

Nothing Venture

by Patricia Wentworth

SYNOPSIS: Ferdinand Frouce tells a thrilling tale about his Mexican adventures to a gay luncheon party at the Tetterleys. As he emphasizes the name of Hermann Eisenthal, Robert Leonard grows tense. Nan wears a scowl whether it all has a bearing on Leonard's attempts to murder her husband, Jerry.

Chapter 37 TRAILING A CLUE

WHAT did F. F. mean? Was she just reading into his words the accusation which filled her thoughts? It was as much as Nan could do to sit next to Robert Leonard without crying this accusation aloud—"You've been trying to kill Jerry!"

George Tetterley was giving her a tabloid version of his last game of golf; to such a mellow mood had lunch and her likeness to that earlier Nan Forsyth brought him. Curiously enough, some delicate extra sense informed her that of all the people around the table he would be the least surprised if she were suddenly to say what was in her mind about Robert Leonard.

Quite definitely George did not like him—oh, quite definitely. Neither did he like Rosamund—much. This surprised Nan. She was young enough to give beauty too many points in the game. Rosamund had begun to smoke before she had begun to eat. She ate very little, and she lit one cigarette from another all through the meal. She wore a straight, plain dress of heavy white wash silk. In contrast to Janet Tetterley, whose thin neck was hung with beads like golf balls, Rosamund's throat was bare. Seen through a bluish haze of smoke, she had the air of beauty withdrawn behind its own impalpable veils.

Nan's heart hurt her very much as she looked across the Tetterleys' luncheon table at this beauty of Rosamund's. Jerry's very anger against her was the measure of his love and his loss. Having loved Rosamund, it could not be possible that he should ever love Nan.

They went out into the garden after lunch and had coffee under the shade of two enormous cedars. As they crossed the lawn with the sun pouring down upon them, the party broke up into twos and threes. Nan found herself walking with Ferdinand.

"What did you mean, Mr. Frouce?" she said without looking at him. "I'd rather you'd not call me that," he said. Nan blushed a little with pleasure, and he threw out his hand in an odd gesture. His queer bright eyes twinkled at her.

"I'd like it if we were friends," Nan said. "Oh— it was a little sound with a quiver in it. Her eyes were soft and misty. "Oh, how nice of you!" she said. They began to walk again. The sunlight dangled round her. She didn't feel afraid of Rosamund any more. Here was a friend of Jerry's who wanted to be friends with her. She found it immensely strengthening. She came back to her first question.

"What did you mean at lunch?" "Perhaps I didn't mean anything." "You did—you told that story on purpose, and you looked at him—Mr. Leonard. What did you mean?" Ferdinand turned and waved a hand in the direction of a most undeniable view. The trees had been cut away to frame a glimpse of the sea.

"That's rather good— isn't it?" he said. "Nan hadn't anything at all to say about the view." "Who was Eisenthal?" she said. Ferdinand turned in a leisurely fashion and let a roving glance travel about the lawn. Mr. Tetterley and Leonard had reached the shade and were already disposed in comfortable chairs. George Tetterley was in the act of joining them. Jerry and Rosamund Carew had taken a wide circle away from the cedars and were entering upon a shady path overarched by tall rhododendrons. A man had just emerged from the house bearing the coffee-tray.

"Who is Eisenthal?" It certainly seemed safe enough to answer her. "A fellow I met down there." He got a frown, and a clear, inquiring look. "What was he?" "A chemist," said Ferdinand. "You mean—an experimental chemist?" "Yes—that was quick of you." She shook her head.

"Why could he make the guerilla chief do as he liked?" "Chemists are sometimes useful." "How was Eisenthal useful?" "A handy fellow," said Ferdinand. "Don't you know?" "Well, yes, I know." "Are you going to tell me?" "Well, that's what I don't know." "Why?" He saw a faint sensitive clouding of those eager eyes. Her lips parted. "You're not going to tell me—"

"Eisenthal was a genius gone wrong. He looked like any other professor, only more respectable, and he'd a fierce brain. And he'd got an invention that had been extraordinarily useful to that guerilla chief."

"What was it?" said Nan. "What'll you do if I tell you?" "I won't tell anyone." He began to speak in the sort of voice that barely carries a yard:

"About a month before he'd captured me, Pedro Ramirez had brought off a little coup. He was carrying on operations in the Madalena district and harassing the government quite a bit. Then the government turned nasty and sent up some real troops—and that's where he brought off his coup.

"There were three trains, and they left Madalena at three-hour intervals. The first of them ran off the line on the edge of the big pass where it enters the hills. It went down a couple of hundred feet, and there weren't many survivors. The second train crashed through the parapet of the bridge over the Madalena River about five miles short of the hills. And the third ran off the track only ten miles out of Madalena.

"How?" said Nan. "Eisenthal," said Ferdinand. "Yes—but how?" "F. F. waved his hand towards the sea.

"I'm not a chemist, but I got the idea that Eisenthal had invented a thing that distinguished certain substances. The man who told me said he'd seen the tea whose three trains left the line, and they were just mush."

Nan looked at him with eyes like saucers. "But, F. F.—the first train got as far as the hills." He nodded. "Why didn't it crash sooner? It must have run over the places where the other two trains went off, and the second train must have run over the bit of track where the third one crashed."

"Yes. You're bright—aren't you? I was bright, too. I said to the man who told me, 'Look here, what are you telling me?' He said, 'I don't know—but as I told you, so it happened.' Afterwards I asked Eisenthal. I'm an inquisitive man, and I like to know how things happen, so when I got a chance I asked him, and he told me it was all a matter of careful timing.

"You spray the stuff on, and it takes just so long to make a thing soft, and so much longer to rot it through. It must all be calculated very carefully. The place where the first train crashed was done first. It ran over the other two places before they'd got dangerous."

Nan looked away to the distant blue of the sea. She said under her breath: "The stuff made wood rotten?" "So I'm told." "Jerry's bridge was rotten." "That's when I began to think about Eisenthal."

Nan turned round quickly. "What happened to Eisenthal?" "I'm not quite sure. I think he's dead." "He's not . . .?" "Leonard! Not on your life! All I know is that they were both in Mexico at the same time—but that's not very incriminating for Leonard."

"Will you tell Jerry?" He shook his head. "Not a bit of good telling Jerry. I shall keep my eyes open. Don't you want any coffee? I think we've been admiring the view just about as long as we'd better."

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McKee had a court action started to prevent the special election, an action which was opposed by Tammany Hall and other organizations.

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MANY ISSUES IN HOOVER ADDRESS

WASHINGTON, Sept. 22.—(AP)—The campaign speech to be delivered in Des Moines on October 4 by President Hoover will embrace other issues as well as the agricultural situation. Secretary Mills reported after more than an hour with Mr. Hoover that "the general political situation" had been discussed, including the primary balloting of yesterday.

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PINCHOT CHIDES PRESIDENT FOR REFUSAL OF AID

HARRISBURG, Pa., Sept. 22.—(AP)—Governor Pinchot today telegraphed President Hoover that his refusal to take a hand in speeding reconstruction Finance corporation aid to Pennsylvania "came as deep great disappointment."

The governor yesterday requested an appointment Friday to discuss with the president means by which the corporation's action on the state's application, now two months old, could be expedited.

manner the governor requested. Although Mr. Hoover did not refer to the governor's request for an appointment. It was said at the White House that he would not be received.

"I cannot concede that you are powerless to help," Pinchot's telegram today said. "Whatever may be your legal authority over the Reconstruction Finance corporation, its members are your appointees, and would unquestionably respect your wishes."

"You suggest that I study the law. I did so most carefully before making application and found in it no requirement whatever beyond the application and certificate of need by the governor, which I made two months ago. Your board has read into the law fine-spun red tape which congress never wrote into it, and is using it to starve our unemployed."

BRINGING UP FATHER

NOW LISTEN, BOYS—TO WIN THIS CAMPAIGN FOR MAYOR—WE MUST HANDLE IT IN A MOST DIGNIFIED MANNER—WE MUST NOT BE SEEN HANGING AROUND CHEAP PLACES. WE MUST MINGLE IN SOCIETY.

WE MUST NOT LET THE OPPOSITION THINK WE ARE A LOT OF LOW BRONS—WE MUST ACT LIKE EM—TALK LIKE EM—EAT LIKE EM—OUR SLOGAN MUST BE "NO MORE EMPTY DINNER PAILS."

BOYS—WHAT WE WANT MOST RIGHT NOW IS—

CORNED BEEF AND CABBAGE.

SOME FOOD LIKE THAT—

MEETIN' IS ADJOURNED.

THAT'S CASEY'S KID—

HELLO, CICERO. WHERE'S PAPA MUTT?

HE'S UPSTAIRS, JEFF!

AND MAY I ASK, WHERE IS MAMMA MUTT?

SHE'S DOWN IN THE CELLAR.

M-M— I THOUGHT IT SEEMED VERY QUIET!

JEFF, YOU'RE FLIRTING WITH DEATH!

MA, YOU'VE AIM WAS TERRIBLE.

DEPART!

OH, THANK YA!

DEPART!

DEPART!

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