

The UNKNOWN BLOND

By Laura Lou BROOKMAN

WHO KILLED TRACY KING? The orchestra leader from town in apartment.

DAVID BANNISTER, a thin, nervous-looking man, was taken to jail.

Police are searching for an unknown blond, who visited King shortly before his death. Bannister has seen the girl, but she has since disappeared.

HERMAN SCUDLACH, who wrote King a threatening letter in jail. He declares his innocence. **AL DRUGAN**, friend of King's, says the orchestra leader has been having trouble with **JOE PARROTTE**, his former roadhouse partner, and accuses Parrotte of the murder. Police learn that **MELVINA HOLLISTER**, middle-aged spinster, had a violent quarrel with King after he had killed her.

CAPTAIN MENDAL of the detective bureau goes to see Miss Hollister and her brother **MAT THEW**. When he leaves, he declares, "Those two will hear nothing."

CHAPTER XIX

The stream of yellow sunshine fell directly across David Bannister's face. He gazed at the curtains at the open window blow toward; then settled across the ridge of Bannister's nose.

The sleeping man wrinkled his face into a grimace. The sunshine persisted. Bannister emitted a sound between a grunt and a grumble, turned on his side. For a moment he lay peacefully, but the movement had aroused him. His eyes opened—two narrow slits—and he frowned at the light. Then the eyes opened wider. Bannister looked about him bewildered.

He was not, as he had been dreaming, in a subterranean cavern. Adele Allen was not beside him, wearing a green costume, brandishing a revolver and threatening to shoot him if he did not help her escape from the giant canary bird pursuing her. The rest of the horrid vision faded and Bannister was tremendously relieved. He was not a murderer or accused of murder. Melvina Hollister was not there, nor a jaunty vaudeville singer who said his name was Gaiety.

Bannister sat up with a start. The thought of Gaiety brought the events of the preceding day before him clearly. No wonder he had dreamed of murder and murder in his imaginings the figure of Gaiety, the Post reporter, had merged into that of Tracy King, the orchestra leader. But it was King who had been murdered. Bannister remembered that. He remembered the brownish stain on the carpet of the hotel bedroom. He remembered, too, that he had promised Jim Paxton to work on the murder story for the Post.

Bannister pulled his wrist watch toward him and saw that it was nearly 8:30. A fine hour to be waking! Gaiety had not on the job for at least half an hour. Probably longer. Yes, a fine hour it was to be getting up and a fine lot of help he, David Bannister, was to the Post. He stood up, realizing that he was tired. Too much running around yesterday. He wasn't used to it. The whole idea was a pack of nonsense.

But by the time he had finished his shower David Bannister's spirits were rising. He could hardly wait to see the morning newspaper to find out if any new developments in the murder had been reported. Newspaper training reassured that and he was eager to know if the morning paper, the opposition, had scored a beat of any sort.

He came downstairs whistling, crossed the dining room and appeared in the kitchen doorway. "Morning, Aunt Kate!"

His aunt looked up, then went on removing golden brown slices of French toast from a smoking skillet. "Morning," she said crisply. "Go on into the dining room. David. Breakfast'll be on the table in a second."

Bannister located the newspaper on the living room table and opened out the pages. There was plenty about the King murder, but there was nothing that Bannister did not know. It gave him a feeling of relief. He was glad to know nothing important had happened while he was asleep. Headlines told of the search for "another suspect" whose name was not given. Drugan's story was credited to a "close friend of the dead man," also anonymous. Apparently no one on the rival newspaper had heard of Matthew and Melvina Hollister's connection with the case. At least it was not mentioned.

There was nothing new in the columns about the murder but still Bannister read them eagerly. He went through the story of the new suspect, he was interrupted. "David!"

It was his aunt calling and Aunt Kate would brook no delay at meal time.

"Coming!" Bannister answered. An instant later he appeared in the dining room, the newspaper in his hand.

The odor of fried ham and coffee and the French toast won him from his preoccupation, however. "Aunt Kate," he began, "there's not another cook like you in the whole country!"

She stopped him with a glance. "Never mind the flattery," she said. "Maybe you've something to say, David Bannister, about what you were doing all day yesterday. Lighting out after breakfast and not showing up again until midnight! I thought it was rest you came to Tremont for!"

While she had been talking she was pouring the coffee. Now she handed him a cup.

Bannister grinned. He didn't mind being addressed as though he were a 14-year-old. It was like old times. "Important business," he told her. "I've got a job."

"A what?"

"I've got a job. A respectable one. Newspaper reporter. I'm working on the Post."

Kate Hewitt waited. "Well!" she asked when he did not continue.

"That's all there is to it. Jim Paxton offered me a job on the Post and I took it. I'm working on this murder case."

The elevation of Mrs. Hewitt's eyebrows was expressive. "So that's it," she said. "You couldn't keep out of it! Something disgraceful and— and criminal happens, like a murder, and you couldn't keep out of it! I don't approve of this, David. I don't approve of it at all!"

But she didn't mean that. There was no disapproval in her voice and none in her eager eyes as she asked a moment later, "David—who do they think did it?"

"Oh, I don't know. It's hard to say now."

Mrs. Hewitt frowned. "I don't mean this man they've got locked in jail," she persisted. "For the other one they're looking for." (Bannister noted she had missed none of the details of the morning newspaper account.) "Isn't there

always?" Mrs. Hewitt said, "one special one the police know is guilty? Isn't there always one they don't tell anything about?"

"Sometimes," Bannister nodded, "but I don't think there is in this case. The whole thing's a muddle. "But who do you think did it?"

He smiled. "Aunt Kate, I'm not smart enough to study a murder for five or six hours and then erring point out the guilty person. And"—he paused thoughtfully—"I don't think there's anyone else in Tremont who can do that either."

Bannister finished his breakfast briefly and took the car down town. It was 10 o'clock by the time he reached the city room of the Post. Paxton was not in sight. Austin, the assistant city editor, was busy at his desk and there was no one else about whom Bannister knew. Without waiting, he went on to central headquarters.

The office at the desk recognized him and Bannister nodded. He went on into the corridor, almost bumping into Cunningham who came flying down the stairs.

"Listen, Cunningham said tersely, "tell Gaiety I'm going out with Murphy, will you? Some kind of a holdup out in the Heights. Tell him—"

"Sure," said Bannister, "but where'll I find him?"

Cunningham motioned toward the stairs. "Up there," he said. "They're all up there. Did you know they've got the girl? Gaiety's phoning the office now."

He would have gone but Bannister caught his arm. "What girl?" he demanded. "You mean—"

"That blond dame they were looking for. I've got to beat it now!"

Cunningham was gone. In a dozen strides Bannister made the top of the stairs. A man in a dark suit and a janitor were the only ones in sight.

"I'm looking for Gaiety of the Post," Bannister said to the janitor. "Have you seen him?"

The man motioned toward a half-opened door and Bannister hurried toward it. He heard Gaiety's voice before he saw him. Gaiety and three others were in the room. One man was whittling a lead pencil and the others were talking over telephones. Gaiety's voice was louder, more excited than the rest.

Bannister said to the man who was whittling, "I understand they've found the girl they were looking for."

The stranger nodded. "Anyone talk to her?" Bannister asked.

"She won't talk."

"Where is she?"

The other motioned with his head. A figure peered the door and Bannister recognized it. "McNeal," he called, hurrying outside. "Oh, Captain McNeal!"

There was considerable head-shaking but Bannister finally had his way. Ten minutes later he passed through a barred door into a wide corridor. There was another barred door and then a woman in blue directed him toward a row of cells.

The first cell was unoccupied. The woman in the second was fat. Her hair was brown and she was asleep. Bannister walked slowly. He came to the third cell and the fourth and then he stopped.

Gray eyes looked at him through the steel bars. "Oh!" the girl said. "It's you!"

(To Be Continued)

"'Twas the Night Before Christmas," famous Christmas poem, first was published on Dec. 23, 1823. It was written by Dr. Clement Moore.

Baby kangaroos are born blind, and only as large as a man's finger, yet they find their way to the mother's pouch without assistance.

Flapper Fanny Says

People with strong views feel they can look out for themselves.

OUT OUR WAY

By J. R. Williams



SALESMAN SAM



BOOTS AND HER BUDDIES



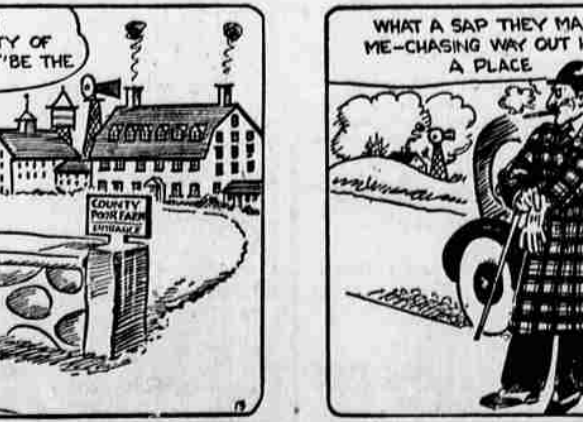
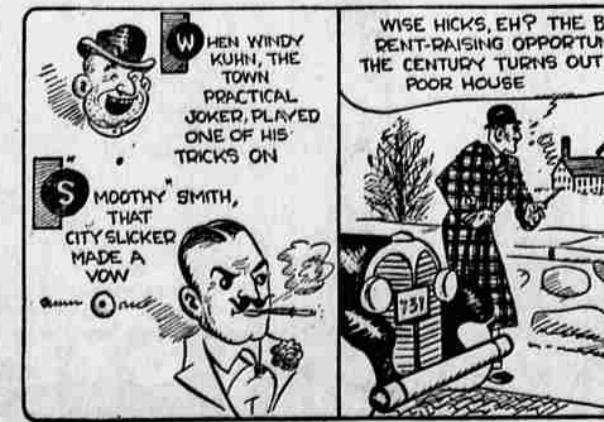
WASH TUBBS



FRECKLES AND HIS FRIENDS



THE NEWFANGLES—MOM'N POP



OUR BOARDING HOUSE

By Ahern



By Small

By Small

By Martin

By Martin

By Crane

By Crane

By Blosser

By Blosser

By Cowan

By Cowan