

“THE CLEAN-UP”

A Young Evangelist Uses Ganster Methods to Clean Up Harlem Cabaret

Fred Harris Has All Harlem Worked Up About Fighting Vice and Sin in the All-Night Resorts. Things are Getting Tight. Regular Cabaret Attendance Has Dropped 50 Per Cent; Gangsters Know that If the Church Crowd is Turned Loose One Night, they will Clean the Nite Clubs Out; so they Put Parson on the Spot.

By NICK LEWIS

WHAT HAS HAPPENED: Linda Allen comes up from the South and under the tutelage of Ace Hinds, owner of the Tom-Tom club, soon becomes a highly successful cabaret entertainer. Ace wants to marry Linda herself, while Al Collins, her partner, also has designs on her. Linda herself likes neither.

Hearing of a camp meeting being conducted by an evangelist across the street from the Tom-Tom, Linda, with Al and the Ace, goes over to see what is going on.

The Ace has a genuine grudge against the evangelist, who is not only keeping the regular cabaret customers away from the Tom-Tom, but is also carrying on a vigorous war against any and all night clubs and cabarets. This grudge becomes acute when the Ace discovers that the evangelist is Fred Harris, and that he and Linda were childhood sweethearts.

Now go on with the story:

CHAPTER II

Linda eased out of Fred's arms. "I've got to hurry," she said, looking at Al and the Ace, who were



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standing disgustedly by. "What are you doing now?" Fred asked.

"I'm at the Tom-Tom Club, just across the street. I sing and dance. It isn't such a hot job, but it's the best I can find. And the folks seem to like me. We draw pretty big crowds some days."

"A night club?" Fred seemed a little disappointed in her.

"Sort of," she told him. "You ought to come over. Maybe you'd change your mind about running all the dance halls and night clubs and cabarets out of the city. They aren't really so bad, after all."

"Oh, but, Linda—" he protested. "Don't." She pressed a finger against his lips. "Why not drop in tonight? Wouldn't you like to hear me sing?"

He hesitated a moment. The Ace stepped in and took her by the arm. "Come on, honey," he grunted. "It's time for your act."

Linda made one final attempt to interest Fred. "Please," she begged. "How can you tell your people what cabarets are like if you don't visit them? Come on; I want you to."

Fred finally said, "Maybe. As soon as I get these things straightened up. Watch for me."

"O.K.," Linda smiled. Then she turned and went with Al and the Ace.

Fred visited the Tom-Tom that night just as Linda's act was drawing to a close. For his benefit she added a special number to her program, a number just for him—

"Sing Hallelujah, Hallelujah And you'll shoo the blues away! . . ."

She did it with fire and enthusiasm, bringing down the house as the final mellow tones flew from her throat. Fred applauded with the rest, Linda saw, and it pleased her. If only she could make him see that, after all, cabarets and night clubs were not wholly places of vice and sin, if only she could show him the better side of the show business, perhaps he would forget his vigorous tent campaign against such places. And in doing so he would not only be doing the Ace a favor; he would be protecting his own life from the menace of gangster guns.

Linda knew vaguely that the Ace had established himself as headman in the Harlem cabaret racket. How great his power was she could not be sure, but certainly it was not menial. His threats to wipe out the pesky evangelist, whose efforts were spoiling his business, were not all just talk. And when the Ace decided upon a course of action, nothing could change his mind. His plans were executed

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swiftly and surely; there was no turning back.

Knowing this much, Linda felt herself compelled to warn Fred of his danger and to beg him to give up the militant anti-night club fight which he had been waging. Certainly she didn't want to see him wiped out by the Ace's guns. Thinking it over now, she realized, almost for the first time, that there had been a warm spot in her heart for Fred since her childhood days. She couldn't bear to see him the innocent victim of a racketeer's jealousy.

When he act was over, she changed hurriedly. Just as she was about to leave her dressing room, however, Al Collins opened the door. One look told Linda that he had been drinking.

She cringed from him. "I wanna see you a minute, baby," he informed her.

"Come again some other time, Al," she begged. "I'm in a hurry. I gotta go."

Al's face twisted suddenly into a fury of rage.

"So that's the way you treat a pal, huh?" He swayed dizzily. "Say, listen you: I'm your partner in this little act; if it wasn't for me, there wouldn't be no act. And I'm telling you this straight: You better keep away from that stiff-necked preacher if you wanna live long."

"Since when did you start giving me orders?" Linda inquired coldly.

Al's attitude suffered a sudden reverse. He lurched toward her and tried to take her in his arms. "Aw, honey," he cried. "You know I love you. You know I don't wanna see you hanging out with guys like that evangelist or whatever he is—"

Linda struggled away from him. "Who said I was hanging out with Fred?" she cried. "Who said I was hanging out with anybody? Tonight's the first night I've seen him since I was a kid, ten or twelve years ago."

"You kissed him," Al flung accusingly.

"He's my friend. He's the best friend I've got. He's from my home town. Why shouldn't I kiss him if I want to? Neither you nor the Ace has any strings tied around me. I can do what I want."

"All right, baby, it's your funeral," Al turned toward the door. Then he turned; faced her again.

"Listen, kid," he said significantly, "suppose I was to let you in on a secret. Suppose I was to tell you that this mug Fred is on the spot right now. And when the Ace gets through, you'll never recognize him."

"But what's he done?" Linda gasped. She ran to Al and caught him by the shoulders. "What's he done that the Ace should put him on the spot?"

Al laughed gruffly. "Oh, he's done plenty," he said. "He's taken half our regular customers, for one thing, and he's got 'em all worked up about fighting vice and sin in the night resorts around Harlem. Why, man, if he turns that crowd loose one night, they'll turn every night club and cabaret in the city inside out. He's fightin' us tooth and nail. And we ain't the kind of guys that sit around and take it on the chin. Not us."

Linda thought quickly as Al left the room. So they were taking Fred for a ride, huh? Well, she'd see about that. She'd find Fred now, while he was here in the club, and warn him of his danger. And she'd stick close to him for the rest of the night to protect him. She knew that Al wouldn't shoot if there was any chance of injuring her.

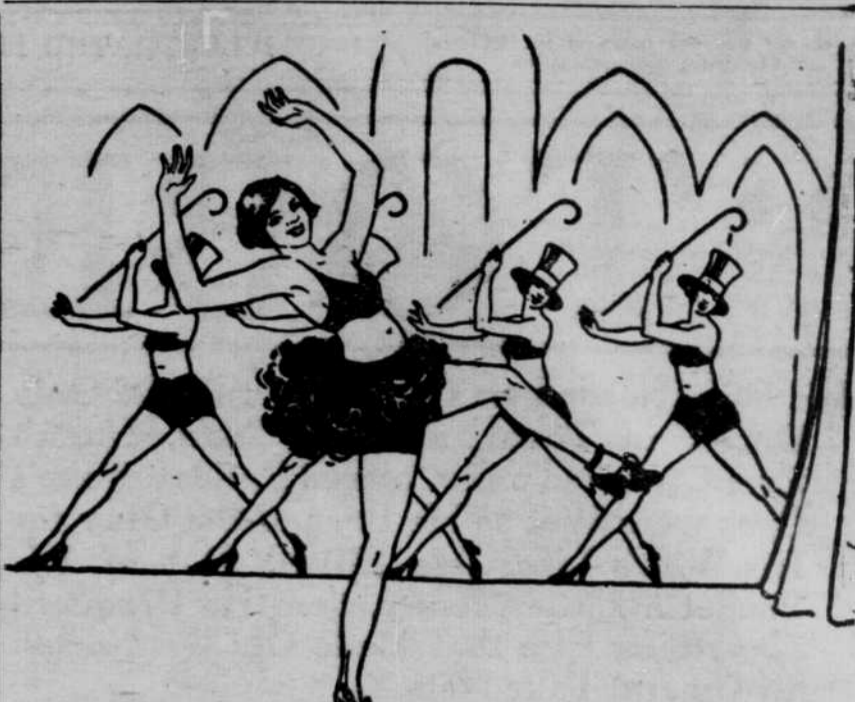
She hurried down from her dressing room and into the cabaret. She found Fred seated alone in a booth for two, watching intently as the crowd milled about him.

"Well!" she greeted him. "How's every little thing?"

Fred grinned. "I'm learning fast," he told her. "Tomorrow I'll have a real story to tell my congregation. I'll show them how these dens of vice are corrupting our morals and lowering our standards. Look at those two kids over there—petting. I bet neither one of them is over eighteen."

Linda smiled. "They're having a good time," she said. "Leave 'em alone."

Fred looked up at her quizzical-



She put on a special number just for him: "Sing Hallelujah, Hallelujah, and you'll shoo the blues away."

ly. "So it's got you, too?" he said.

"What's got me?" "I mean—you don't care any more about what goes on about you. You've lost your sense of moral values."

"Oh, of course not," Linda protested. "But even at that, I don't see why one should be intolerant. There are people, you know, who think that your faith-healing and preaching and shouting are all works of the devil, just as you seem to think dancing and drinking and petting are. People are entitled to have their own opinions, don't you think?"

"Ch, of course," Fred's forehead wrinkled in thought for a moment. "But I'm going to keep on fighting this sort of thing," he avowed. "I'm fighting it to the last ditch. Before I'm through, there won't be a night club or cabaret left in Harlem. We'll clean up the town if it takes fifty years."

"You're impossible," Linda informed him.

"Oh, but Linda, can't you see

what it means. . ."

"Yes, I see exactly what it means. For you it means only one thing ultimately—and that's death. All of these places are controlled by men like the Ace, and they're all gangling up to protect their interests. They're on your track right now, I'm warning you, and when they hit, they hit hard."

"I'm not afraid of the Ace and

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