

How long can Delia hide her secret?

double dutch



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FORGED BY FIRE

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“LOOK OUT, GIRL, HERE COME THE TOLLIVER TWINS! Have mercy! They look like they’re ready to bite something.” Delia pulled her books close to her body and tried to avoid what looked like was going to be a direct confrontation with the two most feared boys at the school—Tabu and Titan Tolliver.

“Or kill something,” Charlene whispered, eyes wide with real concern. “I wouldn’t want to be alone in a room with them. Every time they pass me, I get so scared, I feel like I’m gonna wet my pants!”

“That’s disgusting!” Delia said, laughing, as she glanced at Charlene.

“I ain’t lyin’! I’m scared for real! I heard they kill puppies and kittens for fun. Felicity Johnson lives next door to them, and she told me she found her kitten dead on her front steps. It had been stabbed with a knife,” Charlene said dramatically, shuddering at the thought.

“I heard that, too. But that’s no proof that the twins killed her kitten,” Delia said, trying to sound reasonable. “Sometimes kids just make that stuff up ’cause it sounds gross.”

“Greg Mason’s dog was also killed. Stabbed. And he lives down the street from the Tollivers,” Charlene added

with authority. "His next-door neighbor's cousin told me."

"I heard Greg's dog got hit by a car," Delia replied. But she still watched nervously as the two unsmiling boys approached them. It was as if a double shadow was heading their way.

"The dog is still dead," Charlene said, refusing to accept any other explanation. "And Greg's house is awfully close to the Tollivers'. Yo Yo told me the twins carry knives and sawed-off shotguns and hand grenades in their book bag." Charlene spoke as if she believed it. "You believe that?" Charlene asked, hoping Delia would say no.

"Most times I don't believe Yolanda, but those two are some scary dudes. I wouldn't be surprised at anything. Before you know it, we'll be needing metal detectors on the front doors around here."

"I'm surprised they haven't got around to that—makin' this place feel like a prison. Most of the big-city schools have all kinds of security these days," Charlene stated with authority.

"Yeah, I know. Small-town schools, too. It's a shame. Why do you think the Tollivers dress in the same black clothes every day?" Delia asked in a whisper. "You think that's all the clothes they have?"

"Maybe they want to show people how bad they are!" Charlene said softly.

"They made me a believer!"

"You got that right! Quit whispering! They know we're talkin' about them!" Delia and Charlene tried to move out of the way of the twins, but the halls were crowded, and everybody seemed to be trying to do the same thing.

Titan and Tabu—tall and impressive-looking, dressed

double dutch

exactly alike in black jeans, black sweaters, and black skullcaps—strode through the hall not as two people but as one unified force. Their faces wore the same menacing frown, their fists were clenched into the same tight threat, and their thick black boots stomped in unison on the scuffed hallway floor. They carried no books, even though it was almost third bell. They glared at Charlene and Delia as they pushed through the crowded hallway. With his shoulder, Titan pushed Delia against the lockers, and Tabu knocked Charlene out of the way in the other direction as they passed. She lost her balance and fell to the floor in a heap of books and papers. Tabu and Titan glanced back at them as though to make sure their authority had terrified the two girls. It had. Delia said nothing and looked the other way rather than risk a confrontation. A sea of people in the hall separated as the two forged a path through the crowd.

“Kids treat Tabu and Titan like they’re Moses in the wilderness,” Charlene said with disgust as she picked up her books and papers. “Looks like the parting of the waters of the Red Sea as they go through there.”

“No, not Moses,” Delia said, rubbing her shoulder. “Moses was a holy man. Those two are . . . bad. I can feel it.”

“They give me chills. They don’t talk to people, they don’t speak up in class—I think some of the teachers are scared of them too,” Charlene declared as they headed on to their classes.

Delia sighed. “Miss Benson, my English teacher, is real scared of them, I know. She’s just a first-year teacher—she doesn’t know how to handle the rough kids yet. It’s all she can do to figure out how to handle the thirty-one other kids

secrets

Delia loves Double Dutch more than just about anything, and she's really good at it—so good she and her teammates have a shot at winning the World Double Dutch Championships. Delia would *die* if she couldn't jump—but Delia has a secret, and it could keep her off the team next year.

Delia's friend Randy has a secret too, one that has him lonely and scared. And while Delia and Randy struggle to keep their secrets, their school is abuzz with rumors about what malicious mischief the terrible Tolliver twins—who just may have a secret of their own—are planning.

Delia and Randy's secrets collide on what should be the happiest day of Delia's life, and the collision threatens to destroy their friendship. Why can't life be as easy for Delia as Double Dutch?

"Delia and her friends are delightful, and the reader is rooting for them all the way. A fast-paced, multilayered story."

—Kirkus Reviews


"The author [creates] vibrant, engaging characters with unique voices. . . . Draper adeptly paints a convincing portrayal of how young people think, act, feel, and interact with one another."

—School Library Journal

"A well-paced and engagingly detailed exploration of a double-sided world of public and private truths that teens will find very familiar."

—Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books

Includes Reading Group Guide

 ALADDIN PAPERBACKS

Simon & Schuster, New York

Cover photograph copyright ©2002

by O'Lanso Gabbidon

Cover designed by O'Lanso Gabbidon

Ages 10–14

www.SimonSaysKids.com

0104

Reading Group Guide available

at www.SimonSaysTEACH.com

US \$5.99 / \$6.99 CAN

ISBN-13: 978-0-689-84231-3

ISBN-10: 0-689-84231-7

