



**WE TRIP THE LIGHT
FANTASTIC**



HIGH AND MIGHTY

**THE
DANGEROUS
RISE OF
THE SUV**

**KEITH
BRADSHER**

"[A] sobering, infuriating, necessary book." —NEW YORK TIMES BOOK REVIEW

Praise for *High and Mighty*

"Bradsher has a wide range of contacts in the business . . . a background giving weight to what easily could have become a polemic. He gives a comprehensive account of how lobbying by car companies, car dealers and the autoworkers' union blocked attempts to impose environmental and safety regulations on SUVs." —*The Economist*

"An intelligent reader will conclude from this meticulous and sober investigation that the makers of these behemoths have exploited a lucrative market of self-regarding urban and suburban consumers who care not a whit that by driving such menacing and wasteful machines they are committing a horrendously antisocial act."

—*The Atlantic Monthly*

"Detroit's top auto executives, plus legions of Explorer, Grand Cherokee, Durango, Navigator, and Tahoe owners, will be squirming—and probably fuming—over publication . . . [of] *High and Mighty*."

—*Detroit Free Press*

"Thoroughly researched, superbly readable. . . . A tribute to what one hard-nosed investigative reporter can pull off, regardless of auto-industry promotion of an alternate reality." —*Philadelphia Inquirer*

"Damned if Bradsher doesn't make a point. In fact a fusillade of points, wounding enough to get his book banned in Michigan. It isn't so much that the average SUV is underengineered, inept, unsafe, polluting, fuel-guzzling and sociopathically aggressive . . . as that it's so knowingly, cynically, avoidably so . . . [A] sobering, infuriating, necessary book." —*The New York Times Book Review*

"Dazzling. . . . Bradsher writes with knowledge and confidence. His book is a masterpiece of its kind, splendidly combining reporting, analysis and indignation. It belongs on the same shelf as Ralph Nader's *Unsafe at Any Speed* and Ida Tarbell's *The History of Standard Oil*, chronicles of the dangerous interaction of corporate perfidy and regulatory breakdown. *High and Mighty* tells us more than we may care to know about how government malfunctions, and about the more disturbing aspects of the American cult of driving. . . . Bradsher's terrific book provides incredible and ominous detail on the risks that SUVs and pickups pose to other drivers, and the extent to which automakers knew the dangers and covered them up." —*The New Republic*

"This is one of the best books on American politics I have read recently, although it's supposed to be about cars. . . . Marvelously told. . . . How [the auto market] came undone is Keith Bradsher's men-acing story, and I think he has it cold." —*The New York Times*

"It's the juicy background stories that make this an interesting book. . . . It's a good read that is packed with valuable information, and anyone who thinks they need an SUV—no matter what the reason—would benefit from reading it." —*Motor Age*

"Superb for many reasons, but above all because it studies the rise of the SUV from inside the auto-industrial complex itself. . . . Fascinating historical material is presented with narrative panache. . . . Every engaged citizen of our perishable republic ought to read this book." —*Newsday*

"Not since Ralph Nader's *Unsafe at Any Speed* has there been such a critical look at the U.S. auto industry, or one that is more timely." —*Seattle Post-Intelligencer*

"An expose in the best tradition. Keith Bradsher takes a phenomenon we all think we're familiar with—and then explains its hidden history and startling consequences in eye-opening ways. Anyone who has an SUV in the family or who faces SUVs on the road will want to know what's in this book." —**James Fallows**

"Reveals not just the get-the-profits-up-at-any-cost excesses of the auto industry, but the craven behavior of Washington that surrenders its regulatory oversight, the true safety menace these trucks pose, and even the cowardly silence of environmentalists. Who speaks for consumers? This eloquent, painstakingly reported book does. It is a shout that must be heard." —**Ken Auletta**

"Bradsher tells the gripping, sordid story of the domestic auto industry's callousness, cover-up, deception, and greed. . . . A siren call to motorists to protect their families, pocketbooks, and environment, and buy all-around better cars." —**Ralph Nader**

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**The Dangerous
Rise of the SUV**

KEITH BRADSHER



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To my beloved wife and son

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A senior editor of business news at *The New York Times*, Glenn Kramon, called me from New York in February 1997 with an intriguing question. As the newspaper's Detroit bureau chief, I had been writing articles for more than a year that mentioned how affluent families were flocking to SUVs, and how the huge profits on these vehicles were bringing renewed prosperity to Detroit. But Kramon wanted to know about something that had little to do with business: What happened when SUVs hit cars. It turned out to be a big problem that regulators and automakers were almost completely ignoring.

With constant encouragement from Kramon, I wrote regularly about the problems of SUVs for the next four and a half years. In between, I did the meat and potatoes of auto industry reporting: writing about the management power struggles, marketing wars, quarterly earnings and monthly sales figures of the nation's biggest industry. The criticisms of SUVs infuriated auto executives, who denounced me in speeches and in interviews with other reporters.