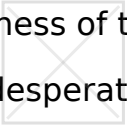


Miles

Miles wakes up to the cold, gray light of early morning, surrounded by the quiet stillness of the vineyard. His body aches from the uncomfortable position he had slept in, and the emptiness of the place only deepens his sense of disillusionment. He had waited all night,  desperately hoping to find the rainbow-haired girl again, to reclaim the fleeting feeling of connection that had once been so palpable between them. But as the sun rises and the silence deepens, Miles realizes that she is gone, leaving him once again to face the weight of his unresolved emotions. In her absence, the anger toward his brother Wynton resurfaces—anger that stems from past humiliations and the feeling of being abandoned, emotions that have lingered far too long.

The air is thick with the sounds of the world waking up, but none of it can ease the storm inside Miles. The vineyards stretch endlessly in front of him, each row of vines seeming to mirror his own tangled feelings. As he looks out at the landscape, he recalls the times he spent with Uncle Clive, a man who had always emphasized the connection between the earth and the human heart. Clive had taught him that both the land and the people who walk on it carry their burdens, that the pain of the past is something that can be found in the roots of the very soil beneath them. It was a philosophy that had never fully resonated with Miles until now, as the weight of his emotions seems to seep into the land around him, making it feel as though the entire vineyard is mourning alongside him.

Sandro, his dog, comes to him, sensing his discomfort and offering some comfort through his quiet presence. The dog's familiar touch is a small solace, a reminder that some things in life are constant. Together, they share a quiet moment of longing for something they cannot have. Their bond grows stronger in this silence, as Miles realizes that his search for connection might be futile if he continues to chase after fleeting moments of happiness. The girl, the perfect moments, they all seem out of

reach. And now, as he sits in this space of longing, he feels more isolated than ever before.

Miles' identity has always been tied to being the perfect son, the one who never causes trouble, the one who follows the rules. This identity was carved out by the constant comparison to Wynton, who lived his life with abandon and chaos. Miles had lived with the pressure to be the opposite of Wynton, always striving to please, to excel, to be the one who made his family proud. But now, as he reflects on his life, he wonders if he's simply been following a path laid out for him by others, not one he chose for himself. The scholarship, the achievements, they all seem hollow now, a reminder of how much of his life has been lived for someone else's approval.

Before Miles can spiral too far into these thoughts, the sound of an old Jeep rumbles toward him, breaking the silence of the morning. The figure that emerges is Uncle Clive, his face drawn and filled with urgency. His usual calm demeanor has shifted, replaced with a look of worry that Miles can't ignore. Clive steps closer and delivers the devastating news, "It's your brother, and it's bad." The words hit Miles like a punch to the stomach, the world around him blurring as he tries to comprehend what's just been said. For a moment, everything stops—the memories, the anger, the longing—all of it fades in an instant. In its place is only the terrifying reality that Wynton, his brother, is in serious trouble. Miles' heart races as the weight of the news sinks in, and with it comes the terrifying uncertainty of what comes next.