

Half of Each Other's Mess

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by [daraoakwise](#)

Summary

(2240) - The dial on the multiverse turns. And a young AOS Montgomery Scott meets one of the most significant people in TOS Montgomery Scott's life.

The Atlantic coast from the west side wasn't much different than it was from the east, Montgomery Scott decided. Especially in March. Cold, damp. Stormy and brooding. Which fit him fine, because he was all those things today too.

It was his eighteenth birthday, and he was standing on the coast of Maine, probably not wearing a coat thick enough to make his wee granny happy, but she wasn't here. Not that she'd be happy with him in any event, because he was supposed to have come home for MIT's spring break, but had decided he didn't want to. He'd—well, *lied*, and told her that he had too much work to do. And there *was* work to do; he was charging through his second doctorate, this one in relativistic physics. It just wasn't particularly *hard* work, because those kinds of maths were like breathing.

The University of Edinburgh had awarded him his first doctorate just a few days shy of his turning seventeen, a mathematics degree for the pride of Edinburgh and Scotland. *The finest mathematical theorist since Cochrane*, they said of a child. It was true, he was Earth's once-in-a-generation mind.

There was a reason the Earth didn't pass out minds like his very often.

A week later, sitting alone in his flat on his seventeenth birthday, strung out on the hypercaine he'd been snorting for a year to try to control his godfucked head, he'd held a phaser in his hand, tracing its grooves and lines. It wasn't set to stun, and he knew that if he pressed it to his temple and fired it, it would destroy his brain before there was time for that brain to register any pain.

That was how he started his seventeenth birthday. He was spending his eighteenth getting soaked to his skin and being glared at by a gull.

There was a hypo of medicine in his pocket. Strong, for the treatment of a madman with a nasty genetic predisposition given to him by his mother. That was the only gift she'd ever given him, other than handing him off to his grandmother and fucking off forever. The meds made him feel—better. Strange. Shaky. All of it. They were too strong for a lad who hadn't yet hit his full growth, and not quite enough to make him feel the way humans were supposed to feel. Apparently. He wouldn't really know.

He was overdue on taking the hypo by a few hours, and was toying with the idea of tossing it into the sea, the temptation of it needling in the back of his brain. Hurting, maybe just the right amount of good. Like the edge of a knife drawn across the skin of your palm; cold you weren't dressed for; meds you hadn't taken; hunger because you took a skimmer up the coast this morning and did you eat anything today? The right amount of pain. *Not* the painless waste of a phaser.

He suspected that he probably shouldn't mention that to his therapist. Or—maybe he should. It was hard to tell. She probably didn't know that her eyes widened, sometimes, when he spoke, and when they did, he noted it: *probably best not to talk about that again*. Unless he was supposed to? The rules of not being insane were still unclear to him.

It was starting to rain on him in earnest, and the gull, which had been following him, probably hoping for a sandwich, finally abandoned him in what he imagined was a huff.

He put his hand around the hypo in his pocket, considering the way the universe could fracture. He could press the dose into his skin. Hurl it into the Atlantic. Walk into the deadly riptide with the meds still in his pocket. Or—he turned and headed back to the skimmer. It was a piece of crap rental he'd grabbed on a whim, wanting to get out of town. He pressed his finger to the starter, and the engine coughed. It needed new converters, a flush of the coolant system. It needed half a day of tinkering in the garage that had first belonged to his grandfather, and then his uncle, four-thousand kilometers away and three years in his past.

Fifteen year old mathematical prodigies didn't work in garages, they went to university, but he could still summon the oil-and-ozone smell of it, the heat of engine exhaust, the memory of grease under his fingernails. The way that smooth curses could drip off your tongue when you smashed your finger, *again*, and that was probably a black thumbnail for the next six months and the lads were laughing at you but would buy you a pint later even if you were a wee bit underage ...

His hands itched to open up the skimmer, to grow stiff in the cold. He wanted to stand in the storm in his shirtsleeves while the gull glared at him and the waves pounded a beach he'd turned his back on. He wanted to stare into the machinery, water dripping off his face—rain, not tears.

But the skimmer finally started and the universe waited in the balance again. South, back to Cambridge? Or ... the computer in the skimmer said the nearest town was South Bristol. A little restaurant there sold lobster rolls and chips and coffee, and got good reviews, and he was hungry because he was pretty sure he hadn't actually eaten today. So, north.

The restaurant was mostly a shack, and had some half-naughty punny nautical name that he forgot immediately. Dick's Crabs or Bikini Bar or Swab My Deck. It also had a *very* pretty barista-slash-cook-slash-waitress who found a couple slightly dusty bags of tea for him before she went to toast some buns for the lobster rolls. And he knew he looked drowned and about twelve years old, but he'd discovered the Scottish accent did things to North Americans that he was happy to leverage. That he was planning on leveraging much more, now that he was eighteen.

He wandered back to the washroom and raked his hand through his hair, still chilled and shivering (it was the *cold*, not the fact that the meds were still in his pocket) and—aye, it was going to have to be the accent to carry the day this time 'round.

Except she was busy flirting with a big blonde bloke when he came out again and—ah well. Blonde bloke was definitely gorgeous to look at, and the two of them together made a nice picture, framed against the window and the storm outside. He was a scientist and mathematician, but could certainly appreciate a good work of art, especially if it came with perky breasts or a handsome line from broad shoulders to tight arse.

He leaned back, drinking the terrible tea, and watched them. He wondered, if they put his arms around him, would it be warm?

"Come on, Abby," the blonde lad was complaining. "I haven't been home in months! Cup of coffee, for old time's sake?" Scott couldn't tell if blondie was asking her out, or trying to get a free drink, but either way he ended up paying for his drink and sulking at a table alone, working glumly on a padd.

The reviews were right—the lobster rolls were incredible, and he decided he needed at least two more (god, did he forget to eat yesterday too?) and besides it was raining harder and he was still freezing. And the lass was a lost cause but if the blonde lad glanced up in surprise at an unexpected accent, well, Scott was willing to follow the wind in whatever direction it might be blowing. Besides, they were the only customers here; it wouldn't hurt to be friendly.

"That padd looks like it personally offended yeh," Scotty said, dropping down in a chair across from him.

The blonde lad startled, then smirked, and oh, *fuck*, he really was pretty. "First day of spring break, and I was hoping to go sailing, but instead it's storming and I have no excuse to ignore the *three weeks* of assignments that got crammed into one week of vacation by my evil professors," blonde-viking-god-boy complained, and Scott had to admit he wasn't immune to an accent either.

Abby brought his next round of lobster rolls and more dusty tea. "You were hopin' tae go sailing? In March?" Scott boggled. "This is my first spring on this side of the Atlantic, but that seems remarkably hopeful."

"I'm tempted to just go anyway. If I drown then at least I'm put out of my misery ... I'm stealing one of your fries as rent for sitting at my table."

"Chips. Help yourself."

"Fries, you bloody Englishman."

"Scotsman," he corrected reflexively, and then waved a finger at him. "Oh, I think yeh did that on purpose." The blonde lad winked at him. "Your table?" Scott asked, picking up from the earlier comment.

"This is the Andrew Corrigan Memorial Table, I'll have you know. My ass is sculpted into this seat," said—Andrew? Andy?

"And it's a bonnie arse too, Andrew Corrigan," Scott answered agreeably. "I'm Montgomery Scott."

Corrigan grabbed more of his chips. Fine. *Fries*. "Montgomery is a hell of a big name for a skinny twelve year old kid," he said in amusement.

"Eighteen year old kid. And my grandfather was Big Monty, which is why most everyone but my wee granny calls me Scotty."

"Well, Scotty, they call me Corry."

"No they don't!" Abby shouted from the kitchen. "*Andy*."

"They call me Corry at Starfleet Academy, Abigail!" Corry shouted back. "They really do," he said ruefully to Scotty.

"Whatever yeh say. Happy tae call yeh whatever yeh want." And blonde lad—*Corry's* breath hitched just slightly and aye, maybe the accent would get him somewhere today. Then Scotty turned Corry's padd around, a lobster roll half falling apart in his other hand. "Ah. Warp physics," he said, and then winced internally, because *that was entirely blowing it there, Dr. Scott*.

Corry squinted at him. "You look at my padd for a quarter second, and go straight to 'warp physics?'"

“Latest textbook that Starfleet Engineering is using, aye?” Scotty asked, and swiped to the title page. And it was authored by a collaboration of scientists but—

Corry glanced up at him. “You said your grandfather is Montgomery Scott?” he asked.

“Aye. But my granny is the other mathematician in the family. Grandfather was a mechanic in Glasgow.”

“Shit,” Corry complained, looking ruefully down at the list of collaborators. “I thought you said you were eighteen?”

“I am,” Scotty said. “Just today. I was seventeen when I wrote that chapter of your book. Had some ... time on my hands last summer.”

Corry put his head down on the table. “Well, Dr. Montgomery Scott, I was thinking about taking you home, but now that I know you are one of the people *torturing* me ...” he lifted his head. “Did you just say you were eighteen today?”

“And having a much nicer birthday than last year,” he admitted.

“Why?” Corry asked, idly polishing off the chips. Fries. Whatever.

Scotty shrugged, like it wasn't that important. “Last year I was in my flat in Edinburgh, and my granny walked in on me. I went for ice cream with her instead of doin' what I was plannin' on doin'.” All technically true. And his granny had *wept*, and taken him straight to the hospital afterward, and he hadn't died on his seventeenth birthday after all.

“That's the worst,” Corry commiserated. “Abby, it's his birthday!” he called. “He should get free ice cream!”

He ... didn't really want ice cream. “I'd take another lobster roll,” he said hopefully when she popped her head out.

“Where are you putting them?” she eyerolled at him. “That's number six or seven.”

“I forgot tae eat this week,” he admitted, and they chuckled at him, because that wasn't something people *actually* forgot to do. “Here, pass me your padd,” he told Corry.

“I am not going to sit here and work on math with the author of my textbook,” Corry protested, snatching it away.

“I didnae write the text book. Couple of chapters,” Scott insisted. “And why the hell are yeh taking warp physics if yeh hate it?”

“Because I'm a Starfleet Engineer! It's a required course!”

“Alright. Why are yeh being a Starfleet Engineer if you hate warp physics?”

Corry glared at him. “I think I hate *you* a little. Oh! If you're so smart: why aren't you a Starfleet Engineer, if you love warp physics so much?”

Scotty smiled faintly. “Starfleet doesnae take the likes of me.”

“Scotsmen? Textbook authors? Utter bastards?”

“Madmen,” Scott answered, taking yet another lobster roll from Abby. He leaned back in the chair and closed his eyes. “Look. Explain what you know tae me, and if you get a wee bit off course, I'll nudge you in the right direction.”

And Corry certainly wasn't an idiot, but seemed to be knotted up in self doubt about what he already knew. Three hours over maths and exceptionally bad tea, and, aye, the ice cream that Abby finally gave in on managed to make Scotty glad he was alive to see this birthday. It was an entirely unexpected development.

When the light came up in Corry's eyes, exulting in understanding the exquisite beauty that was the warp equations, Scotty excused himself to the loo. He locked the door and grinned in the mirror at his own stupid face. Then he took the hypo out of his pocket and pressed the meds into his skin.

His hair was still a wreck, though.

It was the nicest day he'd had in ages, but the sun was going down, and it was four hours back to Cambridge in a dodgy skimmer with a busted heater, and the rain had stopped. And so Scotty said goodbye, and didn't give Corry his comm number, and walked out to his rented skimmer. And the universe turned again, because *the bloody thing wouldn't start*.

It was the best thing that had ever happened to him.

“Well, that's embarrassing, Dr.

Scott,” Corry said, wandering out to lean on the thing. He waved vaguely over his shoulder. “My parents' house is about a ten minute walk away, and they are entirely used to me dragging strays home. Although a Scottish lobster-roll-and-tea powered baby genius is a new one.” Corry pulled off his jumper and wrapped it around Scotty, some woolen LL Bean thing that completely drowned him, but was *entirely* warm.

Then Andrew Corrigan threw an arm around his shoulders. “Come on, Scotty,” Corry said. “Let's go home.”

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