



this land was made for you and me

Fraser/Kowalski wingfic rated PG-13 c. 4500 words

Words by buzzylittleb: <http://hive.ckrweb.net>

Stunning cover graphic by Sandrainthesun: <http://sandrainthesun.livejournal.com>

Delighted gratitude to Mickeymvt and Woolly_Socks for beta and perceptive questions

Comments and feedback to buzzylittleb.yahoo.com

“Ray sits on a boulder at the edge of the lake-shore. The rock is somewhere between the colour of rust and sunburnt skin; the colour changing with every flicker of the autumn sun through the trees. It’s still hotter than Ray expected it to be here. And it is still too light for the mosquitoes and midges to come to feast on his bare skin. Lichen grows on the rock like some organic tattoo. The water laps up against it, betraying that the water is nowhere near as calm as it appears.”

Due South was created by Paul Haggis, embodied by Paul Gross, and product of Alliance Atlantis. They have the copyright to the characters and indicia. I have wrote this out of love and for the enjoyment of other people who love this show. Anything that does not belong to Alliance, belongs to me. So, no reproduction without my permission, which is darn easy to get, just drop me a line and you'll probably get a "yes" by return of post.



Ray sits on a boulder at the edge of the lakeshore. The rock is somewhere between the colour of rust and sunburnt skin; the colour changing with every flicker of the autumn sun through the trees. It's still hotter than Ray expected it to be here. And it is still too light for the mosquitoes and midges to come to feast on his bare skin. Lichen grows on the rock like some organic tattoo. The water laps up against it, betraying that the water is nowhere near as calm as it appears.

There are hidden currents in everything. You never really know until you get below the surface.

Ray isn't a swimming kind of guy. He can bloom, close, and kick in the head with the best. He prefers the safety of the surface to the undertow.

On the beach, Dief whines. It's still too hot to catch squirrels, and he can't without leaving the humans here. Diefenbaker doesn't have good memories about his humans and water. He doesn't trust it, just as he doesn't trust Fraser's assertions that he could save himself, thank you very much.

Ray just keeps looking out at the turquoise-deep water. It's beautiful, but probably bone-chillingly cold once you get out of the shallows. Cold. Ray needs to get used to that, the cold that he chose in a bargain to warm his heart.

Maple leaves float without a care in the world. Ray wishes he could be like them, floating light upon the water, no way they can drown. Ray tries to do the meditation thing Fraser does. But without Fraser to guide him, Ray can hear the far off honking of geese.

Come with us. Come with us. Come with us.

Their cries tear at Ray's heart. But still he sits, wearing only a pair of faded jeans. The sun is warm, yet Ray still feels cold. The hairs on the back of his neck stand stiffly to attention. His heart is hammering inside his chest. He glances around. Dief is still on the beach. The geese are still in the sky. The light shifts strangely.

He thinks he can see something under the water. Maybe it is just weed, or beavers, or maybe otters. There are no turtles here, even though Fraser promised them to him as he pushed him from the plane.

If only Fraser had just goddamned asked, things would be a lot simpler.

But then, Ray would have to be less stubborn too. He would have had to break promises he had made to himself years ago. He had clung to them, unsure of who he even was anymore in a sea of changing names and aliases.

Fraser's head finally breaks the water and Ray stands with his wings outstretched, ready to fly and circle Benton as tightly as he can.

"You find anything interesting down there, Fraser?" Ray cries.

The time for secrets is long gone. Somebody might hear him, but Ray doesn't care



anymore. The geese wheel, confused.

Ray's feet leave the scratchy surface of the weathered rock. The air's cooler than the sun-heated stone and Ray tries to stop the full-body shiver as he takes to the air. He knows it's not really the cold doing this. He can feel the excitement build inside him. Everything looks and feels sharper. And his wings, the wind on his wings is like a lover's caress at once too much and not enough.

Ray loves this. Loves how light and free he feels, here with Fraser.

It's harder to talk in the air. The way the muscles of his chest work changes as the wings beat and Ray circles higher. He's breathing hard, like when he lets everything loose on the heavy bag. Except this is different, it's not his hands that feel like they're made out of lead when he stops, it's his feet, always having to keep them in line, like training wheels, if he wants to fly anything near straight.

Ray wants to swoop down and run his fingers through Fraser's hair. Drops of water adorn the beaver-short hair like jewels. Ray wants to steal them away and lick them off his fingers, but most of all, he wants to touch Fraser. It's the closest Ray can get to showing Fraser how this feels; flying, the beat of wings in tune with the beat of his heart, the coolness of the wind and the heat of the sun. Ray just needs to get up more speed before he tries.

Fraser has stopped swimming around and is peeking out of the water like a meerkat. No, like an otter. Maybe something rubbed off that day, the day when Fraser – who Ray imagines as young and deadly serious – got whacked with that otter. Maybe it was communicable even though the otter was dead and half-frozen. Maybe it was a case of mistaken identity.

"I could ask the same of you, Ray." This isn't what everyone saw in Chicago; this is the Fraser only Ray could see. The one who would hold his hand in dark back alleys where nobody would see, the one who could disappear like Houdini, leaving a cardboard cut-out in his place. This is the inner Benton, the one who could be flippant and frivolous without hiding behind some polite diffident mask. Maybe it is something about the land - Fraser's territory - that brings out this frank but joking honesty. It's still a new taste for Ray, stronger than the brand he had grown accustomed in Chicago, heady and like wood smoke and good liquor. It always goes straight to Ray's head. And other places.

The wind is building up, or maybe Ray is just gaining speed. He can feel it in the hundreds of nerves that make his wings so sensitive and so vulnerable. Ray has to shout, work his lungs harder just to be heard. He always sounded kind of wheezy if he just talked, and the wind would steal away his words and send them flying. "You know, same old, same old."

"I thought I could hear something." Fraser's hearing still surprises Ray, even though he knows every detail, every curve of those ears. Lying together in the tent, seeking the hand of Franklin, close against each other in the double sleeping bag, Ray stole a thousand glances. When they came off the ice, it wasn't just glances that Ray stole. Ray could spend forever looking at those ears, mapping every hollow, tonguing every curve, teasing the lobes and painting them with Fraser's blushing.



Ray considers telling Fraser that he's just got too much water in his ears. But he doesn't. It doesn't seem right to lie to Fraser, not when Ray is hearing him clearer than he ever did before. Not now there are no more secrets between them. The water would wash away any mask Fraser has, except the cold on the tundra has already cracked it into a million pieces. Ray crept into the cracks like water. And like ice, he cracked them open. There's no way he can lie, not now. "Geese. Going south."

Fraser tips his head to one side, his bright eyes asking the question like a signal mirror on a snow plain.

Ray's still circling, gaining speed, a gentle smooth build-up. Somewhere out here, he's found patience. He's found the key to all that restless energy. He dances in the sky using every muscle he's got. The only downer is that his dance partner has two left feet and can't join him up here anyway. "Nah, I'm not going. I'm sticking to you like glue." Ray tried to take Fraser with him once. He sprained a whole bunch of muscles he didn't know about until they started screaming at him as he came to an inevitable and painful stop and careered into the snow-melt. "All those feathers in the bed? I think I'm growing winter plumage. I never have before, but I've never been this far North."

Ray has to stop for a moment and just glide and breathe. He always forgets how much hard work this is. It's like swimming, all over exercise. He's using muscles he never uses otherwise. And it gives him time to unscramble the words in his mind.

"I've never needed to be this far North." Ray hopes Benton will get the message. Fraser can be thick-skulled sometimes. It's probably a survival of the fittest thing. And you can't say that the Frasers don't have good genes, weird but good. All little advantages, a little subcutaneous fat here, a sense of taste a little sharper, and everything is perfect for a freezer without any electrical sockets. It's all good.

Ray thinks he's got up enough speed. He swoops down, feet skimming the top of the trees. Scratches like somebody is tickling his feet with a broom. Feels good – he has to tell Fraser that – but it's a warning. He has to stay streamlined. He has to be like the Goat. This is the closest thing to the GTO he's got now. He misses it dearly, but he wouldn't swap this for anything. This is all speed and Fraser can't stop him from putting pedal to the metal. Well, not really, he's trying to keep his legs behind him like a rudder. He's trying to keep a low, fast profile. There's a ghost of a cramp in his stomach, reminding him that he's going to have to land soon, once he's done this, run his fingers through warm, wet, hair.

Fraser's staying still. He has to have realised what Ray's trying to do. They have this, telepathy and William Tell with his apple all rolled into one. Ray can't see Fraser's face, but he knows he's smiling. The inches of shoulder above the water, Ray can read them like tea leaves.

And then he realises that he isn't going to make it. Ray always has a tough time keeping his legs in the right place. He is a human with wings, not a bird, and his body thinks that legs belong underneath, not in a straight line out through his spine. All the warning Ray has is that nagging feeling in his pectorals getting sharper, then easing. He's lost his training wheels and is five feet past the top of the hill.

This is going to hurt.



Ray feels his feet touch the water. For a moment he thinks that he can do this, just skim the surface. It's like a game, like a home run, and he can make it to the last base. He just has to count the seams on the ball. Count the hairs on Fraser's head. Count the ones curling at the back of Fraser's neck. And Ray loses himself there in the dark curve and his heart is beating one long note of bliss. Fractals burst before his eyes. The secret of everything is going to burst loose from the pattern of the hairs where they meet his lover's neck. Then Ray feels his feet catch and the water is holding them as firm as any bear-trap, cold and metallic and never letting him go. He can't get his wings away; they're spread out like Jesus on the cross, like a crucified angel. His neck is stretched taut as his head goes back like he's been clotheslined.

All he can see is the sky twisting above. The geese are crying and heading due south again. No, they're not crying, laughing, huge honking belly laughs. Ray Kowalski, not quite a bird and not quite a man.

He remembers his mother reading to him, her finger tracing the words as she talked about the swan princes and their coats of nettles. They found him in the nettle patch on the waste ground at the corner of their block. He was naked and stung all over. Red scratching burning flowers were blossoming over pale skin. Ray remembers the burn. They never saw his wings. Never.

Ray remembers the burn now. The water explodes cool around his head. He's tripping forward in slow motion as the water surges up to meet him so fast. There are bubbles streaming past his head like slowly expanding glass jellyfish. The speed he tried so hard to build is turning into momentum sending him end over end over end. He doesn't know what way is up any more. The only thing slowing him down is his wings as they grow heavier and heavier, water pushing into them, soaking into them, and replacing the air.

All Ray can think is that everything is too heavy and too slow. It's like a dream. A slow ponderous dream, which any moment is going to turn into horror and screaming. Once things sink in - once things soak in - Ray's mouth moves in a silent gasp. The force of the water is pushing the air out of him and his urge to scream out is just helping things along. And despite everything, there's something strange and ethereal about this. Nothing like swimming through the sinking ship. Maybe this is what it feels like to be Fraser. A real water baby.

And Fraser, Ray thinks of Fraser, how can he not?

Why bother having your whole life go before your eyes when you can have just Fraser? The water's getting colder as Ray plunges down, tumbling like a leaf during fall. It's almost as cold as the ice. Almost as cold as the ice ravine. And Ray can't feel the heat of Fraser beside him, so he thinks of it instead and closes his eyes, as if that and daydreams can stop him drowning. It won't, but maybe it will matter less. Ray's trapped looking into Fraser's eyes, watching his lips as he sings a soon to be familiar song.

Ray feels something against his shoulder and opens his eyes. Fraser is twisting in the water, trying to get in front of Ray and arrest his fall. Ray's been falling for such a long time, maybe forever. Ray knows there's something not quite right with the skin between Fraser's neck and shoulders, but he can't think what. It's like he's too slow to catch the words with



his tongue. Everything is going so slow and still. It's like ink stealing across the book of Ray obscuring every word on every page and leaving an unreadable mess. There's darkness closing down what he can see until there is only Fraser at the end of the tunnel. Ray flails, desperately trying to reach Fraser. Another firm cool hand grabs his other shoulder and Fraser's getting closer so Ray tries to flail more, desperate to reach him.

And then Fraser's mouth is over his, pushing air into his lungs. It's hot and moist and kind of musty like old books. It is the sweetest thing Ray has ever tasted. Those cool hands slip down into his armpits. Ray can feel Benton kicking. It's like a pulse of water. All Ray is looking at is Fraser's neck and his upturned chin as Fraser looks up to the surface.

It's getting lighter. Ray is still frozen but it looks like fairy lights are just lighting up beyond that milk-white expanse of neck. Fraser stops. No, he doesn't stop, he just changes the way he kicks. The water is pushing at them, squeezing them in a tight embrace. Ray can feel Fraser's knees brush his legs as he makes round small kicks like he's on a bicycle. And Fraser leans in again, one arm slipping down and then up to cup the back of Ray's head. The hand is impossibly hot against Ray and the air impossibly sweet. There's the scantest touch of tongue against Ray's lips, opening him up for more hot, wet air.

Ray tries to press forward. Breathe the air back into Fraser. Push against his warm tongue. But the hand that holds him close holds him back. And he can feel Fraser kicking strong and hard again and the pulse of the water.

And there's got to be more than this, more of the struggle with the cold water that holds them with a grip of iron, but the next thing Ray does is blink water out of his eyes. Fraser is holding him tight on the surface whispering desperate words into Ray's neck. Then, his lips skim Ray's neck and the stubble on Ray's chin, and his mouth meets Ray's.

It's not the best kiss Ray has ever had, but it is the sweetest. Just as Ray thinks this is going to be some chaste brush of lips, the kiss deepens, Benton's tongue begging entrance.

Fraser's head jerks back and Fraser gasps for air. The skin there at his neck is still pulsating uselessly. Fraser needs to move and to move he has to let go of Ray, has to let him fall. Fraser gasps apologies as he pulls back. And Ray begins to fall again, pulled down by the weight of his wings. Fraser twists like a leaping salmon and catches before he sinks entirely, pulls him up, and caresses Ray's chin. Fraser tries to pull them as horizontal as he can.

Ray wants to say something, about how he can never stay horizontal in the air, but he can't, Fraser is holding Ray's jaw closed as his feet float closer to the surface. It is then that Fraser begins to swimming a faltering stop-start crawl.

He's trying to tow Ray to shore before his wings get any heavier with water. They feel like they're tearing at Ray's back. Once, he would have done anything to be free of them. Now, it feels like torture.

There are pebbles under his feet now. Fraser is pulling him upright. Ray can hear Dief barking on the shore. The wolf knows he was right about humans and water.

Ray's standing, just about. He pushes away from Fraser; he needs to make it on his own. Needs to prove to himself that he can make it on his own. He doesn't know why, his picture of the future doesn't feature him on his lonesome at all. His knees feel like they're bending



the wrong way and the world is shifting through a hundred uncomfortable angles. He feels like he wants to puke and then falls flat on the beach.

Nobody said Ray didn't have style. He's just too tired for any fancy footwork.

Ray hears the crunch of Fraser sinking to his knees beside Ray's sore aching wing. The wings are still outspread, too sore and too wet to pull in close to his body; Ray's hoping the sun will dry away his aches. For a moment, Ray is afraid that Fraser will try to touch them, try to smooth them, his nerves blaze at the thought. But Fraser crunches forwards again, lying there, supporting his weight on his elbows in a way that makes Ray thinking of fucking. Ray cradles his chin in his hands like he's watching Saturday morning cartoons and the pebbles stop feeling sharp, more like a massage chair or an orthopaedic mattress.

"Hi." It's all Ray can think of saying; he's still kind of winded. What else does he have to say. Even Fraser would admit that manuals of etiquette are somewhat bare when it comes to crashing into the water while flying and having to be rescued by your perfect freak of a boyfriend. Boyfriend. It doesn't sound right, but what else does Ray have? He remembers partnership and he smiles blissfully. Ray just wants to sleep and the beach is so warm and soft.

"Ray, Ray, Ray." Fraser smiles hesitantly as he tries to call Ray back from dreamland. Back from falling out of an aircraft without a parachute and trekking across the ice with only a snowflake's chance in hell. Sure it was a disaster, but they survived and that's what counts. And there are red ships and green ships and there are no ships like partnership. They're different colours but they're still ships. They're different freaks, but they're still freaks.

"I'm a freak. And I can't even fly straight." Ray fights the sleepy urge to just plump himself up a pebble pillow and catch himself some zees. He can't let himself get lost in sleep. There's simply nowhere Fraser would not follow him. And he kind of owes Benton for saving his ass. Benton's very fond of his ass, but this is beyond fondness, beyond love, beyond lust. It's partnership.

Somehow they both found the only other person who understands what they think, why they hide, why they let loose in the autumn sky as the geese fly south for winter.

"I think there were some problems with hydroplaning." Fraser frowns slightly and Ray knows that his brain is working out all the angles calculating all the velocities. To think Ray didn't trust him that day they took a dive off the roof of the Canada Mill and into the lake they call Michigan but the bag lady down on Miles van der Rohe Way calls Henry. It's only when Fraser is in the water that he's free from this trap of calculation and thought. It's as if he sees velocities and vectors and all the math Ray never got. If Fraser had been on the lakeside, he would have seen Ray was going to fall. But could Fraser move fast enough to save a drowning man? Ray never wants to find out.

Ray doesn't even want to think about it. Fraser without Ray. Ray without Fraser. It's like peanut butter without jelly, wontons without egg roll, pizza without pineapple. Ray doesn't want to think it and more than that, he doesn't want Fraser to start thinking it, calculating the moment at which Ray would pass out as water forced the air from his lungs, the moment when his heart would stop, the moment his brain would stop like its clockwork had wound



down.

It's Ray who has to save Fraser, save him from his own mind.

"Planes. It's always planes." Ray groans. It's a pattern he wants to avoid in the future. "Goons with planes, crop dusting planes after Cary Grant, high low planes." Ray gets it wrong on purpose, Fraser probably knows by now, recognises that moment of concentration as Ray rearranges the words to make less sense. Fraser knows, but he will play along, Benton wants to play along. Anything to take his mind off life without Ray. It's probably like pemmican without water, a lanyard without a knot, a sled without dogs. It doesn't matter. "I'm never going near one again. Those planes are out to get me, you know, Fraser"

Fraser tries to stifle a giggle. He fails. He always fails. And then he rubs the back of his neck and cracks it.

"I'm a freak, Fraser." People who live in glass houses shouldn't throw stones. But Ray has never been big on playing by the rules and a glass house is kind of dumb, anyway.

"Well, so am I." Maybe for Fraser it is a simple truth, maybe he's always accepted he's different. Ray's different; he had to fight, had to fight to stay within the herd. You can't survive on your own in the big city. No man is an island and all that jazz. And here? You might survive on your own here, but you can't live.

"Yeah, dolphin-boy." The teasing is like falling into a big soft eiderdown. It's like falling to sleep, that moment when you just know you're going before sleep embraces you. Ray has to blink to keep awake. He remembers an ice crevasse and singing to stay awake, to stay safe from one temptingly long, cold sleep.

"Ray." Fraser knows. If Ray doesn't stay awake, he'll sleep here until sundown. And then, Fraser will have to wake him and lead him home in the dark.

But this is as upright as Ray's going to get for a while. The sun feels good on his back. His wings are getting warm again and getting slowly lighter. Hopefully, the sun will dry his wings out enough before he has to tuck them away to get back to the cabin. If not, they're going to have a very awkward walk through the trees, walking paths barely big enough for regular folks.

He just has to stay awake, or Fraser will let him sleep too long and Dief will have to lead them through the darkness. As long as they keep talking Ray will stay awake. He's not sure he's got the energy for singing and he doesn't think Fraser knows the words of SOS. "Yeah, I know." Ray sighs theatrically. "Dolphins don't have gills."

Ray's eyes close, just for a moment, just for a minute, just until Fraser pulls him back to shore. "Freak," Fraser says; he's smiling his wolf and doughnuts smile. Ray's hair is all wet and floppy. Floppier than usual, he's living somewhere where you make your own hair gel with unmentionable parts of musk ox. Ray isn't that desperate yet, and it's almost the season for hat hair, which solves the gel problem for half the year.



Ray's doing a pretty good job of keeping himself awake, and before he can make a list of things he is never going to buy again now he's run off to the Northwest Territories with his freak of a partner, Benton cranes in for a kiss. The angle's awkward, but that doesn't matter. All that matters is Fraser's lips on Ray's. Propped up on one elbow, he's running his hand through Ray's hair the way Ray wanted to do Fraser's hair. But Ray doesn't have the energy; he's more than willing to let Fraser do the leg work.

The kiss is long, not particularly dirty by Ray's standards, and he's become a connoisseur of hot dirty down-desperate kisses since they staggered off the ice and into Tuktoyaktak. It's like a leisurely breakfast when you know you'll still be going at dinner.

"Yeah, freak." Ray's smiling. It feels like he's cracked his face open. Ray wonders if he'll bruise from when he hit the water harder than he ever hit drywall. There's no mirror in the cabin. Fraser worries about storms and broken glass and who the hell needs one anyway? Ray knows he's going to be sore, but that's okay. Fraser's got ointments for everything and as long as you don't think about what Fraser makes them out of, everything's okay. And it isn't weird that Ray's looking forward to it, Fraser cleaning off his face so carefully and rubbing out the soreness in Ray's muscles.

The wings are too tender now, he feels like he's been through the grinder. Later, Fraser will help groom them, realign the pinions, fish out any water-weed, check them for otters.

Fraser's still running his hand through Ray's hair. His voice is gentle. No recriminations. "We just have to be clear in future. You don't be dolphin-boy and head-butt the malfeasants and I won't try to fly without wings. Scout's honour."

"Mountie's honour?" Teasing Fraser is a good enough way to pass the time.

"I thought that was a given." Fraser smiles, at last losing the anxiety that was hiding behind his bright eyes.

And Ray knows it isn't just the sunlight that's making him hot.

