who was supposed to be really good at math. . . . Whatever happened to him? Where did he disappear to? The bus pulled in; a man got out and checked the fistful of signed forms I held out to him, then threw my bags into the compartment that opened in the metal side. My parents hugged me, and I climbed the steps into a warm darkness that smelled of strangers breath. I walked unsteadily into the dimly fluorescent-lit space, glimpsing faces passing in rows, until I found a pair of empty seats just as the bus roared and pulled out of the parking lot. I remembered to look for a last glimpse of my parents watching me leave, then we surged up the on-ramp and into through traffic. Suddenly I hated the sopping morning and the impersonal helpfulness of my parents, always a little held back, as if they were afraid to know me; and I was glad to be gone, glad to have no part of them, to be where no one knew me, away from the quiet of their house, their self-restraint. I had a dim inner vision of myself rising up in flame. From Publishers Weekly The world's greatest superhero, CoreFire, has gone missing just before the world's greatest villain, Dr. Impossible, has escaped again from prison. As the fragile alliance among the superhero team, the Champions, begins to unravel, its newest member, Fatale, a female cyborg with an inferiority complex, isn't sure which side she is on. With all the action (and sometimes cheesy dialogue) of a comic book with a bit more detail, development and description, this audiobook proves to be yet another steppingstone in the evolution of the subgenre of superhero fiction. J. Paul Boehmer voices the story from the firsthand point of view of Dr. Impossible with all the self-possession, and egotistical and borderline-deranged attitude one could expect from an evil genius.

Coleen Marlo delivers an excellent account of Fatale, adding softness to the externally hard and cold character. Her inflections throughout Fatale's inner dialogue easily turn listeners' sympathies to the half-metal humanoid. Whooshing sound effects carry listeners from one chapter to the next in a fashion that fits or invokes an old-time radio series. Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc.

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