

What the Eyes of Beata Daury Saw

A novel by
Marie Françoise Lasserre
Attorney-at-law
www.mflasserre.com

Chapter X was published on Friday, the 23rd of November 2018 at 10:42 am. It was the start of low tide slack water in Douarnenez.

Translation: Claire Hendy

Author's note: The numbers given by the school children in the present chapter were verified by the author. These numbers can, therefore, be taken by the reader or listener as facts.

Chapter X

There will always be sand...

How can an Atlantic seaside community, equidistant between Douarnenez and Hendaye, deal with the theft of its sand and at the same time, the modification of the coastal boundary of its territory? Especially considering that this was done with the express intention of increasing the area of constructible land. And in addition, there was now a fracture in the coast, seemingly due to the extraction at sea of aggregate for the making of concrete, and all this in the heavy atmosphere created by the worrying disappearance of one of their own. How can a community manage all these crises at once?

For starters, by staying away from busybodies.

(Speaking of which, that morning Simon Dentraiche was stopped by a passerby who thought it helpful to say, “Don’t worry Mr. Mayor, there will always be sand...” He decided not to pay him any heed.)

But especially by calling on all available intelligence and on all forms of intelligence.

Just after the encounter mentioned above, the mayor practically ran into Rita Merleau and Sandy who, laughing heartily, were coming out of the only place open in low season where they could find a hot cup of coffee so early in the morning,

“Rest assured, Mr. Mayor,” Sandy said pleasantly, “we’ll find a solution to these problems... I see it in my work - it’s often with the flattest and limpest hair, that with a little effort I manage to make some of the best hairstyles. And my clients receive plenty of compliments for them!”

“And it’s the same for me,” added Rita. “I often have to deal with problems that require me to go beyond my limits. I go beyond, and a bit further still, and in the end... I manage to create dream silhouettes!!”

Simon Dentraiche thanked them quickly and hurried to join Alex Legrand, who was waiting to talk to him at his office in City Hall...

“In fact, Mr. Mayor, I decided right away to have the children work on the possible consequences of the State-authorized extraction of sea sand that’s taking place just off the coast. I thought doing a project on the subject would be better than letting them remain passive observers in this stressful situation ... that it would be better for them.

I’ve taken them to the library in La Source several times.

I verified all the sources and all the numbers.

Overall, the State-authorized extraction of sea sand today affects 20 sites located in Guadeloupe and off the coast of metropolitan France. This last is divided into the Channel seafront from the Belgian border to the tip of Cherbourg, the Brittany seafront from the tip of Cherbourg to the Loire estuary, and the Atlantic seafront from the Loire estuary to the Spanish border.

In terms of cubic meters of sea sand, and for the entire French territory, the children discovered:

- for the year 2010 an authorized volume of 6,448,662 m³ and a volume actually extracted of 3,369,704 m³
- for the year 2011 an authorized volume of 6,550,746 m³ and a volume actually extracted of 3,477,767 m³
- for the year 2012 an authorized volume of 11,320,746 m³ and a volume actually extracted of 3,332,036 m³
- for the year 2013 an authorized volume of 10,597,877 m³ and a volume actually extracted of 3,556,849 m³
- for the year 2014 an authorized volume of 12,431,000 m³ and a volume actually extracted of 2,700,629 m³
- for the year 2015 an authorized volume of 13,184,800 m³ and a volume actually extracted of 2,943,428 m³
- for the year 2016 an authorized volume of 13,234,800 m³ and a volume actually extracted of 2,775,368 m³.

As for the effect on the coast of these extraction operations, the children found, in documents issued by the Ministry of the Environment, Energy and the Sea, that the extraction impacts the currents and the wave swell, and that this modification in the currents and wave swell is likely to create an impact on the coast and shoreline.

However, Mr. Mayor, the thing that troubled the children most is something completely different... sometimes they don't mind doing multiplication!... They found that the taxes due to the government for every cubic meter extracted, depending on the nature of the deposit, fall between 1€30 and 2€59 ...”

Simon Dentraiche had an appointment with Marie Langla that same day...

“I've looked at the case file from every possible angle, Mr. Mayor, but there's no avoiding the facts... the town has missed the deadline to lodge an appeal against the authorization to extract sea sand, which is currently on-going in the waters off the coast of Nessian...”

Black thoughts turned in Simon's mind as he left Marie Langla's office, “I gave in to popular trends... All we read, all we hear about, is 'growth'... I pushed the Municipal Council to approve that thalassotherapy center because it seemed to offer the promise of this 'growth'... Now look where we are...”

Next, he ran into Mario Fernando, “At my age, Mr. Mayor, I can tell you... in every failure there's the remedy... concrete, all we hear about is concrete... but what about all the rest?... In this region for example, after the war, we built differently... we didn't have anything, you understand... we mixed everything we could into the cement... it was an ugly gray, not very appealing, but we painted it... and you know what we called that mixture we used for building? We called it 'clinker'... That tells you something right there!”

Simon Dentraiche had summoned his advisor for urbanism, Remi Luzon, to his office at the end of the day.

And it was in this context, taking into account the intelligence from all its sources... that the town began to react.