

Exhausted and under intense pressure to make a decision, we finally agreed that even if we followed through on the senator's plan, no one who knew us would actually believe the story he wanted everyone to tell, so we took the plunge. I would work with a lawyer named Pam Marple, who was recommended by Fred Baron, to craft a statement to release to the media. Once that was done, we would fly off in Fred's plane to a place where no one could find us.

As he listened to me accept his scheme, a prospect that anyone outside the situation would say was ridiculous, the senator breathed a huge sigh of relief. Over and over again he said that he loved me, he loved Cheri, and he was going to support us in every way he could for many years to come. When we discussed the details, he said, "It's going to be a one-day story, Andrew. No offense, but the press doesn't give a shit about you. They want me. But if we give them a story they can understand, a story about two staffers, they'll go away."

While Pam Marple and I worked on the statement that would be issued to the press, the senator and his allies failed to persuade the editors at the *Enquirer* to hold the story. No one knew what they planned to say exactly, but we assumed that as soon as a photo of Rielle with child went into circulation, Elizabeth Edwards would go on a furious emotional rampage. The senator was as concerned about this as he was about the prospect of his candidacy being destroyed. On many levels, he still loved Elizabeth and didn't want to hurt her. We all knew that in her fury Elizabeth could do a lot of damage to innocent people.

To get ahead of the situation, the senator said, he would have to tell his wife a version of the story—the version in which *I* was the baby's father. (In fact, he had done this already.) He said he expected that she would make him call to confirm the tale while she listened. With this in mind, he

## THE COVER - UP

left a message on my cell phone. It said, among other things, “I’m gonna leave you this message just in case you get a call from me where I ask you what’s going on . . . the reason we are calling is because Elizabeth is standing there . . . so, be aware of that. If I am calling saying, ‘What happened? How did this happen?’ or ‘What’s going on?’ then that’s because Elizabeth is standing there with me. . . . I’ve gotta tell her about this because it’s moving.”

For once, I didn’t give John Edwards what he wanted. I refused to be on any call involving the two of them. In five days, he left half a dozen messages, asking me to return his call. Mrs. Edwards, who officially loathed me, even left one asking me to call back on a “hard line” instead of a cell phone, presumably for security purposes. I continued to ignore her, but I did stay true to my word, approving the following statement, drafted by Pam Marple, on December 15, 2007:

As confirmed by Ms. Hunter, Andrew Young is the father of her unborn child. Senator Edwards knew nothing about the relationship between these former co-workers, which began when they worked together in 2006. As a private citizen who no longer works for the campaign, Mr. Young asks that the media respect his privacy while he works to make amends with his family.

This single paragraph was to be offered to the *National Enquirer* or any other media person who called the Edwards campaign about Rielle Hunter. The senator and the advisers who worked closely with him on this issue—Jonathan Prince and Mark Kornblau—expected the onslaught to begin on Wednesday, December 19, when the new edition of the *Enquirer* would be posted online. Accordingly, Cheri flew with our kids to Illinois, where they would stay for a while with her parents. She couldn’t tell them exactly why we needed their help, where she was going, or when she might come back. This frightened her mom and dad, but they were supportive. I offered a



## THE POLITICIAN

similar nonexplanation to my family, telling them we were going away, that we were safe, but that I couldn't tell them anything more.