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To get to Saturn and back

de
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traducción de
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(fragmento en inglés)

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YOUTUBER (*off-stage*)

Hi, ladies, for those of you who are new, my name is Ana, and today I'm going to show you some fun ways to style your headscarf. I want to share my favorite style that I really like and wore my entire treatment. Here are a few of my scarves, and, as you can tell, I'm all about the bright colors. If we have to go without hair, we might as well have color, isn't that right, ladies?

ROSA

Everyone, I have some news to share. I wanted you to hear it from me first because... I'm going to be taking a break from teaching, and it means I won't be back before the end of the year. So I wanted the chance to say goodbye to all of you now. Most of all, I wanted to tell you how much I've loved having you as my students, and what an honor it's been to be your teacher.

We've done great work together, and I'm sorry we won't finish the year together, but... I've been given a cancer diagnosis, breast cancer, and I'll be going in for treatment, chemotherapy, followed by an operation. And although everything will be just fine, I have a long journey ahead of me, and it'll be quite a while before I'll be back.

There. It's done. It's a shock, I know. Does anyone have questions? If you do, feel free to ask. Ask me anything you like. The kids look around, uncertain. Finally, Paula raises her hand. Yes, Paula? --I just hope... we all hope... it goes okay. It will, won't it?-- And Paula looks around at her classmates for support, and they all nod nervously. Of course, everything will be fine, you'll see. And as if they've turned to stone, they sit there, petrified, just like I was when the doctor broke the news to me.

Rosa, it's not an ideal diagnosis. It's invasive ductal carcinoma.

Then I hear that little voice in my head that started up when they first found the lump, that insistent little voice that would not stop nagging me during my urgent mammogram, or scan, or biopsy --that pesky little voice that kept spitting out that dirty word-- cancer. But just in case, I say it out loud myself, casually: So it's cancer? And the doctor, in response, brutally succinct: Yes. And that little voice in my head: Told you so, told you so.

Anyone else want to ask something? My students aren't sure how to react. Then Fede speaks up. My godfather died of cancer. Fede, shut up, you idiot, and the class gangs up on him. A classmate hits him on the head. What? It's true! He did. Don't listen to him, teacher, he's always saying stupid things! They have a point, Fede is special, and I can't help but have a soft spot for him.

All right, everyone, calm down, Fede didn't say anything that isn't true. Sometimes people die from cancer. But from what they can tell so far, that doesn't seem to be the case for me.

I'm lying, slightly, because we don't yet know the exact details of my case, but I can't possibly tell my students that.

Invasive ductal carcinoma, the doctor explains, means cancer that started in the milk duct and has invaded the breast tissue. I take a long look at the breast under consideration. Then I glance over at

my husband, Carles, as frozen in place as I am. I blurt out the burning question: Is it fatal? It's an aggressive tumor, Rosa, I'm not going to sugarcoat this. But with your consent, my team and I will draw up the best possible treatment plan we can for you.

I make a mental note to myself that she didn't promise anything.

Don't look at me like that, friends, everything's going to be fine. This is just a temporary road block --more like a line of enemy artillery, I clarify to no one but myself-- an obstacle in my path that I'll be able to overcome with excellent medical attention. Most of my class looks unconvinced, like actually, it's a death sentence. It's the stigma of cancer. Well, I don't want to take any more time from class. Though the end of the year is still a ways away, I wanted to wish you all the best of luck. Study hard and be kind to your teachers, all right? Be happy. So long.

Adéu.

Rosa, you want to take into consideration that for the next eight-nine-ten months, the next year, really, your life will undergo significant changes. We'll finalize the best possible treatment plan for you once we have all the test results, but know that you'll need an array of procedures that may include chemotherapy, surgery, and radiation. Carles looks over at me. I'm lucky he's here. All I can think of to say, in a whisper, is: We're going away tomorrow. The oncologist raises an eyebrow. Just for a few days, Carles explains. We're supposed to visit Rosa's mother in Logroño. But if we can't, we won't, no worries. I want to go, though. I actually really want to go to Logroño. But afterward I realize that what I meant to say is: But what about my children? I have two young kids. And what came out of my mouth was: I want to go to Logroño. Rosa, Carles says, if the doctor thinks you should... Then the doctor interrupts him. Take the trip, Rosa. We can wait five days. I'll schedule the other tests for next week, Wednesday, if that works for you.

When I come out of the main office, the students are outside on break already, all huddled by the school gate that exits out to the street. They come up to me and Paula hands me a piece of paper. We made a card for you, teacher. "Thank you for everything. You're the best. Good luck!" And they've all signed it. Thank you, I say. Truly. One by one, they each give me a hug. Fede is the last to approach. With all the awkwardness of adolescence, he leans in so he can whisper in my ear, so softly I can barely hear it, "Please don't die, teach."

That's the plan, I think.

Why is this happening to me?

As we're leaving the doctor's office where my life has been undone, Carles tells me not to worry, that we'll get through this together, that we can do this, and a bunch of other stuff that I can't remember, because the more he talks, the more I stop paying attention.

Why me? Why me, world? Why me?

Eat right, eat your vegetables, get plenty of fiber, don't smoke, don't drink to excess, don't do drugs, work out, run laps, do pilates, get your yearly mammogram. I do everything I'm supposed to.

Why me? Why is this bullshit happening to me? What have I done? Who do I owe?

From the way Carles is looking at me, I realize that my inner monologue has at some point become an external one, and I'm babbling out loud, better yet yelling, yelling because --*for fuck's sake*-- this isn't fair. Because I don't deserve this, I don't deserve this, my kids don't deserve this, my mother doesn't deserve this --Mom, how will I tell my mom? None of us deserve this, not Carles, not my brother, not my friends, not my students. Not one of us deserves this. Because it's not just me. I mean, this is happening to *me*, but I'm also this whole ecosystem of relationships, an entire world bound by everyone who's ever loved, or been kind to, or cared about me. And I, *we*, don't deserve this. I like my life. I want to stay here in my life. I want to stay. I don't want to leave. I have no intention of going.