

Noah and the Platypus Delivery

CHARACTERS

Noah

Shem

Bruce, the stereotypical Australian delivery man

Noah and Shem stand looking out at something behind the audience, beside a large table.
Noah a clipboard.

SHEM (*pointing*): What's *that*?

NOAH: Um... (*Flicks through clipboard*) I think they're "giraffes". Yep– giraffes.

SHEM: They're a bit funny-looking.

NOAH: You think *they're* funny-looking? Wait until you see the warthogs. Right – I'll tick that off on the list. Two giraffes.

Ticks a box on his clipboard. Shem looks nervously up at the sky.

SHEM: Look, can we get on with this? Those clouds look pretty nasty and we're barely into the 'g's. This Ark's *never* going to get filled if we...

Enter Bruce, wearing casual clothing and possibly a hat with corks on.

BRUCE: G'day sport and strewth crikey mate.

Noah and Shem look a little bewildered.

NOAH: Um... who on earth are you?

BRUCE: My name's Bruce, I'm from Stereotypical Couriers Inc. I couldn't help noticing your enormous boat over there – I guess one of you fellas must be Noah, right?

NOAH: Yes, that's me.

BRUCE: Got a delivery for you, mate. Did you order a duck-billed platypus?

NOAH: Ah... yes, yes. Actually, I ordered two...

BRUCE: Yeah, I got another one in the outside in the ox-cart. (*Puts down box and proffers clipboard*) Sign here, cobber.

Noah signs the clipboard.

BRUCE: Thanks, mate. I'll just get that other platypus.

He exits.

SHEM (*to Noah*): What's a platypus?

NOAH: It's a kind of animal. I ordered them for the Ark.

Bruce comes back in with another large box, which he deposits beside the first (or on the floor, depending on the size of the table).

BRUCE: Here's the other one. Enjoy... whatever it is you're going to do with them. Oh, and watch out for the claws – the male's got two poisonous ones and he might be a bit riled up about being kept in a box for the six weeks.

SHEM: Which one's the male?

BRUCE: Ah, you'll work it out. No worries – see ya.

Exit Bruce, whistling 'Waltzing Matilda.'

NOAH: What a strange man. Well– let's have a look at these platypus things then, shall we?

He and Shem open one box (carefully, so as not to let the audience see what's inside.)

SHEM (*starts to laugh*): This is a joke, right?

NOAH: No, no... it matches the description...

SHEM: You're kidding! It looks like someone's sewn a duck's head onto an otter's body.

NOAH (*consulting clipboard*): No, this is definitely right.

SHEM: This is just *silly*. Who needs an otter with a duck's head? Couldn't we just... you know... leave it behind?

NOAH: I think the Lord might notice.

SHEM: But it's *ugly*.

NOAH: Just because *you* don't find something beautiful...

SHEM: Oh, I suppose someone's going to come along and think, "I like otters, and I like ducks; if only I could find an animal that combined the best features of both."

NOAH: It's part of God's creation. It goes in.

SHEM (*sighs*): Fine. But we're running out of space as it is. Why do we need all these? (*Indicates clipboard*) We've got eight different types of gazelle, twenty different sorts of lizard, and six different types of cockroach. *Six* kinds of cockroach! We don't even need *one*!

NOAH (*calmly*): The Lord says we need them.

SHEM: Far be it from me to question the Lord, but what are cockroaches *for*? You can't eat them, you can't make anything out of their hide, and unless I'm much mistaken, they don't do anything useful at all.

NOAH: What's all this talk of *useful*? Cockroaches aren't *for* anything, they just *are*.

SHEM: But *why*?

NOAH: Son... (*trying to work out how to explain*) it's like people.

SHEM: Cockroaches are like people?

NOAH: That wasn't quite what I meant. Listen – people are different, yes?

SHEM: That's kind of obvious, dad.

NOAH: And the world would be boring if they weren't, yes?

SHEM: Well, I suppose... but that's different.

NOAH: Why is it?

SHEM: Well... people have different gifts. Some people can tan leather, some are farmers, some are carpenters, some deliver platypuses. That's useful – there's a *point* to having different gifts.

NOAH: What about music? Or poetry?

SHEM: What about them?

NOAH: People have those gifts, too. What's the point of those?

SHEM: Well... they're... I mean...
NOAH: Exactly. They don't have one, or at least, not the way you mean. They're there for us to *enjoy*. Variety is the spice of life, my boy.
SHEM: Dad... that expression won't be invented for at least another three thousand years.
NOAH: Careful – you're getting a bit close to breaking the fourth wall; and don't change the subject.
SHEM: What *was* the subject?
NOAH: I was explaining how diversity is a gift from the Lord, and you were trying not to agree with me.
SHEM: I think I was failing.
NOAH: Good.

There is a pause, and Shem shrugs.

SHEM: OK, you've convinced me. So– where do these platypuses actually come from, then?
NOAH: Well, you see, there's this place called Australia...

Looks up, sees the audience.

NOAH (*cont/d*): We've done the fourth wall enough damage for one night. Let's talk somewhere else. Bring a platypus.

Exeunt Noah and Shem, talking, each carrying one of the platypus boxes.

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