

THE VICTIM

A RUFUS STONE NOVEL

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GRAHAM RABONE

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Grosvenor House Publishing Ltd
28–30 High Street, Guildford, Surrey, GU1 3EL.
www.grosvenorhousepublishing.co.uk

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All characters appearing in this work are fictitious. Any similarity to any person, living or dead is purely coincidental.

About The Author

Graham Rabone was born and grew up in Birmingham, England. After finishing higher education he joined West Midlands Police and rose to the rank of Detective Inspector. For the last 12 years of his service he specialised in Hostage and Crisis Negotiation and was deployed to 183 kidnaps worldwide and hundreds more crises. He joined the Directing Staff of the Metropolitan Police Hostage and Crisis Negotiation Unit, training other police officers, Special Forces and foreign students in all forms of negotiating. After retiring from the police, he worked for a multi-national corporation where he was deployed worldwide on security projects.

Through his fictional writing he has formulated a way to share his knowledge and expertise without compromising his ethics and integrity.

Graham is married to Jayne and lives in Dorset, England, to find out more go to

www.grahamrabone.com

Dedication

To all of the victims I helped and encouraged, bullied, cried, laughed and got drunk with. For the hours, days or weeks of trauma you were put through; I salute your bravery and strength in the face of such surreal and often dangerous circumstances.

Acknowledgments

When I started writing this book, I never imagined all of the essential ‘backroom’ work it would entail. The complexity, determination, creative thinking and support Jayne has shown is incredible. Writing some words was the easy part, refining, polishing and getting them in front of the public is the hard part. Jayne has shown such belief and has done all of that back-room work: created the web and social media pages, proofread, bullied and cajoled me, praised and loved me throughout and I can never repay her.

It would not have been imaginable, never mind possible, without the assistance of some invaluable experts in surveillance, SAS medic training, and general military aspects, who I cannot name but they know who they are. Thank you.

Angela Clarence, who explained the difference between ‘showing’ and ‘telling’.

To Rowena and Mike Bird who offered support above and beyond that of friendship and were the first to read the completed manuscript – you make things possible.

Whilst *The Victim* is a work of fiction, I have tried to make the book as realistic as possible, without giving away policing or military secrets or tactics. The police usually investigate once a crime has been committed and the prime objective is the prosecution of the offender. A Crime in Action is completely different because the crime is continuing and there is a life (lives) at risk. The SIO must *always* put the life of the hostage above any other consideration.

The setting in Tanzania is accurate, with its wonderfully chaotic naming of roads, its street scenes and majestic beauty all bombarding your senses. All characters are fictitious except for Maura and Moez who do indeed run the amazing beachside complex of Butiama on Mafia Island; they gave permission to use their names but all other references to the story around them are indeed a work of fiction.

Glossary of terms

Beat the Clock	Get back safely.
Booties/Bootnecks	Slang for Royal Marines
CHIS	Covert Human Intelligence Source, informant
COBRA	Cabinet Office Briefing Rooms
Counter	Counter Surveillance operative
CRB	Criminal Records Bureau
CROP	Covert Rural Observations Post
DA	Deliberate Action
DSF	Director, Special Forces
FOB	Forward Operating Base
GCHQ	Government Communications Headquarters
HCNU	Hostage and Crisis Negotiation Unit
HoS	SIS Head of Station
Humint	Human Intelligence
LUP	Lay Up Point
MI5	British Security Service
MSR	Major Supply Route
Nod/Noddy	New Royal Marines recruit (due to nodding off in lessons)
OP	Observation Post (See CROP)
RVP	Rendezvous Point
SAS	Special Air Service
SBS	Special Boat Service
SRR	Special Reconnaissance Regiment
Sigint	Signals Intelligence
SIS/Mi6	British Secret Intelligence Service

STAG	British Army term for sentry or guard
TAB	Tactical Advance to Battle
TPDF	Tanzanian Peoples' Defence Force
UKSF	United Kingdom Special Forces (SAS/SBS and SRR)
WRENS	Women's Royal Navy Service

Chapter One

Victoria Conway's cell phone rang on the table next to her. She was about to hear the voice of a man who would become her nemesis. A voice she would learn to hate more than anything in the world.

The young junior doctor looked at the display and saw that it was her mother calling from Tanzania.

“Hello Mum,” she exclaimed in a bright, cheerful voice.

“This is not your mother. Listen very carefully. We have kidnapped your parents and you will not see them alive again unless you do exactly as I say.”

Victoria caught her breath, removed the phone from her ear and checked the display “WHAT? Is this some kind of sick joke? Who are you? What are you doing with my mum’s phone?”

“SHUT UP AND LISTEN,” shouted the man, “we are holding your parents...”

“What do you mean? Holding...”

“I SAID SHUT UP AND LISTEN. We have kidnapped Deirdre and Martyn Conway. You must pay \$10 million for their release. You must not tell anybody. If you do, we will know. You must not go to the police. If you do, we will know. I have many brothers in the police and they will tell me. I will call you again in two hours with further instructions.” The phone went dead and he was gone.

Use the contact list on the hostage's phone. Begin with the same surname. Keep calling numbers until somebody answers. The first person that does, becomes the victim. Simple.

Victoria looked at her phone and checked the number. It was definitely her Mum’s. She sat stock still for a few seconds, screwing her face into a fierce frown. She pressed re-

dial. The phone rang twice clicked and then all she could hear was a slight hissing, signalling a bad connection perhaps.

“Hello? Mum?” she said tentatively.

“I said I will call you back in two hours. Do not call this number again, unless I instruct you to,” said the voice and cut the call.

He'd been lucky this time and got through on the first call. He hadn't even planned what he was going to say.

She tried again, she HAD to do something - but this time the phone was switched off.

Victoria was not a young woman prone to panic, as a junior doctor she was used to dealing with emergencies, but this was completely off the radar.

She didn't know the first thing to do; she didn't know anybody who might have any idea about what you do in a kidnap. She had to think logically, but her brain felt as if it had been dipped in dry ice. She calmed herself and took some deep breaths, closed her eyes and allowed herself to think.

Hang on. Maybe there is a simple explanation. Mum's probably left her phone somewhere and some chancer has picked it up.

She pulled her parents' itinerary up on her iPad; checked the date: a transfer day from Zanzibar to Dar es Salaam. She found the contact number of the Serena Hotel, Dar es Salaam and called it.

“Hotel Serena, Dar es Salaam, how shall I direct your call?”

“Um, reception please?”

“Reception, thank you, connecting you now.”

The phone rang for what seemed like a lifetime.

“Reception, Hotel Serena Dar es Salaam, Hyacinth speaking, how can I help you?”

“Good... is it morning or afternoon there?” said Victoria looking at her watch, 11:23 am.

“Good afternoon. How can I help you?”

“I’m trying to contact my parents, who should be booking back in today. Mr and Mrs Conway?”

Victoria could hear the keyboard tapping in the background and Hyacinth came back on the line.

“Hello, yes, they are due to check back in today, but they haven’t arrived yet”

Shit

“Could I leave a message please? To call their daughter, Victoria, when they arrive?”

“Yes certainly ma’am. Do they have your number?”

“Yes they do thank you. Oh. No. On second thoughts” she said, remembering they probably did not have their phone, “you’d better take it please” and dictated her phone number to the receptionist. “Could you make sure they get the message, it is rather important.”

“Yes of course.”

“Thank you. Thank you very much.”

“It’s a pleasure. Is there anything else I can help you with?”

“No, that’s it thank you. Goodbye.”

“Have a nice day,” came the ubiquitous, unfeeling, robotic response and the line went dead.

Victoria found the website of the Hilton Double Tree Hotel in Zanzibar and called the number. After going through the same procedure, she discovered that her parents had checked out early that morning and were on their way back to Dar. Why hadn’t she been more insistent that they both take their phones?

“We’ll have double the roaming charges and double the hassle. Anyway we’re not planning on splitting up at any point,” her Dad had said, “don’t worry I won’t let your mother get into any trouble!”

She was still inclined to think that their phone had been stolen and checked her watch again. One and a half hours to go. She kept trying to dispel dark thoughts from her mind; after all, what were the chances of her mum and dad being kidnapped? No, she was worrying over nothing. She picked up her iPad and opened the search engine, she skipped to the news absurdly thinking her parents might be mentioned, then went back to Google; she typed ‘Kidnap’ into the search engine, her finger hovering over the ‘enter’ key. *What if they know?*

She quickly deleted the search as if its mere presence on her screen might alert them. The clock watching nearly drove her insane: the hands were moving as if they were being held back by unseen gremlins inside the timepiece, tormenting her and laughing at her discomfort, each minute feeling like five - proving Einstein’s theory of relativity.

She picked up the phone to call Craig, a colleague she respected and admired, and then skipped to her friend, Kerry, whose husband was in the police. *What if they have been kidnapped? What if the man could tell if I speak to somebody? Perhaps they’ve hacked my phone? How am I going to find \$10 million. What if I pay but they aren’t released? What if one of them is dead? What if both of them are dead? How do I get the money to kidnappers?*

Hot sweet tea was what she needed. A glimmer of common sense told her she was in shock, feeling dazed, shaky and confused. She went into the kitchen, struggling to remember where her Mum kept the teabags. She opened the fridge twice without taking out the milk. If she’d been in her own flat she could have slipped across the hall to talk to that unemployed fellow opposite who had worked in Africa and the Middle East on oil rigs. She froze. Was he involved? She wandered listlessly into her parents’ room, looking sadly at their double bed with its Laura Ashley throw, the pretty dressing table and the silver picture frame with a

montage of Victoria as a baby; on a swing; climbing Snowdon; getting her degree; outside the hospital and posing like Princess Di in front of the Taj Mahal.

God; just two years ago and look how I've aged. She looked in the mirror, squinting slightly to compare the two images *I looked good back then with that tan. Look at me now- frown lines, bags under my eyes. And is that a fucking grey hair?"* she examined her herself, disappointed with what she saw.

She checked the phone signal and battery, checked the volume was up, checked she hadn't missed a call and checked it all again, feeling paranoid.

She reached for another biscuit and realised she had nearly finished the packet. As time went on passed the two hours, she tried to convince herself that it was a good thing they hadn't rung: that a kidnapper would have called if he really had her parents. And in a complete volte-face, she thought perhaps they were already dead and that was why the man hadn't phoned. Or was someone watching the house waiting for her to make a move? After nearly two hours and 45 minutes of anguish, the phone rang - her mum's number.

"Hello?" answered Victoria suspiciously.

"Miss Conway. Listen very carefully. If you do not interrupt me I will let you talk to your mother. My associates – of whom there are many - and I, have kidnapped your mother and father, Mrs Deidre Miriam Conway, born 22.12.1952 and Mr Martyn Gerald Conway born 14.8.1950 and we will hold them until you pay \$10 million..."

"But..."

"DO NOT INTERRUPT..." boomed the caller. Victoria tried to picture him in her mind, listening to his sonorous voice. *Is he African? He sounds African, and a little American, and well educated.* Her imagination saw a large, well-built black man. She tried to visualise what he was doing, whether he was smiling or glowering; how old, whether he wore glasses.

“...You will pay \$10 million in cash for their release. When you have the money, I will inform you how you will pay it to us.”

“But...”

“Miss Conway, you are going to get one of your parents severely injured, do not interrupt, do not give me excuses. We are trained professionals and we know what we are doing. We have spies everywhere, in the police, in government, even in your British police. If you do as we say, then no harm will befall your parents. If you tell anybody, if you try and find us, your parents will die. Now just to prove we are serious, here is your mother.”

Is he reading from a script? thought Victoria. Then heard the unmistakable voice of her mother.

“Hello love.”

Victoria almost dropped the phone; until that point she had been trying to convince herself that she had been over-reacting, worrying unnecessarily. At last she really grasped the situation and started to shake.

“Hello mum? How are you? What’s happened?” Her mother was talking but Victoria’s brain could not focus on what she was saying

*Where am I going to get \$10 million? How am I going to get it to the kidnappers? How am I going to cope? I can’t do this on my own. I need help, who can I contact? I’m scared, scared shitless. I need to be calm for Mum. What if I can’t get the money? Shit I **can’t** get the money. You can’t just walk into a bank and ask for \$10 million to pay a ransom. What am I going to tell the hospital? What am I going to do about work? Is somebody watching me? Is mum playing a sick joke? Will I have to go to Tanzania? What do I do when I get there? How do I find them? What if they kidnap me?*

The thoughts tumbled through her head like leaves falling from a tree in Autumn, fluttering and dancing uncontrollably in the wind. At last she tuned back into her mum's voice-

".....these gentlemen have kidnapped us in Dar es Salaam. Now don't you worry about us dear, just make sure you keep yourself safe."

Victoria could hear the tension and fear beneath the façade of calm. The man came back on the line.

"I will phone you tomorrow at midday with instructions. If you contact the authorities or tell anyone, we will kill your parents." and the phone went dead.

She called again back, but the phone had been switched off.

Shit shit shit. What am I going to do? What did mum mean by 'make sure you keep yourself safe'? Does she think I am in danger? Why would they want to kidnap my mum and dad? Who are they? Was Dad alright? I hope he's alright. What if Grandma and Grandpa phone? What if the kidnappers phone them? A torrent of questions assailed her. "Make sure you keep yourself safe." Why had she said that?

Victoria checked every window and door making sure that they were locked. She made herself another cup of tea, sat down and tried to focus, forcing herself to think calmly and logically. She went over a number of options and jotted them down in illegible spidery script:

- Go 2 police, GO, not phone in case bugged.
- Go 2 Kerry and Stuart 4 some advice.
- Bank -ask 4 \$10 million??????.
- Foreign and Commonwealth Office.
- Craig.
- Fly to Tanzania.

- Private detective

She crossed out a couple of the options and pondered those she had left. She looked at the damn clock on the mantelpiece again and noticed the edge of an envelope. The letter her Mum and Dad had left for her 'in case of emergencies'.

She had laughed at the time chiding them for being anal, but now she retrieved the envelope with a beating, hopeful heart. Her fingers trembling, she looked at it blankly before finally drawing out the sheets of paper inside. The first one was covered in her mother's neat handwriting. A list of instructions on what to do if one or both her parents died on their trip; contact number for the funeral director; the order of service; the name of their solicitor; and a full photocopy of their travel insurance document. Lana's brain lit up. She skimmed through the policy until she spotted the word Kidnap. She took in a great gulp of air realising she hadn't been breathing. KIDNAP Insurance. Kidnap Insurance was an automatic benefit! *'Don't tell one soul'* she heard the kidnapper say in her ear. *'Fuck you'* she whispered back stuffing the papers into her handbag,

She considered her options again and decided to visit Craig. She grabbed her coat and keys and left by the back door.

She crept slowly to the front of the house and looked up and down the Avenue. She looked at the cars parked in the road and at the passers-by. Were they watching? Trembling she got into her car and tried to put the key into the ignition, crunched the gears and stalled before she finally pulled off the driveway.

Victoria trusted Craig: they had graduated together: she remembered back-packing through India, when she had persuaded him to take part in the Rickshaw Run: a 3,500km adventure crossing the sub-continent, in a 7 horsepower glorified lawnmower; he had helped her with some of the more technical computer problems she'd had; and now he was a fellow doctor from the hospital, on the same rota.

It took her just fifteen nerve-wracking minutes to reach Craig's small terraced house. She'd been checking her rear view mirror just like they did in the movies and was fairly certain she hadn't been followed nonetheless, she parked Colin, her battered old Renault Clio in a side street and got out of the car. She walked around to the passenger door, opened it and reached across to lock the malfunctioning driver's door and secured the vehicle. She looked up and down the street, before taking a little path that brought her round to the back of Craig's row of houses. She vaulted over his back garden gate and walked swiftly across his lawn to the kitchen door and quietly knocked.

When she heard his footsteps coming down the hallway to answer the door she felt an overwhelming sense of relief, that he was in.

"Lana, what the hell," said Craig staring at her through the glass panel. The look on her face was enough to let him know there was a problem. He raised his bushy eyebrows in that ridiculous way, which usually made her laugh, and she managed a weak smile. God, it was a relief to see his moon shaped, smiling face.

He opened the door and said "You'd better come on in and tell me all about it," and led her through into his little sitting room.

When she had finished he said incredulously "Are you absolutely sure about this?"

"I DIDN'T FUCKING WELL DREAM IT if that's what you mean," she yelled.

"Ok. Ok." apologised Craig "But this is so off the wall. Why would anybody want to kidnap your mum and dad?"

"That's exactly what I've been asking myself. Would you please give me the benefit of the doubt and assume that I'm telling the truth for a moment. What would you do next?"

Craig shook his head and said, "I think you should contact that insurance company. I know you've been told not to tell a soul but you've already told me and I'm really glad that you did, but the insurance company will know what to do – probably. They must have had

experience of this sort of thing. There's always stuff about kidnapping in the papers these days."

"Not helpful."

"Sorry."

"I don't know. I'm just not sure."

"You need professional help."

Victoria thought for a few seconds, nodded and said,

"Can I use your phone then? I don't want to use my cell, in case it's bugged."

She fumbled for the insurance document and found the number "Just tell them what you told me," said Craig "Where's the gutsy, feisty Vicky that I see in A&E rallying the troops, giving out bollockings to time wasting patients?"

"I don't know where she is. She's disappeared. AND you didn't believe me. What if they don't believe me?"

"I'm sure they'll be able to tell whether it's a hoax or not. Have you got the policy number?"

She nodded.

"And all the details? Where they are; when they went; when they are due back."

"Yes,"

"Ok. then, let's call."

The phone was answered after just one ring.

"Extension 2169 please." said Victoria

"Abigail speaking. Do you have your policy number?"

"Um, yes, yes it's P24503982" Victoria was a little taken aback by the perfunctory manner in which Abigail answered the phone.

"Thank you, and the policy holders' details?"

“Yes my mum and dad, Deidre and Martyn, with a “Y”, Conway.”

“And your name please?”

“I’m Victoria Conway”

“Thank you, may I call you Victoria?”

“Yes of course”

“Thank you Victoria. Sorry to be so brusque, it’s just that I have to get the details before I can bring up my AIM or Automated Instruction Menu for your particular policy. Ok, can you tell me what’s happened, please?”

Victoria retold her story:

"My Mum and Dad have been kidnapped in Tanzania."

"How do know they have been kidnapped?"

"Because the kidnapper fucking well phoned."

"I know this is upsetting Victoria, but I have to get all the details down accurately so I need you to stay calm for me."

"I’m sorry, I’m really nervous."

"That's ok. When did the kidnapper call?"

"About 11 o'clock this morning and again err - close to two o'clock this afternoon."

"What were the exact words the kidnapper used?"

"Oh, I don't remember the exact words. I was too shocked to take it all in. He said I had to pay ten million dollars or my parents would be killed. That I was not to tell anybody and that he would know if I had and that he had spies in the police and the government."

"And did you get the phone number he was calling from?"

"Yes it's my mum's."

"What makes you think he is telling the truth?"

"Because he put my mum on the phone and I spoke to her and she told me that they had been kidnapped."

"When was the last time you saw your parents?"

"What? Er, about two weeks ago, just before they left for Tanzania."

"And what were they wearing?"

"What on earth has that got to do with anything?"

"I'm sorry Victoria, it's on this AIM list of questions I need to ask."

"Oh I don't know, Dad was in beige chinos, and a blue shirt and a linen jacket, a sort of typical Brit in Africa, and mum was wearing a floral dress I think."

Victoria felt as if she was being triaged with a nurse assessing the situation before deciding if and where the incident should be directed. A human filter, whose job it was to sort out the wheat from the chaff.

"Ok. Thank you for the information. I know you must be in shock and one of our consultants is going to call you very shortly. He will use the name Charles McHugh.

"Charles McHugh?" queried Victoria, writing it down.

"That's correct. What is the best number to reach you on?"

"This one, if he calls soon. I'm at a friend's house. I didn't want to call from my own phone."

"Your friend is aware of what has happened?"

"Yes, he is."

"Victoria, it is extremely important that you tell no one else. Do you understand?"

"Yes alright. I won't tell anyone else."

"Good, now I need your friend's details."

Victoria gave Craig's name and address and phone number and then the woman said goodbye.

“Well she clearly believed you,” said Craig “I think it was the right decision - the only thing you could do.”

"Oh God Craig, I don't know. I don't know what is right and what is wrong, I don't know who to trust, I don't know who to believe. I should have just stayed at home and done exactly what they told me to do. I might have got my mum and dad killed."

“Right, let’s have a cup of tea, or would you like something stronger.”

“I think I’d better keep a clear head.”

“I think a drop of brandy in a cup of sweet hot tea should do the trick,” said Craig, “in my professional opinion.” Want something to eat, I bet you haven’t eaten anything?”

They walked through into his galley kitchen, which looked out onto a long narrow garden. The sun came out from behind the clouds and illuminated a clump of peace lilies - her mother’s favourite flowers. Victoria felt tears welling up as she thought of her mother being threatened with a gun.

Craig handed her a mug of tea spiked with a good dollop of brandy, “Here you are, this should help a bit.”

Victoria took a sip and perched herself on a stool by the window and looked at the lilies again. Her mother had sounded tense but focussed on the phone. She, Victoria, must try to stay focussed too.

“So what’s the plan?” asked Craig as he turned up the gas and threw some streaky bacon into a pan. When she didn’t answer he said, “Bacon and egg sarney is on the menu – just what the doctor ordered to keep you going.”

“They said a man called Charles McHugh would call and I’m not to tell anyone else and I don’t think they were pleased I told you.”

“Well I am very pleased you told me – no way can you handle this on your own. Come here.” He took the tea out of her hands and put it on the counter, pulled her off the stool and gave her a great big bear hug.

“Let it go, girl, you’ll feel a whole lot better.”

Victoria cried for several minutes as the bacon crisped, then charred and finally set off the smoke alarm.

“Lucky it was two for one at the Co-Op today,” said Craig tipping the bacon into the bin, wiping the pan and starting again with four new rashers.

They’d just finished their sandwiches and a second mug of tea with lots more brandy when the phone rang. Craig picked it up.

“Hello?”

“Hello this is Charles McHugh. Is Victoria Conway there please?”

“Yes she is, hold on.” Craig passed the phone over to Victoria.

“Hello, Victoria speaking.”

“Hello Victoria, this is Charles McHugh. I understand you are expecting my call?”

“Yes, yes I am, thank goodness you’ve called me back.”

“That’s ok. First I need you to tell me what has happened.”

“I’ve already told Abigail.”

“Yes I know, but I’d like you to tell me please, reading it off my computer is not the same as having you tell me.”

Victoria began to recount her story but McHugh kept interrupting, asking her for the minutest details which was exasperating and she found it difficult to keep her temper.

The interrogation went on for about 30 minutes at the end of which McHugh said:

“Take down this number. Call me if you need me, but be sure to call from your friend’s phone or a pay phone. Don’t use your own phone. I’ll bring you a new one when I come to see you tomorrow.”

“Do you think my phone’s bugged?”

“I doubt it very much Victoria, but it’s better to be safe than sorry, isn’t it? I’ll come to your house tomorrow morning in plenty of time to take the call and we can take it from there. I’ll be with you by about eight.”

“Thank you, thank you so much,” said Victoria, feeling relieved that a professional was now in charge, however obnoxious he was.

Little did she know she was about to be catapulted into a terrifying world of deceit, where she would learn to doubt everything and everybody, including herself. Where she would witness events that she had only ever heard of in news bulletins or read in newspaper columns.

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