



“ Uglee peegi I kill  
you!”

## Including the Scandinavian

By R. V. GERY

“**S**PEAKIN’ of Swedes—”

Mr. Chardis, the Levuka’s herculean second officer, leaned back in his chair and contemplated with a pitying eye a Norwegian barque loading in the basin beneath us. It was mid-afternoon in Le Havre, and he and I had been lazily sipping drinks at a table on the sidewalk, while across the harbor, her decks a haze from the

laboring winches, the Levuka took on her final dollops of freight. This evening she would be ready for sea—but meanwhile the sun smote warmly on the cobbles, the whisky was at his elbow, his pipe spluttered in full blast, and Mr. Chardis gave every indication of being about to deliver himself of one of his more masterly lies.

“Speakin’ of Swedes—”

*Ole was so dumb he mistook kicks for caresses—but First Mate Bagshaw was to be thankful for Ole’s thick head*

"We weren't," I said. "But continue, continue!"

He rolled a baleful eye upon me. "Kindly confine your observations to yourself, mister," he said with dignity. "That is, if you're willin' to listen to a yarn—"

I have had sufficient experience of Mr. Chardis and his embroideries to subside at once.

"Go ahead!" I said contritely, shoving the bottle over. "I'll bite!"

He saw fit to disregard the implication in my last remark. From the fine frenzy in his rolling eye I gathered that a special effort was to be forthcoming, and braced myself accordingly.

**H**IS name (said Chardis) was Ole Olsen—believe it or not. About half these here fellers from up the Baltic seem to be called that, one way or another, same as every other Welshman's called John Jones. Dunno why—kind o' national weakness, maybe. Anyhow, that was his monicker—Ole Olsen; and he was a deck-hand on the old Matoppo, along there just after the war.

I dunno whether you've observed it, too, but these Scowegians, takin' 'em by and large, seem to run to size more than to intelleck. Nqt so spry about the upperworks, somehow—all brawn an' no brains, you might say. Leastways, that's what I've always been led to believe. And when this here Ole Olsen come aboard us, I reckon most of us on the Matoppo thought similar.

It was at Suez, and that's a rum kind of a place for a feller like that to be on the loose, too. But there he was, out of a ship, and the agent sent him off to us to replace a cove what had got about six inches of a knife stuck in him at Port Said, t'other end of the Canal.

I was on the bridge—I was third in them days—with our first officer, Bagshaw, when Ole come up the ladder off of the lighter.

Bagshaw was one o' them perishin' little jokers, about two foot high and ten foot 'round, and with a head on him the size of a balloon. What's more, he'd no use for Swedes, or Dagoes; or any o' them outlandish breeds. Swedes in partic'lar was his meat.

"Good godfathers!" he says to me. "Wot in thunder's this walkin' miracle comin' aboard here?"

"Dunno, sir," I says to him, careful-like. It didn't pay to be anything else with Bagshaw. "Looks like another o' them bally Scandahoovians to me."

He squints down under his hand, very pompous.

"By the Lord, Mister Chardis," says he, "I wouldn't wonder but what you're right! Yes, upon me soul—it is! Another o' these tow-haired, slack-witted, ham-fisted, potwallopin' sons o' Satan! Yes, by James! Bos'n!" He bellows down over the rail. "Bring that man up here to me. I want to see him!"

Well, in about a minute here comes Ole, paradin' along of the bos'n, lookin' about the size of a first-prize ox, and as if he was still three-quarters asleep an' the rest cuckoo. Bagshaw looks him up and down.

"Hump!" he says. "What's *your* name, eh?"

Ole gapes at him, stupid. "Olsen, 'is name is, sir," says the bos'n. "Ole Olsen. 'E don't seem very bright, sir."

"Bright!" Bagshaw's workin' himself up into a passion. "Not very bright, you say? Well, he'll be bright enough by the time I've done with him."

I'll give him bright! D'ye hear that, you?"

Ole's been starin' in front of him like he's in a dream, but now he wakes up, kind of:

"Yaw!" he says.

Somehow or other, that seems to touch Bagshaw off.

He takes a deep breath, an' turns purple.

"Oh, you do, do you?" he gulps.

"Well, just you make a note of it, that's all. There's going to be a Swedish gent of the name of Ole that's liable to learn a thing or two on this vessel. Oh, yes, by Judas!"

I dunno what Ole thought he was talkin' about—makin' him a speech of welcome, maybe—but he tugs at his forelock and grins all over his ugly piss.

"Yaw!" says he, affable. "Fine day, yaw?"

That finishes Bagshaw—he was a proper stickler for ship's discipline anyway, and he was in a thunderin' tear to begin with. For just a second I thought he was goin' to lay in to Ole with his two little fists.

"Take him away!" he howls at the bos'n. "Take him out o' my sight before I do him a mischief! Take him below an' look after him—and the next time he addresses me, you tell him to say 'Sir!' or I'll kick him from here to—to Madagascar, by the Lord! I'll give him 'Yaw!'"

He goes stampin' up an' down the bridge, ravin' like a tomcat in the measles, an' the bos'n takes Ole away. He's still grinnin' to himself, Cheshire-cat fashion, and waggin' his big silly head. One'd think he'd been played aboard by a brass band, with all hands an' the ship's cook. Bagshaw goes on with his song-and-dance for quite a while; he was a nasty little biter, as

I believe I've hinted already. Then he runs down, an' goes stumpin' off to his cabin. I thought to meself: Yes, and here's trouble bankin' up for somebody!

Trouble? You wouldn't believe!

WELL, that night we pulls out, and here we goes, away down the stinkin' Red Sea to Aden, which is a cut worse than Suez, as you may be aware. The Matoppo wasn't one o' these new-fangled freighters with ice-water in every cabin an' a cuddy like the Berengaria's saloon—she was just an ordinary old cow of a trampo, slow, rickety and uncomfortable. By the time we'd stewed a couple o' days in the Red Sea, an' fried a couple more hangin' about Aden lookin' for more cargo, all hands was pretty much in a state o' mind, what with one thing and another. So that when we're at sea again, pointin' for Goa an' the Malabar Coast—an' that ain't no ruddy picnic, neither—we're just about due for a blow-up somewhere or other.

An' Bagshaw just the cove to oblige. He's a fat little josser, and the heat's playin' the devil with his liver anyway; so up he gets, an' starts prowlin' the ship, seekin' what he may devour, as you might say. And it's not long before he's found what he wants, neither.

He comes across friend Ole lyin' in the shade o' the forward donkey-engine, takin' a quiet caulk. The heat don't seem to worry that big sawney none—not the heat, nor anything else, seemin'ly. He's been goin' about things since he come aboard with the silly grin still on his mug, an' lookin' as if he'd found a berth at last that was a paradise here below, if you get me; an' that don't do him no good with

Bagshaw neither, 'cos 'e don't like to see nobody happy, not even if they're so batty up top they don't know any better.

An' seein' Ole snoring away there just puts the lid on it.

"Why, damnation an' blue fire!" he says to the bos'n. "What in Gehenna's this? What kind of a hell's delight of a ship d'ye think this is, eh, with men lyin' about all over the decks—"

"'E's off watch, sir," says the bos'n, tryin' to make the best of it.

"Off watch!" Bagshaw jumps down his throat. "What's that—got to do with it, damme? I s'pose you'll be tellin' me he's to snooze in the chart-room if he wants to. Here, you! Come on—rise an' shine!"

An' with that he fetches Ole a kick in the ribs that'd have paralyzed a hippopotamus.

"Get up!" he says. "Get up an' let's have a look at you! Enjoyin' yourself down there, eh?"

Ole's scrambled to his feet, an' stands there lookin' more like an 'alf-witted sheep than ever.

"Yaw!" he says, pullin' away at his old forelock again. "Pretty fine sleep, mister! Plenty hot, eh?"

And he wipes the sweat off his forehead with his elbow, pleasant and matey as you please.

Bagshaw just goggles at him for a minute. Then he explodes with a loud roar.

"Great jumping Jehoshaphat!" he yells. "Suffering Moses an' the bul-rushes! Twenty-three years at sea—twenty-three years and damme if ever I heard the like o' that! Why, you limpin' conglomeration of tallow an' Stockholm tar, d'ye know who you're talkin' to? D'ye know that? Answer me!"

And Ole shows his big yellow teeth, an' says "Yaw, mister!" again.

**W**ELL, I'll trouble you to imagine what that did to the mate. He glares at Ole, chokin', so that the bos'n wondered what was comin' first—apoplexy or murder. Then he stammers out a mouthful o' stuff, most of it fit to blister the paint, an' the rest gibberish; an' then he turns on his heel an' goes aft at the rate of knots. There's the slam of his cabin door, and the bos'n sets about Ole.

"Get below!" says he, mighty savage. "You done about enough for one time, seems to me."

Ole's starin' after Bagshaw with his mouth open, but now he shuts it an' nods his big lump of a head.

"Nice faller!" he says, pleased as all hell. "He lak me, Ay tank!"

"Wot?" screams the bos'n. "Wot was that?"

"He lak me," says Ole again. "You hear what he say to me, no? Pretty nice faller, yaw!"

Well, the bos'n began to wonder who was balmy, him or the Swede. He scratches his head, puzzled.

"See here," he says, "you better get below and finish your shut-eye down there, Olsen. Looks like this 'ere sun's been a bit too much for you, my lad!"

So off Ole trots, like a great big dog someone's just give a pat to, an' the bos'n gets to thinkin'. This here business looks a lot too like the horrors to be comfortable, specially as Ole's a Swede, an' they're a queer bunch anyway—an' moreover, Ole's big enough to tackle any three other hands together an' lick 'em. He don't relish the idea o' that whopper goin' through the fo'c's'le, crazy; and so 'e comes up to me on the bridge:

"Beg pardon, sir!" says he. "I'd be wishful to 'ave a word with you."

Now I'd been watching what'd been happening forward, and I'd seen Bagshaw come aft, with a face on him like a—like a dose o' medicine. We'd all of us juniors been gettin' it from his tongue lately pretty cruel, and it seemed to me that now was the time to have some of it back.

"Well?" I says. "What is it, Hughes?"

He looks a bit doubtful. "It's this here Olsen, sir—" he says; and then he tells me the whole tale, without any trimmin's. Comin' from him the way it did, and knowin' Swedes in general, it did look a bit off; but I let on to be not much impressed with the yarn, in a way o' speakin'.

"Well?" I says. "An' what d'ye want *me* to do about it, Hughes? Tell the skipper?"

Cotton was our master, an' what with one thing and another I didn't exactly see myself doin' any mine-layin' under his bows. Too ruddy dangerous, if you get me. Hughes fidgets.

"I'd be glad if you'd remember, sir," says he, "that I reported it—"

"Get out!" says I. "I won't forget!"

**W**ELL, nor I did—only somehow it slipped me memory to pass the info on to anyone. Not that it needed passin' on; in twenty-four hours there wasn't a soul on the Matoppo that didn't know Ole was cracked.

An' the way he showed it was a caution. So help me, if it hadn't been clear from the look of him that he was a bit loony, one'd have thought he was havin' a little game with Bagshaw. I've said already he was like a big, stoopid dog, all grin an' good nature;

but now he was just that an' nothin' else. You'd see him followin' the mate round the decks, whenever he got a chanst, fair askin' to be took notice of. An' when he couldn't follow him on foot, so to speak, he'd sit an' stare at him—by crimes, I've watched him an' waited to see him get up on his hunkers an' beg.

O' course, it was all over the ship at once. There's no keepin' a thing like that secret, especially as Bagshaw wasn't what you might call popular with any one. It come up in the saloon, the second night.

"Mr. Bagshaw," says the skipper, gentle-like, "what's all this I hear of your havin' made a conquest among the hands, forrard there?"

Now this was a nasty one in all sorts of ways, for Bagshaw'd quite a record among the ladies ashore, an' well the skipper knew it. The mate and his various conquests at one port and another were common talk behind hands in the mess. So there was a bit more in Cotton's remark than met the eye, in a manner o' speakin', an' Bagshaw flushed up.

"I don't know what you're referrin' to, sir," he says, pretty stiff.

The skipper lets on to be surprised. "Indeed?" he comes back. "I'd heard—you'll forgive me if I'm wrong, Mr. Bagshaw—that our last arrival was doin' quite a bit of hero-worshippin'," he says, "at your shrine. It's a grand thing, Mr. Bagshaw," says he, squintin' down his nose, "to see such happy relations existin' between the bridge an' the fo'c's'le. I make you me compliments, I'm sure."

Well, by that time the rest of us was about half-chokin' with laughter, an' Bagshaw was the color of a beet-root. There wasn't anything much he could say, neither—if he denied it, the



skipper'd pull his leg off for bein' modest, an' if he admitted it, bang would go his bloomin' reputation as a tyrant aboard. So he tried to carry it off, airy-like.

"If you're thinkin' of that so-and-so Swede, sir," he says, "he's crazy, anyhow, and oughtn't to have been signed on in the first place. Anyhow," he goes on, "by the time I've finished with him I think he'll have had a bellyful of hero-worship, if that's what's the matter with him."

An' with that he shoves his plate away, excuses himself, and goes on deck, breathin' through his nose an' once again lookin' for a sacrifice. The skipper don't say nothin'—only there's a twinkle in his wicked old eye, and he's more than usual pleasant all around for the rest o' supper. An' by an' by, when there comes floatin' in at the skylight some choice expressions o' Mr. Bagshaw's, addressed to you can guess who, I thought he'd bust out laughin'.

"Ah?" says he, lookin' round the table. "Wot a wonderful thing sympathy is, to be sure, gentlemen! Wot *would* we do without it?"

**A**LL the same, Bagshaw looked as if he could do without it, in the next days. The more he cussed Ole, the better that big chucklehead seemed to like it. An' there's no law at sea to prevent a deck hand from lookin' worshipful at an officer. Bagshaw tried to get him for dumb insolence once or twice, but where was the good o' that? He'd have to haul him up to the skipper for that, and a plucky lot o' change he'd have got out of it.

So there was Ole, proclaimin' to all an' sundry that the first officer loved him like a son—an' the first officer bootin' him around the deck free an'

frequent, an' the whole ship's company o' the Matoppo takin' it in an' laughin' fit to split. An' things was like that still when we made Goa, an' dropped anchor in the road.

Now I dunno whether you're familiar with Goa, which is a Portuguese kind of a colony or what-not, plunked down in the middle of India. It's a queer place, an' there's plenty that'd say it was one o' the last Gawd made; but if you knew it—an' the Matoppo did, seein' it was one of our regular ports o' call—there was a whole lot doin' there. Especially in the society line, if you get what I mean.

And Bagshaw fancied himself in Goa. Quite a bit he fancied himself—he'd got the *ontray*, you might say, to one or two o' these *chee-chee*, half-caste, Eurasian families there, an' when he went ashore he done himself proud. Everyone knew it, an' when he comes up, the evening we anchored, all rigged out in his best Gawd-blime shore-goin' outfit, there was more quiet sniggers, an' everyone looked the other way.

Excep' the skipper—and Ole. The skipper's on the bridge, and Bagshaw approaches him, formal, with the request for shore leave.

"Why, yes, Mr. Bagshaw," says Cotton. "By all means—by all means. Go ashore and—hum, enjoy yourself. Er—wait a minute, though," he says, cockin' his eye forrard. "You ain't bein' accompanied by that Scandinavian satellite o' yours, are you? I mean to say, d'ye think he's quite up to your speed, hereabouts?"

Bagshaw looks over his shoulder, an' rips out a fathom and a half o' select blasphemious language. There'd been general leave given the port watch—Ole's watch—an' the hands was musterin' at the gangway, with a kind of a

native bumboat waitin' to take 'em off. Ole's with 'em, slicked up with soap an' bear's grease the way these Swedes do, an' he's a handsome animal at that, with his six-foot-four an' shoulders, an' the come-an'-get-it blue eyes. I reckon you wouldn't see a finer specimen between there an' Hongkong, that minute.

But he's still lookin' at the mate, with the trustin', "Lor'-love you, ain't we pals?" expression on his dial, and as Bagshaw scowls at him he grins wide an' lovin'.

"There you are!" says the skipper in a shaky kind of voice. "That's what comes o' popularity, Mr. Bagshaw. You better watch out, seems to me, or you'll be havin' him after you all night."

"Damn his eyes!" says Bagshaw.

The skipper turns away. "Well, run along!" he says. "And enjoy yourself. But I'd keep an eye on that joker, all the same. It just occurs to me he might be capable of bein' a nuisance!"

"Can't you stop his leave, sir?" says Bagshaw, alarmed.

The skipper stares at him. "Wot's that?" he asks, kind o' sharp. "Did I hear you suggest that I should victimize a member o' the crew, just to convenience you, Mr. Bagshaw? Far be it from me," he says, "to interfere with the legitimate pleasures of anyone. Anyone, Mr. Bagshaw. I can't stop his leave—and I doubt I would if I could. Look after yourself, Mr. Bagshaw, if you please!"

**W**ELL, that was, that, as the sayin' is, and there wasn't anything to be done about it. Bagshaw goes off, mighty put about, and in a while here we see him, in the stern sheets of another native affair, lookin' like a

bloomin' admiral. The crew's bumboat's pullin' level with him, and Ole's still rhapsodizin' over the side of it. Cotton chuckles outright.

"Upon my soul, gentlemen," he says to me and the second, "I believe I'll be goin' ashore meself very shortly. If you two officers wish to—hum, accompany me, arrange with one of the engine-room staff to take duty, and we'll see!"

The second and me didn't need any further invitations. We fixed it up with one o' the engineers, like the skipper had said, and in ten minutes or so all three of us, Cotton, the second, and me, was proceedin' shorewards. The skipper don't say much, but just as we hit the beach he turns to us.

"Gentlemen," he says, "fair's fair in everything. I've made this wonderful opportunity for you," says he, "to view the workin's of Providence an' human nature. Now it's up to you—Where's Mr. Bagshaw's usual stampin'-grounds in this port?"

Well, we knew all right—Bagshaw bein' the kind that don't hide his light under a bushel, so to speak—and we told the skipper. He puts his finger to the side of his nose, thoughtful.

"Yes," he says. "That's all right, gentlemen, and thanks a lot for the office. But on the whole," says he, "I think it'd be better if we parted company for this maneuver. It mightn't look so good," he says, "to have the whole bridge navigatin' in company on Mr. Bagshaw's trail. You go your way, with my blessin', and I'll go mine. And if you see me," says he, "why, we're strangers!"

With that, off he goes up the beach, rumblin' in his chest an' shakin' all over with laughter. The second—Higgins was his name—watches him go.

"D'ye know, Chardis," he says to

me, "there's times when I could almost worship a feller. Yes, indeed!" he says.

"Here, here!" I says to him. "You ain't startin' that game, surely. One's enough, at a time, ain't it? We better do as the skipper says, an' proceed to studying human nature. Come on!"

**N**OW Goa's like most o' these sea-ports in the tropics—a strip o' wharves an' warehouses an' pubs along the sea-front, an' behind it the residential district, as you might call it. Bagshaw's main stand-by in the place—as we've heard plenty o' times—is a family o' the name of Da Silva, the old boy bein' somethin' around the harbor, an' the girl a bit o' the proper goods, accordin' to Bagshaw. They'd a house back among the trees, down a shady road, and Higgins an' me makes for it, wonderin' whether we're on the right track or not, an' whether little Kiss-me-Quick's followin' out his usual routine.

We needn't have worried, after all, for we'd not gone a quarter of a mile before Higgins touches my arm.

"Look at that!" he says, stoppin'.

There's a few electrics still, even back here away from the town. And under one of 'em, dead ahead of us, is our Mr. Bagshaw, and he ain't alone, neither. Ole's there—you could see his shoulders a mile away—an' Bagshaw's deliverin' an impassioned oration in his direction. It don't take a fool to see what he wants, an' that's to be shot of the big Swede, an' quick too. Even from where we was, we could hear the pretty-pretties fair drippin' off his tongue.

"Crimes!" says I. "He's doin' himself proud!"

Well, there wasn't much doubt o' that, but it didn't seem to affect Ole

more than a shower o' rain. He stands there, soakin' it all in an' shiftin' from one big foot to the other—an' finally Bagshaw runs down.

"What next?" says Higgins to me.

That one wasn't difficult to answer, for Bagshaw shakes his little fist under Ole's nose, and off with him again, up the dark road towards the Da Silva house. The big lummoX stands there a minute, clear under the electric—an' then he scratches his head, turns, an' goes shamblin' off in Bagshaw's wake.

"Come on!" I says. "There's goin' to be proceedin's here."

So Higgins and me, we tackles down to the trail, and in a while here we are, maybe fifty-sixty yards behind Ole, and as far again from the house. There's lights in it, an' by all seemin' Bagshaw's inside. Ole stops, puzzled.

"That's done for him!" says Higgins. "He'll have to wait now, till His Lordship's good an' ready to come out."

"Looks like it," I says. "Well, we'll wait, too. I wouldn't miss this for a million."

"Nor me," says Higgins, pullin' back into the shadow. "It's better than a play. Wonder where the skipper's got to."

"Don't ask me," I says. "But he's somewhere in the offin', I'll bet half a dollar. Trust him to—Hey! What's all that?"

We'd been talkin', an' never kept an eye on what was goin' on up the road; but seemin'ly Ole had made up what he called his mind an' acted. There's the hell's own bobbery suddenly busts out, a woman screamin', Bagshaw cursin' fit to beat the devil—an' then there's a silence.

"What in thunder's happened now?" says Higgins, listenin'. "He's surely not—"



He stops, for there's still no sound, an' what's more there's no sight of Ole.

"Perhaps he's killed him!" I says, gettin' in a bit of a stew.

"Killed him!" says Higgins. "Who—Bagshaw? Him kill that big lump? Come off it, Chardis—"

"Well," I says, "killed him or not, I ain't stoppin' here growin' gooseberries. I'm goin' to have a look!"

And with that I marches up the road, bold as brass, with Higgins after me, and in a minute we're close to the house.

**T**WASN'T much of a place—just the usual kind of a bungalow, with a veranda, standin' a bit back from the road. Old man Da Silva's not any millionaire, by the look of it, although with these here half-an'-halfs you can't never really tell. They've most of 'em got a bit o' somethin' hid away—and anyhow, it ain't like our Mister Bagshaw to be trailin' along any blind alley. He knows somethin', that little perisher, an' take it by an' large he's pretty cushy here.

That's to say, he would be, if things was normal. But they ain't. Not a bit of it they ain't! From where we're standin' in the road there's a clear view into the front room, an' what's goin' on there makes Higgins an' me want to hang on to one another's necks an' fair bust, laughin'.

To begin with, here's our Mister Bagshaw, sittin' in a chair an' lookin' as if he's swallowed the mainmast and it isn't agreein' with him. Opposite, in another chair, happy as you please an' with a big drink in his fist, sits Ole. I b'lieve I've indicated before that he was as handsome a big beggar as you'd see in a month o' Sundays—but in that room, facin' little Tuppence-ha'penny, he's glorious. There ain't no other

word for it—glorious. Until you come to look at his half-baked, five-year-old mug, an' then any man'd shrug his shoulders an' go on to somethin' else.

Yes, that's so—any man; but not any woman. There's two of 'em in there,—a stout old party in some kind of a silk get-up, draped about her very stylish, and a girl. The old woman's mostly native, with a coffee-an'-milk complexion an' a stud in the side of her nose; but the girl's pretty near clear white, an' mighty sweet, in a loose-lipped, big-eyed kind of fashion. An' she an' the missus are all over Ole; there ain't no doubt about that.

"Merr-ia!" says Higgins. "Will you look at that?"

Well, it was cert'nly worth lookin' at. As far's we could figure out, Ole'd gone bargin' in there, amiable, after Bagshaw, an' the mate had tried to shove him out. Then the woman had interfered, all on account of Ole's fatal beauty, it seemed. Anyhow, Bagshaw hadn't done himself a particle o' good with 'em—I see the girl give him a very old-fashioned look or two as she's attendin' on the Swede.

"What'll he do now?" says I.

"Don't see what line he's goin' to take," all the same," Higgins says. "Can't very well object to 'em treatin' a guest civil."

Nor he could, o' course—Ole was a guest, just the same as him, and he couldn't go tellin' 'em the big lump was only a deckhand an' cracked at that. At least, not them women he couldn't. And there was no men about; old Da Silva wasn't visible at Greenwich then.

**S**O there was our Mister Bagshaw, havin' to sit tight an' watch this loony bein' waited on hand and foot by his best girl an' her ma, an' not

bein' able to do a bloomin' thing about it. Pretty state of affairs, eh? His face'd sour the milk, seein' Ole settin' there grinnin' an' bein' made much of.

"He'll go pop in a minute!" says Higgins.

Well, it looked like it—there wasn't anyone with the amount o' side Bagshaw carried was goin' to stick that sort o' thing very long—an' then it got worse. The girl takes Ole by the sleeve. We can see her gesturin' towards the veranda, an' the old lady opens the French window.

"Whew!" I says. "Well, you certainly don't lose no time, do you?"

"Look at Ole!" Higgins whispers.

Believe me or believe me not, that great oaf's blushin' the color of a carrot! He looks at Bagshaw, pretty much in the same old way, as if he could eat him, an' swelp me, I think the mate could 'a' murdered him then an' there. It ain't exactly pleasant, seein' your best Sunday girl bein' swiped under your eyes by a thing like Ole.

But Ole, he's got different notions, seemin'ly. He drags back from the girl.

"Yaw!" says he. "But me, I got gal—got plenty gal way home. You go him!"

An' he points to Bagshaw, that's sittin' there lookin' like the devil served cold.

"You go him—he good man!" he says.

"Non, non, non!" says the girl, very persuadin'. "You come wit' me—"

An' she goes on, tuggin' at his sleeve, while Ole's turnin' all the colors o' the rainbow. Bagshaw's shakin' like he's in the ague, but he makes a shot at doin' the dignified.

"Come, come, Zelig!" says he. "We've had enough of this stuff an' nonsense. A joke's a joke—You go

along, me man!" he says to Ole in a choked kind of a voice. "I'll see you in the mornin'!"

Well, you'd think that under the circs that'd be enough to send Ole full steam out o' there. But no—he's that big a fool he don't know when to come in out o' the wet. Instead, he fair rushes on his doom.

"Yaw!" says he to the girl. "He good man! He lak marry you, Ay tank!"

Now o' course that was just the one bloomin' word our Mister B. didn't want to hear around that house. He'd the best of all possible reasons—she lived in Birkenhead, an' took in roomers—for not wantin' to raise any marryin' palaver here in Goa. 'Strewth, I thought he'd have ruptured himself!

"You—you—you—" he says, gobbilin' like a prize turkey-cock with the colic.

**B**UT what Ole'd said didn't make a particle o' difference. The girl was all over him still, pawin' him, an' without any eyes for old Highty-tighty there in the chair. Mighty tasty piece o' goods she was, too, like lots o' them banana-skins. Dunno but what I—but there, that ain't strictly belongin' to this yarn.

"You come!" she says, smilin' fit to split. "Mamma stay here with him!"

"What's that?" says Bagshaw. "Why, you—you designin' young hussy! Let him alone at once, d'ye hear? He's only a—"

She turns round an' makes a face at him. "Get away—old monkey!" she says. "You hear me—with you I am fineesh! This man, ah, 'e is lovelee!"

An' she rubs her cheek against Ole, while Bagshaw stands there gibberin' like a baboon. Then Ole tears it—right across he tears it.

"Na, na, na, na!" he says. "I no want you. *He* want you—he want marry you. You go him!"

An' at that he fair takes an' hands her to Bagshaw—on a platter, you might say. That is, he gives her what he thinks is a gentle little push—the kind o' thing you give a packin'-crate when it's jammed in the falls—an' there she goes, spinnin' an' slidin' across the floor, an' brings up smack-dab in Mister Bagshaw's breadbasket.

Lumme! (Chardis laughed.) I've heard some fireworks in me time, but what that young girl said to Bagshaw then made the rest of 'em sound like a maiden's prayer, I give you me word. It was in Portugoose mostly, o' course, an' one had to guess at the best bits of it—but it didn't take much guessin'. An' finally, while Bagshaw's still puffin' an' blowin', grampus-fashion, she hauls off an' lands him one over the chops you could've heard in—in Siam.

"Peeg!" she says. "Uglee peeg! I kill you!"

Bagshaw staggers back. "Why, hell's fire an' perdition!" he splutters. "You mind what you're about, you—"

But that's as far as he gets, for there's the devil broke loose in that room—an' Bagshaw's his meat, if you get me. The girl starts screamin' fit to bust an' clapperclaws the mate's face with her nails till it's fair runnin' blood. The old lady, who's been lookin' on puzzled-like, cuts loose too—an' between the pair of 'em, believe you me, they've got our Mister Bagshaw in a pretty mess. Yeah, they fair knock hell out of him—an' in the middle of the rumpus, just when Higgins an' me's tryin' to keep from bein' sick laughin', the door opens in a hurry, an' here's old Da Silva, an' he's got a gun.

"What's all this?" he says in Portugoose—or words to that effect.

He don't look to me the kind o' feller to get foolin' with, neither. There's a kind of a set to his mouth, and he's glarin' somethink tremenjús.

"By cripes!" I says to Higgins. "Here's where we'll have to take a hand!"

WELL, it looked like it. Them two women's still carryin' on like a couple o' hyenas, an' Bagshaw's tryin' to dodge 'em an' explain all at once, an' Ole's standin' there with his silly mouth wide open, lookin' like a codfish. I reckon he's wonderin' in his fool mind what it's all about. Da Silva's fingerin' the gun an' lookin' more like murder every minute.

"Come on!" I says to Higgins. "We gotta stop this!"

An' then there's a fat chuckle behind us—the skipper. Might ha' known he'd be handy somewhere.

"Just a bit, gentlemen!" says he. "I'll be just as glad if you'll stay where you are. This little entertainment isn't concluded yet!"

While we've been talkin', Bagshaw's got a word in edgeways, an' whatever it was, it don't seem to please old Da Silva a whole lot. He looks across at Ole.

"So?" he says. "A common seaman, eh? You hear, Zelig?"

She pouts—she's still got Ole by the sleeve—an' swings her skirts.

"I do not care, me!" she says. "He is a man, and not a—a big ape!"

Old Da Silva lets go both barrels in his Portugoose, an' by the sound of it he's not leavin' out very much. Then he seems to make up his mind all at once, an' goes to the door leadin' back into the house. He calls, and a man comes out—a priest, by the Lord!

"Phew!" I says. "This is gettin' kind of hot, ain't it?"

But the skipper only chuckles again. "Wait!" he says. "I'm inclined to think somebody's goin' to learn somethin' for his good. And for ours!" he adds under his breath.

Da Silva's talkin' a blue streak again now, with the priest noddin' away like an old idol. The girl's dropped Ole; she's gone as white's a ghost, an' she's lookin' this way an' that, like she wants to run. Her ma's begun to cry—and as for Bagshaw! Well, I'll trouble you to imagine Bagshaw, when the priest hauls out his little book, an' grins at him with a dilly-dilly-duck-come-an'-be-killed expression.

"Lor' love a duck!" says Higgins. "He's goin' to marry 'em. It's a shot-gun weddin', sir—but it's bigamy, all the same!"

The skipper nods. "True!" he says. "Very true, Mr. Higgins. Maybe it's about time we—hum, intervened!"

And with that he stumps up the veranda an' knocks at the door, just as casual as you please.

"Follow me, gentlemen!" he says.

Well, the row inside stops, an' there's a silence. Then here's Da Silva, gun and all.

"*Senhors?*" says he, surprised-like.

Cotton touches his cap. "I'm skipper of the Matoppo, sir," says he, mighty polite. "Mr. Bagshaw's ship. You've a man of mine here, too, I see. Maybe he'd better come with me. He's—well, he's . . ."

He winks and touches his head, an' Da Silva nods.

"So?" says he, comprehendin'. "It explains it, eh? You will take him, no? Or—you will enter, *senhor capitán?* We are about to . . ."

But Cotton ain't stickin' his nose inside there—no. He shakes his head.

"No, I'm sorry," he says. "I can't join you, I'm afraid. Matter of fact, I'll have to ask Mr. Bagshaw to leave as well. There's—well, there's something turned up aboard that requires him. Fresh orders by cable—we sail in the morning. Mr. Bagshaw!"

He puts the charthouse rasp into his voice, an' Bagshaw jumps.

"Aye, aye, sir!" says he.

Well, Da Silva an' the priest looks like raisin' an objection for a minute, but after all, a skipper's a skipper, an' they don't quite know where they are, dealin' with one. Da Silva looks at the girl, who's cryin' to beat fifty, and at her mother, who's in somethin' like a faint—an' then he shrugs.

"Go with God, *senhors!*" he says softly. "Perhaps now my accursed women-folk will behave themselves!"

Chardis laughed again, and thrust the dottle down in his pipe-bowl after his maddening fashion at a story's crucial point.

"And then?" I demanded testily.

He took a final gulp from his glass. "Oh, then?" he said. "Well, goin' home, with Ole ramblin' along in front of us, an' lookin' back now an' again silly-like at Bagshaw, the skipper says—

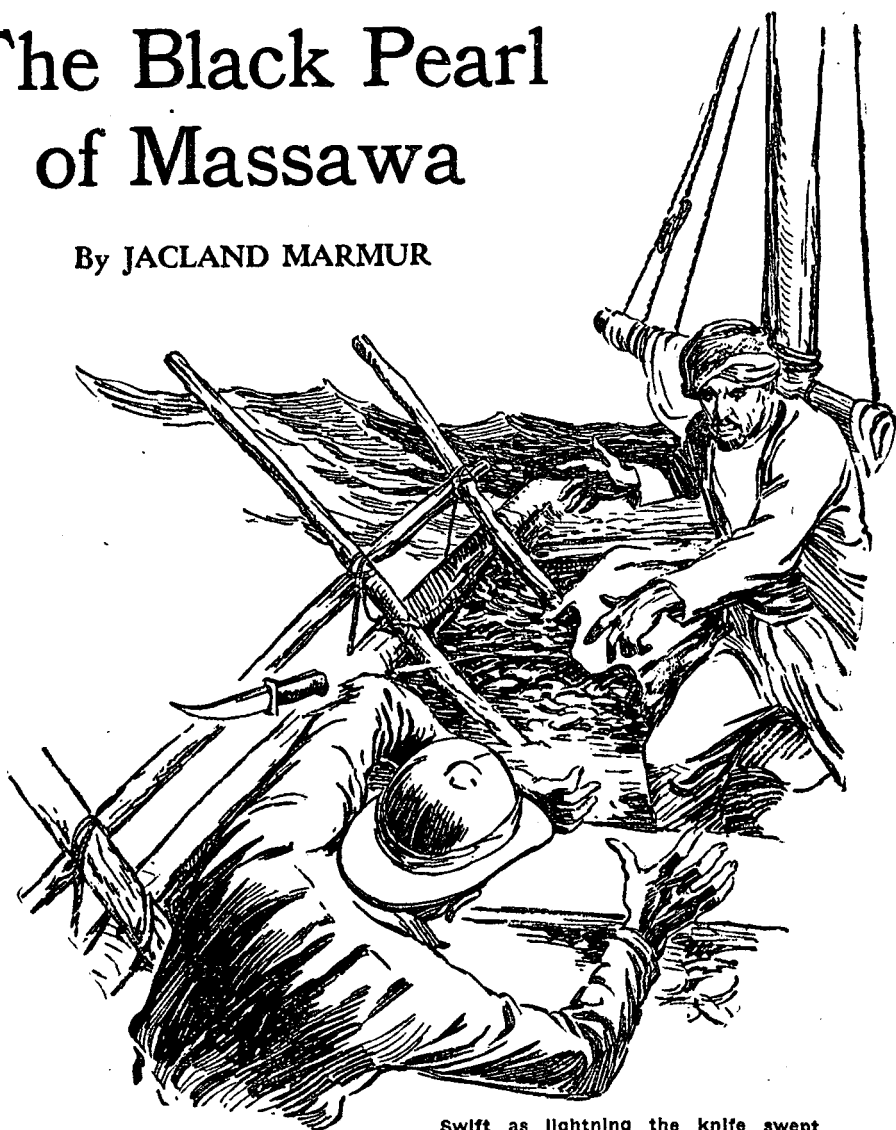
"'D'ye know,' says he, 'I'm be-ginnin' to think I may have been wrong this evenin', Mr. Bagshaw. I'd rather the idea that your Scandinavian friend might have been a bit in the way, somehow. But as it is,' he says, 'it occurs to me that he may have been a blessin' in disguise all round. Don't you think so, Mr. Bagshaw?'"

"Bagshaw don't say nothing. He merely sighs profoundly—like a man who's been dragged back from the edge of a slippery cliff."

THE END

# The Black Pearl of Massawa

By JACLAND MARMUR



Swift as lightning the knife swept forward

*Two large matched black pearls were to cost three human lives before their true owner held them in his palm*

"MASTER," said the native trader in slaves and *zebib*, "Master, we are too late. The dhow has sailed. Look."

Steve Marlowe followed the out-flinging gesture of the bony brown

arm. A dhow stood to the east and north on the blinding dazzle of the Red Sea. It grew steadily smaller, its dirty lateen sail dancing crazily in fetid puffs of hot wind. But on the ramshackle pearling jetty of Massawa upon which