



Society accustoms us to measure future time in a straightforward fashion, as if we needed to feel that we control something that we do not. The day the doctors informed us that Viviana had cancer we did not know how much time we had at our disposal, the only certainty they gave us was that it was not much. It was an aggressive tumor and it would give us no respite. I was definitively not willing to accept this, and my absurd way of denying the fact was to choose not to wear my wristwatch again. Five years went by before my wife passed away, and even today I continue not wearing a watch. Thank God I can say that her illness not only gave us respite, but it also allowed us to glimpse that the fiber of life is not woven by the time that is measured by clocks.

The truth is that punctuality was never my forte, even when I did wear a watch. Every now and then, when I got home late as usual, my wife would insist that I wear one. I think she played around with the idea that if I used a wristwatch her disease would come to an end. That same idea led her to ask the doctors anxiously how long it would be until she could have more children.



The great understanding shown by the doctors that were taking care of her always led them to give her as an answer, a period of time within reach—three years without metastasis—even though they knew that moment would never arrive. Our family clock stopped counting the hours and started to measure the months free from metastasis. Just as we became used to the tic-tac of the clock on the wall without noticing it, something similar happened with the cancer. The constant medical studies were the bell tolls that measured the months; meanwhile, we passed time as any other family did: work, school, chores, discussions, vacations, outings.

Vivi did not dare to enjoy the “**moments of inactivity**”, those moments when we lay together and watched our toenails grow. For her, there was always something to be done, until the moment came when she would have no strength left, and she would fall exhausted on the bed

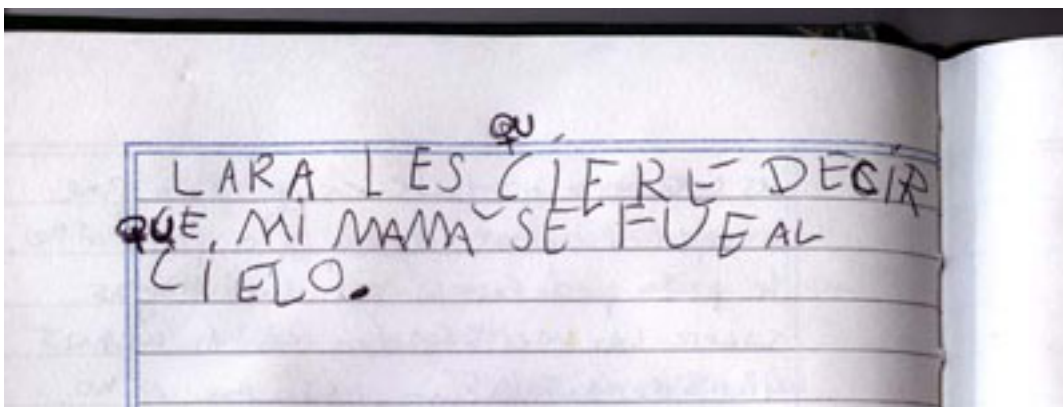
until the following day. It is comprehensible: nobody knows what will happen tomorrow, but my wife lived this tangible reality and when new bone pains appeared, unforeseen and terrible bells began ringing.

Once a month, Viviana would enter the hospital for half a day to receive treatment. During that time she transformed herself, she began speaking like the person she was before knowing she was ill. There was nothing she could do in the hospital bed, and the anguish of **“not being able to do things”**

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as taken care of by that small tube through which drops of hope trickled.

The end came. Vivi's behavior worsened with each passing day and reached unexpected levels. A brain scan revealed an enormous white spot that explained her unexplainable attitudes. In less than a month “our” death would arrive.



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To tell the truth, I feel like an idiot writing this text two weeks after her passing away and trying to choose the right words. I have discovered that no matter how hard I try, I will never find the words that can explain the moment I opened my eyes and found the lifeless body of the person I loved. Her illness—our illness, in terms of our family life—taught us to live at the margins of time and discover that the distance between life and death has an unknown dimension.

I refuse to accept moments of inactivity as well. Right now I am trying to do something during this empty hours.

I miss you.

Osvaldo Ancarola

Buenos Aires, June 2002

Viviana Ancarola (19?-2002)

Written by Osvaldo Ancarola

You can see ["My Family Has Cancer"](#) by Osvaldo Ancarola in ZoneZero's Gallery.

<http://zonezero.com/magazine/obituaries/viviana/viviana.html>