

# the electronic conspirator (extract)

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**This extract is from the start of the story.**

It was about midnight when Barry, by now sure that Louise was asleep, went to check his e-mails. He stood quite motionless as he read the words on the screen once, and then, with a feeling of numbness running through him, for a second time. As the full meaning of the message sunk in, the numbness slowly turned to intense satisfaction. Finally it's going to happen, he thought.

I have the exact goods that you require - age, major body scars and size are an exact fit to your requirements. If interested make immediate contact otherwise goods will be disposed of in the normal way. Please indicate how you will pay me the five hundred thousand pounds. GROVE.

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

Barry knew he had to act immediately. He went back to the bedroom to check that Louise was still asleep and then returned to the kitchen, determined and knowing exactly what he had to do. He sat down at the kitchen table with his laptop computer and set to work. The first message he sent was a reply to the one he'd just received.

GROVE. I will buy the goods from you. Please arrange for the article to be placed and sealed in a black bag, I insist, no leakage. Leave it on a slab at your premises for collection at 7pm this Wednesday. Nobody is to be present; leave your premises unlocked. You will be paid by electronic funds transfer one week after I have collected the goods and when I have confirmation that you are in Australia. If the article does not meet my specification in every way, I will report you to the police; equally if anything goes wrong you will not be paid. Finally, just remember, if all goes to plan you will be half a million pounds richer. Scorpion.

The second message was 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 of the nature of the goods you are making. Finally, just remember, if all goes to plan you will be one million pounds richer. Scorpion.

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

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, as stated, the police will receive information about you. Finally, just remember, if all goes to plan you will be one million pounds richer. Scorpion.

Barry closed the lid of his computer. The feeling of satisfaction he had experienced earlier had now turned to one of calm. He had planned his actions so meticulously that he knew nothing would go wrong. He also knew that his five associates would carry out his instructions to the letter. They all desperately needed one million pounds.

Walking back down the corridor to the bedroom, he allowed himself one moment of regret. This would be the last night he would sleep with Louise. He hoped she would still be awake. As he pulled back the covers of the bed she reached out, pulling him towards her warm body and softly muttering a few words. 'Greg, kiddo, you feel cold.'