



'RIGHT – THIS'LL DO nicely,' said Mr Hepworth. They'd reached a grassy hollow where the land ran down in a gentle slope to a cliff which was neither sheer nor high. The grass was very green and quite short, and the children sat down on it and took out their lunch-packs. Friends sat together, and the three teachers found a spot near the top of the slope from which they could see what everybody was doing.

Fliss grabbed Lisa's elbow and steered her away from the group she'd been about to join. 'I've got to talk to you,' she hissed. Ellie-May stood, wondering whether to go with

them or stay with the group. Fliss turned and called, 'See you in a bit, Ellie-May – OK?'

Ellie-May nodded. 'Sure.' She sat down between Haley and Bobby Tuke. If people didn't want her around she wasn't going to worry about it.

'What's up?' said Lisa, when they'd got settled.

Fliss swallowed a mouthful of fishpaste sandwich. 'You heard what Trotter said back there. About her?' She nodded towards Ellie-May, who was sitting with her back to them.

Lisa nodded. 'I think he made it up. He's like that.'

Fliss shook her head. 'I don't. I heard footsteps, didn't I? I think it was Ellie-May, and I think she was

in that cupboard when I went to the bathroom.'

Her friend looked at her. 'Don't be silly, Fliss! It was a dream. Why would Ellie-May sit in a cupboard in the middle of the night, making funny noises? Why would anybody? And how could a door have a number on it at midnight, and none in the morning? You're barmy.'

'No, I'm not. What about the water on the bathroom floor?'

'Anybody could have squirted water on the floor. People do it on purpose, don't they?'

'Well, what about Ellie-May, then – what d'you think's wrong with her?'

Lisa shrugged. 'I dunno. I'm not a doctor, am I? Maybe she's got food-poisoning, which we all will after

these rotten sandwiches.' She pulled a face, chewing. 'Why – what do you think's wrong, Doctor Morgan?'

'I think something happened to her in that cupboard. I wasn't dreaming at all. I know that now. I'm off over to talk to Trot.'

She got up and went over to where David Trotter was sitting with a group of his friends. The boys stopped talking at her approach and squinted up at her, shielding their eyes with their hands. 'What do you want, mong-features?' asked Gary Bazzard, through a mouthful of something pink. Fliss ignored him. 'Can I have a word please, Trot?'

'Trot!' whooped Richard Varley. 'What is she, Trot – your girlfriend or something?'

Trotter blushed. 'Is she heck.' He scowled up at Fliss. 'What about?'

'I'll tell you over there.' She nodded towards a vacant spot on the slope. The others laughed. 'Watch her, Trot,' said Bazzard, 'she's after you.'

The red-faced boy scrambled to his feet. 'Come on then,' he growled. 'And it better be important or I'll chuck you off the cliff.'

They moved away from the others, and Fliss told him what she'd seen and heard in the night, linking it with what he'd seen and with Ellie-May's present condition. The boy glanced across at Ellie-May once or twice while she was speaking, and when she'd finished he nodded. 'OK. It all fits, and she looks rough, no doubt about that. But what I don't

get is, why would she go up two floors and into a cupboard in the first place, and if she did, and something happened to her there – something bad – why hasn't she told one of the teachers?'

Fliss shrugged. 'I don't know, Trot, but there's something funny going on, isn't there?'

'Maybe. But what d'you want me to do about it?'

'I don't want you to do anything. Not by yourself. I'm thinking of keeping watch tonight to see if Ellie-May goes walkabout again. I think Lisa will join me. Will you?'

'I dunno. It seems daft to me. I mean, a cupboard. I ask you – what could there be in a cupboard, Felicity?'

'Fliss.'

‘What?’

‘Fliss. Call me Fliss.’

‘Oh, I see. What could be in a cupboard, Fliss?’

‘Who knows?’ She chuckled. ‘The point is, dare you keep watch with us and find out?’

‘How d’you mean, dare I? D’you think I’m scared or something?’

‘Could be.’

‘Well, I’m not, I can tell you that.’

‘Prove it. Watch with us.’

‘OK, if Gary can come too.’

‘How d’you know he wants to?’

‘I don’t, yet. He doesn’t know anything about it, but he’ll want to be in on it when he does. Can I tell him?’

Fliss sighed. ‘I suppose so. But get him by himself, right? We don’t

want the whole flipping class stampeding around in the middle of the night, or nothing will happen at all.’

The boy smiled. ‘I don’t think it will anyway.’

‘Well, we’ll see, won’t we?’ said Fliss.