As the cold winds blew the snow over the frozen lake in the middle of the woods, it stirred past two creatures that braved the ice and snow to be on it. With the winter months drawing late, it was just starting to get warm again, but it hadn’t been even close to beginning the thaw of the thick ice that had formed from weeks upon weeks of frigid temperatures and blizzards. For the two that made their way out further on the ice, it had been the perfect time to go out and try some winter camping, or at least for one of the lions that charged forward while holding onto his pack. For the synthetic creature behind him, however, they were a little less enthused about the entire prospect as they trudged through the drifts behind him.

The two lions eventually reached the lake's middle, with nothing stopping the winds from whipping around them. They started to set up camp, which for the middle of the winter involved the two of them building a Quinzhee out of a huge snow mound that they found. A surprisingly thick amount of snow covered that section of the lake, especially since most of the area was bare ice, with only a few drifts covering the shiny surface. “How did you even know about this place?” Dieter asked his father, Alexander, pulling down the balaclava that he wore and giving him a grin.

“It just happened to be on my radar, is all,” Alexander replied before he put the face covering back up. “Now come on, we want to make sure that we have the walls thick enough before night comes so that we can make sure that it traps our body heat. Trust me, we’re not even going to need a fire once we get everything ready, and the night sky out here is better than anywhere else that we could get to.”

Dieter nodded, and together, the two built up the snow mound into a proper temporary dwelling; as the two felines finished up, the sun that had dazzled their eyes while it set had sunk low enough that it was no longer seen beyond the lip of the forest trees. As the synth looked out, they were in awe of how the colorful oranges, pinks, and reds of the dusk sky painted the area while Alexander took out a small portable fire pit and built up a tiny blaze inside. As the smoke rose up and out the little hole on top they had created for ventilation, it had started to get as cozy as promised, to the point where both of them were able to take off their heavy winter jackets and free themselves of the thick layer while they laid out their packs. The two talked for a bit as they ate their dinner for the night, and though they fully intended on going out and seeing the moon high up in the sky amongst the stars, they found themselves starting to nod off amongst the warmth of the small fire…

But the two in the Quinzhee weren’t the only ones on the frozen lake that night, nor even the only lions, as one stood a few meters outside the hut where the two dozed. The white-furred lioness crossed her arms and let out a huff as she could sense who was inside, though what was unexpected was that there was another with him that caused her to frown slightly. Fortunately, she could take care of that quickly enough, just like she had lulled them to sleep as the feline walked away from the snow mound before she brought up her hands and caused the winds that ruffled the fur of her naked form to die down. Once done, she opened her mouth and let out a voice no higher than a whisper, calling for the one she identified as Dieter to come to her.

Inside the snow hut, the eyes of the synth suddenly opened as they thought they heard their name, though when he looked over to the only one that could have possibly said it, he found that Alexander was fast asleep. The fire had died down significantly and had put a slight chill in the air despite the snow walls acting to retain most of the heat, but just as they were about to put a few more small logs onto it, they heard their name again. It was like the ice was calling out to them, and they found themselves dropping the wood onto the ice and slowly making their way out of the hut's entrance. Despite not having their coat on, the lion continued to leave the warmth of the hut, and as he did, he found that the night air was still and silent.

Without the swirling snows they had initially walked in to get to this point, along with the full moon shining overhead, Dieter could see a figure standing there on the ice, arms out as though beckoning them. The lion found their jaw slightly dropping as they approached them, and as they did, a strange sensation began to flow through their bodies. It was like the heat was being drained from them, but despite that, they didn’t find themselves shivering or feeling anything painful from the sensation. It was quite the opposite, and by the time the synth got to standing in front of the lioness, they began to feel too warm in their clothing. As they rubbed against it, the lioness in front of them gestured to take off what made them feel uncomfortable, and Dieter found themselves nodding as they slowly did so.

“Thank you for coming to my summons,” the lioness said as she watched him remove his shirt. “My name is Aurora, and I am the goddess of this lake. Do you know that you have trespassed upon sacred ice?”

“I… I didn’t actually,” Dieter replied as they found themselves with a bare upper body, which once more didn’t seem to mind the chill of the still air around them, even though their fingers started to fumble a bit as they worked towards their pants. “I’m sorry. My father brought me to camp and didn’t know this was your lake. We can move if you want. I’m sure we can hunker down somewhere else for the night.”

“It is too late for that, my sweet lion,” Aurora replied as she stepped forward. She watched them disrobe completely, seeing her magic swirl around them, and she put a hand against the cold metal of the feline’s face. “You see, because you have laid here during the night, you have become cursed, which means that you and your… father will have to serve me. But let’s deal with him later; I want to focus all my attention on you.”

The synth continued to stare into the lioness's piercing blue eyes as he stood there naked, and though the cold no longer affected them, they could feel what felt like frost starting to creep over their bodies as she leaned in. “Serving me isn’t all that bad, though,” Aurora continued. “Being in service to someone with a body like mine is something you greatly desire…”

“Oh… not really,” Dieter said as their eyes blinked, which caused Aurora to stop inches from their muzzle and look at them with a confused look.

“Really?” Aurora replied, furrowing her brows in slight frustration as she stepped back. “You’re not interested in this…” the lioness gestured to her body. “At all?”

“No, I mean, you look nice, and I like your hair,” Dieter replied as the aura of mystique fell away from the entire situation, even though they could still feel some sort of arcane energy affecting their body. “But I actually… um… prefer men?”

“Oh… well damn, so much for the seduction angle,” Aurora replied with a sigh as she flipped the long strands of her white hair from her face before putting her hands on her hips. “Usually, I can just go with that; it works well and is good for me. So… not even a little bit interested?”

“Nope,” Dieter replied as they shook their head with a sheepish grin. “Sorry.”

“Ah well, you know what they say about the best-laid plans,” Aurora said as she crossed her arms over her chest. “Figures that you would be just as stubborn to work with as your father. Can’t be helped though, nothing to be sorry about.”

“Well, thanks for that,” Dieter replied as they stood there, the two naked felines still standing as an errant breeze blew past them. “So… does that mean that I can put my clothes back on and go to sleep?”

“Oh goodness no,” Aurora laughed before giving Dieter a fanged grin. “I’m still going to have some fun with you, just not that type of fun. Plus, I already started with the transformation, and if I stop now, I would have to undo the changes I already made, which can be quite a pain in the tail. Plus, it’s been a while since I’ve had a plaything whose aura was so agreeable.”

Dieter wasn’t quite sure what that meant, but as they looked down at themselves, they let out a yelp of shock as the metal of their body became entirely crystallized and started to come off of his form in chunks. It was like they were disintegrating, but as they rubbed their fingers against their chest and watched them dissolve away, it looked more like… snow? It started to become apparent that there was a reason why there was no wind as Dieter tried to step out of the growing pile of themselves and found that they could no longer feel their feet, mainly since they had no more feet as the weight of their upper body was causing their lower body to turn to more of the power. When they looked up at Aurora, they could see her going to a nearby snowdrift to grab something, but when the transforming synth tried to say something, their muzzle broke off and joined the rest of the snow pile they were becoming!

“I do like my men to be like putty in my paws,” Aurora said as she watched the synth lion look down at themselves in awe, lifting their arms to avoid them touching the pile of snow only to have one of them fall off and land in a pile with a soft paff. “Don’t worry, I’ll take good care of you; I think for you, we’ll just keep it simple. Then, once we care for you, we can talk to your dear old dad.”

As Dieter started to tilt from the weight of their remaining arm, they began to wonder what the connection was between this mysterious lioness and Alexander. However, it was getting harder to think as their mane started to crumble away. It was like a lightness had come to their thoughts that made it hard for them to bother with the necessity of thinking, feeling themselves at one with the snow that their body had become as their other arm joined the first and their head sank down into the someone large pile of snow that was the rest of their body. They felt more like they were floating on a cloud; though they knew they were cold, it was the same pleasant sensation they had experienced before. As their eyes closed and the last of their leonine form crumbled away, Dieter suddenly could see all around them, like they were floating just outside what used to be their body as they saw Aurora approach them.

“Ah, I do love fresh-fallen snow,” Aurora said with a chuckle as she took what looked like some sort of grass or a wreath and put it aside. Now that we've got ourselves a good pace, I think we can go ahead and make ourselves a lovely snow lion as a servant. That would be fun, right? Being able to play around in the snow all you wanted?”

Though Dieter would have nodded their head, they realized they couldn’t and instead just watched as the lioness continued sculpting their body with expert hands. They thought she was good at what she was doing as their legs formed first. It was strange to see her working with what had been their body, but what was stranger still was the fact that they could feel her fingers digging into the snow as though it still was. In essence, they supposed it still was, Dieter thought to themselves; it was just that they didn’t imagine that they would experience what it was like to be a snow pile and feel someone moving them around so fluidly as they saw their feet form. The lioness added ice claws to each of the four toes.

As Aurora moved up to his thighs and hips, Dieter was surprised when they found that the snow ones wiggled slightly as they tried to move their toes. Slowly, they gained a little more control over them with every passing second, though as their transformed body took shape, they found that initially, it was very little. She created a tail and added a bit of the green wreath-like material. Then, she moved up to their chest, keeping them toned but not overly muscular before adding black spots to their chest. Where did she get the coal? Dieter thought to themselves as they began to feel more solid, though they could still watch what was happening to them as their body took shape.

It was a classic snow lion that she was creating, and as Dieter continued to watch, she took her time detailing their body so that it looked almost like it could be real; as she got to the arms and added coal pads to the hand, she sculpted separately. There was also something sensual about the way that she formed their body, not in a sexual way but more in a passionate one as she attached the hands to the arms she had created, and they found that they could move them. As their thoughts grew more precise, the last of the snow formed into the head of a snow lion, and their thoughts once more turned back towards her relationship with Alexander. It was hard to keep such serious thoughts in their head, though as with the sensation of their sense of self coming back to the forefront of their minds, something else was coming with it.

With the smile that Aurora carefully etched into the snow muzzle that she had created, Dieter felt the happiness that would be associated with it suddenly flood their system, creating a sense of euphoria that came with the transformation as Aurora moved over and grabbed the rest of the wreath to form into the mane around their head. Once she had finished, the lioness backed away and looked at her creation on the ice, which Dieter also did. They began to feel a pulling sensation that seemed to come from the new body that he had become. It wasn’t long until everything went black for a moment before Dieter felt themselves open their eyes and found themselves looking up at the stars of a clear and beautiful night sky.

“See, I told you there would be some benefits that come with being cursed to serve me for stepping on my ice,” Aurora purred as she brushed through the bright green mane of the snow lion as they looked at themselves. “How do you feel?”

“I feel fantastic!” Dieter replied enthusiastically. They found they could slide along the ice much more manageable, yet they still didn’t feel like they would slip as they began to go around the lioness in circles. You said it’s a curse, but I’m really enjoying it! Thanks, Aurora!”

“Aurora, huh…” the lioness said with a chuckle as she shook her head. “Not mistress or anything like that; you really aren’t interested. Guess that meant not sculpting certain equipment, which turned out to be a proper time utilization.”

Dieter skidded to a stop as they initially weren’t sure what she meant until they saw a smooth snow expanse between their legs before grinning sheepishly. While they weren’t sure if Snow Lions could blush, they were sure they would know at this point as she just smirked. “Anyway, I think we know how to rectify this,” Aurora continued as her gaze drifted toward the hut where the other lion was still sleeping. “I think it’s time to get Daddy up so we can have him join the snow party.”

Back in the snow hut, Alexander was snoring loudly, with covers twisted over his body as the last of the fire died out in the pit. It wasn’t the cold, though, that woke him up. His eyes slowly opened, and he let out a loud yawn as he scratched his chest. “Alexander…” a soft voice said, which prompted him to look around slightly before smoothing down his mane. “Alexander…”

The lion glanced back and forth for a bit before he shrugged and grabbed his canteen, swirling the contents around before putting it to his lips to take a drink. “ALEXANDER!” the shout caused the lion to nearly choke and spit out the contents of the canteen from the force of it before he managed to swallow down the liquid and look at the entranceway where it came from. “Get your mangy hide out here right now!”

As Alexander recognized the noise and slowly got up from his bedroll, he noticed that Dieter’s was vacant, prompting him to put on his winter coat faster and get outside. As soon as he was out of the snow hut, he could see the white-furred lioness standing out there, but as she looked at him with a smirk, he found she wasn’t alone. A snow lion was running around playing in the snow drifts nearby, and as the creature dived into one, it caused the surrounding area to morph and reshape until it looked like a sculpture, which the laughing creature knocked over and then moved onto the next one. He shook his head and moved towards the lioness whose tail waved lazily behind her.

“Aurora,” Alexander said, hearing Dieter stop what they were doing when they noticed the other lion had come out. “I didn’t think you would be here; I heard a rumor that you had gone to the west after our little break-up. I would have found another lake if I had known that these were still your stomping grounds.”

“That’s pretty rich considering that I was the one that showed you where this lake was and how to build that cozy little hut,” Aurora shot back. “I own this lake and all that dwells in and on it, which means you are cursed to become my servant.”

“Oh c’mon, you’re not still going with the whole sacred ice and trespassing angle, are you?” Alexander said, though as he said that, his eyes glanced over at the snow lion looking at them with ice-blue eyes. “Well, clearly, you’re going with something that worked on them. Dieter, why don’t you come over here and let’s see what the mean old lady did to you.”

Aurora huffed at that and crossed her arms, muttering something about not being old as Dieter came over and stood before the bigger lion. “Actually, I was wondering if I could change my name a little?” Dieter said as their dad looked them over. “I was thinking something snow-themed, like… Drifter…”

“I would keep working on that,” Alexander replied as he turned the snow lion around a few times. “Well, she did a number on you, though the good thing is that, like winter itself, her power is only temporary, and you should be back to your synth form in a few days. I guess you won’t have to worry about the cold anymore for the duration of the trip and got a bit of her snow manipulation… power…” Alexander trailed off a bit before leaning in and sniffing the snow lion, then looked back at Aurora. “…why do they smell like peppermint.”

“The better question is, why wouldn’t they smell like peppermint,” Aurora replied with a slight smirk as she started to circle the other lion. “The best question, however, is why don’t you smell like peppermint yourself? Or we could spearmint if you prefer a change of pace; after all, you are a bit sharper to the senses than your son over there.”

“I already told you that I don’t believe in your silly curse notion,” Alexander replied, crossing his arms over his chest.

“You know, you could just not be a spoilsport and enjoy yourself,” Aurora stated. “Maybe let me have a little fun like we used to as well, back when we would go camping on this lake and have ourselves a fun time keeping warm… or you would let me work my magic on you, and we could avoid it. Don’t you wish you could go out and play in the snow with your son over there and not have to be bundled up in seven different layers?”

Dieter watched as they could see that Alexander was strongly considering it, especially as the naked lioness came up from behind him and squeezed him as tightly as she could through his jacket. Though they were still curious about what their father was doing with someone like that, they knew better than to ask, instead logging the information in their mind before they realized they were made of snow. Clearly, they were still making memories; the snow lion thought as they looked down at themselves, so perhaps the magic had somehow kept their form in some sort of limbo. As they fell back into the snow drift they were playing in, they suddenly found it hard to care about that or anything as the silly grin returned to their face while they turned their attention back to the two on the ice.

It appeared that while they had been lost in their thoughts, Alexander had consented to the request of the lioness, though they could see him roll his eyes as he began to unzip his jacket. As he took the thick winter coat and put it aside, it was clear that he had started to fall under the same spell they had when they came out; otherwise, he would have probably begun to shiver instantly as he also took the sweater off. Before he took off his shirt, though, he told Aurora that he needed to bring this stuff into the snow hut that he and Dieter had created to make sure that when the magic wore off, which he assured Aurora would happen, he didn’t have to go looking all over the lake to find it. Though the lioness pouted slightly, she sighed and told him to go and get changed and that she would be waiting with Dieter.

As the snow lion watched their father return to the snow hut to strip down the rest of his clothing, they approached Aurora. As they slid across the ice, they watched in awe. She caused a gust of wind to swirl the snow around her until the snow formed into a throne-like chair where she could sit. “Wow, that’s amazing,” Dieter said to themselves as they got up close and skidded to a stop. “Can I do things like that?”

“Of course you can,” Aurora replied with a smile. “You are a creature made from my magic; therefore, you can use that magic to shape the crystals however you wish. Of course, that does come with certain limitations, but I’m sure that with some practice, you might be able to create a snow friend of your own.”

As Dieter nodded their head, Aurora leaned in and sniffed the green mane that adorned the lion’s head, commenting on the smell of fresh pine needles before she leaned back and waited for Alexander to return. Armed with this newfound knowledge, the snow lion went over to the nearest pile of snow and tried to create something out of it, and though they could feel the power start to channel through them, the best that they were able to do on the first attempt was have the snow rise slightly before it slumped back down again. The effort seemed to catch Aurora's eye, though, and she went over to help them out, reaching around them and holding their paws on her own before telling Dieter to concentrate. As they did once more, there was a much bigger burst of energy, and they gasped as the snow between the coal pads of their palms morphed and shifted until it turned into what looked like a squirrel.

When they asked if the creature they had created was intelligent, Aurora just shook her head and said they were extensions of their own will. Only creatures already sapient like they were can have the same when turned into snow, she explained as she got back up. As she did, the squirrel they had created flumped into the drift it had been made from, and Dieter attempted to bring it back but found themselves unable to. They did seem to be starting to see some of the snow shift, though, and with the wind completely dead, they were sure that it was coming from them as the head of the squirrel started to form once again…

A roar from the snow hut's direction caused Dieter and Aurora to look over towards the entrance, a slight smirk playing on the lips of the lioness as they saw Alexander practically storm out. “You!” Alexander shouted as he pointed down towards his groin, which, besides being as white as the snow of the hut that he had emerged from, was also perfectly smooth, just like Dieter’s was. “I knew you were going to do something like this!”

“Come now,” Aurora replied as she leaned back on her throne. “You made it very clear that you didn’t want anything like that, and I decided that, like Dieter over there, I wouldn’t waste my effort recreating something that wouldn’t be used. It does figure that the two men that finally wander into my domain are either my ex or gay, but I do what I can with what I have, and I figured that the three of us could just, oh, I don’t know, chill together.”

Dieter found themselves stifling a laugh, and they could see that while Alexander was still fuming, they were at least going along with what Aurora wanted as they wandered onto the ice entirely naked. Already, the snow had started to spread over his fur, and the snow lion could see that he was becoming purely ice, unlike the adornments made to their own body. She had more control over his body as she got up from her throne and slid over to him, wrapping her tail around his. It lengthened slightly while her hands played over the smooth parts of his body. It was clear that even though he protested it, he allowed the magic to affect him. His eyes started to shift into the same icy blue as theirs, and he let out a soft moan.

“See, here you were whining about all this when deep down you wanted to become my servant anyway,” Aurora said, her grin widening when Alexander turned to look at her with a note of contempt. “Just kidding, you enjoy the changes while I breathe you in; I do enjoy the scent of a snowman that I changed.”

Though it appeared that Aurora was also going to have Alexander be a lion, she was making far more adjustments to him than she had with their body, especially as his teeth turned to ice versions of themselves and his mane. It gave him a more regal appearance than the fun snow lion body they seemed to have as they licked their lips with the candy cane tongue that Aurora had given him. While he continued to change, Dieter watched as they continued to work with the snow, eventually focusing entirely on it until they could see a shape forming. While it wasn’t the squirrel that Aurora had helped them create, it was an animal, the snow snake raising its head and giving a little hiss even though it was silent while its forked tongue slipped out.

“Looks like someone is catching on rather fast,” Dieter heard Aurora say as they looked behind them to see that the lioness had come up to them, along with a rather muscular snow lion that was a mix of ice and snow. Just like the lioness had promised, Alexander smelled spearmint as he leaned down and saw the creature that had been created. “What about your dad? Let’s see if he could create anything.”

Alexander just smirked and dug his paws into the snow before he lifted out a handful of it. As Dieter could see him focus, it started moving around and sculpting itself before it became a small snow dragon that walked around on his palms while breathing ice crystals. “Not bad,” Alexander said as Dieter looked at the creature their father had created. “What do you think, Aurora?”

“I think someone is a show-off,” Aurora replied before looking at the sky. “Ah, you deciding to stop being so stubborn has paid off; the whole reason for being on the lake in the first place is happening.” Dieter looked up, and his jaw practically dropped in awe. They saw that the sky had become a sea of various colors that rippled through the night. When they looked back to Alexander, he patted him on the shoulder and joined him in watching the spectacle. They all lay back in the drift so they could watch.

“I have to admit, being out here like this isn’t so bad,” Alexander said. “These changes will go away once we leave the lake, right? We have to head back to the city in a few days, and I don’t know how well being a couple of snow lions will work.”

“You will have the power to change back once you get back to the city,” Aurora explained as she looked over at the two. “I’m sure that with the snows that hit the city, you might enjoy roaming around at night, especially if the weather drops. I’ll leave that to you two boys, though… and Dieter, did you think of a name you might want to give yourself?”

“Yeah, I did, actually,” Dieter replied with a big grin on their face. “I was thinking… Sleeter. Yeah, Sleeter will be just fine…”