

# The Giraffe

Hi, walking watchtower in your checkered woodblock pj's.  
Don't you get cold up there?  
Have you ever lost your way?  
What's it like, so close to the clouds?  
Can you even breathe the air?  
Is it misty, up that high?  
And do you bump your head on the sky?  
Do you topple over?  
Don't you feel the strain?  
Does enough blood flow up  
all the way to your brain?  
How in heaven's name  
can there be an elongated animal like you?

The giraffe has a heart  
like a catapult.  
With every beat  
it shoots blood,  
whizzing at top speed,  
all the way up its endless neck  
through veins as thick as rope,  
and strong as anchor cable.

Say, giraffe,  
that heart of yours,  
that hellish cardiac canon  
firing blood into your head,  
and that neck – could we please borrow them both?  
To see if it's true what I've heard said:  
that rain starts off as snow  
before it falls to earth.

Bibi Dumon Tak  
transl. Vivien D. Glass

# The Oryx

First, there were many  
then few  
then none.  
The wild oryx died out.  
Not from of a drought  
the thirst  
the scorching sun.  
Not from the storms of sand mixed with stones.  
Not from a fog, the heat, the sudden cold,  
but a relentless shower of bullets  
which finally made it vanish from the world.

Stop, enough,  
next animal, please.  
we can't take any more of this.  
Give us a dik-dik, or a dromedary camel,  
we don't need to know about every mammal  
that's gone.  
Bye Oryx,  
it was nice knowing you,  
or not, whatever,  
all the best,  
farewell.

Hang on,  
wait a minute, what the hell,  
we haven't finished!  
'Cause someone had managed to capture three.  
*Really?*

Yes!  
They then took them to a zoo,  
penned them up with others of their sort,  
and waited patiently,  
till, guess what, calves were born.  
*And then? And then?*

They made those tame guys wild again.  
Took a long time, mind,  
but it's one of those things you just have to do.

*And now? And now?*

The Arabian oryx has written history.  
The first animal ever to go extinct  
and then be released into the wild  
alive and kicking,  
the oryx is back from beyond the brink.

Bibi Dumon Tak  
transl. Vivien D. Glass

## The Vicuña, Say: Vi-koo-nya

Where the sky ends  
and the void begins.  
Where the plateau no longer knows  
if it's earthbound or airborne.  
Where the stars are in charge at night  
and clouds hide away from the wind,  
that is the place the vicuña lives.  
Lonely at the mountaintop  
and in air that's much too thin,  
far from all that needs to breathe.  
But the vicuña pulls it off –  
a beast with everlasting blood.

Where we collapse  
panting and dizzy  
in oxygen masks  
the vicuña only just gets going  
because its blood's so good and strong  
so full of zest,  
sparkling like fizzy pop  
bubbling up  
into its head.

When our blood  
is as good as dead  
is no longer as red  
the vicuña and its cells are still alive.  
It's the only animal able to breathe the rare air  
from the Bolivian highlands  
to the Altiplano in Peru.

So, vicuña,  
next time you are running past heaven  
could you stop for just a sec  
and, if possible, say hi?  
There was someone we loved, you see,  
who went there and will not come back.

Bibi Dumon Tak  
transl. Vivien D. Glass

# The Pyrenean Ibex

In Memoriam

The staff of

Ordesa y Monte Pedido National Park  
sadly announce the passing of

Celia

Spain ★ 1997 – ☩ 6 January 2000

A fateful accident –  
a blown over tree smashed in her head –  
has claimed the life of our last Pyrenean ibex;  
Capra pyrenaica is now officially dead.

She leaves no family,  
no son or daughter,  
Celia was the last of her kind.  
Natural disasters,  
lack of food,  
mass slaughter.  
Let us observe a moment of silence,  
let us all remember her,  
let us toll the bells and grieve.  
Celia loved grass, moss and leaves.

Bibi Dumon Tak  
transl. Vivien D. Glass

# The Wild Camel

Bibi Dumon Tak

Male camel, single, wild,  
seeks fem. for friendsh. and love.  
6 y/o  
Don't object to a child.  
I'm faithful and strong.  
Can take the heat (up to fifty above)  
and extr. cold (forty below).  
From the Gobi Desert (Mong.)  
If you're from Lop Nur (China), that's fine.  
Harems are welcome too.  
No tame camels please,  
(too human for me).  
Will you (pl. or sing.) be mine?  
Just drop me a line in the sand.  
There's only a thousand of us left,  
it's quiet and lonely here, and  
my ♥'s been on fire for too long.

Transl. Vivien D. Glass