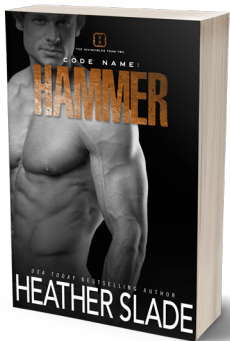


# heather SLADE

USA TODAY BEST-SELLING AUTHOR OF  
SHAMELESSLY SEXY EDGE-OF-YOUR SEAT ROMANTIC SUSPENSE



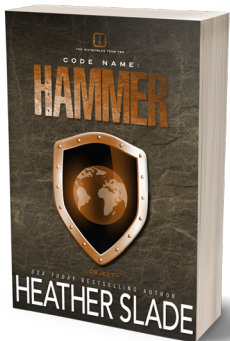
## Code Name: Hammer

*Book Four in the Invincibles Team Two series*

*He's a tough Texas lawyer with a protective streak.*

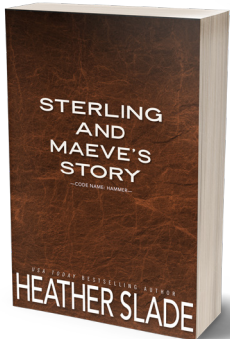
*She's a wealthy Irish heiress hiding dangerous secrets.*

*Together they'll uncover family secrets and battle the mob to claim their destiny.*



## HAMMER

I never expected my latest case to change my life. Maeve McTiernan walked into my world, all fire and independence, and turned everything upside down. As her lawyer, I knew I shouldn't fall for her, but I couldn't help myself. When she got kidnapped, I stopped at nothing to get her back. Little did I know rescuing Maeve would lead us down a path of hidden treasures and dangerous secrets. Now, I'm not just fighting for her freedom, but for our future together.



## MAEVE

I came to Texas with a mission, but I never planned on falling in love. Hammer Anderson was supposed to be my lawyer, nothing more. But as he helped me navigate my legal troubles, I found myself drawn to his strength and kindness. When I was kidnapped, it was Hammer who came to my rescue. Together, we uncovered a conspiracy bigger than both of us and a treasure that was hidden for generations. Now, I'm faced with a choice: hold onto the secrets of my past or embrace a future with the man who's stolen my heart.

## 1

### *Hammer*

My phone vibrated with a text message. *Urgent I speak with you ASAP*, it read.

A few minutes ago, when I saw Kellen “Money” McTiernan’s name show up on my cell shortly after my flight landed at Austin-Bergstrom, I let it go to voicemail. What could he possibly need to talk to me about now? It hadn't been that long since we went our separate ways after traveling to DC from London. We'd both been there for our mutual friends Saint and Harper's New Year's Eve wedding celebration. Not to mention, it was eight in the morning and I hadn't gotten any sleep on either plane ride.

“Fuck,” I muttered under my breath, wishing I could wait until I'd gotten some rest to respond but knowing ignoring him was out of the question.

As the Invincibles' attorney of record, I had no choice but to answer when one of them called—urgent or not. While McTiernan didn't work for them, he was the director of the CIA as well as our primary contact there, which meant he counted.

"What can I do for you?" I asked when Money picked up.

"My sister needs help."

She better be in lockup for him to send me a message saying it was urgent he speak with me after I'd just traveled all night. "What's going on?"

"She's buying a bar not far from where you are—one I told her not to, in fact—and evidently, the owner tried to renegotiate the sale last night."

"And?"

"She shot him."

"Which bar?"

"The Long Branch."

Now I understood why Money told her not to buy it. As far as law-abiding citizens went, more of their customers weren't than were.

The place was less than fifteen minutes away on the outskirts of Austin, Texas, my hometown. It was owned by Bobby MacIver, only brother of John, the sheriff of Hays County. This oughta be fun. *Real fun.*

"Lemme call you when I get to my office. Should be about thirty minutes."

"Copy that. Thanks, Hammer."

"Yep." I ended the call, pulled the cigar case out of my breast pocket, and took out my stogie. I never smoked the thing. I used it more as a prop than anything. It was different back when I was with the Marine Raider Regiment. After a mission with them or Force Recon, I needed four fingers of bourbon and a couple of Cubans to settle me down.

I studied the cigar that had seen better days. Once I got home later, I'd pull a new one out of the humidor.

"Hey, Mac," I said when the sheriff answered my call.

"Been waiting to hear from you."

"Yeah?"

"You know I have. Guess McTiernan filled you in."

"You wanna tell me why the director of the CIA called me after he was on the same red-eye flight I was, saying his sister needed help?"

"Don't play chicken with me, Hammer. You know damn well why."

"All he said was that his sister shot your brother."

"That isn't all. We got her locked up on all kinds of shit. A couple unpaid speeding tickets, possession of a firearm in an establishment that derives more than fifty-one percent of its revenue from alcohol..."

I rolled my eyes. He could've just said "a bar." I was certainly aware of the law.

"The kicker, though, is attempted murder."

"Wait a minute. Attempted murder? Was it really that bad?"

"Well, now, Hammer, that comes down to a case of he said/she said, and she did shoot him."

“Where?”

“In the leg.”

“Money said Bobby tried to renegotiate the sale.”

“Can’t imagine any judge or jury would consider that enough of a reason to shoot someone. Anyway, we’ve got her in the county jail. Probably won’t see the judge until tomorrow. Maybe the next day.”

I could find out on my own, but it was easier to ask if Mac knew. “Have you heard what the DA is thinking about asking for the bond amount?”

“At least a million bucks.”

“What? Why?”

“Forgot to mention she had one or two outstanding bench warrants. Anyway, you wanna know what I wanna know?”

“I can hardly wait.”

“How in blazes did two parents raise such different kids? One’s the director of a national intelligence agency, and the other’s practically a career criminal.”

“I’m anxious to get that answer myself.”

“Talk later, Counselor.”

“Thanks, Mac.”

I pulled up to the gates of my thousand-acre piece of land in Dripping Springs and waited for them to open. It wasn’t like I kept a lot of valuables in the nine-hundred-square-foot house the property came with. No, it was more my affiliation with the Invincibles that meant I had to keep security damn tight.

If those assholes would let me stay put for a few days, maybe I could actually move into the house I was having built to replace the shack I lived in now. It wasn’t finished yet, but was probably far enough along for me to make it work—if I ever had the time.

As it was, the original house suited me okay. I had a grill. I had a kitchen too, but I didn’t use it much for cooking. Usually, I wasn’t here for meals anyway.

Otherwise, the place had a shower, a living room, and a bedroom. What else did a single guy who was never home need?

I tossed my bag on my bed, tired enough that all I wanted to do was sleep until tomorrow morning, but I knew I couldn’t. Nope, after I talked to ol’ Money, I was sure I’d be headed to the county lockup.

*Shit.* How many times had I considered giving up my gig with the private security and intelligence firm? Every time I was this damned tired. The pay was *un-fucking-believable*, but the hours sucked. And like that guy in the movie about the mafia family, whenever I tried to leave, they pulled me back in.

“Hello, Hammer. Are you at your office?” Money asked when he answered my call.

“Negative. I decided to come home first.” I wanted to add, “You know, to *sleep*,” but I didn’t.

“I’ve just learned they’re anticipating asking for a million-dollar bail.”

“Just heard that myself.”

“Jesus,” he muttered, a very un-Money thing to do. “I guess I should come down there and see if I can work something out.”

If anything would make his sister's situation worse, it would be for him to show up. Texans didn't take too kindly to interference from outsiders, and he definitely was one. "Uh, no. There will be no working something out, McTiernan. You set foot in this state, and her bail will double. Stay out of it and let me handle it."

"Let me know what you need in terms of funds. I can invoke my power of attorney if necessary. We have them set up for one another."

"Will do, and Money? I meant what I said. *Do not* come down here."

"Understood, Hammer. It's just that, you know, I promised my dad on his deathbed that I'd take care of Maeve. I haven't done a very good job of it."

"I got it covered."

"What about a writ bond?"

I'd already thought of that and said so. It wasn't legal in many states, but in Texas, an attorney could submit a request to the sheriff to set an amount to secure a person's release in advance of their court appearance. It was only temporary. The law required the person to attend a bond-condition hearing within ten days of their arrest, where a judge might set other conditions—such as increasing or decreasing the bail amount.

I should've thought to ask Mac what he'd take as a bond from me while I had him on the phone. Given the greater charge of attempted murder should be dropped, in my opinion, maybe he'd be willing to consider something lower. On the other hand, she shot his brother, and while it was in the leg, a GSW could lead to all kinds of things—including death—depending on where it hit.

In addition to asking about the writ bond, that was the first thing I should've asked Mac—about Bobby's condition—something I would've thought to do if I'd gotten more than a couple of hours of sleep in the last forty-eight.

"Give me a rundown on your sister. What should I know before going in?"

He chuckled. "I'm not sure either of us has time for that." He sighed. "She's my half sister and quite a bit younger than I am. My father married my stepmom a couple of years after my mother died, and Maeve came along ten months later. I was twelve at the time and in boarding school here in the States. Maeve was born in Ireland and lived there until my father passed away three years ago."

"What about her mother?"

"Died when Maeve was five."

That explained a lot. Older father, mom died young. "Any other siblings?"

"Nope. We're it for each other."

"If that's the case, what's she doing in Texas?"

"You got me, Hammer."

"Is there anything else you can tell me?" I refrained from adding the word *useful*.

"If you've talked to Mac, you already know some of it. The most important thing, I suppose, would be that my sister's two least favorite words are 'no' and 'don't.' They're a trigger of sorts for her. Reverse psychology works much better with Maeve. Tell her no, and that's the first thing she's going to rush out and do. Case in point, buying that bar."

"Understood. Anything else?"

"One of the reasons I think she gets away with it is her looks. Dark, almost black hair, striking blue eyes, and perfect features. She looks like her mother and nothing like our dad and me." Money laughed.

I'd never seen this side of the man. Normally, he was all business. Zero emotion. He was extraordinarily intelligent—off the charts, in fact. “Did she get your smarts?”

“She’s smart. There’s no doubt about it.”

“College?”

“Negative.”

If I recalled correctly, Money was thirty-six, the youngest CIA director in history. That meant his sister was twenty-four.

“Where’d she get the money to buy the Long Branch?”

“Inheritance. Her mother’s family was quite wealthy. If it had been up to me, she wouldn’t have gotten a penny until she was at least thirty, but the trust didn’t come from my family.”

“How much are we talking?”

“Fifty million.”

“Whoa.” Not the figure I was expecting to hear. Now I understood why Money said he had her power of attorney rather than offer to post the bail himself. It was also the reason the amount was so high.

Beautiful—according to her brother—smart, wealthy, and doesn’t like to be told she can’t or shouldn’t do something. The woman was the walking definition of a flight risk, which didn’t bode well for me and the writ bond.

I could afford the hundred grand, if it came down to it, but I’d hunt her down and wring her pretty little neck if she jumped. “What’s she want with a bar?”

“No idea. One thing I won’t ever profess is that I understand Maeve McTiernan.”

Something told me I wouldn’t either. While I’d hoped this would be the year I could slow down a little, it was looking like that wasn’t going to happen.

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