BRITISH COUNCIL

LearnEnglish Teens

Easy reading: Where's Roxy? (level 2) – text

Chloe has an unusual pet which isn't popular with all the members of her family.

Chloe arrived home from school, made herself a cup of coffee and went to her bedroom. She had homework to do, but it could wait for later. She wanted to enjoy the quiet time before her parents arrived home and filled the house with the sounds of conversation, television and her dad's favourite jazz music.

She liked this time of day too because she could play with her pet rats. Yes, that's right, pet rats! Chloe has got two of them, Zena and Roxy. Chloe knows they're not typical pets and she knows most people think rats are dirty. She didn't like rats either till her friend Martin invited her to his house one day and showed her his pet rats. When she played with them and held a rat in her hands for the first time, she saw how affectionate and intelligent they were. Last year, when one of Martin's rats had babies, Chloe decided she'd like to take two of them.

It wasn't easy to persuade Mum and Dad. But fortunately, a good school report arrived just before Chloe's birthday and her parents were in a good mood. When Mum asked Chloe what she wanted for her birthday, Chloe told her she'd like a pair of rats. 'Rats? Are you serious?' asked Mum, and then Chloe told her about Martin and the baby rats. 'Give me five minutes,' said Chloe's mum. 'I'm going to phone Martin's parents.' It had been the longest five minutes of Chloe's life, but finally Mum came back into the kitchen, smiled and said, 'Yes, all right. You can have two rats, but ...' (with mothers, there's always a 'but'!) '... they must live in your room and can never go to other parts of the house, especially not the kitchen'.

Chloe was delighted, and two days later they went to Martin's house to collect Roxy and Zena.

In her room, Chloe opened the cage. First she picked up Roxy and put her on the floor. Then she picked up Zena and put her on her shoulder. Roxy loved to explore. She climbed bookcases and drawers and went under Chloe's bed. Zena was quieter and liked sitting on Chloe's shoulder while she messaged her friends or read a book. A while later, there was a knock at the door. 'Hi, Chloe,' called Mum. 'Are you there?'
'Yes, Mum,' said Chloe. 'Come in.'
'I'm going to my aerobics class. I'll be back about seven o'clock. Dad's on his way home. He's making pasta tonight.'
'OK, Mum. See you later,' Chloe replied.

Mum closed the door. Chloe put Zena back in her cage and called for Roxy. 'Roxy?' said Chloe. 'Roxy, where are you?' Roxy usually came when Chloe said her name. Chloe waited a moment and then started to look for her. Where could Roxy be? She must be in Chloe's room somewhere. Then Chloe remembered that Mum had opened the door. Roxy might have gone out of the room then and now she could be anywhere in the house.

Chloe started to search. She looked in her parents' room and the bathroom but Roxy wasn't there. Next, she went downstairs. On the way, she had a sudden panic. What if Roxy had climbed into the washing machine? And what if Mum had turned it on with Roxy inside? Chloe ran the last few steps to the kitchen and was happy to see the washing machine door was open and Roxy wasn't inside. Then Chloe searched the kitchen, opening drawers and cupboards, calling Roxy's name the whole time.

'Hi, Chloe!' said Dad as he came into the kitchen with a bag of food from the Italian delicatessen. 'Are you OK?' he asked.

'Yes, I'm ... I'm ...' Chloe wanted to say 'I'm fine', but she wasn't fine and she needed Dad's help. 'Dad, I've ... I've ... I've lost Roxy!' she said.

'I see,' said Dad, putting down the shopping bag. 'Don't worry, we'll find her. She can't be far!'

Chloe and her dad looked all over the house but they couldn't find Roxy anywhere. When she was searching her room for the third time, Chloe heard a key in the door and Mum calling, 'It's me, I'm home.'

'Oh, no!' thought Chloe. 'Mum's going to be angry.' She decided to stay in her room and let Dad tell Mum about Roxy. Then she heard Dad laughing and Mum called out, 'Chloe, come downstairs.'

Chloe went downstairs and there was Mum with a smile on her face and Roxy on her shoulder. 'Oh, Mum, you found her!' said Chloe. 'Where was she?'

'When I arrived at the gym,' said Mum, 'I opened my bag and found Roxy sleeping in one of my trainers.'

'Oh, no! Are you angry?' asked Chloe.

'No, it was a shock but I picked her up for the first time and do you know what? Now, I think I like rats too!'

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