

Lioness Mates (Lioness TG Preg, Breeding)

By FoxFaceStories

A Commission for smike

Douglas and Hector are two fierce poachers who are happy to illegally hunt lions for their pelts to be sold on the black market. But after they are cursed by a strange witch woman on the plains of the great Savannah, they begin to find their lives change back in the US. For one, everyone is starting to act like they are lions. For two, the men are finding it hard not to visit two local lions at the zoo. And for three, they are also finding strange urge to breed coming over them . . .

Warning: initial poaching of lions in first part. But a lot of karma after that!

Lioness Mates

Douglas Gates lined up his shot. He was a tall, well-built man with golden hair and a square jaw. The very image of manliness, and in his mind, there was nothing more manly than hunting one of nature's most deadly predators. Especially when you could also get rich off the experience as well.

"She's coming," Hector Kade, his partner, said. "Try to get her in the side. No one likes a lioness rug with a hold in the most recognisable bit."

Douglas smirked. Hector was a lithe man, with a cunning aspect to him. He was vaguely Hispanic, though it was obvious the man didn't give a hoot to any culture or background but what could get him money. In that, the two men were brothers, but Hector was the one with the major black-market connections. Douglas, on the other hand, was the one with the expertise in weaponry. Together with Hector as his spotter, they'd killed or captured just about every near-extinct, endangered, or protected species under the sun. And now there were here, on the great Savannah plains of Africa, making their biggest coin yet. Already the two poachers had bagged seven males, a further three females. They had several cubs already in the back of the large truck, locked and ready to smuggle. The furs alone would make a lot of money, but the cubs were worth the most. As for the rest, well, some whackos had all sorts of ideas about the value of lion organs: aphrodisiacs and stuff. Either way, they were going to hit it big, and the poachers didn't want to miss their chance to pick the plains clean of the great cats that were making it all possible.

"Wait for her side," Hector said. "She's about to peel off from the group. Might even be able to avoid scaring off the other lioness. She's got a few cubs with her – might be what we've waiting for?"

Douglas snorted. "I won't miss, Hector, don't worry, I won't miss. And yeah, this is the big shot moment. Once the mothers are down we can snap up the little ones. Exotic markets will go

crazy for them. And if the female is pregnant – and she looks it – well, her parts might go on the wet markets as some cure-all or some shit.”

Hector chuckled with his friend. “Okay, fire,” he said.

Two pulls of the trigger was all it took. Douglas was damned good, after all, and Hector worked well as the spotter. The lioness fell, and then after a moment’s thrashing fell still. The men gave a silent cheer, a fist bump, and then checked to where the lioness was.

“Just in range,” Hector said. “She’s run off a bit, but we can still get her. Cubs are trailing so she won’t get far.”

“I wasn’t a rifle champ three times running for nothing,” Douglas said, grinning. He levelled his rifle, checked his scope by habit, and put the lioness in view.

“Hello there, my beautiful money maker,” he said. “I wouldn’t ordinarily kill you if you were pregnant, but my friend Hector has got a mean streak I just can’t help but want to keep up with. So, here’s to you, my lovely cat.”

He went to pull the trigger, but suddenly the scope view went all black as something jumped in front of it. Both men jumped back at the sudden intrusion, toppling onto their backs as a strange native woman stood on the other side of the fallen log they’d been perched behind. She looked like an ancient shaman, her face covered in some strange, red-painted mask surrounded by orange-dyed reeds that made it out to appear lion-esque. The front of her costume was adorned in numerous beads and trinkets and bones, and she held a twisted wooden staff in one hand, at the top of which was a bulb of hardened sap surrounded by bright bird feathers.

“What the fuck, lady!?” Douglas shouted.

“Yeah, we could have killed you.”

“Hector, why didn’t you spot her?”

“She came out of nowhere.”

“Well, who the hell are you?” Douglas shouted, lifting himself and Hector up.

The woman twisted her head. The round eye sockets of the lion mask were like voids, dead and empty, and her movements were surreal, almost unnatural. Like she was from another world. It sent a chill down Douglas’ back. Hector, on the other hand, couldn’t give two shits about such creepy regalia. He reached down to his side, ready to draw the pistol tucked away there.

“*I am the protector of this Savannah,*” the woman answered in an eerie tone that seemed to warp and tremble. “*And you are trespassers upon its natural order.*”

Douglas furrowed his brow. He too fingered his gun, but wasn’t ready to raise it against a seemingly unarmed woman. But if he had an inkling that she might report them, well, he could be just as ruthless as Hector when the situation called for it.

"We don't need some superstitious local mumbo jumbo," he said, laughing a little too heartily. "We're here to bag cats. You can either get out of our way."

"Or you can join them," Hector finished. He was the grimmer of the pair, less likely to laugh things off than to finish them with quick but brutal violence. Douglas favoured himself a gentleman hunter in some ways. Hector was the true pragmatist.

"You have hunted the great free cats of my domain. And you have seized young ones in years past, sold them like so much chattel. You have spilled pointless blood upon these lands and violated its sacred cycle."

Again, that voice seemed to not just come from the woman, but the land around them. Both men were growing impatient. The pregnant lioness was getting away, and with her priceless cubs that could make them a fortune.

"Look, bitch," Douglas said. "If you don't get out of our way and flee to whatever mudhole village you came from, then you'll have a lot worse problems than a few missing lions. Isn't that right, partner?"

"Absolutely right, partner."

"Do you not see the ancient signs upon the trees? Did you not see this was a hallowed space, protected by the spirits of the savannah?"

The two looked around, keeping the strange woman in their peripherals. Yes, they had noticed the strange marks upon the trees, and the weird figures of crude stick and stone and reed and mud, like clay scarecrows putting on a false guard.

"Yeah, I don't think that's keeping us out, is it, Hector?"

Hector didn't reply. He tightened his grip on his pistol, mulling something over in a grim fashion. The shaman lady skittered to one side, then the other, as if examining them, but produced no weapon. Still, it made Douglas uneasy, and Hector ready for violence.

"You will pay for your transgressions, then, particularly for the taking of the life of a lion mother. Both of you are now cursed, cursed to breed lion cubs back into the world, a thousand times what you have taken, by which time you will have learned your lessons, for good!"

"Well, aren't we scared as shit, Hector?" Douglas said, giggling despite the creepiness of the shaman woman. "I'm just quaking in my boots. What do you think, partner, should we let her scam before things get serious? That is, if we're not 'breeding lions' from now on?"

He laughed again, but Hector wasn't laughing. His jaw was set, and Douglas recognised something was off.

"What's wrong?" he asked.

"My name."

“Huh?”

“You used my name, dipshit. Hector. You called me Hector, twice.”

Douglas realised what that meant. “Shit.”

The shaman woman cocked her head like an owl, her face a mystery to the men, those void black eyes in her lion’s mask seeming to penetrate their souls. She made no move to run.

“You are Douglas Gates,” she said. “And you are Hector Kade. The world will know you both.”

Douglas sighed as Hector drew his pistol out. The woman did not run. The more ruthless of the two poachers aimed the gun at her head and went to click the trigger.

Suddenly, the two men were hit by a torrent of black feathers. They gasped, and both fired erratically, trying to get their mark.

“Fucking bitch! She threw a pot of feathers at us!” Douglas exclaimed, firing twice more. They’d scared every lion in the nearby vicinity away, but he *really* wanted that woman dead now, just as much as Hector. In truth, he hadn’t seen a pot of feathers or anything like it, but what other explanation was there?

“Did you get her?” Hector said as the almost impossibly large cloud of feathers dissipated.

Douglas was about to answer in the affirmative – he most certainly had her in his sights, and he was easily the best shot of the two – but fell silent when the sight presented itself. Instead of the shaman woman lying dead on the ground on the other side of the log, there was simply one of the clay and rock and stick scarecrow men, its form crude, its hair a wild set of dried reeds. It was standing, looking at them with pebble eyes.

“What the *fuck*,” Douglas said.

“That shouldn’t be possible,” Hector added. “She must have hidden it behind the log.”

Douglas calmed a little at that explanation. It made sense and helped him recentre himself. “Right, of course. Still, it’s a fucking shame we missed her. Now she’ll got tell her whole tribe.”

“We’ll bag the female and get the hell out of here,” Hector said.

It was a plan both men could agree on. As poachers, they both knew when to cut their losses. Besides, they had the cubs in the truck, and several skins besides. They leapt over the log, keeping an eye out for any creepy native witch women, and made their way to where the dead lioness lay.

Except there was no dead lioness, at least not above ground. Instead, a small cairn of stones had been placed over a splash of animal blood upon the sight where the creature had been shot. Two bullets – shrunken and dented from impact into the creature – had been placed before the cairn, themselves still bloodied.

“Fuck this, ohhhhh, fuck this!” Douglas said. “Jesus, what if she was telling the truth? What if she was a spirit, and –“

Hector slapped him. He nearly retaliated until he saw the deadly serious expression on the other man’s face.

“Get it together,” Hector said. “Think. We were distracted by her for several minutes. She may not have been alone. This was a message from more than one local. They want to scare us away.”

“Well, I may be tough, but I’m pretty fucking scared right now.”

“Hmm, me too. We should go. If we don’t leave, the locals may try more aggressive tactics. They’re counting on us to spread the word of the shaman woman, most likely, and to harry our efforts by distracting us while –“

He froze, his eyes full of panic. Douglas realised what he was thinking about. As one, the two men turned tail and ran, faster than one could believe, through the jungle edge of the Savannah, across a wider stretch of plain, and over a small creek until they reached their vehicle. But whatever they were hoping to prevent had already happened: the back of the truck was empty, and all the cages too. The cubs were gone, the skins were gone, and even the offal and other animal bits they planned to smuggle out for sale on the wet markets were gone as well, with no trace remaining.

“Fuck! FUCK! Fuck that bitch! We’ve lost everything!”

While Douglas raged, Hector just glared, his own rage expressed in a different, calmer, more hateful manner.

“We need to come back and kill every lion we see,” he said, “just to teach them a lesson.”

Douglas calmed a little. “A bit too ruthless, don’t you think?”

“Not ruthless enough, but it would do.”

Douglas sighed. “I’m not looking for a massacre, just to get rich. But if it needs doing . . .”

They both looked back at the empty truck. Douglas kicked it.

“Well, even if we wanted to, we can’t! We need to be out of the country soon, and if we stay any longer then our local debts will fucking cripple us.”

Hector sighed. “We’re going home empty fucking handed. This was meant to be our big one. Next time, they’ll pay, and that shaman woman especially.”

Douglas patted his friend on the shoulder. “Now that, Hector, I can agree with. Goddamn it. We need to get out of here. Once we’re back in the states, we can figure something out. Make some money the regular way. When we come back, we’ll be prepared.”

Hector nodded. The man gave a sinister smile, as if relishing the thought of what they would do upon the plains next time.

Angry as the two poachers were, they were laughing about the actual shaman incident when they got back home. The city of San Diego was a wonderful coastal sight to the two of them, and with the return of local culture they were both able to look back on the strange, near-supernatural incident with a much more humorous gaze. Hector, the more serious of the pair, even ribbed Douglas a little on how creeped out he'd been, and Douglas took these stirrings with good humour himself, chuckling that he "won't miss next time," a fact he fantasised about regularly. He was secretly a little humiliated about it, but that just gave him the drive to finish the job next time.

Both men were subsisting on their previous poaching funds but needed to keep up legitimate appearances as well. Douglas owned a fishing store, a past time he greatly enjoyed, while Hector returned to work as one of the employees. Neither made much money from the enterprise, but it was a usual front for where the real money came from, and it made their taxes easier to explain. For several days nothing seemed out of the ordinary, and they simply bided their time, often chatting about how they could recoup their losses. Always, they returned to the subject of selling lion cubs. It was partly a result of the wounded pride of both men, but there was something deeper to it as well that neither could quite understand. Even after the risk and failure of the venture, both had lions on the brain.

It manifested in their dreams as well. Both men found their dreams haunted by visions of powerful lions stalking the plains, great beasts and hunters. They dreamed of lionesses, and especially the pregnant one that got away, and her little cubs. Over and over Douglas heard the words of the strange shaman lady: *you will be cursed to breed lion cubs back into the world, a thousand times what you have taken*. The eeriness of it made him break into a cold sweat in the middle of the night, waking him at an ungodly hour each time. Hector, on the other hand, had dreams that were less nightmarish but oddly sensual. He dreamed of lions mating lionesses, of them rutting upon the morning savannah, of lionesses becoming pregnant with full litters of four cubs over and over again. He woke with a throbbing erection each time, and had to work it out himself, finding the image in his dreams strangely attractive in a way that disgusted him.

Neither of the two poachers mentioned their dreams to the other. Douglas was humiliated at how afraid the dreams made him, and how oddly *dominated* he felt by the lion in it. Hector, meanwhile, simply didn't want to share that his dreams of lion mating and the birth of cubs was making him incredibly aroused as of late. Neither man believed the curse, continuing to rationalise

what was 'actually' happening. They had suffered a tremendous and embarrassing setback, so *of course* they were both psychologically affected by this.

This presumed effect upon their minds culminated just a week after they had gotten back. Douglas had dreamed of that powerful lion again, staring him down its eyes almost attracted to his presence. Hector had seen visions of a lioness pushing out four cubs and nursing their greedy mouths, and had cum in his sleep, something he refused to share. It alarmed them both, these dreams, and yet there was a draw to them that they couldn't understand. And so it came as less shock than it should have when Hector, trying to maintain his stoic exterior, asked Douglas if he wanted to go with him to the zoo.

"The zoo?" Douglas asked.

"Yes. Just for a bit of fun."

"Hector, we're in our late thirties. Why would I want to go to the zoo like some kid?"

"I thought it might be fun. Just a small . . . side trip. We could be inspired for our next hunt."

Douglas leapt upon this excuse. It was all he needed. In truth, he'd been wanting to see the lion enclosure for several days by that point. "Ah, that makes sense! We'll, lets, uh, go then!"

It was a roundabout trip through the zoo. Neither Douglas nor Hector wanted to be the first to suggest they visit the lions, for fear of perhaps giving away their recent strange obsession. In the end, after anxiously checking out zebras, brightly coloured birds, kangaroos and big snakes, they finally moved as one towards what they'd really wanted all along: the lion enclosure.

"Just two males," Douglas remarked. "Fine ones, too."

He felt oddly entranced by the sight of them, in fact. They were more beautiful than he remembered, with their proud manes.

"Hmm," Hector said, trying not to stare at the lions too much. He found himself getting hard, and he had to concentrate to avoid getting an erection. Perhaps it was because a gorgeous woman with a full chest had walked past him. Yes, he convinced himself, that was it. It made no sense for it to be anything else.

"They're impressive creatures alright," Douglas said. "A real shame we couldn't bag a few more of them, and especially so about not getting those cubs caged."

"Mhm," Hector agreed with a grunt. "Cubs. Cubs."

"Are you okay?"

Hector snapped out of it. He still had that damn embarrassing erection, and it was hard not to look at the proud lions with their fierce manes and impressive muscles, their great jaws.

“Yeah. Fine. Just distracted.”

“I know what you mean, old friend. I almost feel like I’ve been pulled here.”

Douglas was similarly intrigued by the male lions. The exhibit had no lionesses, and no cubs, and both of these facts made him feel oddly sad, as if not only were the male lions’ purposes unfulfilled, but his own was as well.

“Damn lions,” Hector said. “They were meant to be our big winner.”

“They do look like big winners though, don’t they? Shame about the lack of lionesses.”

“Hm, real shame,” said the ever-terse Hector. “Should have some mates. Breed little expensive cubs.”

“Will have mates soon,” came a strange voice upon the wind. Both men looked around, trying to find its source. It was a male voice, deep and low and incredibly masculine, radiating power in a way both men only pretended at, especially Douglas.

“Did you hear that?” he said.

“The thing about ‘mates’?” Hector said. “Yeah.”

“Who was it?”

“It was Lionel. I am Hector. We will both have mates soon, thanks to the spirit woman of our ancient grounds.”

Again, the two men wheeled about.

“Did – did that voice just claim to be you?” Douglas said. “Or another Hector?”

“Another, I think,” Hector said. His normally cool exterior, emotionless, was beginning to be pierced by a nervous sweat over his sun-scorched features. “But where?”

They looked around again, the only thing making both men believe they weren’t going crazy being the fact that they both were hearing it.

“We are right in front of you. Waiting. Patient.”

It was then that Hector’s eyes widened. “No,” was all he said.

Douglas realised a couple of seconds after, when he saw where his friend was looking: down into the lion’s pen, this large and free-roaming space, where the two large males were standing alert, staring up at the two men with an intelligent intensity to their otherwise bestial gazes.

“That’s impossible,” he said. “Someone is playing a fucking joke on us.”

One of the lion’s roared, loud as a whistle of a locomotive, as mighty as a vast explosion. And accompanied by the roar was a voice that carried, somehow, to the two men.

"No joke. We watch and see the pretty lionesses. The spirit rewards us. We will mate and father many cubs. Lionesses will be beautiful, and most fertile."

"How are you talking to us?" Douglas demanded. Hector was too shocked to speak. His more cynical mind was wondering if something was to be exploited here, but his partner just wanted answers. "Who are you?"

"We have said. Lionel and Hector. And you bless us. You give us mates."

"We only kill lions," Hector said, his voice steady once more. "Many of them. My friend asked a question. How are you speaking to us?"

"Magic of the forest," said the one that had the slightly higher voice, clearly a little younger. This was Hector, who shared a name with the poacher in an unusual coincidence. *"The woman spirit who protects sacred Savannah place."*

The two poachers looked at each other, bewildered.

"She was a spirit? An actual spirit?" Douglas hissed.

"I – no. But she has to be. This is insane."

Both men were unravelling, and neither knew exactly what to do. The lion's were looking at them intently, and each time the poachers acknowledged their stares, they were hit by a surge of arousal, a burning need that neither could fully explain. Hector's cock strained against his trousers, while Douglas felt a deep warmth in his loins and belly. The golden-haired man's nipples throbbed, and felt sensitive as they raised like little bumps against his shirt.

"J-Jesus," he stammered.

"I feel strange," Hector said, deadpan, focusing all his energies on trying to bring down that erection.

"We get lionesses. Great mates. Fertile. Many litters to replace what was lost."

Something about the phrase 'what was lost' jolted both men from the strange hypnotism of the moment. They pulled back from the lip that oversaw the lions' grounds, walking backwards even as the lions continued to stare at them hungrily. Or perhaps with some other kind of hunger . . .

"We need to go," Douglas said flatly.

"Agreed. Now."

The two poachers turned tail and ran. What they had hoped to be a . . . well, neither of them quite *knew* why that had come to the zoo at all, but they certainly hadn't hoped it would turn out as it had. The strange, talking lions, their weird compulsions to visit them, the burning arousal that infested them, growing stronger with each passing minute. They needed to get away.

"Excuse me!" a woman called out as they ran past her towards the entrance gate. "You dropped a phone!"

Douglas was hit with a sudden fury. He turned around to see the woman who was kindly offering the phone back.

And he *roared*. Just like a lion.

The woman shrieked and stepped back from this obviously crazy man. He in turn widened his eyes, gaped in confusion as to what he had just done. But Hector merely grabbed his arm and yanked him onwards.

“We’re getting the fuck out of here!” Hector called.

“Good idea!” Douglas replied, his throat hoarse. “We’re getting back to the store. We’ll figure out what the fuck to do on the way!”

The two men continued to run.

There were no more strange incidences on the way back to the fishing store, and by the time the two of them settled, had a shower, and sat back in the living room space above the store with a cold beer in their hands, it was almost as if the whole thing had been a dream. Douglas, being the larger-than-life man’s man that he was (or pretended to be), tried to play the whole thing off.

“We’re just nervous!” he exclaimed. “After such a big loss in Africa, we’re bound to be jittery. Plus, that strange woman put the idea of a curse in our heads. Not to mention neither of us have hit a good strip club in far too long, buddy. It’s just a mindfuck, that’s all.”

But Hector put down his beer and steepled his fingers, staring at his friend too long for the other’s comfort.

“I had an erection just looking at the lions, Douglas. You did too. Admit it.”

Douglas blushed a little. “Well, I admit, maybe we had a late reaction to the sleeping pills we took on the plane. Actually, we’re both still taking malaria tablets just in case, so maybe it mingled with the air, and –“

“Mingled with the air?” Hector said derisively. “No. That woman was a spirit, and we *are* cursed. We both heard lions *speak*. We’ve both been dreaming of lions. We found ourselves aroused in the presence of lions. Something is going horribly wrong.”

It was the most Hector had said in terms of consecutive sentences for a long time, and that alone was enough to make Douglas’ dreams of setting all this aside crumble to ash.

“Okay. Okay. Fuck. You’re right. You always were the better spotter, Hector, whether it be targets or problems. I know how to shoot and see things through, but you’re my planner. So . . . what’s the plan?”

Hector took another sip of his drink. He didn't like what he was going to have to say, but he saw no other option. "We go back."

"To the zoo?"

"To Africa. We make amends to the spirit."

"Are you joking? What kind of amends?"

"Anything we can think of."

Douglas put his head in his hands. "This is fucking insanity. Talking lions, being fucking turned on by lions! There has to be another way?"

"Do you see one?"

The question cut to the heart of the matter, and Douglas had no answer to it either. His shoulders sagged like mountains that shrugged of their weight in snow.

"Fine. This could be a damned fool's errand. We'll be losing money rather than making it. We'll need to get some supplies in town, then. Half the shit we took for the truck on the last trip is shot, and after that damned scuffle and the loss of the cubs we're short of lion-catching gear."

"We're in this because we caught lions. Killed them."

"Yeah? So we'll return 'em, Hector. Find some from outside that sacred la-de-da, and bring them to where the shaman spirit lady was carrying on at us."

Hector narrowed his eyes. The plan wasn't totally sound, but he could not think of a better one, other than perhaps donating to a lion shelter or something. And truth be told, as worried as he was, parting from the money he'd already gained in his long illegal career as a poacher on the side made him even more anxious.

"Okay. Quick trip tomorrow morning, then we pack. I'll book tickets. We need this sorted."

Douglas nodded. "Friend, I am *not* letting some weird African witch get the better of us. Don't worry, this lion business will be finished and settled by the end of the week."

Something weird was going on when the pair of them got out of the car Douglas had driven them. They were at one of San Diego's major all centres, a place Douglas frequently visited for some trapping supplies, as well as general trader's goods and the like. He and Hector were simply dressed in casual shirts and jeans. Hector looked a bit mean, scowling as he often did. Douglas, on the other hand, was all smiles and confidence, his blonde beard and rugged hair styled to look handsome yet not prim. Inside, he was still unsettled, but he had a habit of putting on look of confidence when he felt he was weakest. Ordinarily, either of their affectations would have the crowd seeing them

alternatively as someone not to mess with, and someone who was to be stepped around due to his larger-than-lifeness.

Except today, people did more than step around. They looked at them with *fear*.

“What’s going on here Hector?” Douglas asked. They had entered the mall, but a number of the denizens were moving away from them, the nearest with something approaching panic. Someone laughed, only to immediately stop, whisper “oh my God, they’re real, they don’t have trainers!” and run away.

“No idea,” Hector said, looking at a woman across the mall who was grabbing her toddler and crying out for others to run. “But I don’t like it. We should go.”

“We came here to get supplies. We’ll be quick, then go. Whatever weird shit this is, it can’t be worse than the dreams I had about lions the other night.”

“True.”

Neither had shared the contents of those dreams, but they both knew what the other was talking about. Douglas had gasped and groaned, tossed and turned as images of lions mounting one another made him have a powerful wet dream. Hector had grunted, pushing and exerting himself in a strange mix of pleasure and satisfaction as he felt as if he were a lioness pushing out cub after cub. He too had orgasmed in his sleep, and both men were horrified to find that they had stained their sheets the next morning when they woke.

But now, people were afraid. They were running. They were shouting.

And the fear and panic were only growing.

“What the actual hell is going on here?” Douglas marvelled as they moved closer to the centre of the mall. “These people are acting like we are actually pointing guns at them or something?”

Hector wished he had a gun. Something was wrong about all of this. Something was *off*.

“What are you all looking at?” Douglas shouted at the retreating crowd. “What are you – RRARRHGGHHH!!!”

He clasped his mouth shut, held it with his hands. When he opened it to talk again he made that same loud, booming, bestial sound. A lion’s *roar*.

“Douglas, you just roared.”

“I know I RRARRGGHHH!!!”

Again he clasped his mouth shut. His heart beat heavily and quickly in his chest. Hector put his hand on his friend’s shoulder, tried to comfort him, but when he spoke a smaller, more characteristically terse roar escaped from his mouth also.

“You just RRARRGGHH-oared!” Douglas exclaimed.

Hector nodded, not daring to say another word. Instead, a man exiting a shop screamed for his life, dropped his bag of purchases, and escorted his girlfriend or wife as quickly as he could away from their nearby presence.

“They must have escaped from the zoo or something!” he cried. “Run! Get to safety!”

“What are you *RRARRGGHH*ing about!?” Douglas literally roared. He ran ahead of the man, whose eyes were filled with fear as the poacher circled around ahead of him to face him. Hector took up the rear. “I asked you a damned question! What are you *RRARRGGHH*-ing seeing when you look at me?”

The man trembled. “P-please. Good kitty. Nice kitty! Please don’t eat me!”

Douglas staggered back. It was like being shot in the chest. He stepped to the side and the man cautiously sidled away, his partner in tears as she held his hands. They fled only when they had a decent enough distance.

“They think we’re lions,” Douglas said. “How? How is this happening? We’re trying to buy shit to make this fucking right!”

“It’s the curse,” Hector said. “Let’s be quick. Maybe it’ll wear off.”

“Like the . . . experience, at the zoo. Yeah. Good idea, friend. Let’s go. Double time.”

The mall was pretty much empty. Those few who had not evacuated only had not done so because they were distracted, or had just come out of the toilets, or were listening to headphone music. But when they saw the poachers they ran, calling out “lions! Lions! There are lions loose in the mall!”

It confirmed what the two men feared, heightening their anxiety, and pushing them to act quicker. They ran to the hunting store on level two, scrambling up the escalator in a way that only freaked out some of the remaining denizens even further. Neither much cared at this point: they knew that time was not on their side. The owner of the hunting store – a man named Tom – wasn’t even present. Somehow, that did not relax them. Had a general warning to leave been issued? Neither were really focusing on the PA system: they were too busy trying not to roar. It was only when they began rummaging through the supplies of the store – ammo, weapons, traps, cages, the whole works – that Douglas’ rantings were suddenly shushed by Hector.

‘EVERYONE PLEASE EVACUATE THE SHOPPING CENTRE. A PAIR OF LIONS HAVE ESCAPED FROM THE SAN DIEGO PUBLIC ZOO, AND ARE LOOSE IN THE MALL. THE POLICE AND ZOO KEEPERS WILL BE ON SITE QUICKLY TO RECAPTURE THEM SAFELY. FOR NOW, PLEASE LEAVE THROUGH THE NORTH AND WEST EXITS IMMEDIATELY.’

“Goddamn it,” Douglas said as the message began to loop. “I always feared I’d become a fugitive, but *this* is fucking ridiculous!”

“We’re not alone,” Hector said. He indicated to the stairs, where numerous figures were coming up. It was a squad of police, flanked by several figures in what looked like zookeeper uniforms – a Caucasian man in his mid-thirties and a black woman in her twenties.

“Lex!” the man called. “Lexie, it’s me, Bert! You can come back to me. It’s okay! Don’t be scared!”

“Rori!” the woman cried in a softly-accented voice, one that sounded somewhat Nigerian. “Don’t be scared. Hector is waiting for you! He wants to see his friend again. Don’t you want that?”

They stepped ahead of the police, and both had rifles slung over their backs.

“Lexie? Rori?” Douglas said, hiding behind a wall of products in the store. “What the shit is this?”

“It’s our names,” Hector said with a dreadful epiphany. “They think we’re lions. Those are our new names.”

“Those *aren’t* our names. I’m Douglas, you’re Hector.”

“Not to these people. Open your wallet.”

Douglas was confused, but trusted his friend as Hector did the same, even as the others drew nearer. To Douglas’ horror, and Hector’s sad understanding, their driver’s licences were fading white, their bank cards as well. Their photos on their phones were next, and both saw that the images they had taken were disappearing. Even their calendars were emptying.

“This is impossible. This is impossible!”

“We’re losing our lives,” Hector said. “We need to go back. Talk to the woman.”

Douglas nodded. He looked to the side, gestured that it was time to run while the crowd was checking to the right of the store. The two men moved quickly, heading straight for the escalator that would take them down. But then the two zookeepers spoke.

“Lexie! Come back to us!”

“Rori, you too! It’s your friends, Zuri and Bert!”

Neither man could help themselves. By some compulsion, they skidded on their heels, drawn to the sound of the zookeepers’ voices. There was something authoritative and pleasing about hearing it, as if a part of the world clicked naturally into place for the two of them, Douglas especially. Hector realised too late, yet still ahead of his friend, what they were doing. They had wheeled about and headed for the voices, coming directly before the crowd of police with their riot shields and the two zookeepers who suddenly had rifles aimed squarely and professionally at them.

“Shit,” Hector managed.

And then both were hit square in the chest by the kind of powerful tranquiliser darts that were intended for big cats, not ordinary humans. The two were immediately overcome by fuzziness.

Douglas staggered. Hector fell. Both moaned, roared a little like lions, clutching their heads as they tried and failed miserably to escape. Everything was going wrong, but it was hard to think about why: they could only give minute little roars and grumbles of anger. In the near distance, the two zookeepers wore expressions of concern.

“It’s okay girls,” said the young black woman named Zuri. “Don’t worry. You’re going home.”

It was Douglas who had the last thought before unconsciousness.

Girls? We’re I-lionesses?

Unfortunately for him, as the tranquiliser stole away the memory of those last moments, he would have to experience that revelation all over again in coming days.

Both men were terrified when they woke up. They were still in their clothing, but they no longer had wallets or phones. What’s more, they were barefoot, and worse yet, in the lion enclosure at the very same zoo they had visited. With Lionel and Hector, the male lions with their great manes, fierce appetites, and very large jaws.

“FUCK! HOLY SHIT!”

Hector was silent, as he often was, but his eyes were filled with terror. The walls of the enclosure were steep and without purchase: no man had a chance of climbing out. The only other result was being eaten.

“Get a stick or something,” Douglass hissed. “When they come for us, we’ll focus on one and take it down. Scare the other. Then we try and find a way to escape, get some sense into somebody.”

Hector nodded at the plan. Things had escalated severely, and they needed to keep their cool. He found a large stick on the ground, one with a sharp enough point that it could potentially wound a creature, or at least scare it back.

But the attacks never came. Both lions simply languished in comfort atop their hilly section, looking down upon them with something approaching an almost human-like interest.

“Well, are you gonna attack us or not?” Douglas demanded.

One of the lions – Hector, probably – just yawned. The large one – Lionel – followed, but then it seemed to ‘speak.’ Its mouth did not move, but they heard it talk in their minds.

“We will have mates,” it said proudly. “Spirit witch of the Savannah blesses us. We will bless you.”

You can bless us with a damned exit,” Douglas muttered. “We’re not fucking lions! We aren’t going to damn well fuck lionesses. There aren’t any here!”

"Must make cubs. Many cubs in many years. Destiny."

"Yeah, I've fathered kids to lasses around the globe, but I won't be fathering any cubs, thank you. So stop fucking talking to us."

The lion yawned, relaxed on its rock. *"Must wait to mate. Been too long, but can wait a little longer. Then will have gorgeous lioness to make many litters. Make great prides. Bless us."*

"Thank you witch, for blessing," the other added, the one that shared Hector's name. *"We will make many cubs for you. Give many back to world for their atoning. It is right."*

"It is right."

"This is crazy," Douglas said.

"Who cares," Hector said, surprising him. "Look."

He gestured up, and Douglas saw there was a crowd looking at them. His heart leapt with hope, but Hector's mind was ahead of his. He was scowling, and Douglas soon realised why when he whooped and cheered and begged the tourists and visitors to the zoo to rescue him.

They didn't see him as human. They didn't even hear his pleas as human. Somehow, in the background his ears could just barely detect that while he was – to his own hearing – speaking English, what was *actually* coming out to other humans' ears was something like a series of lion roars and grumbles and low purrs.

"This is fucked!" Douglas roared after yet another group of people ignored him, or worse, *took pictures of him and Hector.* "We have to find a way out!"

He was still wary of the lions, but also wary of his feelings towards them. Something about escaping their presence felt all wrong, and it was exacerbated by the strong scent they exuded. He and Hector found themselves sniffing it in, savouring the musky scent of it. It was an incredibly strong odour, earthy and strong and sweaty and *proud*.

"That smells good," Hector said, master of the understatement.

"Goddamn it does. Fuck, it's turning me on."

"M-me too."

"Once we would have shot these lions."

"We should. We need to find a way. Kill them, and we might be free. Just need to get out."

Douglas agreed. Escape, snatch a gun or something. Kill the lions. They were only beasts, and he'd killed so many. And once more, he wanted to follow Hector in ruthlessness. His friend hadn't led him astray yet.

"Okay, we escape," he said. "You're a better climber. Get on my shoulders. There's a hole high up on the wall. Could grip it and use it to get to the rail. You're spryer than me."

It took almost a minute for them to pry themselves away from Lionel and Hector, who simply watched with interest. They weren't much for talking it seemed, and that suited the men just fine: they needed to escape. Douglas positioned his body flat against the wall, and Hector got up onto his shoulders, balancing so he could reach the hole in the wall that once must have had a pipe of some kind running through it.

"Almost th-there," he said, trying to shut out the scent of the lions. It was so good, and made him want to rub against their sides, even though that would be suicide. "Almost th-there!"

He had just gripped the tunnel when he looked up and saw someone new watching from the railing. It was the shaman woman, her empty-eyed lion's mask staring at them in an image that was as surreal as it was terrifying.

Hector screamed and fell, and Douglas collapsed back as well.

"*Your debt will be paid,*" the woman exclaimed in her ethereal voice. The sap of her staff glowed bright, nearly blinding them, and then she was gone again. But before either man could say a word, they were overcome by strange pressures and tensions across their bodies, and the changes began. Both men groaned as their flesh warped, muscles and tendons and bone extending and reshaping. Douglas scratched at his ears, which itched terribly, only to find that they were *moving*. He tried to pull at them as they shifted upwards, but there was no stopping them, and as they moved they reshaped to become pointed and hairy, thinning to look like cat's ears.

"Oh God! Oh fuck!" he yelped. But he didn't have time to reflect on his new cat ears, because suddenly his tail bone was wracked with pain. He tried to touch it with his hands, only to sharply regret it: the pressure was too painful, and the skin was bulging out as if a tumour was growing there. But it was no tumour - Hector was struggling with the same development, huffing in pain under his breath.

"*Your debt will be paid in cubs,*" the woman's voice repeated, this terrible spirit who was watching over them.

"F-fuck you!" Hector called, gritting his teeth against agony as sharp claws extended from his fingernails, and his chest changed shape, splitting open his shirt. An accompanying cry followed, confirming that Douglas had just experienced the same change, and was now stooping over awkwardly.

"M-my ass! My f-fucking spine!" he called.

"M-me too!" confirmed Hector. He was rallying against the pain, trying to push the development back in. But there was no stopping it: all of a sudden it burst forth from both men's backsides, spiralling outwards to become a long ropey tail. Fur sprang out along its surface, a golden yellow colour to match that of a lion.

“Holy shit, we’ve just grown fucking tails! You can’t let this happen to us! Change us back now, bitch! We’ll make it up to you!”

But the spirit woman, who was apparently unseen by others around her, the crowd of which simply saw the men as lions, just remained impassive. *“Yes, you will. You will make it up for many years.”*

Douglas swore, as did Hector. The changes weren’t done either. The men struggled in vain as fur sprouted along their bodies, from their chest and underarms, on the palms of their hands, and upon their thighs. Hector tried to cut it away with any sharp rock nearby, but it simply regrew from his futile efforts, looking even more lush than before. Their arms changed shape a little, becoming difficult to configure, as if halfway between an arm and a new set of legs, and the ever-pragmatic Hector made the horrifying epiphany that they could never successfully scale the walls now.

“T-too much!” Douglas cried. “T-too much!”

“It has to stop!” Hector replied. “Get a-ahold of ourselves!”

Both men roared in an attempt to arrest the changes. Literally roared, like the lions they were fast becoming. And yet, as comically animalistic as they sounded, it actually seemed to work, somehow. Or perhaps the changes were simply finished. For now. The last of their fur patches grew, which now covered a third of their body each, and their eyes turned an unnatural golden colour. But otherwise, they did not change any further.

Both poachers looked at each other, horrified at what their friend had become.

“You I-look like a fucking animal,” Douglas finally said.

“You look worse,” Hector replied canonically.

There was no humour in the exchange, despite the words having that flavour of past relaxing beer talk. Instead, Douglas turned to sobbing, while Hector gritted his teeth, turning humiliation and fear to anger. They both had lion ears, lion eyes, an altered chest shape and a lion’s tail. The last was the strangest, as it curled and moved about behind each man with a sort of life of its own, and yet they were capable of moving it when concentrating. Neither cared to think too deeply on how strange that was though, because they were attempting to use their arms.

“I can’t do anything with these damned paws,” Douglas complained, trying to climb back up the side of the wall. The spirit had gone, but both felt like they were being watched.

“Me either,” Hector said. “Can’t see a way up, either. No one believes we’re men.”

Douglas groaned, unable to think his way out. That had always been Hector’s gift, but there was a heavy tone of defeat in his voice.

“Then what are we supposed to damn well do!?”

Hector had no answer. Instead, he turned slowly, his new ears flickering as they heard the rumbling of the two lions - Lionel and Hector - behind him. His tail flickered with his permission, and once more that arousal returned. His dick hardened. And then, as if he truly had been turned into an animal, he began to stroke it.

"What the hell are you doing?" Douglas said, standing back. He too heard the lions, saw them, took in their detail with his improved cat's eyes. It made him hard as well, but he was just barely managing to resist touching his penis. His clothing was shredded a lot, but like Hector's it still managed to cling on.

"S-sorry," Hector groaned, rubbing his cock with his less-flexible half-paws. "C-can't help myself. Have to."

He continued to stroke himself, fumbling with his zip until, in a frustrated manner, he ripped open the front of his trousers with his claws. He sighed in relief as he began stroking his naked cock, his balls throbbing with a need to release. The lions were too near. He couldn't stop thinking about them.

"Ahhhh," he moaned. "Yesss. Good lions . . ."

Douglas was disgusted, but the sight of his friend masturbating only made him more aroused, for reasons he could not understand.

"F-fuck it!" he grunted, ripping open his trousers as well. "We'll get out of here. I j-just need this for now!"

He began rubbing his cock also, awkwardly due to him not being used to his half-paws, but still massaging his needy cock. Both men were silent, grunting and rumbling under their breaths until finally they came. Hector did so first, squirting his seed out onto the grass before him, and a minute later Douglas did the same, ejaculating onto a nearby rock. The lions showed no real interest, but one spoke mentally.

"Ready soon. Will mate."

"I'm not fucking mating!" Douglas declared. "There's not even any bloody lionesses around, and I wouldn't fuck one even if there was!"

The lion called Lionel was silent. Douglas got the sense he was missing something, but he couldn't figure out what. Hector wasn't sure either, or perhaps the truth of what was happening scared him too much to admit it.

When both men woke the next day, they had changed further, though not dramatically. Their fur had extended, now going to their knees and elbows, and their arms were even more configured like lion's legs, making them appear like bipedal freaks. Thankfully, their actual legs hadn't changed too much, though they did have rakish cat claws now, which they couldn't help but knead upon the ground occasionally. Their hair was changing to fur, and their noses were altering to become the inverted triangle of a cat's.

"This has to end," Douglas whined. "We don't fucking deserve this. So we killed a few lions! We could donate to a shelter or a breeding group or some shit! I'm not fucking lionesses, ya hear me, you witch bitch!"

But Hector was silent. He was terrified of another outcome, one the laconic man didn't even dare speak, as if saying it aloud might confirm its reality. Instead, he looked for avenues of escape.

The first possibility came when they were fed. The zookeepers of the facility simply saw them as more animals. Douglas was referred to as 'Lexie' by Bert and Zuri, and they also called Hector 'Rori.' Neither liked their new names, and made that clear by trying to get the two zookeepers to understand them. There was no chance of it working, however. The two poachers could understand each other, but the zookeepers only heard big cat grumbles and roars, leaving both men feeling petulant and ridiculous. Even worse, Hector's plan to rush the pair of them and use their bipedal stance to overwhelm them, maim or kill them, and get out of the pen, was doomed to failure.

"On my mark, go," he said, as the zookeepers entered the pen. They had with them their usual tranq rifles, just in case, and it was clear this was a special visit to welcome the new 'lions' to the enclosure. Various crowds gathered to see this event, the zoo clearly gaining a lot of interest from their presence. But the men felt confident they could still just barely manage to use the zookeeper keys and run out of there, once the pair were incapacitated.

"Go!" Hector called.

The two men rushed forward. The zookeepers readied themselves, a little bit of alarm creeping over their faces.

"Lexie, it's me!" Bert exclaimed.

"Rori, slow down, girl! I've got food, don't worry!"

Both men bounded forward, ready to strike. But the moment they were close enough to see the pair's faces, their expressions of disapproval, the slight alarm as they shifted to grab their tranq guns, their bodies simply slowed right down.

"What the - why can't I rush 'em!?" Douglas yelled.

"The trainers," Hector said. "We've got . . . instincts."

They both slowed down until they were little more than passive creatures in the presence of the zookeepers. It was like some kind of mental block had descended upon the pair of poachers, and they were helpless but to have their fur scratched and rubbed. They were utterly humiliated as they shifted to all fours in front of the keepers. Bert rubbed Douglas' back, while Zuri scratched Hector's head, massaging the two into easy submission.

"There you are!" Zuri said. "Much easier, huh girl?"

Only Hector caught that part, as Douglas was distracted by Bert's own words. But it sent an icy chill of fear up his spine. Zuri had just called him a 'girl.' He grit his teeth, the ones that were sharper now than ever, and tried to think of anything else that could possibly be happening.

"Welcome to your new enclosure, you lovely lions," Bert said. "We've got some food for the pair of you! And for your lion friends. Hope this will be a nice bonding experience."

"If you know what we mean," Zuri laughed.

The male lions stood excitedly, losing their languid manner as hunks of meat were strewn out for the creatures. The zookeepers quickly retreated, leaving Douglas and Hector to look upon the raw blooded meat.

"S-smells good," Douglas said.

"Should be disgusting."

But their stomachs growled, unfed since yesterday. There was so much meat, and yet their stomachs were like black holes, demanding every part of the pile they could. The male lions approached slowly, yet surely, clearly hungry as well. In the end, Douglas made a decision, one partly pushed forward by his new lion instincts. They lowered themselves, grabbing a hunk of meat each and chowing down upon them, tearing flesh apart.

"Yes, eat. Become lions. Join for mates."

"Fuck you," Douglas spat as he was forced to eat the meat. He rolled his eyes, unable to help but love how delicious it was. What the hell was wrong with him?

"This is good," Hector said. "Too good."

"Damn good," Douglas said, chowing down. "God, I've never tasted better. Fuck, this is amazing. Why is this so amazing?"

"Because we're not just becoming lions, we're becoming -ughh!!! GRAGH!!!"

Hector stumbled. Another series of changes were taking place, this time centres around his mouth. Douglas watched in shock as his friend's mouth pushed forward to form a lion's snout. His teeth bared and became sharper, like a series of canines evolved to catch and devour prey, and crack through bone. Hector panicked, but was unable to stop eating. With every bite he changed further, his muscles stretching painfully, his face swelling. It grew heavy, almost too heavy from his shoulders

until they too cracked and shifted, sending shoots of agony through him. But it wasn't just agony, Hector groaned like the beast he was becoming as pleasure infected him. His cock hardened even as his pelvis shifted, forcing him down to all fours. His legs cracked, now facing at a ninety-degree angle from his chest. His spine stretched, his rib cage extending. His muscular torso became the sinewy yet large stomach of a lion, his hips becoming a full set of haunches. Fur cascaded down his form, yet still he ate, clutching the food with his paw-hands, desperate for more.

"Holy shit. I have to stop," Douglas said, unable to stop looking at his friend's horrifying changes. He'd been trying to tell him something. "Hector! Talk to me! What were you saying?"

Hector clutched his throat, trying to get more words out. He needed to tell Douglas what he feared to be true, but there was just no way. Was he being punished for realising first? It only made him pity Douglas for not knowing. He had always been the softer of the two, the more optimistic, but it would work against him now. Hector was at least steeling his mind for what was coming.

They both continued to eat, even as they tried to communicate. Soon Douglas was also changing, though not as dramatically as Hector. He remained bipedal for one, and his fur did not stretch quite as far. Appropriately, given their previous disparity in body types, it appeared as if he were becoming a larger animal of the two. Fur covered his scalp, reducing his golden hair to simply golden fur, before tracing down over his shoulders. His chest grew a little, becoming less wide but longer, making him look ridiculous while standing. His pelvis shifted, though not quite as much as Hector's once again, but he did gain a lion-like nose and set of whiskers that pushed painfully out from a slight snout. His words slurred, but he was still able to speak.

"Wh-where is our m-muanne!?" he stammered, trying to say 'mane.' "We're l-l-lions aren't wh-whe?"

His large tongue lapped in his mouth, struggling to speak. Hector looked at him with something approaching pity, before tearing into the hunks of meat before them. After waiting far too long, as if curiously watching their changes unfold, the male lions stepped down towards them. For a moment, Douglas found himself intimidated, but they simply moved in between the pair and tore into the meat that was not claimed. The two male lions fought briefly over a large leg of cow, and their displays of ferocity caught Douglas' attention, and even more that of Hector's. Despite having just spent their seed at the sight of these creatures, both became more aroused in their presence, captivated by their raw predatorial power.

But only Hector knew why. And as the one who had traditionally been the more cutthroat of the pair, he found himself even more intoxicated than his friend. He could imagine those claws upon his back, and a lion coming up from behind to . . .

He shook his head, returned to eating. Surely, there must be a way of escaping?

Two more days in the pen, and both were at the edge of their sanity. Twice Hector had tried to scrawl the truth to Douglas about the fact that they were clearly becoming lionesses, but both times he was rewarded with further changes, hastening his coming position as the other Hector's mate. His hands were now full lionesses' paws, and his understanding of the alphabet, of English and Spanish both, were gone from his mind, leaving him utterly useless. Worse, his arousal was peaking every higher, and he found himself pulling away from Douglas and spending time with the lion that shared his name, much to his humiliation. His musk was stronger now that Hector had a more powerful scent of smell, and its allure was too strong to resist. Occasionally, the lion nuzzled against him, and it made his entire body shiver.

Naturally, Douglas was aghast at this.

"Hectorrrr, wh-what are you thdoing!? Hector, whare you in tharr?"

Hector could only communicate with roars, snarls, and movement, but being the more intelligent of the pair of former poachers, he was indeed able to convince Douglas that it was still him, using in particular the old 'one nod for yes, two for no' system that had served people well for hundreds of years. But increasingly there was another kind of language being imposed upon him; the language of animal instinct, and it was settling over Douglas as well. The other man had changed to the point that his body was nearly entirely covered over with fur, while his snout was pushing out ever further. It was so damned difficult to speak with his enlarged tongue and altered jaw, and with his ever-broader face and enlarged head, much else was difficult too. He was moving about like a monkey due to his legs being identical to a lion's. Only his paw-hands remained, requiring him to shuffle about awkwardly.

"Mutht ethscape!" he moaned to himself.

They had tried so many times, but that mental block, or rush of instinct, always returned, making it impossible. Sometimes, when they got close, such as when Douglas had nearly managed to climb a separate path up the wall, the spirit woman from the Savannah appeared, warding him back down and jolting him with a supernatural fear. Those eyes were too dark, too empty, and he was fast realising that they were empty of pity for him.

"Soon, you will bring cubs into the world, and they will give us a new era of lions to fill the plains once more."

There was something approaching glee in her voice, but also a deity-like predestination to it. As if there was no avoiding it. And as optimistic as Douglas tried to be, even that was wearing thin.

He was growing as despondent as Hector, who couldn't even talk anymore. His frustration turned to bitterness, turned to anger, turned to molten rage. Every time the spirit woman appeared alongside a crowd, he raged and roared at her, his words turning into animalistic screams.

“Fff-fuck youuuuu!!! Channnge ussss b-baarrcgk!!”

But she only watched as his arms buckled and twisted, as his instincts became more overpowering, as he felt like a passenger in his own warped body. At times he even found himself nipping at Hector, snarling when he got too close to Lionel the lion, unknowing why but feeling the need to demonstrate a sort of protectiveness to the male lion, despite being the kind of creature he would have happily shot dead for a profit just a week or two ago.

Always, the mirror on one side of the enclosure mocked him and Hector with clear images of their changes. Hector visited it more and more often, since Douglas tried to stay in terrible denial. He was still confused as to why no mane was sprouting, or why he was not reaching the size of Lionel and Hector - the furred one. But Hector knew. The shrinking member between his rear legs was obvious to him, as was his intense arousal when in close proximity to the other Hector. The sharing of names only made it more humiliating, as if that Hector was more deserving of maleness than he. So he tracked his changes obsessively before the mirror, every new patch of fur, every extension of his snout, every correction crack to his back that left him more in the shape of a lion.

Watching for the moment when he would become a full lioness, and his horrid future was set in stone. For the moment, he knew, when Hector the lion would mount the new 'Rori' for the first, but not last, time.

It was getting closer each day.

The moment for Hector was sooner than he wished. It was morning, the sky bright but the visitors were not yet in the zoo - though they were indeed minutes away. The pair had been in the pen exactly five days, feasting instinctively on the meat supplied to them, and forced to let their waste fall in the corners of the enclosure, as if they were animals. Their clothes were gone; no longer able to fit on their bodies, the remnants slowly picked up by their caretakers. Crowds came to see the new lions, and by this point their mutterings and exclamations while they took their photos meant nothing to the pair: they could understand each other, but not humans anymore. They were more animal than man, by this point.

Hector had the worst of it. He knew what was coming, and feared that moment. To anyone else, he would look practically indistinguishable from a lioness, just with front legs that were a little

too bent out of shape, and a face that was too flat still. Oh, and he still had a rather humanoid penis, though that was shrinking. The male lions - especially the one that shared his name - continued to circle him with increasing regularity, sniffing at his backside, as if waiting for the transformation to finish and estrus to begin. Hector could only roar in frustration and anger, before walking off to give Douglas comfort.

The other lioness-to-be was still ignorant - or in denial - of his fate. He sulked around, trying his hardest to return to two feet and failing utterly. He could just barely manage being bipedal for five seconds or so before losing his balance and returning to all fours. His instincts railed against this behaviour, demanding he act more like the animal he was becoming. He knew this was revenge for all he'd done to lionkind, and that he was likely not getting out of it now, but he at least had hope of living life out as an alpha male, a great predator, and if he had to sire cubs then perhaps - perhaps - enjoying the comfort of a group of concubine lionesses.

"Affter allll," he mumbled to silent Hector, his friend, "if I'm going tooo be shtuck as a l-l-lion, then m-maybe we c-can enjoy nice p-p-puthy - pussy!"

He chuckled bitterly, amused by his own double-entendre, but Hector just shook his head and sauntered off. Douglas questioned this, but got not reply. He knew his friend had figured out something, but communication was difficult. Instead, he just felt like an idiot who was missing a piece of the puzzle.

In fact, the only real conversation came by way of the lions, though even that was dimming as the magic completed its work. It was clear that as the omens of transformation and supernatural occurrences receded, so too did it signal that their new lives as lions were not far away. The woman visited less and less, and the lions talked less and less. Often now they just said one word, though it sounded strangely ominous.

"Mate."

They said it semi-regularly, and always it made Douglas hard, and feel strange things in his core. Was he going to join them? When were the lionesses going to appear, then? He was trying to be mentally ready for that part, which he imagined would occur when he and Hector's mane came in. But there was nothing. Instead, as usual, their morning food was made available, and he and Hector both greedily chewed at meat and bones, consuming it readily, and feeling the twinges of pain and pleasure as their bodies changed ever more subtly to become lionesses. They exchanged their golden-eyed glances, trying to keep clear of the male lions who joined them, and who smelled so good. There was something resigned in both of them, but Hector, further along in his changes, appeared even more morose.

"P-plan," Douglas managed. "Must haff a p-plan!?"

Hector shook his head. There was nothing to do, except . . .

As if the mere thought had summoned her, they both sensed that the spirit woman was with them, nearer than she had been before. They turned, only to find that she was *inside* the enclosure, standing upon a small rock, her staff held high. Her wooden lion mask was as empty as ever, her body rigid, as if casting a spell, or simply observing them, or both.

Hector wasted no time. It was the last thing his vicious mind could think of. He'd entertained thoughts of slaying this woman, or ripping her apart in the most violent and terrible ways. No more offerings of apology of atonement, simply death in the most agonising, cruel, and animalistic ways. And if it didn't change him back, then at least he would have that revenge, and make her a lion's meal. He leapt forward, snarling, bounding towards the woman.

"H-Hector!" Douglas called, realising what his friend was doing. A male lion simply whispered, "*Mate,*" as if that explained everything.

"F-fuck thaarrt," he stammered, before leaping forward himself. The two poachers bounded towards the woman spirit that had cursed them, intent on bloodying her to pieces. Their claws extended automatically, and a red haze fell upon them, driving them to kill like the huntresses they were becoming.

"You have the instinct of a lion now," the woman said, extending the staff out.

Hector leapt, claws outreached to shred her face to red ribbons. Douglas had caught up, and was just behind him, likewise reaching forth, instead to tear open the woman's thighs.

But neither reached their destination. The staff pulsed with power, and instead they hit an invisible barrier and collapsed onto the ground, helpless, unable to move.

"N-noo!" Douglas managed.

Hector just roared.

The woman nodded, shifting about, her movements as unnatural as ever.

"It is time for the final change, my new girls. You will find your new place in this enclosure."

Both former humans looked up as the sap of the staff glowed a second time. A chill ran down their spines, but Hector could only feel an icy hatred as the transformation began. Douglas, on the other hand, flew into a panic as his bones popped and reshaped, as his haunches adjusted his stance to be fully lion-like, as his snout pushed out completely. He expected his mane to form at any moment, but instead a horrible withdrawing began between his rear legs. He tried to see what was happening, to twist on the spot to get a better view, but it was impossible. Instead, he saw the exact same thing happening to Hector, who stood stock still, traumatised. Hector knew what was coming. His penis slid back into his body, forming an inner tunnel as it passed back in. His new vulva shifted back below his anus and tail, now easily accessible for any lion. Inside, his belly lurched, as did

Douglas's, as a womb formed, one that was already alight with heat and need. Douglas had time for one last roar of horror before his own dick ceased to be, and his own feminine passage came into being. It was only then that he realised that he was never going to be a lion, but was destined to be a *lioness*. He also realised that Hector must have figured that out days ago.

The two minds were in panic, particularly as further changes settled in. Their physical bodies were now lionesses, but mental and hormonal transformations took place too. The woman twirled her staff once more, and spoke as these took place.

"You are now lionesses, and will be so for many, many days. You will be in heat for your existence, yearning to be filled with cubs. As punishment for your actions, I have made you both more fertile than any lioness that has ever existed. You will both endure large litters, this one who attacked me first especially so. Your bodies will always produce enough milk to feed your litters, so that every cub survives, and can be released back into the Savannah to repopulate what you took, with interest. Your instincts will help you to raise your cubs before that happens. But as further punishment, you will still remain in heat even when heavily pregnant, and your new mates will sense this, and mate you again and again and again, daily. This is my punishment to you, and it will last in years ten times as many lions as you both killed together. Only when that is done will you have atoned."

Before either could roar or snarl or try in any way to question, attack, beg, or persuade her to change her mind, her form erupted into a storm of feathers as it had back upon the plains when they first met her, leaving them alone. For a moment, there was nothing but shocked silence. Then, both new lionesses felt a powerful warmth settle in their bellies and in their new womanhoods. Douglas found himself sniffing the air, taking in the glorious musky scent of Lionel. It turned her on, and as the arousal grew, her mind experienced another change: she was no longer Douglas, but instead the lioness Lexie. It was impossible to think of herself with her old name. The same was true of Hector: as the other Hector approached, her self-perception shifted to see herself as Rori the lioness. It was like her name had been stolen by the other lion.

The two lionesses exchanged pitiable glances, but their bodies were not their own anymore; they belonged as much to their new animalistic instincts. They separated, trying to fight the urges as much as possible, but failing at every turn. The scent of the lions was simply too overwhelming, and both felt their new pussies becoming slick and wet, ready to receive a lion's cock.

Lionel made the first move. He nipped and clawed lightly, playfully at Lexie's side, showing off his virile strength. It made her return the favour, testing his strength. Within, Lexie cursed what was happening. She prayed for the first time in years that someone would deliver her, but instead, once her instincts were satisfied, she planted her rear legs firmly, lifted her tail to the side, and gave Lionel entrance.

No, no, no no no no no! she thought, screaming in her head. *I don't want to be fucked by a lion! I'm not bearing any cubs! Fuck you witch, don't let me - NGHHHH!!!*

It didn't matter what he thought, because his body *craved* to be mounted, and Lionel met that desire quickly. He mounted onto her back, his claws digging in slightly in a way that made her feel dominated, and after a brief moment of positioning that only made her all the more anxious, his cock found purchase, and he thrust into her.

Oh God, I'm being fucked by a lion! Holy shit, he's f-fucking me and it feels g-good! OOHH!!

Lexie was lost in unwanted pleasure as the lion bucked into her. Out of the corner of her eye, she could see Rori also about to be fucked, planting her legs while the 'new' Hector readied to thrust into her. The cruel former man's mind raced with images of revenge, but she knew it was futile.

There's nothing we can do to win, Rori thought. I'm going to fucking birth cubs for years and years. How many did we kill? Was it thirty? Forty five? If we count the lionesses, maybe that will distract me from - NNGH! AHH!! S-so big! TOO BIG!"

Hector was the bigger of the two lions, and in every way that counted, apparently. Rori's mind was overwhelmed by the pleasure of being mounted, and soon she gave little roars of approval as her mate thrust his huge cock into her. Both poachers were now little more than receptacles for their mates, unable to fight it, and caught between rage, helplessness, humiliating, and unbelievable pleasure as it occurred.

Finally, after what seemed like an eternity, Lionel seized as he ejaculated his animal seed deep into Lexie's new womb. She roared, gripped by ecstasy. Rori followed, Hector squirting deep into her also, a torrent of lion semen spilling into her passage. The two lions dismounted, their thorny cocks retracting. There was a brief sting of pain again in both new girls, followed by immeasurable relief. Then, the males wandered off, their deed done. There was just one final word given by them, and both lionesses knew what it would be.

"Mate."

It was a phrase of victory, and a simple fact. They were now, undeniably, the mates of a pair of male lions, destined to breed with them every day. The two lionesses simply stood there, coming down from the delirious nature of the act they had just allowed themselves to be subjected to. With a shared glance of pity, they both recognised the truth of what was occurring.

They were both pregnant already, or would be in the coming minutes as the lion sperm reached their ovum, and this was just the first pregnancy of many, many more to come.

It was only an hour later that both experienced a renewed flush of heat, and the male lions were upon them again. The spirit shaman had spoken true: they would be bred over and over again, made submissive to their alphas, as punishment for their sins.

It was ten years later, and Lexie was being mounted again. She widened her stance, receiving Lionel's cock eagerly. Her tail swept aside, and she could only give a lion's grumble at the fact that she wanted to finish feeding before getting fucked by her mate. Alas, the spirit had ensured that the lioness formerly known as the human Douglas was unable to resist. Her instincts were too powerful. So she simply focused on the pleasure of the act that by now she was so very used to, and allowed him to enter her. The powerful lion bucked, his cock sliding into her wet depths. She was already ready for him, it was like her damned estrus never ended. In fact, she knew that to be exactly the case, which was why her vagina was so ready. As a lion, she was spared from moaning like some common whore, but inside her mind, she was overcome with pleasure. The feeling of being mounted never got old, and yet there was always that humiliation of no longer being a man's man, but instead the continually mated lioness to a true alpha predator.

Several more pumps, and Lexie orgasmed. Her entire rear half shook, and she let loose a light roar of approval as Lionel quickly followed afterwards, pumping what felt like gallons of semen into her tunnel. It made her follow up with a whimper - the feeling of his powerful claws upon her back also heightened the submissive bliss.

Finally, he dismounted, his animal sperm matting the fur around the base of her tail a little. As usual. Some of his seed spilled out of her, and for just a moment she considered the instinctive thought that perhaps it had been wasted, until she shook her head, almost smirking - were that possible for a lioness - at her own ridiculousness. It wasn't like Lionel mounting her was even necessary. He'd already done his work several months prior, which was why her belly was currently full with a heavy litter of four squirming cubs. She grunted as Lionel walked away. Typical male, she thought to herself, only concerned with his own pleasure. Barely a nuzzle or show of affection for the fact that, once again, she was knocked up with his cubs. God, they felt big inside her. Ten years of constant matings and pregnancies, and the former male, former poacher still wasn't used to it. She looked over to Rori on the other side of their shared enclosure, who was also being mated.

Hector was a passionate lion, much larger than Rori, and fucked the former carrier of that male's namesake even more than Lexie was fucked some days. Rori gave a small snarl of a roar, enough to basically say 'yeah, give me a minute' in that laconic way that Rori/Hector had never lost. Lionel waited patiently, lying down on her side due to her own pregnant tiredness, and simply watched her friend get mounted by her mate. It was a sight that once utterly shamed them, seeing

each other taking lion penis into their bodies, but they were both well used to it after ten years now. There was simply resignation to it.

Rori howled as Hector came into her. She remained continually annoyed and embarrassed by the fact that she was always being fucked by a lion that had her former name. It was like being replaced, only even more emasculating. Like her old friend, she too was pregnant, practically bursting with babies, in fact. Lionesses, as a rule, *never* had litters greater than four cubs. Yet Rori, perhaps for being the more cruel of the two, regularly had litters of five to six, much to the marvel and fascination of the zookeepers and attendant crowds. It was utterly infuriating, but she bore her pregnant burdens in her usual cool and taciturn way, even if she simmered inside. She was due to give birth any day now, and being further ahead in her pregnancy than Lexie, and she was not looking forward to the sensation of pushing cub after cub out of her painfully dilated vagina, then licking them clean. The second part came naturally, courtesy of her animal instincts, but it felt all wrong all the same. At least it would give her dangling teats some relief; they were achingly full of milk at that moment, and her previous litter of cubs had been successfully weaned, and would soon be transferred to be released into the very wilds of Africa where the pair had killed so many of lionkind. A bitter karma, Rori recognised.

With Hector finished, the male slunk off, and Rori moved over to her friend, nuzzling against her. The two never imagined they would be the kind of friends who hugged and embraced as they did now, but being sisters and fellow lion mothers made for big changes in their mental state. Besides, it wasn't like they could talk: they got by with a series of snarls, growls, roars, and the like, but even then instinct sometimes took over and they were forced to bring the claws out at each other. At least it felt like old times; being at each other's throats on a drunken lark.

The two pregnant lionesses settled down, resting to the side so that their bloated, litter-filled bellies didn't push uncomfortably against the ground. They rested against one another, breathing heavily, knowing that when their respective litters finally entered the world, it would not be the last.

Ten years ago, that first mating session had indeed knocked the pair up. The mystic spirit woman had spoken true, the two had indeed become incomparable breeders of cubs, always fertile and in estrus. They were forever horny, which meant that - much as they disliked it - they practically begged the male lions to fuck them by rubbing up against them and presenting themselves each day, even when on the verge of birthing a little. The first few months saw them being fucked constantly, and coming to grips with the fact that this would be their state forever. Months after the impregnation, the former men were full with litters, and went into labor on the very same day, which attracted huge crowds. To their shame, they birthed their cubs publicly, instinct guiding them.

Douglas/Lexie had three, while Hector/Rori had four. These would prove to be their *smallest* pregnancies.

After birth, both hoped for some relief, especially since they were already feeding so many cubs with their milk-filled teats. But the spirit woman had other plans. She appeared just one more time, and reminded them of their destiny.

“You will live a lion’s span ten times as long as how many lions you killed. No one will question this. You will birth many great litters, remaining fertile and in heat all of your days. You will restore the lion population as penance for your acts, and only when you have pushed out your last litter will you be allowed to live an ordinary life . . . as a lioness back upon the Savannah. But never human. Never again.”

Lexie had a solid idea of how long that might take. She had birthed many cubs by that stage, and each time had to grapple with being a mother to animals, nursing them and feeding them. She went over her memories often, trying to tally the number of creatures she had killed, in order to figure out how long her punishment would be. At her best count, it was around twenty-nine. And if they were doomed to experience ten times their kill count in years, then . . .

The same figure as always, she thought to herself. Two hundred and ninety years. Two hundred and ninety years of getting fucked by different males and pushing out cubs three times a year. Of having my damned belly always full with a kicking litter, even as I’m fucking nursing my current lot of three to four. And two hundred and ninety years of living like an animal, eating raw meat and playing in a boring enclosure, all while that bitch’s magic means the rest of the world sees nothing weird about an immortal lioness constantly getting pregnant.

It was true, too. Even as Bert retired to another sanctuary job, and Zuri had plans to start a family and reduce her hours, neither of their caretakers seemed to notice anything strange about the lionesses. Sometimes, they would make a statement about how ‘impressively fertile’ the pair were, or how ‘good they’re doing despite your age,’ but that never translated into understanding that there was something supernatural about the new lionesses. The shaman’s magic was still clearly strong in this place, and would be even when Lionel and Hector passed away, and new male lions were brought in to replace them. It made Lexie wearie just to think about it. Easier just to take it day by day and count the years, and hope that one day she could at least be free on the Savannah for her final years, even if she still had to be mated and pregnant occasionally. The witch had promised them that much.

Two hundred and ninety years. Jesus, that’s a long time. J-just gotta put up with this, I guess.

Rori, though, figured otherwise. As the spotter to Douglas' shooter back when they had been human, she had kept good records of how many lions, lionesses, and even cubs they had slain. And with her better memory and recall of said records, her number was higher than Lexie's.

Forty seven, she thought to herself as her incredibly heavy belly trembled with life. She sighed, leaning against her friend, nuzzling against her for comfort in a way she never would have done as a man. *Which means four hundred and seventy years. Mated for that long, with no chance or choice but to take it. Lexie is lucky, she never has to birth six of these cubs like I do.*

She gave a little snarl-like roar, annoyed but simply resigned to it. There was no escaping the fate, and at a certain point she had stopped fighting it completely. Better to enjoy the feeling of being penetrated by Hector, and to experience the warm maternal rush of feeding her litter, than simply stew in bitterness. It still returned from time to time, of course. How could it not? The crowds annoyed Rori the most, the way they thought she was so adorable while she birthed her cubs and licked them clean for feeding. But perhaps even that would one day become normal to the pair of them. They certainly had a long time to get used to it, after all.

It was at that point that Rori's belly trembled. She made a grumble, familiar with the sensation. She had birthed nearly thirty litters in just ten years, so she knew the signs of contraction by now. Lexie recognised it too, giving her friend a little distance, but also pushing her head against the other for a brief moment in a show of solidarity. It was the closest comfort they could offer each other these days. Hector tensed as the pain began, as her vagina dilated, and the first of her cubs began to push against her entrance, squirming and blind and adorable, ready to enter the world.

The lioness had work to do, and in just a month or so, so would Lexie.

A mother lion's work is never done, after all.

The End