



S.W.A.

Copyright © 2013 by James K.B. Brough

*Warning: this novel contains strong violence
and sexual references.*

*All characters and events in this publication, other
than those clearly in the public domain, are fictitious
and any resemblance to real persons, living or dead,
is purely coincidental.*

This paperback edition 2013

1

All rights reserved.

No part of this publication may be reproduced,
stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any
means, without the prior permission in writing of the publisher, nor be
otherwise circulated in any form of binding or cover other than that in
which it is published and without a similar condition including
this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

Typeset in Times New Roman
Printed and bound in the United Kingdom

ISBN 978-1-291-10079-2

Cover Photography by Sylvia Ciociano-Nel
www.sylviaciociano.co.uk

Copyright © 2013 James K.B. Brough

*This one's for D and C.
To those that killed themselves thinking
no one cares... you are missed.*

Other titles by James K.B. Brough:

Save the World Academy Series:

Part I: The Sword of Steel

Part II: The Crocodile's Smile

Save the World Academy
Part III:

The WATCH SUICIDES

By

James K.B. Brough

THE ACTOR

Life is tough as a teenager and it's not worth living so I should just kill myself, thought Douglas Havallon as he shivered in the cold of the Arctic.

It was two in the morning and the young boy pulled his thick Snow Leopard whites tighter around his neck to shield from the chill, feeling his cheeks turn an instant red from the blast of windy ice about him, the fur lined in the hood doing little to make his face warmer.

'I agree, Master Doug,' said his watch, Cerberus. It was odd for his timepiece to agree with him on such things, but the past few days the watch had adopted the same macabre attitude the teenager seemed to have.

Douglas, or Doug as he was known around the Academy when people noticed, wasn't exceptionally good looking or smart. In terms of S.W.A. standards he was below average. Coming close to last was all he knew, too low on the rungs of the school social ladder to even merit insults. He had no close friends, no friends at all in fact. Not even a dog, cat or goldfish. Even his watch spoke to him in a fastidious manner.

Apart from that intruding voice in his mind, Doug felt invisible.

Today he sat outside in the cold performing a mission of observation on the sea lions to achieve extra credit for his dismal report marks.

His parents were overjoyed when Doug had passed the second test and signed on to the Academy, but by year three everyone realised how in over his head he actually was and he struggled to maintain a steady balance in his results.

I'm an average kid. I don't go out and party. I don't drink or take drugs. I study really hard. I don't date anyone, but still my marks suck.

It didn't matter what Doug did, he couldn't get his average up and now he was forced to sit out in the snow doing as much practical work as possible to raise his average to a passing level.

You would think saving the world would be easy, but it's not.

'I agree, Master Doug,' concurred Cerberus, gallingly compliant.

Doug had grand dreams when he joined the Academy, soon overshadowed by his amateur failures.

Back home there was a photograph on the mantelpiece of his uncle with the Queen Mother and other figures of royalty.

‘That’s your Uncle Jonathon on his wedding day,’ boasted mother many months ago. ‘You will never have royalty at your wedding,’ she scoffed further.

‘This is true, Master Doug. You do not know anyone of importance,’ Cerberus stirred his thoughts.

Doug was too cold to argue with his watch and, in all honesty, his device was right. He would never have a wedding picture with the Queen or anyone deemed of high value. His parents often reminded him of what a disappointment he was. The tough love routine had turned into an unnecessary harsh ritual.

Doug didn’t even want to save the world. He wanted to be an actor. He dreamt of stage and screen, yet somehow he passed this amazing exam years ago and his parents had become overjoyed that they didn’t have to pay school fees.

But now he was miserable. His folks still argued, if not more than usual.

‘It’s your fault,’ Cerberus said, *‘you should be a better son.’*

I know, Doug thought. *My family deserve better.*

As long as he could speak he recalled his mum and dad shouting at each other. At every camping trip, over groceries, over anything he said or did in defiance, anything was an excuse to argue for them. Sometimes Doug felt that he was the adult and they were the children.

‘They were happy before you came along,’ Cerberus informed, *‘it’s your fault.’*

Doug wasn’t sure, but his watch told him that it was his fault so he believed it. He hugged himself sadly in the snow.

The other day his extra-curricular marks required him to follow along the sixth quadrant a troop of Emperor Penguins that were struggling to breed and socialise with similar species that inhabited the area. He could see the penguins weren’t getting along with the other larger groups, the tall birds being ostracised as they waddled in the snowy wind.

Story of my life, Doug thought and imagined himself a disliked penguin that no one would offer shelter from the storm.

All his missions from third to fourth year went hand in hand with strife. He envied the Tim Sparks or Troy Pugg’s of the world that waltzed into a bad situation and managed to save the creatures or planet in the process. Doug wasn’t that fortunate.

One instance saw Doug trying to infiltrate an illegal fur selling operation. All he need do was record a business transaction taking place from start to finish, records of the animals being slaughtered, photographs of money changing hands, pictures of the people or companies involved.

All his images came out blurry. All the evidence could not be upheld in any court. Doug was exposed as a joke. A talentless ape amongst the world's finest protectors. If Doug was lucky, once he graduated, he could land a job as a security guard for some smaller organisation. Even that he was not certain of.

'You are not cut out for this work,' reminded Cerberus.

I agree, thought Doug. The boy wanted lights, fame and fortune. Doug didn't care about dying whales or overly hunted dolphins or sea ecology covered in oil. He wanted to be an actor and the mere mention of it in his family household caused turbulence and distress that led to more arguments than peace.

Doug wanted money, jealous of all his rich classmates about him that were picked up in fancy cars at the Cub Station parking lot.

'You realise you are the source of your parents' arguments, Master Doug. If not for you they would have a peaceful life,' his watch told him severely. The boy was used to a stern voice, but the level of bitter reality his timepiece displayed made him uneasy to the point of flouting an argument.

The watch is smarter than me, no point in arguing with it.

'Yes, I am. Maybe the world is better off without your interference, Master Doug,' Cerberus agreed.

The opportunities to save the world did not come easily to him. All the practical work was difficult and, more often than not, he would look to one of his classmates to take over from his incompetency.

Only once in five years did he come close to saving someone. Doug was on a switchboard for a help line required to listen and impart canned advice or information.

It was mainly disturbed adults in their mid-twenties to thirties who were shooting up on drugs who needed help, something the young boy had no experience with.

With his little sheet of robotic responses he listened awkwardly to the people he couldn't relate to, wishing he was on a tropical island with lots of money and beautiful girls. Instead, the reality was draining.

'How old are you?' was a familiar question. Tainted adults did not like taking advice from well-to-do teenagers it seemed. The irony was that his age didn't matter; all that mattered was he use the pre-written

script when dealing with each person. Everyone was different but the same.

One disheartening call was from an actor whose career was failing and cash flow was running dry.

‘Drug help line, you are speaking to Mark. Can I get your name, please?’ Doug said, sitting in Classroom D where there was a row of telephones in small booths, back to back in the centre of the class. All calls were monitored and kept on record for their training. The phones were used for animal and human advice, transmitted and received through giant satellites carefully hidden not too far from the Snow Leopard’s back entrance.

‘Yeah, hi, Mark,’ the man on the other end was snorting loudly, ‘I am in a lot of trouble, Mark.’

‘What’s your name, please?’

‘Eh... John,’ the man lied.

‘How can I help you today, John?’ Doug asked. Using false names was a requirement, as well as not handing out any personal details. The name Mark was something Doug cooked up himself. Where the name stemmed from he did not know, only that this was the closest he had come to the craft of acting.

‘I used to have lots of money. Lots of it. I used to be a famous actor. Used to be,’ Doug could imagine the man on the other end of the line, probably red-eyed from crying, lying on the bathroom floor with a cigarette and bottle of strong alcohol sitting beside him. ‘The money is almost gone, my career has gone down the toilet basically and I want... no I need to escape. My sponsor is away on holiday and he left me this number. Says I phone him too much—’

‘Where are you, John?’

‘I am at home. In the bathroom, actually.’

‘John, is there anyone else there?’

‘No, don’t have any genuine friends... sorry, I forgot your name,’ the man’s voice sounded a little muffled as though he was wiping his mouth or face.

‘Mark, John, my name is Mark,’ Doug stared at the dull grey concrete and metal walling of the Snow Leopard, ‘tell me, are there any substances in the room with you?’

‘What? Oh yeah, of course there is.’

‘Have you taken any?’

‘Yeah, I did, Mark, I did,’ the man’s voice became strained, ‘I was having a party and the booze was running out and some of the girls thought it would be fun to get some stuff. They left though, they all left. Lost my temper and told them to leave. My dealer keeps trying to

call me. I owe him money I don't have. Oh, God, Mark. I'm an out-of-work actor with no money...

The man had Doug's full attention. He could almost feel the man's snot and tears dripping on the telephone.

'This is all I got, Mark,' the man calling himself John had resigned himself, 'this is all I got.' And the man disconnected the call.

On Doug's screen were the options to dispatch an ambulance, police car, or both to the caller's address which was tracked through their satellite caller identification system.

If I had this actor's life I would have done it differently, I wouldn't take drugs or swear, or drink. If I had his opportunities I would not have squandered them, he thought bitterly and dispatched the nearest officer in the immediate area.

Doug didn't have the skill or marks that would entitle him to go on dangerous missions like more prestigious students. The below average boy was in danger of being stuck with a headset for the rest of his life, parroting tin responses to deadbeat druggies.

This is what saving the world is. No money, no fancy things, no babes, just people lower in life than you looking for your sympathy and aid.

'Waste of a life, isn't it, Master Doug?' Cerberus added to his thoughts.

Yes. Whenever he broached the topic of doing something else with his life his parents weren't interested. Arguing with each other seemed to be taxing enough without having to tend to the whims of an unhappy teenager.

When they did pay attention, the argument was short and sweet in their favour, 'we were promised you would have a job after you graduated. Headmaster Irving said so. Enough of this "actor" talk. Do you know how many unemployed actors there are? Dozens, hundreds, all forced to work as waiters or dancers or whatever. Grow up.'

The words anchored into his cerebrum, aching his heart and misting his eyes. A dream he was told he could never wake up and grasp. The thought of running away seemed more drama and effort than relief.

Far below him the animals did not move, leaving him with his chilling thoughts.

The days were endless, normally a clear blue with a flat white blanket, yet today the sky appeared a smoky grey with a duller sheet covered in black and brown dots that were sleeping sea lions.

Doug was huddled close to his snowmobile, shielded partly, but not enough to avoid the nippy breeze catching the top of his cheeks.

'It's a far drop, Master Doug,' Cerberus noted, 'if you jump now it can all end. This dead-end life can be over. That will show them all.'

It is a far drop, Douglas concurred. The fall would certainly kill him. School had begun a few weeks earlier for the fifth year scholars. Right now they were completing tasks, majority of the students doing their utmost to maintain high favour. Not like Doug who was just trying to pass.

The notorious favourite of Doctor Husky, Snow Leopard's Malcolm Weston was reported to have been head hunted by a top secret organisation that dealt with extreme matters of espionage.

He would never see Malcolm again, Doug asserted. *I'll be manning a switchboard while Weston is off saving the world.*

Weston was the Snow Leopard every student in the Arctic aspired to be like. The handsome boy was humble, dark and mysterious like a secret agent. Malcolm was even too cool for the Bear Challenge, no matter how many students protested in his favour that he participate.

Malcolm was asked by Lady of the Ocean Carolyn Otto to the fifth year ball. One of the hottest girls in school, part of Daisy Dinmont's crew. Doug's soul ached at the sad truth that no one would ask him to the fifth year ball. Not a Lady of the Ocean, not even a fellow Snow Leopard. *I really am a Snow Loser.*

The cold wind picked up again and tugged at his jacket, the dust of snow deliberately blowing around him and being sucked over the edge.

'All you have to do is jump, Master Doug.'

THE AUTHOR

James K.B. Brough was born in Stoke-On-Trent, Staffordshire, England and raised in Witbank, South Africa where his parents moved when he was three.

He started writing short stories and poetry from a young age, winning four silver and two gold certificates in local literary competitions. James has nurtured his passion throughout the years whilst studying Art and 3D Animation.

Currently a 3D Visualiser in a London-based Architect firm, James published his first book in Spring 2012, *The Sword of Steel*, part I of V in the Save the World Academy series.

His influences are Michael Crichton, J.R.R. Tolkien, Joss Whedon, Clive Cussler and David Gemmell.

You can follow on Twitter @S_W_Academy

To find out more about Save the World Academy join the Facebook page at facebook/SavetheWorldAcademy and get the details for the next release.

Also visit www.jamesbrough.com and subscribe to get the latest news for upcoming releases.