Jack Merridew stopped in the hallway. He heard voice in the lobby, and they were talking about him.

“Do you know him? Captain Merridew, I mean?” That was his boss, General Nicholls.

“Does he have red hair?” Jack recognized the other voice. His old friend Roger. There was a pause. Jack supposed General Nicholls was nodding. “Blue eyes?” another pause. “Freckles?” Jack blushed furiously and stepped into the room before Roger could reveal anything else embarrassing about him.

“…And his name is Jack.” General Nicholls stood up, tipping his hat.

“Captain Merridew,” he said formally. But Roger had jumped up, all formality forgotten.

“Jack!” The younger man threw his arms around him. Normally Jack would’ve been slightly creeped out by such a thing, but this was Roger. Roger, who he’d known since he was eight. Roger, who had been his right hand man through everything he had done on the island, good and bad. Without a second thought, he hugged Roger back.

“It’s so good to see you!” Jack stepped back, examining his friend. Roger was still young, only 19 or so. Just old enough to join the army. “How are you?”

Jack really was pleased to see Roger. He had a lot of friends in school… before the island. Roger hadn’t. He, while two years younger, grew attached to jack from the first time he met him in the choir. The two had quickly become inseparable.

But after the island, things changed. All the boys were different, and more distant. Roger changed schools. He didn’t tell Jack he was leaving, or where to. He just… left. And Jack never saw him again. Until now.

Roger leaving hadn’t been easy for Jack. After the island, Roger was the only one who would even speak to him. The other choir boys, who were all younger than him, were afraid. They had been mostly little’uns, and although they had been behind him the whole time, their nightmares were worse because of him. *Maurice,* Jack thought absently. Maurice might have been okay… if his parents hadn’t instructed him to not even look at jack. And Simon’s brothers pretended he didn’t exist. Not that he could blame them.

Jack, without anyone to keep him company, had been so lonely; he quit the choir, leaving Maurice in charge. That was so unlike him.

Jack heard a soft cough behind him. General Nicholls was looking at him curiously. Jack smiled ruefully and sat down. Roger fell into the chair beside him.

‘So,” General Nicholls began, turning to Roger. “I suppose you’ll be under Captain Merridew’s command. Alright, Captain?” he asked. Jack nodded absently. It really was good to have Roger back.