The Dark Knight

By WILLIAM SMITH

just in time to receive another blow from the drunken Reggie's fist.

For an instant the young westerner seemed about to spring at his antagonist. Then his face became stern.



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stood breathing hard.

to th.ir feet expectantly. But when to say. Rod dropped his head. Rod failed to return Reggie's blows they sank back into their chairs.

"Aw he'sh a damn coward," Reggie and started away.

Lyla arose cooly and took Reggie's arm, "Com- on my cave man," she commanded. "What you're going to do is dance with me." Reggie laughed

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Why suffer the discomfort and tor-

He s.epped back from the table and foolishly, and allowed himself to be guided toward the dance floor. At the start of the hostilities the she passed Rod her eyes held a look other guests in the party had leaped of contempt. "Coward," they seemed

Wave on wave of the throbbing music filled the room. Rod felt a sudden disgust with the whole affair. muttered. "I oughta sock him again." He left the table to push his way He advanced, half staggering toward ruthlessly through the thick crowd Rod, who turned his back on him on his way to the checkroom for his

A sudden commotion in front of him attracted his attention. The crowd parted just in time to allow him to see a hawk nosed, saffron skinned man, with evil, leering eyes, snatch Lyla out of Reggie's embrace. Reggis stood regarding the other man foolishly, then started uncertainly toward him, only to shrink back as the latter snarled viciously.

Lyla's face was twisted with fright. She pushed desperately at her capwho by now held her tightly in his arms, but he only laughed, and drew her closer Couples around the pair laughed ostentatiously. A dissipated looking youth close by grin-LETECTIVES—Travel, make secret investigations. Experience unnecessory. Particulars free Assertion Detective System. 2190-D took another gal away from her man. Br sdway, New York.

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Chicago, BI. Rod smashed savagely through the clustered dancers as he had smashed his way through opposing teams when he har played halfback for his college. In an instant he reached them He jerked Lyla deftly out of her captor's arms, and pushed her behind him.

The man called Wolf grinned evilly. "Come on sucker," he grated confi-dentl', "You're gonna get hell knocked out of you!"

Rod didn't wait for a second invitation. Swiftly he feinted at the Wolf's head, then ripped a-trip-hammer blow to his stomach. Rod's opponent bent double in agony at which the youth promptly crashed a short, light ting-like punch on his jaw. The fight was over, as Wolf dropped heavily to the floor.

Then Lyla's scream caused the victorious youth to leap to one side just in time to dodge a sweeping blow from a heavy set, dark man who leaped suddenly at him out of the crowd. People stampeded off the floor wildly Lyla stood watching in fascinated horror as two more men closed in on the bronze youth.

The heavy set man who had first struck at Rod was thrown into striking islance by the impetus of his

The heavy set man who had first struck at Rod was thrown into striking istance by the impetus of his own blow. Rod danced lightly away then suddenly forward to land a straight, hard blow to his assailant's temple which sent him sprawling to the floor. As the wide shouldered youth weaved swiftly in and out of his attacker's reach Lyla found herself narvelling at his grace, which was like that of a young tiger. Curiously the thought came to her that he was more graceful fighting than dancing. On his face there was a strange, half-smilling look, as though he were remembering other such battles—and as though he were getting a savage pleasure out of conflict. His fists shot out to meet his opponents' bodies with piston-like precision, and with similar force. One of them knocked another of the men into a crumpled heap, where he lay twitching in pain. Toward the remaining man Rod leaned lithely. The one cast a frightened look at his enemy and attempted to flee from the floor only to receive a crushin blow on his head which sent him skidding into the crowd which hovered at the edge of the dance floor.

Back of the victorious young warrior Wolf sat up dazedly, then his

Back of the victorious young war-ior Wolf sat up dazedly, then his

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glased eyes quickened with ominous intelligence. Deliberately he drew a blue-steel automatic from beneath his coat. And with equal deliberation he aimed the weapon at Rod. The latter unaware of his danger, turned to look around for Lyla.

END OF CHAPTER ONE.

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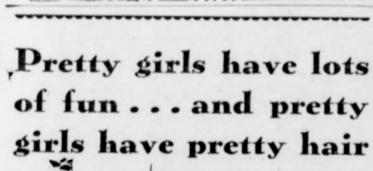
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