

**UNDER THE BAN: A
SOUTH CAROLINA
ROMANCE**

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Under the Ban: A South Carolina Romance by Terésa Hammond Strickland

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BY
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UNDER THE BAN.

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BOOK I—THE GOOD OLD DAYS.

CHAPTER I.

A FRIENDLY LITTLE GAME OF POKER, AND ITS
AFTERMATH.

"Gad, Kendricks, you have taken every single jack pot; you have broken my portable bank, and I think it is about time to quit now, and take a drink all round!" and thereupon a hale and hearty old gentleman, with a deliciously colored nose and cheeks like ruddy winter apples, threw down his valueless cards and arose from the rude bench a sadder and a wiser man. Several other players likewise eyed with lowering brows their empty purses and left the table, whilst the lucky Kendricks delightedly scooped up his easily won cash and calmly buttoned it into the depths of his trousers pockets. He was a clean faced, finely formed young man, with the tell-tale lines of dissipation beginning to show around his handsome mouth.

"Well, friends," he said; "don't feel too sore; remember the last fishing expedition we were on! Luck was then dead against me, and I even chipped in, my treas-

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ured diamond ring! I see, Dr. Dan, that you still wear it. It's the fortunes of war!"

The rotund, jolly little doctor winked his merry eye and cried: "I could never think of parting with such a valuable token of your friendship, Kendricks! My wife has thought a great deal more of you, my boy, ever since you 'presented' it to me;" and the other men all joined in his boisterous laughter. There was but one who failed to see the point of the timely joke,—a tall and graceful young fellow who stood sullenly apart, at a little distance. The ominous frown of defeat had not yet left his brow, and his revengeful glances were fixed on the winner.

His gaze was sternly directed at Kendricks, who noticed his humor and cried, "Come, come, Charles, don't feel so sore, old fellow! I will give you another chance to-night, and stake the mare you so much admire! Luck may turn your way! Fortune is a fickle jade!"

"I don't want another chance with you, Kendricks," coldly answered the young man. "You have the devil's own luck, while I—well, I don't flourish as the green bay tree;" and he walked moodily away, evidently hard hit.

Col. Ashmore poked Kendricks in the ribs, and chuckled, "You lucky dog! first fortune smiles upon you, then lovely woman; look out, don't rob Charles of everything. Where is that confounded nigger, York? York! York! I say, come here and fill up these glasses!" For, wine properly followed cards, in this free and easy hour.

"Yes-sa, Marster, I's comin', yes-sa!" and an old black man appeared, peering through the trees, grinning delightedly. "Pete done cotch a fine string o' fish, an' Sam got two or free eels, big as water moccasins! yes-sa!" And he busied himself then, in wiping glasses scientifically and concocting that wonderfully seductive

"mint julep," for which Col. Ashmore's factotum was famous. York was his own special body-servant and had been presented to him by his father on his sixteenth birthday, when he went away to college. Old York had grown gray in his master's service, and he devoutly thought "Mars' Henry" to be the king and ruler of the universe.

As York lifted the demijohn to pour the old red rye into the pitcher, he sang in a monotone, his African invocation to the spirit which all worshiped:

"Fust, put in the mint when its fresh and green,
 Den, chip in de ice, an' de sugar between;
 Den, pour in de rye, de old red rye,
 An' 'twill tickle you till you almost die!
 Mint julep's de sass dat I like de bes',
 It warms you all up, jes' under de ves',
 It gits in your blood, from your head to your toe,
 Sing ho, for mint julep! an', a ho! ho! ho!"

The white men laughed gayly, as they drew up around the table and joined lustily in the chorus: "Sing ho for de mint julep an', a ho! ho! ho!"

"Come up, Charles, and fill your own glass! Here's to better luck next time!" shouted Dr. Dan, and they all clinked glasses and drank heartily, for "Come easy, go easy" was the rollicking motto. "Fill um up again, ole Marster!" shouted the triumphant York, "an' leave a little drop for your own ole nigger!" Col. Ashmore pressed his own glass upon his faithful slave and filled for himself another, crying, "A toast! a toast! Here, Charles, mount the table and give us a rattling toast!"

There was a chorus of general acclaim as the dark-eyed loser approached. With a flush upon his brow, the young fellow sprang lightly upon the table and, lifting his glass, exclaimed in a rich, ringing voice:

"Here's to the women, God bless 'em! to our mothers, sweethearts and wives!" "Hear! hear!" shouted the excited men, and they joyously clinked glasses and

drank again, and, yet again. The "aqua miraculous" was now getting rapidly into their blood and firing their ardent brains.

As Charles dismounted, Kendricks leapt upon the table, crying in a meaning tone: "A toast! a toast! to the sweetest eyes that God ever placed 'neath woman's brows on earth! to the sweetest lips that ever were formed for kisses! Here's to Carolyn, fair Queen Carolyn!" A crimson wave rushed over young Charles' face, and with a bitter oath he dashed his cup into the face of the toaster, crying fiercely, as he faced him, "Damn your impudence, how dare you name Miss Howard so lightly? If her lips were formed for kisses, you will not have the honor of placing them there! You profligate coward!"

The circle still stood aghast, with uplifted glasses, as Kendricks hurled his own glass full at Charles, and then sprang madly toward him.

Each of the sudden adversaries whipped a ready pistol from his hip pocket, and the men around, now half sobered, dashed their cups to earth and hastily endeavored to part the infuriated rivals.

Cards, wine, and now, woman!

"Gentlemen! gentlemen! Keep cool! I pray you both," shouted Col. Ashmore. "This is not the time nor the place to settle this unfortunate misunderstanding. Kendricks, shame upon you, why, you know better! Charles, you know better also! York, you confounded rascal, you made that last julep too strong!" But the old Southron could not stem the tide of rage. The young hot bloods would not be quieted, but struggled violently for freedom, as four men held each back by main force from the other.

"I insist upon settling this matter right now, and here!" thundered Kendricks. "It is my right!"

"Here it shall be; here you shall pay the penalty of your vile insult!" answered Charles, glaring intensely at his foe. "Gentlemen, the inevitable has occurred! Let