

d-day

His hands shook. That was from the coffee.

They stood shoulder-to-shoulder, crammed to the front of the deck. He could taste the salt on his lips and he wondered when he'd been to the sea last.

"I hope they kill me first," his friend groaned, throwing up over the side.

"I hope so too," he said, and they both laughed nervously.

And then it was time.

Afterwards, he remembered the invasion as a blur. The shock of cold water. The body of somebody he used to know floating beside him. The staccato fire of machine guns. And, suddenly, the new shock of being hit.

He spent the rest of the battle half in the water, half on shore, staring at the perfect, tiny spiral of a conch shell next to him. It was just the kind he used to collect when he went to the sea on school holidays.