



1. Lying Low

It began on a Friday, as strange things often do. This particular Friday turned out to be stranger than most, although it had started normally enough. Elliot Hooper got up at 7.30 a.m. as normal, made his mum breakfast at 8.15 a.m. as normal, went to school at 8.55 a.m. as normal and was in the headmaster's office by 9.30 a.m., 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?'

Elliot scratched his shaggy blond head. He figured that 'excuse me from school for ever and



make me Lord High Emperor of the Universe' wouldn't be deemed an acceptable answer, so he said nothing.

'You seem rather . . . distracted lately,' said Mr Sopweed to fill the silence. 'Is everything OK? Is anything wrong at school? Or at home?'

Elliot avoided his headmaster's concerned stare. School was . . . well, it was school. Annoying, boring, pointless. Nothing new there. But home? That was a different story . . .

'I'm fine,' he said after a lengthy pause. 'Thank you, sir.'

'Oh, Elliot,' Mr Sopweed sighed again, nervously flicking his floppy grey fringe. 'You know you can call me Graham. Let's all use the names our mothers gave us.'

There were many more creative names for Brysmore's headmaster than the one his mother gave him, but the politest by far was Call Me Graham.

A shout outside nearly made the jumpy headmaster fall off his chair. Elliot couldn't help but feel sorry for Call Me Graham. There were many theories at school as to why he was such a bag of nerves, not all of them started by Elliot. Some said it was because his wife had left him. Others said it was because she hadn't. Elliot's

silence

concerned

breakfast

particular

Emperor

theories

nerves

pointless

creative

slightly