

7 — The Southeastern Storm from Another World

The river seemed asleep, yet in its silence it was plotting a roar.



*The river rises
like a wounded animal.*

*The sailboat dances
between waves and lightning.*

*The storm is not an obstacle:
it is initiation.*



*And in the end,
the golden light
reveals the way.*

When the river becomes a teacher

No one could have imagined —not even me—
that that helmsman course
at the Argentine Naval League
would change my skin.
What began as a pastime
became ritual:
reading the wind,
interpreting the water,
letting the horizon

become a compass.

Sailing was not just learning

to handle a boat:

it was listening to a secret language,

written in gusts

and in pauses.

After several practice sessions,

including a crossing

to “the other shore,”

I had my license in hand.

The next step was inevitable:

buying a sailboat.

I chose a used H20,

simple but sturdy lines,

christened Flak.

The name —an abbreviation for German anti-aircraft cannons—

made me smile:

my mother was German,

and that coincidence

felt like a wink from destiny.

The baptism of the Flak

My first experience with my boat
was a regatta.

Against all odds,

we finished first.

That victory was a sign:

the sailboat was ready

for something bigger.

And so was I.

The plan was to cross

the wide, lion-colored river.

April seemed perfect:

long days,

gentle breezes,

the promise of a smooth crossing.

I invited Julio,

a retired senior commissioner,

classmate from the helmsman course,

a man of few words,

steady gaze

and sure hands.

During the week before departure

we prepared everything obsessively:

provisions,

tools,

rain gear,

nautical charts,

flashlights,

flares,

first-aid kit.

The weather report

announced no storms,
but we knew the river
always keeps an ace
up its sleeve.

The mirror of the river

Before dawn

we cast off.

The air was cool,

full of promise.

The Flak leaned slightly

as we hoisted the sails,

as if greeting the wind.

The sun shone with enthusiasm

and the river seemed to celebrate

our departure.

But the celebration was brief.

The edge of the Mitre Channel

caught us by surprise:

the sailboat ran aground

with a dull crunch.

We jumped into the water.

Mud clung to our boots,

the waves pushed us

with whimsy.

We pushed hard,

synchronized with the swell.

Two tons
of fiberglass
and dreams.

Finally,
the Flak broke free.

And then,
silence.

The wind vanished.

The sails fell
like surrendered wings.

The river became
a perfect mirror.

Not a ripple,
not a gull,
not a murmur.

Only us,
floating in a suspended world.

The engine broke the spell.

Its soft growl
shattered the mirror
into gentle waves.

Life went on.

When the river shows its teeth

Colonia del Sacramento

welcomed us calmly.

We moored,

ate something simple,

slept deeply.

But at dawn,

a sharp blow against the hull

woke us.

The sailboat shook

violently.

The sky was covered

with black clouds

moving like beasts.

The wind roared,

the swell hammered the dock.

A southeastern storm

had erupted without warning,

as if the river wanted

to remind us who was in charge.

There was no choice:

we had to return

to Buenos Aires.

We reefed the mainsail,

hoisted the storm jib.

As soon as we left

the shelter of the harbor,

the world changed.

The wind struck us
with fury.

The Flak heeled
as if trying to fly.

Rain fell
in dense curtains,
but more than the sky,
the waves drenched us.

Eleven hours of struggle

The crossing became
a zigzag dance.

Each tack
was a hope
and a doubt.

The compass was little help,
visibility almost zero.

The river wrapped us
in its mystery.

Inside the cabin,
refuge was minimal:

wet bread,
soaked meat,
trembling hands.

Each bite
was a victory.

Outside,
the river roared
like an untamed animal.
Eleven hours of navigation.
Eleven hours of struggle,
of surrender,
of communion
with the water.

The golden revelation

When the day began to fade,
the unexpected happened.
The sky,
which for hours
had been a gray curtain,
opened suddenly.
An invisible hand
pulled the clouds aside,
letting golden rays
pierce the storm.
The light fell on the river
like a blessing,
illuminating precisely
the pilings
we needed to avoid.
It was so perfect,

so symbolic,
that it felt like a miracle.
We embraced tightly,
soaked,
exhausted,
but full of life.
The river had tested us.
And we answered.

Epilogue: the journey inward

The southeastern storm taught me
that sailing is not about reaching port,
but surviving the storm.
That life, like the river,
cannot be tamed.
It can only be faced
with humility,
courage,
and faith that,
sooner or later,
the clouds will open.
That afternoon,
between mud
and golden light,
I understood that the true journey
was not toward Colonia

nor toward Buenos Aires:

it was inward.

