

# The Ashley Protocol

Written by  
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## Characters

Buck (M) - An operator  
Elliot (M) - His younger friend and partner; a fellow operator  
Hannah (F) - A corporate official

First Draft - January 2013  
Second Draft - April 2013

Scene II - "Chuck Cunningham"

BUCK heads to the downstage-left part of the lounge where one will find (atop a small rug) one couch, coffee table, and a lay-z-boy seater. This is an area to rest and read; there is a small collection of books and magazines on a modest shelf (also on the shelf are two speakers on either side of a glass tablet).

Most important are the knee-high stacks of dusty boxes adjacent to the whole affair. They are weathered and ancient.

BUCK blows dust off an old box and opens it. He produces a number of folders and dossiers. They are thick and in some cases, as a result of time passed, look to be sheets of leather more so than paper.

He produces a small, white, electronic Dictaphone. He examines it with interest before taking it to the shelf with speakers and places it on the glass tablet.

The tablet responds to the weight with a soft light under it and we hear the contents of the Dictaphone through the speakers.

LITTLE GIRL (V.O.)

*(soft, innocent, sweet)*

*I remember the sensation of bananas  
in my mouth. Crushing them with my  
tongue.*

MAN (V.O.)

*(gruff, old, cynnical/sinister)*  
*How old are you?*

LITTLE GIRL (V.O.)

*My hands are wrinkled. I can  
picture them soft and wrinkled.*

MAN (V.O.)

*Please repeat the question.*

LITTLE GIRL (V.O.)

*You asked how old.*

MAN (V.O.)

*Before that.*

LITTLE GIRL (V.O.)

*My first memory.*

*(beat)*

*You're angry.*

BUCK flips through a folder and sifts through the box it came from a bit more.

MAN (V.O.)

*A bit. Yes.*

*We hear the softest, heart breaking sound of a little girl SOBBING.*

MAN (V.O.) (CONT'D)

*You are not the sobbing child I'm looking at, you are a one hundred and six year old woman telling me her first and earliest memory is eating fruit as a wrinkly, old bit you never can or have been. You don't remember being a kid?*

LITTLE GIRL (V.O.)

*I remember being a child. I remember being born.*

MAN (V.O.)

*Then just say that. That's your earliest memory. Just say that.*

*More SOBBING.*

LITTLE GIRL (V.O.)

*But it's the truth.*

*SOBBING...*

Upstage centre, a light rises between where the panel doors of the elevator meet before opening and spilling out HANNAH.

*The SOBBING has turned to WEEPING.*

HANNAH

*Oh! Shit! Sorry, you can keep-*

HANNAH re-enters the elevator and presses a button.

BUCK

*Oh! Hannah!*

BUCK rushes to the shelf and takes the Dictaphone causing the RECORDING and WEEPING to stop as the light under the glass plate fades away.

HANNAH

*(calling over, not looking)*

*Don't be embarrassed!*

BUCK wheels away from the sitting/reading area and looks to the elevator doors as they close together. A light descends between the doors, she's gone.

BUCK  
What? What?  
(beat. Looks around the room)  
What?

ELLIOT comes back into the room.

ELLIOT  
What?

BUCK  
Hannah.

ELLIOT  
Oh. Okay.

BUCK  
What are you doing back? I thought-

ELLIOT  
Strangest thing...Lerche. Protocol.

BUCK  
What? No - bike. Lerche gets a  
bike.

ELLIOT  
And he asked me for the 'col.

BUCK  
But he's eleven

ELLIOT  
He's immortal.

BUCK  
He's only been alive eleven years,  
though

ELLIOT  
And he's gonna be alive for  
eternity until he asks for his  
right - his legal right for the  
proto-

BUCK  
What??

ELLIOT

Am I outta line, here? I'm right, right? I kept telling myself in the hallway...

BUCK

But, no...just, no...

ELLIOT

(looking toward the hall,  
dazed)

Longest fuckin' hallway I-longer than I remember, at least...

BUCK

What do we do?

ELLIOT

Our job. Right? We just do it. On paper, he's officially an Elder; he's an immortal asking for something he's entitled to.

BUCK

No.

ELLIOT

Don't we have to?

BUCK

Hannah, what about Hannah?

ELLIOT

"Fuck her"?

BUCK

She's a rep, Elliot - think about for who. They're all coming today along with the cameras and the catering and the chaos. It's best to not do it and let today run it's course.

ELLIOT

That's not our problem! This is our job! What if it comes up like negligence or a protest on our part? They'll think we're being *political*.

BUCK

Okay, then lets see what happens!  
Lets just wait and see what happens  
when we kill an eleven year old  
under the same roof as the  
president of the company-

ELLIOT

Now wai-

BUCK

-And the president of the country!  
Do you get that? Hannah will shit a  
brick and beat us to death with it!

ELLIOT

I dunno...I'm not sure this is  
abnormal. This probably happens.

BUCK

Where??

ELLIOT

I'm just saying it probably  
happens!

BUCK

Oh, you've done this before? This  
young?

ELLIOT

No, I mean, it's a big world out  
there. Shit, I'm not sure if this  
is actually a problem.

BUCK

Yes you are - you didn't do it. You  
came back here looking shell  
shocked! At least let that  
sentiment buy us the night to  
figure this out quietly.

ELLIOT

I came back here because I legally  
couldn't do it - it's your case  
file. It's not a moral dilemma,  
it's a legal wedge!

BUCK

Bull shit! We cut corners all the  
time! You were about to give him  
the bicycle on my behalf!

ELLIOT  
KINDA FUCKING DIFFERENT.

BUCK  
Exactly! And what about the prank phone calls? You weren't gonna tell her about that, why tell her about this?

ELLIOT  
Because they're prank phone calls! We get them on a *regular basis*, it would just confuse her and she'd blow it out of proportion!

BUCK  
Keep it down - Hannah's in the building.

ELLIOT  
Why would she come back? I thought the whole "politely receive her" thing was done with.

BUCK  
Hasn't even started, she came in and out before we could talk - I don't wanna get into this right n-

ELLIOT  
Well where the hell did she go?

BUCK  
I don't know, she rushed out!

ELLIOT  
Why?

BUCK  
Okay: I was going through more boxes I dug out from the archives and sh-

ELLIOT  
Oh, that stupid riveting book!

BUCK  
Stop calling it that. I was reviewing a recording I found; it was loud and off-putting and Hannah interrupted me.

(MORE)

BUCK (CONT'D)

She left, it was awkward, so not exactly a good foundation to propose killing kids, okay? You see what I'm talking about?

ELLIOT

Why "awkward"?

BUCK

No idea. She rushed out telling me not to be embarrassed.

ELLIOT

What were you doing?

BUCK

Are you okay?

ELLIOT

(beat)

Yeah.

BUCK

You seem pretty eager to not talk about Lerche.

ELLIOT

And you're the model of forthcoming about this Hannah debacle.

BUCK

The recording had a girl sobbing on it loud. I don't know what to make of Hannah's reaction.

ELLIOT

Maybe she thought you were crying.

BUCK

You think I cry like a little girl?

Upstage centre, a light rises in the space between the elevator doors.

ELLIOT

I think she's used to making men do it, is all.

Doors open and THUD.

HANNAH is HUFFING and PUFFING; She is dragging a black, long body bag across the floor - it's heavy and full.

She GRUNTS and throws it down before making way to the small kitchenette where (still PANTING) she pours herself a glass of water.

HANNAH  
(sips water and points at  
the bodybag)  
Party shit.

BUCK and ELLIOT relax.

ELLIOT  
Man...