



The Night the Rhinos Came

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The night the rhinos came we had nowhere else to look.
They were not accusatory, but trotted towards us
like big dogs.

One turned her face left to show us her profile,
batted one eye at ours and fluttered there. To watch
a three-thousand-pound animal flutter makes
a great gape of awe.

The children shrieked: *He's looking at me!*
For size is often male,
and scares or flatters us with its attention.
But she has nothing to do with that.
And trots away.

If this were a dance, a dream meeting,
we might bow and leave her.
But someone among us here is dreaming
power, will buy a rifle,
run out and begin the killing,
is already having nightmares, planning
an illustrious future.

It's still possible to love
how small we are
in the face of her face
and our fragility.



Figure 1

Ashakiran (Ray of Hope), the female greater one-horned Indian rhinoceros at the Toronto Zoo, who inspired this poem. Photo, Ronna Bloom, July 2018.