

Kit looked up, "Got something to celebrate, have we?"

"You've never needed an excuse to drink before," Pelham said, "What's stopping you now?"

Kit picked up the mug and drained it in one go. He put the mug back onto the table with a hollow thud.

"Happy?"

"Ecstatic."

Whenever they were in a room together, the air was tense. They always seemed to be seconds from an argument, a fuse that could be sparked at any second.

"I think we need to talk about our little problem?" Pelham said.

"And what would that be?" Kit folded up the letter he'd been writing and tucked it into his breast pocket.

"Hasting."

Kit leant back in his chair, "Is he a problem?"

"I spoke to Sergeant Hill," Pelham said, "He said Hasting tried to desert."

"We don't know that," Kit said, "There was a lot going on. Which you'd know. If you'd been here."

"Where I was doesn't matter," Pelham said, "I can't have deserters in my company."

"We don't know that he was trying to desert," Kit said, raising his voice. I could tell he wanted to shout at Pelham, but knew when to keep his rage in check. "Where is he now?"

"I sent him down to the aid post," I said, "He was in a bad way."

Pelham looked at me, "And what are your thoughts on this?" I didn't believe he was actually interested in my thoughts, but answered anyway.

"I don't know, sir," I said, "When I saw him after the bombardment he was already trapped in the wire."

"And he didn't say anything to you?"

"No," I said, "Hill was the only one who spoke to me."

"Have you thought that Hill might be trying to get Hasting in trouble?" Kit said.

"Why would he do that?" Pelham said.

"I don't know. Some men seem determined to ruin other people's lives."

Pelham's mouth twitched into a grin. He poured himself some more wine and drank it slowly. Kit watched him, waiting to be challenged.