



To The Elephant Graveyard

Tarquin Hall

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On India's northeast frontier, a killer elephant is on the rampage, stalking Assam's paddy fields and murdering dozens of farmers. Local forestry officials, powerless to stop the elephant, call in one of India's last licensed elephant hunters and issue a warrant for the rogue's destruction. Reading about the ensuing hunt in a Delhi newspaper, journalist Tarquin Hall flies to Assam to investigate. To the Elephant Graveyard is the compelling account of the search for a killer elephant in the northeast corner of India, and a vivid portrait of the Khasi tribe, who live intimately with the elephants. Though it seems a world of peaceful coexistence between man and beast, Hall begins to see that the elephants are suffering, having lost their natural habitat to the destruction of the forests and modernization. Hungry, confused, and with little forest left to hide in, herds of elephants are slowly adapting to domestication, but many are resolute and furious. Often spellbinding with excitement, like "a page-turning detective tale" (Publishers Weekly), To the Elephant Graveyard is also intimate and moving, as Hall magnificently takes us on a journey to a place whose ancient ways are fast disappearing with the ever-shrinking forest.

To The Elephant Graveyard Details

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Author : Tarquin Hall

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From Reader Review To The Elephant Graveyard for online ebook

Girish says

Life is infinitely stranger than anything the mind of man could invent

The book is nonfiction writing at it's best!

When the British journalist, Tarquin Hall, sees a news bite on the hunt of a killer Elephant, he joins in for the ringside view.

The account starts with suspicion of foul play given the gentle nature of the magnificent beasts. Joining the Elephant loving hunter Mr.Choudhary and the Elephant squad - Mahouts with their kunkis (domesticated elephants) , the team chases the trail of the rogue tusker across Assam.

The book delves deep into the understanding of the majestic animals - their unique bond with their Mahouts and their intelligence and their memory. It also touches the mysteries associated with elephants in India such as the Pool of Ganesha.

As an account, the book also covers various aspects of Assamese history and faiths. It touches upon the life in tea estates, the insurgency groups motives, the war against poachers in Kaziranga, accounts of bravery in Kohima war - fascinating!

Personally I was overwhelmed with the book with my north east connection and the love for animals. In Sri Lanka I had spent a day with the Mahouts bathing, feeding and playing with elephant and I so fell in love with these animals. The encroachment in the name of civilisation into their habitats cause the confused beasts to cross paths with humans - the most dangerous animal of them all!

It could be essential reading for Assam state except for its open claims on corruption and inaction.

Highly recommended!

Noella Van Looy says

De schrijver, een journalist van beroep, neemt ons mee naar Assam, een gebied in India. Er loopt een gevaarlijke olifant rond, die al verscheidene mensen gedood heeft. Tarquin slaagt erin om toestemming te krijgen om zich aan te sluiten bij de aangestelde olifantenjager en zijn team. Hoewel de olifant moet gedood worden, blijkt toch dat deze mensen veel respect hebben voor het dier en tot op het laatste toe hopen dat het dier tot rede kan gebracht worden, of ten minste zich terugtrekt in het reservaat en de mensen met rust laat. Maar de haatgevoelens van de olifant tegenover de mensen zijn te ver heen, en worden nog versterkt doordat het dier gewond is aan een poot en dus vlug geprikkeld is. Na de olifant verschillende kansen te hebben gegeven om de strijd met de mensen op te geven, blijft er niets anders over dan hem neer te schieten. Het laatste wat men voor hem kan doen is hem een respectvolle begrafenis geven en er voor zorgen dat stropers zich geen meester kunnen maken van zijn lichaam.

Tijdens deze avontuurlijke speurtocht laat Tarquin Hall ons ook kennismaken met de verschillende mensen die hij ontmoet en met de mooie Indiase natuur.

Een boek dat je bijblijft.

Em*bedded-in-books* says

I would never have come across this book weren't it for Sunetra, a Biblio friend who suggested it as a weekend read.

I have read a couple of mysteries by Tarquin Hall and relished them, but never knew that he is actually a journalist who has written non fiction too.

The book deals with the subject of Indian elephants who are on the brink of extinction, and how the author took part in the search and killing of a rogue elephant who was terrorising Assamese farmers.

While the author, the forest authorities and the various elephant catchers and trainers prepared for the hunt, Tarquin Hall educates the reader about Assam and it's culture and history, the lifestyle of elephants and the political unrest in the North East of India, with a tinge of humor.

I thoroughly enjoyed reading about this elusive North East border of my country, and was distressed at the way things are progressing geopolitically.

I felt for the elephants and humans alike, and even the rogue behaved thus, only due to his circumstances. Totally enjoyed the book and will be on the lookout for similar enriching reads.

VPM says

I really enjoy reading about India and learning about life there. This book, a factual book written by a writer of wonderful detective novels not only taught me about Asian elephants but about Assam and the northeast of India. A wonderful book.

Vaidya says

It starts off on the wrong foot, in fact on a lot of wrong feet. There are sentences which go:

Bihar is a state in eastern India notorious for its lawlessness, caste wars and dacoits, who regularly hold up trains at gunpoint.

Most of the descriptions are meant to shock and awe a Western audience, even to the point of describing auto-rickshaw rides and having natives do "jigs" whenever they are excited.

But where it scores is that it stays true to the actual quest - that of an elephant hunt, where a "rogue" elephant that has been killing people regularly has been sentenced to death, and a hunter goes along to kill it. The hunter is someone deeply versed in elephant lore and is doing it, in his words, because "if not me, someone else might do it. And they might do a worse job of it."

Like all books on nature and wildlife, it ends with a warning on dwindling wildlife and that elephants would be extinct at this rate within our lifetimes.

Em*Greedy* (Iniya) says

Absolutely loved reading this one... !!

Ravinder says

I picked up the book from the library without knowing what it would be like to read. Boy, was I surprised.

Tarquin writes very well not only on the main topic of the book - the hunt for the rouge elephant, but shares some other insights into the history of North-East India - be it the bravery of the forest guards at Kaziranga, or what the Bodo movement was really about, the Central Government's continued and possibly deliberate lack of interest in developing the region, the history of Kohima and many more issues.

The story of the rouge elephant, the mahouts, the history of how elephant were domesticated, and for wild elephants the movement corridors are being taken over by the ever increasing human population of the country is all told very well.

A thoroughly enjoyable read

Trish says

I'd wanted to know who Tarquin Hall was, when I went looking for this book. He'd recently written *A Case of the Missing Servant*, which I thought was curious, since it appeared to have been written, not by a Asian native, but by a Britisher. Hall wrote ...*Elephant* when he was 23, and that is impressive enough, I guess. He did an okay job--though I am vastly interested in elephants, I put this down several times. Hall's habit of injecting himself into the narrative was less endearing than tiresome, in the end. He thought the story fascinating, and so it was. Only *he* isn't. There were some physical descriptions of elephants as a species which I'd never heard, nor considered before--sandpaper skin, coarse curly tail and head hair, etc. and the description of the awe inspired by the rogue elephant when he finally came from the forest was masterly. There was also a character, Vipal, introduced towards the end of the narrative that was painted with clever skill. One can just imagine how annoying and useful the man was--a combination that seems to be indispensable in Asia. I am so glad the man who killed the formerly housebred rogue elephant was worthy of his opponent and realized the magnitude of his action. It was a humane death, as they go.

Melinda says

This is an unusual book. A British journalist joins an elephant team in northeast India (Assam) as they hunt down a rogue elephant who has killed almost 40 people. The killings seem premeditated, cruel, and grisly. Could an elephant really be responsible for this type of crime? The author initially believes that there is

something corrupt about this, that perhaps this is an excuse for trigger happy hunters to indulge in a blood sport or some such reason. He does indeed find corruption, but it is not because the tale about the elephant is untrue. The elephant hunter actually grew up with elephants and loves them. He does not want to kill the elephant, but when they go bad someone must treat them with dignity even while tracking and killing them. Who better to do that than someone who loves and respects elephants?

The real story is what is happening to India as a country. The story about the elephants is a very convenient and fitting way to do this. Old India is the Asian elephant. Old India is disappearing and dying. Old India is clung to by those who live there, but who care so little about preserving it that they do nothing to help.

The most telling quotes come from the Indians themselves. "We Hindus are hypocrites. Every day, we pray to animals and Mother India, and even go to Ganesha [the elephant god]. Yet at the same time, we are destroying the very earth that we hold so sacred."

"Our priests say that this is Kalyung, the Age of Kali, a time of decline and degeneration. But that has become an excuse to do nothing. The fact is, people are selfish and lazy."

Pechi says

DNF. An overpowering wave of laziness and indifference washed me away from this book.

Gorab Jain says

They say an elephant never forgets. What they don't tell you is, you never forget an elephant.
- Bill Murray

This is an exceptional read - intimate and moving! The trail of hunting a rogue elephant captured beautifully by Tarquin Hall as a news reporter. Reads like a fiction, and feels like you are living among the elephant squad, absorbing the Assamese culture via related experience.
Highly recommended.

"Elephants are continually being compared to man in favourable terms. This is supposed to be some great compliment. Yet surely to these extraordinary creatures, there can be nothing more demeaning."

Juanita says

Review: **To The Elephant Graveyard** by Tarquin Hall.

The story is interesting, educating, and fascinating. The author gives a great deal of information on the elephants in India. He starts out relating how mankind misuses and overdevelops a great part of the land that

once inhabited the great Asian elephant. As a British journalist he heard of a large angry elephant was being hunted down because the elephant was going into small villages and at that time he had already killed twenty-eight people. That's when Tarquin Hall thought it would make a great story to follow up on especially hearing that the great Mr. P.C. Choudhury, an experience animal hunter that looks into the diagnosis scenario of the situation to determine if the animal has to be put down, killing it, only if needed. Hall went to the area in India to meet with Choudhury and was able to convince him to allow him to be among the group that was headed into the rain forest and jungle to follow the path and pace that the elephant was last seen. Hall was allowed to go with strict rules he had to follow.

Now Hall was headed out to the area of Assam, India. He manages to be accepted into the selected group of mahouts and travels on an elephant for the first time and never stops asking questions. There was some suspense to the story with Hall's questions about the mythic elephant graveyard that is answered and seen near the end of the book. He also learns throughout his adventure about the local Indian culture. Hall warms up to Choudhury and he realizes the kind of person he really was, a kind loving, gentle animal person not the beast of a hunter as he thought. This whole situation was serious to the entire group, even Hall himself. The elephant was a huge symbol in India and they were being pushed off their land and the poaching of elephants was also threatening the elephant population. With people like Choudhury, opposed to poaching and the misused land gave the reader a sensitive issue to think about.

When he talked about the hunted elephant Choudhury explains throughout the story how he stalks the elephant to find out why it is killing. He feels his way on the path of the elephant and creates a believing story of why this elephant has turned mean. No one in the group wanted this elephant put down not even Hall. It was so fascinating how Choudhury explained the life of this elephant as if he watched and felt what this animal had gone through. It really is a fascinating true story, it had to be heartfelt by any reader and the adventure that Tarquin Hall describes is intriguing. The story was a little wordy but the adventure was amazing.

Kendra Schaefer says

Meh. If you don't frequently read travel books, or if you don't travel, this is probably more like a 3- or 4-star read, but this was such a typical Asia travelogue that I found myself incredibly bored. Amazement at quirky societal differences? Check. Intrepid spur-of-the-moment exploration in rural community? Check. Romanticized villagers? Check. Wondering about the "mysteries of the East"? Yup, that too. Nothing wrong with the writing, the writing's fine, I just personally didn't find anything arresting in the subject matter.

Piyali says

No less than a real life suspense thriller, this one. A psychological one at that. The serial killer is a rogue tusker, who primarily targets drunken men and kills them brutally. What are his reasons for this violence? Find out with elephant expert, elephant lover, and occasional hunter Dinesh Choudhury and author Tarquin Hall. Also meet adorable, endearing characters like Churchill, Chander and other mahouts, who have dedicated their lives to love and care for elephants. Learn about dedicated forest rangers like Mole and Amu, whose lives' mission is to protect and nurture endangered Asian elephants and rhinos from the poachers. A fantastic read, for sure.

Jon says

I have very little interest in India and even less in elephants; but this book got such rave reviews on Goodreads that I decided to give it a try. The official blurb is quite accurate, so I won't repeat it. What is surprising and refreshing here is the novelist's detail--the sights, sounds, smells, textures of India, along with wonderful characterizations done mostly through skillful dialogue. There is no doubt throughout what is ultimately going to happen, but Hall strings it out with side adventures and complications that are endlessly fascinating and feel completely authentic. It does what the best travel stories do--sets you down in a strange and incomprehensible culture and gradually helps you begin to understand. The chief mahout assures Hall that he is a "Presbyterian, all the way, no?"--but ten pages later he is praying to the elephant god Ganesha, pouring coconut milk over the statue. When Hall asks him about it, he replies, "Better to be safer than sorrier, no?" An easy read in one sense, but also unforgettable. I'm looking forward to Hall's first novel--a detective story also set in India.
