

# *PRUDENCE*

Hal Ames  
(From a dream)



The sun shone through the window.

Prudence did not want to get up yet.

It was the first day of summer vacation.

She had just graduated from high school.

Prudence had the summer to relax before attending college.

She rolled over.

It was no use.

It was going to be a glorious day.

She sat up, stretched her arms.

Then she looked out the window.

The ocean was blue with the whitecaps of the waves as they headed toward the beach.

She looked out across the horizon.

Was this the day?

Was this the day her father returned?

He had been gone for so long.

Nothing there.

Prudence got dressed, made her bed, and cleaned her room.

She knew her mother would make her do it if she didn't.

The smell of breakfast entered her room.

Prudence rushed down the stairs to see her mother.

Her mother always made such good food.

She loved cooking with her mother.

They would sew clothes, bake cookies, and work in the flower garden together.

“Do you think father will come home today?”

“I don’t know. Maybe you should take another look.”

She ran to her room and looked out her window again.

There was a dot, a very small dot.

It seemed to be getting closer.

It was like watching a snail crawl across the ground in search of food.

The dot got bigger and then she could see the smoke rising from the tall smoke stacks.

It was a ship!

Maybe her father was coming home!

Down the stairs she ran.

“Mother! There’s a ship coming. May I go to the harbor?”

Her mother smiled at her.

“First you must eat your breakfast and clean the kitchen.”

Prudence ate quickly, cleaned up the kitchen.

Then she got ready to go to the harbor to meet the ship.

She had done this many times before.

Her bicycle was leaning against the fence just outside the door.

She had forgotten to put it into the shed.

It was wet from the rain the night before.

A towel quickly dried the seat, and off she went.

It was easy to get to town even though the road was a bit muddy.

She wore her boots.

Her dress got dirty from the mud flying up from the tires.

She didn’t care.

The road took twists and turns past the homes of her neighbors.  
It would be harder to go home because it would be up hill most of the way.  
When she got to the docks, she greeted the people who were there.  
They knew who she was.  
She came there often.  
She placed her bicycle against the wall of the store.  
Then she walked to the pier where the ship would dock once it was in the harbor.  
Almost an hour later, the large ship approached the dock.  
It was tied to the big posts.  
The anchor dropped to hold it in place.  
Prudence ran up to the ship  
She strained to see who was getting off.  
A crowd was there waiting to meet other passengers.  
Large crates lifted off the deck of the ship and were gently dropped to the dock.  
Men moved the large boxes inside the warehouses that lined the opposite side of the pier.  
The stevedores had met Prudence before.  
They greeted her.  
She said hello back.  
One of the crates had a name on the side of it.  
'Duncan Miller'  
"That's my dad! He must be on this ship."  
She hadn't seen him get off.  
Where was he?  
She ran up and down the dock looking for him.  
A nice man stopped her.  
"What are you doing?"  
"I'm looking for my father."  
"What ship was he on?"  
"He was on the Berwick, I think."

“Why do you say that?”

“I saw a crate with his name on it, and it came off the Berwick.”

“Let’s talk to the captain. Perhaps he knows your father.”

He walked with her to the ship.

They climbed the long plank to the deck.

He took her to the office of the captain.

When he knocked on the door a deep voice inside answered.

“Come in.”

The nice man opened the door.

Prudence went in cautiously.

The captain had many papers on his desk.

He was writing something.

He looked up.

“What can I do for you young lady?”

“I’m looking for my father. I think he was on your ship”

“What’s your father’s name?”

“Duncan Miller.”

“I know that name. He was on my ship. Didn’t you see him?”

“No, I have been here all morning and I never saw him.”

The captain got out of his chair and went to the door.

“Ensign, come here please!”

A young man in a uniform came to the door.

“Yes sir, what can I do for you?”

“This young lady is looking for her father. Have you seen Duncan Miller?”

“Yes sir. He left the ship an hour ago.”

“Do you know where he went?”

“I’m sorry sir. I don’t have any idea.”

“Would you please escort this young lady off the ship.”

“Yes sir. I’d be happy to do that for you. May I take leave? The ship is unloaded, and the

passengers are gone.”

“That will be fine. We ship out again before noon. Be here!”

“Yes sir.”

Prudence followed him off the ship to the dock.

“Where are you going?”

“I’m going home to see if my father is there. Would you like to join me? We can give you lunch.”

“That would be nice. I don’t have any other plans yet.”

Prudence got her bike.

They began the walk up the road to her house.

She was glad she had worn her boots.

They talked while walking.

“What’s your name?”

“Prudence, Prudence Miller. What’s yours?”

“Thomas Glanville. I’m from London. I’m on the ship to have a great adventure, but actually being on ship is pretty boring.”

“When will you be able to go home?”

“It’s been a year already and I have another year on my contract. I’m not sure what I’m going to do after that.”

The house came into view.

They climbed the stairs to the front porch.

Prudence removed her boots and put on her house shoes.

Thomas took his boots off.

He hit them against the post of the porch to knock off the mud.

“Here, you can use a pair of my father’s slippers.”

They entered the house.

“Mom! I’m home. Is dad here?”

There was no answer.

Thomas sat in the parlor.

She went to her room to change out of her muddy clothes and to brush her hair.

From room to room, she went looking for her parents.

She went to the kitchen.

Not there.

She went to the living room.

Not there.

She called out the back door.

No answer.

“I wonder where she went?”

They sat down at the table.

Prudence noticed a paper.

‘Your father has come home, and we’ve gone to the store to buy supplies. We will be back before dark.’

“My parents will be home in a little while. Are you hungry?”

“You bet I am. I haven’t had anything but biscuits and jerky for a long time. A real meal would be fantastic!”

Prudence went to the hen house and gathered some eggs.

She got some milk from the goat.

Then she brought everything inside.

When she went to the kitchen, Thomas was asleep on the couch.

She prepared a lunch, which included fresh bread, fried eggs, a slab of bacon, and milk.

The smell of the meal as it cooked woke Thomas up from his sleep.

He walked into the kitchen, sat down, and said a prayer.

Then began to devour the food.

It was like he had not eaten in a very long time.

Prudence smiled.

After the meal she showed him the farm.

They walked around the barns, the orchard, and the pasture where the horses ran free.

The horses came to the fence to eat some apples.

It was a beautiful day for a walk.

They returned to the house.

Thomas sat in the living room reading a book he found on a shelf.

Prudence cleaned the kitchen and did some of her chores.

Suddenly, Thomas was in the kitchen.

Prudence turned around.

He didn't have a smile on his face.

**Alternate endings, Ctrl/Click on the number to go to ending #1 or ending #2.**

## Ending #1

“When will your parents return?”

“Uh, the note said before dark, why?”

“I think you need to sit down.”

“Why?”

“Because I said so.”

“No, I don’t want to sit. I have many things to do.”

She backed up against the counter.

She was getting afraid.

He was so nice before.

What was happening?

Why had he changed?

Thomas pulled out a chair from the table.

“Sit down. I don’t want to hurt you.”

“What do you want?”

“Your family has many nice things. I think I will take a few of them with me. I’m tired of being on the ship. I need money to start a new life.”

“You want to steal from my family? I thought you were a nice person.”

“Everyone says that, until they get to know me.”

He grabbed Prudence forcing her to sit in the chair.

Taking a rope, he tied her up so she could not move.

He went to the living room and started to put things into a bag.

“Why are you doing this?! I was kind to you. I thought you were a nice person. Stop this!”

He didn’t listen, he just kept on searching the house for anything of value.

Prudence struggled with the ropes.

Soon she found she could reach the knot with her left hand.

She managed to untie it.

Prudence went to the counter and picked up a knife.

She hid behind the door and waited for him to come in.



When he entered, she stabbed him in the back.

He fell to the floor with a thud.

Prudence ran out of the house as fast as she could.

She ran like she had never run before.

Her feet were covered in mud.

Her dress was wet.

When she got to the neighbor's house they came out to see what was wrong.

"There's a man in my house, and he is stealing everything. Help me! I think I killed him."

Mr. Johnson got his shotgun.

He rode his horse to the house to stop the thief.

No one was there.

It was obvious something terrible had happened.

There was blood on the floor in the kitchen.

While he was searching, Prudence's parents arrived.

"What's going on here?"

"Prudence said a man came into the house and started to steal things, but I can't find him."

When they checked the house, they found many things missing and one of the horses was gone.

Prudence walked into the house and saw her father.

She ran to him and hugged him so tightly and wouldn't let go.

"What happened here?"

She told them the whole story.

Her mother was not happy.

"I thought you would be home. He was so nice to help me. I never thought he would want to steal from us."

Duncan got onto his horse.

He rode into town to report the robbery.

He looked around to see if he could find his horse thinking he could find Thomas.

Duncan knew Thomas from the ship.

He was surprised by his actions.

He went to the police.

The next thing he did was to go to the ship to report to the captain what Thomas had done.

No one on the ship had seen Thomas since he left the ship with the girl.

The police looked for him.

He hadn't left any clues.

Thomas did not return to the ship when it left.

No one ever saw or heard from him again.

There are stories of a man riding a horse and wearing a uniform wandering around the region to this day.

From that time, anytime something comes up missing, Thomas Glanville is blamed.

The expression 'Thomas must have taken it,' has become a common saying when something is lost.

## Ending #2

“I have to return to my ship. I would love to stay longer.”

“We have an extra room. You can stay the night here.”

“That would be very nice, thank you, but I have to get to my ship.”

He prepared to leave.

Just then, her parents arrived from town.

Prudence ran up.

She hugged her father for a long time.

“Who is this young man?”

“Thomas Glanville”

“Oh yeah, this is Thomas Glanville. He was on the ship you arrived on.”

“Right, I recognize him. How are you doing?”

“I’m fine.”

“What brings you to our home?”

“The captain asked me to escort your daughter. She has been very kind to me. She gave me a wonderful lunch.”

“Thank you for being a gentleman. Will you stay for dinner?”

“That would be wonderful. Thank you.”

He was invited to stay the night.

Duncan would take him to town the next day.

In the morning, Thomas joined the family for a big breakfast.

Duncan told his wife and daughter about his trip to London and all the things he had seen there.

Sometimes Thomas added to the story to describe the places in London.

Prudence began to dream of going to London someday.

Thomas and Prudence went for a walk around the farm.

He helped her feed the chickens and the cows.

They put out hay for the horses.

Soon it was time for him to leave.

He promised Prudence that he would write to her every day.

Duncan offered to take Thomas to the dock so he would be on time.

He hitched the horses to the carriage.

The four of them went to town.

On the dock, the other sailors were arriving.

The captain was yelling orders.

New cargo was on the ship, ready for transport to London.

Duncan went to check on his crate in the warehouse while Prudence said good-bye to Thomas.

“I hope you have a good trip.”

“I’m sure I will. I think I’m going to miss you. I will let you know when we will be here next.”

Prudence smiled.

“Perhaps you can fix me lunch again.”

“That would be wonderful.”

Before he went to board the ship, he gave Prudence a hug and kiss.

She turned red.

She was smiling like she had never smiled before.

She watched as Thomas got onto the ship.

He waved good-bye and disappeared to do his duties before the ship left.

Duncan had the crate loaded onto the carriage.

They began the trip home.

Prudence stared out the back of the carriage.

She watched as the cargo ship pulled away from the dock and headed out to sea.

Tears welled in her eyes.

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A year passed.

Life on the farm had not changed much.

She returned from college for the summer.

Every day Prudence looked out her window to watch for a ship coming to the harbor.

She read the letters Thomas wrote to her over and over again.

He was going from port to port.

In every letter he told her that he missed her and her quiet little town.

Then, one day, she saw a dot on the horizon.

Could it be Thomas?

She watched until she could see the smoke from the smoke stacks trailing the ship.

It *was* his ship.

She was sure of it!

“Mom, Dad, can I go to the harbor to see if Thomas is on the ship that is coming to the harbor?”

Duncan smiled.

“I’ll take you. Get dressed while I get the horses and the carriage ready.”

Prudence ran up to her room.

She could see the ship now.

Her last letter from him said he might be coming to her town.

She got dressed in her favorite dress.

The carriage was waiting.

Mother came along as well.

Prudence looked at her parents.

“Why are you dressed so nice?”

“Let’s make a day of it while we are in town.”

The ride to town was easy.

The road was dry, and the horse had no troubles.

Their neighbors waved as they went by.

Prudence had a big smile on her face.

The ship was pulling up to the dock as the carriage arrived.

By the time Prudence got to the ship it was tied up and the cargo was being offloaded.

She waited patiently while waiting for the passengers and crew to disembark.

It seemed as if everyone had left the ship.

She became worried.

**Alternate endings, Ctrl/Click on the number to go to [#3](#) or ending [#4](#)**

### **Ending #3**

And then, Thomas appeared, with a big smile on his face.

He waved at her.

He told her to come up the gangplank.

She ran as fast as she could.

When she got to him she hugged him like she had hugged her father when he returned a year earlier.

“Come, I have something to show you.”

She followed him to the captain’s quarters.

The room was decorated with flowers.

Shortly afterward, her parents entered the room.

Thomas looked into Prudence’s eyes and took her hands in his.

“Will you marry me?”

Shock covered her face.

“Of course, I will!”

The captain stood up and approached the couple.

Right then and there, they were married.

Her parents could not have been happier.

Duncan smiled at his daughter.

“Everyone knew what was going to happen today. We kept it a secret.”

Prudence and Thomas went on a trip together to London.

When they returned, they lived in the family home until they died, leaving three wonderful children.

#### **Ending #4**

She stood on the pier anxiously waiting.

He never came.

“Where could he be? He said he would be here. Why isn’t he here?”

Duncan was also worried.

They had made plans with Thomas.

The family went up the gangplank to meet with the captain.

When they got to his office, he was waiting for them.

The room was decorated with flowers.

Prudence looked around the room.

“What’s going on?”

The captain stood up.

He walked over to where Prudence was standing.

“I have some bad news for you. Yesterday, Thomas became very ill. He had a high fever and in the morning we found he had died. I’m so sorry. We don’t know what happened.”

Prudence fell on her knees and sobbed.

“What am I going to do? I have lost my true love.”

Her father lifted her off the floor.

He held her for a long time.

Duncan looked over at the captain.

“I have a question. May we bury Thomas on our farm?”

“I’ll have to ask his family first, but if they say yes, I will make sure arrangements are made.”

As soon as Prudence was able, she and her family left the ship.

Three days later a carriage showed up at the farm.

In the back was a coffin.

Thomas was buried in the family cemetery.

When Prudence died, she was buried next to him.

She had never married.