

WHITE LAUGHTER

A Dramatic Serial Story of Love and Sacrifice

By

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Carl and Bogo Clash in a Death Struggle for the Favor of Toto

INSTALLMENT ELEVEN

Work ceased in the field a little earlier than usual that afternoon. Carl went by the cabin where Hotshot now lived with big Sally. He found the little man, shoes off and feet up on the porch rail, puffing contentedly at his corn cob pipe.

"What cha say there, boy!" he greeted Carl. "Fust time you bin 'roun' my shack, ain't it?"

"Better late than never," Carl responded pleasantly.

"What's on yo' min', Carl?"

"Oh, nothing much."

"You ain' kiddin' me none," Hotshot responded.

"Well—I—I wondered what I should wear tonight," the youth explained with a grin.

Hotshot Drops a Hint

"Wear some overalls lessen you wants ev'ybody to shonuff think you's hincky," Hotshot suggested. "Is yo' lady frien' gwine be 'mongst them present ternight?" he asked slyly.

"Well, she told me that she would. I'm not taking her."

"Humph!"

"She said that after that—"

Hotshot spat into the yard. "—after that why she gonna be with you," he finished dryly. "I spect she got to pick Bogo clean 'fo he goes."

"Is he going?" Carl asked in surprise.

"De Kunnel done tole him to leave here arter de scronch case he's mekin' whiskey and de Kunnel he don' wan' too much likker 'roun' here," Hotshot explained. Then he added, "You wants t' be careful t'night. Bogo think he got th' best go with Toto, and he'll be full a likker sides."

"I'll be on the lookout," Carl promised.

As dusk fell the youth bathed and st. d with more care than he could remember since his first date with Antoinette in his junior year at college. He had taken her to a fraternity dance, and had been highly elated at the privilege because the girl belonged to the set of which he hoped to become a member.

He chuckled now as he viewed the white shirt he had obtained that day from the supply house. However, he proceeded with his dressing with great care. Not until his hair was gleaming from a thorough combing did he desist, and his preparations completed, seat himself in the doorway to wait until things got going in the scronch.

Carl is Nervous

He felt an odd bashfulness at joining his fellow workers in a social way, and he knew that the word had gone around that he and Toto had become lovers. Tonight would be his first appearance with her, and he thrilled with something curiously like pride at the thought. He tried to scoff, telling himself that he was only going to a plantation party, but the quiet, throbbing happiness of expectation glowed steadily within him. He felt as he thought a prospective bridegroom must feel a few minutes before his marriage to one dearly loved.

When the strains of the banjos and the shouts of merriment became apparent, he arose and sauntered very slowly through the woods. He idled along the way much as a bashful small boy who dreads to make his entrance at a party night have done. The night was dark, and true to the old woman's prophecy, the sky held a hint of rain.

WHAT OCCURRED IN THE LAST INSTALLMENT

As they embrace Carl forgets Chicago, and Antoinette—and even his career. He tells Toto that he loves her. Toto promises to meet Carl at the scronch, and hints that after that he can see her as much as he wants.

The days pass until the day of the big doings. In the scronch circle preparations are going on at a great rate. Night finally comes, and Carl makes his way to the place only to find Toto standing by Bogo's side, while the huge giant wins at the dice table. Carl is sick with jealousy.

It is the evening of the big scronch. All of the members of the plantation gather around. An old lady makes an ominous prophecy of rain.



Breathing heavily, and with the red urge for blood burning through him, Carl crept like a jungle savage toward his fallen foe.

At last Carl reached the scronching grounds. Around the bright fire many couples swayed in close embrace as One-Eye and a companion drew barbaric music from their instruments. There was much laughter and gaily; much shouting and rough play among the men.

Carl wandered through the dense crowd seeking Toto with an eagerness which he tried to hide. She was not among those who danced, nor was she among those who sat near the fire eating the redolent viands. The youth decided that she had not yet arrived. He walked carelessly over to the long tables, above which oil lanterns swung, casting a flickering light over the intent gamblers.

Someone moved away at the dice table. Carl eased into his place and stood for a few minutes watching the

play. Just as he was about to back out of the crowd he raised his eyes, and there, directly across the table, was Toto, standing close beside the giant Bogo. One of her arms was around the big man, and she was smiling up at him with a sweetness which turned Carl sick with sudden jealousy.

The sight of the woman for whom he had conceived such a sudden, devastating love, standing beside Bogo brought a rush of hurting disgust to Carl. Unsteadily he pushed back out of the crowd without having been noticed. For a few minutes he stood motionless at the outer edge, sick with jealousy. The feeling was new to him. Never before in his life had he known that he could be so affected by what before he would have con-

sidered an unimportant event. But now it was important!

He strode away through the crowd unseeing, his heart bursting with its sudden ache. He tried to tell himself that he was being silly—was acting like a love-sick boy—but such mental abjurations relieved him no whit.

Around the fire the throng of dancers had increased. They formed a dense, closely-packed mass of slowly swaying couples who moved as though in hypnotized rhythm to the throbbing, barbaric strains of the muted banjos. Welded together by the spell of the music, their emotions whipped to a froth of desire, they seemed to have forgotten everything, so engrossed were they in the ecstasy of the moment.

Carl watched them with bitter detachment, while in the back of his mind he was trying to decide what to do. He felt that he could do no good by staying, and yet he was loathe to go. He mulled the problem over in his mind, but came to no decision.

Someone touched him on the arm, and Hotshot's cheery voice broke welcome into his frenzied thoughts. "You looks like a lost sheep, Carl," the little man told him jovially. "What ails you?"

Carl shrugged his shoulders. "Guess I'm just out of luck," he muttered drearily.

"Cause why?"

"Oh, Toto was to meet me here tonight."

"An' she ain' here?"

"Yes, she's here all right," Carl explained with bitter resentment, "but she's with Bogo over at the dice table."

"Hush my mouf!" Hotshot exclaimed indignantly.

"Guess I'll beat it on to my cabin." He faced his friend. "And I'm leaving in the morning!"

"I hates to leave my Sally," Hotshot said with comic mournfulness, "but ef you goes I goes too, pardner!"

"You're a brick, Hotshot," Carl cried, touched by his friend's loyalty, "but you mustn't leave here just because I do."

"Say—lissen yere—why don' you go and ast Toto whut in tarnation she mean by doin' you like that?" Hotshot suggested. "An' ef that big boogie man starts sumpin' why we'll try his jaw!"

Carl Plans Revenge

Carl pondered the idea. It appealed to him because it would at least be better than slinking off like a whipped cur.

"I got me a Smith and Wesson pistol, er ruther Sally's got one. You wait twill I runs down to my shack, and then we shows Bogo sompin'!" Hotshot cried. Before Carl could halt him, he darted off eagerly through the crowd at a rapid pace.

With a slow anger smouldering in him, Carl made his way back to the table, and pushed to a place opposite where Bogo and Toto still stood engrossed in the game.

Bogo was in possession of the dice, and he was winning hugely. His large, heavily lined face glistened with perspiration, and his loud laughter rang out triumphantly as he raked a pile of bills and silver into the mound of money in front of him.

Toto looked up and saw Carl. She smiled quickly, and drooped one eye as though to say: "Business before pleasure," but she was nervous. Her agitation caused Bogo to glance up. The big man smiled in malicious triumph as he saw Carl's hurt face. He threw one of his tremendous arms around Toto and pulled her to him with an air of easy possession.

Up and down the table men halted their gambling to watch this by-play. A whispered sibilance swept its length, and a faint air of tension caused the loud talk and cries to cease.

"I see's we got de weigher present tonight," Bogo said with a clumsy attempt at cutting sarcasm, and loud enough to be heard by all at the table. "But I don' spect he come heah fo' to gamble," he added with a glance at the woman at his side.

"Does you wants to shoot de bones?" the gamekeeper asked Carl respectfully.

Enters the Game

Carl's hand was in his pocket, and under the stress of his emotion he had closed it upon the tight wad of bills which represented his earn-

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UNDER WHAT ZODIACAL SIGN WERE YOU BORN?

In this issue the Illustrated Feature Section begins a weekly astrological feature, conducted by "Phenomena," one of the most distinguished astrologists in the United States. Follow it every week and know yourself and your friends! (See Page 5)