

NIRVANA

BIKES, GUNS AND LOVE



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Strategic Book Group

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CHAPTER . . .

1

Dario towered high above the other gang members; chin up, head up high. An impressive appearance as always.

It was a dark environment—kept sinister all the time.

If you came here for the first time it was an intimidating, overwhelming, even a frightening place.

As usual, Dario looked as if he just stepped out of an action movie. He held his breath so that his chest looked even more impressive. There he was, on the improvised raised podium, a large marbled piece of granite, three by three feet and three feet high. It made him look like a statue, just like Stalin, Roosevelt; or Bono.

Nobody was allowed to stand taller than Dario at what they called a briefing session. That was an unwritten law.

These were the moments that were enjoyed by everybody in the gang. Their leader was their hero, their leader . . . their life. They loved hearing him talk—feeling inspired.

Dario's eyes slowly moved though the dark industrial hangar, pausing at each of the energized teenagers. It was a moment of power, of restrained excitement. Numerous eyes were staring down. He glared at them coldly.

It was rumored that he once stopped an adult man on the street and talked to him in such an aggressive and intimidating way that the man started to cry. Nobody knew if the story was true, but everybody said it was. They wanted to believe it.

There was a deadly silence for about five minutes in the deserted building, which was very unusual. Dario had called for a special meeting with the message that there would be an extraordinary briefing. They always had their briefing on Friday at 9:00 p.m. But it was Wednesday—it was bizarre.

“It is time for drastic changes!” Dario raged at the audience as he launched his opening line, slowly and confidently. His words sounded harsh and serious. The briefing had started.

Dario stood silent for a long time. All eyes were fixed on the granite podium. There was murmuring and commotion in the hangar. He raised his arms at the group of youngsters and said icy and with calm, “Silence! Silence!”

It was obvious that something was happening. Usually meetings went quietly, or as quietly as anything could go in a gang.

“It’s time for drastic changes!” Dario repeated. “FireX have penetrated our neighborhood and are taking a lot of our business! I’m going to make an announcement about these activities.”

Member’s faces looked tense; *What is this all about?* they thought.

Then Dario continued, “FireX is too organized and powerful for us to fight them, so we need to look at a different approach to business.”

While he spoke, small groups were forming in the hangar. That wasn’t unusual, but it happened a lot quicker today. The ‘dudes’ were close to each other on the right side of Dario. That was their rightful and deserved place. The ‘cadets’ gathered on the left, about three feet back. In between the two were the ‘judges’ and ‘staff’; all very well defined ranks.

Each fifteen-to-seventeen year old member had a clearly defined duty within the gang, a position, and a group he or she belonged to. All duties were personally and individually given by Dario.

Dario was nineteen, but could easily pass for twenty-five. He was an import in the city. All the other gang members were locals—all from the area; usually from the area they saw as their territory. Dario was big as a tree at six-foot-five, with the physique of a bodybuilder and the voice of a construction worker. He was always well-groomed and clean-shaven. He had the appearance of a rock star or an Italian photo model. Rumor said he had a large tattoo on his shoulder—an image of his own idol, Kurt Cobain. He hid it and nobody really knew why.

He was an impressive leader and gang members idolized him. None of them was

forced to join the gang; they all joined because they wanted to. They were drawn by Dario's charisma and the money associated with gangs in general. Their lives were exceptional and they had incomes their peers could only dream of. Most of them were average students, sometimes below average, whose lives concentrated on harassing people. Dario gave them the opportunity and the tools to fulfill those urges. Most of them had a drug history, either personal use, involved in dealing, or a combination of the two.

The one person who never smoked a joint or dealt directly was Dario. He was a master at getting other people involved in drugs, but he stayed clean. Clear thinking and mental power made him the leader of the gang, the father of the group. He organized the incoming shipments and collected the profits. All the actual work was done and all the risk was taken by the large group of delinquents who worked for him.

Benny "Drag-foot" Lorenzo stepped forward from the staff group and joined Dario. Lorenzo was Dario's right hand and the only one permitted to approach the granite block during a briefing session. He was unshaven and wore a black T-shirt with a skull on it. His belt buckle rambled as he came forward, even more so because of his right leg that drug behind him. Lorenzo was feared by many. Most people thought he was crazy. He lost the use of his leg when he chased someone with his

motor bike at speeds of more than 150 miles per hour. He intended to cut him off and crashed as the result.

“If we don’t get twenty or thirty thousand dollars we have to sell our bikes!” Dario announced, shouting so loud you could have heard him outside. There was anger in his voice and that wasn’t a good sign.

The murmur got louder. The bikes, BMWs, Kawasakis, Harleys, and Ducatis represented the very soul of Nirvana; they were its heart beat, their element of power. They raced them at night causing as much fear and havoc as they could. It was also their best way to shake off police cars or throw a Molotov cocktail into a house.

Suddenly Maureen stepped forward from the Cadets.

Her voice sounded shaky when she asked, “How about the four pounds of XTC pills that I smuggled through customs during my vacation?” She blushed when she spoke and her voice broke twice before she finished her sentence.

Maureen, sixteen and a half, had just joined the gang. She was an intense girl who always dressed in black. She had a double line of black mascara under her eyes and her lip was pierced. Her parents had just moved into the area. In no time she ran into trouble with the police and found her way to Nirvana. When she met Dario she knew that she had found her new home. She was one of the youngest

Cadets but she acted as if she had been there forever. She enjoyed the tough life, but had a feminine side, which attracted Dario to her. Maureen was secretly in love with the leader of the gang. She saw him as a demigod and Guru.

“Hold it,” Dario cried. “Cadets have no right to speak during the briefing. Go back to your group!”

Everybody was surprised. They all knew that Cadets didn’t have a voice in the organization. They were gofers, messengers, and go-getters. They all also knew that Maureen was the only one who could break the rules. But apparently not today.

“Don’t panic! I have a plan,” Dario added. “But we have to take care of business first.”

Immediately it grew quiet again. Taking care of business was one of the many codes that Dario had introduced. It meant that one of the members would be kicked out of the gang; it was an elimination.

The Judges all stepped forwards. Glenn, Matthias, Lindt, and Waldo - big guys, all seventeen and well known for their honesty and being straight shooters. Some time ago Dario appointed them as what he called Judges, to help him execute the tougher decisions. They had the respect of the other gang members so having them on his side made things a lot easier.

At one of his briefings, he made the announcement, “I am not the one-and-only

person making the calls in the organization.” He said, “These are independent representatives. They will advise me in decisions that concern the entire group!”

It was all nonsense of course; no one would ever stand up against Dario. They weren’t the brightest either so they weren’t capable of suggesting any new ideas.

Waldo kicked off. He cleared his throat and spoke slowly and calmly, “Two days ago Dario issued an order. The responsible person was Junior Big Daddy. We found out that Big Daddy refused. We all know what that means!”

“Out with him! Out with him! Out with him!” they all chanted.

Big Daddy, a short boy who suffered from obesity, stepped forwards. He got his nickname because he had made a girl pregnant when he was fifteen. His parents had banned him from the family and that is how he was drawn to the gang. That was less than a month ago. He was someone you didn’t want to argue with so that’s why he was an asset to the club. There was always a conflict going on and it was good to have a couple of tough guys on the team.

Big Daddy cringed. A Junior had to obey and carry out all orders from Dario without asking any questions no matter what. It was a test to pass to be promoted and become a Dude.

Nobody really knew what the order was but Dario. It could be a raid on a gas station,

delivery of a package with no questions asked, or even cleaning Dario's Falcon bike. The orders were random. They were tests, a command to stretch the Cadet's values. There were plenty Cadets to fulfill Dario's orders. The fact that Big Daddy had refused meant the end of his career in the gang.

Dario kept it short and sweet as usual, "Big Daddy, you know the consequences . . . You are no longer welcome here. Now leave!" His convincing voice meant that nobody would ever argue with his decisions.

Big Daddy retreated quietly, his head down and a small tear in his eyes. As he was leaving, he shook the hand of someone he had befriended in the few weeks he was there, but that was it. He would never see them again. On his way out he also kicked a guy named Mick in his shin. He and Mick didn't get along with while he was there.

After a couple of minutes silence was restored and all eyes were on Dario again. You could see that he enjoyed his power. The atmosphere was tense and that was exactly what he wanted. He was making the calls, he decided what was and wasn't to be said, and he set the mood of the meetings.

Lorenzo, still standing next to the granite block, turned to Dario, his eyes asking for answers. Dario winked at him approvingly; this was the sign for Lorenzo to turn to the gang members and address them officially.

“Dario, our leader and enlightened commander will now speak.”

Some of the Cadets cracked up laughing as it sounded ridiculous, but they were quickly silenced by their peers. This was no laughing matter, laughing was a no-no. You’d better show respect or you’d be in serious trouble.

“I already mentioned that FireX has penetrated our neighborhood. Dr. Zenzia, their leader, and I have come to an agreement about how things will go forwards from now on.”

Everybody knew Dr. Zenzia; he was an icon in the gang business. He was not your average gang leader, not a small-town thief or con-man, as Dario was. No, Zenzia was a murderer, a criminal, and a charismatic one. His gang was the largest and they were active on all levels of crime. FireX was an entirely different type of organization than was Nirvana.

Zenzia killed both of his parents when he was seventeen. He was sentenced to five years in prison, but was released early by pure luck. During an election year, the new President had pardoned all convicted youths under twenty-five. Zenzia was one of them. He was released less than a week ago, was back into crime, and in no time, he had an entire organization behind him.

It was well known that Dario looked up to Zenzia and did anything not to upset him. Dario was a small scale Zenzia. Deep

inside Dario wanted to become as powerful as Zenzia.

“FireX can work 49th Street, Devon Park, and Berkeley corner. We will terminate business there.”

There was murmuring in the room. These were the most profitable areas in town, especially since they were tourist areas. That meant opportunities for hand bag theft, extortion, and hit-and-runs. There were also shopkeepers under a protection contract with Nirvana and those contracts would be taken over by FireX.

Dario wasn't finished yet. He stretched out his arms and added, “We are moving west, in the direction of Cross Park. We will work between Flag Street and Boulder Street. As you all know, these are residential areas, the streets where the real rich people in town live.”

There was clapping, A round of applause. It came from the Dudes. They said, “Finally, fantastic, plenty of money over there, cool!”

Nick, standing in the middle of the Cadets, shuffled nervously back and forth. His heart was beating faster, his face turned red, and his forehead was wet from sweating.

Duncan, next to him, looked at him in surprise; then poked him in the arm and said, “Yeah, you think it's cool too . . . New opportunities, new customers! Now we can make some real money. More money for clothes,

DVD's, new mobiles, games, and the other stuff.”

Nick just nodded, but didn't say a word. His girlfriend lived on Admiral Street.

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