

# THE DARK KNIGHT —By William T. Smith

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PART II.

ROD RECEIVES AN OFFER

On the way back to the city Rod related his encounter with Wolf to the federal agents. The leader laughed heartily at the recital.

"I've heard of this Wolf before," he told Rod. "He's a tough customer, and the boys have kinda laid off of him because he's got some sort of drag. However, I'm a special agent, and drag don't go with me, and if it does with any of the other fellows I don't know it. Our being out there on that little road tonight was a pure accident, though. We were laying for a gang of Italian rum runners when you fellows came along."

"I'm sure glad you came along," Rod told him earnestly. "In about two minutes I guess those fellows would have shot me to death. But I'll bet they won't catch me napping again soon."

"Say," said the leader of the agents suddenly, "how would you like to be an operative? You ought to make a good one, with those hard-hitting fists of yours."

Rod laughed. "Oh, I'd never make a good agent because I don't much believe in the prohibition law. I think it has done a lot more harm than it has good."

"A lot of folks feel that way," the officer told him, "but somebody's gotta try to enforce it. And you could do a lot of good out on the South Side. You might even catch your friend Wolf, and kinda even up the score between you."

"I'd rather not," Rod demurred. "I don't want to bother Wolf, but if he tries to harm me again I'll be ready for him. I learned to handle a gun on the ranch, and I guess I can shoot as good as the next one, if it comes to that."

"Well, don't go carrying a gun in this town," the agent advised. "That is, unless you get a permit, because it is a serious offense. But if you change your mind let me know. We'll be glad to get a guy like you."

"Thanks," Rod returned gratefully. "I sure will."

By this time the agents' car had again entered the city. In a few minutes they had reached the downtown section.

"Where do you want to get, out, buddy?" the driver asked Rod.

"Right here," Rod told him as they swung down Michigan Boulevard.

"I'll take a taxi from here."

As he climbed out of the agents' car, the leader extended his hand. As they shook hands he said, "Take care of yourself, kid, and if you ever get in a pinch, call our secret office." He placed a small white card in Rod's hand.

"Thanks, I will. So long, and thanks for getting me out of that trouble," Rod called, as the car moved away. A taxi pulled alongside of him. He waved it down, then climbed in and gave his address.

In the east it was growing light. "Gee whiz," Rod told himself aloud, "all I do is get in scrapes here and stay up all night, it seems."

As the machine made its way swiftly through the deserted streets, Rod thought of Lyia and was glad that she did not know of his narrow escape from death. In spite of the danger which he had just experienced, he thought not of it, but of the girl and of what he must do in order to stay in the city.

If he intended to enter school he would soon have to find a job of some kind, as he had but little money left, and he didn't intend to call on his father for help. And neither, he decided, would he allow Alderman Durant to get him a job. He'd always managed to get what he wanted by his own efforts, and he would keep on. The thought gave him courage.

As the taxi pulled up in front of his rooming house, Rod peered cautiously up and down the street. Seeing no sign of anyone who looked like the Wolf or any of his gang, he climbed out swiftly, paid the driver and dashed up the stairs.

In a few minutes he had disrobed and climbed into bed. At once he fell into a sound, dreamless sleep from which he seemed to be immediately awakened to find his friend, Martin, standing beside his bed shaking him.

"Gee, Roddy," Martin accused him, "it seems like all I do is to come around and wake you up. Were you up again all night?"

Rod grinned ruefully. "Yeah, I was up almost all night," he yawned.

"Doing what?" Martin asked curiously.

"Oh, you'd be surprised," Rod told him mysteriously. He decided that it would do no good for him to tell Martin of his experience of the previous night.

"I probably would," the lawyer commented drily. "But that's got nothing to do with my errand here now. It's three-thirty of a bright spring afternoon, and the Jew I told you about, Mr. Kling, is waiting in my office to talk to you about making a prizefighter of you. He insisted that I come and get you, and he's sitting up there now chewing cigars into bits for fear somebody else may sign you up before he does."

"Oh, what the heck!" Rod sported. "I'm no prizefighter and I don't want to be one. Tell him to go wash his neck, I'm going back to sleep!"

"Now listen, Rod," his friend insisted. "You know that I wouldn't be chasing over here after you for an ordinary guy. This Kling is worth lots of money. He's managed three champions, and he is in a position to help you make a lot of money. It wouldn't hurt you any to talk it over with him. You know now—"

days boxing is a recognized business, and it's no disgrace to be in the ring. You can't lose anything by at least talking with the man."

"Gee, you must be his agent, or something," Rod observed. "You talk like my becoming a prizefighter meant a lot to you."

"It does," Martin told him simply. "When I saw you tapping those"

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