



SOME MORNINGS ARE just perfect. You know what I mean. You've slept like a log, you come wide awake and it's sunshine from the word go. Sunshine and birdsong and your favourite breakfast and everybody being nice to you. It sometimes happens to people on their birthday.

Well, that Friday morning at Whitby was one of those, and it wasn't anybody's birthday. There should have been some gloom about because the holiday was over, but there wasn't. Fliss and the other three should have felt dog-tired and maybe a little bit chastened after their horrific adventure, but they

didn't. They'd got a terrific telling-off from old Hepworth, of course, but they didn't mind that. An enormous weight had been lifted from them and they walked on air. Nobody thought, Oh, crikey, school. Everybody thought, Oh great, home! It was that sort of morning.

Fliss was hungry. The aroma of sausages, drifting up from the basement kitchen, made her mouth water. Sausages! Her favourite. The cereal was a favourite, too. She shovelled it into her face, watching the teachers.

They hadn't tried to explain to the teachers. There was no point. Grown-ups don't believe anything you tell them. They have to see with their own eyes, and there was nothing to see. Not now.

After breakfast, the children went upstairs to finish packing and tidy their rooms. The door of the linen cupboard was closed, and there was no number on it. Never will be again, thought Fliss. Not even at midnight. She smiled.

In room ten, everything had been packed away. Marie and the twins stood looking out of the window. 'There's no old witch today,' said Maureen.

'Mad Sal's not a witch,' said Fliss. 'And she's not mad either.'

Room ten looked bare without their bits and pieces. It wasn't their room any more and they weren't sorry to leave it. They carried their luggage downstairs and stacked it in the hallway. The coach wasn't due for another hour, so the teachers

took them down to the beach where they ran or skimmed pebbles or stood, saying goodbye to the sea, which sparkled in the sun.

The coach was coming at half-past ten. At twenty past, Mr Hepworth called them together and led them back up the steep pathway.

It was there. The driver was stowing the last of the luggage in the boot. Mr Wilkinson was helping him. Both men whistled as they worked.

The children crossed the road and climbed on board. Fliss and Lisa got seats together. The driver slipped into his seat, grinned at the children through his mirror and told them to hold tight. The engine roared into life. The coach rolled forward. The Wilkinsons stood on

the top step, waving. The children waved back. The coach gathered speed. The Crow's Nest fell away behind. They were going home.

Fliss settled back in the comfy seat and sighed. 'It's been a funny sort of holiday,' she said.

Lisa nodded. 'You can say that again. I'm glad we did it, though. We made things better, didn't we, Fliss – I could sort of feel it this morning.'

'Oh, so could I. Everybody could, I think. Mr Wilkinson, whistling. And the driver. Drivers are usually a bit narky when they've got a coach-load of kids, but this one isn't. Look at him, grinning in the mirror.'

The coach swooped down into Sleights, then toiled up the road to the moors. Halfway up, Fliss slapped her knee and cried, 'Drat!'

Lisa looked at her. 'What's up?'

'I've just remembered – that picture I got for my mum. I put it on top of the wardrobe and I've left it there.'

'Oh, Fliss! Why did you put it there, and not in your case?'

'I had other things to think about, didn't I? Vampires, for instance. I just shoved it any old where and forgot about it.'

'Maybe Mrs Wilkinson'll find it – send it on.'

'How can she? She won't know it's mine. It might have been there weeks for all she knows.' She sighed. 'Poor Mum – no pressy.'

They were on the moors now. Sun and sky, wind and heather. Mr Hepworth stood up. 'If you look back now,' he said, 'you'll get a glimpse of the abbey.'

Everybody stood or knelt, looking back. There it was, a black, dramatic silhouette against the shining sea. As Fliss gazed at it, somebody touched her elbow. She turned, and saw Ellie-May with a little flat package in her hand. 'I heard what you said,' she whispered, 'about your mum's picture. I want you to have this.'

'What is it, Ellie-May?'

'A picture. A Sutcliffe, like the one you lost. I saw you with it yesterday.'

'Well, don't you want it? Didn't you buy it for someone?'

'I bought it for me, Fliss. It was a present from me to myself.' She smiled. 'I bring myself presents all the time. Or rather, I did. I was my favourite person, you see. Now you

are – you and Lisa and Gary and Trot – because I know what you did. Here – take it.'

Fliss took the package. She smiled at Ellie-May. 'Thanks.'

'Thank you, Fliss.' Nobody had seen her give Fliss the picture. Everybody was busy looking at the abbey. She slipped back to her seat.

Fliss looked along the coach at Ellie-May, then down at the little package. She smiled.

'So long, Dracula,' she whispered. 'Hi, felicity.'

THE END