

# No One Can Know

*Adrienne LaCava*

Copyright © 2013 **Publisher Name**

All rights reserved.

ISBN: **XXXXXX**

ISBN 13: **XXXXX**

Library of Congress Control Number: **XXXXX (If applicable)**

LCCN Imprint Name: **City and State (If applicable)**

Cover photo © Bettmann/CORBIS.

**Publisher's Note:**

This is a work of fiction. All of the characters, organizations and events portrayed in this novel are either products of the author's imagination or are used fictionally.

Adrienne LaCava

*For Mom, who inspired the love of story in all of us.*

## No One Can Know

*The very word “secrecy” is repugnant in a free and open society; and we are as a people inherently and historically opposed to secret societies, to secret oaths, and to secret proceedings. We decided long ago that the dangers of excessive and unwarranted concealment of pertinent facts far outweighed the dangers, which are cited to justify it.*

President John F. Kennedy,  
*Address to American Newspaper Publishers Association*  
April 27, 1961

## PROLOGUE

November 19, 1963

CIA operative Gabriel Haines was ordered out of Guatemala to lie low. Not one to question commands, he grabbed a ride on the next transport back home to Texas. Tensions in the southern hemisphere were steadily worsening and, in the months since Kennedy fired Company Director Dulles, it had seemed like a fuse lit somewhere in Central America. Haines was glad to jet out of there.

Strapped into a raw metal jump seat, he suffered five hours in a 1000 KG fuselage stuffed with cargo. The big planes might hold a lot but they sucked for comfort, and by the time they put down at Lackland Air Force Base, his spine hurt as much as his ass. Spies aren't the jet-setting martini drinkers civilians like to imagine—they're mostly just weary hitchhikers tramping around off-the-record.

Haines's personal HQ was near the northern edge of San Antonio. He'd rented a seven-acre parcel of land with a barn on it, prompted by the impulse purchase of a mare named Bella. It was almost midnight when he finally reached the property so he whistled twice as he approached, and Bella's enthusiastic whinnies encouraged a wide, happy smile on his mug. He knew country life defined his future. He'd been raised on a farm and loved the lifestyle. Destiny must have put the irresistible palomino in front of him to hurry things up. A conversation last week with an old Army pal might be destiny calling, too. At forty-five years old, the idea of retirement from the Company wasn't so far-fetched for Haines, especially given his most recent orders.

The stench of sour hay and manure filled the barn and had him opening shutters and doors. A stable hand from a neighboring farm tended Bella daily, but she deserved more than this neglected old place. Haines breathed in the fresh air and relaxed his guard as he moved toward Bella's stall.

A stoic demeanor made Haines an exceptional spy, but he'd never for a moment withheld emotion around Bella. And while only a handful of people in the world knew he even had a first name, nobody—*nobody*—knew he talked to his horse.

"Come on, girl. How about a rub down?" he said, leading the beauty out of her stall. Bella whickered, causing creases to appear on his face, deep enough to hold a peanut. Not many people got to see his dimples, but time with his horse was good therapy and he was going to enjoy it. He only had twelve hours before he'd head out again, for a personal mission this time, that meant a short ride up to Dallas and back. He'd prefer to hang with Bella a few days first, but a plan was taking shape that could very nicely provide him with a way into retirement. He just had to make a deal with a good friend to make it happen.

Haines glided a coarse brush over Bella's golden coat and she leaned into the pressure.

"If this meeting goes right with Tucker, girl, it'll mean greener pastures for both of us."

She lowered her head in a solemn nod.

Dallas lawyer and famed hotshot Tucker Massey happened to be one of the only people in the world Haines would call a friend. Tucker knew Haines was ready to get out of the game and offering him the job of foreman at his newly restored cattle ranch was just the ticket. Haines wrestled with some natural skepticism at first, but allowed himself to imagine the possibilities of a simpler, freer kind of life.

Bella pawed the dirt and whickered again, happy with the prospect too. Big girl had a wise soul.

“Fifty thousand acres,” he said with a soft whistle that put her ears flat. “Imagine that. We’ll ride every square inch, I promise.”

Static shot from a transistor radio hanging from a peg, startling Bella. He shushed her gently, fiddled with the dial and restored country music to the breeze. Nashville songbird Patsy Cline had been scheduled to appear in San Antonio on Saturday, but she’d died in a plane crash a few months earlier. The music world still grieved and the radio DJ promised her hits back-to-back all night. Haines hummed along and filled a water bucket at the spigot.

“On a moonlit night by the Alamo...”

Without easing into it, he poured some water over Bella’s flinching back and her big head dropped and rolled into an eleven-hundred-pound body shake before he could jump out of the way. All six feet of him dripped. Taut and toned muscles reshaped the cotton shirt he wore. He laughed hard and wiped his face on the shirttail.

Haines’s heritage was hard to detect, but anyone could see he was built like a plough horse. His mother was full-blooded Negro and best guess on his father’s side was Italian, according to his grandfather. The resulting skin color and cranial features were ambiguous, and interesting. The sight of him could scare the timid, but drenched and laughing as he was, he presented no threat.

Instead, he could almost be mistaken as comforting. Haines’s dream of days ahead, when he and Bella could just take off and ride, untethered, not worried about people noticing or remembering him, softened his hard exterior because, when he finally got to cut Bella loose on a ride, let her lead “Bella style,” he’d let loose too—with a natural, world-class yuck that vibrated meadow grass and made wildlife scamper.

“Sure will be nice to stay put in one place, won’t it? Not hide anymore?”

It's all he'd been doing lately, and he was tired of it. The direction of Company business didn't suit Haines anymore. America's so-called intelligence-gathering organization was unrecognizable. Its leaders had become a bunch of facilitators, or so it seemed to Haines. Operations had gotten politically ensnarled and too many rogues were out there pulling triggers unsupervised. It was time to get out.

Besides, he was sick of the danger, if truth be told. No James Bond to begin with, he now wore a slice of healing flesh that made a crossroads of his right eyebrow. An accidental casualty on his last assignment after liquored-up Spaniards with blades went at it—in the cantina—over a *senorita*. Talk about cliché. But it got him out of Guatemala. Distinguishing marks were dicey on a spy's face, though. He'd need to see a doc if plans with Tucker fell through. Besides an identifier, facial scars could be a “tell” if they discolored when the wearer fibbed. But Haines didn't mind the new marking himself; he could actually use it to his advantage.

A clean split from the CIA required careful handling and a good cover, like injury and a tailor-made, irresistible job offer. Disagreement with the Company could be deadly, but this kind of reasoning they just might get behind.

He leaned toward Bella's flinching ear as though she had a say. “Don't let this be a tease.”



November 22, 1963

On his last morning in Dallas, Haines woke with the chickens. Not real chickens, though; Kat's was a room-and-board place filled with oil-field hands who thrived on greasy, starchy breakfasts. A man had to get up early not to miss out.

Still dark outside, thunder rolled while he dressed, and rain patterned the tiny steamed-up window of the second-floor room. He might have to catch a cab to the train station at this rate, which was normally a pleasant twenty blocks he'd rather walk. Unlatching the single pane, the chilly air outside carried a heady fragrance into the space. He leaned over the basin in front of him and slapped water on his face.

In the mirror, his usually wicked, sharp eyes glared back muddy and derisive. A thundering herd of mustangs was loose between his ears. He arched his eyebrow and winced as the cut along his skin stretched. It'd be a wonder if Tucker's head didn't hurt as bad, even without the wound. The two of them had nearly overdosed on whiskey the night before, drinking 'til the wee hours, shooting pool in a crappy dive near Kat's. They'd also alternated shots of tequila. Celebrating. It was official.

Haines smiled to know he was foreman of Tucker's vast, scenic ranch. Perched atop Texas Hill Country, Tucker said the property offered up the best the state had to offer, from high bluffs to rambling creeks, game-filled woods and lush pastureland. Haines imagined it'd be like the rolling hills of Kentucky where he'd ridden and played as a boy.

Pink light peeped through the clouds outside and brightened the room for a moment. Allowing a surge of high spirits to strike, he took a deep breath and ignored the old skeptic in his head that poked holes in the plan; pushed away fears of severing all his old ties.

*The Cold War's no place for geezers.*

The truth was, the Company didn't need him anymore, and he didn't need the Company.

Scents of breakfast wafted in and his stomach whined its response, jerking him out of his reverie. He pulled on new cutter-heeled boots and headed downstairs to chow.

...

A small television, with rabbit ears held together by tinfoil, sat on the open windowsill. Scattered sun was forcing itself through the clouds now as TV newscasters shouted appropriately through the boisterous, crowded dining room. Catching the president's name on the air, Haines realized the broadcaster's topic was the presidential motorcade that had been set to go through downtown Dallas later that day.

Haines thought the signs were good that Kennedy would follow through. Last night he'd huddled up with Tucker and counted the insiders they'd recognized around town, trying to figure it out for themselves. His old friend had connections, serious connections that went all the way to Vice President Johnson and the White House. Tucker had alluded to preparations, commented on extra security activities he was involved in, and complained because the presidential itinerary kept changing.

Haines tried to tune out the news chatter the best he could and ambled the length of Kat's legendary buffet, salivating along the way to the stack of warm plates and flatware. Oil-field crews knew their comfort food, and Haines knew there was no better remedy for a hangover than Kat's buttermilk biscuits floating in cream gravy with chunks of her spicy, house-made pork sausage; embellished grits, too, with extra-sharp cheddar cheese and tiny bits of fresh jalapeño. Haines garnished the substantial pile on his plate with crispy bacon strips, found an empty chair and succumbed to the medicine.

But the newscaster's voice crept back in while he ate. According to the TV—and contrary to earlier predictions—citizens had enthusiastically welcomed the president and first lady to the great state of Texas in earlier stops at San Antonio, Houston and, just that morning, in Fort Worth.

The Dallas newspapers, however, had surely lacked restraint in publishing fanatical, right wing hate rhetoric the last few days. Haines wondered if it was Company work. Around the globe every day, propaganda specialists molded public opinion, sanctioned by the National Security Council and Joint Chiefs of Staff. Depending on the intended spin of the matter and the customs of the targeted audience, select professionals marched into media control rooms representing “national security,” and nobody refused them anything. He'd watched them retool inconvenient news plenty of times. But Dallas had been the only major city in the country to prefer Nixon in 1960. Could be its newspapermen didn't need help spinning disfavor.

Hearing laughter and applause from the TV, Haines focused for a moment. The president was speaking at a breakfast in Fort Worth and had just told the crowd that being in Texas was like their trip to Paris, where he'd introduced himself as the man who accompanied Mrs. Kennedy around. “Nobody wonders what Lyndon and I wear,” he added.

Laughter from the ballroom's two thousand guests roared on-screen. It looked like the suave and sophisticated Mr. Kennedy intended to charm the locals right out of their little ole pants, and shoot the finger to his foes. Haines sent the president a mental thumbs-up and decided if it didn't start raining again he'd catch the parade before heading back to Bella and the barn.

Politics at work had forced him to be a closet fan of Jack Kennedy's—nearly every military and intelligence professional outright despised the commander in chief. To them, he

was a commie-loving traitor. Haines saw him as a war hero, though, with different ideas about diplomacy, a man who believed, as Haines did, that America could be secure without aggression. Tension in the ranks got extra ugly after Kennedy fired Director Dulles. Dulles had led Central Intelligence for a decade. And Kennedy inherited Operation 40, including the Bay of Pigs plan, from Eisenhower. He didn't agree with OP 40's missions in the Caribbean, but canning Allen Dulles hadn't helped internal relations any.

Staring at his empty plate, Haines felt heavier—both physically and mentally—but less booze-soaked. He returned to his room to shave. With the sun now winning against the rain, a finch squatted on a branch by the window, trilling her melody over and over. Haines grinned at himself a moment. He was really retiring, leaving the Company. Getting out.

*About damn time.*

The brinkmanship and visceral strife got under his skin severely. Treasonous talk was commonplace and people were acting with bitter carelessness. *Oh yeah, and we have the bomb.* He'd begun to see himself as part of a machine that could recklessly cause the extinction of humanity.

Leaning over the basin again, he wet his scalp, daubed the soapy foam on, and continued shaving with practiced efficiency. He wore bald well—and *yessir*, Ranch Man looked good.

So did the day. Clouds had moved on east and left behind a brilliant morning. He settled the bill with Kat and stepped onto the porch. Dressed in dark Wranglers and a white western-fit shirt, the unmasked Haines—just Haines—picked up his old, buffalo-hide duffel and set out for town.

Crisp autumn air felt scrubbed of pollutants by the rain and complemented his unusually sunny disposition. The city almost smelled *good*. He turned west to pick up

Commerce Street when disorder snagged his attention. Wet paper that looked like handbills littered the street, stuck to windshields and pavement everywhere. He lifted one:

“WANTED FOR TREASON” it said in bold print over front and side views of an unsmiling Mr. President. *We’re not in Kansas anymore.* A similar propaganda piece had taken up half a page in the *Morning News*, attributed to the notorious right wing John Birch Society or something.

Haines sneered at the paper and moved on, remembering his conversation with Tucker last night.

They’d stood around the bar’s single pool table shoved in a corner, and had just uncorked a new bottle of aged whiskey. Both of them had tossed back a redundant shot, already three sheets.

“You remember Mike Gilroy?” Haines had asked, though he knew Tucker remembered their squad mate from World War II.

“Yep. I think I saw him at the automat in my office building Tuesday, buying a sandwich.”

Haines nodded. “He walked past me yesterday on Akard Street.”

They’d exchanged a look, a breeze from somewhere setting the fake Tiffany shade over the pool table swaying.

During their years together in the war, Tucker had led a military intelligence unit that spent almost two full years in Italy. Tucker and Haines were the guns, Gilroy their spotter. The trio—plus a pair of specialists in plastic explosives and a sole radioman—made up the special ops team. But he and Tucker didn’t talk about Italy. Ever. Even inferring it, there, over the pool table, had made the atmosphere prickly.

Tucker put a hand to the lampshade and studied his play options on the felt.

Their squad, assigned the code KODIAK090, had dissolved and split up soon after D-Day. “What happened to Big Mike after ’45?” Haines asked.

“He stayed with the company awhile, on the inside I’m thinking. Dropped off my radar around ’54 I’d guess.”

The men of KODIAK090 had shared experiences capable of evoking soul-wrenching pain if a man let his mind dwell there. Details and faces could never be truly forgotten, but each soldier, in their way, had to get past the experience and move on. Tucker got himself a law practice in Dallas and a leadership role with the Texas Democratic Party. All too easily, Haines had slid into employment by the postwar OSS, which soon morphed into the CIA or “the Company.” His chameleon-like ability to blend and superior command of the Spanish language, including a dozen dialects, kept him on assignment nearly 365 days a year.

“He’s not the only shooter in town,” Tucker had said, speaking to the floor.

“I know.”

*Watch your back, Mr. President.*

Reaching the towering shadows of the city’s heart, exhaust fumes were stronger and sunshine created humidity that held the stinky, brown haze low to the ground. Sidewalks were clogged with placard carriers and parade goers, everybody moving the same direction. Newspapers had published the motorcade route that morning, an approximate fifteen-mile loop out of Love Field in north Dallas. The limousines would start out south on Cedar Springs, turn right onto Main Street and travel westward through downtown, then cut back north to the Trade Mart for lunch and a speech. Approximately one hour later, the Kennedys would be transported, in a quieter manner, back to Air Force One.

Squinting in the late morning sun, Haines walked north a block to pick up Main, where he joined an even denser crowd.

It made sense that details of a presidential visit had to be kept under wraps until the last minute. Tucker had said Vice President Johnson's security people griped because nobody would confirm until yesterday that the envoy would even stop in Dallas, let alone stay long enough for a parade. The metroplex teemed with security and Intelligence suits all week, he'd been told, and over that pool table last night he and Tucker had identified six professional assets milling about Dallas.

Stopping under a tobacco store awning, Haines looked around. There'd been talk of snipers foiled and bagged in Chicago three weeks ago. Some loner set up in a nest directly above the presidential motorcade route. Secret Service and CIA have their own sets of rules, but Haines expected the windows in buildings overlooking the route to be ordered shut, particularly at points where the vehicles would slow down. He also figured Secret Service snipers would be assigned rooftops, with spotters watching holes in the perimeter. But windows were still open in buildings all along Main Street, and it was almost show time.

The celebratory atmosphere seemed honestly adoring, at least, in the traditional way of welcoming a hero, so Haines reined in the urge to study shadows. He let the ebullience of the crowd and the ideal weather carry him on.

His plan was to catch the 1:20 out of Union Terminal over to Fort Worth and hop a cab to the base where he'd get a ride back to San Antonio, eventually. He and Tucker decided he'd buy a new pickup and horse trailer there, fetch Bella, then take up residence at the ranch. Four days, tops. A brand new stable, corral and cowboy quarters were waiting for him, and Tucker excitedly insisted they start breeding livestock right away. Haines knew

weeks of research had to be done beforehand, but he itched to get started. *No reason to delay things now.* In his mind, he smiled.

Reaching Houston Street, he paused to study the nightmarish, gothic structure of the city's early courthouse, Old Red. It faced a grassy park with reflecting pools and statuary called Dealey Plaza, where three major streets came together marking the west side of downtown. According to the publicized route, the president's car would be forced to almost stop at the corner of the one-way street where Haines was standing and take another sharp turn a block later, in order to reach the freeway's northbound on-ramp. Union Terminal was two blocks south, so Haines staked the corner. It was the best spot to see the charismatic couple up close.

The increasing din signaled limousines were near and people started bunching at the curb. Gargoyles peered down from the roof of Old Red and Haines stepped over near the low shrubs that lined the building to stash his duffel. Positioned under the street sign, a group of mouthy pre-teen schoolgirls alternated giggles and ear-piercing shrieks, but he had no trouble seeing over them. Everything vibrated and the energy revved, with all heads craning toward thunderous advance bikes.

Police officials in the pilot car took the sharp turn in front of him first, tasked with spotting any trouble coming up. Next, a group of noisy motorcycle cops rumbled past, then an unmarked car that would be the Lead, carrying big wigs of the Secret Service and probably the local sheriff's department. Haines glanced northward at the criminal courts building where the Dallas County sheriff's offices were housed, and it looked like a battalion of deputies stood at parade rest. All of them faced Houston Street, poised for inspection.

He swept his gaze along the buildings in range. A push against his shoulder made Haines lean back to let an excited fan pass, and he noticed a man in shirtsleeves and dark



glasses moving away, only to turn back midstride and tip his head *hello*. Haines stared in dreadful recognition at a face from his days in Florida—a notorious Cuban exile, Horace Ortiz.

The line of freshly waxed limousines crawled toward him now and Haines refocused on the spectacle. People of all walks, stacked ten bodies thick, cheered wildly as the president's convertible eased through the turn. The young girls shrieked like he was Elvis. Mrs. Kennedy came into plain view and Haines didn't hold back a broad, dimpled smile. Drop-dead gorgeous and classy as a queen, she seemed amused by the crowd and their undeniable affection. By her side, sunlight glanced off the Irish in Jack Kennedy's hair. Haines recalled their security code names, Lancer and Lace. *Truly, beautiful people.*

He considered the wisdom of an open car then, realizing agents weren't riding the running boards as they should. Secret Service detail hung behind the limousine and Haines puzzled over the assumed breach in protocol. The immediate crowd was peeling away to keep pace with the president's car, some crossing to the grassy plaza infield or running to catch the glamorous pair at the next turn on Elm Street. Uninterested in the other limos, Haines collected his duffel and turned toward the train station, away from the crowds. He felt the rifle report before it registered audibly.

Stepping tight against Old Red, he fought any acknowledgment of disaster, though apprehension pushed against his breastplate. The schoolgirls wailed and their heartfelt terror gripped Haines with dread. Another rifle report jolted him with an echo. Counting, he swept the scene.

*Dear God, Mrs. Kennedy on deck—tires peeling in smoke, celebrants prone. Uniforms and dark suits merging like ants with weapons drawn, charging uphill in two directions.*

Haines turned away and locked eyes on his boot tops. All the suspicion about guns in town came together suddenly. The United States President had just been shot at, possibly killed. *Why was Mrs. Kennedy out of the car?* Haines realized he needed to get out of there before he was seen, before he could be brought into any investigation. Knowledge would quickly be assumed because of his Company credentials, never mind that he wobbled in shock.

Willing his feet into motion, he suppressed the abrupt, sickening sense of personal loss and took a side street in search of a cab.

# June 1964

# ONE

*Ivy Jean*

## Prosperity, Texas

Ivy Jean Pritchard considered the fate of the world while sunning like a lizard on her favorite rock. The wide, smooth plank of stone had plopped down nicely, half in and half out of her creek, and despite a recent growth spurt, she could still fit her tall, thin body across it.

Lying on her stomach, she watched as a school of minnows darted and swarmed in an eddy below her, and wondered if they could feel worry. The way they skittered around made it seem like they did. Her shiny, dark hair was loose from its usual ponytail and made a canopy of shadow for them.

She caught her reflection in the water and scowled. Every since a boy from school had called her “Daddy Longlegs,” she’d fought a less flattering idea of herself. He’d meant a spider that is all legs. For her entire life, she’d wanted to be a petite brunette, the way she’d heard her mother described.

*Too bad*, her older brother Wade had taunted just last month. She had their mother’s shiny, dark hair but their dad’s long legs and narrow hips.

*‘Daddy’s long legs’ ain’t even funny.*

Ivy Jean was twelve years old and felt all out of proportion. In fact, the whole world seemed to be that way these days. Her father, Vincent, ate up newspapers and TV broadcasts like they were barbecued ribs, but Ivy just thought the news made people nervous for no

reason. She sighed and looked around her at the woods, hoping her friend Julie would show up like they'd planned.

The creek near her house in Prosperity had served as Ivy's playground for as far back as her memory went. *Requiring strict obedience*, her father warned daily, referring to his rules for hanging out there. True, in a wet summer the water levels might reach the bottom of Ivy's cutoffs if she stood in the middle, but most of the time the creek was a shallow stream, five strides across at its widest. It flowed, with a lazy trickling sound, through a wooded swath that divided crop fields at the edge of town. Now thick with oaks and cedar elm trees—and all the underbrush that comes with them—generations of junior explorers had worn a labyrinth of paths and crafted dozens of hideaways in their midst. Whether the woods were labeled 'magical kingdom', 'alien planet', or 'war-torn village', the trees were picked to serve as friend or foe. If Ivy got to name the game, they'd shelter knights and princesses battling for their queen.

Before leaving the house every day, Ivy Jean crossed her heart and promised her father she wouldn't even put a toe in the creek unless other kids were there.

"A person can drown in a teaspoon of water," he'd remind her like clockwork. Even though she could swim well since age four, Vincent said the solemn promise was a rule of play.

Her brother always called their father "Vincent," but only between the two of them, never to their father's face or in public. Wade cautioned that Vincent was "our elder, a war veteran, and generally deserving of respectful address by his children." She'd told him he sounded like Jem speaking of his daddy, Atticus Finch, in her favorite movie, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, and Wade had given her an all-business frown.

Wade William was Ivy Jean's only sibling. When she was three and he was eight, their mother suddenly died, so when it came to things that mattered only to them, the impersonal reference to Vincent not only seemed natural, but necessary. Discussions between her and Wade were private, after all. They were a team. Obedience to the Vincent Code proved it.

But since her brother up and joined the army, Vincent had gotten pure-D weird. It had been a drizzly morning in March when they'd watched Wade climb on the Greyhound bus that'd take him to Fort Bliss, Alabama. *A place called Bliss filled with tanks and guns*, she'd laughed. Wade had called it irony.

From that day on, it seemed their tenderhearted, if stern and absent-minded, father had transformed into some mean old Scrooge. He constantly snapped like a wounded dog she couldn't predict anymore. He muttered to his newspapers and carped about what they said. And he argued with her about the stupidest stuff.

She chewed the sweet end of a wild oat, concluding that Julie wasn't going to show and pondering feelings of lonesomeness. Her brother might be friendless in the Army camp, just like her there in Prosperity, and that made her sad. She hoped her letters were enough to help because, for some reason, Vincent didn't write his own letters to Wade. Instead he'd just scribble a note at the end of hers. Sometimes Ivy Jean wished for more family.

Sitting up, she put her sneakers back on. They were the dry-goods store's version of Keds, but Vincent promised that her next pair would be the real things. Not that it would matter. She'd still feel awkward and tall.

*Julie must be opting for Photoplay magazine and phone calls with boys*, Ivy thought. Ivy liked celebrity gossip okay, but thoughts about what boys were thinking or saying about her caused distressing pressure on her chest. And no sooner had Wade left than she had gotten her period. Vincent nearly blew a gasket at that news, and she had to agree: it's an icky, life-

changing process. And now she was supposed to get boobs, too? She looked down at the front of her shirt and frowned.

*What does Vincent know about that?*

Ivy Jean was a product of the Atomic Age. That meant being plugged into troublesome adult matters almost constantly, and it was why she liked playing at the creek so much. Bomb shelters and red phones and real people gunned down on television were everyday things. *Everything* could change in the blink of an eye. Like the president getting shot in Dallas last fall.

*My own mother got shot in Dallas!*

The stories weren't related, but the subject matter made her long for excitement of a friendlier nature. Get her mind off exploding bombs and invasions in Florida.

She stood and decided to go home for lunch. As she crossed through a sorghum field, the sweet summer air around her went still, like they say happens when storms are brewing a twister. Ivy Jean looked up to find just one dark little cloud parked between her and the sun.