

T R U T H

by  
James Vanderbilt

Based on the Book  
"Truth and Duty"

by  
Mary Mapes

BLACK SCREEN.

Over this, our title:

**Truth**

INT. WINSTON AND STRAWN -- LAW FIRM LOBBY -- DAY

A cavernous lobby in a high powered law firm. Marble and glass everywhere. An echo chamber.

SUPERIMPOSE - **Washington D.C. - October 2004**

NEWCASTER (O.S.)  
*...with 21 days to the election,  
Time Magazine has President Bush and  
Senator Kerry each with 48%, a  
statistical dead heat...*

MARY MAPES sits. Career woman. Spitfire. Can drink and swear with the boys. Owns multiple curling irons. She sits alone. Waiting. KNITTING. Exhausted. Her eyes flit around as the needles loop and stitch the yarn.

RECEPTIONIST  
Mr. Hibey will see you now.

INT. DICK HIBEY'S OFFICE -- DAY

Richly appointed. A scotch and cigar feel. Attorney DICK HIBEY (50's, bearded) rises as Mary enters.

HIBEY  
Ms. Mapes. I'm Dick Hibey. What can I do for you?

MARY  
Oh, I think you know.

Hibey smiles, gestures for her to sit. Noticing:

HIBEY  
You knit?

MARY  
You don't expect a woman like me to knit.

HIBEY  
No. But it's good. Helpful.

MARY

You mean it blunts my radical feminist agenda?

HIBEY

Do you have a radical feminist agenda?

MARY

You meet a lot of radical knitters?

Hibey smiles politely at the joke. Then:

HIBEY

Do you have a substance abuse problem?

MARY

I'm working on developing one.

HIBEY

I'm serious.

MARY

So am I.

Hibey's not smiling anymore.

HIBEY

You came to me, Ms. Mapes. If you're not up for this-

MARY

I've been in news for twenty years. I've won two Emmys, I broke Abu Ghraib, I've done jail time for not revealing sources. I have neither a radical feminist agenda nor a substance abuse problem, although right now I'm gonna take a xanax because this is really freaking me out - do you have any water?

A beat. Hibey rises and pours Mary a glass of water from a pitcher on the side table. Handing it to her.

HIBEY

You're going to have to be ready for questions like that.

MARY

I'm up for this.

Hibey retakes his seat. Sizing her up.

HIBEY

There's an interesting reoccurring theme in the stories you cover. People abusing their power.

MARY

I don't like bullies.

HIBEY

Tell me about your work.

She looks at him.

MARY

You want to know if I'm responsible for what happened.

HIBEY

Aren't you?

MARY

I did my job, believe me.

HIBEY

I don't have to believe you. What matters is that *they* believe you. Now tell me about your work.

Mary takes a deep breath.

MARY

I'm the producer. I find the story, I put the team together, I write and cut the piece. I work at 60 Minutes.

HIBEY

And what's that like?

And as Mary smiles at the thought, we CUT TO --

INT. CBS NEWS -- EDITING -- EVENING

Cramped and dark. A large screen shows a photograph of NAKED PRISONERS from ABU GHRAIB.

An EDITOR manipulates a computer program, and one man's crotch is blurred out with a field of squares...

**New York City - April 2004 - Six Months Earlier**

COLONEL CHARLES (O.S.)

They're really gonna run it this time?

Mary sits behind the tech along with COLONEL ROGER CHARLES (former military 50's crewcut) and a pregnant DANA ROBERSON.

MARY

They're going to run it.

COLONEL CHARLES

Because you said that last week-

MARY

They're going to run it, Roger.

TECHNICIAN

You want me to paint them out like this?

Mary looks up to the screen to see what the tech is doing - digitally painting out men's penises image by image. One man's crotch blurred out with a field of squares.

MARY

Jesus, no, it looks like his genitals were attacked by mad cubists. Maybe you could just darken the area?

The Technician hits a few keys. A beat.

MARY (CONT'D)

Okay, now it just looks like there's a black hole there.

DANA ROBERSON

From which no light can escape.

COLONEL CHARLES

They're *really* going to run it? Because Sy Hersh has this and he's going to write a story about how we've sat on it for three weeks-

MARY

Dana, tell Roger they're going to run it, then hit him with a large blunt object for me, will you?

(MORE)

MARY (CONT'D)  
 (checking her watch)  
 I gotta go grab him, can you finish  
 this?

The Colonel nods. Mary rises as we CUT TO --

INT. LINCOLN CENTER -- NIGHT

THE MAN IN PROFILE. Seated in a chair on the wings of a stage. Silhouetted by a spotlight. From ONSTAGE:

ANDREW HEYWARD (O.S.)  
 He is, among other things, a piss  
 poor speller. That's why the Houston  
 Chronicle put him on the radio instead  
 of a desk. Three years later, he  
 was their news director.

Chuckles from the crowd. Our man withdraws a NOTEPAD from his pocket. Jotting something down. His speech maybe?

On stage **Andrew Heyward - President of CBS News** (50's, mustached) addresses the crowd; a sea of tuxedos and gowns.

ANDREW HEYWARD (CONT'D)  
 To call his beginnings humble would  
 be generous. A graduate of that  
 most notable of journalism schools,  
 The Sam Houston State Teacher's  
 College, in 1959 he took his first  
 job in the burgeoning medium of  
 television. A year later, when a  
 hurricane hit Galveston, he convinced  
 his cameraman to shoot the radar  
 screen, showing Americans for the  
 first time how a storm worked. He  
 was the first journalist to report  
 that John F. Kennedy had been shot.  
 He described the Zapruder film in  
 detail to a nation that was not  
 allowed to see it. He became the  
 White House Correspondent at 33 years  
 of age and the Chief London  
 Correspondent a year later. He helped  
 bring the horrors of the Vietnam War  
 into American living rooms for the  
 first time.

(MORE)

ANDREW HEYWARD (CONT'D)

At a Broadcaster Convention in 1974 where President Nixon was scheduled to appear but not take questions, he, of course, asked a question. Nixon, upset, asked "Are you running for something?" My friend politely replied "No, sir, Mr. President. Are you?"

Laughter. Mary slips into the back of the room.

ANDREW HEYWARD (CONT'D)

He covered the Russians in Afghanistan and the hostages in Iran. And in 1981 he became anchor of the CBS Evening News. He has now anchored a nightly newscast for longer than anyone else in U.S. history. He has dined with kings, angered Presidents, questioned dictators. Not bad for the son of a ditch-digger from Wharton, Texas.

In the wings, the Man flips his notepad shut and gets ready...

ANDREW HEYWARD (CONT'D)

Ladies and gentlemen, I give you my friend, and the reason I have this job, Dan Rather.

The Crowd rises in applause as DAN RATHER steps from the wings. Mary smiles. Dan takes the lectern and pulls a pre-written speech from his jacket. What was the notepad?

DAN

Thank you, Andrew, for that wonderful introduction. And yes, I will honor your speaking fee.

Off the crowd's laugh we CUT TO --

INT. LINCOLN CENTER LOBBY -- NIGHT

After the ceremony. Dan and Andrew stand with a DRUNK RICH COUPLE during cocktail hour. Dan is in hell. Mary approaches, looking completely out of place in street clothes.

MARY

Hey, Andrew. I need him.

ANDREW HEYWARD

You're not taking him-

MARY

You say that, and yet here I am.

DAN

(to Mary)

You've got him?

MARY

Stashed in a hotel two blocks up.

They move for the door. Heyward panics, following them:

ANDREW HEYWARD

Dan, you're not leaving your own party! I got fifty affiliates and their wives waiting to meet you-- Goddammit, Mary!

EXT. LINCOLN CENTER -- NIGHT

Mary and Dan exit the gala. Among the fountains, Dan pulls off his bow-tie like a kid after Sunday School, barely containing his glee. Pretending to be upset.

DAN

I was receiving an award, you know.

MARY

You don't say.

DAN

For a "Lifetime of Achievement".

MARY

So it's pretty much all downhill from here, then?

DAN

Brother, you ain't kidding.

(pause; then)

We are going to run it, right?

MARY

I'm going to start hurting you people soon, I swear to God-

DAN

I'm just saying, I've already done cut-ins for it. We kill it now, we look like fools.

MARY

Not that that's stopped us before.  
(crossing the street)  
They're worried about the Superbowl-- Andrew thinks the FCC may fine Viacom per station.

DAN

So the CBS News division has to tread softly because of Janet Jackson's left breast?

MARY

We're about to go on national television and accuse the U.S. Military of committing atrocities while hip deep in two wars during an election year.

(pause)

But yes, mostly I think they're worried about the boob thing.

INT. HOTEL ROOM -- NIGHT

Set up for an INTERVIEW. A TV CREW waits with a GENERAL seated in a chair. Mary and Dan enter.

MARY

General? This is Dan Rather.

Dan sits opposite him, pulling the NOTEPAD from his pocket...

DAN

General, thank you for doing this.  
Let's start from the beginning...

...And now we see it's FULL OF QUESTIONS for the interview.

INT. BROADCAST BOOTH -- EVENING

A SERIES OF QUICK SHOTS - Anonymous hands turning knobs, balancing color bars. Slotting video tapes into machines. We see a MACRO of tapeheads sliding the magnetic tape into place, spooling it through the machine...

INT. 60 MINUTES OFFICES -- BULLPEN -- NIGHT

The clock on the wall reads 8:00. We hear the familiar 60 MINUTES STOPWATCH. Colonel Charles, Dana, and others sit watching

ON TV - THE 60 MINUTES BROADCAST

The image of an IRAQI MAN standing on a box WEARING A HOOD. Electrodes run to his body. OVER THIS:

DAN (V.O.)

Americans did this to an Iraqi prisoner. According to the US Army, the man was told to stand on a box with his head covered with wires attached to his hands. He was told that if he fell off the box, he would be electrocuted.

CUT TO Dan, addressing the camera:

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

It was this picture and dozens of others that prompted an investigation by the U.S. Army. Yesterday, we asked General Mark Kimmitt, deputy director of Coalition Operations in Iraq, what went wrong.

INT. 60 MINUTES -- MARY'S OFFICE-- NIGHT

And finally to Mary, watching her story come out...

GENERAL KIMMITT

Frankly, I think all of us are disappointed at the actions of the few. You know, every day we love our soldiers, but frankly, some days we're not always proud of our soldiers.

DAN (V.O.)

Abu Ghraib under Saddam Hussein was infamous. For decades, many who were taken here never came out...

INT. PIERRE HOTEL BAR -- NIGHT

Ice cubes crackle. A piano plays softly. TV over the bar:

NEWCASTER (O.S.)  
*...CBS's bombshell allegations this evening that prisoner abuse occurred at the Abu Ghraib facility...*

A few feet away, Mary, Colonel Charles, Dana and Dan sit a table celebrating. Happily drunk.

DANA ROBERSON  
 I remember when you used to say "Courage" at the end of every broadcast. You remember that?  
 (off Dan's nod)  
 Why'd you stop?

MARY  
 They made fun of him.

DANA ROBERSON  
 No!

DAN  
 (mock wounded)  
 They did. Me. Can you believe it?

COLONEL CHARLES  
 Apparently they thought times back then weren't grave enough to warrant such a sign off.

MARY  
 Give us a "Courage", Dan.

DAN  
 I don't think-

MARY  
 Come on, just one. For me?

A beat. Dan leans forward. In his best newscaster baritone:

DAN  
*Courage.*

The others break up laughing. Dan smiles. Raises a toast.

DAN (CONT'D)  
 To a hell of a story.

MARY  
 Once they finally ran it.  
 (raises her glass)  
 F.E.A.

Laughter as they clink and drink, as above the TV continues to blare coverage of their story...

EXT. MARY'S HOUSE -- ESTABLISHING -- NIGHT

SUPERIMPOSE - **Dallas, Texas**. An inviting two story Craftsman with a big front porch.

ROBERT (O.S.)  
 We're sitting here with Mommy. Thank  
 you for being here Mommy.

INT. MARY'S HOUSE -- LIVING ROOM -- NIGHT

Mary's son ROBERT (7) holds a portable video camera. Mary sits across from him as he conducts an interview with her.

MARY  
 Thank you for having me.

Robert nods, all business.

ROBERT  
 Mommy, you were away for a long time  
 again. What were you doing?

MARY  
 I was in New York working on the  
 news.

ROBERT  
 And what does that entail?

Mary raises an eyebrow at her son's vocabulary.

MARY  
 Asking questions. Questions help  
 reporters get to the truth.

ROBERT  
 Interesting. Are there any questions  
 you shouldn't ask?

MARY  
 No. Never. Why would you say that?

ROBERT

My friend Louis's Dad says reporters ask too many questions.

MARY

I'd be curious to know what your friend Louis's Dad thinks we should do with our time instead.

ROBERT

Were you with the men with the cameras?

MARY

Yes.

ROBERT

Interesting. Can I have a new camera?

MARY

We'll have to talk to your father about it for Christmas.

ROBERT

I'm trying to get to the truth here, Mommy. Answer the question.

Mary smiles.

MARY

This interview is over.

INT. MARY'S HOME OFFICE -- NIGHT

Cluttered with papers. A LARGE TELEVISION above her desk. CNN yammering about Abu Ghraib.

PANELIST

*...can't deny that Abu Ghraib is an enormous black eye for the Bush Administration just as John Kerry is emerging as a real challenger in the Presidential Election...*

Mary's husband MARK WROLSTAD appears in the doorway. Nods to the TV coverage.

WROLSTAD

Caused a bit of a ruckus, didn't you?

MARY  
 (smiles)  
 Who me?

She clicks on her email. One from *Mike Smith*.

*I've been a bad boy. Have some tasty brisket for you.*  
 -Mike

WROLSTAD  
 You wanna go for a walk?

Mary stares at the screen.

MARY  
 I think I have to work...

CUT TO:

INT. JOSH HOWARD'S OFFICE -- MORNING

A SERIES OF SHOTS - Furniture being unwrapped. Boxes being unpacked. An Oriental Rug being spread on the floor. A LINE OF EMMYS being placed one by one on a bookshelf.

As the last one is put down by JOSH HOWARD, (late 30's, mustache). Looks around the office. He's made it.

INT. 60 MINUTES OFFICES -- HALLWAYS -- MORNING

Josh strides down the hall with MARY MURPHY, (30's, brunette) his right hand.

JOSH  
 What's she like?

MURPHY  
 Good. Fast. She's Rather's gal.  
 (pause)  
 Makes twice as much as either of us.

JOSH (O.S.)  
 Thanks for coming in, Mary...

INT. JOSH HOWARD'S OFFICE -- DAY

Mary smiles as she enters Josh's office and shakes his hand.

MARY  
 Not at all, I'm excited to get going.

SUPERIMPOSE - **June 2004**

Josh smiles back and nods to Murphy next to him.

JOSH

As are we. You know Mary Murphy.

MURPHY

Great to see you again. Abu Ghraib was phenomenal.

As they all take a seat.

JOSH

So no big preamble, we love you, we love what you've done here - let's talk about the new season. What are you thinking?

Mary flips open her notebook.

MARY

I got something maybe for the election. Houston businessman named Bill White claims he has documents that the Bin Laden family were investors in Arbusto.

JOSH

Bush's oil company?

MARY

Could just be lots of sound and fury, but Vanity Fair's into it too. That whole time period for Bush is funky.

JOSH

Funky how?

MARY

I did some work on it in 2000. You know Ben Barnes?

JOSH

No.

MARY

Old Texas Pol.

(MORE)

MARY (CONT'D)

Barnes says when he was Speaker of the Texas House in '68, Sid Adger, this big oilman, comes into his office and asks for help getting young George Bush into the National Guard as a pilot. Poppy Bush at this point is a Congressman and Barnes figures he can use all the connections he can get, so he says he called General Rose, who runs the Texas Air National Guard, and gets Bush a slot.

JOSH

Barnes told you this?

MARY

Completely off the record, but he's been dining out on the story for years. Then I talk to Buck Staudt, who was Bush's squadron commander. He starts *screaming* at me about how Barnes is full of shit, because everybody knows that *he's* the one who pulled the strings to get Bush into the Guard, not Barnes.

Josh laughs.

MARY (CONT'D)

Politics in Texas. It's the intergalactic capital of shit happens. Anyway while Bush is in the Guard, he meets a guy named James Bath and they become running buddies. After they get out, Bath, with no resume to speak of, becomes chief financial representative for the Bin Laden Family's interests in Texas. Bush starts up Arbusto and Bath writes him a \$50,000 check.

JOSH

Which your guy White claims is Bin Laden money.

(off her nod)

Okay, run it down. But if we go with it, we have to go early; we can't October surprise them.

MARY

If you're into this, I'd like to bring in some other people.

MURPHY

Who?

Mary reaches into her bag and hands them a list...

EXT. ARLINGTON NATIONAL CEMETERY -- DAY

COLONEL CHARLES stands in full dress uniform at the funeral of a VETERAN as a flag is laid over a coffin. OVER THIS:

MARY (O.S.)

Colonel Roger Charles, worked Abu Ghraib for us. Naval Academy grad. Two tours in Vietnam, then the Pentagon. When he's not working for us, he's trying to get better armor for combat troops in Iraq.

JOSH

Who else?

INT. S.M.U. CLASSROOM -- DAY

LUCY SCOTT lectures a class of journalism students...

MARY (O.S.)

Since Dana's on maternity leave, I'd like Lucy Scott to run point. She's a CBS veteran, journalism professor in Dallas.

INT. JOSH HOWARD'S OFFICE -- DAY

MURPHY

What about this man... Mike Smith?

INT. CRESCENT COURT HOTEL -- DALLAS, TEXAS -- NIGHT

A posh COCKTAIL PARTY. A long haired shaggy guy stands by a huge potted plant, feeding rum-and-cokes to a clearly drunk actor. Pad and pen out. This is MIKE SMITH (20's).

MARY (O.S.)

Mikey cut his teeth working for Molly Ivins and was a researcher for us on  
(MORE)

MARY (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
 this in 2000. Last I heard, he was  
 working as a stringer for People.com,  
 sneaking into cocktail parties to  
 find out who's sleeping with who...

SMITH  
 When you say "sport-fucking", do you  
 mean he's, like, putting it to her  
 for fun, or that he's actively  
 attempting to compete at it?

There is a TAP on his shoulder. A BURLY SECURITY GUARD.

BURLY SECURITY GUARD  
 Sir, we have to ask you to leave.

SMITH  
 Listen, I appreciate where you're  
 coming from, you have your job to  
 do, but I am protected by my First  
 Amendment rights, so, you know,  
 respectfully, go fuck yourself.

The Security Guard rolls his eyes and looks to his goons.

BURLY SECURITY GUARD  
 The hard way.

EXT. CRESCENT COURT HOTEL -- NIGHT

Onlookers scatters as the goons BODILY CARRY a SCREAMING  
 Mike Smith out the front door of the hotel:

SMITH  
*A free press is all that stands  
 between you roided out motherfuckers  
 and anarchy! At-tic-a! At-tic-a!*

As they toss him into a FOUNTAIN...

INT. JOSH HOWARD'S OFFICE -- DAY

Back to the scene. Mary gives them a smile.

MARY  
 It's a crack team. Trust me.

INT. CBS NEWS DALLAS -- LOBBY -- MORNING

A small two story building. Mary walks toward the staircase. Smith sits on the stairs. Rumpled clothes and hair.

SMITH

You really gonna do it this time?  
Your evil corporate overlords will  
let you?

MARY

Good to see you too, Mikey.

SMITH

I hear Heyward's talking about closing  
foreign bureaus, moving in more of a  
bullshit "infotainment" direction.

MARY

Where'd you hear that?

SMITH

I'm a researcher, I research.

MARY

They won't touch the news division  
as long as Dan's there.

SMITH

Dan's not gonna be there forever.  
They'll figure a way to get the Old  
Man out of the chair eventually-

MARY

You've never even met him.

SMITH

Doesn't mean his time hasn't come.  
Why did he get into journalism anyway  
if he's not gonna do tough stories?

Mary looks at him.

MARY

How you doing, Mikey?

SMITH

I'm eating ramen three meals a day  
and stealing cable, I need a job.

MARY

Come meet everybody.

INT. CBS NEWS -- DALLAS BUREAU CONFERENCE ROOM -- DAY

A series of MILITARY FILES spread out across the table. Lucy Scott and Roger Charles, working as Smith and Mary enter. The former Marine raises an eyebrow at the newcomer.

COLONEL CHARLES

Oh, good. You brought me a hippie.

MARY

This is Mike Smith, he worked this with me in 2000. He has no social graces whatsoever.

SMITH

It's true.

COLONEL CHARLES

Your Arbusto tip is for shit. Bin Laden money never got near Bush.

SMITH

So what am I doing here?

MARY

We found something else. Bush's time in the Guard. There are some... gaps.

COLONEL CHARLES

You are looking at George W. Bush's entire Texas Air National Guard file.

SMITH

You mean what's left of it, right?  
(realizing)  
You're doing a paper trail.

The Colonel picks up a file.

COLONEL CHARLES

What we have starts here - May 1968, bloodiest month of the conflict. Bush is accepted to the Texas Air National Guard for flight training.

MARY

If you believe Ben Barnes, he got  
Bush onto the waiting list.

COLONEL CHARLES

If there even was a waiting list.  
Some people say yes, some people say  
no. That one General...

He snaps his fingers, trying to remember.

SMITH

Belisario Flores?

Colonel Charles looks at Smith - not bad.

COLONEL CHARLES

Former head of the Texas Guard, he  
said there was a waiting list, over  
a hundred people on it.

LUCY

So Bush jumped the list.

COLONEL CHARLES

We have no document showing any kind  
of waiting list.

SMITH

Bush says he got in so quickly because  
they were specifically looking for  
pilots, which is bullshit with so  
many pilots rotating back from  
Vietnam. And that's another thing -  
training a National Guard pilot from  
start to finish was a huge rarity.

LUCY

Why?

COLONEL CHARLES

Because it's not cost effective.  
Lot of National Guard jocks are former  
Air Force pilots who want to maintain  
their flight rating.

SMITH

Why spend a million bucks training a  
new pilot when you can just admit a  
(MORE)

SMITH (CONT'D)

guy the Air Force already taught how to fly? The only thing that makes Bush an attractive candidate for the Guard is who he's connected to.

COLONEL CHARLES

Either way, he's in. Signed on for a six year commitment. Does his pilot training at Moody and is then assigned to the 111th Fighter Intercept Squadron in Houston. Records show he does really well here, high marks in every rating period until the spring of 1972. Then nothing. No flights, no appearing for duty. Until August 1 when he is suspended in writing for missing a routine physical.

MARY

So how does someone go from being a top-notch pilot to not even taking your physical?

COLONEL CHARLES

Not only that, but he requests and is granted a reassignment to Alabama to work on a friend's Senate campaign.

LUCY

Wait - he disobeys an order and then they let him transfer?

COLONEL CHARLES

It gets better. From May 1972 to May 1973, his record shows no points registered. Points are like hours on a time card in the Guard. It basically means he didn't show up. The Alabama commander has no recollection of him. No eyewitness has ever placed him on base and no paperwork exists to prove he was ever there.

Lucy looks from one of them to the other.

LUCY

You're telling me the President of the United States may have gone AWOL from the military for over a year?

A beat.

COLONEL CHARLES

We have no proof of that.

LUCY

What does the White House say?

SMITH

That Bush served honorably and that military records go missing all the time.

COLONEL CHARLES

By the way, military records do not go missing all the time. They're the military. They're good at shit.

(looking at file)

Bush is not heard from in the records again until July 1973 when he shows up for drills. And in September 1973 he requests and is granted an early discharge to attend Harvard Business School.

LUCY

He asks to quit nine months early and they let him?

SMITH

And he resigned his commission in '74 which is very weird. You're commissioned for life, right? Why resign it? It makes no sense.

Mary looks around the room.

MARY

So what are the questions we're looking to answer?

SMITH

One - did Bush go into the Guard to avoid going to Vietnam?

LUCY

Not to be cynical, but who *didn't* try to get into the Guard to avoid Nam back then?

COLONEL CHARLES

Me.

The military man says it without blinking.

MARY

Bush's trainer in the 147th said he *wanted* to go to Vietnam.

COLONEL CHARLES

(holds up a paper)

This is the only document in the official record that deals with it. On the question of desiring overseas transfer, Bush checked "No".

MARY

Bush's trainer says that must have been a mistake.

SMITH

Cause *that's* a question you get wrong...

MARY

Two - why did he skip the physical?

A beat.

SMITH

He didn't have a drug problem, he just liked the way it smelled.

Lucy laughs.

MARY

And Three - if someone did pull strings for him, who? And how the hell do we get them to go on the record?

INT. BEN BARNES GROUP OFFICES -- AUSTIN TEXAS -- NIGHT

**Ben Barnes** (60's), former Lieutenant Governor of Texas, clad in a suit. Pours a scotch on the wet bar next to his desk.

NEWCASTER

*...The latest Zogby poll which has  
Senator Kerry leading the President  
by seven points...*

Barnes on speaker-phone, voice drawls as smooth as the liquor.

BEN BARNES

Is it that time of year again already?  
When I have to fend off the advances  
of a beautiful woman such as yourself?

INTERCUT:

MARY

You got the President into the  
National Guard, Governor. I find  
that very impressive.

BEN BARNES

It *is* impressive, isn't it?

MARY

Why don't you come on TV, tell us  
all about it?

BEN BARNES

We both know if I ever said that  
about Texas's favorite son on camera  
they'd run me outta Austin on a rail.  
(looking at the TV)  
Sorry, Mary. Johnny's gonna win  
this thing, anyway.

INT. DALLAS BUREAU -- CONFERENCE ROOM -- NIGHT

Mary ducks her head in where Mike and Lucy sit.

MARY

Barnes is still a no. Who's next?

Lucy walks up to a WHITE BOARD with a LIST OF NAMES on it.  
Draws a line through *Ben Barnes*. Looking to the next one...

LUCY

Colonel Jerry Killian, Bush's CO in  
the 111th. If anyone is able to  
really tell us what went on, he will.

MARY  
Small problem there.

LUCY  
Which is?

MARY  
Killian's dead.

Lucy looks to Smith, who nods.

SMITH  
It's a pickle.

MARY  
Who's next?

Lucy lines out *Jerry Killian* and goes to the next...

LUCY  
General Buck Staudt, former CO of  
Bush's 147th Interceptor Squadron...

INT. BUCK STAUDT'S HOME -- DAY

General BUCK STAUDT spitting mad as he yells into the phone:

GENERAL STAUDT  
George was one of the best fucking  
pilots I ever had! I resent all you  
goddamn reporters implying that  
something fishy was going on!

INT. DALLAS BUREAU -- CONFERENCE ROOM -- DAY

Lucy lines out *Buck Staudt* and moves onto the next.

LUCY  
General Bobby Hodges, succeeded Staudt  
as Commander of the 147th, Killian's  
direct supervisor...

INT. DALLAS BUREAU -- NIGHT

Mary, phone to her ear, hearing:

GENERAL HODGES (O.S.)  
He was like all Second Lieutenants,  
bright eyed and bushy tailed. But  
no strings were pulled for him.

INT. DALLAS BUREAU -- CONFERENCE ROOM -- DAY

*Bobby Hodges* lined out. Onto the next:

LUCY  
Maurice Udell, Bush's flight  
instructor...

INT. UDELL'S LIVING ROOM -- DAY

MAURICE UDELL  
(into phone)  
No strings were pulled for him. I  
thought he'd be a great American and  
a fighter pilot.

INT. DALLAS BUREAU -- CONFERENCE ROOM -- DAY

LUCY  
Tom Honeycutt...

INT. HONEYCUTT'S KITCHEN -- DAY

TOM HONEYCUTT  
(into phone)  
No strings were pulled.

INT. DALLAS BUREAU -- CONFERENCE ROOM -- LATE AFTERNOON

LUCY  
Albert Lloyd...

EXT. LLOYD'S PORCH -- LATE AFTERNOON

ALBERT LLOYD  
(into phone)  
No strings were pulled.

INT. DALLAS BUREAU -- CONFERENCE ROOM -- LATE AFTERNOON

LUCY  
Bill Hollowell.

INT. HOLLOWELL'S CAR -- EVENING

BILL HOLLOWELL  
(into phone)  
No strings were pulled. And even if  
they were, it's a non-issue.  
(MORE)

BILL HOLLOWELL (CONT'D)  
(honks at another car)  
Move, you son of a bitch!

CUT TO:

INT. DALLAS BUREAU -- CONFERENCE ROOM -- NIGHT

SUPERIMPOSE - **August 2004**. Every last name on the board has a line through it. Mary sits, staring at the names. Trying to find a way in.

INT. DAN'S APARTMENT -- NEW YORK CITY -- NIGHT

Dan, getting dressed for a black tie event. Mary talks to him through his speaker-phone, INTERCUT:

MARY

It's like they were given talking points. He was a great guy and no strings were pulled.

DAN

Devil's advocate? What if no strings were pulled?

MARY

You know who else was in the 147th? Lloyd Bensten's son, John Connally's son, both Sid Adger's sons, H.L. Hunt's grandson, and the heirs to the Sakowitz fortune. But I'm sure it's just a coincidence.

DAN

So what's our next move?

Mary shakes her head. Staring at the names.

MARY

I have no idea.

INT. MARY'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Late. Wrolstad snores lightly. On Mary. Can't sleep. The TV plays. A SWIFT BOAT AD. A montage of older VETERANS speaking to the camera, with a background of military images.

VETERAN 1

I served with John Kerry.

VETERAN 2

I served with John Kerry.

VETERAN 3

John Kerry has not been honest about what happened in Vietnam.

VETERAN 4

He is lying about his record.

VETERAN 5

John Kerry has not been honest...

VETERAN 6

And he lacks the capacity to lead.

VETERAN 7

When the chips were down, you could not count on John Kerry.

VETERAN 8

John Kerry is no war hero-

The PHONE RINGS. Wrolstad stirs in the bed next to her.

WROLSTAD

Who's that?

MARY

My secret lover. Go back to sleep.

Wrolstad grunts and rolls over. Mary scoops up the receiver.

MARY (CONT'D)

Hello?

SMITH (O.S.)

You ever hear of Linda Starr? Runs a website, clearing house for anti-Bush stuff. She's hinting documents are going to be floated soon.

MARY

What kind of documents?

INT. JOSH HOWARD'S OFFICE -- EARLY MORNING

Josh drinks coffee as an ASSISTANT pokes her head in.

ASSISTANT

Mary Mapes is on the phone.

INT. MARY'S KITCHEN -- DAWN

Mary, bleary, handwritten notes in front of her, fixing a bowl of Cheerios for Robert across from her. INTERCUT:

MARY

I think we got something. Anti-Bush internet rabble-rouser. I talked to her for three hours, but she put me in touch with her source, a Colonel who says he may have access to missing documents from Bush's purged Guard file. I got Mike Smith talking to him right now.

Robert looks at his bowl.

ROBERT

Milk?

Mary retrieves a carton of milk from the fridge.

JOSH

Get a look at those documents. And do some background, make sure the Colonel isn't nuts.

INT. AUSTIN DINER -- DAY

Mary sits in a booth across from reporter JIM MOORE. Steaming cups of coffee in front of both of them.

JIM MOORE

Colonel Burkett is nuts.

MARY

Oh, good.

JIM MOORE

But he's also on the level.

MARY

You're sure?

JIM MOORE

He's a whistle-blower.  
(MORE)

JIM MOORE (CONT'D)

And whistle-blowers are consistently unbalanced, angry grudge-holders. That's what makes them want to blow their whistles in the first place.

(leaning forward)

He claims he was there for the scrubbing.

MARY

The scrubbing?

JIM MOORE

Of Bush's Guard file. 1997, Burkett, George Conn, a couple other people say that a bunch of Bushies went down to the Guard Headquarters in Austin and made certain unfavorable parts of his file disappear. You've seen the official record right? Holes in it big enough to drive a truck through.

MARY

So you believe him.

JIM MOORE

Enough to devote a hundred and twenty pages in my new book to him.

He takes a sip of his coffee.

JIM MOORE (CONT'D)

You're going to want to be careful with this. The administration doesn't take kindly to this type of reporting.

MARY

I didn't exactly make friends with them on Abu Ghraib-

JIM MOORE

This is different. You're talking about screwing with the man himself.

MARY

The President.

JIM MOORE

After I did my first book on Bush?  
My name mysteriously popped up on  
the terrorist no-fly list. Now, I  
can't hop a puddle jumper without a  
strip search. They don't forget.

INT. MARY'S HOUSE -- FRONT HALL -- DAY

Mary coming home, hears SMITH'S VOICE coming from the kitchen:

SMITH (O.S.)

...Then you gotta know about the  
1996 Telcom Act...

INT. MARY'S KITCHEN -- DAY

Smith sits across from Robert, who is interviewing him.

SMITH

See, the rules were no company could  
own more than one TV station, radio  
station, or newspaper in the same  
market - so no one could have a  
monopoly on the flow of information.  
But the '96 Act eliminated the cross  
ownership ban and now TV News is  
controlled by only five corporations -  
GE, Disney, Time Warner, NewsCorp,  
and Viacom - which owns CBS. And  
all of these mega-corporations rely  
on what?

Robert just stares at him.

ROBERT

I'm seven.

SMITH

On corporate tax breaks and favorable  
government legislation! That means  
the government controls the financial  
well-being of the very institutions  
that are supposed to report on them!  
At best it's collusion. Can you  
still report the news? Sure. As  
long as it doesn't get in the way of  
the golden rule - thou shalt always  
protect the company.

MARY

Ever think maybe you're just paranoid?

Smith turns to see her standing there.

SMITH

Once. But I dismissed it as paranoia.

(rising)

We have a problem. Burkett's talking to other outlets. New York Times, Vanity Fair-

MARY

You gotta get him to meet with us and bring the documents.

SMITH

He does that, he loses all his bargaining power. He wants money.

MARY

We don't do that.

SMITH

He's worried he's going to have to relocate after this. He's worried this will put him in danger. Shit, he's worried his phone is tapped.

MARY

Aren't you?

SMITH

Mary, if these really are missing pieces of a sitting President's military record, we are talking about the Holy Grail of documents. If we won't pay, someone else will.

Silence. The clock ticks. Mary, slowly:

MARY

Tell Burkett we don't believe him.

SMITH

But we do believe him.

MARY

Tell him if he wants to keep us on the hook, he's going to have to show us something to prove his story.

Smith stares at her.

MARY (CONT'D)

You get me in a room with those documents, and I will close him.

EXT. WHATABURGER -- DAY

Deep Texas. A burger chain. The sign blares *WHATABURGER!*

SUPERIMPOSE - **September 2004**. Mary and Smith pull to a halt in front of the bright orange restaurant. After a bit:

MARY

You figure they really have to have confidence in their burgers to name a restaurant that.

Smith nods. Then:

SMITH

How early are we?

A beat. They exchange a glance, thinking the same thing...

TIME CUT TO:

Mary and Smith, now EATING BURGERS. Smith, mouth full:

SMITH (CONT'D)

These are really good.

Mary nods. Scanning the people outside.

MARY

What do they look like?

SMITH

The Burketts? I don't know.

MARY

Then how do we recognize them?

SMITH

I don't know, I thought you Googled them or something.

MARY

We've arranged a clandestine Whataburger rendezvous with a man who wants to bring down the President of the United States and we don't even know what he *looks like*?

A RAPPING on Mary's window and she turns to see a very TAN OLDER WOMAN standing there. Behind her is a taller gaunt older man. COLONEL BILL BURKETT. Looks around, suspicious.

BURKETT

Y'all stay in the car. In case someone listened to our calls, we're gonna go to a secondary location.

Mary gives Smith a look as Burkett heads back to his car...

INT. INDIAN SAM'S -- DAY

The foursome occupy a BOOTH. Colorful kids' placemats in front of them. A birthday party in the background. Nicki helps Burkett take sucks off an oxygen mask, as a WAITRESS delivers four huge sodas to the table. When she's gone--

BURKETT

I saw it with my own eyes. They put the parts of Bush's file they didn't like in a wastebasket.

MARY

And do you have these documents?

NICKI

Bill tried to talk about this in 2000 and someone ran us off the road one night.

BURKETT

I ain't scared of them-

NICKI

Well, I am. I am scared.

She takes a deep gulp of iced tea. Nerves shot.

BURKETT

Let's say I have the documents. Why should we show 'em to you? Why not one of the newspapers-

MARY

Because nobody reads newspapers.

Burkett blinks.

BURKETT

One of the other networks then-

MARY

I don't know if you've noticed, but not many people actually do what we do anymore.

(pause)

We're 60 Minutes. We're the gold standard. And we can help you. Look, you come on camera and we'll-

NICKI

No. No cameras. Our name stays out of this.

(to Burkett)

They will destroy us for this. Don't you understand?

She looks at her husband, pleading. Mary stares at her.

MARY

Nicki, listen. I know what it's like to be bullied. To feel like they're too strong, that you're small and powerless. But you are *not*. And doing this will show them that.

(pause)

I promise. We will protect you.

A beat. Nicki and Burkett exchange a glance. Like a weight has shifted at the table. And then very slowly, Burkett pulls out a photocopied piece of paper. The top reads

*111th Fighter Interceptor Squadron*

And the date

*01 August 1972*

Mary's eyes flit over different words and phrases -

*1st Lt. Bush be suspended from flight status due to failure to perform to USAF/TexANG standards...*

*...No attempt to meet his training certification or flight physical...*

*...Desire to transfer out of state including assignment to non-flying billets...*

Mary looks up at Burkett.

MARY (CONT'D)

This is signed by Jerry Killian.

Burkett hands them a second document.

BURKETT

This too. First one says Bush made no attempt to meet his training certification - that's a big difference than just missing his physical. Second one refers to his pilot position as "critical".

SMITH

Bush said he stopped flying because he was no longer needed as a pilot...

BURKETT

This document would prove that statement untrue.

MARY

Can you think of anyone who would want to fool you with these? Like a political dirty trick?

Burkett blinks. The thought never occurred to him.

BURKETT

I can't believe someone would hate me that much.

SMITH

Do you have the originals?

BURKETT

No, I was only given copies. And don't ask me where, I'm not telling you anything else. You get some experts of your own to look at them.

Mary nods as Smith signals for the check.

MARY

We will.

INT. MADISON SQUARE GARDEN -- NIGHT

Decked out with POLITICAL TRAPPINGS. Various reporters, looking down at the speech occurring on the floor. On a NEWSCASTER doing a stand up:

NEWSCASTER

*...Believe The Swift Boat ads coupled with a usual post-Convention bump could give the President as much as a ten point lead over Senator Kerry...*

SUPERIMPOSE - **Republican National Convention**

IN THE CBS BOOTH - Dan Rather holds a cell phone to his ear.

MARY (O.S.)

I said, we've got 'em!

INT. MARY'S CAR (MOVING) -- LATE AFTERNOON

Mary, driving, while scanning the documents. INTERCUT:

MARY

They contradict Bush's official story, the one he put in his autobiography, the one he ran on-

SMITH

Mary, could you not read, drive, and talk on the phone at the same time?

MARY

I got Lucy pulling together document examiners, but we need to start getting people on camera. What's your schedule after the convention?

DAN

Hurricane Frances is supposed to  
make landfall Friday-

MARY

No, no, no-

DAN

You know how I feel about hurricanes,  
Mary. They are incredible displays  
of nature's power-

MARY

They're wind. I am asking you as a  
friend, please do not go to this  
hurricane-

The car POPS A CURB.

SMITH

Mary!

Mary pulls over.

MARY

I'm going to start talking to Josh  
about timing.

DAN

Good. I knew you could do this,  
Mary.

Mary smiles. He hangs up. Breaks the connection. Mary  
stows her cell phone and restarts the vehicle.

SMITH

Back there, what you said to Nicki  
Burkett about being bullied?

MARY

What about it?

SMITH

That was good. It didn't sound like  
you just trying to close her. It  
sounded real.

MARY

Good.

She puts the car in gear and drives...

INT. MADISON SQUARE GARDEN -- NIGHT

Dan stows his phone. On the convention floor GOVERNOR GEORGE PATAKI is wrapping up the keynote address.

GEORGE PATAKI

...He is one of those men God and fate somehow lead to the fore in times of challenge. And he is lighting the way to better times, a safer land, and hope.

(pause)

He is my friend, he is our President, President George W. Bush!

The crowd explodes in applause as PRESIDENT BUSH makes his way to the podium. High in the CBS Booth, Dan Rather watches.

EXT. MARY'S HOUSE -- DAY

Mary walks up her driveway, dodging Robert's toys, balancing a cup of Starbucks and her phone to her ear.

MARY

(into phone)

Our premiere is September 29th but the story won't hold till then.

INT. 60 MINUTES OFFICES -- BULLPEN -- DAY

Josh, looks up at his SCHEDULE BOARD - the CBS schedule for the next two months. Mary Murphy with him. INTERCUT:

MURPHY

September 15th we don't have a show - CBS is running the Billy Graham crusade.

MARY

What about the 22nd?

JOSH

Preempted again. Dr. Phil special.

MARY

So our airdate is being decided by an unholy confluence of Billy Graham and Dr. Phil McGraw?

JOSH  
News doesn't pay the bills.

MURPHY  
There is one more option. The 8th.

Mary takes a deep breath.

MARY  
As in five days from now?

JOSH  
If it can't be done-

MARY  
I'd need interviews, I'd need to get  
my whole team to New York, I'd need--  
First, I need Dan. Where is he?

CUT TO:

ON TELEVISION - Dan, screaming into a mic as he is POUNDED  
by WIND AND RAIN.

DAN  
*Hurricane Frances is pounding Florida  
harder than a strong man at a state  
fair trying to win a kewpie doll!*

INT. MARY'S HOUSE -- KITCHEN -- EVENING

Mary, watching as the wind almost blows him over.

MARY  
I'm gonna kill him.

As ONSCREEN DAN is almost taken out by a flying tree branch...

SMITH  
You may not have to.  
(checking his laptop)  
I can maybe get him on a puddle jumper  
to Austin for the Strong interview.  
Got an email from the Colonel about  
the documents saying "I feel better".

She scans the email and grabs the phone...

INT. DALLAS BUREAU -- NIGHT

The Colonel scoops up his ringing phone.

COLONEL CHARLES

Yeah?

INTERCUT:

MARY

A memorandum for record is a memo to nobody, right? So why does Killian file them?

COLONEL CHARLES

Killian knows suspending a guy this protected is a big deal. He's trying to do the right thing here, but wants a paper trail to insulate himself.

MARY

Which means W's protection must have come from higher up than Killian.

COLONEL CHARLES

You're thinking Hodges, aren't you?

MARY

He was Killian's direct supervisor... I'll call you back.

Mary hangs up. Checks her notes for another number - Gen. Bobby Hodges. Dials. Rings. ANSWERING MACHINE:

GENERAL HODGES (V.O.)

*You have reached Robert Hodges, please leave a message.*

MARY

General Hodges, this is Mary Mapes from 60 Minutes; I was hoping you could give me a call back at your earliest convenience-

SMITH

You gotta see this!

He hands her his laptop. Onscreen, shaky CELL PHONE VIDEO.

SMITH (CONT'D)  
 Cell phone video from a Democratic  
 fund raiser.

A MAN is addressing a CROWD. Mary squints at the screen.

MARY  
 Is that Ben Barnes?

ON SCREEN

BEN BARNES  
 Let's talk a minute about John Kerry  
 and George Bush, and I know them  
 both. And I'm not name dropping.  
 See I... I got a young man named  
 George Bush into the National Guard  
 when I was the Lt. Governor of Texas.  
 I'm not necessarily proud of that...

MARY  
 Holy *shit*.

INT. BEN BARNES' OFFICE -- NIGHT

Barnes, on the phone with Mary, clearly distressed:

BEN BARNES  
 I didn't know they were *taping* me!  
 Did you see it? I looked like shit!

MARY  
 (smiling)  
 I thought you looked wonderful, Ben.

BEN BARNES  
 Oh, don't you start.

MARY  
 The cat's already out of the bag and  
 your man Kerry is almost ten points  
 down. We're airing our piece in  
 four days. Are you in or not?

INT. MARY'S HOUSE -- FRONT HALL -- NIGHT

Smith, pulling on his jacket. From the other room:

MARY (O.S.)  
 We got Barnes!

SMITH

Burkett just called, he's got more memos he wants to hand off.

He moves for the door as Mary comes in.

MARY

We need to find out who his source is. I have to be at the airport in the morning-

SMITH

I'll fax you what I get!

And he's out the door.

INT. ROBERT'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Mary, dressed in travel clothes. Standing with Wrolstad in the door of Robert's room, looking at their sleeping son.

MARY

He's gotten so big.

WROLSTAD

(nods)

It's a problem.

Mary goes and leans down next to Robert's bed and kisses him on the cheek. He stirs.

MARY

I gotta go, kiddo. Big story, gotta go ask questions.

ROBERT

(yawning)

With the men with the cameras?

MARY

(smiles at the question)

Yes, with the men with the cameras.

He rolls over. She kisses him again and rises. Goes to the door where Wrolstad stands. He whispers to her:

WROLSTAD

You be careful, okay? This is honor and duty. This is where they live.

She looks at him.

MARY  
I'll be careful, Mark.

Wrolstad nods. Enough for him. She kisses him and starts for the stairs. Turns back, with a thought.

MARY (CONT'D)  
Maybe you should let him watch this one.

Wrolstad nods. Okay. She kisses him once more and goes.

INT. DALLAS/FORT WORTH AIRPORT -- ARRIVALS -- DAY

**September 5th - 3 Days To Air.** An amazingly disheveled Dan Rather comes down the jetway. Mary holds up a folder.

MARY  
More memos from Burkett.

INT. ARRIVALS -- DAY

Mary and Dan sit in a bank of chairs as travelers swirl around them. Dan, scanning the new memos. He stops, reading aloud:

DAN  
*"Staudt has obviously pressured Hodges more about Bush. I'm having trouble running interference and doing my job. Harris gave me a message today from Group regarding Bush's OETR..."*

He looks at Mary, questioning.

MARY  
Officer Effectiveness Training Report.

DAN  
*"Staudt is pushing to sugar coat it. Bush wasn't here during rating period and I don't have any feedback from 187th in Alabama. I will not rate."*  
(pause)  
Bush wasn't here during rating period...

MARY

They're trying to get Killian to file a rating for Bush while he wasn't even on base.

(pause)

This is proof that he was AWOL.

A long beat. Dan looks up at her.

DAN

Who am I talking to first?

INT. AUSTIN HOTEL ROOM -- DAY

**Robert Strong - Former Texas Air National Guard** (60's) sits in a chair. Dan across from him. CAMERA ROLLING.

DAN

Is there any doubt in your mind that these memos are genuine?

STRONG

Well, they are compatible with the way business was done at that time. They are compatible with the man that I remember Jerry Killian being.

Off to the side, Mary, Lucy, and Smith stand watching.

DAN

What do you think Colonel Killian was trying to do with these memos?

STRONG

I think he was trying to get a duty performed and I think he was trying to protect himself because of the political environment in which he found himself.

DAN

Political considerations were a major force in the Guard?

STRONG

It verged on outright corruption the favors that were done, the power that was traded.

(MORE)

STRONG (CONT'D)

From a moral and ethical standpoint,  
it was unconscionable.

TIME CUT TO:

After the interview. The cameraman is packing up as Dan bids farewell to Robert Strong. Mary looks to the others.

MARY

Let's go to New York...

INT. AMERICAN AIRLINES (FLYING) -- NIGHT

A night flight. Most people doze in the dark cabin. Smith reads. Someone takes a seat next to him.

He looks up to see it is Dan Rather.

DAN

I didn't get the chance to introduce myself before. Dan Rather.

SMITH

(star-struck)

No shit. I mean, Mike Smith. I mean- yes. You are. I'm Mike. Smith. Hi.

DAN

Mary says you're the one who calls me "The Old Man"?

SMITH

I- wow. Really not happy she shared that with you.

Dan smiles.

DAN

I want to thank you for all your hard work on this. It's important. Questioning things. People say it doesn't matter, one side or the other will always say we're being partisan... but the day we stop asking questions is the day the American people lose. It may sound hokey, but I really believe that.

ELSEWHERE ON THE PLANE - Lucy and Colonel Charles sit next to each other, going through documents.

LUCY

You know what's crazy?

COLONEL CHARLES

(not looking up)

Many things are crazy. Tell me what specifically you feel is crazy.

LUCY

The fact they kept this secret for so long.

Colonel Charles looks over to Mary dozing a few seats away.

COLONEL CHARLES

You know why Mary didn't get this story done in 2000, don't you?

Lucy shakes her head.

COLONEL CHARLES (CONT'D)

Her mother died. Right in the middle of it. So this story never got finished and the election happened. An election decided by 537 votes.

(pause)

Sometimes I think if Mary's mom hadn't died that summer, there's a good chance Al Gore would be President right now.

LUCY

What about her father?

COLONEL CHARLES

Mary's father is a drunken piece of shit who hated himself so much that he beat his daughters. The more outspoken they were, the harder he hit them. How do you think she fared?

Lucy looks at Mary's sleeping form.

LUCY

She'd get beat up for asking questions?

COLONEL CHARLES

That's right.

LUCY

And this is what she does for a living.

Dan retakes his seat next to a sleeping Mary as the Colonel and Lucy watch.

COLONEL CHARLES

People are funny sometimes. That's part of what it is between her and Dan, I think. Why they work so well together. Why they need each other.

(shakes his head)

Fathers and daughters.

Lucy doesn't know how to respond. Pan to Mary. The plane flies on through the night.

INT. CBS NEWS -- LOBBY -- MORNING

**September 6th - 2 Days To Air.** The lobby of 555 West 57th. Our team strides across it bleary eyed.

MARY

Tell me about the document examiners.

LUCY

There are four. We have Marcel Matley coming in from San Francisco today to do on-camera. Linda James in Texas wants to see the originals-

MARY

So would I, but we don't have them.

LUCY

That's what I told her. Jim Pierce in Los Angeles just got started today and Emily Will in North Carolina wants you to call her...

As they step into the elevators

EMILY WILL (O.S.)

I think you have a problem.

INT. MARY'S OFFICE/EMILY WILL'S OFFICE -- DAY

Mary sits at her desk unpacking her carry-on, on the phone with **Emily Will - Document Examiner**. INTERCUT:

EMILY WILL

I've been doing some internet research. The President was in Alabama when these were written, so there's no way they could be true.

MARY

Have you found anything wrong with the documents themselves?

EMILY WILL

No, but-

MARY

Do they appear forged in any way?

EMILY WILL

Without the originals to ink test-

MARY

Let me worry about the investigational side of the story.

EMILY WILL

I always work the whole thing.

(pause)

Do you know where these originated? Establishing exact chain of custody would go a long way towards determining authenticity.

MARY

We're working on it...

INT. BURKETT HOME -- DAY

Burkett, on the phone with Mary. INTERCUT:

BURKETT

I give you the memos, you verify them, that was the deal. You call the Kerry campaign for me yet? They can't lie down on this swift boat shit.

MARY

If I could just confirm where you got the memos, we would be home free.

BURKETT

I told you, I can't go on the record-

MARY

You wouldn't have to. Just give me the name. That's all I need.

A beat. Burkett exhaling. Then:

BURKETT

George Conn. Buddy of mine in the Guard. He was there for the scrubbing. But you call him and he'll deny it.

TIME CUT TO:

Through Mary's phone:

ANSWERING MACHINE (O.S.)

You've reached the Conn Residence, please leave a message at the beep.

MARY

Colonel, this is Mary Mapes, I'm a producer at 60 Minutes. If you could call me back at your earliest convenience, it's regarding a story we're airing Wednesday night.

She hangs up as Colonel Charles pokes his head in.

COLONEL CHARLES

Matley's ready.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM -- DAY

Now set up for an interview. Several ENLARGEMENTS of signatures hang on a board. **Marcel Matley - Document Examiner** stands taking Dan through them as the CAMERA ROLLS.

MARCEL MATLEY

I would say based on our available handwriting evidence, yes, this is the same person.

(MORE)

MARCEL MATLEY (CONT'D)

Now, this signature on the June 24th document shows some conspicuous differences, but it also shows what I call inconspicuous similarities to Colonel Killian's handwriting.

DAN

Why might differences like that exist?

MARCEL MATLEY

The content of the memo is highly stressful, Killian telling a higher up that he cannot rate Bush during his absence. This is enough to explain differences in the penstrokes.

Dan just stares at him.

DAN

Would you give us a moment?

He turns and walks over to where Mary stands.

DAN (CONT'D)

It's like listening to someone *describing* paint dry-

MARY

He said it, though. It was in there somewhere. Can you get the bite?

Dan nods and walks back to Matley.

DAN

Are you saying that if I present these to the American public and say, to the best of our knowledge, these documents were all signed by the same man, I am going to be on solid ground?

A beat. Everyone leans forward to hear. On Matley.

MARCEL MATLEY

Yes.

TIMECUT TO:

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM -- DAY

After the interview. Matley has departed, the equipment sits dormant. Dan stands with Mary, Lucy, and Colonel Charles.

LUCY

Matley's a yes, Jim Pierce is a yes, Emily Will's still working and Linda James wants more documents, but says she'll defer to Matley.

MARY

All the dates and content in the Burkett memos mesh perfectly with the official record - I'm trying to have graphics mock something up to show it visually.

They look to Dan. He shakes his head.

DAN

We don't have it yet.

Groans from the others. Dan presses forward.

DAN (CONT'D)

Someone has to confirm the content of the memos. Someone who knew the players.

COLONEL CHARLES

No one from the Guard is gonna step up for that. Look at what happened to Burkett - you talk, you get your head chopped off.

DAN

What about Killian's family?

MARY

Super Pro-Bush so they'd never go for it, plus there was a divorce there. I don't know if she'd know anything.

DAN

Who were Killian's commanders again?

MARY

Buck Staudt, who has figuratively  
and literally told me to go fuck  
myself, and Bobby Hodges, who I've  
left eighteen messages for.

Dan stares at her. His meaning clear.

MARY (CONT'D)

Fine, I'll go do nineteen...

INT. MARY'S OFFICE -- NIGHT

Smith lies on the couch. Colonel Charles tosses a ball back  
and forth between his hands nervously. Mary dials her phone.

SMITH

You want to get pizza?  
(to Colonel Charles)  
We should get pizza.

The phone is ringing. Picked up. Through the receiver:

GENERAL HODGES (O.S.)

Hello?

Mary blinks, surprised.

MARY

General Hodges?

GENERAL HODGES (O.S.)

Yes.

Mary snaps her fingers for them to pick up a second line to  
listen in.

MARY

This is, uh, Mary Mapes with 60  
Minutes? I'd like to speak with you  
about some old memos I've come across  
from the 111th Fighter Interceptor  
Squadron. They appear to be from  
the personal files of Jerry Killian?

A beat.

GENERAL HODGES (O.S.)

Okay.

MARY

I'd like to read them to you if that's all right?

GENERAL HODGES (O.S.)

Okay.

MARY

Um, the first one is dated June 24, 1973 and the Subject is Bush, George W, 1st Lieutenant.

(reading)

*Sir: I got a call from your staff concerning the evaluation of 1st Lieutenant Bush due this month. His rater is Lieutenant Colonel Harris. Neither Lieutenant Colonel Harris or I feel we can rate 1st Lieutenant Bush since he was not training with the 111th FIS since April 1972. His recent activity is outside the rating period. Advise me how we are supposed to handle this.*

Hodges says nothing. Just breathes.

Smith and Colonel Charles are both staring, in disbelief Hodges hasn't hung up. Mary fumbles for a second memo.

MARY (CONT'D)

Okay, this one is August 18, 1973 and titled Subject: CYA, which I believe means "Cover Your Ass"?

(reading)

*Staudt has obviously pressured Hodges more about Bush. I'm having trouble running interference and doing my job.*

No response. She continues.

MARY (CONT'D)

*Harris gave me a message today from Group regarding Bush's OETR. And Staudt is pushing to sugar coat it. Bush wasn't here during rating period and I don't have any feedback from 187th in Alabama. I will not rate. Austin is not happy either.*

(MORE)

MARY (CONT'D)

*Harris took the call from Group today.  
I will backdate but won't rate.  
Harris agrees.*

Silence. You could hear a pin drop. Mary lowers the paper.

MARY (CONT'D)

Sir, are these memos familiar to you?

A short exhale of breath from Hodges. Then:

GENERAL HODGES (O.S.)

They are.

Smith pumps his fist in victory!

GENERAL HODGES (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Using someone's personal notes, that's going overboard. You're trying to make news, create a story here when there isn't one.

MARY

We're not trying to create anything, General. Colonel Killian was upset Bush missed his physical?

GENERAL HODGES (O.S.)

He was an overboard hardnose. He didn't like the weekend guys. But Bush went to Alabama with everyone's blessing. Killian thought he was doing the best job he could. You're creating a situation here...

INT. DAN'S OFFICE -- NIGHT

Dan looks up to see Mary standing in his doorway, beaming.

MARY

We have it.

Dan grins.

INT. 60 MINUTES -- CONFERENCE ROOM -- DAY

Close on Dan.

DAN

Tell me the truth, the whole truth  
about what happened with George W.  
Bush and the draft and the National  
Guard.

Sitting across from him, BEN BARNES heaves a sigh. Mary  
looks on, along with JOSH HOWARD and MARY MURPHY.

**September 7th - 1 Day To Air**

BEN BARNES

(deep breath)

Sid Adger, a friend of the Bush  
family, came to see me and asked me  
if I would recommend George W. Bush  
for the Air National Guard. And I  
did.

INT. JOSH HOWARD'S OFFICE -- AFTERNOON

Mary, Colonel Charles, Smith, Lucy, Mary Murphy, and Josh  
are crowded into the office.

MARY

I'm concerned about the sheer amount  
of story we have. Barnes, the  
documents, missing the physical,  
being AWOL from Alabama--

COLONEL CHARLES

It's like four different angles on  
the same story.

MARY

Maybe we could split them? Run Barnes  
tomorrow and the documents on the  
Sunday broadcast?

JOSH

Sunday show won't give us the real  
estate. Where are we with the rest  
of it?

Lucy checks her notes.

LUCY

Got an email from Emily Will, one of  
the examiners. She has some concerns  
about the superscript thing.

JOSH  
Superscript?

MARY  
The raised "th" that comes after  
"llth". She was worried that  
function wasn't available on military  
typewriters in the 70's.  
(to Lucy)  
I spoke to Matley - he says they  
were available then. Emily told me  
she deferred to him.

JOSH  
Good. White House will have someone  
for on camera in the morning. I  
can't send Dan because of the storm.

MARY  
That fucking hurricane hates me.

INT. 60 MINUTES -- CONFERENCE ROOM -- DAY

**September 8th - Day Of Air.** Dark. The whole team sits,  
screening a ROUGH CUT of their piece on a drop down screen -  
Mary, Smith, Colonel Charles, Lucy, Josh, and Mary Murphy.  
There are lawyers and executives watching as well.

ON THE SCREEN - Dan speaking with Barnes:

BEN BARNES  
I don't think I had any right to  
have the power that I had, to choose  
who was going to go to Vietnam and  
who was not going to go to Vietnam.  
That's power. In some instances,  
when I looked at those names, I was  
maybe determining life or death.  
And that's not a power that I want  
to have.

DAN  
Too strong or not to say that you  
are ashamed of it now?

BEN BARNES  
Oh, I think that would be somewhat  
of an appropriate thing. I'm very,  
very sorry.

Cut to the 60 MINUTES STOPWATCH - *Tick, tick, tick, tick...*

The lights come up. The first person to speak is **Betsy West - Senior Vice President, Prime Time.**

BETSY

What's it running?

MARY

Sixteen minutes, at least three over.

BETSY

Some of the document stuff is slow, you can definitely trim there.

JOSH

How about flipping it - open with Barnes and then do the documents. It would keep it chronological.

Betsy's nodding, she likes the idea.

BETSY

You've got three hours.

Pan to the wall where the clock reads 4:10...

INT. 60 MINUTES -- EDITING -- NIGHT

The clock on the wall here reads 6:52. An EDITOR toggles the footage back and forth. ONSCREEN:

MARCEL MATLEY

...Based on our available handwriting evidence, yes, this is the same person. Now, this signature on the June 24th document shows some conspicuous differences, but it also shows what I call inconspicuous similarities...

Josh taps our Mary on the shoulder and motions her out into the hall. She follows. Hushed:

JOSH

We need to lose Matley. We're forty seconds over and he's a shit interview. The meshing graphic's terrible too.

MARY

It shows where the new documents  
fall in line with the originals-

JOSH

Poorly. We're out of time. It's  
your call. What do you want to do?

On Mary. A long beat...

MARY

Cut it.

TIMECUT TO:

Clock - 7:44. Everyone tense. The closest they've ever cut  
it. Mary stares at the screen. The others stare at Mary.

EDITOR

We have to start outputting in two  
minutes.

MARY

I know.

EDITOR

We don't start outputting in two  
minutes, we will not have a show.

Sweat on her brow. Stares at the screen. Finally:

MARY

Lock it. Start outputting.

She pushes back from the controls as the techs swoop in and  
start pushing buttons, outputting the report to tape. The  
Editor glances at the clock.

EDITOR

If there's a computer hiccup...

MARY

Tom, I worship you, but shut the  
fuck up.

All eyes on the progress bar. 20%... 30%... 40%...

SMITH

This is really tense.

Nobody responds. Finally the computer PINGS with a done sound. Mary ejects the tape and hands it to Lucy.

MARY

GO!

Lucy RUNS...

INT. MARY'S HOUSE -- KITCHEN -- NIGHT

Wrolstad sits with Robert. Clock on the wall, 8:00. Straight up. From their TV - *tick, tick, tick, tick, tick...*

ON TV

Dan sits in front of an image the reads "FOR THE RECORD"

DAN

The military records of the two men running for president have become part of the political arsenal in this campaign - a tool for building up, or blowing up, each candidate's credibility as America's next commander-in-chief.

Robert looks up at the TV, toys momentarily forgotten...

DAN (CONT'D)

While Senator Kerry has been targeted for what he did in Vietnam, President Bush has been criticized for avoiding Vietnam by landing a spot in the Texas Air National Guard - and then apparently failing to meet some of his obligations in the Guard.

INT. BURKETT'S HOME -- NIGHT

Burkett and Nicki, together on their couch...

DAN

Did then Lieutenant Bush fulfill all of his military obligations?

INT. BEN BARNES' OFFICE -- NIGHT

Barnes sits alone with a glass of scotch, not watching...

DAN (V.O.)  
And just how did he land that spot  
in the National Guard in the first  
place?

INT. 60 MINUTES -- BULLPEN -- NIGHT

Mary, with her team. Push in on her face slowly, taking in  
the report, finally going out over the air:

DAN  
Tonight we have new documents and  
new information on the President's  
military service, and the first-ever  
interview with the man who says he  
pulled strings to get young George  
W. Bush into the Texas Air National  
Guard...

Mary smiles. We FADE TO a MONTAGE of different people  
watching all over the country--

INT. DINER -- NIGHT

KITCHEN WORKERS and PATRONS eating dinner, watching the TV  
bolted to the wall...

INT. AIRPORT GATE -- NIGHT

TRAVELERS waiting for their flights, watching as the story  
plays...

INT. TEXAS BAR -- NIGHT

LOCALS sitting on barstools watching the TV among the  
christmas lights.

People from all different walks of life, all being touched  
by the power of television.

FADE TO:

A MONTAGE of NEWSCASTS - all covering the story. Overlapping  
soundbites about Bush's Guard service, growing until we see  
a TELEVISION SET - Showing a Local New York NEWSCAST:

LOCAL NEWSCASTER  
*...The 60 Minutes report which  
unearthed new documents regarding  
(MORE)*

LOCAL NEWSCASTER (CONT'D)  
*the President is sending shockwaves  
 throughout Washington tonight...*

INT. PIERRE HOTEL BAR -- NIGHT

Later. Our group, celebrating at the bar. Smith and Lucy watching the TV. The Colonel next to him.

COLONEL CHARLES  
 This is what our business is now.  
 Reporting on reporting. Why break  
 news when you can just talk about  
 other news? Thirty minutes from  
 now, someone's gonna do a story on  
 this guy doing a story on us. And  
 then they'll all win Peabodies.

LUCY  
 This one mattered.

Smith smiles at her. Elsewhere Mary's phone rings. She steps away from the group, answering.

MARY  
 Hello?

INTERCUT:

WROLSTAD  
 Nice. Even the kid liked it.

MARY  
 Really?

WROLSTAD  
 You're a hell of a reporter, babe.

Mary smiles. Means the world to her.

MARY  
 I'll be home tomorrow, okay?

WROLSTAD  
 Okay.

Wrolstad hangs up. Mary pockets her phone, turning back to the bar. Then stops.

ACROSS THE ROOM

Stands Dan. Talking to some people he knows. He catches her eye. Raises a glass to her. A dignified salute. A beat. She raises hers back.

No words spoken. No words needed. A real moment between them. Dan smiles and returns to his conversation. And Mary goes back to her team at the bar.

FADE TO BLACK

As we hear more and more reports about the story, now in different languages as it is picked up all over the world...

FADE IN ON:

EXT. WEST 57TH STREET -- MORNING

Mary crossing the street, headed for building 555...

NEWSCASTER (O.S.)

...Latest overnight polls which have  
Bush's numbers stabilizing and Kerry  
rising...

INT. MARY'S OFFICE -- MORNING

Mary, drinking coffee. Checking email. One from Josh.

*I was just sitting here thinking about how amazing you are.  
I'm buckled in, waiting to see where you take us next. Let's  
go!*

*Josh*

Mary smiles. Sips her coffee. A moment of serenity and peace. And then Betsy West comes around the corner.

BETSY

Mary, what's going on? These blogs  
are saying the memos can be recreated  
exactly in Microsoft Word.

Mary blinks.

MARY

Who's saying this?

BETSY

A conservative website.  
(MORE)

BETSY (CONT'D)

(reading a printout)

*Every one of these memos to file is in a proportionally spaced font, probably Palatino or Times New Roman.*

As she continues reading, Mary swivels back to her computer, opens MS Word, grabs a memo and begins to RETYPE IT...

BETSY (CONT'D)

*In 1972 typewriters used monospaced fonts. The use of proportionally spaced fonts did not come into common use until the introduction of personal computers. They were not widespread until the mid to late 90's. Before then, you needed typesetting equipment, and that wasn't used for personal memos to file. I am saying these documents are forgeries, run through a copier for 15 generations to make them look old.*

She stops as Mary holds a copy of the memo up to the screen. Staring at them both. They look nearly IDENTICAL.

BETSY (CONT'D)

Mary... what the hell is going on?

Mary stares at the screen. She has no idea.

SMITH (O.S.)

It's on Drudge!

INT. JOSH HOWARD'S OFFICE -- MORNING

Josh and Mary Murphy, looking at the Drudge Report website. The headline - BUSH DOCUMENTS FAKE.

JOSH

(reading)

*The spacing is not just similar, it is identical. Notice that the date lines up perfectly, all the line breaks are in the same places, and all letters line up with the same letters above and below.*

(MORE)

JOSH (CONT'D)

*And I did not change a single thing  
from Word's defaults; margins, type  
size, tab stops, etcetera, are all  
using the default settings-*

Josh's phone rings. He stops. They look at each other.

MURPHY

What the hell are we gonna do?

Josh answers the phone.

JOSH

Hello?

(listens; to Murphy)

Betsy's office, right now.

INT. BETSY WEST'S OFFICE -- DAY

Mary, Smith, Colonel Charles, and Lucy sit on a couch. Josh and Murphy across from them. Betsy stands with **Gil Schwartz - CBS Public Relations.**

SCHWARTZ

Due respect, did you fuck up?

MARY

We had four document examiners working separately and not one of them said the memos weren't real.

SCHWARTZ

Did any of them try typing them into Microsoft Word?

MARY

I don't know, Gil, I'm not a document examiner, but I'm assuming part of their job was making sure these things weren't whipped up last Tuesday.

JOSH

Just because some guys on the internet have a problem with our reporting-

BETSY

It's not just guys on the internet. ABC News is going after this. Nightline specifically-

MARY

You mean they're going after Dan.

A beat. Schwartz looks to Betsy.

BETSY

Yes.

SCHWARTZ

Tell them about the superscript.

BETSY

It's the little "th" that pops up after you type a number like 111th-

MARY

I know what it is, what about it?

BETSY

Bloggers are saying it's a big red flag this was done on a computer. They say it didn't exist on typewriters in the 1970's.

LUCY

One of our examiners raised that concern as well.

Mary shoots her a glance.

MARY

Emily Will, yeah, but Matley said they did have them and she deferred to him.

SCHWARTZ

They will kill us on that. They will kill us on that alone.

JOSH

I don't understand, what do they want?

MARY

They want us to say we're wrong. Because if we're wrong, all the questions we asked about the President's service go away.

They're all looking at her now.

MARY (CONT'D)

Look, we have the document examiners. We have Bob Strong, who worked at Guard headquarters and says the memos are written in the vernacular of the Guard at the time. And we have Bobby Hodges, Killian's commanding officer, who confirmed both the content of the memos and that they reflected Killian's state of mind at the time. *We have this story.*

BETSY

Make sure. Reconfirm with everybody.

SCHWARTZ

And find us another goddamn "th" in the official record, okay? I wanna ram it down their throats.

INT. CBS NEWS -- MAKE UP ROOM -- AFTERNOON

Dan, getting made up for the news. Mary pokes her head in.

MARY

You've heard?

DAN

Yes. And it's bullshit, pardon my French. People have been attacking me for thirty years, it's not going to start bothering me now. Are you okay?

Mary nods. Then:

MARY

We're gonna be in a fight here, Dan.

DAN

I still got a few good ones left in me.

MARY

You get your contract sewn up yet?

DAN

I got the President of the news division *his* job here, I'll be fine.

(MORE)

DAN (CONT'D)

Now give me something to hit back  
with.

INT. 60 MINUTES -- CONFERENCE ROOM -- AFTERNOON

STACKS of boxes on the center table. All of them labeled  
BUSH GUARD RECORDS. Smith, Colonel Charles, and Lucy stand.

COLONEL CHARLES

We need to find that "th"...

He pulls off the top of the first box...

INT. JOSH HOWARD'S OFFICE -- EVENING

Josh, at his desk. ON TV - Dan giving the news:

DAN

--Killing 9 people and wounding 180.  
Jemaah Islamiyah, the Southeast Asian  
terrorist group claimed responsibility--

Josh changes the channel to ABC WORLD NEWS TONIGHT.

PETER JENNINGS

--Several document experts contacted  
by ABC News have raised serious  
questions about the authenticity of  
these new memos...

INT. MARY'S OFFICE -- EVENING

Mary, dialing her phone. ABC also on her TV:

PETER JENNINGS

And then there's this, the little  
superscript "th". That's something  
very few typewriters could do in  
1972--

Mary MUTES Jennings as the phone rings. Through the line:

GENERAL HODGES (O.S.)

*You have reached Robert Hodges, please  
leave a message.*

MARY

General Hodges, this is Mary Mapes,  
we need to get in touch again as  
soon as possible. Please call me.

She hangs up. Rises and goes out her door to

INT. 60 MINUTES OFFICES -- BULLPEN

Walking past the desks, she notices she's drawing the stares  
of a few co-workers. She's the woman who did this. She  
heads to

INT. 60 MINUTES CONFERENCE ROOM -- NIGHT

Her team still goes through documents. Smith sees her come  
in. Shakes his head. Mary pulls up a chair to help...

TIMECUT TO:

LATER. The group continues to sift through papers. ON TV --  
NIGHTLINE. A woman being interviewed, the graphic reads  
**Marjorie Connell - Jerry Killian's Widow**

MARJORIE CONNELL (O.S.)

Number one, he would not have typed  
because he did not type. Number  
two, the wording is very suspect to  
me. I just can't believe that this  
is my late husband's words-

MUTED. They look up. Josh, holding the remote. Pissed.

JOSH

Staudt was already out of the Guard.

MARY

What are you talking about?

JOSH

(holding it up)

The CYA memo dated August 18, 1973 -  
"Staudt has obviously pressured Hodges  
more about Bush." Staudt *left* the  
guard in 1972. So how the fuck could  
he still be pressuring?

A beat.

MARY

Listen. When a commanding officer-

JOSH

The bloggers are having a field day with this!

MARY

When a *General* leaves his posting and goes to work for Conoco on the *same base* he still wields an enormous amount of influence there. Doesn't matter when he left. Back me up, Roger.

COLONEL CHARLES

She's right.

Josh stares at them.

JOSH

Forgive me if I don't think everyone's going to see it the way you do.

Silence as this sinks in. On TV **Gary Killian - Son of Jerry Killian** is speaking. Almost to make a point, Josh UNMUTES:

GARY KILLIAN

-It was not the nature of my father to keep private files like this, nor would it have been in his own interest to do so.

Josh throws the remote on the table and stalks out. A beat.

SMITH

This is bad...

COLONEL CHARLES

No. When they start asking to talk to our source? Then it will be bad.

LUCY

They're coming for us, Roger.

Silence. The Colonel looks back down to his stack of papers and stops.

COLONEL CHARLES

I got one.

Everyone looks it him.

MARY

What?

COLONEL CHARLES

(staring at the page)

I... have a superscript "th". Here.

And they're moving towards him now, taking the paper from him. Looking to see, a superscript "th", plain as day.

MARY

*Josh!*

Josh rushes back in. Mary holds up the page for him to see.

MARY (CONT'D)

Call Dan, tell him we just got in the fight.

EXT. WEST 57TH STREET -- MORNING

The sun shining as it rises...

INT. DAN'S APARTMENT -- MORNING

Dan sits at his kitchen table. Drinking his coffee watching GOOD MORNING AMERICA:

GEORGE STEPHANOPOLOUS

CBS is still standing by its story and in fact they're also pointing to another source, a Colonel Robert Hodges, who was an immediate superior to Mr. Killian.

INT. MARY'S OFFICE -- MORNING

Mary typing feverishly. Her TV plays the same broadcast.

GEORGE STEPHANOPOLOUS

They said they read these documents to Colonel Hodges and he said "that sounds like what Killian was telling me at the time". Hodges is not speaking to anyone else yet.

MARY  
 (shouting at the TV)  
*Because we can't get him on the  
 fucking phone!*

INT. DAN'S APARTMENT -- MORNING

CHARLES GIBSON  
 Has it come to this, though, George?  
 You were talking about the fact we've  
 all become experts on documents in  
 the last few days. Has it come to  
 this, that, that questions get raised?

Dan drinks his coffee. Ready for the fight.

INT. CBS EVENING NEWS -- BROADCAST STUDIO -- EVENING

Dan sits at the anchor desk, delivering the night's broadcast.

DAN  
 Those raising questions about the  
 documents have focused on something  
 called superscript, a key that  
 automatically types a raised "th."

IN THE FISHBOWL

Mary and the others watch on monitors. GRAPHICS of the  
 documents with Dan's voice-over:

DAN (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
 Critics claim typewriters didn't  
 have that ability in the 1970s. But  
 some models did.

Shots of a *111th* from the Killian Memo and a *111th* from an  
 official memo are shown side by side.

DAN (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
 In fact, other Bush military records  
 already released by the White House  
 itself show the same superscript -  
 here's one from 1968. Some analysts  
 outside CBS say they believe the  
 typeface on these memos is New Times  
 Roman, which they claim was not  
 available in the 1970s.

(MORE)

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

But the owner of the company that distributes this typing style says it has been available since 1931.

Shots of MATLEY looking at the documents and the enlargements of the signatures.

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

Document and handwriting examiner Marcel Matley analyzed the documents for CBS News. He says he believes they are real, but is concerned about exactly what is being examined by some of the people now questioning the documents, because deterioration occurs each time a document is reproduced. And the documents being analyzed outside of CBS have been photocopied, faxed, scanned and downloaded, and are far removed from the documents CBS started with.

Shots of Dan and Matley looking at the documents.

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

Matley did this interview with us prior to Wednesday's broadcast. He looked at the documents and the signatures of Colonel Jerry Killian, comparing known documents with the Colonel's signature on the newly discovered ones.

Cut to Matley, sitting in a chair for the interview.

MARCEL MATLEY

We look basically at what's called significant or insignificant features to determine whether it's the same person or not. I have no problem identifying them. I would say based on our available handwriting evidence, yes, this is the same person.

VOICE-OVER from Dan:

DAN (V.O.)

Matley finds the signatures to be some of the most compelling evidence. We talked to him again today by satellite.

Dan in the studio, speaking to Matley on a big screen TV.

DAN (CONT'D)

Are you surprised from some of the questions that comes from these? We're not, but are you surprised?

MARCEL MATLEY

I knew going in that this was dynamite one way or the other. And I knew that potentially it could do far more damage to me professionally than benefit me. But we seek the truth. That's what we do. You're supposed to put yourself out, to seek the truth and take what comes from it.

INT. CBS EVENING NEWS -- "THE FISHBOWL" -- NIGHT

After the broadcast. Dan pushes through the door and Mary and Betsy rise to meet him.

DAN

Told you I had it in me.

BETSY

I'm calling Andrew right now...

She steps away, dialing her cell. Dan shakes his head.

MARY

F.E.A.

DAN

No kidding. What did you think?

MARY

I think you parked it.

Smith runs up, excited.

SMITH

Bobby Hodges is on the phone.

INT. DAN'S OFFICE -- NIGHT

Dan at his desk, Mary on his couch. Each with a phone to their ear. Mary punches through the call.

MARY

General Hodges, it's Mary Mapes. I have Dan Rather on the line with me-

GENERAL HODGES (O.S.)

Why is the Washington Post describing me as your "trump card" in this? You tell 'em that, Dan?

A beat.

DAN

I did not, sir.

GENERAL HODGES (O.S.)

It says a highly placed CBS source referred to me as your trump card-

MARY

General, that was not me and it was not Dan-

GENERAL HODGES (O.S.)

Because I'm not. I've seen all the coverage, and I have to say, I think the memos are fakes.

MARY

You- Excuse me?

Dan looks over at Mary - *what the hell?*

GENERAL HODGES (O.S.)

I do not believe Jerry Killian wrote those memos.

Mary is frantically going through her notebook.

MARY

Sir, when we spoke on September 6th- I'm sorry, I'm just going through my notes- when we spoke, you said the content of the memos was familiar to you, is that correct?

GENERAL HODGES (O.S.)

Yes.

MARY

And that they "reflected Colonel Killian's mindset at the time".

GENERAL HODGES (O.S.)

They do. But I hadn't physically seen them-

MARY

What physically about the memos makes you now doubt their authenticity?

GENERAL HODGES (O.S.)

Jerry's family says he didn't write them.

Mary looks like she's about to pop a blood vessel. Dan tries a different tack.

DAN

General, the thrust of our story was about what happened with the President's guard service. Now if, as you say, Colonel Killian really felt this way and the things described in the memos - pressure from higher up to get him in and then to give him breaks is true, we would like to talk to you about that.

GENERAL HODGES (O.S.)

I'm just telling you I now believe the memos are forgeries-

DAN

Forget the memos. Is what we presented regarding President Bush accurate?

A beat.

GENERAL HODGES (O.S.)

I don't want to get in the middle of this.

DAN

Would you be willing to sit down  
with me tomorrow? I can come there-

GENERAL HODGES (O.S.)

I'm sorry. Maybe after the election.

MARY

General-

GENERAL HODGES (O.S.)

The family says they're fake and I'm  
supporting the family. I'm sorry.

CLICK. He's hung up. Silence. And then

MARY

*Shit!*

INT. ANDREW HEYWARD'S OFFICE -- NIGHT

Thick rugs and leather couches. Mary sits on one. Betsy  
working the phones, Josh stands over her. Heyward at his  
desk, Gil Schwartz at his side.

ANDREW HEYWARD

What are we doing about Hodges  
recanting?

MARY

We say we respect General Hodges and  
believe him the first time we spoke  
with him.

Betsy hangs up the phone. Weary.

BETSY

ABC is reaching out to two of our  
examiners, Emily Will and Linda James.  
They say they never authenticated.

MARY

Of course they didn't. They couldn't.

SCHWARTZ

Why?

MARY

Because they're copies!  
(MORE)

MARY (CONT'D)

(off their looks)

There's no original ink or paper to test, so one can say with a hundred percent certainty they're real or forgeries. That's why they can attack us.

Heyward and Schwartz stare at her.

SCHWARTZ

Jesus Christ...

ANDREW HEYWARD

But on the internet they are certain, Mary, and it's *killing us*.

MARY

Those are lousy wannabe analysts-

ANDREW HEYWARD

Then we'll get some lousy analysts of our own! We are losing this war!

MARY

Our story was about whether Bush's connections got him into the Guard and covered for him when he missed commitments and *every bit* of research we found backs that up! The documents were just a small part of that, but they weren't the point of the story-

ANDREW HEYWARD

It doesn't matter what the point was! We need to stop the bleeding-

MARY

They do not get to do this!

JOSH

Do what?

MARY

They do not get to smack us just for asking the question!

Silence. Josh looks away. Mary doesn't seem to realize what she's said. Heyward turns away from her.

ANDREW HEYWARD

I want new analysts backing us by  
Monday morning. Go.

It takes Mary a moment to find the door. Josh stays. Heyward looks at him, questioning.

JOSH

Andrew... The way this entire thing  
has been handled... If you'd like  
my resignation, I understand.

Heyward stares at him. Softly:

ANDREW HEYWARD

Get out of my office.

INT. PIERRE HOTEL -- MARY'S HOTEL ROOM -- NIGHT

Mary lies on the bed, staring at her ceiling. Bad headache. The lights buzz. Her laptop beeps. She crawls to it. New EMAIL. From *Dan Rather*. She clicks on it.

*Don't forget to eat.*

Mary smiles. Then has an idea. Types in a web address. Right-wing message board.

Knows she shouldn't, but doing it anyway. Scrolling through comments. Most of them focusing on CBS. Keeps scrolling. And then she stops.

Pasted into the comments is a PHOTO OF HERSELF. Next to it --

*Here's the bitch.*

Mary stares at it. A beat. Scrolls down.

*God, does she look like an evil lefty sneak.*

*Somebody wore out the whole bag of ugly sticks on her.*

*Ugly stick? She fell out of the ugly tree and hit every branch on the way down.*

Scrolls farther.

*YUP. She sure looks like a socialist to me.*

*Mapes: feminazi propagandist.*

*Methinks she is also of the "diesel" persuasion. A good many of them are forced to join those ranks because men avoid them like the plague.*

*I'm picturing Sean Hannity right now sharpening his knife to gut this witch.*

Eyes focused on the last three words floating on the screen...

*Gut this witch*

CUT TO:

INT. MARY'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Wrolstad blinks awake. Looks at the clock. 3:31. Looks beside him. No one there.

The sound of a printer working comes from down the hall...

INT. MARY'S HOME OFFICE -- NIGHT

Mary sips cold coffee as the printer clacks back and forth. HUGE STACKS OF PRINTOUTS litter the office.

WROLSTAD (O.S.)

When did you get in?

She turns to see him in the doorway.

MARY

I was worried there'd be cameras at the airport. Didn't want Robert to see that.

Wrolstad nods, pretending he's okay with that.

WROLSTAD

So what are you doing in here?

MARY

(not looking up)  
Working.

Wrolstad looks at her.

WROLSTAD

You want to go take a walk or-

MARY

No, I don't want to take a fucking walk, Mark, I want to sit here and do this, okay?

WROLSTAD

Okay.

He backs out of the room, leaving her to it.

INT. MARY'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Wrolstad blinks awake again. Mary's standing over him.

MARY

Sorry.

WROLSTAD

It's okay.

She sits on the edge of the bed.

MARY

No, it's not. It's like no matter what I say or do, I'm gonna get hit.

WROLSTAD

This isn't that.

MARY

When my Dad used to start in on me, I'd think, "I'm not gonna cry, I'm not gonna ask him to stop." I'm not going to give him the satisfaction of seeing how much it hurts. So he'd just go harder. And I'd think, *Someday, I am going to fight you.*  
(shakes her head)  
But I never did.

Wrolstad stares at her.

WROLSTAD

Now.

She looks up at him, confused.

WROLSTAD (CONT'D)

You have to fight now.

CUT TO:

ON TV -- An exhausted Dan, interviewing Bill Glennon, an IBM Typewriter Repairman. One of CBS's new "lousy experts".

BILL GLENNON

Everything in those documents that people are saying can't be done thirty-two years ago are totally false. Proportional spacing was available, superscripts were available as a custom feature, proportional spacing between lines was available; you could order that any way you like...

PULL BACK to reveal we are in

INT. 60 MINUTES -- EDITING -- EVENING

Mary, cutting the interview, with Smith, Colonel Charles, and the Editor. Josh steps in. Shuts the door.

JOSH

Word's come down from Andrew. They want to talk to your source.

MARY

What if my source doesn't want to talk to them?

JOSH

Then you'll convince him. You're good at convincing people to do things, aren't you?

Mary's eyes narrow.

MARY

I just want you to know how important your support has been through this entire process.

JOSH

Call your fucking source, Mary.

He slams the door behind him. The Colonel turns to Smith.

COLONEL CHARLES  
Now it's bad.

INT. MARY'S OFFICE -- NIGHT

Mary, on the phone with Nicki Burkett. INTERCUT:

NICKI  
You said he wouldn't have to.

MARY  
Nicki-

NICKI  
You said you'd verify the documents  
and he wouldn't have to do anything  
else-

MARY  
(sharply)  
Well, it didn't work out that way,  
did it?

No response. Mary sighs.

MARY (CONT'D)  
I'm sorry, Nicki, I'm tired.

NICKI  
Bill did nothing wrong.

MARY  
No one's saying he did. I just need  
him to get on the phone with my boss  
and tell him what he told me.

Nicki doesn't respond. Mary plays her last card.

MARY (CONT'D)  
It would mean a lot to Dan. Please?

Another beat and then...

INT. HEYWARD'S OFFICE -- NIGHT

Mary, Dan, and Betsy on couches. Josh and Mary Murphy sit  
in chairs. Heyward sits at his desk, leaning on a speaker  
phone.

ANDREW HEYWARD

Bill? This is Andrew Heyward, I'm  
the President of CBS News.

BURKETT (O.S.)

Is Dan there?

DAN

I'm here, Colonel.

BURKETT (O.S.)

Heard Hodges turned tail on you.  
All these guys run from it. You  
know I got health problems?

Heyward glances at the others - "who is this guy?"

ANDREW HEYWARD

I had heard that, which is why I  
don't want to take up too much of  
your time. I was wondering if you'd  
fill me in on a few things.

BURKETT (O.S.)

Shoot.

ANDREW HEYWARD

Well, how you came to be in possession  
of the documents. You told Mary it  
was from a man named George Conn?

BURKETT (O.S.)

She was bugging me so much about it  
I had to tell her something.

On Mary, her face sinking. Heyward shoots her a look.

ANDREW HEYWARD

So that's not accurate?

BURKETT (O.S.)

No, sir, it is not.

Mary curses under her breath.

ANDREW HEYWARD

Would you mind telling us what really  
happened?

BURKETT (O.S.)

I got a call in March from a guy who said a woman named Lucy Ramirez wanted to get in contact with me. He told me to call the Houston Holiday Inn between 7 and 10 and ask for a specific room, so I did. This Ramirez woman told me she was supposed to be a go-between, a person to deliver a package of documents to me.

Betsy scribbles furiously to get this all down...

BURKETT (O.S.) (CONT'D)

I was supposed to copy the documents inside and then burn the originals, which were also copies, and the envelope. Destroy the DNA evidence of where they come from, you see.

ANDREW HEYWARD

Of course.

BURKETT (O.S.)

So she says "When are you gonna be in Houston next?" And I tell her we're coming to the Livestock Show in a few weeks - we sell Simmental cattle. The Show is an excellent way to advertise our bull semen.

On Betsy's notes - *burn papers, livestock show, bull semen...*

BURKETT (O.S.) (CONT'D)

So the first day at the show, a dark skinned fellah comes up, hands me an envelope, walks away. Inside are those memos. I burned the rest like he said. Done and done.

ANDREW HEYWARD

And was this the same man who talked to you on the phone?

BURKETT (O.S.)

No idea. Maybe.

ANDREW HEYWARD

And you didn't tell Mary all this before because...

BURKETT (O.S.)  
Said I'd keep it quiet.  
Mary did a good job on this. Don't  
judge her too harshly.

MARY  
(hollow)  
Thanks, Bill.

BURKETT (O.S.)  
De nada.

Heyward, still reeling.

ANDREW HEYWARD  
Bill, this is, uh- this is pretty  
amazing stuff. Maybe you'd be willing  
to sit down and talk about it for  
us? Help clear the air for everyone?

BURKETT (O.S.)  
Don't know. What do you think, Dan?

DAN  
I think they can't hit us any harder  
than they already are, Colonel. Go  
on the record and tell the truth.  
Be done with it.

Silence. Finally:

BURKETT (O.S.)  
Okay.

ANDREW HEYWARD  
My office will make the necessary  
arrangements. Thanks for your time.

BURKETT (O.S.)  
Goodbye.

CLICK. Call over. Everyone sits there in silence. And  
then Mary LAUGHS at the absurdity of it all. Can't help it.

BETSY  
You think this is *funny*?

MARY  
You *don't*? It's The Manchurian  
Candidate meets Hee Haw!

ANDREW HEYWARD

We need him on camera as soon as possible. Betsy?

Betsy nods as the group rises and heads for the door.

ANDREW HEYWARD (CONT'D)

Mary, hang back a sec?

Mary does. The others leave. Heyward shuts the door behind them and turns back to her. Just the two of them.

ANDREW HEYWARD (CONT'D)

When you sit with Burkett, there should be a line of questioning about his motives. His political leanings, his views on the President. *Why* he lied. People are going to cover how we cover this. We need to inoculate ourselves.

MARY

Thou shalt protect the company...

ANDREW HEYWARD

Fuck that, I want Dan to survive this.

MARY

Why wouldn't he survive this?

Heyward looks at her. Doesn't respond. A beat.

MARY (CONT'D)

If Dan feels like this is corporate positioning, he won't do it.

ANDREW HEYWARD

He won't for me. He will for you.

INT. PLANE (FLYING) -- MORNING

Betsy sits across the aisle. Dan sits at the window, staring out at the clouds. Mary is next to him. Watching him. Trying to decide what to do.

EXT. DALLAS/FORT WORTH AIRPORT -- ARRIVALS

Mary, Betsy and Dan exit the airport terminal to find PROTESTERS and CAMERA CREWS shouting at them. Pandemonium.

MARY

*Jesus!*

A FOX NEWS REPORTER pushes to the front of the scrum, sticks a microphone in Dan's face and breathlessly asks:

REPORTER

*Dan, you broadcast those fake memos!  
Do you feel duped?*

DAN

You work for Fox News. Do you?

Mary hustles him into a waiting car and shuts the door.

EXT. CRESCENT COURT HOTEL -- MORNING

**Crescent Court Hotel - Dallas, Texas.** A lushly appointed hotel. Smith and Colonel Charles stand in front motor-court. Smith eyes the nearby fountain. Familiar.

SMITH

I think I've been thrown out of this hotel...

The Colonel spots Mary and Dan's car approaching.

COLONEL CHARLES

Here they come.

The car enters the hotel grounds and pulls to a halt beside the fountain. Mary, Dan, and Betsy get out of the car.

DAN

Where are the Burketts?

COLONEL CHARLES

Upstairs getting ready.

MARY

Dan?

He looks at her.

MARY (CONT'D)

We need to ask why he lied to us.

(exchanging looks  
with Betsy)

We need to make sure we get that.

INT. HOTEL ROOM -- DAY

Dan, Mary, and Betsy come into the Burkett's room as Bill and Nicki rise to greet him.

DAN

Just wanted to come in say and hello before we get going.

BURKETT

Well, thanks for that, Dan.

DAN

These things are fairly easy, we'll just sit and talk a bit. I'm also going to ask about why you misled us, didn't want to take you by surprise with that.

BURKETT

I expected that, and I'll be happy to set that straight.

DAN

Great. Anytime you need to stop, get a drink of water, whatever, let us know. If you'll excuse me, I gotta go get my war-paint on.

(smiles)

Worst part of this is the make up.

Burkett smiles as Dan excuses himself. Off to the side, Nicki stands with Mary and Betsy. Her simple cotton dress no match for the fashionable clothes of the news women.

MARY

It's going to be fine, Nicki.

On Nicki's face. Not buying it.

INT. HOTEL -- HOSPITALITY SUITE -- DAY

The lights blaze down. Dan sits across from Burkett. Make-up caking on his sweaty face. The interview is into it's second hour. Burkett is visibly tired.

DAN

...But you told us a different story.

BURKETT

To protect the people who gave me  
the documents.

DAN

Did they ask you to do this?

BURKETT

They had wanted me to burn everything  
they- yeah, they didn't want people  
to know they were the source on this.

DAN

This man and this mystery woman.

BURKETT

That's right.

(pause)

Can I get some more water?

DAN

Of course.

A PA hands Burkett water. Mary and Betsy walk over to Dan.

BETSY

We need a better bite on this. Maybe  
instead of "Did they ask you to do  
that", say "Did they ask you to lie?"

Dan looks to Mary, who nods.

MARY

I agree.

DAN

Okay.

Burkett finishes sipping the water. Dan looks to him.

DAN (CONT'D)

We're going to go back for a moment.

BURKETT

Okay.

DAN

This man and this mystery woman, did  
they ask you to lie to us?

BURKETT

They didn't want me to say how I got the documents.

DAN

And that's why you initially misled us?

Betsy begins writing something on a card...

BURKETT

Yes.

She hands the card to Mary - *So that's why you lied you us?* Mary looks at her. Betsy nods, urging "go on"...

BURKETT (CONT'D)

Your producer was pushing me to find out where I got the memos from.

Mary hands Dan the card who scans it.

DAN

So that's why you lied to us?

BURKETT

Yes. And I know it caused some problems.

He reaches for the water again. Dan pauses as he takes a several gulps from it. Betsy is writing another card.

*Why didn't you tell us the truth when you gave us the memos?*

Mary raises an eyebrow at her. Betsy gives her another "go on" look. Mary hands the card to Dan while Burkett breathes. Dan looks at Mary. Not pleased, but he'll do it.

DAN

(to Burkett; gently)  
Whenever you're ready.

Burkett nods. Finishes with the water. Nicki takes it from him, not pleased with how this is going.

DAN (CONT'D)

You say you knew this would cause problems.

BURKETT

I know it did, I didn't know it would.

DAN

So, again, why didn't you just tell us the truth when you gave us the memos?

An exhale from Nicki on the sidelines. Not happy with this.

BURKETT

I was trying to protect people, Dan. People who were trying to tell the truth about what happened back then.

Betsy, writing again - *So you decided to lie about where the documents came from?* Mary shakes her head. Not doing it.

DAN

And you believe these documents are telling the truth?

BURKETT

I do.

Betsy hands it to Dan herself. Dan looks at it. Frowns.

DAN

We have that already.

BETSY

I want to make sure we have enough so it'll cut-

DAN

(sharply)  
We *have it*. I'm moving on.

Betsy moves back to her chair, chastened. Across the room, Nicki Burkett stares at Mary, furious.

INT. HOTEL ROOM -- AFTERNOON

After. Mary, Betsy, Smith and Roger sitting silence. Passing a package of potato chips back and forth. Smith exhales.

SMITH

He's a good guy, you know.

BETSY

You think I enjoyed that? We should cut something for Nightly, get it out immediately. Andrew agrees.

COLONEL CHARLES

F.E.A.

BETSY

You guys and Dan always say that, what the hell does it mean?

A knock at the door.

MARY

It's open!

The door opens to reveal Nicki Burkett. Lips pursed and eyes glistening. A beat.

MARY (CONT'D)

How's Bill doing?

NICKI

(softly)

Don't you dare ask how Bill is. Bill is sick. He's a sick man. And you don't give a damn about him. You just spent two hours trying to destroy him. You made him crawl on-camera. You made him say, again and again, that he lied and it still wasn't enough for you. You wanted more. You wanted to put the blame on him for all the things you did wrong putting this story together. You want to wrap it all up in a neat package and say "It's all Bill Burkett's fault." Well, it's not, and you know it. And you promised when we came here to do this interview, we would get a fair shake and we got nothing from you but lies.

She's so mad she's shaking. Everyone else is too.

MARY

Nicki-

NICKI

You may think I'm some stupid hick who doesn't know a damn thing about a damn thing and you are so smart and such a big shot. But I keep my promises and I don't destroy people to protect myself. I don't destroy people and humiliate them and then pretend I give a goddamn about how they are. To answer your question, Bill is not good. But then, you knew that already.

Silence. No one else can summon a word.

Nicki turns and leaves them. Betsy crumples up the chips bag and tosses it on the table. Not hungry anymore.

EXT. LAGUARDIA AIRPORT -- NIGHT

As a plane touches down...

INT. CBS NEWS -- LOBBY

Dan walks in, hefting his overnight bag. Andrew Heyward stands waiting for him. Dan sees the look in his eyes.

ANDREW HEYWARD

We need to talk.

INT. PIERRE HOTEL -- MARY'S ROOM -- NIGHT

Late. A knocking at the door. Mary clicks on the light and goes to answer it. Dan, in his trench coat.

DAN

What are the chances you have something alcoholic in there?

MARY

Better than average.

INT. PIERRE HOTEL -- MARY'S ROOM -- LATER

Dan sits on the sofa as Mary pours him a drink from tiny mini-bar bottles.

DAN

How long have we known each other?

MARY

Oh, Jesus, it's that bad?

Mary hands him his drink and sits on the bed.

DAN

There is going to be an investigation. CBS is going to appoint an independent panel to look in to how the story was put together. I'm to make an announcement about it tomorrow.

(pause)

And I'm going to apologize for the story on air.

MARY

Andrew asked you to apologize?

Dan looks up at her.

DAN

He did not ask.

MARY

It's surrender.

DAN

Since Burkett changed his story, Andrew says CBS will no longer risk its reputation on this.

MARY

He knew. Even before we went down there. He just wanted Burkett on tape...

DAN

I need you to do me a favor. I need you to stop worrying about me.

MARY

That's not gonna happen-

DAN

You need to protect yourself now. We all do.

He puts his drink down and withdraws a BUSINESS CARD. Leaves it on the table. Mary looks at it. It is for a lawyer.

INT. MARY'S OFFICE -- EVENING

Mary sits on her couch. Josh across from her. ON TV - The feed from the EVENING NEWSCAST downstairs.

DAN

Last week, amid increasing questions about the authenticity of documents used in support of a 60 Minutes Wednesday story about President Bush's time in the Texas Air National Guard, CBS News vowed to re-examine the documents in question, and their source, vigorously. And we promised that we would let the American Public know whatever the outcome-

Mary clicks off her TV. Can't watch anymore. She looks at Josh. Then:

MARY

I'm sorry this was your first story here.

JOSH

I'm thinking next week we should just have Dan shoot the President. Would cause much less drama.

Mary laughs. Josh smiles. A nice moment. Broken by Betsy coming through the door, a strange look on her face.

BETSY

Mary? USA Today wants to know if you put Burkett in touch with the Kerry campaign in exchange for documents?

MARY

I know what this is about. Josh, remember when I told you Burkett wanted to give the Kerry campaign advice on the swift boat stuff?

Josh just stares at her.

MARY (CONT'D)

I wanted to do a bullshit check on Burkett after he said he'd talked to  
(MORE)

MARY (CONT'D)

Howard Dean? You said I could contact the Kerry people to check and then Burkett wanted me to give them his phone number and you said I could, so I did.

(pause)

Do you remember any of this?

JOSH

(softly)

I must not have made myself clear. You must have misunderstood what I said you could do.

Mary looks at him, stricken.

BETSY

Jesus *Christ!* What else is going to fucking happen here! Unbelievable!

MARY

Betsy-

BETSY

No, you know what, Mary? Maybe it's best if you just went home.

Mary looks from one of them to the other. Josh won't meet her gaze. A beat. She gathers up her things...

INT. CBS NEWS -- LOBBY -- EVENING

Mary's heels clack on the marble floor as she heads for the exit. TV's on the wall play the CBS EVENING NEWS. Dan's voice, echoing all around her...

DAN (O.S.)

After extensive additional interviews, I no longer have the confidence in these documents that would allow us to continue vouching for them journalistically. I find we have been misled on the key question of how our source for the documents came into possession of these papers. That, combined with some of the questions that have been raised in public and in the press, leads me to

(MORE)

DAN (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
a point where, if I knew then what I  
know now, I would not have gone ahead  
with the story as it was aired, and  
I certainly would not have used the  
documents in question.

She pushes out through the doors into the night...

INT. MARY'S LIVING ROOM -- DAY

Wrolstad holds the phone to his ear.

WROLSTAD  
...I'm sorry, she's not speaking to  
reporters at this time.

He hangs up and retakes his seat next to Mary. Sitting across  
from Smith and Colonel Charles, who opens a file folder.

COLONEL CHARLES  
CBS has hired the firm of Kirkpatrick  
and Lockhart Nicholson Graham to  
conduct the Review Panel.

Mary looks at her friends.

MARY  
You paper trailed them.

SMITH  
(smiles)  
Of course.

COLONEL CHARLES  
Over a thousand lawyers, headquartered  
in Seattle. They specialize in  
internal investigations. They're  
the ones Bush brought in to rip apart  
WorldCom last year.

WROLSTAD  
The same WorldCom that committed an  
11 billion dollar fraud leading to  
the largest bankruptcy filing in US  
History?

MARY  
And we're as bad as them?

SMITH

It gets worse.

Colonel Charles flips the page.

COLONEL CHARLES

The panel will be co-chaired by K  
and L partner Richard Thornburgh.

Mary and Wrolstad can't believe it.

COLONEL CHARLES (CONT'D)

Former governor of Pennsylvania,  
first appointed as a U.S. Attorney  
by Richard Nixon. Ran for Congress  
twice, lost to Democrats both times.  
Second campaign was run by Karl Rove.  
But the crown jewel of his resume is  
serving as U.S. Attorney General  
from 1988 to 1991 under former  
President George H.W. Bush.

SMITH

The man running this "independent  
panel" worked for Bush's father.

Silence.

MARY

Jesus. Who goes in first?

SMITH

Dan, then me, then Lucy, the Colonel,  
then you. You're the grand finale.

WROLSTAD

Why?

COLONEL CHARLES

Because they want to have everything  
they can on you before they put you  
in that chair.

Mary doesn't know what to say. The phone rings again.  
Wrolstad snatches it up.

WROLSTAD

I'm sorry, she's not speaking with-  
(pause; to Mary)  
It's Heyward.

SMITH

If he tries to put someone else on the phone with you, hang up.

(off their looks)

Corporate policy, he has to have a witness on the line if he's going to fire you.

MARY

Thanks for the pep talk.

(taking the phone)

Andrew?

INTERCUT:

ANDREW HEYWARD

Mary, we've hired a private detective to go back over everything. I want you to turn over your notes, your emails, everything.

MARY

I was thinking, if we could track down the actual typewriter-

ANDREW HEYWARD

Stop working on the story.

He hangs up. Mary puts the phone back. Looks to the others.

MARY

All work official on the Bush-Guard story has ceased. I can't imagine why.

Robert stands by the front window, looking out at the lawn.

SMITH

What are you looking at, buddy?

ROBERT

The big van.

Mary moves to the window. A NEWS VAN setting on Mary's lawn. Guys run cable into the street. MEN WITH CAMERAS.

ROBERT (CONT'D)

Are *they* friends of yours?

Mary watches the reporters for a bit.

MARY

No.

CUT TO:

EXT. MANHATTAN STREET -- DAY

NEWSCASTER (O.S.)

*...Rather's apology has not quieted conservative bloggers who are now calling for criminal charges. As CBS officially begins it's Review Panel today...*

INT. 60 MINUTES -- BULLPEN -- DAY

Mary Murphy looks up as Smith walks past.

MARY MURPHY

What are you doing here?

SMITH

I left my wallet in a cab, I'm supposed to be over at Black Rock for the panel this morning-

MARY MURPHY

You can't be here.

SMITH

Excuse me?

He sees Josh coming down the hallway towards him.

JOSH

You're not allowed in the building.

SMITH

I'm not allowed in the building according to who?

JOSH

Management. You have to go now.

Josh gestures to the door. Smith stares at both of them.

SMITH

Do you even understand what's happening right now?

JOSH

(picking up a phone)

I understand that you're leaving.

SMITH

Right now Viacom is lobbying a Republican controlled Congress for deregulation and tax breaks that would save the company hundreds of *millions* of dollars - and we just aired a report that could cost Republicans the Presidency!

JOSH

(into the phone)

Security to the 9th floor now please?

SMITH

You don't think Viacom *needs* the Administration on their side? You don't think they're *desperate* to make it up to them right now? Make up for CBS running stories on Abu Ghraib and the President and Vietnam and all the shit that isn't part of their regularly scheduled programming? *Everyone* wants this to disappear!

(disgusted)

There's a fucking election at stake! We're supposed to question everything and you won't even question this!

People's heads poke out of their offices at the yelling.

JOSH

Are you done?

SMITH

You know when the FCC repealed cross ownership laws a single company was allowed to own forty-five percent of the National Market Share? *Forty-five percent*. People fucking flipped. They actually wrote their congressmen. So in the 2003 Appropriations Bill, Congress overturned it. Hooray for democracy, right?

A crowd has now gathered around this ranting former employee.

SMITH (CONT'D)

Except the President wouldn't sign it. Bush threatened to veto the entire bill unless a compromise was found at *thirty-nine* percent and why? Because at that *exact* percentage, both Viacom and Newscorp wouldn't have to sell off any stations. The President of the United States was ready to take down the entire federal budget so that *Viacom wouldn't lose money!*

Silence. The staffers look to Josh.

JOSH

You're right. We're all evil and you're the plucky misunderstood hero. It wasn't that you guys fucked up a story - it's the conspiracy, right?

Smith, about to retort when TWO LARGE SECURITY GUARDS appear and walk him to the elevator. Smith gets on. Looks at Josh.

SMITH

They're gonna screw you too, you know.

The doors close between them.

EXT. BLACK ROCK -- NEW YORK CITY -- DAY

**Black Rock - CBS Corporate Headquarters.** Establishing. The monolithic black tower at West 52nd and Sixth.

INT. BLACK ROCK -- CORRIDOR -- DAY

Smith sits across from Dan and SEVERAL LAWYERS. Like kids about to be called into the Principal's office. Silence.

SMITH

I never asked you why you got into journalism.

Dan thinks about it for a bit.

DAN

Curiosity.

SMITH

That's it?

DAN

That's everything.

(smiles)

Why did you get into it?

Smith looks at him.

SMITH

You.

On Dan as this lands. The door opens and LAWYER approaches.

LAWYER

The panel is ready for you, Mr.  
Rather.

Dan smiles at Smith and rises. Walks inside.

INT. DINER -- AFTERNOON

Mary sits alone in a booth. Pops a Xanax. Watching a woman in the BAKERY SECTION decorate a cake. Fascinated by it.

MARY

That's amazing. How do you get the  
icing to do that, with the piping?

WOMAN

It's no big thing.

MARY

Yeah, it is. It's beautiful.

Interrupted as Smith slides into the booth across from her.

SMITH

They asked if you bullied staff or  
sources. If you tried to physically  
intimidate people into doing what  
you wanted.

MARY

And I hope you told them I regularly  
beat the shit out of you-

SMITH

This isn't a joke, Mary!  
(MORE)

SMITH (CONT'D)

(pause)

They asked about your politics.

She stares at him.

SMITH (CONT'D)

Deck's stacked. Game's rigged.

(shakes his head)

Between them and talk radio and your father, it's a fucking lynching...

MARY

What about my father?

Smith blinks. Said something he shouldn't have.

SMITH

It's nothing, forget it-

MARY

*What about my father, Mike?*

So loud that heads turn. The cake lady frowns.

SMITH

(softly)

I thought you knew.

INT. MARY'S KITCHEN -- AFTERNOON

Mary stands with Wrolstad. A NEWSCAST on TV. Replaying a radio station CALL IN SHOW. *Mary Mapes' Father Calls In!* Voices from the TV. One of them belongs to DON MAPES.

DON MAPES (O.S.)

I'm ashamed of what my daughter has become.

Mary shakes like a child at the sound of his voice...

RADIO HOST (O.S.)

You are?

DON MAPES (O.S.)

She's a typical liberal. She went into journalism with an axe to grind and that was to promote radical feminism.

Like each word is a slap...

RADIO HOST (O.S.)  
So this is a pattern of hers?

DON MAPES (O.S.)  
Oh, sure. When I heard this was a  
60 Minutes story, I figured she would  
be the producer of the show. She  
and Dan Rather have been working on  
this ever since Bush was elected.  
She should be really be looking at  
George Soros or Michael Moore-

Mary can't take it anymore - she stabs at the television to  
turn it off. Walks from the room without a word. Broken.

INT. MARY'S KITCHEN -- AFTERNOON

Wrolstad pulls an address book from a cluttered drawer.  
Dials the cordless phone. Walks into the

EXT. MAPES BACK YARD -- AFTERNOON

As it rings. Pacing tightly. The phone is answered.

DON MAPES (O.S.)  
Hello?

WROLSTAD  
You can't talk to the press anymore,  
Don.

DON MAPES (O.S.)  
Who is this?

WROLSTAD  
You know who. For once in your life,  
be decent.

A beat.

DON MAPES (O.S.)  
I'm expressing my opinion. I thought  
you reporters were all about that-

WROLSTAD  
Don, if you don't stop talking to  
the press, I'm going to fly up there  
and break your fucking arms.

MARY (O.S.)  
Is that him?

Wrolstad turns to see Mary standing by the back door. He doesn't know whether to tell her or not.

MARY (CONT'D)  
Let me talk to him.

She extends her hand for the phone. Wrolstad gives it to her. We think she's going to lay into him, but instead:

MARY (CONT'D)  
(softly)  
Daddy, please, stop.

A beat. An exhale of breath from the other end.

DON MAPES  
Well since *you* asked, I will.

CLICK. He's hung up. Mary swallows. Tosses the phone on the lawn and goes back inside. Done.

INT. MARY'S BEDROOM -- AFTERNOON

Mary lies in what almost looks like a catatonic state. No lights on, just the fading sun coming through the slats in the shutters. Wrolstad steps quietly into the room.

MARY  
I can't anymore.

WROLSTAD  
You can.

MARY  
I don't want to. They can have my career. I don't care.  
(deep breath)  
I never should have asked the question...

Wrolstad looks at her. He knows that's not true.

WROLSTAD  
So they're right and you're wrong?

MARY  
Guess so.

WROLSTAD

And Dan?

She looks up at him.

MARY

That's not fair.

WROLSTAD

"It's a shame what that woman did to Dan Rather." That's what they're saying on cable.

MARY

(softly)

Don't...

WROLSTAD

How's he's going to go down a disgrace. And Robert will get to see you quit, that'll be good for him.

MARY

Fuck you...

He puts his hand on her brow.

WROLSTAD

You have to make your case to the Panel. You have to fight.

MARY

Even if the system is rigged?

WROLSTAD

The system *is* rigged. Always has been. But you still have to tell them what happened.

Mary stares at him.

MARY

*Why?*

Wrolstad smiles at his wife - isn't it obvious?

WROLSTAD

Because that's what we do.

And he strokes her brow as she looks at him and then we

CUT TO:

KNITTING NEEDLES clicking softly together, as they make loops of yarn. A clock on the wall ticks. We're back in

INT. WINSTON AND STRAWN -- LAW FIRM LOBBY -- DAY

Mary sits as she has before. Exhausted. As the Receptionist looks up to tell her that Mr. Hibey will see her now...

MARY (O.S.)

So. Do you believe me?

INT. HIBEY'S OFFICE -- DAY

Mary sits across from the lawyer. Tale told. Hibey blinks.

MARY

Do you believe I did my job?

HIBEY

I told you, it doesn't matter what I believe-

MARY

It does to me.

HIBEY

If you'd like someone else to represent you in this, I understand.

He looks to the door. She doesn't move.

MARY

Tell me why I shouldn't.

Hibey leans back in his chair.

HIBEY

What do you want out of this?

MARY

Excuse me?

HIBEY

Do you want to get into a debate about journalism with them or do you want to keep your job?

MARY  
I can't do both?

HIBEY  
Not at this point, no.  
(pause)  
You're the primary breadwinner, is that correct?

MARY  
Yes.

HIBEY  
And your son is seven?

Mary stares at him.

HIBEY (CONT'D)  
This isn't a trial, this is a hunt. This is about assignation of blame - who is at fault, because somebody has to be. Debate that with them and you're done.

Mary looks at him. The needles have stopped.

HIBEY (CONT'D)  
You have one chance here. Among all the conservative lawyers on the panel, there is one former journalist. One man who can maybe understand what happened. You convince him... maybe he can turn the rest of them.  
(pause)  
But if you antagonize them, if you bait them, if you fight them - you *will lose*.

Mary looks up at him.

MARY  
You're hired.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM -- MORNING

Mary going through her notes with Hibey's assistants.

HIBEY (V.O.)  
 You're going to cooperate in every  
 way, follow every request and  
 instruction.

EXT. BLACK ROCK -- NEW YORK CITY -- MORNING

Mary and Hibey exit a taxi in front of the large and imposing  
 monolithically black CBS Corporate Headquarters Building.

HIBEY (V.O.)  
 There is no standard here. No books  
 full of journalistic laws, no written  
 codes.

INT. BLACK ROCK -- CORRIDORS -- MORNING

Secretaries crane their necks to catch a glance of Mary and  
 Hibey as they walk past. The walls plastered with posters  
 from CBS shows. Lucy and Desi. MASH. And Dan Rather.

HIBEY (V.O.)  
 There's just opinion...

INT. BLACK ROCK -- CONFERENCE ROOM -- DAY

HIBEY (V.O.)  
 And we have to sway it.

Mary and Hibey, taking their seats on one side of the  
 conference table. On the other is THE PANEL. Hibey nods to  
 the older man in the back of the room.

HIBEY (CONT'D)  
 (whispering to Mary)  
 That's Thornburgh.

MARY  
 Where's the journalist?

Hibey points to the bespectacled gentlemen to the side. One  
 of the lawyers in the front speaks.

LARRY LANPHER  
 Ms. Mapes, thank you for coming in.  
 I'm Larry Lanpher. I'm Lead Council  
 along with Mike Missal here.

MIKE MISSAL  
 A pleasure.

Hibey looks around the room.

HIBEY  
I notice there's no stenographer.

MIKE MISSAL  
This is an internal investigation.  
We're just going to take some notes  
as we go.

He nods to two women with notebooks and pens.

HIBEY  
So there will be no official record?

Lanpher ignores the question with a smile.

LARRY LANPHER  
Would you like to take a bathroom  
break before we begin?

MARY  
I'm fine.

LARRY LANPHER  
You're sure?

Mary smiles back.

MARY  
I'm not that delicate.

HIBEY  
I'd like one.

LARRY LANPHER  
Okay. Start in ten minutes everyone?

INT. SIDE ROOM -- DAY

Hibey pulls Mary into a small room off the conference room.

HIBEY  
I need you to stay calm.

MARY  
Don't I look calm?

HIBEY

Not even a little. They're going to try and catch you off balance. When they ask a question, answer it. Tell them what time it is, don't tell them how to build a clock.

MARY

But-

HIBEY

Don't fight.

He holds her gaze. She nods. They head back in.

INT. BLACK ROCK -- CONFERENCE ROOM -- AFTERNOON

Missal slides a stack of papers across the table.

MIKE MISSAL

I'd like to talk a little about language.

MARY

Absolutely.

MIKE MISSAL

These are the printouts of emails sent back and forth by your group during the investigation.

Hibey pages through them.

MIKE MISSAL (CONT'D)

In this one to Mike Smith, what did the two of you mean when you discussed a piece of "tasty brisket"?

MARY

That referred to a piece of information Mike uncovered working on a documentary for the Germans.

MIKE MISSAL

A piece of information against the President.

MARY

I think specifically it referred to Bush losing his nerve while flying.

MIKE MISSAL

Which was not mentioned in the report you aired on 60 Minutes.

MARY

I didn't think we had it nailed down.

MIKE MISSAL

So, is it accurate to say that you were looking for anything negative about the President?

Hibey looks over to Mary. Careful here...

MARY

I would say it's accurate that we were looking for any information about his time in the Air National Guard that had not yet come to light.

MIKE MISSAL

And that's why it's "tasty"? Not because it reflected poorly on the President?

MARY

It was tasty because it had the potential to be newsworthy. Mike and I are friends, we use a shorthand. Sarcasm, jokes.

LARRY LANPHER

Is that common in your industry?

MARY

I suppose.

LARRY LANPHER

When dealing with matters as serious as this, it's common to make jokes?

MARY

I can assure you, we take our work very seriously.

MIKE MISSAL

I also wanted to ask you about this email from Roger Charles where he says he "feels better" about the

(MORE)

MIKE MISSAL (CONT'D)  
documents because of their formatting.  
Colonel Charles originally thought  
the documents were fake?

Mary blinks.

MARY  
I don't believe so.

MIKE MISSAL  
Then why would he say here that he  
"feels better"?

MARY  
Because it seemed that what our source  
was telling us was true.

LARRY LANPHER  
I have to disagree. Even the subject  
line of the email is "I feel better"  
with three exclamation points. It  
seems that Colonel Charles initially  
had doubts.

MARY  
You would have to ask Colonel Charles.

Hibey nods. Good answer. But Mary continues:

MARY (CONT'D)  
But also, I'd say he was coming from  
a place of not being sure whether  
the memos were real or not and then  
becoming confident that they were.

LARRY LANPHER  
Really?  
(smiles)  
You'll forgive me for saying, but  
your testimony so far doesn't bear  
that out.

HIBEY  
(sensing danger)  
This isn't testimony, remember?

LARRY LANPHER

If it was impossible to authenticate the memos, doesn't it stand to reason that you initially assumed that the memos were *real* rather than the other way around?

MARY

I wouldn't say that.

LARRY LANPHER

Well, what would you say?

Mary stares at him.

LARRY LANPHER (CONT'D)

It seems to me you assumed these memos were real from the outset, and you looked to make sure that nothing disproved that. Essentially, you took the position that the President was guilty until proven innocent.

On Hibey. *Shit.*

MARY

We took several steps to vet these memos.

LARRY LANPHER

Such as?

There's only two signatures, and two sets of initials - hardly enough comparison for a handwriting match. You said yourself no ink or carbon tests could be performed, in fact two of the four analysts you hired have said they had strong reservations about the memos authenticity.

MARY

Much of the formatting and terminology used is consistent with the period-

LARRY LANPHER

That's debatable-

MARY

(insisting)

Is consistent with the period, as is the content of the memos, which was verified by several different sources who knew Colonel Killian-

LARRY LANPHER

Then what about this?

(reading a memo)

"O.E.T.R." Is this one of the terminologies that was "consistent with the period"?

MARY

I believe so.

LARRY LANPHER

What's it stand for?

MARY

"Officer Effectiveness Training Report."

LARRY LANPHER

Actually, the correct acronym is O.E.R. - "Officer Effectiveness Report". No T.

(pause)

Isn't it true, Mary, that the phrase "Officer Effectiveness Training Report" doesn't actually appear anywhere on any official documents? That this phrase is something you created to explain this incorrect abbreviation in your memos?

Hibey stares at Mary, stricken. *Checkmate.*

MARY

That's not true.

LARRY LANPHER

It isn't?

MARY

I wouldn't do something like that.

LARRY LANPHER

Then prove it.

A beat. All eyes on Mary. She opens up her binder and withdraws a piece of paper. Slides it across the table.

MARY

Official document. Top of the page.

Lanpher looks. The others around him do too. The top of the page reads - *Officer Effectiveness Training Report*. A beat. Mary looks at Lanpher, pleasantly. Waiting.

LARRY LANPHER

Oh. I see that. Sorry, my mistake.

Hibey beams.

INT. BLACK ROCK -- CONFERENCE ROOM -- NIGHT

Mary and Hibey watch as the panel files out. BOCCARDI, the journalist, smiles at them as he goes.

HIBEY

Clearly you did well. They'll regroup and call you back in next month.

MARY

Next month?

HIBEY

They've decided to delay announcing the Panel's findings till after the election.

Mary stops in her tracks.

HIBEY (CONT'D)

Don't look so glum. Keep your head down and you'll make it out of this.

EXT. MARY'S HOUSE -- NIGHT

Wrolstad stands on a step ladder, putting up Christmas lights. Several other houses twinkle. A chill in the air.

PRESIDENT BUSH (V.O.)

I want to thank you all for your hard work in the campaign...

INT. MARY'S KITCHEN -- NIGHT

Mary wrapping a VIDEO CAMERA for Robert for Christmas. ON TV - President Bush doing a PRESS BRIEFING.

PRESIDENT BUSH

I told you that the other day, and you probably thought I was just seeking votes. But now that you voted, I really meant it.

LAUGHTER from the press corps.

PRESIDENT BUSH (CONT'D)

I appreciate the hard work of the press corps. We all put in long hours, and you're away from your families for a long period of time. But the country is better off when we have a vigorous and free press covering our elections. Without over-pandering, I'll answer a few questions. Hunt?

Over more laughter reporter TERENCE HUNT speaks.

TERENCE HUNT

Mr. President, thank you. As you look at your second term, how much is the war in Iraq going to cost? Do you intend to send more troops, or bring troops home? And in the Middle East, more broadly, do you agree with Tony Blair that revitalizing the Middle East peace process is the single most pressing political issue facing the world?

PRESIDENT BUSH

Now that I've got the will of the people at my back, I'm going to start enforcing the one-question rule. That was three questions.

More laughter. They love this guy. The phone rings and Mary mutes the TV to answer it.

MARY

Hello?

INT./EXT. DAN'S NEW YORK APARTMENT -- NIGHT

Dan, holding a glass of scotch. Tie loosened, jacket off.  
The door to his balcony is open.

DAN

Mary, it's Dan plus three.

INT. MARY'S KITCHEN -- NIGHT

Mary smiles.

MARY

I'm working on a chardonnay Xanax  
cocktail if it makes you feel any  
better. How are you?

EXT. DAN'S APARTMENT -- BALCONY -- NIGHT

Dan takes a swallow of scotch and steps out to the balcony.  
INTERCUT:

DAN

Did you know that 60 Minutes was the  
first news program to ever make money?  
Before that, all news divisions  
operated at a financial loss.

He looks out at the city.

DAN (CONT'D)

When the government gave networks  
the airwaves, it was with the  
stipulation that they would be used  
in some capacity for the public good.  
And that was the news. They made  
their money elsewhere on the schedule.  
But reporting the news was a duty.  
A public trust.

Mary doesn't say anything.

DAN (CONT'D)

When Hewitt started 60 Minutes in  
1968, it built to enormous ratings.  
It was wonderful. People were really  
watching news. Caring. And we  
figured out a way to give it to them.

(MORE)

DAN (CONT'D)

(sips)

I was there, Mary. I was there the day they figured out news could make money.

The traffic below him is honking. He doesn't seem to notice.

DAN (CONT'D)

After a while it dawned on them; how come the Evening News isn't a profit center too? Why aren't the morning shows earning more? If you interview Survivor contestants instead of survivors of genocide, your ad rates go up. Pretty soon we won't even run down our own stories cause it's too expensive. We'll just pay someone else to do it, then read them on the air for show.

(pause)

It was a public trust once. I swear to you it was.

Very softly, Mary asks him again.

MARY

How are you doing, Dan?

Dan drains the rest of the scotch and examines his glass.

DAN

I'm stepping down as anchor.

In her kitchen, Mary stands very still.

MARY

When?

DAN

After Inauguration.

MARY

Oh, Dan...

DAN

You didn't cause this, Mary.

MARY

You're a shitty liar, you know that?

(MORE)

MARY (CONT'D)  
 (tears in her eyes)  
 Why didn't you ask me? Everyone  
 else asked after the shit hit the  
 fan, why didn't you?

DAN  
 Ask you what?

MARY  
 Why didn't you ask me if the documents  
 were real?

DAN  
 Because I knew I didn't need to.

Mary is silent.

DAN (CONT'D)  
 When you go back in there, you hold  
 your head up, understand?

Mary smiles through the tears.

MARY  
 Yes, Dad.

A beat. Dan puts down his glass. Smiles.

DAN  
 F.E.A.

INT. BLACK ROCK -- SIDE ROOM -- AFTERNOON

Thunder and lightning outside. Late in the day. Dinner  
 break. Mary watches Panel members through the open door.

HIBEY  
 You're doing great. Another half  
 hour and we're done.

Mary nods, her mind anywhere but here. Like she's deciding  
 something. Doodling absently on a legal pad. "FEA". Hibey  
 looks at the letters on the page.

HIBEY (CONT'D)  
 What does that mean?

She looks up at him.

MARY

Fuck 'em all.

INT. BLACK ROCK -- CONFERENCE ROOM -- AFTERNOON

Mary and Hibey sit across from the panel. One more time. Rain streaks the windows. Things are wrapping up.

MIKE MISSAL

...Well, I'm glad we have clarification on that.

HIBEY

Good. If there's nothing else?

Missal and the others move to rise. Mary keeps her seat.

MARY

Aren't you going to ask about my politics?

Missal blinks. Hibey shoots her a warning look.

LARRY LANPHER

Excuse me?

MARY

You've asked other people what I believe. Aren't you going to ask me?

HIBEY

(hissing to Mary)  
What are you doing?

The journalist, LOU BOCCARDI, finally speaks.

LOU BOCCARDI

Well, wouldn't you say most people you work with think you're a liberal?

MARY

Do you mean, "Am I now, or have I ever been a liberal"?

A number of the panel shifts in their seats uncomfortably.

LARRY LANPHER

It's a legitimate question.

MARY

Is it?

MIKE MISSAL

You brought it up.

MARY

No, you did when you asked all my co-workers. So I'll tell you. I don't believe in labels. I think most people have a mixture of views-

LARRY LANPHER

That's not what we're talking about.

MARY

Then what are you talking about, Larry?

LARRY LANPHER

We're talking about you bringing your politics into your reporting.

MARY

I did nothing of the kind.

LARRY LANPHER

Really? Nothing? Is that why when Barnes said he got Bush into the Guard, you believed him without question? That when Bill Burkett, an outspoken Bush critic and admitted liar brought you memos, you assumed their authenticity and didn't bother to source them? That when not one but two of your four document examiners expressed doubts the memos were real, you pushed them aside and rushed the story on air? And why you *personally* contacted John Kerry's campaign on behalf of a man who had dedicated himself to smearing the President?

(staring at her)

Tell me, Mary, where exactly does politics not enter into any of this? Or are you just *that* bad at your job?

A beat. Lanpher's breathing hard. The others stare at him.

MARY

Do you know what it would take to  
fake these memos?

HIBEY

Mary-

MARY

No, this is important. It would  
require the forger to have an in  
depth knowledge of the 1971 Air Force  
manual, including rules, regulations,  
and abbreviations. He would have to  
know Bush's official record backwards  
and forwards to make sure that none  
of these memos conflicted with it.  
He would have to know all the players  
in the Texas Air National Guard at  
the time - not just their names but  
their attitudes and opinions including  
how they related to one another. He  
would have to know that Colonel  
Killian kept personal memos for  
himself like this in the first place.  
He would have to know how Killian  
felt at the time, particularly about  
his superiors and then first  
Lieutenant Bush. He would have to  
know or learn *all* of this in order  
to fool us as you assume he did.

(leaning forward)

Now. Do you *really* think a man who  
takes that kind of time and precision  
then goes and types these up on  
Microsoft Word?

Silence. The men stare at her. Nobody has a response to  
that. Thunder in the distance.

MARY (CONT'D)

Our story was about whether Bush  
fulfilled his service. But nobody  
wants to talk about that. They want  
to talk about fonts and forgery and  
conspiracy theories. Because that's  
what people do if they don't like a  
story these days. They point and  
scream.

(MORE)

MARY (CONT'D)

They question your politics, your objectivity - hell, your basic humanity - and then they hope to God the truth gets lost in the scrum.

(shaking her head)

And when it's finally over, they've kicked and shouted so loud we don't even remember what the point was.

Rain continues to fall. And then from the back of the room

DICK THORNBURGH

But you didn't prove it.

They all turn to him. The old man finally speaks.

DICK THORNBURGH (CONT'D)

You didn't prove Ben Barnes got the President into the Guard. You didn't prove the memos are real. The burden of proof is on you.

MARY

By that standard the Times would never have run the Pentagon Papers, the Post would never have listened to Deep Throat-

DICK THORNBURGH

Ben Barnes is hardly Deep Throat-

MARY

Ben Barnes has confessed to abusing his power to keep some of the richest and most privileged sons of Texas from getting their asses blown up in Vietnam!

DICK THORNBURGH

Ms. Mapes, don't you think that it's possible, just *possible*, that some of those fine young men got into the National Guard on their own merit?

Mary blinks. A beat. And then she answers truthfully.

MARY

No, sir. No, I do not.

Thornburgh nods. A beat. He's heard what he came to hear.

EXT. BLACK ROCK -- EVENING

The rain has grown to a downpour. Mary and Hibey step out the door. Pausing at the edge of the deluge.

HIBEY

Had to do it, didn't you?

MARY

In the immortal words of Popeye - "I am what I am".

HIBEY

I would've gone with "To thine own self be true" but Popeye works.

(pause)

They'll have their findings in a few weeks. I'll call you when I hear.

She extends a hand. They shake. Then she turns, heading off down the street.

HIBEY (CONT'D)

Hey, Mary?

Mary turns back. Standing there in the rain.

HIBEY (CONT'D)

I believe you.

FADE TO:

INT. MARY'S HOUSE -- LIVING ROOM/FRONT HALL -- DAY

Mary sits with Robert, playing with his video camera. The phone in the other room rings. Mary gets up to answer it.

MARY

Hello?

ANDREW HEYWARD (O.S.)

Mary, the report is out and it's very bad. I'm going to put Jonathan Anschultz on the line.

Mary's shoulders slump.

ANDREW HEYWARD (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
Jon, can you hear me?

VOICE (O.S.)  
Yeah.

ANDREW HEYWARD  
Mary, as I said, the report is bad.  
You're being terminated.

Mary closes her eyes as Heyward keeps speaking. She's not even listening. As we begin cutting around to see the others losing their jobs...

INT. BETSY WEST'S OFFICE -- EVENING

Betsy at her desk. She throws the phone across the room...

INT. HEYWARD'S OFFICE -- NIGHT

Mary Murphy crying as she is being let go...

INT. JOSH HOWARD'S OFFICE -- EVENING

Half of the office in boxes. Josh carefully taking down the row of Emmys from the shelf behind his desk...

INT. S.M.U. CLASSROOM -- DAY

Lucy, returning to her classroom to find her students waiting, smiling. They've strung up a banner that says "SO, YOU GOT FIRED." Lucy laughs as they rise and applaud her...

INT. CBS NEWS -- DALLAS BUREAU -- LOBBY -- SUNSET

Mike Smith, carrying his box of stuff down the stairs and out the front door...

EXT. CBS NEWS -- DALLAS BUREAU -- SUNSET

Smith carrying a box of stuff to his truck. Someone standing next to it. Waiting. Colonel Charles. Smith smiles.

COLONEL CHARLES  
Hippie scum.

SMITH  
Jarhead fuck.

Colonel Charles offers his hand.

COLONEL CHARLES  
You ever need a reference...

SMITH  
I can tell them how we destroyed  
modern journalism together?

The Colonel laughs. They shake.

COLONEL CHARLES  
I'll see you.

He turns and walks off into the dying sun...

INT. MARY'S HOUSE -- KITCHEN -- EVENING

Sundown. Mary and Wrolstad sit on their couch. Wine uncorked  
on the table. And the CBS Evening News on TV.

DAN  
We have shared a lot in the 24 years  
we've been meeting here each evening.  
And before I say good night, this  
night, I need to say thank you.

Wrolstad takes Mary's hand...

INT. CBS EVENING NEWS -- BROADCAST STUDIO -- EVENING

Hundreds have turned out to watch Dan's final broadcast.

DAN  
Thank you to the thousands of  
wonderful professionals at CBS News,  
past and present, with whom it has  
been my honor to work, over these  
years. And a deeply-felt thanks to  
all of you who have let us into your  
homes, night after night. It has  
been a privilege, and one never taken  
lightly.

INTERCUT with Mary and Wrolstad watching...

DAN (CONT'D)  
To a nation still nursing a broken  
heart for what happened here in 2001  
and especially those who found  
themselves closest to the events of  
(MORE)

DAN (CONT'D)

September 11th. To our soldiers, sailors, airmen, and Marines in dangerous places. To those who have endured the tsunami and to all who have suffered natural disasters and who must find the will to rebuild. To the oppressed and to those whose lot it is to struggle, in financial hardship or in failing health, to my fellow journalists in places where reporting the truth means risking all, and to each of you...

(smiles)

Courage.

Mary takes a breath. Tears in her eyes.

DAN (CONT'D)

For the CBS Evening News, Dan Rather reporting. Goodnight.

The screen fades to black.

IN THE STUDIO

Dan rises to thunderous applause. Smiling at the people there. A little teary eyed himself. Champagne is popped.

Among those clapping, Heyward. Dan catches his eye. Heyward smiles. Dan turns away from him and begins a conversation. Heyward's smile falters just a bit. But he keeps applauding.

Dan turns and walks away from camera. Leaving us. Leaving the stage.

As he goes, these words appear:

**The Independent Panel Report found no political bias in the reporting of the Guard Story. Josh Howard, Mary Murphy, and Betsy West were asked to resign.**

**Mary Mapes was fired.**

**10 days later, President George W. Bush was inaugurated for a Second Term.**

These words fade. Replaced by:

**Dan Rather left CBS and sued, claiming the network caved to political pressure to placate the White House. The suit was dismissed by the New York Court of Appeals.**

INT. MARY'S HOUSE -- KITCHEN -- EVENING

As commercials and "coming up next" ads play on the television, Mary stares at the image. Then slowly picks up the remote and clicks it off. Silence save for crickets.

Mary takes another tissue and blows her nose. Laughing at the amount of tears. Looks to her husband.

MARY

You want to take a walk?

Wrolstad grins and bounds to his feet. He takes her hand and leads her out the door. And we get the feeling that maybe, just maybe, they'll be okay.

We hold on the door and slowly pan back to the television. Sitting there, mercifully silent.

As we PUSH IN, these words appear on screen...

**Following Mary Mapes' firing, CBS News won a Peabody Award for her story on Abu Ghraib.**

**It is considered one of the most important pieces of journalism of the decade.**

**Mary Mapes has not worked in television news since 2004.**

ROLL CREDITS

FADE OUT