

The UNKNOWN BLOND

By Luan Lee BROOKMAN

BEGIN HERE TODAY
 Who killed TRACY KING, an obscure leader of the Poor in his apartment?
 DAVID BANNISTER, a cheap, famous mystery writer, takes to find out.
 Police are searching for an unknown blond who visited King shortly before his death. Bannister has seen this girl, but she has disappeared since.
 HERMAN SCURLACH, who wrote King a threatening letter, is in jail. He declares his innocence.
 Bannister works on the case with J. RANDOLPH GAINES, star reporter of the Poor. In the nick of time Bannister finds a picture which he knows.
 AL DRUGAN, friend of King's, says the orchestra leader had been having trouble with JOE PARROTT, his former vaudeville partner, and accuses Parrott of the murder.
 Gaines and Bannister go to see wealthy DENISE LANG, King's old friend, also called. While they are there Druggan's father appears and angrily demands that the newspaper men leave.

NOW GO ON WITH THE STORY

CHAPTER XVII

CAPTAIN OLIVER McNEAL

brought the front legs of his chair to the floor with a resounding crack. "Well!" he exclaimed. "Will you look who's here—?"

Bannister grinned from the doorway. "Hello, Cap," he said. "Hope you don't mind callers." J. Randolph Gaines, just behind, edged into the room and slumped into the nearest chair.

McNeal was on his feet now. "Davey, my lad!" he said, grasping Bannister's hand. "I thought you were in California! I thought you were away making a big name for yourself. What in blazes do you mean, turning up in my office? Looking fine, you are—"

"And you're looking terrible," Bannister told him, well aware that this was the proper answer. "Well, Cap, I'm back on the job. Understand you've got a little murder case on. Getting a little slow on your feet, aren't you, letting 24 hours go by without bringing in the guilty person?"

"Back on the job!" McNeal eyed him dubiously. "You mean you're working for the Post again?"

"That's it," Bannister told him. "Uh-hi!" McNeal grunted. "That's different!" He scowled. "Thought we'd got rid of you, once and for all. What'd you want to come back here for?"

"Don't take it too hard," Bannister urged, still grinning. "You see, it isn't permanent. Jim Paxton told me he was short-handed and I agreed to go to work for him for a while. Wanted to see just how slow you and your staff of gum-shoers will be clearing up this murder—"

McNeal dropped back in his chair. "Just as much lip as ever," he announced, shaking his head. But there was admiration in the blue eyes raised to Bannister's. Admiration and liking. The exchange of mild insults meant merely that Captain McNeal and David Bannister were old friends.

BANNISTER gazed himself on the edge of the desk. McNeal, he thought, looked exactly as he had six years before. He wore a felt hat and a blue suit—the same sort of hat and the same sort of suit he had always worn. His hair was no grayer. The gray hair seemed, surprisingly, to accent the youthful alertness of that round and ruddy face. Possibly the captain of detectives was a little heavier than he had been six years before. The military set of his shoulders, though, was as pronounced as ever.

"Well—?" Gaines, across the room, removed his hat and inspected McNeal less than perfect out-Hi. "What's the dope now? Got a confession from Scurlach yet?"

McNeal shook his head. "We're keeping him locked up, just the same."

"Think you'll get one?" Gaines persisted.

"I don't know. We've got a line on another suspect—"

"I know," Gaines said languidly. "You mean Joe Parrott. Do you think you'll find him?"

"Of course we'll find him!" the captain snorted. "I suppose you've been talking to Drugan, have you?"

The oaths that followed were not flattering to Mr. Drugan. "I wish he'd learn to keep his mouth shut," McNeal went on. "Going around town doing all this talking! If he keeps on he's going to find himself in trouble!"

Bannister interrupted. "Drugan seems to be pretty sure this fellow Parrott is the one who did the shooting."

McNeal nodded. "We've a surprise or two in store for Mr. Drugan," he said darkly.

"What do you mean?"

"I won't say any more about it now," McNeal answered. "Wait a day or two."

Gaines leaned forward. "On the level, McNeal," he said. "Who do you think killed King?"

The captain frowned. "I'm not saying anything," he told them. "until we have that girl here."

"You mean the 'unknown blond'?" jibed Gaines. "Don't make me laugh! There never was such a girl. Somebody down here made up that fairy tale!"

"She wasn't made up!" McNeal said stoutly. "And we're going to have her here." His expression was much like a small boy's in the face of tormentors.

BANNISTER felt that he wanted to change the subject. "Spoken of blonds," he said, "we've been talking to one—Denise Lang. McNeal looked up, interested

"So she can talk now!" he exclaimed. "What did she tell you?"

"Not much. Didn't have a chance. Her father appeared on the scene—"

McNeal tapped the desk sharply with a lead pencil. "Say," he said, "did it strike you there is something queer about that bird?"

"There's plenty queer," Gaines put in indignantly, "about the way he trots reporters. I'd like to take a sock at him. Practically threw us out of the house!"

McNeal gave him a withering glance. "Well, that's too bad," he said tartly. "Maybe he's got so queer as I thought." He went on seriously, turning to Bannister. "Maybe you think we're not getting anywhere on this case, but we've done a lot of work. Lots of people involved. Have to talk to 'em and check their stories. Arthur Lang's a big man in this town, but that doesn't give him all the privileges he thinks it does. No, sir! Lang says he was in his office from 8:30 until 10 o'clock last night. Nobody saw him go there, or leave, so far as we've been able to check."

"You're not accusing him of shooting his prospective son-in-law, are you?" Bannister asked.

"I'm not accusing him of anything," McNeal said. "—yes. But he's got to come across with the truth. I don't believe he was in that office last night. I don't see why someone wouldn't have seen him—the elevator boy or a night watchman or someone."

"I think," McNeal said suddenly, "there's something I picked up this afternoon that may not be important, but I think you should know it."

"Picked up where?"

"Out at the Shelby Arms. I went out to have a look at the place—oh, not that I expected to find anything you'd missed! I just wanted to see the layout."

"What'd you find out?"

"A few things. Did you know that last week one of the other tenants quarreled with Tracy King and their voices were so loud at least a dozen people heard them? Did you know the other tenant—a woman—swore she'd find some way to get King out of the hotel?"

McNeal's blue eyes widened. "Where'd you get all this?" he demanded. "I didn't hear anything about it. I was out there all morning—"

"Then I guess they were holding out on you," Bannister said. "It was this way—"

He repeated the story Mrs. Keene had told, the story of Melvina Hollister's quarrel with Tracy King after his cat had killed her canary bird. He told about the burial of the canary with flowers from the florist and about Melvina Hollister's threats.

McNeal listened in silence, was silent for several minutes after Bannister had finished.

"What do you think of it?" the younger man demanded. "Do you think it means anything?"

"I think," said the chief of the detective staff slowly, "that I'll be going out there and having a talk with the Hollister woman myself. Why wasn't she around this morning, I'd like to know!"

Captain McNeal was scowling and Bannister understood why. It burned the captain up to undertake a job and then slip up on it. It was an affront to his dignity and his pride.

"Listen, Cap," said Bannister quickly, "do you mind if I go along with you? I didn't see Miss Hollister myself and I'd like to."

"Are you going tonight?" Gaines asked. "Why, it's—" he looked at his watch. "It's 10 after 8. Gosh, I thought it was later than that!"

Bannister, too, had thought it was later than that. He was glad to know it was not.

McNeal rose to his feet, snapped the half-open drawer of his desk shut. "Come on!" he said crisply to Bannister. "Let's be on our way!"

(To Be Continued)

Clothes moths cannot eat while in the flying stage, since their mouths are put together imperfectly; they damage clothing only while in the larval stage.

The odds are 12 to 1 against the average man making large or permanent profits from speculation on the stock market.

Flies smell by means of hair-like organs on their legs.

Flapper Fanny Says



A girl who sees herself as others see her is never blind to her shortcomings.

OUT OUR WAY

By J. R. Williams



HEROES ARE MADE—NOT BORN.

OUR BOARDING HOUSE

By Ahern



SALESMAN SAM

By Small



BOOTS AND HER BUDDIES

By Martin



WASH TUBBS

By Crane



FRECKLES AND HIS FRIENDS

By Blosser



THE NEWFANGLES—MOM'N POP

By Cowan

