For many families, the person most visibly under strain is the husband, assuming he is not the patient himself.

Rafiq, 42, runs a consultancy firm in Mirpur. When his wife Nasrin was diagnosed with cancer, he became the person who knew where every prescription was kept, what time school ended, and how much cash was left in the drawer.

"People think the hard part is the hospital," he says. "The hard part is coming home. Nasrin is trying to be brave for the children, and I am trying to be brave for her. Then the children look at me to see if the house is still safe. I cannot show them I am scared, so I go to the balcony and be scared there."

For the children, the diagnosis brings a different kind of uncertainty.

Suraiya, now 17, was 13 when her mother began treatment. Nobody sat her down to explain what was happening. She pieced it together from overheard phone calls and the way the adults lowered their voices.

"What I wanted was a clear sentence," she says. "Nobody gave me one, so my head filled the gaps with the worst possibilities. I stopped asking, because I could see it made my father sad when I did."

Children in these situations often take on responsibilities beyond their age: managing their younger siblings, doing chores that were once never their concern, and a quiet pressure to stop being a problem. Many families do not talk openly about the possibility of death, which leaves children carrying that thought alone, which, in itself, gives rise to future mental health concerns.

SURVIVAL IS NOT THE END OF THE STORY

Even when treatment succeeds, the family's story does not end at the discharge summary. Several families described new complications arriving years later, sometimes as side effects of the treatment itself. Some survivors go on to live full lives. Others face further illness, and some, unfortunately, do not even survive. For the family, each follow-up appointment can carry the old fear back into the house.

When a patient does pass away, the family is left with insurmountable grief, debt, and rearranged roles, often all at once. The household that spent every resource fighting for one person must decide how to recover, and that recovery is slow, rarely planned for by the health system, and rarely discussed in public.

A cancer diagnosis does not stay with one body. It moves through the household and settles on whoever is closest: the husband managing fear at the kitchen table, the child who learns the truth from a closed-door discussion, the parent whose savings and future are paused, and the relatives who sell land or move in to help.

Rehana Rahman puts the lesson plainly. "Cancer does not only come to the patient's bed," she says. "It comes to the kitchen, the school, the bank, and the bedroom. When you are the family, you do not get to leave the room. You just learn to stay."

Any serious conversation about cancer care needs to count the people sitting beside the bed, because their endurance is doing work that the system has not yet found a way to count for.

By Intisab Shahriyar

HOROSCOPE



ARIES
(MAR. 21-APR. 20)

Have honest conversations. Avoid idealising relationships. Unexpected changes could strengthen partnerships. Your lucky day this week will be Friday.



TAURUS
(APR. 21-MAY 21)

Balance daily routines. Address neglected responsibilities. Unexpected workplace changes could improve your wellbeing. Your lucky day this week will be Tuesday.



GEMINI
(MAY 22-JUN. 21)

Enjoy romantic opportunities. Question unrealistic expectations. A creative breakthrough could inspire exciting changes. Your lucky day this week will be Thursday.



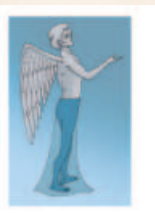
CANCER
(JUN. 22-JUL. 22)

Set boundaries with family. Communicate your needs clearly. Small household changes could bring greater comfort and freedom. Your lucky day this week will be Monday.



LEO
(JUL. 23-AUG. 22)

Speak honestly. Avoid people-pleasing. An unexpected message could resolve lingering tension. Your lucky day this week will be Sunday.



VIRGO
(AUG. 23-SEP. 23)

Review your finances. Assess purchases carefully. Unexpected changes could reveal better ways to manage resources. Your lucky day this week will be Wednesday.



LIBRA
(SEP. 24-OCT. 23)

Trust your instincts. Avoid losing yourself in people-pleasing. Honest conversations could strengthen relationships and reshape others' perceptions. Your lucky day this week will be Friday.



SCORPIO
(OCT. 24-NOV. 21)

Make time for quiet reflection. Examine recurring relationship patterns. Unexpected insights could improve your self-worth and emotional wellbeing. Your lucky day this week will be Tuesday.



SAGITTARIUS
(NOV. 22-DEC. 21)

Evaluate your friendships. Address uncomfortable truths. Honest conversations could strengthen bonds with people who genuinely support you. Your lucky day this week will be Thursday.



CAPRICORN
(DEC. 22-JAN. 20)

Review career opportunities carefully. Verify promises before committing. An unexpected conversation could open a promising professional door. Your lucky day this week will be Saturday.



AQUARIUS
(JAN. 21-FEB. 19)

Research purchases thoroughly. Question extravagant promises. Reliable people and practical ideas could help you make better long-term decisions. Your lucky day this week will be Sunday.



PISCES
(FEB. 20-MAR. 20)

Review shared finances carefully. Address concerns about intimacy. An honest conversation could improve trust and clarify boundaries. Your lucky day this week will be Monday.

