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*To Shoot an Elephant*

The essay's focus is primarily on the death of an escaped, domestic elephant in Burma (in its phase of “must”, where all male elephants become violent), at the hands of an “imperialist” occupying police officer from Brittan, in front of roughly two thousand onlooking “natives”. The author's vivid recollection of the animal's passing and his own subjective experience as the killer poses an intense moral dilemma. The political jabs and unique perspective serve as context, setting the tense conflict between the beasts' intentions.

Orwell tells in the first person of detesting his responsibilities as an enforcer of foreign law in a country he was sure he had no place in. Likely set in a time Brittan's empire is showing weakness in the grand political scheme of the far east, he doesn't simply question the authority that is essentially his own, but denounces it. However, when the escaped elephant kills a man, and he calls for a larger rifle, the crowd begins to multiply. With neutral intent he pursued the beast with an ever growing, expectant crowd of natives behind him, watching, engaged. He feels at the whim of their expectation, as anyone likely would. He interprets their interest in seeing the elephant shot as obligation to shoot the elephant, who's owner, chasing his elephant in the wrong direction, is day's travel from the scene.

When at last he's taken three shots with the large gun, the crowd reacts immediately, preparing to gather the flesh. But the creature doesn't simply fall down and die, so the 'brit puts a few dozen rounds into the animal, and tells of its half-hour of agonizing, labored death rattling. The town butchers the animal's flesh by sundown and the owner, powerless against the political tyrant, simply cannot fight for compensation.

The heavier questions asked are about the injustices of western Europe's attempts to occupy every nation on the planet from which it could pillage natural resources. Marching totally un-tuned to the politics of said nations and without the slightest interest in universal human rights.

As a vegan, libertarian, anthropologist, this wasn't a fun read, but no doubt, it's well written.