

I Measure Every Grief I Meet

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by [daraoakwise](#)

Summary

The timeline is destroyed. Scotty may as well teach physics. If it hurts, at least it is interesting.

Notes

Set during Ch. 10 of "A Higher Power When You Look."

See the end of the work for more [notes](#)

- Inspired by [Six Inch Valley](#) by [SLWalker](#)

Owen Hanson hid in the back of the lecture hall, waiting. Dingy tile floors and long tables with mismatched chairs wrapped above and around a large blackboard with half-erased numbers and letters in the language of the cosmos, while the smell of chalk and a ticking clock provided the only ambiance.

The fledgling scientists were sitting solemnly in first-day silence, dreading this crucible of a course. Their infamous professor limped in two minutes late, and the tension thickened.

Owen squinted at Professor Scott, assessing. He hadn't shaved, and was wearing jeans and a t-shirt ("*We're Here, We're Queer, Fuck Off*") with a sports jacket.

(Owen had been looking for something to wear to breakfast when he found a shirt in the back of Scotty's closet. Jewel red, a symbol on the breast, bands around the wrists. He'd turned to find Scotty staring in raw grief, and it was gone the next time Owen stayed over.)

Scotty leaned against the board; it would put a white line across his ass, only noticeable if he stood or moved, which he probably wouldn't. His right hand was crossed over to his left elbow, fingers pale and tense against the hollow black sleeve.

When he spoke, his threadbare voice somehow filled the room. "Physics One," Scotty said, smirking at Owen. "If yeh are lookin' for Poetry, Doctor Hanson is here from th' English Department." Owen smiled back at his often-lover. Scotty's gaze flickered forward a row, and his jaw tightened before he lifted his eyes again to the class.

"There are no stupid questions here, save three." He held up his only hand, and three fingers. "One: '*Doctor Scott, what part of England are yeh from?*'" He glared at them. "Never call a Scotsman fuckin' English." He lowered a finger. "Two: '*why are yeh missing a hand?*'" He shrugged. "I'm a starship engineer who lost it when the Captain flew through a microsingularity." The class chuckled. Owen blinked. Scotty told a different story about the missing hand every semester; that one was new.

Scott dropped another finger, leaving one that made the class titter. "Three: is this class hard?" Scott grinned wolfishly at them. "Aye." And then, with energy he didn't have, he straightened. "It's the secrets of the universe, it's nae meant tae be easy."

The rest of the lecture was *extraordinary*; it always was, and Owen was as rapt as the students, though he'd heard it before. The class burst into applause when dismissed, buzzing with infectious curiosity, and swarmed him. Scotty leaned on an off-kilter desk near the front and indulged them.

The fellow Owen had tried to hide behind was apparently not a student either, and turned to Owen. “You’re the poet boyfriend, aren’t you? I’m Jim Kirk,” he said. “He’s been in a not-talking mood.”

Owen, who hadn’t spoken to his parents in ten years, smiled dangerously. “He’s never mentioned your name.”

Kirk flared his nostrils. “You have *no idea* who he really is.”

Owen laughed. “Are you kidding me? Everyone in this room knows who he is; he just cut himself open and let us all see his heart.”

That seemed to deflate Kirk. “I was reading Dickinson recently, Professor, and she asked a question— ‘*I wonder if when Years have piled – Some Thousands – on the Harm – That hurt them early – such a lapse, Could give them any Balm?*’”

Owen frowned, and pointedly continued the poem. “‘*Or would they go on aching still Through Centuries of Nerve – Enlightened to a larger Pain – In Contrast with the Love?*’”

The man sighed, conceding the battle, then stood and put his hand on Scotty’s back on the way out. Scotty caught his arm, and they exchanged a word, although whether of anger or reconciliation Owen couldn’t say.

The students gone, Owen wandered forward and tucked his hands into Scotty’s back pockets, tugging the sweat-soaked professor backward into his chest. He let his hands wander, more comfort than heat. “I still don’t know how you manage to fill them with wonder using *mathematics*. Who is Jim Kirk?”

Scott tapped his arm ruefully. “The *Captain*. I need tea, Owen, and a fag.” He groaned. “Interpret that however yeh’d like, just take me home.”

End Notes

Poem and title from Emily Dickinson

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