

Chapter 1

A New Beginning

"Now, Kira, you be careful." Mrs. Bay said. "Russellville isn't as big as Nashville but it's still not as safe as you think it is." Mrs. Bay has been helping me pack my stuff all week. Mrs. Bay is the mother of a girl that I have been friends with since I was five, until something went wrong between us. She has been taking care of me since my mom and brother died in a car accident. My dad... well, he travels all the time so he was never really there but I don't want to think about that right now.

"I will." I said. "You know I'm always careful, Mrs. Bay."

"Kira Phoenix, how many times do I have to tell you to call me Juniper?"

"Only a few hundred." We laughed. I looked up at the sky.

"Are you still scared to fly?" Juniper asked.

"Scared? No." I replied. "Terrified." I've lived in Nashville, Tennessee all my life. I am moving to Russellville, Arkansas. Why? Because I need to get away from a few painful memories. Plus I am starting school at Arkansas Tech University.

"It will be okay. It won't be that long of a flight." She reminded me. "I see you are wearing your favorite outfit." I looked down at my clothes. I was wearing my favorite black t-shirt with a silver dragon on the front, some blue jeans and my favorite black ankle boots. I had my hair half up with it pinned in the back with the dragon hairpin my mother had bought me for my thirteenth birthday.

"You bet." I turned to look at Mrs. Bay's little two story blue house with its white windows. While I stared at the little home, I couldn't help but remember the fun times I had in it. *I'm really going to miss this little old house.* I thought. I looked up at a window on the top floor of Juniper's house. I could see my friend Crystal watching me. I felt really bad about leaving her after all these years. "I should say good bye before I go."

"Are you sure you want to? It will be okay if you don't."

"No, I should. She has been my friend for eleven years. She deserves a good bye." I walked up to the door. I took in a deep breath and opened the door. I looked into the living room and noticed that the couch still had the stain from when I accidentally spilled my coffee all over it. I'll never forget how mad Juniper got over that stain. My hands hurt for a week after all of the scrubbing I had to do to get most of the coffee out. I walked over to the stairs that were in the middle of the room. *Maybe I should have listened to Juniper.* I thought. *No, if I don't say good bye, she will hate me more than she already does.* I walked up the steps to a room that I usually try to stay away from. I knocked. "Crystal, I came to say good bye." I opened the door. I saw her standing at the window. She was wearing her usual all black outfit. "I'm going to miss you." I walked over to her. "Crystal?"

"Kira Phoenix is coming to say good bye to her old friend?" Crystal asked sarcastically.

"She would leave me here to rot while she goes to Arkansas to achieve fame and glory." She turned towards me.

"Crystal, what are you talking about?" I said.

"You want to get as far away from me as possible, don't you?" She was twirling a knife around.

"No, Crystal." I started to back away. "I'm just going to college."

"YOU WOULD DARE LIE TO ME?" She lunged at me with the knife. The knife cut my arm. I screamed in pain.

"CRYSTAL, STOP!" Juniper yelled. Juniper got behind Crystal and pulled her off of me. "KIRA, GO TO THE TAXI AND GET TO THE AIRPORT!"

"But-" I said.

"JUST GO!" I ran out the door and got in the taxi.

"Nashville Airport." I told the driver. The driver looked at my arm and got nervous. "GO!" The driver took off. While in the cab, I took out my first aid kit and took care of my arm. We arrived at the airport in no time.

"Do you want to stop by a hospital first?" The driver asked.

"No, it's not that bad." I said. "It didn't go too deep." I was very happy that it didn't take too long to get to the airport. The cab smelled awful. I got out of the cab and started to get my luggage out.

"Here, I'll get that." The driver said.

"Thank you." I said. He pulled out my luggage and put it on the curb for me.

"Take care of yourself and good luck." He walked back to the driver's seat of the cab. "Also remember that there are worse things out there than whoever did that to you. So be wary of other dangers." When he looked at me, I thought I saw his eyes flash a different color and back again.

"Thank you." I waved to him. He got in and drove off. *Weirdo cab driver.* I thought.

I went inside and found where I had to go. I had to wait for a while before I could get on the plane. While I waited to get on the plane, I found the restroom so that I could check on my arm. After I was sure my arm was okay, I sat down and wrote in my diary and tried to ignore the screaming kids. The flight was pretty boring. The nuts were nasty, there were kids running around, and nothing to do but watch a stupid movie. Even with how boring it was, I didn't get any sleep. All I could do was think about how Crystal reacted when I tried to tell her good bye.

I still don't understand why she hates me so much. I thought. *I wonder if she still blames me for her accident.*

The landing was pretty rough. When I got off the plane, there was a guy holding up a sign with my name on it. The guy was kind of cute. He had shoulder length red hair, green eyes, beautiful skin, and... tall. *Why do they all have to be so tall?* I thought as I walked up to him.

"Are you, Kira Phoenix?" He asked. As I got closer I noticed that he was wearing a plaid button up t-shirt and denim jeans.

"I am." I replied.

"Hello, Kira, my name is Lowell Hew. I will be your ride to campus." He took my bags.

"Awesome." We walked out to the car. *I can carry my own stuff.* I thought.

"So how did an eleven year old like you get into college?" I stopped dead in my tracks and started laughing. "What? Is something wrong?"

"No. I was just hoping that this would be different."

"What?"

"I'm sixteen." His eyes went wide.

"Okay. How did a sixteen year old like you get in?"

"Good grades." We started walking again.

"So you're like me."

"How so?"

"I'm sixteen too. I'm also starting this fall."

"Wait - they said they were sending a sophomore to come and -"

"He got sick. He and I have been good friends since we were in high school. So I said I would come and get you."

"Okay." He loaded my bags into the car.

"So what is your major?" He opened the car door for me.

"I was thinking about going into art but I'm still not quite sure yet."

"Well, you could take some classes and see what you like first."

"That's the plan." I got in the car. He walked around and got in the driver's seat.

"I'm an undecided as well. So I will be taking classes to see if I can figure out what I want to be." He started driving. "At least we have some time before we have to decide."

"True."

It didn't take us long to get to the campus.

"What do you think?"

"It's beautiful. I can't wait to actually see what the buildings are like on the inside." I said.

"Do you know which residence hall you're staying in?"

"The Wilson Residence Hall."

"Interesting."

"How so?"

"I'm staying at the Nutt Residence Hall which isn't too far away from Wilson Hall."

"That *is* interesting." I laughed. He helped me get my luggage out of the car and up to my dorm room. There was a desk next to the head of each bed.

"Well, I guess I will see you later." He said after we got my stuff in my room.

"Okay, see ya." I replied. He left me alone. I wasn't alone for long though.

"Hi you must be the new girl from Nashville." A girl came into the room. She was wearing a white knee length skirt that had purple flowers on it and a purple top. I nodded.

Oh no. I thought. *Please tell me that I don't have a girly girl for a roommate.*

"I'm Melissa Perks. I'm going to be your roommate this semester. It is so nice to meet

you. Welcome to Arkansas Tech University or as we like to call it ATU."

"My name is Kira. Nice to meet you too." I replied. *Okay, I want to go back to Crystal.*

"Come on let me show you around campus." She pulled me out of the room.

Can I keep my arm? Man this girl is strong. I thought. "Are all Arkansas girls this strong or just the really girly ones?" Melissa laughed.

Melissa took me around campus and showed me everything she could think of. She pointed out all of the buildings, named them off, and even told me the main classes that would be taken in those buildings. There was just so much to see that it was very overwhelming.

"Ooh, there is the baseball field where you can watch the players. I am so glad that it is near our dorm. Oh, and you will most likely find me in one of the auditoriums where there are all kinds of performances." Melissa said.

"So are you a theatre major?" I asked.

"Yep, ever since I was a kid, I was told I was the best actor in the town. Of course it was mainly because I liked to pull the puppy dog eyes to get out of trouble." She laughed.

I can actually see that happening. I laughed in my head. *I wonder how long it lasted.*

We continued to walk and I continued to listen to Melissa brag about the times that she managed to get out of trouble instead of telling me what each building was.

"So since I was told I was a good actress, I became a theatre major. It has been so much fun. I can't tell you how many times I have been able to use the knowledge that I have acquired here to my advantage. Even my professors tell me that I am an amazing actress and that I should continue to build my skills." Melissa said.

Okay, getting really bored now. I thought. *I wonder where Lowell is.*

"So what are you thinking about majoring in?"

"I'm not sure yet. I haven't really had a good chance to really think about what I would like to do. I have so many interests that it is just really hard to decide."

"Well, you should take some classes and see which ones really catch your eye and go for it. Maybe you will be a theatre major too."

"Maybe." *Not in a million years.*

When we were finally getting back to the dorm, I saw Lowell. I was going to wave but he looked busy. Apparently Melissa saw him too.

"Look at him. Now that is the cutest freshman I have ever seen even if he is sixteen. Don't you think so?" Melissa was drooling.

"He is." She saw I wasn't really interested.

"What - not cute enough for you?" She asked. She nudged me with her shoulder.

"That's not it."

"Then what?"

"I don't see the point in drooling over a boy." Her eyes were wide.

"What kind of girl doesn't drool over a boy? It's unnatural! Has anyone ever taught you how to be a woman?" I just stared at her with complete and utter fear.

"Do you hear yourself?" I tried to walk away.

"I have to teach you about boys." She grabbed me and pulled me back.

"No, you don't." She apparently didn't hear me because she kept going on and on about boys. I looked back at Lowell. He noticed me and waved. I waved back.

"Wait a sec. Either he thinks you're really cute or you know him." I looked down at a flower. "You know him?!" I couldn't help but smile. Her jaw was hanging open.

"He gave me a ride from the airport." He walked over.

"So do you like the campus?" He asked.

"Loving it so far." I looked at Melissa. "Melissa, this is Lowell. Lowell, this is Melissa."

"Hello." He said. She was so shocked to meet him that she couldn't speak.

"Melissa is my roommate. She has been showing me around campus and telling me a little about herself." I said.

"Cool! Like what?" Lowell asked.

"Like how she is a theatre major." I said.

"Awesome, what are you planning to do with your major? Do you want to go into movies or theatre production? Maybe even as a teacher?" Lowell asked. Melissa just continued to stare. I nudged her arm. "Well, I have to get going. See ya later, Kira." He walked off.

"See ya." I said. I looked at Melissa. "Melissa, are you in there?" I nudged her arm. People started to stare at Melissa as they walked by. "Can I help you?" I put my hands on my hips. They walked away. "Melissa, do you remember what I said about drooling over a boy?" She snapped out of her trance and wiped her face. I laughed. I finished listening to her rant about boys as we went back to our room. Of course she had to give me a speech about how I should start dating Lowell. She also said that if Lowell wasn't the guy I wanted to be with, that she knew a few guys who would like to be with me.

I really hope I don't have to worry about her hooking me up with some strange guy. I thought. Really don't want to have to worry about it. Okay just think, orientation starts tomorrow and maybe by then she will have forgotten all about it. I looked at her and noticed she was still ranting. *Emphasis on the maybe.*

The next day was the first day of orientation. It lasted for the next two days. I had to attend different meetings and be ready in case there was something important that I needed to remember. I also signed up for classes.

The next week classes started. I put on my blue jeans, a red t-shirt and my black boots. My first class was poetry. I took my seat at one of the desks. I got bored waiting for class to start so I started to draw all over my notebook. I never noticed that someone had walked up to my desk.

"Are those demons?" A familiar voice asked.

"Are you following me, Lowell Hew?" I replied putting my chin in my hand and my elbow on my desk.

"I was about to ask you that question." We laughed.

"They are *supposed* to be demons but I'm not much of an artist."

"You're being modest." He took the notebook.

"Hey!" I tried to take it back but he put his hand on my head and pushed me back in my seat. "So not fair." He laughed. "It's bad enough that I'm short. I don't need you using it to my disadvantage." He just continued to examine the notebook.

"These are the best demon drawings I have ever seen. You should be in demonology class." He sat in the seat next to me. I took the notebook back.

"I am."

"Which time?"

"It's actually..."

"My next class." He and I said in unison.

"How many classes do you think we have together?" I asked.

"Let me see your schedule." He said. I handed him my schedule and he laughed.

"What?"

"Well, apparently great minds think alike. All of them are the same." He showed me his schedule. We laughed. Just then the professor came in.

"Welcome to the first day of classes. My name is Professor Craft. I do not tolerate people who try to hide their cell phone under the desk. If you do not show up for class, you will not pass this class. I'm a strict professor and I do not give extra credit. This is not an easy class so you better keep up. Let's get started." The professor said.

When poetry class was done; we walked to Demonology. As we walked to class, I noticed something and giggled.

"Wow." I said.

"What?"

"Do all girls drool over you or just college girls?" I laughed. I pointed at them.

"All girls." He laughed. "Well, except one."

"One girl or one type?"

"One girl."

"Oh really? Who is that?"

"You. You are the only girl who didn't start drooling when you first saw me."

"Well, drooling has *never* been my thing." We laughed the rest of the way.

Demonology class was really interesting.

"Welcome to Demonology. The only class that deals with the supernatural and teaches you how to defend yourself from it." The professor said as he lifted his shirt. "You see this scar? I got this from a cat demon. It tried to eat me alive. I was able to defend myself from it by cutting off its tail." He put his shirt down. "Now unfortunately this is the only time that this class will ever be allowed to be taught in any college or university. Not unfortunate for those of you who got in of course, but for any others who really wanted to take this course. Now there are other courses that deal with a different type of supernatural event but they deal more with a psychological form of it. So let's try to make sure that this course gets good reviews so that I can convince my bosses to bring it back." The rest of the class laughed. Lowell passed me a note.

Did you already read ahead? He wrote.

Yes. I passed the note back. The professor then began talking about a wolf demon named Ulric. *Did you know that Ulric had a lover?*

How did you know? He wrote back.

I read it in a book. He started flipping through our text book. *No, not our text book. A different book. It is said his lover, Cadel, was the daughter of a Wiccan named Althea. Ulric fell in love with a human.* The professor walked over and grabbed the note.

"Well, it appears that we have some students that already know about the wolf thief. They must have read ahead." The professor said.

"Well, actually sir, I learned about the wolf when I was ten." I said.

"Interesting. Who taught you?"

"No one. sir. I learned it through a book I found." In the corner of my eyes I could see Lowell tense up.

"What was the name of the book?"

"Well, even though the book was in English, I was unable to read the name of it. My mother said it meant 'Demons of Five types.'"

"Your mother could read it?"

"No, she cheated and used the internet." All the students laughed. "I'm actually serious. She told me that she looked it up on the internet."

"They might not believe you, but I do." The professor said. "I would like to take a look at the book sometime if you're willing to bring it to the office."

"Of course." I said.

"Excellent. Now back to Ulric." The professor continued to talk about Ulric. I looked over at Lowell and saw he was a little tense.

Is he okay? I wonder why he is so tense all of a sudden. I thought. Lowell and I had one more class to go to.

"Ugh I hate math." I said.

"The day is almost over though." He tried to laugh. He was still a little tense.

"Are you okay?"

"Of course. Why wouldn't I be?"

"One you are not a good liar. Two you look like you're a little tense. You have looked like that since we talked about Ulric."

"I'm fine. I have actually been looking for that book for many years because of my fascination with demons. So when I heard you talking about it, I got a little excited."

"Well, anytime you want to read it just let me know."

"Thanks. Let's get to math class." He walked ahead of me.

How could he have known about the book? I thought. I had lied about how I knew the name of it when the professor asked me. How could he know what the words on the book meant? We finished walking to class. Luckily the class was over pretty fast. Lowell walked me back to my dorm room.

"I'll see ya later, Kira."

"Okay see ya." I walked into the room.

"So how was your first day?" Melissa asked.

"It was pretty good. Demonology class was fun."

"Really?"

"I can't wait to see what tomorrow will be like."

"Well, you will have to wait and find out."

"Sadly." I was so tired that I fell asleep right away.

The next day was pretty awesome. Lowell and I talked about demons, the professors fell in love with us for being so smart, and the girls drooled over Lowell. At one point I thought I saw some boys drool over him but he said that it was me they were drooling over. I didn't believe him. The day went by pretty fast. The next day was even better. In demonology class the professor asked us to write down our favorite type of demons and explain why we liked that type of demon so much. He read them off.

"Well, some of you picked the types that don't even exist. For example, there is no such thing as..." He pulled one out. "Unicorn demons." Everyone laughed. "However, two students picked some interesting ones. One picked demons that are animal types. 'The wolf is my favorite.' The student wrote. I suppose this student likes Ulric the wolf thief the best. This other one says that they like fire types. The reasons are very interesting. 'They are wild, free, and misunderstood. Though they tend to want to be left alone, they will do whatever it takes to protect the ones they love.' Very interesting points but they are all wrong."

"What?" I whispered. Lowell looked at me.

"Fire demons are wild, free, and want to be left alone, but they are not misunderstood and do *not* love."

At the end of class I was so mad.

"Hey did you write the one about fire demons?" Lowell asked. Catching up with me in the hall.

"Yes." I sighed.

"You think they are misunderstood and can love?"

"Yes, don't tell me you are making fun of me too."

"No, no. I just find it interesting that you think that."

"So I have been told."

"Come on. We are going to be late for math." I looked at him.

"You don't believe that demons exist, do you?" I asked.

"Why would I? Do you?" He asked.

"I haven't really believed in *magic* since I was a kid. I believe anything is possible, but not because of magic. Besides those stories are based off myths and made up legends, written by people to scare their kids into obeying them."

"Legends start somewhere, don't they?" Lowell put out his hands to make his point. I watched him walk off.

I know I technically just lied to him, but believing in magic and demons only caused me pain. I thought. I looked out a nearby window. I haven't believed in magic since my mom and little brother died. It has only been seven months. I wish Ulric did exist because I owe him a big thank you for getting me through their accident. If it hadn't been for that book, I would have gone insane. I feel bad for lying to Lowell, but I can't let the make believe get in my way now.

"Kira, are you coming?" Lowell asked as he put his hands on my shoulders.

"Why wouldn't I be?" I asked. He looked uncertain.

"Well, let's get to math class."

"Okay." I started walking.

"Maybe it will actually be fun this time."

"Oh boy! Numbers and letters dancing around to make my head spin." He laughed.

The rest of the week Lowell and I would spend the time during classes trying to find a way to have fun. We would talk about all kinds of stuff, mainly about demons. He would constantly ask me about the book that I found when I was ten.

This boy is obsessed with demons. I thought. Maybe he is as crazy as our demonology professor. I hope he doesn't think they are real too. I hope I don't have to worry about him trying to prove that demons exist like our crazy demonology professor. The professor still claims that his scars are from demons. Hopefully Lowell isn't as crazy. I guess I'll have to wait and see.

After Friday's classes were over, I went back to my dorm to get my homework done so that I wouldn't have to do it over the weekend.