Burning

by emmawicked

Summary

Miles stays in his tower after the events of the Asylum. No one comes in, no one goes out. Until Richard Trager.

Notes

Merry Christmas to @pettynecromancer! I hope you like the fic, I kinda went overboard on the length.

Miles is a ghost in his homeland of the Asylum. His new homeland, forged from blood and old money and broken minds. Each day his memory of the outside world fades and each month there’s a different troop of Murkoff units. Sometimes he wonders what became the rest of Murkoff. More often, he doesn’t.

Miles rests his head against the icy windowpane. He can’t feel the sharp bite of the frost anymore, only the cold memory that hasn’t yet been faded by time. The sky looks like fire, Miles thinks as he looks out into the garden illuminated by winter’s dawn. There’s only one patient outside in the burning orange sun. He’s tending to old dead plants, cutting off the heads and preparing them for new growth. Miles sees him sometimes, always outside, but he doesn’t know his name.
Zachariah, the Walrider hisses, *Paint with his Blood. A Mural fit for a God…*

“Oh shut up you fucking parasite.” Miles tries to growl, but he just sounds exhausted. “He hasn’t done anything wrong.” He’s as close to an innocent that can exist in the Asylum.

*Tear into his softness… Make him explode from the inside out.. Render him into a t h o u s a n d pieces.*

The Walrider roars and Miles forces it to the back recesses of his mind in an attempt to staunch its bloodlust.

The patient- *Zachariah*- sees him standing in the window and scurries back into the protection of the indoors. Miles sighs and rubs his palms into his eyes. He can feel a tension headache starting there.

“Looks like you’re having a good time all the way up here, buddy,” a voice says behind him. Miles freezes and dead blood pounds through his veins. He knows that voice.

So does the Walrider.

“Woah, woah, woah.” Richard Trager, Murkoff exec, holds his hands up (with ten whole fingers, Miles notes) in a display of surrender. “I’m not here to hurt you.”

Miles ((or is it the Walrider?)) grins with blackness oozing over his teeth.

*Kill him Kill him Kill him Kill him Kill him Kill him Kill him Kill him Kill him Kill him Kill him Kill him Kill him Kill him Kill him Kill him Kill him Kill him Kill him Kill him Kill him Kill him Kill him K I L L

“Afraid I can’t say the same,” Miles forces out, over the screams of the Walrider. Trager doesn’t seem fazed and wanders further into the room, eyes wandering over bare walls and bare shelves.

“Just thought I should pay a visit to the guy keeping us all locked up.”

“I’m not what’s keeping you here.” Miles can barely hear his own voice over the one in his head.

“Oh? Then what are you doing hiding up here, buddy? Why are you keeping the exits locked down?”

“I’m not keeping you in, I’m keeping them out.”

Trager laughs. The sound isn’t as demented as Miles remembers, but just as cruel. “Is that what you’re calling it, buddy? This isn’t a goddamn protection service.”
“I’m keeping all of you alive and you have free-range of the asylum,” Miles lowers his voice enough to drag on the floor, “It’s more than those fucking doctors ever gave you.”

“Hey now, watch your tone: I’m one of those doctors.”

“You’re not a goddamn doctor Trager, you were a corporate scumbag who got sold out so someone else could get ahead in the game.”

For the first time, Trager’s ever-present smile falters.

“Well, it seems someone has been doing his reading. Full marks.” Trager moves over to the cot in the corner and settles on it. “Where did you manage to find a bed that’s actually comfortable? Mine feels like a bag of sawdust.”

Miles watches him from his position by the window, wondering why Trager thought it was smart to come here. “Stole it from the second floor. It was the only one without bloodstains,” he finally answers.

“Hmm. That’ll do it…” Trager bounces for a moment on the thin mattress before settling down. He looks better than he did months ago when Miles first came here. His scalp is mostly healed along with his facial disfigurations. He has fat now; more than just thin skin over exposed muscle and bone. Nothing can be done to save his hairline, however.

“What are you doing here, Trager?”

The longer he’s here, the louder the Walrider Screams. Not for the first time, Miles wishes for silence.

“What can I say? I was feeling nostalgic for our time together in the Asylum.”

“I’m afraid I can’t say the same,” Miles says, lip curling.

Trager only shrugs. “I guess you can’t win ‘em all.” He gets up from Miles’s bed to explore the small, bare room. Miles stands rock-still with his back to the wall, eyes tracking Trager’s every moment. He can’t hurt him now. Not again. If Miles wanted to, he could unleash the Walrider and let it wreak its vengeance in the blood and torn flesh of the good doctor.

But.

Despite the power lurking under Miles’s skin, he doesn’t want to hurt Trager either. Miles can’t say the same thing of the parasite that keeps him alive.

“Do you seriously live up here, buddy? Why don’t you just leave?” The disbelief in Trager’s voice is almost welcoming.

“This definitely isn’t the strangest thing you’ve seen at Mount Massive.”

“Buddy, I’ve seen grown men grow tumors in minutes, women go through pregnancy in a matter of days, and a man tearing out the intestines of his brother so he could copulate with them. So yes, you’re the oddest thing I’ve seen during my stay.”

His words sum up all of Miles’s experiences more succinctly than the reporter could ever hope to.

“-But you never answered my question. Why do you never leave?” Trager asks.

Miles laughs, the sound dry from months of disuse.
“Do you even need to answer that, Trager?” Miles steps closer to the ex-doctor until he can feel his warm breath fanning on his face. He drinks in the sight of Trager’s wild eyes beating to a drum only he can hear and the sound of his pulse quickening.

“Can’t you feel it?” The Walrider whispers.

Trager’s eyes scream Yes in the absence of words and runs.

“Well,” Miles says when the air is still once more, “That’ll be the last visitor for a while.”

*

The garden does better than Miles expects. Zachariah is a good gardener, up at dawn each day to tend to his raised beds of spinach, potatoes, and onions. Miles can see the beginnings of apple saplings from his tower, along with corn and Roma tomatoes. The apple saplings will take another year or two to fully grow.

((Not that they’ll last that long))

But, Miles can admit that the pink apple blossoms are beautiful.

“Knock, knock!” Trager calls.

The Walrider stirs around him and Miles has to force him back.

“Why are you back here, Trager?” Miles presses his palms into his eye sockets in an attempt to rid himself of his growing headache. Again.

“Don’t you get lonely, hiding all the way up here?” Trager saunters around the room at a walking pace, but the tension held in his back belies his calm demeanor. “Not to say your tower isn’t lovely, I admire what you’ve done with the place. And while solitary confinement can be beneficial for one’s health, keepi—”

“If I answer your question,” Miles says wearily, “Will you leave?”

Trager shrugs. “It’ll certainly make me leave sooner.”

If Miles could sigh, he would.

“Well?”

“… It was peaceful, at first.” No more running. No more bleeding. No more dying.

“And now?”

Miles shoots him a sharp look. “Well, I don’t have any other option, do I?”

“Sure you do, you could come down and hang with the crew. We’re a lot of fun, minus the murder.”

“I know you can feel it, Trager. You know why that’s a bad idea.”
“What do I feel?”

Trager avoids his gaze until Miles steps in front of him. His too-bright eyes stare into his like he can’t look away. The slide of blood through veins is loud enough that Miles can hear it.

Taste it.

“I know you can feel it,” Miles says softly. “The cold. The oily darkness. The beat that only you can hear. It tries to force its way in your head: corrupting your mind with fever. Being around me turns men insane and blood thirsty. Makes you forget who you are and eats away at you until there’s nothing left but violence.”

“Does it do the same thing to you?” Miles tilts his head at the unexpected question and reaches out to stroke the side of Trager’s face with four fingers.

“Yes,” Miles admits, “It does.”

Richard’s eyes search his face hungrily, but says nothing. Eventually, Miles forces himself to let go and step away. Too long, and the Walrider will snap his fragile sanity.

“You never answered my question.” Trager still looks dazed from close proximity to the Walrider.

“What question?”

“Are you lonely?”

A beat of silence passes.

“Always.”

Richard stays until dusk, when the cool night air sweeps in the frost to cool the Earth after the burning sun.

Miles doesn’t sleep now. Can’t. Won’t. He sits in the window of his tower looking out into his concrete kingdom. Each morning he watches the glow of the dawn wake up the Earth: the only sign that time is passing. Each day, the sun grows closer and closer to the gates. Any day now, and the sun will be perfectly aligned between the two stone pillars and it will bathe the Asylum in healing fire. Miles looks forward to it. The slight reminder that beauty exists.

He’s seen precious little of it in the past few months.

“Hey buddy.”

Miles doesn’t stir, the Walrider had heard him coming. For once, the Walrider doesn’t scream; Miles only hears the Walrider’s electronic babbling, reminiscent of rushing water.

“Hello, Trager. What brings you here today.” If Trager hears the sarcasm in his voice, he doesn’t care. He settles on the bed next to Miles and the springs creak under their combined weight.

“Just thought I’d give my best friend a fruit basket.” He places a hand woven basket filled with
vegetables on Miles’s lap.

Miles chuckles humorlessly. “I’m pretty sure that best friends don’t cut off each other’s fingers. And I’m pretty sure spinach doesn’t count as fruit.”

“I had to make do with Zacky’s garden. Besides, tomatoes are fruit, right?”

Miles’s lips twitch. “You’re an odd man, Trager. I don’t even know why you keep coming up here.”

“Well, we have a complicated relationship, that’s for sure.”

“Understatement of the year, Trager.”

“Who’s to say that chasing a man with trauma shears isn’t a fantastic start to a relationship?”

“Do you feel bad?” Miles asks, turning to face him. “Guilty. For mutilating and killing all of those patients?”

Trager is quiet for a moment, a rare state of being for him.

“I don’t,” he finally says, “I know I should. But… I don’t.”

Miles turns away. For some reason, bitterness coats the back of his throat. “Makes sense.”

“Don’t get me wrong, I know the difference between good and bad. Right and wrong. I just don’t always… Feel it, ya know? And I didn’t always care.”

“Do you care now?”

Out of the corner of his eye, Miles can see Richard looking at him.

“Yeah,” he says, “I do now.”

“What made you care?”

Richard laughs. “A weird fuckin journalist who hides in a tower in an attempt to help the people who tried to murder him.”

“I don’t think all of them wanted to kill me,” Miles comments, “Some just wanted to cut parts off and fuck me.”

“Somehow, that doesn’t make it better.”

“It didn’t at the time, either.” Miles suppresses a memory of the brothers and let’s cut him open: you can have the spleen, I’ll take the liver. He wonders if they’re still alive. Wonders if they carved out a happy ending in the stone walls surrounding them.

“Why do you do it then?” Richard asks, jolting him out of his thoughts, “Why are you hiding up here when you can leave? You have the power of a God. No one could ever hurt you again. You co-”

Miles cuts him off. “I know I could leave, but what’s the point? I leave and everyone here gets obliterated the next time Murkoff sends a team. No one here deserved this. You didn’t…. you didn’t deserve to be driven insane by the Walrider and be stripped of your memories and humanity until you’re nothing but bones and violence. I can’t… I can’t mend your broken minds, but the least I can
do is avoid inflicting further damage. And it works. Haven’t you noticed how bodies have stopped dropping like flies? How the patients seem less violent? How you feel calmer now, away from me?”

Richard nods slowly as Miles’s grip tightens on his shoulders. Miles isn’t sure when he got up from the bed, sending tomatoes scattering on the floor. Isn’t sure when he took Richard in his hands. Isn’t sure when he became comfortable touching the man who took away his fingers.

“Do you understand now?” Miles asks, eyes burning.

“So you don’t leave.. because of us?”

“You don’t deserve a painful existence.”

“But you deserve to give up the rest of your life?”

“Trager I’m a dead man walking. I have no future and the longer this thing is inside me, the more I lose myself.”

Richard eyes him critically. “You seem like you’ve done a good job so far, buddy”

Miles laughs with the coldness of the winter wind. “Tell me, buddy, have you been down to the old church lately?”

Miles can tell by the look on his face that he hasn’t.

“Tell you what,” Miles says, “Go take a look down there and then you can come back and tell me that I- We- should be let loose on the world.” The Walrider stirs at the idea, but doesn’t try to burst out of its host to wreak havoc in a spray of blood and matter.

*Soon, it purrs.*

Richard looks at Miles like he doesn’t know what to make of him. Doesn’t know what to make of the high-pitched screeching in his head that plays on a loop when he’s around the other man. Doesn’t know what to make of his martyr tendencies.

“Oh, he says, “I will.”

Good, Miles thinks. Now he’ll understand.

Maybe he’ll stop trying.

Richard doesn’t come back for days. Weeks. So long that Miles wonders if he was murdered by one of the more violent patients that even Miles’s absence couldn’t heal.

Or, Miles thinks, Maybe he understands.

But it doesn’t matter. Miles can be alone; has always been alone. He will live in his tower above his unsustainable kingdom and wait for the day that sunlight reaches through the gates to wash over the
Asylum with its cleansing rays.

Maybe then, he can look into the sun and be cleansed as well.

Miles looks out into the darkness shrouding the asylum, the only light coming from the buzzing electric lights that had survived the initial devastation. The green tinted light reflects off the broken glass of the windows and illuminates the silhouettes of-

((What is that.))

You have got to be kidding me, Miles thinks. When are they going to give up?

Cursing to himself, he can’t hear himself over the Walrider’s roar. He bursts through the tower door and floats above the stairs, racing down fast enough to break the sound barrier. The halls are empty of all patients, but he can feel their eyes on his body enshrouded in oily black mist. His lips curl back in a sharp grin.

It’s time, the Walrider screams.

The night air would be cold on Miles’s skin if he could still feel it. Now it’s just itchy as he races towards the new Murkoff team. They’re heading to the old church, he can feel them. Can hear their feet tiptoeing the ground, smell the imprints they leave in the mud. See their radios turned to silent as to now alert him. Little do they know.

Miles creeps after them and waits, covered with the darkness of the night and that of the Walrider. Distantly, he’s glad that he won’t have to move their bodies. They’ll die amongst their fallen soldiers.

“What the fuck is this?” He distantly hears one of the soldiers say over the sound of the rushing wind and moving trees. The Walrider grins. It’s time.

KILL KILLKILLKILLKILLKILL-

“GET DOWN ON THE GROUND!” Miles hears, but it doesn’t faze him. He rips into the soldiers, peeling their bones out of their skin like taffy. The Walrider tears itself out of Miles’s body to wreak vengeance in the blood of the Murkoff units in a dark, screeching tornado. It isn’t until blood and matter are sprayed against the walls that Miles realizes the soldier hadn’t been talking to him.

“Richard?” Miles yells over the electronic screams of the Walrider. Trager is there, huddled against the floor. “What are you doing here?”

Richard gives a strained laugh. “Came.. to see your work again. Have to say, I’m impressed.” He gestures with a bloodstained hand to the piles of bodies wearing Murkoff swat uniforms: casualties of the Walrider’s rage. Miles ignores the gore around them to focus on the blood coming from Richard’s sternum.

“You’re hurt.” He states.

“No shit, Sherlock.”

Miles stares helplessly at the bullet wound, blood coming up in thick red bubbles.

“We need- we need to put pressure on it to staunch the blood loss.” Miles starts tearing apart his shirt into strips. They’re not sanitized, but he doesn’t have time to search for something better. “We can get the bullet out later. You have tweezers right?”

“Listen, buddy, I don’t think—”

“Richard, no offense, but shut up.”

“Listen to me.” Miles stops at his harsh tone. “Listen, buddy… This isn’t sustainable. You can’t keep living like this and killing everyone who tries to come in. One day, you’ll be tired, or you’ll mess up, or SOMETHING will happen and you’ll slip up, because you’re human.”

“Not entirely.”

“Still. One mistake, and this all crumbles to the ground. You have to try to leave this place. Because Murkoff is never going to stop, trust me, I was a part of it. If they sold out me, an executive, what will they do to you if they catch you?”

“They won’t catch me.”

“They will one day, buddy. They’ll keep trying and trying until all the patients are dead and you’re trapped in another underground lab just like Billy Hope.”

Miles doesn’t want to argue with a dying man, so he refrains. “Let’s just focus on getting you bandaged up.”

“Buddy, you know that you can’t save me. From my limited memory of medical school—”

“You didn’t go to med school.”

“anyway, I’m pretty sure the bullet is in my stomach. I move and POOF.” Richard imitates an explosion with his hands and starts coughing from exertion.

Miles stares at his old enemy ((friend?)) and thinks about all the times he hid under blood stained beds and rusty iron springs. He thinks about missing fingers and blood and vomit and trauma shears. He feels the Walrider settle around him like a contented tick: fat on the blood of mercenaries. He thinks about bullet holes and Doctor Wernicke, still smeared on the floor of his precious asylum.

“I think I have another idea,” Miles hears himself say.

The Walrider bears most of Trager’s weight as he carries him back to his tower. The asylum patients hide in their rooms, curious, but wanting to live another day. Trager passes out from blood loss at some point, Miles notes as he lays him on the bed.

“Can you fix him?” Miles asks. His voice is low enough to be almost imperceptible.

… Yesss… the Walrider hisses, but Miles sees no sign of the gaping bullet hole knitting itself back together.

“What do you want?”

… We want Freedom from this Place. We want to go home.

“Where is home for you?” Miles tells himself the waver in his voice is from exertion.

Home… Is the Earth. We came from All, we wish to return to All.
Miles can feel bloodlust that isn’t his rising in his veins towards his heart. He feels dizzy with it.

*Let us leave this place,* the Walrider whispers in his ear, *And you may save your love.*

In the end, it’s hardly a choice.

Miles watches in fascination as bone and sinew congeal into something resembling human flesh. The bullet pops out and rolls across the wooden floor. But the Walrider goes further than repairing the bullet wound; it knits broken skin back together and builds Trager’s empty cavity back to something resembling a nose. But the Walrider’s knowledge is incomplete and the overall effect is eerie. His skin is too tight and his nose a little too crooked, turning him into something slightly Not human.

When the Walrider is done, Trager lies still. His eyes twitch like he’s dreaming and Miles settles down to wait for his sleeping beauty to awaken.

“*What the Hell happened?*” Trager asks the minute he wakes up, just a little before dawn. His eyes are dimmed and gray, just like Miles’s.

“You died,” Miles says.

“Not the weirdest thing that’s happened so far, I guess. But that still doesn’t answer my question.”

“The Walrider healed you.”

“First time I’ve heard of it doing that.”

“Not the first.” Richard looks at him in confusion which only increases when Miles starts to unbutton his shirt.

“Not that I’m complaining, but why the fuck are you undressing?”

“To show you this.” Richard’s eyes widen as he takes in the sight of Miles’s torso, littered with bullet wounds. On some of them, where the bullets didn’t go in all the way, he can see the silver of the casing peaking through his skin.

“You know, when you said you were a dead man walking, I didn’t quite expect this.”

“The Walrider saved me. And it saved you.”

“Why?”

Miles pauses. “I… bargained with it.”

“That. Has got to be the stupidest thing you’ve ever done.”

Miles lips twitch into something resembling a smile. “I don’t know, breaking into this place is pretty far up there.”

“This is worse, Miles.” Miles is disquieted by Trager’s tone. “What did you give it in exchange?”

“It wants to go home.”

“What the hell does that mean?”
“I don’t know.” It isn’t a lie, but the moment it exists his tongue it feels like one. He doesn’t know what the Walrider wants, but he senses bloodshed in their future.

Soon, it purrs.

“Will you have to leave?”

Miles forces himself to nod.

“If you think you’re leaving me here, you’ve got another thing coming.”

Miles almost laughs at the irony. “You may not have a choice,” he says. Trager stares directly into Miles’s eyes, and once again he is startled by the similarity.

“What the hell does that mean, buddy?”

“Something… happened when the Walrider fixed you.” Miles gets up from where he was crouching by the bed and starts to walk towards the door. “I don’t know if it’s because you’ve just been healed, or because the Walrider’s never healed anyone before, but…” Just as Miles exits through the doorway, Trager’s wound starts to bleed again. Trager gapes in horrified amazement, clutching his sternum in a useless attempt to staunch the blood loss.

“The distance causes it,” Miles hears himself say, “I hope you don’t mind being within eight feet of me for the rest of your life.” If Miles could feel nauseous anymore, there would be bile rising in his throat for the fate he condemned his once-enemy to.

“I’d prefer you a lot closer.”

Miles stops at that.

“What?”

Trager laughs, the sound dissipating out the window into the night air. “Come here, Miles.” He crooks a finger at him and Miles is thankful he can no longer blush.

With three slow moving steps, Miles is right in front of him. Richard is still reclining on the bed, looking up at him.

“Closer.”

Miles settles on the bed with his legs over one side, ready to make a quick escape.

“Closer.”

Richard tugs on his shirt until his face is right in front of his.

“Closer.”

Miles closes the gap. Distantly, Miles knows he’s kissing the man who mutilated him, but right now all he can feel is Richard’s lips. And he can feel. Genuine laughter bubbles up in Miles’s chest for the first time since he came to this place.

“I can feel you! I can feel you!” Trager, thankfully, doesn’t say anything and kisses him through his crazed grin.

Miles climbs onto the bed to straddle Trager and watches in awe as he touches the bare torso of the
other man. He knows this must be a side effect of bringing Richard back to life, but he can’t help but think this is a mercy from God. Maybe the Reverend was right about being an apostle, Miles thinks. He sees now why the Walrider was worshipped for its power.

But what else can he feel, Miles wonders.

He can feel Trager’s hot mouth on his neck. The stretch of his legs around his body. The cock slowly filling out under him and pressing into his ass. The sensations threaten to send him tumbling back down the cliff into insanity.

*I deserve this I deserve this I deserve this*. It isn’t until Richard laughs that Miles realizes he was speaking out loud.

“What do you deserve?” Trager teases.

“I deserve you.”

Trager’s eyes darken. “You must have done something really bad then,” he says.

“Or really good.”

Miles finds out he can feel when Richard smiles into a kiss. He can feel when it turns hot and heavy. He can feel the weight of his arms encircling him. Can feel hot fingertips replacing cold fabric until he’s bare in front of him. Miles grinds down in slow circles on Trager’s cock. Once upon a time, he would have been disgusted to be in this situation. But right now, all he wants is for Trager to fuck him open in a slick mess of want and ecstasy.

“You’re gorgeous.” Richard’s voice is conversational, but the look in his eye is hungry.

“If you want me, come and get me.”

He does. Trager flips Miles onto his back and Miles relishes in the weight of another body on top of him. His cock presses hot into Trager’s stomach and distantly Miles is aware that he won’t last long; it’d already been so long without a non-violent touch that Miles is fit to explode where he stands.

“Fuck me, fuck me,” he chants and Richard laughs.

“Patience,” he chides.

‘Patience can suck my dick’, Miles wants to say, but Trager slides in a finger and Miles shudders. He relishes in the slick burn of it. Trager has to force in another finger, made more difficult by the absence of lube. Miles clutches at the bed sheets, warring between wanting desperately to touch himself and not wanting to cum yet.

“Please just fuck me, I’m ready.”

“I’ll tell you when you’re ready, Miles.”

Miles twists in his grip. “This is cruel.”

“I’ll tell you what’s cruel- hiding this ass from me for so long.”

“You can have it, you can have me,” he babbles.

Richard smiles. “Well, if the lady insists.” Trager spits in his hand to slick his cock and Miles almost laughs at the ridiculousness of it all. His smile falters as Trager aligns his cock slowly pushes in.
“Fuck.” It feels too big, like everything Miles has ever wanted. The stretch. The ache. His knuckles are white against the sheets. Trager pulls back and thrusts back in, harder this time. Miles stifles a loud moan.

“God, you’re tight.” He’s slamming in at this point, so hard that Miles knows he’ll feel it for days.

It’s not slick enough and it hurts. Miles can feel the Walrider healing him as Trager thrusts in again and again and again until he’s perfectly formed around Trager’s cock. Miles throws his head back and groans, getting off at the thought. Being changed for someone else’s pleasure. Maybe the Walrider didn’t change him at all, Miles thinks. Maybe he was always this twisted.

“Can’t zone out on me, buddy,” Trager says, teeth glinting, “It’s against the rules.” Miles groans again as Trager grips his cock, stroking it with tight, fast movements. Miles is lightheaded with pleasure. He feels boneless against the 50 thread count sheets with a heavy weight in between his legs and someone else’s hand (with all fingers intact) jacking him off.

“I’m gonna-” It’s too soon, but Miles doesn’t care. He howls as he spills into Trager’s fist, splattering on his own stomach and the sheets beneath them. Trager doesn’t stop after the shockwaves have passed.

“You’re not getting off that easy, buddy.”

Trager fucks him until Miles shudders from overstimulation, desperately trying to escape the endless thrusts. Eventually, he settles down and just takes it; his mind fuzzy with desperation, but unable to get hard so soon. He clenches around Trager and he makes a choking sound in the back of his throat.

“Jesus christ, Miles.” Trager redoubles his efforts until Miles is moaning and desperate for anything.

Miles isn’t sure how long after Trager finally spills into him, his warmth seeping deep into his being. He isn’t sure how long they lay together on that bed. He isn’t sure how many hours pass until the first rays of light shine through the window.

“Jesus fuck,” Trager grimaces, looking outside, “The sun is in my fucking eyes.”

Miles looks and laughs into the golden sun.

Miles leaves his tower for the first time of his own will, Trager beside him and the Walrider coiled tight in his stomach. It’s excited, he can tell. The thought should make him nauseous, but Miles can’t help but enjoy the orange daylight and pink apple blossoms. The air is still as Miles reaches the gates, past the fountain, past Zachariah’s Garden of Eden. Trager is a steady presence at his side, anchoring him to the present.

Euphoria blooms in his chest.

One of the patients follows them all the way to the gate at a respectful distance. He only comes closer when Miles beckons him.

“What is your name?”

The patient shuffles side to side, avoiding his gaze. “David,” he says finally.
David seems more cognizant than most of the other patients, so Miles speaks again. “David can you do something for me?” He nods and Miles continues. “Tell the other patients that they’re free to go. No one will be guarding the gates and all of you need to vacate as soon as possible. Murkoff will send more soldiers soon.”

“Where… Where will we go?” David asks.

“Do you have any family?”

David shakes his head.

“Friends? Anyone who might have missed you?”

David tilts his head, pondering. “I had a teacher. She was nice. Gave me part of her lunch. I think she tried to visit, once.”

“Go to her. Tell everyone to find their family or friends- anyone who will help you. If you don’t have anyone, band together. Keep yourselves safe at all cost and do not hurt anyone. The time for violence is over.”

David looks into his eyes for the first time and Miles is struck by how blue they are. “Thank you, Mr. Walrider.”

Miles face burns. “I’m sorry I couldn’t do more.”

“You did the best you could. We thank you.”

“Good luck, David.”

David glances at Trager once before scurrying off back into the shadows of the asylum. Miles looks at the eyes shining through the windows, watching.

“Do you think they’ll survive?” Trager asks.

Miles is silent for a moment. “I hope so.” He turns his back on the watching gaze and takes Trager’s hand. Linked together, they take the first step into the burning sun.

End Notes

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