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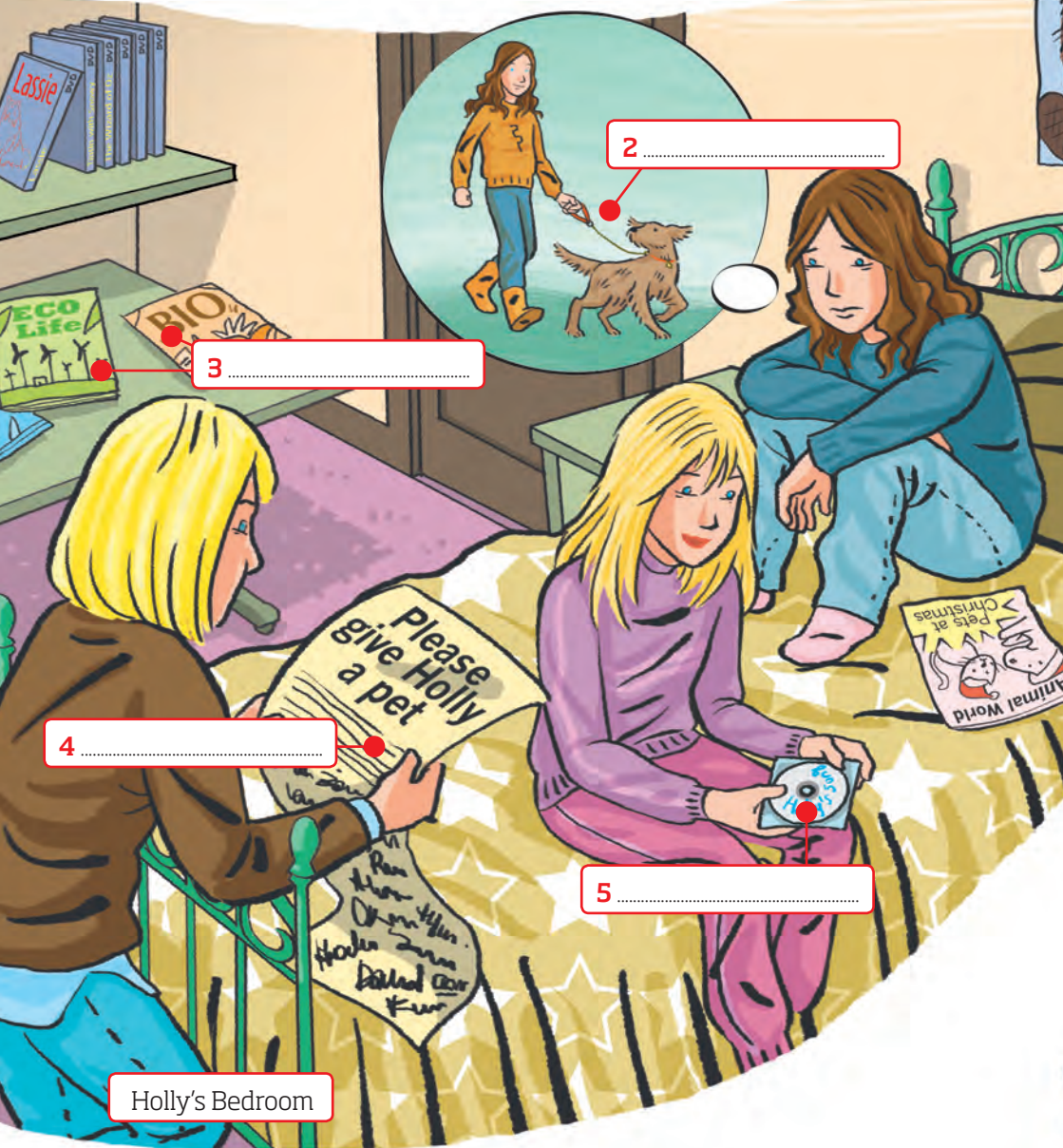
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Hello, I'm David
and this is my story.
Who is the Black Corsair?
Look through the book
and find out!

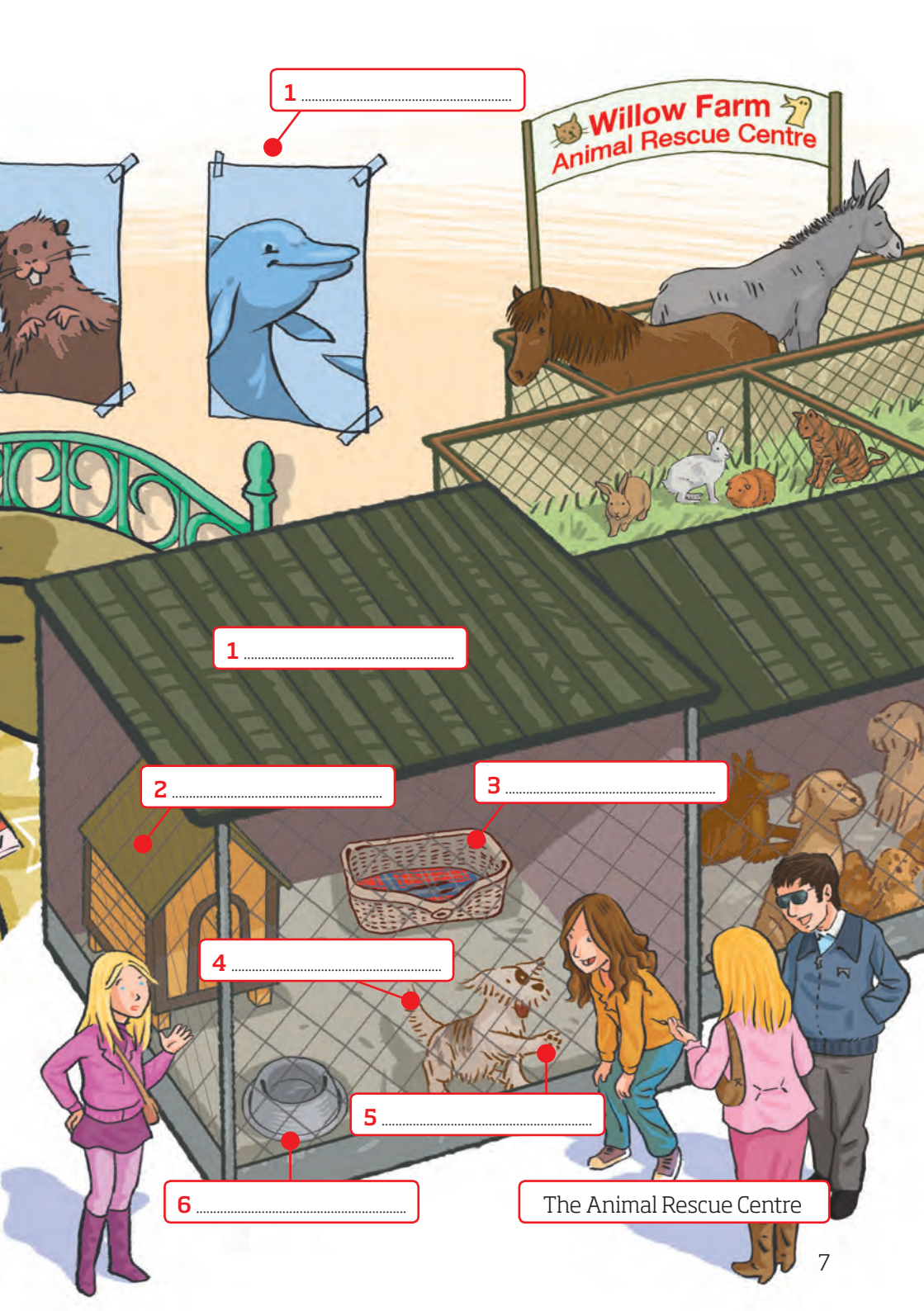


Before Reading

1 Look at the pictures and answer the questions on pages 8 and 9.



Holly's Bedroom



1



Willow Farm
Animal Rescue Centre

1

2

3

4

5

6

The Animal Rescue Centre





3 The front door opens and closes with a bang. Holly throws her school bag onto the floor and calls out, 'I'm home!'

No answer.

So she tries again.

'Hello! I'm home!'

No answer.

The house is silent. It sounds empty[•], but she knows it isn't. Her dad is working in his office upstairs. Her mum is working in *her* office in the loft[•]. And her sister is in her room, listening to music or sending text messages to a new boyfriend. Sophie always has a new boyfriend! So Holly takes off her school jacket, drops it on her bag, and walks into the kitchen.

She gets a glass of orange juice from the fridge, goes into the conservatory and sits down in her favourite chair. It's an old deckchair. Her mum doesn't like it in the conservatory. She and Holly have arguments about it, but Holly always wins.

The garden is very still in the dark afternoon. Most of it is neat and tidy with boring short grass, boring straight flowerbeds and boring straight paths. Only Holly's Nature Garden (that's her name for it – her mum calls it The Jungle) looks wild and exciting. It contains big dead sunflowers, bushes with lots of berries, tall grasses and old vegetables with strange shapes.



Then Holly looks at her plants and herbs in the conservatory, safe from the winter weather. There's basil, rosemary, sage and loads of other plants. They grow tall and wild and fill up her side of the conservatory with their lovely perfume.

But the conservatory is divided just like the garden. On the other side her mum keeps all her boring flowers in tidy pots with labels on them. There isn't a leaf or bit of dirt on the floor. It's neat and shiny like a supermarket.



Holly sits and looks out at the empty garden. She listens to a single bird singing in the darkness. And then she starts thinking unhappy thoughts.

'I'm just like that sad lonely • bird. Nobody is interested in me. My parents only think about their work and my sister only likes boys and shopping. I don't know why I live in this house!' But she knows that today is special. Today things are changing. She can't wait any longer. It's time to talk to her parents.

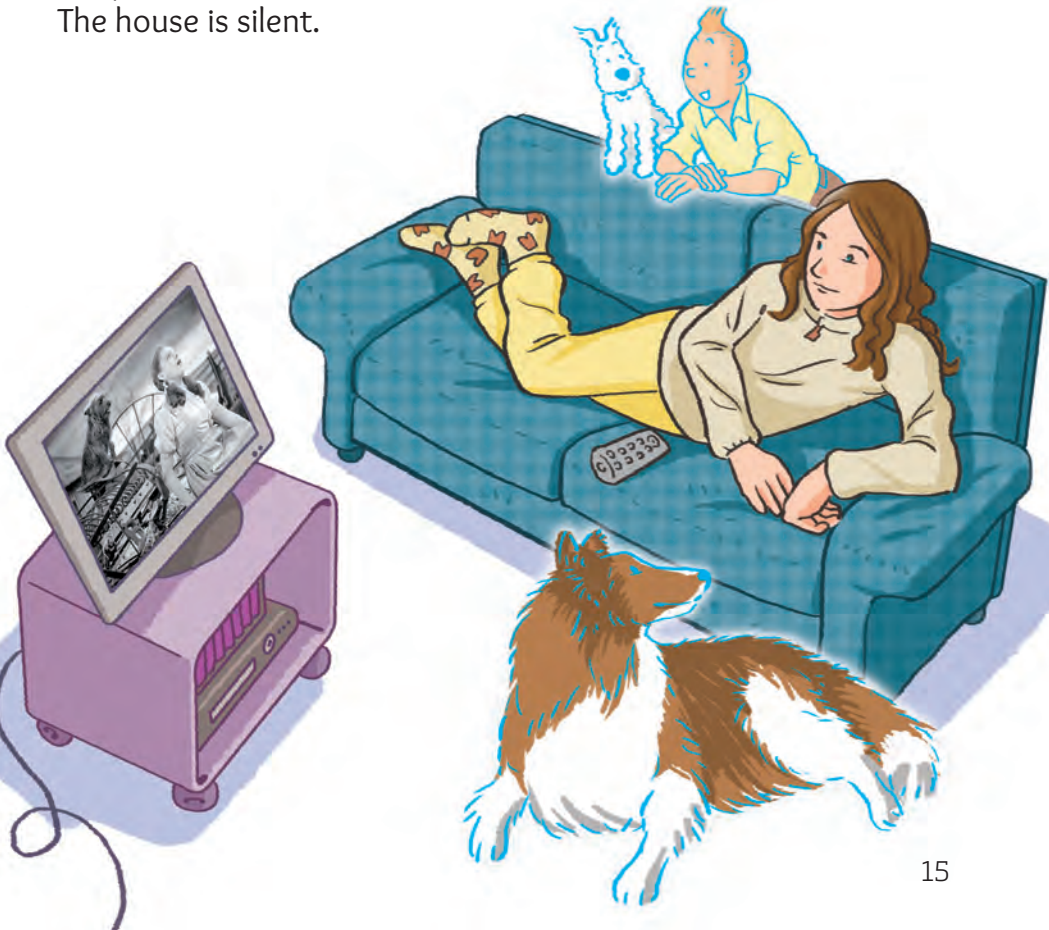


Two months earlier...

Christmas is over. Holly's dad is working in his office. Her mum is shopping at the sales. Sophie is hanging out with her friends. Holly is lying on the sofa and watching the Movie Channel. First, she watches an old Lassie film. It's in black and white and really boring, but Lassie is a beautiful dog and he always saves people in trouble. Then she watches a Tintin cartoon. Holly isn't very interested in Tintin, but she likes Snowy, his pet dog. Finally she watches *The Wizard of Oz*. There's a girl in the film with a dog called Toto. Toto is Holly's favourite dog and she always feels a bit sad when the film ends.

Holly switches off the TV with the remote.

The house is silent.



One month earlier...

Holly is reading a magazine. And she isn't very happy.



Pets are for life



Puppies are so cute. And kittens are so sweet. People think they make really great gifts at Christmas. But a few weeks later, they get bored with their new pets. They don't want to take their dogs for a walk. Cats can scratch the furniture. And every pet takes up a lot of their time. Dogs want to play, they want attention, they make noise. They're expensive, too. Not just for food, but think of all those vet's bills!

So what happens? Every year, people put their pets in their cars, drive for kilometres, then leave these poor animals at the side of the road. They abandon them!

13

Holly puts down the magazine. Her eyes are red.





One week earlier...

Holly is carrying a big bag of bird seed from the pet shop. She has a bird table in her Nature Garden – and the birds eat the food really quickly! But while she's walking home, she hears a sound – a dog is barking somewhere. There's nothing strange about that, but this dog sounds upset. Holly listens carefully. She's right. This dog is in trouble.

She runs towards the sound and stops at the entrance to an alleyway.

A dog is standing at the far end. But two boys are there, too. They are holding sticks and waving them at the dog.

Holly doesn't think twice.

'Stop that!' she shouts.

The boys turn around, surprised.

'Leave that dog alone!' Holly says. She speaks loudly – but she can hear the fear in her voice.

'What do you want, little girl?' the tall one asks.

'Are you looking for trouble?' the short one asks.

As they start walking towards her, the dog runs past them and along the road.

'Hey!' the tall one says. 'That's your fault, little girl. I want to talk to you.'

He waves his stick at Holly.

But Holly doesn't want to talk to him. She throws the bag of bird seed at them, then quickly runs away.



One hour earlier...

It's only four o'clock, but it's cold and grey and getting dark. Holly and Zadie are on their way home from school, talking about their day – about all the good things and the not so good things.

When they get to Zadie's house, her mum opens the door – and a big funny brown dog jumps out of the house and into Zadie's arms. He nearly knocks her over!

'Hey Scamp! Take it easy!' says Zadie, laughing. But Scamp just licks her face and wags his tail.



'Do you want to come in?' asks Zadie's mum.
Holly nods and smiles.
But half an hour later, she is walking home again, alone.
And she's thinking about another boring evening.



It's time for Holly to talk to her parents.

So she gets up from her deckchair and climbs all the way to the loft. The door is open so Holly goes straight into her mum's office. She is doing something on the computer.

'Are you busy, Mum?'

'What was that, darling?'

Her mother doesn't look up.

'I want to talk.'

'Oh, just a minute,' says her mother. She clicks on the keyboard, takes off her glasses and turns to look at her daughter.

'What is it, Holly?'

Holly coughs, takes a deep breath, then starts to explain.

One minute later her mother says, 'No, Holly. That's impossible.' And Holly turns around and walks out of the room.



Holly walks noisily downstairs to her father's office. She knocks on his door, waits for him to say, 'Come in!' Then enters. Her father's on the phone. He's *always* on the phone, and when he isn't on the phone he's working on his computer. She waits and rehearses in her mind what she plans to say. Finally he presses a button on his mobile and looks at her.

'Dad, can we talk?'

'Sure. But not for long. I have to make another call. What is it?'

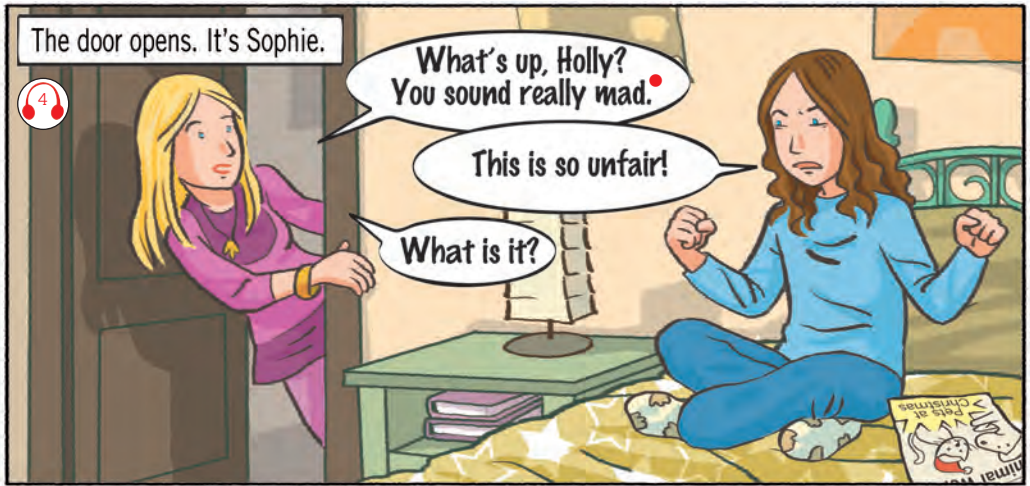
'I've got an idea,' says Holly.

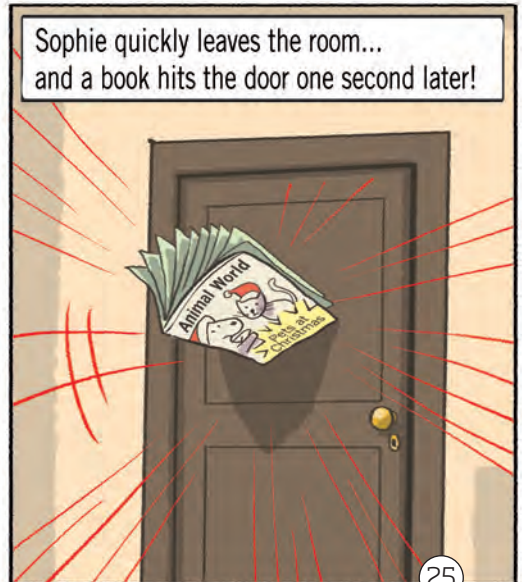
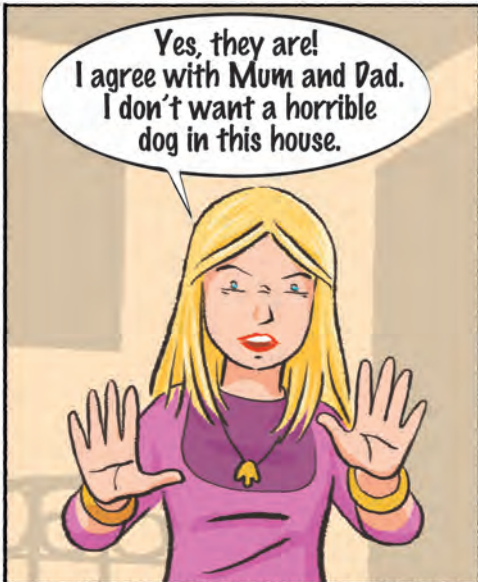
Thirty seconds later...

'Absolutely not!' says her father.

So Holly walks out of the office (leaving the door open), goes into her own room and slams her door shut.







After Reading

Vocabulary

1 Circle the adjectives in the word snake.

silent tidy huge boring expensive empty confused nervous

2 Complete the speech bubbles with the adjectives from Exercise 1.

a

I feel so
I've got three exams
tomorrow!

b

There's nothing on
TV tonight. All the
programmes are
.....

c

I want to buy a new
skateboard but it's very
.....

e

There's nothing to eat
in the fridge.
It's !

f

My room isn't
In fact, it's a mess!

d

The house is
I can't hear a thing!

g

I don't know
what to do.
I'm really
.....

h

My uncle lives
in a
house. It's got ten
bedrooms!