

"THE CLEAN-UP"

A Young Evangelist Uses Gangster Methods to Clean Up Harlem Cabarets

Here's the final chapter in Nick Lewis's thrilling story of gangsters in New York. Linda walks into Ace's trap, right through a steel door because she thinks it will save the life of a friend who has quit the nite life for the straight and narrow.

By NICK LEWIS

WHAT HAS HAPPENED: Linda Allen.



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singer in the cabaret of Ace Hinds, called the Tom-Tom Club, falls in love with Fred Harris, a young evangelist from her home town, who is carrying on a campaign from his gospel tent to rid Harlem of its gangsters and racketeers. Visiting the Tom-Tom to see Linda, Fred is shot at but the wounds are not fatal.

Linda quits the Ace to work for Fred and Al Collins, her partner, goes with her. Fred's campaign gains such headway that Harlem's gangster chiefs hold a meeting and decide to take Fred "for a ride."

Their hirelings mistake Al for Fred, however, and when the mistake is discovered, he is imprisoned in the Ace's office. He sends a note to Linda telling her that Fred is in grave danger. The Ace also sends a note saying that Al will "get his" unless she comes to visit him at his office. Linda knows that this is a trap set for her, but she decides to walk into it to save Al's life.

NOW GO ON WITH THE STORY:

CHAPTER X (Final Chapter)

Linda Allen grabbed her hat and pocketbook and ran out into the street. Then suddenly she remembered the warning which had been contained in Al's brief note. "Tell Fred to look out sharp, tonight. They're after him for sure this time!"

Quickly she turned and went back into the house. Picking up the telephone, she got Fred on the wire.

"Promise me you'll watch out for those gangsters tonight, honey. They got Al last night, thinking he was you. They're on your trail for sure tonight. They'll be armed, so you'd better be careful."

"I'm not scared of any of those bums," Fred told her quickly. "If that's the way they're going to fight, I'll show 'em a thing or two. If they're looking for a fight I'll give 'em a real fight!"

"Oh Fred, please be careful."

"Don't worry, Linda," Fred's voice calmed. "Say, how'd you learn all this anyway—about tonight?"

"I got a note from Al. The Ace is holding him now, down in his office at the Tom-Tom. I'm going down there..."

"You're going down there!" Fred was excited again.

"Yes. It's perfectly all right. The Ace hasn't got the nerve to bother me."

"But Linda!"

She dropped the receiver upon its hook quickly and darted out into the street. At the corner she hailed a taxi. "The Tom-Tom Club," she instructed the driver, "and make it snappy."

Ace Hinds rose and advanced to meet her as she strode through the steel-barred door and into his office.

"You sure got here quick, sweetheart," he said, trying to put his arms around her.

"Not so fast, Ace," she countered coldly, drawing instinctively away from him. "Tell me what this is all about first."

"Aw kid, we got all the time in the world," the Ace exclaimed, baring his teeth in a wolfish grin. He motioned her to sit down. "Make yourself at home."

Linda sat down, watching the Ace carefully. He studied her from beneath lowered eyebrows, then finally he spoke.

"Your friend Al," he said, "is in that little room over there." He indicated a closed door with a jerk of his thumb. "He's sort of tired of staying in there, he tells me. So we got together and he just sort of traded you over to me—in exchange for his life."

"Al wouldn't do a thing like that!" Linda flared.

"Oh, no?" the Ace grunted. "Well, you wait and see." He pressed one of the buttons on his desk. A heavy-set, dark man in shirtsleeves came into the office. "Let's have Al Collins out here," the Ace commanded.

The servant went to the side door and unlocked it. Al Collins wasn't there! A broken window pane, a tiny file and three bent bars re-



"I am terribly proud of you, Fred."

mained, mute evidence of his method of escape.

The Ace let loose a string of curses. Then he turned suddenly to Linda. "You'll pay for this!" he cried. His voice grew soft, venomous. "Lord, how you're going to pay!"

There was a moment of intense quiet. Then the Ace stormed again. "I know why you won't play ball with me! You may think you've got me fooled, but you haven't. It's that damned Al Collins; you think

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you're in love with him. Well, we'll fix that up for you. Think he can walk out on us, huh?" He whirled away from her. "Monkey!" he called.

The husky black servant came back into the office.

"Get the boys together," the Ace commanded, "pronto! Tell 'em to forget everything else—leave whatever they're doing—and get Al Collins. Get him and bring him here to me, dead or alive!"

"O.K., boss." The dark man hurried out. The Ace turned his attention once again to Linda. "Come on, honey," he said, bending over and trying to kiss her. She fought him off, throwing all the strength that she possessed into those flying, tiny fists of hers. But he was upon her once again, and his lips were pressing down upon hers hungrily.

"Hey!"

The Ace turned suddenly, releasing the pressure upon the girl. Too late he remembered that he had forgotten to press the desk button which closed his office door.

Big Joe Wilson, head of the Harlem Protective and Benevolent Association, strode into the room. His face wore a sullen, ugly expression.

"Up to your old tricks again, huh?" he sneered at the Ace. "Say, I thought you promised to lay off the dame till we had this evangelist and all our other business off our hands. After that's over with, you can do as you please."

An ugly smile curled across the Ace's face. "Is this any of your business, you dirty—!" He began.

Like a flash, a gun slid into Big Joe's palm out of nowhere. The muzzle was pointing straight at the Ace's chest. Linda, elated at the quarrel between the two men, struggled to get away, but the Ace had too firm a grip upon her wrists.

"I'm sorry, Joe." The Ace backed down. "Put that rod away. We got too much at stake right now to get all messed up about a skirt."

"I'll say we have," Big Joe grunted. "Do you know what's happened this morning?"

"No. What?"

"The campaign that that crazy evangelist started is coming to a head. The coppers are hot on our trails—and I don't mean maybe. And the people are right behind them this time. They've rounded up Scar Short already on an income tax charge and they've got Rod Johnson on the run. They'll be trailing us next. We gotta get reinforcements; we gotta fight 'em!"

"Say!" Cold sweat broke out on the Ace's face. "Is that true?"

"Sure's I live."

"Then come on, let's beat it while the going's good!"

"You gonna run out like a yellow cur?" Big Joe snarled. "Well, I ain't. I'm staying right here and I'm taking over every racket you guys wels on out. I ain't afraid of coppers nor nothing else."

"It's your funeral," the Ace told

him pessimistically.

"What about this Harris guy—are we still taking him for a ride tonight? Just you and I and maybe Rod?"

"Count me out," said the Ace. "I'm leaving town."

"Yellow," sneered Big Joe, and the Ace did not even take offense. He placed Linda in a room which opened off the office and sat down to talk over plans with Big Joe. An hour later, he released Linda and brought her once again into the

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