

Just Business, By Artemié

“I didn’t think that my last moments would be like this.”

The sun set as two boys stared at it up on a roof.

The blond boy chuckled, his cross necklace falling from inside his shirt, swinging softly.

“No? What did you expect?”

“I dunno, I guess something a bit more... personal?” He shrugged and leaned back, a soft sigh escaping through his smile. “Like, the army coming into our town, and we had a little last stand or something like that.”

The other boy laughed, picturing their last stand at the local supermarket, hidden behind the vegetable aisle.

“I asked her out.” The blond boy confessed, and his friend turned to him, his eyes open wide.

“Now you tell me!? Did she say yes!?” He tried to hide his smile under his hand, but to no avail. “No way, congrats dude!”

He passed a hand through his hair slowly, his gaze breaking from the setting sun. “I’m so pissed.” The other boy narrowed his eyes, and turned his head slightly. “Great, she said that she liked me. So I wasted, what, a couple of months having a mutual crush? Instead of going out with her before, I had to ask the day we’re dying.”

The other boy hummed and nodded slowly, understandingly, and wrapped an arm around his shoulders.

They stared at their neighbourhood. It was quiet, like one of those still winter afternoons they’d spend watching those horrible rental DVDs. Not even the wind is blowing. It felt like a painting—unchanging, unmoving.

They were silent for a while. “I wish I’d gotten that piercing.” The other boy spoke up again. “Or that one tattoo.”

“It would have looked great on you.”

The conversation stagnated, and then resumed, spontaneous confessions and weird thoughts trying to be their last words. Time slogged between words, but the two of them, perched closer to heaven than anyone, didn’t mind the quiet.

“Yo.” The blond boy started again. “Do you think we’ll go to heaven?”

The other boy shook his head. “I’ve sinned enough.”

“I mean, the entire town is going down, you think they’ll have enough space?”

Even though it was said with the cadence of a joke, the question felt genuine.

“They’ll make a whole circle of hell for us. It’ll be like we never died.”

“I wish.”

“I’m really scared.”

“I know.”

“God, I’m tired of waiting.” His gaze rose to the darkening sky. “I’d rather they didn’t tell us it was happening.” He laid his back against the cold roof. “Not knowing when it’s gonna happen is driving me mad.”

The other boy smiled. He opened his mouth, but no words came out.

They didn’t get to say their final goodbyes. The explosion blew their entire town to smithereens, the shockwave and heat stripping their flesh from their bones. Their names won’t be remembered.

The war will continue. Millions more like them will die, unnamed, unaccounted, to line the pockets of those at the top. They won’t feel guilty about this, of course. Why would they? It’s just business.