

Dead Parrot Sketch  
by  
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INT. PET SHOP - DAY

Cluttered and dingy.

This sounds old fashioned, I don't think our target demographic of teens will like it. Make it more like an Apple store, gleaming white and brightly lit with lots of shiny things to keep teens' attention.

A fish tank on one end of the counter, cash register on the other.

The OWNER (30), cowardly liar in a brown shopcoat, hides behind the register as MR. PRALINE (32), lanky and determined in a buttoned-up mac, strides in carrying a dead parrot in a cage.

We won't hear the name on-screen, the owner needs to call Mr. Praline by name.

OWNER

Hello, Mr. Praline. Thank you for coming back to my shop.

It's a bit sexist this since there are no women, can we make the owner a woman? Only, if it's a woman then we can't describe her as a cowardly liar because that's sexist, so can we make her pretty and slim instead? And not in brown; but in something sexy and bright. They're both too old too, make them both 18 because teens won't watch anything with older people in it. Apart from Batman. Or Doctor Who. Could we get Matt Smith to do this?

MR. PRALINE

Hello? I wish to register a complaint.

(spies owner)

Hello, Miss?

The owner stands up, annoyed.

OWNER

What do you mean, "miss"?

This will have to be Mr because the man is now a woman.

MR. PRALINE

I'm sorry, I have a cold.

I don't get this. Why would he think the woman is a man because he's got a cold? Cut this bit. In fact, cut everything so far and just start with the next bit. Maybe have the woman bending over to show some cleavage in a non-sexist way. Oh, and keep the opening "Hello Mr. Praline" bit, I love that. She could say it in a sexy accent.

(beat)

I wish to make a complaint!

OWNER

Sorry, we're closing for lunch.

Is lunch sexy? Can we sex it up a bit?

MR. PRALINE

Never mind that, my ~~lad~~ lady. I wish to complain about this parrot, what I purchased not half an hour ago from this very boutique.

What's a boutique? Can we just call it a shop because I don't think the audience will understand words I've never heard of. Thinking about it, this is a deus ex machina because we haven't seen Mr. Praline buy the parrot. Put that at the beginning.

OWNER

Oh yes, the Norwegian Blue. What's wrong with it?

Is that a real type of parrot? I've never heard of it. I've heard of an African Grey but since the audience aren't as clever as me, we should just call it a parrot throughout.

MR. PRALINE

I'll tell you what's wrong with it. It's dead, that's what's wrong with it.

Are dead pets funny? People love their pets, I think we're risking alienating people here. Why not make it a bit ill? Or perhaps not a pet but a ... book or something. Perhaps he could be returning a book with some of the pages missing?

OWNER

No, no, it's resting, look.

So instead of resting, she could pretend it's not a novel but a novella! Hah!

MR. PRALINE

Look, my lad, I know a ~~dead parrot~~ book with missing pages when I see one and I'm looking at one right now.

OWNER

No no, it's not ~~dead, it's resting.~~ not a book with missing pages, it's a novella.

Remember to change all these references to death.

MR. PRALINE

Resting?

This is just repetition now.

OWNER

Yeah. Remarkable bird, the  
Norwegian Blue. Beautiful plumage,  
isn't it?

Maybe talk here about how good the novella is? I'll see if we  
can find a real novella for product placement.

MR. PRALINE

The plumage don't enter into it.  
It's stone dead!

OWNER

No, no! It's resting.

Repetition. Actually, I'm warming to the dead parrot now.  
Teens can't read anyway, so let's keep it a parrot. But make  
it an African Grey. Do they even have parrots in Norway? I  
don't think they do.

MR. PRALINE

All right then, if it's resting,  
I'll wake it up.

(shouts at cage)

Hello, Polly! I've got a nice  
cuttlefish for you when you wake  
up, Polly Parrot.

Do parrots eat cuttlefish? Is it cruel to put a fish in a  
cage? Maybe seeds would be better?

The owner hits the cage.

OWNER

There, it moved!

MR. PRALINE

No, it didn't, that was you pushing  
the cage!

OWNER

~~I did not!~~

MR. PRALINE

~~Yes, you did!~~

That's not necessary - we need to move this along. Also, we  
will see the sexy owner hitting the cage so we don't need to  
say it.

Mr. Praline pulls the parrot out of the cage and screams into  
its ear.

MR. PRALINE

Hello Polly! Plllllyyyy!  
(bangs its head against  
the counter)

Animal cruelty is not funny.

(MORE)

MR. PRALINE (CONT'D)

Have him tickle it instead.

Polly Parrot, wake up!

~~(bangs it on counter)~~

Polly!

Cut the bits I've crossed out - they're not needed.

He tosses it up in the air and watches it plummet to the floor.

MR. PRALINE

Now that's what I call a dead parrot.

This line is pure exposition, we can see the parrot's dead. We don't need to be told.

OWNER

No, no it's stunned.

MR. PRALINE

Look my lad, I've had just about enough of this. That parrot is definitely deceased. And when I bought it not half an hour ago, you assured me that its lack of movement was due to it being tired and shagged out after a long squawk.

OWNER

He's probably pining for the fjords.

Fjords doesn't make sense if it's an African Grey. Say trees instead.

MR. PRALINE

Pining for the fjords? What kind of talk is that? Look, why did he fall flat on its back the moment I got it home?

Do we need two excuses here? Just one gets the point across.

OWNER

The Norwegian Blue prefers kipping on its back. ~~It's a beautiful bird, lovely plumage.~~

You've said this bit before. We really need to keep the length down. Studies show teens can't concentrate on sketches which last longer than two minutes. Remember, this show is for teens and they're all stupid because of the sex and drugs.

MR. PRALINE

Look, I took the liberty of examining that parrot and I discovered that the only reason that it had been sitting on its perch in the first place was that it had been nailed there.

This speech is too long. Trim please.

OWNER

Well, of course it was nailed there! Otherwise it would have nuzzled up to those bars and VOOM!

Mr. Praline puts the cage down and picks up the parrot.

MR. PRALINE

Look matey, this parrot wouldn't "vooom" if I put ~~four thousand volts~~ through it! It's bleeding demised!

Volts is too science-y. Can we put a drugs reference in there? Like heroin - something which gives teens lots of energy.

OWNER

It's not! It's pining!

We've said this already.

MR. PRALINE

It's not pining, it's passed on! This parrot is no more! It has ceased to be! It's expired and gone to meet its maker! This is a late parrot! It's a stiff! Bereft of life, it rests in peace! If you hadn't nailed it to the perch it would be pushing up the daisies! It's run down the curtain and joined the choir invisible! This is an ex-parrot!

I count eleven different ways here of saying the same thing. You don't need them, the audience aren't stupid. Except the drugged up, sex addicted ones. Can we just choose one and stick to it? In fact, just say This parrot is dead. That's much simpler.

OWNER

Well, I'd better replace it, then.

MR. PRALINE

(to camera)

If you want to get anything done in this country you've got to complain 'til you're blue in the mouth.

I think the expression is 'blue in the face' but do teens use that expression? Is there a way of saying it in txtspk?

The owner casts a perfunctory glance behind the counter.

OWNER

Sorry guv, we're right out of parrots.

~~MR. PRALINE~~

~~I see. I see, I get the picture.~~

Cut this, join the next line onto the one above.

OWNER

I've got a slug.

MR. PRALINE

Does it talk?

Mr. Praline would know a slug didn't talk. Plus, a slug is too different from a parrot to be a viable replacement - it makes the owner look stupid and we can't do that because she's a woman and making women stupid is sexist. Maybe if it were a budgie?

OWNER

~~Not really, no.~~

Repetition!

~~MR. PRALINE~~

~~Well, it's scarcely a replacement then, is it?~~

You don't need this line, he could just do it with a look. He could look exasperated. Is that the right word? Or does that mean tired?

OWNER

Listen, I'll tell you what, tell you what, if you go to my brother's pet shop in Bolton, he'll replace your parrot for you.

Not Bolton, it's too Northern. A Bolton pet shop would only sell ferrets and whippets. And it would take too long to get to, we need to respect the greek unity of time. Make it Swiss Cottage or somewhere like that.

The Owner hands Mr. Praline a business card.

Teens don't use business cards any more - this is the 21st Century! The owner should just bluetooth address to him. Oh, unless they have iPhones, in which case they'll just have to find a pen and paper and write it down.

~~MR. PRALINE~~  
~~Bolton, eh?~~

~~OWNER~~  
~~Yeah.~~

~~MR. PRALINE~~  
~~Alright.~~

~~Mr. Praline leaves, dead parrot in hand.~~

~~Don't need this bit.~~

INT. SIMILAR PET SHOP IN BOLTON - DAY

TITLE OVER A SIMILAR PET SHOP IN BOLTON, LANCS

~~I don't like all this reading. Teens can't read. Fact.~~

The same pet shop. The owner stands behind the same counter in the same coat ... wearing a false moustache.

A sign on the inside of the door: SIMILAR PET SHOPS, Ltd.

Mr. Praline enters with the dead parrot in hand. He spots the moustachioed owner ... and stops dead.

~~A woman in a moustache isn't funny or sexy. Plus, if it's a different petshop then how is it the same person? That doesn't make sense. Make it a different sexy woman in a non-sexist sexy dress.~~

The owner tries to act naturally.

~~Mr. Praline glances around, sees his empty cage on the floor.~~

~~That wouldn't be in Swiss Cottage!~~

~~MR. PRALINE~~  
~~Uh, excuse me, this is Bolton, is it?~~

~~OWNER~~  
~~No, it's Ipswich.~~

~~Is there a place called Ipswich? Sounds a bit made up. Let's make it Croydon.~~

~~MR. PRALINE~~  
~~(to camera)~~  
~~That's inter-city rail for you.~~

~~There's not enough swearing in this sketch. Just have him say 'Fuck!' teens love swearing and sex and drugs.~~

~~Mr. Praline strides out.~~



~~INT. TRAIN STATION, COMPLAINTS DEPARTMENT - DAY~~

~~A small, plain room with COMPLAINTS DEPT. written on the wall. Mr Praline wanders up to an ATTENDANT.~~

~~MR. PRALINE~~

~~I wish to make a complaint.~~

~~ATTENDANT~~

~~I don't have to do this, you know!~~

~~MR. PRALINE~~

~~I beg your pardon?~~

~~ATTENDANT~~

~~I'm a qualified brain surgeon. I only do this 'cause I like being my own boss.~~

~~MR. PRALINE~~

~~Excuse me, this is irrelevant, isn't it?~~

~~ATTENDANT~~

~~Oh yeah, it's not easy to pad these out to thirty minutes.~~

~~MR. PRALINE~~

~~Well, I wish to make a complaint. I got on the Bolton train and found myself deposited here in Ipswich.~~

~~ATTENDANT~~

~~No, this is Bolton.~~

~~MR. PRALINE~~

~~(to camera)~~

~~The pet shop owner's brother was lying!~~

~~ATTENDANT~~

~~Well, you can't blame British Rail for that.~~

~~MR. PRALINE~~

~~If this is Bolton, I shall return to the pet shop.~~

~~Mr. Praline dashes out ... leaving the confused attendant to wonder what the hell is going on?~~

~~This just confuses me. Cut this whole scene.~~

INT. SIMILAR PET SHOP IN BOLTON - DAY

TITLE OVER: A LITTLE WHILE LATER LIMITED

Mr. Praline stomps in,, straight up to the counter where the owner (still with fake moustache) once again hides behind the register.

MR. PRALINE

~~I understand that this is Bolton-~~  
Swiss Cottage!

Actually, Swiss Cottage sounds a bit too much like Swiss Cheese. Make it Staines because the kids know where Staines is because of Ali G. Actually, write Mr. Praline as Ali G. That would be really funny!

OWNER

~~Yeah?~~

~~MR. PRALINE~~

~~But you told me it was Ipswich.~~

OWNER

It was a pun.

~~MR. PRALINE~~

~~A pun?~~

Repetition. Just use a withering look.

OWNER

No, no not a pun ... What's the other thing which reads the same backwards as forwards?

MR. PRALINE

A palindrome?

Do kids know what a palindrome is? I doubt it. Maybe an anagram?

OWNER

~~Yeah, yeah.~~

Join the next speech onto the one above.

MR. PRALINE

It's not a palindrome! The palindrome of "Bolton" would be "Notlob!" It don't work!

Try to make a cool, sexy, funny and rude anagram of Staines. And edgy. Make it edgy. Teens love edgy.

OWNER

Well, what do you want?

MR. PRALINE

No, I'm sorry! I'm not prepared to pursue my line of inquiry any longer as I think this is getting too silly!

The COLONEL strides in.

I don't know who this is. Army people aren't funny.

GENERAL

Quite agree, quite agree. Silly, silly, silly.

(to camera)

Right, get on with it. GET ON WITH IT!

The ending is very weak. Maybe the sexy owner could give him her phone number and they could go to a rave? Or back to her parents' house for a drug fuelled orgy? That means she's a strong, independent woman who loves sex. So fix all the above and I think we're onto a winner!

CUT TO: