

In *The Favor*, Stacie calls her best friend to the creek to help her learn a new skill.

Joseph and I stood on the bank of Talbot's Creek beneath a canopy of redwoods, the afternoon sun peeking through the branches. Ten minutes ago, I had called him and told him to meet me at the redwood tree where we had carved our names: Joseph and Stacie—best friends forever. That day, we had promised to share everything and to tell no lies. That was three years ago when I was eight and he was nine.

You see, I had a favor to ask, a *big* one. Joseph had taught me how to catch crickets in a Mason jar, hit the bull's eye in darts, and fire off a BB gun. Now, I needed him to teach me one more thing—how to kiss the grown-up way.

I'll admit, I had kissed plenty of people in my life. Mom and Dad's goodnight kisses were the best, especially the butterfly ones Dad threw me just before turning out my light. The only ones I didn't like were the wet beer kisses Uncle Jack gave me when nobody was around. "*Don't tell,*" he always said.

Now, Joseph picked up a rock and skipped it across the water. Once the ripples settled, he turned to me. "So, what do you want?"

My stomach ached in a strange way, sort of like the time I ate too many green apples from Mr. Williams' tree. "Well, I was wondering—"

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