

DO OSTRICHES HAVE EYEBROWS?

Dedicated, with thanks, to Emily McFarland and Catriona Mackenzie

Scene: A bus-stop, late on Christmas Eve. Organist or church band plays the tune of "O come, O come Emmanuel" as character A enters, and stands by the bus-stop sign. Then character B joins A. They pause for 10 seconds or so, shivering, glancing up and down the road and looking at their watches. The music stops at the end of the verse.

A: I wonder when it might come.

B: When what might come?

A: The bus.

B: What bus?

A: The bus I'm waiting for.

B: *[Pause]* That depends.

A: Depends on what?

B: On what bus you want.

A: What bus do I want?

B: Where're you going?

A: The far end of town.

B: OK: you've got the 10, the 10A or the 44.

A: What's the difference?

B: Well, the 10 goes through the estate, round by the supermarket then takes a left at the statue of the man with the dog and the moustache.

A: The dog has a moustache?

B: What I meant was ... no, never mind.

A: What about the 10A?

B: Same as the 10, except it takes a right at the statue and goes into town by the canal.

A: The bus goes in by the canal?

B: What I meant was ... no, never mind. It skirts round the edge of the cemetery then takes a left at the Gravediggers' Arms.

A: Big arms, I shouldn't wonder.

B: What I meant was ... no, never mind.

A: So that leaves the 44.

B: It's the express.

A: Where to?

B: All the way to the terminus, of course. *[Shakes his head.]*

[C enters, joining the queue]

C: Evening!

A&B: Evening!

C: Been waiting long?

B: *[Wearily]* As long as it takes.

C: How long does it take?

B: That depends.

C: Depends on what?

B: On what you're waiting for.

C: And what are you waiting for?

A: Me, I seem to be waiting for a 10, a 10A or a 44.

C: And how about you? Are you waiting too?

B: Good question. ... Yes ... yes, I am. I'm waiting too.

C: What for?

B: Just waiting really. Hoping that “something” might arrive in time for Christmas.

A: What kind of “something”?

B: I don’t know. A surprise “something”, perhaps? An unexpected arrival?

A: Like a 10, a 10A or a 44?

B: Yeah. Or maybe a really unexpected arrival.

A: Like a canal boat? Or a hot air balloon? Or an ostrich-drawn racing buggy? Now that would be really unexpected.

C: Yes, I can see that an ostrich at a [*INSERT PARISH NAME*] bus stop on Christmas Eve might raise an eyebrow.

A: Do ostriches have eyebrows?

C: What I meant was ... no, never mind.

[*Pause*]

B: There’s certainly a lot of waiting to do on Christmas Eve.

A: [*Looking at watch*] Waiting, waiting, waiting.

B: I wonder when it might come.

C: When what might come?

B: The unexpected arrival.

C: What unexpected arrival?

B: The unexpected arrival I’m hoping for.

C: That depends.

B: Depends on what?

C: On what kind of unexpected arrival you’re hoping for.

B: What kind of unexpected arrival should I be hoping for?

C: Perhaps the kind that arrives when you least expect it. Maybe even in the darkest of moments.

B: Like light in the darkness?
C: Like light in the darkness.
A: So it's light. How light? As light as a feather?
C: What I meant was ... no, never mind. Don't worry. It'll come.
B: What'll come?
C: The arrival. The special arrival.
B: It had better be worth the wait.
C: Oh yes, it'll be worth the wait.
A: Worth the weight? Will it be worth its weight in gold?
C: What I meant was ... *[long pensive pause]* ... well actually ... yes. This arrival, this special arrival, will be worth its weight in gold.

[All freeze (not literally!) then music group or congregation sing "Child in the manger", or a similarly reflective Christmas hymn]

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If you use the sketch, have fun, and let us know how it goes!

With best wishes, especially for Christmas when it comes,

Robin and Alec

Rev Dr Robin Hill
8A Elcho Road
Longniddry
East Lothian, EH32 0LB
Scotland

Rev Alec Shuttleworth
1 Kirkport
Tarbolton
Mauchline, KA5 5QJ
Scotland

Church of Scotland HIV Programme
121 George Street
Edinburgh, EH2 4YN
Scotland

robinailsa@btinternet.com

shuttleworth.ayr@gmail.com

hiv@churchofscotland.org.uk