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Extract from **THE GRANDFATHERS**

By Rory Mullarkey

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**Characters**

VAL

SASH

KOL

STAS

TOL

LEV

KOST

DIM

ZHEN

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**SCENE VIII: Sash**

Sash:               Something always matters more when you know it is going to end.

*The soldiers are at bus stops, at airports, on station platforms, in front gardens, in hallways, saying goodbye.*

I used to count the days through in my head. My favourite parts of the day were the parts that would pass as quickly as possible.

Val:                The time at scoff, those extra hours of sleep.

Sash:             I often just wished this time.

Kol:               This five hundred and forty seven days.

Sash:             Would pass entirely. I just wanted to age. Fuck it, you know, I'd much rather be old and safe than be young and be sent off to die.

Stas:             They say the worst part is always now.

Sash:             But then the time came before deployment and I just wanted time to slow down.

Stas:             Is always now.

Sash:             I was at home on leave but I just started doing press-ups in my bedroom because I knew that periods of intense physical exercise have the ability to make time pass incredibly slowly.

Tol:               What do you call that, recruit?

Sash:             Something I learnt from my training days. Nights I'd lie awake completely unable to sleep.

Lev:               At home.

Val:               In my bedroom.

Kost: In my bed.  
Dim: Do you ever get scared?  
Tol: And then in the morning we do it all over again.  
Sash: And my dreams.  
Lev: A Roman soldier.  
Dim: Covered in blood.  
Sash: When I did get to sleep, were the worse I'd ever had.  
Kol: When I wake up.  
Sash: I know that whether I'm different now.  
Val: I guess happiness is something different nowadays.  
Sash: Or exactly the same.  
Kost: I just love twatting stuff.  
Sash: That these days.  
Tol: That they have made me who I am.  
Sash: I'm part of something bigger than myself.  
Tol: Erase the word "personal" from your vocabulary.  
Zhen: I'm concerned about the section. I'm concerned about the productivity of the section.  
Tol: A sleek, beautifully ironed, nicely polished aesthetically pleasing machine.  
Sash: And I'm proud of that. I'm intensely proud of that.  
Tol: We trained hard.  
All: We'll fight easy.  
Sash: We trained hard and I hope with every part of me that we will fight easy.  
Stas: But it is only us.  
Sash: And it doesn't always work like that.  
Stas: In the very worst part.  
Dim: Everything you can imagine.  
Stas: In the very worst part.  
Lev: We're completely pinned down.

*Quietly at first, the sound of gunfire and explosions begins to underscore.*

Sash: It is only.  
Kol: Ever.  
Zhen: Us.  
Kol: One.  
Tol: Two.  
Val: Three.  
Kost: Four.  
Stas: Five.

Dim: Six.  
Lev: Seven.  
Sash: Eight.  
Zhen: Nine.  
Kol: Us.  
Sash: And they made me sit down and they made me write. And if you receive this letter.  
Zhen: And if you receive.  
Kol: If you receive this letter.  
Tol: If you receive.  
Val: If you receive.  
Sash: Then you know that the worst.  
Stas: In the worst part.  
Dim: And if you receive.  
Lev: If you receive.  
Sash: Then you know that the worst has happened.  
Kol: The worst has happened.  
Zhen: The worst has happened.  
Val: We're completely pinned down!  
Tol: And if you receive.  
Stas: Grenade!  
Zhen: If you receive.  
Tol: Heads down!

*The sounds are louder now.*

Kol: If.  
Kost: If you receive.  
Lev: If you receive.  
Sash: We're completely pinned down!  
Tol: Grenade!  
Val: If you receive.  
Stas: Grenade!  
Dim: If you receive.  
Kol: And I have a terrible feeling.  
Sash: If you receive.  
Kol: When I wake up I don't know where I am.  
Zhen: If you receive.  
Val: What makes the grass grow?  
Kol: And the thunder closes in.

Tol: If you receive.  
Kol: And I see omens in everything.  
Sash: If you receive.  
Dim: If you receive.  
Stas: The bird with the broken wing.  
Sash: And if you receive.  
Val: What makes the grass grow?  
Tol: We're completely pinned down!

*The sounds are deafening.*

Dim: If you receive.  
Kost: Grenade!  
Stas: And now, in the worst part.  
Zhen: If you receive.  
Dim: Grenade!  
Stas: In the very worst part.  
Zhen: It is only.  
Stas: Ever.

*The sounds stop.*

Kol: And if you receive this letter, then you know that the worst has happened.  
Stas: And now in the worst part.  
Tol: It is only us.  
Kost: It only us.  
Kol: Will you be there to meet me –  
Val: What makes the grass grow?  
Sash: When I wake up?  
Dim: When I wake up?  
Zhen: Will you be there to meet me –  
Kol: When I wake up?