

On Saturday mornings, if I got up early, I was expected to watch cartoons.

Each weekend I dreaded the time waiting for breakfast having to just sit, hungry, watching the stupid shows.

This morning it didn't matter anyway.

"No cartoons today," my mother greeted me when I came into the den the morning of November 23, 1963. A pleasant surprise, No stupid cartoons, I thought.

She said, "I hope you're not too disappointed. But it is because President Kennedy was killed."

Yeah!

I didn't like most cartoons anymore.

I was slowly cutting back on them as much as I could get away with.

It was a slow battle. I was expected to think they were funny.

There were a lot of supposedly funny programs on TV that had real people but I didn't like most of them either.

Even more surprising, this morning the TV was already on and Daddy was watching it again. The TV was almost never on except when I had to watch it. Daddy worked almost every day, sometimes he was off on Sundays and we went to church. But not very often. He usually came home every evening though often very late.

Sometimes Mama would take a break from her housekeeping to watch a program with me but Daddy rarely watched anything except Ed Sullivan and **Bonanza**. Mama and I were expected to watch those two shows with him every week, and unless he was working late, we did.

I hated them.

"Daddy's off this weekend because of the President," said my mother.

I noticed then Aunt Worthrose was back too, silently watching the people speaking on TV, her arms folded, her upper body slowly rocking back and forth and a pinched expression on her face.

"You need to watch this too, Victoria Irene," said my father. "This is history."

I had not realized they liked President Kennedy so much. I had heard the story of how Daddy had voted for Nixon and that had made all his family mad at him because Kennedy was the first Catholic who could become president.

This was not unusual. Daddy's family was usually mad at him, and him at them, for something.

"Can I have my book?" I asked, being deliberately vague.

It normally bothered them when I read books and watched TV at the same time.

I had earned that right by repeatedly answering questions about the content of both correctly time and time again over the years.

But it still bothered them and I had to ask permission, frequently threatening to refuse to watch TV if they didn't let me read at the same time.

But this time- "Of course," they all said, almost at once.

Wow, jackpot, not even a dissent.

I went back to my room and got my notebook and pen. Just to be on the safe side I brought **Little Women** also, to try to take attention away from my writings. I could pop it open and read from it if necessary for subterfuge.

To my delight, I got the couch all to myself because my parents and my aunt

preferred to sit in hard chairs they brought in from the dinette and placed very close to the television, closer than I was ever allowed to sit because Daddy said the rays from the TV were harmful and Mama said it could hurt your eyes.

And I had never seen Aunt Worthrose come and watch TV with us before, she only ever watched Lawrence Welk at her house with Uncle Clyde, which sometimes I watched with them when I visited.

But today Daddy ignored the deadly rays and Mama didn't care about her eyes and Aunt Worthrose was there with us.

So I was behind them, almost alone on the couch, writing when they thought I was reading.

I got Chapter 2 done before lunch.

Chapter 2 *A Warning*

Ellen and Barbara laid Belle down on the couch.

"I'm going to see what's out there!" determined Barbara. "Mom you stay with Belle. I'll be right back."

Barbara went to the door and looked out.

Whatever Belle had seen was gone!

On the ground were footprints of a woman's high-heeled shoes!

When Barbara came back in Belle was sitting up on the couch still as white as a sheet.

"Then what did you see out there?" Barbara questioned her with a puzzled expression on her face.

"Barbara don't question her now!" Ellen said. "Can't you see what a shock this has been to her? Come dear, you had better lie down."

Ellen and Belle went upstairs leaving Barbara to figure out things for herself.

Barbara went back outside unmindful of the pair of eyes watching every move she made and of the rattlesnake waiting to be let out of his cage to bite of the plans made for her in the future.

Belle came and said she was ready to tell Barbara what she saw.

They went inside together and Belle said, "Well there was the horrible thing. It was so frightening it made me faint. Well there was a red sign with black letters and it said,

BEWARE
BARBARA SCOTT
YOU
AND
YOUR
FAMILY
ARE IN
DANGER

It had brown edges. It looked like it was written and colored with a magic marker. At the bottom there was a very funny little mark sort of like this."

Belle took a pad and pencil and made a mark like this:

x

"Was there anything else?"

"Yes, do I have to tell you?" pleaded Belle.

"No, you told me enough for now," said Barbara kindly.

"Barbara, didn't you see it?" asked Belle.

"What?"

"The thing."

"No, all I saw was a woman's footprints."

"A woman's footprints!" exclaimed Ellen who was vacuuming the carpet.

"Yes," said Barbara. "Right out beside the walk."

"Let's go see," said Belle.

"Ok, come on."

Ellen cut off the vacuum and followed the girls out into the yard. Ellen was very proud of her intelligent daughter and her feminine niece. Although Barbara and Belle are very sensible, Jane was more practical even though she was somewhat spoiled. Ellen loved them all very much. Unknown to Barbara, Belle, or Jane, April had had another child. A son who would be 21 if he had lived.

Outside, Barbara went exactly to the place. Then she gasped, The woman's footprints were gone!

What was going to happen next?

I wasn't sure but I sure was proud of my characters. They were turning out just like I wanted them to.

Barbara, the beautiful clever amateur detective, Belle, her orphaned cousin who looked up to her, and Jane, the annoying cousin who was sure to get some lessons from Barbara. Plus I had made Barbara's father a private detective, I figured that was indeed clever, he could be gone without explanation, working on a case. I knew Nancy Drew's father was a lawyer, always around, dabbling in her cases, and I didn't want to copy that.

Belle was a character who would frequently have hysteria, always need attention, thrown into Barbara's family by fate. I used Jane as a name because I did not like the girl characters that had a boy's name, I did not think girls should have boy's names. Boys should have strong names like Victor, Christopher, or Clark. Jane was going to be unattractive, at least at first so her name would be plain. Most of my girl characters would have more beautiful names like Barbara, Caroline, Jacqueline...

"Victoria!"

"Yes, Daddy?" I sat up straight at once.

"Pay attention, the new President is speaking."

Lyndon was a strange name for a man, in my opinion. It sounded like a girl's name, almost more like a last name. It was a name I would not use for any character in

my book unless I did use it as a last name.

He didn't talk long and it was soon back to the commentator who was talking about President Kennedy's brother Robert.

Robert. Now that is a beautiful name. I thought that was the best name I've ever heard for a man.

"It's a shame Bobby Kennedy can't just take over and become the president instead of old Johnson," Aunt Worthrose commented.

I agreed. He certainly was better looking.

"It wouldn't be right. He wasn't elected," said my father.

Aunt Worthrose stayed through lunch, saying Uncle Clyde could make himself a sandwich. They had closed his company also and he was home, like me and Daddy.

"He won't starve if I'm not there to make lunch one day." She added, "Clyde said we should send the family of the police officer that was killed some money. What do you say, Vic?"

"They hardly mention him," said my mother resentfully. "He had a family, too."

"Ok." said my father.

"We should send President Kennedy's family some money, too," I said.

"No, honey, they don't need any money," said my mother. "They have plenty of money."

"It's a damn shame," said my father.

"I know," said my mother. She was crying just a little. "Right here in America, after he had traveled all over the world, even to Germany, Africa, to be killed right here in America. It is a damn shame."

"At least it was not here in our city or our state," said my father.

"Thank the Lord for that," said Aunt Worthrose. "Dallas and Texas will be tainted forever. This is America. Things like this don't happen in America."

"I'm tired of reading," I said. "I want to play fashion dolls."

I was getting bored too.

The TV was repeating a lot. They were talking more and more about Lee Harvey Oswald and showing him on TV.

He was quite uninteresting.

I wasn't in the mood to write now. I wanted to resume playing. All this week my dolls were having a beauty contest and it was not finished.

But my father wanted me to watch it all.

So after lunch I received rare permission to bring toys into the den. I spread my dolls out on the couch, my black haired ponytail, Barbara, always won, of course. She beat brunette Midge, blond Midge and the blond bubble every time. I wanted a blond ponytail but with those four female dolls, the boyfriend doll and the rest of the family, my parents were resisting.

Baby dolls were populating my room in ever increasing numbers. They were just in the way as far as I was concerned.

Whenever I got the chance I dumped them in the bottom of my closet.