

## [Transcript] My First Million / The Story of Black Market Kingpin Ross Ulbricht + Sam Does an AMA

All right.

Quick break to tell you about another podcast that we're interested in right now.

HubSpot just launched a Shark Tank rewatch podcast called Another Bite.

Every week, the hosts relive the latest and greatest pitches from Shark Tank, from Squatty Potty to the Mench on a Bench to Ring Doorbell.

And they break down why these pitches were winners or losers.

And each company's go-to-market strategy, branding, pricing, valuation, everything.

Basically all the things you want to know about how to survive the tank and scale your company on your own.

If you want to give it a listen, you can find Another Bite on whatever podcast app you listen to, like Apple or Spotify or whatever you're using right now.

All right.

Back to the show.

It created these dopamine rushes where like it sucked, it sucked, it sucked.

And then like one of our articles got like a million views and I got so pumped.

All right, Sean's not here.

So Ben and I are doing this.

Ben, producer Ben.

What's up?

What's up?

Um, should we run through a few questions?

Yeah.

Okay.

I'll read them.

Okay.

And I'll, as you're answering them, I'll go pick up some of the new ones in case anyone has responded with more stuff on Twitter.

So first one is pretty open, pretty generic.

What do you want to learn more about in 2022?

I want to learn more about how to get popular on YouTube.

That's what I'm going to do.

And in 2022, I'm going to take more adventures, I'm going to do more trips.

So that's what I'm going to figure out.

Do you have an answer?

But I actually just wanted to follow up on the YouTube thing.

You are a self-professed wannabe fitness influencer is like that a part of it.

Are you also trying to learn Instagram?

Like where's your head at with this?

I want to vlog.

I want to keep a diary of my life.

I think it'd be fun to look back in 50 years and say, yeah, like you could see a, there's a period of my life that's all in video and I could watch it and see how I behaved.

I think that'd be really exciting.

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So that's why I want to do it.

I was just going to say, like I'm pretty much laser focused on my podcast right now and growing it.

But the other thing that I'm like super interested in, and I think is going to be a big space for the crypto type people going forward is idea of like startup cities, autonomous cities, like kind of building a new way of living from the ground up.

And people are doing interesting stuff there with there's something called Prospera that you've talked about.

Yeah.

Peter Thiel is trying to build down somewhere in Central America.

There's Praxis.

I've talked to those guys a little bit.

There's some interesting things going on and I would like to learn more about that and see what's happening in that scene.

What are some business related or what's an idea and trend that you think is overhyped?

I'll go first.

Well, how about this?

I don't want to say what I think is underhyped because that's also part of the question.

You know what I think is underhyped recycling?

I think it's I think current ways of recycling are overhyped.

So did you know that the most most of the you know how like you have a blue bin at your home?

Yeah, that's bullshit.

It all gets thrown away and burned.

They don't almost all of it like the vast majority like 90% of that gets burned and they don't use it.

The only reason we do that is because it makes us feel good and so we're okay buying more shit and that was and that I believe that this whole recycling thing was it was made popular by a lot of plastic like big plastic the plastic lobbies and that's bullshit.

So I think recycling is overhyped.

I think making it actually work is underhyped.

I'm very very bullish on that and it's something that I think about all the time.

I think that's a good one.

I actually did it.

I used to work in consulting in the previous life and I worked on a big project with a waste services provider.

One of the big ones here in the US and I can tell you that you are absolutely correct about what you said.

Am I?

Yes.

How much?

How much of it is just thrown away?

Here's the thing.

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The big waste services providers and there are two here in the US.

They try.

They try to recycle.

Yeah.

The thing is you actually have to be like really good with your recycling of like you have to wash out your milk carton.

You know, you have to like take out all of the styrofoam that is even there's little pieces like.

But then you need like five different bins.

You need like a plastic one, plastic two, plastic three, glass A, glass B.

Now in some areas they will sort it for you right.

But anyway, it's extremely costly.

It's not energy efficient.

So it takes it like costs a lot of energy to recycle this stuff.

So it's like, is it worth it from a carbon standpoint anyway?

And then most of it is just not worth it because people aren't that good about sorting out their stuff and throwing it away the right way.

So anyway, you're right about that.

But I do think there is an interesting space for people who do recycle like if people are willing to confront the fact that it doesn't work, then they can we do some recycling stuff that does work?

Like can we recycle in a different way?

I think it's interesting space.

I always say it should be reduced reuse.

That's just ended there.

Don't say.

Just reduce reuse.

Yeah.

I think it's like I think it's tragic that I order something from Amazon and I get all that packaging.

I think it hurts me.

I'm like, why is it hurts me just because this is inefficient, but it's like I just took this from the environment when I didn't need to.

Yeah.

Yeah.

Absolutely.

The one I'll say that I think is overhyped is I don't think it's overhyped, but I do think that you know the hype cycle where it goes way up and you have the trough disillusionment and then it comes kind of back up.

I think we're right at like the top of the initial hype cycle for crypto.

We're going to hit like a big disillusionment period where a lot of people are going to leave the space and then it will find its footing and find some legitimate uses a few years from now.

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But I think that the current fervor cannot continue forever.

Let's answer it.

All right.

So you're 20 million by 30 goal.

What was the process to come to that number?

So this person basically when I was like 21 or 19, I forget I set a goal where I wanted to have 20 million dollars liquid by age 30.

And the reason why I created that goal was I basically asked a bunch of rich people how much they spend each month and it range from like 10,000 to 100,000 a month.

But this one guy whose life I really liked, I think he said he said \$60,000.

And then a lot of like I went through a lot of Monte Carlo simulations.

And what it shows is if you spend only 3% of your net worth per year, you will never run out of money and your principal will continue to grow.

So \$60,000 times 12 is \$720,000.

And then 3% of 20 million is around that.

So 3% times 20 million is \$600,000.

So it's a little bit less.

And so I thought 20 million was a nice number because it was close to that \$60,000 a month number.

And a lot of people think you could spend 3.5.

So the number changed a little bit because a lot of people say it's 3.5.

Some people say 4.

I budgeted for 3.

And I don't spend anywhere near that.

I think I spend like \$18,000 a month.

Do you worry at all about sort of these black swan scenarios of like inflation is bad right now at 15%?

What if it goes like really out of control?

Do you prepare at all for catastrophic scenarios like that?

No.

Like the vast majority of my net worth is in large publicly traded companies in real state.

No.

If I'm bullish on America, therefore I don't plan on its demise.

Cool.

All right.

Do you have another one you want to do or do you want me to go?

You can go.

All right.

How about this one?

I was just about...

Yeah, that's the one I was going to ask too.

Okay.

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What are you most proud of when it comes to my first million?  
To this day, when people say they listen to it, I'm like, really, why?  
So I'm shocked that anyone even listens to it.  
Whenever I get recognized on the street weekly and that is the most proud.  
So I was going to bring this up, but we talked about Raw So Bright and he said, I want someone to bring up Silk Road to me and I want them to not know that it was me.  
I've heard people talk about it or reference it and they didn't know I was there or I say who I am.  
I'll say I'm Sam.  
They don't know anything.  
But then I'll say, like, oh, my last name is Parr and they go, oh, wait, you're from the podcast.  
I love it.  
And so that is when I'm most proud is when strangers or people I don't know say that they listen.  
I'm most proud of that.  
And I tell the story that I was going to tell off the top of the show and I forgot it relates to what you just said.  
So I told you like a little bit about this, but we did an AMA together about podcasting.  
I was talking about how to take over the world and a little bit about my first million.  
You were mostly talking about my first million.  
So we're talking with a group of a number of people on trends about podcasting.  
And just at the beginning, the host, the moderator asked everyone to type in where they were from.  
And one person said, Alexandria, Virginia, which is where I live.  
So I just sent him a quick DM and I said, hey, you're also in Alexandria.  
You subscribe to trends.  
You're probably my kind of person.  
Let's go get lunch sometime.  
This person said, this person will call him John.  
I'm not going to share his identity publicly.  
John says, yeah, sounds great.  
I'll DM you on Twitter.  
Let's go get lunch sometime.  
The next day I'm flying to where I am now, Utah, which is where my in-laws live.  
And we get on the plane and I'm there with my wife and with my daughter, who's one.  
And so we had an aisle and a middle seat.  
And so this guy gets on, he has the window or no, no, no, we had a middle and a window.  
Yeah.  
We had a middle and a window.  
And this guy had the aisle.  
So I say to the guy, hey, would you mind taking the window seat so that we're not always crawling over you to go use the aisle to walk my daughter around.

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And the guy says, sure, no problem.

And he's super nice about it.

So we all sit down.

And he turns to me and goes, I'm sorry.

Are you Ben Wilson?

And I immediately felt cool.

First time anyone's ever said that to me.

And I said, yeah.

And he said, I'm John.

Like I'm the guy that you messaged yesterday on that AMA.

And we were sitting next to each other in the same row on this airplane.

So anyway, this is my first time being recognized and just like one of the most insane coincidences I've ever had.

What did he say?

So he's a huge fan.

We talked to just about like what he's got going on.

He had a bunch of questions about the podcast about what I'm doing, but he's an interesting.

He's a really cool guy.

It's really interesting when that happens because you're like, wait, you're smarter than me.

You listen to our podcast.

What the fuck?

Why?

It is wild.

Yeah.

It is a wild feeling.

Let's wrap up at number six and seven.

How's that?

Yeah.

Sounds good.

What's the most fun you've ever had in your professional career and why?

I don't know.

What's yours?

I've got two answers.

Mine is one time I worked for a startup that did like event management technology.

Like they did sort of the software backbone for CES, if you know what that is.

But so I would just go around.

I was single time.

It would go around to a bunch of different like major conferences and events.

And that was just like really fun from a fun standpoint of just like being in different cities all over the world and just like being on vacation all the time while I was working.

I really liked that.

That's good.

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When I first started the hustle and I was the only employee blogging and trying to game reddit and get all the traffic was the most fun I had because I created these dopamine rushes where like it sucked, it sucked, it sucked.

And then like one of our articles got like a million views and I got so pumped.

And so that was the most fun where I was like just writing every single day in order to get views.

I think that was the most fun.

Okay.

Should we go with finish up with number seven?

Yeah.

So your person's over.

So you got to read it.

Sorry.

Name a couple of celebrities or high profile business people you feel genuinely nervous about meeting.

When I met Tim Ferriss, I was a little nervous, but I'm not nervous anymore.

I would say when we had Andrew Huberman and Ariel Hohani on the podcast, those two folks

I was more nervous to talk to than anyone else.

I will, I would absolutely say with Ariel, you definitely were for like days and weeks in advance.

I didn't notice so much with Andrew, but I definitely believe you.

Yeah.

And I don't know.

I've met as many rich and famous and powerful people as you.

So I, you know, my list is long, like a lot of people, all of them.

That's my answer.

No, we haven't, we've had like some famous people reach out and say they like, so like when Sean, Sean's now buddies with Hassan, I like, that wasn't, that was no big deal for me.

Like some of, or like we've had a handful of like famous people reach out and say they listen like really famous, like tier one actor famous.

And I found that to be incredibly underwhelming when I met Lance Armstrong.

So basically I grew up cycling and I'm a massive Lance Armstrong fan.

And one day I get this email and it's a picture of our office in Austin and we had like a sign on the window and it said, Hey, that's so cool.

I didn't realize you guys were in Austin and the Gmail sender said Lance Armstrong and he signed it just like L and I hit reply and I go, I don't believe your Lance Armstrong.

Here's my phone number.

He called me to prove it and I get a call and he goes, Hey man, what's going on?

It's Lance and it was Lance Armstrong and I was like, what?

Like in my mind of like the top 10 famous people I could meet.

He was like in the top three.

I was a huge Lance fan or still am.

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And he goes, what's up, dude?

I was like, nothing, you like I was so shocked.

And eventually we just talk on the phone and he goes, you want to come over?

I go, yeah, I would like to come over.

He goes, cool.

Come over for breakfast next week.

So I fly it out there and hang out with them and now we're friendly and we've hung out and gone to dinner a couple of times and I still am nervous around them.

That's super wild.

It was, it's a crazy crazy.

That was the craziest like celebrity style moment.

Were you nervous to meet Rob, a deer deck at all?

No, not at all.

That's interesting.

Dude, I didn't even want to do that podcast.

I was like, why are we going to talk to Rob?

Like he just a skateboarder.

Like he doesn't do anything interesting.

And then on the podcast, he totally blew my mind.

But at first I said, why are we talking to Rob Deer Deck?

Like he doesn't do any interesting business stuff.

Yeah.

Well, that was great.

Something interesting happened recently.

So there's this guy named Ross Olbright.

Am I saying that right?

You think I think so.

It could be Ulbricht, but I think it's Ulbricht.

Well Ross, we're going to call him Ross mostly.

He, not allegedly, but this is the facts.

There's a lot of alleged going on here, but this is the fact that I'm going to say he started this thing called Silk Road.

And about eight years ago, I believe 3,000 days ago, and I'll say 3,000 days for a certain reason, 3,000 days ago, he was arrested and sent to prison for life.

And basically Silk Road got famous because they had something like, if you do like today's dollar, it basically made Bitcoin popular because it was like eBay for drugs and something like \$10 billion went through it in only two years and he's since he started it.

And he was allegedly hired a bunch of murder for hires and for the screen, the Silk Road and for the murder for hires, he was sentenced to life in prison.

And he tweeted out the other day, basically this really cool status and whether you think he's a murderer, well, he didn't actually murder anyone, but whether you think he tried to kill people or not, and he's a bad guy or not, it's incredibly interesting content of him tweeting about being in prison.



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And he somehow has access to Twitter and he is able to talk about it.

And then he has a medium, like a blog where he's, he blogs about death and prison.

And it's incredibly fascinating.

So because he just tweeted this on December 17th, he tweeted, today's my 300, 3000th day in prison.

At this point, I feel numb to it.

I've forgotten what freedom feels like, but when I let myself feel like I am today, I just feel pain and a deep longing to be part of the world again.

So like this like super deep stuff today, what I wanted to do was with Ben tell the story of Ross, explain why this story is incredibly interesting and almost like what we can learn from business and leadership about it.

And we're going to try and like make an argument, like we'll try to dissect the arguments of is he guilty or is he not guilty?

And I want to preface this podcast that's with a few things, the first finding unbiased information on this topic has been incredibly hard.

It's been incredibly hard because the people who don't, who are on Ross's side are like these Bitcoin bros who love Bitcoin and they're incredibly passionate about it.

And then of course there's his family who is in who, who says he didn't do what he's accused of and finding information has been hard.

And also the third, maybe biggest reason is there was a ton of corruption in this case where a lot of police officers or a lot of detectives were arrested because there was so much corruption in this case.

So I want to say that like we're using research that is likely biased and I think I'm biased about the situation.

I had a strong opinion about it.

So I'll try.

I think what we should try to do is say what's fact and what's not.

Although that would be hard.

I think it's a little, I don't know where you kind of came out on it.

For me, it was like really easy to put myself in Ross's shoes.

So I found myself naturally drifting towards opinions that exonerated him and I had to kind of check myself because I want him to be innocent if that makes 100%.

And that's what I have at the bottom of this of our show is for us to talk about like what our opinion is.

And one of my points is it's easy for guys like you and I, you know, white dudes who have our good intentioned and who have access to the internet and like imagine ourselves because that's what this guy Ross, which we're going to talk about.

He looked like he was like a tall, good looking guy.

And it's easy for us to imagine that we're just like him.

But like when I, when I lived in San Francisco, there was these Guatemalans on the corner and they would sell heroin to people on the street.

And I was so angry at them.

I'm like, man, these guys should be arrested.

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What the hell?

And I caught myself thinking like, well, Ross did do it.

And I'm like, no, no, no, that's fucking racism.

Like you got to like, it's got to be the same, by the way.

Just because he's like this like internet, just cause he's doing it on the internet.

You know what I mean?

So anyway, we'll talk about that.

So let's start, start with the background.

Do you want to go first, Ben?

Sure.

So he starts in, in year old stopping grounds.

He starts in Austin.

He was kind of a science guy in college.

He studied, I want to say it was something like neuroscience or something like that, but it was more of a science guy before he decides that he wants to go down more of the business road.

And so has this kind of flash of an idea.

And he kept a diary, which turned out to be not a great idea for him.

If you keep a diary, keep the bad stuff out, keep yourself covered.

But he wrote down basically everything in his diary.

He wrote, quote, the idea was to create a website where people could buy anything anonymously with no trail whatsoever that could lead back to them.

He'd been studying the technology for a while, but needed a business model and strategy.

So he kind of goes into his bunker.

I read like a thing from his girlfriend at the time that said he became increasingly withdrawn and was just like in his room 24 seven, programming, coming up with the business model, coming up with this whole thing for what would become Silk Road.

And Silk Road is this essentially a marketplace where you could buy or sell anything initially.

They do end up putting some restrictions on it, like no child porn.

You had other stuff written there.

What else could you not do on Silk Road?

No fake degrees and no counterfeit goods.

But there was times where that those rules kind of got blurred because someone was like, should we have cyanide?

Pretty much the only reason people use cyanide for is for killing themselves or killing other people.

Should we allow that?

And they ended up allowing it.

So there was a little bit of gray area of what they allowed and what they didn't allow.

And before he started the Silk Road, he had an online business called Goodwagon where he sold books and it didn't go so hot.

Like the peak it made in revenue was like 10 grand in one month.

And so his profit was very little.

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And at the, at the beginning of 2011 in that same diary, he wrote, well, basically he, he basically admits everything so about starting it.

So he goes in 2011, I am creating a year of prosperity and power beyond what I have ever experienced before.

Silk Road is going to become a phenomenon, phenomenon, I can never say that word. And at least one person will tell me about it unknowingly or unknowing that I am its creator.

And so he talks about that.

And even in his LinkedIn, his LinkedIn says that, what did it say?

Oh, sorry.

On his LinkedIn, he wrote, I want to use economic theory as a means to abolish the use of Corey. I can't ever say that word either.

What's wrong with me?

Use, read this for me, Ben.

Economic theory as a mean to abolish the use of coercion.

I can't ever coercion.

All right.

Here we are.

On his LinkedIn page, Ross wrote that he wanted to use economic theory as a means to abolish the use of coercion and aggression amongst mankind.

So he's basically like acknowledging all this.

And so what he does is he learns how to program.

I believe he just used like the most basic coding languages ever and builds this website on this thing called Tor.

Tor is basically, it's basically a different version of Chrome.

So it's a web browser.

It was developed in the early 2000s by the US Navy because they wanted a way for officials who are in North Korea or in China to be able to use the internet and not be tracked.

And so they created this browser.

And so I remember when I was a little younger, when Silk Road was around, I downloaded Tor and I went to the Silk Road's website and you had to like type in this, like all these weird numbers in order to find it and it popped up and it was amazing.

Like it was like, I couldn't believe that this was a thing.

And 99% of, well, I don't know if it's 99%, but most people who used it were using it to buy weed, essentially.

So like there was all this stuff around the edges, but the research that they have done shows that people were generally going to it to buy small amounts of weed, not like big drug dealers, but just kind of people like Sam who were like, Oh, cool, you can buy anything on here.

I will buy weed.

I'd never bought anything on the just for the record, but we did an article.

We did an article all about this and I had friends that bought Ritalin from it.

And they were like kind of squares.

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They were like, not people, I didn't know that they were like, they don't fit in your head.

They're not like a drug user or, you know, but they bought Ritalin and Adderall on the Silk Road.

And I used to go to it.

I never bought anything from it, but I would go to it just like, I can't believe this is a thing.

And right when it launched, he basically grew some in the book, the American Kingpin, he said that he grew mushrooms and put it on the website in order to get the initial sales.

And then he somehow Gawker found it.

Like just a few months after starting it, created an article about it on Gawker.com, which at the time was one of the most popular sites on the web.

And that's kind of when it blew up.

And you mentioned his kind of early comment about like manifesting the growth of this thing. He also comes up around this time with his moniker.

So the system admin, who we now know to be Ross wrote, who is Silk Road?

I am Silk Road, the market, the person that enterprise everything.

I need a name.

And then he said, my new name is Dread Pirate Roberts, which do you know where Dread Pirate Roberts comes from?

A little bit, but tell me, it's from the Princess Bride.

So kind of the main character Wesley goes and gets kidnapped by the Dread Pirate Roberts.

And then later it turns out he is the Dread Pirate Roberts and that Dread Pirate Roberts is actually like more of a position.

And so once one pirate dies, someone else becomes Dread Pirate Roberts.

And that name is important because that's like the whole crux of the case, which is, are there many people doing this or just one?

Right.

So in the name is seeded this idea that there could be many people who are Dread Pirate Roberts. It like kind of hints at that.

Having said that, there is, I don't know if you want to go through it, but there's like pretty compelling evidence that he was at least the main person who was Dread Pirate Roberts.

Let's, let's do that.

But just not yet.

Let's first get, I want to set the background for finish up, we'll wrap up with what Silk Road was and like Ross's background.

So around this time, this was in February of 2012.

So we're about, I think a year after launch, he starts blogging on the Silk Road and you can go and read some of his writing.

His writing is very good.

He's a very, his character, this character of Ross and this character of Dread Pirate Roberts.

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It's very romantic and it creates like a cult of personality.  
And he writes things about how we need to stop funding the state with our tax dollars and direct our productive energies into the black market.  
And he says, money is powerful and it's going to take power to affect the changes I want to see.  
And it's all about how like people need to have their own rights to decide what they want to do with their bodies, things like this.  
Like very traditional, libertarian things, traditional.  
What's it called?  
The Austrian School of Economics.  
It's like a way of thinking is very libertarian.  
And he even writes, we, what we are doing will have rippling effects for generations to come.  
Like he uses these words that are like, he sounds like a dictator and you want to get behind them.  
And he sounds like he's furthering this like romantic and admirable cause.  
And in some ways I'm on board with that because I am on board Bitcoin.  
But the idea of like, you know, we don't want to be controlled by a central bank, things like that.  
I'm on board with it.  
And he does a really good job of using that language.  
It's amazing to, to go back and look at it with the amount of value that was flowing through Silk Road at the time, because Bitcoin hadn't had its moment yet the way it has now.  
And so you can go back and look at the amount that flowed into Dread Pirate Roberts' wallet.  
And if he had just held it, it's now worth like \$5 billion or more.  
Or more.  
Yeah.  
Yeah.  
So it's, it's, it's booming.  
As you said, Gawker picks it up.  
There's a lot of money flowing through it.  
And after only two years of doing this, he gets arrested.  
And the way that he gets arrested is, is, is pretty amazing.  
So basically in like 2010, he writes into a forum, uh, Stack Overflow, a popular development forum, forum, uh, developer forum, and he goes, how do I connect to a Tor hidden service using the curl and PHP?  
And then he lists his website as Ross Olbright at Gmail.  
And so he's like, he posts that, which that in itself isn't interesting.  
But what they noticed is that immediately after posting that, he changes his username from his name, Ross Olbright, to Frosty.  
And the reason that's also interesting is the very time, the very first time anyone used the word or referenced the Silk Road.  
It was for a username in a forum called the Schumerie.org and Frosty, that username,

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he writes something like, Hey, has anyone seen this cool new thing called Silk Road where you can buy and sell anything anonymously?

So he posts that.

And then in another thread using Frosty, that same username, he posts something saying like, I'm working on this, uh, site that helps people sell and buy anything.

I need help DM me if interested, you know, he says something like that.

And so that's actually how they like catch them.

And they noticed that this guy Ross previously, he had gotten in a little bit of trouble because Homeland Security opened a package a few months prior and they found like 20 different fake IDs all with his picture and different addresses on there.

And they went to his home and they busted them and he said he bought them like as a gag.

And so he actually got away with it.

He didn't get in trouble, but they go, huh, this is kind of interesting.

This guy, he's has a little bit of a background and they end up like stalking all of his social profiles and they noticed that he's talking a lot of libertarian stuff on his LinkedIn.

He says what he does and it's what I said earlier about very libertarian vibe.

He watches a ton of libertarian and Bitcoin related videos on YouTube and comments on them.

And that's basically how they catch him.

And so what they do is they find out that he lives in Glen Park.

And I have a story about that because Glen Park is where I lived.

He lived right down the street from me when he was arrested.

They found out that he goes, lives in Glen Park and the police stake out his house.

And what they're able to do is they're able to track him because throughout this process, which I'm going to talk about, an undercover agent, an agent went undercover and befriended him and basically became an employee of Silk Road.

Additionally, they had arrested other employees of the Silk Road.

And I'm going to tell you how in a minute, and they were having conversations with Ross because of that the whole time.

And what they noticed when they were tracking him in Glen Park, they noticed that when DPR is saying he's going to get off the computer.

So when, and he tells his employees like, Hey guys, I'm done for the day and close this computer.

They noticed that Ross goes out for a walk.

And so they're just being able to catch like, okay, whenever DPR logs off, Ross is out walking around.

And so what they do is they go to the library because Ross goes to the library, he works out of the library.

This library was basically like eight houses up from my house.

And he goes to the library and he logs onto his computer.

And what the investigators do is they have two of their guys go behind him.

Ross is sitting at a table with his computer open working on the Silk Road.

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They have two investigators go behind him and kind of act like two homeless people getting in a fight.

And Ross turns his back to his computer to see what's going on.

And someone swoops in and grabs the laptop from out of him.

And then another person tackles them and they rush the laptop down to the van waiting outside and they take screenshots of it and then they download the data.

And he was logged in to the Silk Road admin account and everything that they ever want is there.

And they could easily see how much Bitcoin he had.

They could see everything.

And at the time he had 144,000 Bitcoin, which at its peak 60 K, it's like \$8.5 billion that he had.

And so they caught all of this.

And when they logged onto the computer, they find his diary where he's like logging all of this interesting stuff going on.

He's got like an escape plan about what he's going to do if it gets caught.

I mean, it's just all there.

Yeah.

And it wasn't just so they have this physical tail on him and they're able to like using this kind of shoe leather approach, connect him to Drip Out Roberts.

But they also had, did you read how many federal agents they had infiltrating Silk Road?

No.

Do you want to guess?

I don't know, 50?

That's really close.

It's 60.

There were federal agents who were on there doing like fake sales or fake buys and a lot of them weren't even talking to each other.

Right.

Right.

And a couple of them, and this will come into it later, were like pocketing money.

We're essentially like when they were busting people, they were just like, well, no one really understands Bitcoin.

So if it just ends up in my wallet, it's fine.

And one of them ends up going to prison for that.

So well, let's talk about that in two seconds.

So but first Ross is arrested for doing that and everyone's shocked.

And I'm going to, I'll tell a story about that in two seconds, but everyone's shocked.

And eventually after a very short amount of time, he goes on trial and he gets locked up and they find them guilty.

And the judge sentences him to like two life terms plus 40 years.

And so the verdict, and then they appeal it and they go to the Supreme court and they just say, nope, we're all, we're holding this up.



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So at this point, very, very, very, very likely he is in there forever and nothing will ever happen.

And now like this is where a lot of the drama begins.

And the reason why a lot of the drama begins is because there's a lot of debate over whether there was multiple people as Dread Pirate Roberts.

And the debate is if there is multiple people, did he commit the hits?

So throughout this process, there was four or five different times where someone emailed him like an employee and try to blackmail him saying things like, or they would steal money from him or they would say, I'm going to reveal your identity if you don't give me blank.

And so Ross hired someone or Dread Pirate Roberts hired someone to go and kill these four or five people.

But the person he hired was an FBI agent and they went to the people's house and they knocked on the door and they go, bitch, we know you're up to no good.

We're supposed to kill you.

We're supposed to cooperate with us.

And they take fake pictures of them killing these people and in exchange, the people spill the beans on everything they know.

And that's how they get access to be able to track him so well.

All right.

A quick message from our sponsor.

You know, I was thinking about the shortest day of the year earlier.

And while we technically have the same amount of time as every other day of the year, the lack of daylight makes it feel so much shorter, which is exactly the same kind of feeling as working with disconnected tools.

Our work days, the same length as always, but before you know it, we spent three hours just fixing something that was supposed to be automated.

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Yeah, and so to be clear, he was never convicted of this.

In fact, he was never even charged with putting out these hits.

And that's because they probably didn't, they didn't have very solid case.

It was going to be very difficult to prove that he was actually the one that did it.

But it really seems like the reason they wanted to put him away for so long was because they were pretty sure that he did it.

They just couldn't prove it.

The judge says, basically, I need to make an example out of you.

She goes, we need to put an example that anyone who creates the Silk Road 2, this is what's going to happen.

And the prosecution actually told the judge, we want 20 years.



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And she goes, no, no, no, we're doing life.

And they gave him life, which is wild.

And they never actually pursued the murder charges because or the murder for hire charges.

But she does say in her reasoning for the sentencing that she takes that into account

and she assumes that he does it, which I don't know much about the law.

I don't know if that's considered kosher or not, but that's what happened.

It seems legally suspect to me that something that you were not convicted of could count towards your sentencing.

Yeah, I don't know.

I do think so.

Okay.

Do we want to jump into some of the implications of this and some of our conclusions?

So one thing I will say that scares me a little bit is essentially he's being put away for life for something that they couldn't prove he did like, well, that what I believe the charge was a bunch of drug charges.

But then there's this, if I'm not mistaken, there's this thing called the kingpin.

The kingpin act, something like that, where basically in the 40s and 50s, they were trying to arrest these guys like Al Capone and they're like, shit, all we can get them for is like tax evasion, but we know they murdered people.

And so they created this act that basically says that they can put these guys behind prison for a long time, even if they don't know that they did it, but they know that they were involved in so many things.

Correct.

And so I guess how you feel about that is going to determine a lot about how you feel about this, that crimes that they can't get them for, just like you said, they kind of add up these tax evasion charges until they say, all right, well, we couldn't get you for murder, but you're going to be life behind bars anyways for tax evasion.

It's pretty wild.

And let me tell you a quick story and then we're going to go into, like, let's have an argument about why we think he's not the one and why we do think he is the one and I will try hard to do both.

But so I've told the story to you Ben a couple of times, I've sold on the podcast, but since we're talking about it already, I'll bring it up.

So around 2012, I went to a party in San Francisco and I was single at the time and I saw this girl and I was flirting with this girl and this very charismatic, tall guy comes in and kind of steals the girl from me.

And I wasn't like mad, you know, we were just flirting, but I was in awe of him.

Like I was charmed by his energy.

He was like nice enough and he was good looking and confident and he stole her.

And I like looked up who this guy was after the party and I was like, oh, his name's Ross Albright and I looked him up on LinkedIn and I wouldn't, we weren't friends, but we had that one run in and he lived on someone told me he lived on the street from me in Glen Park.

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And if you're in San Francisco, Glen Park is a neighborhood that's a little bit more family oriented.

And so if you're young, pretty much no other young people live out there and I was one of the young guys.

And so I heard he lived there.

I was like, oh, that's cool.

I got a holler at this guy one day.

Well, I, I see that there was a big commotion at the library in Glen Park.

I lived on the street from the library and I would hang out there and I look online and it's this guy I knew Ross had been arrested and it was for starting Silk Road.

And I was in awe.

I'm like, oh my God.

And so we went online and went and found all the pictures we had together at that party and we I took screenshots of all of them and then we had to delete all of them because you know, everyone was nervous.

We're like, oh, sure.

So after this party, when you look him up, like what did what did people think?

What was the public face of what he was doing?

Like, what did you think he did?

Dude, he had.

So I think his LinkedIn, like the description said what it said up there.

I think it also said that he was a currency trader or some type of like currency.

I don't know anything about that world of finance, but it made it.

It was interesting.

Bitcoin wasn't that popular at the time.

And in fact, the day after I told my friend, Billy, I go, Billy, this dude I know was arrested for Silk Road.

Your dad likes Bitcoin, right?

Billy, his dad was Tim Draper, who eventually goes on to buy the Bitcoin.

I think he was a billionaire already, but he bought the Bitcoin that Ross was arrested with because they the government auctioned it off.

And that Bitcoin is like worth like \$5 billion.

And he bought it from the government for like 20 million or something like that.

And I go, Billy, this is crazy.

And he goes, yeah, my dad's and at the time he didn't know that his dad was going to buy it, but he was like, yeah, my dad like loves Bitcoin.

He thinks it's like the future and I was like, all right, that sounds cool.

I don't know anything about it, but if this is just too good to be true, like I got a like you're telling me you think it's going to be popular and the guy got arrested, I'm just going to buy some.

And that's how I bought it.

And I bought Bitcoin for my family that year for Christmas.

So if you were attaching a percentage chance to it, what do you think the chances are that

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he was the one who put out the hits for hire?

70%.

So yeah, let's get into it.

So there's the problem with this case is that there's a large amount of information out there that's really good for both sides.

And it's really hard to know who to trust.

And so I don't know, like what's not debated is that he started it.

The point is like, when did he give it up?

And so let me explain to you why I think it's suspect.

So he had this friend named Richard Bates and rich, he tried to recruit Richard to come work at the Silk Road when he first started it and Richard is like, no, I'm not into that man.

That's illegal.

Eventually Ross wrote to him and said, all right, I sold the site.

But in the diary, he wrote, I've been lying to my friends and telling them I sold it.

So that has happened a bunch of different times and it's hard.

And what we forgot to mention was throughout this case, there's like three or four different FBI agents or like DEA agents who are convicted and go to prison because they started talking with Ross and getting into Bitcoin.

And they eventually like started feeding him information about what the feds were doing and they started stealing Bitcoin and they were locked up and sent to prison for this.

And so there's a massive amount of corruption going on here, but you could say, and his parents say, because there was so much corruption, we can't trust the entire case.

I actually think there can be corruption and it can also be true.

For example, O.J. Simpson, Mark Furman, I think planted that glove.

So you know, the, if it don't fit, you must have quit.

They found this glove and O.J. Simpson's thing and, but they're like, why is this glove here?

And like, I think Mark Furman planted it because he was racist, but also O.J. killed that lady. Right.

You know what I mean?

I think a conspiracy can exist and also the guy's guilty.

Yeah.

I think, so one of the big points of debate is, did anyone else have access to Dread Pirate Roberts?

It seems clear that other people, at least at times, a few other admins did have access, but there probably weren't multiple DPRs, if that makes sense.

Like he was Dread Pirate Roberts, but maybe some other people had limited access for a short amount of time.

The other like question is, did once the FBI and the DEA had access to his laptop and had access to Dread Pirate Roberts, could they go back and edit messages in order to make them support their case, essentially?

And he argued that they did.

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And there are some people who were involved with Silk Road who basically say, yeah, I went back and looked at my messages after the FBI had access to Ross's laptop and like mild messages are totally whack.

I didn't say any of that stuff.

Now they might have reason to say that stuff anyway, but that, that is an argument.

Yes.

And there's things like that, which make me question it.

And then there's things like this.

So listen to this.

This is a post that Ross wrote.

There's been more than one occasion where I've wanted to quit without getting into details.

The stress of being DPR is sometimes overwhelming.

What keeps me going is the understanding that what we are doing here is more important than just my insignificant little life.

I believe what we are doing will have rippling effects throughout many generations.

There's going to be a shift in how human beings organize and relate to one another.

I've gone through the mental, listen to this.

I've gone through the mental exercise of spending a lifetime in prison and dying for this cause.

I've let the fear pass for me with, and with clarity, commit myself fully to the mission and values outlined in the Silk Road Charter.

So he writes things like that.

And I think, so are you just, you're lying to all of us?

Because in a little bit, it's like, if you believed in something that strongly in what he's saying is like this glorious revolution, then would you be willing to kill for something that's that important?

Definitely.

Yeah.

I mean, it sounds like the kind of rhetoric that maybe, maybe.

So let's talk about some more evidence that shows that he didn't do this.

So there's no doubt.

He admitted that there's this great website called Free Ross.

And I'm not saying I actually agree with it, but it's called Free Ross.

And then they have a post called like The True Story.

And they, someone on the, on his team wrote all the, this really long blog post and that has all evidence citing everything that they said.

And basically in that, Ross has admitted, he goes, yeah, I started it, but I handed it over.

Someone, a hacker came to me and he said, like, I figured out how your site works.

I'm going to get into it because of this error you made.

Otherwise, you should just sell it to me.

And so he does, or that's what they say the story is, and he sells it to the guy who started Mount Gox.

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Do you know what his name is?

I'm looking, I'm trying to look it up right now.

So he sells this to the guy, basically Mount Gox in 2012 was in 2011, 2010 was Coinbase, but back then.

Eventually this guy though gets locked up and goes to prison because Mount Gox gets, gets hacked and he kind of knew about it.

And so he's kind of a crook.

I mean, this guy's a crook hardcore, but what the police say and the feds say, they say that Silk Road was registered on a domain service owned by this guy and that most of transactions that were, were working with Silk Road went through Mount Gox and it made sense for the Mount Gox CEO to want to own Silk Road because it increased the price of Bitcoin and made them more valuable.

And so that's a huge accusation here.

Mark Kerples is the name.

So that's what a lot of people, so a lot of people think, well, he actually wasn't it.

And then they go, well, why did, why was Ross on Silk Road when he got arrested?

They say because this guy hired Ross as a freelancer after he sold it for help and multiple people had access to it.

And so they say, yeah, he was helping him run Silk Road when he got arrested, but he's not the guy who ordered that, the murder for hire or did a lot of the other stuff.

I read, I met a guy the other day who lost \$20 million in the Mount Gox hack and that guy, the Mount Gox guy, he's a French guy.

He spent time in prison for doing a bunch of bad stuff in Japan.

So I think that guy's sleazy.

It is sort of a just so story though that like, oh yeah, I was totally out of it, but

I was doing this one last freelancing gig and you guys happened to catch me at the exact moment when I just happened to log in for one last time just to help this guy out.

It is, it does stretch credulity a little bit.

It does, but there's so many things in the story and we're only touching about a little bit of it.

There's a book called American Kingpin.

There's so much stuff in this story though that is like, it's hard to believe is true, but it is in fact true.

Like basically when Ross started this in 2010, 11, he was like a happy go lucky ish like, Oh, you know, I'm down to my luck.

I'm going to try this.

And then within 18 months, you see his tone change to like being this like domineering, we're going to take over the world and further this cause type of guy.

And this is just like, I mean, this is, it's a movie, just how this guy could do it and he had the good looks and the charisma.

So it's hard to know what to believe because there's a lot of unbelievable stuff.

That's true.

Yeah, exactly.

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And also add to the fact that by virtue of what he's trying to do, most of it is secretive by design.

So it is like hard to unravel and unpack what is true, what is not because it's intentionally obscure.

And so I don't, and then add that it is just so weird though to me that like multiple federal agents, multiple, multiple federal agents on this case get arrested and do, and do time do hard time for corruption and one guy extortion.

One guy who did it.

I think his name is Carl force.

I think he got sentenced to 76 months.

So like, what's that?

Like six years.

He basically, you can go and read his chats and I think that he like fell in love with Ross and this idea like, like fell in love with the idea of like this, this mission.

And he would, he would say like, dude, you're going to get arrested.

I'm going to get fired from this.

I'm going to go to jail for this.

I think that like he, at first he wanted to make money, but because this is such a romantic like idea of overthrowing the government and like the little guys are winning and we're doing this all and we're the downtrodden, they all bonded together.

And it was when I was reading this, I was like, I wish I was part of this.

And so I understand it.

So this guy knob, he, that was his username Carl forces username on silk road.

He just did it for fun and just to learn.

And then he realized like he got into it.

So I think it was a combination of greed.

So he eventually stole from people of greed, but also I think that they just got caught up in the intoxication of all this because when you're doing something like this, it feels like there's no consequences.

When you're building something online, it's like, well, this is just fake.

Like there's no consequences.

So let's talk about how big this was.

So the silk road, even though it had a massive impact on Bitcoin and society and things like that, it was only around, I think for two years.

And so, and let me see if I have some stats.

So between, there was a period between May and July, where 1.2 million messages were sent on the platform.

When he was arrested, he had 144,000 Bitcoin, which at its peak is like \$8.5 billion.

And keep in mind, he was only, it's like eBay, you only take like a 10% fee.

So that's like not including the, that's not the transactional value.

So in 2013, they say that it was doing more than 7 million in income.

So DPR, that was his annual revenue or his, so there's, with these businesses, there's gross merchandise revenue, like our total transaction volume, which is like, if you're

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eBay, it's how much goods are going through.

But then there's like, how much the actual company makes because they only take a 10% fee.

And his 10% fee added up at the time, he was making \$7 million of Bitcoin.

And if you, if you bring that out to today's prices, that means he was making around \$5 billion a year already in year two.

And there's a bunch of interesting things about this.

The first is that he was doing all remotely without knowing the identity of his coworkers.

So he eventually hires like freelancers, but they, and he like makes them do certain things like send them his, their ID and stuff like that.

And but he had like a team and he didn't know at all who they were and it was all done remotely.

That's incredibly interesting.

They built something that big, that fasted that way.

And second, he didn't know how to code.

He was learning to code as he was going.

And it is, it is kind of mind blowing.

It is interesting that he was able to do it with this remote team that he'd never met, but like half of them ended up trying to extort them, right?

Yes.

Yeah.

So maybe a cautionary tale there in terms of who you work with.

But like, yeah, oh, well, sure.

But it was a productive working relationship other than that huge thing.

So if it's like a thing where there's like, where it's like, well, no, like we're, we're selling bottles of soda, like I can call the police on you.

Like I sound like I'm afraid to call the police on you about this thing.

Totally.

So this, by the way, in terms of this is like DEA estimates.

So they say \$1.2 billion worth of illegal drug transit transactions took place.

Is that at the time of Bitcoin's price in 2013?

Yes.

Not a current day price.

That is at the time price.

So I think Bitcoin, when he was arrested, was worth around \$80 or \$90.

And at its peak, it was \$60,000.

So, so what's that?

You multiply it by \$6,000.

Yeah.

It's a lot of money.

A lot, a lot of money in today's value.

So \$1.2 billion, \$46 million of that is marijuana, \$17.4 is cocaine, \$8.9 is heroin, then \$8.1 is meth.

How much billion?



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\$1.2 billion in, in then time.

Money total moved.

Oh my gosh.

I can't even, my calculator, I'm like struggling to even, like it's hard to even read those numbers.

It's basically like \$780 billion.

So it's, it's crazy, right?

It's crazy.

Yeah.

Like the, the, how big this is.

I would love to see some numbers.

I don't know if you have, I don't have them of like, of what percentage of Bitcoin transactions back then and even up till now took place on Silk Road.

It's crazy.

So the reason why they suspected it was Mt. Gox was when they started, it accounted for like 75% of Mt. Gox's business.

So let's talk about why this story is so fascinating.

So the first reason is like, there's just like a lot of like drug sex and rock and roll.

Like this is like, we're, we're into that.

No problem admitting it.

The second reason is that for a lot of like white nerdy tech internet guys of which both of us are that this guy Ross is incredibly relatable.

We look at him and we're like, Oh, I could see myself doing that.

Maybe not going that far, but like, I, in, in, in some regard, I would say we're envious of him.

We're like, Oh man, he had the courage to like do this epic thing because it doesn't seem like there's any bad consequences to what he was doing, even though it's not realistic, but that's how it feels.

And it's also like, it tugs on your heartstrings a little bit of to look at a guy who you're like, yeah, he's kind of like me and he's never going to breathe a free breath again for the rest of his life.

Like it's just hard to digest that, but like, because let's take for granted that he did call in these hits, right?

Like it feels like someone who just really got caught up and got really carried away.

And I know like we've both had to check ourselves.

Like that's not really an excuse.

That's not fair.

That's incredibly unfair.

It's incredibly unfair to, to people, other people who do get put away for these kinds of things, but it is like easy to, to relate to and to excuse if you're someone like us who has an easy time putting yourself in his shoes.

Another reason why this story is incredibly interesting and it's, this is the part that hurts, which is that it feels like Ross's life is like a wasted life.



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So this guy was like kind of, I wouldn't say he was a genius, but he created something amazing and it only lasted two years and now he's in prison forever.

And it's just like a total waste.

That's why I feel angry about this.

I'm like, man, this guy was so smart, he had it going for him.

What the fuck, man?

Now he can't do anything.

Yeah.

And also I feel like his life is a little bit of a waste and Silk Road is a little bit of a waste.

Like obviously some really terrible stuff happened on it, I think.

And I don't know how much I agree with like hardcore heroine and stuff movie, but like at the same time, I don't know if you're, if you are someone who has a little bit of a libertarian streak, you're kind of like, well, shouldn't there be room for something where people can like do stuff outside of the all seeing eye of the government, you know?

So I went through the same battle as well.

I consider myself to be aligned with a lot of libertarian stuff.

And I realize I'm not a true libertarian because I don't want drugs to be legal.

And if I don't want them to be legal in real life, like I lived in San Francisco and I would see these guys shooting heroin all the time.

I found a dead body at my office once.

Did I ever tell you that?

No.

So I was at my office.

I got in early at like 830 and there's oftentimes people sleeping at our door and I would nudge them with my foot.

I'd be like, Hey, can you, you got to move please?

I got my employees are coming.

You can't lay in our doorway.

And I did that.

And the person was, I did at this time, the person was dead from drugs.

And we would see shit like that all the time.

I lived in Soma and I would see the drug dealers.

They were allowed to be there.

I knew who they were.

I could tell you who they were.

I knew they're a little bit of the background.

I was like, here I'm talking.

And I was so angry at them.

I was like, these guys are the worst for our society.

They're only hurting people.

This is not good.

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And I, so that's when I changed.

I was like, I don't want heroin to be legal.

I don't want this to be legal.

This is not good.

And I was so mad at these guys.

And then I found myself romanticizing Ross so much and I had to check myself and say, this is wrong.

It's wrong on both sides.

If I don't like these, these gangbangers selling this shit.

I can't also think that Ross is innocent or shouldn't, shouldn't suffer.

Yeah.

Absolutely.

I get what you're saying.

I mean, I'm not a true libertarian either, but I don't know.

It just like, I can't even think of a specific use case for it, but just the idea of there should be a place that isn't owned.

Does that make sense?

Yeah.

Yeah.

Yeah.

I agree.

That's why that's another reason why we like him so much is because are we like his intentions were interesting.

Yeah.

Yes.

So you did your research for a little while.

What is your opinion on if he's guilty or not?

Well, on a bunch of different stuff, there's actually a lot that I want your opinion on.

So we, we, you, you believe that he started it.

Obviously he admitted that.

Do you think that he was running it the entire time?

Yes.

So then that means you think that he ordered those hits.

I do, I maintain that there is a possibility that, no, that, that at least the chat logs were massaged in order to make it look more open and shut.

Man, I like, I think that a person would do that.

The problem that I have with a lot of conspiracies is when many people are involved in something, keeping a secret is impossible.

Keeping a secret is very, very, very hard.

If there's three or four people involved, particularly government officials, government officials, it seems like keeping that type of secret is so freaking hard.

So if that did happen, there had to be more people involved and did, did there though?

I mean, I guess one person risk their career just to multiple people did.

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That's the thing.

You know, well, they did it and got caught.

They did to make money.

Yes.

Most of them.

Do you have to gain by changing this?

Just a guy goes to jail.

I don't care about him, a person that much.

Well, you got to realize, though, that for some of these prosecutors and for some of these DEA agents, like this is a career making thing, like I'm the guy who busted Ross Albright and sent him to jail, drug kingpin, billions of dollars worth of transactions.

Like you're, you're kind of made right after that, right?

So I do think they had something to gain from it.

Do you think that?

It is a little conspiratorial.

I don't know.

I don't know that I would assign a more than 50% chance that that actually happened.

But I think I like to maintain like a 30 to 40% chance that maybe something like that could have happened.

Do you think that he deserves life in jail?

No.

Well, if it, I don't know.

I guess, yeah, if he did try to call hits on people multiple times, then yes, someone who does that does deserve to, does deserve life in jail.

Yeah, I guess.

So the reason why I'm a little suspect, if at first I thought that's fair, but then I realized no one died.

No one actually died.

And for murder, a lot of murder for hires, particularly if, if no one dies, they don't get life because you know, they get 20 years.

And so it is crazy that he got life.

And there's also a lot of cases I listened to a ton of crime stuff where people actually kill someone and they don't get life and they can get out after 25 years.

And so you have to ask, and I've spent time in prisons working with a lot of people.

I've met inmates who killed their mom or killed their, killed someone in their family, killed their wife, and they get out after 20 years because they've proven that they're rehabilitated and when they did it, they were like young-ish and they're like, we think you could deserve a second chance.

Did you read the chat logs at all?

Well, there, so that's another thing about this case is there's like so many chat logs.

Like there's like thousands and thousands of pages.

So which ones?

I've been talking about specifically the ones where he supposedly orders the, the murder

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for hire.

Yeah.

He was pretty callous about it.

Yes.

But the other side, who I believe did turn out to be a federal agent.

Is that correct?

Yeah.

Is like kind of drawing him into it a little bit.

Like a little bit of like, man, this is such a problem.

I wish there was a way for it to not be a problem, you know, and is like definitely trying to move him in that direction.

I think Ross says like, let's just beat him up.

And the guy replies with, I don't know if that was going to do.

I don't know if that's going to solve this.

Yes.

Which is like pretty shady, especially if you think that's a federal agent.

Like, man, why are you trying to bait this kid into ordering a hit?

So my opinion is I think that there's, so the thing about like trials though, like you have to, you have to paint a picture of a shadow of a doubt.

I have a shadow of a doubt, but I think that it's likely that it was him.

I do think that he deserves time in prison, 10 to 20 years, just for the drug charges and for creating Silk Road.

But I think it's kind of bullshit that the judge sentenced him for the murder for hire or put that into account without actually trying him for it.

So I think that's a little nonsense.

So I, my opinion is, yeah, he's totally guilty.

Just like, well, how much stuff is he guilty of?

In my opinion, it's enough to get 10 to 20, but if they wanted to do life, they really should have, they had to charge him with a murder for hire and prove that it was, it happened.

Yeah.

Do you think, so it's like early 2012, it's like right in the middle of Silk Road going gangbusters.

Do you think that there is any, and there are 60 DEA agents infiltrating it.

They're on his case.

They're monitoring his house.

Do you think there's anything that he could have done to have either like gone legit somehow and like turned it into a marketplace for things that were maybe questionable, but not totally illegal, or is there a way he could have just remained undetected and outsmarted the Feds?

I think there's a world where he could have gotten away with it if he bailed.

I think he could have bailed and gotten away.

And like, there's a lot of examples like Whitey Bulger, you know, Whitey Bulger.

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Yeah.

He was basically the character that Robert De Niro, is it Robert De Niro and the departed was the Jack Nicholson, Jack Nicholson, which one of them.

Yeah.

Yeah.

That's right.

He was a gangster in Boston.

He got enough loot.

He got like the equivalent of like \$15 million and he goes, I'm out and he left Boston and he moved to Santa Monica and he lived there relatively peacefully for like 30 years and then he was arrested when he was like 90.

And I think there's a world where like Ross could have done something like that where he could live for a little while, maybe the rest of his life undetected if he just stayed with a low profile.

But I think a guy like him and myself included, I'd rather probably die than like shut up forever.

Yeah.

Is there a way he do you think he could have like kept it running from some small island in the Caribbean or off the coast of Africa or something like that?

Well, aren't there still sites like this?

Are there?

I don't think I'm pretty sure there's nothing at that scale.

I don't know.

I haven't actually researched it, but for the hustle, we had a guy talk about using medicinal LSD to help him with his depression and we did an article where he just showed how he buys it online and I actually saw him buy it and it was on a competitor.

I think a lot of this is changing just in that the drug war, the idea of a drug war has taken a hit and so a lot of people are less gung-ho about enforcing this kind of stuff.

And so there are a lot of places now where you can, LSD, that probably does have to be pretty black market, but there's some like gray market stuff where you can buy shrooms and other kind of lighter psychedelics.

Yeah, for sure.

And it might be illegal.

I mean, you could take ketamine and you can go to a doctor and get ketamine in New York and a few other states, I believe.

So yeah, it's an interesting story.

Another interesting thing is that his girlfriend, she still lives in Austin, so she's a major part of the book that I took a lot of information from called American Kingpin.

I think her name is Vivian and you could follow her on Instagram.

She's like this beautiful black lady, she kind of looks like my wife, to be honest.

And you could follow her on Instagram and it's really cool because if you read the book or learn about you, you can go and use web archive and see pictures on Instagram and

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on Facebook and things like that, that like, it's what the author is describing.  
And so you can like kind of track this journey and you're like, oh man, here he is.  
See, they're under the gold like a bridge.  
They took that picture.  
Like there she is.  
And you could still follow her.  
I think she just got engaged.  
I follow her on Instagram.  
Before anyone thinks that Sam is just being conceited because you literally did just say she's super hot.  
She looks like my wife.  
And the first time I saw that picture of her with Ross, I did go, is that Sarah?  
Like she does look a lot like your wife.  
Yes.  
Yeah, she does.  
I actually don't know what racist lady is, but she's definitely, I bet she's mixed, half white, half black.  
That's what my wife is and it does look like her from afar.  
And it's cool.  
You could see all these pictures of them together.  
What a crazy story.  
So I don't know, where do we go from here?  
Don't do drugs.  
Sell drugs.  
That's our official advice.  
Don't start a marketplace where people can buy and sell drugs.  
Yeah.  
It's a fascinating story.  
The book, American Kingpin.  
Have you read that?  
No, I haven't read it.  
It's the greatest book I've ever read.  
It's the number one best book I've ever read.  
It like, I was so impacted by it.  
Like it's a story that sucks you in.  
I couldn't set it down.  
It's amazing.  
Is that the pod?  
So good.  
I think it's the pod.  
I feel like I can rule the world, I know I can be what I want to.  
I put my all in it like no days off on the road, let's travel never looking back.