

NO ONE CAN KNOW
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Synopsis

Literary Political Thriller
80,313 words

Gabriel Haines is a road-weary CIA operative who wants to quit the Company and breed horses. When he just happens to be in Dallas on November 22, 1963 to accept a ranch foreman job, though, an agency asset recognizes him in Dealey Plaza just moments before President Kennedy is assassinated. Haines knows he needs to lie low while the dust settles, then proceeds with his plans to retire—with caution.

Late in the spring of 1964, twelve-year-old Ivy Jean Pritchard is dying of boredom in the tiny town of Prosperity, Texas. Worry over the war and possible nuclear annihilation doesn't help make her summer prospects any more fun. She worries enough as it is with no mother, a news junkie for a father, and her only brother going overseas to Vietnam. So, when her father offers her a weekend of western adventure on her Uncle Tucker's ranch, there's only one way to react—to jump at the opportunity.

Haines is still getting settled at the ranch when Ivy arrives soon after he learns that JFK assassination witnesses, and those with specific knowledge of related affairs, are dying suddenly...and suspiciously. Evidence of the events leading up to the president's murder is disappearing at an unlikely rate of coincidence. It's almost too late when Haines realizes he's the mistaken target of one such manhunt. And now he's unwittingly putting Tucker's entire family in danger.

Ivy Jean just wants to escape talk of A-bombs and Commies landing in Florida while her dad leaves her at the ranch to swim and ride horses. But no matter where she turns, some new drama is surfacing. Things get even more stressful when her uncle's mistress, Carla, shows up with shocking news while he is out of town, sparking new levels of rebellion from Ivy Jean's teenage cousin Debra.

Dysfunction in the house and heavy topics—adultery, sex, and drugs—compel Ivy Jean to escape to the outdoors, gravitating to the barn and Mr. Haines, the only other outsider on the property, the man who her cousin calls an “old war spy.”

Though Haines enjoys Ivy Jean's company, he's discovered evidence in the hills of the JFK cleanup crew's surveillance, and has a tough decision to make. Does he stay and try to keep the danger from invading the ranch or flee to hiding, leaving the only place that's ever felt like home?

Inside the house, Carla's unwanted news shakes the family to its core, and a secret, botched abortion takes her life before anyone realizes how sick she is. Haines juggles multiple crises while he's stuck waiting for help—and Tucker—to arrive, unable to address any possible dangers from outside and needing to draw the mysterious watchers away from the ranch.

Haines knows they could be from any of several organizations that wanted John F. Kennedy dead, but the public seems to be buying Oswald as the lone assassin. Whoever is behind the conspiracy is taking sweeping measures to assure there is never enough evidence for a solid conclusion, let alone a trial, in the matter of who killed the president.

As things fall apart at the ranch, Ivy Jean grows more and more terrified. She escapes to hang out with Haines, and a little snooping uncovers proof of his past, giving her way too much knowledge of the trouble he is in. Thoroughly confounded by what's going on around her, and having just watched a woman die, Ivy makes an inspiring connection to her dead mother, and it leads her to create a daring distraction for Mr. Haines to flee.

Grateful, Haines goes off the grid, out into the cold in order to stay alive while he tries to figure out who's hunting him. Ivy Jean, meanwhile, goes back to Prosperity, accepting her family's darker parts, even if she might never know the whole story. Awoken to the power of family narrative, Ivy vows to participate in truthful storytelling. Still, she vigilantly guards her own secrets of the weekend at her uncle's ranch...and she will always wonder what happened to Mr. Haines.

Ivy Jean's father, Vincent, and Tucker provide additional POV and subplots. The estranged half-brothers contribute to the story through their simultaneous experiences in Dallas and Mississippi. Vincent and Tucker show readers what fatherhood and politics were like circa 1964 and bring the wider world to the ranch.

Unlike many novels structured around President Kennedy's assassination, *No One Can Know* does not promise answers or subscribe to theory. Instead, it merely suggests that secrets, particularly those devised and perpetuated "for the good of us all," are capable of breaking down a family...and even a nation.