

BAD DAY BABY BUFFALO

Written by

Arty Whale

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FADE IN.

EXT. KRUGER NATIONAL PARK - DAY

Sun glistens on the surface of a watering hole. Murky water laps against its banks. Bushes and small trees punctuate the dry surroundings.

A herd of buffalo amble along the waters edge. Dust kicks up amongst them.

Out in front, ALAKAI, a monster of a buffalo, guides the way. Between immense, curled horns his eyes move from side to side. Slow. Alert. He glances back to the herd, continues on.

MUMINAH, Alakai's wife, follows behind. She looks up to the sun, sweat gleams on her forehead. She turns to the water, stares for a moment. She licks her lips.

DERFEL, their son, trudges forward. He's tiny compared to his father. He breathes heavy, his dry lips smack together.

DERFEL

Why can't we just drink here?!

MUMINAH

Because your father said so dear.

DERFEL

But I'm so thirsty! The water's right there.

MUMINAH

I know hun. Just be patient.

DERFEL

But I'm dying here!!

ALAKAI

Derfel! One day you'll understand. For now just keep your mouth shut.

DERFEL

This is so unfair!

ALAKAI

Until you're in charge that's the way it's gonna be.

DERFEL

I hate you! I hate you!!

Alakai slows. He focuses ahead to a patch of dry grass.

ALAKAI

Derfel, go back to the herd.

DERFEL  
Make me stupid head.

Concerned, Muminah approaches Alakai.

MUMINAH  
What's the matter dear?

In the grass ahead, crouched low is LEAH, a lioness, the hunt leader. Focused on the buffalo, she lays still.

TIANNA, second in command, stays low, crawls to her side.

TIANNA  
Pride in position ma'am.

Leah nods once, keeps her eyes ahead.

Alakai stops in his tracks. He looks down at...

A LIONS PAW PRINT.

Leah extends her claws.

LEAH  
On my mark.

Alakai turns to Muminah, fear in his eyes.

ALAKAI  
Get Derfel back to the herd.

MUMINAH  
What's the mat...

ALAKAI  
Now!

Leah leaps up from the grass.

LEAH  
Charge!

Alakai kicks up dust as he turns.

ALAKAI  
Run!!!

With a burst of speed Leah propels forward.

Tianna springs into action, follows in Leahs tracks. Two other lions, ZANE and POLO, burst out of the grass.

Alakai sprints as fast as he can, Muminah close by his side.

ALAKAI (CONT'D)  
Move! Move! Move!

Derfel hesitates, his weak legs move as fast as they can but he struggles to keep pace with his parents.

ALAKAI (CONT'D)

This way!

Alakai changes direction, Muminah follows, they head for the cover of thick bushes.

Leah gains ground on Derfel.

LEAH

I'm coming little one.

Tears flow from his panic stricken eyes.

Leah catches up to Derfel, she pounces on his back.

Derfel whimpers.

They hit the ground together and roll forward.

Their momentum carries them through a bush and into the water with a splash.

Tianna leaps in after them.

Ripples flow across the surface of the water.

In deeper water, a FIGURE lurks at the bottom. A slender body. A long tail. It lays still.

A ripple passes above the FIGURE. It whips around, glides in the direction from where it came.

Tianna bites onto Derfel. Leah grabs on with her paws.

Derfel pulls away toward deeper water.

Leah tightens her grip, glares at Zane and Polo.

LEAH (CONT'D)

Don't just stand there!

The two lions rush in, each bite onto Derfel who screams.

LEAH (CONT'D)

One, two, three, pull!

Derfel struggles, the lions overpower him. They drag him to the bank.

Alakai gains on the herd. Muminah trails just behind.

MUMINAH

Keep moving Derfel. Don't look back.

Muminah glances to her side.

MUMINAH (CONT'D)

Derfel?

In an instant she stops. Panicked she looks from side to side. She turns back. Her eyes grow wide.

MUMINAH (CONT'D)

Derfel!!!

Alakai skids to a standstill. The herd grinds to a halt.

The lions work together as they battle with Derfel.

LEAH

One, two, three, pull!

They drag him onto the bank, his back legs kick in the water.

The FIGURE glides towards them, just a few feet away.

DERFEL

Please let me go! I'm so scared. I just want my mummy!

TIANNA

Look at this little cry baby. I'm afraid I've got bad news for you kid.

Tianna flicks out her claws, holds them in front of Derfel's face.

Suddenly, a crocodile bursts from the water. Its powerful jaws aim for Tianna's stomach.

Tianna leaps back just in time to avoid the bite. The croc slides back beneath the water.

TIANNA (CONT'D)

What the hell was that?! Did you see that?

LEAH

Get your head in the game dammit!

Nervous, Tianna stares at the water. She shakes her head.

The croc breaks the surface, snaps its jaws around Derfel's leg, drags him into the water.

POLO

Crocodile!!

LEAH

Pull, pull, pull!!

The lions tighten their grip, dig their paws into the ground and pull as one.

The croc pulls in the opposite direction.

Derfel wails, the rope in a nightmarish tug of war.

Away from the herd, a dejected Alakai faces Muminah.

MUMINAH

But he's our son!

ALAKAI

I'm sorry. There's nothing I can do.

MUMINAH

Nothing you can do?! Your own flesh and blood. How can you just leave him like this? We can still save him!

ALAKAI

I swore an oath to protect the herd. No matter what. I can't break that oath.

MUMINAH

Fine! I'll go alone.

Defiant Muminah turns. She fights back the tears, moves on.

ALAKAI

Muminah. Muminah wait!

Muminah looks back.

MUMINAH

You swore an oath to protect me once. It was the happiest day of my life. Goodbye, Alakai.

On the bank the tug of war goes on.

Derfel cries out in pain.

LEAH

If any of you let go I'll kill you myself.

The lions pull together with all their might.

Derfel is ripped from the croc's jaws, razor sharp teeth leave their mark on his leg. No energy left to fight he gives up the struggle. His eyes close.

The croc stares for a moment. He cracks an evil smile, slides back into the water.

The lions crowd around Derfel. They share triumphant smiles.

TIANNA

I'm so hungry I could eat an elephant. But I guess this will have to do.

The lions roar with laughter.

Zane raises his head. He can't hide his surprise.

ZANE

Hey, check this out!

The lions turn their attention to...

Muminah. She stands alone. Determined. Without fear.

POLO

She looks pretty mad.

LEAH

This is her son.

TIANNA

Who cares, it's just one buffalo.

Leah, Tianna and Polo turn back to Derfel.

Zane's mouth falls open. He stares in shock.

Tianna looks at him.

TIANNA (CONT'D)

Relax, one buffalo can't hurt us.

ZANE

What if it's not just one?

Alakai pulls up alongside Muminah.

The herd fall in behind, ready for war.

ALAKAI

I swore to protect all buffalo. I will keep that promise. I'll get him back. Just do one thing for me.

MUMINAH

Anything.

ALAKAI

Stay in the herd.

Alakai stomps forward, five male buffalo break free to join him. Muminah is swallowed into the herd.

Alakai and the five rush the lions.

LEAH  
Nobody move.

Alakai and the five pull up short, the lions hold firm.  
Alakai stares into Leah's eyes.

ALAKAI  
We'll be taking my son back now.

Leah smiles.

LEAH  
There's a fine line between bravery  
and stupidity. Which are you?

ALAKAI  
You sure you wanna find out?

Derfel stirs, opens his eyes.

DERFEL  
Dad?

ALAKAI  
Hold on son. I'm here now.

DERFEL  
I'm so sorry dad.

TIANNA  
Screw this.

Tianna opens her mouth, plunges her teeth into Derfel's side.

Derfel screams.

ALAKAI  
No!!!

Alakai charges. Fearless, he lowers his huge head, he rams  
his horns into Tianna's ribs, flips her high up into the air.

Tianna lands with a thud. A small pack of buffalo break from  
the herd, they form a line and chase Tianna away.

Alakai turns to Zane and Polo, his nostrils flare.

Zane and Polo make a break for it, Alakai charges after them.  
They don't look back, don't stop running.

Alakai stops, turns his attention back to Leah.

ALAKAI (CONT'D)  
So, you brave, or stupid?

Alakai nods to the five buffalo. They advance on Leah and  
Derfel. As they get closer they lower their horns.

Leah backs away.

Derfel pushes himself up, staggers into the herd.

Muminah appears before him.

MUMINAH

Oh baby!

DERFEL

Mum! I never thought I'd see you again.

MUMINAH

It's OK baby, we're here now. You're safe.

DERFEL

I promise I'll listen from now on. I promise.

Alakai squares off with Leah.

ALAKAI

I commend your bravery, but you'd be stupid to stick around.

Leah questions with sceptical eyes.

ALAKAI (CONT'D)

Nobody needs to die here today. But, they still could.

Leah nods, turns and skulks away.

Alakai watches a moment, rejoins his herd.

Leah turns back.

LEAH

Brave warrior!

Alakai turns.

LEAH (CONT'D)

I shall tell others of your compassion. Tell me your name.

ALAKAI

My name is Alakai. King of the buffalo.

THE END.