

BLACK

The sound of ice against metal, creaking and splitting, like nails down a blackboard.

1.INT. NADINE'S CABIN. DAY

A sharp, scared intake of breath.

NADINE (OS)

(scared)

Shit! What the hell...?

DR. NADINE CHAMBERS flicks on the light. She's a nice looking, late 20s, slim, intelligent, city girl. She's wearing thick pyjamas.

NADINE CONT'D

Oh my God!

The grinding and shrieking continues. She leaps out of bed, wrapping the duvet around herself.

Her fiancé FRED, lies asleep, wearing noise reduction headphones and a sleep mask. He doesn't move.

She opens a small curtain, but the window is steamed up and she can see nothing. We realise she's on a ship.

NADINE CONT'D

Shit.

She fights with the door. Pulling a huge handle down, she steps into the corridor.

2.INT. CORRIDOR -- CONTINUOUS

The corridor is very institutional. A SAILOR disappears out of sight.

NADINE

(quiet)

Goddamn.

FRED (OS)

It's ice baby. Vanilla Ice ice baby.

NADINE

Huh?

She looks annoyed at being shown up.

3.INT. NADINE'S CABIN. DAY

Fred lies there with his sleep mask and headphones still on, a smile on his face.

FRED

(rapping)

All right, stop, collaborate and listen
Ice is back with my brand new invention
Something grabs a hold of me tightly
Flow like a harpoon daily and nightly.

NADINE

When Dr Finklestein said I needed more
adventures with you before we get married,
I cannot believe he meant this!

FRED

(rapping)

Ice ice baby, too cold
Ice ice baby, too cold, too cold.

He flips up his sleep mask.

FRED CONT'D

Too cold baby. Come on, bring the duvet
and your sweet fat ass back to bed.

Nadine gives him the bird.

FRED CONT'D

Ok, just the duvet then.

NADINE

(annoyed)

Why didn't you tell me we'd be hitting the
ice?

FRED

You didn't ask.

Exasperated, she drops the duvet and scrabbles for some clothes, pulling on some baggy long johns.

Fred leans over and grabs the duvet. He grimaces.

FRED

Ohhh God!

He leans back.

FRED CONT'D

Woah.

Nadine pulls on more thermals.

NADINE

Old Elizabethan proverb say 'he who plays drinking games with overweight Norwegian 'til past midnight gets zip sympathy from fiancé'.

FRED

Erudite men those Elizabethans.

NADINE

(smiles)

C'mon Dr Samos, ice tweeb extraordinaire. Your herring fish stocks wait for no man.

FRED

Don't tell me, one of Raleigh's favourite phrases.

She yanks the duvet off him.

NADINE

Up!

4.INT. SHIP'S CORRIDOR. LATER

Nadine and Fred walk along the corridor, both dressed in unflattering thermal dry suits. They niggle one another.

NADINE

...no, why can't you just think about me for a change? Consider my needs. Jesus how hard can it be?

FRED

Hey I got millions of little cold fishies to think about. I don't have time for a whale.

Nadine stops.

NADINE

(angry)
Fred, shut up.

Fred doubles up in pain.

FRED

Owww, Goddamn.

Nadine looks at him without sympathy.

FRED CONT'D

I know, I know, Elizabethan man he say...

NADINE

28 days, 28 days! And I am counting them down Fred, I can tell you. Never, ever, ask me to come on a research trip ever again.

FRED

This is about climate change baby, it's import...

NADINE

Save it. Melting ice cap or no melting ice cap.

(shouts)

I just want off this ship!

She walks off. Fred is about to follow her when another bolt of pain hits him.

5.INT. SHIP'S DINING ROOM. DAY

Nadine enters. At a table sits CAPTAIN LOCKYER, Canadian, 50ish, a gruff sailor type, wearing a suitable cap.

Next to him is SHIKHA, of Asian extraction, mid 20s, a skinny, IT dweeb, working on a laptop.

LARS cooks fried herrings behind a counter. He's a large, mannerless, Nordic Viking type, in T-shirt and boxers.

LARS

(Nordic accent)

Ahhhh Nadine, apple of my one-eye, girl of my dreams.

He sniffs the herrings deeply.

LARS CONT'D

Ahhhh yes, that particular dream is all coming back to me? Herring?

NADINE

I'd rather shit glass.

LARS

Delightful, delightful. You American ladies, such a way with words.

Nadine sits down next to Shikha. He doesn't look up.

NADINE

Morning captain. Morning Shikha.

LOCKYER

(Canadian)

Ma'am.

Lars grabs the salt and pepper off the table.

NADINE

Put some clothes on can't you?

LARS

But Nadine, my little mermaid, today is not so cold.

Nadine looks out at the icebergs.

LARS CONT'D

Too much Viking man, huh?

Lars rotates his hips lasciviously.

NADINE

(deadpan)

I was thinking too little actually.

She stares at his groin. Fred enters.

LARS

Ah ha! Here he is, my little
drikkekameratt.

Lars waves some herring at Fred.

LARS CONT'D

Herring?

FRED

Jesus no!

Lars laughs, tipping the herrings onto his plate. Nadine looks
at Shikha.

NADINE

Good morning Nadine, how are you? Can I
pass you the coffee?

Shikha ignores her, tapping away.

Lars pours schnapps shots into two glasses.

LARS

(to Fred)

He we are my friend, hår av hunden.

FRED

Huh?

Lars grabs him around the shoulders.

LARS

(laughing)

Hair of the dog!

He knocks one back.

FRED

I think I'll pass.

Nadine stands, reaching across Shikha for the coffee pot.

SHIKHA

Goddamn Deene!

NADINE

Sorry Sarah. Crash Bandicoot just whipped
your ass again did he?

Shikha turns his laptop around, on it is a 3D image of a naked woman.

SHIKHA

No Deene, you just gave her a third nipple! Oh well, all the more to go round.

He is high fived by Fred. Nadine looks appalled.

SHIKHA CONT'D

Yo dude. Here it is in all its glory.

He shows a photo to Fred.

FRED

Oh no way man! Sheek, that is gross.

SHIKHA

Hey Deene, wanna see your fiancé, Dr Samos, freckling the Baffin Sea?

The photo shows Fred throwing up over the side of the ship. Nadine stands with her coffee.

NADINE

Oh grow up.

She exits.

SHIKHA

That's the trouble with ancient history chicks, no appreciation of the modern world.

Lars sits next to Fred and burps. Fred stands.

FRED

Lars, eat my shorts.

And he farts.

6.INT. SHIP'S CORRIDOR -- CONTINUOUS

Nadine walks through the ship, passing the bridge. It's a hive of activity, no one notices her.

She zips her survival suit right up and puts on some sunglasses, opening a door.

7.EXT. SHIP DECK -- CONTINUOUS

Nadine exits onto the deck. The arctic is very cold and very beautiful, icebergs and broken ice as far as the eye can see.

She inhales the cold air deeply.

NADINE

(to herself)

Sorry world.

She lights a cigarette, staring out to sea.

RICHARD (OS)

See, it can even captivate a landlubber.

Nadine doesn't turn round.

NADINE

Well professor, if I was allowed a smoke inside, I'd forgo the view.

Professor RICHARD SPACEY joins her at the rail. He's the expedition director. A very laid back, black man, early 40s, nice looking, glasses. Nothing seems to faze him.

RICHARD

Professor Emeritus to you, and I don't believe you.

Nadine looks at him.

NADINE

Well boss, I don't care.

RICHARD

(smiles)

I still can't believe Fred persuaded you onto this ship. Didn't he tell you it doesn't serve skinny mocachinos?

NADINE

(sour)

He warned me about the coffee, he was just less forthcoming about our expedition leader.

Richard looks out over the side.

RICHARD

(serious)

Would it have made a difference?

Beat.

NADINE

Martin Frobisher made the first British attempt to find the North West Passage in 1576, following John Cabot's search a hundred years earlier. It was the sailor's equivalent of alchemy. Find the Passage and die rich men.

RICHARD

They were 400 years too early.

NADINE

In the end all Frobisher had to show for his three voyages were four dead Eskimos. He brought them back to Bristol and they didn't last weeks.

Nadine tosses her cigarette over the side.

NADINE CONT'D

Life was so cheap in those days. And look at us now...

RICHARD

If Lars' projections are right, his Russian sponsors will be working Frobisher's Passage within 30 years. And the myth will be a myth no more.

NADINE

(arch)

As Lars is working on your figures professor, I'm quite sure his projections are watertight. How does such a slob have such a brain?

RICHARD

(surprised)

Who me? I...

NADINE

(smiles)

I could call you many things Richard, but slob wouldn't be one of them.

RICHARD

John Davies tried to find the Passage as well didn't he?

NADINE

Davis. Nearly perfect, show off. 1585, 86 and 87. Now, as plastic surgery wasn't a reason I joined your expedition, I need to get inside, or my nose will fall off. As big as it is, I'd like to keep it.

Richard smiles, opening the door for her.

RICHARD

Dr Chambers, you have a lovely nose.

He says, looking at her butt.

8.INT. SHIP'S RESEARCH ROOM -- LATER

Shikha, Lars, Fred, Richard and Nadine sit working. It's hi-tech stuff, sonar, satellite tracking, 3-D modelling etc.

FRED

(to Shikha)

What's it showing now?

SHIKHA

We got a salinity PPM of 32,000, one and a half degs.

Fred looks at a sonar scan.

FRED

So where the hell are these guys?

He stands and immediately holds his side.

FRED CONT'D

Ahhh, Jesus.

He walks to Shikha who makes the sign of an X.

SHIKHA

Get thee hence dude, I don't want what you got.

FRED

I'm fine.

He stops.

FRED CONT'D

Oh shit!

Holding his mouth, he makes a fast exit. Shikha grabs his camera.

SHIKHA

Woah, let me get this man!

Richard looks up from a sheet of figures. Lars smirks.

NADINE CONT'D

I dunno what you're smirking about,
poisoner.

LARS

Ahh my fiery New Yorker, it was Russian,
finest quality, no chemicals. Tonight we
have some Norwegian Akevitt, a treat from
my wife.

NADINE

(amazed)

You have a wife?

LARS

(smiles dirtily)

I shall share it with Fred, to learn more
about this fascinating piercing of yours.

Nadine is speechless. Lars laughs uproariously. She stands,
livid.

LARS CONT'D

Don't worry my dear, what goes on
expedition stays on expedition.

She exits, watched by a concerned Richard.

RICHARD

Lars, for God's sake...