

Zoo Life (Hippo TFTG)

By FoxFaceStories

Story Tier Prompt for Spacebanana

Kade and Wallace are two ordinary young college graduates who have successfully gained employment at a remote zoo as veterinarians in training. However, neither of them are aware that this is a special zoo, in which most of the animals are former people who signed contracts without paying attention to the details. Instead of helping exotic species mate and reproduce, Kade and Wallace are going to be 'enjoying' these acts in person!

Zoo Life

We were both eager, my friend and I. We sat at the desk, positively buzzing with energy.

"I'm very glad to have been selected," I said.

"Me too," Wallace added with an earnest grin.

The slim woman with a dark bob of hair smiled. Her name was Claire, and she was in her forties. She was the Overseer of the Ovid Zoo, a remote wildlife preserve with astonishing facilities and numerous endangered and exotic animals. Just getting a job there took effort, and you had to sign NDAs upon application; *no one* was to know you were applying for a job there; apparently there were concerns over poachers and security breaches, given their focus on preserving such astonishing creatures. Somehow, my best friend Wallace and I had managed to get in.

"I am pleased in turn Kade and Wallace," the woman said, folding her hands on the desk. "You are both such fine young candidates, and I can tell you are both committed to the cause of animal preservation, and - importantly - continuation."

Wallace and I exchanged a knowing glance. That must have been what clinched it. While many applicants had trained in veterinarian skills as we had, and many had surpassed us, we had both taken elective courses in animal reproduction, particularly when it came to fostering it within a controlled zoo or wildlife preserve setting. And Ovid Zoo was known for its breeding programs.

"Kade and I are particularly committed to that," Wallace said. He brushed a hand through his fiery red hair, and tapped me on the shoulder in a friendly gesture. "Both our papers were sent to Beijing in regards to improving panda reproductive cycles."

"I am well aware. It caught my interest," Claire said. "But more than that, it is your *enthusiasm* that sets you apart from other candidates, which is why you have been accepted. As such, I am very happy to formalise your employment, with just one little detail to be sorted out."

She reached into her desk and pulled out two contracts attached to their respective clipboards; one for each of us. On each, there was a little picture of a cartoon animal; an endangered white rhino on the left one, a hippopotamus on the other.

"I'll need you to sign your formal work contract," she said, "and also to decide which animal you shall be . . . caring for. We have the critically endangered white rhino and the vulnerable hippopotamus."

"Dibs on the rhino!" Wallace exclaimed.

"Damn!" I said. "Rhinos are so cool. But hippos are great too."

"Are you sure you don't want to talk it out further?"

"No need," I replied, taking a pen and beginning to sign my name, "I have to respect the law of dibs."

Wallace chuckled and signed as well, and then Claire took the contracts and placed them back into her desk.

"Very well then," she said, clapping her hands together excitedly. "Shall I give you the full tour?"

"Yes please!" we said together.

It was shaping up to be the best days of our lives.

"And finally, here is the preserve section you shall be working in."

We marvelled at the gorgeous scenic view of the surrounding savannah area, somehow entirely recreated with ludicrous accuracy. Indeed, there were a number of hippos lounging in the cool river stream several hundred feet away, their large, fat bodies with their rubber-like skin easily discernible even from a distance. One rolled a little to the side, revealing its massive jaw with its prominent set of great teeth, and its pink underbelly on display. Wallace gasped at the view intended for him; several critically endangered white rhinos, a species sadly destined for extinction until Ovid Zoo somehow managed to rescue a previously unknown herd. Their large, tank-like bodies were more grey than white in colour, their horns proudly displayed, their form all muscle and power.

"This is the best place, by far," I said.

"I'm glad you think so, Kade. I like to save the best for last, and now here it is."

It was a marvellous installation, even after all the others. To their best perception, they were in an actual African savannah. In truth, however, it was a state of the art complex the size of over twelve stadiums, with artificial streams, rivers, lakes, hills, fields, rocks, and so on. Only when one got close to the walls of the incredible exhibit could you make them

out, as well as the observation areas where visitors to the zoo were allowed, though that was only on weekdays, and it was currently a Sunday.

Wallace and I looked at our respective chosen creatures, admiring them. They were great, hefty creatures, almost megafaunal in size, and it was a genuinely moving experience just to be in their presence.

“Wow, so what exactly will our duties be in taking care of them?” I asked.

“That’s an excellent question Kade. You’re going to be mating with them.”

Wallace chuckled. “I think you mean *mating them*, Miss. What you said sounded like-”

“I know exactly what I said,” Claire replied. Her eyes narrowed as she reached into her pocket, “and what I said was entirely right.”

She pulled out what looked to be a pistol, and my heart leapt into my throat.

“Wait, Claire, no!”

It was too late. She fired twice, and the gun made a quiet ‘PEW’ as two darts shot out, hitting my body. Wallace turned to run, but she loaded another capsule into a silver cartridge, and fired at him as well, catching him in the neck and back. He fell to the ground several feet away.

I fell to the ground, my body immediately overcome with the sensation of alien liquid being injected into my body. It felt like I was on fire, and I struggled to move as my muscles tensed and untensed without my permission. I looked at my friend, who was similarly writhing on the ground, gritting his teeth and moaning much like I was.

Claire stepped between us, and put the dart gun away. She crouched down, keeping both of us in view. I tried to say something, to reason with her, but the paralysing effect of the serum was too strong.

“I’m sorry to scare you like that, but I doubt you would have allowed yourself to be injected voluntarily,” she said. “The contracts you signed were a bit different to work contracts you might have signed in the past. If you had read them, you would have noticed that you haven’t agreed to be *caretakers* for these animals, but to *become* the animals themselves.”

“B-become a-animals?” I managed to stammer. None of this made any sense.

Claire nodded. “Yes, *become* them. It is a technology we alone at Ovid had perfected. You will become a rhino, Wallace. And you Kade, will become a hippopotamus. Females of the species, in fact.”

I managed to raise my eyebrows, widened my eyes in shock. With each passing second, the serum of whatever I had been injected with poured further into my veins, infecting my body. I grunted as it reached my core, making parts of my body numb, and other parts feel a strong, aberrant pressure.

"F-female? Why? That's imp-ohhhh . . . impossible!"

"Not impossible, far from it. As for why you are female, try to turn your head to look at your respective herds. Do you see the big hippo there?"

She pointed at a large grey-backed creature rising out from the distant river.

"That's the bull. We rotate him and two others between several zoos. I call him Bruce. Don't worry, he's true hippo to the bone and from birth. The females, on the other hand - his mates - all of them were once men and women too."

I gulped, connecting the dots.

"You m-mean he's g-going to-"

"Make you pregnant, yes. As per your contract, you're going to give us lovely calves to save the species."

"WHAT!?" Wallace called.

I managed to turn my head to see him. He was not looking at us, but the herd of rhinos. It was smaller than the hippo herd, but had a big heavy bull as well.

"That's Carter. He's *very* protective of his females," Claire said.

"This is c-crazy," I yelled, "there's n-no such thing as turning p-people into animals - NGHH!"

Even as I said it, the pressure caused my body to bloat up. I gasped as my chest inflated, as my muscles surged forth, as the dark skin at the end of my limbs lightning, becoming rubbery and stretched. My jaw cracked a little wider, causing me to wail. Wallace cried out, and I could see his skin altering, a wave of grey overtaking his white flesh, dry cracks already forming.

"H-holy shit!" he exclaimed. His face pushed forward a little, the early beginnings of a snout. He fell backwards, squirming as a small ropey tail pushed out from over the top of his shorts.

"You were saying?" Claire said.

Another bloating of flesh, my stomach expanding in leaps and bounds. My frizzy hair retracted into my scalp, my ears twisting outwards and shifting to the top of my head. I could feel pound after pound of flesh entering my body, causing me to bloat and churn. My clothes pressed tight against me, and then moments later exploded, tearing apart. The same happened to Wallace.

"Nanites," Claire remarked. "In case you were wondering about how you're packing on all those pounds. It's converting microbial mass around you into hippo and rhino flesh. You'll need it, to hold up those bulls when they mount you."

"I d-don't want to g-get knocked up with f-fucking h-hippos!"

"I'm sorry Kade. You seem like a good person, you and Wallace. But this is how Ovid Zoo has achieved its amazing work. This is why we have the need for secrecy. You're going

to be doing the work you always dreamed of; saving entire species and helping them reproduce. You're just going to do it a lot more up close than you ever thought."

The thought of not only becoming a big, fat hippo, but getting mounted - getting *fucked* - by one, was absolutely terrifying. Worse, the idea of growing a baby hippo in my fucking hippo womb and giving fucking birth to it!

"H-how long?" I managed, as my fingers swelled up, becoming greyed and trunk-like. Surely, there was some way out of this?

"For life, I'm afraid. The contract is legally binding, and besides, you won't be able to talk anyway. You're going to spend the rest of your life as a female hippo, and your friend as a female rhino, getting mounted and pregnant with calves."

I screamed, tensing as my limbs expanded further, as my face jutted outwards, as my nose became a broad snout and my ass ballooned out ridiculously in size.

"NNNNNNOOOOOOO!!!"

Claire stepped back, got into the jeep she had used to drive us to this point.

"I know it is hard to accept right now, but trust me, you'll get used to it. You'll have a full human's lifespan - longer actually, as the nanites will keep you in good health - and you'll be fit and fertile for all of it. I'm sure as the years go by that you'll come to love getting impregnated with little hippo babies, just as Wallace will come to realise his purpose in pushing out little rhino babies.

"Don' wanna b-be s-stuUUUCK!"

She gave a sympathetic smile. "You'll be able to take human form on Saturdays, along with all the rest. Don't worry, we're not completely inhuman. From eight in the morning to eight at night you'll have a whole twelve hours of being homosapiens again, albeit the female equivalent of your bodies. Just be aware, some of your pheromones might still be in effect; don't be surprised if Bruce or Carter still have an interest in you. Anyway, farewell!"

She secured herself in the jeep, just as my body began to de-paralyse, and was driving off before I could grasp at its bumper. My form continued to expand, becoming unbearably heavy, and my bones changed shape, expanding in size and scope to accommodate my new weight.

"P-p-please c-come baaAAAACK!"

My voice distorted, altering to become a deep bellow as my jaw cracked wider, my neck swelling as if I were experiencing anaphylaxis. I looked to Wallace, and his still-human eyes pleaded with me; his body was already triple the size of its usual weight, and his limbs were increasingly those of a rhino. His skin was entirely grey, his hair gone, and his snout was larger and larger with each second. I tried to stand, and to my horror I found myself upon four limbs instead of two. I tried to call for Wallace, to see if he was okay, but all that

erupted from my mouth was a low rumble that grew louder and louder so as to become positively deafening.

I shifted, my enormous body weight feeling like sandbags upon me. My running speed was dragged right back, and yet I could feel the incredible muscle among the denseness, able to keep me upright. More fat poured in, and my hippo form bulked out every wider. My face spread apart, and I experienced a momentary dizziness as my vision split in a strange way, my eyes separating further. My teeth elongated, thinning out along my humongous jaw, and a tiny little tail pushed out my backside.

The changes slowed, the final pounds packing on, and then I was simply a hippo. As if to add final insult to injury, the last thing to change was my manhood sucking back into my new immense quadrupedal body, and a feminine opening remaining behind.

Just as Claire had said, I was now a female hippo. And unless I found a way to escape, I would be stuck as one for life - though there was something about Saturday that she'd said about being human, but it was lost among the insanity.

A strange groan, and I shifted my incredible weight to get a better look at Wallace. His changes were just behind mine, and were just as grotesque and strange. I had to twist my big head a little to get him into view - I wasn't used to the positioning of my eyes - but when I did, my enormous jaw opened. Indeed, just as Claire had also said, Wallace was no longer a he, or even a human. He was a female rhino. Somehow, I could smell it on him.

And I could smell something else as well. Something powerful and intoxicating that I couldn't quite understand. I sniffed the air, driven by an instinct I wasn't even yet used to. I could almost taste the scent of something attractive in the air, and it called to me. I could see Wallace do the same, his head aimed in a different direction. It rocked me to my core when I realised what it was; we were smelling our respective herds, and more specifically, the big male bulls who were waiting for us.

I let out a bellow, and my friend let out a loud huff. We locked gazes, our eyes no longer human, but the expression behind his certainly conveying confusion and fear and helplessness. It was as if some invisible, silent communication passed between us:

'I can't help myself. I can't control myself. I need to follow that scent.'

I fought it as long as I could. I still had some control. I kept my heavy four feet with their webbed toes upon the earth, keeping as rigid as I could. My dense body was unfamiliar, strange, and bestial. And the beast won. The scent, the pheromone, was too strong, and it called my body forth. I could already feel my insides - my new feminine insides - become slick with want. It was wrong, it was disgusting, but as I left Wallace and he left me, it began to feel more and more *right* as well. The herd was so close, and my heavy body felt so wonderfully natural as I entered the cool water. I snorted, feeling its wonderful coolness over my new bulk.

The smell was stronger, it was so close. Somehow, I was able to tell the female hippos from the male. The large bull was in the water, its eyes upon me.

I tried to half my movements, but instead I came right up beside him. He snarled, opening his wide jaw in a display that somehow filled my body with yet more need. The bull rubbed against my hide in a way that seemed almost flirtatious. He pressed harder again, and I yielded to his motions, walking up the bank. I couldn't believe how heavysset I was - I could understand why hippos preferred it. But that wasn't my primary thought at that moment. What did concern me was the way my body was automatically assuming a position for mating. Despite every attempt to wrestle control back from my hippo instincts, I spread my legs wide in preparation to take his weight. My tunnel was slick, the alien feeling of wetness mingling with arousal. I wanted to be filled, felt infected by the base bestial need to be mated.

To be bred.

The bull sniffed at my backside, and made a sound that could have been approval. I trembled, trying to think of a way to avoid this. I always wanted to help animals, particularly the vulnerable, endangered, and exotic. But now I was one, and if what Claire said was true, I was going to be pregnant with hippo calves for a long time to come.

In the distance I could see a white rhino in a similar position to me. It was stationary, but there was something human in the way it wagged its head, as if stressed. I knew immediately it was Wallace. The bull behind my friend reared up and mounted him/her. I could do nothing to help him. And nothing to avoid my fate.

The bull raised itself, and I grunted as it mounted me, my dense body holding up his weight. Shit, shit, shit, it was happening. It was happening. I was going to be fucked by an actual hippo!

I tried to think of any way to save myself, but it was far too late by that point.

The bull entered me, and I grunted in unwanted pleasure.

Its weight was heavy upon my back, and I struggled with my mixed feelings of reluctant pleasure and frustration with my new situation. Just two weeks ago I had signed a contract to work at the prestigious and mysterious Ovid Zoo along with my best friend Wallace. We were both avid conservationists and animal enthusiasts, and the overseer, a slim black-haired woman named Claire, was eager to take us on once we signed our contracts.

Unfortunately for us, we had no idea that we were literally signing our lives away. Claire took us in a jeep to the massive reserve where numerous great African mammals were kept, many of them endangered or at risk in their native environments. It was then, while we admired two herds of rhinos and hippos, respectively. It was then that she shot my friend and I with strange chemical-filled darts. As we writhed on the ground, unable to pick

ourselves up, she revealed that the contracts we had signed had hidden clauses that would turn us not only into a rhino (Wallace) and hippo (me, Kade), but *female* members of our new species. And that was just the beginning; our changes would last for the rest of our lives, and require us to be mated, bred, and impregnated by the bulls of our new herds over and over again, in order to reconstitute the species.

We railed against our changes, but both of us lacked the strength to fight against our new instincts.

Which is how I got to this point. It's only been two weeks, and I've already been fucked by the male hippo of the herd more times than I can count. Wallace, no doubt, is in the same position: sometimes our herds draw near, and we are able to approach one another. But oftentimes I can see him - now a *her* - with the male rhino on her back, getting mated. Sometimes we share a glance across the plain as we are mated at the same time. Despite my revulsion, my new body *craved* the experience. I could feel my oestrus in full effect, my bloated, heavy hippo body demanding to be impregnated. No matter how hard I tried to fight my new animal instincts, I still found myself rising out of the cool water, widening my stance, and presenting my backside to the bull. To *my* bull.

And so I was mated, over and over again. My days consisted of grazing upon the ferns and fruits along the riverbanks, cooling myself in the water, and congregating with the other female hippos, of which there were many, and all of whom were once ordinary men such as me.

I knew as such, not just because Claire told me, but because every Saturday our bodies were allowed a brief respite to become human again. To my despair, when the change back occurred, we were still all female. My hair was long, my skin soft, my dick replaced by a very womanly passage. I had a huge pair of breasts, and to my further frustration I was also now quite heavy and rounded; obese, really. A result of the hippo influence, I suspected. Wallace was much the same with some key differences: I was actually jealous that she wasn't as fat and rounded as I was. While she was still a bigger girl, she also had a strong musculature that I lacked, due in no small part no doubt to her being a muscular rhino instead of a blubbery hippo.

It was then that we learned this cruel program had been going on longer than we thought. The oldest of the hippos had been there for nearly ten years. Her name was Sasha, and she had a slight purple-pink tinge to her hair, as well as an incredibly round belly from her latest pregnancy.

"I've lost count at this point of how many I've given birth to," she grunted, in response to a flurry of kicks in her womb. "We breed quicker than regular hippos, and we're always in fucking oestrus even when pregnant. If I had to guess this would be the fifteenth or sixteenth?"

Wallace had managed to join them, despite his instincts urging him back to his own herd. He looked terrified.

“H-how do you cope?”

She shrugged.

“Not like I have much choice. At least hippo babies are pudgy but easy. I hear you rhino girls have it way harder when it comes to pushing out your little calves.”

Poor Wallace paled, touching her stomach. I got the distinct sense she knew she was pregnant already. I wish I had a notion of yet, but I suppose it was only a matter of time before I was gestating a baby hippo, however much I most certainly did not want that.

Evidently, at least our babies didn't remain hippos or rhinos or whatever when we turned human, though to hear others tell it they still 'locked in' to their animal forms when they were finally born. As such, only a small portion of the herd 'turned back' on Saturday, roughly eight of us hippos and twelve rhino girls, most of them already pregnant or between pregnancies.

“Is there a way to escape?” I asked Sasha. Unlike her and the rest, I was covering myself with some reeds, awkward in my human nakedness. Clearly, the others were used to their nudity, and lounged around as they wished, bare breasted and bare bellied.

The woman - who must have been in her mid-thirties with wild, tangled hair - just shrugged. She even looked a little hippo-like with her hair colour, general roundness, and the merest suggestion of a snout. She had the view that eventually her 'anthro' form would be just as hippo-like as her quadrupedal one.

“There isn't,” she said. “Do you really think I or any of the others would be sticking around if we could get out of here? I used to be a university student named Samuel. I had dreams of being a commercial jetliner pilot. Now my job is getting knocked up with hippo babies and pushing them out of my vagina every five months or so. Even if I could get out, what would I even do at this point? I'd be a freak; the woman who spends six out of every seven days stuck in hippo form, and is constantly horny for big hippo dick to get her pregnant again.”

Her words didn't exactly inspire confidence, particularly when the other hippo girls all agreed. To a one, they had given up on any means of getting out. They regaled me with numerous stories of failed attempts, including several ideas I'd seriously entertained, each of which ended disastrously as they were placed in special breeding pens to make absolutely sure they ended up nice and fertile and full of calves by the time they were let back into society.

“Trust me, that Claire is one mean bitch,” Sasha said, grunting as she rubbed her distended womb. “She only cares about making sure these endangered species come back. She doesn't give a shit if we're stuck as fat hippo breeding stock until we die. Trust, the only

thing you can do is learn to enjoy being bred, and get used to having big fat hippo babies moving around in your belly. Or rhino babies, in your case Wallace.”

We both gulped.

A month later, Sasha’s prophecy came true. I had thrown up in human form on my fourth Saturday, during which I was at least able to be transported for a checkup. Occasionally they let us eat human food at a cafeteria, and I learned there were also guys who had been turned into female giraffes, elephants, and even tigers. I was most jealous of the ‘gorilla girls’ as we referred to them; they had opposable thumbs, and so could at least have some semblance of normality in their function. We also had the chance to cash in chips we had earned if we ‘played out animal parts’ well for zoo visitors. Evidently, I had done well appearing like an ‘authentic hippo’, and was allowed to cash in my earned chips to enjoy a movie. Wallace joined me, though he had less chips than I, having tried and utterly failed to dig a message to onlookers in a jeep that he was actually a human. Claire threatened that another incident like that would put him in the breeding pens for a week.

But the time in human form served a dual purpose. Yes, it kept morale up, and allowed us to not go completely crazy, and also to look forward to cashing in our chips which caused us to be more docile the rest of the week, but it also allowed easier medical checkups. It was during one of these that I discovered I was pregnant with my first hippo calf.

“P-pregnant?” I asked in my new feminised voice. “Are you sure?”

I was sitting naked in a chair, a set of stirrups pulling my legs apart, and one of the doctors inserting an uncomfortable device into me. With my large F-cup breasts and large body, I felt humiliated and powerless, as if on display.

Claire, my cruel overseer, simply smiled as she removed her rubber glove in a dramatic fashion.

“Oh yes, my dear *Kate*. You do indeed have a gorgeous little calf growing inside you. Of course, right now it appears human, but tomorrow it will be *much more* hippo-like. We’ll run even further tests then. I’m sorry to say you’ll have another invasive test as well as a sonogram. But it’s all to ensure your first little calf is growing well. Your first of many.”

I blushed, utterly overcome. How could it have come to this? I loved animals, but I didn’t want to become pregnant with one? Of course, I should have known it was going to happen soon; my bull was fucking me practically every day, and my body had become addicted to his cock, practically yearning for his seed inside me. It was a wonder I wasn’t pregnant sooner, in fact.

“H-how many months?” I stammered.

She smiled. “You’ll remember that your gestation time is much quicker than an ordinary hippo. It should be only five months. With luck, you’ll be delivering calves twice a year! And we’re only getting better at this; your body is much more fertile than Sasha’s is - she’s our oldest former human male of the lot.”

I groaned, unbelieving this was my life now. “Please, you can’t do this. I want to go back to being Kade. Please, change me and Wallace back. We won’t tell anyone about Ovid Zoo.”

Claire just made a ‘tssk-tssk’ sound, wagging her finger. “Nonsense *Kate*, I couldn’t change you back now even if I wanted to! The change only goes one way. I’m afraid you’re just going to have to learn what it’s like to be a fertile female hippo for the rest of your life. At least you’ll have good company, plus your friend Wallace - I call her Wendy now - is pregnant too, so at least you can go through this together.”

I felt my skin go white. “Wallace is pregnant too?”

“Yes, she is! I suspect she was successfully bred by her bull around the same time, actually. How amazing would it be if you both went into labour at the same time, huh?”

It sounded *dreadful*, but it also sounded like I didn’t have a choice.

Over the next five months, evidence of my pregnancy grew and grew as I grew and grew. My belly - already fat and blubberous - expanded further, causing my poor legs to strain beneath the weight, and requiring me to lounge in the wonderful buoyant water more and more. The fetus inside me developed with each passing day, and it wasn’t long before I experienced the alien sensation of life shifting around inside me. And not long after that, that life was shifting and squirming and kicking, and causing me to pee in the water far more often than I cared to admit, like an animal. As big and heavy as I felt as a regular hippo, becoming a pregnant one was worse. My roundness only increased, but that was not the only change: I learned that other mammals also get weird mood swings and cravings when they are pregnant, not just humans. Some days I desired specific fruit and berries, while other days I wanted a particular type of branch to nibble on. Wallace was similar, though being a rhino her pregnancy caused her to develop some emotional aggression: several times when we were able to meet - in hippo and human form - she would snap or say something insensitive or feel the need to scrap her horn against something. She even called me *Kate*, and I started calling her *Wendy* in revenge. Soon the names just stuck; they felt more natural to us now anyway, given that’s what we were. Female.

They were also the names that the visitors to the zoo called us. They came in their tour buses and jeeps, the official ones with the Ovid Zoo symbol on the side. I was pregnant. Pregnant with a damned hippo. Once, I would have been ecstatic that I was able to spend time with an endangered species and see a hippo give birth to one of its kind. But now I was that hippo, and my days were spent grazing, being mated (unnecessarily, at that), cooling myself in the water, and going through the motions of my pregnancy. It was not a fantastic existence, and it was made worse by the fact that I had no choice in it. In some ways, being turned back - into a fat pregnant woman - once per week only made life worse, because it was just brief enough for me to remember how much I missed being human without the benefit of getting to remain one.

Wendy had similar troubles: she too was visibly pregnant, and like me was expanding every day. Her herd was more territorial than mine - mind you, we hippos have an instinct for aggression that people underestimate - and it was clear that she didn't like tourists and zoo visitors snapping photos of her. She would huff and puff and even give a brief rush of aggression towards their jeep, only to stall out and walk away after their excited claps and cheers. Nothing ever came of it. No one wanted to end up in the breeding pens, being fed fertility drugs.

Still, we complained and compared our experiences on those days we could. Both of us had swelling udders, and mine was a source of discomfort. According to Claire, it was "filling with extra milk and early too! All the better for you to feed your future young! After all, you'll be producing young and feeding them for the rest of your life now!"

It manifested as lactating nipples on our Saturdays, and even worse when it had to be collected and stored to feed the hippo calves when we weren't there in animal form to do it. It was all a lot to take in, but I continued to become accustomed to it, as if given Stockholm Syndrome by new life.

Claire grinned, showing a jeep of tourists the so-called 'magnificent sight' before them.

I was giving birth.

The pressures had started earlier that morning, and had only increased. It didn't take a genius to recognise that I was having contractions, particularly since they were unlike any pressures I'd ever experienced. It was like my entire, fat, hippo body was tensing, my overly-full womb quivering and pulsating, demanding to push the calf within out of it. I bellowed aloud, opening my enormous snout and huffing loudly, and this made the various visitors cheer and take further photos.

Another bellow, another need to push. I struggled and strained, trying to ignore the powerful instincts urging me to play my animal part. I didn't want to put on a performance for this crowd, especially not for Claire's satisfaction.

"You're about to witness something incredible folks!" she called loud enough for me to hear. "The live birth of a new hippo calf. Watch how the female bellows and widens her stance. And also how she has kept near the water so she can introduce her calf to it when necessary."

I hadn't even realised I'd done that, but then I was used to my instinct operating in more subtle fashions. I was just glad, despite the pain and urging to bear down, that I was finally ridding myself of this calf, at least from within my heavy body. Sure, I would be impregnated again soon no doubt, at least I would have a respite, and being mated by my bull would be less burdensome. After all, that too was something I couldn't avoid, and had long since given into.

"Look, I think she's pushing!" someone yelled.

Indeed, they were perceptive. I groaned, snapping my great maw as another contraction rippled through me. I tried to fight it, to stave off the moment of birth until the tourists gave up and went away, but it was a losing battle.

I had to push.

"MMWWWAHHHHHHHHH!!!!"

The zoo guests shouted in surprise at my outburst, as I began to push in full. It was a slow process, and my large body made me exhausted, but still I continued to push and push. I could feel the incredibly large form of my first calf descend, squeezing through my birth canal. It was an utterly alien feeling, and yet I was helpless to prevent it, or to stop giving into the process. Another push, and it descended further, pressing my large animal hips wide. Another push, another squeeze. It felt like I was pushing out a living boulder. The animal form pressed against my walls, the life within me desiring freedom.

"MMRMRRAWWW!!"

I bellowed one last time, pushed and pushed and *pushed*, and finally I felt it emerge. Waters gushed out of my rear as my amniotic fluids leaked. Another push, another act of bearing down, and I felt the calve widen me painfully to my fullest extent.

And then it exited completely, and I huffed in agonised relief as it escaped.

I had just given birth.

"There it is, folks!" declared Claire as I breathed heavily. The tourists snapped numerous pictures, causing greater humiliation as instinct drove me to check on my new calf. It was small - comparatively - and wet, covered in amniotic gunk. Another push and my cord and sac detached. I helped my little one with its own cord, tearing it with my great jaw.

It looked at me like I was the world entire.

“Here we see the first interaction between mother and child. Will it take to her? Will she let it feed? Rarely, hippos reject their children.”

The small crowd of onlookers watched in baited breath.

I hated my new existence, having to breed new hippos into the world. And yet . . . I had just created life. This gorgeous little calf had come from me, and would depend upon me for some time until it was weaned. Something about it was not just instinctive, but part of the old Kade that loved animals.

I turned, shifting over my calf, allowing my udder near its face. It raised its little head and latched on, and I immediately felt the relief of my first calf of many suckling from my body.

It wasn't much of a life, but it was mine. I might as well get used to it. I could only hope when Wendy gave birth any day now, that she would feel the same way.

The End