

🐰 🐰 March 🐰 🐰

Pet Store Panic!

by Tiffany Preston

Sometimes even a good idea has problems.

That's what Jeffrey Keifer, owner of the Pets 'R' Your Best Friends full-service pet store located at 33 Winston Street, found out on Saturday, the second day of his new spring event – “Pet Photos with the Easter Bunny.”

“We did a lot of business during the “Pet Photos with Santa” event in December, so I thought I'd expand,” explained Mr. Keifer. “We just started offering grooming services last year, and man, I'm telling you the requests for appointments went through the roof during whole the Santa thing.

People want their dogs to look stylish for photos,” said Taronda Lane, chief groomer. “Cats aren't the best clients, so we don't get as many requests for them,” she added, sounding relieved. Ms. Lane was out of work for a few days earlier in the year when Pufflelump, a Persian cat owned by Mrs. Charles Cahill, took grave offense to having his ear-hairs trimmed during his grooming session.

“I'm pretty careful with what I'll offer for cats these days,” Ms. Lane admitted.

“Pet Photos with the Easter Bunny” kicked off on Friday, April 7th, and is scheduled to run 1-6 pm every day through April 15th. Ronald Hardy, the store's Santa at Christmastime, returned to don the fluffy mantle of the world's most famous rabbit.

“People have the option of a photo with the Bunny, or a picture of their pet in front of the spring flower backdrop.” Mr. Keifer explained. “June Esperanza is taking the photos, and she is doing a great job.” He sighed. “Friday, the first day, was wonderful,” he said wistfully. “We got a lot of compliments. People were thrilled.

But then, on Saturday, Arlo Frank brought his Amazon blue parrot, Bonzo, in for a photo.

“Well, he's a pet, ain't he?” Mr. Frank demanded. “I wanted to get a picture for Ma, cause she's always going on about how cute the Santa pictures were when Ms. Gregory posted them in the *Gazette*. I thought she'd like seeing Bonzo in a spring picture, 'cause he's got them blue wings and all. I've got as much right to bring my pet in as anybody else in this town.

“It was fine that he brought the parrot,” Mr. Keifer argued. “Parrots are great. I like parrots. But Arlo obviously didn’t have him under control, and Bonzo’s wings aren’t clipped, so he took off.

“Bonzo usually stays right with me,” Mr. Frank protested. “I guess all of the new sights and sounds just got him worked up. Before I knew it, he was gone.

“Arlo was too busy flirting with Grace Cooper and her friend to pay attention to anything else,” sniffed Mrs. Cahill, who’d brought Pufflelump in for a photo. “And then his parrot is flying all around screaming obscenities at the rest of the animals. My Puffy was livid! Livid, I tell you!

“I don’t know. I thought the cursing was kind of funny,” June Esperanza disagreed.

The Easter Bunny, Ronald Hardy, suffered some scratches on his hands and face when Mr. Peabody, the beagle he was holding at the time of Bonzo’s bid for freedom, went into a frenzy trying to get to the bird.

“He’s a hunting dog,” said Mr. Clark, Peabody’s owner. “I guess he thought the parrot was a big, blue, quail.

“I was right there, so I tried to grab Bonzo when he took off,” said Calvin Hardy. “But I was kind of busy.” Mr. Hardy was in line with Ms. Mathilda Gregory’s cat, Shakespeare, as Ms. Gregory was home sick with a bad cold. Since Shakespeare was about to get into a kitty smackdown with Pufflelump, he had his hands full.

Mr. Hardy assured us head wounds bleed a lot and that the scratches weren’t as bad as they appeared.

As soon as Bonzo took off, he started swooping all around the store, which, as readers may know, is an old warehouse and thus has very high ceilings.

“He also...pooped all over everything,” Mr. Keifer said and shuddered.

“Birds do that!” Mr. Frank protested. “They get nervous, they take off, they dump their business sometimes. It’s freaking natural. You’d think a pet store owner would know that. Besides, the stupid little Chihuahua Mr. Looper brought crapped all over the place, too.

Mr. Looper claimed that Dazzle, the Chihuahua, has a nervous condition and irritable bowel syndrome and that he cleaned up the mess immediately.

“Besides, Dazzle’s poop is the size of a raisin,” he pointed out. “And it wasn’t raining down from the sky onto our heads!

Alerted to the disturbance, Mr. Keifer raced through the store trying to capture Bonzo, which only succeeded in making the parrot even more agitated.

“That bird sure has a pair of lungs on him,” observed Calvin Hardy. “The way the screaming echoed...I thought I was gonna go deaf.

Mr. Keifer finally tracked Bonzo back to the bird section, where he found the parrot sitting on one of the cages cursing loudly with such horrific language that Sophie Barton dragged her sons, Clifford and Markie, and their pet salamander, Mr. Wiggles, out of the store.

Mr. Frank finally joined in the attempt to recapture his pet, but Bonzo would not come to him, and, in fact, called him some names that are unprintable in a family newspaper.

“Mom watches cable TV all day.” Mr. Frank shrugged. “I guess he’s heard some stuff around the house.

Mr. Keifer, driven by either panic or desperation, tried to throw his shop apron over Bonzo. The parrot dodged it and knocked over a display cage of zebra finches.

A finch massacre seemed imminent when Pufflump, who had escaped Mrs. Cahill’s embrace, arrived on the scene. Fortunately, Mr. Keifer was able to rescue the birds in the nick of time. Pufflump retaliated and then ran to hide behind some bags of birdseed.

Mr. Keifer was forced to retreat to his office so he could bandage his forearms.

“I really do have to get Puffy’s nails trimmed,” said Mrs. Cahill. “But nobody seems to want to do it.

Bonzo was finally captured when June Esperanza put some parrot treats out on a nearby cat tree and the bird, apparently hungry after its exertions, came down for a snack. Ms. Esperanza was able to throw a dog blanket over him and bundle him up.

“I got tired of watching everyone run around,” she said.

Bonzo was not impressed, but at least nobody could hear what he was saying. Mr. Frank took him, still wrapped in the blanket, and left the store.

Mrs. Cahill eventually recaptured Pufflump when he tried to hunt the pet mice in a glass display case.

Mr. Keifer said that he did not have to go to the hospital to treat his wounds and that his doctor told him there was no reason he couldn’t have alcohol once he got home.

Want a photo of your pet with the Easter Bunny? There’s still time! “Pet Photos with the Easter Bunny” runs every day 1-6 pm at the [Pets ‘R’ Your Best Friends](#) pet store. Pet birds will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.