



THEY WERE BACK at The Crow's Nest by twenty to four, stowing their purchases in their rooms and writing up their journals. It had been their last day, and Fliss wondered why it had had to end so early. It wasn't as if they'd be setting off home at the crack of dawn and needed an early night. They weren't leaving till half-past ten.

Not that an early night would be much use to the four of us anyway, she thought. She had talked briefly to Lisa and Trot on the stairway. They knew what had happened to her today, and had agreed to meet

Gary and herself in the usual spot at half-past eleven.

The rest of the kids were feeling a bit down because the holiday was nearly over, but for Fliss, Gary, Lisa and Trot it couldn't end soon enough. They were tired and frightened, and wanted only to be near their parents and to sleep in their own beds.

'Guess what?' said Marie. She was looking out of the window.

'Shut up, Marie,' growled Maureen. 'I'm trying to write.'

'The old witch is there again,' said Marie, ignoring her.

'We know,' said Joanne, impatiently. 'We saw her when we came past the shelter just now. How d'you spell "stake", Fliss?'

Fliss looked up. 'There's two sorts of stake,' she said. 'What're you writing about?'

'A poster I saw in the town. Movie poster. It showed this vampire with a stake through its heart. It said, "Party all night, sleep all day, never grow old, never die, it's fun being a vampire."'

'That sort of stake's S-T-A-K-E,' Fliss told her.

'Thanks.' Joanne bent her head over her work. Marie left the window, sat down at the dressing-table and began to write. Silence reigned.

Fliss chewed her pencil and stared at the carpet. S-T-A-K-E. Stake. A short pole, sharpened at one end, and a mallet to hammer it in with. A flaming torch to illuminate the crypt, and a cross lest the

vampire should wake. A stick of rock the size of a telegraph pole, sucked to a point. A pebble too heavy for the pocket. A torch the shape of a dragon. A cross? No cross.

Trot. We've each done our bit, except Trot. Trot must find the cross, then. He hasn't got one that I've ever seen. He didn't buy one today, which was the last chance. He bought –

A kite. That tattered kite on its rigid, cross-shaped frame. That's it!

She was certain, now. You'll be told, Sal Haggerlythe had said, and it was true. Mrs Evans had catalogued the items, and then spoken those very words. You'll be told. The pieces fitted. Every one.

She got up and went to the window. Sal was sitting in the shelter, and seemed to be looking at her.

Fliss mouthed a silent 'yes,' and nodded. The woman made no response, but then, the sun was behind the hotel and this side was in shadow.

When they went down to the lounge, the children found out why they'd returned early to the hotel. There was to be a disco for them in the dining-room starting at seven o'clock. They would eat early so that the room could be prepared, and would have plenty of time to wash, do their hair and get into their best outfits before the festivities began.

'It's a farewell disco,' Mr Hepworth told them. 'Farewell to The Crow's Nest, farewell to Whitby. We've kept it a secret till now because we wanted it to be a surprise. It will go on until half-past nine,

with a break at eight o'clock for pop, crisps and various other goodies. Mr and Mrs Wilkinson's daughter will be running the disco, and I think it's very kind of them all. Don't you?'

Everybody did. There were three very loud cheers for the Wilkinsons, who came to the doorway of the lounge to hear them, and then it was dinnertime.

As she ate, Fliss watched Ellie-May, two tables away. She'd joined them on the trip to Robin Hood's Bay that morning, and had seemed fine. She'd behaved so normally that at one point Fliss had approached her and spoken, just to see what she'd do. Ellie-May had been her usual rude self, telling Fliss to drop dead, and she seemed normal now too, sitting between Tara and Michelle,

boasting about the outfit she was going to wear. She's chuffed to little mint balls, thought Fliss. Looking forward to the disco like everybody else. She doesn't remember a thing about last night. Or the night before. Or the night before that.

Lucky her.