

# The UNKNOWN BLOND

By Laura Lou BROOKMAN

**BEGIN HERE TODAY**

DAVID BANNISTER undertakes to find out who killed TRACY KING, orchestra leader. Bannister is an author and former newspaper reporter who wrote the murder case with GAINNEY, star reporter on the Post.

Among those suspected are JULIET FRANCE, blond, pretty and known to have visited King shortly before his death; MELVINA SCURLACH, who wrote King a threatening letter; and JOE FAHRETT, down-town rando-ville actor. It is also known that MELVINA HOLLISTER, middle-aged spinster, had quarreled with King recently.

AL DRUGAN, friend of King's, is found dead in a wrecked automobile.

Bannister persuades the police chief to let Juliet come to his sun's home, ostensibly as a guest, on the theory that if the girl believes herself free they can learn more about her.

Juliet begs Bannister to "stop trying to find out who killed Tracy King." Later that day Melvina Hollister is found dead.

Bannister rushes to the hotel where Melvina died. He discovers that Melvina was strangled. Her brother, Matthew, is hysterical and demands that the police protect him.

**NOW GO ON WITH THE STORY**

**CHAPTER XXXVIII**

MATTHEW HOLLISTER was a completely changed figure—whether from grief or terror Bannister could only guess. He seemed smaller, shrunken and his face was as colorless as his rather sallow skin could be.

"The police have got to protect me," he shouted.

McNeal stepped forward. "Just what are you afraid of, Mr. Hollister?" he asked.

"What am I afraid of? You ask me that, with my sister lying dead in the next room! This place isn't safe, I tell you. I won't stay here—"

"You don't need to stay if you don't want to," McNeal assured him. "You can go some where else."

"That's not what I want. I want protection!"

McNeal eyed him curiously. "You mean you want a bodyguard? Listen, Hollister, if there's anyone you're afraid of I want you to tell me about it. We'll do all we can to protect you but we'll have to know who or what you suspect—"

Matthew Hollister's voice rose more shrilly. "My sister's dead, isn't she? Someone murdered her. Right in this room! There was a man killed upstairs, too, less than two weeks ago. I tell you this place isn't safe! They're liable to walk in here and murder me any minute!"

"Who do you mean by 'they'?"

The line of questioning brought little satisfaction. It was obvious that Matthew Hollister was in the grip of hysteria.

It was finally settled that he should stay in the apartment that night and that McNeal would send out a man to guard the place.

When Hollister seemed quieter Bannister stepped to his side. "You remember me, don't you, Mr. Hollister?" he asked. "We had a little talk downtown a few days ago."

Matthew Hollister raised his eyes. "Why, yes," he said slowly. "I remember."

"My name's Bannister," the other reminded him. "I wonder if there's some place where we could go now to talk—"

Hollister glanced sidewise at McNeal who was speaking to a uniformed officer. "We could go in my room," he said.

He led the way and the reporters followed. The bedroom opened off a narrow hall at the left. It was a small square room, simply furnished.

Hollister, apologizing for the lack of chairs, sat on the bed and Bannister sat beside him. "We'd like to hear just what happened this afternoon," he said. "I mean—so far as you know."

The wild look had gone from Matthew Hollister's eyes. They were pale and mild again. But his voice was not quite at its natural pitch and it was not quite steady.

"I told the police," he said, "but I can't tell you over again. I don't know anything about how it happened. I was away most of the afternoon. I went for a walk. I usually go for a walk every day and I didn't get out this morning. Had a touch of indigestion."

"Melvina'd been putting around the kitchen, washing the dishes and doing some cooking. She told me she'd made a lemon pie for supper." He hesitated. "It's out there now," he added slowly. "I saw it a while ago."

"I told her I was going out and she stopped to find out if there was anything she wanted me to get for her. She said there wasn't. Then she looked out the window and saw it had begun to snow. She told me I ought not to go out in the snow but I don't mind that so I said I'd go anyhow. If I hadn't—if I'd stayed here maybe this wouldn't have happened."

He paused and the room was perfectly quiet. "She was sitting at the writing desk when I left," he went on. "She didn't say so but I supposed she was going to write a letter. Just as I was going out the door she called and wanted to know if I had my rubbers and I told her yes. She said, 'Matthew have you got your rubbers on?' It was the last thing I ever heard her say."

AGAIN there was a pause and then Hollister continued. "I went down stairs and out on the street. The snow wasn't coming down very heavy and it wasn't cold so I decided to walk over toward the Heights. That's one of my favorite walks. I went down Kinsman avenue and turned into Forest."

"Did you meet anyone you know?" Bannister asked.

"No. Don't remember that I did. There were some people on the street but I didn't stop to talk to anyone. I just walked. After while I thought I'd gone far enough and started back. The snow was coming down faster and it began to look dark but I wasn't in any special hurry. I like to be out in the snow. When I got to the corner down the street I noticed the clock in the drug store window

Many a girl answers a call to arms to capture a man.



## OUT OUR WAY



## OUR BOARDING HOUSE



## SALESMAN SAM



## BOOTS AND HER BUDDIES



## WASH TUBBS



## FRECKLES AND HIS FRIENDS



## THE NEWFANGLES—MOM'N POP

