

## Orchid's Drive to Arkansas

The trees seemed to all blend together as we passed through the Louisiana countryside. We had left Fawn Creek around three hours ago, making only one stop on the way. I haven't even looked at my dad once. I was sitting by him in the only other seat in his truck. Our belongings were secured to the cargo bed. The tension in the car was immense. After our fight last night, I refused to talk to him. I didn't want to leave Fawn Creek. I didn't want to leave Didi and Grayson. I am sick and tired of moving around to tiny towns with mean people putting other ones down. My dad doesn't seem to care. All he cares about is his stupid construction company. The long hours of silence were finally broken. "Hey kiddo," he said. I kept looking at the window. "Want food?" he continued, "We're comin' up on a station." The seconds passed by slowly. He thinks food will win me over? The only thing that would make me feel better is if he turned this truck around and went back to Fawn Creek. "C'mon, I know you're a sucker for those crappy hotdogs," my dad persisted. I was in fact a sucker for those crappy hotdogs, but I won't let him win. "Listen, I know you don't wanna leave Fawn Creek, but you startup school Monday. We're heading to Arkansas. My company requires it. I'll letcha pick a new name like always, and you can get a fresh start."

"But I don't *want* a fresh start Dad," I began to say. And there goes my silent streak.

"What d'ya mean? You just got into a fight with those kids. Why on Earth would you want to go back?"

"Because it's the only place I've ever had actual friends. I hate moving around. I hate your construction company. And I hate that you expect me to be fine with it. Just leave me alone."

"Listen, I know you don't like movin-"

"Leave. Me. Alone."

"Tone, missy. Nothin's gonna change the fact that I can't afford to go back. 'Specially since that fight prolly got the whole town angry at us. So let's start fresh. You hear?"

"I hear."

There's no getting through to him. Though, I guess that's why I come up with places that I've been, attempting to impress the people I come across. To pretend like I actually go to cool places, like I'm actually a cool person. Though one thing I can say, Greyson and Didi really taught me something. I don't need to pretend I've gone to Paris or New York or even an island where you can pet monkeys. I'm sure I can make friends by just being me. I will admit, that thought does scare me a little, but if Greyson can wear what he wants and Didi can learn to have confidence, then I can make friends without lying about my life. I hope.

After over a day on the road, Dad and I finally made it to the construction site. His “buddies” have already set up a temporary house for us to stay, with theirs being right next to ours. He told me this would be one of his longer projects. I lay down my sleeping bag on the dusty flooring of the tiny home. I get ready to sleep and pluck up the courage to face tomorrow.

On the morning of Monday, I put on one of my favorite dresses. It's a dress that Greyson said complimented my hair. I went through my routine of getting ready for school, and then spent the next ten minutes looking for a flower to fasten into my hair. I end up finding one that I find suitable. I finally began to walk to school. The first thing I notice about the school is that it's a lot bigger than I imagined. I see so many more kids than there were at Fawn Creek. I begin to feel butterflies in my stomach do cartwheels. As I walk into the school, I realize that I have no idea where my class is. In my determination to ignore my dad, I forgot where I was supposed to go. I spot a teacher and ask for directions. She shows me the way to my classroom, so I walk through the door. To prove to myself that I'm a lot more than just stories.