

= Soon I Will Be Invincible =

Soon I Will Be Invincible is a novel by Austin Grossman . It was published by Pantheon Books and released on June 5 , 2007 . The novel uses two alternating first person narratives . One narrative is told from the point of view of Fatale , a female cyborg who is recruited by the superhero group The New Champions as they investigate the disappearance of superhero CoreFire . The other narrative is told from the point of view of Dr. Impossible , a supervillain who possesses super @-@ human strength and intellect and suffers from Malign Hypercognition Disorder (" evil genius " syndrome) , as he escapes from jail and makes his thirteenth attempt at taking over the world .

It is Austin Grossman 's first novel . He was better known as a video game designer but was studying literature . While the book uses characters , settings , and storylines generally associated with comic books and superhero fiction , it is written entirely in prose . The story looks at how superheroes cope with their powers and interact with one another . The potential motivations and perspectives of supervillains are also explored . The book has been variously described as clever , engaging , and fun ? but overstuffed with comic book tropes . An audiobook was released along with the hardcover and a movie has been in development since 2008 .

= = Background = =

The novel Soon I Will Be Invincible is the first novel by Austin Grossman , a man better known for designing video games . Grossman had come from a literary family , son of Judith and Allen Grossman and brother of Lev Grossman , which had fostered his ambition to write his own novel . Instead , Grossman accepted a job working in the video game medium which he credited with teaching him to realistically portray creative characters and situations . He always had an interest in the superhero genre , citing Alan Moore and Frank Miller as literary influences . In the mid @-@ 1990s , the idea behind what would become his first novel came to him in the form of a supervillain 's voice . Grossman spent the next few years casually developing the character that would become Dr. Impossible , adding supporting characters , and writing short stories . By 2006 , Penguin 's imprint Michael Joseph purchased the publishing rights for the UK , as did Rizzoli for an Italian version . By the time , the book was being published Grossman was 37 years old and had entered the University of California @-@ Berkeley 's doctoral program studying English Literature , specializing in Romantic and Victorian literature .

= = Plot = =

After CoreFire , the world 's greatest superhero , goes missing , the former members of The Champions re @-@ unite to investigate his disappearance , bringing in two new replacement heroines , Lily and Fatale . They immediately suspect CoreFire 's nemesis , Dr. Impossible , was involved , even though he has been incarcerated in a maximum security prison since his defeat by Damsel during his twelfth world domination attempt . An interrogation by two novice heroes about CoreFire 's disappearance gives Dr. Impossible the chance to escape and initiate a new attempt at world domination . The New Champions search for Impossible , convinced he is responsible for CoreFire 's demise , while he gathers the materials needed to advance his plan . This is intercut with flashbacks to earlier times and his origin , as well as reflections on other paths he could have taken in life .

Fatale observes the actions of the New Champions as its newest member . She feels uncomfortable replacing a popular , deceased member and unworthy of belonging to a superhero group , but she proves herself to be highly competent and earns the respect of her teammates . Fatale 's closest friend on the team is another new member , Lily , a reformed supervillain and former girlfriend of Dr. Impossible . Fatale contrasts Dr. Impossible 's flashbacks by having no memory of her life before the accident in Brazil that made her a cyborg , with her exposition coming from her new experiences with the other superheroes . During the investigation , she discovers that the corporation that transformed her into a cyborg was a front for Dr. Impossible during one of his

previous plans .

The climax is reached on Dr. Impossible 's island , as he attempts to start a controlled Ice Age , making him Earth 's ruler and only source of energy . He almost succeeds , using the hammer formerly belonging to the supervillain The Pharaoh to defeat the New Champions . CoreFire suddenly returns but is also unsuccessful against Dr. Impossible . Lily , who had quit the team earlier , eventually returns and defeats Dr. Impossible . Lily reveals that she is actually Erica Lowenstein , Dr. Impossible 's childhood crush before his transformation and frequent kidnapee when she was the girlfriend of CoreFire . In the final chapter , Dr. Impossible ponders what it truly means to conquer the world , and whether such a feat can really be achieved , as he prepares for yet another escape from custody to start the cycle all over again with a new plan .

= = Main characters = =

CoreFire , a Superman @-@ like character . His disappearance motivates former members of the Champions to re @-@ unite as the New Champions . He gained his powers as a college student when a lab experiment by a classmate , who would later become his nemesis Dr. Impossible , irradiates him with ' zeta radiation ' giving him superpowers . CoreFire became one of the three founding members of the original Champions .

Dr. Impossible , the supervillain narrator . The novel chronicles his escape from maximum security prison and his thirteenth attempt at world conquest . He is the " smartest man in the world . " A lab accident involving ' zeta radiation ' gave him superpowers , consisting of super @-@ reflexes , reasonable super @-@ strength , and toughened skin . He was diagnosed with Malign Hypercognition Disorder . He is a loose analog of Lex Luthor .

= = = The New Champions = = =

Fatale , a superhero recruited by the New Champions and the narrator of the superhero @-@ half of the novel . She is a cyborg , the result of experimental surgery following a near @-@ fatal accident in São Paulo . She eventually discovers that the corporation responsible for creating and maintaining her cybernetic parts were a cover for one of Doctor Impossible 's schemes . For a time she worked National Security Agency missions .

Damsel , a Wonder Woman @-@ like character . She is the leader of both the original Champions and the New Champions . She is the daughter of a golden age superhero and a princess of an alien planet . She is also Blackwolf 's ex @-@ wife . Her powers are flight , super @-@ strength , micro @-@ vision , and a protective forcefield .

Blackwolf , co @-@ founder of the Champions and Damsel 's ex @-@ husband . A Batman @-@ like character , he is the team 's only unpowered member , but he is athletically trained and intellectually gifted . He is motivated by the death of family members and has mild autism . He divides his time between managing his successful corporation and work as a superhero .

Feral , a half @-@ human / half @-@ tiger . He is the only member of the team who still patrols and fights street crime .

Elphin , the last fairy on Earth . Though born in the 10th century , she continues to have the appearance of a teenager but with insectoid wings . Inhumanly fast and strong , she uses a magical spear as a weapon and has some nature @-@ controlling powers .

Mr. Mystic , a magician . He was a stage magician before travelling the world and discovering the secret of true magic . He wears a tuxedo and top hat as his costume . His powers are undefined but include illusion and teleportation . Real name is William Zard .

Rainbow Triumph , a teenage girl given experimental treatment for her terminal illness . The treatment saved her life and gave her superpowers , such as super @-@ speed , but she needs to keep taking her medicine every few hours or she will die .

Lily , a reformed supervillainess and former girlfriend of Dr. Impossible and CoreFire . She claims to come from the far future , having been sent back to prevent an ecological disaster that would destroy humanity . However , she later is revealed to be Erica Lowenstein , the Lois Lane @-@ like

one @-@ time girlfriend of CoreFire . She is super @-@ strong , invulnerable and transparent .

= = Style and themes = =

The story is divided into 21 chapters , with each chapter switching between the points @-@ of @-@ view of the supervillain Dr. Impossible and the superhero Fatale . The narrative is written in the first person , like a memoir , describing the inner monologues of the two protagonists . The dual narrative foils and " blur [s] the distinction " between the superheroes and the supervillain . The language was described as having a " sincere tone of glory " and " boyish indulgence " with " an undercurrent of sadness and a surprisingly human universality " . While the story uses standard comic book story elements , like superheroes fighting supervillains , the book is written entirely in prose . The story combines a satire of superhero archetypes and comic book clichés , such as the use of many superlatives , with realist elements that portray the sometimes mundane lives and everyday challenges of its characters , like coping with cybernetic body parts that weigh far more than a natural body and that react before the brain registers what is happening . Common social situations and psychological issues , like loneliness and trying to connect with a group , are also portrayed . Reviewers identified numerous themes , such as power , greed , fame , ego , loneliness , belonging , and identity .

= = Characterization of superheroes = =

The novel uses characters with generic superhero traits . While they are public celebrities for being heroes , the novel deals more with the personal lives of superheroes , how they cope with their powers and interact with one another . The character Fatale , being asked to join the New Champions superhero group , is used as a " useful outsider looking in " behind the scenes . They exist in a " cult of overachievement " , constantly competing and trying to distinguish themselves from one another , which results in characters as " colorful as playing cards but all from different decks , a jumble of incompatible suits and denominations dealt out for an ' Alice in Wonderland ' game . " Despite their celebrity status and heroic facade , they exist in a " mundane reality " with a normal routine ; as the villain devises new means of committing crimes and conquering the world , the heroes chat among themselves , reliving past adventures , and practice fighting one another . From the perspective of the supervillain Dr. Impossible , superheroes live in " a dumb , hackneyed world " .

= = Characterization of the supervillain = =

Dr. Impossible is used as an archetype or stock character supervillain . He is characterized as an evil genius or mad scientist who continually attempts to take control of the world 's population . This is seen as a sub @-@ type of the hero 's journey and his calm deconstruction of his own futile , repetitive and self @-@ destructive behaviours is compared to existentialist literature . The supervillains , especially Dr. Impossible , are portrayed as sympathetic characters afflicted with " Malign Hypercognition Disorder " , a psychological condition which makes highly intelligent people use their advantages to perform non @-@ virtuous , or evil , actions . Grossman explained that from Dr. Impossible 's point of view , he is not inherently evil but rejects societal norms : " it 's a matter of integrity ? he 's sticking to his principles , doing science his own way , pursuing his goals ? even if it means the entire world is against him , even if he looks ridiculous in his costume , even if he knows he 's going to lose . The superheroes are taking the conformist path , and getting all the applause . " From the literary point of view , Grossman believes the supervillains are more interesting characters , " they are usually the most dynamic characters and the most creative Their plans usually start with a great invention , which gives the story all its color and energy . The hero just has to come in and smash it up . " Grossman admitted that much of the Dr. Impossible character was inspired by his feelings as a graduate student , " On the one hand , you 're supposed to be really smart , and on the other hand , it 's a humiliating experience . You 're psyched about your intellect and kind of

arrogant , but at the same time , you 're [insignificant] in the eyes of the world . "

= = = Genre = = =

Soon I Will Be Invincible takes characters , settings , and storylines generally associated with the comic book format and re @-@ casts them using the novel 's prose format . This use of superhero fiction in an alternate format was compared to other similar , successful attempts , like Sam Raimi 's Spider @-@ Man films , Brad Bird 's The Incredibles , and the TV serial No Heroics . Several reviewers contrasted the novel 's elements of realism with Alan Moore 's Watchmen and Rick Veitch 's Bratpack which portrayed a darker side of more realistic superheroes . Novels cited as being similar included Donald Barthelme 's Snow White , Robert Coover 's Stepmother , and the works of Michael Chabon and Jonathan Lethem . The novel format allowed for more character development , which Grossman took advantage of by portraying them as " real , human characters , with all of the foibles that come with the territory " in what one reviewer called a " hybridization of character and genre " . Grossman described it as " a book about real people who happen to be superheros [sic] or supervillains " and that if it were a comic , it would be " page after page of thought balloons " . Compared to comic stories , the reviewer for the Richmond Times @-@ Dispatch wrote " The common denominator for most superhero comic books is that they don 't make fun of themselves - the believability of their stories is never called into question . They take the heroes seriously . Not so in literature . When a novel appears with comic books as its focus , its author will undoubtedly believe that his or her theme is far more important - far more serious - than the comic books that inspired them tries to do it all , combining humor and comic @-@ book adventure with a literary sense of character The result is a postmodern , inventive , comic @-@ book plot with literary aspirations , and its only problem is that it isn 't entirely successful as either humor or as straight adventure . "

= = Publication and reception = =

Soon I Will Be Invincible was published by Pantheon Books , an imprint of the Knopf Doubleday division of Random House , and released on June 5 , 2007 , as a hardcover . In the UK it was published by the Penguin Group imprint Michael Joseph . An audiobook was released at the same time featuring the voices of J. Paul Boehmer and Coleen Marlo . Grossman promoted the book by attending book signings in major American cities . In the UK it was promoted by wrapping telephone booths in advertising , in reference to Superman changing outfits in such booths . The cover art , which features photos of stereotypical comic book character clothing like a mask and gloves , by Chip Kidd was called " excellent ... [and] sure to attract readers " . By contrast , Bryan Hitch 's cover art on the British edition , which features hand @-@ drawn illustrations of the book 's characters , was called " counter @-@ productive ... [or] unnecessary " due to its graphical interpretations of characters that were deliberately written in prose only . The book was short @-@ listed for the 2007 John Sargent Sr. First Novel Prize . Work on a film adaption began in 2008 through Strike Entertainment with scripts being written Dan Weiss and Grossman .

Several reviewers described book as clever , well @-@ written , engaging , amusing , and fun . The prose was described as " effortless " , " colorful " , " kinetic and often witty " . Numerous reviewers thought the Dr. Impossible character was the highlight of the novel . The Library Journal review " highly recommended [the novel] for all public libraries " calling it " fun and thought @-@ provoking book " . In The New York Times Book Review reviewer Dave Itzkoff wrote that the novel " can 't completely measure up [to other superhero fiction and film] , but its ambition and persistence in the face of formidable odds make it an admirable addition to the genre " . The Publishers Weekly review noted that the comic book scenario written in a prose novel , with " thoughtfully portrayed " characters , would broaden the appeal of the genre . Similarly , regarding the comic book set @-@ up written in prose , Mat Johnson in USA Today wrote that Grossman 's " fabulist vision is meticulously captured so that it might be gleefully explored , nostalgically , within its traditional boundaries " . Journalist Carlo Wolff wrote that " it takes some time to engage because ... Grossman

is so enamored of the worlds he 's fashioning that he overstuffs them ... [but it] is a fresh , warm take on comic books , science fiction and pop culture . " The Kirkus Reviews summary notes that the action scenes are " unimpressive , interrupted by more talk as ... the battle seesaws in an arbitrary fashion . For all the special effects , a debut novel that 's lifeless and inert . " Both the reviewers for Entertainment Weekly and Christian Science Monitor gave the book a " B " grade , though the The A.V. Club gave it an " A " grade . It is currently ranked # 2 as the Best Superhero fiction Books on ListNerd .

A musical theater adaptation of Soon I Will Be Invincible ran at Lifeline Theatre in Chicago from May to July , 2015 .