

A Treatise on Megafauna, Regional Pronunciation, Night Sounds in Maine and the Mating Obnoxiousness of Foxes

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by [SLWalker](#)

Summary

(2245) - Not long after getting back to Earth from Vulcan, Scotty and Corry go hiking in the Wôbanakik Preserve.

The Relative Size of Worlds and People

"No, it's not that. It's just-- everything here's so bloody *big*."

Corry smirked and measured with the flat of his hand from the top of his head, then over on a level plane to hover said hand several centimeters above Scotty's head. "I think I see what you mean."

Scotty swatted his hand away, not particularly hard, and then rolled his eyes at Cor's answering snicker. "That's not what I meant, either," he said, aiming the most disgruntled look over at his best friend that he possibly could, even though he knew full well that Corry wouldn't be the least bit abashed. "I don't mean the *megafauna*."

Corry stared back for a moment while that percolated, blinked once and then cracked up, which was admittedly the whole point of hauling out old biology lessons from secondary. Cor ended up laughing so hard that his face turned red, making it very difficult for Scotty to keep a straight face himself.

Then, when Corry managed to gasp, incredulously, "Did you just compare me to a *moose*?" it went from very difficult to impossible.

Scotty shrugged expansively, palms up, even if he couldn't help grinning broadly. "If it walks like an ungulate--"

Cor was still chuckling as he shook his head. "That would make me the only moose in the Wôbanakik Preserve." Then he paused and thought about it before clarifying, "The only *confirmed* moose."

"Really?" They had somehow gotten completely off-topic, but the idea that the park didn't have moose still surprised Scotty. He glanced around at the incredible vista of trees spread out around and below that were just now starting to wear autumn colors; it certainly *looked* like there should be a moose or ten lurking.

"Yeah. If you really wanna up your chances of a real moose sighting--"

--I really don't--"

--then you're gonna wanna go into lake country. Or even further north or deeper into the interior."

Scotty narrowed his eyes in suspicion. "Now wait, 'cause don't think I didn't notice those signs on 129 tellin' people to watch for moose."

Corry waved that off. "I'm not saying it's impossible. Just not likely. Because, you see, all of the artists and antiques dealers flood up here in tourist season and drive the native wildlife -- megafauna *or* Mainiac -- either away or crazy."

It was completely impossible to detangle the joke from the reality there, and Scotty opened his mouth to try at least three times before giving up with a wondering, perhaps awed shake of his head. All he could say to that was, "Aye." Then he shook his head again. "Anyway, I only meant that--" A beat, then he had to concede for the second time in less than a minute, "--I'm not actually sure what I was gettin' at."

"That it's nothing like Aberdeen," Corry said, decisively, looking back out over the beautiful preserve they were currently hanging about in.

The fact that Cor pronounced Aberdeen with a distinctively Doric flare -- starting with *ay* rather than *aah* -- made Scotty smile, especially since he knew it wasn't intentional, just the consequence of them having lived in such close quarters.

"Ayuh," he said, which definitely *was* intentional, because he still got a kick out of that particular affirmation and didn't actually foresee a time he wouldn't. Pronounced like a proper Mainuh, with barely any *ay* there; all the emphasis was on the *yuh*.

It was Corry's turn to roll his eyes, though he did with a smile. "Aye. So, now that we've discussed Down East megafauna--"

--I was sayin' that I never quite got Earth's scale, until ye managed to get me over here." Scotty tilted his head, looking far beyond the trees to where the ocean was dotted with islands and the white specks of boats. "Took us three hours to drive up here, right? It's only two and a half between Aberdeen and--"

"And?"

Scotty shook off the brief chill that crossed his bows. "--Edinburgh. But they're worlds apart, culturally speakin'."

Corry also knew how to pronounce Edinburgh -- *Edin-bruh*, faintest hint between the 'b' and 'r' of a theoretical 'u' -- even though he'd never been there. Just like Scotty knew that Damariscotta was really pronounced *Dahm-ri-scot-ah*, especially since he'd been there or through there several times now. "Huh," Cor said, thoughtfully. "And Ireland was like that, too. Small, but-- I guess dense."

"Aye, everything over there is. And I didn't get scale in Basic, either, since we just used the transporter platforms to move about." Scotty shifted enough to rest his arms on his knees, boots braced against the gray rock they were sitting on. "Or *sound*. Even that's bigger here."

That got Corry looking over again, eyebrows drawn, a bemused smile on his face. "How so?"

"Crickets. And-- what're those little things that chirp? All night, seems like? Hundreds of 'em."

"Peepers? They're a kind of tree frog." Corry's bemused smile softened there. "You don't have anything like that in northeast Scotland?"

"No." They were lovely sounds, though; the first night Scotty had stayed over there in South Bristol -- just a couple weeks ago now -- when the weather was still warm, he'd really *listened* as night fell. It was impossible not to, because there was so much, the night was so full. "I

mean, I've heard all those sounds before, but that was during Basic and ye ken how that was. It's different when ye get to be still and just-- take it in."

"So what do you have in Scotland?" Cor asked, looking kind of fascinated.

"Some frogs. The croakin' kind, not the chirpin' kind. And owls. And foxes." Scotty quirked his eyebrows. "Not much, by comparison. Birds during the day, but mostly just in the woods."

Cor nodded, after a moment. "Foxes. We have those, too. I've heard them screaming before, they get pretty obnoxious during mating season."

Scotty scoffed at that. "Don't we all," he said, laconically, then smirked when he got Corry laughing again.

Corry hadn't exactly had all that much time -- or reason -- to laugh when he was on Vulcan. Even on the sixteen day trip back, he'd seemingly swung between a kind of straight-faced exhaustion and something a little more manic, as if he was trying on different facets of himself to see which, if any, still fit. Despite having his parents and Scotty there, how *hard* that two years on Vulcan had been for him was clear.

Corry wasn't quite back to rights, but if hiking in the Wôbanakik Preserve and getting him to laugh helped, then Scotty considered it a day well spent.

"Yeah." Corry shook his head, still chuckling. "You missed the cicadas, though. They're around in July and August. You'd like those."

"Probably." Scotty tried to remember if he'd had the sound of cicadas pointed out to him back in Basic, but ultimately couldn't place it. He supposed he could go and look it up in a database, but that almost seemed like cheating.

"Which means you'll just have to stay over come next summer," Corry said, finally standing up and dusting off his jeans before offering a hand down. "I mean, you'll get off corrective action right around the right time, so you might not even have a shipboard assignment yet."

Scotty took that hand and got up himself; once he was up, he rolled his shoulders to straighten his jacket and looked out once more from their high vantage, and took in the color and the sea and where it met the sky, and thought about the relative size of worlds and people. "Aye," he said, thinking ahead and trying to picture Midcoast Maine in the summer proper, and South Bristol in particular.

(He didn't know it'd be not quite three years, and no small amount of suffering, before he'd get to see that.)

For now, he just turned and followed Corry down the trail, poking at his best friend with a metaphorical stick as he caught up. "Anyway, I'll just bet that a wolf can take a moose down."

Corry barked a laugh at that. "And I know for a fact that a moose can kick a wolf to death. Unless, of course, said moose is old and sickly."

"Well, ye *are* a year and seven months my senior citizen."

"Hey, if I'm megafauna, does that make you *microfauna*?"

They didn't stop the whole way down the mountain.

Antiques Dealers: A Coda

Chapter Notes

My many friends from Massachusetts-- please forgive me. >.>

"Okay, but listen: It goes like this--"

The words came essentially out of nowhere, halfway back to South Bristol from Bar Harbor -- *Bah Hahbah*, if one wanted to be technical and also happened to be delighted by the Maine accent -- and pulled Scotty out of the doze he'd been in, head against the window and arms tucked into his jacket, worn out after a long work week and then a long day hiking.

Cor didn't look away from the road as he drove, and he didn't even seem to realize he'd been talking to someone essentially asleep, "--they come here from away -- sometimes New York, but *especially* from Massachusetts -- and they look around at allllll the antiques stores, and they get caught up in the beauty of Maine and the idyllic notion of what it's like to deal antiques in Maine, so they decide to buy one. Or, hell, even open a whole new one, converting some Mainuh's perfectly good barn in the process."

The subtle, artful disdain in Corry's voice as he said 'Massachusetts' made this screed or lecture or whatever it was about a thousand times more interesting; before he was even all the way awake, Scotty was watching his best friend in absolutely rapt fascination, wondering where the hell this was gonna go and sort of pleased that he didn't actually have the first clue.

"So," Cor went on, at his metaphorical podium, "what happens is they don't bother to sit down and think about how saturated the market is. They put out incredibly kitschy signs about beach property, like crossed oars or something similarly generic, fake cracked paint on 'em, or they maybe get ahold of some dusty old painting that was made by one of the likewise endemic artist galleries in the region. And maybe *sometimes* they pony up their grandma's silverware or an old armoire, which is the real deal. But -- and pay attention, this is the important part -- most of their actual so-called antiques come from other antiques dealers."

Scotty wished he had something to prop his elbow on; resting his chin on his palm to watch this seemed instinctive. "How's that work, then?" he asked, because he could already see the fatal flaw in that business model.

"It doesn't." Corry nodded, solemnly, with so much gravity that Scotty half-expected his half of the skimmer to scrape the road. "What happens is, they realize they're unable to cope with our winters, our rugged independence, our *manners*, -- namely, that we have some -- and they sell off their stock so they can go back from whence they came. And the other antiques dealers, like the desperate vultures that they are, swoop in and buy up that stock. Or, rather, what they assume to be their *good* stock, not realizing that they are just the latest link in an unbroken chain of thwarted Massholes."

Massholes, Scotty thought, in wide-eyed wonder, before promptly laughing his head off.

Corry, bless him, let Scotty laugh until he was wiping the tears off of his face and his sides were aching. But then, once that laughter was tenuously under control -- very tenuously, because *Massholes* -- he continued, "And so, the very same so-called antiques float from store to store to store, like the *Flying Dutchman*, destined never to be bought by anyone aside yet another antiques dealer, destined never to stay in one place, and leaving in their wake the broken dreams of a cursed people."

Scotty knew that this was something of a deeper explanation about why there were unlikely to be moose in either the Wôbanakik Preserve or down ME-129, but somewhere between his interrupted dozing and the absolutely fantastic expansion on his vocabulary, he'd lost the thread and had no great urge to take it back up.

Instead, still giggling intermittently -- because *Massholes* -- he managed to ask, "What's that make me, then? 'Cause I'm not from Massachusetts, but I am 'from away'--"

Cor waved that off. "Oh, we've already claimed you. You just haven't figured it out yet."

That was enough to get Scotty eyeing him narrowly, though also good-naturedly. "That so?"

"Aye," Corry said, smiling. "See, the first time you're driving up here and a skimmer with a Massachusetts registration cuts you off despite there being wide open road, forcing you into fancy maneuvers just to avoid slamming into that beautiful eastern white pine, you'll find out just how much."

After a long moment of visualizing that scenario -- and his inevitable reaction to it, exercising his fantastic new vocabulary -- Scotty could really only echo in amused resignation, "Ayuh."

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