

What the Eyes of Beata Daury Saw

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Chapter 1

DIVORCE?

Friday mornings were devoted to meeting clients in the office, and on that particular Friday the 8:30 meeting began in an unusual way.

The well-dressed person standing before her, exuding ease and privilege, seemed hardly credible to Marie Langla when she declared the purpose of her visit,

“I’d like to know if you think I have a case...
...I’ve been abandoned.”

“Abandoned? Do you mean at birth? Are you looking for help with a paternity search?”

“No” she replied, “that’s not the problem. I was abandoned...by the person I loved.”

“In that case, Madame, if you don’t feel a reconciliation is possible, we can help you understand how best to protect your interests in the case of a separation or divorce. Could you tell me a bit more about your situation?”

“No, it’s not that...
...It’s a bit complicated
...You see... I was abandoned by a man... other than my husband.”

“In that case, and if I’ve understood correctly that you are, indeed, married, then it would be risky, if not dangerous, to expect compensation for abandonment from another man.”

The 8:30 Friday client was starting to annoy Marie Langla, and she tried to bring the meeting to a rapid close.

The fact that the purpose of the meeting hadn’t been fully disclosed at the time of booking would give her the pretext she needed, and she heard herself say,

“I am at your disposal, Madame, for any future problems requiring my specific area of expertise.
If you would give me your full name? The receptionist has only taken down your email address, a telephone number and the purpose of your visit, which she noted with a question mark and understood to be ‘divorce’.”

At that moment Marie Langla heard an answer she'd never thought she'd hear in an attorney's office.

"I ... I can't give you my name...

...

...Every time I'm asked to say it... I avoid it...I change the subject...

...I can't say it anymore...

...

...Ever since I was abandoned, it's as though I no longer have a name...

...not a first name or a last name...

...

...And ... that's another reason why I came to see you...

...I'm afraid ...

...I feel threatened..."

"A serious and credible threat to the safety of another person is a crime, Madame.

You said you "feel threatened" ... Do you feel threatened, or have you actually been threatened?"

"...I feel threatened."

...

That Friday's 8:30 client had had an affair.

It took place at the shore, in what estate agents call a “beachfront property”- a luxurious villa overlooking the sea.

At first, when they met, there was only the best champagne.

Later, just like in a novel, she’d noticed the disappearance of a painting and the mark left on the wall where it had hung. He’d made off-hand remarks about slight budget problems that would soon be resolved.

After that she had witnessed, quite by accident, brief conversations with a man in a hardhat. These visits seemed to lighten the mood.

The quality of the champagne, however, kept getting worse.

On the other hand, as though to compensate, certain things at the villa seemed more luxurious than ever.

She became accustomed to the beautiful baroque music, played throughout the estate on top-of-the-line speakers. It completely enveloped her from the moment she parked her car in the garage.

To shield them from any possible disturbance from passers-by on the beach, he’d installed custom-made, heavily lined draperies. They were hung in all the windows and doorframes fronting the sea and kept permanently pulled. Their privacy was complete.

But one day.

“But one day ... I don’t know what came over me...

...I ruined everything...

...

... It was during the spring tides... it’s a time when I always feel a bit... out of sorts...

I remember feeling a little warm...I wanted to let some air into the house and I thought the breeze off the sea would be coolest...

...

...So, I opened the curtain... the heaviest one, in the sitting room that looks over the beach...

...

...But at just that moment he arrived...

...

...I never imagined that the person I loved so much could suddenly become someone else...

...

...He was flushed and tense... practically foaming at the mouth...

...

... “Get out of here! Go!”

...

... And then he said,
“Never tell what your eyes saw!”

After a moment of silence, Marie Langla urged her to continue,

“Would you like to tell me what it was your eyes saw?”

...

“I can’t,” she answered. “Something terrible would happen to everyone I care about...it’s a feeling I have...”

...

“If you don’t think you can say it, perhaps you could draw it? At least to give yourself some relief?”

The 8:30 Friday client relaxed a little.

“... Drawing... it’s true... in school it was a subject I enjoyed....

...

...

But it was so violent... such an uproar... and so unreal...

...

... and also, it’s as if there was something else...that’s it... something that didn’t belong...”

Marie Langla waited again, until the silence was complete, then said,

“I suggest that you let all this settle for a while, and, when you’re feeling better, you can make another appointment. If you’re truly in danger, you or your family, you must go to

the police and file a complaint. Then they'll be able to protect you. I'll help.

And that's another reason that, for practical purposes, I need to know your full name..."

"I can't say it...it's because I was abandoned...I explained that to you."

"Can you write it then?" Marie Langla insisted.

"No, I can't do it..."

"In that case, you know what we'll do?
You'll dictate it to me and I'll write it down.

Do it as though it was someone else's name that you were spelling. One letter at a time. And not from left to right, do it instead from right to left. First your last name. Then your first name. If you have a middle name, tell me if they're attached by a hyphen, or if they're separate.

You'll see, together we can do it!"