



Righteous

Joe Ide

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In this hotly anticipated follow-up to the smash hit *IQ*, Isaiah uncovers a secret behind the death of his brother, Marcus.

For ten years, something has gnawed at Isaiah Quintabe's gut and kept him up nights, boiling with anger and thoughts of revenge. Ten years ago, when Isaiah was just a boy, his brother was killed by an unknown assailant. The search for the killer sent Isaiah plunging into despair and nearly destroyed his life. Even with a flourishing career, a new dog, and near-iconic status as a PI in his hometown, East Long Beach, he has to begin the hunt again—or lose his mind.

A case takes him and his volatile, dubious sidekick, Dodson, to Vegas, where Chinese gangsters and a terrifying seven-foot loan shark are stalking a DJ and her screwball boyfriend. If Isaiah doesn't find the two first, they'll be murdered. Awaiting the outcome is the love of IQ's life: fail, and he'll lose her. Isaiah's quest is fraught with treachery, menace, and startling twists, and it will lead him to the mastermind behind his brother's death.

Righteous Details

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From Reader Review Righteous for online ebook

Andrew Smith says

I can only speak as I find, I was really disappointed with this book. I'd enjoyed the first episode in this series IQ (IQ #1): I thought it fresh and funny and I liked the characters of Isaiah Quintabe (IQ) and his henchman Dodson. IQ was a bright lad who, struggling to overcome the death of his revered brother, had dropped out of school to take up various odd jobs before turning his attention to looking into crimes the police weren't interested in – sometimes getting paid for his efforts and sometimes not. There were certainly enough left over loose ends to warrant at least one more book, and I was happy enough to pre-order a copy. So what went wrong?

Well the first book flowed really well: the major characters were introduced, enough background was supplied to allow some context to be established and a neat narrative added to complete the job. This time around the whole thing jumps around all over the place. Firstly, there are too many characters for my tastes (I get lost if I can't count them on the fingers of one hand), then there are plot lines aplenty ...and sub-plots and sub-sub-plots. I got confused, I gave up.

Ok, I didn't entirely give up but my mind started to go absent as the story played out: gangs, gambling, people trafficking, shooting (lots of shooting) and some other stuff too. But surely I'd learn more about IQ wouldn't I? Wouldn't this make up for the story I couldn't track? Well, er, no! I did learn some more about his history but the man himself came across this time as rather bland and, frankly, dull. I really wanted to know what was going on inside his head, but there lay the the problem - I never did really get to know any more about what makes the man tick and where he sees his life going. A significant omission, this, I think. By the end of the book I was no closer to understanding Isaiah than I was at the start. And what of Isaiah's uncanny ability to spot the clue everyone else misses – well, I'm afraid it's gone missing. He does eventually piece it all together but I think most readers will be way ahead of him.

There are some upsides. The funny lines are back – not really enough of them, but still some good ones. And in Dodson, Ide has created a character I'd really like to meet up with again. His partnership with IQ reminds me of James Lee Burke's Dave Robicheaux and Clete Purcell: one straight and sensible, the other wild and hilarious.

Is there enough to bring me back for book three? I'm really not sure. I certainly think I'll be watching early reviews to see what trusted friends think before parting with any cash.

Richard says

7/10

An enjoyable read that didn't quite live up to the first in the series but still provided enough entertainment to make it a worthy read.

What made the first book enjoyable is still here but that doesn't feel overly fresh either now. IQ is still an interesting main character and comes up against a number of foes here but with the help of his trusty sidekick/partner they manage to struggle through.

I didn't feel there were masses of surprises but enough to keep me reading and curious as to how things would end up. There were a couple of new characters but none ever leapt off the page and just the main characters from the previous novel were the stand outs again.

My review might sound more negative than intended but that's due to the high expectations from the first novel. It was still a good read and worth picking up but I'd definitely recommend the first book initially.

I received a free copy from NetGalley

Terri Jacobson says

Isaiah Quintabe (IQ) is still grieving for his brother, Marcus, who was killed in a hit-and-run accident four years ago. Since then he has been helping folks in his East Long Beach neighborhood with problems that the police can't solve. Now his brother's former girlfriend, Sarita, is having problems with her sister Janine. Janine is in Las Vegas and is deeply in debt to a loan shark. Sarita asks IQ to help.

IQ has feelings for Sarita he has never disclosed, and he sees this case as a way to gain her affection. He asks his friend, Dodson, to go to Vegas with him and investigate. Along the way, IQ learns details about his brother's accident.

Righteous is a well-written story, and the characters--particularly IQ--are engaging and real. The story moves along nicely with some surprises along the way. Very enjoyable, I look forward to the next volume in this series.

Truman32 says

Righteous is the gripping follow-up to Joe Ide's celebrated 2016 thriller **IQ**. Isaiah Quintabe (IQ) is still solving crimes and mysteries as an unlicensed private detective in East Long Beach, California. IQ is an inner city investigator; think of a blend between Sherlock Holmes and Mushmouth from *Fat Albert's Junkyard Gang* (with much better enunciation and a party-sized smarts). He takes cases from his neighbors—sometimes trading items and services for his methodical and observant deductions. Other times working for free. He is still haunted by the murder of his brother, and tracking down the killer consumes his waking hours. But then a new case arrives—his dead brother's old girlfriend needs aid in locating her gambling-addicted sister. Isaiah must employ all the skills and tricks at his disposal, as he is not the only one on the hunt! Ruthless Chinese mobsters and savage loan sharks make up a cavalcade of goons chasing this young woman. These are bad men, and they come armed with brutal beat-downs, hot lead, and a morally vacant willingness to use any means at their disposal to achieve their nefarious goals. They will not lose sleep when the blood begins to spill and the screams ring out.

Like a piggyback on the Hulk, **Righteous** is a compelling and exciting ride sure to elicit sweating palms and increased heart rates. Ide humanizes his inner city environment, distancing his story from stock stereotypes and ghetto clichés. This mystery is crammed full of interesting and authentic characters, violent exchanges, and seemingly unworkable quandaries that only the big brain of IQ can crack. Isaiah continues to evolve as a person through his relationships including his friend/ex-burgling pal Dodson who is now operating on the up and up as a food truck operator until he is pulled back into his friend's chicanery. The nail-biting conclusion

is satisfying and leaves us waiting breathlessly for the next book.

Pat says

4 stars

Book #2 in the IQ series. In this installment, Isaiah Quintinabe (IQ) is still trying to find out what happened in the hit and run death of his brother Marcus. He receives a phone call from Marcus's old girlfriend Sarita. Her sister, Janine, may be in some trouble in Las Vegas and Sarita wants Isaiah to check on Janine. So begins two storylines, one taking place in Vegas and the other in IQ's neighborhood of LA.

When I first began this novel I was excited to revisit IQ, Dawson and all the other familiar characters from the first novel. I was not so keen on the storyline in Vegas and after awhile the alternating chapters started to put me off. How was this coming together? Ah, Joe Ide performed his magic by lining up all the loose ends and bringing them together. I never anticipated the ending he created. An excellent book #2.

Faith says

I suggest reading "IQ", the first book in this series, before reading this book. Not because the stories are dependent on each other but because the first book was very original and introduced the wonderful character Isaiah Quintabe (IQ) who was Sherlock Holmes with more wit. Without that intro you might not get as much pleasure from reading "Righteous". In this book Isaiah is still trying to track down the driver who killed his brother Marcus in a hit and run a few years ago. Isaiah suspects that this wasn't an accident but, since Marcus was almost saintly, the motive for this isn't apparent. He also agrees to help extricate the sister of a friend from some serious trouble that she has gotten into in Las Vegas.

I thought that this book lacked focus. There was too much going on here, too many fight scenes and too many characters. The dialogue appealed to me more than the complex plot. Maybe the author felt the need to up the action because I think the series was sold for television. There are loan sharks, gambling addiction, Chinese gangsters, African gangsters, Mexican gangsters, drug dealers, prostitution, money laundering and more. There is also a somewhat tedious side trip to the courtship of one of Isaiah's friends.

I hope that there is going to be more to this series because I still love Isaiah and this author is very good, but this book didn't quite live up to the first one for me.

Kemper says

What happens in Vegas stays in Vegas. At least that's the general rule, but unfortunately if you cross a Chinese triad it may not apply.

Isaiah Quintabe (a/k/a IQ) is a brilliant young man who acts as an informal private detective and problem solver which has earned him a lot of respect from the people of his neighborhood in East Long Beach, but he's haunted by the death of his big brother Marcus who was killed by a hit-and-run driver who was never

caught. Marcus' old girlfriend contacts Isaiah looking for help in trying to get her gambling addicted younger sister out of a jam with a loan shark in Las Vegas. Isaiah asks his old partner Dodson to help him out, but the two of them quickly learn that the little sister and her idiot boyfriend have also made the enormous mistake of trying to blackmail a Chinese triad with some business records they've obtained. All of this is happening as Isaiah is trying to deal with a new lead that indicates that his brother was murdered and not just the victim of a careless accident.

I very much enjoyed the first novel IQ in this new series from author Joe Ide, but this doesn't meet the highs of that one. I won't go so far as to call it a sophomore slump, but it didn't seem as fresh or fun this time out.

One of the bigger problems is IQ himself. The whole concept here is a modern take on Sherlock Holmes with an African-American detective living in a poor area instead of white sleuth in upscale Victorian London, and that worked really well in the first book. However, here Isaiah comes across as more of a naïve jerk rather than the more sympathetic portrayal of a person isolated by his brilliance and lack of patience with social skills. I also liked that rather than have Dodson just be his ass-kissing sidekick like Watson is to Holmes that his relationship with Isaiah is much more contentious, and that Dodson is continually frustrated by Isaiah's methods. Again, that's a lot less fun this time, and the constant bickering between the two got on my nerves.

The ending of this with Isaiah finally uncovering the circumstances of his brother's death is also a whole lot of convoluted nonsense with an ending that feels less than satisfying. (view spoiler)

I also had some problems with the time hopping between Isaiah in Vegas vs. Isaiah at home investigating his brother's death. I was listening to the audio version, and there weren't any indications of this so that I actually thought I'd screwed up and was listening to the wrong part a couple of times. It eventually all comes together, but it was fairly confusing for a chunk of the book.

Despite these problems I still liked this overall. Isaiah is still interesting even if he bordered on seeming like a complete jerk for much of the book, and I found Dodson even more entertaining this time. The other characters are also well developed, and the whole plot about the triads was a lot better than the stuff about finding who killed his brother. The ending also seemed to set things up for Isaiah to grow as a person as well as maybe move on to bigger and better cases so hopefully that's what we'll get more of in the future.

Paromjit says

I had such high expectations for this sequel to IQ that I was afraid of being disappointed. My fears drifted away as I began to read, in fact I would venture to suggest that this book is even better, Joe Ide's writing has developed to give us two seamless stories running parallel in the narrative, that come together through the introduction of Sarita, the dead Marcus's girlfriend, over whom Isiah had an all consuming crush on. After it had almost destroyed him, Isiah had dropped his search for the hit and run driver responsible for the death of Marcus, but the pain and intense grief has never left him. Upon locating the car used in the hit and run, Isiah is back on the trail, burning with revenge, hate and righteous anger, convinced his brother was murdered. Sarita calls IQ asking for help for her half sister, Janine, and her weak willed boyfriend, Benny, both gambling addicts. Their lives are on the line with trouble from a loan shark, Leo, and the 14K Triad, whom Benny had ill advisedly tried to blackmail.

Isiah has acquired a pitbull, and is helping the locals in the poverty stricken Long Beach area of LA.

However, he is feeling out of sorts when Sarita calls him. He jumps at the opportunity to help, daydreaming about himself and Sarita getting together and the rosy future they would have. We get reacquainted with Dodson, whose girlfriend, Cherise is now pregnant, Deronda, TK and others. Isiah and Dodson go to Vegas only to encounter mayhem, violence, Chinese gangs and the ugly side of life such as human trafficking and sexual exploitation. Add to this volatile mix a Mexican gang, run by the entrepreneurial Manzo, attempting to modernise and lift it out of the ghetto, yet still dogged with members holding on to their brutal history and instincts. IQ and Dodson fight their way through a trail of death and destruction in their efforts to save Janine, Benny and Ken, Sarita's father. Seb, a Rwandan civil war survivor who has remade himself in the US, finds himself a person of interest to Isiah as he digs deep to ascertain his connection to Marcus.

Joe Ide delivers a tale full of allusions from the original Sherlock Holmes stories, told with wit, warmth and humour. It is written with vibrant prose and fantastic dialogue. It is a intricate story with psychological depth in its character studies, such as Isiah desperately trying to rise above the hate that is eating him up, and tuning into the most emotionally vulnerable side of a person to destroy them. Isiah has serious issues that he is forced to confront and address, his lack of social skills and difficulties in making relationships and so much more. There is nothing superficial in either the storylines or in any of the characters as they are developed. It is this complexity that marks Joe Ide as a gifted author writing this unique and barnstorming series. Cannot wait for the next in the series! Simply Superb and highly recommended. Many thanks to Orion for an ARC.

Carol. says

This is a good book; don't let my rating fool you. After all, what are ratings? A momentary reflection on the enjoyment of a read, a statement on the overall quality of the book, an assessment of value, or a comparison to an author's other works? On any given day, I may rate according to any one of those things, while attempting to explain why in my review. Onward, then.

Isiah, known locally as 'IQ,' is contacted out of the blue by Sarita, the woman who had been dating his brother in the years before he died. Her call shakes him from his depression after discovering the car involved in his brother's hit-and-run and realizing that it was intentional, a homicide. Sarita is worried about her half-sister, Janine, a DJ and gambling addict who lives in Vegas and claims she's in trouble. This time, IQ asks Dodson along, who has been busy trying to go straight in the food truck business while supporting his very-pregnant girlfriend Cherise. As always, they discover more than they expected in Vegas after the sister's boyfriend attempts blackmail. At the same time, the narrative follows IQ as he works his brother's case and his last steps in the weeks before his death.

Although reviewers often dub IQ as 'Sherlock-style,' there really is only the faintest resemblance to the Coyle stories. In this book, the action is considerably amped up, and IQ's deductions are primarily in service of rescues and not in solving a mystery. There's also a dual timeline, with IQ's earlier investigation into his brother's murder intermixed into his trip to Vegas to assist Janine.

"Janine is a serial liar, and hopefully it's a story she made up to get money from me. She's done it many times before. On the other hand, she might be telling the truth and if she is, she'll need help--oh, I'm sorry, Isaiah, I'm just assuming you'll drop everything you're doing and go."

One of the challenges for me was that Ide uses a limited third-person narrative, giving the reader perspectives from virtually everyone in the story. Personal perspective from Dodson, Janine, her boyfriend

Benny, a store clerk, Janine's father, the loan shark, a local gangbanger, a local gang leader, etc. all serve to confuse the story line and create distance between the reader and the characters. On the one hand, this choice does give the reader some insight as to the motivation, potentially humanizing those choosing a life of crime. On the other hand, it is so many people that it is hard to care about one person in particular. Furthermore, I'm not sure it was successful. I felt like the perspective just convinced me the person in question was an asshole, making it hard to appreciate IQ's efforts.

I felt mildly guilty not enjoying this more. Ide's a solid writer and to be honest, I think he is using a technique very few authors could pull off. The overall quality of the writing is very high, far above the average mystery; really edging into literary fiction. A little stuck on what didn't work, I happened to open Claire Dewitt and the City of the Dead, another kind of mystery/ lit-fic that solves a mystery while looking at life in the underclass, hoping for more insight. I think a limited perspective would have helped a great deal. Ide could have put more of the information into dialogue, bringing the characters to life, or left it out altogether. My guess is, however, that he likely wanted to humanize some of the criminal stereotypes used. Dodson provides much of the comic relief, but in some ways, that's a stereotype too.

I think changing emphasis on the story lines and concentrating on IQ's brother's murder and his resulting personal development could have done some amazing things. Greater focus on IQ might have let more opportunities for humor to creep in as well, because IQ mostly seems grim and irascible. While I appreciate his awareness of his contradictory impulses, it felt very tiring after a bit. He's so young, and still struggling with the fallout of the murder that the plot with Sarita and Janine felt like a distraction from the emotional weight of the real case.

"Much of the guilt he'd been carrying around for years had lifted and feelings were surfacing that he'd always ignored. He was lonely. He wanted friends... He wanted to have fun, not that he knew how. Inviting Dodson to come along was a bold step for him."

Overall then, a middling kind of read, partially because Ide set the bar quite high in IQ. Still, I'll be looking forward to the next book.

Three-and-a-half stars, rounding up because I like IQ's potential.

Meredith says

4.5 stars

In order to fully appreciate *Righteous*, read *IQ* first!

IQ, aka Sherlock from the Hood, aka Isaiah Quintabe is back in *Righteous* to avenge his brother Marcus's murder. This second book in the series does not disappoint! If anything, it's even better than book one. Filled with angst, pain, intelligence and humor *Righteous* is more than a PI novel--it's about friendships, complicated relationships, and personal connections.

This is a quick read, but there's a lot going on: two cases, lots of action, and tons of emotion. Isaiah investigates the murder of Marcus, and another case that involves a DJ in Vegas, Janine, who gets in over her head with Chinese gangsters. Helping Janine comes at the behest of Marcus's former girlfriend, Sarita--the

woman that Isaiah has loved from afar.

Isaiah's investigation into Marcus's death leads to him confront some painful realities and come to terms with some of his life choices. In doing so, he comes to recognize that he needs people, including friends.

Janine's case takes Isaiah and Dodson to Las Vegas. I love the dynamics of Dodson and Isaiah's friendship-- they bicker they an old married couple.

This book really delves into the emotional depths of Isaiah's character; his pain over Marcus's death is palpable. The moment he recognizes that Dodson is his friend is endearing. I love the motley cast of characters, especially Cherise, Deronda, and Ruffin (the cowardly pitbull). This series has quickly become one of my favorites. It's intelligent, original, well-written, and full of heart. I highly recommend and cannot wait to read book three!

Nigel says

2.5 stars, rounded up - 5/10 or just a pass

Overall a pretty disappointing follow up to the first book in this series. Pretty lacklustre, disjointed plot, but the main problem was that IQ is simply not as likeable as in the first book. Not as smart, also whiny and slightly pathetic.

Still just readable, although it was close

William says

Fabulous! Wonderful! Another bling-noir roller-coaster ride from Joe Ide!

Like the first I.Q. book, there are two stories here, in two time-frames, nicely intermingled by Ide. In the first, Isaiah realises that he must pursue the events of Marcus' death, and in the second story, Isaiah and Dodson are perfectly mis-matched, and off and running to save the day for the wayward Janine in Las Vegas.

Things get ever more complex, with Ide's insightful and horrifying look into the underworld of L.A. gangs and Las Vegas Triads. The insight about President Bush's good intentions towards the oppressed of China triggering an increasing horror in the USA was quite depressing.

Throughout, Isaiah is a spectacular bling-noir gumshoe, and the prose and dialogue are top notch. For the first 2/3 of the book the pace is blistering and often hilarious. I was grinning like a madman!

(view spoiler)

The ending contains the obligatory, somewhat clichéd and cockeyed shoot-out (not sure why this is obligatory in so many noir books these days) followed by a kind of epilogue was not-dump with some painful realisations for Isaiah about his life and future. Since we love Isaiah, we stand with him as he grows, and as he finds a little ray of hope on the last page. Wonderful.

My notes and quotes:

38% ... Wow ...

He'd never experienced hate before. It was like an ulcer growing on a tumor, festering and stinking. Late at night or between dreams and sleep, he'd get into it, bathing in the venom, wallowing in thoughts of revenge. In a way, the hate felt good. You were righteous, godlike, the dispenser of justice. Hate dispelled your fears and forged every disappointment, setback, loss, humiliation, and failure that ever happened to you into one massive steel sledgehammer of rage, poised to obliterate, and for one brief, purifying moment, give you relief.

1.0% "If there were ever two words that had no meaning they were moving on. Sorrow isn't a place you can leave behind. It's part of you."

2.0% "... Isaiah had a Google Earth map of East Long Beach inside his head with landmarks for every gang turf, crack house, flophouse, bar, dance hall, pool hall, drug corner, hooker stroll, murder scene, sex offender, abandoned building, liquor store, and park in the area."

5.0% "... Rap music was pounding like it was trying to break a window and get out of the car. Isaiah wasn't a fan of rap to begin with but this had accordions and trumpets in it and sounded like some pissed-off Mexicans shouting over a polka band."

7.0% WOW, what a rhythm! Delicious prose, the poetry of the 'hood!

15.0% ... "Come on, you must be a little excited," Isaiah said [about Dodson having a baby].

"Yeah, I suppose. I can see myself doing things with a kid. Teach him to shoot craps, roll a dub, help him pick out a gang to join—don't tell Cherise I said that."

25.0% Haaaaahahahaahhaa

Zhi was Tommy's internet whiz. If you were mute, illiterate, and living in the Gobi desert, Zhi could find out what rock you were sleeping under and what kinds of scorpions you ate.

26.0% Vegas was his world—or more like his natural environment. If he left he'd be like one of those killer whales at SeaWorld that goes berserk because it's not in the ocean.

28.0% ... Wow, the fight scene in chapter 5 is fabulous and fun! Woot!

35.0% omg this book is so much fun! Hurray, Ide!

70.0% ... the story of how Leo acquired Zar is hilarious!

Eric says

Righteous is the second novel involving Joe Ide's Isaiah Quintabe character in the follow up to his first novel IQ.

It is strongly suggested to readers to pick up IQ before reading Righteous and if readers do, readers will find

themselves in for a crime fiction treat.

Righteous picks up right after the ending to IQ and follows Isaiah Quintabe, a modern-day, urban-savant amateur detective, as he tries to unravel the history behind his brother's hit and run death while trying to help his brother's former girlfriend with a separate problem.

The novel brings back characters from the previous novel and introduces other more dangerous and interesting characters.

Isaiah Quintabe is approached by Sarita, his now-dead brother's girlfriend and is asked to help out her sister after her sister has run afoul of both loan sharks and deadly Chinese gangsters in Las Vegas.

These novels are enjoyable crime fiction-gangster novels that avoid typical cliches found in other novels and keep the reader interested. In many ways, these novels include the often emotional heft of George Pelecanos and Richard Price novels, along with their grit.

Highly recommended.

Josh says

Righteous, the second novel in the modern urban Sherlock Holmes-like series featuring the talented and super smart Isaiah Quintabe also known as IQ, sees the likable protagonist somewhat less-self assured and vulnerable than in its predecessor. The death of his older brother, Marcus, still a raw wound that fails to heal, only this time 'round, Isaiah is doing something about it.

Exploring the darker corners of the criminal underworld, Isaiah and his sometime sidekick, Dodson, duke it out with gangsters, murderers, and human sex traffickers in Las Vegas as they work a dangerous case to help an old flame and link to happier times in Isaiah's past.

Author Joe Ide does a great job at balance Isaiah's personal investigation into his brother's death and the current case he's working with Dodson to formulate a well rounded and entertaining novel with subtle linkages throughout.

I also liked the way Dodson was written, as the novel progresses he evolves from an acquaintance to sidekick to friend. With more page time, Righteous sees the sidekick becoming a more well-rounded and important character in the series; a contributor rather than a quick fix schemer.

My rating: 4/5 stars. Righteous has more 'bang' than its predecessor in terms of large scale violence, however, to fully appreciate what's going on, read IQ first; the death of Marcus and the impact that has on Isaiah is keg cog in the narrative.

Barbara says

This is the second book in Joe Ide's "IQ" series, about Isaiah Quintabe (nicknamed IQ) - a brilliant

twentysomething investigator who uses Sherlock Holmes-like insights to resolve his cases. IQ, who lives and works around Los Angeles, generally takes local jobs like getting a bully to stop bothering the science club kids and warning off an abusive spouse. Many of IQ's clients are financially strapped, so they pay in baked goods, produce, chickens, and the like.

Isaiah idolized his older brother Marcus, who was killed by a hit-and-run driver eight years ago. The incident devastated Isaiah and changed the trajectory of his life. Instead of heading off to Harvard as Marcus wanted, Isaiah dropped out of high school and became a thief. He then mended his ways and set himself up as the local detective.

Just recently, IQ was in a junkyard and spotted the vehicle that killed his brother. From clues in the car, Isaiah figured out that Marcus was deliberately murdered, and vowed to track down the perpetrator(s) and get revenge.

While IQ is looking into his brother's death he gets a call from Marcus's one-time girlfriend Sarita Van, who's now a lawyer. Sarita tells Isaiah that her younger sister Janine, who works as a DJ in Las Vegas, is in bad trouble. The DJ and her useless boyfriend Benny are gambling addicts and owe a lot of money to loan sharks. Thus the duo are in danger of getting beat up.....or even killed. Isaiah, who's had a crush on Sarita for years, says he'll go to Vegas to help out - hoping this gives him a shot with the beautiful lawyer.

IQ wants backup for the Vegas job, so he looks up his old partner in crime Juanell Dodson, who now owns a food truck and is an expectant father - looking forward to raising 'L'il Tupac' with his girlfriend Cerise. Dodson is always trying to prove that he's just as smart as Isaiah, and constantly attempts to get the jump on IQ's lightning-quick insights. This doesn't work and leads to friction between the pair.

The action in the book jumps back and forth between Los Angeles and Las Vegas, and is interspersed with flashbacks to the backstories of some characters. This can be confusing so the reader needs to pay close attention.

In Los Angeles, IQ drops in on various gang members and criminals, thinking they might have information about his brother's death. This leads to run-ins with dangerous Mexican gangbangers like Frankie - who thinks Marcus robbed him; Ramona - who'd kill you as soon as look at you; and Manzo - a tough guy who's trying to take his gang into upscale enterprises like real estate. Isaiah also seeks out Seb - a dapper little real estate magnate/money launderer whose leg was chopped off by a Tutsi tribesman in East Africa; and Gahigi - Seb's enigmatic right-hand man, who looks a bear gouged grooves into his head. Step by step, Isaiah gains insight into his brother's death.

Meanwhile, in Las Vegas Janine and Benny decide to steal computer records from Ken Van (Janine and Sarita's father), who's the accountant for a Chinese gang of human traffickers. The DJ and her boyfriend figure they'll extort the gang for cash to pay their debts. After this idiotic maneuver, the duo are in the deadly sights of the Chinese mob AND Leo the loan shark, who runs around with a 7-foot-tall gargoyle called Balthazar who 'only needs bolts in the side of his head to look like Frankenstein's big brother' and whose 'backpack fit like a cupcake stuck on his spine.'

When IQ and Dodson try to help Janine and Benny, the gangbangers and thugs go after them as well. Thus there's plenty of action - with pain, injuries and near-death (or real death) experiences for everyone involved.

Isaiah, who was a colorful firecracker in the first book, is more subdued and less interesting in this second installment. He constantly daydreams about Sarita (this is too icky) and demonstrates very little of the

sparkling repartee that made him so much fun the first time around. On the upside, Isaiah is solicitous of his new pitbull Ruffin, and meets an interesting girl in the junkyard....who provides good advice about training the pooch.

As Isaiah works to identify his brother's killer and to solve Janine's predicament, the two cases come together in an unforeseen - and rather inventive - fashion.

Though 'Righteous' isn't quite as good as 'IQ' (IMO) I enjoyed the book and recommend it to fans of thrillers. I look forward to the next IQ book, where I hope Isaiah will recapture his zing. :)

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