‘This morning I was sitting in the private, (*make that very private bordering on intimate)*, office of one of the leading industrialists in Europe, if not the most leading and, from what I read, a member of one of the top five highest profile sponsors of charitable causes in the land. This person is on first name terms with the top drawer in society, names that would really impress you, from business, politics, show business and a sprinkling of blue bloods.

A man who is squeaky clean with a devoted wife, not eye candy but an independently well connected lady who is not afraid to get her hands dirty in the cause and promotion of her less trumpeted but equally laudable aid agencies.

A couple blessed with two adorable, photogenic but media shy, highly successful children.

It might impress you, but not me.

I was there for detailed discussions with him on a commission that he has given me.

But first, let me introduce myself.

My name is Yeats.

Just Yeats.

I´m going to be very famous.

There´s actually a book out about me, my life and my art. I co-authored it, it´s called, ‘Unfinished Business’. For obvious reasons it´s classed as fiction, but it isn´t.

‘Unfinished Business’ is credited to Yeats and Writer because without me there wouldn´t be a book.

Among other things I sell images to writers. You obviously don´t know this, but one or more of my images, sometimes grisly but also mysterious or disturbing but always laden with impact, have probably leapt off the printed page of a thriller or such like that you were reading.

You may think that doesn´t pay much. You don´t know my clients or how desperate they become when they´re blocked.

Or what it means to be beholden to me.

Writer´s block, a curse for the creative mind, but it´s proved a nice little earner for me.

These images are created first hand by yours truly, but are not made to measure and I deliver them to my clients personally.

That is, I actually describe the image, I´m big on the personal touch, to any would be purchaser.

I´ve got a way with words.

But you can´t stand still in this world.

What was once a budding but ancillary project has now become my main source of income.

Writers and film makers, they´re the main beneficiaries. When one of these creative types wants to know what happens to a living human body under extreme circumstances, such as torture for example or would like to see played out one of these truly unbelievable deaths that they conjure up, I conduct trials and put the films of said trials at their disposal.

I like to call it, Money for New Rope.

And I don´t come cheap.

No, they don´t contact me. Nobody does. I contact them. I keep my ear to the ground, I move in their circles, ever widening circles these days. They don´t even realize I am moving in their circles. That´s how good I am.

Now, to the latest project.

What do you call those things?

You know, there´s a row of balls on wires suspended from a cross bar. You lift one, at either end, and then release it and the ball at the opposite end receives the momentum and rises and crashes back against the others and the process is repeated. It´s all to do with, I think, kinetic energy.

Yes, that´s it, Newton`s Cradle.

My industrialist wants a living, human version of this, to show his fellow tycoons at their next shindig.

You don´t believe me?

Wake up!

People are always looking for the next thrill.

Even our so called pillars of society.

Especially our so called pillars of society.

My first prototype revealed that it´s better, though not essential, that the ‘human spheres’ wear crash helmets. Maybe it´s obvious to some people but I found this out through a pretty painful, not for me, I hasten to add, series of attempts. I also learned to make sure that each human is exactly the same size and weight as all the others. I´m not a scientist but it´s pretty clear it´s not going to work otherwise.

Now, I´m not going to give anything away, but there are a couple of variations to this game. Depending on the results you wish to achieve and the market segment one is aiming at. Let´s just say one comes with the crash helmets, so you get that reassuring click on contact that you get with the Newton´s Cradle and the other doesn´t, the latter I call the barbarian model and the former the stately homes’ study.

Of course, the initial outlay for the framework is considerable, but thereafter, apart from maintenance, it´s not excessive. The joy of it is that the supply of game pieces is, quite literally, infinite.

I keep a holding tank of these pieces or subjects these days. It saves me scouring the streets when I´m preparing or re-working a project.

Because, wouldn´t you know it?, you can never find what you need when you need it.

How do I collect them?

Let´s start at the beginning, one of them could be you.

And there´s nothing you can do to prevent it.

Nothing.

You may see me and not think much of it.

Maybe you bend over to tie your shoelace and you see a figure in the wing mirror of a parked car, but it means nothing to you.

And why should it?

But that figure may be me.

I call that a ‘sighting’.

And I pick you because you possess an air of something, vulnerability, stupidity, arrogance, aggression? Sometimes, even I don´t know.

I´m an artist and you possess that certain je ne sais quoi, but I recognize it when I see it, as something that will complete my latest installation.

I have a setting for you.

Just for you.

It may be years until I ‘remove’ you, that´s what I call it when I take you out of general circulation, but I will.

My favourite part is the absolute beginning; these ‘sightings’ will increase and you will begin to feel uneasy and you will slowly begin to suspect that they are more than just coincidence.

You may become paranoid. You may contact the police.

Depending on your social standing and means you may assemble a gang of ‘rent a thugs’.

Futile.

These clods usually think they´re invincible. Mistake.

I´ve got a few of them in my holding tank.

When you realize you´ve been targeted, it´s already too late.

It´s not a question of catching me. I can´t be caught.

I´m a true force of nature.

I can´t offer you any comfort. Once you´re mine, you´re mine.

To be honest, it´s probably better if you´re not observant. Because the fear will be paralyzing when you realize it´s not just coincidence but you really are being hunted.

When I have decided on somebody, I have no mercy.

Nothing can stop me.

I supply people who are looking for something. They´re cowards these artistic Johnnies. They like to live vicariously through me, they yearn to walk on the wild side, but they haven´t got the bottle.

What some of them don´t realize is, that once they set this process in motion, and it´s irreversible, then they will have to learn to live with the consequences and ultimately themselves.

Some manage it. Some don´t.

I can see you´re thinking.

Go on, ask me. I won´t bite.

Who constructed my interpretation of Newton´s Cradle?

Good question.

That´s the joy of it. It´s my version of recycling.

It´s easy to find workers. What with all these displaced souls from foreign climes on the move. I tell them I´m an artist, if I tell them anything at all. I tell them or show them a diagram of what I want, they construct it. Then I throw them in my holding tank which, you guessed it, was constructed by its very occupants.

Ingenious, isn´t it?

Now this big wig I saw this morning inadvertently gave me a brilliant idea. I am going to create a big name version of this. It`ll set me up for life.

I´ve already got one candidate in my sights. But there´s no rush.

However, I will begin the ‘sighting’ or ‘teasing’ process, as I also like to call it, shortly.

Just for the hell of it.

Now, the strange thing about me is, I´m a very distinctive looking person but I possess this unique talent of blending in, chameleon like.

How distinctive?

Well, I´m…….

That would spoil the fun. Let´s see if you guess it´s me, when we meet.

I´m now sitting in a café, having a well earned breather. But I´m never off duty.

It´s not one of those name chain places. I prefer to favour the independent business outlet. After all, I´m a one man band myself. It can be tough when the buck stops with you. So I like to offer all the support I can to the struggling entrepreneur.

Maybe you´re also sitting in here.

These places usually cater to a complete cross section , take today for example, some elderly couples holding hands, that´s sweet; two groups of youngsters sprawled all over the place, with all the latest gadgetry at their disposal; a young couple gazing lovingly into each other´s eyes and a large number of, apparently, singles.

Oh. Hallo?

What´s he doing here?

Not what I´d call his usual stamping ground. He´s going to the table in the corridor behind the palm tree like thing. To a woman almost hidden behind sun glasses and a broadsheet newspaper.

She lets the paper fall, pushes the glasses back onto the top of her head where they nestle in her chestnut brown hair.

A young woman.

She´s not his wife.

Whatever.

So, I´m scanning the array of faces set out before me, like so many goodies at a banquet. And what do you know?

Yes.

A confirmed choice.

Is it you?

Or, is it the sporty person waiting at the counter? Maybe, that student looking type coming back from the toilet? Possibly, that eccentric who`s just walked in? That legal eagle staggering under the weight of those ribbon bound documents?

Or is it you?

Remember that man crouched down stroking your dog outside the pub last week; or who held the train door open for you a few days later; or whose shoulder you brushed entering the dentist´s surgery as he walked out?

The man in the black crumpled suit.

You never saw his face, did you?

Think harder.

I think the penny has dropped.

And this morning. In your office?

Yes, it is you.

You with the slowly dawning expression of dread.’