

Review of a Spanish book. The man that defied the system, by “Codigo Fuente”

Spanish title: El hombre que desafió al sistema: La historia real de Ross Ulbricht, Silk Road y el mercado negro que cambió internet para siempre

This is the story of Ross William Ulbricht, the Dread Pirate Robert of the Silk Road, which revolutionized the distribution of illegal drugs and along the way legitimized Bitcoin between 2010 and 2013.

The book itself is surrounded by its own mystery. It is written by a certain Código Fuente, a pseudonym that translates to Source Code. It has no title page, no copyright, no publisher, no forward, no notes about the author, no index, no footnotes – nothing. Just the story. Amazon lists one other book by the author, another computer-related biography.

Although the entire story takes place in the United States, the book is in Spanish. It was the first one presented when I queried Amazon for a book on the Silk Road, though there are several other biographies of Ulbricht. I would guess, however, that this is not a translation. The other books all have identifiable authors. Jeff Bezos comes from a Hispanic family. Is there a connection?

Whatever is background, the story is told in the gripping style of a mystery. It was hard to put down.

Chapter 1 30 seconds until chaos	Chapter 17: the Empire of numbers.
Chapter 2 the young eagle	Chapter 18 chinks in the armor
Chapter 3 between atoms and philosophy	Chapter 19 the hunt intensifies.
Chapter 4 the world before the silk Road	Chapter 20 the letters from hell.
Chapter 5 the epiphany of the free market.	Chapter 21: Black September
Chapter 6 building it in the shadows.	Chapter 22: the net closes
Chapter 7 the first gram	Chapter 23: the last 48 hours
Chapter 8 Altoid sows a seed	Chapter 24: the tomorrow of the falcon
Chapter 9 the mentor comes out of the shadows.	Chapter 25: 30 seconds that changed everything.
Chapter 10 the ecosystem grows	Chapter 26: the Empire contracts
Chapter 11 the bloodhounds smell blood.	Chapter 27: the traitors are exposed
Chapter 12 dread pirate Roberts comes on the scene.	Chapter 28: David and Goliath in the courtroom
Chapter 13 nob and French maid	Chapter 29: the system renders a verdict
Chapter 14 the problematic friendly chemist	Chapter 30: the battle continues.
Chapter 15 stack overflow: 58 fatal seconds	Chapter 31: the price of the revolution.
Chapter 16: assassination in Maryland.	Chapter 32: liberty is on the horizon.
	Epilogue: the world that Ross created

Ulbrecht was a brilliant student and a high achiever. He always got top marks in high school and became one of the youngest Eagle Scouts ever. He was also an idealist – captivated by the Austrian school of economics and libertarianism.

He became familiar with psychedelics in college. It struck him as absurd that the government would restrict anybody from doing whatever they wanted with their body. It went against his libertarian strain. He bought psilocybin, LSD and other psychedelics for his own use.

The reason was that government had no business interfering with transactions between willing buyers and sellers that hurt nobody. The time was right the Internet was new, and Bitcoin, an anonymous currency beyond the control of government, had been introduced in 2009. Bitcoin and the Internet both built on [public-key cryptography](#), which allowed confidential correspondence between two parties who previously had no connection. Bitcoin fortuitously had a three-party verification system, whereby funds could be transferred upon the agreement of any two. This allowed an escrow system, whereby buyer, seller and Silk Road itself were the three parties. The last, critical element was the Tor browser, bouncing messages randomly among a large network of participating servers, so that no observer could figure out where messages originated and ended up.

The architecture that Ulbricht conceived for his system was perfect. The weakness was that its very illegality meant that he could not easily advertise either the service itself or for employees. The latter weakness was its undoing. The fact that the business was illegal meant that the employees were not the most honorable of people. They did not all share his idealism. They took advantage of him – cheating him. They compromise the secrecy that was necessary for such a system.

Ulbricht realized that the system would not hold up forever. He had accumulated a lifetime's worth of money but did not get out quickly enough. The government had a team of 200 sleuths on his trail for two years before they finally caught up with him. But they did, and they got him thrown in prison for a lifetime. Had he acted more quickly on his instincts, he could have escaped to some country without extradition and live comfortably for a lifetime.

Just this year, 2025, Pres. Trump, in recognition of the fact that he had spent 12 years in prison for a financial crime, considerably more than many spend for very real violent crimes, gave him a pardon.

I recommend this book for anybody who's interested in brushing up his college level Spanish while reading a fascinating story. In other words, not very many. I have the satisfaction of having had a very pleasant read.

