
FIRE *by*
NIGHT



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To Ken
for your encouragement,
support, and love.

Part One



By day the Lord went ahead of them in a pillar of cloud to guide them on their way and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light. . . .

Exodus 13:21 NIV

Jesus said, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”

John 8:12 NIV

CHAPTER

1

BULL RUN, VIRGINIA
JULY 21, 1861

The rippling cry split the air like torn cloth. It shivered down Julia Hoffman's spine, making the hair on her neck stand on end. "What was that?" she murmured.

"The Rebels," Uncle Joseph said. "God help us . . . they're attacking." He passed his binoculars up to Reverend Nathaniel Greene, seated in the carriage across from Julia. "Here, Reverend. Just look at them all!"

Julia leaned forward, watching the young minister's face as he pressed the field glasses to his eyes and surveyed the distant battlefield. When Nathaniel spoke, his voice was hushed with awe or maybe fear. "Where did they all come from?"

"What's happening?" Julia asked. "Tell me what's going on."

"Confederate reinforcements have arrived," Uncle Joseph said. "Looks like thousands of them. Is our line going to hold, Reverend?"

"I can't tell." Nathaniel offered the binoculars to Congressman Rhodes, seated beside him. The portly congressman shook his head, rubbing his eyes with the heels of his hands.

"I've gotten sweat in my eyes. Burns like the devil. This blasted heat is too much." He slouched on the seat beside Nathaniel, looking very much like a lump of lard slowly melting in a frying pan. Empty champagne bottles clinked at his feet.

Julia turned to her uncle, who stood in the dusty road beside the carriage wringing his hands. "I thought you told me we were winning this battle," she said.

"Well . . . we were. But now . . . I don't know where all these Rebels are coming from."

The carriage horses suddenly tensed. They lifted their heads in unison and stared in the direction of the fighting. They had grazed sluggishly along the roadside all afternoon while Julia and the others had watched the battle, but now the pair stopped eating. The hair along the big gelding's spine rose in a ridge, and he whinnied softly, a sound like a shiver.

Julia stood and took the binoculars from Nathaniel. They gave her an excellent view of the two armies fighting in the distance and the battered farmhouse that stood between them. But what she'd thought were stones scattered across the field were clearly fallen soldiers. Dead soldiers. She quickly looked away from them, pointing the glasses toward the horizon. A solid mass of gray marched forward into the clearing, bayonets glinting, crimson flags visible in the wavy heat. Then the binoculars slipped when the carriage lurched, and Julia fell backward against her seat.

"Are you all right?" Uncle Joseph asked her.

"I think so. Here, you can have these glasses back. What's wrong with the horses? Why are they acting this way?" They had grown increasingly restless, capering nervously in place, rocking the carriage. The Negro coachman pulled hard on the reins to hold them steady.

"Sorry, miss," he said. "Must be some horses out there been hurt. Making these ones upset."

Julia had encountered few Negroes during her nineteen years, and most of those had been viewed from a distance—former slaves who'd spoken at the abolition meetings she'd attended with Rever-

end Greene. There weren't any Negroes back home in her wealthy Philadelphia neighborhood, and she'd certainly never observed one as closely as this coachman. His skin was very black. Glistening with sweat, it reminded her of black satin.

"Yes . . . I can see some fallen horses," Uncle Joseph said, looking through the binoculars again. "A cavalry unit is fighting near Sudley Road."

The carriage rocked as Nathaniel jumped down from it. He was tall and lanky, with the ruddy, freckled look of an overgrown schoolboy in a clerical collar. Julia climbed down to stand beside him. She wished he would take her hand and offer her comfort and reassurance, but he took no notice of her. She watched the steadily mounting activity on the distant battlefield, feeling as uneasy as the horses.

They'd all been here since noon—four hours—and Julia had quickly grown restless. Like the congressman, she hated the sticky Virginia heat that pressed against her like too many sweaty bodies in a crowded bed. Beneath her bonnet, Julia's golden brown hair had escaped from its hairpins, curling damply around her face. But after pleading to come along in the congressman's elegant landau to watch the battle, she hadn't dared complain when she'd grown hot and bored with the distant skirmish. She had tried to engage Nathaniel Greene in conversation—the minister was the real reason she had begged to join the group—but he seemed more interested in talking politics with the men than in conversing with her.

As the hours passed they'd eaten crab cakes and ripe peaches from the picnic basket. The two older men had drunk champagne, cheering with hundreds of other spectators as the Union army slowly pushed the Rebels across the battlefield. "This should teach them a lesson or two," the congressman had said. "Now we'll see how eager they are for war."

"I daresay it will all be over with after today," Uncle Joseph had predicted.

But now the tide of battle had clearly changed. The men appeared worried and no longer confident as they stood silently beside Julia,

watching. The intermittent pop and rattle of gunfire grew to a steady clamor, like a storm of hailstones. The smell of sulfur and gunpowder drifted across the field in a haze of smoke. Julia's cousin Robert was fighting out there. Uncle Joseph was surely thinking of his son.

"Do you think we should leave, Joseph?" the congressman asked from his seat in the carriage. "Your niece . . ."

"I'm not afraid," Julia said, even though her legs felt strangely limp and she had to lean against the carriage for support. No one spoke as they watched for another half hour, the flash of exploding rifle fire visible through the smoke. Shouts, screams, and the blare of bugles filled the stagnant air with noise.

The thrill of fear that tingled through Julia was both dreadful and exhilarating. She'd been jealous of her cousin Robert—now Lieutenant Robert Hoffman, a newly commissioned graduate of West Point—as he'd prepared to invade Virginia with the Union Army. She'd pleaded for permission to travel with her aunt and uncle to Washington by train to see him, especially after she'd learned that Reverend Greene would be joining their party. Her cousin and his company of ninety-day volunteers had been certain that the rebellion would end quickly. None of them had wanted to miss out on the excitement—and neither had Julia.

But that excitement now turned to apprehension as she watched the Rebels slowly force the Union army to retreat the entire distance they had advanced. The ground shook with the rumble of booming cannon.

"This is not going well," her uncle murmured.

"Hold your line!" the congressman shouted to the distant troops. "Don't let them push you back!" But the blue-coated line gradually splintered and broke apart before the onslaught of gray. Union soldiers scattered as the field dissolved into chaos.

"Dear God, our men are retreating," Uncle Joseph moaned.

"That's not an orderly retreat," Nathaniel said. "It's a rout."

Julia clutched her uncle's sleeve. "They're coming this way!"

"Stop, confound you! Stop!" the congressman yelled. "Stand and fight!"

Then, above the din of clattering gunfire, an eerie whistling sound sliced the air. A roar like a burst of thunder crashed nearby, followed by another, then another.

"They're shelling us!" Congressman Rhodes cried out.

Nathaniel gripped Julia's arm. "Everyone into the carriage. Quickly!" He propelled her up onto the seat, then helped her uncle.

The congressman's face was pale behind a sheen of sweat. "Driver, let's go! Make haste!" he said. For a long moment the coachman didn't move, his eyes wide and very white against his dark face. "Hurry! Move!" the congressman shouted. "What are you waiting for?"

The coachman finally turned around and snapped the reins. The horses, more than eager to run, lurched forward, throwing Julia backward against the seat. The carriage started down the rutted turnpike toward safety. But dozens of other carriages, coupes, and landaus bearing fleeing spectators already mobbed the road, slowing their progress. Julia turned around to watch the battle as the sounds of warfare grew unmistakably louder: exploding cannon, volleys of gunfire, and the eerie, inhuman scream of the Rebel yell.

Congressman Rhodes suddenly stood, swaying in the jolting carriage, waving an empty champagne bottle at the retreating soldiers. "Stop! Go back! Stand and fight, you cowards!" His orders were lost in the tumult as troops sprinted across the fields toward the river, their panic made worse by the mad flight of everyone around them.

"Please, sir. You'd better sit down," Nathaniel urged as the cannonading grew louder. "Those shells are falling much too close."

"The Rebels are probably trying to destroy the bridge across Bull Run," Uncle Joseph said. "Can't you go any faster, driver?"

"I sure would like to do that, sir, but they all backed up ahead. Everybody try and get across that bridge, same as us."

Julia saw a long line of army wagons with white canvas covers clogging the road ahead. Her carriage made very little progress, then, a few minutes later, stopped altogether. The excitement she'd felt earlier vanished, replaced by horror as fleeing soldiers staggered past, dazed and bleeding, their lips blackened from tearing open their

powder cartridges. Sweat and dirt and fear covered their faces. Their abandoned knapsacks and bedrolls littered the road.

“Let us through!” someone shouted. “Please! This man needs help!” Two soldiers hurried past the stalled carriage, supporting a third man, whose bloodied foot dangled from his leg. Julia quickly looked away.

A hundred feet ahead, a tangle of vehicles and pushing, shoving men jammed the bridge. Dozens more men plunged headlong into the river in their haste to retreat. Then Julia heard the eerie whistling sound again, tearing the sky apart, roaring toward her like thunder. Her heart seemed to stand still. She was going to die.

The shell slammed into the ground nearby, the powerful blast pulsing through her body and hurling her to the floor of the carriage. Julia felt the explosion at the same moment that she heard it. Her nerve endings prickled from the concussion as dirt and grass and tattered cloth rained down on her. Everything vanished from sight in a blinding cloud of smoke and dust.

Above the ringing in her ears, she heard the terrible screams and moans of the wounded and the driver’s frantic shouts as he fought to restrain the rearing horses. She was still alive.

“Are you all right?” Uncle Joseph asked as he lifted her onto the seat. He sounded far away even though he sat right beside her. Julia nodded and realized she was weeping. Dirt filled her mouth and coated her tongue. Grit stung her eyes. The front of her new blue dress had turned gray with dust.

“Hurry, driver!” the congressman pleaded. “Get us across that bridge before they reload their artillery!”

Julia felt the carriage jolt forward again. Through a blur of tears and dense smoke she saw that the Confederate shell had missed the bridge by only a few hundred feet. A jumble of blue-coated bodies littered the roadside where the missile had struck.

“Help me! Please!” a soldier begged. He lay beside the road, both of his legs missing below his knees. A man lay dead beside him, still gripping his gun, the top of his head blown off.

“Driver, stop,” Nathaniel said. “We have to take some of these wounded men on board.”

“No, don’t!” Julia cried, hugging herself in terror. “Don’t stop. Please don’t stop! We have to get out of here!”

Nathaniel stared at her, shocked. “Julia! These men need our help.”

“I don’t care! I don’t want them near me! Keep going. Please, keep going!”

Then, unable to stop herself, she leaned over the side of the carriage and vomited her lunch. Her entire body shook. Bile burned her throat, humiliation seared her cheeks. She reached for the handkerchief Uncle Joseph offered, her movements clumsy with fear. She couldn’t control her arms and legs. They seemed to belong to someone else.

“Please, we must help these wounded men,” Nathaniel begged.

“No! *No!*” Julia was terrified that another bomb would explode, that a shell would destroy the bridge and they’d be trapped, that the carriage would become an enemy target if they took soldiers on board. And she could no longer bear to see the blood and muscle and glistening bone of the soldiers’ wounds.

“Don’t force her, Reverend,” Uncle Joseph said. “She’s very upset. I’m responsible for her, and I don’t want her hysterical.”

“Help me . . . please!” One voice carried above the moans and cries of a dozen others. Nathaniel stood and leaped off the moving landau as it finally reached the bridge.

“What are you doing, Reverend? Come back!” the congressman yelled.

“We can’t wait for you,” Uncle Joseph pleaded. “Come on. Get in, get in!”

“No, go on without me. I’m staying to help.”

“We can’t leave you here.”

“Go on,” Nathaniel called. “I’ll find another way back.”

“Please, get me out of here!” Julia begged. “I don’t want to die!” She covered her face with her hands as the horses clattered across the stone bridge and plowed through the crush of stampeding soldiers

on the other side. The horses gradually picked up speed as they finally pulled ahead of the troops, leaving the cries of the wounded far behind. Only then did Julia dare to open her eyes.

“What should we do about Reverend Greene?” the congressman asked. Dirt and sweat turned his handkerchief black as he mopped his face. “We can’t leave him here. He’s in danger.”

“It was his choice to stay,” Uncle Joseph mumbled. He looked pale and badly shaken. The layer of dust on his hair and mustache aged him ten years. “Look, I have my niece to consider. Let’s get her back to town, then we can decide what to do about Greene.”

The ride back to Washington seemed very long. Though the sounds of battle gradually faded in the distance, the thunder of artillery and the screams of the wounded continued to echo in Julia’s mind. At dusk, Washington’s church steeples finally appeared on the horizon beneath lowering clouds. The carriage reached the safety of Congressman Rhodes’ home moments before the rain was unleashed.

“I’m so sorry, my dear, for putting you through that,” Uncle Joseph said before a servant helped Julia upstairs to bed. “I should have known better than to let you come with us.”

“It wasn’t your fault,” she murmured. Her hands still shook as she accepted the laudanum pill and glass of water her aunt offered her.

Julia held back her tears as the maid helped her undress and turned down the bedcovers so she could crawl in. Then, alone in the darkened room, with rain hammering on the roof above her, she finally allowed herself to cry. She wanted to die of shame. It was bad enough that she had proven a coward, fleeing in fear and leaving Nathaniel stranded. But refusing to help the injured men had been unforgivable. Worse, she had disgraced herself in Nathaniel’s eyes. If she was ashamed of herself, what must he think of her? Julia wept until the laudanum took effect, then fell into a nightmare-filled sleep.



“Has there been any word of Reverend Greene?” Julia asked one of the maids when she awoke the next morning.

“He arrived a few minutes ago, miss.”

Julia sat up in bed. The sun, streaming through the cracks around her curtains, looked high in the sky. “What time is it?” she asked.

“Nearly half past eleven. You had yourself a good sleep, then, didn’t you?” The servant’s cheerfulness seemed wrong to Julia, as if the entire world should still be mourning over what had happened yesterday.

“How did it get to be so late?” Julia murmured. “Open the curtains, please.”

“No, Mrs. Rhodes said to keep the room dark and let you rest, seeing as you had such a terrible time of it yesterday. I never did see anyone shake the way you was shaking last night. Had yourself a terrible scare, didn’t you?”

Julia felt a wash of shame all over again at her cowardice. To let Nathaniel think she was bedridden from the experience would only add to it.

“I want the windows open, Bridgett. Hurry.” Hot, humid air poured into the room along with the sunshine as the servant reluctantly tugged open the draperies and opened the windows. Julia untangled the sheets from around her legs and climbed out of bed. “Help me get dressed.”

“But Mrs. Rhodes says you ought to stay in bed for the day, Miss Julia.”

“I’m not staying in bed. Come here and help me.” Julia reached behind her back, trying in vain to pull her loosened corset laces tight by herself while the young servant gnawed her fingers as if unsure whom to obey. “Bridgett! Are you going to help me with these corset laces or must I ring for another servant? Where’s my dress?”

“The blue one? We’re still trying to clean it, Miss Julia. It was nearly ruined, you know, especially all that lovely lace. Just covered with dirt, like you been rolling around on the ground, wrestling or something.”

Julia’s skin tingled as she remembered the force of the blast, the blinding cloud of debris. “Then I’ll just have to wear my evening dress. Come on, then. Help me with it. Hurry.” She drew a deep breath as

Bridgett yanked the corset laces. "Pull tighter!" Julia wanted her figure to appear as dainty and frail as possible. "Where is Reverend Greene at the moment?" she asked, carefully exhaling when the ordeal was over.

"In the study with Mr. Rhodes. That reverend's looking all tuckered out, like something the cat dragged in. I heard Mrs. Rhodes telling them to fix his bath."

"Is my uncle with him?"

The maid stood on a stool, lifting Julia's hoops and layers of petticoats over her head one by one. "No, miss. He left for the railway office to buy tickets to take you all back to Philadelphia."

"Did he say when we were leaving?"

"Tomorrow, I think."

"Do you know if Reverend Greene is going home with us?"

"I don't think so, miss. I heard him talking about staying to help the wounded soldiers."

Julia wanted to weep. She had hoped to finally win Nathaniel's affection on this trip as they spent time traveling together. Instead, she was further from her goal than ever before, having disgraced herself in his eyes yesterday.

"Hurry," she begged. "I must speak to him before he retires to his bath." With her dress finally in order, Julia sat down in front of the mirror and dabbed a little color onto her cheeks and lips while the maid tried to tame her wild hair with a brush. Julia didn't want to look like a painted woman, but she had to do something to disguise the pallor of her face, still ghostly from yesterday's ordeal. When the maid finished brushing her hair, parting it in the middle, and pinning it back, Julia thought it looked much too severe. She pulled a few curls loose to soften her face. Then, satisfied with the way she looked, she splashed on some perfume, shoved her feet into her shoes, and hurried downstairs.

The door to the congressman's dark-paneled study stood open. Julia stayed outside in the hallway for a moment, waiting to catch his eye and be invited inside. Nathaniel's impassioned voice drifted out along with the congressman's cigar smoke.

“But the Rebels should be the least of your concerns, sir,” he said. “The government simply must find accommodations for all of the wounded men. There aren’t enough hospital beds for them all, and they’re being forced to wander the city, looking for medical care.”

“What good are hospitals if our city is virtually undefended?” Rhodes said. “There’s nothing to stop the Rebels from crossing the Potomac and attacking Washington!”

“I don’t think you’ll have to worry about that. The heavy rains have turned all the roads to mud. Believe me—the enemy will have as hard a time getting here as I did.”

“General McDowell ought to be fired for being so ill-prepared. We made a terrible spectacle of ourselves yesterday. I expect Jeff Davis is having a good laugh at us right about now, and—Julia! My dear! Come in, come in. I didn’t expect to see you today. Are you all right? Have you recovered?”

“I’m quite well, thank you,” she said, sweeping into the room. “When I heard that Reverend Greene had returned, I simply had to see him and assure myself that he was all in one piece.” She turned to him, looking him over with what she hoped was an affectionate gaze. “Are you all right, Reverend? I’ve been praying for your safety all night.”

“I’m fine, thank you.”

“Thank heaven. I want to apologize for my appalling behavior yesterday. I’ve never had such a terrible shock before, and I simply wasn’t myself. Will you ever forgive me?”

“Of course,” he said after a moment. But Nathaniel’s cold, sullen expression didn’t change. She waited for her apology to soften his features into his boyish smile, but it didn’t. An ugly silence fell, made worse by the room’s gloomy atmosphere. The study was filled with dark heavy furniture and papered with drab wallpaper. The liver-colored drapes on the windows had been pulled half closed, adding to the melancholy. Julia wanted to say something to dispel the dismal silence, but she didn’t know what.

“Were you able to help those poor, suffering men, Reverend?” she finally asked.

“Some of them.”

“Goodness, you must be exhausted. I know all of us were by the time we returned home, weren’t we, Congressman?”

He nodded vacantly. Julia remembered the quantities of champagne he’d drunk and how he’d managed to fall asleep on the bone-rattling ride back to Washington. She wondered just how much he remembered from yesterday.

“Our government was disgracefully unprepared for so many casualties,” Nathaniel said, ignoring Julia. “You must publish a report on it, Congressman. The wounded had no transportation, too few physicians, inadequate field hospitals. . . . Our fighting men deserve better.”

“Yes, I expect Congress will be busy for some time debating this appalling disaster.” As Rhodes began fussing with his cigar, trying to relight it, Nathaniel turned to stare out the window. Julia followed his gaze and saw the unfinished dome of the Capitol building in the distance, covered with scaffolding. She had offered her apologies. Neither man seemed to want her here. The polite thing to do would be to leave.

“Well, then . . .” She smiled uncertainly at the minister’s rudely turned back. “I’ll leave you gentlemen to your discussion. I thank God you’re all right, Nathaniel.” Julia never used his first name and didn’t know what had prompted her to use it now. His coldness made her feel like a scolded child, but she held her head high as she left the room in a swirl of hoops and petticoats. She got as far as the first stair landing before remembering that she was going home tomorrow. She’d forgotten to ask Nathaniel if he planned to go home, too.

She hurried back to the study and saw that Congressman Rhodes had moved to stand beside Nathaniel at the window. They couldn’t see Julia in the doorway, but their voices carried out to her quite clearly.

“She’s sweet on you, Reverend,” the congressman said.

“Miss Hoffman, you mean?”

“Yes. I may be old and gray, but I can still recognize the signs.

She's a lovely young woman from a very fine family. Quite pretty, too. You're a lucky man to have caught her eye."

Julia smiled at the compliment and moved away slightly so she could listen without being seen.

"I do believe you're blushing, young man," the congressman said, chuckling. "Have I touched a nerve?"

"Truth be told, I find Miss Hoffman's attentions toward me embarrassing. But I'm afraid I haven't found the necessary . . . words . . . to discourage her."

"Why on earth would you wish to discourage her? Don't you find her pretty?"

"I really couldn't say if she's pretty or not. As the Scriptures say, I made a covenant with my eyes not to look upon a girl in that way."

"You're much too serious, Reverend. You needn't call it a sin to say a girl is pretty. How old are you . . . twenty-four, twenty-five?"

"Twenty-nine, sir."

"You look much younger. Listen, how do you expect to find a wife if you never look at a woman? Don't you plan to marry someday?"

"I wish very much to marry, God willing."

"Then, as I say, you would do well not to ignore Julia Hoffman's attention. In fact, I'd advise you to encourage it. Aside from her physical loveliness, she is purehearted, comes from a sterling family—and she tells me she's involved in your abolitionist causes, too."

"Well, yes . . . I suppose she is. . . ."

"Then what's the problem, my good fellow? I understand from her uncle that she can have her pick of eligible suitors back home and that her father is quite eager to see her well married and settled down, especially with the Union in an uproar."

Nathaniel heaved a sigh that Julia could hear even outside the door. This conversation was making her more and more uneasy, and she wasn't sure she wanted to hear Nathaniel's answer.

"To be perfectly honest," he finally replied, "Miss Hoffman is not at all what I'm looking for in a wife. I find her shallow, spoiled, and unbearably self-absorbed."

Julia slumped against the wall as if he'd struck her. Shock left her momentarily numb; then the pain of his cruel words slowly grabbed hold of her.

Apparently he'd stunned the congressman, as well. "My dear fellow!" he said.

"Forgive me for being so blunt, but I find it to be a true assessment of most of the young ladies in Miss Hoffman's social position. They can't—or won't—do a thing for themselves, whether it's combing their own hair or fixing a cup of tea. And their works of charity are always about themselves, done for selfish motives, not from true Christian love and compassion. Outward beauty rarely lasts a lifetime, Congressman, and then what would I be left with once it fades? A whining, nagging wife wrapped up in her own needs, whose only passions are spending money and spreading gossip? I need a devout wife, one who spends her time in the Scriptures and in prayer, one who is devoted to meeting the needs of others, whose lifelong passion, like mine, is to spread the Gospel."

Julia hated him. She longed to stalk into the room and strike back at him for insulting her. But to be caught eavesdropping would further disgrace her in his sight—and in her host's. Every part of her seemed to ache as she slowly backed away from the door. She didn't want to hear another painful word, but she couldn't stop herself from listening.

"Don't you think you're being a bit hard on young Julia?" Rhodes asked.

"Frankly, no. I don't. You saw her lack of compassion for those wounded men yesterday."

"I saw a frightened young lady who has never been exposed to such gruesome sights before. Neither have I, as a matter of fact. The battlefield is no place for a woman."

"I disagree. I've been reading the accounts of Florence Nightingale and the work she and her band of nurses did during the war in Crimea. The 'Nightingales' displayed remarkable courage and saved many lives on the battlefield."

“Ah, yes. I’ve read about them, too. Extraordinary. We could use a few Nightingales in our own war.”

“Even when Miss Hoffman has attended abolition meetings with me, she seemed more interested in flirting and being noticed by everyone than in what the guest speakers had to say. I realized that she had aimed her sights on me some time ago. But the more I’ve tried to discourage her, the more she has leeches onto me. I seem to be a prize she has set for herself, and the more coldly I treat her, the more determined she has become to win me over. Forgive me for sounding harsh, Congressman, but I’m very frustrated. I don’t quite know how to get rid of her.”

“Would you like me to have a word with her uncle or her father?”

Julia knew she would curl up and die if Congressman Rhodes ever repeated Nathaniel’s words to her father. The mere thought of it made her shrivel inside herself in shame. She considered storming into the room and telling Nathaniel that he needn’t think she would ever bother him again, when she heard his answer.

“No. . . . Thank you for offering, but I think I’d better learn to handle her advances myself.”

“All right. But be careful, Reverend. Judge Hoffman wields a great deal of power in Philadelphia, and he’s a generous contributor to your church. If you insult him or his daughter, I guarantee you’ll be looking for a new position.”

Julia finally turned away and hurried up the stairs as her tears began to fall. That’s what she would do—have Nathaniel fired as soon as she returned to Philadelphia. She knew her father had the power to do it and that he would gladly do it after she told him how Nathaniel had insulted all the women who did charity work for the church. She couldn’t remember ever feeling so angry. How dare he speak of her that way? She’d had dozens of worthy suitors, but she had loved only him, pursuing him alone for more than three years. Well, no more! She felt nothing but loathing for Reverend Nathaniel Greene.

Julia cried for a good long while, comforting herself with images

of Nathaniel being drummed out of the church, out of Philadelphia, out of the ministry. Then a better idea came to her. Rather than having him leave with such a low opinion of her, she would first prove to him that she wasn't shallow and self-absorbed. Once he was sorry for everything he'd said, *then* she'd have her father get rid of him.

She pressed her handkerchief to her eyes to stop her tears and sat down in front of the looking glass to repair her face. Julia knew she was pretty, even with red, swollen eyes and blotchy cheeks. Other men considered her a prize; why didn't Nathaniel Greene?

But the more she thought about his words and how she had reacted yesterday to those pleading, wounded men, the more clearly Julia began to see herself—clearer than any mirror might have shown. She saw her reflection, not in glass but in the words of the man she loved, a man who didn't return her love, a man who didn't look at her face but at her soul. There were things she could do to dress up the outside of herself. But all the lace and silk and rouge in the world couldn't camouflage her heart. Nathaniel had called her "shallow" and "spoiled" and "unbearably self-absorbed."

Julia Hoffman looked beyond the mirror and knew his words were true.