

JITTERBUG! SCREENPLAY-2020-A -- SCRIPTNOTE REPORT

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Savoy: Arguably the most famous ballroom in the world. Owned by Moe Gale, a Jewish man, and managed by Charles Buchanan, a black man, it opened in 1926 on Lenox Ave between 140th and 141st streets. It had two bandstands and a spring-loaded dance floor that could handle 5,000 people of every color (by the war years, on any given night, 30% of the Savoy was white). It's where the Lindy became the Jitterbug and went airborne. Although it didn't fall within the Jolly Fellows turf, it became the gang's exclusive domain because its founder Herbert White was the Savoy's head bouncer. Harlemites called it "The Track" because it had once been an indoor greyhound racing track. It was torn down in 1959 and replaced with a housing project. BTW, "squares" were identified by the way they pronounced Savoy. Hep- cats always put the accent on the second syllable.

Jolly Fellows: Founded by Herbert White in 1923, it was the most revered and influential Harlem gang of that time. Its turf was between 134th & 135th Streets. Members didn't wear "colors" or have their name emblazoned on the back of motorcycle jackets. This "secret" gang was identifiable only by their great dancing and the fact that they were well-dressed and smelled good-- an enforceable requirement laid down by White-- and ruthlessness if need be (they were one of the toughest gangs around and no one would ever think of dissing them for their GQ style). Besides not tolerating "coarse language," White required that women be treated with "unfailing courtesy."

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Flattie: Flatfoot, slang for a police officer walking a beat.

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Jigaboo: Offensive racial slur for a black person. First used in the U.S. in the early part of the 20th century.

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Gate: a male, short for "gatemouth."

Pg 8

Lane: a male.

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Lafayette Theater marquee: Eddie Rector; considered by many to be the first person to take hoofing (standing-in-place tap dancing which focuses on the steps to the basic abandonment of any upper body motion) and making it move gracefully across the floor with arms outstretched in a style now called "stage dancing;" Butterbeans & Susie (Mr. and Mrs. Jodie Edwards) was a song and dance comedy act that focused on hurling insults at each other; King Rastus Brown was a legendary hooper who wore all of his WWI medals down the front of his jacket while performing; Billie Holiday was 16-years-old at the time of this story. The Lafayette was the first New York theatre to desegregate (1912). In 1916 Harlem's first black theatre stock company (and one of America's earliest African-American theatre companies) was formed. The Lafayette Players focused on performing Broadway plays written by whites with black actors "uptown." In 1936 Orson Welles directed Macbeth (derisively referred to as "Voodoo Macbeth") there. Once referred to as "The House Beautiful," the nearly 2,000-seat theater was bought in 1950 by the Williams Institute CME Church. Today it and the block it stood on has been razed for a new 8-story apartment building called "The Lafayette."

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Signifying: bragging

Jeff: a pest, a bore; a stupid, unhip person.

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Get Happy: Harold Arlen and Ted Koehler's first song written together before working as songwriters for the mob at the Cotton Club. Became a national hit in 1930 thanks to the relatively new medium called radio (first national broadcast was in 1926). It has been recorded by just about everybody ever since from Ella Fitzgerald to Elvis Costello including Judy Garland's unforgettable version in the 1950 movie Summer Stock .

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Icky: an unhip stupid person who can't "collar the jive."

Ofay: a white person.

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Madame St. Claire: Born in Martinique, she speaks with a French accent. She introduced the numbers racket to Harlem in the 1920's through the 40 Thieves, initially an Irish gang.

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Herbert "Whitey" White is a WWI vet, and the oldest member in the gang by a decade. He served as a sergeant in Harlem's famous "Hell Fighters" 369th Division in WWI (Bill "Bojangles" Robinson was the regiment's drum major in their marching band; Noble Sissle played violin in the band and in 1921, with his songwriting partner Eubie Blake, wrote and produced Shuffle Along, the first hit musical on Broadway written for and about Afro-Americans). White managed over seventy dancers in a dozen dance troupes under such names as The Savoy Hoppers, The Jive-A-Dears, and the most famous, Whitey's Lindy Hoppers which appeared in movies and

toured the world. He died in the 1940's a wealthy man.

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Screw you, bastard!

Pg 10

Don't screw with me!

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Ellsworth "Bumpy" Johnson was Madam St. Claire's chief enforcer at this time. After Schultz's murder he negotiated a deal with mob boss Lucky Luciano to become the Harlem enforcer for the "five families" which forced Madam St. Claire into retirement. The nickname came from a bump on his head.

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A derogatory term for a West-Indian black person.

Pg 11

A fellow, a friend.

Pg 11

Glim: to look at.

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T.O.B.A: Theater Owner's Booking Association, the Negro Vaudeville.

Pg 12

Big D: The Depression.

Pg 12

Kick: pocket.

Pg 13

Harlem gangs.

Pg 13

Mickey Mouse's wine: lame white people's money.

Pg 13

Land of Darkness: Harlem

Pg 13

High-yeller: Light-skinned Negroes

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This smallroom is the "unacknowledged headquarters" of American tap dance from the 1920's through the 1940's and

is known as the HOOFER'S CLUB31

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Cat's Corner: the NE corner of the Savoy Ballroom dance floor chosen by Shorty Snowden in 1928 for the Jolly Fellows. Intruders were dealt with in many ways but the most apropos was to break shins with Charleston kicks.

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Madame St. Clair's apartment: 409 Edgecombe Ave. This 13-story 1917 building in Sugar Hill (south of 155th St. overlooking the Harlem River) was home to many of the black elite during this time including W.E.B DuBois (pronounced doo-BOYZ). DuBois, a co-founder of the NAACP, espoused an idea called the "Talented Tenth" which expected educated blacks to lead the rest of the race into higher education and a better life.

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Domi: a place to live (domicile).

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Neigho: nothing doing.

Pg 19

Down with: through with, finished with something.

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Sadder than a map: terrible

Pg 19

Snowman: someone who has been put on "ice," ostracized.

Cup catcher: a place to sleep.

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Off-time jive: a sorry excuse, saying the wrong thing.

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Line: cost, price, money.

Pg 20

Black and tans: Dark and light-colored Negroes (not Negroes and white folks).

Snatcher: a detective.

Pg 20

BANDAID®: invented in 1920, didn't become popular until 1924 when Johnson & Johnson introduced a sterilized version.

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Scottsboro Boys: 9 innocent black teenage boys falsely accused of rape in Alabama in 1931. Led to the end of all-

white juries in the South and sparked the civil rights movement. Final pardons for all didn't come until 2013.

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Harlem Rens: New York Renaissance, a professional black basketball team considered to be one of the best teams of all-time. Founded in 1923 by West Indian immigrant Robert "Bob" Douglas in an agreement with the Renaissance Ballroom in Harlem which served as the team's home court (the dance floor was cleared and hoops set up for games). Became World Champions in 1925 when they beat the white Original Celtics (New York City).

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Ripley: Robert Ripley ("Believe It or Not!") was a multimedia pioneer whose syndicated cartoons, radio, movie and book deals were earning him over \$350,000 a year by 1931 (nearly \$5 million today). His 1929 cartoon "America Has No National Anthem!" created such a furor that within a year over 5 million signatures were gathered on petitions demanding Congress officially adopt the Star-Spangled Banner as the nation's anthem. On March 3, 1931, President Hoover signed a bill that formally recognized the song as the national anthem.

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Bee's Knees: fad slang from around 1923 that uses animal anatomy to denote excellence; for example, cat's meow.

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Personal marijuana possession or sale wasn't illegal in the U.S. until 1937.

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Off the tracks: nuts, crazy.

Pg 24

Slip/slide your jib: to talk freely.

Pg 26

Jumped in port: arrived in town.

Bree: girl.

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'A' train: NYC/Harlem subway line. Take the A Train (1941) was the signature tune of the Duke Ellington Orchestra.

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Langston Hughes quote from his 1922 poem "Negro" written when he lived in Harlem.

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Countée Cullen: (Following his return from France in 1930, he pronounced his first name Countay and took to writing it with an accent). He was abandoned by his parents at birth, raised by his grandmother and then when she died, adopted by a Methodist minister. Entered NYU in 1922. Earned a Masters from Harvard University in 1924 and wrote in the tradition of the great lyrical poets such as Keats and Shelley. Born in 1903, he died in 1946.

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Slumming: when rich, white people traveled up to Harlem for

entertainment, ie, poorer sections of town.

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"She of the Dancing Feet Sings": 1926. The German magazine Der Querschnitt published it in July of that year along with Langston Hughes' The Weary Blues under the title Nigger-Songs.

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Frail: a woman.

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Chimes: Hours.

Black: Night.

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New Negro: a term used to describe a new attitude in many Afro-Americans following WW1 (1919). Instead of groveling for recognition of basic human rights which they felt they surely earned this time around by dying and fighting bravely in French trenches, many Afro-Americans were now demanding their rights to the point of armed militancy. The 1919 "Red Summer" race wars across America of whites-on-blacks convinced more pragmatic blacks that armed conflict would mean certain genocide for their race and elected to tone down the rhetoric in favor of a more subtle approach. So subtle that by 1931, Billy Rhythm had never heard of the New Negro.

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Niggerati: an ironic, self-mocking and self-glorifying term coined by author Zora Neale Hurston to describe the black artists and writers of her day-- and to rile the stuffy

black bourgeoisie (who found the term offensive). "Niggerati Manor," a rooming house located at 267 West 136th Street (home to Wallace Thurman and Langston Hughes), was the bohemian gathering place for Hurston, Cullen, and others; a non-sexists and non-judgmental place of wild weekend parties that accommodated straight, gays, and people of different colors. FYI, Hurston called whites who studied and championed the Niggerati such as Carl Van Vechten (who wrote the controversial Nigger Heaven): "Negrotarians."

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Leo Frank, a Jewish-American, was convicted in 1913 in Atlanta, Ga for the murder of 13-year-old Mary Phagan. Both the prosecutor and Frank's attorney dug into the South's warped prejudices during the trial. The state portrayed Frank as a rich northern Jew who had flirted with the girl and was last seen with her. His attorney, on the other hand, tried to shift the blame to a black factory worker who testified against Frank on grounds that the "negro is predisposed because of his race to lying and murdering." Sentenced to death, Georgia Governor John M. Slaton commuted the sentence because he believed there had been a miscarriage of justice. A mob of 1,200 people marched on Slaton's home in protest. Two months later in 1915, 25 prominent armed citizens-- including a former governor, a former and current Marietta mayor, a superior court judge, and numerous sheriff deputies who called themselves "Knights of Mary Phagan"-- kidnapped Frank from prison, drove him 150-miles to Marietta (Phagan's hometown), found a tree and hung him. As was the custom, pictures were taken with people posing under the hanging corpse. When he was cut down, at least one man repeatedly stomped on Frank's face. Pieces of Frank's nightshirt and parts of the rope were taken and sold as souvenirs. Following the lynching, of the approximate 3,000 Jews living in Georgia, nearly half of them fled the state. In 1918, House Republican Leonidas C Dyer introduced his Dyer Anti-Lynching Bill where it was quickly passed by a large majority. However, it was prevented from becoming a law because of a white Southern Democrat Senate block.

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Rennie: Renaissance Ballroom: the first ballroom in Harlem (1924) was financed by Marcus Garvey and other affluent black Caribbean immigrants. Located on 7th Ave between

137th and 138th street, the second story venue gave Harlemites a place to dance since they were barred from white dance halls.

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Chick Webb: known as the "King of Swing," Webb's short stature was a result of contracting tuberculosis of the spine when he was child. His band became the house band at the Savoy in 1931 and achieved legendary fame when he beat drummer Gene Krupa of the Bennie Goodman band, in a battle of the bands at the Savoy on May 11, 1937 (4,000 were inside the Savoy, 5,000 were outside and hundreds of riot police were everywhere in case things got out of hand). He was just 34-years-old when he died in 1939. His band was then managed by its singer, 22-year-old Ella Fitzgerald.

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This is how the best dancers in "Cats Corner" removed lame interlopers from their exclusive section of the Savoy dancefloor.

Pg 40

Hincty: conceited, snooty.

Peola: a light person, almost white.

Pigeon: a young woman.

Pg 40

Jitterbug: a swing fan but originally used as a word to describe an alcoholic with the jitters (tremors).

Handle: a person's name.

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Funeral processions at night were common in Harlem during the 30's since taking time off from work during the day was unthinkable if you expected to find your job waiting for you the next day.

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Eddie Rector is credited for inventing "stage dancing," ie, taking hooper style tap dancing done in one place and "freeing" it to gracefully move across a stage floor.

Pg 47

This actually happened.

Pg 54

Bill "Bojangles" Robinson: In his 50's, he's just being discovered by New York audiences. This is 2 years before his first movie, "The Little Colonel" with Shirley Temple. Arguably the most famous tap dancer who ever lived. Born in 1878, died in 1949, and in between created a legend for himself that included holding a record that lasted nearly 50 years for running the 100-yard-dash backwards (13.5 seconds set in 1930). To celebrate his 61st birthday in 1939, he tap danced down Broadway from Columbus Circle to 44th Street. In 1989 a joint US Senate/House resolution declared May 25th as "National Tap Dance Day," the date of his birth. Fondly called the "Mayor of Harlem" by Harlemites, he was penniless by the time he died having given most of it away to people in need. His good friend Ed Sullivan paid for his funeral which was held at the 369th Infantry Regiment Armory in Harlem. Over 32,000 people attended his funeral with an estimated half-million more standing in silent tribute as his funeral cortege passed. He's buried in Brooklyn's Cemetery of the Evergreens.

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Fin: \$5.00 bill (worth approximately \$77.80 in 2020).

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Trade fours: to take turns soloing in music or dance for four measures at a time.

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Stop-time: a chord or accent played only on the first beat of every bar or every other bar; a simple tune that can be played with one finger.

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Copacetic: Bojangles is given credit for coining the word for "perfect."

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Jack and Jills: lame wannabes.

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Dreck: Yiddish for worthless or crappy material.

Pg 65

"Rhyth-mania" is the new Cotton Club revue.

Schmuck: Yiddish for a contemptible or foolish person.

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Schlimazel: Yiddish for an unlucky person that bad things happen to through no fault of his own, a Job.

Pg 65

Schlemiel: Yiddish for an inept clumsy person, a bungler, a dolt.

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Mugging: making them laugh, putting on the jive.

Cracker: a term used before the Civil War by whites and blacks to describe English and Scots-Irish hard-scrabble farmers and slave owners who once were "bond servants," i.e., slaves or serfs themselves before they were freed.

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Cracker Jack: considered the first "junk food" (1896). This concoction of popcorn, peanuts and molasses flavoring came with a cheap "prize" in every box; a colloquialism from that period for something of excellent quality.

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Solid murder: excellent, terrific.

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High pillow: the person at the top, the one in charge.

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Copper Colored Gals: the 16 chorus girls in the Cotton Club revues (the 8 "Tall, Tan & Terrific" were show girls). To work there, all had to pass the infamous brown paper bag test, that is, their skin had to be lighter than the club's paper bag.

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Dutch Schultz (Arthur Flegenheimer), a German-Jewish American gangster was involved in bootlegging and numbers running. In 1935 Lucky Luciano ordered his murder after Schultz disobeyed the "Commission" for trying to kill Thomas Dewey who was prosecuting him for tax evasion.

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Marcus Garvey: Jamaican born Garvey was a leading proponent of Black Nationalism and the Back-to-Africa movement at the beginning of the 20th Century. At its peak between 1922 and 1924, he had over 8 million followers. He was deported as an "undesirable alien" in 1927 after alienating himself from the NAACP and Congress by urging Afro-Americans not to enlist during WWI because they were not treated equally under the law (the NAACP encouraged black men to enlist with the hope that following the war, the government would reward their sacrifices with full rights as citizens to all black Americans). Making alliances with the KKK and racists politicians in an effort to get funding to buy steamships (Black Star Line) to carry Afro-Americans to Liberia, setting himself up as the "Provisional President-General of Africa," and posing in a 19th Century Admiral's feathered hat didn't help his cause either. But perhaps the thing that hurt him the most was he was West Indian. Harlemites disliked them because they worked harder for less, spoke and wrote better English, and were overly aggressive in business and politics. Garvey died in London in 1940.

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Ring-tail: a derogatory term for a West Indian.

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Blip: something very good, for example, "That's a blip" or "She's a blip."

Pg 78

This actually happened.

Pg 81

"Dream Variations" (1932) by Langston Hughes. Born in 1902 in Joplin, Missouri, Hughes was the most famous writer of the Harlem Renaissance (1925-1935) and is noted for capturing the lives, hopes and dreams of the common black man and using jazz structures in his work. Following his death in 1967, his ashes were interred beneath a floor medallion in the middle of the foyer in the Arthur Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture in Harlem.

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Jules Bledsoe: a famous baritone of that era eclipsed by his contemporary Paul Robeson.

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"down by the river" references a series of traditional Gospel songs of slave origin which would have been sung in Tharbis' Baptist church.

Pg 86

Gammin': showing off, flirtatious.

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Pounder: a cop.

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\$100.00. The relative Purchasing Power today is \$1,560.00.

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Vincent "Mad Dog" Coll was an Irish-American hitman. Nickname earned by the accidental 1931 killing of a young child during a mob kidnap attempt. An associate of Dutch Schultz, his own murder was due to his "unauthorized" kidnapping of mob rival Big Frenchy DeMange.

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Owney "The Killer" Madden: Owen Madden was born in England to Irish parents in 1891. When his father died, his mother brought him with her to America and settled into New York's west side Irish ghetto known as Hell's Kitchen. Recruited as a teen into the notorious Gophers (pronounced "Goofers") gang, he committed his first crime at the age of 14, clubbing a man for \$500. He earned his nickname while still a teenager after gunning down a rival gang member in the streets and shouting, "Owney Madden, 10th Avenue!" Madden bankrolled the careers of George Raft (who as a younger man was Madden's chauffeur and had won a Charleston contest at Madison Square Garden) and Mae West, both of whom had grown up with Madden in Hell's Kitchen. He was her boyfriend and protector and she described him this way: "Sweet, but oh so vicious." Stanley Walker, former editor of the New York Herald Tribune at that time, reported that Madden was "lean and tough and acted precisely as a racketeer should look and act." He goes on to write that he was "a catlike gentleman" with slicked-back black hair and very bright and piercing blue eyes. He died in 1965 from emphysema and the ill-effects of the many bullet wounds he received over the course of his life (at least 6).

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Walter Winchell wrote the first syndicated gossip column On-Broadway for the New York Daily Mirror (1929). 50 million people a day read him in over 2,000 newspapers worldwide and over 20 million listened to him on radio from 1930 through the early 60's. Although he was an "intimate friend" of Owney Madden, in 1932 he fled to California in fear that he would be "rubbed out for knowing too much."

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B&Bs: Bumps and bruises.

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"Song" by Langston Hughes, 1925.

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Social Whist party: During this period, 25% of Harlem was unemployed. To survive, many Harlemites would throw parties to help pay the high rents for their apartments. These costs were typically higher than elsewhere in New York City because the five-, six-, and seven-room apartments were originally built for larger white families who could afford them. When they moved out during the northern migration of southern blacks and West Indian blacks into the city during the turn-of-the-century, the rents remained the same or increased. Over 25% of Harlem households were renting rooms and many were throwing rent parties with cover charges at the door and additional costs for illegal hootch. The anger and frustration of not being able to find work even in Harlem at local white-owned businesses, high rents, and systemic police brutality came to a head on March 19, 1935 when Harlemites rioted in the streets. Beginning at the S.H. Kress Five and Ten Cent Store at 256 West 125th Street-- where unfounded rumor had it police had beaten and killed a black teenage boy-- many stores were looted and vandalized and cars burned. Rioting ended after a second night of violence and one person was killed. Unlike early race riots of the twentieth century where white mobs attacked blacks, this one would become the first one where

blacks attacked white people and their property. To many historians, March 19, 1935 marks the official end of the Harlem Renaissance by revealing nothing had changed for the better for blacks in America.

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Fews and twos: Money or cash in small quantities.

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7Up©: The lemon-lime flavored soda was introduced in 1929 as a patent medicine two weeks before the Wall Street Crash. Until 1950, it contained lithium citrate, a mood stabilizing drug used in treating bipolar disorder. Early advertising slogans: "Dispels hangovers. Takes the 'ouch' out of grouch" and "...a savory, flavory drink with a real wallop."

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Got her boots on: she is wise, a hep cat.

Jane: A woman.

Pg 111

Dillinger: A real "killer," fantastic.

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Mezz: Supreme, genuine.

Frolic pad: Nightclub.

Sky piece: Hat.

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High mortality rate: In spite of a young adult population in Harlem during this time, the death rate was 42% higher for Harlemites than for the rest of the city. Malnutrition was commonplace.

Pg 114

35 thou: According to MeasuringWorth.com, the Purchasing Power for that actual ransom amount translates in 2020 to \$577,000.00. The "Economic Power" value is \$9,270,000.00.

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Zoot suit: is defined in the 6th edition of Cab Calloway's 1940 Hepster's Dictionary as "the only totally and truly American civilian suit." Although there is speculation as to its origins, there is no argument that the zoot suit, like jazz and the jitterbug, is a product of the African-American mind. It is known that around the mid 1930's jazz musicians were getting Harlem tailors to create these baggy suits with the overstuffed padded shoulders on a jacket that fell below the knees with abruptly cut sleeves and trousers (Punjab pants). This "killer-diller" style also included a long looping "zoot chain" that hung from pants worn high above the waist, and an equally over-the-top wide-brimmed hat. The word "zoot" can be traced back to 1930's jazz musicians who coined the term to describe something worn or played in an exaggerated style. Connecting the word to describe a suit of clothes was a natural since it has always been common in African-American slang to rhyme words; in this case through a nonsense "reduplication," for example, reet pleat, drape shape. In 1931, the year this play takes place, the cost of a zoot suit started at around \$55.00. Since this is a commodity and not income or wealth, MeasuringWorth.com estimates the relative real price in 2018 is \$907.00.

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Madden and West grew up together in Hell's Kitchen.

"Liza," written by the Gershwins, is Chick Webb's go-to music for finishing off all challengers of the Battle of the Bands at the Savoy.