

Antarctic Tales and Something More





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*For the boys and girls who dream of discovering
the white continent*





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❄ INTRODUCTION ❄

A Letter from the End of the World.

For the little ones and the grown-ups peeking into these pages.

Dear boys and girls opening this book:

Before you turn the next page, I want to tell you a secret.

Far, far away, where the map of Chile gets thinner and thinner until it ends up looking like a little finger pointing downward, our country does not end there. It keeps going. It keeps going across a wild, wild sea, between waves that look like mountains, between icebergs that float like crystal castles, on and on until it reaches a place where the snow never melts and the silence is so big you can actually hear it.

We call that place the white continent.

And one part of it — a part that fits completely inside our Chilean hearts — is called the Chilean Antarctic Territory. It is not a fairy tale. It is not a game. It is real. And it is ours.

A long, long time ago, before you were born, before your mom and dad were born, before your grandparents were born, there were very brave men and women who dared to sail all the way down there. They went in wooden ships with white sails, with big hearts and frozen hands. Some

went to explore. Others went to rescue. Others went to protect. And among all of them, without even meaning to, they wrote a story so beautiful that it is still told today in whispers, by the fireside, in the houses of the south.

In this book you are going to meet some of them.

You are going to meet Pilot Luis Pardo Villalón, a Chilean sailor who, more than a hundred years ago, did what the whole world said was impossible: he rescued twenty-two explorers trapped on the ice, on a lonely little island, with a tiny cutter called the *Yelcho*. When people asked him how he had done it, he smiled shyly and said he had only done his duty. But ever since that day, Chilean sailors repeat a phrase that sounds like an oath: "A sailor from the Chilean Navy never gives up."

You are also going to meet the *Dragón de Valparaíso* — which was not a dragon with scales and fire, but a wooden sailing ship that dared to reach a horseshoe-shaped island called Deception Island. You are going to meet President Pedro Aguirre Cerda, who on 6 November, 1940 signed a piece of paper that changed history: that day, Chile said out loud that the white continent was its home too. You are going to meet Professor Julio Escudero, a lawyer who — with words and laws, not with swords — defended the idea that a little piece of Antarctica would be ours forever.

And you are going to meet others: scientists from INACH who travel every summer to study the ice, sailors who cross the wild Drake Passage, soldiers and sailors who

spend a whole year far from their children, glaciologists who listen to the secrets trapped in tiny air bubbles from thousands of years ago. All of them are there, right now, while you read this book, taking care of that white corner of the world.

But you are going to meet someone else, too.

You are going to meet Pipo, a curious penguin who asks questions all day long. Agustina, a leopard seal with a giant heart. Florencia, Estela, Pablo and Gustavo, Ramón: boys and girls just like you, who also wondered one day what was down there in the south, where the sea turns to ice. They are going to take you by the hand. They are going to tell you, in their own words, what they learned from their moms and dads, from their grandparents, from the sailors, from the wise penguins and the exploring seals.

I am only going to ask you for one thing before you keep reading:

Read it slowly. Don't be in a hurry. Close your eyes sometimes and imagine yourself there, with the snow crunching under your feet, with the icy wind hitting your face, with a penguin watching you curiously from a rock.

Because there are people who say — and it is true — that when you get to know Antarctica, even if only in a story, something happens to your heart. It is as if a little blue star stayed lit inside you, beating. Explorers call that feeling the Antarctic emotion.

And I promise you, little reader, that when you finish this book, you are going to feel it too.

Steady as she goes, little explorer.

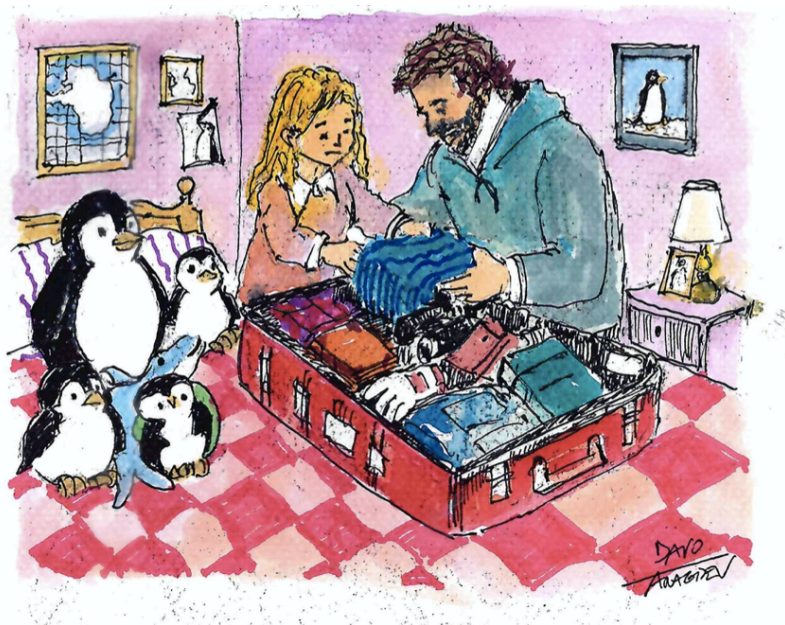
Steady as she goes, curious little one.

Let's go to Antarctica together.

Dad's Great Journey to Antarctica

A story for Florencia

*A journey to the Chilean Antarctic Territory
and to Professor Julio Escudero Base*



❄ Chapter 1 ❄

The Phone Call That Changed Breakfast

Florencia was seven years old. She had long hair that danced when she ran, and a collection of stuffed penguins that her dad gave her every time he came back from a trip. She lived with him in a wooden house in Punta Arenas, a city where the wind blows so hard that sometimes the clouds seem to run faster than the cars.

Her dad was an Antarctic historian. That meant he spent hours reading very, very old books, looking at maps with strange names, and writing on his computer about explorers who, a long time ago, sailed to the coldest continent on the planet.

"Dad, is Antarctica real?" Florencia would ask him some nights, while he tucked her into bed.

"It's as real as you and me, sweetheart," he would answer, smiling. "And one day I'm going to tell you all its stories."

One February morning, while they were having toast with calafate-berry jam for breakfast, the phone rang. Her dad answered. Florencia saw him open his eyes very wide, put a hand on his chest and say: "Really? Truly? Of course I will!"

When he hung up, he took her hands and said:

"Florencia, I've been invited to the anniversary of Professor Julio Escudero Base. I'm going to Antarctica!"

Florencia opened her mouth, but no words came out. She just hugged her dad very tight, with the special strength that hugs *from a proud* daughter have.

"And will you come back?" she asked afterward, a little bit scared.

"I'll come back with so many stories that we won't have enough nights to tell them all," he promised.



❄ Chapter 2 ❄

The Suitcases and the Blue Scarf

The next few days were a mix of excitement and preparations. Her dad packed a thick parka, special gloves, notebooks for taking notes, a camera and, of course, the blue wool scarf Florencia had given him for his birthday.

"So you won't be cold down there, where it always snows," she told him, helping him fold it.

The night before the trip, Dad sat on the edge of Florencia's bed.

"Tomorrow I will get up before dawn, sweetheart. The plane leaves very early, when there are still stars in the sky."

"And what are you traveling in?"

"In a DAP plane — that's an airline based in Punta Arenas that flies all the way to Antarctica. I'll be traveling with scientists from INACH, the Chilean Antarctic Institute. They're people who study penguins, algae, ice, the climate... everything. There will also be Army personnel and journalists who are going to report on what happens down there."

"And what are you going to do, Dad?"

"I'm going to tell the story. The story of how we got to Antarctica, who the first ones were and why the base is called Professor Julio Escudero."

Florencia thought for a moment.

"And who was that man?"

Her dad smiled.

"When I come back, I'll tell you everything. I promise."

And so, Dad left the next day, before the sun came up.



❄ Chapter 3 ❄

The Long Wait

Florencia stayed home with her grandmother, who cooked and told her stories from when she was a little girl. But Florencia couldn't stop thinking about her dad. Every chance she got, she looked at the map he had left on the wall, with a little drawing of a plane that said "Dad is here" and a red heart on Antarctica.

"Grandma, do you think he's arrived yet?" she would ask.

"I'm sure he has, my love. And I'm sure he's looking at a penguin right this very moment."

Florencia counted the hours on her fingers. One, two, three... she hugged her biggest stuffed penguin, the one with a blue patch on its tummy, and thought about icebergs floating like crystal castles.

Her grandmother taught her how to make penguin-shaped cookies. She painted little eyes on them with chocolate chips. "For when your dad comes back," she would say. And they kept the cookies in a tin, waiting.

The hours went by... to Florencia they felt like days.



❄ Chapter 4 ❄



The Coldest, Warmest Hug in the World

Until one afternoon, she heard the door open. She dropped the pencil with which she was drawing, ran down the hallway, and saw her dad standing there, with a red nose, shining eyes, and the blue scarf still on.

"DAD!"

He bent down and hugged her so tight, so tight, that Florencia felt the cold of Antarctica still tucked inside his parka. And she saw that her dad's eyes were teary. Not from sadness. From emotion.

"Florencia, sweetheart... it wasn't just a trip. It was an adventure." Dad said.



❄ Chapter 5 ❄

A Whole Day Between the Sky and the Ice



That night, after dinner, Dad sat her on his lap in front of the fireplace and began to tell her everything.

*"We left Punta Arenas before dawn, sweetheart. It was still dark, it was very cold, and you could see the stars. At the airport, the DAP plane was waiting for us — that airline from **right** here in Magallanes, the one that knows how to fly to the end of the world."*

"And did you fly for a long time?"

"We flew for a couple of hours over the sea. I looked out the little window and all I saw was water, clouds, and more water. My heart was beating like a drum. Until suddenly, through the window, something white appeared. But it wasn't a cloud, Florencia. It was ice. Ice as far as the eye could see."

Florencia opened her eyes very wide.

"And what happened when you landed?"

"When I stepped off the plane, the air was so cold that it felt like it was cutting my face. But it was also the cleanest air that I had ever breathed in my whole life. It smelled like the sea, like rock, like something ancient — as if the whole planet were breathing with me. And when I arrived at the base, it was very moving."

"And what was the base like, Dad?"

"Professor Julio Escudero Base is like a big blue-and-white house, planted in Fildes Bay, on King George Island. It has laboratories, bedrooms, a kitchen where everyone gathers for afternoon tea, and windows where you can see the whole landscape."

"And were there lots of people?"

"Lots and lots. And from many different places."



❄ Chapter 6 ❄

The Silent Heroes of the Base

"Do you know the first thing I learned when I arrived, sweetheart?"

"What, Dad?"

"That in Antarctica, the scientists wouldn't be there at all if it weren't for some other very important people: the INACH logistics team."

Florencia frowned.

"What's logistics?"

"Logistics is all the things that have to be done so that things work. For example: loading the boxes with the scientific equipment, preparing the food, keeping the engines running so there's electricity, fixing the roof when there's a storm, driving the boats that take the scientists to where the penguins are, keeping the radios working so we can talk to Chile, receiving the planes, organizing the storerooms..."

"So many things!"

"So very many. And every one of them matters. Without those people, the scientists couldn't do science. Imagine it: if nobody turns on the generators, there would be no light in the laboratories. If nobody cooks, nobody eats."

If nobody drives the boats, the biologists couldn't get to the sea to study the algae."

"So they're like the superheroes of the base."

"Exactly, sweetheart. They are the silent superheroes. I met one who had been working there for many years. He told me: 'Professor, I've spent more than twenty years helping science happen.' And I answered him: 'Then you are a scientist of life too, because without you, none of this would be possible.'"

Florencia smiled.

"When you write your next book, will you talk about them too?"

"I promise I will."



❄ Chapter 7 ❄

Friends from All Over the World

"I also met people from many countries there," Dad went on, while Florencia listened with her mouth open. "There were Russian scientists with fur hats, Korean researchers who showed me photos of emperor penguins, a group of Chinese scientists from a base known as 'Great Wall' who were studying all kinds of things about Antarctica, and a team of Germans measuring how fast the ice is melting. They all spoke different languages, but they all smiled the same. Because Antarctica, Florencia, brings all of humanity together. It's a place where people go to do science, not to fight."

"And did you eat with them?"

"I ate with them, I laughed with them, and even when we couldn't understand each other with words, we understood each other with drawings, with gestures, with looks. A Czech scientist taught me how to say 'penguin' in her language, and a Japanese scientist taught me how to bow."

Florencia laughed.



❄ Chapter 8 ❄



The Invitation to the Big Speech

"But, sweetheart, the most important thing was the ceremony," said Dad, becoming more serious. "The director of INACH took me aside and said: 'Professor, would you give us a speech? Tell us the story of this base, and who Julio Escudero was.'"

Florencia sat up straight.

"And what did you do?"

"I, my little one, felt like my heart was going to jump out of my chest. But I thought of you, and of everyone who wanted this story to be told. And I said yes."

"And did that make you nervous?"

"Very. I went over my mental notes again and again. I would look out the window of the base, see the landscape, and think: 'I have to rise to the occasion. This story deserves to be told.'"



❄ Chapter 9 ❄

The Room Full of Uniforms and Polar Vests

"At the anniversary ceremony, the room was packed. There were Navy sailors in their blue uniforms. There were Army soldiers in their red outfits. There were men and women from the Air Force. There were people from the Maritime Government Office of the Chilean Antarctic, who make sure that everything is in order on those faraway seas. There were journalists with their notebooks. There were scientists in their polar vests. And, of course, there was the INACH team, organizing everything, making sure the ceremony went perfectly."

"And were there captains?"

"There were two very important captains, yes. The commander of the ATF 60 'Lientur,' a ship that sails among the icebergs bringing supplies and protecting human life at sea, and the commander of the OPV 83 'Marinero Fuentealba,' a ship that patrols and protects

those southern seas. They were both there, standing, caps in hand, ready to listen."

"And was everyone standing?"

"Everyone. Because it was an important ceremony, and the room was full of people."

"And weren't you scared, Dad?"

"Very. My hands were cold and the paper was trembling. But then I looked out the window, saw the Antarctic landscape, and took a deep breath. And I began to speak."



❄ Chapter 10 ❄

Who Julio Escudero Was

"I told them that this base bears the name of Julio Escudero Guzmán, a Chilean lawyer who was very important a long time ago. Don Julio was one of the great defenders of the idea that Antarctica belonged to Chile too. He helped write laws, he wrote documents, he traveled, he talked with authorities from many countries, and he fought so that the Chilean Antarctic Territory would have its place in the world."

"Was he brave, Dad?"

"He was brave with his head and with his heart, sweetheart. He didn't use a sword — he used words. And with those words he left it written down that a little piece of Antarctica is part of Chile too, just like Punta Arenas, just like our house."

"And is that why they named the base after him?"

"That's why. Because when you do something important for your country, your country doesn't forget. And every time someone says 'Professor Julio Escudero Base,' they are remembering him."



❄ Chapter 11 ❄

The First Ones to Arrive

"Then I told them how the base was built, and how getting there was even harder years ago. I told them how the first Chileans who arrived had to carry everything by hand, how they slept in the cold, how they wrote letters to their families that took months to arrive."

"Could you have done it, Dad?"

"I don't know, sweetheart. But I know that those men and women did it for us. So that today, so many years later, scientists can study climate change, penguins can

be protected, and children like you can know that they have a small piece of the white continent."

Florencia felt a tingle in her chest.

"Dad... am I part of that too?"

"You are part of it, my love. Every Chilean boy and girl is. That's why it's so important to take care of Antarctica. Because it's ours and, at the same time, it belongs to everyone."



❄ Chapter 12 ❄

The Applause and the Penguins

"When I finished speaking, everyone applauded. The director of INACH shook my hand, the sailors stood firm, and a journalist came up to me and said: 'Professor, that was beautiful.' I just smiled, because I was thinking of you."

Florencia's eyes were shining.

"And what happened after that?"

"After that, we all went outside. The sky was bright, because in Antarctica, at that time of year, the sun almost never hides. We walked along the bay and saw penguins in the distance. I brought you a photo."

Dad took a photo out of his pocket. In it you could see three small penguins and a man, wearing the blue scarf, smiling.

"Is that you?"

"That's me. And those three penguins," he said, pointing at them with his finger, "reminded me of three stuffed penguins I know."

Florencia laughed so hard she almost fell off her dad's lap.



❄ Chapter 13 ❄

The Promise

"Dad, will I go there someday too?"

Dad looked at her with those eyes dads have when they know something important.

"Someday, sweetheart. Because Antarctica is waiting for you. And in the meantime, we're going to read together, we're going to learn about it, we're going to take care of it from here. Because you can take care of a place even when you're not there. You just have to know it exists, and love it."

Florencia snuggled against her dad's chest. He smelled of cold, of wind, of adventure.

"Dad..."

"Yes?"

"When I grow up, I want to tell stories too."

"Then you're going to be a great historian, my little one."

That night, before going to sleep, Florencia looked at the map on the wall. She took a red pencil and, next to the heart that said "Dad is here," she drew another, smaller heart.

And she wrote, in her very best handwriting: "Florencia too."

Because Antarctica, she now knew, was a little bit hers.

And because the greatest adventures begin when someone tells you a story with eyes full of emotion.



❄ Epilogue ❄

Did You Know...?

Real facts about Professor Julio Escudero Base

Professor Julio Escudero Base is a place that really exists, just as Florencia and her dad came to know in this story. It was opened on February 5, 1995, thanks to the support of the Regional Government of Magallanes and the Chilean Antarctic, and since then it has become Chile's main scientific base on the white continent. It is located on King George Island, in the South Shetland archipelago, very close to "Presidente Eduardo Frei Montalva" Base. It belongs to the Chilean Antarctic Institute (INACH), an agency of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that coordinates all Chilean science in Antarctica.

When it opened, the base was tiny: it covered only 95 square meters and room for eight people. Today, after more than three decades of growth, it covers more than 1,500 square meters of buildings, multidisciplinary laboratories, aquariums, and accommodates more than 50 people. Research is carried out there on climate change, marine biology, microbiology, oceanography, glaciology, meteorology, paleontology, and many other areas of knowledge. And, as we learned in this story, all

of this is possible thanks to the joint work of the scientists and, very especially, the INACH logistics team, which keeps the base running all year round.

Its name honors Professor Julio Escudero Guzmán, a distinguished Chilean jurist who devoted more than ten years of his life to defending Chile's presence in Antarctica. He was the one who drafted the decree that set the boundaries of the Chilean Antarctic Territory and, in addition, he played a key role in drawing up the Antarctic Treaty, the international agreement that establishes Antarctica as a land of peace and science for all humanity. That is why, every time someone says "Professor Julio Escudero Base," they are remembering a Chilean who — with words, laws, and a great deal of patience — helped our country earn a place on the coldest continent in the world.

Keep telling stories, curious little one.

*Chile, in the south, reaches all the way to the
white continent.*



Pipo and the Star of the South

A story about Chile and its white heart

For the boys and girls who dream of discovering the world

❄ Chapter 1 ❄



The Penguin Who Asked Questions

In the southernmost place in the world, where the sea turns to ice and the wind sings ancient songs, there lived a tiny penguin named Pipo.

Pipo was not like the other penguins. While his brothers and sisters dove into the water to fish, he would stand gazing at the horizon with his bright little eyes, asking questions all the time:

"Where does the wind come from, Grandma? Why is the snow so white? Who lives beyond the sea?"

His grandmother, a wise penguin named Mama Snow, always smiled patiently. Her feathers were a little bit gray, and her eyes were full of stories.

"Pipo, my curious little one," she said to him one day, "today I'm going to tell you a story that my grandmother told me, and that her grandmother told her. It's the story of how some very brave men reached our white home, and of a long, skinny country that is always looking toward the south."

Pipo opened his eyes very wide. He settled down on the ice, tucked in his little flippers, and prepared to listen.



❄ Chapter 2 ❄

The Country That Looks Toward the Pole

"A long, long time ago," Mama Snow began, "long before you were born, long before my grandmother was born, there was a country called Chile."

"Chile?" asked Pipo. "It sounds like the noise the ice makes when it cracks!"

Mama Snow laughed softly.

"Chile is a very special country, Pipo. It's long and skinny, like a colourful ribbon. It has dry deserts in the north, very tall mountains in the middle, green rain-soaked forests in the south, and... do you know what it has at the very end, at its southernmost tip?"

"I don't know!" said Pipo, excited.

"Us!" said Mama Snow. "Antarctica is part of Chile too. That's why they say Chile is an Antarctic country — because its heart reaches all the way to the South Pole."

Pipo looked around him: the sparkling ice, the white mountains, the icebergs floating like castles on the water. All of that was part of a country called Chile? It seemed magical to him.

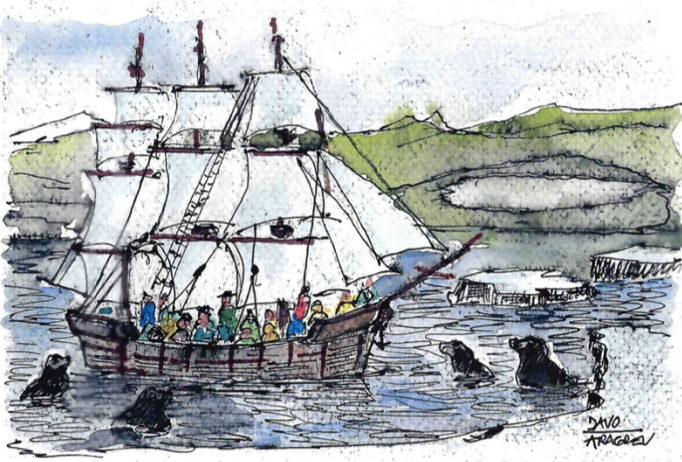
"But Grandma, how did they get here? We swim, but humans don't have flippers."

"Oh, my little one. They came the way brave people always come: in wooden ships, with big hearts, and with a great, great longing to discover."



❄ Chapter 3 ❄

The Dragón de Valparaíso



"The first Chilean ship to reach these white lands was called the Dragón de Valparaíso — the Dragon of Valparaíso," said Mama Snow in an important voice.

"A dragon?!" Pipó nearly fell over in fright. "A dragon came here?"

"No, silly," laughed Mama Snow. "It was a ship with that name. Humans give very pretty names to their ships. The Dragón de Valparaíso reached an island called Deception Island a long, long time ago. It was the first Chilean merchant ship that dared to come so far south."

Pipo imagined the ship with its sails as white as his own feathers, making its way between the icebergs, while curious seals poked their heads out to watch.

"And why did they come?"

"Some came to fish. Others came to explore. But all of them, every single one, felt something very special when they saw our mountains of ice for the first time. They said Antarctica stole their hearts."

"Like when I see Mommy?" asked Pipo.

"Something like that, my dear. Something like that."



❄ Chapter 4 ❄

Pilot Pardo's Impossible Rescue

"But the most beautiful story, Pipo — the one that makes my feathers tremble every time I tell it — is the story of Pilot Luis Pardo Villalón."

"Who was he, Grandma?"

"He was a Chilean sailor with a little ship called the Yelcho. Do you know what happened? A long, long time ago, on another island in the south, there were some English explorers who were trapped. Their ship had been crushed and sunk by the ice, and they were

freezing and starving on a lonely little island, far away from everything."

Pipo snuggled closer to his grandmother. That part made him a little bit sad.

"Many countries sent ships to rescue them," Mama Snow went on. "But nobody could do it. The ice was too dangerous. They said it was an impossible rescue."

"Does impossible mean it can't be done?"

"It means it looks like it can't be done. But then came Pilot Pardo. His little ship, the Yelcho, was tiny — it had no heating, none of those modern things. But Pilot Pardo had something stronger than the ice."

"What did he have?"

"He had courage. And he had hope. And he told his crew: 'We're going to find them, boys. Nobody gets left behind.'"

Pipo felt his little chest swelling up. He imagined the Yelcho sailing among the big waves and the icebergs, the wind lashing, the Chilean sailors bundled up in their heavy coats, watching the horizon.

"And what happened, Grandma? What happened?"

"Something magical happened, Pipo. On the very first try, they found them! The twenty-two English explorers were alive — hungry, frozen, but alive. When they saw

the Yelcho appear out of the fog, they cried with joy. And Pilot Pardo brought them all home, safe and sound."

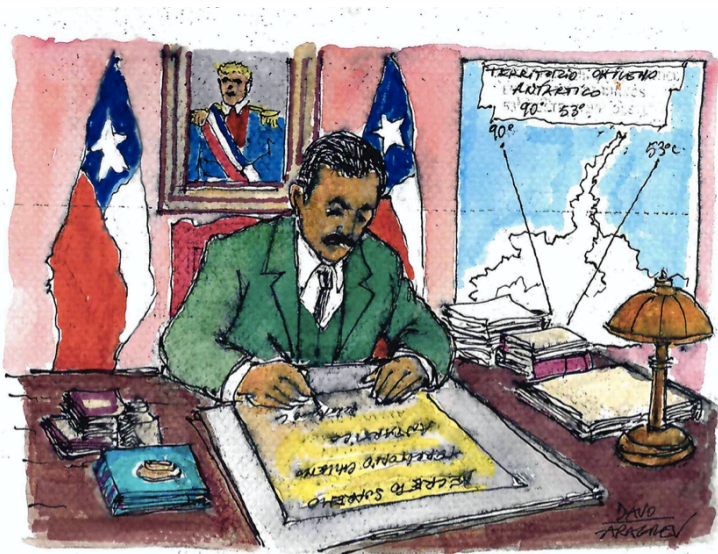
"He did it! Pilot Pardo did it!"

"Yes, my little one. And from that day on, the whole world knew that Chileans were brave sailors, and that Antarctica had friends who watched over her."



❄ Chapter 5 ❄

The Day Chile Said: "So Far"



Mama Snow took a deep breath. Pipó noticed that her little eyes were shining.

"There was a very important day, Pipo. A day you must remember. It was 6 November, 1940."

"What happened that day?"

"That day, the president of Chile, a good man named Pedro Aguirre Cerda, signed a very important piece of paper. That paper said something like this: 'This white land, with its mountains of ice, its penguins, its seals and its whales, is part of Chile. We will take care of it. We will study it. We will love it.'"

"He just signed a paper?"

"But that paper changed history, Pipo. Because when a country puts its heart into something, it takes care of it forever. From that day on, Chile said: 'Antarctica is our sister, and we are going to stand by her side.'"

Pipo looked at the stars beginning to appear in the sky, and it seemed to him that one of them was shining brighter than the rest. A blue and white star, like the flag of Chile.

❄ Chapter 6 ❄

The Little Houses on the Ice

"But Grandma, how can humans live here? It's so cold!"

"Good question, my curious one. A few years later, in 1947, some Chilean ships arrived loaded with

hardworking men. They brought wood, nails, and tools, and they built the first Chilean house in Antarctica."

"A house? Here?"

"A very special house. They called it Captain Arturo Prat Base. It was painted in cheerful colours so it could be seen against all that snow. And the next year they built another one, Bernardo O'Higgins Base, in honor of a very important hero of Chile."

Pipo had seen those little houses. They were red and yellow, with chimneys puffing little trails of smoke into the sky. Sometimes the humans came out in their thick coats to study the icebergs, to look at the stars, to count penguins. Once, one of them had even smiled at Pipo and taken his picture.

"That day I posed so nicely!" said Pipo proudly. "I stood up perfectly straight and everything."

"I know, my dear. You are a very photogenic penguin."



❄ Chapter 7 ❄

Friends from All Over the World

"Grandma, do only Chileans come here?"

"No, Pipo. And this is one of the most beautiful things you need to learn. Antarctica is a very special place for

*the whole world. Here, countries that sometimes fight in other places decide to be friends **here.***"

"Real friends?"

"Real friends. Many years ago, in 1959, twelve countries got together and signed something called the Antarctic Treaty. Do you know what it says?"

"What does it say?"

"It says that here, on this white continent, there can be no wars. That you can only come to study, to learn, to take care of little animals like us, and to understand the secrets of the ice. And Chile was one of the twelve countries that signed it. One of the founders."

Pipo thought about the penguins in his colony, who sometimes squabbled over a fish. And he thought how lovely it would be if everyone could be friends, like the humans in Antarctica.

"Grandma, is that why so many scientists come?"

"That's why. They come to study the climate, the whales, the glaciers, the stars. Antarctica is like a giant book of science, and all the countries read its pages together."

❄ Chapter 8 ❄

The Antarctic Emotion

Night had fallen completely. The stars filled the sky like shining seeds, and the southern lights painted the air green and violet.

"Pipo, there was a wise man named Óscar Pinochet de la Barra. He wrote a book, and he gave the last chapter a very beautiful name. He called it 'Antarctic Emotion.'"

"What is the Antarctic emotion?"

"It's what people feel when they come here for the first time. It's like when something touches your heart so deeply that you are never the same again. Everyone who comes to Antarctica carries away a little piece of ice in their soul. And they never, ever forget it."

Pipo was quiet for a moment. He thought about his home: the enormous sky, the whales that swam by singing, his friends the fur seals, the snow that crunched under his little feet.

"Grandma..."

"Yes, my darling?"

"I think I have the Antarctic emotion too. But the other way around. Because I was born here, and I feel like this place is the most beautiful in the whole world."

Mama Snow wrapped Pipo in her soft wing.

"That's because you are a little ambassador of the white continent too. Your job is to take care of it, to know it, and to tell the other penguins how important it is."



❄ Chapter 9 ❄

Pipo's Promise



That night, Pipo couldn't sleep. He came out of his little ice cave and looked at the stars. One of them, the brightest, seemed to wink at him.

He thought about the Dragón de Valparaíso sailing two hundred years ago. He thought about Pilot Pardo and his little Yelcho breaking through the ice to save his

friends. He thought about President Aguirre Cerda signing that very important paper. He thought about the Chilean scientists who arrived every year, every summer, with their instruments to study the sky and the sea.

And then Pipo made a promise, in a very quiet voice, so that only the stars and the wind would hear:

"I, Pipo, penguin of the Chilean Antarctic, promise to take care of this beautiful place. I promise to tell the humans when I see them: 'Thank you for coming with respect. Thank you for studying without destroying. Thank you for making this a place of peace.'"

And it seemed to him that the wind answered, whispering among the icebergs: "Steady as she goes, Pipo. Steady as she goes, always toward the south."



Epilogue

For You, the One Reading

Dear boys and girls:

What you have just read is not only a story. Pipo is an imaginary penguin, but everything else is true. The Dragón de Valparaíso really existed. Pilot Pardo really did save twenty-two explorers. President Aguirre Cerda

really did sign that paper on 6 November, 1940. And the Chilean bases are still there, with their painted walls, welcoming the scientists who come every summer to study the white continent.

Chile is an Antarctic country. That means that you — even if you live in a city full of cars, or in the countryside full of trees, or near the sea — also own a part of the whitest, cleanest place on the planet.

Antarctica needs you. It needs you to learn about it. It needs you to take care of it. It needs you to grow up and someday — who knows — travel south to see it with your own eyes.

And when you do, you will understand what that wise man said: the Antarctic emotion will touch your heart, and you will never be the same again.

Steady as she goes, little explorer.

Chile, in the south, borders the Pole.



Estela and the Secrets of the Ice

The questions of a curious little girl

A story about Chilean scientists

and the ships of the Southern Ocean

❄ Chapter 1 ❄

Dad's Suitcase



Estela was five years old. She was tiny, she wore two little pigtails, and she asked questions all day long.

That morning, her dad was packing a very special suitcase. It held big boots, a yellow helmet, dark glasses, and a sleeping bag as thick as a teddy bear.

"Dad, where are you going?"

"I'm going to the Chilean Antarctic Territory, to work."

"What is the Chilean Antarctic Territory?"

Dad sat down on the bed. Estela climbed onto his lap.

"It's the southernmost place in the world, sweetheart. A part of Chile that is made of ice. There are white mountains, a very cold sea, penguins, seals, and whales. And our president, many years ago, said that place belongs to Chile, and that we have to take care of it."

"And what do you do there?"

"I'm a glaciologist, remember? I study the ice."

"And why do you study ice, Dad? Ice is just... ice."

Dad laughed softly. He kissed her on the nose.

"Estela, the ice keeps secrets. And my job is to listen to them."

❄ Chapter 2 ❄

The Secrets of the Ice

"Secrets? How?"

"Imagine this, sweetheart. Once, a long, long time ago, snow fell on the Chilean Antarctic Territory. That snow stayed there. Then more snow fell on top of it. And more. And more. And all those layers kept pressing down on each other until they turned into ice."

"Like when I squeeze snow to make a snowball?"

"Exactly like that. But it took thousands of years. And trapped inside that ice there are... do you know what?"

"What?!"

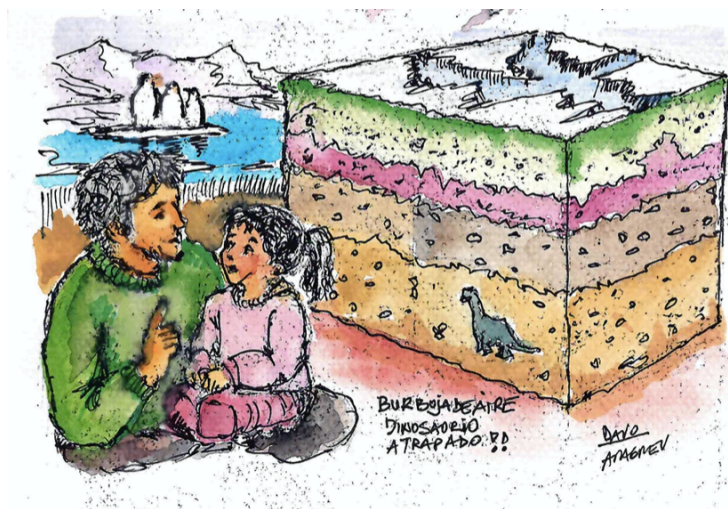
"Tiny air bubbles. Air from thousands of years ago. Air that the dinosaurs breathed, maybe."

"The dinosaurs?!"

"Well, not quite that old. But very, very old. And we glaciologists pull out a long piece of ice, like a long candle, and we study it. We look at the little bubbles. And that's how we know what Earth's climate was like thousands of years ago. Whether it was warmer or colder, whether it rained more, whether it was windier."

"The ice is like a book!"

"That's exactly it, my love. A book made of ice. And we read it."



❄ Chapter 3 ❄

What You Have to Bring

"And why are you taking so many things, Dad?"

"Because in the Chilean Antarctic Territory it's terribly cold. Imagine the refrigerator in the kitchen, but giant. And with wind. I have to bring special clothes so I don't freeze."

Dad showed her each thing, one by one.

"Look: these boots have double soles, so the cold can't get in through my feet. This yellow helmet is to protect

me when I'm on the glacier, in case a piece of ice falls. These dark glasses are so the snow doesn't hurt my eyes, because the snow shines so brightly that it hurts to look at it."

"And that long stick?"

"That's a shovel. And this is a coligüe, a little cane of Chilean bamboo. We stick it in the snow to mark the trail. If fresh snow falls, the coligües tell us which way to go."

"And that rope?"

"That one is extremely important, my little flower. On glaciers there are crevasses, which are like cracks in the ice. Sometimes they're covered with snow and you can't see them. If someone falls, the rope holds us all together. That's why glaciologists always walk roped together, in a group."

"Like when we go to the supermarket and you hold my hand!"

"Just like that. It's exactly the same, sweetheart. So we don't get lost."

❄ Chapter 4 ❄

The Question for Mom

Right at that moment, Mom came into the room. She was carrying a cup of tea and a smile. She was an officer in the Chilean Navy, and she had sailed to the Antarctic Territory many times too.

"Mom! Dad is telling me about the ice. But now I want to know something else."

"Tell me, my love."

"How do you get to the Chilean Antarctic Territory? By car?"

Mom laughed and sat down on the other side of the bed.

"No, my little flower. There are no cars that go there. There are no streets. There are no bridges. To get to the Chilean Antarctic Territory, you have to cross an ocean called the Southern Ocean."

"And how do you cross it?"

"By ship, my darling. In special, very strong ships called Antarctic vessels. The Chilean Navy has several. I sailed on one called the Aquiles, and before that there were other very famous ones, like the Piloto Pardo and the Yelcho."

"And what is it like to travel by ship, Mom?"

"Oh, my love. It's an adventure. But it's also hard. There's a place along the way called the Drake Passage. And it's the roughest sea in the whole world."

"Rougher than when we go to the beach and there are big waves?"

"A thousand times rougher. The waves can be as tall as a four-story building. Taller than our apartment building!"

"Whoa, Mom!"



❄ Chapter 5 ❄

The Drake Passage



"Tell me about the Drake Passage, Mommy. Were you scared?"

"A little bit, the first time, my love. But we Chilean sailors know how to do it. Let me tell you."

"Tell me!"

"When a ship leaves Punta Arenas for the Chilean Antarctic Territory, first it sails through some calm channels. But then, when it enters the Drake Passage, everything changes. The ship starts to move a lot. Up, down, side to side. Things fall off the tables. That's why, on the ships, we use special sticky tablecloths, so the plates don't go flying."

"Sticky tablecloths! That's so funny!"

"And everything that's loose, we tie down. The chairs, the books, the suitcases. Everything, everything, everything. Because if we don't — off it flies!"

"And how do you know which way to go?"

"Good question, sweetheart! On the ship there's a very important place called the bridge. That's where the commander and the officers are. We have special maps called nautical charts. They're like maps of the sea, showing the depths, the rocks, the currents. The Chilean Navy has a group of very wise people, called SHOA, who draw these maps so that ships don't get lost."

"And do you look at the stars?"

"Sailors used to navigate by the stars, yes. Now we also use satellites, which are like stars made by people, way up there in the sky, that tell us exactly where we are."



❄ Chapter 6 ❄

The Icebergs

"And is there ice in the water, Mom?"

"Lots of ice, my love. When the ship gets close to the Antarctic Territory, the icebergs start to appear."

"Icebergs?"

"They're mountains of ice floating in the sea. Some are small, like a car. Others are enormous, like a building. And you have to be very careful, because underneath the water they are even bigger."

"Like in the pictures?"

"Just like that. And that's why Antarctic ships have a special, reinforced hull that can take the bumps against the ice."

"And are there little animals nearby?"

"So many! The Southern Ocean is home to the biggest whales in the world, to seals, to fur seals, and to teeny tiny little creatures called krill. And penguins too, of

course. When the ship comes close to the islands, the penguins come down to the shore, all curious, to watch."

"I want to see penguins!"

"Someday you will, my love. I promise."



❄ Chapter 7 ❄

Chile's Little Houses

"And where do the ships go?"

"To the Chilean bases. Chile has several little houses in the Antarctic Territory, where scientists like your dad live. Some belong to the Navy, others to the Army, others to the Air Force, and others to INACH."

"What is INACH?"

"I'll answer that one, sweetheart. INACH is the Chilean Antarctic Institute. It's like my office, but bigger. It's in Punta Arenas, way down south. And its job is to bring together all the scientists in Chile who want to study the Antarctic Territory."

"And do they all go to the ice?"

"Every year, in summer, something called the Antarctic Scientific Expedition sets out. Hundreds of us scientists go. Some study the ice, like me. Others study the

penguins. Others, the whales. Others, the tiny plants that grow between the rocks. Others, the stars. There are scientists for everything."

"I want to be a scientist!"

"You're going to be a great scientist, my love."



❄ Chapter 8 ❄

A Day in the Life of a Glaciologist

"Dad, what do you do all day down there?"

"Let me tell you about a normal day, sweetheart. I wake up early, when it's still dark. I put on all my warm clothes: three pairs of pants, two jackets, a hat, gloves, goggles. I drink hot chocolate for breakfast — lots of it. And I head out with my teammates."

"And do you walk?"

"We walk across the glacier, roped together. Sometimes we ride a snowmobile, which is like a motorcycle but with skis on the front. We get to the place where we want to take out the ice. We drill a hole with a special machine. We pull out the ice in the shape of a long, long stick. And we store it in little boxes, very carefully, because that ice holds the secrets."

"And then?"

"We go back to the base. We eat something hot. We write down everything we saw in our notebooks. We call Mom on the radio to tell her I'm okay."

"That's why the radio crackles sometimes!"

"That's why, my love. When it crackles, it's Dad talking to us from the south."

"And at night?"

"At night, in summer, it's strange. Because the sun almost never sets. There's light almost all day long. But we still climb into our sleeping bags, because we have to rest for the next day."

❄ Chapter 9 ❄

The Most Important Care of All



"Dad, why do you study the ice? What is it for?"

Dad was quiet for a moment. He stroked Estela's hair very tenderly.

"Look, sweetheart. The ice of the Chilean Antarctic Territory is very special. If it all melts, the sea rises, and rises, and rises, and many cities around the world would flood."

"Like Valparaíso?"

"Like Valparaíso, yes. And many others. That's why it's so important to know whether the ice is melting, how

much, and why. We glaciologists study that so we can warn the world and take care of the planet."

"So your job is to take care of the Earth?"

"My job is to take care of the Earth by listening to the ice, sweetheart."

Estela became very serious. She thought for a moment, with her brow furrowed.

"I want to take care of the Earth too, Dad."

*"And you do, my love. When you turn off the light in your room. When you don't throw litter in the street. When you don't leave the **tap** running. That is taking care of the Earth too."*

"Really?"

"Really, my love. You don't have to be a grown-up to take care of the planet. You can start right now."

Chapter 10

Estela's Promise

It was nighttime. Dad's suitcase stood ready by the door. Estela was in her pyjamas, her eyes a little droopy.

"Dad, Mom."

"Yes, sweetheart?"

"When I grow up, will you take me to the Chilean Antarctic Territory?"

Her two parents looked at each other and smiled at the same time.

"We'll take you, sweetheart. And you'll see the Southern Ocean with your own eyes. You'll see the blue icebergs. You'll see the penguins. You'll smell air so clean that doesn't exist anywhere else in the world."

"And you'll touch the ice, my love. You'll feel how cold and how old it is."

"Then I promise one thing."

"What thing, my darling?"

"I promise to learn a lot. I promise to take care of the planet starting now. And when I grow up, I promise to go to the Chilean Antarctic Territory, just like you. And I'm going to study the ice, or the whales, or the penguins. I don't know yet."

Mom hugged her tight. Dad kissed her on the forehead.

"Estela, my little glaciologist. That's the best news I could take with me to the south."

Mom tucked her in under the blanket. They turned off the light. But before they closed the door, Estela whispered softly:

"Dad... take care of yourself. And bring back a secret of the ice for me."

Dad smiled in the darkness.

"I'll bring you the most beautiful one, sweetheart. I promise."

And Estela dreamed. She dreamed of a Chilean ship crossing the Southern Ocean, with giant waves and blue icebergs. She dreamed of her dad walking across a glacier, roped to his team, pulling out a long stick of ice. She dreamed of her mom on the bridge of the ship, studying the nautical charts. She dreamed of teeny tiny penguins waving to her from the shore.

And she understood, without quite knowing why, that she was already part of that story. A five-year-old girl in a house in Chile, with two parents who loved the south, and a Chilean Antarctic Territory waiting for her to grow up.



❄ **Epilogue** ❄

For You, Curious Little One

Dear boys and girls:

Estela is imaginary, but everything she learned from her dad and her mom is true. In Chile there are many scientists who travel every summer to the Chilean Antarctic Territory. They study the ice, the penguins,

the whales, the plants, the stars, even teeny tiny viruses. They work at an institute called INACH and live at Chilean bases on the white continent.

To get there, they cross the Southern Ocean on ships of the Chilean Navy, passing through the Drake Passage, one of the roughest seas on the planet. They do it with nautical charts drawn by SHOA, with reinforced hulls, and with a great deal of preparation.

The Chilean Antarctic Territory was declared part of Chile on 6 November, 1940. It is ours. And Chilean scientists take care of it by studying it, because when we understand something, we can take better care of it.

You can be a scientist someday too. It doesn't matter if you're a girl or a boy. It doesn't matter if you're little, like Estela. The only thing you need is what she has plenty of: lots and lots of questions.

Keep asking questions, curious little one.

Chile, in the south, borders the Pole.



Ramón and the Ship of the South

The Antarctic adventures of a sailor dad

A story aboard the AP-45 "Piloto Pardo"

and the Chilean Antarctic Territory

⚓ Chapter 1 ⚓

Dad's Chest



Ramón was seven years old, with curious eyes and a dad who was a sailor in the Chilean Navy. They lived

near the port, where through the window you could watch the ships go by like silent giants.

What Ramón loved most was when, on Saturday nights, his dad opened the wooden chest he kept under the bed. It was an old chest, with an anchor painted on the lid and the smell of salt stuck to it forever.

Inside there were treasures: a blue Navy cap, a little piece of ice kept in a jar, black-and-white photographs, a compass that no longer worked, and a small Chilean flag, folded carefully, like a sleeping butterfly.

"Dad," said Ramón that night, hugging his knees, "tell me about the time that you sailed on the Piloto Pardo."

Dad smiled. It was a special smile, the kind that only appeared when he talked about the south. He sat on the edge of the bed, took the blue cap in his hands, and gazed at the window for a moment, as if instead of the street he could see the ocean.

"The Piloto Pardo, my Ramón..." said Dad slowly. "That ship was my second home. And the Chilean Antarctic Territory was like a second homeland. If I tell you everything, you'll be up past your bedtime."

"I don't care, Dad! Tell me!"



Chapter 2

A Ship Named After a Hero

"Before I tell you my adventures, Ramón, you have to know why our ship had that name. Because a ship carries someone's name to honor them. And our ship carried the name of one of Chile's greatest heroes."

"Who was he?"

"His name was Luis Pardo Villalón. He was a Second Pilot in the Chilean Navy. More than a hundred years ago, in 1916, he did something the whole world believed was impossible. He rescued twenty-two English explorers who were trapped on the ice, on a lonely little island called Elephant Island, inside the Chilean Antarctic Territory."

"Alone on the ice? How did they get there?"

"Their ship, called the Endurance, had been crushed by icebergs and sunk. Their leader, an explorer named Shackleton, managed to ask for help. Three countries sent ships to rescue them. Three times they came back unable to get through. The ice was too dangerous. They said: 'It can't be done. Impossible.'"

"And then?"

"Then came Pilot Pardo, with an old, tiny cutter called the Yelcho. It had no heating, no modern radio, nothing. But before setting sail, Pilot Pardo told his crew a

phrase that later became famous throughout the whole Navy. A phrase your dad repeats every time things get difficult."

"What phrase, Dad?"

Dad looked at him steadily. He placed the blue cap on Ramón's head — it was far too big for him — and said in a firm voice:

"A sailor of the Chilean Navy never gives up."

"He never gives up?"

"Never, Ramón. Even if there's a storm. Even if the waves are gigantic. Even if others say it's impossible. A Chilean sailor keeps going. And Pilot Pardo proved it: he rescued the twenty-two Englishmen on the very first try. When he saw them appear out of the fog, Shackleton counted them one by one and said: 'They are all here. Not one is missing.'"

"He was a hero, Dad!"

"He was a quiet hero, Ramón. The kind who doesn't talk much. When he returned to Punta Arenas, thousands of people were waiting for him at the pier. He came down from the ship with his cap in his hand, almost embarrassed, saying he had only done his duty. That's why, years later, when the Navy built a big, strong ship to serve in the Chilean Antarctic Territory, they gave it his name. So that his courage would keep on sailing the sea."



Chapter 3

The AP-45

"Tell me about the ship, Dad. About your ship!"

Dad's eyes lit up like two lighthouses.

"The AP-45 Piloto Pardo was a beautiful ship, Ramón. It was built in Holland in 1957, specially reinforced to sail among the ice of the Chilean Antarctic Territory. It arrived in Chile in 1959, and from then, for almost forty years, it completed thirty-nine Antarctic missions. Thirty-nine! Summer after summer, and once even in the middle of winter."

"Was it very big?"

"To me it was enormous. It had a crew of eighty-seven, it carried two little helicopters on deck, and its hull was reinforced so that it wouldn't break against the ice. It was the Antarctic ship of the Chilean Navy. Its job: to carry food, supplies, and people to the Chilean bases on our Antarctic Territory."

"And what did you do there, Dad?"

"I was part of the crew. We did everything, Ramón. We looked after the ship, we kept watch over the engines, we supported the scientists who traveled with us, we

helped unload the boxes and equipment at the bases. And when we were needed, we went out on rescues."

"To rescue whom, Dad?"

"Whoever needed rescue. Stranded ships, lost planes, sick sailors. The Piloto Pardo carried on the tradition of the Yelcho: helping anyone in trouble, whether they were from Chile or from any other country. Because — remember this well, son:"

"A sailor of the Chilean Navy never gives up."



Chapter 4

The Drake Passage

"And what was it like to reach the Chilean Antarctic Territory, Dad?"

Dad paused. He looked at the little jar of melted ice on the nightstand and took a deep breath, as if getting ready.

"To reach the Antarctic Territory, Ramón, you have to cross the roughest place in the world. It's called the Drake Passage. It's where two oceans meet, and the waves can reach twelve meters high. Twelve meters! Imagine it: like a four-story building crashing down on your head."

"Whoa, Dad!"

"The first time I crossed it, I was a little scared — I won't lie to you. The ship rocked like a crazy cradle. Things fell off the tables. Some of the crew got seasick. But the commander would say: 'Easy, boys. The Piloto Pardo was built for this. And we are Chilean sailors. We don't give up.'"

"And you didn't give up?"

"Never, son. I learned something very important on those crossings: fear is like a wave. It comes, it pushes you, and if you hold on tight, it passes. After the second or third voyage, the waves didn't bother me anymore. I knew the hull was strong, I knew my shipmates were good, and I knew that on the other side of the Drake Passage something so beautiful was waiting for us that it was worth every shake and shudder."

"What beautiful thing?"

"The white silence, Ramón. Our Chilean Antarctic Territory."

Chapter 5

The White Silence

Dad closed his eyes for a moment. When he opened them, he seemed to be looking at something very far away.

"When the Piloto Pardo crossed the Drake Passage and entered the waters of the Antarctic Territory, everything changed. The sea grew calm. The air became so clean that it almost hurt to breathe it. And the icebergs appeared."

"What were the icebergs like, Dad?"

"Icebergs are mountains of ice floating on the sea, Ramón. Some were as big as a stadium. Others had strange shapes: caves, arches, needles. And the colour... oh, the colour. They have blues that don't exist anywhere else in the world. Blues that seem to glow from the inside."

Ramón's mouth fell open. It was hard for him to imagine.

"And the animals, Dad! Tell me about the animals!"

"Oh, the animals! The penguins were our best friends. When we went ashore, they came up to us, curious, without any fear. Sometimes they walked alongside us as if they were our guides. The seals slept belly-up on the ice, fat and happy. And the whales... the whales swam

right past the ship, blowing spouts of water into the sky. Once, a humpback whale jumped so close to the Piloto Pardo that it soaked all of us standing on deck. And we burst into applause like children!"

"I want to see a whale jump, Dad!"

"Someday you will, Ramón. I promise."



Chapter 6

Chile's Little Houses on the Ice

"And where did you take all the supplies, Dad?"

"To the Chilean bases, son. Chile has several little houses in the Antarctic Territory. The oldest is the Captain Arturo Prat Antarctic Naval Base, founded by the Navy in 1947."

"And why was it built?"

"Because a few years earlier, on 6 November, 1940, President Pedro Aguirre Cerda had signed Decree 1747. That paper said something like this: 'All these lands, islands, glaciers, and seas to the south, between the meridians 53° and 90° west, are the Chilean Antarctic Territory, and we will take care of them forever.'"

"And since that day they're ours?"

"They are under our care. And we sailors of the Navy were the first to go down and raise the flag of our homeland there. In January 1947, two ships set sail from Valparaíso: the frigate Iquique and the transport ship Angamos. The following year, President Gabriel González Videla traveled there in person to inaugurate the base. Imagine that! The president of Chile set foot on the ice of the Chilean Antarctic Territory."

"And did the Piloto Pardo go to the bases?"

"Every year, son. The AP-45 was the main supply ship. It carried food, fuel, materials to repair the little houses, scientific instruments, and the relief crews."

"What are relief crews?"

"They're the new men and women who were going to stay and live on the bases for the whole year. And we brought back the ones who had just spent an entire year on the ice. Some of them cried with joy as they climbed aboard the Piloto Pardo. Spending a whole winter in the Chilean Antarctic Territory, Ramón — now that is truly an act of service to your country."

⚓ Chapter 7 ⚓

The Rescue of the Lindblad



"Dad, did you ever rescue anyone on the Piloto Pardo?"

Dad nodded slowly. He took the little jar with the melted ice and placed it in Ramón's hand.

"The Piloto Pardo carried out the biggest rescue in the entire history of Antarctica, Ramón. I was very young then, just starting out, and I will never forget it."

"Tell me, Dad!"

"It was 11 February, 1972. A Norwegian tourist ship called the Lindblad Explorer ran aground in a bay called Admiralty Bay, on King George Island, right in the Chilean Antarctic Territory. On board were 172

people: 104 tourists and 68 crew members. The ship was damaged and could sink at any moment. They called for help."

"And did you go?"

"Full speed ahead, son. The Piloto Pardo and another Chilean ship called the Yelcho — yes, named just like Pilot Pardo's original ship, in honor of that great feat — rushed to the rescue together. When we arrived, we saw the passengers on deck, frightened, bundled up in whatever they could find, watching us arrive as if we were their angels."

"And what did you do?"

"We worked day and night. We lowered the boats and ferried the tourists across in groups — first the children and the elderly, then everyone else. The commander kept saying: 'Easy now. Stay calm. Nobody gets left behind.' It was exactly what the original Pilot Pardo had said fifty-six years earlier, in these very same waters. Because we Chilean sailors always, always repeat the same thing:"

"A sailor of the Chilean Navy never gives up."

"Did you save them all?"

"All 172, Ramón. Every single one. No one was missing. And when we returned to Punta Arenas with everyone safe, the Norwegians hugged us, crying. Some of the tourists were grandparents, others were children. A

little blonde girl gave me a drawing of the Piloto Pardo. I keep it in the chest — do you want to see it?"

Ramón nodded, thrilled. His dad took a yellowed piece of paper out of the chest, folded with care. It was a drawing of a gray ship with the Chilean flag, made with wobbly coloured pencils. At the bottom it said: "Tusen takk," which in Norwegian means thank you very much.



Chapter 8

The Rough Night

Dad put the drawing away very carefully. Then he was quiet for a while, and Ramón sensed that tonight there was something more to tell. Something more serious.

"There was another mission I will never forget, Ramón. A rough night — the kind that puts sailors to the test."

"What happened, Dad?"

"In 1982, two faraway countries, Argentina and the United Kingdom, went to war with each other. A very large Argentine ship called the General Belgrano was sunk at sea. Hundreds of sailors were left floating in life rafts, in the freezing ocean, in the middle of a dreadful storm."

"How sad, Dad!"

"Very sad, son. And even though Chile was not in that war, the Piloto Pardo received an order: go out and search for the shipwrecked men. Because that is what Chilean sailors do — they help anyone in trouble, no matter what flag they sail under."

"And did you go?"

"We set out right away, son. The waves were terrible; the winds could knock you off your feet. Some of the crew were afraid. But the commander looked at us and told us what he always told us:"

"A sailor of the Chilean Navy never gives up."

"And did you find the shipwrecked men?"

"We found life rafts," Ramón. *We did everything we could. Afterward, the Argentines thanked the Piloto Pardo for having been there. That night I learned something very important: the sea doesn't understand flags. The sea only understands hearts that help each other."*

Chapter 9

The Antarctic Emotion

The night had grown quieter. Through the window you could see the lights of the ships in the port. Ramón snuggled under the sheets, but he didn't want to fall asleep. Not yet.

"Dad, what does it feel like to be in the Chilean Antarctic Territory?"

Dad thought about it for a moment. He stroked Ramón's head slowly.

"There is a wise man named Óscar Pinochet de la Barra who wrote a book about Antarctica. He titled the last chapter 'Antarctic Emotion.' And he described exactly what I felt, Ramón."

"What does it feel like?"

"It feels like the world is bigger and smaller at the same time. You feel respect. You feel silence — but a silence that is full. You feel very tiny next to the mountains of ice, but at the same time important, because you are there, because your country sent you, because you are taking care of a little piece of the homeland that no one else would take care of if we weren't there."

"And do you feel something in your heart?"

"It feels as if your heart fills up with white, son. As if a part of you stays in the Chilean Antarctic Territory forever. That's why we Antarctic sailors are a little bit different. We speak slowly, we gaze into the distance, and we always, always want to go back to the south."

Chapter 10

Ramón's Promise

"Dad." ... "Yes, son?"

"When I grow up, can I go to the Chilean Antarctic Territory?"

Dad looked at him with a smile that held a little bit of pride and a little bit of longing: "You can go, Ramón. You can be a sailor like me, or a scientist, or an explorer, or simply a visitor with a great deal of respect. The Chilean Antarctic Territory belongs to all Chileans. It is ours. And it is waiting for us."

"Then I promise you two things, Dad."

"What things?"

"I promise I'm going to take care of our Antarctic Territory. I'm going to learn all about it at school. And when I grow up, I'm going to go, and I'm going to wear your cap. And I'm going to tell my children the adventures of the Piloto Pardo, just like you tell them to me."

"And the second promise?"

Ramón became very serious. He took the blue Navy cap in both little hands, held it against his chest, and said quietly, as if he were swearing a very important oath:

"I, Ramón, promise that I will never give up. Because a sailor of the Chilean Navy never gives up."

Dad said nothing. But Ramón saw that in his eyes there was a tiny tear, shining like a diamond of ice.

"Ramón," he said at last, his voice hoarse, "that is the most beautiful promise anyone has ever made to me in my whole life."

He hugged him tight. He kissed him on the forehead. He turned off the light.

And before closing the door, he whispered: "Good night, my little sailor. Dream of the south."

And Ramón dreamed. He dreamed of the AP-45 Piloto Pardo crossing the Drake Passage. He dreamed of the whales leaping, the penguins waddling, the blue icebergs of the Chilean Antarctic Territory. He dreamed of his dad as a young man, on the deck of the ship, gazing at the white horizon.

*And he understood, for the first time, that the story of Chile in its Antarctic Territory was the story of his own family. It was his story. And that he, too, someday, no matter how big the waves were, would always remember his dad's words: **"A sailor of the Chilean Navy never gives up."***



Epilogue

For You, Little Sailor

Dear boys and girls:

Ramón is an imaginary character, but everything else in this story is true. The AP-45 Piloto Pardo really existed: built in Holland in 1957, it served Chile from 1959 to 1997 and completed thirty-nine Antarctic missions, bringing people, food, and hope to the Chilean Antarctic Territory.

The Chilean Antarctic Territory is real too. It was officially declared by President Pedro Aguirre Cerda on 6 November, 1940, through Supreme Decree No. 1747. That little white piece at the end of the map of Chile is as Chilean as your town square, your school, or your bedroom.

The rescue of the Lindblad Explorer in 1972 was real: 172 people saved. The search for the survivors of the Belgrano in 1982 was real too. And Luis Pardo Villalón truly did save 22 men in 1916, at Elephant Island.

Today the AP-45 no longer sails for the Navy. But its memory lives on in every Chilean sailor who crosses the Drake Passage, and in every child who learns this phrase:

"A sailor of the Chilean Navy never gives up."

That phrase is not only for sailors. It is for you. When something is difficult, when you are afraid, when a task seems impossible, remember Pilot Pardo crossing the ice. Remember that a brave Chilean never gives up.

Steady as she goes, little sailor.

Chile, in the south, borders the Pole.



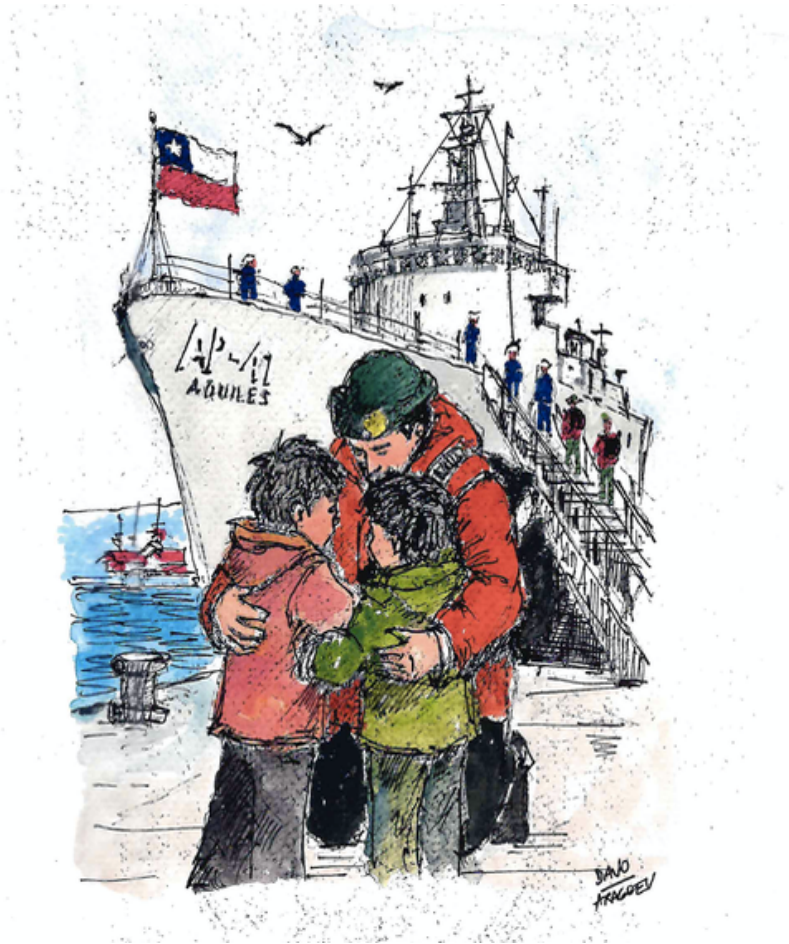
The Hug That Crossed the Sea

*A story of Pablo, Gustavo, and a dad who traveled to the
end of the world*



Chapter 1

The Promise at the Pier



Pablo and Gustavo were twins. So identical that sometimes even their mom mixed them up. They were seven years old, with hair as black as the night and eyes that shone like two tiny stars.

They lived in Punta Arenas, a city in the far south of Chile, where the wind blows hard and the clouds race across the sky.

One day, many months ago, the brothers went to the pier with their mom. There, facing the sea, stood an enormous ship, gray and silent. It was called the Aquiles, the AP-41 of the Chilean Navy.

"It's gigantic!" said Pablo, opening his eyes wide.

"Bigger than our house!" said Gustavo.

Their dad, dressed in his red and black uniform as an officer of the Chilean Army's Antarctic forces, knelt down to look them in the eyes. He had his backpack over his shoulder and a look on his face that mixed joy with a little bit of sadness.

"My little heroes," he told them, "Dad is going to a place very far away. I'm going to Antarctica, to the white continent, to serve our country for a whole year."

"A year?" asked Pablo, his voice trembling.

"That's such a long time," said Gustavo, and a tear slipped out.

Their dad hugged them tight, tight. He smelled of clean wool and adventure.

"I promise you two things," he whispered. "First: that every night I will look at the same stars you are looking

at. And second: that I will come back on this very ship, the Aquiles, to hug you again."

And so, while the Patagonian wind ruffled their hair, Pablo and Gustavo watched their dad climb the gangway of the ship, until he became as tiny as a toy soldier.



Chapter 2

A Year Looking South

The months went by slowly, like snails out for a stroll.

In the living room, Mom hung up an enormous map. Pablo and Gustavo looked at it every day before going to school. On the map there was a red line that crossed the sea and reached a white, white land.

"Dad is over there," Gustavo would say, pointing with his finger.

"At Bernardo O'Higgins Base," Pablo would add in a serious voice, because he liked saying important names.

Their mom explained to them that Antarctica was part of Chile, that it was called the Chilean Antarctic Territory, and that many brave men and women lived down there to take care of it and study it.

Every now and then a letter arrived, or a short phone call, with Dad's voice half broken up by the wind from the end of the world.

"Hello, my champions!" he would say. "Today there was a white wind so strong you couldn't see a thing. But we're fine! Here, we soldiers look after each other like brothers."

Pablo and Gustavo would squeeze the phone tight, as if they could hug their dad through the wire.



Chapter 3

The Aquiles Is Coming!

One spring morning, Mom came running into their room.

"Boys, wake up! Dad comes home today! The Aquiles is arriving at the port!"

Pablo jumped out of bed so fast he got tangled in the sheets. Gustavo was already putting his socks on inside out without noticing.

"Let's go, let's go, let's go!" they both shouted.

At the pier in Punta Arenas there were lots and lots of people. Families with balloons, Chilean flags waving in the wind, happy little dogs barking.

And then, far away on the horizon, a gray silhouette appeared.

"It's the ship! It's the Aquiles!" shouted Gustavo, standing on his tiptoes.

The great AP-41 came closer slowly, majestic, like a guardian of the sea. When it docked, a long, long horn sounded, and it tickled their hearts.

And then they saw him.

He was coming down the gangway, with his backpack over his shoulder, his face a little more weathered by the cold, but with the same smile as always.

"DAAAAD!" shouted Pablo and Gustavo at the same time, and they took off running.

Their dad knelt down and hugged them both at once, as hard as he could, as if he wanted to make up for all the hugs of the entire year. And there, in that hug, all three of them cried and laughed at the same time.



Chapter 4

Tales of the White Continent

That night, at home, they had a special dinner. There were sopaipillas, hot chocolate, and many, many questions.

"Dad, what is Antarctica like?" asked Pablo, his eyes as big as saucers.

Their dad settled into the armchair, with one twin on each side, and began to tell them.

"Antarctica, my boys, is the whitest place there is. Imagine a world where everything — everything — is covered in ice and snow. There are mountains that look like crystal cathedrals, glaciers bigger than entire cities, and a sea so blue that it looks like a painting."

"And how did you get there?" asked Gustavo.

"On the Aquiles, the same ship that I sailed back on. We crossed the Drake Passage, which is one of the roughest seas in the world. The waves were as big as houses, and the ship went up and down like a rocking horse. But the Chilean Navy knows how to sail those waters better than anyone."

"And the Base, Dad? What was Bernardo O'Higgins Base like?" insisted Pablo.

"Ah... the Base is like a little red house in the middle of the ice. A group of us soldiers from the Chilean Army live there, taking care of our Antarctic land. It sits on a rock, in O'Higgins Land. It carries the name of Don Bernardo O'Higgins, the Father of our Nation, because he was the first one who dreamed that Chile would reach all the way to Antarctica."

The twins looked at each other, amazed. Their dad had lived in a little red house, in the southernmost place in the world.



Chapter 5

The Wind That Roars

"And was it very cold?" asked Gustavo, hugging himself just thinking about it.

"Colder than ever before," answered Dad, smiling. "Sometimes the thermometer read thirty degrees below zero. If you left a glass of water outside, in just a few seconds it turned to ice."

"Whoaaa!" said the twins at the same time.

"But the most impressive thing," Dad went on, lowering his voice the way he did when he told mystery stories, "was the wind. Antarctic weather is unforgiving, boys. That means it doesn't forgive mistakes."

"Unforgiving?" asked Pablo.

"It means that when the weather gets angry, you have to respect it. Sometimes the white wind came — a snowstorm so thick that you couldn't see your own hand. If you wandered off even a few steps, you might never find your way back."

Pablo and Gustavo snuggled closer to their dad.

"That's why, in Antarctica, nobody walks alone. We always go in groups, tied together with ropes like mountain climbers, watching out for one another. Down there I learned, my loves, that friendship is the most important thing of all. In the coldest place in the world, what truly keeps you warm is knowing that your companion is watching your back."

The twins looked at each other and smiled. They always watched out for each other too.

Chapter 6

Penguins, Seals, and a Sky Full of Colours



"Tell us something nice, Dad," asked Gustavo, already getting sleepy.

"Well... did I tell you about the penguins?"

"NO!" they both shouted, waking right up.

"There are thousands of them. Gentoo penguins, chinstrap penguins, Adélie penguins. They walk in lines, like tiny little soldiers. And when they dive into the water — zoom! — they turn as fast as arrows. I also saw seals sleeping on the icebergs, and once, far away, a whale jumped so high it looked like it wanted to touch the sky."

"And is there day and night?" asked Pablo.

"That's another bit of magic. In summer, the sun never hides. You can play ball at midnight and everything is bright. But in winter... in winter the night lasts for months. And then something appears that I will never forget: the southern lights, the aurora australis. They are green, pink, and violet lights that dance across the sky like magic ribbons."

The twins closed their eyes and imagined the sky dancing. And they felt that, even though they had never been there, their dad had given them a little piece of Antarctica to keep in their hearts.

Chapter 7

A Promise for Life

Before going to bed, Pablo asked him an important question:

"Dad... why did you go so far away for so long?"

His dad thought about it for a little while. Then he looked at them both.

"Because Antarctica is ours, my sons. It belongs to Chile. Many, many years ago, brave men planted our flag down there and said: 'this piece of white land is part of our homeland too.' And ever since then, there have always been Chileans taking care of it. When it was my turn, I said yes, even though it hurt to leave you. Because serving your country also means taking care of your future."

"And would you go back?" asked Gustavo, very quietly.

"I would," said Dad, "but right now my place is here, with you. And I want to teach you something: Antarctica is not just ice. It is history, it is hard work, it is friendship, it is our flag flying in the southernmost place in the world. And one day, if you want to, you can go and see it too."

"On the Aquiles?" asked Pablo, hopeful.

"On the Aquiles, or on another ship, or maybe flying. But the important thing isn't how you get there... it's understanding why that place matters to every Chilean."

That night, the twins fell asleep snuggled up against their dad, dreaming of penguins, of gray ships, of skies painted in colours, and of a little red house at the end of the world.

And just before closing his eyes for good, Gustavo whispered to Pablo:

"When we grow up, we'll both go."

"Both of us," answered Pablo. "Just like Dad."



THE END



Did You Know...?

Fun facts about the Chilean Antarctic

 **The Chilean Antarctic Territory** is the part of Antarctica that belongs to Chile. It is administered by the Region of Magallanes and the Chilean Antarctic.

 **Bernardo O'Higgins Base** was inaugurated in 1948 and belongs to the Chilean Army.

 **The AP-41 "Aquiles"** is a transport ship of the Chilean Navy that travels to Antarctica every year, carrying food, equipment, and the personnel serving their tour of duty at the bases.

 **The "white wind"** is a snowstorm so strong that you cannot see anything around you. That is why, in Antarctica, nobody goes out alone in bad weather.

 **Penguins** are the friendliest inhabitants of the white continent. Gentoo, chinstrap, and Adélie penguins live in Antarctica.

 **The aurora australis**, or southern lights, is a glowing phenomenon that paints the southern sky with green, pink, and violet colours. It can only be seen in places very close to the South Pole.

 **Bernardo O'Higgins** was the first Chilean to imagine, back in 1831, that Antarctica should also be part of Chile. That is why a base carries his name.

❄ EPILOGUE ❄

The Final Hug

A goodbye that is not a goodbye



Dear boys and girls who made it all the way here:

If you have reached this page, it means you already know Pipo, Agustina, Florencia, Estela, Pablo and Gustavo, and Ramón. It means you have already sailed on the Yelcho, already crossed the Drake Passage, already seen — with the eyes of your heart — the blue icebergs and the little red houses of the Chilean bases. It means you have already heard the voice of Pilot Pardo saying he would never give up, and the voice of President Aguirre Cerda signing that very important paper.

But before you close this book, I want to tell you something that maybe you didn't know yet.

Everything you read is true.

Pipo and Agustina are storybook characters, yes. But the white continent is real. Pilot Pardo existed, and his rescue was every bit as brave as we told you. The Chilean bases are there right now, with their colourful walls, welcoming the INACH scientists every summer.

The Navy's ships keep sailing south. The planes keep landing on runways of ice. And the penguins — the real penguins! — still waddle along in little lines through the snow, just like in the stories.

*This is the most beautiful thing about Chile, my little reader: our country does not end where the map they draw at school ends. Our country has a bigger heart, one that reaches all the way to the Pole. That is why we say **Chile is an Antarctic country**. That is why we say **Chile, in the south, borders the Pole**.*

*And that is why, even if you live in a city full of cars, in the countryside full of trees, in a house near the sea, or in an apartment with a view of the mountains, **a part of Antarctica is yours too**. Even if you have never set foot on the ice. Even if you don't know how to swim. Even if you are still young. It is yours. It belongs to your brother, your cousin, your neighbour, your teacher. It belongs to every Chilean boy and girl. And we have to take care of it.*

And how do you take care of a place so far away?

You take care of it like this:

By learning about it, the way you did today by reading this book. By telling others what you learned, just as we told you. By saving water when you brush your teeth, because every drop counts. By not throwing litter on the street, because all litter ends up — one way or another — in the sea. By turning off the light when you leave

your room, because every light left on makes the planet a little bit warmer, and when the planet gets warmer, the ice in the south melts. And we want the ice to stay there, shining, with its penguins, with its whales, with its secrets trapped in tiny bubbles of air from thousands of years ago.

Maybe someday you will travel south too. Maybe you will board a Navy ship, or a small plane that lands on the snow. Maybe you will be a glaciologist and extract long pieces of ice to read their history. Maybe you will be a marine biologist and study the whales. Maybe you will be a pilot, a sailor, a journalist, a photographer, a doctor, an engineer, a teacher. Maybe you will be an Antarctic historian and tell all these stories to the children of the future.

Or maybe you will never go at all. And that is fine too.

Because the white continent does not need all of us to walk on it. It needs all of us to love it. And that — loving a place even though it is far away, taking care of it even though you cannot touch it, defending it with words the way Professor Escudero did — that, too, is being an explorer.

Close the book. Go to the window. Look at the sky.

If it is nighttime, look for the southernmost stars. One of them, the brightest, shines right above the Chilean Antarctic Territory. That star is watching you. And the penguins, far away, are watching it too. And the sailors

*on their ships. And the scientists at their bases. And
children like you, who live in Punta Arenas, in Puerto
Williams, in places where the wind blows hard.*

All of them, all of them, watching the same star.

That star is Antarctica.

That star is Chile.

And now, that star is you, too.

Keep asking questions, curious little one.

Steady as she goes, little explorer.

Chile, in the south, borders the Pole.

*And we, thanks to you, will always go a little
bit farther.*

END

Read it slowly. There is no hurry. Close your eyes now and then and imagine yourself there, with the snow crunching beneath your feet, the icy wind stinging your face, and a penguin watching you curiously from a rock.

Because there are people who say — and it is true — that when you come to know Antarctica, even if only in a story, something happens to your heart. It is as if a little blue star stayed glowing inside you, beating away. Explorers call that feeling the Antarctic emotion.

And I promise you, little reader, that by the time you finish this book, you will feel it too.

Steady as she goes, little explorer.
Steady as she goes, curious little one.
We are off to Antarctica together.



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