

## AVA and ELLEN

- Ellen: (Ellen passes the bottle of cumin to Ava.)  
So, you lost your dad when you were young, huh?
- Ava: Yeah. Summer before grade eight. When I was eleven, things were simple. Somehow by the time I turned thirteen, everything seemed complicated. I lost my dad. We stopped planting after he died, so Caleb wasn't coming around much, and Connie had to take on babysitting jobs to help her mom out, so she stopped riding Magic Sparkle.
- Ellen: So that was the end of the Three Musketeers. Did you ever see Caleb?
- Ava: Once in awhile. There was this place we found by the water tower. We called it Sandy Mountain but it was really just a hill. Up there, after dark, you could see all the lights of town. We'd go up there and talk. It's true what Connie said: Caleb had a terrible stutter. But up there, when it was just the two of us, it went away. One night he told me he dreamed about becoming a news reporter and travelling the world. But he figured, with his stutter, they'd never take him. I told him not to count himself out. I believed he could be whatever he wanted to be. He was so smart. (*She loses herself in the memory.*) I'll never forget the way he looked at me. He had the bluest eyes I've ever seen. And for a moment, everything stood still...until, finally, he said, "Hey, Ava...do you want some Pop Rocks?"  
And I said "yes" and then...
- (*Ava trails off and stares off into the distance. After a moment, Ellen grabs her.*)
- Ellen: What? Don't stop there! That's not how you end a story! What happened next?
- Ava: What happened next was Connie threw a log at my head.