



Sam McCue

BABY GOVERNOR

The Story of a Pampered Politician

Baby Governor

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by
Sam McCue

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Chapter One: Wings



The Saturday afternoon after the election, Sandy and I were at our old house. I remember the moment rather distinctly because Sandy was changing a dirty diaper when the phone rang. She had to leave me lying in a bit of a mess while she walked to the living room and picked up the extension.

I heard Sandy greet Susan and grab a pen to write down a number.

Sandy returned to the bedroom with my cellphone in her hand. First things first... She sat the little Nokia down on the changing table and finished cleaning me up. After Sandy slid on my plastic pants, she dialed a number on the cellphone.

Sandy snatched the NUK out of my mouth. I thought this highly irregular.

"Hello, Governor," Sandy said, "Sam's right here." Then she handed the phone to me, and I sat up.

I knew the Governor would not call on Saturday afternoon had the matter not been urgent.

"Sammy," the Governor said, "Brad Steele died an hour ago. That's all I know right now." He hung up.

Bradford Steele, who had been elected to succeed me as Secretary of State, was a 74-year-old retired Army Colonel. He died of a massive heart attack four days after he'd been elected.

Sandy, Susan, and I attended Colonel Steele's funeral the following week, along with most of the state's elected officials.

Until I ran for Secretary of State in 1996, the job was considered a retirement benefit, seemingly designed for spry septuagenarians who wanted to play at government for a few years. "Bingo" Bill Westlake, for example, was 79. Mr. Westlake was my predecessor. Bob Young, the man I beat for the job, was 73 at the time I was elected Secretary.

The day after the funeral, I sat down with the Governor to discuss who might fill the office – albeit temporarily – after January 2. I had not resigned. I was Secretary of State until I became Governor. The sitting Governor could not fill the vacancy because no vacancy existed.

The situation, the Governor concluded, would require someone who could get up to speed in a hurry. At least Steele had been an administrator. He knew the lay of the land.

I walked into Susan's office a few minutes later and closed the door.

"Nanny," I asked, "how would you like to be interim Secretary of State?"

"I'm not even 30," Susan said.

"What difference does that make?" I asked, suddenly exasperated.

"Okay, let's forget about my age," Susan said. "Have you considered the political ramifications?"

“What are you talking about?” I asked.

“You’ll start your term as Governor in a firestorm,” Susan said. “And you’ll invite the same sort of scrutiny we experienced when you ran against Bob Young.”

Susan was right, but the firestorm of criticism wasn’t what really worried me.

If I appointed Susan to the vacant Secretary of State position, even temporarily, I would also be starting my term as Governor without her as my Chief of Staff. That move would put me at a huge disadvantage. During my four years as Secretary of State, Susan had become indispensable to my success in the office. I literally could not imagine becoming Governor without Susan at my side.

At home that night, Sandy told me she thought Susan was the logical choice. The appointment would be temporary... perhaps four months at most. Sandy thought I was making a mountain out of a molehill.

“I really don’t see what all the fuss is about,” Sandy said while she was giving me a bath. “Appoint Susan and have it over and done with. You can move her into the Governor’s office soon enough.”

All that was easy for Sandy to say because Sandy had never tried to do *without* Susan. The little nanny had been part of our lives for the past decade. In fact, neither Sandy nor I could imagine how we’d have managed without her.

Being Secretary of State was a full-time job and there was no way Susan could do that and be of service as the Governor’s Chief of Staff. I’d already ruled that out.

I walked into Susan’s office on the Monday before Thanksgiving and asked her to call the White House. Since I was

Governor-elect, I expected the President would call me back. I needed some sage – and dispassionate – political guidance.

Bill Clinton could provide that.

The President called the following afternoon. Susan came into my office and closed the door. I put the call on speaker so she could hear. President Clinton sounded a little deflated, but he remembered Susan from Roger's wedding.

"Sammy, your priority has to be the office itself," the President told me.

"If Susan really is the best person for the job, then she's your pick," he said. "I wouldn't worry about how folks will react. Anything you do in your first 18 months will likely be forgotten by the next election cycle."

Then Clinton asked a question neither Susan nor I had even considered.

"Will Susan want to run for the office? I know she's young, but so are you. If she runs, she'll win."

"Mr. President," Susan said, "I honestly hadn't even thought about running."

"Well," the President said, "maybe you should. Sammy, your Dad could be Chief of Staff long enough for you to find someone else who will work out. That's my thought."

I thanked the President for the guidance.

"Sandy did great work up here. Tell her we said hello." The President hung up.

I punched the speakerphone button and sat behind my desk, staring at the ceiling.

While the President had confirmed my thinking, he'd also infinitely complicated the situation. Had I known Clinton would have injected the new variables, I'm not sure I'd have called him in the first place.

That year, Mom and Dad hosted the Thanksgiving holiday at their house. Kathy Kassil, Susan, Sandy, and I attended. My Mom's parents were there, along with my Dad's dad, Sandy's parents, and Susan's parents. My son was in his element. At age 11, his passion was magic, and there was an entire audience he could entertain.

While we all had a good deal to be thankful for, I wasn't sure I could count being Governor-elect as a blessing. The job had already provided a quantity of headaches, and I hadn't even been sworn in.

I listened as my Dad said grace over the massive dining table that Thanksgiving afternoon, and suddenly realized that the President was probably right. *Dad* might be the answer. The former Lieutenant Governor, Dad still knew most of the current Governor's staff. He could step in as my temporary Chief of Staff.

While there might always be an uneasy equilibrium between us – any dynamic involving a father reporting to a son tends to complicate things enormously – I trusted Dad and I knew he understood the situation. With Dad's political gravitas as an asset, I hoped my term as Governor would enjoy a start smoother than I had experienced four years before when I became Secretary of State.

When I sat down with my parents that evening, Dad said he was willing to come out of retirement to do what he described as "a temp job" – on one condition.

“You and Sandy move into the Governor’s mansion temporarily, so your mother and I can move back into the old house. I’m not driving a hundred miles a day roundtrip.”

This discussion unfolded in my parents’ massive living room. Sandy wasn’t particularly happy with Dad’s ultimatum, but I saw no other alternative. We wouldn’t be moving in the traditional sense – the mansion was fully furnished, for example – but for a few months, we’d be leaving behind our home, our neighborhood, and Sandy’s easy commute to work.

Finally, Susan suggested what must have seemed an obvious solution:

“Let your parents move into the mansion. Problem solved.”

I called the Governor’s counsel to check, and a temporary grant of the residence would be within my purview beginning January 2.

Mom and Dad seemed happy to make the short-term transition. They would have a bevy of staff catering to them, around-the-clock security, a house that was comfortable enough, and they could come and go as they liked.

“Chalk up another one for Susan,” Sandy said.

The 2000 holiday season began cheerily enough, I suppose. I was a little preoccupied trying to leave the Secretary of State’s office in the best shape possible for Susan, while also trying to smooth out some bumps in the gubernatorial transition.

One of those bumps was Kathy Kassil, who had continued to resist my efforts to induce her to become Director of the Office of Health Services.

On Saturday, December 16, Susan and Kathy babysat me at Kathy's house while Sandy took our son to her parents' house for the day. This would be one of the few times I'd have a chance to be babied before being sworn in as Governor on January 2.

Susan and I arrived at Kathy's in Susan's Miata. Our state trooper escort sat in his cruiser, guarding Kathy's driveway.

Beneath my warmup suit, I was wearing baby clothes. Once inside, Susan helped me out of the jacket and pants, and I lay in Kathy's lap while she fed me a bottle. When I had finished all eight ounces, Kathy sat me in her lap, flipped a burp cloth over her shoulder, and burped me.

I could have happily remained in Kathy's lap for the rest of the day, but she had other ideas. Kathy checked my pants, found I was wet, and led me into her bedroom to change my diaper. Susan followed.

On Kathy's bed next to my changing pad lay a stack of disposable diapers.

"These are Kendall Wings," Kathy told us. "They're made by the same company that made the Curity diapers."

I lay down across the changing pad and Kathy unsnapped my onesie. She pulled off my plastic pants, opened the wet diaper, cleaned me with a baby wipe, then pulled the diaper from beneath me. I lay on the bed naked from the waist down while Kathy found the diaper pail in her closet.

Kathy slid one of the new disposables beneath me. She'd procured an entire case for us to try. At first, I honestly felt like I was lying on a paper towel. Unlike most adult disposables at the time, the Wings didn't seem particularly thick, but they were extremely lightweight and fit well.

“These won’t hold nearly as much as the diapers we’ve been using,” Kathy said, “and I’m not sure they’ll hold a big BM.” ‘BM’ was nursing shorthand for ‘bowel movement.’

“But they’re very discreet,” Kathy said, “and they’re thin enough that you can wear them beneath pretty much anything. If you get changed every hour or so, they should work better than cloth.”

Susan and I noticed that the Wings were less noisy because they were cloth-backed rather than plastic. Capacity aside, we were hard-pressed to dislike the diapers. The single Velcro® tabs were certainly an improvement over the sticky-tabbed Attends and Depends briefs we’d used.

I wore Wings the rest of the day and Susan took home five or six in her diaper bag.

Sandy liked the Wings immediately. She said they were “Pampers for big kids.” With the Velcro® tabs, Wings had most of the advantages of the cloth diapers Mom had sewn for us, and the laundry issue was nonexistent.

In the fading minutes of my ‘baby time’ with Susan and Kathy, I had tried to bring up the Office of Health Services job. Kathy shushed me, saying she didn’t want to discuss the position.

I’d already learned from Sandy that when a nanny says she doesn’t want to discuss something, the topic *doesn’t* get discussed. Governor-elect or not, I’d have to find a different approach.

I went home early the Friday afternoon before Christmas. I didn’t feel much like wading through the capitol staff party. About 5 o’clock, I walked down two blocks to Kathy’s house. My state trooper escort was with me. The trooper stood on the sidewalk while I rang the bell.

Part of me still expected Kathy's mother to greet me, but Kathy's parents had been dead nearly eight years.

"Governor," Kathy said when she opened the door. "To what do I owe the honor?"

"I wanted to invite you for Christmas Eve," I answered honestly enough. "And if you're not too busy, Nanny, I wonder if we might take a walk."

Kathy ducked back inside to fetch a jacket, then we headed via her backyard to the sidewalk that ran behind our houses down to the school. The state trooper followed at a discreet distance.

"I want to make one final representation," I told Kathy, "I hope you'll hear me out."

As we walked, I outlined for Kathy what I wanted the Office of Health Services to become under my administration... a far more 'activist' role in public healthcare than had ever been envisioned for the office. My latest thinking was to roll out a healthcare program for migrant farmworkers and undocumented immigrants.

Migrant and immigrant families and their children had absolutely no recourse outside the local emergency room. In many communities, these folks were without hope, without an advocate, and without decent healthcare.

I wanted Kathy to help me change that.

I felt certain that no element of this lofty vision could be achieved with a Medical Doctor at the helm of the office. While I respected doctors – and still do – I told Kathy that I needed someone who wasn't afraid to roll up their sleeves and get something *done*.

“We’ve been friends for a long time,” I finally said, “and what I’m asking you to do is a lot of work. If this isn’t something you can embrace, tell me. You understand my vision and I think you’re the right woman for the job.”

We walked another couple of blocks, making a circle of the school track field. As we headed back home, Kathy said not a word. We were in her backyard before she spoke.

“This is something I really *want* to do, Sammy,” she said. “I don’t see how I can say no.”

Kathy kissed me and went back inside. The trooper and I walked back home.

That night, I sat in my home office and called Jim Cravens. Jim told me when he conceded the governor’s race on election night that I could count on him for anything I needed.

“Would you have any interest,” I asked Jim, cap in hand, “in being interim Secretary of State? I feel certain you can run for the office in the spring and win.”

I’d face quite a backlash from my own party, of course, but I’d free Susan from an entrapment and allow my Dad to enjoy his retirement.

Jim’s response frankly surprised me.

“Can you give me a day, Sammy?” Jim asked. “I want to talk this over with Christine.”

Chapter Two: Christmas



Jim Cravens called me back less than an hour later. Susan answered the house phone and brought me the cordless. I was in the garage, waxing the chrome wheels on my Corvette, as strange as that sounds.

"Sam," Jim said, "I've talked this over with my wife. She's on board. I'm ready to serve."

"Have you or Chrissy said anything to anyone else?" I asked, after making certain Susan had gone back into the house.

"No, I wanted to speak with you first," Jim said.

"Can the two of you keep this a secret until January 2?"

Jim said he thought they could manage.

"I'll have Susan prepare the appointment, then I'll sign it when I finish my inaugural remarks and you can hand me your letter of resignation." Jim was a State Senator.

"I'll have you sworn in right there," I told him. "We'll give the press a crowded news cycle."

"Governor," Jim wondered, "do you have any idea the river of *shit* you're going to catch for doing this?"

"I am aware," I said. "And if you ever call me 'Governor' again, I'll have your knees broken."

Jim laughed and hung up.

I sat back down on my little garage creeper and began waxing again. The next challenge I'd face would involve breaking the news to Susan. Already, this job was turning into something quite different than I'd imagined.

We had a very nice, almost old-fashioned family Christmas that weekend. My grandparents were absent. All had made the trip for Thanksgiving and were disinclined to travel again until the inaugural. But Mom and Dad came to spend Christmas Eve, sleeping upstairs in our guest bedroom. Years before, the room had been my upstairs playroom.

Kathy Kassil spent Christmas Eve and Christmas night at our house, sleeping in our son's bed while the boy slept in his sleeping bag.

Zuth shared our Christmas Eve as well.

Before dinner that afternoon, my son performed for us – a magic show he'd spent his entire vacation rehearsing. We all found it quite entertaining. The boy was in his best white shirt and black slacks; he certainly looked the part.

"Governor, Governor-elect, Madame Superintendent, Madame Chief of Staff, Madame Director, Captain, Ladies and Gentlemen," he intoned, having managed to mention everyone but my Mom by title. "I am Hardeen, the Master of Manacles."

The boy had a pair of handcuffs purloined from one of our state trooper friends and a spare key hidden somewhere. He also had several magic tricks – illusions, mostly – that were quite good.

'Hardeen,' incidentally, had been the stage name of Houdini's brother Theo. Our youngster had become quite the Houdini aficionado.

Hardeen finished to rave reviews. Sandy, Susan, and Mom went to the kitchen to heat the Christmas Eve feast from Rustler's Rooster while Kathy, Dad and I sat with my son in the living room. Mom arranged a little buffet on our long formal dining table, and we all sat in front of the Christmas tree and ate, talked, and laughed.

Then we divided up into teams and played Trivial Pursuit. Kathy and Susan had a good chance in the second game because many of the questions seemed skewed to Kathy's strong science background. Dad and I eventually won all three games, but the real surprises of the evening were my son and Zuth. Never try to be smarter than an Algerian and a sixth-grader.

Mom was taking a bath when I walked up to the guest bedroom to talk alone with Dad. I told him about my call with Jim Cravens.

"Well," Dad said, "appointing someone from the opposing party is one way to show everyone you intend to be your own man. I'm glad to be off the hook. There's no way you could have me as Chief of Staff without folks thinking I was pulling your strings from behind the curtain."

I had this immediate vision of Dad as the Wizard of Oz. For a moment, anyway, I smiled.

Dad sat back on the little loveseat. "Does Susan know?" he asked.

"Not yet," I admitted. "That's a conversation I dread."

"Who knows?" Dad said. "She might be thrilled. You've just given me one of the best Christmas presents I've ever had."

I slipped back downstairs, took a shower, and got into bed with Sandy. I snuggled into her embrace, my head on her breasts. Christmastime with Sandy always made me feel like a small child.

“What did your Dad say?” she finally asked.

“He was relieved,” I replied. “But Susan may beat me up and leave me for dead.”

Sandy laughed. Trying to imagine Susan hurting someone was a struggle. Susan was too small.

“Nounou,” I finally said, “I know I’ve said this before, but I really *need* some baby time just now. I’m in way over my head.”

“You silly baby,” Sandy told me. “Let’s get through the day tomorrow and send the kiddo home with your parents. Maybe Susan, Kathy, and I can triple-team you.”

Just the prospect of that sort of babysitting free-for-all made me positively euphoric.

I got up and put my bathrobe on.

“Where are you going?” Sandy asked.

“To talk with Susan,” I answered.

“Sammy,” Sandy said, “it’s Christmas Eve.”

“I am aware,” I said. “I told Jim the same thing when he asked me if I knew the river of criticism about to land on me. I feel the need to get out in front of some of it.”

I knocked on Susan’s door, asked her to put on her robe and slippers, and we went out into the driveway. The new night watchers, only recently installed by the highway department, cast an eerie yellowish glow on the house and lawn. A state trooper sat

in his cruiser a hundred feet beyond the driveway entrance, watching us.

I stood in the driveway, put my hands in my pockets, and looked up at the stars.

“What’s going on, Sam?” Susan finally asked.

“I’ve asked Jim Cravens to be interim Secretary of State,” I said. “I can’t be Governor without you, Nanny.”

Susan was very nearly speechless. “But Jim’s a Rep ...” she said.

“I know,” I replied, holding up my palm to cut Susan off. “If you want to slap me or slug me, feel free.”

“This was always your call, Governor,” Susan said. “I imagine it was a tough one to make.”

“Please help me for the next four years,” I implored Susan. “Then, if you want to run for Secretary of State or Lieutenant Governor, I’ll help you win.”

Susan leaned up and kissed me on the cheek. “You have no idea how relieved I feel,” she admitted and went back inside.

I walked to the trooper’s cruiser in the street. The hour was about 11:30 on Christmas Eve.

“Need something, Sir?” the trooper asked. I asked him his name and where he was from.

“Rick White, Sir. I’m from Milledgeville.”

“Do you have a waiver or something I can sign so you can stop watching our house and go home to your family?” I asked.

The young man laughed. “No, Sir. My parents live out of state now; I volunteered to be detailed here tonight.”

I walked around the front of the cruiser and got in on the passenger side. I'm not sure what the trooper made of the Governor-elect sitting beside him in a bathrobe, but the young man *sat* at attention.

We sat in silence for several minutes, listening to the sporadic traffic on the police radio channels and watching an occasional car glide down the street.

The clock on the dash turned to 12:01. Trooper White extended his hand.

"Merry Christmas, Governor," he said.

We shook. "Sam," I said. "Happy holidays, Rick. Remember to call your mom and dad. They worry."

I got out and walked back to the house. I wasn't the least bit cold. The forecast high for Christmas day was in the 70s.

A living room lamp was on, and Susan was sitting on the sofa. I could tell she'd been crying. I sat down beside her and put my arm around her.

"I want to make love to you," Susan said, burying her face in my robe. "I'm just so happy that you still need me."

I held Susan close for about ten minutes. "Let me put *you* to bed, for a change," I told her, and then I picked Susan up and carried her back down the hall. We slept very little.

I was sitting at the breakfast table about 7 o'clock when Sandy came in from our bedroom. I hadn't been in bed all night, but I wasn't sure she'd missed me.

"How's Susan?" Sandy asked me as she poured orange juice.

"She says she feels very needed," I replied. "Done and dusted."

“Hey,” I told Sandy, “Get dressed and let’s go somewhere. Let’s go play tennis or something.”

Sandy took her orange juice and retreated down the hallway. She returned in a white tennis dress. I changed clothes quickly, then went to the garage and got our racquet bag.

“If we get a car out, the garage door will wake your parents,” Sandy said.

“Already thought of that,” I replied, using a line Sandy often used with me.

We went out to the driveway, and I beckoned to Rick across the street.

Trooper White drove us to the vacant local tennis courts in the state cruiser and stood guard over Sandy and I... one of the perks of being Governor-elect.

“Back up into the driveway, Rick,” I said as we returned home, “and come inside for breakfast.”

We had a quiet morning, surmounted by a gift exchange just before noon. Our rule among the adults that year was that we had to give each other gifts we’d *made* or *had* made.

Our son was the only one who received ‘store-bought’ gifts, largely magic books or tricks.

Dad gave everyone boxes of money. They were literally that... checkbook-sized boxes filled with \$20 bills. Dad explained the money was something he’d *made*.

We weren’t sure whether we were impressed by his ingenuity or if we thought he’d broken the rules somehow.

Mom had sewn an article of clothing for each of us. She gave me a lambskin jacket with the state seal and ‘Governor McCue’

embroidered across the left front. She'd done the embroidery work herself and admitted the leather made that a challenging task.

I wore the jacket constantly and treasure it today.

Kathy gave us each a carefully curated scrapbook of newspaper clippings from the election cycle.

Susan gave each of us a leather-bound desk journal, something like a large, limited-edition Moleskin notebook. The slim volumes had our initials stamped on the cover. Susan had created a surprisingly intimate gift. Each of us would use her journal in a different way.

Sandy had the high school shop class create unique freestanding 'name plates' for each of us... 'Sam McCue,' 'Kathy Kassil,' and so on. The letters that comprised each first and last name had been cut out on a bandsaw, then sanded and stained. I still have mine sitting on a bookshelf behind my desk.

I had a local graphic designer create a 'boxed set' of hardcover copies of my four novels. The handmade slipcases had my book jacket photo on one side and 'The Collected Works of Sam McCue' on the other. I'd signed each of the four books to each person, writing inscriptions that focused on four cardinal virtues: Love, hope, trust, and faith.

We had a quiet Christmas dinner of leftovers before Mom and Dad headed home. Since Dad had driven a Corvette, the trooper on duty followed them and took my son. We waved goodbye from the driveway as my parents pulled away.

Finally, I was alone in the living room with three women and a Christmas tree, bare at the trunk after our little gift exchange.

"Sammy says he needs some baby time," Sandy said as she drew the curtains. "Who wants to help?"

“Do we go to the other house, or stay here?” Susan asked. She was always concerned with logistics, the result of spending four years as my Chief of Staff.

“Let’s stay here, Nannies,” I said. “The other house doesn’t have a Christmas tree. There’s a lot of magic here for me.”

“Well,” Kathy said, “I’ll handle the bath.” She got up and headed down the hallway.

Sandy stood in front of me, just as she had so many Christmases ago. “Dry cleaners,” she said. “I need these clothes.” I let Sandy undress me, aware that Susan’s interest in my naked state was nearly nonexistent.

The bath Kathy gave me was sublime. There is no other word to describe it.

After she’d dried me with a towel, Kathy doctored a couple of ‘boo-boos’ – an infected hair follicle on my left thigh and a spot where an ingrown toenail was trying to give me some trouble – and then turned me over to Susan.

I lay atop Susan’s just-made bed while she diapered and dressed me. I had the NUK in my mouth, wore a light sleeper, and felt quite sleepy as Susan led me back down the hallway.

Kathy was now sitting on the sofa. A baby bottle and a burp cloth were on the end table. I slid into Kathy’s lap as easily as I always had. She fed me four ounces, burped me, and then fed me the rest of the bottle.

I was still over Kathy’s shoulder when Sandy sat down between Kathy and Susan. Sandy had the little photo album she’d created as a Christmas present for my Mom more than 25 years before. Mom had given it back to Sandy a few years before, as my parents prepared to move to their new house.

The Polaroid photos were still enchanting, and the baby clothes were remarkably like the ones I wore 25 years later. The *baby*, however, looked a good deal younger back then.

Sandy enjoyed showing the album, and Susan suggested they create a modern version. The idea seemed to resonate with Sandy and Kathy. Susan went to her bedroom for her digital camera – a Polaroid studio camera with megapixel resolution, quite advanced compared to Sandy’s old Square Shooter 2 – while Sandy gathered up baby clothes.

That left me still sitting in Kathy’s lap, which was fine with me.

That’s how we spent Christmas night before I became Governor – recreating the big baby fashion show Sandy staged during the 1973 Christmas holiday. Sandy even managed to find some applesauce to smear on my face; in many ways, that offset my somewhat more aged appearance.

Sandy put me to bed that night, and – unusually for Sandy – asked me if I felt better.

I certainly did. The holiday had been an emotional roller coaster. With the help of the women I loved, I could survive whatever challenges would confront me in the weeks ahead.

Or so I thought.

Chapter Three: Bath Time



We had a week between Christmas and my inauguration as Governor on January 2, 2001. Sandy told me she was focused on making this last ‘normal’ week as memorable as possible for me. Years later, when the burdens of the office threatened to overwhelm me, she promised I would remember those days in late December and find some comfort there.

I’m not entirely sure that was the case.

Zuth drove Susan and I to the capitol each day. There was much to do to prepare for the transition. Jim Cravens would be taking over the following week, and we wanted to have things ‘just right’ when he assumed the office.

I met briefly with the outgoing Governor on Tuesday afternoon. I assured him I’d selected someone qualified to replace Brad Steele, but I wouldn’t tell him the name of my pick. I knew better than to disclose that my choice was a member of the ‘loyal opposition.’ The Governor became a little angry with me, but he’d been angry with me before and I knew he’d get over that at some point.

Our son was still at his grandparents’ house, so Sandy, Susan and I went to Riazzi’s Italian Garden on Tuesday night. Because it

was the night after Christmas, the restaurant was nearly deserted. Susan had a couple of Rum Collins and Sandy had *three* glasses of well-chilled Chardonnay.

I could have had something to drink – Zuth was driving – but I contented myself with iced tea.

Zuth and I drove home with two inebriated women. I didn't mind that, of course. Susan was under a good deal of pressure and Sandy hadn't really had much of a holiday break so far.

Sandy and I wound up putting Susan to bed ... literally. We undressed the little nanny to her underwear and got her beneath the bedspread. I found her unconscious state highly entertaining.

I went to my home office and wrote a little note:

We had a great time!

See you again soon.

– Bunny and Fritz

I called Zuth's cellphone. Anticipating Susan's condition, I told him we'd have a later start than usual the next morning.

Then I went back down the hall and left the note beneath Susan's pillow.

I walked into our bedroom and sat down on my side of the bed. Sandy, who had been lying nearly comatose on her side, suddenly sat up. She narrowed her eyes as she looked at me as if she'd walked into a room filled with junior high school miscreants or some curiously unsavory interlopers.

"Well, well, well, well, well," was all she said.

Then Sandy's head hit the pillow again, and she said nothing more.

I got up, walked into the kitchen, and called Kathy Kassil.

"Can I come down for a little while?" I asked. "I'm all alone here." That wasn't the truth, but it was as close to the truth as I dared admit on the phone.

A few minutes later, a state trooper and I were walking down the sidewalk. Kathy answered the door in her robe and pajamas and beckoned me inside.

"Well, Kath," I said, "I guess you're the Governor-elect's Tuesday night girl."

"I've been the Governor-elect's Tuesday night girl before," Kathy responded, referring to our teenage trysting. "And Wednesday night girl, and Thursday night girl, and ..."

I decided that the only way I could shut Kathy up was to kiss her. Suffice it to say that didn't go well.

Kathy slapped me so hard my ears rang for the next week.

I held my hands up as if to apologize or surrender, whichever seemed appropriate. I sat down on Kathy's sofa.

"You want to tell me what the Sam Hill is going on?" Kathy finally asked.

"Not particularly," I answered honestly. Then I did.

"I took Sandy and Susan to Riazzi's for dinner, and they both got hammered. So here I am."

"And you want to do *what*, exactly?" Kathy wondered.

"I haven't really figured that out yet," I admitted. "I got you on the sofa. That's where my plan stopped."

I noticed that the little four-volume boxed set I'd given Kathy for Christmas was front and center on the coffee table.

“Well,” Kathy said, “you know you’re not getting anywhere with me.” She smiled slightly. I could take her to bed if I wanted to, but I didn’t want to.

“Do you want a bath?” Kathy asked.

“A bath would be great,” I finally said.

I stood in Kathy’s bathroom and watched as she filled the bathtub.

“Do you need me to undress you too?” Kathy asked. She wasn’t making any move to be helpful in that regard, and I gathered that perhaps, this one time, Kathy wanted me to take my *own* clothes off.

I walked into Kathy’s bedroom – it had been her parents’ bedroom when we were little, and that’s still how I thought of it – and I sat down on the bed.

Kathy left the bathtub as it filled and came to sit beside me. I started unbuttoning my shirt and she helped me pull it off. I unbuckled my belt, unbuttoned my slacks, then stood up to slip off my shoes and socks. When I stepped out of my slacks, Kathy folded them neatly.

I stood in front of her in my underwear. Kathy led me back into the bathroom. She played with the faucets for a moment, then turned off the water. I pulled my underwear down and off and stepped into the bathtub. I sank into the bubbles and was perhaps a little embarrassed.

Kathy had me lie back in the bathtub.

“Close your eyes,” she said, sounding like a nurse.

Kathy picked up a small plastic cup – the same one the nannies used to wash my hair – and filled it from the bathtub. She

poured the cup down my chest, then filled it again and poured the warm water across my shoulders. I felt quite peaceful and contented.

My mind drifted, spun, and freewheeled. If there really is such a thing as an out-of-body experience, I had one that night in Kathy Kassil's bathtub.

I finally opened my eyes. Kathy continued pouring cups of warm water over me. She smiled at me.

"Every time I see you open your eyes and look at me like that," she told me, "I feel reborn. I can see why Sandy and Susan enjoy babying you so much."

"Must be pretty common stuff for a pediatric nurse," I said quietly.

"I never get to do anything this ... peaceful," Kathy said, obviously searching for the right word. She put the cup down on the side of the bathtub.

"Oh," Kathy said, suddenly remembering, "I got asked out today."

I sat up, of course, and asked for details.

A doctor at Kathy's facility had asked her to dinner Saturday night, which would be the night before New Year's Eve.

"And what did you tell him?" I asked.

"None of your business, Sam," Kathy said, playfully slapping my shoulder.

Then she seemed to remember who she was bathing.

"I told him I'd have dinner," Kathy finally said.

I wasn't sure how I felt about that.

"You want to double-date?" I asked.

"You mean, bring him to dinner with you and Sandy?"

"That would be the idea, yes. We should check this guy out in person, medical degree or no medical degree."

"Might be a little much for a first date," Kathy said. "The Governor-elect and his wife having dinner with us and all."

"Point taken," I said. "But we'd be happy to have dinner with the two of you. If you want to impress him, we could all have dinner at the mansion some night."

That pushed Kathy back a bit. I could see it in her eyes. "You'd do that for me?" she asked.

"Sweetie, there's not much I *wouldn't* do for you. Anyway, seize the day with this guy, because you won't be seeing a lot of him after next week."

"You think the Senate will confirm me?" Kathy asked. Her appointment as Director of the Office of Health Services would be subject to confirmation by the State Senate.

I hadn't announced the appointment yet. That would happen on January 2, after I'd been sworn in.

"Oh, they'll confirm you," I said. "A few of the hardliners will want a doctor, but they'll confirm you."

Kathy picked up her washcloth and the bottle of baby wash and began bathing me. She paid no more attention to my most intimate places than she would have if she'd been bathing a real toddler.

I'm not sure what it was, but there was a dreamlike quality to Kathy's baths... they were genuinely addicting.

"Sammy," Kathy asked quietly, "how did we miss each other?"

I knew immediately what Kathy meant; no explanation was necessary.

"I got pretty wrapped up with Sandy when I was midway through college," I said, "and you weren't here."

"But you loved her when you were in grade school, right?" Kathy asked, "and when we were dating?"

She obviously wanted to know. This was a landmine for me and I had to navigate it carefully.

"I loved Sandy at first sight," I said. "But we never had sex until I was a junior in college. Sandy is what you medical types call bisexual. She had no interest in being with me until I forced the issue."

Kathy Kassil was the first – and only – person to whom I'd ever disclosed Sandy's sexuality. I'd never even had this talk with Susan. Part of me couldn't believe I was having the talk with Kathy.

"So, what about Susan?" Kathy asked. "Is that why you sleep with her?"

"I'm not going to discuss that with you, Nanny." I had to draw a line somewhere.

Kathy might have been a dear old friend, but she wasn't my wife or my confessor.

"I'm 37," Kathy finally said, "and I've slept with four guys in my entire life. There it is."

"You've got me beat by one," I replied. Kathy didn't believe me, but that was the truth. My generation was peculiar in that way. We formed deep attachments and didn't really sleep around.

"You've always been so beautiful," I said. "I guess I'm surprised you've only had three other lovers besides me."

That little comment earned me a quick peck on the cheek. Kathy pulled the bathtub drain. I stood up so she could rinse the lingering bubbles.

"You asked me how we missed each other," I said as Kathy sprayed me off.

"You're thinking of me in the present tense. Sandy *made* me. I wouldn't have written another book or run for office had it not been for her. I'm not sure you'd have wanted me as I was in college. I was pretty shallow."

"What do you mean?" Kathy asked. She turned the shower off. "Were you only interested in sex or something?"

"Or *something*," I replied. "*You* got me interested in sex." Kathy and I had lost our virginities to each other.

"Sandy babysat me while I was in high school and college," I said, "and I only had eyes for her."

Kathy focused on drying me with a towel. She said nothing for a long moment as if the last pieces of the puzzle had finally slid into place.

"Because you're a nurse," I finally told Kathy, "I know you have a pragmatic view of things like diapers and babysitting, especially with respect to older kids. That's what interested and fascinated me, even when you and I were little. I used to watch you in sixth grade and dream about you burping me, believe it or not."

Kathy did not laugh, which surprised me.

"Sandy facilitated all that when my Mom wouldn't," I continued, "and that's how we wound up together."

"There's no way I'd have known any of that back then," Kathy said, as if the knowledge now was somehow a relief of sorts.

"No, you couldn't have known," I said as Kathy walked me back into the bedroom, "because none of the three people who knew would have told you. My Mom wanted to tell you, and I wouldn't let her."

"I'm very appreciative of the fact that you know now," I admitted. "You help me much more than you realize."

"None of this seems to arouse you very much," Kathy observed. I was sitting on her comforter, limp as linguini. Except on a couple of occasions when the nannies were changing me, my flaccid state was customary, expected.

"I'm built like every other guy," I admitted. "If you rub or scrub the right places the right way, I get hard. But it's comfort and security... the relaxation. I don't unwind any other way. That's what I get from being babysat."

Kathy handed me my underwear. "Well, Governor," she said gently enough, "I hope you're relaxed, comfortable, and secure. I think you should get dressed and go home. I'm sure the officer standing guard at my front door is getting pretty bored."

I did as Kathy asked. She gave me a long hug on my way out.

When I walked back into the house, the house was silent. Sandy was just where I'd left her. I gently shook her awake and suggested we take a shower together.

Sandy took her time sitting up, but she got undressed. I found it hard to gauge her level of interest in the shower.

She'd probably have a headache overnight and not feel well tomorrow.

I pulled off my clothes for the second time in two hours, dropped everything into the hamper, and followed Sandy into the bathroom. She was wearing the bright red bra and panties I always found so bewitching. The combination of that color and Sandy's red hair conspired to arouse me.

In the shower, Sandy used her hands and soap to wash me to an orgasm. That was the first time she'd done this since we'd been together, and I found the sight of her washing off afterward quite sexy.

I knelt in front of her, the shower spray pounding my back, and tried to please Sandy with my tongue. But the angle was wrong.

"Why don't you just take me to bed," Sandy said, turning off the shower. She pulled two towels from the rack. We dried ourselves, then returned to the bedroom.

Sandy unwrapped herself, spread her damp towel across the bed, and lay down upon it. I busied myself with my head between her knees.

At one point, Sandy became quite insistent. I remember that moment distinctly because I was having difficulty breathing, but I didn't dare change the rhythm or cadence of my tongue.

I kept my eyes closed and thought about Susan, then Kathy, then Sandy as a young woman... anything to distract from the inherent challenge of the task at hand.

I fell asleep with my neck aching; the effort had exhausted me. Sandy turned toward me and folded me into her arms.

Chapter Four: Nanny Brigade



I awoke the next morning with a yearning to get out of Dodge for a few days.

I waited until 7 o'clock to call my Dad. I asked after my son, who was asleep but well. Then I asked Dad if his friend still owned the villa on St. John, and if we might be able to rent it for a few days.

"You're cutting it a little close, Son," Dad said.

In six days, I'd be sworn in as Governor. However, the inaugural was unlikely to proceed without me. Our state constitution did not specify a time – only a date – so I had a little room to maneuver.

Dad said he'd make a call and get back to me. I sat in the kitchen eating granola and reading the newspaper. Sandy walked in wearing her bright yellow dress.

I thought she looked lovely, but I was mystified about such attire in the middle of her Christmas vacation.

"Governor's mansion walk-through and mansion staff meeting this morning," she said, pouring herself some orange juice. "First Lady-to-be stuff."

Neither of us expected Susan to be up anytime soon. I told Sandy about the note I'd tucked beneath Susan's pillow. She thought it funny – especially 'Bunny and Fritz,' – but added that Susan would likely *not* be amused.

The phone rang, and Sandy got up to answer it. She handed the receiver to me.

Dad said the St. John villa was open. The owner wouldn't be there until mid-January. His estate agent could meet us and give us the keys.

Dad mentioned that if we did decide to go, he thought he could get us a private jet courtesy of a company in which he'd invested. The owner owed him a favor, Dad said.

Dad added that he and Mom could bring our son to the inauguration. The boy could stay with his grandparents until January 2. We hung up.

I looked at Sandy. "Nounou," I said, "how would you like to get out of town tomorrow and come back Monday?"

"Where could we go?" Sandy asked. She seemed interested.

"That villa on St. John, where we stayed four years ago," I replied. "Dad says he can get us a private jet."

"Groovy," Sandy said. "We should take Susan. I'd like to ask Kathy."

"I'm not entirely sure Susan can go," I told Sandy. "But I can ask Kathy." I picked up the phone and dialed her house.

"Sandy wants to know if you'd like to go to the Virgin Islands with us," I said simply. This would mean canceling her Saturday evening dinner date, but I thought Kathy might find the trade equitable.

Kathy needed more specific information than I had at that point. I told her we'd likely leave around noon on Thursday and return on Monday evening. A trip to the Caribbean obviously appealed, despite the dinner date challenge.

She'd assess her work situation and let me know if she could get the time off.

Sandy kissed me goodbye, walked to the garage, and got into her Miata. She did not have a state police driver and wouldn't have one until next week. I think she was content to drive to the mansion on her own. She had her CD collection in a little file on the floor in front of the passenger seat.

Sandy had been gone about five minutes when Susan appeared, still in her nightgown.

"Sammy," she said, pouring herself some coffee, "we may have a problem. I don't remember these people at all, and they were obviously in my bedroom." She handed me the note from Bunny and Fritz.

I laughed. "Nanny," I told Susan, "I wrote the note and put it beneath your pillow. It was a joke."

"Screw you," Susan said. She took her coffee and walked away.

"Screw you, *Governor-elect*," I called after her. "By the way, do you think we can wrap up everything in the office by tomorrow morning? We thought we might take a little trip."

That brought Susan back. "Trip to where?" she asked. I told her the destination, which seemed to excite her. Then I mentioned that I'd asked Kathy to come with us and that Dad had wrangled us a private jet.

Susan hopped in the shower and got dressed in double-quick time. Suffice it to say Susan picked up the pace enough to go with us the next day. Kathy met us at the airport.

A pristine white Learjet 31 was waiting for us. Both crew members looked like movie stars. When we were seated, the copilot turned around to us, teeth aglow in a perpetual smile.

"Y'all fasten your seatbelts," the copilot said. The smile never faded.

This, I thought, was customer service.

The little jet hurtled down the runway before heading up almost vertically. The takeoff was like riding a small rocket.

"Oh, my holy God," Susan said as we were all pressed back into our seats.

We stopped in Miami to refuel, then we were off to St. Thomas. We landed about 4 o'clock, in time to catch the early evening shuttle to St. John. We were in the villa before nightfall, bringing with us food purloined from one of the Cruz Bay restaurants.

"Oh, Governor," Kathy gushed as she carried her little bag from the rental Jeep. "Private jet is *the* way to travel."

We had a nice dinner, then I gave the girls the nickel tour. The villa looked the same as it had four years before. I found myself hoping that Sandy and I could make love in the pool again, but with the entire nanny brigade present this trip, that seemed somewhat unlikely.

As it happened, Sandy and I hit the pool the next morning. The sun was brilliant and there wasn't a cloud in the sky. Susan and