

"This fabulously feisty heroine will win your heart."—*Kirkus Reviews*

dovey coe
a novel

Winner of The
Edgar Allan Poe
Award

FRANCES
O'ROARK
DOWELL

chapter 1

My name is Dovey Coe, and I reckon it don't matter if you like me or not. I'm here to lay the record straight, to let you know them folks saying I done a terrible thing are liars. I aim to prove it, too. I hated Parnell Caraway as much as the next person, but I didn't kill him.

I know plenty of folks who thought about it once or twice, after Parnell shot a BB gun at their cats or broke their daughters' hearts. They're the same ones who go around now making out like Parnell was an angel, a regular pillar of society. The truth is, there ain't no one in Indian Creek who didn't believe Parnell Caraway was the meanest, vainest, greediest man who ever lived. Seventeen years old and rotten to the core.

Of course, his daddy being the richest man in town meant Parnell could do about whatever he pleased without anybody saying *boo* back to him. Most of the folks who live in town rent their houses from Homer Caraway and buy their dry goods from his store, and they know better than to cross him. You so much as look at Homer Caraway wrong and he can make your life right miserable.

Every time I start complaining about having to walk a half mile down the mountain to school every morning, I remember how lucky we are to own our land. It ain't much—four acres, a five-room house, and a barn—but it keeps us Coes from being beholden to Homer Caraway, and I'd walk ten miles to school to keep it that way.

I know it pained Parnell that we weren't indebted to his daddy. Maybe if we had been, my sister Caroline would have married him the way he kept asking her to do. Caroline Coe was the one thing Parnell wanted he couldn't have. As conceited as Parnell was, it took him a long time to figure that out.

But I'm getting ahead of myself, which I do from time to time. You probably want to know where I'm from and who my family is, the particulars folks tend to be interested in.

Like I said, my name is Dovey Coe. There have been Coes living in Indian Creek, North Carolina, since the beginning of time, and I expect there always will be. We're mountain folk, and once you been living in the mountains for a while, it's hard to live anywhere else. You can walk over to the graveyard behind the church in town and see Coes going as far back as 1844. The most recent stone belongs to my Granddaddy Caleb, who passed on two years ago, when I was ten. It says: HERE LIES CALEB COE, LOVING HUSBAND TO REBECCA COE, FATHER TO MATTHEW, LUKE, AND JOHN COE. BORN MAY 17, 1861. DIED DECEMBER 2, 1926. MAY HE WALK WITH THE LORD.

John Coe is my daddy. He's what they call a jack-of-all-trades, meaning he can fix anything you got that's broke and some things that ain't. Folks bring him their busted radios, their hay-wire toasters, their broke-down automobiles, and Daddy tightens a screw here, reconnects a wire there, and makes it good as new. Them who have money to pay give him a dollar or two, depending on the size of the job, and them who don't have a dime in their pocket work out a barter. When Gaither Sparks's carburetor died, we got a new pig and a pound of sugar. It evens out, as Daddy is all the time saying.

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Dovey Coe says what's on her mind, so it's no secret that she can't stand Parnell Caraway. Parnell may be the son of the richest man in town, but he's mean and snobby, and Dovey can't stand the fact that he's courting her sister, Caroline, or the way he treats her brother, Amos, as if he were stupid just because he can't hear.

So when Parnell turns up dead, and Dovey's in the room where his body is discovered, she soon finds herself on trial for murder. Can the outspoken Dovey sit still and trust a city slicker lawyer who's still wet behind the ears to get her out of the biggest mess of her life?

★ "The story maintains a very fast pace, and Dovey is an original character who speaks with a mountain twang that brings the vivid setting to life without distracting from the plot."

—*School Library Journal*, starred review

"A delightful book, thoughtful and full of substance."

—*Booklist*

"This is an author well worth watching."

—*Publishers Weekly*

ALADDIN PAPERBACKS

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1101

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