

CHAPTER ONE

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HELP . . .



LOOKING BACK, I TOTALLY SHOULD HAVE EXPECTED the school floor to crack open and flames to spew out all over the place.

There were signs the whole morning that things weren't normal anymore. But it's just not something you imagine happening.

The floor opening up like that.

Smoke suddenly everywhere.

And Dana Runson suddenly nowhere.

I tried to help her, I really did. But she was gone in a flash. Just *gone*. I couldn't believe it.

Not then.

Not until the red wolf and the crazy lunch ladies and the huge guy with horns and the army of metal dudes—

Hold on. I'm telling this backward.

Let me start again.

Before the world flipped upside down and I lost whatever cool I had, this morning started pretty much like any morning.

With my dad's voice.

"Owen Brown, get down here!"

I leaped out of bed, splashed water on my face, and threw on my clothes. Then I raced to the kitchen and flopped down at the table next to my little sister, Mags.

"Sorry," I said. "I couldn't sleep. I was worrying about the concert."

I play guitar in the school orchestra. We were doing a big benefit concert at the local college that morning.