



THEY PLAYED ON the sand for an hour or so, until Mr Hepworth called them together at the foot of the slipway which connected the promenade with the beach.

‘Right. What I thought we’d do between now and teatime is this: walk along the road here and have a look at the fish quay, then along the quayside to the swing-bridge and over into the old town. There are lots of interesting shops in the old town, including some specializing in Whitby jet. We could have a look in some of the windows, but I don’t think we should shop today – otherwise some of us might run out of

pocket-money halfway through the week. At the end of the old town is a flight of steps leading up to the abbey and a church. There are a lot of steps, and I want you to count them as we go up and tell me how many there are. We’ll go in groups again – d’you know your group, Barry Tune?’

‘Sir.’

‘Good. Here we go, then.’

The three teachers moved apart and called their groups to them. The children got into twos, and this time Fliss had Gary for a partner. He grinned at her. ‘Holding hands, are we?’

‘No chance. I’ve to eat my tea with this hand when we get back.’

‘I’ll be using a knife and fork.’

‘Ha, ha, ha.’

They looked at the fish dock, but there were no boats in and the sheds with their stacks of fish-boxes were shut. They went along the quayside, threading their way between strolling holiday-makers, looking in shop windows or at the different kinds of boats in the harbour. There was that exciting smell in the air which you get at the seaside – that blend of salt and mud and fish and sweet rottenness which has you breathing deeply and makes you tingle.

They were taking their time – the evening meal was not until six-thirty – and Fliss was looking at a coble with her name, *Felicity*, painted on its prow when Gary grabbed her hand and cried, ‘Hey – look at this!’

‘What?’ She spoke irritably and jerked her hand away, but looked

where he pointed and saw a narrow building with dark windows and a sign which said 'The Dracula Experience'. A tall man with a pale face, dressed all in black, smiled from the doorway at the passing group. His teeth seemed quite ordinary.

Gary raised his hand and waved it at Mrs Evans. 'Miss – can we go in here, Miss, please?'

Mrs Evans, who had been looking out over the harbour, turned. She saw the building, read the sign, smiled faintly and shook her head. 'Not just now, Gary. On Thursday, everybody will be given some free time to shop for presents and spend what's left of their money in whatever way they choose. You'll be able to buy yourself some Dracula Experience then.' She looked into the

eyes of the smiling man and added, loudly, 'If you must.'

They crossed the bridge and sauntered through the narrow streets of the old town till they came to the church steps. By the time they reached the top, Fliss was out of breath. She'd counted a hundred and ninety-seven steps but Mr Hepworth, whose group had got there first, said there were a hundred and ninety-nine and she believed him.

The top of the steps gave on to an old graveyard. Weathered stones leaned at various angles, so eroded you couldn't read the epitaphs. Long grass rippled in the wind. There was a church, and a breathtaking view of Whitby and the sea.

They had a look inside the church. It was called St Mary's. Mr

Hepworth pointed out its special features. You could buy postcards and souvenirs by the door. Fliss bought a postcard of the ruined abbey to send home. When they were gathered outside she said, 'Are we going to the ruins, Sir?' She wasn't sure whether she wanted to or not.

'Not today, Felicity. We'll be looking at them on Wednesday morning, before we set off to walk to Saltwick Bay.'

They poked about in the churchyard for a while and visited the toilets near the abbey. Then they descended the hundred and ninety-nine steps and began making their way back to The Crow's Nest. The fresh air and exercise had sharpened everybody's appetite, and most of the children spent the walk back

wondering what was for tea. Fliss did not. She was thinking about the landing at the top of the house, and what it would be like in the dark. The funny thing was, she seemed to know.