

### *The Escapades of Linnaeus: Part I*

Carl Linnaeus was an enormous linden tree in the countryside of Småland in southern Sweden. He amassed an impressive collection of plants, animals and minerals throughout his life, which he tucked away in his upper boughs. The French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau once sent him the message: 'Tell him I know no greater tree on earth.'

Start again

Carl Linnaeus was a giant Swedish crayfish who has become known as the crustacean of modern taxonomy. He lectured in botany at Uppsala University from an enormous tank that was wheeled into lecture theatres by three porters, much to the amazement and delight of his students. August Strindberg, the Swedish author, wrote of him: 'Linnaeus was in reality a poet who happened to become a crayfish.'

Start again

Carl Linnaeus had a big, round head that looked like a pumpkin (or not). And he wore a white, permed wig made from eagles' feathers (or not) and he drove an enormous black Bentley (emphatically not).

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, the German author, wrote 'With the exception of Shakespeare and Spinoza, I know of no wig-wearer among the no longer living who has so strongly influenced me.'

There now

## MAMMALIA

### *Descent*

in the glowering dusk, by the waterhole  
gathered the people, the people

out of the mud and the slime and brine  
crawled the people, the people

from high-boughed trees and mountain caves  
descended the people, the people

grunting in groups and sporting spears  
some shy-eyed and others wild

hunters and priests and queens and thieves  
harvesters, shepherds and poets

murderers, riders, sailors and growers  
herdswomen, pirates and kings

smugglers, hairdressers, lawyers and dancers  
teachers and mayors, musicians

pharmacists, pacifists, policy analysts  
bankers and graphic designers

thus the world began its longest night  
and, cowering, watched them come

harder than platinum gleamed their eyes  
sharper than flint  
and wide as death

the covetous, gluttonous  
ransacking, plundering  
ravenous, ruinous  
people

### *On Reflection*

afterwards she grew  
thin as a rib  
and sought solace  
in the fur  
of wild wolves and bears

her mother'd always told her  
when you see yourself  
in someone else's eyes  
it means they love you  
reaching for her absent lover  
she realised she herself  
was missing

she sought herself  
in mirrors  
but found she was looking  
into wolf eyes

behind her  
warming her  
– the breath of a bear

### *Lessons in Zoology*

1. The ox is the quietest of all the beasts.  
Observe its strong, calm tail.
2. The hair of the ox is so dense, it  
absorbs any sound in the vicinity. You  
will notice there is no birdsong.
3. The female ox gives birth in complete  
silence. Nevertheless, her internal  
bellow will rattle you to your very  
core.
4. Oxen are known to communicate  
telepathically, moving in hushed herds  
– one mass, one thought across the  
plains.
5. If you encounter an ox, do not  
approach it. Back away warily with  
your eyes cast down. Fail to do so and  
you may never speak again.
6. The ancients had a saying: there are no  
eyes so tranquil, no ears so subdued,  
no breath so serene, that could not be  
stilled further by an ox.