Rhinoceros Antiquitatis

Bruce Becker*

*Iowa State University

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very, close and whispered something. Alice nodded vigorously and opened her hand to receive the cough drop. Ollie gazed passionately into her eyes. The cough drop was warm and sticky in her hand. She held it tightly as she stepped inside.

Alice just stood at the door with a most radiant smile spread out all over her face. She held out her hand, cocked her head, and cooed happily at the big brown lump nestling in her palm. She rubbed it on her coat. No, I can't just eat it, she thought.

Contentedly, Alice bounded up the stairs to her room where she could be alone with Ollie's big 10 by 14 inch picture.

Rhinocerous Antiquitatis

by Bruce Becker

THE SUN seared the red-brown earth with malificent intensity. The wind blew the dust in the air into little swirls of ghostlike figures which lurched across the plain drunkenly. Covering the ground like a five-o'clock shadow was a sparse growth of tan grass. On the far horizon a tree attempted to break the monotony but the effort was masked by the dust and the heat-distorted air. High overhead a small brown tic-bird coasted on toward the tree with leisurely ease. He sailed downward to land on one of the more leafy branches, and shook the dust from his wings before folding them. Several hundred feet in front of him, the rhinoceros pawed the ground in intense concentration, like a football player listening to the coach before being sent into the game. The rhinoceros tore the ground with his horn, tossing the earth over his head with snorting anger. Then, with one last paw at the dusty earth, he lurched forward with lumbering strides into a full gallop. He picked up speed as he ran, shaking the ground with his weight. At the last second he lowered
his head and crashed into the tree with a loud "WHUMP!"
The splinters of the bark flew from the trunk. The rhino­ceros stood back dazedly, recovering his wind. Then he shook his head and looked up at the tic-bird.

"Well?" The rhinoceros's voice was deep and muffled.

"Not as good as a week ago. You've skipped a couple of practices, haven't you?"

The rhinoceros pawed the ground sheepishly and slowly nodded a yes to the small bird. Then he turned and trotted out to the bare spot in the turf where he had started from. Taking a couple of quick paws at the dust, the huge animal again lumbered forward and gathered speed until he was moving faster than before. This time he forgot to duck his head until it was almost too late. He slammed into the tree violently, almost shaking the tic-bird from his perch. The rhinoceros stood back and tried to look at his bruised nose but the horn got in the way and all he could do was stare cross-eyed at it. Then he limped around to the opposite side of the tree and reached up with his mouth for a few leaves. The tic-bird flew down and landed on his back.

"Why don't you call it quits for a while? One of these times you'll really forget to duck your nose and wind up with your horn stuck between your eyes." The little bird had hop­ped up by the rhinoceros's ear.

"You know why I don't quit. What if somebody chal­lenges me and I'm not in shape? Any day now someone is going to come and challenge me. I'm going to be ready."

"You'll be lucky if you don't kill yourself first. Why don't you do something quiet for a change? Build your vocabulary or something. Read a good book or maybe strengthen your eyes. Anything but this stupid slamming into trees.

The rhinoceros snorted in disgust. "There'll be no need for books when I get the challenge, you'll see. Just wait."
The rhinoceros reached up for another branch and ate it.

"Three more runs and then I can hit the mud hole for the rest of the afternoon." He dug in the ground with his horn and threw the dust over his shoulder, sending the tic-bird fly­ing.

"Some day you'll be sorry. Just remember that I told you so."
The rhinoceros was just returning to his starting spot when a small stir of dust appeared on the next hill. The cloud came nearer and in the center of it, a small Land Rover drove toward the rhinoceros. But he didn’t notice as he was furiously throwing dust with his two front feet. This time he tore from his spot and charged the tree with every bit of speed that he could find. The tree swayed several feet at the top. Without even a pause, he wheeled back toward the starting place. He was just turning as the shot broke the scalding air. The rhinoceros started, jumped, and landed on his side. He attempted to get up but couldn’t quite roll to his stomach. With an agonizing bellow he fought the ground which held him but lost the battle. He collapsed on his side. A little brown bird flew from the tree and landed on the cheek of the fallen rhinoceros. The immense eye of the animal stared up at the tic-bird, unseeing.

The Past Dies

by Neil Nelson

my life . . . a cobweb;
strong to sustain
bright dew of morning
and following rain.

my life. . . a poem;
with beginning and end.
the rhythm is natural
and likewise . . . the blend.

spinning the cobweb,
writing the poem;
i destroy my creation
looking dimly
. . . ahead.