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Godspeed

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Godspeed

by Noah Rucker
University of Florida

March 18th, 1944

The sea is more restless of late, here overlooking the Pacific. It bashes against the bluffs with some prodigious strength of nature, milling away at the ancient rock outcroppings that have stood sturdy for so long. One can't help but be impressed by the ocean's fury, yet I feel loathe to liken such enigmatic capabilities to that of nature. More seems at work here than that.

A rather morbid note with which to begin this letter, and at the end I fear you'll wish your eyes never to have met its contents. I'll let you judge whether my plight is worth your time as I lay my situation to bear.

In a fortnight from now, the beating of my heart will be called into question, and my mind is intrinsically tethered to this fact. The invasion begins April 1st, and a gruesome spectacle it is sure to be. Though I've no desire to berate the generals in charge or the soldiers around me; those letters of malevolence and discontent I'll leave to the angry throbs of fathers and sons holding rifles, still too young or too unwilling to comprehend the circumstances in which they are now so entangled. I'll leave their stories alone, as I'm sure they will be heard in due time. But what I wish to convey is something more than the violence of the youth and the brainwashing of the committed.

To make this connection, I ask you to bring yourself to the sea, the current vantage point from which I write. A sea breeze blows heavy with the scent of salt, and a great bluff looms overhead. The sun is setting in the distance, beautiful orange and red streaks patching their way like veins through the clouds. The water itself is a brilliant blue-green, clusters of foam clinging

to the rocks and pebbles of the beach. As picturesque a scene as I've ever been privy to, but it all falls short when thoughts of the future consume the mind. Will I receive the chance to ever witness such a spectacle again, or will I be rendered a figment of black, of sorrow, of a list that's printed for all to one day see, honoring the daily struggles of each individual in this war by the mere pairing of letters that constitute a name? No doubt these letters would be dignified, and whatever audience left to view them moved in some way by their sheer magnitude. But does it really matter that the strangers of the future remember a single name, lost from context aside so many others? Will they ponder on the issues, the lives, the mundane, ordinary actions of each individual, or will they view this entire monolith as more the fragment of a blighted past, of horrors unknown to them and therefore impossible to wholly relate? Will history repeat itself as it has done so many times before, with future soldiers scrawling these same sorts of letters on the eve of battle to throw to the sea, hoping for someone to find and understand their plight?

I may wish it otherwise, but I fear history will always foreshadow the future. But if human nature is doomed from the advent, why bother to articulate this letter even now? Why not just grudgingly accept my fate before the eternal Footman holds my coat, snickers, and lets fall his scythe? Why go to such lengths trying to impart some meaning or message to ones I'll never know? There must be some wishful longing I harbor that clings to the hope of others' futures not being rutted in the same deep groove as mine.

But I catch myself rambling. Surely you have grown bored with this meandering and all its tedious intertwining of words and prancing about the point, just wishing to be done with it so you might attend to the cocktail you left in the adjoining room. Yet I know I still hold sway over you. There is not one whose life is such that they would not finish a letter found floating in a bottle at sea, and perhaps this is my point.

Whoever may be reading this, wherever you may be, whatever year in history is scrawled across your calendar, you have the need to understand a fragment of the past that is just another piece in the Unfinishable Puzzle. And that need, that desire to explain or to understand – that is what drives us all. We are beings of curiosity and discovery, sated only by our endings. If we but— ahh, alas! The bell signaling my end of leave echoes in the distance. My time is cut short, even now. Yet, perhaps it is better this way. More fitting that my words be curtailed before their inadequacy is wholly realized. As such, I bid thee adieu. I will perform my duty, for however long it is bid to last. Godspeed, my friend.

*Andrew M. Wellington,
Frontline soldier of the Okinawa invasion force*