

## ✻CHAPTER II✻

# 1776: The Army of Israel

✻Faith Trumbull Huntington—known to her family as Faithy—was thirty-two years old in 1775, the mother of an eight-year-old son. Her husband was Colonel Jedidiah Huntington, also thirty-two and, beginning in July, commander of the Eighth Connecticut Regiment outside Boston. Her father was Jonathan Trumbull, who served as governor of Connecticut for fifteen years, including all of the war. Her mother, Faith Robinson Trumbull, was believed to be a great-granddaughter of John Robinson, the pastor of the Plymouth Pilgrims while they were in Holland. Her oldest brother, Joseph Trumbull, was commissary general of the Continental Army. Another brother, Jonathan Trumbull, Jr., was paymaster general of the Northern Department and, later in the war, military secretary to Washington. Her youngest brother, John Trumbull, served as adjutant to the Second Connecticut Regiment, then briefly as aide-de-camp to Washington, then as a brigade major. After the war he became the foremost artist of the revolution. Through his eyes Americans still see *The Death of General Montgomery*, *The Declaration of Independence*, *The Surrender of Lord Cornwallis at Yorktown*, other tableaux, and portraits of revolutionaries. In his autobiography John said that his sister Faith first awakened his interest in drawing while he was a child. Faith and her sister went to school in Boston, where Faith painted two portraits and a landscape. These hung in her

mother's parlor and were among the first objects that caught her favorite brother's eye.

As a child and as an adult Faith was an active Christian. She made an early and serious profession of piety and remained diligent in attendance at religious services. Although she had not yet undergone a "Change of her Heart"—that is, a conversion experience, giving her assurance that she was one of the saved—her first pastor said that she had "comfortable Hopes." Her husband thought her "the best of Women" and valued her as "my best earthly friend." She was admired for her learning, her friendliness, and her open, frank, cheerful character. Governor Trumbull said, "The tenderness and affection of my daughter Faith I am apt to think are without a parallel." Although wealthy, she was not idle. She showed benevolence in acts of generosity to others.

When the war began, Faith Huntington was deeply affected by the wrongs done to her country and felt a generous love of America's rights. Yet her sensitivity—her "soul susceptible of the most tender impressions"—soon made these feelings painful.

She experienced a strong shock during the Battle of Bunker Hill. She and a party of young friends visited the army outside Boston in June of 1775, their curiosity excited by the novelty of military scenes. Instead of a great militia muster with the promise of glorious war, they saw the battle, the artillery fire—chain shot, ring shot, and double-headed shot—and the burning of Charlestown. These sights, with their threat to her husband and her brothers, "overcame her strong, but too sensitive mind." Later, at home, her health was impaired: she was not robust, and "her feeble frame almost sank beneath the weight" of her anxiety. But when her husband was given his command in July, she "cordially" consented to his departure, concealing her strong emotions. Soon, however, she fell into a despondent frame of mind, which by the first week of October had become a deeply fixed gloom and melancholy. Although she was not explicit when she wrote to her husband, in her mind everything seemed "totally inverted": "she thought she was most de-

servedly forsaken and hated by God, her friends and all mankind, and was the most ungrateful and wicked creature on earth; and in spite of all the efforts of her friends and physicians, these things were to her perfectly real."

When Colonel Huntington heard from his mother, his father, and his father-in-law about the illness of his wife, he felt "the greatest Uneasiness and Concern," but he was "in great straits." The eagerness of many officers to get out of camp troubled Washington and made it dishonorable to ask for a leave of absence. Huntington decided to have his mother accompany his wife to Dedham, Massachusetts, where he could visit Faith and have her treated.

They arrived at Joshua Henshaw's house on Friday afternoon, October 27. Colonel Huntington met them there and found his wife better than he expected. For several weeks, in addition to having the tenderness and care of Mr. and Mrs. Henshaw, she was treated by Dr. John Sprague. "She had intervals of calm tranquillity and composure, but frequent turns of great and surprizing pain and distortion." Her husband called these turns "the Fits." Sprague visited her on Thursday, November 2, and predicted that "her Disorder will go off like a Mist." Both the doctor and the husband felt confident of her recovery. Colonel Huntington visited her for several days in mid-November and found that her intervals of calm increased daily. Faith was told that "her distempered Mind proceeds from a distempered Body." She said that she wished it might turn out to be so.

Thursday, November 23, 1775, was Thanksgiving Day in Massachusetts. The legislature called on ministers and people to praise God for giving them subsistence and health, for preserving the lives of their officers and soldiers while the enemy fell, for uniting the American colonies in "a Band of Union, founded upon the best Principles." With their thanksgiving, the people were to pray that wisdom would guide civil rulers and generals, that peace would be restored and the rights of posterity preserved, that God would "pour out his Spirit . . . bring us to a hearty Repentance and Reformation; purify and sanc-

tify all his Churches: That he would make Our's Emanuel's Land."

Mr. and Mrs. Henshaw and Faith Huntington expected all the Huntington and Trumbull brothers in camp to gather at Dedham "to rejoice with them . . . on this Day of public Thanksgiving." On the morning of the twenty-third the men had not yet decided to go, because they expected the British to attack the new siege works on Cobble Hill. However, Jedidiah was in Dedham early on the morning of the twenty-fourth, the day after Thanksgiving. He saw Faith; she seemed well; he left. Within the hour she found a small cord, and in her bedroom she hanged herself.

Governor Trumbull wrote in the family Bible: "*Faith d. at Ded. Friday Morning, 24th Nov. 1775.*" In a memorial sermon at Lebanon, Connecticut, on December 3, Faith's first pastor said that the reasons for her death were among the unknowable secrets of God's infinitely wise providence: "I can give you no Account of this Matter." But he did advise, "Let us all take Warning to improve our Reason, that Candle of the Lord, and his precious Gift, while we have it. . . . We have no Assurance of the Continuance of our Reason, or of our Lives: And when Reason is gone, we can do as little about working out our Salvation, as when we are dead." A newspaper obituary said, "The authors of American oppression and the public calamity, are accountable for her death, and that of thousands more." Governor Trumbull wrote to his son-in-law, "The world after all is a little pitiful thing; not performing any one promise it makes us for the future, and every day taking away and annulling the joys of the past. A few days ago I had a dear affectionate daughter Faithy. Alas! she is no more with us. Let us comfort one another, and if possible study to add as much more goodness, love, and friendship to each other as death has deprived us of in her." In camp, Colonel Huntington trusted that his wife had gone to "uninterrupted bliss"; but he recalled "the thousand agreeable and tender scenes" of their marriage and wept. He wished to see their son: "his presence might have soothed me—but it could not well be." During the war the boy

lived with Governor and Mrs. Trumbull. Colonel Huntington hoped that "he may by his improvements and dutifulness make some amends to his grandparents for the loss of their lovely daughter."

Faith Huntington's body was placed next to the remains of Nathaniel Ames, Sr., in Dwight's tomb in Dedham on November 28. Four junior officers in Colonel Huntington's regiment came from Roxbury camp to attend the services. Their walk took two and one-half hours, and on the way one of them argued to the others that it was beneath the dignity of human nature to shed tears or to mourn for the dead. They all debated this at great length and then disputed on the doctrines of predestination and free will the rest of the way.

The corpse lay at the Henshaws' house, where the mourners gathered. After prayer by the minister of Dedham's First Church, the funeral procession—first the immediate mourners, then those who had lived with Colonel Huntington, then officers, then women, then men—escorted the body to the tomb, walked back to the meetinghouse in the same order, and parted. That evening the four officers were guests at the Ames home. The company dined heartily on roast turkey.<sup>13</sup>