

Hey, hi. I'm Jack, and I'm back. I took a three-month break. I really needed it, but it's springtime now. So yeah, it's time to come out of hibernation and get back to work. So let's do this. Oh, and from now on, you can expect new episodes of the show to come out on the first Tuesday of every month. In this episode, we get into a story about dark net marketplaces. That means listener discretion is advised. We're certainly going to get into drugs this episode, and who knows what else. So let's just say this one is rated R, and this is your warning. These are true stories from the dark side of the internet.

I'm Jack Reciter. This is Dark Net Diaries.

This episode is sponsored by Linode, which is now Akamai, and this is exciting news for developers. Linode is now part of Akamai Connected Cloud, the massively distributed edge and cloud platform that puts apps and experiences closer to the users and keeps threats farther away.

Increased performance and speed to market with cloud computing services you're used to, now running on the Akamai Connected Cloud. All the developer-friendly tools that have helped you build on Linode for the past two decades are still available now that Linode is part of Akamai.

In fact, they're expanding their services to offer even more cloud computing resources and tools while providing reliable, affordable, and scalable solutions for businesses of all sizes.

As part of Akamai's global network, they're also expanding data centers worldwide, giving you access to even more resources to help you grow and serve your users.

Experience the power of Akamai Connected Cloud for yourself and see why developers worldwide choose it for their cloud computing needs. Learn more at [akamai.com](https://akamai.com) or [linode.com](https://linode.com).

That's spelled A-K-A-M-A-I dot com, or Linode is spelled L-I-N-O-D-E dot com.

So, let's start out with your name. So, what do you want to be known as on here as well, because you may want to want to occur or something?

Oh, no. So, my name's Sam Bent. It's a matter of public record. Also, I'm also known as doing FedTime online and Killabee. That was my hacker alias for a while, and also 12189082, which is almost like talking to Jean Valjean. So, that was my Fed number. So, I got a couple of aliases.

Okay. Well, maybe that gave the story away a little bit, but whatever. Now,

you know, Sam spent some time in federal prison. And honestly, sometimes when I talk with criminals

on this show, I get a little nervous and have to lay down some boundaries. I'm assuming you're criminal sprees over, but I do not want to know about any future things you may be cooking up that may be illegal because it puts me in an awkward spot. But definitely not. Just us, like, even if I had mentioned something to you federally, you are literally part of a conspiracy now and you can get up to 10 years. So, I take it very seriously. Even like when I was incarcerated, I would have guys who would walk up to me and they'd be like, oh, when I get out, I'm going to sell Coke right this time. I'd be like, listen, man, get the fuck away from me.

You know, like, what is wrong with you, dumb ass? You're guaranteed to come back. It's like, I don't want to hear anything about any of that. So, I absolutely understand that that's great that you have that mindset of, you know, don't try to involve me in anything.

Okay, so when Sam was in his 20s, he was living in Vermont and was getting good at computers, and he had a job fixing computers for a while, and then he started a little business doing computer repair for other people. Now, as Sam got more into technology, of course, he noticed and heard things like Silk Road and darknet marketplaces and Tor and Bitcoin. Because when you're a tech

enthusiast, you go in and you check these things out. I'd had this exposure to cryptocurrencies and to the darknet in general for a long time because I had been in information technology and cybersecurity. I did a lot of residential work mainly, but I was always, that was always kind of my thing. I loved computers. When I remember when Silk Road came out, like, I honestly, I thought it was a scam. You know, I thought it was a bunch of feds that ran it, and like, it was just a big, you know, it was just like a big sting operation. And then as time went on, I learned a little bit more about it, you know, I realized it wasn't. Silk Road was a website on the darknet that let you buy and sell drugs, among other things, illegal drugs. And the whole thing was anonymized, so it protects buyers and sellers. That way, the police would have a hard time finding

who the users were. An interesting use of technology, but Sam didn't really care about Silk Road at all. He was not interested in buying drugs from it or selling drugs on it. So Sam was in his 20s and had a girlfriend for 10 years that he was living with. And like, we were arguing about peas. My daughter got like, you know, excited. I had two stepdaughters and a son and I had made them dinner. And when I had given them dinner, my ex was like, Oh, you gave her too many peas. And I was like, I don't think so. You know, and she was like, you know, and she's like, Oh, well, you know, you obviously did look at the play. And I was like, well, it's the same amount of scoops. And, and she's like, you know, you're an asshole. And I'm a logician, like my personality type is INTP. So I'm a logician. So I, you know, I don't really get emotionally invested. And so I was like, you know, I disagree. You know, I think you're wrong. It's the same amount of scoops as, you know, the other kids guys. So it really aggravated her. And she basically told me she was like, you know, I cheated on you seven years ago. She was a super miserable person for those seven years because her guilt aided her. And she would take that out on everyone else. And she would basically never be home. And when she was, she was just a nightmare to deal with. So when she ended up telling me that I was like, awesome, like this is, you know, my chance to, you know, basically tell her to go to hell. And I use that opportunity to break up with her. But living in rural Vermont and doing like these small computer jobs, I definitely didn't make a ton of money. It was, it was at my own company was called our worldwide computer consultants. It was a startup. And just like, I didn't have a ton of money. So I was like, well, I need to make money. Like if I want to move out and I want to have a good house for my children to live in, I need, you know, at least 200 grand. Okay, so we've all been in this situation, right? Where life throws us a curveball and suddenly we need money, maybe not 200 grand, but still I can relate to being in a bad spot where money can fix a lot of my problems. But I have no idea how I'm going to get it. Not only does he need money, but breakups are hard to go through, especially after being with someone for 10 years. And sometimes when we break up with someone, we have a tendency to go back to our old ways. So what were Sam's old ways?

Prior to living in Vermont, I lived in Rhode Island. And prior to living in Rhode Island, I lived in Massachusetts. So like, you know, most people, they move, you know, from these states for whatever reasons, economic reasons, job opportunities, right? So I was in Massachusetts, I caught my first case, it was assault and battery with intent to murder.

Geez, dude, I don't know the full story of what happened here, partially because Sam never told the police everything either. Like what I do know is that he was 17 at the time. And there were two other guys who were also part of this. Everyone ran and Sam was the only one who got caught. Anyway, this landed Sam in jail for a while. And while he was there, he was sent to the shoe

a few times, solitary confinement, one for possessing a lighter because he's a smoker and one for making a knife to defend himself in case another inmate attacked him. In this period of his life, he was a drug user. And when he got out of jail, he even got charges for possessing marijuana. And he got into some more serious drugs and moved out of Massachusetts to Rhode Island. I had been in Rhode Island for a while. And like when I lived in Rhode Island, I sold, I had spent way over the statute of limitations at this point, but I sold the Coke, you know, powder cocaine and weed and stuff. And, you know, I moved up to Vermont because I was like, I was tired of doing that kind of stuff. Because like, it's a rough life, you know, it's no joke. So I moved up to Vermont. When I moved up to Vermont, I got my high school diploma. From there, I continued on. And with my education, when I came up to Vermont, I couldn't turn a computer on. Like, if you were like, turn this, you know, turn this computer on, I wouldn't be able to turn it on. I couldn't reform that one. I couldn't defrag a hard drive. I couldn't do anything. I didn't know anything about it. So I spent, you know, the next 10 years educating myself about computers and technology. So Sam's old ways was a lot of drug related stuff and even running from the law. Sam has learned a lot since then, specifically that there are now online drug marketplaces. Old Sam was about to catch up with new Sam. Silk Road, the leading dark net market, was raided and shut down by the feds in 2013. But this didn't make dark net marketplaces go away. No, Silk Road was replaced with like four other markets. And people just flocked to those. And when Sam was going through this breakup in 2017, a popular market at the time was Hansa. And Sam was particularly fascinated by this site. So he spent long nights reading through many listings and posts on there, trying to learn as much as he could about dark net marketplaces. So like, I had hopped on their site, and I was on their site for a while. And I started making posts. Like how I ended up establishing my name was just helping as many people as I could and calling out the people that I knew were scammers. So, you know, you had a ton of people, obviously, that are on that forum, or any dark net forums that are trying to get people to conduct transactions with them outside of the escrow system. So, you know, someone's like, oh, like, I'm looking for this vendor. He had a pound of weed, or hypothetically, he had a pound of weed for 1200 bucks. You'd see, you know, some shark come in and be like, oh, I like I have his weed and I bought it in bulk and I'll sell it to you for 600 bucks a pound. And like, this guy is just a random person, like, you're never going to get anything. He's just, he's there to rob you. It might even be a Fed. And he's just there to try to get your address, you know, and he'll rob you too, you know, but he'll get your address too. So, like, I used to call those people out, like, if you're, if you said that to someone on the forum, you're like, oh, like, I can beat his price. And like, you don't have that vendor star, or like, you can't prove that you're a legit vendor. Like, you can't provide a signed PGP message saying you're vendor x, y, and z from this market. And I'd be like, dude, like, you're a fucking fraud, you know, like, you're trying to rip this dude off, you know, and like, like, they used to hate that, because I would call them out. And I made 5000 posts in a month on handsome. And that was how I establish my name. Hansa came out with a policy where they were like, listen, you can't, you can't post on our forums unless you're a buyer or a vendor.

At this point, Sam was neither a buyer or seller.

So I was like, son of a bitch. So there was a, there was a big carter. He was like, listen, man, like, you know, I know, like, you like being on the forums, you do a lot of good. He was like, if, like, if you, you know, are you going to buy something that way you can stay on the forums? And I was like, well, like, I understand, you know, I understand Bitcoin, I understand all that, but like, I'm not completely sure yet that if I hop on like, local Bitcoins, that I can buy Bitcoins and have it be completely anonymous. And for me, that's a major risk. To me, it was like, you know, it's not worth the cost of being able to post on the forums. So I was like, God, it's a bad hit. Like, I'm not going to be able to post on the forums. And he was like, no, man, like, I'll send you some Bitcoin and just like, buy a technically that was my first purchase on the dark net was a stolen credit card. So he had sent me the money for it. I had bought it off him as two happy times. And then once I bought it, I was now a buyer so I could talk on the forums. So I'm like, yeah, I solved that problem. You know, that's awesome. So I sent him like his stolen credit card number back. I was like here, man, like, I don't need this. I'm not going to do anything with it. Like, I'm good, you know. So I was like, sweet. Now, you know, I could post on the forums though. So I kept posting on the forums. And then, you know, about a month or so later, it was like, I wanted to become a vendor. So I go to like become a vendor. And like, he was like, Hey, listen, man, like, you know, if you want to become a vendor, I'll, like, I'll front you that 200 bucks to do it. Because I know you don't want to go buy Bitcoin. And, and you're, you know, your parent, he called me paranoid

about it. I was like, yeah, right. Like, that's awesome. You know, I appreciate you, you know, like, like sticking your neck out, like it's 200 bucks. And he probably makes that in an hour. But I thought that was really cool. Hansa required something like \$200 be paid if you wanted to create a vendor account. And now that he had this, Sam was all set to start a new chapter in his life as a dark net market vendor. He didn't jump right into it though. He was very cautious about everything. For one, he knew a lot about Opsac or how to remain private online from his knowledge of cybersecurity and computers. But then having spent months reading thousands of posts

on Hansa really helped him get embedded into the dark net market culture. And this is a tough culture to pierce. There's little trust in some areas, and a lot of trust in others, which makes it feel like you're part of a criminal family at times. He had made friends and connections and started a reputation without even buying or selling a single item. And he made some observations during that time. Number one, nobody uses a real name on the dark net. In fact, everyone is trying hard to hide from their real identity. Number two, you can assume everyone is a criminal or a federal agent. And three, the feds are actively looking to take down the criminals, and he would pay attention to all those methods on how the feds were catching people.

So other people's missteps became his rules to live by. Do you remember what you sold at first? Yeah, so it was moonshine and cannabis. But where were you getting the cannabis?

I was growing it. So I had imported seeds from the EU. I had gotten some masterkush seeds, and I refined them. And I had studied botany for probably about 15 years. So I learned, like I taught myself about macro nutrients, micro nutrients, deep water cultures, scrubs, like all this kind of stuff, aeration and nutrient deficiencies and how to tell nutrient deficiencies and plants. So I had learned all this stuff, and I had wanted to

cultivate cannabis for the longest time. Yeah, how did it go on, Hansa? How was your first dip into the vendor pool? Yeah, so I want to say on the first week, I made about 300 bucks. And then the second week, it was probably about \$500. So it was definitely, it was a slow start. But had I not spent that month making those posts, I would have had no sales. His big idea was that he really wanted to be the manufacturer and seller. His theory was that this is how you can maximize your profits. So I'm like, you know, if I'm the manufacturer and I'm the retailer, my ROI will be insane. So like with my moonshine, like I could spend 10 to \$14 and I could turn that into \$100 at a minimum. And like that, and then if I made Apple Pie Brandy from that, multiply that by five. And that was my, my return was like, you know, 500 bucks. Now, Sam was trying to be business savvy too, trying to find ways to cut costs like shipping supplies can easily start adding up. So like for me, one thing I came to find out was that USPS on their website, you can order free supplies, right? So like, like if you want bubble wrap, like instead of buying bubble wrap from Amazon with your credit card, having it sent to your house and going through a ton of it, you can order envelopes from USPS or pick them up in person, right? And now you don't have a credit card purchase, you know, for one less of your shipping supplies anyway. And then I would take, I would order like generic catalogs that were really big, like Granger that had 500 to like 2000 pages in them. And I would tear out the pages, crumple them up into a ball and throw them in there. And I would pack it. So like, there's no packing peanuts. So now I don't have to buy that on Amazon. You know, like, I would make sure that my expense because, you know, whatever you're sending out, that's one end that you can get popped. But like, you buying supplies is just as dangerous, right? So all you have to factor in all those things. And like, you know, if you can factor those things in and make sure that they have no overhead, even better, you know, because now you're more profitable. He also made a lot of very careful steps just to get onto the handset darknet market. Like when you get on social media, chances are you just turn on your phone or your computer and you're already logged into the site, just like where you were before. But you don't want to do that with darknet marketplaces, because suppose you get caught by the cops, and they take your computer and open it. And they can just see that you're logged in as a vendor on the site. And that's some smoking evidence that they'd have on you. So Sam would try to hide his tracks so that it looked like he was never even on a darknet marketplace to begin with. For one, he would never use his home internet connection to do illegal things online. He lived up on a hill. And so he pointed his antenna down the hill towards the neighbor's house, and was able to figure out a way to get onto their network. And he used the tails Linux operating system, which has some extra security features. But the thing about the tails operating system is that it gets completely wiped every time you reboot or shut down and has no memory of what you've done before, which means every morning when Sam needed to log in and check his orders, he would have to reload tails and re enter his PGP key and his Bitcoin key and do all that in order to authenticate and do business on the site. But here's another problem. Having possession of those two private keys would prove to the feds that he's a vendor on the site. So he needed to protect those keys very well. And he stored them both on a little USB flash drive. I would have my flash drive that I would always keep on me. And I kept it on me



because first off, you have to figure I'm a moonshiner. So there's 170 proof alcohol around me at all times. So it's possible for me at any time to take this flash drive out of my pocket, pour 170 proof alcohol on it and light it and hopefully melt it to a point where it can't be recovered. But really, obviously, that's not a guarantee. It's not like I have thermite sitting around, even though that was an idea of mine at one point. Also, because he lived up on a hill, he could watch and see if anyone was coming for quite a ways away. I would do regular perimeter checks. So like, you know, probably for a day, I would walk around, I would look through almost every window in the house and just kind of look at what was going on outside. You know, was there a car parked down the street? And there were times where like, I saw a car parked down the street. Yeah, there's a ton of stuff. Like I wouldn't have a cell phone. And I wouldn't like, if you had a cell phone, like you somehow knew me and I like knew you well enough where I trusted you enough to come to my house like your cell phone stays in the car. Dang, things get really intense when you're a darknet market vendor. Friends aren't allowed to bring cell phones to your house. And you have to always have a plan in the back of your mind on how to burn the USB stick that you're always carrying with you all the time. We're going to take a quick commercial break, but stay with us because despite all this planning and safety precautions, something goes seriously wrong.

This episode is brought to you by Thinxt Canary. Most companies find out way too late that they've been

breached. Thinxt Canary fixes this. Canaries are devices that you drop into your network. You can make them Cisco routers or mainframes or Windows file shares or even SCADA equipment. They set up

in under four minutes and then you just forget about them. They require no ongoing admin and for the most part remain silent. Malicious insiders, pen testers and attackers who have breached your network betray their presence by tripping over them. And at that point, you receive your one high fidelity alert to let you know badness is happening. Some of the smartest security teams in the world use Canary, which is deployed on all seven continents. And you should check out their feedback, which is at [canary.tools/love](https://canary.tools/love). It's almost unheard of for a security product to have such good feedback and find out why some of the best security teams in the world use Thinxt Canary by visiting [canary.tools/why](https://canary.tools/why). That website is [canary.tools/why](https://canary.tools/why).

What about which carrier to use? Oh, for packages? Yeah. USPS only. Why? Because it's run by the federal government, which means they require a warrant to open it. If you ship DHL, UPS, FedEx, any of those are private companies, they can open your package, it will. Whereas with USPS, they require a warrant and they need reasonable suspicion with probable cause in order to apply for that search warrant and have a federal judge sign off on their ability to even open that package. Okay, so for the government to open your package, they need reasonable suspicion and probable cause.

Hmm. So what's that? What does the government think a suspicious package looks like? Well, this is obviously something Sam wanted to know. Making a package safe to ship was actually, it's kind of difficult because they try to make it as generic as possible so that they can classify almost any package as suspicious. So like if you use quote unquote too much tape, what's too much tape? Well, that's arbitrary, it's up to them. So like if you use too much tape, if you have a fake return address, if you have a handwritten address, if it's not an official USPS box, right, like all of these, your fraudulent return address,

a fake sender address, like all of these things culminate to create a suspicious package and then pairing them together makes it so you can add up these individual variables to, you know, make it something where now you can say you have probable cause and plead that case to a federal judge and hopefully give him, you know, he'll grant you a warrant to open it up. Now when you have all these packages that you need to ship out, it becomes a big task. You can't just hand them all to the mail carrier who's come into your house. You need to somehow anonymously send them without a way for them to be traced back to you. So like a public mailbox on the street corner might be good. You just put the stamps on it and put it in there. But that's kind of hard to do when you've got a bottle of moonshine that you're trying to ship. But the thing is, you just don't want to put all your letters in one mailbox either or make one mailbox the one that you always use. And Sam was already really busy making moonshine, growing cannabis and packaging

everything up and dealing with the orders. I don't have time to ship packages. So I had reached out to my cousin. So I contacted my cousin who at the time lived in Rhode Island and she worked at a dead-end job. And I said, Hey, listen, like, you know, I got a plan. You want to come up for a weekend?

And I'll talk to you about it. And she drove up that weekend. And I told her, you know, because I'm not going to talk about selling drugs on the internet over the phone. I told her about it. And I said, Listen, like, how it'll be is like, I will pay you a, you know, a certain percentage, 5% of whatever I'm shipping out, 5% of that profit margin for that package is yours. Plus a standard fee will do like \$5 a package plus the percentage plus gas money, all the expenses, car payments. And we had a spare bedroom. So she if she wanted, she could live there. So she had very well taken care of plus like, you know, unlimited alcohol, moonshine, weed, shrooms, ecstasy, acid, like basically whatever you want, you can take, you know. So that was kind of the arrangement that I had.

And then she would go and I would in the morning, I would wake up, I would check my orders, I would

print out addresses on thermal labels, because thermal labels don't use micro printing, which means my IP address won't be on that label. Okay, so I want to pause here and just do a little fact check. It's true that printers typically put some dots on every page they print. These are almost invisible and these dots mainly go unnoticed by most people. And there's this presumably to track the paper back to which printer printed it. But it's not exactly certain what information is encoded in those little dots. I don't think your IP address shows up in it. But it's more like a little signature of which printer it came from. And I think this is to help law enforcement trace counterfeit money to see if it came from the same origin. So while it's probably smart to not use a printer that does this, I'm not sure how effective this step was to actually hide its tracks.

For me, I bought a thermal printer, because with a thermal printer, it doesn't use ink, it uses thermal paper. And there's no micro printing with those. So in the morning, I would wake up, I would print out, like let's say I'm sending you, you know, half a pound of weed. I print out your address. And on the back of it, I write half a pound of weed. I package up a half a pound of weed. I have it sealed up in my clean room. I have, you know, my fake return addresses, slap it on there. And I slap destination address on that box. And I throw away the backside of the label, which says half a pound. So like one of the things my cousin was concerned about, she was like, if I'm sending out these packages, and like the FBI fingerprints, they'll see my fingerprints.

I was like, yeah, it's true. Yeah, it's not false. It's true. You know, and she was like, well, you know, like that's kind of an issue, right? I was like, no, because at the end of the day, if you're at the post office, and you touch a box, you have you still have plausible deniability. Right. Now, if your fingerprints are inside one of those, you know, the plastic that seals the drugs or on the inside of the box, not so much. So for me, I would seal the package because I'm working with it on the inside of it, I would seal it. And I would have like, you know, two or three pairs of latex gloves on, I bleached the area that I did it in on a regular basis to make sure there's no, you know, DNA. Like there's a ridiculous amount of stuff that kind of goes into this and then actually packaging it up. So let's say I'm packaging up just an ounce of weed. I'm taking I'm taking a sandwich bag, I'm putting you know, the cannabis in there, I'm sealing it up, getting the air out as best I can. And then I'm taking that and I'm wiping it down with rubbing alcohol with a new pair of gloves, I would stick it inside a vacuum seal bag, I would vacuum seal that bag, and then I would dip that whole bag in a solution of rubbing alcohol, let it dry off, then I would seal it in another bag. And then the last bag that I would seal it in would be what's called a visual barrier. And a visual barrier is just a it's a vacuum seal bag that's a solid color so you can't see through it. So I would vacuum seal this last bag, and off my thermal printer, I would print off a label that says organic dried fruit, and I would slap it on that visual barrier. Now if I hand this to you, you look at it and you squeeze it, it feels like dried fruit, but you can't see it because the visual barrier. So if law enforcement or a postal employee was curious about what was in a box and stepped on the box to look inside of it, like, oh, there's an accident, we didn't know we stepped on the box by accident, you can step on this box all day. And that visual barrier is not going to is a visual barrier. So you could literally open the box. And what you're seeing is just this thing that says organic dried fruit, you have to open this box and cut through this, you know, two mil thick plastic in order to get the other plastic out. And even then it's still so opaque that you can't see what it actually is. So you have to go through all these layers to see what it actually is. Now the reason I would do that is because you have a thing called permeation. So I can take a pound of weed, I can put it in a bag, I can stick it in a PVC pipe, and I can stick it in a block of concrete, stick that block of concrete in a gas tank. And if I leave it there for long enough, a drug sniffing dog will smell that smell of that cannabis through the metal of the gas tank, the gas in the tank, the concrete, the PVC pipe, and the plastic bag because it permeates out, right, because nothing in this world is actually solid. It's all held together by atoms, but nothing is technically solid, right, even the inside of an atom is, you know, comprised of basically nothing, right, but empty space. So permeation goes through everything and anything. Some substances, it takes longer. Now, mind you, I don't have to put it in concrete or steel or any of this crazy stuff that you see like a lot of the cartels do that, that are shipping, you know, large quantities, because at the end of the day, I use two to three-day shipping, you know, and it's sealed in four layers. So it doesn't have time to permeate those bags in order for a dog to be able to smell it, and I can assure you there's no microscopic residue on the outside of it because I've changed my gloves and I've killed whatever it is with rubbing alcohol and completely cleaned it multiple times on that same package. Okay, there's one more precaution to take around the shipping labels. So every three packages would have a different return address because one of the alerts for law enforcement is a fraudulent return address. So I had to find a database of legitimate return



addresses and like, you know, me, like, if like, you're an honest guy, right, like you're an honest citizen, you're nine to five guy, you don't break the law, you're not, you know, you're not evil that I know, you know, like, so like, I didn't want to send out, you know, a bunch of Coke with Jack's return address. Because if I did that, you know, it might not be the best thing, like Department of Homeland Security, bust down your door at 6am, you miss work, or someone tells your boss about how they saw you getting raided, you lose your job, you know, what do you need to say? Oh, I didn't do it. Everyone says that, you know, and like the stigma, the trauma that your kids are going to have, like, you know, all that kind of stuff that goes hand in hand with it. So like, for me, I needed a list of people that I could find and like my solution for that was looking at the sex offender registry and finding like level three sex offenders, the worst sex offenders, and, you know, putting their name as a return address and what this did was it made it so as a legitimate address, a legitimate return address, where I could be pretty sure, you know, not guaranteed, but reasonably sure that kids didn't live at, and that, you know, this guy got raided. I really didn't care, you know, because I have no sympathy for, you know, chomos, like this is what they call them, federal prison, like child molesters or pedos as they call them on, you know, the dark net and everywhere else. So, you know, I was like, at the end of the day, like, you know, I, it was, it was a great list to have because no matter where I'm shipping from in the country, there are sex offenders. And I didn't feel guilty about using them for my nefarious purposes, you know, because at one point they had used someone else for their

nefarious purposes, you know, I just kind of saw it as karma. Now, this is when he'd hand over the packages to his cousin, and he told her to ship these out. But there were certain rules that he told her to follow. Each post office at a maximum would have three packages going out. Right. So, you know, if we were shipping nine packages that day, she would probably be visiting three or more post offices. So our maximum was three packages per post office. So she would go, she would, you know,

ship out these packages from these three different post offices, she would get receipts, and she would bring them back, and I would cross off the name of that town. And then the next day, and then the next day, I would pick a different county. Right. And that's how I rotated. But it's also how I ensured that I did not visit that same post office for at least six months. Because I figured, you know, if the feds are going to, the feds, you know, let's say we ship out this package from this post office, the feds catch it. And they're like, well, we didn't get any video footage. Like, so we're going to set up shop, we're going to do surveillance. That's what they do. Right. We're going to set up surveillance at this location. Have fun, because we're not going to be back for six months. How big is your budget? You know, we're not, we're not sending out, you know, five gallon buckets of fentanyl. In fact, like the most dangerous, the most harmful drug that I, I shipped, I think was alcohol. Other people would say was powdered cocaine. I think, I honestly, I think alcohol is worse, even though it's legal. But like, I didn't sell heroin, I didn't sell meth, I didn't sell fentanyl. I tried not to sell drugs that I thought took people's souls. I tried to sell what I consider to be party drugs. And again, people would be like, you know, that's, that's, you're just trying to, you know, rationalize your bad behavior. And you could absolutely say that I wouldn't contest it. I wouldn't say it's wrong. You know, that's what it is. But at the end of the day, like, for me, that was my moral line, you know, and I was proud of myself for even having one. Because there's a lot of guys that don't. It's always fascinating to me

to see what moral lines people draw in the sand and don't cross. You'd think being a criminal just means fuck the rules, be all punk about it. But you just heard Sam talk about a lot of the rules that he follows to stay safe and secure. But adding rules just for moral reasons is interesting to me. One was that Sam would only use registered level three sex offenders as his return addresses, because he thought it would be wrong to put a good citizen down as a return address.

Another was that while Sam sold a lot of different drugs, there were some that he wouldn't sell, the ones that took your soul away from you. And he also didn't want to sell to kids, but he had no way of checking that. Well, so that's the thing, right? Everyone's anonymous. You know, it's kind of like, it's kind of like if I sell a knife on Amazon, how do I know you're over 18? And that's the thing. Doing this as your job, you really do need a moral code because the stuff you see on these sites gets dark fast. And some things that are for sale will really make you question where you stand on a lot of stuff. Like, should there even be a market where you can buy and sell anything stolen items, counterfeits, forbidden items, poisons, weapons, and of course, drugs? Sam was only involved with the drugs part.

All of us have an inherent right to our own bodies. You know, if you want to go eat McDonald's for the rest of your life and, you know, become 400 pounds and die of a heart attack, you're free to do so as an American, you know? And I'm of the belief that if you want to do drugs, you should be free to do so. As an American, you have a right to put whatever you want in your body.

Unless someone else owns your body, no one has a right to tell you what to do with it. It's like me telling you, you know, you can't wear your glasses over your eyes. You have to wear them on your forehead. Who am I? I have no right to your property. Who am I to tell you what to do? So that was kind of like my contention on that whole thing.

This is a libertarian way of looking at the world. Libertarians want to maximize autonomy and minimize the government's involvement in your life. Ross Ulbrecht, the creator of the first big dark net marketplace, Silk Road, was a libertarian too. He had to be in order to run a marketplace like Silk Road. He thought people should be allowed to make their own choices of what drugs they can buy, even if they're illegal drugs. But then weapons started showing up on Silk Road. And it really made Ross take a long hard look into his soul to figure out what rules should be around weapons. And he ultimately decided that it's going to be prohibited to sell anything whose purpose was to harm or defraud. So Silk Road didn't allow weapons or to or child sexual abuse material or even stolen credit cards on the site. And again, I find it very fascinating what criminals won't touch due to ethical reasons. I could never run or operate or even admin a dark net marketplace. I'd get stressed out, turn old and die in like one week. Just this week in my town, there was a warning poster I saw stuck in a bathroom of a coffee shop downtown. And it said, look out, there's a bad batch going around. Make sure to carry Narcan and test your drugs. It's talking about fentanyl. And just this week I saw in my town there were two fentanyl related deaths. One guy found dead in a bathroom and the other overdosed in a jail cell. See, fentanyl is an opioid, a painkiller, but it's 50 times more potent than morphine. And it's just incredibly powerful. But because it's so potent, people can easily take too much and die, which is a problem on its own. But what's scary to me is people don't always know they're taking it. One dark net market vendor was simply selling Xanax and oxycodone. Now people buying this stuff think that's what they're getting. But no, this seller was lacing the Xanax and oxycodone with fentanyl. So if some dad who just had tennis elbow or something needed some heavy duty painkillers, he could wait a month for a doctor visit and then get a prescription

and then go to the pharmacy and get it. Or he could just order it on a dark net marketplace and have it in four days. But that's dangerous because he could get one laced with fentanyl and run a huge risk of overdosing on it. And we hear stories of people dying from fentanyl all the time. And this is why it's important to test the drugs you get. There are fentanyl strips that you can get where you can test to see if the drug you bought has fentanyl in it. And this is why I could never be a dark net market admin. If I knew there were people lacing deadly things into drugs that shouldn't be there and killing people, I'd feel obligated to figure out who the hell that person was that sold it. And that guy who was selling that laced oxycodone got arrested and was put in prison for 20 years. And he is very likely responsible for a few deaths. So some vendors on these dark net marketplaces really don't give a fuck. Despite all the illegal stuff that Sam was doing, it's good to see that he wasn't misleading his customers or lacing them with deadly ingredients.

And he had rules that he was following. For me, it was like no international shipments, no selling stuff that heroin, meth, fentanyl, things that kill people, and not ripping people off, giving them the best quality product that I could source on a global scale. Okay. So one thing that you should be clear about from the beginning, if you're going to be a dark net market vendor, is you need a goal because things can get crazy, deep down in the dark net. And if you're not clear of what you're doing down there, you could get swept up in the undertow. My only goal with this was to make 200 grand. Because in Vermont, you could buy a house for a relatively cheap. You can find a cheap house for 100 grand. So I was like, I buy a \$100,000 house and I have \$100,000 left, which will let me pay the taxes and live off of it for long enough until I can find something to keep me afloat permanently. But it was like between my cousin's fee that I paid her and having to upgrade my cannabis setup and upgrade my alcohol and pay for shipping and evolve with the business, I always found myself always reinvesting. So if I sold something, I made \$800 off of it, I would be like, all right, \$400 is going to be for shipping fees. And the other \$400 of that is going to be for gas money for my cousin to ship \$400 worth of stuff, hopefully. So I made enough to make a profit, but between my cousin and my ex, who I was still living with, I never got to that \$200,000 line. Now, I did get to a point where towards the end, your money starts to come in exponentially. So the first week was \$300, second week was probably \$500, and then I had weeks where it was nothing. And then you have weeks where you got Bitcoin, and guess what? Bitcoin dropped 20% in value. So now you got to hold that till it goes back up at least 20%. And I'm not a millionaire. I don't have a lot of money. Having that being held, it kills you. I learned about Sam because he gave a talk at Defcon last year. And in his talk, he had a clear warning for others, don't drink and type. Yes, absolutely. It's more dangerous than drinking and driving. Absolutely.

What's the danger here?

What happens is that complacency. So you get comfortable at a certain point with me, just like me and you might know each other for years in IRC, right? And then you get wasted one night, and I call you by your handle, and you say, oh, no, man, it's cool. Just call me Jack. Right? And it's like, in that situation, but on the dark net, right?

Where I very well could be a fed. Now I know something. I know an identifying piece of information about you. And maybe I've seen you say something a certain way that's unique to a certain area. Now I know what your first name is and around about where you are. And as time goes on, there'll

be more information leaks that I can capitalize on to figure it out. And that's why I said, to answer your question, that's why I said, don't drink and type. Because whatever complacency you have is exponentially increased, which means the chances of you basically being a data leak on yourself increases exponentially with them. What kind of payment were you accepting? So yeah, Bitcoin. Bitcoin only. Yeah, that was it. So washing money is what I want to know. What did you do to cash out? Super easy. Yeah, that's probably one of the easiest things to do. I think the simplest way to cash out is with drugs and be like, what the hell? It's super easy. Here's the thing, right? Around where I live, a really good, good, good ounce of weed might run you like 225, 250. So on the dark net, I can go and buy 30 bucks an ounce. Like my cash out would be like, buy a bunch of his weed. And anyone that I knew in my area that I knew was like a social butterfly, and I knew we'd keep their mouth shut, I would turn around and I would say, hey, man, listen, you know, I will sell you, you know, a pound of this weed for 1600 bucks, and I'll give it to you up front. Now that's 100 bucks an ounce. Again, the typical price in that area was 225, 250. This guy can turn around, sell ounces for 150, undercut everyone by almost 100 bucks, and make a good amount of money. And he didn't have to put up any money. And he would be able to do that and come back with that in like a week to two weeks. So I'm getting cash from all different sources. His theory was that if this person got caught, they wouldn't snitch on him because he was giving them good deals. Besides using this method to turn his cryptocurrency into cash, he also would exchange his Bitcoin from Monero, which is more private than Bitcoin, and harder to track. And then he'd cash out his Monero. Okay, so at this point, he's posted a lot to forums and is a buyer and is a seller on some markets, and he's becoming well known and even starts working for one of the dark net markets. Specifically, he was doing dispute resolution. So basically, when you would have a customer who would dispute a sale, and you would have a vendor who would either agree or dispute it, then I would, I would manage some of the, sometimes on some of those markets, I would manage those disputes. And I would be the one to decide, like, do you get a refund? Do you not get a refund? Do you get a percentage of a refund? Like, how is that figured out? And we would do that by looking at, you know, obviously the reputation of both the buyer and the seller. Well, we would also look at like the account age. We would look and see if like, they had accounts on other dark net markets, how reputable they were. On top of doing that, because he was so involved with the community, one dark net marketplace asked if he wanted to do PR for them. And he took that job. It was a small job, didn't pay much. But since he was already very active in the forums and stuff, he could just keep an eye on any negative posts about his marketplace. And he would try to make that seem more positive. Now, at this point, one of the more popular forums to talk about dark net markets was actually Reddit. The subreddit r slash dark net markets had 180,000 members. And this is where Sam would hang out and see what chatter was going on about dark net markets. One day, someone made a post about the market Sam was doing PR for. And the person posting it was going by the name Hugbunter. I'll play on the words bug hunter. Hugbunter found an exposed config file on the dark net market site. But he put it on Reddit. He didn't put the actual page like he didn't leak anything. He was responsible in his disclosure and he contacted the admins. And he was like, hey, like, you guys have a IP leak. They just kind of gas lit them. And they're like, oh, yeah, like, we'll discuss it, you know, two weeks later, he's a cost security issue. And they're like, yeah,

whatever, you know, and he like, he was posting about it on on Reddit. So like, I'm trying to chill him out from posting about it on Reddit, because I'm in charge of PR. I had went on as a representative and said, you know, yeah, you know, that is our honey pie. You know, and we're glad that, you know, you were able to showcase that because now we can show people how strong our security is that we also have offensive measures, you know, built in. And he was like, oh, that's not true. That's not true. We went back and forth. And we argued, you know, for a long time. So that's how Sam got to know Hugbunter by trying to gaslight him over chat messages. Well, over time, Sam got to know Hugbunter more. And yeah, the conversation continued into other things. One thing they talked a bunch about was Reddit. Yeah, just Reddit itself. Because some users were getting banned from Reddit, trying to sell things right on Reddit instead of a dark enough marketplace. And it became a big thing to talk about. Like, how much is Reddit going to allow on their site? I mean, we're talking about illegal buying and selling of stuff here. He had come up with the idea like, oh, like, let's mirror and have this, you know, this forum on the dark net. So worst case scenario, there's a fallback. So the idea was born, take the dark net markets subreddit and make it sort of a dedicated Reddit like site on the dark net. Hugbunter got to work building it. He coded the site, he did, you know, all of that. And like, his job was to be like a background admin. And my job coming on was to be like an admin and actually do stuff on the actual form because I had, you know, I had a laundry list of credentials of sites that I had worked at before. The site that Hugbunter created was called Dread. They didn't allow users to buy or sell anything, but just let's talk about dark net markets. And they advertise this new site on Reddit to let people know that, hey, there's a fallback place to go if Reddit goes down. And sure enough, that prediction came true. In 2018, Reddit posted some new rules to their site saying that they're not going to allow users to exchange certain items. And the items forbidden to be exchanged on Reddit were firearms, drugs, sex, stolen goods, personal information, fake IDs and counterfeit money. Apparently Reddit had noticed a lot of people were buying and selling these things on their site and took a big move to ban communities who were involved in this. And this resulted in Reddit shutting down the whole r slash dark net markets forum. And this suddenly made the Dread forum explode with new users and went on to be one of the biggest forums on the dark net. And Sam had a front row seat to it all as the first admin to Dread. No one ever comes to my house, you know, no one comes to my house. So like, the only people that ever came to my house were people who knocked on the door and like try sell paintings. Because again, like where I'm living, it's an affluent area, right? So that people would knock on the door, try to sell paintings, or they'd knock on the, like Jova's witnesses would come and knock on the door. So I got a knock on the door. So like, it's like, uh, 715 in the morning. So like, I just got my coffee. So I'm like, I'm sipping my coffee. I walked to the door and like, I opened the door and there's this dude standing there and he's got a bulletproof vest. He's got a badge that's sewn into the bulletproof vest that I've never seen this bag before. Um, and he's holding up a piece of paper. He's like, hi, my name's so and so. Um, I'm a special agent with the Department of Homeland Security and this is a federal search one. And like, I'm sitting there and I'm holding my coffee and I'm looking back at the sky and I'm looking at the 30 people that are behind the sky that have MP fives and ski masks with skulls on



them on. And like, um, like this is before COVID. So seeing someone with a mask is weird. You know what I mean? Um, so like, I see all these people behind the sky and they're all looking through the windows and all of a sudden nonsense. And I was like, Oh, okay. I guess you want to come in then, huh? And he was like, yeah. I was like, all right. So as he starts walking in, I'm like, listen, there's, you know, there's two adult females, you know, one's my cousin and one's my ex and then there are three children in the house because like, I don't want them, you know, they like to play like they're in Iraq, you know, I don't want them running through, you know, pointing

an MP five at, you know, my son's or my daughter, you know, and like, you know, you know, scaring the shit out of them. Like I want them to know who's in there. So they're not scared, you know, because if they're not scared, they might be a little bit more relaxed when going through. And they were, and they were there. There's a pretty courteous and common. That was, uh, that was my first interaction with them. Just as a step back here, um, kids in the house with the whole drug lab. Yeah, there's no lab. And it was like the, the room that I had like the cannabis in was separate from the main house. So that wasn't something that they were around. And the packaging and all that, they never went around. That was in a, that was in a clean room, right? Yeah. So they didn't, they don't see any of that. And all the narcotics that I have were kept in a safe in there. Okay. Um, all right. So, so they come through, they see all this stuff? Yeah. So what they do is they, they raid, they go through, they find this. So, all right. So moving back a little bit, one thing like my, that my cousin had been worried about was she was like, all right, let's say we do this and like we get caught. I was like, listen, if we get caught, it's because I screwed up. I'm in charge of everything, you know, I'm in charge of the security. I'm in charge of everything that goes on. So if something doesn't go right, then it's my fault.

So I was like, listen, if, if they come and they raid us, like I'll tell them, it was all me, because at the end of the day, why am I not? You know, um, if I don't, then they're going to put it on everyone. So like when they came in, you know, they searched and they, they're going through and like they come and they see me like, oh, any, any drugs in the house. I was like, yeah, they're upstairs. They're in my safe. You know, they're all mine. I'm a dark net vendor. And they were like, what? They're blown away. But like, again, I had an agreement with my cousin prior to this, that if this happened, this worst case scenario, we had a ton of contingency plans. That's part of having good operational security and having good information security policies. It's like, you know, do you have an incident response policy at your work? So didn't we, you know, and this was agreed to prior to anything. So like that was the thing. Like if we get raided, I admit everything was mine and I did. So listen, I'm a dark net vendor. Everything's mine. You know, like what's the combination of the safe gave them the combo. What do I do? Say no, they're gonna open it anyways. The police were apparently unprepared to make any sort of arrests at that point. So they left, created an indictment, and then they set a date for his arraignment. So I go for my arraignment, right? So now I move out of the house I was in to a different apartment. So the Department of Homeland Security showed up on the day of my arraignment to that old house because they didn't know I moved. They wanted to arrest me there and bring me into court and handcuffs, but I didn't live there anymore. And the geniuses didn't know I didn't live there anymore. And the, you know, the rock stars, they are, you know, they had no clue where I was. So my ex had told them, Oh, he moved. And this is the address. And by the time they got to this address, I was already halfway to the federal courthouse to go turn myself into

the US Marshals for my arraignment. They said, listen, like in the time that you were a vendor, so I think it was like in totals, like a year and a half or two years, they were like in the short time that you were a vendor, you have crawled into more crevices and learned more about this culture and seeped into this culture than we've been able to do in six years. Because like in my short period of time, I inserted myself into the community and, you know, ended up working with these markets and, you know, starting up dread. And like I had become, I had made myself an indispensable part of the community by contributing, you know, and contributing in meaningful ways.

And that's what, you know, made me valuable to the community at the end of the day. And, you know, they said, hey, listen, like, you know, someone with your knowledge, like, we could absolutely use that. And, you know, going forward, we'd like to bring you a laptop and, you know, you can, you can continue taking orders and, and, you know, vending, you're not actually going to be sending drugs, but, you know, just gathering information. And, and I was like, man, I'm, I'm what? Yeah, I'm good. Yeah. Remember, I had been to county before, right? I had been to state prison. We're like, nah, I'm, I'm set, man. I'm like, you know, are you kidding me? Like I work with cartels, dude. You know what I mean? I work with multiple cartels. You think I like, like, I'm going to, I'm going to tell on people like, I'm good. I have a family, man. You know what I mean? Like, like I did this for my family. Now you think I'm going to risk their lives to get out of whatever punishment is coming? You're delusional. I'd die for them. I'd kill for them. They're my family. You know what I mean? So like, you know, they, they obviously didn't like that. So Sam and his cousin were able to go back home while the case was being built. And they set a date for when he was supposed to show up in court. At this point, Sam had moved out and was living in a small apartment. Now at some point during his time as a dark net market vendor, his cousin introduced him to a lady. Sam and her chatted a lot online and over the phone, but never in person or even using video calls. They became really close and good friends, flirtatious at times even. And like, she didn't know, obviously she didn't know anything about what I was doing because it would be in, I just consider it to be a massive obseq risk, right? To tell her. So like, I just told her that like I had a business and I wasn't specific about it. And like we learned a lot about each other as I was like doing my vending and she was completely unaware of it. And like after I got rated, I lost all my electronics. So I like lost her number. I lost all her info. So I had to go like, you know, find it all. And my cousin was able to do it through her Facebook. And like, I remember contacting her and being like, you know, she was like, oh, like you haven't talked to me in like four days. Like, is there an issue? And I was like, no, I got rated by the feds. You know, and it's like, it's like, you know, those, those dudes that like, like break up with a woman and tell her that like, oh, I'm a spy. You know what I mean? I was like, I got rated by Department of Homeland Security. They came in 30 deep on cooperation with the state police, like the cyber crimes task force came in and, and she's like, yeah. All right, whatever, Sam, like, listen, if you don't want to talk to me, like you just tell me, I swear to God, I got rated by the Department of Homeland Security. You know, obviously, you know, she ended up learning that it was true that my phone did get taken. And then she ended up moving from where she was living up to up here with like with me. Because I told her, I was like, listen, like, I have this indictment. I was like, just forget about me. I'm probably going to do 20 years. You know, like, like, because we wanted to get married, we had learned we had fell in love by talking to each other. And we fell in love intellectually. I didn't know what she looked

like. And I didn't think she knew what I looked like. We spent two years talking to her there. And I had hated, I wouldn't take a selfie because of my op sec. So, so after I got rated, like I ended up talking to her, I sent her a selfie, because now like, who's going to raid me now? You know, and she's like, Oh, like, I know, you know, I know you look like that because like your cousin had showed me a picture of you like a while ago. I was like, are you kidding me? So is this she sent me a picture of herself and like, and she was like way out of my league, you know, she was like, like, dude, I'm like a three, you know, she's, she's an easy 10. Yeah, I was like, what, what the hell? She was like, she's like, it's, you know, who cares? And she was like, she was like, you're handsome. And I was like, whatever, like, I'm not going to argue with you. I got a posture syndrome. So I'm like, I'm like, no way. But um, but she, you know, I was like, listen, I'm going to get 20 years. And she was like, I was like, you know, just forget about me, you know, we'd be friends and stuff. And she was like, she was like, listen, it's not all about you. I was like, what? She was like, I love you. Like, I'm not, I don't care how long you get, you know, and that was, that was pretty incredible for me. But like it was, I had, I had had people in the past who had been in my life who had said they would stick with me through a prison term and they didn't. And so like, I was very leery of it. And that's why I kind of like, just didn't want her to have to deal with that. I knew how much pain and agony it was going to be going forward. And she did, man, it was crazy. She stuck with me through my everything, through my sentencing, through my actual prison incarceration, like everything. They moved in together and waited for his court date. No, of course, Sam is super curious how they caught him. He took so many precautions. Where did he go wrong? So he looked through his discovery, which is the evidence that the feds had on him. And there were three words that he saw on there, Operation Dark Gold. Towards the end, like I found this one vendor on the darknet called Gold, G-O-L-D. And what he would do is he would charge you five to 10% and you would send him your Bitcoin and he would send you cash in the mail. And I love that system. Nice, a new way to turn your Bitcoin into cash. Just give it to someone and they'll send you the cash in the mail. This bypasses the crypto exchanges who like to collect a lot of your personal information. This went on well for Sam and Gold for a while. But then something happened where Gold got arrested and the feds asked him the same thing they asked Sam. Hey, you know a lot about this community. Would you like to work for us or go to jail? Gold agreed to work with the feds, which became Operation Dark Gold. So that's when Sam sent him some Bitcoin and he sent Sam some cash. But this didn't make any sense to Sam. No, this wasn't right. What law did he break here? It's legal to send your buddy Bitcoin and they give you cash for it. There's nothing wrong with that. So he told the feds there's no crime to exchange Bitcoin for cash. United States Attorney's big thing was you paid 10% to cash out your Bitcoin and that shows criminal intent. And I was like, the one thing I said to my defense lawyer, I'm like, dude, you know, there are Bitcoin ATMs that charge 10%, right? Like, it's not, like that makes no sense, you know? So this still wasn't adding up for Sam. Were the feds just making up crimes to get a search warrant? Because if they did get a search warrant under false reasons, then perhaps this case can be thrown out. So Sam kept seeking answers. So what actually happened was my cousin got complacent. What she was doing is she would

go to the post office with, you know, 12 packages. And remember what I said, three packages would have one return address on them. The next three would have a different return address from a different town. So she's going there with like our agreed upon number was three packages. And now those three packages have the same return address. Now she's going to the post office with 12, 15, 20 packages. And remember, every three packages has a different return address. So she's going there in some cases with, you know, six different return addresses. So like, they're like, what the hell is this? But again, that is not enough for a warrant. It's suspicious and it's reasonable suspicion, but it is not probable cause. So what ended up happening was the United States Postal Inspector just cut open a package with no warrant, cut open the visual barrier, cut open the three layers of vacuum sealed, and he found some Coke. And then they used that Coke to apply for a federal search warrant for the house after they followed my cousin back to the house. So like for the longest time, I was angry at my cousin because I was like, you know, you didn't follow the security policy. And now you're potentially costing me 200 years in prison because you were too lazy to drive. Even though you built for it, you were too lazy to do your job and drive to these different post offices. And then like, I came to the realization that at the end of the day, it's not her fault. It's my fault. I was in charge, right? That it was on me to supervise her. And I didn't do a good enough job doing that. And that's why we got raided. So even my OPSEC at the end of the day and my Information Security Policies were so on point that I would have never had an issue with law enforcement. So to kind of prove that, Hansa went down, your stuff is all over that database. That was taken over by the feds. They did a massive arrest through that. Yep. Hundreds of people in the U.S. and so was European, but they did an operation bay in it. Yep. They did hundreds of arrests in the U.S. for dealers, mostly vendors. Yep. You weren't one of them. So that kind of proves that you were, OPSEC was tight. Right. Right. And like, I had, so I'd gotten, in my discovery, I had gotten times when I looked through my discovery and the feds actually bought drugs off me like 20 times. They bought Coke. They bought LSD. They bought cannabis. And the only thing they didn't buy was moonshine, but they bought pretty much everything. And like, there was nothing from it. There's no fingerprints. There's no hair, not even microscopic DNA. Like, there's nothing. And, you know, at the end of the day, again, it was like that smallest little thing, you know, is what caused it. And that was her complacency. And my being overwhelmed, doing all these jobs, you know, having my attention so divided that I did not do a proper job in monitoring her and making sure that she was doing her job correctly. What ended up happening was my lawyer had applied for what's called the Frank's hearing. A Frank's hearing is when you can show law enforcement broke the law in order to catch you. This was my security policy from the start. It was like, if you guys are going to catch me, I'm going to make this maze so complicated that you're going to have to jump over a wall in order to do it. And then, of course, like, it's that whole thing you see like on law and order, where it's like, oh, fruit of the poisonous tree, you know, they broke the law in order to do this. So everything's invalidated. And that was another part of my plan. That's why I was ready to admit to it so readily. I knew my rights. I knew I wasn't under any obligation to talk. I knew that I was better off asking for a lawyer. But I also knew that they would most likely have to break the law in order to bust me. And then if that's the case, and I admit to everything, and they get everything, everything's got, there's nothing else they can do. If everything from that

arrest, from that original search warrant is thrown out, there's no case. Now, keep in mind, the feds have a conviction rate of 99%. They don't lose. It's like you playing chess with me, and I tell you, all my pawns are queens. I'm not going to lose, you know, so that's what it's like playing them. So now I got this Frank's hearing scheduled. Now, that said, with this Frank's hearing scheduled, a Frank's hearing is very difficult to get. It's super, super hard to get. So the United States attorney, Drescher, contacts my lawyer and tells her, I don't want to go to this Frank's here. So like my lawyer contacts me, she's like, Oh, he said he doesn't want to go to this Frank's hearing. And I was like, Yeah, I bet he doesn't want to go to this Frank's hearing. You know, like we're going to prove like everything that they did. First of all, everything you got was it was done so illegally. So I guess he told her he was like, Listen, tell him that if he pleads guilty, I'll give him a maximum of 108 months, which is like nine years. So if he doesn't, and we go to this Frank's hearing, he'll get nine of the 10 of his charges dropped, but he won't get his conspiracy charge dropped. And I was like, Well, what's he mean? And she was like, Oh, did you read your PSR? So PSR is a pre sentence reports, basically the background of your whole life. So I was like, No, so I went and I looked at it was like page 15. And like on that page, it said Geneva's proffer. So when I had first gotten arraigned after I got out, I got released on my own recognizance. After I got out, my lawyer had called me up and she's like, Oh, do you want to come in and do a proffer? I was like, What's a proffer? And she was like, Well, a proffer is like when you come in and you tell them what you did, who you worked for, who like who bought off you, who did what, what vendors that you worked with and what you know about them. I was like, Yo, man, that sounds kind of like snitching to me. And she was like, Well, we don't call it that. And I was like, The people I work with would. No, I'm not doing that. That's a death sentence for just me, but my family. But aside from that, like, I'm just not on that kind of time. Like, I'm good. You know, I'm not going to I'm not going to put people in a box, because I'm scared about being in a box. You know, like what I I'm a man, I was so what I did, I'll accept responsibility for. So he's like, All right, so like when when they were like, Oh, did you read your PSR? Go read page 15 or whatever. And I went back and I see Geneva's proffer. Immediately, I know what a proffer is now. And I go through it and it says like, your cousin proffered on you. She confessed to all this stuff, like, you know, all like he had me send these packages out. I didn't know what was in the packages. And like, I'm like, you got a percentage of every, you know, everything that was in the package, you got a percentage of, you know, and like, like you help me with the labels, like, what? So it was just completely mind blowing. What I understand a proffer agreement to be is where you admit to what you've done to get a reduced sentence with his cousin, the information she provided in the proffer was enough to make it so she didn't get any prison time at all. It was good for her, but bad for Sam. And Sam was upset because he told her to admit to nothing, and he'd take full blame for it. And I don't know what made her deviate from the plan. Perhaps she just wanted to get rid of a guilty conscience. Sam's big plan was if the cops raid the house and take everything, and even if he admitted to everything, he was going to prove to the judge that the cops broke the law to get evidence on him, which would make his case invalid. And he thought this would work because Operation Dark Gold wasn't enough evidence and the post office opened a package without a warrant. And that was a big deal. If he could prove they broke the law, then he thought it would mean that they would have to



throw out all this evidence on him and let him go. But this plan backfired. His cousin told all, giving the prosecutors more evidence. So he's faced with a new decision, either get a frank hearing to prove that the police broke the law to bust him, which may or may not go his way. And even if it did go his way, he'd still have a conspiracy charge that could get him 20 to 30 years in prison, or simply admit to being guilty, take a plea deal and get a maximum of nine years in prison. Suddenly, the Frank's hearing seemed like more of a gamble. And the nine years seemed like the better option. So he took the plea deal and admitted he was guilty. Somewhere around this time, his girlfriend and him got married. And they were living together waiting for the big sentencing hearing. The sentencing day came. And the judge sentenced him to 60 months in prison, which is five years. And during his time in prison, his wife would visit him frequently, giving him hope and encouragement to stay positive. Sam was due to be released from prison in 2024.

But he educated himself in the law library in prison and applied for compassionate release, which he was granted and let out after only serving 18 months in prison, instead of the five years he was supposed to serve. And when he got out, his wife was right there waiting for him, happy, he was out of prison. And after he got out of prison, he wanted to help others fight the law and went back to school and graduated and became a paralegal, which is what he's doing now. He even wrote a book about how to write a compelling, compassionate release motion. And he's also making

YouTube videos and blog posts and giving talks about his story.

A big thank you to Sam Bent, a.k.a. doing fed time, a.k.a. kill a bee, a.k.a. two happy times, two, you can learn more about him by visiting the website [doingfedtime.com](http://doingfedtime.com) or search for doingfedtime on YouTube. I'm going to be releasing new episodes of the show every month from that one, so I'll see you next month. This show is made by me, the cowboy coder, Jack Reisider, editing help this episode by Tristan Ledger, mixing done by Proximity Sound, and our theme music is done by the rollerblading breakmaster cylinder. Why did the capacitor kiss the diode? He couldn't resist her. This is Dark Net Diaries.