



The DARK KNIGHT

A Smashing Story of Brown Love and Thrilling
Intrigue by **WILLIAM T. SMITH** *Talented Negro Writer*



Roderick Herrick, son of a Montana cattle rancher has come to Chicago with the intention of entering the university. His friend a lawyer named Martin Thompson, drags him to a party given by Alderman Durant for his lovely daughter Lyla. Rod's bashfulness, and his inability to dance well cause him to step on Lyla's foot, and her fiancé, Reggie, makes an ugly remark. Lyla averts trouble by leading Rod into the garden where they quickly become friends as he tells her of his lonely life on the vast Montana ranges.

Later in the evening, a number of young folks from the party go to the Swamp Hut, a notorious cabaret on the South Side, where Rod defends Lyla against Wolf, owner of the Swamp Hut, and a notorious gangster.

After Rod has knocked Wolf out, and has driven his henchmen from the scene, Wolf regains consciousness, and is foiled in his attempt to shoot Rod, by Lyla's presence of mind. The police raid the place, but Rod escapes with Lyla and takes her home.

He is warned against Wolf the next day by his friend Martin but laughs the warning away. When he calls on Lyla that night, he meets her father, the Alderman, who also warns him against Wolf. Rod tells them that he can look out for himself. Lyla asks her father to get Rod a job, but Rod demurs. That evening Rod tells Lyla that he loves her.

When he leaves her house and walks toward the street, he feels the sharp pressure of a gun in the middle of his back, and a gruff voice commands him to raise his hands. He complies and is pushed ahead toward a waiting car.

CHAPTER III

Rod thought quickly, but the sharp pressure of the gun in his back forced him to enter the waiting car, whose door swung open with silent ominousness as he stepped on the running board.

A shadowy figure sat at the far side of the machine, and as Rod sank down beside it, he felt another gun probe into his side. His other captor leaped into the machine and gave a curt order to the driver. The car roared away, careening recklessly down the street.

Not till the machine was in motion did the other man in the seat with Rod speak. "So our little playmate is with us again," he observed, his voice softly dangerous. With a chill sense of foreboding, Rod recognized the voice of Wolf—not the snarling voice he had heard when they had fought in the Swamp Hut, but a silky, menacing voice which promised nothing but disaster.

Wolf's gun prodded fiercely into Rod's ribs. His voice changed abruptly into a threatening growl: "Did you think you could get away with slugging me, big boy?" Wolf asked grimly, and without waiting for an answer, continued, "You or nobody else can do anything to me and get away with it."

"And you can't get away with this," Rod answered, as calmly as he could. "Oh! So I can't eh?" Wolf demanded fiercely. "Well, you'll see! We are going to take you out into the country down a quiet little road I know, and then do you know what's going to happen to you?"

Rod was silent. Wolf punched his gun into Rod's side again. "Answer me, d—n you!" he commanded.

"No, I don't know what you are going to do, but I do know that you'll get in trouble about it."

Wolf laughed raucously. "Trouble! Why, you oig farmer, don't you know that I got drag enough to clear me out of any kind of trouble? Just to ease your little mind, I'll tell you something. You'll never come back to tell anybody else, so it doesn't matter. I've got the bulls on my payroll, and guys higher up than flaties and dicks take my dough, too. And what for? Why, they see that I can do just about what I please in this man's town—see? A little matter like taking a nobody like you for a ride won't

even make a ripple." "Maybe you think it won't," said Rod, as he desperately sought a means to avert whatever terrible thing lay in store for him. "but it will. My old man is one of the biggest cattle ranchers in Montana, and if anything happens to me he will turn the whole town over till he finds out about it."

"Oh, yeah?" Wolf drawled maddeningly. "Is that so? Well, well, well. Thanks for telling me. Tell you what I'll do. After we take you out here and blow your smart head off I'm gonna send a message to your rich papa telling him that if he don't fork over \$5,000 by telegraph immediately his handsome son will be killed. What do you think of that for an idea, big boy?"

If it had not been for the knowledge that there was a gun poking into him on both sides, Rod would have tried to throttle his tormentor. "I think it's a rotten idea!" he exclaimed furiously. "Nobody but a cheap rat like you would think of it!"

Wolf cackled loudly. "Well listen to our big steer bellow! Calling me a rat just because I can use my brains. Now ain't that something?"

During their conversation the big car had speeded through darkened streets, the houses of which grew steadily shabbier and further apart. As the streets became rougher, the machine bounced upon and down, but the driver did not slacken his mad pace.

Wolf spoke again. "Well, bozo, it won't be long now." He nudged Rod suggestively with his weapon as he made his grim joke. "However, you don't need to worry because it's all over—except the shooting!"

ROD REALIZES HIS PLIGHT

The youth stiffened. He believed that his captors were serious about killing him. From what Martin had told him, and from the warning given him by Alderman Durant, the conclusion that Wolf would actually carry out his evil designs, was borne home to him with a sickening sense of horror.

His mind darted over various expedients to escape, only to discard them with the dull knowledge that they were futile. He thought of Lyla, and knew a poignant sadness as he realized that he would probably never see her again. Then the thought came



Did you think you could get a way with slugging me, big boy?

to him that he would never see his father again—his big, gruff, hard father, who in spite of his harshness, loved his son dearly. What a blow it would be to the man who, despite his fifty years, was as active and tough as a man of 25.

As the car jolted along, Rod was remembering the beauty of the rolling Montana hills and serried mountains . . . the blue of the clear skies . . . and the friendliness of the people. Not to see them again . . . the thought made him desperate. He gathered his

muscles for a supreme effort of some kind. He didn't know what he was going to do, but he did know that he was going to attempt some effort to save his life.

They were racing along at seventy miles an hour over the smooth concrete of a highway. Back of them the myriad lights of the city grew dim. The cold air snatched at them with icy fingers when, suddenly the driver slapped on his brakes. The machine swayed to a slower pace, then plunged off the concrete into what

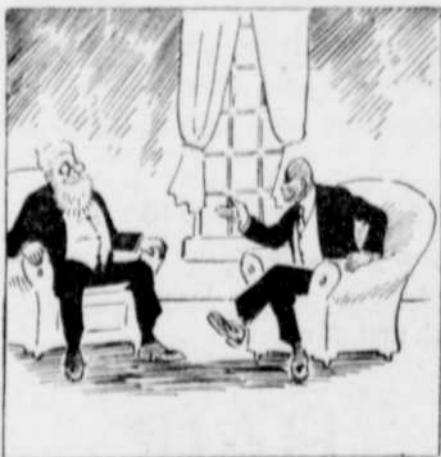
appeared to be a solid mass of undergrowth, but which gave way to allow the car to penetrate a narrow, intensely dark, and totally deserted road.

Rod felt Wolf stir and sit slightly farther toward the edge of his seat. The man on Rod's other side leaned forward to put his hand on the handle of the door. The car crept along as if it were coming to a halt in another instant.

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The Stormy Career of Jack Johnson - - No. 21

Text by **ROLFE DELLON**
Drawn by **FRED B. WATSON**



In April, 1919, Jack arrived in Mexico, where his fame was well known. During his stay in Mexico City, he became a close friend of Carranza, who was then president of Mexico. Carranza opposed Jack's fight with Willard in Mexico because Pancho Villa, the notorious bandit, financed it. But this did not prevent his personal admiration of Johnson.



During Jack's stay in Tia Juana, he met Tom Carey, a one-time candidate for mayor of Chicago. They were frequently together and largely through his benign influence Jack consented to surrender himself and serve his prison sentence. Jack realized that under no other terms could he enter America, so he left Tia Juana bound for Chicago.



Jack landed at Joliet, Illinois, to avoid the great demonstration which had been arranged for him in Chicago. Newspaper reporters, photographers, and amusement promoters flocked about him and invaded his quarters in prison in order to interview him. The unjust prison term had merely added to the great fighter's popularity.



Jack remained in the Joliet prison until October, 1920, when he was taken to Chicago for trial. Soon after the sentence he was placed in charge of a United States marshal and was accompanied by a friend to Leavenworth to begin the prison term of a year and a day. However, he was soon to learn that his stay there would be valuable to him.