

Contrast

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| Rating: | Teen And Up Audiences |
| Archive Warning: | Creator Chose Not To Use Archive Warnings |
| Category: | Gen |
| Fandom: | Star Trek: The Original Series |
| Character: | Montgomery "Scotty" Scott , Andrew "Corry" Corrigan |
| Additional Tags: | Good Parenting , Bad Parenting , Implied/Referenced Child Abuse , Foreshadowing , Coming of Age , Pre-Series |
| Language: | English |
| Series: | Part 10 of Arc of the Wolf |
| Stats: | Published: 2023-08-16 Completed: 2023-08-20 Words: 3,140 Chapters: 7/7 |

Contrast

by [SLWalker](#)

Summary

(2228 - 2242) - Before they were roommates (let alone best friends, let alone brothers), they were just two kids navigating very different lives.

Notes

This was written for the Ficlet Flashdance on the original Ad Astra for the Twelve Trials of Triskelion. Corry's actually not quite two years older than Scotty, but the first six chapters are written with their ages parallel to one another; the last chapter, though, takes place in 2242, between the Prologue and Part I of On the Nature of Wind.

Age 8

The pony was a sturdy Welsh pony, and Montgomery liked him already. He was pretty, a sort of dappled brown color, and he had big dark eyes with a nice look in them. His neck was arched over the wood door of his stall, and he whickered when they came in, and of course, the first thing Montgomery did was beeline over there to give him an apple slice.

He didn't really know how to fit in Uncle Charlie's household, and he didn't really have anything in common with his cousins, but he liked the horses and ponies. They were all well-socialized and good-natured, and when he had to stay here, he would spend hours in the stables with them. He'd learned to ride when he was four, and sometimes he would even climb up on one, though he wasn't actually allowed to go riding alone at all.

"Our new lad," Charlie said, reaching out to scratch the pony's forehead. "Take a fancy, Montgomery?"

"Aye," Montgomery stepped closer, and when the pony put his head down, he buried both hands in the dark brown mane. That made the boy grin; a sudden, beaming grin.

"Well, I'll tell ye what." Charlie crouched down, smiling and eying his nephew. "If ye promise tae see tae him when ye get back, ye can take him out."

"Alone?" Montgomery looked over, both eyebrows up.

"Aye." Charlie stood up, patting the pony. "Stay in the pasture, though."

He had to know how much that made the lad's day.

"You're not a pebble," Andy said, looking at the tiny blue crab hiding amongst the pebbles, so perfectly camouflaged that it looked like one to predators and just about everyone else.

The tiny crab, not even as big as his dad's thumbnail, didn't move. There were hundreds of them on the shoreline, glistening like minuscule rocks. Andy sat on a big rock, not wanting to accidentally step on any on the beach. Lots of them would die, wouldn't make it through moulting or through predators, or through weather, or people walking, but he didn't see any point to making it harder for them.

"I know, you have to pretend to be a pebble, but I see you." Andy rested his chin on his crossed arms, belly cooled by the stone, the sun heating up his back. He felt a sudden rush of affection for this particular little crab, staring at him and holding perfectly still, waiting to be eaten. "I won't hurt you. I promise."

Age 10

"Why'd ye do it, lad?"

Uncle Edward's voice was disappointed. Montgomery didn't look up -- he *couldn't* -- but he chewed on his lip and he felt some mix between scared and angry, and he didn't know what he was supposed to say in answer, and so, he didn't. His cousin Alan had been *mean*, and he didn't know why, but Alan had said he was messed up, like in the head, and Montgomery didn't do anything about that, they were just words, but then Alan had shoved him in the back, not really that hard like he was trying to get his attention, and Montgomery had turned around and punched him so hard in the nose that it bled, and he wasn't even sure *why* he did, but he did.

Alan was three years older, and he still went running back to his Da crying.

"Montgomery..." Edward said, softly, like it was a breath out and not his name. He reached out, and when his hand came into Montgomery's peripheral vision, Montgomery jerked *back*, looking up for a moment with his teeth clenched.

Edward was blinking in surprise, confusion. And maybe... like sad or angry, almost, but not quite. "Lad, what's gotten into ye?"

"I dinna ken," Montgomery finally answered, head down again, bottom lip quivering. "I'm sorry."

He just avoided Alan after that.

"Mom, it's icky! She won't quit following me around!"

Andy had a legitimate grievance. Sally Nash wanted him to be her boyfriend, and he didn't want to be, because girls were weird and he had absolutely no desire to go hold hands and kiss or whatever they were supposed to do, especially since Sally didn't like it when he'd shown her the dead lobster that had washed up on shore.

"You made her cry, Andy," his mother said, giving him The Look, the one where she crossed her arms and leaned on the counter and it made him squirm.

He didn't *mean* to make Sally cry, but she wouldn't leave him alone and it just wasn't *fair* that he was getting in trouble when she was the one who wouldn't quit bothering him.

"Andy..."

It was Mom's warning voice, to go with The Look. And even though Andy wanted to protest again, he knew better.

He did sigh, though, as put upon as he could. "Okay, okay. I'll tell her I'm sorry. Tomorrow."

His mother pointed to the comm box. "Not tomorrow."

Andy made a face, but he went and said he was sorry.

Scotty's part directly alludes to *Frosted* and *Forty-Eight*.

The tile resolved from a blur, taking on definition. Cold white tile, under his knees, under his hands. He picked his head up, and the painted shapes moved across the wall, impossibly, sickeningly. Dropped his head again. Breathed.

There were no words in his head; no laments, no pleas, no prayers. Just dazed, scattered thought, rifled through and scrambled, fragmented, broken, and his only defiance was the breath in his lungs and the certainty that he would fight for the next one. Even if he didn't understand why he had to.

Words, now, and a shape and blur and he didn't recognize them. Scrambled back, dizzy, baring his teeth in a silent, feral response that spoke where he could not: *Stay back*. It stopped, and tried to sound soothing. *Stay back*. It moved again, and he found his feet, reeling.

Stay back.

The world swirled, maddening.

Dazed, scattered thought, scrambled and disrupted, and defiance. Just his breath and fight, silent and grim and there was no before. No after. No nothing. He didn't even know, anymore. Only that he was still breathing. Still fighting.

One living creature, that fought because that was all he knew how to do, in defiance of what he could not understand, for the right to *exist*.

The sea shoved the nose of the little skiff skyward, and he whooped.

It didn't matter if there was no one to hear. It was a sound as bright as the sun burning down, deeper than the blue depths below; it was warm in his chest, in the burn in his arms as he trimmed the sail, and he felt like if he wasn't sailing, he'd be flying.

Over the crest of another wave, turquoise in the sun, back down to spray and the flecks of cold hitting his face; he didn't whoop this time, but he grinned so wide his face hurt.

He had been out here for hours and he knew he had to go back soon, but he could have sailed forever; it was his first time out solo, the first time he'd been allowed to go alone, and he never wanted to give it up. It was every bit of the happiness he'd thought it would be, and it was his.

Every breath in was filled with a bright joy that had him whoop to the sky and the sea.

He pointed his bow to the east.

Age 14

It took him four starts to get out of his window, and down the tree, and away. The rain made it harder. His hands didn't stop shaking the entire time. He waited for the lights to come on, and he thought about what they would do if they caught him, and that thought was enough to make him break out in a cold sweat.

It wasn't enough to stop him, though.

The trembling didn't go away, not even when he managed to navigate his way in the dark back to his old hideout, way back on the family's property, deep in the old forests replanted a couple centuries ago; the one he hadn't seen since-- since--

Since.

It didn't matter. It didn't matter. *He wasn't broken.*

Montgomery just pulled his sister's nonfunctional NovaPad out of his backpack, with his tools and his flashlight, and got to work fixing it. It would be too loud to do it in his room, and aye, she was mad at him all the time it seemed, where everyone else just sort of slid looks past him, but he could do this. He couldn't figure out where it'd all gone so bloody wrong, but he could fix *this*.

And his hands steadied as he did.

Andy bounced from foot to foot, trying occasionally to jump up high enough to see over the heads of people taller than him.

Everyone was in the way. It wasn't fair, it wasn't like *their* Dad had been gone for a month and a half in deep space. But no, they just had to get in the way.

His mother stopped his jumping with a hand on his shoulder, and Andy just crossed his arms and sulked. *Of course.*

Rach was bouncing just as much as he was. Just because he was fourteen and she was eight didn't mean he should have to be the one to stand still. Kids got away with *everything*.

Then the announcer came on: The shuttle was arriving.

"Mom," Andy finally begged, looking up at her, his bravado fleeing in light of an almost frantic feeling in his chest. "Please?"

His mother pressed her lips together, then shook her head and a smile took over where the mild consternation left off. "All right, but don't run into anyone."

"Okay!" That was all he needed to hear. He took off through the crowd, and okay, so maybe he did bump into some people, but he apologized.

When Aaron Corrigan stepped off of the shuttle, seabag over his shoulder, he was nearly knocked right back in by his son flying into his arms.

Scotty's part takes place during Part 2 of *Junkyard Dogs*; Corry's part foreshadows the story *Perfectly Good Sunday*.

The concert tickets had cost him about a month's pay, which was funny since he didn't really listen to music very often, and there was some part of him that had a twinge of guilt that he wasn't working on Perera's Theory, especially since Mister McMillan had gone to such trouble for him, though that was blasted mostly out of his head by the Irish band covering other Irish bands, and even *that* paled in comparison to the beautiful lass who had his hand.

Montgomery had spent the last three weeks in a daze, and Flora had held his hand every day of it.

He still couldn't believe it.

She was one of the most popular girls in secondary. And she walked with *him* to class, every day for three weeks, hand in hand. Sometimes she would turn back and get his other hand and walk backwards, her skirt swirling around her knees, and just beam at him until he laughed, and then she'd stop and kiss him when he stepped in.

Now, the winding down set of Irish rock left him feeling breathless and light, where nothing could really touch him, except Flora, and then she did.

She leaned in, up, and her lips tickling his ear made him shiver head to toe, and she whispered, "Come away with me, Montgomery."

*If you walk away, walk away
I walk away, walk away
I will follow...*

"Aye," he answered, breathless; *oh, god, aye.*

"Hey, we could have done this a long time ago if you hadn't spurned my lobster." Andy leaned his head on his hand, grinning wide at Sally.

"We were like ten, Andy." Sally reached up and pushed her sweat-damp hair back off of her forehead.

"Good point."

His parents were at Rach's choir concert, and Andy had managed to beg off for school work. And he wasn't lying, because he had school work and it was done, but part of it was also because he knew Sally was going to come over, and fooling around in a bed was way better than trying to hide in the back of the dance hall.

Andy grinned, ready to take advantage of the time he knew he had left when the door swung open, and in walked Barb, and then he realized he'd scheduled two dates on the same night.

Oh, *cripes*.

Sally squeaked, pulling his blanket up over herself, and stared. "What are you doing here?!"

Barb stared back. "I should be asking what you're doing in bed with my boyfriend!"

"But he's my--" Sally cut herself off, and then they both looked at Andy, who scrambled around in his head trying to figure out how to explain this.

He had a feeling, given their expressions, that there wasn't a chance in heck of him pulling it off.

"...I didn't know we were exclusive?" he tried, apologetically.

It wasn't enough, no.

Scotty's part takes place after the story *Distant Horizons*.

The wet heat was more oppressive than any blanket, and so heavy it felt like he'd never be able to lift his eyelids.

Not that he needed to. His tricorder was blasting his music through his wireless headset, and he'd also rigged it to give him a proximity alarm in case any enemy -- or ally -- came within five meters of him. That left him, half-trampled tall grass, sparse shade and the chance to sweat in peace for awhile, waiting his turn on perimeter detail.

He spent it alone. Not that he didn't like his squadmates, mind. Actually, he really did. Couldn't call them friends, but they were a bonnie group, and they liked him, too. The alarm was for their good, too; he'd nearly belted Eissa this morning when he was woken up for his turn to keep watch.

Now, though, all was calm and the music was good, and he might have even taken a nap if his alarm hadn't sounded.

He snapped his eyes open, grabbed his phaser and pulled his headset off, but it was just Ahlgren. The Swede stepped over, eying him in smiling bemusement. "Sorry, Scotty."

"Everything a'right?"

"Red team's on the move." Ahlgren offered a hand down, and pulled him to his feet when he took it. "What were you singing?"

If it weren't for the fact he was already flushed, Scotty would have turned red at the realization he *had* been singing. "Just... somethin'."

Ahlgren grinned. "You're good. Maybe after we take them out, you'll give us a concert."

Scotty shook his head with a sheepish grin back, picked up his tricorder and set off back for camp.

The bar was filled with a pounding beat, and he wished he could really feel it. He loved dancing, but for some reason, he couldn't really get into it tonight.

The beer was cold, the air was hot, and his squadmates were living it up. They'd won the flag, and it was the first time in two and a half months of Basic that they'd gotten to go party, but all he could really think about was how the night off would have been better spent in Maine. With Mom and Dad. With Rach. With his house and his shore and--

"Come on, Corrigan!" Lisette grabbed his hand and pulled. "None of these knuckle-draggers can dance."

"Lise," he started, but he didn't know what else to say.

Her face softened and she sat next to him. "Homesick again?"

Andy glanced over, smiling a little. "That obvious?"

"On you? Like an open book." She patted his shoulder. "Weekend furloughs start in a month in a half. For now? Come and dance."

Andy looked out over the dance floor, then back at his squadmate, then chuckled. "Maybe just one song."

He ended up tearing up the dance floor for two more sets, but he still went to bed missing home.

Takes place between the Prologue and Part I of *On the Nature of Wind*.

There was a misting rain in the lowering gray light, and the brick against his back felt reassuringly solid right now. His arm ached from the vaccination rounds he'd gotten earlier, and that was oddly solid, too.

Everything else was vertigo.

He'd figured out early on that he didn't agree with whatever formulations Starfleet loaded their hypos with, but he'd rather walk through an antimatter stream than tell them, so now he just needed to get back to his barracks without passing out.

Could have, too, if not for a spanner in the works.

"Is it the flu? Should I call the doc?"

"No."

When he finally pried his eyes open, he found Corry watching him with worry written all over his face. It was unnerving; he barely knew the man, though he'd half-resigned himself to Corry hanging around, trying to engage in conversation or convince him to go drinking, all good-natured persistence. It was an endearing quality, but Scotty wasn't looking to make friends.

Still, he did need to defuse this before Corry got it in his head to call a doctor anyway. "I'm fine. Happens every time, trust me. Just need tae lay down, a'right?"

There was a long beat where Corry looked at him, then nodded. "Let me walk you there?"

"I dinna need any help."

"Maybe not," Corry said, with a worried half-smile. "But it'll make me feel better."

Scotty just sighed, closing his eyes. "Fine."

It was warm, and the desk lamp lit the room yellow.

Everything was quiet.

He'd figured out early on that just because he thought Scotty needed someone to take pity on him, that didn't make it the truth. The more he tagged along, the more Corry realized that the *last* thing Scotty was interested in was making friends.

They never made it to the barracks; Scotty was reeling too badly before they got far, so with worry gnawing on him, he just took Scotty back to his own dorm room. His roommate was gone for the weekend anyway. At least by then, Scotty wasn't exactly in the shape to put up a fight over it.

Corry still wasn't sure what to make of the wall of wariness he got, but he steamrolled past it anyway.

So, now he was sitting in his chair and Scotty was crashed on his bed, and he probably could have used the time to study, but he kept looking over, trying to make sense of things. Figure out what it was about this one that was so different. Surprised some by the depth of his own worry earlier, and the warmth of his affection now.

He shook his head to himself, got up, got an extra blanket from the closet and tossed it over his not-yet-friend, who was curled up as if cold. Sat back down. Thought about it.

When it finally clicked, he could only smile.

"I've got news for you, pal, but you're not a pebble, either."

Satisfied, Corry settled in for the long haul.

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