

a novel

"A celebration of the unexpected paths and lasting power of female friendship... A gem of a book."

—REBECCA SERLE, *New York Times* bestselling author of *In Five Years*

# The Favor

TWO-TIME NATIONAL  
BOOK AWARD FINALIST

ADELE  
GRIFFIN

# Reading Group Guide



1. Describe Nora and Evelyn's first meeting. How do those first impressions shape the dynamic of their friendship?
2. How does Nora's love of vintage clothing shape her outlook on life?
3. Why does Jacob feel threatened by Evelyn? How does he handle his feelings? What effect does his discomfort have on Nora?
4. When asking her for styling, do Evelyn's references to Nora's savings feel empathetic or manipulative?
5. What role does Nora's mother play throughout the book? How do her dreams influence Nora's life?
6. How does Evelyn handle rejection? Why do you think she behaves that way?
7. Evelyn is happy to use the pregnancy to boost her standing on social media. How did you feel about EvvieDoesIt? Would you have pushed back if you were in Nora's shoes?

8. Nora is superstitious about believing anything positive about the pregnancy. How does superstition protect us from bad news?
9. How does Nora's attempt to be tactful by discussing the Bergessen cape in person backfire? Can you remember a time when waiting for "the right moment" to discuss a problem made it worse in the long run?
10. Where does Nora and Evelyn's friendship stand at the end of the book? What do you think is next for them?



# A Conversation with the Author



## **What was the inspiration for *The Favor*?**

My children were both born via surrogacy, and I'm fortunate that my personal experiences were so positive. But I remember the push and pull of that time, of being deeply emotionally invested while physically so disconnected. My surrogates were literally my lifeline. But what if it had been a different experience? What if my surrogate never kept me in the loop? What if I wasn't even a priority? Those were some of the questions that kicked off my early outline.

## **What's the first thing you decide on when you start writing a new book?**

First, I buy a 5 x 7 lined notebook. For the next weeks, I'm writing down everything I sense about this maybe-novel. I gather scraps—names, scenes, settings, a feel for the trajectory—all in my scribbly longhand. Also, I try not to blurt out my idea to everyone, but I always do.

## **There are so many great details about the history of fashion and the world of vintage styling throughout the book. How did you connect with those worlds? What did your research process look like?**

Many of us who love wearing vintage fashion connect with the sense

that we inhabit other stories and a shared life—I've got a closet full of other people's histories. So research was a delight. Rapt hours steeped in online vintage sites? Yes, please. I'm also a big fan of memoirs and documentaries about designers. Writing about fashion was a happy, natural burrow down well-known rabbit holes.

**As many of Nora's and Evelyn's acquaintances point out, the stories we hear most about surrogacy are horror stories of kidnapping and protracted lawsuits. Did those well-known fears change the way you wrote *The Favor*?**

My oldest is fifteen, so I've had surrogacy conversations for a while now. Generally, I find that people know more about surrogacy now than they did sixteen years ago. At the time, we fielded some pretty wild questions. People didn't get it—but they wanted to get it. That's what I remember best—how friends and strangers tried to understand the process and wanted to be part of a conversation about how my family came to be. I hope the book caught some of that bewildered curiosity.

**Evelyn and Nora are back in contact by the end of the book, but they're nowhere near as close as they were when they first became friends. Do you think this is the beginning of finding each other again, or will they remain friends only distantly?**

I'd like to believe that both answers are true. I think in the evolution of this friendship, Nora and Evelyn come to a hard-won, genuine understanding of each other. At the same time, they're more respectful and honest about the boundaries of this relationship. They've found their balance.

**Nora's cape switch is a big surprise. When did you decide that she should keep the original?**

I'd hoped to give Nora the last laugh, and I'm drawn to writing about privilege bubbles—people wanting things for the sake of wanting

them, people who get their way and say. Nora's switch makes me happy because she knows precisely why she values this piece. It's a feisty move but not out of character—and I'm always cheering for Nora.

**How did writing *The Favor* compare to writing books for younger readers? What surprised you the most?**

It was a journey! I'd written YA for many years, and the structure of coming-of-age novels is usually about figuring out arcs and resolutions of first love, first loss, first real look at that giant horizon of your future. By the time I jumped into Nora's life, she's already had a lot of her firsts, she's made some big decisions, she's got her view established. The other surprise is that while I've been writing fiction for a long time, the experience of finding and exploring Nora's voice was so different that *The Favor* feels like a debut. Was not expecting that!