

What the Eyes of Beata Daury Saw

A novel by
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Chapter XI was published on Friday, the 30th of November 2018 at 10:20 am. It was the start of high tide slack water in Hendaye.

Translation: Claire Hendy

Chapter XI

Sea Sand: an interesting material from an economic point of view...

The assembly room at City Hall was full, but the doors had been kept open, allowing the public to overflow into the corridor. With the exception of Mrs. Ramier, everyone was standing.

Simon Dentraiche invited the Municipal Council to deliberate on the next steps to take, and preceded this discussion with a short explanation of the facts as they currently stood,

“... The town appears as plaintiff in a civil suit before the examining judge in the question of the theft of our sand and the modification of the coastline, apparently for the purpose of changing the surface area of constructible land... At this point in the magistrate’s investigation, it appears to have been carried out by a mafia-like organization - a group of off-shore companies organized like a Russian doll, one hiding within the other, using false addresses in distant countries... It’s possible that the perpetrators may never be found or brought to trial...

...It is also possible that the authorized extraction of sea sand taking place off the coast of Nesson, has caused changes to the seabed and the currents over time. These changes, in conjunction with the modification of the coastline that we’ve undergone, have re-opened a

pre-existing fissure and so re-joined the Lauve River to the sea. As you know, this happened on the night of the boathouse fire... The town has sought the advice of counsel and found that it's too late to take legal action on this matter, which would, in any case, be doomed to failure, given that these on-going extractions have been approved at the highest State levels.

...The Municipal Council was asked to brainstorm possible solutions, and for this purpose we've taken into account the opinions given, in various forms, by the inhabitants and friends of Nessian...

... I'd like to remind you that the sea sand and aggregate that are so much in demand from our Maritime Domain, and also from the sea floor, are essentially used for construction purposes... And also, that today's concrete is made up of one third cement and two-thirds aggregate and sand...

Now, sea sand and aggregate are interesting materials from an economic point of view, because there's no purchase price to be paid to any owner... which is why it's difficult to see how the use of concrete in construction could ever slow down by itself...

At the end of our brainstorming, it seemed that the best way forward was to... reduce access to concrete made with sea sand... And if we can't change the world, we can, at least on the scale of our own town, oppose the use of sea sand in building projects.

Specifically, to oppose these types of construction, we will have to modify the local building codes, and this must be done according to correct legal procedure.

The purpose of these changes being that, in the future, the only materials allowed for use in the construction of roads and buildings here be made of renewable or recycled materials, and that in either case they be recyclable.

This will exclude for the future all new extraction of sea sand and aggregate for the purpose of construction.

And so, as Mayor, I invite the Municipal Council to deliberate on the modification of our building codes.”

The compound of what should have been the thalassotherapy center remained locked and sealed, and it was just next to it, in front of the sea, that everyone went after the unanimous vote of the Municipal Council.

They all knew that as a result of changing the town planning laws and building codes, they would have to face a multitude of appeals.

Lobbying and every sort of pressure.

That the fight would be long and hard.

They knew there would be violence done to them.

They knew the degree of that violence, without knowing what forms it would take.

But now it was nighttime, and the sky above them was already turning deep blue and starting to sparkle.