



Invincible: A Novel

By Styles P

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When he wakes in a hospital bed two years later, things have changed: His prison sentence has been commuted, his girlfriend is fiercely independent, and his side piece has gotten out of the street life altogether. But one thing remains: Jake's enemy still wants him dead and is powerful enough to track him down no matter where he hides.

On the run, and with rumors circulating about a powerful, phantomlike gang called the 300 Crew, Jake will need to rely on his mantra: Trust no one—not the law, not his girl, not the street cats he helped out years ago, not even his own blood.

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Editorial Review

Review

"Styles P definitely came correct with his freshman novel. If you're a fan of his music, then **Invincible** will not disappoint." —K'wan, #1 *Essence* bestselling author of *Section 8*

"As a rapper, Styles has always been a heavily respected voice of the street. It's no surprise that his talent and authenticity translate to the page!" —Angie Martinez, *Hot 97*

"**Invincible** is a cleverly crafted hip-hop whodunit that engages the reader from start to finish." —Shannon Holmes, author of *Bad Girlz for Life*

"**Invincible** had me on the edge of my seat turning the pages to see what would happen next." —Wahida Clark, *New York Times* bestselling author of *Thug Lovin'*

"Styles P has crafted a street masterpiece that can only be told through the eyes of someone who's lived it. **Invincible** is a new hood classic. Authenticity at its best!" —Ashley and JaQuavis, *New York Times* bestselling authors of *The Cartel*

About the Author

STYLES P (David Styles), a Queens-born, Yonkers-bred emcee, first stepped on the scene as one-third of the famed hip-hop trio the LOX (aka D-Block), a group he formed with childhood friends Jadakiss and Sheek. After guest-starring on multiplatinum singles like "We'll Always Love Big Poppa," and "All About the Benjamins," Styles and the LOX released their albums *Money, Power & Respect* and *We Are the Streets*, before the group's members began focusing on solo projects. Styles P's solo projects include *A Gangster and a Gentleman*, *Time Is Money*, and *Super Gangster (Extraordinary Gentleman)*. **Invincible** is his first novel.

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Chapter Two

BAD NEWS

"Jake Billings!" It was CO Frazier yelling from the front of the dorm. "Jake Billings," he repeated. "Come get your mail before the garbage gets it."

Jake walked to the CO desk with a little pep in his step because he knew CO Frazier would do exactly what he said he would do. When he got to the desk, Frazier tossed the mail at him along with a do-you-want-a-problem-motherfucker look. Jake picked his mail up off the floor and kept moving; he knew better than to feed into the corrections officer's bullshit. He didn't need any extra problems right now. He'd been in jail for five days and hadn't gotten in contact with anyone yet. To keep it one hundred he wasn't expecting any mail in the first place; he was waiting on a visit from his girl so he could put her up on what he needed to get out of there.

Sitting back on his bunk, Jake looked over the envelope he'd just gotten: no return address or name. Not

really in the mood for surprises, he ripped the envelope open and read:

Dear J.B. you don't know me, but I know you or rather I know of you, and you can't believe how happy I am to see you in this jail. I'm sending you this kite to let you know I am going to fucking kill you. Your best bet is to check into PC you bitch-ass nigga. You violated the wrong nigga many moons ago and what comes around goes around motherfucka. I hope you're built for war.

Oh and p.s.

Praying in the middle of the night ain't gonna help a fucking thing.

Sincerely yours,

Real Nigga, Same Dorm

Internally, Jake was fucked up knowing that a nigga was not only watching him but wanted him dead, and he had no idea who that nigga was, but he wouldn't give anything away to his stalker. Jake had mastered the art of being emotionally cold many years ago; therefore, he hadn't a worry in the world of his expression or body language giving him away.

The fact that an anonymous person had sent him a heads up that they wanted him dead meant one of two things to Jake: He was stupid for tipping his hand and had no idea how dangerous Jake was, or he was the real deal and wanted to play mind games before murder games. Either way, Jake appreciated the letter for putting him on point. But he didn't appreciate his life being threatened, or being called a bitch-ass nigga. *Who would want to see him dead?* He thought for a second, but who was he kidding—his list of enemies was as long as Broadway. He needed to concentrate on what he did know, and that was that whoever wrote the letter was more than likely watching. Jake decided to put on a show for his anonymous audience. He strolled over to the trash, crumbled the letter with a smile on his face, and threw it in the can. Satisfied with the production, he went to his bin and got out a towel, toothbrush, soap, and boxers. Then he came out of his county oranges and walked to the shower whistling, as if he didn't have a care in the world. *I can play mind games, too*, he thought, as he walked toward the shower with his head up, chest out, and sneakers on.

"Billings," the CO yelled out. "You got a V.I. I see you about to hop in the shower so I'm going to give you five minutes to do what you gotta do before you come get this pass. Washing your ass is the smartest thing you done since you been here," he joked. "Now hurry the fuck up."

Ignoring the CO, Jake stepped into the shower wondering if his bold act at the trash can was a wise one or if his pride would lead to his demise—only time would tell.

He quickly began soaping up his 6'1", 240-pound body.

Once he felt like his body was good and clean, he soaped up his mid-brown bald head. Beads of hot water bounced off the tense muscles that made up his broad back, which was cut up from previous bids and frequent visits to the pull-up bar in the park by his crib. Jake felt he could handle himself with just about anyone, but who said it was going to be only one person when the attack came. However, the attack hadn't come yet; no one followed him or came in during his shower so he hurried to catch his V.I.

Jake got dressed and went and got the pass from the CO, then headed toward the electric door—waiting for the CO in the bubble to open it. While he waited, Jake took a good look around for any faces he might recognize, but the problem was that there were too many faces he'd seen before. The doors in jail revolve like a carousel from hell . . . same niggaz in and out with new ones always joining the ride. He would have to deal with this shit after his visit. The CO in the bubble popped the gate and Jake stepped out into the

hallway.

“Let me see your pass,” the CO working the hall asked.

Everywhere an inmate went in the jail there was a CO. This was what they called controlled movement. Jake showed his pass to the CO and waited for the elevator. Right now the only thing on his mind was how come it took his girl five days to come visit him. *Something ain't right*, he thought.

Kim was running out of patience as she sat waiting in the visiting room for Jake. She knew he wasn't in control of the time or movement in the jail, but she was still pissed off at him like it was his fault. Kim chuckled to herself. She noticed she stood out like a black sheep among a herd of white ones in the visiting room: Most of the women visiting their men had a look of stress or concern on their faces and looked tired and depressed. Kim had none of those problems. *I ain't stressed or the*

least bit concerned with Jake's future at the moment, and definitely don't look tired and depressed like these bitches. Kim felt and looked like a million bucks. Every man who walked into the visiting room couldn't help but notice her, and every one of their girls couldn't help but roll her eyes at her.

Kim was 5'10" with a mocha complexion and the body of a runner, the face of a goddess, and the mind and heart of a cold, calculated criminal. Kim had purposely waited a week before she came to see Jake. She wanted him to be uncomfortable and riled up. She wanted to ruffle his feathers for once. He always acted so cool, and she hated that about him. Kim was glad he was in jail, honestly. Now she could do all she wanted without consequence.

Kim told herself she really did love Jake; after all, he was one of the realest men she'd ever met. But it was over between them—finally. They had gotten as far as they could as a couple and had made decent money, but the past couple of years their relationship had gotten kind of rocky and Jake was no longer fitting in Kim's plans. So him shooting those dudes in the store was right up her alley. *This is my way out. I got too much shit to do. I rode out with this nigga every other time he was locked up, but not this time. Now I'm gonna do me.*

Kim was psyching herself up to handle her business. *Fuck this nigga he don't fit in with my plans. We have different agendas, and it is time for me to move on.*

Kim once again had to chuckle to herself. It was really funny how she was planning to get away from Jake. And he only had himself to blame. *He is the one who made me into the monster I am today.*

Kim and Jake had known each other practically their whole lives. They were both raised by churchgoing mothers and went to the same schools throughout elementary, junior high, and high school, but they never went out with each other until they were nineteen. It started one day when Kim was going to community college and J.B. was going to his spot to knock off his work for the day. J.B. kept a spot by the school for several reasons. One was that he didn't like hustling crack on the same block where he laid his head, and another was that it was easy to knock off a pound of weed in about a week around there. College kids love to get high.

Kim was about to walk by when Jake got the idea to stop her. He had been thinking about making her a proposition for a while now and today was as good as any.

“Hey, Kim, what's up?” he called to her. “Can I talk to you for a sec?”

“Sure, what up, Jay?”

“I’ve been meaning to run a few things by you.”

“Okay, shoot.”

“Do you go to work somewhere after school?” he asked, already knowing the answer to his question because he had been keeping an eye on Kim for a while.

“I wish I did.”

“Then your wish just came true. I got some work for you.” Kim knew that Jake dabbled in a lot of different illegal things so when she asked what, and he told her, she responded, “I can’t sell weed, J.B.,” almost too loudly. “I wouldn’t even know what to do or say. Plus, I can’t afford to get kicked out of school.”

Jake laughed. “You don’t have to do it in school and you don’t have to say much. The customer will do most of the talking.” After getting her attention with that, he gave her the run- down. “See, I have this apartment around the corner where the students come to cop from. The problem is I don’t have the time to be in there from four to ten because I have a lot of running around to do—I need some help. All you got to do is sit in the apartment and when they knock, tell them to slide the money under the door. We only sell dimes so you can figure out what to give them. I will return every day around ten p.m. to relieve you.”

Kim stood there seriously considering Jake’s offer. God knows she could use the extra money. Her school books alone were costing her a fortune, and that was for the used ones, but she still had a few other concerns. “What if somebody tries to rob me?”

Jake gave her a smile that said he had it all under control. “The whole transaction is made under the door,” he said. “It’s more than enough space; I had the bottom of the door shaved so that there’s no reason to ever open it up. Trust me.” “What about police?” she asked, covering all bases.

Jake put his cards on the table and spoke to her earnestly. “Well that’s another story. If the police kick this shit in you’re going to jail, but you will only be in there a couple of hours. Weed ain’t no felony and being that you’re a girl the most they’ll hit you with is a fine and a warning to stay out of trouble for a year.”

When she asked how much money she’d make, Jake knew that she was down. He told her she would make three dollars off of every ten-dollar bag that she sold.

“How about four?” she cracked.

Jake laughed. “The job is only worth two dollars a bag,” he said. “I’m being generous with three.”

“Why don’t you find someone else?” she asked honestly.

“ ‘Cause I’ve known you for a long time and I don’t have to worry about you doing any grimy shit. And besides, our moms are friends and I know y’all going through hard times right now so I figured this could help both of us!”

She told him to let her sleep on it and she would let him know tomorrow, although she already knew the answer was yes. There were just too many bills in her household and she needed some kind of income.

Tomorrow came around and she told him it was cool with her. He chilled with her for the first few hours so he could walk her through the process. “It’s simple,” he explained. “You hear the knock . . . tell them to slide the dough . . . you slide the smoke—everything is done. The door is double bolted so you’re safe, and if something goes wrong I’ll be right down the block. Plus, I got somebody keeping their eye on the spot.”

“Do you mind if I ask what you’re doing down the block that’s so important that you’re not here collecting your own money?” she asked.

“I’m down there knocking off base; that’s where the real money is.”

“Don’t you feel funny selling that stuff knowing what it does?”

Jake knew that she was referring to the fact that his father was a crackhead. “Yeah, I feel a certain kind of way being that my pops is a basehead, but I’ll feel even funnier being broke with a basehead pops. Plus I’m only gonna do this hustling shit until I can save enough to buy a clothing store and a laundromat. After that I’m going to find the flyest chick in the city and have kids and move out of this shit. That’s my plan, what’s yours?”

“I’m going to graduate and move my moms outta here,” Kim said. “I have a boyfriend who goes to school in Cali. Maybe I will go there, I don’t know yet.”

“You got a man in Cali?” J.B. asked kinda shocked. “Ain’t that kinda far? Why don’t you get yourself a nice New York college boy?”

“I haven’t met one yet.”

“I got a homie.” J.B. sort of smiled. “He’s in college and he’s cool. I think you might like him.”

“No thanks, J.B.” she said returning his smile. “I always knew there was something crazy about you ever since we were young. You never paid attention to anyone. You were always in your own world—very rebellious but still very kind. Now here you are offering me a job and a nice college friend. I hope I don’t look like I need handouts. What is my moms telling your moms anyway?”

“Damn girl, chill out! I told you you were cool so I felt a’ight telling you about this shit. All my closest friends are way outta town or not around, plus I know you kinda stay to yourself so that works for me. If you were a bird I wouldn’t have asked you to join my empire.” J.B. laughed, and so did Kim.

The elevator opened.

“Ooohhhhh shit, J.B., nah nigga—not you!” It was his homie Reggie from high school. “Damn, nigga, I ain’t seen you since Lord knows. I heard you owned a clothing store with mix tapes and the whole shit . . . fly mommies helping niggaz and all that. What brings you to hell this time, my nigga?”

“Attempted murder,” Jake told his friend. Seeing the look on his old friend’s face, he explained, “Two niggaz in the store start beefing with each other over Lord knows what, next thing I know guns come out. Nobody was shooting, just yelling and aiming at each other. I was trying to tell them chill out but they just kept yelling. Next thing I know one of ’em turned around and told me to get on the floor. His partner told the girls to do the same and then walked to the front door and locked it.

Niggaz was on some real-life movie shit, son. When they told me to open the safe I popped that shit open for 'em with no hesitation. After I handed the dude all the money, they took off for the door. Where the smart mu'fuckaz fucked up at is they never bothered to search the girls for a burner . . . they only searched me. My girls are required to tote at all times, so I grabbed one of their tools, ran out behind the cowards sparking off. Hit 'em both: one in the leg and the other in the shoulder. Next thing I heard was 'get on the floor,' which brings me here."

"Damn, J.B., how much cash you kept in the safe?" Reggie asked, genuinely sorry about the bad one his old friend took. "Two hundred thou," Jake said, "which the police stole from them. So now I'm beat for the paper and I got a case."

"I thought you could pop a nigga for trying to rob your property, ain't that a law or some shit?"

"It probably is, Regg, but on paper I don't own the store— I'm just an employee. If I was down as the owner the feds would've been on my ass about where I got the loot to buy a store."

The bell in the elevator went off. "Okay," the CO said. "The ride's over."

They all got off. "Where they got you housed at, my nigga?" Reggie asked.

"Third floor—northwest side . . . How about you, Regg?"

"Second floor—southeast side. I got the shit on smash, too! I got pull in this bitch. Ain't shit changed from the streets. You know me. I'm all about that paper. You wanna get moved to my block I can make it happen."

"Nah, Regg, I got some shit to handle. If I don't see you coming off the V.I., I'll kite you in a few."

"No doubt, J.B. Hate to see you in here but it is good to see you. Holla if you need something. One!"

Jake still had to go through the rest of the usual routine that the jail made all inmates go through before their visits: drop your drawers, lift your nuts, turn around and split your ass cheeks, show the bottoms of your feet, open your mouth—and after all that they still gave him a small-ass jumpsuit.

When Jake stepped into the visiting room, despite how overcrowded it was, he spotted his girl right away and walked to her table. She stood up to greet him with a cold hug and short kiss, then they both sat down.

"I'm pretty sure you knew I was locked up like five days ago. What took you so long to get here, Kim?" Jake cracked right off the bat. "I know we ain't been on the best of terms but if it's going to be like this maybe it's best that we come to some sort of agreement right now!"

"Nigga please, you should be lucky that I'm here at all with yo grimy ass," Kim shot right back. "The store—my store, since it's in my name—is fine, like all the rest of my properties."

That's why I've been doing all my shit on the side anyway. I knew you weren't reliable for shit in the long run, she thought. "What I came to do is be a courteous bitch and have the decency to let you know you're on your own on this trip. Don't expect a visit, a letter, or anything from me. I'm through with you and I don't want you thinking I'm going to be here for you when I'm not. Don't get me wrong, I love you, but I'm not in love anymore. I've dealt with seven years of your bullshit and now I'm through. I came to relay any

messages you have for your lawyers or workers.”

Jake wanted to reach across the table and choke the bitch for coming off at him the way she did but that would get him nowhere. “Thanks for letting me know what was up,” he said instead. “I’m sorry things got so bitter between us in the past two years, but I didn’t know you felt this way. If I did I would’ve let you out of your misery a long time ago, baby.” Jake kept his eyes locked with hers. “And as far as needing your help for anything, I’m all right. I can help myself out.” He told her “Good luck” before getting up and walking toward the CO, leaving her sitting at the table with a face that looked mad, sad, and confused all at once.

The nerve of this nigga, she thought. Her plans were to leave him upset and somehow he managed to flip it on her. She wound up being the upset one. “He really doesn’t give a fuck,” was all she kept saying to herself. A single tear escaped her eye and ran down her cheek as she left the visiting room thinking: *He’s really crazy . . . all of these years for nothing.*

J.B. felt like this had to be the worst day of his life. He hated to be so cold to Kim but the fact was he was in a situation and she wasn’t riding. Then there was that other business. There was a chance he might not make it out of this one. Something didn’t feel right and he wasn’t sure if he played his hand right with Regg earlier. Could Reggie be the enemy? Could the police have planted the letter? One thing he did know was that when he got back to that block anybody who got within arm’s length of him was going to have a problem. If today was his day, he was going out hard-body style.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Ilene Venne:

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