

Ground Swell

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Rating:	General Audiences
Archive Warning:	No Archive Warnings Apply
Category:	Gen
Fandom:	Star Trek: The Original Series
Character:	Andrew "Corry" Corrigan , Montgomery "Scotty" Scott
Additional Tags:	Found Family , Angst
Language:	English
Series:	Part 25 of Arc of the Wolf
Stats:	Published: 2023-09-29 Words: 1,619 Chapters: 1/1

Ground Swell

by [SLWalker](#)

Summary

(2247) - Between trips on the Denevan run, Corry and Scotty try to deal with things far outside of their all-too-human reach.

Notes

The poetry comes from T.S. Eliot's 'The Four Quartets'. <3

The moon reflected off of the water and reflected off of the haze, but even as bright as it was, there was no seeing the bell that was steadily tolling in the night. Down on the tall rocks that seemed somehow out of place amidst the time-tortured patterns, it was cool and damp and the air was so saturated with the smell of the sea that it was more a state of existence than part of the environment.

Corry had been coming down here for years; there weren't all that many places along the shore he hadn't been. Maine was always quiet outside of the summer rush that brought the tourists and yet more artists or wannabe artists, and when he was young and wasn't on the ocean, he was still somewhere on the shore of it. He'd ventured out for hours, returning with bits of seaweed clinging to his boots, from exploring the rocks and coves and cliffs and tidal pools.

And sometimes he wondered if it was strange that he had no real desire to explore the very stars, but could lose himself for hours next to the sea.

It was after midnight. Everything had pretty much closed down all across the region; a Sunday night, so that was typical. For that matter, on Sundays it seemed like everything was closed by about three in the afternoon; that left plenty of time to nap at home, curl up with a book, have a good meal, enjoy some family time and then *still* get a little restless. It was winter, but it didn't feel like winter right now -- a warm snap had kept the region unnervingly balmy, and mostly they had a lot of rain and fog. It was forecasted to become more properly like winter soon, but for now it still felt too much like spring.

The decision to drive over here was not really even spoken aloud; Scotty just asked for the keys, and after an obligatory moment where he debated on the wisdom of letting someone without a license drive, Corry handed 'em over. And then they'd just driven for awhile. Most of the commentary on the drive was typical, too; Scotty had mentioned a couple of things he could hear off by some fraction Cor couldn't even fathom in the skimmer's engine, and Corry had talked more about what had happened in the long months his best friend -- his brother -- had been in space.

Neither of them were all that willing to talk about the fact that Scotty was going to be gone again in another week. That was the way it was in Starfleet. He'd be gone for months, in a quadrant at war, overworked and lightyears away, but that was just the way it was.

Neither of them were willing to talk about it, but there was no escaping it anyway.

And so they ended up on the rocks under the Pemaquid Point Light, sitting together with a hell of a view of the sea, the last traces of conversation having since given way to mutual quiet. It was one of those times where Corry didn't know what was going through Scotty's head -- there were a lot of times like that, even now -- but even if he didn't know what those thoughts were, he knew that they weren't all that different in feel from his own.

"Time and the bell have buried the day," he said, not really thinking too much about it.

Scotty tossed him a glance, eyebrows drawn in bemusement. "I suppose that's one way o' puttin' it."

Corry shook his head with a quick look back. "It's a line from a poem." Then he grinned. "Prettier way of saying the day's over than I can come up with."

"Well, 'the day's over' would work too." Scotty nodded, then looked back out at the sea. "And sound less pretentious."

Corry rolled his eyes. He didn't really feel exasperated, but he did it anyway. "Not all poetry is pretentious. And this poetry definitely isn't."

Scotty just gave a dismissive snort, curling his arm back, leaving his elbow rested on his knees so he could make himself a chin rest.

Cor watched for a moment, then looked back out over the water. Thought about all the things they weren't willing to talk about, but couldn't outrun; thought about the unseasonable warm snap, and the ticking minutes, and the long months ahead. He even thought a little about poetry in the abstract, but he kept coming back to T. S. Eliot in the specific.

"The river is within us, the sea is all about us; the sea is the land's edge also, the granite into which it reaches, the beaches where it tosses its hints of earlier and other creation: The starfish, the horseshoe crab, the whale's backbone; the pools where it offers to our curiosity the more delicate algae and the sea anemone," he quoted, from memory, from high school assignments, from a certain affinity towards Eliot, who knew how to capture the sea.

Of course, Scotty huffed. "If I wanted a lesson on sea life, Cor, I'd probably just get a marine biology textbook, aye?"

Undaunted, Corry pressed on, falling into the rhythm:

*"It tosses up our losses, the torn seine,
The shattered lobsterpot, the broken oar
And the gear of foreign dead men. The sea has many voices,
Many gods and many voices.*

*"The salt is on the briar rose,
The fog is in the fir trees."*

There was no scoff or sigh this time.

Corry got it, what Eliot was saying; got it, and lived it, and understood it. Maybe now better than he had before. Or maybe it was universal. But it was all of the things that they didn't want to think about and were unwilling to talk about that dogged them even here. And out at sea, the bell kept ringing. And here on shore, the time kept ticking.

*"The sea howl
And the sea yelp, are different voices
Often together heard: the whine in the rigging,
The menace and caress of wave that breaks on water,
The distant rote in the granite teeth,
And the wailing warning from the approaching headland
Are all sea voices, and the heaving groaner
Rounded homewards, and the seagull,"* he continued, then took a breath; this part always did leave him feeling breathless, where the words were evocative enough to bring back the nights his father lay in the hospital, enough to bring back the long hours and days and weeks and months where he waited on shore for Scotty to come back in one piece, *"And under the oppression of the silent fog
The tolling bell
Measures time not our time, rung by the unhurried
Ground swell, a time
Older than the time of chronometers, older
Than time counted by anxious worried women
Lying awake, calculating the future,
Trying to unweave, unwind, unravel
And piece together the past and the future,
Between midnight and dawn, when the past is all deception,
The future futureless, before the morning watch
When time stops and time is never ending;
And the ground swell, that is and was from the beginning,
Clangs
The bell."*

The bell rang in the darkness, invisible in the moonlit haze. Sometimes, a dim flash off in the distance showed Monhegan's light. Closer, here, Corry felt his brother shiver briefly, where their shoulders touched.

He didn't think it had much to do with the weather.

"It's only the Denevan run," Scotty finally said, shaking his head. "It's only there, and back; it's haulin' gear for miners and supplies, it's not like I'm on the front lines, or anywhere near 'em. It's not a lot o' fun, but it's steady--"

--except the part where the *Sun* was six weeks overdue--"

--and what would ye have me *do*?" Scotty asked, looking over, eyebrows up; it was a look somewhere between a plea and a challenge.

And that was the real question, to which there was no answer.

Neither of them had asked for war. Corry couldn't even pretend that Scotty somehow liked it; the anti-war protest music, some current and some ancient, that he carried around on a data stick and blasted through the skimmer's speakers pretty much spoke his philosophy on the subject without him outright saying it. And in truth, Corry knew that if he had stayed in engineering himself, he would either be out there doing the exact same thing -- sloughing his guts out on some freighter -- or AWOL. There weren't really any other choices.

Not for either of them.

"I'm sorry," he said, quietly, looking back out over the sea. And he meant it.

Scotty didn't answer right away, but when he did reply, at length, it was equally quiet and his wry grin was in his voice. "Not so pretentious, but still. Couldn't ye have just said, 'Don't get killed while you're out there'?"

"Nah." Corry shook his head, and utterly despite himself, he could feel a smile creeping up on him. "At least I made a point about the poetry, if nothing else, right?"

"Aye, I suppose. Take yer victories where ye can get 'em." A beat. "Especially since ye don't get that many."

This time, it was Corry's turn to snort, knowing full well he was being poked to cheer up. And it was working. He still didn't quite feel it, but he did feel better. He knew he wouldn't be able to press on; Scotty would just clam up and go quiet, and he'd listen, but there wouldn't be any serious conversation beyond what had already been said.

Even so, what had been said had been enough, for now.

The bell rang on.

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