

Chapter One

A Not Quite Normal Day

It began on a Friday, as strange things often do. This particular Friday had been stranger than most, although it had started normally enough. Elliot Hooper got up at 7.30am as normal, made his Mum breakfast at 8.15am as normal, went to school at 8.55am as normal and was in the Headmaster's office by 9.30am, which was in fact, slightly later than normal.

'Oh Elliot,' sighed Graham Sopweed, headmaster of Brysmore Grammar School. 'What are we going to do with you?'

He looked into the blue-green eyes of the 13-year-old boy before him, as Elliot scratched his shaggy blonde head for an answer. Two years earlier, Graham Sopweed had watched as Elliot was proudly escorted through Brysmore's gates by his Mum, Nan and Grandad. The reports from his primary school had been glowing. "Elliot Hooper is a wonderful student who is sure to set Brysmore alight," his previous headmistress promised. There was no doubt that Elliot was a bright boy, but after a promising start, the past year had seen a big change in this young man and not for the better. Elliot Hooper hadn't set Brysmore alight. But Mr Sopweed was more than a little concerned that he might set the school on fire.

'It's a tricky one, Sir,' Elliot replied after a lengthy pause. 'It's really a question of everyone's best interests. And the simple fact is that I don't want to be at this school, the teachers don't want me to be at this school, the pupils don't want me or the teachers to be at this school, so perhaps it's time we admitted defeat and everyone got home in time for *Deal or No Deal*.'