

IN THE JUSTICE DEPARTMENT

a play by Ken Kaye

Characters

Richard Graham, 45, Attorney General of the United States

Anne Graham, 40, his wife

Rusty Graham, 19, his daughter

Rose Graham, 70, his mother

William James Maimbolwa, the Grahams' cook

Tom Stern, TV news anchorman

Tamara Glass, TV reporter

Scene

The suburban Graham home in Alexandria, Virginia

August

Scene 1 Noon

Scene 2 Evening

Scene 3 Midnight

Scene 4 Early the next morning

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Scene 1. Noon

Blackout. Internal sounds of an airplane taxiing to terminal after landing. We hear the amplified announcement to passengers, followed by an unamplified conversation in the first class section, near the door.

Voice of Stewardess: Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to Washington National Airport. The time here is 11:56. Please remain in your seats until the Captain has turned off the seat belt sign to signal that the airplane has come to a complete stop, and refrain from smoking until you are inside the terminal building. On behalf of the entire crew, it has certainly been our pleasure having you on board this morning and we look forward to seeing you on our next flight. Once again, please remain seated until the seat belt sign goes off. Thank you. *(Pause, then voice clearer and louder)* Mrs. Graham?

Voice of Rose: Yes?

Voice of Stewardess: Your son is here to meet you. He'll be right at the door when it opens.

Voice of Rose: Really? My son himself? Are you sure?

Voice of Stewardess: That's what I'm told. I have your raincoat right here. Did you have just your handbag and cane, no carry-on luggage?

Voice of Rose: That's all, yes. Thank you so much. I didn't think he would be able to meet me himself at this time of day.

Voice of Stewardess: Well, you must be very special to your son. He's a busy man, isn't he?

Voice of Rose: Yes, he certainly is.

Voice of Stewardess: We've had him on this flight several times. In fact, just a few weeks ago I think he sat in that same seat. There *(bell dings)*, why don't you stay in your seat just a moment longer and I'll let Mr. Graham come on board. *(To another passenger)* Excuse me, sir, I'm going to ask you to wait just a moment; she's blind, and we'll

be taking her off first. Well hello, Mr. Graham. Are you looking for someone?

Voice of Richard: Oh, hi, how are you? Hello mother.

Voice of Rose: Richard, dear, you're so good to come and meet me yourself! I thought Anne -

Voice of Richard: Oh, no, I wanted to come. Good excuse to get out of the office. There you go.

Voice of Stewardess: Goodbye.

Voice of Rose: Thank you so much. You were both very kind.

Voice of Stewardess: It was our pleasure. See you next time.

Voice of Richard: There's just this one step, now it's a straight ramp. How was your flight?

Voice of Rose: Oh, fine, it's really very fast, isn't it? I listened to some music, and by the time my ears got tired of those earphones, we were here.

Sounds of airport terminal.

Man's voice: Excuse me, Mr. Graham, I wonder if I could just get a quick comment on the Peterson -

Voice of Richard: Excuse us, thank you. Now Mother, we just have to go down this way to get your baggage.

Voice of Rose: All right, there's just the one brown suitcase with a yellow ribbon tied to the handle.

Voice of Richard: I know. Charlotte called the minute she put you on the plane.

Voice of Rose: You'd better check the name tag as well - (*drowned out*)

Another man: (*Loud*) Mr. Graham! Mr. Graham!

Sounds fade. Slowly, three lights begin to glow on stage: a television set in the dining room, on our left, another in the living room, on our right, and an aquarium in the center of the stage, against the wall that partially separates these two rooms. The home is furnished in the fashion and technology of the 1970s.

As Tom reads the following news bulletin, daylight comes up. At the foot of the stage, living room and dining room are connected. The kitchen is offstage left. The dining room table is set for luncheon. On a buffet along the side wall are plates of cold cuts, salad, and an electric coffee pot. The TV is on the buffet. The set in the living room is below a window in the right wall, which is the street side of the Graham house. These TVs remain on throughout the play except where indicated, but they only show a dim, scrambled signal when the news team is not speaking.

Toward the back of the living room on the right is a foyer, a step or two higher than the living and dining rooms. The front door and a curtained window beside it look onto the house's front porch. From the foyer one goes upstairs to the left, behind the aquarium wall and dining room. Across the foyer, at the rear of the stage, we see through an open door into Richard's study.

Anne stands in the center of the living room, watching the news. She is Wellesley-educated, efficient-looking, attractively and fashionably dressed, nearly always with a cigarette. Rusty comes downstairs into the foyer, wearing a nightgown. They stare at one another in mutual disapproval before Anne speaks.

Tom: Lawyers for former Arizona Governor Dan Peterson, appealing his conviction last month on bribery charges, filed a brief this morning in federal court charging that the FBI illegally bugged the Governor's Mansion in Phoenix. The brief does not directly refute the testimony of Albert Bandelli, a highway contractor who confessed to bribing Governor Peterson in connection with interstate highway construction last year. However, the brief states that Bandelli made his statement only after investigators had confronted him with a transcript of a conversation between himself and the Governor. No such transcript was introduced as evidence in Peterson's trial, and it is not known at this hour whether a copy exists.

Anne: *(Over Tom's last four words)* Your father is going to be home any minute with Grandma.

Rusty: So? *(Goes to dining room, pours herself a mug of coffee.)*

Tom: FBI Director Arthur Brown issued a statement denying Bureau involvement in the Peterson case. He said it was his understanding that Arizona law enforcement personnel had been assisted by some information from Phoenix officials of the General Services Administration, which oversees federal purchasing. At his weekly press conference this morning, Attorney General Richard Graham said the Justice Department would investigate the allegations made by Governor Peterson's attorneys.

Anne and Rusty each attend to the TV sets, where Richard appears behind an array of microphones.

Richard: *(On videotape)* We've only just learned of Governor Peterson's allegation. I will ask the appropriate people in this Department to investigate, and the Bureau will answer the allegation in due course. *(Richard can be seen through the window curtain, helping Rose to the porch. He opens the door and guides her into the foyer, carrying her suitcase.)* I don't have any other information at the moment, except that accusations in the past of illegal surveillance by the FBI have proved to be false.

Rose: *(Cheerily, as Tom reappears on TV)* Hello!

Anne comes over to greet Rose, as Richard's attention is caught by Tom.

Tom: The new allegations by Governor Peterson's attorneys revive his claims, before and during the trial, that he was the victim of a campaign engineered by the White House to discredit him and put him out of contention as a challenger to the President. You will recall that Attorney General Graham, one of the President's oldest friends, was also his campaign manager five years ago, and a key strategist in last year's reelection campaign. In other news, ... *(fades)*

Richard: How they manage to say it without saying it!

Rose: Say what? (*Leaves her cane by the front door as she comes in. She uses touch to guide herself through the rooms. Other than not quite looking at others when they speak or at the TV when she listens to it, Rose has the matter-of-fact competence of a person who has been blind for most of her life.*)

Rusty: (*Approaching her grandmother*) Daddy, did you bug Dan Peterson's office so you could put him out of contention in the election?

Richard: (*Answering Rose by reference to Rusty's words*) That.

Rose: Hello, dear. (*Embracing Rusty, feeling her nightgown, her face and hair*) My, are you just getting up? Well that's good, you're taking advantage of your last week of vacation, eh?

Rusty: Hi, Grandma.

Anne: (*To Richard*) What was that all about?

Richard: Absolutely nothing, as usual.

Rusty: I don't get it. How is it going to help Governor Peterson to claim there was a tape recording made when that guy bribed him?

Richard: Baby, at this moment I don't know any more about the Peterson case than you do. We'll all read about it tomorrow in the Post.

Rusty: If he admits he took a bribe, how can he appeal his conviction?

Richard: If his lawyers could prove an illegal tape was used to intimidate a star witness, they could get the whole case thrown out.

Rusty: But then he's admitting he's guilty!

Richard: He wouldn't have to admit anything. But don't worry, the FBI isn't in the business of bugging governors' offices.

Anne: (*Inbred manners on automatic drive*) Rose, you haven't eaten, have you?

Rose: Perhaps I'll unpack first, and just catch my breath. Richard, you go ahead and eat, I know you have to get over to the White House.

Anne: I'll show you upstairs. It's been so long since you were here! Two years, isn't it? We've redone your room ... (*Follows Rose upstairs.*)

Richard and Rusty move to the dining room. She rolls up a slice of meat and sits down with her coffee. He prepares a plate of food.

Richard: I love your costume. Are you going to a masquerade ball this afternoon?

Rusty: I thought I'd ball the gardener.

Richard: That's nice. Properly speaking, wouldn't he be the one to ball you?

Rusty: That, too.

Richard: I'm sure you made just the impression you wanted to make on Grandma.

Rusty: I don't have to impress her. She's your mother, not mine.

Richard: Did you put in your appearance like that for your mother's benefit? Or my benefit?

Rusty: (*Unfolds a napkin and tucks it in the top of her nightgown, carefully arranging it with mock modesty.*) The gardener is black.

Richard: (*Mock horror*) No!

Rusty: You're shocked!

Richard: (*Quietly, indicating kitchen*) Is William here?

Rusty: He has classes every day till four.

Richard: I am, I am truly shocked, that you would think I don't know the gardener.

Rusty: What's his name?

Richard: Satchmo.

Rusty: Racist.

Richard: His name is Burton. I can't even joke with you.

Rusty: He's a Jew, you know.

Richard: Now that is shocking. A Negro Jew!

Rusty: He has a twelve-inch cock.

Richard: Then be careful.

Rusty: Why don't you take me seriously?

Richard: Why do you try so hard to shock me?

Rusty: Don't flatter yourself.

Richard: If you're trying to show me you're mature enough to live in an apartment, you're having the opposite effect.

Rusty: I didn't even bring it up. But since you did, I have to mail the application today. (*Getting it from living room*) You just sign right here.

Richard: I told you. I disapprove.

Rusty: In your capacity as chief law enforcement officer?

Richard: As father. In my professional capacity, the only thing I find surprising is that they still require your parents' permission.

Rusty: Me too! It's unconstitutional, isn't it?

Richard: If it isn't, it soon will be. Why don't you wait until then to entertain your gentlemen acquaintances overnight?

Rusty: It doesn't occur to you sex might have nothing to do with it.

Richard: I was out of law school before I had my own apartment.

Rusty: And it wasn't easy getting it on with the lady law students in the dorm, was it?

Richard: It wasn't easy getting it on with them, period!
(*Satisfied with having elicited at least a smile from Rusty.*) I thought you said sex had nothing to do with this apartment idea.

Rusty: No, I said it doesn't occur to you sex might have nothing to do with it. Will you sign it, or not?

Richard: What I don't understand is, why should it be easy?

Rusty: Forget it.

Richard: I've got to go. Tell your mother I'll try to be home by six.

Rusty: Grandma should be flattered.

Richard: Grandma deserves your respect as well as mine. (*Starts to exit through foyer, meets Anne coming downstairs.*) I'll try to be home by seven.

Anne: Why? (*They glare at one another; he leaves; she comes down into dining room.*) Are you going to be here around 4:30 when William gets back?

Rusty: I don't know, maybe.

Anne: Never mind, I'll leave him a note.

Rusty: I need you to sign this permission for me to live off campus.

Anne: In what? A brothel?

Rusty: Let's cut the crap. The General hassled me enough for both of you, okay?

Anne: (*Signing the form*) When Grandma comes down, give her lunch and pretend to be a nice young lady, please. I explained to her that I have to go out.

Rusty: Where?

Anne: I'll think of someplace. (*Exit, through kitchen.*)

Rusty: Have you got a lover?

Anne: (*Coming back in*) Shut up. Where I go, four afternoons a week, is to a couch, but unfortunately not with a lover.

Rusty: Oh. (*Pause*) You're in analysis? Why didn't you ever tell me before?

Anne: You never asked. Not that's any of your business. (*Exit.*)

Rusty: Is he Jewish?

Rusty sits at the table alone for a few moments. She is more adult and more sensitive than either parent acknowledges. Rose comes downstairs and smoothly negotiates her way into the dining room. She has changed clothes. Rusty remains perfectly still, watching her.

Rose: Well, Rusty!

Rusty: Well, Grandma! How did you know it was me?

Rose: You were so quiet. Richard or Anne would have jumped up right away. No, no, stay where you are, you know I can manage. (*Conspiratorially*) I've been warned about you.

Rusty: Would you, uh, would you like lunch now? Mother had to go out.

Rose: All I want is a cup of that coffee.

Rusty: Sure. Sit down.

Rose: I must say, even after all these years I can't get used to your Daddy being such an important man. We were driving home from the airport, and the driver answered the telephone, and it was the President.

Rusty: Cream and sugar?

Rose: Please. Richard wasn't very happy about having to go to the White House this afternoon. He had to call his office and change a lot of appointments. He was sweet to pick me up himself instead of sending the car for me.

Rusty: When I came home in June, I had to take a cab. Cost me fifteen bucks.

Rose: When do you go back to Providence?

Rusty: Two weeks. There, can you do without a saucer? We're pretty informal around here.

Rose: I see that.

Rusty: What?

Rose: I mean you're still in your nightgown.

Rusty: Oh. Yeah. That outfit you're wearing looks nice, Grandma.

Rose: Thank you. *(Pause)* You're wondering how I matched the blouse to the skirt. Your Aunt Charlotte tells me what I can wear with what.

Rusty: Oh.

Rose: You should have seen me when I was your age. I wouldn't let anyone tell me... I dressed strictly by touch!

Rusty: I've seen pictures of you. You were pretty.

Rose: Those were black and white pictures. Anyway, your grandfather was color blind, so he didn't care; but when Charlotte was only around seven or eight, she started in on both of us. And she's been telling me what to wear ever since... forty years. *(Pause)* Well, have you had a good summer?

Rusty: Grandma, you're going to be here a month, aren't you?

Rose: Well, I thought a few weeks, if it won't disrupt anyone's plans.

Rusty: As you can see, you didn't disrupt anything.

Rose: Well, that's just the way I want it. I don't want to be treated like a guest.

Rusty: Then I ought to warn you, Grandma, this is a real no-bullshit family. You know what I mean?

Rose: No... not exactly.

Rusty: We don't bullshit each other. We don't pretend feelings we don't have. We don't pretend to be what we're not. *(Pause)* You don't know what I'm talking about, do you? Listen, right next door, four kids, the oldest is about fourteen, the other three aren't even in high school yet. All four kids are into drugs, the parents pretend they don't know. And on the other side of us, the Friedmans, they sleep around, they're strung out on

booze, and the kids pretend they don't know. They're bullshitting each other, and they're bullshitting themselves. Know what I mean?

Rose: Is there a nicer word you can use?

Rusty: No, that's the point! Bullshit is bullshit! You have to call it what it is! But we just never have been that way with each other. I'm not into bullshitting Mother and Daddy and they're not into bullshitting me. If I stay out all night, I don't pretend I was sleeping over at a girlfriend's. If they aren't speaking to each other, they don't pretend they are. We don't put on a show for the help, either. The reason I'm saying this is because in the past, I think, our relationship with you has been full of bullshit. But I'm sure you agree that it's more respectful of you if we're completely honest.

Rose: No, I don't agree.

Rusty: I don't think you have a choice, if you stay here three weeks... even three days. You're going to find out all is not sweetness and harmony between the Attorney General and his lovely, charming wife.

Rose: Dear, you always were one to exaggerate. Your parents are the happiest couple I know.

Rusty: Really? You must know some real winners. (*Serves Rose a lunch plate.*) Here, I'll see you later. (*Exit upstairs*)

Rose: What on earth was that child talking about?

Blackout

Scene 2. Evening.

Tom: The Equal Rights Amendment failed in two more states today, ... (*Fades to a murmur.*)

Rose is sitting in the living room, listening to the TV. William enters from the kitchen.

Rose: Hello.

William: (*He has the clipped accent of Nigeria.*) How do you do, mum. Mrs. Graham asked me to introduce myself.

Rose: How do you do? I understand you are a member of the family.

William: Well, I don't know about that, mum. (*Polite laugh*) Thank you.

Rose: And what is your name?

William: Maimbolwa. William James. May I get you a drink before dinner, mum?

Rose: Oh, goodness, no, thank you, Mr. - Maimbolwa? They tell me you are a student from Ghana?

William: No, mum, from Nigeria. (*Laugh*) Please call me William.

Rose: Oh, Nigeria? And where do you study?

William: Georgetown University, mum, School of Business. (*Laugh*) Please excuse me now, I must attend to dinner.

Anne: (*Entering from kitchen*) I'm back!

William: Can I get you anything, mum? (*Into kitchen, passing her.*)

Anne: (*Distractedly*) No. The St. Emilion I bought is for dinner.

Rose: Such a polite young man.

Anne: I don't know, he laughs too much. Cordon bleu cook, though, that's the main thing.

Rose: So Rusty tells me.

Anne: Has she been entertaining you?

Rose: Yes. Indeed. She told me this is a "no bull" family, marriage is an obsolete institution, and there's no such thing as a fifteen-year-old virgin in the United States.

Anne: You mustn't let Rusty frighten you, she's like a good watchdog. Scares the hell out of strangers, but her bark is worse than her bite.

Rose: I knew she was exaggerating. Then she isn't really ... promiscuous?

Anne: Not as promiscuous as she'd like to be.

Rose: Well, as long as it's only talk, I guess they go through that stage nowadays, eh? I won't worried about it if you're not worried.

Anne: Oh, I wouldn't say that. I'm her mother, I can't help being worried. But I'm not stupid. I'm not one of those parents who pretend their little angel is different from the rest. Until they have to go down to the police station and bail them out, or take them to New York for an abortion. No, I have no illusions about Rusty. I can't stand her, but I'm not going to try to change her, because there's no hope of that. We'll always be oil and water.

Rose: Oh, you don't mean that. Can I help you with dinner?

Anne: *(Stares at Rose for a moment. She might be wondering what sort of help a blind woman would be to a cook; or how Rose has dismissed everything she said.)* There's not much for me to do, actually. Why don't you just sit? *(Exit to kitchen.)*

Rose walks around the room, explores the objects on the end tables, feels the leather of the arm chair. William enters dining room and begins to set the table for dinner.

Rose: I'd forgotten this. His father's chair. *(She sits down, thoughtfully.)* Richard's aquarium, like he had as a boy. *(Chuckles at the memory.)*

Richard enters the front door, agitated, sees Rose and tries to go into study before she hears him.

Rose: Richard?

Richard: (*Putting briefcase down reluctantly*) Hello, Mother.

Rose: How was your day?

Richard: Have they said anything about the Peterson case yet?

Rose: No, I don't believe so. Is that what you were discussing with the President?

Richard: (*Collecting himself*) He sent you his regards, by the way.

Rose: He didn't.

Richard: He did. He said, "Tell your Mom Bob says hi."

Rose: Are you teasing me? He is a sweet man, to remember me. Why don't you sit down? I was remembering how your father always stretched out in this chair for a half hour when he got home. Is that an aquarium?

Richard: Um hm.

Rose: Are there a lot of fish?

Richard: Only two: they're Siamese fighting fish. They have to be kept apart by a glass partition, or they kill each other.

Rose: Goodness. I thought people kept tropical fish for their tranquility.

Richard: They're wonderful for my tranquility. On a particularly bad day, I come home, pull out the partition, and watch them tear each other to pieces. They float to the surface, as tranquil as can be; and they're easily replaced.

Rose: I'll go and tell Anne you're home.

Richard: No, there's no - okay, why don't you do that? (*She exits to kitchen.*)

Tom: There were conflicting statements this afternoon regarding the means used to persuade an Arizona highway contractor to confess to charges of bribing former Governor Dan Peterson. In Washington, FBI Director Arthur Brown reiterated his denial that Governor Peterson had been under electronic surveillance by the Bureau. Brown said the contractor, Albert Bandelli, confessed to the bribery after being confronted with evidence gathered by Arizona state investigators. "FBI agents were not involved in any way," Brown insisted. However, the *Phoenix Star* reported today that an unnamed state official admitted having received a transcript of the conversation in which Peterson accepted the bribe, and that he showed this transcript to Bandelli, but not to the Governor, on February 27 of last year. That was the same day Bandelli signed the confession which led to his conviction and to Governor Peterson's conviction on the same charges.

Richard: What about the \$50,000 Peterson deposited in his sister's bank account the next morning, which happened to match the serial numbers of the bills Bandelli had withdrawn from his own bank? You don't bother to mention that, do you, asshole?

He takes off his jacket. Rusty comes downstairs in tight jeans and a t-shirt bearing the word "Cocaine" in imitation of the Coca-Cola logo.

Rusty: Talking to someone?

Richard: Do you know you could be arrested for wearing that shirt?

Rusty: I have diplomatic immunity.

Richard: Don't count on it. That's for foreign ambassadors.

Rusty: Why couldn't you have been an ambassador?

Richard: Why, would you like to live in Russia?

Rusty: How about Morocco? (*Pulls the neck of her t-shirt up over her nose, simulating a veil.*)

Richard: They'd love you in Morocco. I don't like that shirt.

Rusty: No one's asking you to wear it.

Richard: For your grandmother's sake, go change it, will you?
(*He has not been able to take his attention fully away from the TV.*)

Rusty: For Grandma's sake!?! If she tries to read the lettering I'll slap her hand. (*Pause*) Did you hear the item they had on just before I came downstairs? Well, what about it? Who's lying? You must know, don't you?

Richard: Everyone's lying. What do you think?

Rusty: Top secret, huh?

Richard: (*Wearily*) No secrets, just confusion. Since when are you interested in the problems of the Justice Department?

Rusty: Maybe I'll go to law school, follow the family tradition.

Richard: Dressed like that, you won't get in.

Rusty: I'm not stupid.

Richard: What kind of grades did you make last year?

Rusty: Funny you never asked me that until I mentioned law school.

Richard: Out of respect for you, as an independent adult.

Rusty: Out of neglect, you mean.

Richard: You poor thing.

Rusty: Why don't you answer my question? (*Sitting down*) Are you mixed up in that Peterson business?

Richard: No. I'm not "mixed up" in anything. You sound like a gangster movie. (*Pause, looking at TV screen*) They do manage to make it sound like I had something to do with it, don't they?

Rusty: Didn't you? He was the enemy?

Richard: Not my enemy.

Rusty: You managed Bob's campaign.

Richard: Don't call him Bob. He is the President. As you know.

Rusty: And Peterson was climbing up in the polls.

Richard: So, I guess I had the FBI bug his office to see if they could come up with any dirt on him. I've got your room bugged, too. And your car. Hidden cameras, videotape, the works. We know everything you do. We've got secret files on all your friends.

Rusty: Okay, okay, you don't have to be sarcastic. All I did was ask you a question. *(Pause)* Wouldn't you be pleased to have another lawyer in the family?

Richard: I'd be surprised, more than anything. But you've got a couple of years yet to decide.

Rusty: What are you going to do after you graduate?

Richard: *(Smiles, still watching TV.)* That could be sooner than you think.

Rusty: We could go into practice together.

Richard: *(Suddenly stares at her.)* That is the nicest thing you've said to me in about ten years. *(Sits down beside her)* I've never practiced law. A law professor isn't really a lawyer. Well, I suppose I haven't "professed" much, either. I've been a politician for twenty years, which is no better than being a lawyer. But what I want to do after this job is go back to teaching. Not practice. The truth is, I love the law, I don't like lawyers much. The legal "profession". The legal profession in the United States is responsible for distorting people's whole understanding of what the law is all about; for the deterioration of - of values.

Rusty: I thought that was the fault of rock 'n roll and girls who don't wear bras.

William: *(Entering)* Excuse me, sir *(laugh)*, scotch?

Richard: Yeah. *(William exits.)*

Rusty: Why doesn't he ever ask me?

Richard: I told him not to. (*Changing his tone*) Hey, would you like a drink?

Rusty: Yeah.

Richard: Scotch? (*She nods, he goes to kitchen door and speaks to William, then returns.*)

Rusty: Wow, what did I do, what did I say?

Richard: It must be that shirt. (*Restlessly, he sits on couch.*) When I "graduate", as you put it, I'm going to write a book. Not a law book; a best-seller type of book, about -

Rusty: About the degeneration of values.

Richard: No, and now you're being sarcastic. About the law. What it is and what it is not.

Rusty: And what it's not is - ?

Richard: It's not a substitute for morality. The idea that one is innocent until proven guilty: that was supposed to mean innocent in the eyes of the law. One might still be guilty in a moral sense. The law was never meant to establish right and wrong. It's only a set of procedures for resolving conflicts, and providing us recourse when our lives or property are threatened. Threatened by a few - there will always be a certain number of people who live by no code except what they can get away with. But if we had depended on the law to keep every man from robbing and killing his neighbor, the human race would have extinguished itself a million years ago.

During this speech William has brought two glasses, ice, and Scotch, which Richard pours.

Rusty: (*Haughtily*) Thank you, William. (*He exits.*)

Richard: And if we continue in the direction we're going, where no individual, no corporation, no civil servant is morally culpable for anything unless actually convicted and sentenced, and even then only if they're unsuccessful in appealing all the way to the Supreme Court on every technicality their lawyers can think of - we're relying on the law to do something it was not

intended for and is incapable of doing. You're going to see every man, woman, and child armed to the teeth, and winner take all.

Rusty: Looting time in the ghetto?

Richard: Everywhere. It's already here. And I'm not talking about the poor, I'm talking about everybody out for whatever they can get away with, by whatever means, from whomever looks most vulnerable.

Rusty: All because no one believes in God any more?

Richard: (*Annoyed*) As a matter of fact, the decline in faith has a lot to do with it. Fine, go ahead, be a lawyer.

Anne and Rose enter from kitchen. Anne is disturbed by seeing Richard and Rusty in friendly conversation. She feels excluded, threatened.

Rusty: Where does Peterson fit in?

Richard: He'll get off scot free, if they violated his rights. It's a technical issue, actually: No transcript was introduced against him, but Bandelli's confession was, and if that was extracted by showing Bandelli evidence which had been gathered illegally, well - so far as the law is concerned, he may be absolutely right. I mean if he was bugged illegally, it would be absolutely correct to reverse his conviction. I'd be right there suing the State of Arizona on behalf of its own crooked Governor's civil rights. But that doesn't mean he isn't a crook! That doesn't make the son-of-a-bitch a goddamn hero!

Rose: (*clearing her throat*) Ahem.

Rusty: Then his office was bugged?

Richard: How should I know?

Anne: Monsieur et mademoiselle sont servis. (*She has been drinking, while watching the TV news in the kitchen.*) S'il vous plait, a diner?

Rusty: What's your problem?

Anne: (*To Richard*) Something happen today?

Richard: Something happens every day. Our daughter wants to be a lawyer, that's what started me off.

Anne: (*Helping Rose into the dining room*) Oh, Richard Graham on lawyers. I've heard that speech a few times.

All seat themselves around the table, except Anne, who helps William serve a soup course. He holds the tureen as she serves each person.

Rose: It certainly smells good, William.

William: Thank you, mum. Mrs. Graham's recipe. (*Laughs*)

Rose: Are you a Christian?

William: Pardon?

Rose: I was wondering if you happen to be a Christian.

William: Yes, mum (*laughs*).

Rose: Do you still say grace, Richard?

Richard: I - we've sort of got out of the habit, Mother. Why don't you?

Rose: Oh. All right. (*Bows head and closes eyes, reaching out to clasp hands with Richard and Anne, who has sat down.*) Dear Lord, we thank Thee for bringing us together again, for this beautiful home, for this delicious meal, and for all Thy gifts in Jesus's name, amen.

Richard: Amen.

Rusty: Religion is the opium of the people.

Anne: You should know. (*William laughs with embarrassment and exits.*)

Richard: No, unfortunately, it's not. I wish it were. The opium of the people has become - opium.

Tom: ... a startling development in the Peterson case. This is Tom Thomason with the 7:00 edition of Evening News, and I'll have that story after these messages ...

Rusty: (*Watching Richard's reaction*) I was wondering, Daddy. Could the FBI have bugged his office and everything without you knowing about it?

Richard: I doubt it. They wouldn't have had any reason to. That's what our friends there are suggesting, though (*gesturing toward the TV*): that the President and I must have ordered it. They can't think of a reason why the FBI might have done it on their own.

Rusty: But if they did, if you didn't know about it, could you be held responsible?

Anne: Rusty, shut up, will you?

Rusty: I'm trying to learn -

Anne: Shut up!

Richard: It's all right! If I don't mind discussing it with her, what business is it of yours? (*Quarreling in front of Rose embarrasses him.*)

Exit Anne to kitchen, angrily. Telephone rings.

Tom: As he was leaving his office, moments ago, FBI Director Arthur Brown startingly reversed himself and told reporters that there was indeed a tape recording made when Arizona contractor Albert Bandelli bribed Governor Dan Peterson, and that Bandelli had been shown ...

William: (*Entering*) Excuse me, sir, telephone for you.

Richard goes swiftly to study, transfixed by TV on his way through the living room.

Tom: ... a transcript of that conversation before he confessed to the bribery charges. Brown insisted, however, that the Bureau was not involved in the taping. He said the transcript had been turned over to the FBI by an anonymous source, and he had then ordered it passed on to Arizona law enforcement officials. The Director would not say whether the identity of the source was unknown to the Bureau, or was being kept secret.

Anne enters, having heard the foregoing in the kitchen, highly disturbed.

Attorney General Richard Graham, usually accessible to reporters, is having all calls to his home intercepted by his staff this evening.

Anne: *(to Richard)* What the hell? *(Then to Rusty)* Did you know that? *(Rusty shakes her head.)*

Tom: White House chief advisors have refused comment on whether the Peterson matter was among the topics discussed when Graham met with the President this afternoon.

Richard: *(Can be seen and heard in study)* Hello. Yes, put him through. Bill? What the hell? *(Pause)* What is Brown doing? What kind of a bonehead play is he – no, of course I didn't know. I haven't talked with him since this morning. Just as I told you, everything was under control then. None of you talked to him after our meeting? What about the President? Are you sure?

In the dining room, all continue watching the news, Rusty and Rose still seated but not eating, Anne and William standing.

Listen. If Brown thinks he can keep the Bureau out of this while the rest of us go down in flames, he's – Look, I'll get him at home and call you right back. Where are you? What? *(Pause)* Why should you call him? Are you sure you didn't know about this? Well – *(beginning to be shaken out of his tough posture)* If you don't mind, Bill, I think I should talk with the President before he talks to Arthur. Arthur may not know everything the President knows about it. Or does he know more than I thought? *(Long pause)* Okay. He is the President, yes. But tell him to call me right away, will you? Ask him to please call me. And Bill, let's not react too hastily, eh? We have to be very careful – Bill? Bill? *(Hangs up slowly, pensively.)*

Doorbell rings. William comes to answer it, but Richard rushes from study and stops him.

Hold it! Don't open it. *(Goes to foyer window, parts curtain.)*

We glimpse Tamara on front porch. She turns, and is about to say something when he closes the curtain.

Don't open the door, you understand? (*Returns to phone, dials, while William stands awkwardly by door.*) This is Attorney General Graham. We're being bothered by a reporter out here, and there may be more. You know the house, don't you? Thanks.

Doorbell sounds again. Rusty crosses into living room.

William: Sir, dinner is -

Richard: Keep it warm for a few minutes, will you? No (*to Rusty*), go ahead and eat without me. Go on!

Rusty: Daddy? Who's at the door?

Anne goes to street-facing window, looks out.

Richard: No one. A reporter. Don't open it. Go on and have dinner. I'm waiting for a call, I'll be there in a minute.

Anne: Richard, there are trucks in front of the house. (*Accusingly*) Television trucks, God damn it.

Richard: You think I invited them? Calm down, will you? I've already called the police. We're not going to be bothered at home.

William: Shall I serve the salad, mum?

Anne: No.

William returns to kitchen. Doorbell rings once more.

Richard: (*In living room*) Sit down, both of you, please. I want to explain this to you. (*To Rusty*) Help Grandma come over here, too. (*To Anne*) I know what you're thinking, and I couldn't agree more. But you did marry me, so let's keep our cool, eh? Will you please sit down?

She remains standing. Rusty and Rose sit. Richard peeks through the porch window curtain.

She's gone. Listen to me, all of you. We've been through crises before. This one is going to look worse than it really is for awhile, okay? It looks like we used the FBI illegally, which we did not. But the truth, which has nothing to do with the Bureau or with the Justice Department at all, would embarrass the President politically. So we may choose not to explain where that transcript actually came from. We may just tough it out and let the accusations die for lack of proof. That's all you need to know. What I've just told you must be kept absolutely secret. We're going to sit tight here in the house tonight, and in the morning we'll see where we stand.

Anne: *(After glaring at him a few seconds, unbelieving)* Don't include me in that "we".

Richard: All of us! No one goes out, no one comes in.

Rusty: I don't get it. So you're saying his office was bugged? By whom?

Richard: For the record, we don't know anything about any bugging, or any transcript. None of that happened at the federal level, if there even was any taping. Bandelli confessed in hope of getting a deal by turning state's evidence; which he did. Later he made up the transcript business to claim he had been coerced.

Rusty: But the truth is - ?

Richard: *(Choosing his words carefully)* The truth is - and what I'm telling you is in strictest confidence - the truth is that Peterson's office was bugged by some private individuals in Arizona, for reasons of their own.

Anne: Liar.

Richard: When they heard the tape of Bandelli and Peterson, they sent it to - well, they sent it to me - by way of the Party, not the government - and we had to decide what to do about it. I think we made the right decision, showing it to Bandelli. He practically begged the Bureau then, to let him rat out the Governor. But

we didn't want the part about the taping to get out, in order to prevent this from happening. That's all. That's the whole story.

Rose: Well, that's a perfectly good explanation.

Rusty: So it's true. You used illegally obtained evidence to convict Peterson.

Richard: On the contrary: the tape and the transcript were never introduced as evidence. They weren't necessary. There was Bandelli's own testimony, plus the serial numbers on the bills.

Rusty: But they would not have got him to testify if you hadn't confronted him with the tape.

Richard: So far as the investigators were concerned, I would have been violating the law if I had withheld that evidence from them.

Anne: Richard, I'd like to talk with you alone for a minute.

Richard: I've got to make a call.

Richard goes into study and closes door. Anne fumes, lighting a cigarette and pacing like a caged animal. She kicks the study door. The others turn their attention to the TV screen. William, clearing dishes from dining room, also stops to watch.

Tom: This bulletin just in: Reliable sources at the Justice Department have revealed the name of the "source" from whom the FBI received the transcript of a conversation between Arizona Governor Dan Peterson and the highway contractor who later confessed to bribing him. The source is said to be the Attorney General himself. Tamara Glass is in Alexandria at the Graham home with more on the story.

Tamara: *(On TV in front of house exterior)* Thank you, Tom. A small crowd is beginning to gather here across the street from that house, in which Attorney General Richard Graham has sequestered himself with his family. Police are not letting us get any closer to the house than this. Mr. Graham was, of course, the President's official campaign manager five years ago, and unofficially managed the reelection campaign last year from his

office in the Justice Department. Governor Peterson, as you'll recall, Tom, had been regarded as the President's strongest challenger until his indictment on bribery charges. So the fact that the illegal wiretap evidence that convicted the Governor came personally from the Attorney General revives rumors in Washington about a special intelligence unit. Some opponents of the President believe that his campaign committee financed political espionage and sabotage missions, under Mr. Graham's direction. Now back to New York.

Tom: In sports, ...

Rose: How can they be so malicious? Surely that's libel! Richard would never approve of something like that!

Anne: Wouldn't he? (*Opens door of study without knocking, but remains in foyer.*) Are you on hold? (*He looks at her without responding.*) I want you to know, I'm not going to play my part in this drama. (*Straining to keep her composure*) I've seen enough loyal wives play the part so that I know it by heart, and it makes me sick. I can't do it. I won't.

Rusty observes the ensuing dialogue uncomfortably. Rose sits rigidly, so that we cannot tell if she is tuned in to Richard and Anne, to the TV, or to her own thoughts.

Richard: (*To someone on the phone*) He's got to come to the phone. He said what? I see. Will you please ask him to call me as soon as possible. Thank you. (*Hangs up.*) "He's watching the news and suggests I do likewise." No way did Bob say that. I wonder if they even told him I was calling. It doesn't matter. He'll call me any minute now, regardless.

Anne: Did you hear what I said?

Richard: I heard, and I understand.

Anne: Do you?

Richard: (*Sigh*) It's not what you contracted for when you married me. You're a good partner, Anne, as long as things are going well. Charming hostess, intelligent companion, an adornment to me in every way, as they say. Even a good bridge partner. But you've always been

worthless in a crisis. I've always known if I came through okay, there you'd be afterward, business as usual, but if I went down, I'd go down alone. Loyalty and devotion have no meaning to you.

Anne: (*Backing out of his way as he storms out of his study*) Then why have I stayed with you all these years?

Richard: Because I always have come through a winner.

Anne: You made a big mistake in marrying me. You should have got a dog instead.

Richard: Instead of a bitch? You know, I don't think you're so goddamned superior. And I don't share your contempt for loyalty and selflessness. If you had ever loved me, you'd feel those instincts. You can kid yourself with any explanation you like; I've never thought you capable of that kind of love.

Anne: You bastard. There was a time when I would have died for you. You killed that. All you wanted was an adornment: a hostess, an escort.

Richard: Stuff it. You love that, you open the paper to the society page as soon as you wake up, just to read what dress you wore to the British Embassy the night before.

Anne: You project it all onto me, don't you? I'm the one who's contemptuous of others? I'm the one who who's incapable of feeling anything? Dr. Kaufman doesn't think so.

Richard: Fuck Dr Kaufman! I'll do without his services this evening, thank you.

Anne: I've said what I had to say. (*Exit upstairs.*)

Rusty: (*Jumps up, intercepting Richard before he can disappear into his study.*) Is it true, Daddy?

Richard: They didn't say anything different from what I told you, did they?

Rusty: I think they did. Is it true? You used an illegal wiretap against the President's opponent to extort a confession from the guy that bribed him, and never

revealed the fact to Peterson or his lawyers during the trial?

Richard: It was unnecessary to use that evidence in the trial. There was enough to convict him without it.

Rusty: "Attorney General." My God, how can you live with yourself?

Richard: I would have no trouble living with myself. It's living with the two of you that's a pain in the ass.

Rusty: All that bullshit about morals, about right and wrong
-

Richard: It's not bullshit! Look, baby, the world isn't as straightforward as these characters make it out to be. The press and the opposition are falling all over each other in a self-righteous campaign to - to do what? To expose discrepancies between the naïve fantasy of what goes on in Washington and the way things really work. They'd have you believe that our Administration invented politics. That's the bullshit. What's being exposed - and not for the first time, either, but people have short memories - is the game of hardball we inherited. It's power. Whoever's in power use their power as well as they can to make changes and to run things the way they believe things should be run. Whoever's out of power use every means at their disposal to make the ones who are in power look bad: incompetent, crooked, immoral. Preferably all three. It's as old as our form of government. It is our form of government! You know, baby, we've done more for justice and for civil rights, more to protect the rights of the individual against government interference, than the last four administrations put together. But that's not enough. To stay in power we also have to protect our images against their attempts to make us look like evil bastards. That means we can't sit around waiting for them to attack. We have to know what they're up to.

Rusty: And if an innocent man goes to jail - "innocent in the eyes of the law," quoting you - that doesn't bother you?

Richard: What are you talking about? The five hundred \$100 bills Bandelli took out of his bank on Wednesday were

deposited in the same bank on Thursday, in five different accounts under Peterson's sister's name. Why does she have five accounts? Because this was not a one time thing. He's been corrupt for years. I didn't make that transcript up. You want to hear the goddamn tape? (*Rushes into study, opens desk drawer, returns.*) Here! Here it is! Peterson was up to his ears in kickbacks since he was in junior high. We knew it, and he knew we knew it, and no one had been able to prove anything against him - until this came along.

Rusty regards the tape cassette as though it were a bomb about to explode.

This is the real world, baby. There's no such thing as an innocent man in politics. You know what? I've had guys go over every square inch of this house. They've taken the telephone apart, the lamps, everything. And I still can't be one hundred per cent sure someone isn't listening to this conversation we're having right now. Doesn't that excite you?

Rusty flees, upstairs. Tom appears on TV screen, silently looking up at Richard. Richard returns his hostile glare. After a minute, he shouts:

What the hell do you want?

Tom continues to stare at Richard in silence. Finally he looks down to the news script in his hand.

Rose: Richard? Richard?

BLACKOUT

Scene 3 Midnight

The bottle of Scotch on the coffee table is nearly empty. Richard and Anne are standing, and Rose is seated, all three holding drinks. The TV in the dining room is off. Richard is in shirtsleeves with his tie loosened and collar unbuttoned.

Tom: The eyes of the nation this evening were on the comfortable home in Alexandria, Virginia where Attorney General Richard Graham is believed to be preparing his statement of resignation. Tamara Glass has been outside the house since early evening. Tamara?

Richard: Believed by whom to be preparing his resignation?

Tamara: Thank you, Tom. No one has entered or left the Graham home this evening, and it might be just an ordinary night on this quiet street. (*Shot of street*)

Richard: Then why don't you get your ass out of here, bitch?

Tamara: The reason we're still here is the tense drama we know must be taking place inside that house ... A crowd has been gathering here since late this afternoon and there are now more than a hundred people, including one family in a camper from as far away as Pennsylvania, who have come to be part of this vigil ... And Tom, it is a vigil more than anything else ... We see a few signs calling for the Attorney General's resignation (*Shot of placard: "Attorney Criminal Graham OUT"*) and some of the folks are laughing and clowning around, but most are very quiet, even sad. The neighbors especially are thinking about the Graham family - his lovely wife, his teen-age daughter, his Mother who happens to be blind, isolating themselves in there to support him ... No American can help feeling sympathy for the Graham family as they stand loyally by the Attorney General, and no matter what may come to be proved against him we cannot help feeling the tragedy of a man who ...

Rose: If you'll excuse me, I'll be off to bed.

Richard: Everybody's excused tonight! Everybody but the fucking Attorney General.

Rose: You should go to bed, too, dear - you're taking it all too hard. Tomorrow I know the President will clear your good name. No one believes all those lies anyway,

Richard: Does the President of the United States believe him to be preparing a letter of resignation? ...

The President of the United States would like him to resign, the President would like him to take full responsibility and absolve the President and the President's aides of any knowledge whatsoever about the electronic surveillance of his political opponents ...

But does the President have the balls to talk with his Attorney General on the telephone? No! ...

They've only been friends for twenty years ...

In gratitude for which, the Attorney General is expected to cut his own balls off ...

And that son-of-a-bitch doesn't even pick up the phone himself to ask me to do that for him!

Jesus, what crap! (*Turns off TV.*)

Richard. You know enough to ignore such nonsense. When your father was accused of -

Anne: Rose, let's not go there tonight, okay? Should I help you get ready for bed?

Rose: No, dear, I know where everything is, and I'll ask Rusty for help if I need any. Good night, dear, God bless you. (*Kisses Anne and Richard.*) God bless you, Richard. (*Exit.*)

Anne: (*After Rose disappears upstairs*) She's not only blind, she's deaf.

Richard: She's loyal! That's all! (*Throws himself on the couch vacated by Rose.*)

Anne: Stop pretending you're drunk.

Richard: I'm not. I'm pretending I'm devil-may-care.

Anne: Well, you're doing a poor job of that.

Richard: And you, my darling, are the very picture of a loyal wife standing by her husband through thick and thin.

Anne: There hasn't been any thick. Only thin.

Richard: It's going to get thinner.

Anne: I'm not feeling sorry for myself, Richard. I'm sorry for you. I wish I could do whatever all the sympathetic Americans are sympathizing with me for doing, or saying: "My darling husband I believe in you and I know you're right no matter what you do." But I can't. I'm sorry.

Richard: (*Softened*) At least you're honest with me, that's a form of loyalty -

Anne: No I'm not! That was the first honest thing I've said to you in years.

Richard: (*Sighs, pouring the last of the Scotch in his glass.*) Do you want another drink?

Anne: No.

Richard: Must you stand with your back to me?

Anne: (*Turning part way toward him*) It frightens me to look at you. I'm not used to seeing you helpless and awkward and - really desperate. I look at you and all I think is that you did everything they're accusing you of, all they're insinuating, and more.

Richard: I'm not ashamed of anything I've done.

Anne: It's not shame I feel. It's - emptiness.

Richard: I gave you what you wanted - a prominent husband, a glamorous social life, -

Anne: That was never what I wanted, you snotty bastard! I grew up with a glamorous social life, and it bored me to tears. Washington bores me, too, and it's the only life I have, but it's not what I - (*chokes*)

Richard: You are feeling sorry for yourself.

Anne: (*Controlling her tears*) Maybe I am, but not because of what this scandal or whatever you call it will do to my social life. It's just that today has tested me - forced me to admit the truth about our marriage.

Richard: And now you're going to share that truth with me. No, thank you, I have other problems at the moment.

Anne: Our problems are worse than those "other problems."

Richard: Our problem is that you're just no damn good in a crisis. You're worse than no damn good. You're a positive liability. A week from now, when all this has blown over, you won't see this "truth" as truth any more. Your satisfaction with our marriage waxes and wanes with the Gallup poll - so why should I listen to your revelations now, when you're only going to reverse yourself next week? Jesus Christ! You're the one who's drunk!

Anne: I've never been more sober! It's this day-it broke down something that kept me from facing the facts about you.

Richard: Let's all jump on Richard now that he's down.

Anne: About us, I mean. There used to be another aspect to our relationship, that stopped some time ago. You remember?

Richard: There still is. Our needs have obviously decreased, that's all. We're older. We're busier.

Anne: Mine haven't.

Richard: What is that supposed to mean?

Anne: Just that there used to be more to our marriage than our glamorous social life. And age has nothing to do with it.

Richard: I haven't noticed you expressing any needs along those lines lately.

Anne: There wouldn't have been any response if I had.

Richard: Is that an indictment of me, or of you? (*Embarrassed*) Goddamnit, don't be crude! I'm not the cause of your problems, sexual or otherwise.

Anne: Well, you sure as hell aren't the cure, either.

Richard: I never said I was. In fact, I gave you exactly what I contracted for.

Anne: (*Screams*) Life is not a goddamn contract!

Richard: Marriage is.

Anne: It is not! Or if it is, it's a contract that can be broken.

Richard: Don't you threaten me! (*Charges her, grabs her by the shoulders; she drops her glass.*) Don't even think about leaving me now!

Anne: You're hurting me!

Richard: Hurting you? You bitch, I'll kill you before I'll be humiliated by you or any other woman or any fucking President of the United States, either, understand? I haven't worked my tail off to put you where you are only to have you abandon me like rats off a sinking ship. (*Releases her with a force that knocks her off balance; she falls to the floor, more frightened than hurt. Enraged, fists clenched, he looks for a moment as though he might kick her.*) 'Cause this is one ship that isn't going to sink, see? You're wrong, all of you! You rats had better stay on board this fucking ship. 'Cause if I don't sink, I'm gonna drown any rats that didn't stay

on board. Now, do you want to be one of those rats, you little bitch? Or do you want to grow up and start accepting some responsibility - *(Anne has risen and starts to run upstairs; he grabs her.)* Huh? *(She stares at him, paralyzed.)* Oh my God, Anne, I'm sorry. My darling, I am so, so sorry. *(Presses her to his body, kisses her.)* You've got to forgive me, my darling, for taking it out on you -

Anne: Please - let me go.

Richard: Will you forgive me, Anne? The strain -

Anne: Yes, only please, let me go. *(Runs upstairs.)*

Richard: *(When she is out of sight)* Pathetic bitch. Never had a human feeling in her. She's not a human being. I married a goddamn robot. Wasn't in love with me, she was in love with my picture in a magazine. Well goddamn it, I fulfilled my end of the contract, "the eyes of the goddamn nation this evening were on the comfortable home where - " Bullshit. You wanted fame, baby, you got fame now. I wanted love and all I got was - what? "The lovely wife of the Attorney General announced this evening that he fails to meet her needs." Because she goddamn doesn't turn him on, that's why. Lovely wife of the former Attorney General. Those bastards. They set this whole thing up to cut me out. And he swallowed it hook, line, and sinker. He always was a sucker. *(Shouts)* I always played straight with yo, you stupid son-of-a-bitch! Those *(gesturing to the TV)* guys are probably working for somebody; the CIA, probably. Not the FBI - shit, the FBI is supposed to work for me. Goddamn FBI, Brown, should have been able to keep the lid on this. Oh, those bastards knew about it, all right. Arthur Brown knew it was going to come out. He'd love to be rid of me. He's in it with them. Bob, you pussy, can't you see? Gotta tell him. Get through to him now when they're not there. *(Picks up phone and dials)* Wake up, Bob, you pussy. Hello, who's this? Let me speak to the President. The fucking President! This is Richard Graham, who the hell are you? *(Hangs up.)* They knew I'd be smart enough to call after midnight on the private line, the bastards have got a fucking fortress around him. What if Brezhnev needs to get through, you assholes! We could have World War III just because you're afraid I might talk the poor sap into listening to me instead of you. Got to keep my cool. I would have

been on my toes if I'd had any support from my family. Instead of having to cope with these three witches. Wife too busy psychogoddamnalyzing everyone to show any concern for me. Kid who wants to fuck anything in pants. Present company included, the way she flashes her tits around all day. Anne thinks it's just to piss her off - the paranoid bitch. That's only half of it. The little bitch is trying to distract me so I can't stay one step ahead of these bastards Stillman, and Rogers - and Brown, the bastard. What a stupid sucker I am. Why do I let these bastards with their hired bitches get the better of me? And then there's Mother. Irish Rose. Ha ha! What the hell is she doing here? Why did she come just this week? She'd sell me out in a minute. Why haven't I seen that before? What's that noise. Who's there? (*Goes to window facing street.*) They're still there. Son-of-a-bitch mob would tear the house down if the cops weren't there. There's that news bitch on the sidewalk, interviewing some asshole neighbor, putting words into his mouth. I just wonder who she's really working for. Incredible how they twist it any way they want it. (*Sees his father's picture on mantle or shelf.*) Father. The Honorable Frederick Graham. Peterson is small potatoes next to you, isn't he? Does Mom know the truth about you? You're having a good laugh now, aren't you, you bastard? (*Crosses to kitchen door.*) William!? Oh, there you are, come out here, will you?

William is in pajamas, a flannel robe, and slippers. He is carrying a textbook and a writing pad.

What's the name of that news bitch?

William: Which one, sir?

Richard: The one who's outside. I want you to take a note to her. Let me have a sheet of that paper.

William: I don't know her name, sir.

Richard: (*Writing*) You'll recognize her when you see her.

William: All white women look the same to me, sir.

Richard: I'll bet they do.

William: I'll go and dress.

Richard: No, for Christ's sake you don't have to get dressed. You're not going to be on TV.

William: I won't be a moment, sir.

Richard: No! Goddamn it, take this out there now and bring her back with you - show it to the policeman. (*Opens front door and pushes William out. Leaving door slightly ajar, he proceeds to straighten up the living room a bit, carrying the glasses, ashtrays, and Scotch to the kitchen.*) I've got news for you, boy: They all look the same to me, too. This one, though, she's different. She has fangs. She'll stop at nothing to get the story she wants. And what she wants is my ass! (*Laughs*) Richard, my boy, this could be the most important press interview of your life, boy, don't blow it. Now if I wanted some ass - (*laughs*) not that that ice-cold bitch could turn me on. But she's gonna sure as hell try, you watch. Try anything to get the dirt on me. She didn't get where she is without balling the right people at the right time. Damn! Somebody told me something about her and - who? (*Tries to remember.*) Screw it, she'd only be flattered, the bitch.

*Hearing footsteps on the porch, Richard hurries into study.
William ushers Tamara into the house, gestures toward living
room, knocks on study door and opens it.*

William: The lady is here, sir.

Richard: I'll be right out. (*He waits a few moments before joining them in living room. He has tied his tie.*) Hello, nice to see you again; we've met before, haven't we?

Tamara: Only at press conferences, Mr. Graham.

Richard: What are you standing around for? (*Startling Tamara, but he is talking to William.*) Go to bed.

William: Can I get you anything, sir? Would the lady like a drink?

Tamara: Nothing, thank you.

Richard: I'll have a Scotch.

Tamara: I'll join you.

Richard: Bring the bottle and some ice. Soda? (She *shakes her head.*
William nods, and exits.) Have you had dinner?

Tamara: Yes. Thank you.

Richard: Surprised you found the time. Sit down. Wait a
minute. (*Takes her purse from her, opens it and removes a tape recorder.*)

Tamara: It's not loaded, officer.

Richard: (*Putting it on desk*) Have you got a smaller one that is?

*William enters with Scotch, glasses, and ice on a tray, as Richard
is frisking Tamara. William is wide-eyed for an instant, then sets
the tray down and exits.*

Tamara: Feel anything?

Richard: Nothing. Sit down. (*Begins to pour each a drink.*) This
conversation is completely off the record. No "usually
reliable sources," not a word. It isn't even taking
place. If that isn't acceptable to you -

Tamara: That's what your note said. If it weren't acceptable,
I wouldn't be here. (*Pause*) But I'm sure you didn't
invite me just for companionship.

Richard: But I did, I did! I couldn't let a charming lady
spend the night on my doorstep. (*She makes it clear that she is
waiting for him to get serious.*) I feel misunderstood. There are
some things I can share with you off the record that
will give you a better understanding of this Peterson
business, and keep you and your colleagues from making
fools of yourselves by barking up the wrong tree.

Tamara: Making fools of ourselves?

Richard: And doing an injustice to the President - and me.

Tamara: Well, Mr. Graham, I'm all ears.

Richard: Fact: Peterson is a crook. He was a crook when he was
in office, he's still a crook, he was a crook before
you were born. Bandelli bribed Peterson blatantly,
without even trying to use money that couldn't be
traced. As you know quite well, but none of you has

bothered to mention today, fifty thousand bucks were withdrawn by Bandelli and deposited by Peterson the next day in the same bank. Fact number two: Private business interests in Arizona had bugged Peterson's office, illegally to be sure, but they had no connection with me or the President, or the party. Nor did we know about, until months later, when Bandelli had already been arrested on the basis of the five hundred \$100 bills, and the state's attorney was about to have Peterson arrested. Now. Here's the great revelation. The President's campaign headquarters got a tape in the mail, someone listened to it and wrote me a memo about it. I listened to it myself. I was then damned, no matter what I did, wasn't I? (*Pause*) Should never have listened to the goddamned thing. To ignore it then was to withhold evidence relevant to a criminal proceeding - even though it was inadmissible as evidence. To turn it over was to be an accessory to a civil rights violation, and of course eventually to subject myself and the President to the vilification and unfounded accusations we are presently enjoying. I'm curious: What would you have done?

Tamara: I would have published the transcript.

Richard: (*Laughs amiably*) That's why you're a reporter and not Attorney General. In any case, I turned it over to the prosecutors. They couldn't use it in court, but they could - and did - use it in negotiating a confession from Bandelli. Notice I say negotiating. I've made some phone calls today - until today, I honestly didn't know any more details about the case than what I could remember from the news coverage at the time - and everyone assures me there was nothing tricky or dirty about it, just a standard kind of plea bargaining in exchange for a confession that would help the Arizona law enforcement people get the whole story, so far as Peterson and everyone else involved.

Tamara: Wasn't Peterson in fact the one you were out to get?

Richard: We weren't "out to get" anybody. Peterson is and was a lying, thieving son-of-a-bitch. I was delighted to see him caught by the balls, and the President was even more delighted. I'm not going to deny that. But don't you see that it was just a fortunate, happy thing that he happened to be stupid enough to be caught red handed? Fact number three: There never has been any

secret espionage squad, nor has the Federal Bureau of Investigation or any other branch of government been used by the present administration to subvert the political process in any way, at any time, by anybody, so far as I am aware. Fact number four: This administration has done more for civil rights, more to protect individual privacy, more to advance the basic freedoms - including, if you'll pardon the expression, freedom of the press - than the previous five or six administrations put together.

Tamara: Sir, excuse me, the first three may be facts, but the last is an opinion.

Richard: It is a fact - in my opinion. And the fifth and last fact is that the President is getting damned pissed off at this little campaign of insinuation you and your colleagues are waging. You're endangering your network's good relations with his administration.

Tamara: It's not our job to have good relations with the President, Mr. Graham. It's part of his job to have good relations with us.

Richard: Bullshit. No, excuse me. I concede that point. After all, it's why I asked you to come in.

Tamara: What you've just told me is useful, enlightening, and important. But I'm enormously puzzled. If it's true, why cover it up?

Richard: Why publicize it?

Tamara: And then, once it became known, why not explain it publicly, why not say what you've just told me?

Richard: That, my dear, I do not know.

Tamara: Pardon?

Richard: I honestly don't know. I have wanted to do that all day, I told the President this morning that if we did not reveal all the facts ourselves, immediately, then exactly what has happened would happen. The President chose to stonewall it.

Tamara: Why?

Richard: We now leave the realm of facts and truly enter that of speculation. I don't know. I think the President feels honor bound to protect those who originally made the tape and gave it to us.

Tamara: Who was that?

Richard: That's, um, something else I don't know. It was sent anonymously. I suppose the President has some ideas about who might have been involved. I don't think he has asked anyone directly. He doesn't want to know, and frankly neither do I. We are not about to embarrass anybody for doing something they believed was patriotic and loyal.

Tamara: And criminal?

Richard: I would say overzealous. The only one who suffered by it, if anyone did, was Peterson. He is the criminal. You know, it would be the easy way out for the President to say, "So and so made the tape on their own," and pass the buck to me and say he didn't know a goddamn thing about it until this morning.

Tamara: Did he? I thought you said you told him about it at the time.

Richard: I don't remember whether I did or not.

Tamara: Off the record?

Richard: Even off the record, I'm just telling you someone sent the tape to me anonymously and I passed it on to the appropriate authorities. I'm not saying if or when I discussed it with anybody. The point is, you've got to admire the President's courage and integrity, tolerating all this nonsense you people are speculating about, secret surveillance of opponents and so forth, because all the facts are not public and he doesn't want to discredit people who were doing the best we could do to be helpful.

Tamara: Somehow that doesn't sound like my image of the President.

Richard: (*Angrily*) Because your image of the goddamned President is an image you people created!

Tamara: Is the press conspiring against the Administration?

Richard: Unquestionably. You know you are. All of you have been sticking it to us for five years. (*Laughs*) And you'd love to add paranoia to your litany, too, wouldn't you?

Tamara: Does - does the President believe the press is out to get him?

Richard: The President lies awake all night, trembling in fear of what the morning papers will say about him. He is mortified by each of your broadcasts, Miss -

Tamara: Glass.

Richard: Yes. Tamara Glass. I know your name, I was only hesitating over whether I might call you by your first name.

Tamara: Please do.

Richard: Yes, Tamara, the President is decimated by your treatment of him. He writhes on the floor in agony (*Tamara laughs*) with each new revelation of his incompetence, of his weakness of character, of the bloody fools he has assembled in his Cabinet. All of us live in dread of the next distortion, insinuation, or ironic remark you will produce. (*Moves to sit beside her, very close.*) You're doing a great job of undermining the public's confidence in government, Tamara, all of you are.

Tamara: (*At first was amused, now uncomfortable.*) You flatter me, sir. But you also make me doubt whether anything you've told me was true.

Richard: (*Takes her hand*) I apologize for the sarcasm. But sincerely, you are doing your job. Circumstantially, the Peterson business does look like it might have been a vendetta. It would be outrageous if the Justice Department had been used as a political hatchet. But you be the judge; I've given you the facts.

Tamara: Can I use them?

Richard: You can use them only to get more facts, from other sources. If you pose them in the form of direct questions to some of the people who ran the reelection

office, and to the U.S. Attorney's office in Phoenix, you'll get answers. Don't say I told you, but if you come back to me having learned it from them, I'll have to confirm it.

Tamara: Mr. Graham, I understand why you would want to leak this to the press, but what I don't understand (trying to remove his hand, which his hand has trapped; she puts down drink and tries to pry his fingers loose) is why you chose me to receive the information.

Richard: (*Placing his other hand firmly on top of hers, making a stack of four*) Miss Glass, that is just one more thing I myself do not know. I suppose - I'm sure I'm not the first man to say this to you - in a funny way I feel I know you.

Rusty: (*Coming downstairs, startling them*) Daddy?

Richard: Miss Glass, Miss Graham.

Tamara: Hello. (*Gathers herself, picks up purse.*) Me. Graham, thank you for the drink. And the interview. (*Rusty stands aside to let her pass.*) Goodnight.

Richard: Wait a minute. You're forgetting something. (*Rises and hands her the tape recorder, which Tamara takes, closing front door as she leaves.*) What's your problem? She was interviewing me.

Rusty: Looked like an "in-depth" interview. (*Pause*) You gave her the Peterson tape, didn't you?

Richard: Sssh! (*Peeks out window onto porch.*) No. Got it right here. (*Pats shirt pocket.*) She wanted it, but she didn't get it. Lucky thing you came in when you did, though, she was just saying she would do "anything" to get the story.

Rusty: You fucking liar.

Reflexively, Richard slaps her. Both are astonished, and speechless for a moment; Rusty fights tears.

Richard: Don't talk to me like that. Oh my God, what's wrong with me? Baby, are you okay?

Rusty: I want to sit down. (*Goes to couch.*)

Richard: (*Also sits.*) Baby, I'm sorry, I'm - good Lord, I didn't really think - I'm a mess. (*Rusty nods, weeping softly; lets him stroke her hair.*) I had too much drink. That's all it was. Forgive me?

Rusty: (*After a pause*) What are you going to do, Daddy?

Richard: About what?

Rusty: It's really bad, isn't it? I mean the stuff that's gotten out isn't the worst of it?

Richard: That's right, baby.

Rusty: Can you tell me?

Richard: I don't know what's happening. I think I'm being sacrificed to the press in order to stop them uncovering a whole lot more, some things that involve me and some that don't. I'm sorry, baby. I can't believe I slapped you like that.

Rusty: I can't believe I said what I did. Daddy? I love you.

Richard: What?

Rusty: I just wanted to tell you, in case you didn't know.

Richard: (*Recovering his dignity*) Of course I know. I love you too, baby.

Rusty: It seems like a long time since we said it.

Richard: Funny you should say it now, when I'm - well, kind of a mess.

Rusty: You're human.

Richard: The way you say that, like a grown-up woman.

Rusty: I am a grown-up woman. Hadn't you noticed?

Richard: No, I hadn't. Sleeping with guys doesn't make you a grown-up.

Rusty: It helps. (*Pause*) Are you and Mother breaking up?

Richard: What are you talking about? Don't be silly.

Rusty: When you aren't fighting, do you still - make love together?

Richard: Mind your own business.

Rusty: I heard her lock the bedroom door.

Richard: This happens to be an extraordinary night. *(Pause)*
Doesn't it occur to you that I have more important problems to contend with right now than her?

Rusty: I know that. So do I: there's a crowd of people outside laughing at my father.

Richard: Is that what they're doing?

Rusty: I felt like going out and telling them to fuck off.

Richard: Don't.

Rusty: Don't worry. I know you've got a lot on your mind, Daddy. I just wanted to talk. I'm sorry I mentioned Mother. Are you going to resign?

Richard: I think I'd rather talk about your mother than that, as a matter of fact.

Rusty: *(Pause)* You're still in love with her?

Richard: Of course I am. She's a damn good wife to me.

Rusty: But not much help in a crisis?

Richard: Are you a help? Miss August? *(Pause)* She may not be worth a damn in a crisis but when everything's going along normally, she's great.

Rusty: You don't show her you love her.

Richard: How do you know?

Rusty: You don't show either of us.

Richard: Well, I do. Who do I work my ass off for, a hundred hours a week? I show my love for you by giving you a husband and father you can look up to, be proud of; that's why it's so upsetting to have you hear it all twisted around on television and in the papers. Believe

me, baby, no one could have accomplished all the things we've accomplished in this administration without bending a few rules. But you don't hear about our accomplishments, only whining about our imperfections. And frankly, I don't care what the public thinks, but I do care (*voice breaks*) what you and your mother think.

Rusty: Wow, have you got your head wedged! (*Jumps up to face him.*) I don't care what anyone says about you - bad or good. Maybe Mother does, I don't know. But it doesn't impress me. I used to think you were such hot shit, because you were the Attorney General - but no longer. I wish you would resign. (*Sits on arm of couch.*) Get a normal job, be a normal person. You know what I thought when you were so angry at the President this evening and he wouldn't talk to you? I thought, so my father has feelings after all - not just opinions. Just now, losing your temper, you seemed more like a real father than the thousand times you've kissed me goodnight and turned away to phone up one of your assistants.

Richard: You know, I was out of my head just now, I was seeing things, don't - (*near tears*)

Rusty: I'd rather be with you when you're bitter and mixed up than listen to all the careful, analytical reasoning you're so famous for. (*She puts his head down against her side. He looks almost dead.*)

Richard: I'm beat, baby (*choking*).

Rusty: It's all right, Daddy. (*Scratching his head*) You have to come down sometimes. It's all right. I'm here.

Richard: I'm really beat.

Rusty: Shhh. (*Scratching his head*) Shhh.

Lights fade, on the disturbing image, slowly to blackout.

Scene 4 **Morning**

Throughout this last scene, occasional muffled, angry voices can be heard in the distance. As sunlight slowly increases through the windows, we see Richard asleep on the couch, covered with a bedspread.

Rose: (*Calling from upstairs*) Richard? Richard? (*She enters, in a robe over her nightdress.*) Richard? Are you down here?

Richard: I'm right here, Mother. What's the matter? What time is it?

Rose: I was worried, I thought you'd - when they said Anne had left, I -

Richard: Who said what?

Rose: That Anne had left. The woman on the news. Where did she go?

Richard: I don't know what you're talking about. Anne is upstairs, asleep. It's early morning, Mother. I was up late, I guess I just fell asleep on the couch.

Rose: No. She isn't. I went in your room. The bed is made. Didn't you know?

Richard: The woman on the news? (*He goes upstairs.*)

Rose: (*Thinking aloud*) The strain was very great for her - it's nothing to be concerned about - she couldn't sleep. She must have gone to her mother's. (*Richard returns.*) I know what happened, Richard: she couldn't sleep and went to her mother's. The strain was very great for her, Richard. Anne is a private sort of person. Those reporters -

Richard: Did she say something about going to her mother's?

Rose: No. I - I just imagined.

Richard: Don't imagine! Find out where she is. Call all the hotels.

Rose: Call all the hotels?

Richard: There's five a.m. flight to New York. Find out if she was on it.

Rose: How can I find that out?

Richard: Can't you do anything? (*Goes to phone, which he picks up but never dials.*) What's the difference where she went, anyway? She left, that's the point. Big news. National news. Anne Graham sneaks off in middle of night. Jesus, they're hard up for headlines.

Rose: She'll be calling us now, to explain!

Richard: She's trying to humiliate me. Had to sneak out in the middle of the night, proves her husband's a madman. Shit! I thought Bob had more brains than this! I told him to let me deal with the situation myself, and that would have been the end of it. But he stalled because he was afraid, no doubt, how it might implicate him, and then somebody got him to stall a little longer and managed to make it look as if he has no confidence in me. How stupid I was! Now the lid is blown off the whole project!

Rose: What project?

Richard: How the hell does he think he's going to get out of it now? We're all in the together, Mister President! But the buck stops there, pal! (*Pause*) Where'd Anne go?

Rose: Perhaps she left a note?

Richard: If she had, I wouldn't be asking you, damn it, where did she go?

Rose: Richard! (*Crying*) I have no idea!

Richard: Didn't you ask her?

Rose: I didn't know she was leaving!

Richard: How did you not know?

Rose: All I know is what they just said on the news - she left about three o'clock - drove out of the garage suddenly, drove away fast.

Rusty: *(Running downstairs)* Daddy, you'd better - you'd better turn on the TV. *(She does so herself.)*

Anne: *(In front of an array of microphones)* No, my leaving Richard had absolutely nothing to do with the allegations about him. I was dreadfully sorry that our marital problems happened to come to a head at this time, and I don't intend to make any further statements. I don't think the Attorney General's private life should be of any interest to the press.

Reporter's Voice: Is there another woman involved?

Anne: Not likely. *(Laughter from reporters, which seems to put her at ease. She combs her fingers through her hair, smiles.)*

Another reporter: Another man, Mrs. Graham?

Anne: Not yet. *(More laughter; TV cuts to Tamara.)*

William enters dining room, turns on the TV there, begins setting the table for breakfast. He will stop and be transfixed by the news.

Tamara: This new development took Washington by surprise, as the Grahams were one of the capital's most popular couples on the social scene. The crowd here in front of the Graham home has swelled to several hundred, and its mood has turned decidedly against the Attorney General. Banners and placards are calling for his arrest and the President's impeachment. Some of the slogans are in such poor taste, Tom, that we'd better not show them on the air. Someone has been selling buttons that read "Shame, Graham" - here's one. *(She is wearing it.)* Despite the generally hostile feeling toward the Attorney General, I must say we are experiencing a rather festive atmosphere.

Tom: Tamara, would you say Mrs. Graham's leaving has had an effect upon the popular sentiment against her husband?

Tamara: No, Tom, I don't think so. People were incensed yesterday when it came out that he had obviously orchestrated the bugging of Governor Peterson, and probably others.

Richard: "Obviously orchestrated!?!"

Tamara: Most of these people did not learn until they arrived here, about Mrs. Graham's midnight escape.

Telephone rings. During the following news item William returns to the kitchen.

Tom: Thank you, Tamara. In related news, the *Washington Post* reported this morning that the House Judiciary Committee intends to launch an investigation into those charges that Arizona Governor Dan Peterson was illegally bugged by the FBI - or some other organization - over a two-year period prior to the taping of his now-famous acceptance of a bribe in February of last year. Chairman Morris Bernard said his committee will attempt to determine how widespread the practice of bugging was, who ordered it, who else was bugged, and how the tapes were used. Some Congressmen have speculated that contractor Albert Bandelli may have had contact with the Committee to Re-elect the President, or with Attorney General Graham, before meeting Governor Peterson ...

Richard: Damn! (Telephone *still ringing; Rose goes toward it.*) Don't touch the phone. (*Goes into study, leaving door partly ajar.*) Hello! Yes, Bill. Why didn't he call me himself? I've been trying to get through to him since yesterday afternoon. I don't want to talk to you about it. Let me speak to Bob - to the President. He said what? What kind of game are you guys playing? We've got a major crisis here that implicates you and Stillman and him too. Now, if you want to sit down all of us and work out our strategy for dealing with it I can be there in (*looks at his watch*) - what? I don't understand. (*Very long pause*) You can't do that to me, you bastard! (*Changing tone*) Look, Bill, I underestimated how far this thing would go. I made a mistake, okay? Look, I'm sorry I lost my temper just now. You're making major decisions without me, and I think I have something to contribute to that. For Christ's sake, Bill! (*Begging tone*) You don't have all the facts. Let me bring them to you, okay? Please. (*Choking back a sob*) This is my whole career you're telling me to throw away. My life! My father was a fucking judge for Christ's sake! What do you want me to do, kill myself? Where will that get you? I'll do it, you bastards, and then who will take the - (*Pause*) no, I am not cracking up. (*Struggling to control himself*) No. Okay. Yes. I understand.

I'll call you back in one hour. You'll be in your office? Yes. Goodbye, Bill. (*Hanging up*) SON-OF-A-BIIITTTCCCHH!

Rose: What did he say?

Richard: Mother-fuckers. (*Goes to aquarium, removes dividing glass.*) Kill.

Rusty: Daddy? (*As in, "are you all right?"*)

Richard: My gladiators.

Rusty: (*Watching him rather than the fish*) Which one is you?

Richard: The one on the right side.

Rusty: Is he going to win?

Richard: They'll keep at it until they're both dead. They're offering me a deal.

Rose: The fish?

Richard: (*With disgust*) The White House. If I resign and take full responsibility, the President will - pardon - me.

William has returned to the dining room and stands listening, turning back and forth between Richard and the TV.

Rose: Pardon you?

Richard: Before I can be indicted, he'll issue a Presidential pardon - saying that I was merely "overzealous" in pursuing justice.

Rusty: So you won't be prosecuted. Not by the courts. Just crucified by the press.

Rose: You have never cared what they say, Richard. We know you didn't do anything wrong, the President knows you -

Richard: Of course I didn't. That's not the question. The fact is, if I were indicted, I'd probably be convicted of conspiracy in the Bandelli thing. The question is, do they really want to get me off the hook or do they want to stab me in the back with it, and leave me hanging there? They're not really stupid enough to think if I

"resign" now and say the whole thing was done on my orders without the President's knowledge, he can issue a pardon and that'll be the end of it? The opposition is going to let it pass? The press is going to forget about it? No - even Bob isn't that stupid. They have no intention of getting me off the hook. They want me to take the fall for all of them. Uh uh!

Rusty runs upstairs.

Rose: What would your father do?

Richard: (*Laughs loudly, then shakes his head.*) That crooked son-of-a-bitch!

Rose: You're angry at the President, Richard, and I'm sure you have good reason to be. But please control yourself. I've never heard you talk that way before.

Richard: (*Laughing bitterly*) What would Father have done?

Rose: Why are you laughing? Your father was in similar situations many times. His opponents said terrible things about him, libelous things.

Richard: Not libelous. Father was the crookedest judge in Ohio.

Rose: Richard!

Richard: I think he won the prize in 1947 for crookedest judge in the United States.

Rose: You don't know what you're saying.

Richard: Yes, I do, Mother. He told me so himself. Sat me right down in this chair, the night before I went off to law school. You remember all those people who used to come to the house to see him, to discuss cases with him? Did you think those were intellectual discussions? What about the ones who came to ask for his help in getting contracts with the county, or jobs with the state? Did you think that was part of a judge's job?

Rose: Your father was very active in politics. All the important men in Ohio were his friends. He would talk

to his friends on behalf of people he felt were deserving.

Richard: What made them deserving, Mother? They got to be deserving by paying Father - large sums of money, Mother, that they brought to the house in small bills. That's what made them deserving.

Rose: I'm not listening to you, you don't know what you're saying.

Richard: Good. Don't listen to me. Get out of here, let me think.

Rose: What - what are you going to do?

Richard: I'm going to fight. Bob and I go back a long way. I'm not going to let these tight-ass punks he's surrounded himself with brainwash him into a suicide move. We're going to fight this thing, deny it right down the line. And there's a lot of people - a lot of people we can destroy right now before they destroy us. If we lose in the end, then Bob and I will both go down the tubes. I go? - he goes, too.

Rose: To - jail?

Richard: Possibly. This is the big leagues, Mother, we're playing hard ball.

Rose: Hard ball?

Richard: What we did, we did because we believed in our country, our party, our Administration, and ourselves. I'm not ashamed of fighting for my principles, and when you fight - in a dirty fight you fight dirty. But that doesn't make it any less illegal, and if they nail us, they nail us.

Rose: Do what the President is asking you to do.

Richard: What?

Rose: You said if you take responsibility for the whole thing yourself, he will pardon you?

Richard: He's not that stupid. Stillman and Rogers are even less stupid. They'll let me twist in the wind. Number

two, I don't believe the other team can nail us. The evidence isn't there, if they'll just have the guts to brazen this out. Number three, I have a reputation to uphold, not just my own, but the office. I'm not a crook. This administration has done more for justice, for civil rights, for the rights of the individual - I'm proud of that, you understand? You should be proud of that!

Rose: Richard, I am very proud of you, but -

Richard: We're talking about a minor infraction of the rules, as against - I'm not going to let that negate everything we've accomplished, walk out on the lawn and say, "Sorry folks, the Attorney General of the United States for the last five years has been a small-time political grafter." Jesus Christ, Mother, you of all people -

Rose: I'm thinking of you, Richard. Your family. You can't let your pride - it seems to me you have to trust the President. He's not going to go to jail and he won't let you go to jail. Richard, I'm so frightened. What will happen to Anne?

Richard: Hah!

Rose: To Rusty? All right - to me! I don't care about your reputation!

Richard: Since when?

Rose: I don't want you to go to jail! I'm afraid of what can happen to all of us if you don't cooperate with the President. Trust him, he must have information you don't have. Let's calm down. You're not going to do anything until you talk with him, isn't that right? I'm sorry Richard, I'm getting so upset, I'm getting you upset - (*Crying*)

Richard wants to comfort her, but cannot keep still. He paces the room like a caged lion, muttering incoherently even as he tries to get Rose to stop crying. Rusty comes downstairs dressed in the style of Anne.

Rusty: (*To William*) What are you standing there for? Clean those glasses away.

William: Yes, miss, I was just about to do that.

Rusty: Get rid of all the ashtrays. We won't need them any more.

William: As you wish.

Rusty sits on the edge of the couch, watching TV, as William picks up glasses, whiskey bottle, and ashtrays. Both ignore Richard and Rose.

Rose: How long do you think I would last? Do you want to kill your mother? What would become of me with you in jail? You're going to sacrifice your mother and your family to your own pride and stupidity!

Richard: Stupidity?

Rose: Yes, stupidity to think you would accomplish anything by going to jail when you don't have to. The public would damn you as fast as the courts convict you!

Richard: People still respect a man who stands by his convictions. No one would take me seriously if I took the cheap way out, but they will if I fight to preserve what we've - That's what it's all about.

Rose: Stupidity. And pride.

William, on his way through the dining room, is stopped by the following appearing on TV; the others immediately watch the living room set.

Tom: With me here in New York is the newest addition to our NBS news team, Anne Graham. Welcome, Anne.

Anne: Thank you, Tom. It's great to be here. Everything's happened so fast, I can hardly believe it.

Tom: When you left your husband last night, Anne, did you have any idea you'd have a job as television legal commentator the next morning?

Anne: Absolutely not, Tom. Even now it seems incredible.

Tom: Let alone the highest-paid color commentator for a single media event in television history, eh?

Anne: That's right, Tom.

Tom: Well, I know you'll be worth every dollar. It's a real television first, Anne.

Anne: Thank you, Tom.

Tom: Now let me just explain to our viewers at home that your contract prohibits us from asking you to comment on your marital problems or the reasons for your decision to dump the Attorney General. You're here strictly to fill us in on what's likely to be going on in that house in Alexandria, and to comment on developments as they occur.

Anne: That's right, Tom.

Tom: So I won't be asking if your husband has been disappointing in the sack lately, or anything like that, heh heh.

Anne: Heh heh, that's good, Tom, because I wouldn't know. No, it was just a coincidence that I finally got fed up last night and left. It was that B.S. - am I allowed to say B.S.? - about the fifty thousand dollar deposit of numbered bills that clinched it for me. As if agents of the Justice Department wouldn't be able to falsify cash deposits to a bank account! Anyway, a happy coincidence for me, as here I am with a job my first day out of purgatory.

Tom: Well, now let's go to Tamara Glass in front of your house.

Tamara: Thank you, Tom; welcome, Anne. The crowd here is beginning to turn into an angry mob. Effigies of the Attorney General have been hung from several of the neighbors' trees, there's a banner calling him the Entrapment General, and only the valiant efforts of the Alexandria police have prevented the crown from storming onto the Graham lawn and perhaps breaking into the house. Chants are going up against police protection for the privileged, and it really is turning ugly. Anne, are we correct that the only people inside

the house with your husband are your daughter and his mother?

Anne: That is correct, Tamara. (*William is offended.*) Mother was visiting us when the scandal broke. She worships Richard.

Tom: Do they have a close relationship, Anne?

Anne: Perhaps we'd better not go into that. Let's just say Richard can do no wrong in his mother's eyes. I'm sure she'll stand by him all the way to the gallows.

Tom: And what about your daughter?

Anne: Well, she's just a child, Tom. You know how unpredictable teenagers are. She's a spoiled brat, really, with unresolved Oedipal feelings toward her father. She hates him, deep down, but she'd also like to provoke him sexually. So what effect all of this will have on their relationship only a good child psychologist could say.

Richard: Well, that just about takes care of everybody, doesn't it?

Tamara: Would you say all his unsatisfactory relationships with women are at the root of Richard's arrogance and abuse of power?

Anne: Anne: Well, I'm no psychoanalyst, Tamara, but it seems to me an impotent man will use any power he can attain to disguise his impotence and to put himself above other men, with no regard for the feelings or for the rights of others.

Tamara: What is his mother like?

Anne: Oh, in his eyes she's a saint; can do no wrong. He attributes all his success to the values she imbued in him, which he goes on about ad nauseam. In reality, he hates her, of course. His arrogance toward women reflects that.

Richard: Turn that off! (*No one moves; he turns it off himself. William quickly turns off the dining room set.*) It's unbelievable! (*To Rusty*) Was that your mother? Was vicious, backstabbing, lying bitch your -

Rose: (*Very controlled*) Richard, stop talking that way! You must realize that Anne has had some kind of a nervous breakdown. She needs care, and understanding. This has been a terribly stressful experience for her, as it has for all of us. (*Rose seems to be withdrawing into a distant, inaccessible state – robot-like.*)

Rusty: She didn't look nervous to me.

William: Nor to me, either. (*Laughs*)

Richard: Shut up! What the hell are you doing here? Beat it! (*William exits. Richard paces the room, Rusty watching him with concern, Rose looking even more remote.*) You know what Father said? He said he wanted me to know how the game was really played, so I wouldn't fall for any idealistic crap at Harvard.

Rusty: She can't hear you. Look at her. She sees what she wants to see, hears what she wants to hear.

Richard: (*To Rose*) How do you think he paid for all that land in Colorado? How do you think he paid four servants? On a judge's salary? His salary was \$26,000 a year when he died. Not enough to live in that style, even twenty-five years ago. Graft put me through college and law school. I might as well have paid my tuition in ten dollar bills.

Rusty: Daddy, you're rambling. You'd better sit down.

Richard: What the hell am I supposed to do?

Rusty: When you said, they want you to say the whole thing was done on your orders – you mean bugging Peterson?

Richard: Peterson!? Peterson was only one target. That son-of-a-bitch! This whole thing wouldn't have happened if we hadn't come up with so much dirt on Peterson we had to indict him. You think we were looking for indictments? My idea was, send Bandelli in there with the goddamn tape recorder, then let Peterson know, after he takes the money, that there's a tape. He doesn't even have to know who has it. Just that it might come out if he runs for national office. We were using our power to keep them at bay, just the way they used theirs to keep us out of power for sixteen years. You're so naïve, baby! You think we started this stuff? For sixteen years, they intercepted letters, planted spies in our

meetings, bartenders at our parties. You think we could get a goddamn Congressional committee to do anything about it? Who controlled Congress all those years? Who owned the goddamn newspapers? When we took the election away from them, we took it by hard work and guts. We were practically alone at first, Bob and I. Nobody thought we could do it. But we hammered away at their weak spots, we psyched out every issue in every state, we got the nomination and we won. And we said goddamn it now the shoe is on the other foot. They're out, and we're gonna keep them out. And we used modern methods - we didn't bartenders at their parties, for Christ's sake. We could have put a transmitter in an olive pit, if we wanted to - dropped it in their martinis. You're not laughing? The point is, we played the same game that's always been played - only better. So well, in fact, that the other side goes crying to the press, and Congress. Why not? They still own the press, and television, and Congress, they've got it all, the Teamsters, the Mafia, the Jews. So good old Bob, my old pal, wants me to take responsibility for the whole thing - mea culpa - and he, in his kindness and compassion, will pardon me, and then where will I be?

Rose: (*As from a great distance*) Free.

Richard: Never. I will not stand in front of those cameras and say I, Richard Graham, I invented all these dirty tricks, I abused my power, I'm so ashamed, pardon me. Because I'm not ashamed: First of all, I did not act alone, I didn't act impulsively, what I ordered to be done was part of a carefully reasoned plan in which all of us - Stillman and Rogers and the President, too - were full partners. We knew what we were doing. We were violating certain selected individuals' rights. Not out of a disregard for the law, or for personal rights in general. Quite the contrary. This administration is the savior of individuals' rights against infringement by the state. It's the enemies of freedom who are now trying so hard to make us look like hypocrites. Don't you see? In order to protect what we'd accomplished, to preserve and strengthen it, we has to stay in office. We had to try and get control of the Hill. That's the way it' always been. The noblest principles in the world are no virtue without the power to carry them out. So we used what power we had. We knew what the price would be if we were caught. But they have to prove us guilty first, in court, and that won't be

easy. And you know what? Even if I'm tried and convicted, I'm willing to bet that history will judge us to have been right.

Rose: History can judge you better out of jail, than in.

Richard: Not true! History loves political prisoners. Some of the best political writing has been done from jail. Think of Lenin! My God, think of Gandhi, Mao Tse Tung, Che Guevara! What freedom one has in jail - time to think and write without distraction!

Rose: They were Communists.

Richard: It's nothing to do with Communism, it has to do with power - holding it, losing it, getting it back, and using it while you've got it. (*Musing to himself*) But I'm not going to jail. Not when I can leak stuff on Stillman and Rogers, things that nobody can tie up with me at all, stuff that can be confirmed with a little aggressive probing in the right direction, and the next thing they know they'll be the ones with shit on their faces. Nobody can prove I was involved in that stuff. Bandelli didn't know, the guys who set that up don't know. Nothing but insinuations. It's not going to be that way for Stillman, though, or the President either. I'll come and visit you, Bob, once a year on visiting day.

Rusty: Daddy -

Richard: Shut up, both of you. Leave me alone. (*Charges into study and back out at once.*)

Rusty: (*Following him*) Daddy, listen to me. You don't have to go on fighting dirty. You've got it all turned around. You're guilty, all right, but guilty of what? Of helping the President and his other cronies try for five years to turn the Presidency into a - I don't know what, a dictatorship? Yeah, a dictatorship. Isn't that what you call it when someone gets into office and puts a stranglehold on the political process so their opponents don't have a chance?

Richard: No, no!

Rusty: So what if the last President did it? What if George Washington did it? That doesn't make it right. Are

those the principles you're so proud to have fought for?

Richard: You don't know anything about it.

Rusty: I know enough. I know right from wrong. I know it's not too late for you to come out from whatever you've done, okay, confess to what you're guilty of and take the consequences. But tell them everything. Don't cover up for the President, don't cover up for yourself. Tell people what's been going on. Like a journalist, strictly factual, no excuses. Do it for the sake of truth. You're always complaining about what's happening to our country. Here's something you can do for the country. You were wrong. Okay. Now start being right.

Richard: Only history can judge whether we were wrong or right.

Rusty: Bullshit. (*They stare at one another for a moment.*) You want my respect?

Richard: You make that sound so easy, so clean. But things aren't that simple. I'm not so arrogant as to think I can be a hero, clean up the system single-handedly. The system is bigger than any one incident or one person. My old man was right, you know. He's the one who taught me that to do any good you need power, and you don't get power by being good.

Rusty: You've lost your power. The only kind you've got left is the power to tell the truth. Daddy, do you remember when I was in seventh grade, and Sandra O'Neill and I had a shoplifting contest and Mother found all those skirts and blouses in my room that she knew I couldn't have paid for? Do you remember what you made me do? You took me back to every single store, and you made me ask for the manager, and tell him what I had done, and return the clothes. Do you remember? I do. I remember the look on their faces, and the humiliation, not being able to talk, and the silence while they waited for me to find my tongue. Was that a lesson only for me to remember, and you to forget?

Richard: If only I could be sure it would do more good than harm.

Rusty: If only you had the balls.

Richard: (*Watching fish*) I've always wondered if they can see out as well as I can see in. Fight, you lazy bastards. What do you need rest for, you're going to die anyway.

Rose: (*Still from afar – no attempt to turn toward them*) Rusty, I know that what you are telling your father seems the honorable and the honest thing to do. But when you have lived as long as I have, you'll learn that one man or woman can't change the world - and it's a tragic waste of a life to try.

Rusty: I've already lived longer than you have.

Richard goes into study.

Rose: Your father is going to do as the President wants him to do, Rusty.

Rusty: We'll see, won't we?

Rose: You and I will feel a little bit ashamed for him, we'll have to stop reading the papers and listening to the television for awhile, but we'll have Richard at least. He isn't going to throw his life away.

Rusty: That's exactly what he will be doing if he listens to you.

Rose: (*Coming to life*) You're only thinking of yourself. Think of him! Do you want him to go to jail? You drove your mother out, do you want to be rid of him, too? And what about me? I only have your Aunt Charlotte and Richard. I want my children with me in my last years.

Rusty: I see now why men like him despise us, and fear us at the same time. Women like you made them that way. I didn't drive Mother out. He drove her out - he's been doing it all my life, you know how? Not by being cruel to her. By being afraid of her. And who was he really afraid of?

Rose: (*On her knees*) Dear Jesus, hear this old woman, this blind old woman who has loved You as well as she knew how. We have all failed You in this family, forgive us and have mercy on us. Anne has had a nervous breakdown, Richard is on the edge of a breakdown. Rusty is a lost child, she needs Your guidance and I blame myself for not

bringing it to her. I know my blindness is no excuse, Lord. Give Richard Your divine guidance, show him the way. Forgive us our selfishness, our pride, our striving after earthly rewards. Take me now, Lord, I'm ready to die. Help Richard ... *(her prayers continue inaudibly)*

Richard has returned and is flipping channels on the TV. During the last part of Rose's prayer he watches Tom, who silently looks out at him. Then he flips the channel to a shot of the White House and a news reporter speaking, but the volume is too low for us to hear the words. He changes the channel again, to an inaudible replay of Tamara's last report; then to Sesame Street; to a soap opera; back to Tom, still watching Richard as though keeping a vigil. Finally, as Rose comes to the end of our audible prayers, Anne appears in a bath soap commercial, lying in a bubble bath.

Anne: Hi. I'm Anne Graham. Believe me, I needed this bath. I've got a lot of dirt to wash away. But I need a soap that's mild, one that will keep me young and attractive *(she stands up, wrapping herself in a towel)* as well as fresh and clean. That's why I switched to -

Richard changes the channel. The dining room TV comes on, as well.

Tom: Showing signs of a sleepless night, the Attorney General of the United States *(Richard walks away, toward the front door)* came out of his house this morning to face reporters. *(Video changes to a shot of the front porch, outside.)* What he had to say surprised us even after two days of startling developments in the wake of former Governor Dan Peterson's lawyers' *(Rusty watches Richard open the door slowly; simultaneously we see it open on the TV screens)* disclosure of a secret transcript that had been used to persuade his co-defendant to confess to bribery charges. *(As Richard steps out into the sunlight and we see him on TV walking down the front steps toward the camera, the stage lights dim until only the TV monitors remain lit.)* This is what Richard Graham told reporters:

On TV, Richard approaches microphones. BLACKOUT