



American Kingpin: The Epic Hunt for the Criminal Mastermind Behind the Silk Road

By Nick Bilton

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NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER. The unbelievable true story of the man who built a billion-dollar online drug empire from his bedroom—and almost got away with it

In 2011, a twenty-six-year-old libertarian programmer named Ross Ulbricht launched the ultimate free market: the Silk Road, a clandestine Web site hosted on the Dark Web where anyone could trade anything—drugs, hacking software, forged passports, counterfeit cash, poisons—free of the government’s watchful eye.

It wasn’t long before the media got wind of the new Web site where anyone—not just teenagers and weed dealers but terrorists and black hat hackers—could buy and sell contraband detection-free. Spurred by a public outcry, the federal government launched an epic two-year manhunt for the site’s elusive proprietor, with no leads, no witnesses, and no clear jurisdiction. All the investigators knew was that whoever was running the site called himself the Dread Pirate Roberts.

The Silk Road quickly ballooned into \$1.2 billion enterprise, and Ross embraced his new role as kingpin. He enlisted a loyal crew of allies in high and low places, all as addicted to the danger and thrill of running an illegal marketplace as their customers were to the heroin they sold. Through his network he got wind of the target on his back and took drastic steps to protect himself—including ordering a hit on a former employee. As Ross made plans to disappear forever, the Feds raced against the clock to catch a man they weren’t even sure even existed, searching for a needle in the haystack of the global Internet.

Drawing on exclusive access to key players and two billion digital words and images Ross left behind, *Vanity Fair* correspondent and *New York Times* bestselling author Nick Bilton offers a tale filled with twists and turns, lucky breaks and unbelievable close calls. It’s a story of the boy next door’s ambition gone criminal, spurred on by the clash between the new world of libertarian-leaning, anonymous, decentralized Web advocates and the old world of government control, order, and the rule of law. Filled with unforgettable

characters and capped by an astonishing climax, *American Kingpin* might be dismissed as too outrageous for fiction. But it's all too real.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

An Amazon Best Book of May 2017: The Silk Road was once an ancient trade route through Asia, but in 2011 an idealistic young man named Ross Ulbricht used the moniker for a new enterprise that the internet age had never seen; A Dark Web site where everything from drugs and guns to passports could be bought and sold—this was the new Silk Road. Ulbricht was an extreme libertarian who never imagined his revolutionary new free market enterprise would become a billion dollar empire, or that he would be sought by multiple agencies of law enforcement over the coming years. *American Kingpin* takes us back in time, from Ulbricht's early failures to becoming Dread Pirate Roberts, the name he adopted to hide himself online. We see how a small pink pill in an anonymous envelope caught the eye of a low-level Homeland security employee and became the catalyst for Federal agency power struggles, and cops who became criminals over the course of a massive manhunt for someone they weren't even sure existed. The cast of characters involved, those who Ulbricht enlisted to aid him and those who worked to bring him down are a fascinating mix of personalities, but none more so than Dread Pirate Roberts himself. *American Kingpin* is addictive reading, and whether or not you are already familiar with the Silk Road, by the time this book ends you will likely want to know even more about the Dark Web and the legacy of the world's largest online retailer of illegal goods. --Seira Wilson, *The Amazon Book Review*

Review

"An astonishingly well-researched narrative... Bilton's storytelling bears not so much as a trace of fat; the book he's conjured is so sharp and bright that it can be whipped through in the airport lounge before the flight takes off."

—The Globe and Mail

"Unbelievably riveting."

—CASEY NEISTAT

"I dare you not to read this book in one sitting. Masterfully reported and written, Bilton's book drops you hard into the dark heart of the most famous Internet crime to date. A first-rate thrill."

—JOSHUA COOPER RAMO, author of *The Seventh Sense*

"Nick Bilton has issued a fantastic modern true-crime thriller. The book moves at a stunning pace while packed full of exquisite reporting and detail. It delivers a vivid picture of what happens when genius, ambition, and depravity collide, as well as a study on the complex interplay between good and evil."

—ASHLEE VANCE, author of *Elon Musk*

"Engrossing, addictive, suspenseful, riveting—this book hooked me on page one and I could not put it down. *American Kingpin* is the best thing I've read in ages. I can't recommend it highly enough."

—DAN LYONS, author of *Disrupted*

"In *American Kingpin*, Nick Bilton again proves why he's one of tech's best storytellers with a stunningly researched and very scary portrait of the creator of a marketplace gone mad, and the oddly uncoordinated officers who took him down."

—STEVEN LEVY, author of *Hackers* and *In the Plex*

“You’ll never forget Bilton’s portrait of the brilliant and brazen Ross Ulbricht, even after you sacrifice sleep in a sprint to the final pages and to see justice served.”

—BRAD STONE, author of *The Everything Store* and *The Upstarts*

“A rollicking, deftly reported tale of the Dark Web. I couldn’t put it down.”

—CLIVE THOMPSON, author of *Smarter Than You Think*

“Bilton’s investigation of the Silk Road is dramatic and, at times, nearly unbelievable. It puts your favorite thriller novels to shame.”

—STEVEN PRESSFIELD, author of *Gates of Fire*

“Nick Bilton is the only writer who could tell this suspenseful story. *American Kingpin* is engrossing at every turn, right up to its pulse-racing ending.”

—ADAM LASHINSKY, author of *Wild Ride*

“*American Kingpin* is both a staggering feat of investigative journalism and a triumph of edge-of-your-seat storytelling. This is what true-crime writing should be.”

—BRYAN BURROUGH, author of *Days of Rage*

"A fast-paced, readable true-crime tale that frames the likely future of the underground economy."

—Kirkus Reviews

About the Author

Nick Bilton is a special correspondent for *Vanity Fair*, where he writes about technology, business, and culture, and a contributor at CNBC. He was a columnist for *The New York Times* for almost a decade. His most recent book, *Hatching Twitter*, was a *New York Times* bestseller. He lives in Los Angeles with his wife, son, and dog, Pixel.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Shannon Silva:

Have you spare time for any day? What do you do when you have considerably more or little spare time? That's why, you can choose the suitable activity to get spend your time. Any person spent their spare time to take a move, shopping, or went to the actual Mall. How about open as well as read a book allowed *American Kingpin: The Epic Hunt for the Criminal Mastermind Behind the Silk Road*? Maybe it is to get best activity for you. You know beside you can spend your time with the favorite's book, you can better than before. Do you agree with the opinion or you have other opinion?

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Hunt for the Criminal Mastermind Behind the Silk Road to read.

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Spent a free the perfect time to be fun activity to perform! A lot of people spent their sparetime with their family, or their very own friends. Usually they performing activity like watching television, about to beach, or picnic in the park. They actually doing same thing every week. Do you feel it? Would you like to something different to fill your own personal free time/ holiday? Can be reading a book could be option to fill your totally free time/ holiday. The first thing you ask may be what kinds of book that you should read. If you want to consider look for book, may be the reserve untitled American Kingpin: The Epic Hunt for the Criminal Mastermind Behind the Silk Road can be good book to read. May be it can be best activity to you.

Robert Cox:

This American Kingpin: The Epic Hunt for the Criminal Mastermind Behind the Silk Road is great publication for you because the content which can be full of information for you who have always deal with world and still have to make decision every minute. This book reveal it information accurately using great organize word or we can claim no rambling sentences included. So if you are read it hurriedly you can have whole info in it. Doesn't mean it only provides straight forward sentences but challenging core information with lovely delivering sentences. Having American Kingpin: The Epic Hunt for the Criminal Mastermind Behind the Silk Road in your hand like keeping the world in your arm, facts in it is not ridiculous one. We can say that no e-book that offer you world inside ten or fifteen small right but this book already do that. So , this is certainly good reading book. Hello Mr. and Mrs. occupied do you still doubt which?

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