

Gone With The Wildebeest

by Roz Warren

A recent book reveals that nature documentaries are staged. Shocked by such claims we went on location to discover for ourselves the behind-the-scenes manipulations and more.

Director: "You'll spot the wildebeest, freeze, and then charge. Okay? And try to bring it down on the left side, so its head is facing the camera."

Lion: "What's my motivation?"

Director: "Motivation? What motivation? You're a predator! You hunt. You kill. Take that sucker down and rip it apart!"

Lion: "I'm not that hungry, actually. I had a late breakfast."

Director: "Think about the thrill of the chase. The capture. The blood. The drama! This is your shot, baby."

Lion: "I need more than that."

Director: "Like what?"

Lion: "Like instead of calling this 'African Hunters,' why not go with 'Lion: The Greatest Hunter of All?'"

Director: "We've gone over this. It's a contractual matter. It's out of my hands."

Lion: "I need to call my agent."

Assistant: "Sorry to interrupt but the wildebeest refuses to leave his trailer."

Director: "What now?"

Assistant: "He says the hair people have ruined his tufts and he won't come out unless they're redone."

Director: "Talk to him."

Assistant: "I did. Between you and me, I think the problem is that the lion got a full dye job and --" (shrugs).

Director: "God, I miss those penguins."

Baby Elephant: "Excuse me?"

Available online at <http://fictionaut.com/stories/roz-warren/gone-with-the-wildebeest>

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Director: "What is it?"

Baby Elephant: ""My contract calls for seedless watermelon."

Director: "And so?"

Baby Elephant: "I'm not eating the stuff they put in my trailer. I arrive on set ready to work and what do I get? Watermelon with seeds! Would Justin Beber endure this kind of incompetence? Does Miley Cyrus have to beg to get a decent meal? I don't think so."

Director to Assistant: "Seedless watermelon. Didn't you read the damn contract? Make sure he gets it."

Baby Elephant: "And?"

Director: "What else?"

Baby Elephant: "If those craft services people make one more Dumbo joke I want them fired."

Director: "You got it, baby."

Mother Elephant: "Can I speak with you a moment?"

Director: "Why not? Everyone else has."

Mother Elephant: "The big money shot is when I find my baby in the middle of a Kalaharan desert, right? So why aren't I getting a producer credit? The zebras told me the lion is getting a credit and all he does is take down a fucking wildebeest. Since when is going out and getting dinner such a big deal?"

Director: "Those zebras are a bunch of assholes. I've had it with all of you! You signed the contract and now you're whining like a damn hyena!"

Mother Elephant: "Shout all you want. Just try making this picture without me."

Director: "Fine. I'll do it. We can send the baby elephant out to die in the storm. We'll cut your part entirely and you won't get a fucking dime in percentages."

Mother Elephant: "Okay okay, calm down." She stalks off.

Director to Assistant: "Fire all the zebras."

Lion: "My lawyer's on the phone. She says there's nothing in the contract at all about titles."

Director: "Not my problem. Tell her to talk to the Producer. I don't care what they call this picture. They can call it "Kvetching Lion, Hidden Profits" for all I care."

Lion: "Bruce Willis wouldn't put up with this kind of treatment."

Director: "Bruce is a pro. Bruce wouldn't need motivation to shoot a lousy predation sequence."

Assistant: "Phone for you." (Hands phone to Director)

Producer: "Our people are on it. The title isn't changing."

Director: "Great. Just get everyone off my back, okay?"

Producer: "What about some control at your end? I'm still hearing rumors about the wildebeest and that crazy Thompson's gazelle. Weren't we going to close the set and keep that out of the press? If the paparazzi get photos of the two of them, this picture will be NC-17. "

Director: "I wouldn't worry about it. They never come out of the trailer."

Producer: "God, I miss those penguins."

Director: Let's try this again. You'll spot the wildebeest, freeze, and then charge.

Lion: And my motivation is --

Director: Your motivation is if you screw up this shot, we replace you with Tyler Perry and retitle the film "Medea and the Wildebeest."

Lion: "Got it. Let's roll."

(This humor piece was co-written with Janet Golden)

