

**THE PRICE OF A GHOST**

by Paden Reilly

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### CHARACTERS

ACHAN WHEREWITH, 53

SARAH WHEREWITH (Wife of ACHAN), 50

JOSHUA WHEREWITH (Son of ACHAN and SARAH), 30

BETH (Housekeeper), 29

ZACH (Bodyguard), 30

THE GHOST

### TIME

The year 2008.

### PLACE

The newly built Wherewith Mansion in New Jersey.

ACHANS office has a desk with an analogue clock , a telephone and a computer on it, there is a hidden safe that only ACHAN knows about, above that is a painting of an archer. There's also a grandfather clock, and a waste bin. There is a door, which is the only way in or out of the office. ACHAN and SARAHS bedroom has the bed with sheets that are never made. The dining room has a table.

**ACT 1**  
**SCENE 1**

(Lights up on ACHAN sitting at his desk counting money. The grandfather clock displays the time twelve-thirty. ACHAN looks at some letters that are lying on his desk, he takes them and throws them in the waste bin. There is a knock at the door)

SARAH (O.S.)

Achan, honey? Get out here, Joshua is on the phone, he wants to talk to you.

ACHAN

I'm almost finished here.

SARAH (O.S.)

You can finish doing that later, Joshua is on the other side of the planet, we have not seen him in months.

ACHAN

Your making me lose count.

SARAH (O.S.)

At least unlock the door.

ACHAN

Keep your skirt down, I said I'm almost done!

SARAH (O.S.)

Ugh!

(As ACHAN finishes counting the money, He goes toward the wall and opens the secret compartment hiding his safe. He enters the combination to open it, places the money inside, and closes the secret compartment, then unlocks the door and lets in SARAH who is talking on the phone)

SARAH

Well, Just be safe honey, it is dangerous out there. Here is your father.

(SARAH hands the phone to ACHAN)

ACHAN

Josh?

(JOSHUA, enters dressed in camouflage clothing)

JOSHUA

Hey dad.

ACHAN

How is it there?

JOSHUA

It's pretty friggin hot.

ACHAN

Yeah, deserts can be a real bitch. What time is it there?

JOSHUA

About seven-thirty in the morning.

ACHAN

Fuck, It's about twelve-thrity here.

JOSHUA

You must be tired.

ACHAN

A little bit, yeah. Your mom kept me up so we could talk to you.

(JOSHUA chuckles)

ACHAN (Cont'd)

Now don't go getting your ass off shot out there, your mom and I want you home so we can put you to work doing something that doesn't involve blowing shit up.

(SARAH hits ACHANS arm.)

JOSHUA

Heh, ok dad, I'll be safe.

(looks behind him)

I gotta go now, I'll talk to you later.

ACHAN

See you later son.

(JOSHUA is about to hang up)

ACHAN (Cont'd)

Oh, and Josh?

JOSHUA

Yeah?

ACHAN

I love you.

JOSHUA

I love you too dad.

(JOSHUA and ACHAN hang up, and JOSHUA exits. SARAH looks at ACHAN with dissatisfaction)

ACHAN

What?

SARAH

Why did you do that?

ACHAN

What the fuck did I do now?

SARAH

Our son is in the middle of a war zone, when he calls, you should at least set aside some time for him.

ACHAN

I did, you kept me up for the past two hours.

SARAH

And you spent it keeping inventory on your stash. You already know how much you have in there, why count it? You think it's going to vanish or something?

ACHAN

My ``stash`` is for a very important business transaction, so forgive me if I act a little anal.

SARAH

Why don't you just write a check?

ACHAN

I prefer to hand deliver it, it's safer that way.

SARAH

If you are so concerned about safety, perhaps you would think more about your family, your greed can hurt us you know.

ACHAN

I'm helping you and countless others by supporting the world economy. Money makes the world go round, so don't come bitching to me if everything stops spinning.

(SARAH looks away from ACHAN)

ACHAN (Cont'd)

Fine, I'm sorry.

SARAH

Let's just go to bed.

ACHAN

Well, as long as we're up...

(ACHAN rubs SARAH'S shoulders)

SARAH

No, I am tired.

ACHAN

Come on honey, it's our first night here, let's celebrate.

SARAH

I said no.

(ACHAN wraps his arms around SARAH'S waist)

SARAH

Achan!

(BETH enters)

BETH

Oh, I'm sorry sir.

ACHAN (slightly annoyed)

That's fine Beth, waddya want?

BETH

Nothing sir, I was just looking for my room, This mansion is awfully big, I think I'm lost.

ACHAN

Just go back to the front door and turn right, your room is at the end of the hall.

BETH

Thank you sir.

(BETH leaves then turns right back)

BETH

Oh, by the way, did you get those letters?

ACHAN

What letters?

BETH

The ones from Food for the Poor, I left them on your desk.

ACHAN

Hmm? Oh those letters, yeah, I had a look at them, thanks.

(BETH exits)

ACHAN (Cont'd)

Now, where were we-

(ZACH enters)

ZACH

Um...boss?

ACHAN (more than just slightly annoyed)

What is it Zach?

ZACH

Uh...where the heck is my room?

ACHAN

Go to the front door and turn right, it's next to Beths room.

ZACH

Already did, still can't find it.

ACHAN

Ugh alright follow me, I'll show you.

ZACH

Sorry about this.

ACHAN

It's ok, we're all getting used to the layout of this place.

ZACH

At least I got my exercise for the day.

(ACHAN and ZACH exit, lights down)

SCENE 2

(Lights up on Bedroom, SARAH lies asleep as ACHAN enters and goes to the bed)

ACHAN

You awake? Hon?

(Pokes her)

Come on, I know your awake, stop faking it... Fine, see you tomorrow.

(ACHAN goes to sleep, lights down. Lights come back up as time passes, it is late at night. From off stage, footprints are heard, they are faint at first, but get louder. ACHAN wakes up at the sound of the footsteps, he looks around and goes back to sleep, lights down)

SCENE 3

(Lights up on the dining room, ACHAN and SARAH are eating as BETH is serving them)

BETH

Did you two sleep alright?

SARAH

Yes we did, thanks.

ACHAN

I slept ok. Did you get lost again last night?

BETH

No sir, why do you ask.

ACHAN

I heard someone walking around last night, thought it may be you.

BETH

It wasn't me sir, maybe it was Zach.

(ZACH enters)

ZACH

This place is a friggin maze.

ACHAN

Were you up late last night?

ZACH

Nope, didn't wanna get lost again.

ACHAN

Did you hear any footsteps?

ZACH

Didn't hear a thing, I was dead asleep.

ACHAN

Beth, did you here anything?

BETH

No sir, it was pretty quiet.

ACHAN

Sarah?

SARAH

Nothing.

(A look of worry comes on ACHANS face)

SARAH (Cont'd)

Maybe you were dreaming.

ACHAN

No, I was definitely awake, I heard someone walking around.

SARAH

You sure?

ACHAN

Yes I'm sure!

SARAH

Calm down, maybe you were just really tired and thought you heard something.



ACHAN

Someone else must have come in the house last night.

ZACH

The alarm didn't go off.

ACHAN

I'll be right back.

(ACHAN exits)

SARAH

Really think someone could have broken in?

ZACH

Maybe.

BETH

Then we should call the police. Someone could have been hurt.

ZACH

Just started as bodyguard and I'm already failing, I'm sooo getting fired.

BETH

It's ok, as long as no one got hurt.

SARAH

All right, stop jumping to conclusions, we don't know if anyone broke in here.

(ACHAN enters)

SARAH

Where did you go?

ACHAN

Just checking, nothing important seems to be missing.

SARAH

Good, now we can get off the subject.

ACHAN

I didn't check the whole house, this limp dick could have taken anything.

SARAH

You do not even know if anyone was in here!

ACHAN

I heard someone prowling around here last night, there's no way someone would have come into a place like this and leave empty handed.

BETH

Maybe we should find out what you heard, it could be some escaped lunatic running around the town.

(SARAH looks at BETH, then ACHAN)

SARAH

Hmmm, tell me, would you be so anxious to find this intruder if he tried to hurt one of us?

(BETH shutters)

ZACH (sarcastically)

Heck, I'd hope for something like that, I got a job to do here.

ACHAN

What kind of stupid ass question is that? Of course I would!

SARAH

Well, if you are so convinced someone came in here last night, tell the police.

(ACHAN ponders)

SARAH (Cont'd)

Well?

ACHAN

No, I don't want anyone else in here.

SARAH

Come on, you can trust the police.

ACHAN

It's not that I don't trust them, it's that I trust myself more. The most important lesson I learned is you need to surround yourself with ignorant people to keep yourself safe.

(SARAH, BETH, and ZACH look at ACHAN, ACHAN looks back at them realizing he insulted them)

ACHAN

So, no police. Zach, come with me.

(ACHAN and ZACH exit, lights down)

SCENE 4

(Lights up on ACHANS office, he is counting the money with the door locked. When he is done, he puts the money away, closes the secret compartment, and opens the door. ZACH enters)

ACHAN

Find anything?

ZACH

Nope, everything's where it should be.

ACHAN

Strange...

ZACH

Still think someone came in here?

ACHAN

Yeah, but since he didn't take anything, I'm more worried about the alarm system.

ZACH

I already checked, it's working just fine.

ACHAN

What about the cameras?

ZACH

Didn't look at those yet.

ACHAN

Let's do that now.

(ACHAN and ZACH look at the computer monitor, ACHAN points to the screen)

ACHAN

You see? There's the little fucker!

ZACH

Where?

ACHAN

There.

ZACH

That?

ACHAN

Yeah, look right there, you can see his shadow.

ZACH

Wow, this guy's stealthy.

ACHAN

How did he get in here so quietly?

(SARAH enters)

SARAH

The way you are talking it sounds like you want someone to break in.

ACHAN

Hi hon.

SARAH

Did you call the police yet?

ACHAN

You heard what I said, no cops.

ZACH

Nothing to tell them anyway, nothing is missing.

SARAH

Good, now we can stop arguing about it.

ACHAN

Zach, double check the alarm again.

(ZACK exits, ACHAN continues to look at the computer screen)

SARAH

Are you just about finished with this?

ACHAN

Someone broke into my house; no one does that unless they fancy being sodomized by my boot.

(SARAH chuckles)

SARAH

Freud would have a lot of fun with that phrase.

(ACHAN laughs)

ACHAN

Oh really? Shoe rape? What would that represent?

SARAH

If I was feeling lazy, I would say a repressed sexual desire for your mother, but...

ACHAN

Ugh, don't mention her.

SARAH

Sorry, I forgot.

ACHAN

I wish I could forget her, at least I got you to show me what a real woman is like.

(SARAH sits on the desk)

SARAH

I knew there was a reason I married you.

(ACHAN hugs SARAH)

ACHAN

Of course, you're everything she's not.

SARAH

What do you expect, when you are as money crazy as she was, you just turn into human repellent. I just hope you do not end up like her.

ACHAN

What do you mean? I love you!

SARAH

I know you do sweetie, but sometimes it seems you love wealth a little bit more.

(ACHAN ponders)

SARAH (Cont'd)

And other times you seem to act little paranoid. Even if you did hear something, it was probably just the floor creaking.

ACHAN

Marble floors don't creek.

SARAH

You wouldn't be all riled up like this if you didn't hide so much cash in this place.

ACHAN

Of course I wouldn't, if something is worth earning, it's worth stealing.

SARAH

My point is you are so possessive about your money that you see anything suspicious as a threat to your wallet.

ACHAN

I'm just being cautious is all, it's perfectly normal.

SARAH

Well, I guess I'm not normal then.

ACHAN

That's what made me fall in love with you.

(Lights down)

SCENE 5

(Lights up on ACHAN and SARAH'S bedroom. SARAH and ACHAN lay asleep. From off stage, loud footsteps are heard. ACHAN wakes up, walks out of the bedroom and grabs a flashlight following the sound of the footsteps, eventually, they disappear)

ACHAN

Where the hell are you?

(ZACH enters)

ZACH

Boss?

ACHAN

Please tell me you heard something.

ZACH

I did, footsteps.

ACHAN

Find where they came from?

ZACH

Yeah, right here.

ACHAN

What?

ZACH

They were your footsteps boss, they woke me up and I followed them.

ACHAN

How the hell did you not hear the others ones? They were pretty damn loud.

ZACH

You definitely weren't dreaming this time.

ACHAN

Damn right, this guy must have been hiding here since yesterday.

ZACH

Doesn't seem like a good idea for a thief.

ACHAN

There are plenty of places to hide in here

(To himself)

Believe me, I'd know.

ZACH

What?

ACHAN

Um...Your right, it's a stupid idea, now lets find this asshole so we can get some sleep. You check the east wing, I'll check the west.

ZACH

Yes boss.

(ZACH and ACHAN exit, lights down)



SCENE 6

(The next day. The Lights up on ACHANS bedroom, ACHAN sits on the edge of the bed rubbing his eyes. SARAH enters)

SARAH

How's the manhunt going?

ACHAN

Frustrating.

SARAH

One thing I don't get is why anyone would hide out here.

ACHAN

I figured maybe he's a squatter. Lazy bum, needs to get a fucking job!

SARAH

Did he take anything?

ACHAN

That's what's really weird, nothing is missing, he didn't even raid the pantry.

SARAH

So, someone is hiding in our, er...your house, has not stolen anything, is not looking for something to eat, and walks around here at night.

ACHAN

I know, it makes no sense.

SARAH

So does not calling the police.

ACHAN

Ugh, do we have to go through this again?

SARAH

Look, if there is someone in the house, he's still trespassing. It's really creepy, I mean, this guy could be watching us sleep!

ACHAN

Relax, I got Zach staying up to keep an eye on the place tonight, and I gave him a floor plan. If this parasite makes another move, he'll catch him.

SARAH

As long as this ends soon.

(SARAH and ACHAN go to bed. Lights down)



SCENE 7

(Lights up on ACHAN walking around outside his office)

ACHAN

Ugh, can't fucking sleep.

(ACHAN unlocks the door to his office and enters. He looks around to make sure nothing is missing. ACHAN sits at his desk and taps his fingers for a bit. He gets up and as he walks to the door, he knocks some coins on the floor. As ACHAN picks up the coins, loud footsteps are heard outside his office)

ACHAN

Zach? You there?

(ACHAN leaves his office, locks the door and walks away from it)

ACHAN

Zach? Was that you? Shit. Listen dicknose, your gonna get caught either way, so you might as well show your ugly face!

(The door to the office unlocks, opens, and closes very loudly. Sounds of vandalism are heard inside.

ACHAN rushes to the door and tries to unlock it to no avail)

ACHAN

You better get the fuck out of there!

(ACHAN succeeds in opening the door and enters his now ravaged office)

ACHAN

What the fuck?

(ZACH enters)

ZACH

Holy crap! What happened here?

ACHAN

What the Hell do you think?

ZACH

Well, where did he go?

ACHAN

No fucking idea, he managed to pick the lock and have his way with the place.

(SARAH and BETH enter)

BETH

Oh my...

SARAH

It looks like this guy is looking for something.

ACHAN

Told you!

SARAH

Do you know what he's looking for?

BETH

He didn't find it, whatever it is.

ACHAN

And he never will.

ZACH

Well, let's clean this place up.

ACHAN

No, I'll do it, go keep an eye on the girls.

ZACH

Uh, sure thing boss.

(ZACH, SARAH, and BETH walk out of the office. ACHAN closes the door behind, checks his safe, and begins cleaning)

BETH

What happened in there?

ZACH

No idea, he said someone broke in and ransacked the place.

BETH

How did he get past Achan?

ZACH

I'd like to be able to sneak around like that.

SARAH

I think Achan might know something.

ZACH

What do you mean?

SARAH

Well, we know he has a lot of cash saved for some big deal.

ZACH

Yeah, but he won't say what it is.

SARAH

Well, I think now would be a good time to find out.

ZACH

I don't like that idea, I mean; as a body guard I'm not doing a very good job at the guarding part.

SARAH

There are only two reasons a criminal would return to the scene of a crime.

ZACH

What's that?

SARAH

Either he is a total idiot, or this money is much more important than Achan is letting on. This person is willing to risk getting caught to get what he wants.

ZACH

So what good is it for us to know what it's for?

SARAH

Not sure, but Achan seems to have a clear idea of what this guy wants; I would like to have one too.

ZACH

You know how he gets with that kind of stuff, he'll build up walls real fast if I try to poke into his business.

SARAH

Then be more subtle, stroke his ego a little, you might get him to start boasting.

ZACH

So basically I soften him up and sneak the information out of him?

SARAH

Exactly.

ZACH

I don't know...

SARAH

Relax, if he gets too upset, I won't let him fire you.

ZACH

Ok, I'll try.

SARAH

Thanks, hopefully this helps us understand what is going on here. Oh, and keep an eye on Achan.

ZACH

I'll uh...stay on my toes.

(Lights down)

SCENE 8

(Lights up on ACHAN and ZACH in ACHANS office)

ZACH

You sure he's gonna come in here again?

ACHAN

There's something in here he wants.

ZACH

If you say so boss.

ACHAN

Thanks for helping me out.

ZACH

Just doing my job...So, what do you think this guy's looking for?

ACHAN

I'm guessing some of the money I'm saving for an upcoming deal.

ZACH

Must be a big one.

ACHAN

It is.

ZACH

Who do you think's doing this?

ACHAN

I'm betting it's a business rival.

ZACH

Heh, you must have some tough competition.

ACHAN

None of them more badass than me.

ZACH

I bet

(ACHAN smiles)

ZACH (Cont'd)

How'd you make so much?

ACHAN

I learned pretty early on that you can't let guilt get in the way.

ZACH

What do you mean?

ACHAN

My dad kinda pushed me into making money, it was hard trying to make him happy.

ZACH

So what did you do?

ACHAN

I had to do things I swore I would never do.

ZACH

What was that?

ACHAN  
Uhh...nothing.

ZACH  
It's gotta be something.

ACHAN  
I said nothing!

ZACH  
Ok, ok. So where do you keep that thing anyway?

ACHAN  
What?

ZACH  
Your safe.

ACHAN  
I didn't keep my shit from getting stolen by telling anyone where I keep it.

ZACH  
Come on boss, you can trust me.

ACHAN  
Can I trust you to shut the hell up?

ZACH  
All right...Is it in this room.

ACHAN  
Zach! Goddamnit!

ZACH  
Is it behind this painting?  
(ZACH looks behind the painting, ACHAN looks at him disapprovingly)

ZACH (Cont'd)  
Ok, I'm sorry I'll stop, but we might be able to work better if you trusted me a little more.

ACHAN  
Who said I don't trust you?

ZACH  
It's what you don't say boss...I gotta go to the bathroom.

ACHAN  
Don't get lost again.  
(ZACH exits waving his floor plan, ACHAN locks the door behind him and walks over to his desk. THE GHOST enters and stands behind ACHAN. ACHAN turns around and sees THE GHOST)

ACHAN  
Holy Shit!  
(ACHAN takes out his gun, THE GHOST knocks it out of his hand. ACHAN tries to hit THE GHOST, THE GHOST grabs ACHAN and throws him at the desk. ACHAN jumps to the floor towards his gun, and picks it up. Lights down, ACHAN fires his gun until it is empty. Lights

come back up, the clock is on the floor, ACHAN is alone and THE GHOST is gone. ACHAN sits in petrified silence until he is startled by someone banging on the door)

ZACH (O.S.)

Boss!? Boss?! You ok!?

(ZACH breaks down the door)

ZACH

You hurt?

(SARAH and BETH enter)

SARAH

What's going on?

ACHAN

H...he was here.

SARAH

And you shot him.

ZACH

Where is he now?

ACHAN

He...disappeared...into the wall.

ZACH

Great, we're being invaded by Houdini!

SARAH

People don't just ``disappear`` Achan. There's only one door and you always keep it locked.

ACHAN

He got in here...almost beat the shit out of me...I shot at him and he vanished.

ZACH

Boss, I think you need some sleep.

ACHAN

NO! He could come again.

ZACH

I think you scared him off for good this time.

ACHAN

You can't scare a ghost.

SARAH

What!?

ACHAN

I'm being haunted.

SARAH

Ugh, I am not tolerating this anymore, Come on Beth, let's have some coffee.

(SARAH and BETH walk out into the hall)

ZACH

Boss, I think you should really get some sleep.

ACHAN

Like I can after what I just saw.

ZACH

Let's clean up this mess then, It'll help keep your mind off it.

(ZACH starts to clean)

ACHAN

You think I'm crazy don't you? You think I'm batshit insane.

ZACH

No one said that.

ACHAN

It's what you don't say.

(ZACH picks up the clock)

ZACH

Looks like you broke your clock...That's strange.

ACHAN

What?

ZACH

The time's wrong.

ACHAN

What time does it say?

ZACH

Eight O'clock.

ACHAN

Oh fuck...

ZACH

The battery probably just died.

ACHAN

Something's going to fucking die soon, and it isn't the damn battery.

ZACH

So Casper's sending a message from beyond the grave? I guess Ouija boards got old fashioned.

ACHAN

You have to help me.

ZACH

Look, when this spook sends you an e-mail, then I'll believe you, you need to get some sleep and put that friggin gun away.

(ZACH walks out into the hallway, Lights down)

SCENE 9

(Lights up on the hallway outside ACHANS office, ZACH meets up with SARAH and BETH)

BETH

I'm scared, do you really think this place is haunted?

SARAH

The only ghost in this house is Achan.

BETH

What do we do?

SARAH

I think Achan is seriously ill. I've had violent patients before, it's very similar to this.

BETH

What did you do with them?

SARAH

Sent them to a psychiatric hospital, had them committed, or called the police.

ZACH

Then let's do that, let's call the cops!

SARAH

If he sees the police, he'll grow even more paranoid. I think we should leave.

ZACH

Normally, I would say we make like ghosts and vanish, but where else am I going to go?

BETH

I don't think we should leave him, he needs our help.

SARAH

With him carrying that gun around, it is only a matter of time before he accidentally makes ghosts out of us. I do not want to walk out on him either, but we would be helping him more by leaving.

BETH

How?

SARAH

He cares more about his stupid money than he does about us. Maybe he figured we would see things his way if it was at risk.

ZACH

So he's imagining all this?

SARAH

Think about it, he is the only one who ever heard or saw this ``ghost'', if anything is haunted, it is his head. If we leave, he will see we are not buying into it and he'll stop.

BETH

Are you sure that will work?



SARAH

Yes, we should not give in to his delusions; he will only sink lower and lower. Babies do the same thing if you give in to their tantrums.

BETH

Well, if that's what it takes to help him.

SARAH

Good, what about you Zach?

ZACH

I don't really have any choice, I have to stay.

SARAH

Do you want to get shot?

ZACH

No, but I don't want to end up on the streets either.

SARAH

All right, see if you can get him to put that gun down, but if that doesn't work, we should go.

ZACH

All right, I'll see what I can do.

BETH

We could stay at my sisters house until this whole episode is over.

SARAH

Good, start packing, just in case this does not work, and Zach?

ZACH

Yeah?

SARAH

Be careful. Don't try and grab the gun, just ask him to put it down, and be calm.

ZACH

I'll watch my back.

(Lights down)

