



Nemesis: One Man and the Battle for Rio

By Misha Glenny

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Antônio Francisco Bonfim Lopes was a hardworking young father before he became the king of Rocinha, the largest slum in Rio; the head of a drug cartel; and perhaps Brazil's most wanted criminal, known as “Nem.”

Nemesis is the riveting account of Nem's ruthless ascent, his sway over its anarchic outlaw culture, and ultimately—his downfall. Struggling to come up with funds to pay for the hospital bills necessary to save a sick baby's life, a twenty-four-year-old Nem is forced to take a loan from a local mafioso, a decision that plunges him into the heart of Rio's criminal underworld. Over the next sixteen years, as he grows in stature, Nem will try to bring welfare and justice to a playground of gang culture and destitution.

Drawn from years of in-person interviews and told with humanity and warmth—*Nemesis* is an unflinching, dramatic investigation into the rise of a crime lord in Rio and the menacing conditions of life inside the favela.

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Nemesis: One Man and the Battle for Rio By Misha Glenny Bibliography

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Editorial Review

Review

“Incredible....an epic, painstakingly detailed story about the rise of a favela kid to king of an empire.... what Glenny does so well is explain the context for Rio’s drug world, and the battle to contain and (to use the word local officials concerned about Rio’s global image employ) “pacify” it. What emerges is not just a study of one man and how he came to control a cartel, but a portrait of a city bursting with new arrivals from poorer parts of Brazil, unfortunates who wind up clustered in shantytowns that lack adequate water, electricity and, crucially, economic opportunity.... Without glorifying Nem or trying too hard to justify his bitterly violent enterprise, Glenny humanizes a kind of person we tend to see drawn as a two-dimensional character. And he shows how the fortunes of Rio — to say nothing of its reputation on the world stage — are tied to its ability to do well by its poorest and most marginalized citizens.” —*The Seattle Times*

“Reading “Nemesis” is like taking a walking tour of Baltimore’s underworld with Stringer Bell....Most true-crime accounts are heavy on car chases and shootouts, and light on analysis. Glenny turns that formula upside down. He is at his best in a quieter voice, sorting out why the police cannot simply swoop into a favela and arrest Mr. Big, and how street lookout and, especially, how a smart young Brazilian with a sick baby could transform himself into a crime lord.” —*The New York Times Book Review*

“A balanced, but ultimately sympathetic, biography of the leader of a relatively small local drug cartel. Nem’s personal story anchors more profound reportage about Brazil’s parallel economic and political systems—specifically, Rocinha’s existence as a largely autonomous urban community and what happens when the government attempts to destroy, substantially reduce, or otherwise encroach on that autonomy.” —*New York Journal of Books*

“His name is Antônio Francisco Bonfim Lopes. But you can call him Nemesis, everyone else does, and he was the don of Rocinha, the largest of Rio’s slums, known as favelas. He is also the protagonist of Misha Glenny’s fine book, the grim, elucidating *Nemesis: One Man and the Battle for Rio*.... For all the tale’s vileness, it is very skillfully told and a very strong piece of journalism.” —*The Christian Science Monitor*

“Fearlessly reported with impressive detail....Mr. Glenny doesn’t preach or moralize. He shows that law enforcement in Rio is as problematic as the criminals, and in doing so, he paints what seems to be a true picture. This is a balanced book in the best sense.” —*Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*

“Misha Glenny’s *Nemesis: One Man and the Battle for Rio* aims to give a sense of what life is like in those favelas, which, though they exist on the margins of every Brazilian metropolis, are especially visible and important in Rio, where they number more than one thousand and overlook Ipanema, Copacabana, and other elegant neighborhoods....To tell this exceedingly complicated story, Glenny focuses on Antônio Francisco Bonfim Lopes, nicknamed Nem, for many years the drug boss of Rocinha, a favela whose approximately 150,000 residents make it Rio’s biggest....Glenny is correct to conceive of the 1980s and onward as a true ‘battle for Rio,’ and he clearly sympathizes with the beleaguered favela residents, caught as they are between the drug gangs and police. He also gives us portraits, complete with humanizing details, of the police officers who tried to negotiate Nem’s surrender before he was arrested....*Nemesis* is a useful and readable introduction to the favela phenomenon.” —*The New York Review*

“In 1999, with no criminal background, Antonio Francisco Bonfim Lopes was a typical resident of Rocinha, trying to figure out how to survive and support his family in one of Rio de Janeiro’s largest favelas. Less

than six years later he was known as Nem, in charge of the large criminal organization unofficially ruling over Rocinha. The story of Nem acts as the glue for this title, in which journalist Glennly successfully explores the history of Rio de Janeiro, focusing on the violence, drug trade, politics, police forces, and related corruption within Rio's favelas since the 1960s....Glenny employs a writing style that both keeps the story moving and the reader wanting more.” —*Library Journal*

“[Glenny] is able to shed considerable light on the shadowy interconnections between the powers that be in the favela and the various police forces, most of which are thuggish and corrupt, as well as the politicians that reach out to favela voters at election time....Mind-bending and terrifying, rich in detail and nuance.”
—**StoptheDrugWar.org**

From the Hardcover edition.

About the Author

MISHA GLENNY is the author of *DarkMarket*, *McMafia*, *The Rebirth of History*, *The Fall of Yugoslavia* (which won the Overseas Press Club Award in 1993 for Best Book on Foreign Affairs) and *The Balkans: Nationalism, War, and the Great Powers, 1804–1999*. He was a BBC Central Europe correspondent—he covered the fall of Communism and the wars in the former Yugoslavia—and has been regularly consulted by the U.S. and European governments on major policy issues. He lives in London.

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