



The DARK KNIGHT

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



Rod Attempts to Trap the Wolf in order to Clear the Way for His Marriage to Lyla

SYNOPSIS

Rod Herrick, of Golden Arrow, Montana, has come to Chicago to enter the university. It is spring and he intends to earn enough money to enter school by fall. His lawyer friend Martin Thompson, takes him to a party given by Alderman Durant for his daughter, Lyla. Rod, unused to society's ways, treads on the girl's foot and is insulted for his clumsiness by Reggie, her fiance. To avert trouble between the two, she takes Rod into the garden where he tells her of his life in the West. A warm friendship springs up between them.

Later, Lyla, Reggie, Rod, and several others go to the Swamp Hut, a cabaret, where Reggie drinks too much. He strikes Rod who falls to return his blow. Lyla thinks Rod is a coward, but she has a different opinion when he takes her from Wolf, a notorious gangster who had snatched her from Reggie's arms while they were dancing.

Wolf attacks Rod and is knocked out. Several of Wolf's henchmen also attack the youth but are routed just as police raid the place. Rod is able to get the girl safely out of the place.

The next night as he leaves her home after having spent the evening with her, he is kidnapped by Wolf and his gang, who take him out of the city in their car. They tell him they are going to kill him, but he is saved by federal agents who are laying in wait for scoundrels.

An manager of swindlers, Kling, who was in the cabaret when Rod fought with the gangster, offers him a contract to become a boxer, and Rod enters in order to make enough money to enter school. At the gymnasium Kling orders Kelly, another of his henchmen, to put on the gloves with Rod in order to see how skilled his new fighter is. Kelly, afraid that Rod may replace him, tries to harm him when they get into the ring, but Rod knocks him out. That evening Rod goes to see Lyla. They go for a walk to the beach. He tells her of his love and takes her into his arms. Intoxicated with her nearness and softness, he kisses her hungrily, but she averts disaster by begging him not to spoil their friendship.

They leave the beach, and as they reach the sidewalk she discovers that she hasn't her pocketbook. Rod runs back after it and when he returns he sees her being dragged into a car. A half block away, the machine crashes into the sidewalk and Rod is able to catch it.

He finds Lyla's abductor is Reggie, who has been drinking heavily. However, Reggie's identity is not known to him until after he has beaten him severely. Lyla, for some reason which he does not understand, becomes angry at him and after they take Reggie to a doctor, tells him to go away.

As the days pass, Rod trains faithfully and sees no one except the other fighters in the gym. He does not try to see Lyla. One afternoon his friend, Martin, takes him to a "tea party" at a young society girl's home. There is much gaiety at the party which Rod soon discovers is caused by free drinking of liquor.

He meets a seductive looking girl named Zeda, who makes him take a drink—the first one in his life. Under the influence of the liquor, he kisses Zeda in the hallway of the place and looks up to see Lyla entering. Zeda laughs triumphantly and, pulling Rod into the room, slams the door.

Rod goes to Kling's office, where his manager informs him that, in two weeks, he is to fight Mickey Latzo, chief contender for the middleweight championship. They go to the office of the arena's manager, where the contract is signed, several newspaper reporters being present.

When they leave the place, two of the reporters accompany them. At one of the city's busiest corners, a truck carrying a number of steers, crashes into another machine. One of the animals breaks loose and charges madly across the street.

Rod, trained on the range for just such an emergency as this, leaps out in front of the beast as hundreds of people watch in fascinated horror. Directly back of him are a number of small children who will be crushed by the enraged charge unless Rod is able to halt its terrible speed.

Rod leaps aside just in time to avoid the charging steer, then after the fashion of the West, he succeeds in "bulldozing" the animal by twisting its neck so that it falls to the ground.

That night he is awakened from sleep by kisses, and by soft hands stroking his face and hair. At first, only half-awake, he dreams it is Lyla, but Zeda's voice brings him to the consciousness that she has come into his room while he slept.

She tells him that when she wants a man she "gets" him. Being a normal youth, Rod gives in to her wiles, and returns her kisses and embraces. A more serious development is avoided when Martin, Rod's lawyer friend, arrives. Zeda hides in Rod's closet. Martin brings the evening papers, which contain Rod's picture and the story of his exploit.

Finally he goes, and Zeda emerges from the closet he guards in Rod's bathroom, her dress in her hand. Rod stares as she throws off the robe, disclosing her lovely form in sheer silk garments. She holds out her arms to him, and he walks slowly toward her.

Zeda has come to Rod's room unannounced, but is forced to hide in a clothes closet when Rod's friend, Martin, arrives. After Martin leaves she emerges almost unobserved, but Martin, suspecting her presence, returns unexpectedly. She is furious, and slaps his face, then leaves. Martin explains to Rod that he doesn't want to see him mixed up with the girl, as she has been involved in several ugly scandals.

Kling comes to get Rod in his car the next morning, taking him to the gymnasium where Rod trains before a large audience of fans, who, having read of his heroism in the papers, are anxious to see

The Wolf Cornered



"Wolf stood like a trapped animal."

him. Kling tells him that their share of the money from the fight may amount to \$35,000.

After leaving the gym, Rod calls Lyla. She begged him to come to see her at once. She tells him that she must marry Reggie, because his father and her father are all tangled in an affair with Wolf, and that if her father incurs the banker's ill-will, it will disgrace him.

Rod declares that she will not marry Reggie and starts to leave after threatening that Wolf may have to settle with him.

As Rod tells Lyla that something serious is liable to happen to Wolf, after she tells him that she must marry Reggie in order to save her father from disgrace, the Alderman steps into the room. He warns Rod that he must not interfere in his affairs. Rod tells him definitely that he will not allow Lyla to sacrifice herself for even her own father.

After Rod leaves, Alderman Durant tells her that the only reason Wolf has not harmed Rod again is because he asked him not to, and tells Lyla of Wolf's attempt to take her friend "for a ride."

She promises to marry Reggie, and her father sets the following Sunday for the wedding.

Rod makes his way to the office of the federal agent whose interference saved his life the night Wolf tried to kill him. He tells the agent that he wants to get Wolf out of the way, and that he is sure Wolf

will kill him. The agent gives him a badge showing that he is a member of the prohibition department, and they arrange to raid Wolf's place Saturday night after Rod's fight.

When he leaves the office, he bumps into Wolf. Wolf asks Rod what he is doing in the Federal building. Rod laughs and makes a flippant reply which enrages his enemy. Wolf shows his hand into his pocket, and pointing his gun at Rod, is about to shoot as Rod taunts him.

An instant before Wolf would have fired, a man emerges from a washroom near them, and, seeing him, Wolf walks away hastily. After waiting a few minutes Rod leaves the building but does not see his enemy.

Rod goes to Kling's office and tells him that he wants to buy a car. Kling sends him to his brother, an automobile dealer, where Rod chooses a low-slung, grey Stutz roadster.

Rod is tempted to go to Lyla's and show her the machine but he decides that until he has gotten Wolf out of the way he will not even call her.

The day of the fight approaches rapidly. Saturday night, Rod goes to the arena with Kelly, his stablemate, where shortly afterward he is called to the ring for the big fight.

The vast crowd, the bright lights over his head, and a sort of stage fright daze Rod so that before the sound of the gong announcing the beginning of the first round has died away, Latzo knocks him flat on the canvas. The referee counts to eight, and he has not yet risen.

NOW, GO ON WITH THE STORY.

CHAPTER XI

I

By now Rod's head was growing clearer. In a lightning-like instant he realized that unless he regained his feet by the time the referee counted ten he would be counted out—would lose the fight without ever having struck a blow!

The roar of the crowd now was like the voice of a blood-thirsty mob. As his eyes began focusing properly, Rod could see Latzo standing in a neutral corner, smiling down at someone at the ringside, confident that he had scored a knockout over the Cowboy fighter.

"—Nine!" cried the official's voice. Rod's splendid young strength came to his rescue. Before the referee could utter the fatal "ten," the bronzed youth scrambled quickly, if ungracefully to his feet, where he stood swaying drunkenly.

Latzo's eyes were not on his quarry, so confident was he that Rod would complete out. A warning shout caused him to look back into the ring, where he beheld his victim upright, if patently unsteady.

Latzo was a seasoned veteran of the ring. Instead of dashing madly over the canvas at his adversary, and

launching a wild hail of blows in the effort to beat him back to the floor, he glided carefully to him. Measuring Rod quickly, he feinted with his left hand toward Rod's stomach, then launched a flashing powerful blow for the youth's jaw.

Rod saw the blow coming and stepped back just enough to make it miss. As Latzo came in, Rod clenched and held on fast as his strength and senses returned. The multitude of voices which filled the arena with deafening noise yelled hysterically for a knockout—for blood. Latzo glanced appealingly at the referee who stepped in between the two men, parting them.

When Latzo dashed again at Rod, however, he found not a fighter on the verge of a knockout, but an elusive, swiftly moving foe, who, although he did not counter with blows, evaded them with uncanny ability.

ROD'S COME BACK

As it became apparent that Rod had made what seemed to be an almost miraculous recovery from what appeared to be a certain knockout, the crowd settled down to watching the contest, with only occasional shouts from those who were disappointed that the proceedings had not ended when Rod was on the canvas.

Once when they clenched in Rod's corner, the youth looked pale to see Kelly's face strained and pale while tears frankly rolled down Kling's cheeks, although at the moment he was smiling. He seemed to be crying and laughing all at the same time. As his glance met Rod's he made a motion of applause with his plump hands and nodded encouragingly.

When the bell sounded and the fighters sprang apart to return to their corners, Kling's voice, hoarse with emotion, came to Rod.

"You're doing fine, Cowboy. Don't let a little thing like a knockout faze you! You can beat that guy! Why, when you got up he couldn't even lay a glove on you. But stay away from him till you feel all right."

Rod nodded that he understood. Kelly was working over him frantically. First he had doused the youth with cold water, wiped his tongue with a wet sponge and now he was busy massaging his thighs and legs.

"Feel OK?" he asked anxiously.

"Yeah," Rod growled, as he drew deep lungfuls of the smoky air into his lungs.

The bell for the second round clanged. Rod slipped off his stool swiftly and met his opponent in the middle of the ring. Flinching rapidly, he landed two solid punches to Latzo's body, then danced out of range.

ADVICE FROM KELLY

The crowd roared its approval. Latzo lunged in angrily, ripping a vicious uppercut at Rod's chin. Rod stepped back just enough to cause the blow to whistle harmlessly by, then stepped in with a left hook to his adversary's stomach, which caused him to flinch.

Latzo, however, was not easily hurt. He did not give an inch when Rod landed but started shooting body punches as fast as he could swing his arms. Again Rod danced away.

Throughout the round Latzo plunged doggedly after his opponent, taking as a reward many hard clean smashes to the body. When the gong clanged again, signalling the end of the second round, the crowd loudly shouted its approval of the furious milling.

"You can take that guy now," Kelly whispered as he tilted a water bottle for Rod to rinse his mouth. "Try his jaw with that right cross of yours like you did me!"

Rod nodded "I've been laying off his jaw just so I could get over that one punch," he panted.

Kling stood at the side of the ring stroking one of Rod's legs. The tears were gone from his face now, and there was a smile of happiness in his eyes. He squeezed Rod's leg affectionately.

"I knew you could lick this guy, Roddy," he shouted "I knew it!"

But Latzo was not licked yet by far. He came charging out of his corner with both fists swinging. Rod met him in the center of the ring and to the swiftest delight of the crowd, vociferous punch for punch there was a puzzled look in Latzo's eyes. He began boxing cautiously.

It was evident that Rod had hurt him more than he had hurt Rod.

LATZO KAYOED

Rod let a snake-like right to the face then flashed a resound-

Continued on Page Four