

The Dooleys

by Joe Lyons

Mama told me never to play with the Dooley boys. They play too rough, they're not to be trusted, and no one has seen Mrs. Dooley since she tried to clean out their tree house. Mama would always say, "You play with the Dooley Boys, you play with Satan." Mama had a good sense about things like that.

Finn Dooley was the oldest. He's been running the town ever since he grew that beard on his 8th birthday. He's the only teenager to be charged with a war crime in the state of New Hampshire, but that's mainly because he bludgeoned all of those Army recruiters.

Carl Dooley is five months younger than Finn. I know that math doesn't make sense, but Allen tells me that Carl actually came out of a hornet's nest and not Mrs. Dooley. I usually take Allen's word for it since he's in all of the AP classes. Carl got kicked out of school after he picked a fight with Deaf Kevin...they also found a pillowcase full of cobras in his locker, which didn't help his case.

Mick Dooley has been caught eating live squirrels on five separate occasions. He says it's on account of him being a werewolf, but I've only ever seen him do it during the daytime. I think he assumes it also excuses him from wearing pants. Mama says it doesn't. I think I agree.

I don't understand anything about Stan Dooley. He chatters a lot, but I don't think it's English. Indian burns from Stan require skin grafts to correct. He's the scariest because he doesn't make any noise when he walks. When you don't hear anything, you know Stan Dooley's behind you.

There's not enough paper to list the reasons to stay away from the Dooleys...and yet I'm still knocking on their door.

I can see Julie Dooley's room from mine. She never smiles or wears shoes. I never see her boss her brothers around, but they always seem to stay out of her way. It's usually raining when I see her and she smells like it does in the morning after it snows. She's

got green eyes and whenever I look into them my lungs stop working.

"But that Julie Dooley", Mama would say, "is the oddest of them all. Make sure you stay away from her."

I know I'm taking my life in my own hands, but I keep knocking anyway. At worst, I may end up dead and buried and not necessarily in that order if the stories about the Stevenson's dog are to be believed. At best, I get to see Julie's eyes up close and personal...and maybe get another clue or two about Mrs. Dooley's whereabouts.

"Uh....hi, Julie...how are you?"

