

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

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