Right at the peak of the carnival’s last night, the storm broke, scattering the crowds. In seconds, the tempest cleared the village square of macho funk and competing sound systems as well as the skies over Cabelo Seco of the military helicopters that had scanned the community’s streets and River Tocantins’ walkway since the carnival began. We barely slept, moving buckets from our bedroom to kitchen, front room to hallway, as the wind changed direction and new leaks appeared in our tiled roof.

I mop the floor and open the window, catching sight of the river in the gap between two houses, which a year ago promised to become a new home for a headteacher, who was hoping to profit from the ‘revitalization of Marabá’. Like a missing front tooth, it attracts attention, accumulating symbolic power as the community’s riverside story changes behind it.

‘The river has risen again!’ I shout to Manoela, as she prepares a green juice from the plants in her herbal garden. ‘At least a metre. Today, the waterfront could flood.’ The neighbour’s parrot in the street behind the herbal garden squawks the national anthem continuously, catching the urgency of Brazil’s political crisis in its insistent pitch. ‘There are hundreds of families camped in that empty lot beside the school,’ shouts Manoela over the juice-mixer. ‘The army isn’t posted there just for emergency aid. And now six cities have declared a state of calamity. My god in heaven!’

We sit in silence. Évany’s chance to lift herself beyond the socio-economic apartheid in this region trembles on a horizon of no hope. Territorial disputes between dealers claimed Zequinha’s youngest son. Crack turned his first-born into a shell. But this arbitrary violence has merged with state repression to create a pervasive panic and mistrust. I look up at the gap between the simple wooden houses, missing tiles on every roof.

‘The rivers of the world,’ Zequinha warns, ‘will rage.’

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