

HUNDREDS OF SPARROWS

by

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## **CHARACTERS**

BELL - Mature depressed Vegan woman

JADE - Friend of Bell (Jake if male)

TOBY - Her mixed breed dog who is part Labrador Retriever and part Russell Crowe on a bender. Outrageous accent at the discretion of actor and director - accents like Kiwi/Australian, Cockney, Northern Irish, Glaswegian would work - it's written in a cockney-kiwi patois so other accents might require certain word substitutions on "mate" v "pal/chum" and "lady" v "woman" depending. Can be played by m/f actor but character male either way.

## **SYNOPSIS**

1. Bell and Jade exercise the dog Toby. Bell explains her death wish to Jade.
2. Before trying to kill herself she tries to put Toby down with her own hands. Toby remonstrates. He can talk and he argues with Bell. "Dogs talk constantly. You people just never listen."
3. Bell confronts her friend, angry that she had been feeding meat to the dog.
4. Following her argument with Jade, Bell and Toby talk more and he persuades her to relinquish veganism.
5. Jade, having learned from the Vegan Society about Bell's turnaround, dognaps Toby.
6. Bell pursues them.
7. Toby liberates himself and violently forces Jade to do tricks.
8. An accident happens and Bell has to decide whose life is more important - Jade or Toby?

SCENE 1

JADE AND BELL OUT WALKING BELL'S DOG  
TOBY

BELL: There's a good boy! There's a *good* boy!

JADE: He's mad that dog. Completely crackers. You don't feed him properly.

BELL: I feed Toby. He eats very well.

JADE: You can't expect a dog to thrive on vegetables.

BELL: How can you say that? We're vegans!

JADE: He's a dog!

BELL: He's a vegan dog.

JADE: That's silly, Bell.

BELL: Go on boy! Catch the stick!

JADE: Look at him. He runs like a man runs.

BELL: He's adorable. Look at the shine on that gorgeous coat.

JADE: That's shampoo.

BELL: Well it's the expensive shampoo, the good stuff.

JADE: The good stuff. You're as soft as he is.

BELL: Toby! Stop that!

JADE: Look at him, he wants to hunt the birds. It's what dogs do. They're animals. They sniff each others bums and try to kill things. Go on... give the dog a sausage.

BELL: Do you talk to the Vegan Society like that?

JADE: They're all stuck up stuffed shirts and full of it.

BELL: You're the finance secretary!

JADE: I just steer the ship. I don't get to say who sails in it.

BELL: You're a self-hating vegan.

JADE: I don't hate myself. Just the other members of the Vegan Society.

BELL: No wonder noone likes us.

JADE: People don't have principles.

BELL: Principles! You just told me to feed meat to my dog!

JADE: Not all the time. Just the occasional banger. Toby! Sausages! There, he's salivating. Don't you want a sausage, Toby? Give him a sausage, Bell.

BELL: I'm not giving him a sausage. You can't feed a dog human food. He'll do human poos! Toby! Stop that, right now!

JADE: Don't take it out on the dog. What's wrong, Bell? You're pasty. Are you depressed again?

BELL: No. My cystic acne's playing up.

JADE: Did you try that cream?

BELL: I've tried all the creams.

JADE: Try Sepia. It's that new organic rub.

BELL: They're all organic. That's why they don't work.

JADE: What about your self care rituals?

BELL: I do all my self care rituals but I still get these migraines.

JADE: You want some proper exercise.

BELL: I do yoga, *kundalini* yoga, twice a week.

JADE: Proper exercise, Bell. Lying on the floor for half an hour listening to a gong isn't exercise. It's not even yoga.

BELL: It is. It gives me a mystical connection to the universe.

JADE: That won't help your cystic acne or your

migraines.

BELL: Sod it. I'm sick of it. I'm going to pack it all in.

JADE: Why don't we go to that vegan juice bar and have smoothies? That'll cheer you up.

BELL: They don't like the dog.

JADE: We can tether him outside.

BELL: I'm not tethering Toby up outside while we drink juice. It's inhumane.

JADE: You need a lift.

BELL: I've had enough, Jade.

JADE: You're depressed again. Bell, you're not going to do anything silly are you?

BELL: I'm old and I'm ugly and I'm hopeless and everything is pointless.

JADE: You're splendid, Bell. Your skin is absolutely vibrant.

BELL: I'm going to do it, Jade. This time. I just wanted you to know.

JADE: Don't be silly, Bell. You'll be fine.

BELL: Who would care anyway? Nobody loves me!

JADE: Toby loves you. Don't you Toby? Yes you do! Yes you do! Look at him licking his mummy's face. He loves his mummy, don't you boy? Okay, Bell, if you won't cheer up then I'm afraid I'm going to run.

BELL: Don't want to *depress* you.

JADE: I love you. Don't do anything silly. Goodbye, Toby! Who's a good boy?

EXIT JADE

TOBY LICKS HIS MUMMY

SCENE 2

BELL AND TOBY

BELL: I'm sorry, Toby. I love you so much little dog. We had such good times. Remember when you were a little pup, and we took you to Doggie World? And we rode in the car and you put your head out the window. You loved it. We were so happy. Weren't we happy? I can't remember when I was last happy. We'll be happy soon. It'll all be over soon. There's no pain, Toby. Just a moment and then it will all be over. Then there will be no pain.

BELL STARTS TO STRANGLE TOBY, WHO WHELPS AND WHINES IN DISTRESS, BEFORE FREEING HIMSELF AND BREAKING INTO SPEECH

TOBY: What the hell are you doing, lady?

BELL: What!? You can talk.

TOBY: Mate, I'm not stupid.

BELL: But you're a dog!

TOBY: I'm not a stupid dog.

BELL: Dogs can't talk!

TOBY: Dogs talk constantly. You people just never listen.

BELL: I never knew!

TOBY: Mate, why are you trying to strangle me?

BELL: I thought it was kinder for you.

TOBY: What's kind about strangling a dog?

BELL: So you didn't suffer afterwards.

TOBY: I'm suffering now! My neck.. I think I've got spinal whiplash.

BELL: I didn't want you to be alone when I'm gone.

TOBY: Are you mental?

BELL: I have to do this. To be free of it all.

TOBY: Listen lady, if you're going to kill yourself then kill yourself but don't drag me into it.

BELL: I thought you wouldn't be able to look after yourself. You'd be all alone. I couldn't bear the thought of you wandering the streets alone and half starved. Some doctor giving you an injection. I didn't want you to suffer.

TOBY: She doesn't want her dog to suffer so she strangles him. I'm lucky that when I wanted feeding you didn't starve me. Oh, wait...

BELL: I feed you well.

TOBY: I'm half starved mate. All that vegan crap you feed me: it's like eating boiled sandpaper. That's why I have to lick my own bollocks, to take the taste away.

BELL: I give you the best quality food.

TOBY: I'm a dog! I like gnawing on tasty bones and big slabs of steak.

BELL: I can't give you animal products. Besides, you're an animal!

TOBY: Mate, you're an animal too.

BELL: I don't eat animals!

TOBY: You should try it, mate. A gleaming sirloin with mustard sauce and pepper. That'd sort you out. You wouldn't be depressed. You might chill out and stop trying to strangle pets.

BELL: Toby! I have a principled moral position. Vegans don't consume animal products. At all. How can I feed you meat?

TOBY: You didn't ask me if I had a principled moral position. It's animal cruelty, mate! If you'd bothered asking me I'd have told you: "I want sausages."

BELL: No-one can understand you.

TOBY: You're mocking my accent now? That's racist.

BELL: Have I gone mad? I think I'm going a bit funny.

TOBY: You people are all mad. You wanna take a leaf out of my book, mate.

BELL: I must be mad. My dog is giving me life advice.

TOBY: A lady who strangles dogs is in need of an intervention, mate.

BELL: I can't cope.

TOBY: Mate, you're lucky I'm still standing on four legs in my half starved state. I only survive because your mate gives me meat.

BELL: Jade gives you meat?

TOBY: She gives me a few treats on the sly.  
[SALIVATES]

BELL: Treats? *Meat* treats?

TOBY: Tasty ones. Making me hungry to think about it. When are we seeing her next?

BELL: We're not seeing anyone, ever again.

TOBY: Snap out of it, mate. Look, we're still mates. I'm just saying: a few rashers of bacon and some sausages wouldn't kill anyone.

BELL: I'll kill Jade.

TOBY: What, strangle her?

BELL: A wisecracking dog now!?

TOBY: [Barks assent]

BELL: She's a vegan. How can she give you meat?

TOBY: Maybe she's faking it.

BELL: Faking it?

TOBY: Not a real vegan. Loves to chow down on a black pudding when noone's looking.

BELL: I bet she does as well. No wonder she was giving me the whole nine yards about your diet.

TOBY: She's a good lass.

BELL: I'm so angry about this.

TOBY: Mate, chill out. Chill. Shall I tell you a joke?

BELL: Please don't.

TOBY: A dog walks into a post office. He says he wants to send a telegram.

BELL: They can understand dogs in the post office?

TOBY: Yeah, they can understand dogs in the post office. There's a special relationship between dogs and postmen, isn't there.

BELL: Go on.

TOBY: He dictates the telegram: "Woof woof woof woof woof, woof woof woof woof." The man takes it down, and he says: "That's nine words" and the dog says "So what?"

BELL: Oh, God.

TOBY: The man says "It costs the same to send ten words as nine. So you could have 'Woof woof woof woof woof, woof woof woof woof woof' for the same price!" The dog looks at the man incredulously, and says "But that would make no sense at all!"

PAUSE

Tough crowd.

BELL: I've heard that one before.

TOBY: I'm a dog not a stand up comedian.

BELL: Noone even sends telegrams any more.

TOBY: [MIFFED] Oh, really. You people.

BELL: Come on. Put your leash on. Toby.

TOBY: Get off. [BARKS]

BELL: I'm going to give Jade a piece of my mind.

TOBY: Grr. Can I still have meat off her?

BELL: No you can't!

EXIT BELL AND TOBY

SCENE 3

BELL AND TOBY AND JADE

JADE: God I'm so tired. People who drink alcohol are so boring. Telling the same jokes and stories over and over again. Getting lost in the middle. Forgetting the punchline. Going on about nothing, and finding it all so hilarious. Then soaking it up with doner kebabs on the night bus. I can feel their stupidity seeping into my skin. Jade, you need a cleansing scrub and an exfoliate. Now... what's that? There's Bell, with Toby. What are they -

BELL APPROACHES HER

BELL: Jade, you shit!

JADE: Bell, darling! Why is your face red? Have you got an allergy again?

BELL: I'm livid, Jade. I know, Jade. You've been feeding Toby meat.

JADE: Bell! As if!

BELL: I told you he isn't to have meat. Ever.

JADE: Toby! Good boy! I haven't been giving you meat have I?

TOBY: Don't ask me mate. I'm famished.

NOTE: JADE DOESN'T HEAR TOBY SPEAKING AS SPEECH

BELL: It's against our principles. I know you gave him meat!

JADE: How do you know?

BELL: Toby told me.

TOBY: Here we go.

JADE: He *told* you?

BELL: I... well, not *told* me... his breath smelled of veal!

JADE: What nonsense. Toby, boy!

TOBY: Mate, I'm staying out of it.

JADE: Your breath smells of doggy drops and lovely. Doesn't it, Toby!

TOBY: Dunno mate, she only brushes my teeth once in a blue moon.

BELL: Jade, I won't stand for this.

JADE: Bell. The poor creature is half starved. I only gave him a few scraps to keep him going.

BELL: He's fine on my diet. He's a dog!

TOBY: You're a bitch, but don't rub it in.

BELL: Toby! Watch your mouth!

JADE: What?

TOBY: Sorry your majesty.

BELL: Jade, I don't think we should see each other any more.

JADE: Bell, you're depressed again. That's all. You sleep on it and we'll chat next week.

BELL: No. And I'm terminating my membership of the Vegan Society!

JADE: Bell, no!

TOBY: Oh thank God.

JADE: You can't leave.

BELL: If I let you carry on you'll have Toby eating fois gras and wearing cowboy boots.

JADE: Bell!

BELL: Toby, come on. No more sausages, Toby! Goodbye!

TOBY: Talk about a dog's life.

EXIT BELL AND TOBY

JADE: Ah, shit. This is bad. What am I going to tell the Vegan Society? If she tries to quit they'll eat her alive.

EXIT JADE

SCENE 4

TOBY AND BELL

BELL: I mean it, Toby: No! You're still my dog, and you'll eat what I say.

TOBY: What about chicken nuggets?

BELL: That's meat too!

TOBY: There's no meat in a chicken nugget.

BELL: It's all meat!

TOBY: What part of a chicken is the nugget? Chickens don't have nuggets do they?

BELL: It's chicken. They grind up all the beaks into a pink paste and batter it in whale blubber.

TOBY: How about a nice hot dog?

BELL: That's pig trotters and anuses.

TOBY: Mmm. [SALIVATES] As long as that hot dog's a dog made of pig not dog, I'm easy mate.

BELL: No meat!

TOBY: At least let me have a drink of milk, mate.

BELL: Vegans can't drink milk: it's from animals.

TOBY: Is there anything you people can have? What about breast milk from humans?

BELL: Breast milk from humans? You know, I'm not sure.

TOBY: That's sorted then. Where can I get some?

BELL: Toby!

BELL: We need to find someone who's lactating.

BELL: You want me to go up to some woman and ask "Excuse me miss, are you lactating?"

TOBY: That works.

BELL: "Sorry, my vegan dog craves human milk"?

TOBY: Why not? People don't even ask cows. They just strap 'em up, mate. [MIMES MILKING]

BELL: Toby, don't be ridiculous.

TOBY: Look, lady. Try and see it from my position. You're a vegan nutter who wants to kill herself and strangles dogs.

BELL: I was trying to help you!

TOBY: Don't help me! Just stop trying to help me!

BELL: Toby!

TOBY: Help yourself, mate. Listen, we need a new deal here. You're depressed. You have cystic acne and chronic migraines. Your self care rituals are shit.

BELL: They're therapeutic.

TOBY: Mate, what you need to do is try giving up Veganism for a bit, and see if it gives you a bit more bite.

BELL: I couldn't.

TOBY: Start with fish. Little fishy on a dishy. Fish don't have feelings, right?

BELL: Fish have rudimentary nervous systems. They feel pain and suffering.

TOBY: Fish don't suffer, mate. You ever talk to a fish?

BELL: You can talk to fish?

TOBY: Course I can't, I'm a dog. My point is: you

never hear fish complain, do you?

BELL: They're fish!

TOBY: You're talking to a dog!

BELL: Toby, I can't take much more of this.

TOBY: Fishy, fishy!

BELL: Okay, fine. I give up. We'll do it your way. I'll try it.

TOBY: There's a good girl! Meat sweats for all!

BELL: I'm not promising anything.

TOBY: I'm not expecting anything.

BELL: How do we start?

TOBY: I know a great Chinese restaurant that does a killer crispy chilli beef. Using the whole cow.

BELL: You're a dog. A restaurant won't let you in.

TOBY: The Chinese place will. They're very dog friendly.

BELL: The Chinese say that when you die you have to come face to face with every single animal whose death you have caused.

TOBY: Well that's all right isn't it? It's just a load of cows. What's so bad about that?

BELL: What if they're mad?

TOBY: You're all mad, mate.

TOBY AND BELL EXIT

SCENE 5

JADE AND TOBY

JADE: I wouldn't want to be Bell right now. The Society is furious. Blistering just vitriol. They're vicious to turncoats. Hell hath no fury like a vegan scorned. Well... it's not my

problem, is it? Poor Bell. It's sad, sad. She'll miss that dog. She's not fit to look after an animal. It's not right. It's not fair to the dog. Perfect, he's out in the yard. Little Toby! Hey boy!

TOBY: Hey hey lady! [RUNS UP, EYES WIDE] Got any sausages?

JADE: Toby, you beautiful thing! Shhh, shh now.

TOBY: Stop tickling me, lady.

JADE: Who's a good boy!

TOBY: Yes mate, now make with the steak supper.

JADE: Shhh, shh. Come on now. We're just going on a little trip. All right boy? You like riding in the car, don't you?

TOBY: The car!? Aw mate, do you mean it? With the window open? For real? In the car?

JADE: Come on, Toby! Shhh. [LEASHES HIM]

TOBY: Hey, get off me, man. [BARKS] What is this? Where are we going?

JADE: Let's take you somewhere safe. Come on, Toby. Come on! Let's get you away from that madwoman.

JADE LEADS TOBY OFF

## SCENE 6

BELL

BELL: Where's Toby gone? Toby! Yoo-hoo! I've made sausages! Special sausages, Toby! You like sausages don't you! Toby! Darling doggy! Bit weird. He never misses a meal. Toby! Your dinner's ready! Toby, come to mummy! Must be off chasing birds. Just like a man. Toby!? Fine then. More for me. Mmm, God, how did I ever survive before sausages?

EXIT BELL

SCENE 7

TOBY AND JADE

TOBY: So thanks for all the snacks, lady. Very tasty. Good and meaty. Look, hey. I've gotta shoot. Can you get this leash thing off me please? I've got places to be, mate.

JADE: What's that, boy? You can't be hungry again! No wonder, with that madwoman starving you and feeding you triffids and hair gel.

TOBY: Tell me about it.

JADE: No more silly Bell meals for you, Toby! No!

TOBY: Great, so...

JADE: Proper cuts from the Vegan butcher. Who's a good boy!

TOBY: Thanks. Look, it's been really charming.

JADE: She didn't even teach you any tricks! Nasty mean woman not teaching you any skills. Shall we do some tricks, boy?

TOBY: I don't do requests, lady.

JADE: Come on! Jump! Sit! Crawl on your belly! [AGITATING TOBY] Crawl on your belly, Toby! No snacks without tricks!

TOBY: What is this, you're making me *work* now?

JADE: Roll over, boy! Tasty flesh if you can catch the ball!

TOBY: Oi!

JADE: Catch the ball Toby!

TOBY: I'd sooner catch a cold. Hey, stop that.

JADE: Catch!

TOBY: Mate, I mean it. I'm going to lose my rag in a minute.

JADE: Good dog! Catch the ball!

TOBY: Stop lobbing balls at me lady. Right, that's it.

TOBY GETS FREE, AND GRABS JADE WITH  
HIS PAWS AND BENDS HER OVER

Why don't you do some rolling over for a change?

HE ROLLS HER OVER AND PUSHES HER DOWN

Catch the ball, lady! How do you like it? God,  
women really can't catch.

HE LOBS BALLS AT HER AS SHE SCREAMS  
AND SQUIRMS

You wanna see some tricks, mate? Run around,  
catch sticks?

HE RUNS HER AROUND. SHE IS  
INCREASINGLY DISTRESSED

Wanna win some prizes? Win a prize! You're a  
winner aren't you, lady? Can't have any sausages  
if you don't do tricks. Don't you want a  
sausage? Nice big banger. Eat it! Eat my meat,  
lady! Who's a good girl?

HE LICKS AT HER FACE AS SHE CRIES

Who's a good girl? Who's a good girl! But look  
at all this fur you've got. You've more beard  
than I have. Let's get some scissors shall we?  
Just for play! Cut it all up into amusing  
shapes. For play! We'll enter you into the  
People Show. The People Show, yeah! You'd better  
win though. Or I'll beat the shit out of you.

SHE HAS ALMOST FREED HERSELF

Hey. Don't think I'm serious? DON'T YOU WANT A  
SAUSAGE? Where are you going? You're not going  
anywhere until you catchee ball. Catch my balls  
in your mouth, lady. Hey, lady! Hey!

SHE ESCAPES FROM TOBY AND FLEES IN  
TEARS. HE ANGRILY PURSUES HER

SCENE 8

BELL AND THEN JADE AND TOBY

BELL: Argh, I'm bleeding like balls here. Those Vegans are vicious. Why *me*? Why do they never beat up butchers? Why do they never stand outside supermarkets with placards? Big signs shaming the meat slaves? Argk, fight the pain, love the pain. Focus. Am I in the right place? Where's Toby? Toby! [GRIMACES] Jade! Jade, where are you! Toby! Is anyone there!

TOBY: [BARKING VICIOUSLY]

JADE: Bell, help me!

BELL: What's going on?

JADE: The dog's gone mad! He's been making me do tricks. He's demented! It must be all the sausages - they've fried his brain!

BELL: Toby, leave her alone!

TOBY: Get out of here, lady.

BELL: Toby!

TOBY: Taking care of business.

BELL: No, Toby! Why have you got scissors? You haven't got any thumbs.

TOBY: [BARKS]

JADE: He's gone mad!

TOBY: [BARKING SAVAGELY]

BELL: Toby, where the hell did you get that!?

JADE: Oh my God!

BELL: Put down the blowtorch, Toby!

TOBY: [GROWLING]

BELL: Toby, I mean it. Put it down, right now. Get away from her, Toby.

TOBY: Wanna see a real trick? I'll show you a trick.

JADE: He's insane!

BELL: Toby, no!

JADE: The curtains are on fire! The sofa!

TOBY ATTACKS BELL

BELL: Toby!

JADE: Get off her!

TOBY: [BARKING AND GROWLING]

TOBY ATTACKS JADE

BELL: Mind the dresser!

JADE: Watch out!

BELL: It's gonna fall!

TOBY AND JADE MIME BEING CRUSHED BY  
FALLING FURNITURE

JADE: It's crushing me!

BELL: Are you okay?

JADE: The carpet's on fire! Help us!

TOBY: [BARKING]

JADE: Bell, do something! Please!

BELL: I can't save both of you!

JADE: Bell, please!

TOBY: Not her, me!

BELL: I don't know!

TOBY: You can't just leave me to die.

JADE: Bell!

TOBY: Help *me*! Not her! Those people don't even like you! I'll do tricks! I'll eat polenta!

JADE: Bell, come on! I'm a human being! Who is more important, me or a bloody dog?

BELL: I don't know! I don't know!

JADE: He's a dog!

BELL: But he's *my* dog!

BLACKOUT

CURTAIN