

# LOOK FOR ME UNDER THE RAINBOW



The sea was unusually calm, even the deep currents seemed to stand still. As if suspended in the hushed stillness of dawn. The blue darkness of the night sky began to recede as the pale daylight washed over the horizon. Helped by the frail rays of the wintry sun shimmering through a cloud of fog. In the cold air, the coat woven out of the drops evaporated from the sea, turned into small crystals of ice.

The fog crept along the surface of the sea, dragging like a tired traveler, and spread in the direction of the land. Thin in places, thick in others, it occasionally revealed a glimpse of the blinding whiteness that covered most of the land.

If you looked at the right moment, when patches of fog dispersed enough to reveal an endless vista, you could see that it was, in fact, not land. Enveloped by the gradually disappearing fog, huge icebergs loomed, huddled atop the ice crust covering the sea of blue. At first glance, one might easily mistake them for a continent. It did, in fact, exist. The outline of the coast etched against the distant horizon was all part of nature's optical trick to fool a casual observer. Swathed in a mist of crystals, countless icebergs of various sizes stacked next to each other merged into the image of an ice mountain. The anomaly, carried by deep but weak currents, traveled the ocean almost imperceptibly.

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If not for the sound of the icebergs clashing and breaking piercing the sleepy air, the entire scene would appear lifeless. A white wasteland. Even the scattered groups of seals dozing lazily on white sheets of ice, seemed motionless and almost unreal. Their dark, slick bodies struck a sharp contrast with the surrounding harmony of whiteness. As if they were unwanted intruders. Now and then a seal would move, usually a female. With a sharp sudden spasm, one cried out in pain struggling to bring a new life into this icy world of cruel beauty.

Having left her group, she lay on her side trying to find the most comfortable position to endure the labor pains. Growing stronger and more frequent, they produced searing pain. She felt the restless pup kick and strain to come out into a whole new world. A world of breathtaking beauty, yet fraught with danger. She wanted to help it. She matched the pace of her breathing with his efforts to break the thin membrane that divided him from the outer world. She synchronized her heartbeat with his, but to no avail.

She knew it was going to be a difficult birth. Still not full term, her offspring was in a hurry to leave her body. She nevertheless hoped the two of them would somehow succeed.

When the pup suddenly started to writhe and push inside her, she could not help howling in pain. Her cry resounded over the ice, eclipsing the muted groans of other mothers-to-be who were to begin labor in a few days. They were rested and ready, prepared for the hardship of giving birth, while she had only just arrived and was still exhausted after the long swim from the north. A journey she would again take several months from now with her pup, back home to the winter-bound land of eternal snow and ice. That is, *if* the birth went well and all ended happily.

As time went by, her fears seemed well founded. The last obstacle that separated her baby from the outer world was removed. Splashes of red blood stained the ice around her, slowly freezing in the bitter cold. But the pup still did not come. Not moving, exhausted and weary, it

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braced itself for another attempt.

She wondered whether it was male or female. If a male, would he look like his father who had just woken and proudly sniffed the air? If a female, would she, like her mother, one day have to go through this pain to bring her baby into the world? After carrying it lovingly inside her womb for months and months, only to. . . .

A new wave of excruciating pain slashed through her body and interrupted her thoughts. The pup pushed its way into the world, this time with more force and determination. The mother again synchronized all her bodily functions with its efforts to break free. Though united in their struggle, she wondered whether they felt the same pain. Or if only she suffered? Though it did not matter. She would gladly endure all the pain it took, if only to let it live.

As cry after piercing cry woke up other seals, they grew agitated, particularly the females about to become mothers in a few days. They timidly lifted their small heads to listen to the cries until they gradually abated. And then, one by one, they softly stretched on the ice that glistened in the sun. Silence fell, and everything was again hushed and motionless.

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She could barely hold the overactive pup at her breast. He kept pulling away and refused to eat. His large black eyes squinted at the new surroundings with curiosity, blinking in the dazzling sunlight reflected from the white surfaces. Dark whiskers protruding from his snout combined with big chocolate eyes and two short hairs resembling antennae above each one, were all that disrupted the harmony of whiteness cloaking the pup. His fluffy fur, in its dreamlike softness once the afterbirth had been washed off, seemed to blend into the

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whiteness of the glacier. This fragile creature looked more like a chunk of white ice than a living being. Protected by nature like a mother shielding her baby from the perils that lurked.

His mother looked on tenderly as he gave in to her persistence and, something calmer, began to suckle. Content, she nevertheless remained on guard. Although seemingly relaxed, she'd primed her senses to detect the slightest of movements—any sign of danger or concealed threat. Her memories of the past, still too alive, filled her with a sense of foreboding.

The satiated pup stopped nursing and snuggled by his mother. But she could not get rid of the nameless fear. With one eye half-open, she eventually dozed, ready to snap awake at any sound.

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She left him alone for a brief moment, to satisfy her hunger. When she returned, the cub was nowhere to be found. *Nowhere!* She scanned the iceberg hoping to spot him, but in vain.

“Danny! Danny, where are you?”

Overcome by fear, she stumbled and slid over the smooth ice, searching for her son. She hoped he'd joined the other seals. When she saw he hadn't, she completely lost her head. She rushed forward, lurching and tripping, falling and rising again. Feverishly, she searched in each nook and cranny, turning at each shadow. Just when she thought it all over and lost hope of ever seeing him again, she saw something. On another end of the ice floe, a small and fluffy ball shuffled toward the sea.

“Danny!”

No reply. The chilly wind carried her voice away. Catching her breath, she dashed after

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her son still skidding toward the sea. She scurried over the ice with only enough strength to let out several sharp barks in succession. It seemed to work. The pup stopped for a moment and turned around. Giving his frantic mother time to catch him.

“Look, Mom! The sea!” He looked at her with shiny button eyes.

“Come here, Danny, to Mommy! Let’s go.” Her heart pounding, she pressed him to her side and kissed the moist tip of his little nose.

“But, Mom, this is the sea.” Eyes wide, the pup stared at the blue expanse of water stretching out between the giant icebergs into infinity.

“Yes, Danny, but you’re too small to go in the water.”

“When will I be able to go swimming?” Danny wailed.

“In a little while, after you grow up.”

“When will that be?”

“Soon, my son.” Smiling at his curiosity, she moved toward the center of the ice floe, holding him by the nape of his neck.