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## Actus Reus

by Ivor John

It really isn't that difficult to do. Not the actions anyway, the actus reus. It had become surprisingly straightforward. I had done it so many times now. Clicking the WhatsApp link on my laptop, isn't exactly hard work is it?

'Hello my darling, how are you today? I don't have very long to talk now but I will call you again later, I have to go to a store to do some marketing. I think that the project may take a bit longer than I thought but I will speak to you later about that my love, perhaps I will call you tomorrow'

I have a script to follow. It is best not to improvise if possible, it can easily become too confusing. Confusion means mistakes and mistakes could spoil the whole thing. It is easy to forget, if you are not careful, that they hang on your every word. If it is working as it should they do. So if I do say anything off of the script, I make a note, so that I don't make a mistake during another call. Or with a different 'boyfriend'.

I usually prefer to tell them that I am in brand franchising. My own marketing company of course. They never really know what that means. It fits with the glamorous pictures I send them. Usually mid-thirties or early forties. Always glamorous, sexy clothing, long hair, they seem to quite like hair up or pony tails. Maybe it's the impression of youthfulness, paedo chic.

It used to be easy to get my pictures. Any online clothes or cosmetic advert. But now, everyone is so much more aware. Even middle-aged lonely men can do a reverse image search. So now I prefer to get pictures from social media, facebook or Insta. Even then it is getting much harder to find them. Sometimes you can use the names as well but there is a risk with doing that. They may find the profile. Then they may write to them, which would never do. Or the posts may not fit my script.

They send me their pictures, I always ask for them. Old men, fat and unfit. Badly dressed ugly men. Of course they are, or they wouldn't be writing to a woman who doesn't exist. Why would they think that the sexy woman whom they see in my pictures would possibly be interested in them? Their personalities perhaps? As they tell me about their last evening at the pub, a game of darts and a football match on telly. Whatever the reason, they do.

I never ask for the money, not directly anyway. Too many people have read about 'romance scams' as they describe my work. But it isn't all a scam is it? For weeks or months, over two years was my longest, they enjoy a relationship with a beautiful woman. They are optimistic and often for the first time in a long while, they look forward to their futures. To meeting me. It isn't me of course, but they enjoy the fantasy. But the money. I tell them about my company, and how much money I make from it. But they ask me, I only tell them what they want to know. I tell them, I have been contacted by a retail group in Hungary. A chain of twenty or so clothing and cosmetics shops just starting up. They heard about me and asked me to tender. I know I could do it. It would be very profitable, but I don't have the startup costs. It would be at least thirty thousand dollars and I don't have it right now when my current contract is completed, but not now.

'Maybe you could come and see me in Italy? or I could come to you in Swindon? It sounds so lovely there my darling, once I have finished this contract in a few months'. They always ask about how they could invest in my company, how much money could they make and how lovely it would be to work together. 'Oh my love, you would do that for me? That would be so amazing'. Honesty for me is usually the worst policy imaginable.