

What the Eyes of Beata Daury Saw

A novel by
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Chapter VI

LEAKS...

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“THE NESSAN PROBLEM: IS THE ENTIRE TERRITORY EFFECTED?”

Converging Evidence. *We would like to draw your attention to the inquiry currently being led by the investigating judge of this jurisdiction: a massive and clandestine extraction of sea sand is presumed to have been carried out at the building site of a thalassotherapy center, hidden from view by a thick surrounding wall. Authorization for this project was given by the town council, and the directors and personnel of this project are currently presumed innocent. We note that the act in question was accomplished by sucking up sea sand using the pipes put in place on the ocean floor for the legitimate purpose of drawing water to fill the main thalassotherapy pool. Based on information gathered from colleagues, it seems that Mr. Mario Fernando, a mason who recently settled in Nesson after his retirement, has come forward with certain concerns. Descending from a long line of Portuguese*

builders, his suspicions were aroused by the unusual appearance of the wall enclosing the presumed clandestine and illegal extraction of sea sand. Mr. Fernando chose not to express these concerns directly to the Gazette, but our colleagues who received this information indicate that he was alarmed by irregularities in the wall. This would confirm the observations made by Cristelle Gallois, as noted in her deposition. Thus, wishing to confirm or allay his suspicions, Mr. Fernando proceeded by simply putting a loose fragment of the wall to his tongue. He states that the taste of the fragment was highly salty. This could indicate that the sand used in mixing the cement for the wall surrounding the site in question may have been unwashed sea sand.

Civil liability or criminal offense. *Although the laboratory results needed to analyze and better understand these findings are not yet available, there is reasonable cause to question these proceedings. The fact of the sea sand being unwashed would encourage the highly corrosive effect of the salt in the cement. This cement constitutes the principle material used in the wall surrounding the project at the heart of this dispute. The discovery of this new element in the events affecting the town of Nesson was only made public a few hours ago. No building inspector has yet been authorized to express his opinion in our pages. Nevertheless, the contractors that our correspondent was able to reach were unanimous in agreeing that, unwashed, the sea sand used in making the cement was likely to have a negative effect on its solidity in the short to medium term. Given this fact, we must ask ourselves: Was it an error of execution? Will the effect be restricted to the disputed facility? Or is it a pre-meditated plan to sell cheap, unwashed sea sand at cut-rate prices to construction companies who are more concerned with price than with safety?*

Planned obsolescence? *When contacted, Mr. Smith (not his real name), a well-known real estate attorney, proposed the following troubling hypothesis: citing the usual caution to be respected regarding an on-going investigation and the presumption of innocence until proven guilty, he drew our attention to the possible magnitude of tonnage of unwashed sand that could have been extracted from the site clandestinely by passing through the neighboring property of an elderly woman. It is presumed that the company had managed to secure her consent prior to the activities in question. In addition, this consent – which for the moment remains a hypothesis – could have been obtained through undue influence.*

Given this scenario, Mr. Smith poses the following questions: Where does the duplicity start and where does it end? And why not go further still, and imagine another hypothesis with even more troubling consequences, but having the same fraudulent purpose? To support his reasoning, Mr. Smith called our attention to the fact that a 10-year guarantee is given by construction insurers during the first ten years, when damage affecting the solidity of the building renders it unfit for use. Why not imagine, he concludes, when confronted with the kind of blatant fraud that shows no concern for human welfare - why not imagine the hypothesis of construction projects purposely using unwashed sea sand to lower production costs, and therefore increase profits. The result being a serious weakness in the buildings which will become apparent in the short or medium term, but in either case within ten years. And therefore, the costs and repairs would be covered by the insurance company's 10-year guarantee! The builder then gets to hold on to all of his profits!

A legal vacuum? *According to this same attorney, the modification of the coastline, which was discovered accidentally, presents a judicial problem: is there, or is there not, damage done? If yes, is it to the environment or to the national heritage? And in either case, who or what can be considered the victim?*

A worrisome disappearance. *A leak of her bank statements reveals that, in the days before her disappearance, the missing person had reason to consult a local attorney and a doctor from the surrounding area. Both, citing client privilege, have refused to confirm that they met with the woman in question. In any case, and according to the formal wishes of Dr. Daury, later reconfirmed, no information has been communicated on this subject, and therefore the current edition has no news to pass on to its readers.*

In fact, Dr. Daury was concentrating on the road as he sped in the direction of the La Source police station.

Agent Paul Rivois was again on duty, and Dr. Daury, overcome by emotion and focused on his subject, skipped the greetings and began,

“Agent Rivois... my wife's drawings...”

“Yes doctor, I looked them over and, as you said, it’s the same subject over and over... but I did, nevertheless, find some differences...”

Dr. Daury began again, “I came about the ink drawings... well...look what I brought you... they were in the bathroom. Mrs Sancia, you remember our housekeeper – she had carefully put them away... I told her to keep the house in order for the day when,” his voice cracked, “the day when my wife comes back to us...”

“Yes, doctor, but I don’t really see...”

“... I know... you don’t see it either... well, look here!... these aren’t make-up brushes!... These are reeds!

... Reeds... she cut them... then sharpened them into the shape of feathers... like writing quills... look... there’s still ink!... these are what she used to draw!

... and most importantly... look, they’re not dry!... That means they were cut very recently!”

Excuse me doctor... I’d like to help you... and I don’t want to be rude... but I don’t see the connection... I’m sorry... I passed the exam to become a police officer... I didn’t study art history...”

“Don’t you see, Agent Rivois?... Don’t you understand?

... this is a region of nothing but dunes and pine trees for kilometers and kilometers in every direction...

... Reeds don’t grow around here!