ILLUSTRATION: **FATIMA JAHAN ENA**

Dealing with a blind parent

PUJA SARKAR

Dealing with parents is hard in general and only gets harder as you grow older. Many of us have to grow up earlier as we have to start picking up after our parents sooner than we'd like to. For myself, these responsibilities began weighing on me when I was fourteen.

Parents typically choose not to go to the doctor's in fear of a potentially bad diagnosis, opting to become the literal embodiment of "ignorance is bliss." However, when you have parents in their 70s, the fact that their actions (or lack thereof) might have an active impact on their children is ignored. They don't expect you to cater to them and yet, you find yourself planning your day around what they need. This is fine if you believe that you have to take care of your parents, which is something I also want to do, but not at the expense of my own work and sanity. That's a little unfair for anyone, if you ask me.

It was more than a decade ago that I started taking care of my father who started to lose his vision, and is now fully blind. As his blindness grew, I became an intruder in my own home. Be it during the day or the night, stepping out of my room and walking around the house is hushed. Unless I move like a stealthy ninja, there's always a scream of, "Who's there?!" My answer is always, "Dad, it's me. I'm home. I live here, too."

I may have started off as a daughter fulfilling her duties, but over the years, as both his eyesight and mental state worsened, I have become a space-occupying entity who makes sure that he doesn't hurt himself.

From reading his bank statements multiple times and spelling every word aloud, to telling him the colour of the shirt he's wearing, to reading out the instructions of the medication he's prescribed himself, to watching him cry because he can no longer see my face – every day is hurtful. Every day is a test of patience and a question of how much I can endure being his eyes.

After almost a decade of dealing with my father in this state, I began drawing lines as his words and actions began taking a toll on me – something that is not socially appreciated. However, when "I can't see" turns into a statement of guilt-tripping, meant to serve as the only explanation for me to cater to his unrealistic restrictions, regulations, and cut my life experiences short, I am required to draw the line. Not to say that I've completely abandoned him. I still do what's needed, but I make sure my life is not lessened.

It's a complicated situation to be in and not everyone understands what it's like. Some think of me as an ungrateful daughter, others extend sympathy. Regardless, it's only when you live with such parents for years that you either forget yourself and start to resent them, or you accept your fate as the caretaker. Unfortunately, no one from the outside can ever truly empathise.

Puja does nothing but read Gaiman and drinks unhealthy amounts of coffee. Send her cat photos at www.facebook.com/pspspspspspspspspspuwu/

Not all men, but yes, all women

RUDAIBA MAHBUB

Whenever the struggles of women are being talked about, rebutting with the "not all men" argument can be futile for a lot of reasons. The most important being a disruption in the discourse. If someone has to resort to that argument, it usually indicates they are unaware of the myriad of struggles women have to face on a daily basis or have faced at least once in their lives.

While changes are being made in the fight for gender equality, misogyny is still rampant, either expressed in a straightforward manner or in a passive way. A girl blessed with progressive parental figures might not have to face any sort of discrimination at home, but the chances are she is not this respected in most other environments, be it work, educational institutions, or even social spaces.

Misogynistic ideologies usually give rise to harassment. Unfortunately, no woman in the world is a stranger to unwanted or unwelcome behaviour in different shapes and forms. It can come from anyone, be it a stranger, a partner, a friend, a relative, or even another woman who has deeply ingrained internalised misogyny. The harassment can be physical or verbal, sometimes subtle, oftentimes not. Starting from inappropriate personal questions, belittling comments to being stared at, or cat-called or inappropriately touched, no woman in the world is stranger to such harassment. These are situations they usually have to deal with their whole lives.

Women also have to face objectification at large, having to hear demeaning analogies where they're compared to objects to be owned and "protected." One such example is the medieval lollipop analogy, where women are encouraged to be "modest" in order to protect their "purity" and innocence. These tone-deaf analogies often promote archaic ideals of purity while glaringly exhibiting victim-blaming ideals.

The beauty standards that we have set for women is another example of this. Putting aside what a woman can do, should do or is doing, her appearance and the way she is handling herself remains a big question for most people. In the eyes of society, women remain as eye candies or muse of sorts irrespective of any other quality to them.

In order to cope with such an unkind world, women have to live with fear and practise constant hypervigilance. Even if they are not in any noticeable danger, they still have to remain alert in every situation, just in case they can have a fighting chance if the time comes. Mothers constantly warn their young daughters about tragic incidents. Consequently, every woman grows up with a deeply ingrained fear about the world they live in.

Referring back to the "not all men" argument, it may come as a surprise that people are aware not every man is a perpetrator. A perpetrator does not even necessarily have to be a man even. However, that is usually not the point of such discussions. So, the "not all men but all women" idea is there to serve as a reminder of all the problems that come as a package with being a woman. This might help bring back focus onto the core issues that the gender discrimination discourse is based on.

Rudaiba is too mad at patriarchy. Send help to calm her down a bit at rudaiba.rhymee@gmail.com

ILLUSTRATION: **SYEDA AFRIN TARANNUM**