

"THE CLEAN-UP"

A Young Evangelist Uses Ganster Methods to Clean Up Harlem Cabarett

Somebody has put Fred Harris, rip-snorting evangelist on the spot. Maybe the bosses of the nite clubs, for when cabaret attendance dropped 50 per cent, they knew only desperate steps would save them. Who did it? That's what Linda Allen, the blues-singing, hip-shaking nite club sweetheart would like to know and is going to find out.

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 himself, while Al Collins, her partner, also has designs on her. Linda cannot bring herself to like either one.

Hearing of a camp meeting being held 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.

Fred visits the Tom-Tom club that night. Al warns Linda that he is being put on the spot by the gang which controls the Harlem cabaret racket. She goes to him and begs him to leave the club alone, but he is adamant. They leave the club, but as Fred goes through the door he is shot down from the rear. Linda hustles him into a taxi and takes him to the hospital.

Now go on with the story:

CHAPTER III

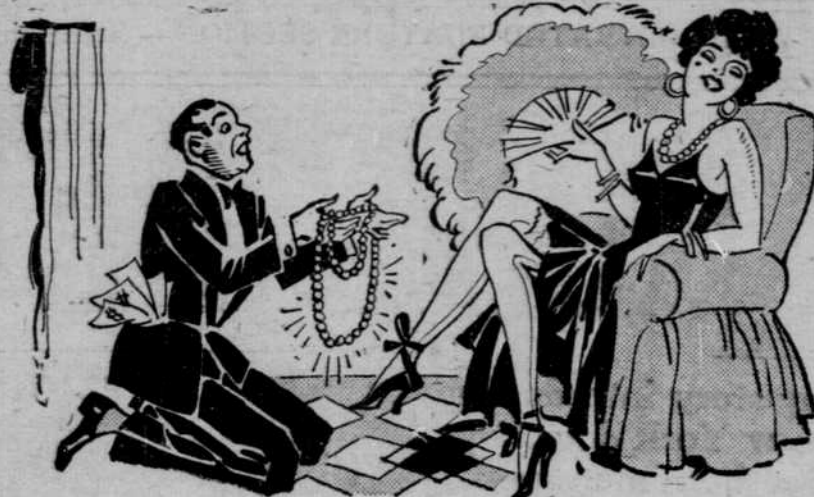
Examination proved that Fred's injuries, luckily, were only superficial. Whoever had fired the shots had been forced to shoot at an angle in order to avoid hitting Linda; none of the slugs had taken

effect. It would be only a question of a few weeks before he would be back on the job again.

This news pleased Linda, for in those awful hours in the hospital's waiting room she had come to realize how much Fred actually meant to her. After all, he was all she really had. He was the only remnant of her old plantation life. Whether he felt the same about her she did not know, but at least, she told herself, she would see him through this crisis. She would nurse him back to health and then—and then she would join him in his fight against the viciousness of Harlem's night life. Her mind was firmly made up, now that she had witnessed this ugly manifestation of organized crime, this cowardly shooting of a man who was innocent of any wrong-doing whatsoever.

Meanwhile, would she go back to the Tom-Tom? That was a burning question in her mind. Her contract called for another two weeks of work, unless the Ace had automatically cancelled it at the moment when he poured hot lead into the back of Fred Harris.

Had the Ace himself fired those shots? Or had his nimble mind been the one which conceived the crime and ordered its execution?



He put the money he offered into his coat pocket, and a necklace of pearls appeared in his hands.

Or was it that Al Collins, mad, jealous, impetuous Al, had thus attempted without the authority of his boss to repay her for her studied antipathy towards him?

In the end, Linda decided to venture back into the Tom-Tom, cost what it may. She would go through her act night after night, just as though nothing had happened. And meanwhile she would keep her eyes open. She would try her best to learn what she could of the plans of the Ace and his gang, and to discover who had fired the shots at Fred.

If there was any change in her attitude when she reported back to the club the following night, it was imperceptible. She went immediately to her dressing room and donned her scanty costume for the first act. Gingham dress, plaited hair, bandana about her head, she soon emerged a typical southern belle.

Someone knocked on the door at five to ten. She opened it Al was outside. He stared, half surprised, when he saw her. Linda smiled nonchalantly.

"Time to go on?" He recovered quickly. "Y—yes," he stammered. "Come on; it's five of."

They started down the steep iron stairs. "You look kind of surprised," Linda said. "Didn't you expect to find me here?"

Al caught her in his arms as they reached the bottom of the stairs. "Of course I did, honey. But you got in so late, and I heard somebody say that you and that hick evangelist ran into—well, a little trouble—on your way out last night."

Linda said, "Well, did run into a little trouble."

"Somebody shot him?" "Somebody shot at him. Just enough to rouse his temper and put him in the hospital for a couple of days."

"Say," Al looked worried as they stood there in the wings, awaiting their turn. "You better lay off that guy. He's due to get his and he's due to get it mighty soon. What happened last night was just a start r. I sure don't want you to be around when something happens."

"I'll go around with Fred whenever I want to," Linda flared. "There's nothing wrong with him. He may be a preacher and all that, but I dare any one of you boys to take him on in a fight. You're yellow, all of you gangsters. You'd shoot a man in the back first, like you shot Fred last night."

"Whoa, change that, sister," Al cautioned her. "Not like I did last night. Like somebody did last night. Don't get me mixed up in none of those personal brawls."

"I want you to tell me," Linda demanded suddenly, "who shot at Fred last night?"

Al shook his head. "You know," Linda insisted. "Who was it?"

But the call-buzzer, ringing sharply on the wall above their heads, interrupted their conversation. It was time for Linda's act to go on.

CHAPTER IV

In the days that followed, Linda continued to go through her paces at the Tom-Tom club, and her popularity showed no signs of waning. On the contrary, she drew heavier crowds every night, now that the Gospel Tent, missing its

leading spirit, had begun slowly to lose ground.

Yet all of her success as a songbird failed to yield Linda the slightest bit of happiness. Only those few hours each day which she could spend with Fred were happy ones.

Anxiously she counted the days which she would have to wait before her contract with the Ace expired. And meanwhile she kept eyes and ears open for any clues as to the identity of Fred's assailant.

Some of the things she learned caused her considerable worry. Chief among them was the fact that the night resort owners of Harlem were strengthening their bonds of union in order to combat the clean-up campaign which Fred's injury had temporarily halted. They could see in the fanatical church people who attended the Gospel Tent meetings no real menace, yet it was better to be prepared for whatever might occur. For Fred, they knew, was a powerful, an indomitable leader.

The Ace, too, had his worries. It was undeniable that Linda was the chief drawing card at the Tom-Tom. Yet her contract expired in two weeks. Would she sign another? And what if she didn't? Of course, he could wreck her career as far as the show business was concerned if she failed to carry out his wishes. His control over theatrical bookings throughout the country had not been gained for nothing. But would that have the least effect upon her?

Finally, he decided to have the thing over with. He sent Linda a note. "Report to my office as soon as you come in," it read.

An hour later she rapped on the door. The Ace pressed the button which controlled the oak-and-steel re-enforced structure and it swung slowly open. She came in and it closed behind her.

"Sit down, Miss Allen." He waved her to a seat close to his desk. "I just wanted to talk to you about your next contract. You'll get eight hundred a week instead of five..."

She remained standing. "I might as well tell you," she said coldly, "that I haven't the slightest intention of re-signing. In two weeks I'll be through here. After that, I'll be free to do exactly as I please."

"If it's more money, you want..." The Ace was in a compromising mood.

"I don't want another cent of your rotten money," Linda threw at him. "I'm through with you and your lousy bunch of crooks!"

The Ace rubbed the back of his hand across his cheek. "That's perfectly all right," he said, "if that's the way you feel about it. I just thought maybe you'd be a little more sensible about the whole thing."

"What do you mean—sensible?"

"Well—" He gestured widely. "Lots of things might happen that you never thought of. Like what happened to your good friend, the young evangelist, the other night."

Linda said, "So you were the 'brains' behind that!"

The Ace shrugged nonchalantly. "Well look here," the girl went on, "you may get away with things like that now, but you're not going to get away with them for long. All this gang rule, all these shootings and gun-battles in cold blood have got to stop. And they will stop!"

The Ace smiled, "I suppose you're going to go to it that the town's

cleaned up," he said sarcastically.

"Yes, I am!" Linda informed him. She turned to go. The heavy door barred her way; it could not be opened except by the electrical control mechanism on the Ace's desk. Linda turned to him. "Come on, Ace," she said. "Let me get out of here."

The Ace arose and strode slowly over to her. She backed away. He stopped, and held out his hands to her.

"Aw, honey," he said softly. "I ain't gonna hurt you. But no kiddin', didn't I give you everything you ever wanted? Didn't I take you up on the streets and turn you into a big star, with your name out in the lights and all, almost overnight? Where'd you be now if it wasn't for me?"

He put the money he had just offered her in his coat pocket and a necklace of pearls appeared in his hands. He dropped to his knees to offer them to her.

"I admit you've done a lot for me," Linda said. "I'm grateful, really. But I'm tired. I want to get away from this life before it kills me."

"I see." The Ace's hands dropped to his sides. Then he got up and

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FASHIONS



59

206

59—Some tailored frocks can go to tea this season. This one might very easily if the fabrics were well chosen, but even if it merely went to business or shops it will do much to brighten the corner where you are. The wrap around effect of the skirt is very jaunty as are the deep, flared cuffs. You will note that this is one of the newer and narrower skirts.

59 is available in sizes 14, 16, 18, 34, 36, 38, 40, 42, 44 and 46. Size 36 requires 3 3/4 yards of 39-inch material or 2 1/2 yards of 54-inch material.

206—Note how skillfully the feminine touch has softened the lines of this two-piece business frock. The closing at the blouse is graciously curved and the blouse edge might be bound all around in plain color fabric to contrast with the tweedy print suggested for office wear. Bright silver ball buttons would be very jaunty.

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