A Most Beautiful Day

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A breath of warm breeze across my face, down my arms, tickling against my neck. The pleasure of the sun's gentle rays on my shallow cheeks. I opened my eyes, letting them be enveloped in brightness, momentarily blinding me. Feeling the sweet air flow past me, on its way to rejuvenate the dusty stone room. Looking out in-between the bars that dissected the narrow window, I took in the natural beauty, listened to the birds as they chirped their lively language. Not a blade of grass was out of place. It was the most beautiful day that I had ever seen. Fitting that it will be my last.

A knock on the cell door tore me from my thoughts. I turned to face the old oak slab as it swung open, revealing a large man behind.

"Your last meal. As requested," he spat out, in that same old monotone voice that I had become so accustomed to in the last few days. I slowly walked up to him and looked down at the tray he was holding in his hands, and at the KFC Chicken Strips Bucket Meal that sat on top.

"You forgot the ketchup."

At that he thrust the tray into my arms and slammed the door shut again. I heard the keys jangle as he locked it. I sighed and sat onto the poor excuse of a bed that I had been given, the tray on my lap. I felt numb. Today I will make my last breath, smell my last scent, take my last step. And there was nothing I could do to stop it. But I am a martyr. I am supposed to be brave. To be courageous in the face of death. Why then did I feel so scared? So detached from myself. I'm meant to be proud. Proud to die for a greater cause. But that feeling coming from my gut wasn't pride. Far from it. I looked down at my KFC. The last food I'll ever taste, and boy was it finger lickin' good.

They came at midday. They didn't even knock. I was only alerted to their presence by a chorus of heavy boots in the hallway and the rattle of the lock as it turned. There were four of them. Their faces showed no emotion. Serious. Silent. Soldiers. They had a job to do. They escorted me down the corridor. Two in front. Two behind. I only began to feel again when we arrived out into the courtyard.

Only a few months ago, I was living normally, helping out my father in the bakery, content with my life. Then one day I got talking to some persuasive people and suddenly I found myself caught up in the notion of rebellion. Of independence. Of being more than a single man. I was convinced that dying for the cause was a great and honourable thing to do. We knew the rebellion was doomed. But we were prepared to die for it anyway. I thought I was ready to be a martyr. Now, looking at the spot where I was about to be executed, I realised how wrong I was. I amn't ready to die. I wish more than anything that I could go back to my home and completely forget about the rebellion. I am only a young man. I still have to get married, raise a family, watch as my children grow taller than me. But here I was, staring at my death bed. One of the men approached me. In his hand dangled a black blindfold.

"Any last words?"

I shook my head. I had a speech prepared. A speech about freedom. About my country escaping from its tyrannous shackles that bound it so fiercely. But it seemed futile now. I would never even know if we gained independence. Or if my death was just a pointless sacrifice. He wrapped the blindfold around my head, his worn hands fixing it into position in a tight knot. He walked away, boots crunching on gravel. And so I stood there. Hands behind my back. My eyes reddening beneath the blindfold. My shaking lips began to mumble out a prayer. I don't know what I was praying for. Maybe it was for me, maybe it was for my family, but it was definitely not for the fate of my country.
"Our father, who art in-"
"Fire!"

Three rifles cracked. Three cracks that resounded throughout the land and rebounded throughout history. Three cracks that history would remember as the final moments of a great martyr's life. A man that willingly gave his life through belief and bravery so that his country would be free. But history would never know the truth. History would never know how in his final moments he regretted everything he'd done, and how he wished more than anything that he could take it all back. Three cracks that broke a most beautiful silence, a most beautiful stillness, of a most beautiful day.