



*On a cargo ship called Mayflower, side by side with a congregation of religious Separatists, John Alden and Priscilla Mullins travel to the New World. But the dark, gloomy voyage is only the beginning of their trials and tribulations. They face threats of disease, starvation, and attack by Indians, to establish a colony on unforgiving shores.*

## ***All Will Be Well: A Mayflower Novel***

By Amy C. Martin

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A *Mayflower* Novel

# All Will Be Well



AMY C. MARTIN

## Praise for “All Will Be Well”

“The Pilgrims’ leaving England, landing in Plymouth and celebrating the first Thanksgiving in America are foundational myths taught every American school child. Amy Martin’s fictionalization of these events brings new life to this well-known story. Using meticulous research, Ms. Martin tells the much more interesting, true story of Massachusetts’ settlement. Religious dissenters, speculators hoping to earn their fortune and return to England and Native-Americans struggling to recover from a mysterious epidemic competed and cooperated through difficult circumstances that led to the establishment of a second British colony in North America.”

-Brien Brown, author of *The Fourth Son* and *Abigail’s Tale*

“Faithful to recorded history, *All Will Be Well* reveals the complexity of early European settler’s relationships with and attitudes towards the native people of New England. Author Amy Martin masterfully crafts a page-turner that reveals many long-forgotten truths about the early days of colonization at Plimoth Plantation. She unmask the myth of the pious, united, freedom-seekers and bares the disheveled machinations of a band of people with mixed objectives who laid the foundation of the United States of America. Martin exposes the birth of the “Shining City on the Hill,” in all its naked confusion, frustration, and pain as the settlers carve out a world reminiscent of the one they left behind, often at the expense of their aboriginal neighbors. This fascinating narrative is by turns both tender and stark and is a compelling look at colonial history.”

-Christine Duffy Zerillo, author of *Still Here*

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## Prologue

But Jesus... answered with these words and said:  
“It was necessary that there should be sin; but all  
shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner  
of thing shall be well.”

—Julian, anchoress at Norwich,  
*Revelations of Divine Love*, written  
circa. 1373, published 1670

### *Tuesday, 1 August 1620*

Priscilla Mullins hoisted herself up the ladder onto *Mayflower*'s top deck, heart pounding. She would never understand her mother. How could she sit all day with her mending and her darning, cooking or embroidering, always busy but never *doing* anything? They had been stuck in port for two weeks already, and Priscilla was exhausted from trying to keep still. She pounded her fist on the rail in frustration and slumped forward, wishing she could scream instead of stifling the small noises in her throat. A scream would catch the attention of the sailors, if not the passersby on the dock. She was trying, after all. Her father had proposed the ludicrous notion that they sail to the New World with a congregation of Separatists, and her mother, of course, said nothing against it. They left behind, along with most of their worldly goods, Priscilla's older half-siblings, William and Sarah, with their families back in Dorking. So now, Priscilla was the eldest. Instead of playing with her little brother Joseph, she was tasked with looking after him. She took on more of the household responsibilities, since her father chose to bring a male servant, Robert Carter, but no woman to help them. Well, it was not as though they *needed* help. It was the

fact that she did not have enough to do which was so frustrating. There was no shopping to do, no neighbors to visit, no means nor reason to leave the accursed ship where they sat, useless.

She gazed out over the port of Southampton, a view which had not changed since they docked on arrival from London. The town bustled, with sailors and tradesmen shouting and passing by at all hours. Chimneys drifted trails of smoke into the blue summer sky. The air reeked of salt water and fish, but it was better than the scent 'tween decks where the passengers were quartered. It was in Southampton they would join their companion ship *Speedwell*, loaded with the congregation from Leiden. The Separatists lived in Holland for twelve years, her father told her, because their practice of religion was illegal in England. Priscilla wondered what they might be like, having chosen to live first in Holland, and now in the New World, all to be separated from the King's church. A seagull cried overhead, and she gazed up at it, following its looping path through the wind. She wondered what it might be like to fly and no longer be stuck on this vessel like cattle in the market square. Below deck, families were packed together with their belongings on a transport ship designed to carry cargo, not passengers. She grew frustrated again just thinking of it and shook her head with irritation. Doing so, she noticed an unfamiliar young man boarding the ship.

As he climbed the gangway, he walked right into a low-hanging rope. He wore a brown felt capotain hat that added half a foot to his height, and his hat took the blow with the ease of long practice. The man did not seem to notice it at all. Priscilla stood up straighter. She'd been leaning on her forearms such that her rump stuck out across the narrow aisle between the ship's rail and the hatchway leading belowdecks.

But the stranger made no move to pass her by. Instead he turned and rested his small sea chest against the railing, scant inches away from her. He looked out over the view of Southampton.

His face was not one of unusual beauty, nor ugly, scarred, or pockmarked. His nose was long, and his chin the flat edge of a square jaw. His smooth cheeks were red with the prickle of skin unused to a razor's edge. His eyes squinted against the sun, pulling his thick eyebrows down toward his nose. She realized she was staring at him and turned her face away, feeling herself flush with embarrassment. He seemed not to have minded, nor even noticed her. She felt her heart in her chest, thrumming as though she had just run from her father's shop to St. Martin's Church. Her palms sweated, too, in the heat of the summer, although the breeze off Southampton Water kept the ship cool. She buried her hands in her blue skirt, wiping them dry, and stood next to the ordinary man looking out over *Mayflower's* rail.

## **Part I: October 1620–April 1621**



## Chapter One

They put to sea again with a prosperous wind, which continued divers days together, which was some encouragement unto them...

After they had enjoyed fair winds, and weather for a season, they were encountered many times with cross winds, and met with many fierce storms, with which the ship was shroudly shaken.

—William Bradford, *Of Plymouth Plantation*, 1651

### *Monday, 2 October 1620*

“Man overboard! Man overboard!” John Alden shouted into the howling wind. He heaved himself farther up the ladder, pulling his body into the torrent on the top deck. The sailors were already scrambling toward the ship’s rail, where one of *Mayflower*’s ropes was pulled taut, dragging underwater.

“Stay down there, landlubber,” one sailor shouted at him, rushing past.

“Do you want to go over the side too?” another asked, kicking at him for good measure.

John wobbled, and he descended one rung of the slick wet ladder to keep himself steady. His head and shoulders were above decks, the rest of his body suspended in the hatchway which led below. John squinted against the rain that pounded the deck in sheets. He had seen his friend Howland, who was ill with fever, ascend the ladder just moments before. John rushed after him, but as he reached the top of the ladder, a mighty wave crashed into them, causing the ship to roll like a barrel turned on its side. Howland had been swept from John’s field of view.

Rain tore at the canvas overhead and soaked the sailors who rushed about the deck grasping for ropes and shouting words John couldn't understand. The sting of salt water filled his nostrils. He hesitated; he had been told to stay down, and in truth he did not trust his sea legs enough to dash about the sodden deck. Yet he wanted to do something, rather than stand unsure, wobbling on this ladder like a dullard. The sailors gathered near the rail, heaving against a pitch-coated rope. John's cooper's strength could aid in their efforts, surely? But before John steeled himself to finish his ascent, the sailors pulled a sodden body over the rail and dropped him to the deck.

"Get him back 'tween decks, where he belongs," snarled the bosun. "We've enough else to do in this squall without looking after the kine." Howland rolled onto his side, coughing and spluttering. Two of the sailors grabbed him under the arms and heaved him toward the hatchway.

John was still standing on the ladder, his torso poking above decks through the opening. He reached up to steady his friend, as the sailors lowered him through the hole. Howland was a strong man, made lean during the course of their voyage, but at present he could not control his limbs. Getting down the steep ladder proved difficult. The ship rocked, buffeted by the crash of giant waves. As John reached the 'tween deck, he heard the thud of the hatch above closing. He glanced up to see a tarpaulin slide over the top. This was always done at first sign of a storm. *Why had it been delayed so long?* he wondered. At least there would be no more jaunts above decks by *Mayflower's* unwitting passengers tonight.

A crowd of interested passengers gathered around the base of the ladder, and a few men came forward to help balance Howland's coughing body. As John ducked, Howland's arm banged into his brown felt capotain hat,

knocking it off his head. John lifted one of Howland's arms over his shoulder and found the ship's surgeon, Giles Heale, on Howland's other side. Together, the surgeon and John carried Howland over to his pallet, stumbling through the mess of belongings piled on the floor; the darkness of the 'tween deck was seldom broken by lamp or candlelight for fear of fire. The thick stench of vomit and piss pervaded the air. John's exposure to the storm had cleared his nose, and the odors of the 'tween deck struck him afresh. The wetness made matters worse, as the aroma festered in the humidity. The tarpaulin would at least prevent the spill of further rain into the ship, though this would not alleviate the dampness. John had not felt dry since the start of their voyage two months ago.

Master Heale disappeared for a moment and came back with an oil lamp, which illuminated a small circle of light about him. John wondered if the surgeon came down 'tween decks to treat one of the passengers; perhaps that was why the hatchway was open in the midst of a torrent? Heale kept to his quarters above, with the crew, rather than with the passengers, who had been relegated to the cramped cargo deck.

"Fetch blankets," Heale instructed John, who was closest. "This man is freezing."

John faced the crowd, uncertain how to move through them. He was surprised when he saw blankets being passed forward, hand to hand. He seized them as they drew near and dropped to his knees beside the doctor. In the flickering light, John could see Heale's face was unlined, still soft in the cheeks, still filled with concern and worry rather than the wary resignation most doctors wore. Heale did not look much older than John, perhaps two or three and twenty. He furrowed his brows in concentration. John dropped the

blankets and retreated; the doctor and his patient were crowded by the growing number of passengers, drawn like moths to a flame. There was so little entertainment on the two-month voyage that the sight of a dying man became the height of interest. The increasing crush made John uncomfortable, and he wanted to seek out his own corner of the ship, to curl up as far from the other passengers as he could, pressed together as they were. However, there were few enough men on *Mayflower* John considered friends that he did not want to leave Howland if there was some way he could help. He found a post against which he could lean, to avoid the feeling of jostling at his back. His height gave him the advantage of sight even over the heads of many other passengers. He watched the ship's surgeon tap on Howland's chest, peer into his eyes, lean close to listen to his breath. Howland still lolled about, unconscious in the delirium of fever.

"Is he dead?" John heard a trembling voice ask. He turned to see the neat white coif of a girl's head at his elbow, a slice of ash blonde hair visible where the coif was slipping. She stood on her tiptoes, trying to peer above the crowd.

"It would be a shame to lose your dear intended over something such as this," replied her companion. John recognized the daughter of the cordwainer, Master Mullins, who carried an enormous store of shoes and boots in the cargo hold. Her voice and smile were teasing, as though it were a laughing matter.

The blonde girl looked horrified. "Oh, Priscilla, you know he is not—but what if he is to die?"

"Then your grand plans for matrimony may be upset, dear Tilley." Miss Mullins' grin irked John. How could she joke over the death of his friend?

“If he were dead, Master Heale would not need to tend him,” John interjected.

Both girls looked up, startled. Miss Mullins’ expression turned from mischief to shock in an instant. Her face flushed, and she looked away from John.

“Goodman Howland’s condition will not improve by virtue of you all standing here,” the ship’s surgeon chided, waving at the gathered crowd to usher them away. “This is no spectacle. Go back to your own beds.”

Grumbling, the crowd dispersed, each man or family retreating to the heap of possessions and the mattresses they called their own, squeezed between other men and families. John cast one last worried glance at his friend before heading to his own straw-stuffed pallet near the rear of the deck. His doublet was sodden from his exposure to the rain, and he would be glad to strip off his wet shirt to replace it with a damp one.

Priscilla pulled Tilley away from Goodman Alden, her face burning with embarrassment. Her heart was jumping along at a pace that frayed Priscilla’s nerves, too rapid even for the excitement of Howland’s rescue. She had not meant to be overheard; she was just teasing her friend a little. Elizabeth Tilley had been making eyes at Howland since their voyage began. Priscilla did not mean to keep the jest going more than a moment, yet she felt immediate regret when Alden’s dark eyes looked down at her. She knew her cheeks had warmed, as they did every time she found herself in his proximity.

“Who was that?” Tilley whispered as they picked their way around heaps of furniture and huddled passengers to a corner of the ship where someone was sleeping in a piece of

the shallop. The small boat was stowed 'tween decks with the passengers and their goods, as were the cannons.

“Goodman John Alden, the ship’s cooper.”

“A cooper just for the ship?” Tilley asked. There was no room for barrel-making aboard *Mayflower*.

“He maintains the casks that hold our provisions. He was hired on at Southampton.”

“So, he is not one of the merchant adventurers?”

Priscilla shrugged. “He seems not to speak much to anyone aboard, whether from Holland or amongst the merchant adventurers.”

Tilley was a member of the separated church, whose congregation made up about a third of the ship’s passengers. Priscilla’s father was one of the merchant adventurers, who made up the rest. Tilley spent most of her time with her mother and the other women from her congregation, but she and Priscilla became friends despite their different affiliations, and Tilley’s youth. Priscilla made a habit of easy conversation with everyone.

Everyone but Goodman Alden. Priscilla felt the flush creep down her neck, making her hairs stand on end. They had been on the ship together more than two months already, but since their first encounter by the ship’s rail she became feeble-minded and mute every time she saw him. It was unpleasant to feel herself strangled, to feel her thoughts go blank and her tongue still at the sight of this common man. She could not fathom why Goodman Alden had such an effect on her, when before today he never even spoke to her. He seemed to prefer solitude, at his work with the cargo, or to talk with other single men. It would not be appropriate for Priscilla, as an unmarried young woman, to approach him without reason. She wondered if asking after Howland’s health would be sufficient grounds to invite him to

*Amy C. Martin*

conversation, if she should find a good time to speak with him. If she spoke with him, she hoped these uncomfortable feelings might disappear.

## Chapter Two

Now next after this heavenly peace with God and our own consciences, we are carefully to provide for peace with all men what in us lieth, especially with our associates, and for that end watchfulness must be had, that we neither at all in ourselves do give, no, nor easily take offense being given by others.

— *Mourt's Relation*, 1622

### *Thursday, 5 October 1620*

“How do you fare?” John asked Howland with concern a few days later.

His friend was sitting up on his pallet, grinning with good humor.

“How can I fare but well, when God has spared me?” Howland ruffled a hand through his thick blond hair.

John could not sense any jest or bitterness in his words. “He could have spared you from going over the edge to start,” John said with a smile.

“Aye, no, Alden, that was the Devil’s work to be sure. That is what Mistress Carver says. It felt so, when I had wits enough about me to feel at all. I cannot imagine what fevered delirium led me up there. I remember the sensation of falling into the water, and when I opened my eyes the hand of God reached down and lifted me up.”

He said it so simply, as though there could be no doubt it was God’s own hand, and not the sailors, that rescued him. This belief in God’s direct intervention was not one which John could comprehend.



“Mayhap the ship does sail with God,” Howland continued. “Elsewise, why would he have chanced to look on me? It could not be my good fortune that left the halyard line dangling in the waves and placed me near enough to grasp it.”

Howland took his employ among the Separatists, and this line of thought was influenced by their beliefs. John’s smile faded.

“Mayhap,” was all he could reply.

The ship had passed through the worst of the storm, though it was still dank ’tween decks. A little light filtered through the hatchway, which stood open this afternoon. It was a rare invitation for the passengers to go up and walk about the deck.

John made his goodbyes to Howland, who was still recovering from his illness, and headed for the ladder. He needed to clear his head of all these Separatist sentiments. How could God reach out himself to one man, without his intermediaries? More than that, how could a man cast aside the King as head of the church in order to pursue direct contact with God? Such was vanity! More than vanity, it was treason. John could not understand it.

He reached for the ladder and hauled himself up the rungs. Perhaps sailors’ talk could help rid his mind of this theological quagmire. He got along with the sailors he met while working in the cooperage near the docks at Southampton. Their stories of Virginia were the reason he’d been keen to join *Mayflower*’s voyage. It was his chance to see this New World, the hot, unfamiliar land, and of course the Indians. His chance to do something independent of the master he served as an apprentice. Perhaps John could make his own name as a cooper and would return to England no longer reliant on the goodwill of others. He was added late to the ship’s roster, hired by the Virginia Company, who

financed the journey and fitted out the ship. He lodged 'tween decks with the passengers, but he was not one of them. Working in the hold, rather than above decks, he wasn't considered crew either. He was not sympathetic to Separatism, as were many of the merchants, so he tended to keep his own counsel. Nevertheless, his conversations with Howland accorded him cheerful company. Howland was an unburdened soul who took things as they came to him.

John meandered over to the ship's rail and leaned against a short stretch of wood that was free of tarred and tangled ropes. He tried to keep out of the way of the rushing sailors, who appeared too busy to stop and talk to him. The sky was cloudless, and the ocean lay as quiet as John had seen it. The two masses of blue met at a never-ending horizon. He drew in a deep breath of the tangy sea air. One grew accustomed to the putrid odor 'tween decks, but now fresh scents chased the smell of it away. There was a peace in this moment. *What might my life have been, he wondered, if I'd been sent aboard a ship as a boy, rather than apprenticed to a cooper?* He'd have gained some resistance to the seasickness which plagued him, as well as all the other passengers, for the first several weeks aboard. Some still lay incapacitated, unable to do much but vomit. But in that world, John would not know a curved froe from an adze, which was unimaginable. Nor would he know the delight of having something in front of him which he made with his own hands.

He felt the brush of a sleeve against his arm and turned to see who joined him at the rail. Miss Mullins stood there, placing her petite hands on the balustrade. He took a step back in surprise. Her eyebrows rose and her lips quirked up, giving her an expression of curious delight.

"Good morrow, Goodman Alden," she said.

John was startled, not knowing what to do. Though he had encountered her about the ship, they had not yet been introduced. He had never been approached by a young woman in such a straightforward manner. The circumstances of the ship contributed to a certain lack of propriety, but it did not mean John had any idea what to say.

“I hear Goodman Howland has recovered from his... unexpected swim,” Miss Mullins said, inviting conversation.

John nodded.

She looked out over the rail. Loose, dark curls of hair escaped the constraints of her white coif. Her face was round, her cheeks a light wind-stung pink that stood out against her pretty paleness. It was clear she was not a young woman who worked much outdoors. She looked soft, the fullness of her figure accentuated by the bulk of her blue wool skirt.

“Papa says we are sure to reach the New World soon,” Miss Mullins said, “though I cannot see how. When I look about and see so much of water and naught else, it feels as though we are the only souls left in the whole of creation.”

He could see the thought did not perturb her, as she bounced on her toes. John wondered what this woman might fear. She jested without concern over Howland’s death, and she seemed unworried that there was nothing around for miles but their ship.

“Priscilla!” called a man’s voice from a few feet down the deck.

They both turned to see who summoned her. Though several passengers milled about, it was the girl’s father who looked at them. She waved in his direction with a sparkling smile.

“Would you have leave to come and meet my father?” she asked John.

*Leave?* he wondered. *Leave from what?* But John could think of no reply, and Master Mullins approached, panting with his efforts to catch his wayward daughter.

“Priscilla—” he started, but she interrupted him.

“Papa, I want to introduce you to Goodman Alden,” she said. “He is the ship’s cooper.”

“How now, Goodman Alden,” Mullins made curt acknowledgment.

“I fare well, Master Mullins,” Alden replied with a small bow and a touch to the narrow brim of his hat.

Mullins grunted and turned back to his daughter. “Are you not meant to aid your mother with the mending, girl? How is she to tend to Joseph and do the mending all at once?”

“But Papa, we have not been able to come on deck in weeks. I will mind Joseph, if he will come up here. It is far too dark to see to mending down there in any case, and Mama shouldn’t strain herself so.”

“You know she will not cease for such a sensible suggestion,” Mullins replied with a smile. “You must go and fetch your brother, so she will have a modicum of peace.”

Miss Mullins made a face and went off toward the ladder.

“She’s a lovely girl,” her father said with a sigh, “but too free with herself, I’ll admit.”

John did not know whether this warranted argument or acquiescence. Miss Mullins’ lack of propriety seemed to be inherited. He settled on making a noise in his throat and retreating again to the rail, out of the way of the passing pedestrians. Mullins stepped back with him.

“You are not amongst the congregation that sails with us to the New World?”

“No, I came not from Holland,” answered John, “but from Southampton.”

“What said your family to your taking such a voyage?” Mullins asked.

“I have no family, Master Mullins.”

“Had you no shop to tend?”

“No, indeed. I have just completed my apprenticeship. I expect I shall begin working as a journeyman after I return to England,” John explained.

“Return?” Mullins asked, surprised. “Do you not intend to settle with us in Virginia?”

John shook his head. “I was hired on as ship’s cooper. The crew will want me with her on her voyage back.”

Mullins looked him over afresh, though John knew not why this information would alter the stranger’s opinion of him.

“And you, Master Mullins? You are not of the separated church?” John asked.

Mullins’ face relaxed into a smile. “No, no, we’ve not been to Holland. I’m a cordwainer by trade and sought the opportunity for my family. We are of the other party—the merchant adventurers, if you will have it so.”

As he spoke, Miss Mullins emerged from the hatchway, a small boy climbing up after her. His ascent was impeded by something clenched in his fists which he would not relinquish to grasp the ladder.

“Never thought I’d sail with Brownists,” John admitted.

Mullins frowned at him as Miss Mullins and Joseph ran up to join them. “Though we are not of their congregation, Goodman Alden, we are together in this venture,” he admonished. “And I do not think the members of the separated church would appreciate your insult.”

*Ah, John thought. He’s a sympathizer.*

“Priscilla, do take Joseph for a few turns about. I have business to attend with Carter, and your mother needs her

rest.” With a narrow glance at John, Master Mullins made his way ’tween decks.

“He can’t need aught of Carter.” Miss Mullins looked after him, perplexed.

John shook his head. He was unwilling to repeat his conversation with her father for fear she would take equal offense on behalf of the congregation.

Joseph was a boy of about eleven, whose breeches were somehow stained at the knee, although they had not left the ship for months. His brown hair flopped about his face, getting in the way of his eyes. He must not have cut it since their departure from England. He sat down in the corner by the forecastle cabin and emptied his fists of the game of knucklebones he carried with him. The knobbly white bones scattered across the deck. He tossed one bone into the air and, while it was aloft, swept up as many of the others as he could in one hand. He tried to catch the airborne bone on its way down, but missed.

“He will not move until he’s played his game through a dozen times. Would you care to walk with me instead, Master Alden?” Miss Mullins asked, taking him by the arm and steering him away from the rail.

The deck was not large. It would take but a few strides between the closed-off cabins to cross the whole of it. There were several other passengers ambling about, enjoying the air.

“Who on the ship have you met?” Miss Mullins asked. “Having come on as a cooper, you can’t have known many of them before your employ.”

He shook his head. “Goodman Howland,” he told her, “and Master Hopkins’ family, and Captain Standish and his wife.” He spotted Captain Standish, who stood with his wife next to the main mast. Standish was difficult to miss, for

although he was near a foot shorter than John, his hair was a fiery red and he always carried his cutlass strapped to his side. John was sure he would have worn his helmet and kept a belt of powder and shot as well, were it not for his wife Rose. Their quarters next to John aboard the ship gave him much occasion to speak with them both, as the closeness of the 'tween deck meant they slept about a foot away. Standish was a rough-and-tumble sort, typical of a soldier, but he engaged John in one-sided conversations about military campaigns through history, and he was at least not a Brownist.

Miss Mullins nodded beside John. He hadn't realized before that her head was at his shoulder. Her small stature was well matched with her plump figure. Her vivacious personality was the first overwhelming facet of her character and made her seem much larger than she was. He smiled, despite himself. John had no doubt that Miss Mullins made the acquaintance of each of the hundred souls aboard *Mayflower*. How she came to know them, he had no notion. He was not inclined to mingle with the Separatists and was not much practiced in greeting strangers of any stripe.

As they turned the corner, Miss Mullins dropped John's arm and scampered over to the ship's rail. She leaned so far over the edge, John worried she would topple forward. He reached out to steady her but hesitated, unsure where he ought to place his hands.

"Praise be, praise be, for this is the day the Lord hath made, and we will rejoice and be glad in it," she sang with joy out over the water.

A surge of laughter bubbled up in him. It was a fine day, indeed.

"Alden?" asked Captain Standish, a mere step closing the distance between them. "Do you have any notion what she means by such as this?"

John shrugged, unable to understand the woman himself.

“I mean to be glad of the sun and the sky and the sea, and glad of the ship *Mayflower* and the providence of God which has put us together in her,” Miss Mullins answered.

“Take note,” Standish replied, “unexpected outbursts can be alarming to men-at-arms and will alarm the Indians we encounter in Virginia.”

“I hardly see anyone of whom to be wary in our vicinity, Captain,” she answered.

Standish’s eyes widened as though he took personal offense.

“It has been too long since any of us had a breath of air unsullied by sea sickness,” John said, unsure who he was trying to appease. It took Standish aback, and his gaze flicked between John and Miss Mullins.

“Aye. Though some take more delight in it than others,” Standish grumbled, then stepped back to lead his wife away.

Miss Mullins giggled, and John gave her a frown. This did not improve matters; she giggled harder.

“What a terrible man,” she said, loud enough that the retreating captain might still have heard her. John looked after his back, but Standish did not turn.

“The captain mayn’t be having such a glad day as you,” John muttered.

“Do you think not? Whenever I see the captain, he is in such a mood. He seems always threatened by Indians, where I see none.” Her restrained smile still lifted the corners of her cheeks in a fashion from which John could not look away.

“He is a good man,” John said, wary of how informal their conversation became. “He has been one of the few men to speak with me since I have come aboard.”



“That,” Miss Mullins said, “is because *you* speak not to anybody.” With this, she flounced back to her brother Joseph, leaving John agape.

Joseph was still tucked away in his corner, tossing bones into the air and snatching at the collection remaining on the ship’s deck. Priscilla crouched beside him, careful not to let her skirts disturb his game. She felt warmth rising from her gut, and her insides squirmed. She had been so nervous to even muster the courage to speak to Goodman Alden. To then be caught in such a situation! To be reprimanded by the captain in front of him, of all people—and why had she not been able to stop giggling? Had she behaved too frivolously? Her mother often accused her of frivolity. Had she embarrassed herself?

“Joseph, have you not played enough?” she asked, wanting to distract herself from her encounter.

He shook his head, still concentrating on the scattered bones below him.

“Well then, may I at least have a turn? Would it not be more fun to play with me than by yourself?”

“You said you weren’t going to play children’s games with me anymore.” There was a gap in his mouth where he had lost a tooth, and his tongue prodded at the hole.

Priscilla sighed; a pang of regret mixed with her embarrassment.

“Yes, Mama keeps telling me that I am to behave more as a young woman who will, in a matter of years, be wed. But, well, I do not have a husband yet, do I?”

Joseph shook his head, but he still did not look at her. He tossed a bone into the air and picked two off the deck before catching it.

“What are you concerned with now?” she asked her brother.

“Your hands are bigger than mine, Sissy,” he complained, using his own endearing name for her. “It isn’t fair. Of course you’ll win.”

“Is that so?” she asked. “I don’t know; place your hand against mine and let’s see.”

She presented her palm to him, fingers spread. He glanced at her, uneasy that she wished to prove him wrong.

“Your hands are still growing,” she explained. “You are sure to outgrow me soon. If you insist on a fair competition, we shall have to measure to see when I shall be able to play against you.” She wiggled her fingers, encouraging him to raise his hand.

He did so, stretching out his fingers to their full length. The tips still fell a little short of her own. He huffed, dejected.

“Hmm. It looks like a scant inch left until you surpass me. By tomorrow, your fingers will have grown, and I can play with you.”

Joseph giggled. “Of course my hands will not grow so quickly!”

“No? But I am so impatient to play! If you can carry all the bones one-handed, why should it matter whose are larger?”

“It will be more difficult to pick them up!” he protested, and began demonstrating.

She smiled, listening to him chatter. He had not wanted to leave their home in Dorking, and the thing which convinced him to come along was that there would be Indians in the New World. He knew of Indians and wanted to see them for himself. Priscilla had not much wanted to come along on this venture either. She had little choice. If she wished it, her parents might have let her stay in England with her half-

sister's family. But Sarah was married, with child, and had been out of the house two years already. She would not appreciate Priscilla getting underfoot.

Priscilla glanced up and spotted Master Alden conversing with Captain Standish. His face was outlined by the sun, and she could just make out the shape of it: the brim of his hat, his flat nose, the square jaw now covered by a short brown beard that grew in patchy by the corners of his mustache. His stoic face was a reminder of her earlier indiscretion. She looked away and tugged at her coif, pulling it over her ears. Now he had spoken with her, and what could he think of her? Why had she spoken so freely? She always said too much, her mother warned her. A woman should be quieter. She supposed she would learn to hold her tongue. She had accomplished her goal and spoken with him, yet she felt herself even more silly in his presence than she had before. It was no use! Perhaps she was destined to look a fool in his eyes.

### Chapter Three

The one side labored to have the right worship of God, and discipline of Christ, established in the church, according to the simplicity of the gospel: without the mixture of men's inventions; and to have and to be ruled by the laws of God's Word, dispensed in those offices, and by those officers of Pastors, Teachers, and Elders, etc. according to the Scriptures. The other party (though under many colors, and pretences) endeavored to have the Episcopal dignity (after the popish manner) with their large power, and jurisdiction still retained; with all those courts, canons, and ceremonies... as formerly upheld their antichristian greatness, and enabled them with lordly, and tyrannous power, to persecute the poor servants of God.

—William Bradford, *Of Plymouth Plantation*, 1651

#### *Sunday, 15 October 1620*

On Sunday, John attended the Christian services 'tween decks. The services were as proper as could be expected aboard such a vessel, with such passengers as she carried. Sundays came and went aboard *Mayflower* with little argument between the congregation, who were of the separated church, and the merchant adventurers, who belonged to the Church of England. John found that many of the merchants were, at least in part, sympathetic to religious reformation, which eased the tension which would otherwise have come between them. While the merchants may have preferred to sit in a decorated nave and have the services done with ceremony by proper priests, who wore vestments, there

was neither church nor priest here. Not even the Brownists' pastor, John Robinson, made the voyage. He stayed instead with the congregants who remained in the city of Leiden, in Holland, until more ships could be got up for their passage. So, the merchants stood together with the Separatists, as it suited everyone better than trying to pray separately. It was unthinkable to everyone to have no service at all.

John stood with the others who were shy of singing with Separatists. His King James Bible was a last gift presented to John by his master before he left Southampton. He imagined it smelled of the cooperage. He feared his sense of home might vanish with the turn of each delicate page. The Separatists used the Geneva translation or Calvin's English Bible. In the services John attended at home, there would be hymns and recitations of the creeds and the Lord's Prayer. His copy of the Book of Common Prayer would guide him through each step of a never-changing journey. It was something he liked about services back home: they were reliable and familiar. He had not needed to take the Book of Common Prayer from his sea chest for weeks. The Separatists did things their own way. Their prayer was founded on the Bible, and not supplemental texts prepared by church leaders, which, they said, had no foundation in the word of God. They believed that the individual could pray to God himself, not rely on the hierarchy of priests and bishops and popes. The Separatists thought people should join together to become a congregation in belief, rather than depend on the established hierarchy of the English church. John's congregation at home was comprised of all his neighbors, the people around whom he lived and worked day by day. Why would these men leave their communities to seek out people who wanted a schism in the King's church? People who would abandon their king and their country, who wished to influence loyal Englishmen with

illegal and seditious materials? He shook his head in frustration.

Master Brewster led the prophesying, his voice passionate and steady. Separatist services tended toward extended interpretations of the text of the Bible and extemporaneous prayer. Brewster, an elder of the reformed church, was heartfelt in his appeals to God, but to John the words blurred together. The sermon turned to a faint hum, a lull; the sounds entered his mind but were not understood. From the rear of the deck, the squawk of chickens could be heard now and again, protesting their confinement. The pages blurred before John, and soon he did not even see them. He felt as though in a trance, aware of the rock of the ship, the lap of the waves against her hull, and the dull sounds of the Separatists' observation of the Sabbath. He waited, tired of these odd services which were spoken in English yet half understood. He waited, wanting to explain that this was not the way to God, that there could be no direct contact with God for any man on earth but King James and his bishops. That it was unlawful for any man to take upon himself the office of ministering without the authority of the Church.

Then the singing began. The Separatists did not believe in hymns with no basis in scripture, but in services they did sing the Psalms. A voice, sweet and soft and shaky, half hummed, half sang along with the raised voices of the congregation. It was not the first time he heard her tremulous voice, but now John recognized it. The singer was Miss Mullins.

*Serve ye Jehovah with gladness.*

*Come before him with singing mirth.*

His eyes shot up, and his hands snapped his Bible shut with more force than he intended. He sought her white cap amid the coifed heads of all the women aboard. A stray lock of dark hair caught his eye, and he followed it to her face. Her

brows were furrowed in concentration. There were no hymn books, but there were a few copies of the translations of the Psalms by Master Ainsworth. Ainsworth had rearranged some of the psalms into metered verse to ease the transition to song. The words were familiar to those from Holland, but they were strange for those raised in the Church of England. Sometimes the Separatists set the psalms to familiar tunes, the tunes of hymns sung in churches back in England, and put the new words to them. It was confounding to John, yet Miss Mullins tried. She had been trying, all these weeks aboard, to learn the way the reformers sang the songs.

*Confess to him, bless ye his name,  
because Jehovah, he good is.  
His mercy ever is the same,  
and his faith, unto all ages.*

John watched her silhouette, listening to the melodious voice fumble over the words. *It mayn't be so terrible*, John thought, unprompted, *to settle 'cross the ocean*.

His thought was broken by the sound of someone being sick into a bucket behind him. The sound made his own stomach turn over. At least if he stayed in the New World, he would not need to sail back.

### ***Wednesday, 18 October 1620***

Priscilla hummed to herself as she stroked Master Goodman's spaniel, who curled up beside her. His fur was long and tangled into filthy knots. She feared her own hair fared little better, after days tucked into her coif with little attention. It was difficult to maintain, in the dark dampness of the 'tween deck, so she kept it wrapped up under her coif and ignored it

as much as possible. The dog rolled and stretched, the feathering from his front legs trailing across his belly.

“Be merry, my friends, and list a while unto a merry jest,” she sang, working her fingers through the dog’s fur. “It may from you produce a smile, when you hear it expressed.”

He huffed a contented sigh as she scratched him behind the ears.

“It’s of a young man lately married which was a boone good fellow, this song in his head he always carried when drink—”

“What are you singing?” Tilley asked, squatting next to her.

Priscilla jumped a little in startlement. She blushed. “Oh, it is nothing, I’m sure.”

It was the first tune that popped into her head, but her father did not like her to sing drinking songs. It was not her fault that evening revelers wandered down the streets of Dorking singing them so she could not help but hear. The tunes echoed in her head until she needed to sing them to get them out. Tilley, who grew up in Holland, knew no English drinking ballads. It would not look well for Priscilla to teach her any.

The spaniel put his paw on Priscilla’s wrist to remind her that she was busy stroking him.

“Would you mind going through one of the psalms with me, Tilley? It is so much more difficult to try to fit new words to a familiar tune than to learn a new song altogether.”

Tilley smiled. She lifted her skirt and petticoat and sat down next to Priscilla.

“Aye. Did you have a particular psalm in mind? I know that the Ainsworth Psalter we use may read a little differently to the ones you are familiar with.”



“There was one I enjoyed this past Sunday—oh, I cannot remember the number.” She hummed a few bars. The tune they used was one she loved, and she would oft confuse the words if she did not concentrate. To be able to sing in church was one of Priscilla’s joys. It was not strange to want to sing praises to the Lord, if one did so in an appropriate setting. Whether at St. Martin’s Church in Dorking or here among the Separatists, the setting mattered less to her than the songs.

“I think that is number 23,” Tilley said. “The Lord to me a shepherd is, want therefore shall not I,” she began to sing. “He in the folds of tender grass doth cause me down to lie.”

“Aye,” Priscilla answered. “’Tis that one. Will you go through the lines with me?”

Tilley smiled. “It is a comfort to know the Lord is with us, is it not? To know that we shall dwell with the Lord eternally.” She sighed. “It is a comfort. How much of it do you recall already?”

“I think a few repetitions would help keep it straight as one verse in my head, separate from any other words I might think of when singing that tune.”

*The Lord to me a shepherd is,  
want therefore shall not I.  
He in the folds of tender grass  
doth cause me down to lie.*

*To waters calm me gently leads,  
restore my soul doth he;  
he doth in paths of righteousness  
for his name’s sake lead me.*

*Yea though in valley of death’s shade  
I walk, none ill I’ll fear,  
because thou art with me, thy rod  
and staff my comfort are.*

*All Will Be Well*

*For me a table thou hast spread,  
in presence of my foes;  
thou dost anoint my head with oil,  
my cup it overflows.*

*Goodness and mercy surely shall  
all my days follow me,  
and in the Lord's house I shall dwell  
so long as days shall be.*

Tilley's singing was not melodic; she was still quite young and did not have full control of her pitch. But she was sure of the words, and in their message, and the sound was sweet enough. At first, Tilley sang the lines one at a time for Priscilla to repeat. The lines were designed to be sung, so were written with meter and rhyme, which made them easy to remember. It took a couple of repetitions before the pair sang together, Priscilla stumbling but little over the words. Several of the women nearby joined their voices to the recitation, and soon they began singing other psalms to while away the afternoon. Even in the dark, in the midst of a storm, one could always sing. It was a great comfort, indeed, to be surrounded by familiar voices which all sang together.

***Tuesday, 24 October 1620***

A scream ripped open the night. John woke with a start, his heart racing. It was a woman's scream, and it came again. A horrible groaning cry. John recognized the sound and put his head between his hands. It was inevitable, alas. There were three women aboard round with child, and now one was birthing. He hoped the women might all last till land was

sighted—it could not be long now—but nature did not slow its course for his comfort.

'Twas his misfortune it should be Mistress Hopkins, who lay not six feet from him. The close quarters did not provide any relief. As the woman let out another terrible sobbing shriek, John Goodman's spaniel began barking—frenzied, uncontrollable barks—until Goodman came and lifted his dog away to the other end of the ship. It was raining—of course—and there was no chance at all of being let onto the top deck. John stood, knocking his head against the low ceiling of the ship. Fumbling in the dark, he made his way through to the gun room and down the ladder whence he could descend into the ship's hold.

The memories started to come back to John, as he knew they would. The terrible memories. His mother, lying in agony, blood soaking her smock. The screams were bad, but worse was when they faded away. When she tried to scream but could not. Her voice was gone, her life going. He was in their house and could not escape it. The house was one room, shared with another family. His place on the floor afforded him a view of everything. The misshapen red thing which fell through his father's grasp. It did not cry nor wail the way a babe ought. His father sent John's sister out to fetch the midwife, but it was over by the time they arrived. The babe had not moved.

"'Twas like to have been born dead," the midwife said, when she arrived. "More like than not."

John stood between the barrels, tuns, and hogsheads that lay in the hold. The rocking of the ship lessened here. He began his by-now-familiar routine of work. He moved from each cask to another, checking for damage. The hold was well packed, the furniture and personal effects of the passengers stored with their provisions. Master Mullins' collection of

shoes and boots caught his eye for a moment, but he focused his attention on the casks of seed and provision. The things which the Virginia Company, who financed the voyage, paid for. The weather knocked the goods about and kept John busy at his work repairing the wood to keep the contents well sealed. He fell into his labor and tried to block out the sounds of pain he could hear above him.

It was not long after his mother's death when his sister contracted the flux. It was not a week till she died. His father, with little enough control to begin with, gave in to drink. John supposed he should be glad his own contract to his master was made and he could go to live in the cooperage. John had been reliant on the master coopers who taught him ever since. He hadn't seen his father in all the years of his apprenticeship. He doubted the man yet lived. Though it was nothing so solemn as a vow nor an oath taken with himself, John was not interested in repeating his father's life. To be married and have children, but end up alone, finding solace in heavy drink, with all his family dead or gone? It would be unbearable to have such a thing happen to him when he'd already lost his family once.

A new cry broke through his self-imposed wall. A babe. A babe's cry. The relief flooded over him. The babe lived, at least so far. Mistress Hopkins' noises of continued struggle were welcome relief, too. Sounds of celebration were not oft heard 'tween decks, and it was joyous to hear it trickle down through the floorboards above his head. But the screams lingered in John's mind, and the sight of his mother's bloody body appeared before him when he closed his eyes. He would not sleep more tonight.



*On a cargo ship called Mayflower, side by side with a congregation of religious Separatists, John Alden and Priscilla Mullins travel to the New World. But the dark, gloomy voyage is only the beginning of their trials and tribulations. They face threats of disease, starvation, and attack by Indians, to establish a colony on unforgiving shores.*

## ***All Will Be Well: A Mayflower Novel***

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