



## The Sweet Gum Tree

By Katherine Allred

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### The Sweet Gum Tree By Katherine Allred

Blush: This is a suggestive romance (love scenes are not graphic). Sweet tea, corn bread, and soup beans—everyday fare for eight-year-old Alix French, the precocious darling of a respected southern family. But nothing was ordinary about the day she met ten-year-old Nick Anderson, a boy from the wrong side of town. Armed with only a tin of bee balm and steely determination, Alix treats the raw evidence of a recent beating that mars his back, an act that changes both of their lives forever. Through childhood disasters and teenage woes they cling together as friendship turns to love. The future looks rosy until the fateful night when Frank Anderson, Nick's abusive father, is shot to death in his filthy trailer. Suddenly, Nick is gone—leaving Alix alone, confused and pregnant. For the next fifteen years she wrestles with the pain of Nick's abandonment, a bad marriage, her family and friends. But finally, she's starting to get her life back together. Her divorce is almost final, her business is booming, and she's content if not happy -- until the day she looks up and sees Nick standing across the counter. He's back...and he's not alone. Once again Alix is plunged into turmoil and pain as Nick tries to win her love, something she resists with all her strength. Only one thing might break the protective wall she's built around her emotions—the truth about Frank Anderson's death. But when that truth comes out and those walls crumble, neither Alix nor Nick is prepared for the emotional explosion that could destroy as well as heal.

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