

# CHAPTER 1

## THE OUTBREAK

Can life get more sucky?  
Yes. Yes it can.

It's just my luck that the hot guy I've been crushing on turns out to be dead. By "dead," I mean "vampire dead." They're not really living; they're pretty dang dead. I found out that Jesse Sweeney was a vampire sometime after the zombie outbreak came to New Jersey. That's right. I said it. Zombie outbreak and vampires...what the crap! That's enough to make a person's head explode.

I remember looking down from the top of a school bus as Mr. Blackwell, my math teacher, was chewing on the shoulder of Mr. Bright. I really didn't like Mr. Bright because he was shrewd, short-tempered and gave out more detentions than A's, but in that moment, I felt sorry for him. All the notes I passed and all the silly things I said about him behind his back came rushing to me and the words just came out of my mouth, "I'm sorry." I didn't know where they came from. They just fell out of my mouth. I think I would have picked them up and hid them if I could. In just a brief moment, just a microsecond, he glanced up at me. He was still screaming but I thought he understood me. At least, I hope he did. Man, I was a jerk. Honestly, I think the reason I was so shocked that the words, "I'm sorry," came out of my mouth is because I didn't apologize for much in those days. I think I was really angry with my parents splitting and felt like most everyone owed me something, especially stupid adults.

My friend, Tommy, somehow worked his way into the driver's seat of the bus and slammed into Jessica Bunberry's car, which was tragic. Her dad spent all spring fixing up a 1969 Ford Mustang for her just in time for her eighteenth birthday. In the midst of people screaming and kids running everywhere, I thought, *Tommy, Jessica is going to kill you.* Not just because she had turned into a zombie and was bearing down on him either; that, I think, was just coincidence.

Then, through all the chaos, I saw it. On the rooftop of the science lab, Jesse Sweeney sprinted to the edge. I remember thinking, *How the heck did he get up there?* But, I also remember teachers wondering where he disappeared to during fourth and fifth periods. Everyone thought he was smoking somewhere, but he was eighteen anyway. He looked over the entrance of the courtyard gazing down like a hawk - a really sexy hawk. Jesse was one of those guys who looked like he should have played football because he was big and strong and girls found him attractive, but he never did. His dad probably never played catch with him because he thought sports were stupid. I watched Jesse look down at the kids running around like chickens or fish in a barrel or whatever you want to call it. He squatted down observing, then after a moment, he pushed with his legs and flew through the air. He flew nearly a hundred feet from the top of the roof, slamming down onto two zombies that were bearing down on Stacey Thompson. She was sheltering down between two cars.

Stacey was last year's prom queen and was now the school's biggest stuck-up cheerleader. She was in her cheerleader uniform and screaming her head off when Jesse landed with one foot on each zombie. He reached down and pulled the heads off both zombies at the same time. I'm pretty sure the zombies were underclassmen earlier that day, but I can't be positive. Jesse threw back the heads of the zombies sending an arching stream of blood that splattered on Stacey's white cheerleader top, which made her scream even louder. I thought to myself, *You're such a bimbo, Stacey*. Right then, Jesse walked toward her, and I thought, *Gosh dang, that's pretty hot*. Then, he did the unthinkable, at least at that moment in time it was pretty unthinkable. He lifted up Stacey from the ground and bit her right in the neck, not like a zombie would bite. He latched on. Jesse was freaking sucking her neck for blood. It was disgusting and kinda hot, but more disgusting. Anyways, I lost a lot of respect for Jesse then, not because he was a vampire, but because he could have done a lot better than Stacey Thompson.

I'm getting ahead of myself. I'm Rosetta, Rosetta Stone. I know, I know. It's the same as that big hunk of rock with a bunch of languages on it. Mostly, I think that's my name because my parents weren't very creative and happened to be watching an ancient mysteries documentary on TV when my mom went into labor. But, I kind of like it. I've never met anyone else with that name, and well, when life gives you lemons, you make Kool-Aid or whatever. My dad used to say, "If it wasn't for the Rosetta Stone, we would never have understood what Egyptian hieroglyphics mean." He would make jokes about how I was the translator that could help him understand the language of women used by my mom. I tried being a mediator or a bridge of sorts between my mom and dad before their divorce, but that didn't work out so well. After that, I lost faith in believing your name says something about you. I lost faith in a lot of stuff then. I guess I'm still trying to figure out if I have the ability to connect people from very different worlds, especially when I look in the mirror and still try to understand myself.

I'm a sophomore suffering from senioritis since kindergarten. I suppose all the back and forth from my parents' houses kept me from making any friends that stuck. So, by now, I just stopped trying to make friends. I've settled on Jack White and Mick Jagger being my closest allies. That is, until I was teamed up with Jesse Sweeney as my lab partner in the worst class ever.