



# *Point Venus*

By SUSANNE McDONNAUGHES

**It would almost be better not to see Jonas at all, Marianna thought miserably,  
than to play this wretched role of middleman in Lily's flirtation with him**

**The Story:** Tahiti's fight against French annexation in the 1880s was a heartbreaking struggle. In their concern for the island's future, MARIANNA MOORE and JONAS BURKHAM became deeply involved in the war—and deeply involved with each other.

Marianna was the daughter of an English missionary, NATHANIEL MOORE, and though she knew Jonas thought of her simply as a prim young schoolmarm, she had for years been in love with the handsome, reckless American. She'd been deeply hurt to hear of Jonas' affair with LILY NICHOLLS, the beautiful, spoiled wife of ANTHONY NICHOLLS, a planter, and in an at-

tempt to stifle her love for him, had agreed to marry RICHARD JOHNSON, a mild-mannered young missionary.

When the Tahitian resistance to the French flamed into actual warfare, Jonas joined the Tahitians in battle. And when Marianna appeared on the battlefield to help nurse the wounded, Jonas realized for the first time how deep her feeling for him was—and how great was his concern for her safety.

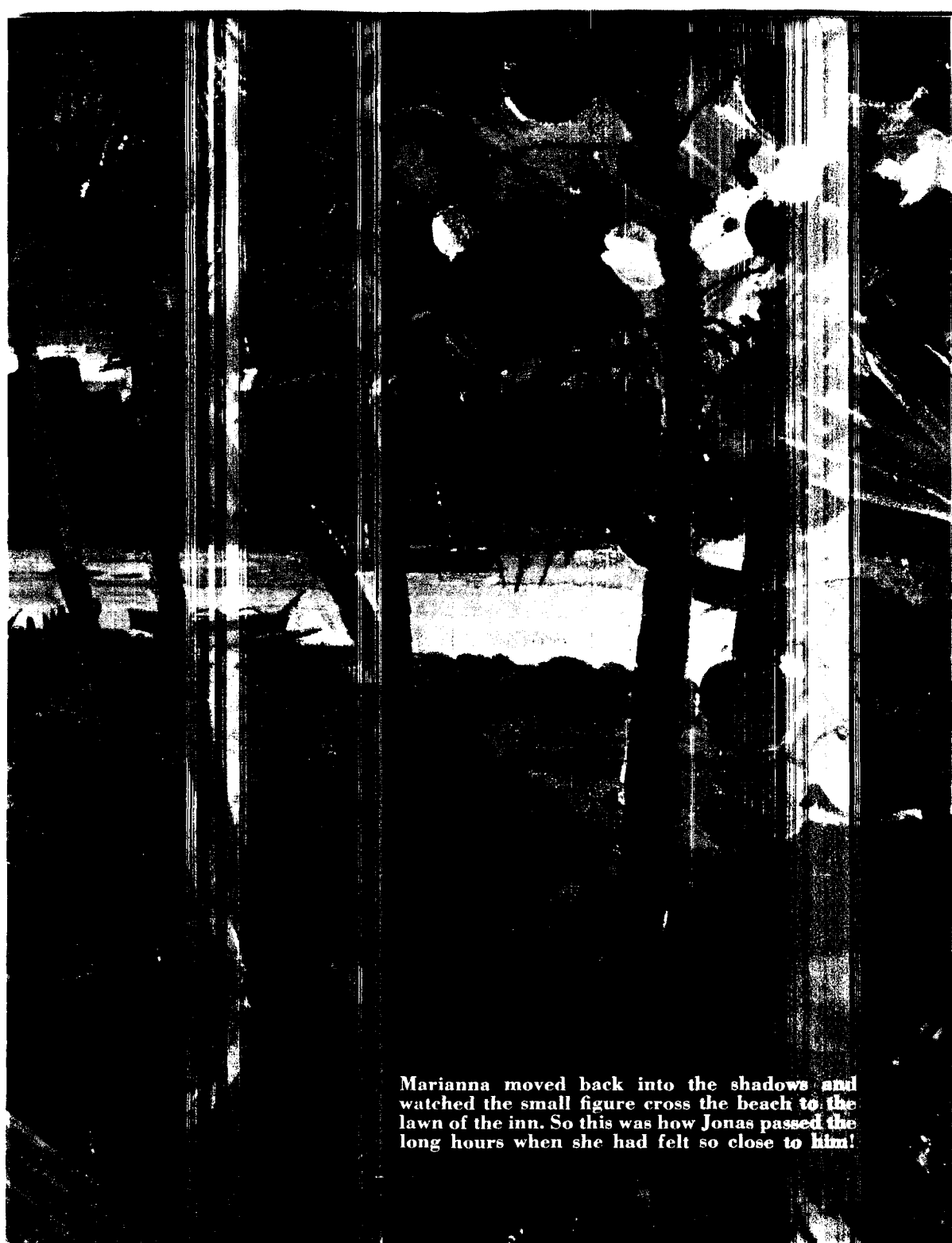
Several weeks later, tragedy drew them closer. A Tahitian bullet, meant for the French governor of the island, killed Marianna's father. In her grief, Marianna turned not to her fiancé, but to Jonas, and as he

took her in his arms, Jonas knew that what he felt for her was deeper than sympathy.

A few days after her father's funeral, Richard Johnson came to Marianna and told her that he and some of the other missionaries had decided it was useless and dangerous to stay in Tahiti any longer. He planned to return to England and wanted Marianna to go with him to be married.

Indignant that he should leave Tahiti in its time of greatest need, Marianna tried to reason with him, and when that failed, she told him that she could never marry him.

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Marianna moved back into the shadows and watched the small figure cross the beach to the lawn of the inn. So this was how Jonas passed the long hours when she had felt so close to him!

## IV

THE days that followed her father's death were the most miserable Marianna had ever known. Except for Teui, her old servant, and a handful of children and old people, there was no one about; all the others had moved to the fortified encampment in the valley of Papenoo, a few miles to the southeast. And with her father gone, the soul seemed to have left the mission station. Her own life, bereft not only of him but of the ordered routine that had sustained it for so long, seemed empty as a stranded conch shell.

She had not seen Jonas for more than a week; in fact, not at all since she'd returned from burying her father in Papaoa. Each evening as she sat on the veranda she would find herself listening for the sound of his horse's hoofs on the road. Then she would remind herself that Jonas had no reason to seek her out now. His kindness and concern had merely been his way of paying tribute to her father's memory. Now his duty was done. But still she sat and listened for his coming, as if the waiting and listening provided a proper evening's climax to the dragging pointlessness of her days.

Yet, when he suddenly appeared one evening, full of news of Papeete where, he explained, he had spent the past five days working on his schooner, she found that his presence was oddly disturbing. As she listened to his news of the continued tensions in town she saw that he was preoccupied and worried. It was only when he swung around in his chair to face her directly that she knew that the waiting was over at last.

"I hear that you—I understand that your plans are somewhat changed," he said.

"If you mean that I'm not going to marry Richard Johnson and go to England," she said coolly, "you are right."

"Then what do you intend to do? You can't stay on out here. The French are planning to build a fort here. Right on the Point, Marianna. You can't possibly stay."

So he had heard about her decision not to marry Richard Johnson, and now he would once again dutifully take the responsibility for worrying about Nathaniel Moore's daughter and her future. She listened with growing resentment as he went on.

"I talked to Mr. Thomson in town about it. He wants you there very much, to teach school for him. There's a little cottage at the inn you could rent, and Mrs. Buelle said you could take your meals at the inn."

"You have already spoken to her?" Marianna said. "How very—kind." How very officious, her voice indicated.

Some of the concern in Jonas' eyes was replaced by a look of wary amusement. "As a matter of fact, I have. I also took the liberty of engaging a wagon and horses to come out for your things a week from today."

"Perhaps you'd be good enough to pack up for me, too," she said. "You seem to have taken all the other arrangements out of my hands."

"It would give me great pleasure," he said. "Helpless women have always appealed to me."

"When I go," Marianna said in a carefully con-

trolled tone, "you won't be troubled with any women at all in the district—helpless or otherwise. There just won't be any here."

"I was afraid of that," he said regretfully. "And for that reason, among others, I, too, am moving to town."

Marianna's eyes were wide and intent upon his face. "You, too?"

"Yes," he said. "There's nothing left here. I'll live aboard my schooner when I'm not on a voyage." He pushed back his chair. "And now I must go. Good night, Marianna. I'll be over tomorrow to see about that packing."

She got to her feet as he went down the steps, and for a moment stood indecisively by the table. Suddenly she caught up a lantern and lighted it from the lamp.

At her call he stopped by the gate. Quickly, she came to him across the dark grass. "Here," she said, "you'll need a light tonight—there's no moon."

"Thanks," he said. He took the lantern from her, watching her face in its light.

"Mr. Burkham," she said rapidly, "I do appreciate what you have done. I'm sorry I was rude."

He laughed. "Don't be sorry," he said. "I quite enjoyed it. Besides, I wasn't being altogether altruistic in planning your future, Marianna. As it happens, there are a few things I can do for the natives, now that I've got the schooner again. I can run supplies around to Papenoo, and carry information to them, and I'll badly need your help."

"My help?"

"Someone I can trust," he said. "Someone to cover up for me, and find things out, and be my liaison with respectability. Don't worry about it now."

He said good night to her then, and went off down the road. For a few minutes Marianna stood there in the cool starlight. All her resentment had faded away and in its place she felt a warm thankfulness. To be needed once more, to be needed for something, however small . . .

THE day she left Matavai to move to town was bright and windy. White clouds rode swiftly across the sky, and beneath the sunlight and shadow the landscape was dazzlingly vivid.

The carter's wagon, loaded with her goods, had started on its way an hour before, and Jonas stood waiting at the foot of the veranda steps. At the top of the steps Teui, shaking with sobs, was holding Marianna in her huge embrace, and as Marianna kissed her brown cheeks and finally drew away, he saw that her face was tight with her effort for composure.

She held her shoulders very straight as she came down the steps. Jonas helped her into her saddle. She turned back to Teui as the horse started slowly to walk away, and there was a break in her voice. "Good-by, Teui! Let me know always how you are."

He saw that she could not trust herself to speak for a few moments, and they rode silently along the shady lane, past the deserted church, past the schoolhouse, out onto the road at the foot of the bay. At last she spoke, leaning forward and patting the neck of her horse, her face momentarily hidden from Jonas by the wide brim of her hat. "I can never tell you how grateful I am for all you've done, Jonas. Sending the wagon—bringing the horse out."

Before he could reply, they heard horses' hoofs behind them and voices calling their names. They turned and saw a group of natives riding toward them.

"It's Teui's son, Poriri," Marianna said, astonished. "And Tane, and his sister, and Manu and Taua's daughter—"

"Our old neighbors, down from the hills! I hope there hasn't been trouble with the French!" Jonas said.

In a moment the riders came up to them, five men, each with a musket slung across his back, and three girls, riding astride, with gay *pareus* twisted above their slender legs and their long wavy black hair streaming behind them in the wind. Their arms were laden with wreaths of flowers, and there were bundles hanging across the backs of their horses. They reined in beside Marianna and Jonas, laughing and calling out greetings. Poriri leaped from his horse.

"We heard you were leaving the district today, and we came to say farewell."

He held up his hand to (Continued on page 59)

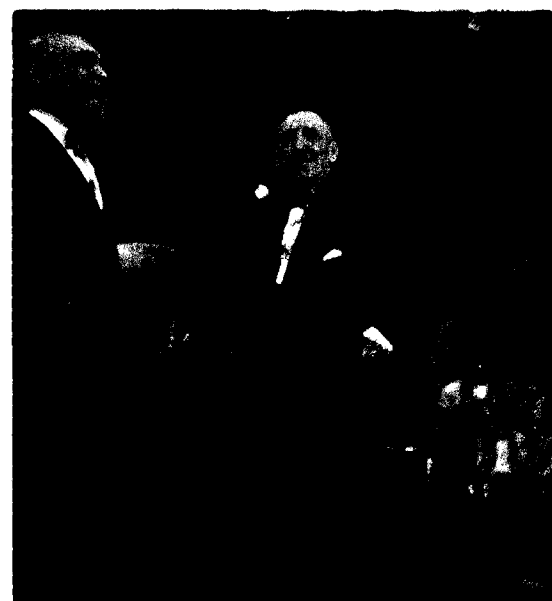
# "Good Night, Mrs. Calabash-

Concluding SCHNOZZOLA! Jimmy Durante's Life Story

For Jimmy Durante, tragedy was the forerunner of triumph. In 1943, just as he reached his "low pernt" professionally, his wife died, to be followed later by his partner and long-time pal, Lou Clayton. But then came television—and the supreme success of a brilliant career



Cyrano Durante, once again a hit in the night clubs that gave him a start 30-odd years ago



Singer Eddie Jackson rejoined Durante a few years back, has been a regular on TV program

Among the Schnozzola's video guests has been Sophie Tucker, "last of the Red Hot Mamas"

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