

1. *Gone Again, Harragan*

SOMEbody was calling me on the phone and though I could hear him it seemed my voice just wasn't getting across to him at all. . . .

"Hallo!" he kept saying, and then a lot of other noises that just didn't make sense. "Hallo!"

It was giving me a headache. A hell of a headache. Such a headache, in fact, that my scalp kept lifting up and settling down like the lid of a boiling kettle. Come to that, the blood inside my skull felt like it was boiling.

I groaned and rolled sideways a little, wondering slightly what the hell kind of a telephone it is that kicks you in the ribs when you don't answer, and that brought my peepers in line with the largest and shiniest pair of heavy black boots I ever saw, even in Brooklyn.

I blinked a couple of times at these boots and then let my eyes drift upwards. With, I might remark, about as little pleasure as I have ever taken in looking over a pair of legs.

These legs were thick and sturdy and above the boots they wore baggy white pants and above the pants came a blue coat. That was as far as I got with the survey right then because the blue coat reached down a blue arm with a large red hand on the end of it, and this hand fastened in my hair and assisted me to get up.

And at the same time this guy in the blue coat turned out to be nobody else but the man who had been shouting "Hallo!" at me over the phone, only what he was shouting was "Allons!" Which I now understand to be the French for "Let's go!" though I didn't know it at the time.

I swayed on my feet and looked this guy over. I licked my lips and tried to remember what I'd been drinking the night before, because I was seeing three of this guy.