

## **Floating islands are invariably Krakens** ***Written for Moosesal for the dS Seekrit Santa 2006***

*I would like to thank my incredible beta, Tora Kowalski for her help and input. The title comes from a Pontoppidan's "Natural History of Norway" as quoted by JL Borges in his "Book of Imaginary Beings" Due South is Alliance Atlantis'.*

Ninety percent of an iceberg is below the surface. Everyone knows this.

It's also true of Mounties.

Ninety percent of Benton Fraser is below the surface and Ray is the guy sitting in a diving bell.

Only guys in diving bells know what they're doing and what they're looking for. More to the point, they're pretty damn sure what they're looking for is already there. That goes for shipwrecks and geological faults, because there are signs.

Okay, they're pretty fancy signs that are only there if you study. You know, study earthquakes and plate tectonics or shipping reports and old radio messages. But there are signs.

With Fraser, there aren't signs. Or maybe there are signs, and only Ray can see them, or maybe Ray's only imagining seeing the signs. Maybe the signs are figments of Ray's imagination.

Ray's in a submarine.

Really, Ray's in an honest to god submarine.

Things like this need to stop happening to Ray, but then, that would mean Fraser would stop happening to Ray and that would be a bad thing. Not just for Ray, but for Fraser too, 'though Ray doesn't think Fraser would let himself see it that way.

You learn to stay away from things that hurt you. Like the top of the stove, or the jocks at high school, or Gold Coast girls with smiles like pearls... You get the idea. The problem, and Ray thinks Fraser knows this in his bones - knows better than most folks, is that life hurts. There is no recipe for perfect happiness and hell is other people.

Ray sounds like a fortune cookie, or maybe like he's in therapy, but really you should bear with him on this one.

Fraser's always closed himself off from everything that hurt him, repressed it away. Maybe he was encouraged to, sure, there's nothing about his mom's death in Bob Fraser's diaries and Fraser's grandparents don't sound like the fun types.

Fraser closes himself off from everything except physical danger, ties everything else up with the rules in his head, and leaves him with the only loophole of duty to cover everything else. He sucked Victoria's fingers in the ice storm, and Ray doesn't want to know what else didn't make the report, and he's sure that got filed under "duty" at the time, and something else for Fraser to fence himself off from later.

Ray had thought that when the country opened up, Fraser would open up as well. Like a serge-coloured flower. Instead, he's stayed closed up, a bud of freaky potential.

Every day they risk their lives on the most pointless adventure ever, and still Fraser keeps everything tied down.

They don't talk out here much; the wind snatches away their words.

Fraser keeps everything pinned down, like the tent, like the dogs eating their tallow, everything is a hundred routines designed to keep Fraser safe.

Ray wants to break Fraser free, just for a while. He wants them to go on a road trip and keep going until they run out of gas. He wants them to have stocked up on tapes before they set out, and to feed them to the boom box he'd have slung on the back seat of the Goat. He wants Stan Rogers and the Sex Pistols; he wants to mix it all up.

Ray wants to show Fraser what a good time is, the problem is working out how to make Fraser understand, because that's the stuff underneath the surface. Under the serge and the big hat and the regulation book of carefully bent rules; under the surface, like Fraser and Ray in the submarine they've "borrowed".

There were some big game crypto zoologists hanging around the Beaufort Sea.

Fraser thought things looked funny, in an icebergs-out-of-place kind of way. And the crypto zoologists seemed to be talking about something, and the Mountie ears didn't like it.

Fraser repeated it all under his breath to Ray. They'd tied up the dogs and were hiding behind a big chunk of ice. Ray doesn't know why Fraser got suspicious of the cryptic zoology geeks; maybe he's had some bad experiences or something.

And Fraser's wind chapped lips were moving softly against Ray's ear. Ray's right ear, that's the sort of thing he'll remember later, when he doesn't have to concentrate on words from anywhere but his head,

“ ‘Below the thunders of the upper deep,  
Far far beneath in the abysmal sea,  
His ancient, dreamless, uninvaded sleep  
The Kraken sleepeth...’

“Ray, another fellow is interrupting the first, ‘And the sonar is picking up increased marine activity in the area, analogous to shoals of fish, as per Pontoppidan's *Natural History of Norway*. And it seems that poor maligned Denys de Montfort was right. And the sensors are also picking up... Oh yes,’ he's excited Ray. ‘get the icebreakers

ready, we want to be the first to bring a kraken to light. And we're going to shoot it with the venom-coated harpoon installed on the...' Ray! Now!"

And they were running across the snow, sure, they had snow shoes, but they were running. No, Ray thought, we're fucking flying.

Fraser punched the guy nearest the sub, which is not as teeny tiny as the one they went on their cruise of the Great Lakes in, but it's still pretty damn small, maybe big enough for four people, with two of them working that mean looking harpoon arrangement.

Normally, Ray thinks things with robot arms are pretty cool; today he made an exception. The barbed end of the thing made Ray think of the Spanish Inquisition.

Fraser just growled at the pilot who got the hell out of Dodge, up and out the conning tower without even stopping for his coat. Fraser looked terrifyingly hot.

Ray can see what's under the surface now. He's in a submarine.

They'd gone down without a word, Ray doesn't understand what a Kraken is, but he knows they have to keep the big underwater weapon away from the trophy hunters.

He's about to ask Fraser, when he glances out of the porthole and sees it.

Something between a squid and a crab and big enough to blot out the little light that filters through the sea ice. The sub headlights are on, but it means that Ray can only see little circles of it at a time.

It's beautiful. And it's enormous and suddenly everything is so fucking small.

Ray wanted to get under the surface and see what's there. He realises he has when Fraser starts crying.

It's not manly weeping, or hysterical like he did when he climbed out of that mineshaft with Muldoon's unconscious body over his shoulder; this is crying like a child that's lost his balloon, or his hamster, and with that everything. Because that's what the world is like when you're four and you had the brightest bounciest balloon in the world.

The light from the headlamps outside scatters eerily on Fraser's skin, turning every tear into a shard of glass.

"Ray," Fraser's voice is broken, hoarse; Ray can't remember a time that Fraser sounded so raw. "Ray, I think... I think I have doomed us both. I... ah... I didn't think this through... I just thought... I'm not sure that this submarine can surface through the ice unassisted..."

"You did this on instinct, right?" Ray asks, gently, like everything is sunshine and rainbows. "You did this because all you were thinking of was saving our friend Olly the octopus crustacean thing."

A small “yes” squeaks from between Fraser’s lips, the look on his face, he thinks it could shatter glass.

“That’s good, that’s greatness. Fraser, even if you thought about it, you wouldn’t let those harpoon-wielding wackoes take out this,” Ray waves his arm, hitting a bulkhead in the confined space and not caring, trying to capture the enormity of the creature, “this beautiful and incredibly large, uh, thing. And you never think about yourself, and you don’t have to worry about me, because I could have impulsively not gone with you, but I have, because I trust your instincts and stuff.” Ray’s trying to say something important, but he’s never had the words, he always gets tongue-tied at times like this. “Fraser? Is it okay for me to do something impulsive? I’m not going to sink the ship or anything crazy.”

Except this is crazy, Ray thinks in the moment between this and Fraser’s small, brave nod.

And then Ray stops thinking and kisses Fraser on the lips.

It’s not a big kiss; it’s not a force open the doors and invade with serious tongue kind of kiss. It’s pretty damn chaste, just lips touching; sliding off each other slightly, greased with balm made from god knows which parts of a moose.

It’s the sort of kiss that just is a kiss, because Ray isn’t sure how much he can go for.

Ray isn’t sure that Fraser will kiss back, open up; and then Fraser does, his lips like flower petals opening in a storm.

Ray’s got under the surface, but he’s still surprised when the unseen ninety percent of Fraser reaches up and under Ray’s toque and cards fingers into his hair. His horrible, not washed since they left Paulatuk, hair with Fraser’s fingers in it, firm but not tight. It all seems to be telling Ray to get as close as he could, press against the twenty two layers of clothing, and still feel Fraser’s pulse as he pulls his mouth away from Fraser’s and begins to nuzzle against his neck.

There’s a funny clonk-click noise, but Ray doesn’t care, and it seems neither does Fraser. Fraser’s fingers are insistently trying to guide Ray’s mouth back towards his own, while Fraser’s other hand is making funny figure of eights on the back of Ray’s windbreaker.

Ray thinks Fraser’s realised that Ray will never hurt him, Ray tries to communicate it in his touch, and if they’re really trapped under the ice, then what better way to go than in each other’s arms, watching a giant squid?

The submarine lurches. “Vortex effect,” Fraser gasps, “Pontoppidan theorised that kraken cause a vortex that sucks ships under. When they move they leave such an immense space that a momentary vacuum...”

Fraser's let go. His hands are just wild, he's panicking. Ray wraps his long fingers around the struggling wrists. Ray looks at Fraser and it's like telepathy, Fraser relaxes, knowing that they'll try and keep the sub steady and ride out the storm.

Ray backs off; lets Fraser twirl around in the pilot's seat and move them away from the edges of the storm. Hopefully things won't get any scarier. And if they do, then it's not as if it's anyone's fault, Ray and Fraser doing the right thing, and the Kraken, now, it's not as if the Kraken understands.

Ray glances out the window as the whole submarine shudders wildly. He thinks that he saw another dark tentacled shape far below.

Maybe the kraken does understand as it descends into the darkness.

There's a sharp crack. Ray jumps and Fraser laughs.

The vortex effect has cracked the ice above. It's suddenly a whole lot brighter as Fraser begins to steer them towards the light. Ray can see the plankton dancing in the water like little angels falling from grace. There are shadows of fish circling above. And sleek swimming shapes that Ray at first thinks are divers, except no diver could survive in this, this cold pressure. That's why the hunters had the submarine. One of the shapes comes closer and Ray fancies that he can hear the sound of the seal's whiskers as they brush against the Plexiglas of the porthole.

The light's hurt-your-eyes bright after all this time under the ice, but it isn't as bright as the grin Fraser throws Ray as he pulls one of a myriad levers and they rise slowly towards the sun. Fraser's making lazy circles towards the surface as if he has been driving submarines all his life, rather than snowmobiles and dogsleds. Ray wants to watch the fishes more, and the bubbles rising from down below, but he starts to explore the ship instead. He finds the radio and the sonar and looks for blips for a moment. If the kraken's still about it must be a long way down, the sticker on the still new screen says it's good for five hundred metres.

Ray knows they can't use the radio until they're surfaced, which is just as well as Ray doesn't know *how* to radio. Chances are Ray would get the airfield in Inuvik or a pizza place in Alkavik. Fraser looks over his shoulder, his smile burning, smouldering into Ray, and tells him that they'll need to hoist a mast in the conning tower once they surface. He's still matter of fact, but Ray knows what's underneath that now. It's like he has x-ray glasses now, he can see it even when Fraser covers it. Fraser's not doing a very good job of covering it right now, just enough so that he can concentrate on turning them into a tighter and tighter spiral, getting them closer to the hole in the ice with each pass.

They surface, and hoist the aerial and signal the detachment over in Sachs Harbour. Diefenbaker and the dogs have already been found. Fraser hadn't anchored them firmly, just asked them to stay, and when they hadn't come back, Dief led them to get help. They do their best to dissuade Sergeant Rogers from sending in the paramounties. If the hunters have stuck around, then they'll still be there by the time the Mounties arrive at the approximate position Fraser gave them, looking on the sonar for where their submarine has gone. And if they're gone, there's enough evidence on the submarine for somebody to track down their asses.

In the meantime, Ray has ninety percent of a Mountie to get to know.

It's warm in the submarine, they're keeping the engines going; it looks like they can shed some of those layers and bed down for a while. And Ray's going to dive below the surface, now that Fraser's ice has cracked.