



SOMEWHERE BETWEEN LUNCH and Runswick Bay, David must have filled his friend in on the events of the night before, and on Fliss's plan for that night. As he passed her seat on the coach, Gary bent down and whispered, 'OK – I'm in. Talk to you later.'

Clouds rolled in after tea, threatening rain. Team games on the beach were cancelled, and everybody went to their rooms to write up the day's activity. Each child was keeping a sort of log or diary of the visit, in which points of interest were to be recorded. Fliss wrote for a while, then got up and looked

out of the window. The old woman was there watching the hotel. Fliss resolved to ask Mrs Wilkinson about her. She sat down again on her bunk, chewing the end of her pencil and reading through what she had written.

'Tuesday. Staithes and Runswick Bay. Nothing happened on coach. Looked at scenery. Staithes old-fashioned and sort of dark with hills and cliffs all round. Mr Hepworth told us about the headless ghost but we didn't see it. We didn't see Captain Cook's shop either because it is under the sea. Crab pots everywhere. I had an ice-lolly and Mrs Marriott took our photo.'

'How d'you spell "excitement"?' asked Marie from her perch on the top bunk.

'Why – what're you writing about?'

'Mrs Evans. I'm putting, "There was a bit of excitement when we thought Mrs Evans had fallen off the cliff, but she'd only fallen behind, which was boring."'

'You're not.'

'I am.'

'I wouldn't be you, then. It's E-X-C-I-T-E-M-E-N-T.'

'Ta.'

Fliss knew she should write more, but she couldn't concentrate. If Lisa and the two boys were to watch with her tonight, they'd have to get together sometime this evening and sort out details, like where they'd meet and at what time.

She listened. Beyond the door, everything seemed quiet. Nobody

was on the landing or the stairs. She wondered what the teachers were doing. If they were busy, she and Lisa might be able to slip down to the next floor and have a quick meeting with the boys. It was strictly forbidden to visit other people's rooms, but they'd have to risk it. She put her book and pencil on the bed and went to the door.

'Where you going?' asked Maureen.

'Toilet,' she lied, opening the door and looking out. The landing was deserted. She slipped out, closed the door and knocked on the door of room eleven.

'Who is it?' Samantha's voice.

'Fliss. Is Lisa there?'

'Yes. Just a minute.'

Voices beyond the door. Fliss glanced towards the cupboard. No number. Door eleven opened and Lisa looked out. 'Come on,' whispered Fliss.

'Where? I'm halfway through my log.'

'Trot's room. Make plans. Quiet.'

'OK.'

They tiptoed down the stairs, listening for teachers. There was nobody on the landing below. Doors seven and eight were closed.

'Which is theirs?' hissed Lisa.

'Seven. Watch the stairs while I knock.'

Lisa watched and listened. Fliss knocked.

'Who's there?' It sounded like Gary's voice.

'Fliss. Open up, quick.'

Footsteps approached the door. It opened a crack. An eye peered out. 'On your own, are you?'

'Me and Lisa. Hurry up.'

The door opened. Gary and David came out. 'Aren't we using your room?' Fliss asked.

'No chance. Barry and Richard're in there. They know nothing about this. It'll have to be the bathroom.'

They slipped into the bathroom, and Gary pushed the door-catch into place. 'We'll have to make it quick,' he whispered. 'Somebody's bound to want the toilet before long, and anyway I haven't started my log yet.'

They made their plans swiftly. They would go to bed at nine as normal, and wait till their room-mates fell asleep. That should be earlier

than last night because they'd had a long, tiring walk. At twenty-five past eleven exactly they'd get out of bed. They wouldn't dress for fear of waking somebody. They would leave their rooms and meet in the top-floor bathroom, room twelve, at half-past eleven. From there they would be able to keep watch on the stair-top, landing and cupboard. It would be impossible for anyone to reach the cupboard without being seen, and if anything odd happened to the door itself, like the number thirteen suddenly appearing on it, they'd see that too.

This settled, the four split up and returned to their rooms. It wasn't until Fliss was lying in bed at half-past nine, listening to Marie and the twins, that she realized no-

body had thought about what they'd do if Ellie-May did appear. She lay, worrying about this and looking at her watch every minute or two, as her room-mates chattered on.