

THE POST

Written by
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Based on a true story.

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INT. DINING ROOM, DUPONT CLUB - MORNING

It's breakfast, there's a soft hum of conversation. The glass windows on one side show off the D.C. skyline. BEN BRADLEE (late 40s, articulate but short-tempered) sits with his back against the view. He has a red pencil in hand and reads the draft of a story: "**Senate Told Nixon Aid to Laos Illegal**".

Chryon: June 9, 1971

Bradlee rubs his eyes and looks around the room. There are MEN scattered amongst the tables reading newspapers. Bradlee squints to get a better look - every paper is "The New York Times". He frowns and looks back at the story - bored.

KAY (O.S.)

Am I late?

KATHARINE "KAY" GRAHAM (mid 50s) speaks with trained intent - never letting something slip that she hasn't considered many times over. She's well put together but not ostentatious.

BRADLEE

(surprised)

Mrs. Graham.

KAY

I thought we said 8:30.

BRADLEE

Yes, I was just catching up on a few things.

She nods once and sits. A WAITER arrives.

WAITER

(to Kay)

May I get you anything?

KAY

A cup of tea, please.

WAITER

Mr. Bradlee?

BRADLEE

Thanks, but another cup and I'll be flying to the office.

Neither Kay nor the waiter get it. The waiter leaves.

KAY

Is there something you wanted to talk about?

He reaches into his bag and pulls out a magazine, folded to a certain page, and shows it to her.

BRADLEE
Have you seen this?

KAY
Of course.

She doesn't take it as he intended, so now it hangs limply between them. He reads -

BRADLEE
"Men are more able than women at executive work and in certain situations. I think a man would be better at this job I'm in than a woman." Did you say that?

KAY
It's an interview with me.

BRADLEE
But do you believe it?

KAY
Do you not?

BRADLEE
(annoyed)
It doesn't particularly matter what I believe - I'm not the Publisher of the Washington Post.

She gives a noncommittal acknowledgment. A moment passes.

BRADLEE (CONT'D)
Well, I'm in a tough position with it.

KAY
Why is that?

BRADLEE
How am I supposed to put a paper together with someone who doesn't think they should be in charge?

KAY
I didn't say that.

BRADLEE
It was implied.

KAY

Forgive me, but I disagree.

BRADLEE

Forgive *me*, but that doesn't particularly matter. I'm pretty sure the consensus is in my corner.

KAY

There are corners?

BRADLEE

(sighs)

That's not what I meant.

KAY

Playground fights aren't going to get us anywhere, Mr. Bradlee.

BRADLEE

That's why we're in a restaurant, not a sandbox.

She presses her lips together - a nervous tic she's never been able to shake. Maybe to stop her from saying something she shouldn't.

BRADLEE (CONT'D)

We've been getting mail - letters - from women. Asking you to correct your quote.

She's taken aback but covers.

KAY

That's ridiculous.

BRADLEE

I'm not so sure that it is.

KAY

Well, that won't be happening.

He sighs, a moment passes.

BRADLEE

I'm not trying to be combative. I... we're still new at this.

She gives him a look.

BRADLEE (CONT'D)

The two of us. Working together. As editor and, look, I don't see a point in letting things fester.

KAY

I agree.

BRADLEE

Good. I -

KAY

I'd like you to tell me what you're doing with the Style section.

The term "style" comes out as if it has vinegar attached to it. He crosses his arms and sits back in the chair - annoyed.

BRADLEE

In what way?

KAY

Is there more than one?

BRADLEE

We're figuring it out.

KAY

It's been a year.

BRADLEE

It's going to take another.

KAY

We can not keep wasting time on a section that discusses... what is it again?

BRADLEE

Fashion, lifestyle, you know -

She doesn't.

BRADLEE (CONT'D)

My wife likes it.

KAY

I'm happy for her.

BRADLEE

We can't drop the "Style" section.

KAY

Why not?

BRADLEE

Because The Times is starting to
print their own.

KAY

Good for them.

BRADLEE

If they run with it and it's a hit,
how's that going to look?

She purses her lips again; he's exasperated. She pulls a
piece of paper from her purse.

KAY

I've got a quote here, too.
(she reluctantly reads)
"Ben Bradlee needs a managing
editor like a boar needs tits."

He lets out a laugh, a man nearby gives her a look.

KAY (CONT'D)

You know who sent this to me?

BRADLEE

How many guesses do I get?

KAY

Gene Patterson.

BRADLEE

Would've needed three.

KAY

He'll be stepping down at the end
of the year.

BRADLEE

What's he waiting for?

KAY

I asked him to stay.

He gives her a look, clearly annoyed.

KAY (CONT'D)

You ask for my support, I hire you
support, then you terrorize them.

BRADLEE

Or maybe he just wanted to see if
you'd say "tits"?

KAY
That's beside the point.

BRADLEE
We're dancing around that aren't we.

(beat)
I didn't terrorize Gene.

KAY
He's your managing editor.

BRADLEE
Was.

KAY
He said you're not receptive to his ideas.

BRADLEE
That's not how I'd put it.

KAY
How am I supposed to trust The Post is doing what it should if you change your mind at every turn?

BRADLEE
I'm not changing my mind about Style.

KAY
You changed your mind about Gene.

BRADLEE
No, I *never* wanted Gene. I was clear about that.

KAY
(exasperated)
I'm trying to work with you, Mr. Bradlee.

BRADLEE
No, Mrs. Graham, you're not. Gene's right - I *don't* need a managing editor. I need a publisher, you, who is willing to back me, my editors, and my writers.

KAY
How do I not?

BRADLEE
(shaking the magazine)
By saying idiotic things like this!

The people around them sneak a peek once more. This isn't the first time Kay's been scolded, but probably the only time it's happened from outside her family. Bradlee knows he went too far but he's too stubborn to apologize.

KAY
Forgive me, but I don't know what
you want me to say.

BRADLEE
In the event of that, just say
nothing.

They sit quietly. The waiter arrives with her tea.

WAITER
Ready to order?

This is going to be a long breakfast.

BEGIN OPENING CREDITS

EXT. DUPONT CLUB - A LITTLE LATER

Bradlee steps onto the street, the bustle of pedestrians and commuters on their way to work. He begins his journey through the maze of D.C.

INT. UNDERGROUND GARAGE, DUPONT CLUB - SAME TIME

Kay climbs into the back of a chauffeured car. Simply, this is something she's always done.

INT. CAR - CONTINUOUS

The car pulls out into the city and heads in the direction of The Post offices. Sitting on the seat next to Kay is the magazine. It's her own copy. She's on the cover - regal, but sad. The title, "One-on-One with the Queen of the Beltway". She frowns.

EXT. VARIOUS, WASHINGTON, D.C. - SAME TIME

Bradlee edges his way around a small Vietnam protest walking towards the White House, which can be seen off in the distance.

INT. CAR - SAME TIME

Kay reads the article. It's clear she's read it many times and is perhaps more insecure about what she said than she let on. The car pulls into another underground garage and stops.

INT. LOBBY, WASHINGTON POST - SAME TIME

Bradlee walks in, his shirt damp from the humidity and walk. He throws his copy of the magazine into a nearby trash can and climbs onto an elevator.

INT. EXECUTIVE FLOOR, WASHINGTON POST - SAME TIME

The elevator doors open, Kay's posture straightens, jaw tightens, she steps off. The energy is tense, stiff, quiet. Along the wall are two portraits: EUGENE MEYER (1875-1959), Kay's father, and PHIL GRAHAM (1915-1963), Kay's late husband. They watch over her as she passes to her office at the end of the hall.

END OPENING CREDITS

INT. BULLPEN, WASHINGTON POST - MORNING

Bradlee steps off a different elevator and looks across the bullpen: a constant soundtrack of typewriters, the din of the news on a TV set, random conversations that come in spurts and starts. He smiles to himself - this is home. The serenity lasts for just one moment when -

MEG

I want to ask them about the vets again.

MEG GREENFIELD (40s, no-nonsense) instantly annoys him. He doesn't stop walking.

BRADLEE

No.

MEG

They're throwing their medals into the Potomac and we're OK with the White House's "no comment"?

BRADLEE

I need you to write something about the protest.

MEG

Which one?

BRADLEE

The United-Women's-whatever-they're-called. Go and... I don't know. Just get them to not hate us right now.

MEG

I take it Mrs. Graham won't be retracting -

BRADLEE

Go away.

She grins and heads off as Bradlee approaches his office, handing his briefcase to his secretary, CYNTHIA. BEN BAGDIKIAN (50s, Turkish, resolute) is waiting for him.

BRADLEE (CONT'D)

(to Cynthia, annoyed)

I thought you told them not to hover?

CYNTHIA

They don't listen.

BRADLEE

This is going to annoy me, isn't it.

BAGDIKIAN

Have you seen Sheehan around?

BRADLEE

Neil? Have we started letting the Times just take up office space here?

BAGDIKIAN

He hasn't been at the briefings in a while.

BRADLEE

What's a while?

BAGDIKIAN

Weeks.

BRADLEE

(surprised)

Weeks?

BAGDIKIAN

Yea.

BRADLEE

No, I haven't seen him.

BAGDIKIAN

OK.

Bagdikian walks off abruptly, as he customarily does. Something about this sticks in Bradlee's craw.

BRADLEE

(annoyed)

Get someone to find out what Sheehan's been up to.

Cynthia nods. He heads off down the hallway.

INT. GENE'S OFFICE, WASHINGTON POST - MOMENTS LATER

GENE PATTERSON (late 40s, thinning hairline) reads over some pages. There's a knock on the door, Bradlee stands there. Gene sighs and sits back in his chair. Bradlee enters.

BRADLEE

Did you do it so she'd say tit?

GENE

Just an added bonus.

Beat.

BRADLEE

I can't say that I'm all that disappointed.

GENE

Nothing but honest.

BRADLEE

It's not like either of us get anything out of the other being miserable.

GENE

You're right on that.

BRADLEE

Are you miserable?

GENE

It's been... difficult.

BRADLEE
I'm the "it" in that sentence?

GENE
Yes.

Bradlee thinks about that and nods.

BRADLEE
Mrs. Graham said you'll be staying
on for a couple of months.

GENE
She asked me to.

BRADLEE
If you don't want to, I'll -

GENE
No, I'd like to see things get
sorted properly.

Bradlee nods and extends his hand across the desk.

BRADLEE
A shame it didn't work out - I hope
you know I respect you.

Gene rises and accepts the handshake.

GENE
I didn't, so thank you.

INT. BOARDROOM, WASHINGTON POST - SAME TIME

TEN MEN sit around a large oval table. At the head is
FREDERICK "FRITZ" BEEBE (late 60s, Chairman of the Board,
proper and kind) with PAUL IGNATIUS (50s, President of the
Washington Post, Co., stuck up) to his right.

On his left is Kay - she's tense in this setting. Her hands
rest properly on a bound document in front of her. It reads
"THE WASHINGTON POST COMPANY INITIAL IPO PROSPECTUS".

FRITZ
As you can see, our underwriters
have proposed an IPO for a little
over 1.35 Million shares of Class B
stock. All of the Class A stock
will stay within the Meyer-Graham
family and they will continue to
have the majority vote and right to
elect 70 percent of the directors.
(MORE)

FRITZ (CONT'D)
Class B stockholders will elect the remainder.

There are some murmurs of acknowledgment, a few nods.

IGNATIUS
Well, I think that's where my problem is, Fritz.

Fritz sighs, he and Ignatius clearly aren't compatible. Kay's face tightens.

FRITZ
How so?

IGNATIUS
The *majority* vote to elect the *majority* of directors? That feels... one sided to say the least.

FRITZ
Do you have another suggestion?

IGNATIUS
I just think that perhaps there should be more of a balance. As President, it seems like my voice should be heard, no?

The tenor of the room becomes tense, Ignatius keeps a watchful eye on Kay. MARVIN (60s), a boardmember.

MARVIN
I see where he's coming from, Fritz. We were elected to the board in order -

FRITZ
You were elected by the Graham family.

MARVIN
Well. I -

Marvin shifts in his seat, uncomfortable, eyeing Kay.

KAY
It's alright, Marvin. Go on.

MARVIN
Respectfully, Mrs. Graham, I was elected to this seat by your father.

(MORE)

MARVIN (CONT'D)
And - I - well, I feel a
responsibility to keep the company
going in the direction he had hoped
for.

KAY
And you feel that I'm not doing
that?

BOARDMEMBER #2
It's not that necessarily -

Kay is surprised by the second opinion.

BOARDMEMBER #2 (CONT'D)
It's just. Well. Your appointment
happened by... unfortunate
circumstances. Because of your
husband's, well, because of Phil's
accident. And there's a standard
that The Post - there's a standard
we're used to meeting.

Kay purses her lips. Ignatius clears his throat -

IGNATIUS
It's about the numbers, Mrs.
Graham. The revenue from the Post
is down by 1% so far this quarter.

FRITZ
It's only June.

IGNATIUS
And there have been quite a lot of
attacks against the President.

KAY
Not just by us.

MARVIN
I understand the President even
cancelled his subscription to the
Post.

FRITZ
That was years ago.

IGNATIUS
(exasperated)
You called him Caligula for
Christ's sake.

KAY

I did?

IGNATIUS

Your editor.

KAY

That's not me.

IGNATIUS

Maybe that's the problem.

KAY

(indignant)

That I'm not the editor?

IGNATIUS

That you don't have control of him.

KAY

(heated)

What does this have to do with our stock offer?

IGNATIUS

It's more so with the suggested reorganization -

KAY

This company has been owned and operated by my family for 40 years.

IGNATIUS

Perhaps that's what needs to change.

Kay is stunned, as are a number of people in the room. Ignatius keeps his eyes on hers.

INT. KAY'S OFFICE, WASHINGTON POST - A LITTLE LATER

Kay slams the proposal onto her desk, furious. Her office is tasteful, mid-century modern with personal touches throughout: photos of her children, etc. Fritz walks in and closes the door behind him.

KAY

Phil always hated them.

FRITZ

That was a long list.

KAY

You seem very relaxed about all of this.

FRITZ

I don't know if relaxed is the term I'd use but, yes, I think you're preoccupied with the negative.

KAY

Is there something I'm missing?

FRITZ

(calm)

The IPO has been approved. With your shares, the estate's shares... it's a good day.

KAY

I hate money.

FRITZ

That's because you've always had it.

She gives him a sharp look, but he's not wrong.

FRITZ (CONT'D)

This is what the paper needs to keep going. You know that.

She nods. Her face softens, the mask of confidence beginning to drip away. A moment passes.

KAY

None of them came to my defense.

FRITZ

That's not their style.

Beat.

KAY

Do you think I'm letting them run wild?

FRITZ

Downstairs?

She nods, he shrugs.

FRITZ (CONT'D)

I never got involved in Post business. Phil hated it.

KAY

It just seemed... easier for him.
He could talk to them.

FRITZ

Well, Phil... He loved having the
ink stains and all that. Fighting
it out. Your father... Eugene liked
to be a part but not a player.

KAY

Which worked best?

FRITZ

There were issues with both - the
public thought Phil was too
involved. Even you've said that.
Maybe your father not enough. But
both of them understood the
difficulties of the post. You have
to be able to command the board and
the bullpen.

(laughing)

And neither had to fend with Ben
Bradlee in charge.

KAY

I thought they would respond to
him.

FRITZ

Who?

KAY

The staff. The public.

FRITZ

I think they do. Do you?

She's not sure. Kay's secretary, LIZ HYLTON (30s), enters.
Fritz rises to leave.

LIZ

Excuse me.

FRITZ

Did they really call Nixon
Caligula?

Kay nods. He shakes his head, waving as he leaves.

LIZ
Your daughter called and said
she'll meet you at the symphony
tonight.

KAY
Thank you, Liz.

LIZ
And Mr. McNamara called.

Kay gives her a look.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM, WASHINGTON POST - SAME TIME

It's a very different looking room than where the Board meets. Bradlee is alone and sits with his feet up on the table, reading through some reports. HOWARD SIMONS (early 40s, stubborn, Bradlee's right-hand man) comes in.

BRADLEE
Are these meetings attendance
optional now?

HOWARD
They're scrambling.

Howard sits next to Bradlee, eyeing him. After a moment.

HOWARD (CONT'D)
How'd that go?

BRADLEE
What?

HOWARD
With Gene.

BRADLEE
It's Friday, Howard, let's wait
until the blood dries before
getting into it.

HOWARD
You're going to talk to me though
right?

BRADLEE
I'm not sure, if no one else shows
up in the next five minutes you all
might be fired anyway.

HOWARD

Phil's going to come in here and
tell you we don't have anyone
covering Tricia Nixon's wedding.

BRADLEE

My heart breaks - which Phil?

HOWARD

Geyelin. How many Phils we got?

BRADLEE

Why don't we have anyone covering
the wedding?

HOWARD

The White House won't let us.

Bradlee stares at him.

BRADLEE

I'm sorry?

HOWARD

Ziegler called and said Haldeman
and Nixon didn't appreciate the
coverage from the last event so
they're revoking our press
privileges for this one.

BRADLEE

Who was supposed to be there?

HOWARD

Judy.

BRADLEE

Devastated, I'm sure.

HOWARD

She's been calling for Ziegler all
day but he won't return.

BRADLEE

It's only 11 am.

HOWARD

So?

BRADLEE

So when'd she start calling?

HOWARD

You know what I mean.

BRADLEE

I do and I can't believe that the most important conversation I'm having with my associate editor is whether Nixon's daughter's wedding is going to make the paper this weekend.

HOWARD

What do you want -

BRADLEE

I want coverage of the goddamn wedding!

Beat.

HOWARD

How was breakfast?

Through the glass Bradlee can see Meg, Bagdikian, and a few other EDITORS approaching.

BRADLEE

Later.

Howard nods.

BRADLEE (CONT'D)

Well - thank you all for joining us.

MEG

Sorry, Ben.

BAGDIKIAN

Sorry.

Gene enters with PHIL GEYELIN (40s, balding) and TWO OTHER EDITORS, he closes the door behind them. They all sit.

GEYELIN

Ben, we've got a problem with Tricia -

BRADLEE

Someone talk to me about anything else first. Meg.

GEYELIN

Ben -

MEG

The Grand Jury is issuing more subpoenas on the Capitol bombing.

HOWARD

Who are they subpoenaing?

MEG

(checking notes)

A couple - white collar, middle America.

BRADLEE

OK. Bags, anything from Paris?

BAGDIKIAN

North Vietnamese said they want the US to stop sending aid. The US said no.

HOWARD

So you'd categorize that as a productive conversation.

BAGDIKIAN

(sarcastic)

Oh yes, absolutely.

EDITOR #1

(reading notes)

The FBI cleared it's own funds in congress yesterday.

MEG

Are they allowed to do that?

GENE

They're the FBI.

BRADLEE

(to Geyelin)

See if you can get some other papers to share their notes and we'll get our story from that.

EDITOR #1

(confused)

About the FBI?

BRADLEE

No. Why, you think the FBI wants to know what Tricia Nixon's wearing at her wedding?

EDITOR #1

No -

HOWARD
(sotto)
Hoover does.

GEYELIN
I think he means me.

HOWARD
I think we should ignore it.

GENE
What?

HOWARD
The wedding. They're ignoring us,
we might as well ignore them.

GENE
I don't know if poking the bear is
the best move right now.

MEG
Would we call Nixon a bear?

BAGDIKIAN
He's more like a little... eh...
what do you call them...

He scrunches his nose and puts his hands to his face.

GEYELIN
A weasel?

Bagdikian snaps his fingers and points -

MEG
Didn't Herblock make him up like
that?

HOWARD
What're you thinking, Ben?

BRADLEE
I'm thinking the reason The Times
has a one up on us is because they
don't fuck around calling Nixon a
weasel.

Everyone quiets down. Cynthia walks in and hands Bradlee a
note, he reads.

GEYELIN

I heard some Times boys going around talking about printing something that would "end the war."

MEG

There were one too many pronouns in that sentence for me to care.

HOWARD

They say that every other week.

BAGDIKIAN

This about Sheehan?

GENE

What about him?

BAGDIKIAN

Nobody's seen him in the press room in awhile.

MEG

That doesn't mean anything, that could just be Neil being Neil.

GEYELIN

You OK, Ben?

BRADLEE

(reading)

Mrs. Graham wanted me to know that she just received a call from the former Secretary of Defense letting her know that The Times will be publishing something "damning" about him this Sunday.

GENE

What?

Bradlee shows Gene the slip.

MEG

(hushed to Bagdikian)

How's she know McNamara?

BAGDIKIAN

(hushed)

She and Phil Graham used to be friends with him and his wife before Phil -

He puts his hand to his temple as if he's holding a gun and pulls the trigger. Meg makes a face.

GEYELIN

It's gotta be about Vietnam.

GENE

Maybe about them pulling out?

HOWARD

That doesn't feel like a scoop.

(to Bagdikian)

Could it be that report?

BRADLEE

What report?

Bagdikian rolls his eyes -

BAGDIKIAN

There was a rumor a couple years back that some guys were hired by the White House to do a study on Vietnam.

GEYELIN

What kind of study?

HOWARD

We couldn't even confirm that the thing existed.

BRADLEE

(to Bagdikian)

You talk to Rand?

BAGDIKIAN

A couple times. Nothing there.

BRADLEE

(tired)

Make some calls and see if this "study" has anything to do with -

BAGDIKIAN

It doesn't exist, Ben -

BRADLEE

Just do it! I'm tired of being ten minutes late to the party! When we meet back in a couple of hours let's fill in all those "someones" and "somethings" with a few more fucking details.

He leaves, Gene and Howard exchange a glance.

INT. HALLWAY, WASHINGTON POST - MOMENTS LATER

Bradlee walks toward his office and sees MICHAEL (20s, clean-cut) waiting outside. He doesn't stop walking.

BRADLEE
You the runner?

MICHAEL
Yes. Yes, sir. Michael.

BRADLEE
In. Let's go.

INT. BRADLEE'S OFFICE, WASHINGTON POST - CONTINUOUS

Michael follows behind him, he hastily tucks his shirt into his pants. Bradlee gives him a look -

BRADLEE
What're you - you tuck your shirt
in while walking into the office?

MICHAEL
I -

BRADLEE
You looked into Sheehan?

MICHAEL
Yes, sir.

He hands Bradlee a slip of paper. Bradlee looks at it.

BRADLEE
What's this.

MICHAEL
Um, that's all Mr. Sheehan has
written sir. In the last three
months.

BRADLEE
Are you sure?

Michael nods. Bradlee stares at the boy, lost in thought. Michael shifts in his shoes, uncomfortable.

BRADLEE (CONT'D)
One article in three months.

MICHAEL
Is that... bad?

BRADLEE
(sighing)
It's not good.

INT. AUDITORIUM, CONSTITUTION HALL - NIGHT

Beethoven's "Symphony No. 4" is played by the NATIONAL SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA. In a box, Kay watches in her finest next to her daughter, LALLY (30s). The D.C. elite are packed in by the thousand; tuxes and studious looks on.

While Kay watches the players, others sneak a glance at her: the daughter; matriarch; widow; publisher. The attention doesn't phase Kay - she's had it all her life. She looks up at the Presidential Box. It's empty.

The Symphony finishes, the quiet settles and the crowd lifts into a roaring applause. Kay snaps out of her stare and politely claps as the Symphony takes a bow.

INT. O'BYRNE GALLERY, CONSTITUTION HALL - LATER

Champagne glasses clink, the CONDUCTOR smiles for the cameras as he is celebrated by a few PARTYGOERS. He laughs, enjoying the praise. He is being watched from outside by -

EXT. PORTICO, CONSTITUTION HALL - CONTINUOUS

Kay. She holds an untouched glass of champagne, encircled by a group of people. As if they're both protecting her and trapping her from getting away. She can't tear her eyes from the conductor. His seeming joie de vivre.

ALSOP (O.S.)
Kay?

She snaps out of it and looks to her friend, JOE ALSOP (60s, journalist, effeminate), who stares at her.

KAY
Yes?

ALSOP
(light)
Now it's not just my wife, but my
closest friends who ignore me.

The friends around them laugh, Kay quickly pulls her face back on. With them are ARCHIE, PAUL, Lally. Lally is sociable but doesn't possess her mother's innate ability to make everyone she's speaking to feel important.

KAY

(teasing)

Joe - I could never. I was just so intoxicated by your story I lost myself for a moment.

ALSOP

This woman - always with the witty save in her back pocket.

KAY

I keep mine in my purse.

Laughs abound from the group, they're smitten by her.

ALSOP

I was just saying how sad it will be to not have the Symphony perform here anymore.

LALLY

Have you seen the new pavilion?

ALSOP

Only in passing. It'll have quite the view.

KAY

This one isn't terrible.

PAUL

Have you heard what they're calling it?

ALSOP

(nodding)

Nixon can't be happy.

LALLY

Is he ever?

ALSOP

(chuckling)

Touché.

KAY

I was thinking about him tonight.

They turn to her, she surprised even herself by saying that out loud.

PAUL

Nixon?

KAY

No. Kennedy. Phil and I - we - used to see him in that box often. I was just thinking of how empty it's been since he's been gone.

ALSOP

(sotto)

Not a lot of love for the arts with this White House.

ARCHIE

I don't know if that's true.

LALLY

I do.

ALSOP

(to Lally)

Oh, we miss your feistiness around here! Kay, tell your daughter she must move back here immediately.

Kay smiles and forces a laugh - she's not going to say that. It's too personal. Lally knows this, she covers.

LALLY

But if I come back more often the luster will be lost and you'll realize I'm only my best in short stints of time.

ALSOP

That's what they say about me!

The group laughs, Kay looks back to the conductor but, to her disappointment, he's moved on.

EXT. WARSH HOUSE, GEORGETOWN - SAME TIME

In a very different part of town, Bradlee rings the doorbell of a simple home with music coming from within. Standing next to him is his wife, TONY (40s, beautiful but tired). His suit is rumpled. It's tense.

TONY

What's this for?

BRADLEE
(distracted)
Hm?

TONY
This party -

BRADLEE
It's for Warsh.

TONY
I assumed - but what for?

BRADLEE
I don't know - he got an award or something.

TONY
You don't know?

BRADLEE
I forgot.

TONY
You forgot.

BRADLEE
(exasperated)
Tony, it's been a long day.

He goes to ring the bell again -

TONY
Don't. They heard it.

He stops. Annoyed.

TONY (CONT'D)
Marina got a B on her History exam.

BRADLEE
(absentmindedly)
That's great.

TONY
She was hoping to show you tonight.

They've had this fight before.

BRADLEE
I promised Warsh we'd be here.

TONY
For a reason you're not sure of.

BRADLEE

I know the reason I just -

TONY

Forgot.

BRADLEE

Can we just get through this and
save the banter for home? You know
I can't sleep without the ringing
in my ears.

The door opens and CHARLOTTE MARCH (40s) answers.

CHARLOTTE

(grinning)

If it isn't my favorite duo.

Bradlee forces a smile, as does Tony.

INT. LOUNGE, WARSH HOUSE - NIGHT

The room is filled with around 20 PEOPLE milling about.
Bradlee heads to a corner where a BARTENDER is making drinks
and Howard is drinking them.

BRADLEE

You save some for me?

HOWARD

Never.

(to bartender)

Two.

(to Bradlee)

You stag?

Bradlee gestures towards Tony speaking to another wife. She
couldn't be less interested.

BRADLEE

She was in a good mood. Once.

Howard laughs, Bradlee gets his drink then sees something at
the door.

BRADLEE (CONT'D)

Nixon Cheer Squad has arrived.

Howard looks as KEN (40s, lanky and balding) enters with his
wife. Bradlee watches, unreadable.

HOWARD

Who's that?

BRADLEE

Lawyer. Works for the party. Had lunch with him a couple weeks back. Spent the entire time talking about Nixon's new "drug war".

HOWARD

When'd guys like that start keeping the secrets?

BRADLEE

It's always guys like that. Some of them just dress better than others.

EXT. PORTICO, CONSTITUTION HALL - LATER

Kay's thoughts are elsewhere but she plays the part.

LALLY

But they haven't invited any women.

ARCHIE

So the women have decided to boycott?

KAY

That seems extreme.

LALLY

Does it?

Kay glances at her contradictory daughter.

PAUL

What's that?

ARCHIE

The Gridiron's White Tie.

ALSOP

What's so wrong with inviting the women in?

KAY

Darling, they're terrified we'll spill all of your secrets.

Archie and Paul laugh.

LALLY

If they invited you - you would go, wouldn't you?

Kay is taken aback by the question.

KAY

(icy)

I'm not sure I'd look very good in
a tuxedo.

Charming, but cutting. Lally is disappointed by the answer.

ALSOP

Let's try it at least!

PAUL

What would your father say?

Kay's eyes shoot to Paul, the tension is immediate.

KAY

Excuse me?

PAUL

Your father - what would he say if
women were allowed?

Kay watches him for a moment, her stare impenetrable.

KAY

I certainly didn't speak for him
when he was alive so I don't see a
point in breaking the habit now
that he's dead.

Paul realizes his misstep, Kay won't let him back down.
Luckily -

SCOTTY (O.S.)

Kay?

Kay turns to see SCOTTY RESTON (60s, white-templed) standing
there, a warm smile on his face. The tension broken, Paul
heaves a deep sigh of relief.

KAY

Scotty.

He kisses her on the cheek. Lally gives him a hug, clearly
they all know each other.

KAY (CONT'D)

Joe, you know Scotty Reston.

ALSOP

Of course.

They shake hands.

ARCHIE
Isn't this crossing enemy lines?
The Times and Post on the same
terrain?

ALSOP
Ignore my friends - they live for
drama.

SCOTTY
Don't we all.
(to Kay)
Can I borrow you for a moment?

KAY
Of course.

He takes her elbow and gently leads her away from the party.

KAY (CONT'D)
Are you alright? Is Sally?

SCOTTY
Yes, yes - nothing like that.

He shoves his hands in his pockets. Clearly nervous.

SCOTTY (CONT'D)
I wasn't sure if I - I think I
should've told you earlier but,
well, I hope you understand why I
didn't. I wasn't sure we were going
to print until this morning. The
lawyers -

KAY
Does this have something to do with
the call I got from Bob?

SCOTTY
(stunned)
McNamara? What'd he say?

INT. WARSH HOUSE, GEORGETOWN - SAME TIME

Howard and Bradlee accept another round from the bartender.
Bradlee looks at his drink, spinning it absentmindedly.

HOWARD
Everything OK with you? You were
pretty on today.

BRADLEE

You looking for my confession?

HOWARD

Not drinking enough for that.

Bradlee lights a cigarette. A moment passes.

BRADLEE

I'm just tired of losing. And I'm even more tired of weighing everything on whether we lost or not. There used to be a reason for all of this.

HOWARD

There is. We tell people the truth about things they don't want to hear.

BRADLEE

Like every detail of Tricia Nixon's wedding? C'mon.

HOWARD

If you think that then what's the point?

BRADLEE

Because I used to be good at getting a story. Fighting for it. Now I'm just... management.

Howard watches him, not knowing what to say.

BRADLEE (CONT'D)

You know Meyer passed her over for the job once before?

Howard gives Bradlee a look.

BRADLEE (CONT'D)

Instead of leaving her the paper - he left it to Phil. Her husband.

HOWARD

(whistling)

Well that tells you something.

BRADLEE

It does. I'm just not sure if it says more about him or her.

HOWARD

(quiet)

It says that if you want a good party, you call Kay Graham. A paper run? There's a whole list of names that come first.

Charlotte Warsh approaches them.

BRADLEE

Yea, well, we went through those - they keep dying on us.

Charlotte taps Bradlee on the shoulder.

CHARLOTTE

(hushed)

Mrs. Graham is on the phone for you.

BRADLEE

You're joking.

HOWARD

Speak of the devil and she will -

Bradlee shoots Howard a look.

INT. KITCHEN, WARSH HOUSE - A MOMENT LATER

Bradlee picks up the phone. A shopping list is taped to it.

BRADLEE

(skeptical)

This is Bradlee.

His expression changes upon realizing that it's actually Kay. Then turns to anger when he hears what she has to say.

INT. LOBBY, CONSTITUTION HALL - A LITTLE LATER

Kay hangs up the payphone in the empty lobby - the sounds of the party wafting in from outside. She stands there for a moment, processing. Then straightens her posture, puts her face on, and heads back towards the music.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM, WASHINGTON POST - LATER

Meg, Bagdikian, and Geyelin sit at the table. It's the middle of the night and they've all been dragged out of bed.

GEYELIN

You know what this is about?

MEG

Yea, he asked me here at 2am then
revealed all his hopes and dreams.

GEYELIN

(quiet)

Just asking.

Bagdikian chuckles. Through the glass they see the elevator doors open and Bradlee storm out. Howard is on his heels. Bradlee reaches the conference room where a few nearly empty coffee cups sit on a nearby table. Bradlee slaps them and sends them flying into the wall. The trio jumps.

BAGDIKIAN

Ben! What the -

BRADLEE

I'm getting really goddamn tired of
finding out we're being scooped by
the goddamn publisher!

Everyone is silenced. In the background, Gene steps of the elevator and sees what is happening. Bradlee pulls out the shopping list -

BRADLEE (CONT'D)

According to Scotty Reston of the
New York Times, they have over
"7000 documents detailing how the
White House has lied about the
Vietnam War for the past 30 years."

Geyelin sits back in his seat, Gene approaches. The night shift in the office gathers to see the show.

BRADLEE (CONT'D)

Sheehan's first article comes out
Sunday, then they'll be doing a
series about the documents every
day. They're going after the White
House with *proof* that there were
ulterior motives from the beginning
for sending our guys there. Proof
that they lied, that they hid it
from the public *and* that they
documented the whole thing.

He lets this all settle in.

BRADLEE (CONT'D)

They've been going over the material for three months. *Three months*. And I had to find out from -

GEYELIN

How'd -

Meg goes to shush him but it's too late -

BRADLEE

It doesn't matter how she found out! She did it before any of you!

GENE

(quietly)

Ben.

BRADLEE

You've got twenty-four hours before the story hits and I'd like to have a little more goddman warning of what it's going to say than what I already have!

GENE

(a little forceful)

Ben.

BRADLEE

What!

After a moment, Bradlee takes a breath. He looks back at the table - the editors look like puppies kicked when they're down. Bradlee throws the shopping list on the table and storms out.

INT. PHIL'S OFFICE, GRAHAM HOUSE - NIGHT

The lights come on, Kay, in her robe, stands in the doorway. It's not dusty, but feels oddly untouched. She steps in, standing across from the large wooden desk. On a bookshelf rests a number of framed photos, Phil Graham (handsome, lanky) featured in most of them. One shows he and Kay on their wedding day - youthful, optimistic, but with Kay still carrying a weight on her shoulders. Later photos show him with LBJ, Kennedy, their children, her father, Bradlee. She lingers for a moment. Considering.

INT. KITCHEN, GRAHAM HOUSE - NIGHT

Lally sits at the table, reading the article from earlier.
Kay steps in, Lally looks up.

KAY
Can't sleep?

Lally shakes her head. Kay sees what she is reading and
frowns, moving to the stove.

KAY (CONT'D)
Tea?

LALLY
OK.

A moment passes. Kay fills the teapot.

KAY
What time is Yann dropping
Katharine off tomorrow?

LALLY
He said 10.

KAY
And he won't stay?

LALLY
(warning)
Mom.

Kay offers a thin smile and nods, backing off. She sits while
the water boils.

KAY
(re: the magazine)
I thought I'd thrown that out.

No she didn't.

LALLY
It's a... it's a good article.

The page is open to a photograph of Kay laughing with Truman
Capote at the Black & White Ball. A different version of her
than the one in the boardroom - glamorous, in her element.

LALLY (CONT'D)
(gentle)
I just wish that maybe you'd...
take, I don't know, a little more
pride in -

KAY
Pride? I can -

LALLY
That's not the right word. You just
- you come across like - I don't
know. You're in one of the most
powerful positions in the country,
Mom. And it just seems like... you
don't want it. There's a lot of
people who look up to you.

KAY
I think that's a bit dramatic.

The teapot sings, ending the conversation. Kay pours them
tea. Lally moves on.

LALLY
So what will happen now?

Kay gives her a look.

LALLY (CONT'D)
With The Times. With what they're
printing.

KAY
I'm not sure. It's in Mr. Bradlee's
hands at the moment.

LALLY
But aren't you curious?

KAY
Of course but it's not my place to
interfere.

LALLY
Didn't you get them the story?

KAY
You don't understand how it works.

Lally goes to speak but realizes it's a moot point.

KAY (CONT'D)
Your father always seemed to have
the right answer.
(beat)
At the meeting today. Paul and
Marvin, well, they feel that the
Board and the trust should share
the same voting power.

Lally is taken aback.

LALLY

That's crazy. It's never -

KAY

It will be fine. I spoke with Fritz and he's going to take care of it. I was just... I was surprised. That's all.

LALLY

(treading carefully)

Did they ever... suggest anything like this when Dad was in charge?

KAY

No. No. Absolutely not. Phil would've never stood for it.

LALLY

So... why are you?

Kay stares at her a beat.

LALLY (CONT'D)

I mean... I know Dad had a different relationship with them -

KAY

Yes, of course -

LALLY

Why wouldn't you just tell them it's not going to happen?

KAY

That just wouldn't be appropriate.

Lally sighs, exasperated.

INT. BRADLEE'S OFFICE, WASHINGTON POST - MORNING

Bradlee sits on the phone, same clothes as the night before. Howard across from him. Gene walks in.

GENE

Anything?

HOWARD

Nope. He's on the phone with a kid from our New York office. Sent them to the hotel.

BRADLEE
(into phone)
What do you mean you ran away?

GENE
Hotel?

HOWARD
The Times has the 11th floor of the
Hilton.

BRADLEE
(into phone)
Yes. I understand.

GENE
I'm sorry?

Bradlee hangs up.

BRADLEE
The New York Times is squatting on
the 11th floor of the Hilton with
two guards standing watch outside
the door.

HOWARD
What happened?

BRADLEE
Our guys got so spooked they
pretended to be lost and ran in the
opposite direction.

HOWARD
What do you mean ran?

BRADLEE
I mean when you go from one point
to the other and you don't walk.

HOWARD
What else did they say?

BRADLEE
Not a whole lot. We heard anything
from the White House?

GENE
They've been busy all weekend.

Bradlee gives him a look.

HOWARD
The wedding.

BRADLEE
That fucking wedding.

GENE
All they're saying is the documents
didn't come from them.

HOWARD
Which we know is bullshit because
the only thing that would make this
story stick would be documents from
the inside.

Bradlee checks his watch.

BRADLEE
So it's 9am and we've got guards
outside a hotel room, the White
House denying any knowledge of
documents that were most likely
created *inside* the White House
and...

HOWARD
And McNamara's call.

Bradlee stares at him.

BRADLEE
Hm?

HOWARD
The call. From McNamara.

This sticks with Bradlee. Bagdikian walks in.

BRADLEE
You got something?

BAGDIKIAN
(shaking his head)
They're not budging. I'm trying to
get a hold of a guy I used to know
when I was there. Left a couple
months ago and I can't seem to find
him. Ellsberg. Dan.

GENE
He's kind of a quack isn't he?

HOWARD

I remember him - he was down here
for awhile working on something.
Doved real quick.

BRADLEE

(absentmindedly)

If the leak didn't come from the
White House, why is McNamara
calling us?

Bradlee stands, moving towards the door.

BRADLEE (CONT'D)

Bags - find Ellsberg.

HOWARD

Where're you going?

BRADLEE

To talk to Mrs. Graham, because she
seems to be the only one who can
get any answers.

GENE

She's not here.

BRADLEE

Why not?

GENE

It's the weekend.

BRADLEE

Where is she?

GENE

I don't know. Home?

Bradlee walks out. Howard sighs -

HOWARD

That's going to go well.

EXT. BACKYARD, GRAHAM HOUSE - A LITTLE LATER

Kay sits in an Adirondack chair next to Lally, going over
some documents. Her expression one of concern. The grass is
getting long and unkempt, rising well above the ankles.

Playing a few yards away is KATHARINE (5, tow-headed), Kay's
granddaughter. She runs her hands through the grass, which is
now itching Kay. The doorbell rings, Kay's brow furrows.

LALLY
Were you expecting someone?

KAY
No.

LALLY
I'll go check.

Lally leaves. Kay looks back to Katharine and watches her play in the yard. A look of concern begins to cloud Kay's face as Katharine begins to twirl in the grass.

KAY
Katharine, slow down.

Katharine giggles and starts spinning faster, her feet pounding the ground and her arms out beside her.

KAY (CONT'D)
Katherine, I said stop!

Katharine doesn't hear her, she throws her arms above her head and, in one violent leap, loses her balance and crumbles to the ground, hidden in the tall grass. Kay is up in an instant, rushing to her granddaughter.

KAY (CONT'D)
Katharine! Lally! Lally!

Kay approaches, fearful of what she'll find where Katharine was once in action. She finds Katharine on her back, gazing at the sky, a look of fascination on her face. Her arms move as if she's making a "grass" angel. In the background, Lally runs toward them.

KAY (CONT'D)
(panicked)
Are you alright?

KATHARINE
Look.

KAY
You scared me! I asked you to -

KATHARINE
(pointing)
Look! It's red!

Kay looks up to the sky and sees the rising moon is a deep red. Kay seems to get momentarily lost in the sight of it.

KATHARINE (CONT'D)
Isn't it pretty?

Kay looks from the sky to her granddaughter and back again, surprised at the natural wonder of the child. She's unaccustomed to such unhindered joy and curiosity - something she's always kept at bay.

KAY
(quiet)
It's beautiful.

LALLY
(confused)
What? What is it?

Kay snaps out of the daze.

KAY
Oh. It was nothing.

LALLY
Nothing?

KAY
Yes. I'm sorry, I -

She looks to the back door and sees Bradlee standing there.

LALLY
He said he needs to ask you something.

INT. KITCHEN, GRAHAM HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Kay hands Bradlee some water. They can see Lally and Katharine playing out the window.

KAY
This is very inappropriate.

BRADLEE
Well, I'm here. So... Is that your granddaughter?

KAY
Yes. What did you want to ask me?

No small talk is fine with him.

BRADLEE
Do you have any idea why McNamara called you?

KAY
He's an old friend.

BRADLEE
Yes.

KAY
He trusts me.

BRADLEE
Yes.

He waits for more, she doesn't give it.

KAY
Maybe I don't understand the question.

BRADLEE
We're still piecing together what it is exactly that The Times is printing. We're not going to get their source in time -

KAY
Why not?

He's a bit taken aback.

BRADLEE
Because finding a source is like finding a -

KAY
I don't need a metaphor, Mr. Bradlee.

He steams.

BRADLEE
Well it's extraordinarily difficult, Mrs. Graham. I haven't been a writer in a while so the haystack comparison is really the only one I can come up with right now.

KAY
Alright.

BRADLEE
But if you could get McNamara to talk to us, well, that would be helpful and -

KAY
(confused)
Talk to you? About what?

BRADLEE
About whatever it is that The Times
is printing.

KAY
What makes you -

BRADLEE
(exasperated)
Mrs. Graham, the former Secretary
of Defense called you because he
knows what's in that article. He
knows what's in those documents.
Which means he either wrote them or
organized them or found them. I
honestly don't care which one
because he's one of two people we
know of who can tell me about it
and the only one whose name I have.

She purses her lips.

KAY
Well, I'm sorry, Mr. Bradlee but
you'll have to find another way.

BRADLEE
(stunned)
Excuse me?

KAY
Bob McNamara is an old friend who
spoke to me in confidence. Not as a
source. Not as a subject.

BRADLEE
He spoke to you because you're the
publisher of a newspaper and he was
hoping you'd bail him out.

KAY
I -

BRADLEE
(heated)
He spoke to you because he was
hoping to get you on his side and
banking on the fact that I wouldn't
notice.

KAY
Mr. Bradlee.

BRADLEE
I don't know if I can articulate
just how important it is that we
get -

KAY
You have, but my answer is no. I
will not exploit a friendship of
over twenty years for -

BRADLEE
Unfortunately that's the position
that you're in. We exploit
friendships and acquaintances and
sources to find the information we
need because the end is better than
the means.

KAY
I'm not a journalist, Mr. Bradlee.
And I'm not going to change my
mind.

Bradlee grits his jaw, thinking for a moment.

BRADLEE
Are you trying to tell me I
shouldn't go after this story?

KAY
That's not what I -

BRADLEE
Because I'll just walk out of the
bullpen right now if that's how
it's going to be.

She's taken aback by his ferocity.

BRADLEE (CONT'D)
I need to know that you're going to
print these documents if we get
them.

A moment passes.

KAY
(firm)
I absolutely will not guarantee
that, Mr. Bradlee.
(MORE)

KAY (CONT'D)
I have no idea what is in them, who
it might expose, what relationships
it could damage if we -

BRADLEE
Relationships.

He shakes his head and rises.

BRADLEE (CONT'D)
When we fail, this will be on you.
Thank you for the water, I'll see
myself out.

He exits, leaving Kay stunned. She looks out the window and
sees Katharine twirling in the grass, smiling up at the sky.

EXT. VARIOUS, WASHINGTON, D.C. - NIGHT

The Lincoln Monument. The Capitol. The White House. A few
protesters linger around.

INT. BULLPEN, WASHINGTON POST - LATE NIGHT

Bagdikian's desk is empty. In the background, he waits for
the coffee to percolate. He hasn't slept or left the office
in over a day. There are other people, in other cubicles, who
have been doing the exact same thing. His phone rings. He
doesn't hear it at first. Finally, he runs over and grabs it -

BAGDIKIAN
Bagdikian.

His mood changes.

BAGDIKIAN (CONT'D)
Who is this?

He seems satisfied with the answer and grabs a pen, writing
as he nods his head.

BAGDIKIAN (CONT'D)
Sure, yes - I've got it.

He hangs up, grabs his jacket, and takes off.

EXT. BRADLEE HOUSE - DAWN

Bradlee stands on his front porch in his robe, watching as
TWO TRUCKS make their morning deliveries: one for The Times
and one for The Post.

He smokes a cigarette and waits for them to drive off. Then, he carefully walks across his neighbor's yard where a Times paper has been dropped off. Checking to make sure no one sees him, he grabs the paper and runs back to his porch. He opens to the front page and reads, "**PENTAGON STUDY TRACES 3 DECADES OF GROWING U.S. INVOLVEMENT**". He frowns.

INT. BOARDROOM, WASHINGTON POST - DAY

The same boardmembers sit at the table. Ignatius has a copy of the Times next to him. The tension is palpable. Fritz and Kay listen while Ignatius speaks.

IGNATIUS

I think it's clear, after the events of this weekend, that I was correct in suggesting we rethink the voting percentages.

FRITZ

How do you mean?

IGNATIUS

Excuse me?

FRITZ

What does this weekend have to do with that?

IGNATIUS

The failure of The Washington Post to properly investigate and report on a story that The New York Times has dedicated the better half of this year to.

FRITZ

Have you read The Times' article?

IGNATIUS

Of course.

FRITZ

So you'll agree, it's damning.

IGNATIUS

Damning?

FRITZ

To the White House.

IGNATIUS

Well, it's -

FRITZ

And this morning the White House
filed an injunction against the
Times. It was approved an hour ago.

MARVIN

What?

FRITZ

A restraining order. The Times is
prohibited from printing anymore of
the documents until there is a
hearing.

Kay smiles, letting Fritz fight for her.

FRITZ (CONT'D)

So I'm just confused - do you want
us to embarrass the White House or
stand with them?

Ignatius stutters.

INT. HALLWAY, WASHINGTON POST - A LITTLE LATER

Kay and Fritz approach her office.

FRITZ

That's not going to hold him back -
he'll figure out another way to
discredit you in front of the
Board.

KAY

Can he really take away my voting
rights?

FRITZ

(hesitating)

Technically no. But he can call a
vote to have you removed and that
will put into question the -

KAY

(stunned)

Removed?

FRITZ

I'm afraid so.

KAY

But -

FRITZ
Don't worry, if Phil wasn't booted
off, you have nothing to worry
about.

She nods her head - unsure. A moment passes.

FRITZ (CONT'D)
You read the article?

KAY
(solemn)
Of course.

FRITZ
(re: the papers)
Horrible. The audacity of - I wish
I was more surprised.

He expects her to respond in unison, but she doesn't.

FRITZ (CONT'D)
Do you think Bradlee will go after
the documents?

KAY
It seems that way.

FRITZ
We can't get pulled into some kind
of legal battle over this, Kay. Not
now. It could jeopardize -

KAY
(loaded)
I don't think it will come to that.

FRITZ
Let's hope not.

He moves off, she's more concerned now than ever. She
approaches Liz's desk, there is a stack of letters.

LIZ
(gentle)
More of the letters came in today.

Kay furrows her brow and sees a return address on one of the
envelopes reads: "**EQUAL PAY FOR WOMEN**". Kay extends her hand.

KAY
I'll take them.

LIZ
Are you sure? They're not -

KAY
Yes.

Liz hands her the pile and Kay heads into her office.

INT. BULLPEN, WASHINGTON POST - DAY

Bradlee and a few staffers watch a news broadcast on TV.

ANCHOR
(on TV)
Outrage continued today regarding
The New York Times' publishing of
what has been dubbed the "Pentagon
Papers". While marches have been
steadily occurring in Washington
since earlier this year, today saw
more pop up in both New York and
Boston...

Bradlee walks off, shaking his head in annoyance.

INT. BRADLEE'S OFFICE, WASHINGTON POST - MOMENTS LATER

Bradlee sits in his chair and looks down at a Post story in
front of him. He reads.

BRADLEE
"As reported by the New York
Times."

He sighs and throws a pen at the wall. Frustrated. Angry.
There are lots of other little dents in the wall from pens
that have been thrown there before. He stares out at the
bullpen, mulling over the next move. The elevator doors open
and Bagdikian speeds out. Bradlee watches him as he awkwardly
hurries into his office.

BRADLEE (CONT'D)
Bags, what the hell are you doing?

BAGDIKIAN
I need to go to Boston.

BRADLEE
Boston?

BAGDIKIAN
I gotta talk to a guy.

Bradlee smiles and closes his office door.

BRADLEE
You find Ellsberg?

BAGDIKIAN
He found me. Or, someone we know -
it's not important.

BRADLEE
Is he the Times' source? Does he
still have the documents?

BAGDIKIAN
I need to go to Boston.

BRADLEE
Alright.
(beat)
You're still standing here.

BAGDIKIAN
He's not going to give me the
documents unless I promise we'll
print them.

BRADLEE
We don't know what they say yet.

BAGDIKIAN
Still. I'll have to say something.

Bradlee thinks a moment.

BRADLEE
If what's in these documents is as
good as we think, you can tell him
that if we don't print, there'll be
a new executive editor at the
Washington Post.

BAGDIKIAN
(taken aback)
You sure?

BRADLEE
Go.

Bagdikian nods and leaves. After a moment -

BRADLEE (CONT'D)
(yelling)
Howard! Meg! Get in here!

INT. TAXI, BOSTON - DUSK

Bagdikian rubs his eyes, the Boston skyline looming ahead, roads nearly empty. They pause at a stop sign by the river. The TAXI DRIVER points at a deserted intersection with a payphone.

TAXI DRIVER

You sure you want to go up there?

Bagdikian looks up at the street signs, they coincide with what he has written down.

EXT. INTERSECTION, BOSTON - MOMENTS LATER

Bagdikian grabs his bag and shuts the taxi door. He waits for the car to leave, then heads to the payphone. He dials.

BAGDIKIAN

(into receiver)

It's Bagdikian. Yes, I'm at the corner.

Whatever is said doesn't please Bagdikian.

BAGDIKIAN (CONT'D)

What the hell do you mean walk to -
I just let the cab go! Fine, fine.
I'll be there soon.

He slams the phone down on the receiver. Then one more time to do it right. He starts to walk down the path of the river.

EXT. CONVENIENCE STORE, BOSTON - A LITTLE LATER

Bagdikian stands at another payphone, getting more instructions. He hangs up and turns in yet another direction.

EXT. MOTEL, OUTSIDE OF BOSTON - NIGHT

It's dark now. A taxi pulls up outside a run down, out-of-the-way motel. Bagdikian climbs out and looks around. He goes to one of the rooms and knocks. The curtains move to the side but he can't make anyone out. The door opens and DANIEL ELLSBERG (40s, big eyebrows) stands there, an apologetic smile on his face.

ELLSBERG

Ben.

BAGDIKIAN
(a sigh of relief)
Dan.

ELLSBERG
Come in.

Bagdikian does. Ellsberg looks around a moment before shutting the door behind him.

INT. BRADLEE'S OFFICE, WASHINGTON POST - NIGHT

Bradlee sits at his desk reading. His hand toys with his unkempt hair while he notes a few things. There is a knock on the door. He looks up, surprised to see Kay standing there. His mood is icy.

BRADLEE
Mrs. Graham?

KAY
My secretary gave me your note.

She holds a slip in her hand.

BRADLEE
You didn't need to come down. I
just wanted to let you know where
we stood.

She nods her head once, considering.

KAY
May I come in?

He gestures to the chair in front of him. She sits and takes in the sight of the office - she hasn't been in here since he took the job. He knows this.

KAY (CONT'D)
Mr. Bagdikian is on his way to
Boston?

BRADLEE
Should be there by now.

KAY
Who is he meeting with?

Beat.

BRADLEE
I'm not going to tell you that.

She nods - understanding the protection of a source.

KAY
You think he'll be able to retrieve
the documents?

BRADLEE
(loaded)
I hope so.

KAY
That's quite a coup.

BRADLEE
We've got good reporters.

She purses her lips.

KAY
You're going to stay until you hear
from him?

BRADLEE
It'll be awhile.

KAY
Your wife doesn't mind you staying
so late?

BRADLEE
She minds. But here I am.

KAY
And your children?

He looks at his watch -

BRADLEE
Long asleep by now. Or should be.

KAY
Should be and will be are always
difficult with children.

BRADLEE
Truer a statement has never been
made.

She looks around, noting the minimal personal touches. Only a few photos: one of JFK and Bradlee laughing, Bradlee and Phil Graham, and one of Bradlee and a YOUNG MAN (20) in an Army uniform.

KAY
I haven't been in here since Russ
left.

Bradlee nods - he knows.

KAY (CONT'D)
Your son?

He follows her gaze to the photo behind him. He nods.

BRADLEE
From my first marriage.

KAY
Volunteered?

BRADLEE
Couldn't stop him.

KAY
Mine too.
(careful)
He's, well, he's home?

BRADLEE
Sort of. Peace Corps.

KAY
Mine too. Well, not the Peace
Corps. But home.

Beat.

BRADLEE
What are you doing here, Mrs.
Graham?

KAY
I thought that we should get to
know each other a little better.

BRADLEE
I know you.

KAY
As Phil's wife.

An awkward tension enters the room. A moment passes.

KAY (CONT'D)
Did you find that difficult?

BRADLEE

Excuse me?

She points to a photo of Bradlee and JFK.

KAY

Being close with the President.
Being a journalist and his friend.

BRADLEE

Only when someone pointed it out.

KAY

Phil never felt... awkward about
it. He liked being able to call the
President and for him to answer.

BRADLEE

A lot of things were different back
then.

Beat. Kay's eyes stay with the photos, Bradlee's on her.

KAY

I think my father found personal
effects to be distracting, too.

BRADLEE

I have some.

KAY

Most people have things on their
desk though, don't they? Yours seem
to be watching over you.

BRADLEE

I've never thought about it.

KAY

Of course you have.

Beat.

BRADLEE

There are a lot of reporters on my
staff who don't ask this many
questions.

KAY

I wanted to be one once, a long
time ago.

BRADLEE

On my staff?

She's annoyed by his snark. He forces a smile then reaches into his desk and pulls out a bottle of scotch and a glass. He pours -

BRADLEE (CONT'D)
If we're going to do this.

He offers her the glass, after a beat she takes it. He finishes his coffee then refills it with liquor.

INT. MOTEL, OUTSIDE OF BOSTON - SAME TIME

Bagdikian sits at a ratty table, Ellsberg opposite him, coffee in front of them both. Bagdikian sees a box in the corner filled with papers.

ELLSBERG
Sorry about the rigmarole getting here.

BAGDIKIAN
A lot of guys looking for you.

A moment passes.

ELLSBERG
How'd you figure it was me?

BAGDIKIAN
Sounded like something a crazy guy would do.

He's half-joking. Ellsberg laughs.

BAGDIKIAN (CONT'D)
I poked around at Rand. They got nervous when I mentioned your name.

ELLSBERG
What do you know?

BAGDIKIAN
The basics. You were part of a team set up at the DoD to gather information on Vietnam.

ELLSBERG
(almost wistful)
McNamara would say "let the chips fall where they may". He wanted scholars to have the opportunity to examine Vietnam policy - all angles. I loved it.

(MORE)

ELLSBERG (CONT'D)
I loved the guys - the work. We had access to everything. I mean, how often does that happen, you know?

BAGDIKIAN
(treading lightly)
But.

ELLSBERG
(shrugging)
What else... "but" we found something.

Bagdikian holds his breath. Ellsberg lights a cigarette, his hand shakes.

ELLSBERG (CONT'D)
None of it was ever about helping Vietnam.

BAGDIKIAN
What was it about?

ELLSBERG
What's it always about? Self-interest. Expansion. Making sure we had the final say.

BAGDIKIAN
But how -

ELLSBERG
It was us. From the beginning: Covert Ops, rigged elections, guaranteed debt. It's all in there - memos, studies, cables. Since the 40s they've been doing this. The CIA, NSA, DoD... the White House. 80% of it is classified. They knew all along that we were sending men - boys - not to fight, but to die. The knew because they started it all. And they planned it from the start. Then they knew that we were going to lose. But they kept sending those boys over anyway.

The truth hangs between them for a moment.

BAGDIKIAN
If there's nothing in there about Nixon - why does he care? He must love how it makes the Democrats -

ELLSBERG

You think Nixon wants you guys to be able to start publishing materials like this? Nixon may not be in these, but I guarantee he's got something in a drawer he doesn't want anyone to find.

INT. BRADLEE'S OFFICE, WASHINGTON POST

Kay looks at her drink, swirling it around a bit. Bradlee watches her, arms crossed. Unreadable.

BRADLEE

Have you thought about it?

KAY

About?

BRADLEE

If you're going to let us print these or not.

She hesitates.

KAY

I don't know that it's worth the risk.

Beat.

BRADLEE

You know what I think?

She purses her lips - this should be good.

BRADLEE (CONT'D)

I think you want to help. I think you're hiding behind your title because you're afraid of making the wrong move when we both know you've spent just as much time in an office like this as anybody.

Beat.

KAY

You don't like me very much, do you?

BRADLEE

I - don't think my opinion matters -

KAY
Unfortunately, it does to me.

BRADLEE
Why does it matter? I'm -

KAY
Call it a woman's problem.

BRADLEE
(scowling)
Don't do that. Don't bring up the
woman thing again.

KAY
I am one.

BRADLEE
Yes. But that doesn't mean you need
to act how a woman thinks a man
thinks a woman should act like.

KAY
Not the interview again.

BRADLEE
I just don't understand it. You're
running this massive company. All
this responsibility on you and... I
mean - it's not 1952 and you're not
running around getting the old boys
their coffee.

KAY
Yet you think it's appropriate to
yell at me about how to do *my* job.

BRADLEE
Yes! Because you're not doing it!

KAY
Would you speak to Phil that way?

BRADLEE
I was never in charge of Phil's -

KAY
If you had been.

BRADLEE
Suppositions don't suit anyone.

KAY
Mr. Bradlee -

BRADLEE

(annoyed, heated)

No! I wouldn't have to yell at Phil about that! I would've had to about a dozen other things but not that. Because he would've made the call before I even walked in the door. This was *his* paper. Phil *knew* that. And he *knew* that his influence, his opinion, mattered. It was the opinion of the Washington Post. And you, Mrs. Graham, your opinion, for better or worse, is the opinion of the Washington Post! If you don't believe you should be running it, why the hell should I?

Kay looks at her glass, the honesty hitting them both. He's a little embarrassed by his outburst. The moment hangs there.

KAY

What you don't seem to understand is that it's not about what I want. It's never been about that. It's about what is right for the paper. That's what comes first.

(beat)

That's what has always come first.

BRADLEE

But can't you -

KAY

I've been getting some of those letters, too.

(beat)

Everyone seems to have an opinion on how I'm supposed to behave. You. The Board. My daughter. I walked around like my father, they'd call me a narcissist. If I behaved like Phil they'd have me committed much -

BRADLEE

Well -

KAY

- faster than he was. I'm left with no real option except to let all of this keep spinning while I try to make sure it doesn't slip off its axis.

BRADLEE

It is slipping. You're just too busy trying to keep up appearances that you haven't noticed.

This hits her hard. She processes.

BRADLEE (CONT'D)

I think you want to help. But, that's what everyone says.

The phone rings, startling them both. Bradlee picks it up.

BRADLEE (CONT'D)

Bags?

(listening)

Great. We'll see you in a few hours.

He hangs up.

BRADLEE (CONT'D)

He's got the documents. He's headed back now.

She nods and rises to leave.

KAY

You'll keep me informed?

BRADLEE

Of course.

KAY

I'm throwing Harry Gladstein a retirement party tomorrow night. If I cancel, people will know something is going on.

He nods. She stops at the door.

KAY (CONT'D)

Do you think Phil would print them?

BRADLEE

(sighs)

I can't answer that.

She nods once.

KAY

Have a good night, Mr. Bradlee.

BRADLEE
Good night, Mrs. Graham.

She leaves. He stares at her empty glass for a moment.

EXT. BRADLEE HOUSE - MORNING

It's early, the morning light casting a beautiful glow on the semi-suburban neighborhood. A few extra cars are parked in the driveway and MARINA BRADLEE (11) sits at a table selling lemonade. Trudging along from afar is Bagdikian, the box of papers weighing heavily in his arms. He looks awful.

MARINA
Lemonade?

He doesn't respond or stop; a man on a mission.

INT. KITCHEN, BRADLEE HOUSE - SAME TIME

Meg, Howard, and Geyelin all crowd around the kitchen. Tony tries to make coffee as quickly as possible but the reporters keep gulping it down. Bradlee hangs up the phone.

BRADLEE
The Times is going to lose their appeal.

The mood in the room falls a bit.

INT. LIVING ROOM, BRADLEE HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

The front door opens and closes, the reporters peek their heads around the corner as Bagdikian walks in. He drops the box on the ground then goes to the living room and lies on the couch. It's a feeding frenzy, they grab handfuls of paper and start to read. Bradlee approaches Bagdikian.

BRADLEE
You OK, Bags?

BAGDIKIAN
(eyes closed)
Yea. I just - need a minute.

Bradlee smiles and smacks him on the shoulder. Meg goes through some pages -

MEG
Wait - are... these in order?

HOWARD
Doesn't look like it -

MEG
Bags, did you see if they were
organized in some -

BAGDIKIAN
This is how they came to me.

MEG
It's more than...

She looks to Geyelin who, in turn, looks to Bradlee.

GEYELIN
We can't sort through this much
stuff in time to -

Bradlee's expression quiets him.

HOWARD
The Times had three months, we -

BRADLEE
(checking his watch)
Have nine hours.

The editors stare at him. They don't move.

MEG
I think... it's... it might be -

GEYELIN
It's a tall order.

In the background, Marina approaches Bagdikian with a cup of
lemonade. He smiles and reaches for it, she pulls back.

MARINA
10 cents.

He scowls but reaches into his pocket, she grins.

BRADLEE
What?

Marina glances at her father - she's heard that tone before.
This is about to get bad. She goes to get more lemonade.

GEYELIN
I just -

BRADLEE

What does that mean "it's a tall order".

MEG

He's saying -

BRADLEE

He's saying it's not worth it. It's too hard. Why even bother - The Times has done it already. They've got everyone talking so why waste our time.

HOWARD

That's not -

BRADLEE

That's exactly what he's saying!

The room is quiet.

BRADLEE (CONT'D)

For the last six months, hell, for the last two years, we've been taking what they give us and now, when we have something and we can do something about it - no. No. We don't want to do that.

(beat)

Because it's a tall order.

(beat)

I can't be the only one who cares about this. Because if that happens I get mad and every else gets fired and we're all screwed in the end.

He goes to the box and grabs a stack of papers then sits and begins to sort through them. After a moment, the rest of the team does so as well.

INT. RESTAURANT, GEORGETOWN - SAME TIME

Kay walks in, looking around for someone. She spots ROBERT McNAMARA (50s) sitting at a table by himself, reading the paper, eating breakfast. She approaches. He looks up, surprised, then instantly knowing why she's there.

MCNAMARA

Hello Kay.

KAY

Hello Bob.

MCNAMARA
(resigned)
Please. Sit.

She takes the seat across from him. After a moment.

KAY
Are you alright?

MCNAMARA
I've had articles written about me
before.

KAY
Not like this.

MCNAMARA
No. Not like this.

Beat.

KAY
Bob -

MCNAMARA
Do you know what I did at Ford?

KAY
(puzzled)
You were the President, I assume
you -

MCNAMARA
All anyone cared about was selling
cars. All that mattered was how
they looked, how they sounded, how
they felt. No one saw a car like I
saw it - like a weapon.

She's listening but - where's this going?

MCNAMARA (CONT'D)
I wanted them to put in seat belts.
But they said, "Well, if you put
the seat belt in there, all
anyone's thinking about is their
kid's head going through the
windshield." It didn't matter that
I had mountains of research to
prove otherwise. Eventually I got
them to put it in as an option.

KAY
Bob.

MCNAMARA

I thought "At least I got them to do that much." My conscience could be clear. For the most part. Of course, it didn't matter.

KAY

Bob.

MCNAMARA

The second I left for Washington they took the seat belts away. People kept dying. But - they kept selling cars.

(beat)

And they sure looked pretty.

KAY

Bob, why did you call me?

Beat.

MCNAMARA

I guess I was trying to give you a seat belt.

INT. LIVING ROOM, BRADLEE HOUSE - A LITTLE LATER

The journalists have split the piles into different sections. Meg and Geyelin are on the floor, sorting things while Howard reads the organized materials. The room is tense. Quiet.

GEYELIN

Jesus Christ.

He and Meg exchange a look filled with anger... sadness.

MEG

The whole time... when Johnson was running and... he was...

She looks up at Howard.

MEG (CONT'D)

He'd sent the boys over there already. He was acting like it'd never happen but... he'd already done it.

Howard watches her, sad. It all sinking in.

INT. KITCHEN, BRADLEE HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Bradlee sits at the table, phone to ear, head in hand. The cord is stretched inconveniently across the room so if anyone wants to walk in, they have to duck. Tony makes sandwiches.

BRADLEE
I'm *still* on hold.

TONY
On hold with who?

BRADLEE
Huh?

TONY
Who are you on hold with?

BRADLEE
The lawyers. Supposedly. Though at this point they could've transferred me to the Guam Embassy and I wouldn't know.

TONY
You do that all the time.

BRADLEE
Call Guam?

TONY
Say something without knowing that I'm here.

Howard pokes his head in, getting Bradlee's attention.

BRADLEE
Yea?

HOWARD
(hushed)
Some of this stuff. It's... it's heavy. Even just going through it. I'm wondering if we could get Mrs. Graham to come and take a look. Tell us if -

BRADLEE
That's not her job, Howard.

HOWARD
(annoyed)
Then what is? Because we're sitting here going through all of -

BRADLEE
(firm)
Go back to work.

After a moment, Howard does. Bradlee watches him go. Tony turns to him.

TONY
There's an embassy for Guam?

BRADLEE
Of course, there's an embassy for -
(into receiver)
Yes! Yes. This is Ben. Bradlee. Of
the Washington. Post. I'm trying to
get -

He's clearly put on hold again. He slaps his hand on the table four times - each one harder than the last.

TONY
It might help if you were more
condescending. Why don't you just
call Mrs. Graham?

BRADLEE
Hm?

TONY
Jesus -

BRADLEE
I was teasing that time. I can
tease.

No he can't.

BRADLEE (CONT'D)
Because if I call Mrs. Graham
without knowing what the lawyers
are going to say then the first
thing she's going to do is call the
lawyers and I'll be on hold with
both of them. At least this one
cuts out the middle man.

TONY
Except you're still on hold.

He glances over at her.

BRADLEE
What are you doing back there?

TONY
Making sandwiches.

BRADLEE
For who?

She stares at him and shakes her head. She puts the sandwiches on a platter and walks out, ducking under the cord. The front door opens - Bradlee turns. He sees ROGER CLARK (late 30s), ANTHONY ESSAYE (40s), and a few other LAWYERS arrive.

CLARK
Mr. Bradlee?

BRADLEE
Who are you?

CLARK
We're from Royall, Koegell, &
Wells.

Koegell is pronounced "Kegel".

HOWARD
(to Meg re: Koegell)
What'd he say?

She would roll her eyes but she's too tired.

BRADLEE
The lawyers?

CLARK
That's right.

BRADLEE
(irritated)
Who the hell am I on hold to talk
to then?

CLARK
Probably me.

Bradlee slams the phone down and walks to them -

INT. LIVING ROOM, BRADLEE HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

BRADLEE
Your firm needs to work on its
communication skills.

CLARK
We'll get right on that.

He extends his hand -

CLARK (CONT'D)
Roger Clark.

Bradlee shakes it, briefly, and walks towards the back.

BRADLEE
OK. Follow me.

MEG
Ben - I think we need to get a
writer over here. We're going to
need to get someone -

BRADLEE
Call Chalmers.

MEG
He's... not going to be happy about
that.

BRADLEE
Call him!

Bradlee kicks the couch, waking a sleeping Bagdikian.

BRADLEE (CONT'D)
Bags - with me.

He turns and heads into another room. Bagdikian, Clark, and
Assaye follow behind. The remainder stare at each other.

INT. RESTAURANT, GEORGETOWN - SAME TIME

An empty tea cup sits in front of Kay, a silent tension rests
between the old friends.

KAY
We have the papers.

MCNAMARA
You shouldn't be telling me that.

KAY
You shouldn't have called.

He nods, conceding.

KAY (CONT'D)

I haven't decided what we're going to do with them yet.

MCNAMARA

I'm not sure I'm the one to help you decide.

KAY

That's not... I just wanted to -

Her mask begins slipping, why is she there?

KAY (CONT'D)

I guess I thought if I heard from you what they were... why... it might make it easier... Or. I don't know.

MCNAMARA

(shaking his head)

It's not going to be easy.

KAY

I keep hoping.

Beat.

KAY (CONT'D)

Can I ask you - we've been friends a long time.

MCNAMARA

Yes.

She steels herself to ask this tough question.

KAY

Well, I just... you knew Don was volunteering for the Army. Why - how - how could you not tell me? Or Phil? How could you just let him... With everything that you knew... ?

McNamara's eyes are on the table, unmoving. She's well composed, not overtly emotional. She just wants an answer.

KAY (CONT'D)

I suppose you couldn't have told me but, I can't help thinking...

Kay watches him, seeing that she's upset him.

KAY (CONT'D)
It's alright. Nevermind. He's home -
we don't have to -

MCNAMARA
No. I - I just wish I could tell
you that I...

He trails off.

MCNAMARA (CONT'D)
We made mistakes. All of us. It
doesn't excuse - nothing could
but... well.

He takes a moment, gathering his thoughts.

MCNAMARA (CONT'D)
Maybe we did the right thing. Maybe
we didn't. Who knows. Maybe it's
your job, the job of the press
to... I don't know. Keep us all
honest? I'm not so sure if people
should know everything. But I...
I'm not sure anyone has a right to
make that decision for them.

She thinks.

KAY
(soft)
I'm not sure I can.

MCNAMARA
Can or not, I think you're going to
have to decide one way or the
other.

She nods. Still so unsure.

INT. LIVING ROOM, BRADLEE HOUSE - A LITTLE LATER

Meg, Geyelin and the lawyers continue to sift through the documents in a tense peace. New at the table is CHALMERS ROBERTS (60s, big ears, Chief Diplomatic Correspondent). The voices in the library can be faintly heard.

CHALMERS
(annoyed)
You guys couldn't have called me
any earlier?

MEG
We just got the papers, Chal.

CHALMERS
Mmhm.

He reads, shaking his head at what he's reading.

MEG
Why would the Director of the CIA
send a memo on war policy?

GEYELIN
Because they weren't calling it a
war yet.

MEG
But they're bombing -

CHALMERS
(to himself)
I was supposed to retire on Friday.

HOWARD
Good luck with that.

The front door opens and Fritz walks in. He looks to the
table of weary Post employees.

FRITZ
Good evening.

HOWARD
Mr. Beebe, they're -

BRADLEE (O.S.)
AND THAT'S WHY YOU'RE THE GODDAMN
LAWYER AND I'M THE EDITOR WITH HIS
DICK IN A VISE.

Howard and Meg wince, Chalmers chuckles.

FRITZ
(forcing a smile)
I think I'll find my way.

INT. LIBRARY, BRADLEE HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Bradlee paces, Bagdikian has a fresh drink.

CLARK
Look, I understand that you're
worried about -

BRADLEE
No you don't.

CLARK
- the exposure and the perception
of the paper -

BRADLEE
That's exactly what -
There's a knock on the door.

BRADLEE (CONT'D)
WHAT!
Fritz enters -

FRITZ
I hate to barge in.
Clark stands and shakes Fritz's hand.

CLARK
Mr. Beebe, we're trying to explain.
Fritz walks over to Bradlee and shakes his hand.

FRITZ
You look terrible.

BRADLEE
That's what I was going for.

FRITZ
(to Bagdikian)
You alright?

Bagdikian shrugs.

BRADLEE
He's fine.

Bradlee's hackles are up - with Fritz here he knows there's
no more messing around. Fritz takes a seat.

FRITZ
You want to catch me up, Ben?

BRADLEE
Sure. They say we can't, I say we
can. You're caught up.

FRITZ
(to Clark)
Go ahead.

CLARK
Ignoring the fact that the
documents could be represented as
stolen property and therefore -

BRADLEE
We didn't steal anything.

CLARK
But they were -

BRADLEE
Not by -

CLARK
Regardless of that. And forgetting
that we don't know what is going to
happen with The Times case -

BRADLEE
What's going to happen is -

Fritz puts up his hand for a second, Bradlee stops.

CLARK
As I said. Forgetting *all* of that.
We simply don't have the time to
vet these documents. The majority
of what we're dealing with is
classified information and we *don't*
know what's in them. I don't
understand why it isn't the most
prudent to simply wait and ask -

BRADLEE
(bursting)
Because we lost!

Fritz looks at him, the lawyers watch.

BRADLEE (CONT'D)
Why can't we wait? Because we've
already waited three months and
four days longer than we should've.
We've got egg on our face and
unless we publish these documents
right now we might as well be some
shitty, one stoplight, no radio
town, single edition paper.
(beat)
(MORE)

BRADLEE (CONT'D)
We are the Washington Post. We
aren't anyone's runner-up.

Fritz thinks a moment.

FRITZ
(to Bradlee)
The Post is going public next week.

Bagdikian looks up - surprised. Bradlee is disappointed.

FRITZ (CONT'D)
Our IPO is contingent on a series
of steps and markers that will
ensure to the -

BRADLEE
How's it going to look when the
biggest property in the company
goes down because they didn't have
the balls to stand up with the
Times.

FRITZ
It's not always about winning, Ben.

BRADLEE
(indignant)
Yes, it is! With this? It is
entirely about winning. I don't
care what's in those papers and I
don't care who we make look bad!
We're printing them and -

FRITZ
That's not your decision.

A tense beat. Bradlee hates that Fritz is right.

ASSAYE
I have an idea.

BRADLEE
Oh, goodie.

ASSAYE
What if we wait. Hold off on
printing today -

Bradlee starts to interject, Assaye speaks over him -

ASSAYE (CONT'D)

And, instead, we call the Attorney General and tell them that we intend to print the papers on Sunday. That way we give them, and ourselves, time to figure out the legality of it all. Let the courts decide what will happen with the Times. Just - give ourselves some breathing room.

Bagdikian, Fritz, and Bradlee stare at him. Clark keeps his head down. A long moment passes.

BRADLEE

(sotto)

You want to... tell the Attorney General that we... have these documents and are going to print them. In a few days.

ASSAYE

(less sure)

Yes.

Bradlee looks back at Bagdikian, then Fritz.

BRADLEE

That's the shittiest idea I've ever heard.

FRITZ

Ben -

Bradlee walks towards the door.

BRADLEE

You know what? Hang on, let me go talk to my eleven-year-old and see if she has a better plan.

He leaves, slamming the door behind him.

INT. KAY'S DRESSING ROOM, GRAHAM HOUSE - NIGHT

Kay sits at the vanity, clipping large pearls to her ears. Music can be heard from downstairs, the party winding up. Kay is the consummate hostess and tonight will be no different. But her mind is elsewhere.

INT. PHIL'S OFFICE, GRAHAM HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Kay stands in the doorway, her hand on the light switch.
After a moment, she turns the light off and closes the door.

INT. VARIOUS, GRAHAM HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Kay greets various GUESTS while WAITERS distribute small bites, a glass of champagne in everyone's hand. Kay teases and laughs, her best party face on. Every now and then she flicks her eyes to the telephone - waiting.

IGNATIUS (O.S.)
Having a nice time?

Ignatius stands there, martini in hand. Kay forces a smile.

KAY
Bittersweet.

IGNATIUS
Why's that?

KAY
Retirement parties tend to be tinged with it.

IGNATIUS
Oh, is that what this is?

KAY
Did you not see it on the invitation?

IGNATIUS
I'm not sure I received one.

Kay absorbs the jab, forcing that smile again. She makes a move to leave, he subtly cuts her off. Entertaining him is not a task she needs right now.

IGNATIUS (CONT'D)
I hope you weren't offended by what I said in the board room.

KAY
(tense)
Offended isn't the word I'd use.

IGNATIUS
However you might feel, I hope you know - I've always been impressed by you.

KAY

Excuse me?

IGNATIUS

(genuine, condescending)
Surprising as it may seem to hear
it. The way you stood by Phil
during everything. Even when he,
well, I guess there's no need to
walk on a dead man's name.

Is he serious?

IGNATIUS (CONT'D)

I never met him, you know, but I
always though we'd get along. And
the way you handled yourself during
his - situation - with such...
style. However all of this works
out - I want you to know that I
have the best intentions towards -

KAY

(irate but calm)
Mr. Ignatius, this really isn't the
time or place for the type of
conversation you're wading into.
But I can assure you, I am well
aware of your intentions - good or
otherwise.
(beat)
Enjoy the party.

She walks away, leaving Ignatius taken aback. Kay fumes.

EXT. BACK DECK, BRADLEE HOUSE - SAME TIME

Bradlee sits and watches Marina and a FRIEND (10) play in the
backyard. He watches but he's not really there. A coffee mug
is placed in front him, he looks up and sees Tony.

TONY

Looked like you needed a pick-me-
up.

He nods and accepts it, she sits next to him.

BRADLEE

You give it the good stuff?

TONY

The staff drank us out of
everything.

BRADLEE
Could've guessed that.

TONY
But your daughter made a killing
with her lemonade business.

Bradlee smiles. Tony watches him. As much as she doesn't want
to sometimes - she cares about this guy.

TONY (CONT'D)
What's going on?

BRADLEE
(shaking his head)
They're idiots. All they can see
are dollar signs vanishing in front
of them.

TONY
Have you tried to convince -

BRADLEE
Of course I have.

TONY
You sure? All I heard was a lot of
"me" and "the paper" and -

BRADLEE
(scowling)
Tony -

TONY
Did you try and tell them what the
point of it all is?

BRADLEE
The point of it?

She shakes her head.

TONY
I'll never understand how you
convinced people you were so
perceptive.

BRADLEE
What do you -

TONY
Did you even read -

But they're interrupted with Bagdikian walking out - he looks panicked.

BAGDIKIAN
Ben? Beebe - Fritz - he just left.

BRADLEE
What? Where'd he -

BAGDIKIAN
To the Graham house.

Bradlee grits his jaw, running into the house.

BRADLEE
Sonofabitch.

BAGDIKIAN
But I have to tell you -

Bradlee doesn't hear anything - his rage overwhelming. Tony just watches him go. As she always does.

INT. KITCHEN, BRADLEE HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Bradlee storms in and grabs the phone. He dials. The remaining editors and lawyers keep their heads down in the living room, trying to power through.

BAGDIKIAN
Ben.

Bradlee raises his hand. The phone rings.

BAGDIKIAN (CONT'D)
He went to tell her we can't publish.

BRADLEE
No shit.

BAGDIKIAN
(hushed)
No, Ben. It's because of Ellsberg.

BRADLEE
Nobody's answering. What're you talking about?

BAGDIKIAN
He wanted to know if we had the same source as the Times and -

BRADLEE
(into phone)
Yes, this is Ben Bradlee, I'm
looking for -

BAGDIKIAN
He says -

BRADLEE
(growing frustrated)
I understand that it's a party, but
I *promise* that she -

BAGDIKIAN
(shouting)
He says we can be charged with
conspiracy to commit treason!

That gets the attention of everyone. Geyelin rises from his
chair, the lawyers survey the room.

BRADLEE
What?

BAGDIKIAN
They could argue that we knew that
because it's the same source as The
Times, we knew we were getting
stolen documents. I - I don't know.
I had one too many to catch it all -

BRADLEE
Shit.

He hangs up the phone and grabs his keys.

HOWARD
(sotto)
She's probably too busy rubbing
elbows to even know what's going
on.

Bradlee stops and grits his jaw.

BRADLEE
Enough!

The volume startles everyone, Tony pokes her head in from
outside.

HOWARD
Ben, it was just -

BRADLEE

No! I've heard - you have *no idea*
what that woman is dealing with!
What she's been through! The
pressure that we - you should just -

He stops himself, getting blank stares. He shakes his head.

BRADLEE (CONT'D)

You should just be... better.

He walks out, his staff left both confused and hanging their heads.

INT. GRAHAM HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

The HONOREE (60s) speaks to the crowd, Kay stands to the side, smiling.

HONOREE

Many of you are too young to
remember Mr. Meyer so, I'll just
leave you with this. Remember that
this... this was a man's life. This
paper. And he did it all for the
public. For the readers. He never
wanted anything in return, I mean,
he sunk so much money into it those
early years, you'd a thought he was
trying to marry it.

Laughs abound. Kay digests these words. Fritz walks in and makes eye contact with Kay. She's slightly concerned by his arrival. Ignatius spots him, too.

HONOREE (CONT'D)

But he believed it was his duty,
his public service, to put out the
paper every day. Give people a
chance to read the news.

Bradlee runs in. A few guests notice, shooting him wary looks. Bradlee pants, beads of sweat rolling down his temples. He spots Fritz and approaches him.

BRADLEE

You're not talking to her without
me.

FRITZ

Ben -

Ignatius approaches -

IGNATIUS

Mr. Bradlee - are you... alright?

BRADLEE

(panting)

I had to run. Who are you?

Ignatius goes to speak but Kay approaches, interrupting them. She gives Bradlee a once over.

KAY

If we could take this outside.

They follow her, including Ignatius, which surprises both Fritz and Bradlee.

EXT. BACKYARD, GRAHAM HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Bradlee, Fritz, and Ignatius fight it out. Kay sits nearby, listening and seemingly ignored by the three men. She takes it all in.

FRITZ

It's not just that the offering can be suspended, but also the government might have just cause to seek a criminal indictment.

BRADLEE

Don't be dramatic.

IGNATIUS

What?

FRITZ

A felon may not hold a broadcast license, which means they will seize all of our broadcast properties. Without that revenue, we'll be forced to sell. If they win, and we are convicted, then The Washington Post Company will cease to exist.

BRADLEE

If we're living in a world where the government can tell you what to print and broadcast then that license doesn't mean shit any way.

FRITZ

That's just -

IGNATIUS

How is this even a debate? We can't possibly risk -

BRADLEE

If we don't publish, we'll be out of business soon enough as it is!

IGNATIUS

How -

BRADLEE

Because The New York Times will win! Maybe not tomorrow, or next week, but gradually people will stop thinking The Post has a leg to stand on.

FRITZ

Ben, I understand that this might be difficult to understand -

BRADLEE

Your patronizing tone aside, this isn't -

IGNATIUS

This is about your ego? Mr. Bradlee, I truly don't -

Bradlee tries to ignore Ignatius but it's difficult.

BRADLEE

Look. I understand that the public offering is important. I understand that being convicted felons isn't high on everyone's list. But in this case it's better than failure!

IGNATIUS

You and I have very differing opinions on failure.

BRADLEE

(finally)

I'm not talking to you!

Ignatius is taken aback. He hates reporters.

FRITZ

There will be other fights. Other -

BRADLEE

You want to talk about a court battle? If they start fighting back with freedom of the press - which they absolutely will - and it comes out that we had these documents and didn't publish them or stand with The Times - at best we'll look like we're scared. At worst it'll seem like the government is telling us what we can and can't print!

FRITZ

Publishing these documents could destroy this paper.

BRADLEE

There's more than one way to do that and you're just letting them have it! We're not even going to push back a little? What are you so scared of?

FRITZ

It's my job to -

BRADLEE

It's not *your* job! It's hers!

He points to Kay. They all look to her, she seems tiny compared to the three of them. They wait for her to speak.

KAY

It... it is Mr. Beebe's job to -

BRADLEE

No. It's *yours* to make this decision. Just you.

Beat.

BRADLEE (CONT'D)

You could've told me to get off the story. But you didn't. You could've told me to not get the documents. But you didn't.

Beat.

BRADLEE (CONT'D)

And if The Post doesn't publish these papers, you'll have to find a new executive editor tomorrow.

FRITZ
(scowling)
Don't be dramatic.

Bradlee's eyes don't leave Kay's.

KAY
You're willing to stand by that?

BRADLEE
Absolutely.

She thinks, not taking this decision lightly.

KAY
While you may feel responsible to act as an exemplification for freedom of the press, Mr. Bradlee, I have a commitment to the thousands of people employed by this company. This isn't their crusade and I refuse to put them in jeopardy over a... vendetta.

Bradlee is crest-fallen, Ignatius heaves a sigh of relief. She looks to where her granddaughter spun in the sunshine just days ago - lost in the memory for a moment. Finally, she stands.

KAY (CONT'D)
But -

Bradlee perks up.

KAY (CONT'D)
I also have a responsibility to the public. To the readers. Even when it might not support our own best interests.
(beat)
They lied. All of them. They lied and told us that what we were doing was good. That we were helping people who couldn't help themselves. But that wasn't it at all. No one wanted us there. So, they, we, just sent a bunch of young men to die. It wasn't just my son, or your son, that they sent over there. And it shouldn't just be us to know the truth.

She stands her ground, Fritz can't help but be moved. Kay looks to Bradlee, softening.

KAY (CONT'D)

They knew it was wrong. Our... our friends knew. And they didn't care.

Bradlee stares at her - the weight of it all hangs between them. She catches herself in the emotion straightens herself back out.

KAY (CONT'D)

Can you guarantee me that we can go to print without publishing the names of anyone in danger?

BRADLEE

I -

IGNATIUS

I can't believe this.

KAY

Mr. Ignatius, I'm -

IGNATIUS

You can't be *actually* considering this! This is just your maternal -

KAY

Mr. Ignatius -

Ignatius turns to Fritz.

IGNATIUS

You're just going to let her do this? She can't possibly -

FRITZ

I assure you, this is entirely Mrs. Graham's decision.

Ignatius stammers. Kay hides a smile, looking back to Bradlee.

BRADLEE

I give you my word.

She thinks again, then looks up at him.

KAY

Do it. Print them.

She turns and walks back into the party, going back to host as if nothing happened. Bradlee can hardly believe it.

EXT. NEWS STAND, WASHINGTON, D.C. - MORNING

Bradlee leans on a wall with a coffee and watches a POST TRUCK deliver stacks of newspapers. The early morning COMMUTERS begin to grab them. No one picks up The Times. Bradlee smiles and, after a moment, walks over and picks one up himself. He reads the front page: **"DOCUMENTS REVEAL U.S. EFFORT IN '54 TO DELAY VIET ELECTIONS - FIRST OF A SERIES BY CHALMERS ROBERTS"**.

EXT. VARIOUS, WASHINGTON, D.C. - MORNING

MEN and WOMEN, young and old, pick up copies of the Washington Post. They read it at NEWSTANDS and BARBER SHOPS. STUDENTS read it on CAMPUS. There is an overwhelming feeling of anger and disappointment in the faces of the readers.

INT. BULLPEN, WASHINGTON POST - MORNING

The usual cacophony of typewriters and go-getters rushes through the giant room. Gene is in his office. Howard sips coffee - his eyes glued to the glass wall of Bradlee's office where Fritz, Kay, and Bradlee sit inside. Meg approaches.

MEG

They're going to catch you staring.

HOWARD

Then he shouldn't have made it a glass wall.

MEG

(smiling)

Chalmers onto the next piece?

HOWARD

(nodding)

He's got Murrey working on one too.

MEG

Think we'll get to print them?

HOWARD

(shrugging)

I'm shocked she let us get one in.

INT. BRADLEE'S OFFICE, WASHINGTON POST - SAME TIME

An awkward silence hangs between Bradlee, Kay, and Fritz - who has a legal pad on his lap.

BRADLEE

You're sure they're going to call.

FRITZ

Yes.

BRADLEE

I met the AAG once. Tiny hands.

Kay hides a smile. After a few moments of unbearable silence... the phone at Cynthia's desk rings. After a moment -

CYNTHIA (O.S.)

It's the Assistant Attorney General.

BRADLEE

Put him through.

Bradlee takes a deep breath, Kay doesn't know what to expect. Bradlee's phone rings and he puts it on speaker.

BRADLEE (CONT'D)

This is Bradlee. I have Mrs. Graham and Mr. Beebe here with me.

BALILES (O.S.)

Good morning, this is Assistant Attorney General Gerald Baliles.

BRADLEE

Hello, Mr. Baliles.

Fritz begins making notes.

BALILES

(rote)

Mr. Bradlee, I have been advised by the Secretary of Defense that the material published in The Washington Post this morning contains information relating to the national defense of the United States and bears a top-secret classification.

(MORE)

BALILES (CONT'D)
As such, the publication of this information is directly prohibited by the provision of the Espionage Law, Title 18, United States Code, Section 793.

Fritz closes his eyes tight. Kay and Bradlee exchange a glance.

BALILES (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Moreover, further publication will cause irreparable injury to the defense interest of the United States. Accordingly, I respectfully request that you publish no further information of this character and advise me that you have made arrangements for the return of these documents to the Department of Defense.

Bradlee looks to Fritz who gives him another nod of the head.

BRADLEE
Thank you for the call, Mr. Baliles, but we respectfully decline.

BALILES (O.S.)
Thank you for your time.

The call ends. The moment hangs there briefly.

KAY
What's next?

Fritz sighs and stands.

FRITZ
We're going to court. Today. They'll try and prove we knowingly published something that was a danger to the US government.

BRADLEE
Did he call us spies?

FRITZ
Not as glamorous as you thought, is it.

(beat)
I'll call when I have more news.
For now... keep them writing.

(MORE)

FRITZ (CONT'D)
We've opened the door. No reason
closing it until they order us to.

KAY
Will it come to that?

FRITZ
Most assuredly.
(to Bradlee)
You wanted a fight.

Fritz leaves, she looks at Bradlee.

KAY
Mr. Bradlee?

BRADLEE
(in a daze)
Hm?

KAY
When was the last time you slept?

BRADLEE
The day before I started this job.

Beat. Bradlee wonders why she's still there.

BRADLEE (CONT'D)
Mrs. Graham?

KAY
I spoke to Mr. McNamara.

BRADLEE
(surprised)
What? You - will he -

KAY
He's not a villain.

BRADLEE
You don't have to be a villain to
do villainous things.

KAY
He won't be a source for you.

BRADLEE
(frustrated)
Mrs. Graham -

KAY
(standing)
I think I'll go with Fritz to the hearing.

BRADLEE
They probably won't let you in. Why did you tell me if you're not going to let me -

KAY
Because I didn't want you to think I was afraid to ask.

He's stunned by this. A moment hangs between them.

KAY (CONT'D)
I'll keep you informed.

He nods and she leaves. He looks out to the bullpen and watches his staff; their never-ending hustle.

INT. COURTHOUSE - NIGHT

Kay paces outside of a courtroom - a closed hearing taking place. She's alone, walking up and down the hallway, her heels echoing off the walls. A YOUNG WOMAN (late 20s) hurries down the hallway, part walk/part run. She's about to open the door to the courtroom -

KAY
I wouldn't do that. It's a closed hearing.

YOUNG WOMAN
Shoot. Have they been in there for long?

KAY
(checking her watch)
A few hours.

YOUNG WOMAN
Shoot, shoot.

She presses her ear to the door, Kay watches her from the corner of her eye. Finally, the young woman sits.

YOUNG WOMAN (CONT'D)
I was supposed to bring something
to my boss but I had to finish up a
few things and there was so much
traffic and I - well - you just
wouldn't think - at this time of
night.

Kay nods once, trying not to get involved. A moment passes.
The woman gives Kay a once over.

YOUNG WOMAN (CONT'D)
Are you... Mrs. Graham?

KAY
(forcing a smile)
I think we're supposed to keep our
voices down.

The young woman nods. Another moment passes.

YOUNG WOMAN
(hushed)
I'm probably not supposed to say
this, but I hope you win.

Kay looks at her, a strange expression on her face.

YOUNG WOMAN (CONT'D)
I mean, I think what you're doing -
printing those papers - I think
it's right. It's the right thing to
do.

Kay nods once. The woman waits a minute but can't help
herself -

YOUNG WOMAN (CONT'D)
I read that interview you did and -
I know people been giving you a
hard time but - I think you gotta
just ignore them. It's not easy
being the only one of us in a room
with a bunch of them.

She gestures her head towards the door.

YOUNG WOMAN (CONT'D)
Sometimes people don't appreciate
how much you're doing until you've
already done it. And I like seeing
someone tell these guys what's
what.

(MORE)

YOUNG WOMAN (CONT'D)
But don't tell my boss I said that -
he'd fire me just for talking to
you.

KAY
Let's not have that happen.

The woman nods and goes back to sitting there in silence. Kay realizes she might have been rude.

KAY (CONT'D)
Thank you.

The woman offers a friendly smile, JUST as the doors to the courtroom open. Kay stands, Fritz walks over - there's a frenzy coming from all the lawyers as they spill out.

KAY (CONT'D)
Well?

FRITZ
They're issuing a restraining order
until we can get back in to see the
judge.

KAY
Tonight?

FRITZ
(tired)
Monday. And if that doesn't work
for them, we'll head to the Supreme
Court of Appeals.

KAY
(angry)
We can't print anything?

FRITZ
Not after tonight. But, it's not
over yet.

Kay watches behind Fritz as the young woman is berated by a GOVERNMENT LAWYER.

INT. LIVING ROOM, BRADLEE HOUSE - NIGHT

Bradlee walks in disheveled, exhausted. He drops his briefcase on the ground and stands there for a moment. Enjoying the quiet. He hears the faint sound of a TV.

INT. DEN, BRADLEE HOUSE - NIGHT

Marina is asleep in front of the TV. He smiles. He moves to turn it off but sees that it's special news program on Vietnam produced by ECO. He sits for a minute.

NEWSREEL

"... The truth of the matter is, the Paris Peace Talks, hailed as a major breakthrough in 1968 have, by 1971 achieved nothing. The delegates still turn up, make accusatory speeches and leave. Week in week out, the delegates play their parts but its all become a puppet show without an audience. And in the meantime, the war goes on and the casualty lists mount..."

Bradlee grits his jaw as he watches.

INT. STUDIO, BRADLEE HOUSE - A LITTLE LATER

Tony sits on a stool, painting in splattered overalls. A record player plays softly, a cigarette smokes in an ashtray. Bradlee walks towards the studio with a beer. Eventually he leans on the doorway. She knows he's there but she doesn't need to acknowledge it.

BRADLEE

I thought that one was finished.

TONY

You're thinking of a different one.

BRADLEE

Oh.

Their conversation is slow. At ease. He walks to the worn-out recliner he sat in for many nights in the early days of their marriage. Now, it's cluttered with papers. He moves them off and sits.

BRADLEE (CONT'D)

Your daughter snuck down to watch TV again.

She looks at him.

TONY

You look terrible.

BRADLEE
(smiling)
So I've been told.

He watches her paint. The sounds from the record playing in between them.

BRADLEE (CONT'D)
Fritz thinks it's going to go to the Supreme Court.

TONY
That's what you wanted, right?

BRADLEE
Yea, I -

He trails off.

TONY
What?

BRADLEE
I think I messed this one up.

TONY
Just because you might not win doesn't mean you messed up. Not everything is supposed to go your way, Ben.

BRADLEE
I know.

TONY
Do you?

Maybe he doesn't.

BRADLEE
If this goes bad they're going to put the blame on me. I guess... I just don't know if it was worth it.

TONY
Don't be an idiot, Bradlee.

He stares at her.

TONY (CONT'D)
Yea, maybe you won't win. Maybe you'll have to resign and start all over again. But you did the right thing. That's worth it.

(MORE)

TONY (CONT'D)
Besides, you asked for the blame in
the first place. You can't put that
on anyone else now that you're up
shit's creek.

BRADLEE
(smiling)
You sure know how to cut to the
quick.

TONY
Of course. It's why you married me.

BRADLEE
Ah, is that why, I keep forgetting.

It's a joke, but there's some truth to it. He watches her
again - lost in thought.

BRADLEE (CONT'D)
What do you think of her?

TONY
Who? Our daughter?

BRADLEE
(laughing)
No, Mrs. Graham.

TONY
I don't know her.

BRADLEE
That's never stopped you from
having an opinion before.

She takes her time with it, turning to look at him.

TONY
I think... she's in a position she
never thought she'd have and I'm
sure plenty of people don't think
she should be in. If I were her...
I wouldn't even know where to
start.

INT. BOARDROOM, WASHINGTON POST - MORNING

Copies of The Washington Post are dropped. Each headline details the progress that's been made on the case: **"GESELL UPHOLDS PREVIOUS RULING IN 'PENTAGON PAPERS' CASE, APPEAL HEADED TO FEDERAL COURT"**, **"COURT FINDS IN FAVOR OF POST, RESTRAINING ORDER UPHELD"**, **"TIMES AND POST CASES ENJOINED, CASE HEADED TO SUPREME COURT"**, **"SUPREME COURT HEARING ON 'PENTAGON PAPERS' SET FOR EMERGENCY SATURDAY HEARING"**.

IGNATIUS slams each paper onto the table. Kay watches patiently from her normal seat; Fritz looks on. The past week has taken a toll. They look exhausted.

IGNATIUS

And now our IPO is being reconsidered.

A murmur amongst the board members.

FRITZ

They're just doing their due diligence. This is a big offering.

IGNATIUS

Due diligence?

FRITZ

Yes, Paul. And what is it -

IGNATIUS

Please don't ask what I'm insinuating. I think it's clear: ever since Mrs. Graham took over we have seen not only a steady decline in profits but, now, a jump off the cliff!

Kay lets it happen - but she's not happy about it.

IGNATIUS (CONT'D)

I was brought here because of my experience and never have I seen such a disregard for the best intentions of a company. If I offer my opinion and it is ignored once, I'll let it go. Twice, I'll raise my hand. Three times - I must speak! If no one else will, I will stand up for the interests of our Board.

That's a dagger to Kay's heart. Fritz surveys the room, he can't tell whose side the boardmembers are on.

IGNATIUS (CONT'D)

Mrs. Graham, your decision to allow The Post to become involved in this crusade is beyond reprehensible. You've repeatedly allowed Mr. Bradlee and his - group - to have his way with this paper. Through weak and misguided leadership. And, frankly, it is something I am sure that neither your father, nor your husband -

She stands, surprising everyone - not the least of which, herself.

KAY

That will be quite enough. It is perfectly clear, Mr. Ignatius, that you and I have very different opinions of how to run this company. However, whether you agree with my decisions or not, I have made them. Not you.

Ignatius is almost red with anger.

KAY (CONT'D)

If it is your intention to bully me into leaving this company, I assure you - that is not going to happen. If you truly believe that the correct step is for me to step down, please - take a vote. But I recommend you do it after the hearing tomorrow. You may not think I know much, but I can tell you your headline will sell much better if you fire a felon. Not just a woman.

(beat)

And I hate to disappoint you, Mr. Ignatius, but Phil Graham never cared for bullies and he wouldn't have cared for you.

She leaves the room, emboldened. The boardmembers shocked.

INT. GENE'S OFFICE, WASHINGTON POST - DAY

Bradlee knocks, Gene looks up.

BRADLEE

You got a minute?

GENE

Sure.

Bradlee walks in and shuts the door behind him.

BRADLEE

You coming to the hearing tomorrow?

GENE

I think I should probably stay here. In case the world decides to keep rotating while you're all in court.

Bradlee laughs once.

GENE (CONT'D)

You alright?

BRADLEE

No... I - I need to ask a favor.

GENE

(joking)

Hang on, let me write this down.

Bradlee's mood is serious, Gene's expression changes.

GENE (CONT'D)

Jesus, Ben. What?

BRADLEE

If this thing goes bad. Which... I don't know. I thought it would be over by now and it's not so -

GENE

They're just -

BRADLEE

When Fritz Beebe tells you it doesn't look good... it doesn't do much to bolster confidence.

(beat)

If I have to resign, if it comes to that, I need you to stay.

Gene is stunned. A moment hangs between them.

GENE

Well, that's about the last thing I ever thought I'd hear.

BRADLEE

Howard's going to want the job and if I'm here he'll get it. But if things go south and I have to leave - I need you to be here. They'll listen to you and I - look, I may not have done a lot around here but... I assembled a great newsroom. I need you to keep them together for as long as you can.

Gene thinks a minute.

GENE

(quiet)

Alright.

Bradlee stands and offers his hand, Gene rises and takes it.

BRADLEE

Thanks.

GENE

But if this goes your way I'm still getting the hell out of here.

BRADLEE

(smiling)

I'd expect nothing less.

INT. KITCHEN, GRAHAM HOUSE - NIGHT

Kay sits at the table, writing in a notepad, she keeps scribbling things out. Frustrated. A half-empty glass of wine next to her. She hears the front door open and turns to look, concerned. Lally walks in, looking exhausted. Solemn.

KAY

(concerned)

Lally?

LALLY

I'm sorry I didn't call.

She sits across from her mother.

KAY

(carefully)

Is everything OK? Where's Katharine?

LALLY

With Yann. I just... I needed to
get away for a bit.

Kay goes to the cabinet and gets a glass for Lally. Then
pours a hefty one, surprising her daughter. Lally looks at
the notepad, confused -

LALLY (CONT'D)

What're you -

It dawns on her.

LALLY (CONT'D)

The case - I didn't -

KAY

It's alright. I'm not getting
anywhere.

LALLY

You have to make a statement?

KAY

Fritz thinks it would be best.

LALLY

Can I help?

KAY

Oh no. Honestly, I'm not even quite
sure where to begin.

LALLY

I'm sorry - I should've called -

Kay waves her hand to stop her.

KAY

Growing up, we always had to be
scarce. Out of sight and all. I
never wanted that for my children
but - now. Well. It's quiet again.

LALLY

We should visit more.

KAY

(shaking her head)
I raised you to have your own
lives. It would be hypocritical of
me to ask for them back.

LALLY

No it wouldn't. You're allowed to ask for things, Mom.

KAY

I know that.

LALLY

Do you? Sometimes I feel like you don't speak up because... I don't know. You're afraid you'll sound -

KAY

That's not fair. When -

LALLY

Fair or not, it's the truth.

KAY

My children always think they know everything.

Lally watches her mother with interest.

KAY (CONT'D)

People thought I must have been devastated when your grandfather picked your father to run the company instead of me.

LALLY

Weren't you?

KAY

No. I was... proud. Your father was the smartest man I'd ever met. When your grandfather chose him it was like, well, it was like he chose me. Because Phil had been *my* choice.

LALLY

But... He didn't choose you.

KAY

It's different for you. Your generation - women can get away with having expectations -

LALLY

No we can't! But we do it because if we don't... well. No one's going to do it for us.

Kay watches her daughter.

LALLY (CONT'D)

I grew up in this house, too, Mom.
Dad was smart but you... you're the
one that kept it all together.

(beat)

Grandpa was wrong.

Kay looks down at her notepad.

KAY

I keep wandering into your father's
office. Hoping that I'll find
something new there. A journal or a
letter - telling me what I'm
supposed to do next. What steps to
take - If I made the right ones.

LALLY

(soft)

This isn't about Dad. Or Grandpa.
This is about you. And you've
already done the hardest part - now
you just have to stand by it.

KAY

You say it as if it's so simple.

LALLY

I know everything, remember?

INT. COURTROOM, SUPREME COURT BUILDING - DAY

The courtroom is packed, the NINE JUSTICES (all men, 40s-60s) sit in their leather chairs and listen to the arguments. There are three sets of lawyers: the government (GRISWOLD, 40s), the Post, and the Times. At the moment, Griswold is at the lectern.

Kay is in a pew directly behind Fritz, next to Lally. Ignatius is nearby. Bradlee a few behind her next to Howard. He's nervous, foot tapping on the ground. The doors open and Bagdikian sneaks in, taking a seat next to Meg.

BAGDIKIAN

(hushed)

You see how many people are
outside?

MEG

(sotto)

I've been here for the last four hours.

GRISWOLD

... We also contend that the publishing of these documents is a dishonorable and treasonous act that will dramatically undermine the President's power to conduct foreign affairs and in authority as Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces.

Bradlee and Kay both wince at Griswold's use of "dishonorable".

GRISWOLD (CONT'D)

As the scope of these documents is so vast, it's hard to fully warn against the consequences of them being made public. To print these papers without consulting the government is to exercise a criminal disregard for the safety of this country and our troops overseas.

Griswold closes his folder and takes his seat.

JUDGE BLACK

Thank you, Mr. Griswold. Now I understand that Mrs. Katharine Graham will be making a statement.

Bradlee is surprised. She rises and walks to the lectern.

KAY

Thank you, Judge Black.

She takes a breath, steeling herself.

KAY (CONT'D)

As you said, my name is Katharine Graham and I am the owner and publisher of the Washington Post.

(beat)

I've been in the newspaper business almost my whole life. My father purchased the paper when I was sixteen and - well - all I ever wanted to do was work at it. It...

(MORE)

KAY (CONT'D)
took me a little longer than I
thought it would, but, well,
sometimes things happen as they
should, I think.

The crowd is rapt with interest.

KAY (CONT'D)
As I said, I've been in this
business nearly my whole life and
never, never, have I seen a story
that displays such a wanton
disregard for the public interest.
To have hidden these decisions made
without the people's knowledge that
resulted in decades of torture,
murder, and oppression.

Bradlee is stunned by the power of her words.

KAY (CONT'D)
My father, when he stepped down,
issued a press release. He said,
"The citizens of a free country
have to depend on a free press for
the information necessary to the
intelligent discharge of their
duties of citizenship. That is why
the Constitution gives newspapers
express protection from Government
interference." It... it might have
taken me a little while longer than
my father would've hoped to truly
understand these words but... I
believe them to be true. It is my
responsibility to stand behind my
staff and the truth of their
convictions to tell this story. It
is our duty.

Meg and Howard are rapt with attention. A shock to them both.

KAY (CONT'D)
This paper has been in my life
longer than most of my staff has
been alive. And the legacy it
carries is not just my name, but my
father's name. My husband's name.
And my decision to publish these
papers is one that could put into
jeopardy the lot of it.

She almost looks back at Bradlee, but keeps her eyes forward.

KAY (CONT'D)

However, if the decision is made by the courts to side with the government, and the Washington Post ceases to exist, I can think of no stronger mark to leave than by taking a stand for what is right. And there will have been no greater honor in my life than to be beside the men and women of the Post while we attempt to do just that.

Her voice shakes, Bradlee's eyes are glassy but he covers.

KAY (CONT'D)

Thank you.

She steps back to her seat, she and Bradlee avoid eye contact. Lally beams with pride.

JUDGE BLACK

Thank you, Mrs. Graham.

INT. HALLWAY, COURTHOUSE - A LITTLE LATER

The attendees file out. Bradlee stands with Meg and Howard. He keeps his eyes aloft, looking for Kay, not paying attention to their conversation. He can't find her. Bagdikian jogs towards them from outside.

BAGDIKIAN

There's something you gotta see.

Bradlee looks around one last time to find Kay but, if she's there, she's lost in the sea of people. He follows the trio to the door.

EXT. SUPREME COURT, WASHINGTON, D.C. - MOMENTS LATER

Bradlee, Meg, Bagdikian, and Howard step out onto the iconic front steps to see a PEACE RALLY taking place. Thousands of people, PICKETS in the air plastered with messages like "**NO MORE LIES**", "**BRING OUR BOYS BACK**", and "**VETERANS FOR PEACE**". Meg smiles and pats Bradlee on the back. He stands there, hands in pockets, watching everything that's taken place.

EXT. SUPREME COURT, WASHINGTON, D.C. - EARLY MORNING

Kay sits on a bench outside of the courtroom. Her ankles crossed, posture perfect, there is an unreadable look on her face. Fritz walks over.

FRITZ
Shouldn't be much longer.

She nods, he goes back to the attorneys. She seems to be in a bit of a daze, trying to wrap her head around the magnitude of it all. The sound of shuffling feet knocks her from her thoughts. She turns, surprised to see Bradlee straightening his tie and rushing towards her. He sits.

BRADLEE
The verdict in yet?

KAY
I don't think so.

He relaxes into the bench. She studies him, he finally looks at her.

BRADLEE
You didn't think I'd leave you here with the suits.

KAY
I'm a "suit".

BRADLEE
Mrs. Graham, you are much more than that.

The faintest of smiles appears for a moment on her face. She sits back in the bench. After a beat -

BRADLEE (CONT'D)
About yesterday -

KAY
Did you ever see *The Vagabond King*?

BRADLEE
The one with Rita Moreno?

KAY
My father took me to see it when it was on Broadway. I was just a little girl but I remember being so excited that he picked *me* to go with him. Not everyone. Just me.

BRADLEE
He liked you.

KAY
There's a scene I've been thinking about quite a lot lately.

(MORE)

KAY (CONT'D)

Since Phil died, really. At the end, when the King appears in royal garb, walking down those steps for the first time. All the archers have their arrows pointed at him, ready to release at any moment - deciding what to do - deciding if... he is worthy enough to wear those robes.

She trails off into the memory, choosing to keep the intention of the story private. He watches her, then -

BRADLEE

I'm sorry.

She looks at him, surprised.

KAY

For what?

BRADLEE

For... well. Not trusting you.

KAY

(conspiratorial grin)
I didn't trust you the whole time either, Mr. Bradlee.

BRADLEE

Still. I was wrong.

After a moment, she nods ever so slightly.

KAY

Being the victim doesn't really suit me. All it does is open a door for more people to judge you. Criticize you. And, I guess, one day you have to just decide not to allow them to do that anymore.

BRADLEE

Would love to know how you did that.

KAY

Sometimes in life you don't really decide to move on, you just do. Blindly and mindlessly.

BRADLEE
Blindly and mindlessly. I like
that.

Next to them, the doors to the courtroom open and Fritz turns to give Kay a nod. She stands, nervously smoothing her dress. She walks into the courtroom first, followed closely behind by Bradlee. The doors shut.

INT. BRADLEE'S OFFICE, WASHINGTON POST - THE NEXT DAY

The front page of the Washington Post sits on his desk. The headline reads, "**SUPREME COURT RULES IN FAVOR OF PAPERS**".

Bradlee looks at the famous photo of he and Kay on the steps of the courthouse, celebrating their victory, a smile of pride on his face. He tears it from the rest of the paper. Cynthia walks in.

CYNTHIA
We can have an actual photo framed
for you, y'know.

BRADLEE
I like this one. Did you reach Mrs.
Graham for me?

CYNTHIA
I left word.

He writes on the photo, "Wear the robes - B" then hands it to Cynthia. She looks at it, confused.

BRADLEE
Make sure that gets to her desk.

She nods and he rises, walking to the bullpen.

INT. BULLPEN, WASHINGTON POST - CONTINUOUS

He walks to the center of the room, his back to the elevators.

BRADLEE
Hey! Can I have everyone's
attention for a minute?

The staff turns. Gene steps out of his office and into the doorway. Meg, Howard, Bagdikian, and Geyelin all listen from various parts of the newsroom.

BRADLEE (CONT'D)

This is going to be quick because it takes an act of God for any of you to hit a deadline even without an interruption.

Laughs from the crowd.

BRADLEE (CONT'D)

I just wanted to say thank you. I - you know - I don't say it enough but. The guts. The energy and of everyone involved in this and... well - it has impressed me more than anything. You were all beautiful.

Behind him, Kay steps off the elevator. He doesn't see her, but others do. Bradlee's voice shakes slightly.

BRADLEE (CONT'D)

To have been able to work beside you all, to work with our publisher who saw through the fear of retribution. Who saw the need to bring it all to light. To echo Mrs. Graham's words - to have been a part of that is one of the greatest honors of this newsman's life.

There's a split second of awkwardness as no one knows what to do with such a level of sincerity from him. Finally, Howard begins to clap. The room applauds and cheers, after a minute he waves his hands -

BRADLEE (CONT'D)

Alright! Enough! To work!

They all listen and get to it. Bradlee makes eye contact with Gene who offers a slight nod of the head before going into his office. Bradlee turns to see Kay walking in his direction. He forces a smile, slightly embarrassed. Kay approaches Bradlee. There's a moment hanging between them.

KAY

Would you have really resigned?

He shrugs.

PHIL

Do you think Phil would have published the Papers?

After a moment. That conspiratorial grin again -

KAY
Not in a million years.

He laughs and they begin to walk towards his office.

KAY (CONT'D)
If now is alright, I was hoping we
could discuss the Style section?

He starts to laugh, then realizes -

BRADLEE
You're serious.

KAY
We can't sit around in
sentimentality all day.

BRADLEE
I'm not getting into this with you
again.

KAY
Then it appears we are at an
impasse.

BRADLEE
That's one word for it.

KAY
I'm not saying it's entirely wrong,
but the section it - it just
doesn't make sense to me.

BRADLEE
It's not meant for you!

KAY
Who's it meant for?

BRADLEE
(annoyed)
We've discussed this.

KAY
I think it deserves just another
conversation -

BRADLEE
The Times -

KAY
Not with The Times again -

They walk into Bradlee's office, where we stay outside in the bullpen and watch through the glass. Bradlee sits, stubborn and headstrong, feet on the desk and arms in the air out of exasperation. Kay, seated across from him, thoughtful but equally stubborn, politely making her point.

AS THE FOLLOWING APPEARS ON SCREEN:

THE 6-3 RULING BY THE SUPREME COURT TO UPHOLD THE PUBLICATION OF THE PENTAGON PAPERS IS ONE OF THE MOST SEMINAL DECISIONS MADE REGARDING A CHALLENGE TO THE FIRST AMENDMENT. THE RELEASE OF THE PAPERS EVENTUALLY LEAD TO WATERGATE, PRESIDENT NIXON'S RESIGNATION, AND THE END OF THE VIETNAM WAR.

--

BEN BRADLEE STAYED ON AS EXECUTIVE EDITOR OF THE WASHINGTON POST UNTIL 1991. HE REMAINS ONE OF THE MOST RESPECTED NEWSMAN OF THE 20TH CENTURY. BRADLEE'S TIRELESS PASSION INFLUENCED GENERATIONS THAT HAVE COME AFTER. BRADLEE PASSED AWAY IN 2014.

--

IN 1972, AS THE HEAD OF THE WASHINGTON POST COMPANY, KATHARINE GRAHAM BECAME THE FIRST FEMALE FORTUNE 500 CEO. SHE WORKED TIRELESSLY TO CHANGE THE PERCEPTION OF WOMEN IN THE WORKPLACE THAT SHE TOO ONCE HELD.

KAY STEPPED DOWN AS PUBLISHER IN 1979. SHE WAS SUCCEEDED FIRST BY HER SON, DONALD, THEN LATER BY HER GRANDDAUGHTER, KATHARINE. KAY PASSED AWAY IN 2001.

--

FOR THEIR DETERMINED PURSUIT OF JOURNALISTIC EXCELLENCE, BOTH KAY AND BRADLEE RECEIVED THE PRESIDENTIAL MEDAL OF FREEDOM. IT IS THE HIGHEST CIVILIAN AWARD OF THE UNITED STATES.

--

KAY AND BRADLEE REMAINED CONFIDANTES FOR THE REST OF THEIR LIVES. ALWAYS RELYING ON EACH OTHER FOR COUNSEL, GUIDANCE, SUPPORT, AND FRIENDSHIP.