

Electronic Crime in Muted Key (extract)

Much like a flash of lightning, a frisson of fear shot through his body. He felt strangely unsteady. For some time he stood quite still, mesmerized by the reality of the words in front of him. After all the planning and preparation his plan could now take place. There was nothing left to stand in his way. Everything was ready. But he felt a little apprehensive and wasn't at all sure about it. He turned his head to check that Louise was asleep and then looked again at the email.

Scorpion.

I have what you require – male, 54, with body scars and size as specified. Confirm your interest. If I don't hear from you immediately, the normal procedure will take place. Please indicate how you will pay the £500k.

Grove.

As he read the message several more times the full meaning and implication sunk in and his earlier anxiety turned to a realisation.

Finally it's going to happen, he told himself.

They'd been to the Ballet. As soon as it was over they took a taxi to the flat in Horton Street, just to the north of Kensington High Street. As was usual on the weeks they spent together, they went straight to bed and made love with intense passion. For some time afterwards neither of them spoke. They just lay on top of the bed naked and still and held each other tight.

It was close to midnight and he knew he had to act. He went back to the bedroom to check that Louise was still asleep and returned to the kitchen. He sat at the kitchen table and stared for a moment at his laptop. He began to type.

Grove.

I confirm I want it. I will collect it at 7pm this Wednesday. Please leave in one of your standard sealed black bags on your slab. It must be watertight - no leakage. Nobody is to be present. Leave your premises unlocked. I will transfer the money to your account one week after I have collected the goods, provided I receive confirmation that you are in Australia. If the article does not meet my specification in every way, I will report you to the police. If anything goes wrong you will not be paid. Just remember, if all goes to plan you will be £500k richer.

Scorpion.

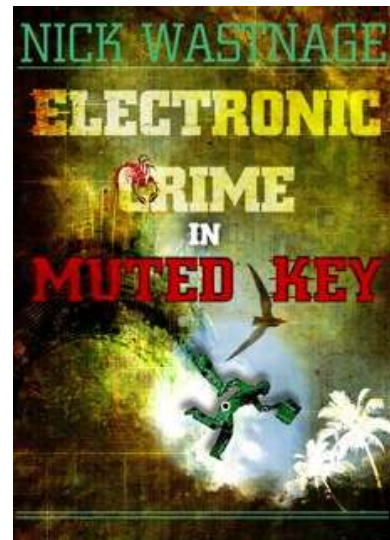
The second message went to Phil Stanmore.

Start the manufacture process immediately. Goods must be ready and perfect by Tuesday. Four couriers will pick up, some time on Tuesday. You will be notified through this route how to pack them and how much to put in each package, as well as all courier details. Under no circumstances are you to meet any of them. If the goods are not perfect or there is any delay, the police will be informed. Just remember, if all goes to plan you will be £1m richer.

Scorpion.

The third and last message went to four other people, Tammy Jones, Bruce Thompson, Guy Fisher and Robin Walker.

You will need to pick up a parcel from an address in East London on Tuesday some time and then take it on to meet a contact where you will be given a package in exchange for your parcel. You will then take



the new package and give it to a second contact and return home. All precise details will come through this route. Be prepared to travel abroad and to be away for two to three days. If you do not carry out these instructions, exactly as stated, the police will receive information about you. Finally, just remember, if all goes to plan you will be £1m richer

Scorpion.

He closed the lid of his laptop. He felt calm and at ease. He had planned and thought through his scheme in such detail that he was confident nothing would go wrong. He knew the five people he'd emailed would carry out his instructions. They were all desperate, and needed the £1m he'd promised each of them to buy their way out of their own personal adversity.

As he walked back down the corridor to the bedroom, he had one moment of regret. It would be the last time he would sleep with Louise. He hoped she would still be awake. He pulled back the covers of the bed and felt her reach out and pull him towards her warm body.

'Greg, kiddo, you feel cold,' she muttered softly.'