Living with the Walrider

by LizzardLady

Summary

Miles and Waylon find that living with the Walrider isn't what they expected, but not in the way they thought.

Notes

This is my first Outlast fic, so I hope you all like it! Lisa and the boys aren't in this oneshot; my reasoning is that Waylon sent them off after leaking Murkoff's info, so he could keep them safe. But in reality I just don't have a space for them in the plot of this fic, especially since I might continue it one day. Anyway, hope you enjoy!

Acclimating to a life with something that felt so supernatural was a lot harder than Miles had originally thought. For the first few days, he spent his time on the front steps of Mount Massive Asylum, dark nanobots hovering around him like a storm cloud. His body had felt like hell; bruised skin torn to shreds by angry bullets, on top of the two fingers he'd lost and the other trauma the Variants had put him through. Over time, though, the Walrider had put him back together, repaired the wounds that had felt unbearable after the adrenaline died down. Only after that was it obvious that he wasn't normal anymore; like Wernicke had said, he was the host, the vessel for the thing they called the Walrider. Miles should have died on that cold, blood-stained floor, but instead he had lived. Revived in a way that no one else could, got revenge on the people that had murdered him. Even if he hadn't entirely meant to.
After those few days, he managed to stumble his way back to town, clothes bloodied and sanity
damaged. He stuck to shady alleyways and sketchy back roads, doing his best to avoid the public
eye. Eventually he found a payphone, finding a few dated coins and managing to gain contact with
Waylon. If Miles wasn't so exhausted that he felt he might faint, he had every intention to give the
other a piece of his mind for sending him to that god-awful asylum. Although, Miles did recall seeing
Waylon leaving the building, limping and distraught; vaguely remembered using the Walrider to save
him. There was a good chance Waylon was also a victim in whatever cruel disaster Murkoff had
cooked up.

Miles had been staying with Waylon since. The other had insisted, claiming that it was his fault Miles
had gone through so much (which, it was) and that it'd be better this way, anyway. With the Walrider
hovering around him like a lost puppy, he couldn't exactly live like he normally would. Waylon had
already known about the nanobot creation, and he even said he'd give Miles a few tips on how to
control it. He had to admit, that was better than living with it blindly, wondering if or when it would
kill some innocent person. The whistleblower didn't even seem particularly concerned about living
with the host of a killer.

Now that Miles was, for the most part, recovered from the events of Mount Massive, he started to
focus on harnessing the Walrider's power. It was an absolute pain in the ass to deal with; while he
was sleeping, it would spend its time wreaking havoc on the room around him, knocking things to
the ground and causing a ruckus. Similar to a naughty cat obsessed with causing trouble and getting
away with it. Absolutely absurd. Waking moments were spent fighting random and unnatural
impulses, like trying things he'd shown no interest in before, or reading a random book out loud.
Almost as if the Walrider was curious. This would all be fine and dandy if it didn't affect his daily
life. Sometimes the urges were so strong he couldn't resist them. It was incredibly frustrating.

Waylon had told him he'd never heard of that happening before, but then again, Miles’ situation was
quite unique. The previous hosts had been confined to the lab, forced into the role of controlling the
Walrider. There were many variables that had been added and changed when it chose Miles as its
host. They were practically blind in that aspect, stumbling clumsily as they tried to navigate its
behavior.

With the Walrider in the house, Miles almost always had his camera with him. Sure, it could be seen
fully without it up close, but only the vague shape of it was visible further away. Using the night
vision feature on his camcorder provided him with its full shape; a ghastly body adorned with a
frightening face and boney fingers. Sometimes, it was like watching a child; a dangerous, murderous
child, sure, but a child nonetheless. The nano cloud often regarded common household objects with
curiosity, holding even durable items like they were as fragile as a snowflake. Miles had to admit that
it was fascinating to watch, like observing a wild animal.

It didn't take much to realize the nano-swarm was smart. It picked up on things fairly quickly, and
seemed to enjoy learning fresh things, if that was possible. Miles spent a majority of his free time
showing it new things; teaching it, even. Waylon often walked in on him and the creation, visibly
startled at first before remembering that the Walrider was controlled by his friend now. He usually
didn't stick around, though; Miles doubted the whistleblower wanted much to do with the monster,
despite inviting them to stay. He decided to confront his friend about it one time.

“Does it bother you that I'm here?” Miles had asked bluntly, catching Waylon off guard.

“What? No, why would it, Miles?” Waylon replied, looking up from the news article he'd been
reading on his phone. “I did invite you to stay here, remember?”

“The Walrider makes you uncomfortable, doesn't it?” the journalist retorted, dark eyes searching the
Waylon shifted a little in his seat, pale gaze flickering away from Miles’, “A little bit, but that's only natural, isn't it?”

Miles couldn't deny that; Waylon had watched as the demon tore Jeremy Blaire apart, saw Miles as he stumbled, bloody and broken, out of the asylum.

“You're right,” Miles admitted after a moment. “I can't blame you for being uneasy around me, especially when the Walrider is around.”

“Thanks for understanding,” Waylon responded earnestly, and then said, “You know, you treat that thing like it's your kid.”

The other blinked really hard, like that would make Waylon's words clearer, “I treat it like it's my what?”

Snickering, he added, “I see you teaching it things a lot, like you're a father instructing his son.”

“That's ridiculous,” Miles sputtered, “I just do that so it leaves me alone during the day.”

Waylon chuckled, looking back down at his mobile, “Whatever you say, Miles.”

That had been the end of that conversation, and Miles hadn't bothered Waylon again about the topic. Over time, though, the blond grew more comfortable with the idea of sticking around with him. Which was all fine and good until Waylon playfully punched Miles in the shoulder.

Waylon realized his mistake the moment the microscopic nanites started manifesting, an angry storm surrounding Miles like a shield. His cornflower eyes sparked with fear as he stumbled backwards, his breathing shallow as his mind flashed memories of what happened to Jeremy Blaire. He barely heard Miles yelling at the Walrider to stop through the beating of his own heart, limbs paralyzed with fright. Luckily, he got away with only a shallow scratch or two, but that was enough to keep him away from Miles for quite a while.

Miles tried to focus on summoning and dismissing the Walrider on command after that. Up until this point, he couldn't care less about when the swarm decided to show up, but its attack on his friend changed his opinion. Now when it showed itself uninvited, Miles did his best to force it back; and when that didn't work, he scolded the thing. Much to his surprise, it worked. The Walrider was intelligent enough to understand it was in trouble, and the way it slunk back off to non-existence was almost comical. It really was like raising a child.

Waylon only started to hang around Miles again after he proved he could control the Walrider. It hadn't taken quite a whole month, but with Miles staying home all the time, it felt like an eternity. He supposed he couldn't complain, though; an eternity training himself and the nano-swarm was better than another eternity spent in Mount Massive. With time and patience, he was now able to muster and disperse the 'ghost' at will; he could even control its actions, if he wanted to. Just like on that first, desperate morning when he was chosen as its vessel.

Due to his situation, Miles hadn't step foot outside since Waylon had brought him home. Now that he was in charge of his own inner demon, however, there was nothing stopping him from freeing himself from the indoor cage. When the weekend rolled around, he practically dragged his friend out of the home, positively restless and ready to just walk. It didn't matter where, or for how long; Miles just wanted to stretch his legs, really. The Walrider, on the other hand, was interested in anything and everything they passed.
It took most of Miles’ willpower to keep the nanite creation concealed. He hadn't realized how powerful it could be when fueled on curiosity alone, and now he was paying the price of ignorance. Luckily for them, he was able to placate the Walrider with the promise of free exploration later. Waylon hadn't even given him a strange look this time when he seemingly talked to no one. Although, he did voice his concerns on the idea; Miles figured it would be fine.

As promised, the brunet went back out on his own the very next day. About an hour prior, Miles had found a chunk of woods to travel to; a safe place where the Walrider could wreak havoc on whatever it pleased. They wouldn't have to worry about prying eyes and property damage out in the wilderness. As delicate as the nano cloud could be with new things, it was as equally as destructive when it wanted to be. He and Waylon had learned that the hard way near the beginning (let's just say that they hadn't expected to replace an entire dining room table like they had).

Somewhat deep into the forest he came across an old, abandoned house. Nature had claimed the decrepit building as its own, growing out of cracks in the walls and dirty, broken windows. The Walrider wasted no time in pushing out of its restraints, manifesting itself just ahead of Miles before disappearing into the structure. He chuckled to himself; it was amazing how fond he'd grown of the creature over the span of a few months. The threat of Murkoff catching Waylon and him hadn't even crossed his mind lately, despite the constant presence of the nano-swarm.

He himself had decided to stay outside, wandering about the exterior of the house. Off to the side sat an old swing set, paint chipped and rusty from time. Little signs of youth peeked out of the wild grass, ranging from deflated balls to forgotten toys. It led Miles to wonder who lived out here; so isolated from society, and with kids at that. Curiouser and curiouser, he thought to himself, running his fingers over the discolored swing’s chains. His eyes drifted over to the house, looking for signs of the Walrider as he watched.

It had migrated outside and was doing a patrol around the building, nanobots trailing behind it like smoke. Miles caught its eye and it hovered closer, swiftly getting distracted by the swing set beside him. He observed as the nano cloud pushed one of the swings experimentally, seemingly fascinated as it swung back at it. It put into light how sheltered the Walrider was back in the labs of Murkoff, knowing only sterile halls and test equipment. He didn't have much time to contemplate, however, because foreign movement caught the corner of his eye.

Miles whipped around, instantly alert to their surroundings. He'd let himself get too relaxed, too comfortable in a location he thought was isolated. Standing some paces away was a kid; a teenage girl, from what he could tell. Her bright eyes were staring straight past Miles, fixated on the inquisitive Walrider. He felt himself start to panic, dark eyes widening as he took in just what was happening. Behind him, he felt the Walrider getting rowdy; it often acted out depending on Miles’ mood, especially when the emotions were negative.

Everything felt muted through the trepidation beating in his head, and he was just barely aware of the phone—camera pointed directly at the Walrider—in the teen's hands. The nanite manifestation must have noticed his unease, deciding to take the matter into its own hands. Miles could hardly blame the creature for what it did next; it hadn't seen anyone but Miles and Waylon in person after they escaped the asylum, after all. It was only natural that it was interested in someone new.

Like a wary animal, it simply watched her from a distance for a spell, soulless eyes unblinking. The girl could only stare back, mobile device nearly slipping from her grasp under the watchful gaze of the Walrider. When it decided to float closer, however, she seems to rethink her choices. She stumbled back, fear flashing in her colorful eyes as the Walrider grew closer. Miles snapped himself out of his frozen state, absorbing the full force of the situation and calling the nano cloud off. It dissipated, gone as quickly as it came.
The teenager stared at him for a long moment, skepticism clear in her gaze, before turning and running back the way he assumed she came. Miles distantly heard himself say 'Wait!' as she sprinted off, but that did little to stop her. Dread seized at his mind, thoughts of that brat leaking photos of Miles and the Walrider all over the internet. Murkoff would find him in a heartbeat at that rate. He needed to leave.

When he got home, his first goal was to find Waylon. He looked around a bit before finding him in the living room, watching some cheesy sitcom on TV. Miles almost asked why before remembering why he'd been so urgent to get back. His friend hadn't noticed him yet; ever since the Walrider had merged with him, his steps had been lighter than normal. Sometimes Waylon called him a cat for it.

“Waylon,” Miles decided to start, startling the other out of his TV haze. “We need to talk.”

“God, Miles. You scared me, please stop doing that,” Waylon huffed back, playful irritation teasing at his voice, “What is it?”

“I messed up,” he blurted, guiltily glancing away from the whistleblower's intense periwinkle eyes. “Badly. Very badly.”

“Well, spit it out. It can’t be that bad.”

The brunet wrung his hands nervously, looking for the easiest way to break the terrible news to Waylon. He eventually came to the conclusion that there was no easy way, so he'd just have to delve into it head first.

“Someone saw me with the Walrider,” Miles finally forced out, eyes darting back to the other's to observe his reaction.

Waylon was silent for a good minute or so, and Miles was starting to question if he'd even said that out loud.

“Someone saw you?” Waylon repeated. “How?”

“We were deep in the forest. I thought we were alone.”

“This is why I was against you taking that beast out of the house,” Waylon was frantic now, anger lacing his tone; not anger directed at Miles, but at the situation. “Did they only see you? No one will believe the crazy tale of one person.”

“She took pictures, I was too panicked to react in time—”

“Miles, that's bad.”

The reporter winced at the emphasis, running a hand through his messy hair, “I know it's bad. I know too well how horrendous and life-ruining this could be.”

Waylon sighed, looking away from his friend before getting up from his comfortable spot on the couch. He seemed to be contemplating something, concentration clear in his crystal gaze.

“We need to leave,” he stated, brushing past Miles to head for his room, “Start packing, and pack lightly. We're leaving today.”

Miles tries his best not to flinch at his touch, disappointed in himself for being so foolish. It wouldn't be long before Murkoff was at their doorstep; Waylon was right to be hasty. And so, he headed for his room, praying to a non-existent god that they'll outlast Murkoff's horrors once more.
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