

Also by Frances Patton Statham

Flame of New Orleans

Jasmine Moon

Daughters of the Summer Storm

Phoenix Rising

From Love's Ashes

On Wings of Fire

To Face the Sun

Mary Musgrove, Queen of Savannah
(Original Title: Call the River Home)

Trail of Tears

The Roswell Women

The Roswell Legacy

The Silk Train

Mountain Legacy

Murder, al fresco

Bright Sun, Dark Moon

Frances Patton Statham

Bocage Books

Copyright © 1975 by Ace Books

Copyright © 1984 by Frances Patton Statham

All rights reserved under International and Pan-American
Copyright Conventions. Published in the United States
of America by Bocage Books

ISBN: 978-0-9895007-0-8

(Previously ISBN: 441 08040)

First Edition: September 1975 by Ace Books
Second Edition: November 2013 by Bocage Books

Library of Congress Control Number: 2013917670

bocagebooks@mindspring.com
www.bocagebooks.com

Cover design by Steve McAfee

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2

To
Meredith and Kathleen

*"And who is she that looketh forth in the morning,
fair as the moon, bright as the sun, and terrible as an
army with banners?"*

Song of Solomon 6:10

Bright Sun,
Dark Moon

Chapter 1

Charleston—February 2, 1803

*I*n an old deserted mansion on the banks of the Ashley River, Sonia Beauveau sat in the once elegant drawing room, where time seemed to stand still. Silence hung like the limp damask draperies dusted with a patina of neglect.

The woman had been lost in her own thoughts, but now her attention returned to the small, determined face before her.

In repose, the girl resembled a cold and unattainable Renaissance beauty captured on some Italian canvas of a bygone age. The double-fringed, golden lashes, easily seen at arm's length, tended to disappear at a distance, leaving only the fragile, mystical glance of a Botticelli or Da Vinci. Yet, when the amethyst eyes came alive, they announced her spirited heritage from the Carter family.

"And what makes you so sure you'll succeed?" the woman asked, breaking the silence. "Will you swoon at the man's feet and expect to be carried into his house?"

The awakening was swift; the girl's eyes became two shining mosaics—yellow glints of fire in an amethyst setting.

"Oh, thank you for such a marvelous idea, Sonia," the girl exclaimed, clasping her arms around the woman's shoulders. "Yes, I see now how it can be done... When I—"

Sonia held up her hand. "I certainly didn't mean to give you any ideas, love. Now, forget this foolishness and come to New Orleans with me, instead."

"I can't, Sonia. I must stay here in Carolina and prove my brother's murderer. The clues are almost certain to be in that hateful man's house. All I need is a little time to look. And I intend to get back what he stole from my brother."

"I still wish you'd leave it to the authorities. I don't think it proper for a sweet innocent like you to be anywhere near a man with that kind of reputation... much less under his roof."

"The authorities have done nothing about it."

The woman continued on as if the girl had not spoken. "...Why it was rumored that he even took a mistress on the Grand Tour with him and flaunted her all over Europe. Now everyone in Charleston knows he's bedding the daughter of his overseer. Heaven help him if his mother were still alive." She put her hand to her throat in dismay.

"Well, it's my own affair," the girl said stubbornly. "After all, I *am* eighteen and able to take care of myself. And if he already has someone sharing his bed," she

added with a twinkle, "then I shall be safe from that indignity." Her expression sobered again. "But Sonia, I'll need one small favor. May I ride your mare tomorrow? She'll come home when I give her a slap on her rump, and then she can't be traced."

"You're far too headstrong, my dear. You always were." Sonia's glare softened. "But you know I can't refuse my own godchild."

With that settled the girl spent the rest of the day planning and replanning her strategy. Luckily, her riding instructor had taught her how to fall from a horse without getting hurt, but she could easily pretend. She knew it was a dangerous venture, but wasn't that why she had come back to the Low Country—to make sure that her brother's murderer was punished?

Now alone and hidden in the house for that one night, she did not dare to build a telltale fire as evening approached. Instead, she wrapped herself in the heavy down quilt and went to bed in the dark. But she was unable to sleep. Lightning flashed outside the window and thunder rumbled menacingly, while the storm without and her personal storm within merged and then subsided....