



Unyielding Destiny

Spiros Gratsias

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Unyielding Destiny is a page-turning mafia thriller in which two men from opposing worlds fight for their own kind of justice.

Spiros Gratsias's suspenseful mafia tale *Unyielding Destiny* focuses on honor, revenge, family, and coming to terms with fate.

Orphaned Frank is adopted by a powerful New York mafia don. He becomes a made man with undying loyalty to his family, but because of this, he is incarcerated more than once. While a prisoner in Alcatraz, Frank crosses paths with Scott, the son of the man who sacrificed his life to save Frank's while serving in Korea. After this chance meeting, Frank escapes from Alcatraz and starts a new life back in New York, remaining tied to his family but never shaking the weight of his unpaid debt to Scott's father. Years later, Frank and Scott cross paths once again—this time, as a criminal thirsty for revenge and an assistant district attorney who's trying to take down the mafia.

Frank and Scott represent two ends of the spectrum. They come from opposite coasts; one is a hardened criminal, the other is a hopeful young man. Frank's development is progressive, and he grows and hones his skills over decades. Scott, on the other hand, jumps from a naïve boy to a young professional with a righteous ax to grind without much explanation. Similarities between the two are also apparent: each is nurtured by others, loses their parents, and grows up in an imperfect world. Both remain who they are at the core.

Primary and secondary characters help to shape and deepen the story, though clichéd mafia behavior takes away from its weight. Multiple tertiary characters bear the same names: a prisoner, guard, grocer, boy, soldier, and policeman are each named Sam, while two characters in close page proximity are both called Sally. This creates confusion, making it difficult to understand which character is doing what. One character, Grace, has no real bearing on the story, serving as a vehicle for explaining what Scott has been up to since his childhood visit to Alcatraz.

Detailed descriptions of locations and violent actions make the work easy to visualize. Alcatraz, San Francisco, New York, and the world of organized crime are all well conveyed. Everyday dialogue makes the story more natural, though stilted deliveries, overused words, and distracting lead-ins make some conversations anticlimactic. Sicilian lingo makes the mafia elements more convincing, though its inconsistent formatting is jarring.

A staccato writing style complements the no-nonsense story. Though within chapters of manageable length, transitions are difficult to navigate; it is hard to differentiate between present moments, dreams, and flashbacks. With the story maintaining a sense of urgency throughout, the book's penultimate chapter is anticlimactic for Scott, though the epilogue knits together overarching themes.

In the page-turning mafia thriller *Unyielding Destiny*, two men from opposing worlds fight for their own kind of justice.

ALEX DAILEY (August 6, 2019)

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