The UNKNOWN BLOND

By Laura Lou BROOKMAN © 1933 NEA SERVICE, INC.

CHAPTER L

had reached the last of the drawers, was going through it ily and methodically when Cole- heard an exclamation.

mured. "You've found it?"

nister was on his feet and in and he held a dark, shining ob- "Yes. I've found it! See—it's a d the same make as the gun killed Tracy King. It IS the gun killed him! I told you we'd find e, didn't I? I told you Hollister ilty!"

ere was triumph, excitement in ister's voice. He opened the re- , looked into the clyinders, re are four bullets left," he said, a quick movement he emptied from the gun.

hy did you do that?"

st to be safer. I don't care much carrying a loaded gun around—"

e sentence was never finished. was a sound in the outside cor- Both men heard it and started ch other. For an instant there quiet and then they heard the again. Someone was putting a in the lock.

ere was no time for flight, no for anything except what Ban- and Coleman did—snap off the ric light switch and flatten them- es against the wall. They heard key turning in the lock and then door swung open. Someone en- d the living room.

nister could hear Coleman's heavy breathing. There were voices the living room—low, indistinct, of them was Matthew Hollister's, the other was unfamiliar. Now man in the outer room were mov- about. Bannister heard another open, but the voices did not to go farther away.

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hat happened after that took so quickly that Bannister was able to describe it clearly. He crouching closely against the He remembered that Coleman's was just barely visible in the ress. Suddenly there were foot- coming toward the bedroom The footsteps paused, and then door was flung open. There was a and a rush and the lights came a blinding glow.

Here they are!" Matthew Hollis- exclaimed excitedly. There were men beside him, officers in blue orms.

e of them stepped forward. ome on!" he said harshly. "What you two doing here? Let's see gun!"

We found it here, Officer," Ban- r told him. "Hidden in that ing table. It's the gun that killed r King!"

What!"

It's the gun that killed Tracy g—or one just like it. We found it t there—"

e turned, pointed to the drawer, pulled out and its contents rump-

Matthew Hollister's face was ched of color. "You found that— d!" He repeated slowly. "In Mel- 's bedroom? You—you mean—?"

he officer slipped the gun into pocket. "All right," he said. "It's gun we're been looking for." He ded and put a hand on Parker man's arm. "You'll have to come h us," he said.

Coleman's eyes were incredulous. hat do you mean?" he demanded. re you crazy? This isn't my apart- nt. Hollister's the man you want. gun proves he's guilty!"

Oh, so, it doesn't. You're under est, Parker Coleman. You'll have come along—"

It required the two policemen to d him. Coleman tried desperately wrench himself free. "Let me go!" screamed. "I haven't done any- ng! Why don't you arrest Hollister? nister, make them let me go! Tell m it's Hollister!"

But the other had stepped back. o sorry," he said. "You'll have to along with them. There isn't any- g I can do for you now. You see OW you killed Tracy King!"

* * *

t was an odd looking group gath- ed in Kate Hewlett's kitchen. Hewlett, with a white apron tied r her gray flannel bathrobe, moved m the stove to the table, her heel- bedroom slippers flopping as she alked. Her gray hair hung in a fall down her back and about her rehead was a halo of curl papers. Juliet France, wrapped in a rose t negligee, sat near the table. Her e scarcely left David Bannister's face. He was still wearing his topcoat and he stood in the doorway, almost filling it.

The kitchen was brightly lighted but outside it was dark. The hands of the clock on the wall pointed to 10 minutes past four o'clock.

"You sit down," Juliet said to Mrs. Hewlett, "and let me pour the coffee." She arose, holding a chair forward for the older woman.

Kate Hewlett eased herself into the seat. "All right, Juliet," she said. "The cups are on the shelf behind you. Now then, David, I want you to tell us the straight of this—"

He rested his arms on the table. "I'll go over the whole thing once more," he said. "But this is the last time! I'd like to get a little sleep before it's time to get up again."

"People can sleep any time!" his aunt said tartly. "But they don't catch a murderer every day in the week—and I suppose I should thank the Lord for that! I don't see how anybody could sleep with such excitement going on. To think you solved the murder!"

"Oh, no," Bannister objected. "Not quite that. McNeal and the detectives did the real work. I just played a hunch and Juliet helped—"

The girl turned, "Why, what did I do?" she asked.

"Gave me the idea that finally made Coleman confess. Don't you remember we were talking the other day about where the murderer could have hid the gun? You said something about a window box and that set me to thinking. I'd figured out who it was the man in the old photograph looked like—Parker Coleman. The likeness is really quite striking if you forget about the mustache. Of course it couldn't be Coleman so I decided it must be some relative of his.

* * *

"It seemed queer for King to have a picture of anyone related to Coleman, though. That stumped me for quite a while. Of course I knew both men were in love with Denise Lang. But there was something more than that between them. Coleman hadn't accounted for the way he spent the evening King was killed, except to say he had called on Denise. She told us he was there, but she was obviously mistaken about the time. I knew that because Daisy Connor, the maid, had checked up on the time when those telephone calls came.

"Then when I found out King had been trying to blackmail you" (he looked at Juliet) "it came to me he might have played the game more ways than one. I asked McNeal to check up on Coleman's bank account. We found out he'd been withdrawing large amounts regularly during the last year. Amounts much larger than he'd ever drawn before.

"That fitted in with the blackmail idea but, as for the murder, I hadn't anything at all to go on except my hunch. I couldn't prove Parker Coleman killed Tracy King because he'd been blackmailing him. I couldn't even prove he had blackmailed him.

"I kept thinking about the gun Coleman used—if he had used it—and what he could have done with it. What Juliet said about a window box kept sticking in my head. It seemed silly but I couldn't forget it. And then when I met Matthew Hollister on the street yesterday the whole thing come to me in a flash.

"I figured if I could convince Coleman we had enough on Hollister to pin the two crimes on him, except for the missing gun, Coleman would supply that. Oh, I gave him every chance! I knew that if I was right about it he'd bring the gun with him when we went to search the apartment and then hide it.

"McNeal had the two policemen waiting, ready to come in with Hollister after we'd been in the apartment half an hour. There was one thing I hadn't figured on. I thought I'd find the revolver in the most obvious place—a desk drawer or something like that. If I came across it too soon I was going to stall. As it was, I'd barely picked the thing up before the policemen got there."

"But why," Juliet France asked, "did Parker Coleman—?"

(To Be Concluded)

Mississippi and Missouri both had the same abbreviations at the same time. "Mi" was used for both states, but Mississippi having priority rights, Missouri changed to "Mo." and later Mississippi changed to "Miss."

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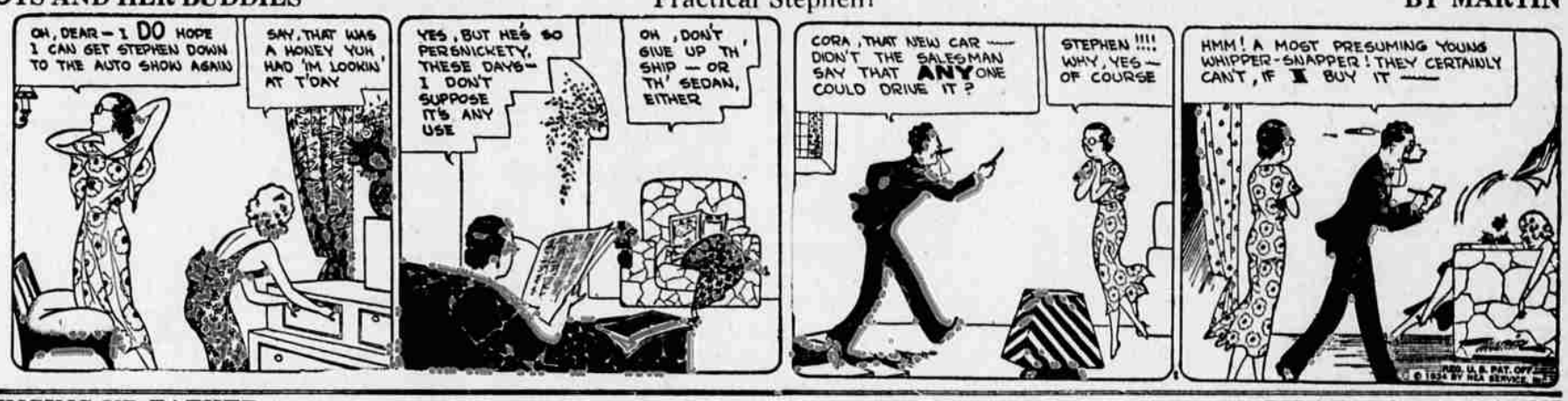

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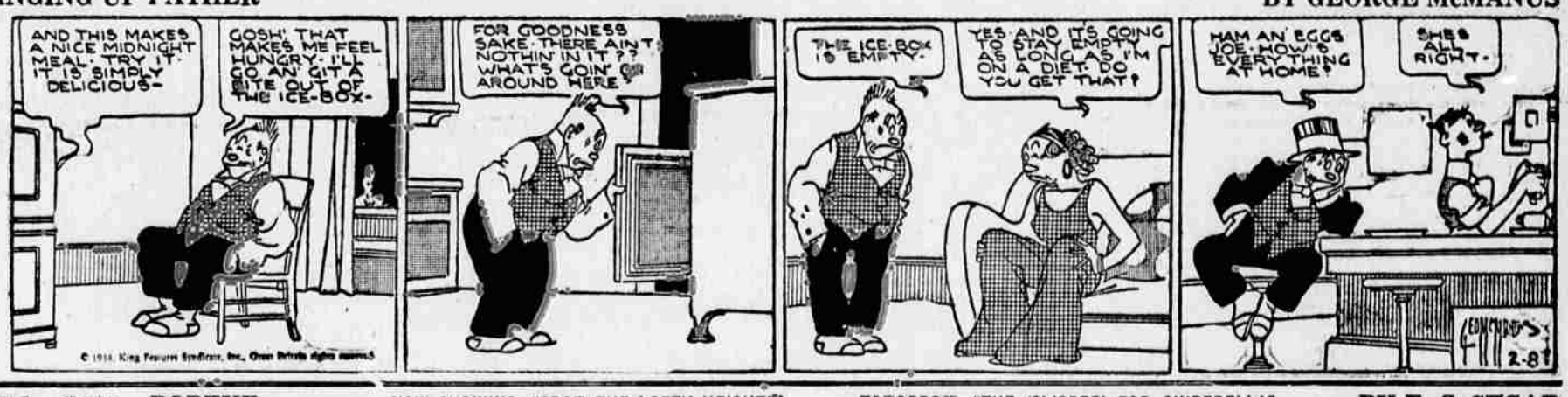

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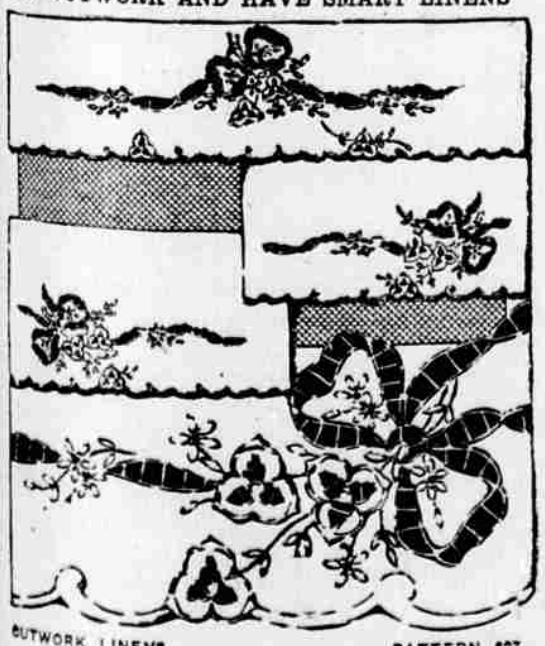

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