

Winning Poems in 2020 CFCP, Inc., Annual Contest

8. I Remember, Second Place

**Ground Zero**

One country wraps its arms around another  
the day after 9/11 in a gift  
to an American away from her homeland  
A safari through a private game reserve  
in an open air jeep with two guides  
But a gift in Africa can be festooned  
with bared teeth or charging horn

I'd always planned to look death in the eyes  
But when it comes for me  
its own eyes see red in maternal rage  
inside 7000 pounds of rhino flesh  
The baby behind in what moments before  
could have been a peaceful veld  
on a *National Geographic* page

Brakes slam to a halt  
The guide's words *Don't move*  
*Don't make a sound* fade as though  
I've already left on my final departure  
It's when her breath brushes my hair  
My own breath feeds me the putrid of feral  
And stomach muscles flex in threat of gag  
That my eyes meet the straw mat on the floor

Then shift to another seat charging two towers  
Another day where there wasn't a full minute  
of deadlock disguised as hours when time emptied  
Where the driver didn't have an afterwards  
to say *They usually stop*  
Or to navigate an earthly destination

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