Prologue: The Day my World Changed

I COME FROM a country which was created at midnight. When I almost died it was just after midday.

One year ago I left my home for school and never returned. I was shot by a Taliban bullet and was flown out of Pakistan unconscious. Some people say I will never return home but I believe firmly in my heart that I will. To be torn from the country that you love is not something to wish on anyone.

Now, every morning when I open my eyes, I long to see my old room full of my things, my clothes all over the floor and my school prizes on the shelves. Instead I am in a country which is five hours behind my beloved homeland Pakistan and my home in the Swat Valley. But my country is centuries behind this one. Here there is any convenience you can imagine. Water running from every tap, hot or cold as you wish; lights at the flick of a switch, day and night, no need for oil lamps; ovens to cook on that don't need anyone to go and fetch gas cylinders from the bazaar. Here everything is so modern one can even find food ready cooked in packets.

When I stand in front of my window and look out, I see tall buildings, long roads full of vehicles moving in orderly lines, neat green hedges and lawns, and tidy pavements to walk on. I close my eyes and for a moment I am back in my valley – the high snow-topped mountains, green waving fields and fresh blue rivers – and my heart smiles when it looks at the people of Swat. My mind transports me back to my school and there I am reunited with my friends and teachers. I meet my best friend Moniba and we sit together, talking and joking as if I had never left.

Then I remember I am in Birmingham, England.

The day when everything changed was Tuesday, 9 October 2012. It wasn't the best of days to start with as it was the middle of school exams, though as a bookish girl I didn't mind them as much as some of my classmates.

That morning we arrived in the narrow mud lane off Haji Baba Road in our usual procession of brightly painted rickshaws, sputtering diesel fumes, each one crammed with five or six girls. Since the time of the Taliban our school has had no sign and the ornamented brass door in a white wall across from the woodcutter's yard gives no hint of what lies beyond.

For us girls that doorway was like a magical entrance to our own special world. As we skipped through, we cast off our head-scarves like winds puffing away clouds to make way for the sun then ran helter-skelter up the steps. At the top of the steps was an open courtyard with doors to all the classrooms. We dumped our backpacks in our rooms then gathered for morning assembly under the sky, our backs to the mountains as we stood to attention. One girl commanded, '*Assaan bash!* ' or 'Stand at ease!' and we clicked our heels and responded, '*Allah*.' Then she said, '*Hoo she yar!*' or 'Attention!' and we clicked our heels again. '*Allah*.'

The school was founded by my father before I was born, and on the wall above us KHUSHAL SCHOOL was painted proudly in red and white letters. We went to school six mornings a week and as a fifteen-year-old in Year 9 my classes were spent chanting chemical equations or studying Urdu grammar; writing stories in English with morals like 'Haste makes waste' or drawing diagrams of blood circulation – most of my classmates wanted to be doctors. It's hard to imagine that anyone would see that as a threat. Yet, outside the door to the school lay not only the noise and craziness of

although she knew her family would never agree to it, so she told everyone she wanted to be a doctor. It's hard for girls in our society to be anything other than teachers or doctors if they can work at all. I was different – I never hid my desire when I changed from wanting to be a doctor to wanting to be an inventor or a politician. Moniba always knew if something was wrong. 'Don't worry,' I told her. 'The Taliban have never come for a small girl.'

When our bus was called, we ran down the steps. The other girls all covered their heads before emerging from the door and climbing up into the back. The bus was actually what we call a *dyna*, a white Toyota TownAce truck with three parallel benches, one along either side and one in the middle. It was cramped with twenty girls and three teachers. I was sitting on the left between Moniba and a girl from the year below called Shazia Ramzan, holding our exam folders to our chests and our school bags under our feet.

After that it is all a bit hazy. I remember that inside the *dyna* it was hot and sticky. The cooler days were late coming and only the faraway mountains of the Hindu Kush had a frosting of snow. The back where we sat had no windows, just thick plastic sheeting at the sides which flapped and was too yellowed and dusty to see through. All we could see was a little stamp of open sky out of the back and glimpses of the sun, at that time of day a yellow orb floating in the dust that streamed over everything.

I remember that the bus turned right off the main road at the army checkpoint as always and rounded the corner past the deserted cricket ground. I don't remember any more.

In my dreams about the shooting my father is also in the bus and he is shot with me, and then there are men everywhere and I am searching for my father.

In reality what happened was we suddenly stopped. On our left was the tomb of Sher Mohammad Khan, the finance minister of the first ruler of Swat, all overgrown with grass, and on our right the snack factory. We must have been less than 200 metres from the checkpoint.

We couldn't see in front, but a young bearded man in light-coloured clothes had stepped into the road and waved the van down.

'Is this the Khushal School bus?' he asked our driver. Usman Bhai Jan thought this was a stupid question as the name was painted on the side. 'Yes,' he said.

'I need information about some children,' said the man.

'You should go to the office,' said Usman Bhai Jan.

As he was speaking another young man in white approached the back of the van. 'Look, it's one of those journalists coming to ask for an interview,' said Moniba. Since I'd started speaking at events with my father to campaign for girls' education and against those like the Taliban who want to hide us away, journalists often came, even foreigners, though not like this in the road.

The man was wearing a peaked cap and had a handkerchief over his nose and mouth as if he had flu. He looked like a college student. Then he swung himself onto the tailboard at the back and leaned in right over us.

'Who is Malala?' he demanded.

No one said anything, but several of the girls looked at me. I was the only girl with my face not covered.

That's when he lifted up a black pistol. I later learned it was a Colt 45. Some of the girls screamed. Moniba tells me I squeezed her hand.

My friends say he fired three shots, one after another. The first went through my left eye socket and out under my left shoulder. I slumped forward onto Moniba, blood coming from my left ear, so the

mentor Akbar Khan, who although he had not gone to college himself lent my father money so he could. Like my mother, Akbar Khan may not have had much of a formal education, but he had another kind of wisdom. My father often spoke of the kindness of Akbar Khan and Nasir Pacha to illustrate that if you help someone in need you might also receive unexpected aid.

My father arrived at college at an important moment in Pakistan's history. That summer, while he was walking in the mountains, our dictator General Zia was killed in a mysterious plane crash, which many people said was caused by a bomb hidden in a crate of mangoes. During my father's first term at college national elections were held, which were won by Benazir Bhutto, daughter of the prime minister who had been executed when my father was a boy. Benazir was our first female prime minister and the first in the Islamic world. Suddenly there was a lot of optimism about the future.

Student organisations which had been banned under Zia became very active. My father quickly got involved in student politics and became known as a talented speaker and debater. He was made general secretary of the Pakhtoon Students Federation (PSF), which wanted equal rights for Pashtuns. The most important jobs in the army, bureaucracy and government are all taken by Punjabis because they come from the biggest and most powerful province.

The other main student organisation was Islami Jamaat-e-Talaba, the student wing of the religious party Jamaat-e-Islami, which was powerful in many universities in Pakistan. They provided free textbooks and grants to students but held deeply intolerant views and their favourite pastime was to patrol universities and sabotage music concerts. The party had been close to General Zia and done badly in the elections. The president of the students' group in Jehanzeb College was Ihsan ul-Haq Haqqani. Though he and my father were great rivals, they admired each other and later became friends. Haqqani says he is sure my father would have been president of the PSF and become a politician if he had been from a rich khan family. Student politics was all about debating and charisma, but party politics required money.

One of their most heated debates in that first year was over a novel. The book was called *The Satanic Verses* by Salman Rushdie, and it was a parody of the Prophet's life set in Bombay. Muslims widely considered it blasphemous and it provoked so much outrage that it seemed people were talking of little else. The odd thing was no one had even noticed the publication of the book to start with – it wasn't actually on sale in Pakistan – but then a series of articles appeared in Urdu newspapers by a mullah close to our intelligence service, berating the book as offensive to the Prophet and saying it was the duty of good Muslims to protest. Soon mullahs all over Pakistan were denouncing the book, calling for it to be banned, and angry demonstrations were held. The most violent took place in Islamabad on 12 February 1989, when American flags were set alight in front of the American Centre – even though Rushdie and his publishers were British. Police fired into the crowd, and five people were killed. The anger wasn't just in Pakistan. Two days later Ayatollah Khomeini, the supreme leader of Iran, issued a fatwa calling for Rushdie's assassination.

My father's college held a heated debate in a packed room. Many students argued that the book should be banned and burned and the fatwa upheld. My father also saw the book as offensive to Islam but believes strongly in freedom of speech. 'First, let's read the book and then why not respond with our own book,' he suggested. He ended by asking in a thundering voice my grandfather would have been proud of, 'Is Islam such a weak religion that it cannot tolerate a book written against it? Not *my* Islam!'

when he heard the news he came running. My mother was worried about telling him he had a daughter not a son, but he says he looked into my eyes and was delighted.

'Malala was a lucky girl,' says Hidayatullah. 'When she was born our luck changed.'

But not immediately. On Pakistan's fiftieth anniversary on 14 August 1997 there were parades and commemorations throughout the country. However, my father and his friends said there was nothing to celebrate as Swat had only suffered since it had merged with Pakistan. They wore black armbands to protest, saying the celebrations were for nothing, and were arrested. They had to pay a fine they could not afford.

A few months after I was born the three rooms above the school became vacant and we all moved in. The walls were concrete and there was running water so it was an improvement on our muddy shack, but we were still very cramped as we were sharing it with Hidayatullah and we almost always had guests. That first school was a mixed primary school and very small. By the time I was born it had five or six teachers and around a hundred pupils paying a hundred rupees a month. My father was teacher, accountant and principal. He also swept the floors, whitewashed the walls and cleaned the bathrooms. He used to climb up electricity poles to hang banners advertising the school, even though he was so afraid of heights that when he got to the top of the ladder his feet shook. If the water pump stopped working, he would go down the well to repair it himself. When I saw him disappear down there I would cry, thinking he wouldn't come back. After paying the rent and salaries, there was little money left for food. We drank green tea as we could not afford milk for regular tea. But after a while the school started to break even and my father began to plan a second school, which he wanted to call the Malala Education Academy.

I had the run of the school as my playground. My father tells me even before I could talk I would toddle into classes and talk as if I was a teacher. Some of the female staff like Miss Ulfat would pick me up and put me on their lap as if I was their pet or even take me home with them for a while. When I was three or four I was placed in classes for much older children. I used to sit in wonder, listening to everything they were being taught. Sometimes I would mimic the teachers. You could say I grew up in a school.

As my father had found with Naeem, it is not easy to mix business and friendship. Eventually Hidayatullah left to start his own school and they divided the students, each taking two of the four years. They did not tell their pupils as they wanted people to think the school was expanding and had two buildings. Though Hidayatullah and my father were not speaking at that time, Hidayatullah missed me so much he used to visit me.

It was while he was visiting one afternoon in September 2001 that there was a great commotion and other people started arriving. They said there had been a big attack on a building in New York. Two planes had flown into it. I was only four and too young to understand. Even for the adults it was hard to imagine – the biggest buildings in Swat are the hospital and a hotel, which are two or three storeys. It seemed very far away. I had no idea what New York and America were. The school was my world and my world was the school. We did not realise then that 9/11 would change our world too, and would bring war into our valley.

the business of the state.' My father says the problem is that Jinnah negotiated a piece of real estate for us but not a state. He died of tuberculosis just a year after the creation of Pakistan and we haven't stopped fighting since. We have had three wars against India and what seems like endless killing inside our own country.

We Muslims are split between Sunnis and Shias – we share the same fundamental beliefs and the same Holy Quran but we disagree over who was the right person to lead our religion when the Prophet died in the seventh century. The man chosen to be the leader or caliph was Abu Bakr, a close friend and adviser of the Prophet and the man he chose to lead prayers as he lay on his deathbed. 'Sunni' comes from the Arabic for 'one who follows the traditions of the Prophet'. But a smaller group believed that leadership should have stayed within the Prophet's family and that Ali, his son-in-law and cousin, should have taken over. They became known as Shias, shortened from Shia-t-Ali, the Party of Ali.

Every year Shias commemorate the killing of the Prophet's grandson Hussein Ibn Ali at the battle of Karbala in the year 680 with a festival called Muharram. They whip themselves into a bloody frenzy with metal chains or razor blades on strings until the streets run red. One of my father's friends is a Shia and he cries whenever he talks about Hussein's death at Karbala. He gets so emotional you would think the events had happened just the night before, not more than 1,300 years ago. Our own founder, Jinnah, was a Shia, and Benazir Bhutto's mother was also a Shia from Iran.

Most Pakistanis are Sunnis like us – more than eighty per cent – but within that we are again many groups. By far the biggest group is the Barelvis, who are named after a nineteenth-century madrasa in Bareilly, which lies in the Indian state of Uttar Pradesh. Then we have the Deobandi, named after another famous nineteenth-century madrasa in Uttar Pradesh, this time in the village of Deoband. They are very conservative and most of our madrasas are Deobandi. We also have the Ahl-e-Hadith (people of the Hadith), who are Salafists. This group is more Arab-influenced and even more conservative than the others. They are what the West calls fundamentalists. They don't accept our saints and shrines – many Pakistanis are also mystical people and gather at Sufi shrines to dance and worship. Each of these strands has many different subgroups.

The *mufti* on Khushal Street was a member of Tablighi Jamaat, a Deobandi group that holds a huge rally every year at its headquarters in Raiwind, near Lahore, attended by millions of people. Our last dictator General Zia used to go there, and in the 1980s, under his regime, the Tablighis became very powerful. Many of the imams appointed to preach in army barracks were Tablighis and army officers would often take leave and go on preaching tours for the group.

One night, after the *mufti* had failed to persuade our landlady to cancel our lease, he gathered some of the influential people and elders of our *mohalla* into a delegation and turned up at our door. There were seven people – some other senior Tablighis, a mosque keeper, a former jihadi and a shopkeeper – and they filled our small house.

My father seemed worried and shooed us into the other room, but the house was small so we could hear every word. 'I am representing the Ulema and Tablighian and Taliban,' Mullah Ghulamullah said, referring to not just one but two organisations of Muslim scholars to give himself gravitas. 'I am representing good Muslims and we all think your girls' school is *haram* and a blasphemy. You should close it. Girls should not be going to school,' he continued. 'A girl is so sacred she should be in purdah, and so private that there is no lady's name in the Quran as God doesn't want her to be named.'

madrasa on a hill near the main town of Khar, killing eighty-two people, many of them young boys. The Americans said it was the al-Qaeda training camp which had featured in the group's videos and that the hill was riddled with tunnels and gun emplacements. Within a few hours of the attack, an influential local cleric called Faqir Mohammad, who had run the madrasa, announced that the deaths would be avenged by suicide bombings against Pakistani soldiers.

My father and his friends were worried and called together local elders and leaders for a peace conference. It was a bitterly cold night in January but 150 people gathered.

'It's coming here,' my father warned. 'The fire is reaching the valley. Let's put out the flames of militancy before they reach here.'

But no one would listen. Some people even laughed, including a local political leader sitting in the front row.

'Mr Khan,' my father said to him, 'you know what happened to the people of Afghanistan. They are now refugees and they're living with us. The same is happening with Bajaur. The same will happen to us, mark my words, and we will have no shelter, no place to migrate to.'

But the expression on the man's face was mocking. 'Look at this man,' he seemed to be saying of my father. 'I am a khan. Who would dare kick me out of this area?'

My father came home frustrated. 'I have a school, but I am neither a khan nor a political leader. I have no platform,' he said. 'I am only one small man.'

We remembered how scared we had been that morning and started raising money at school. Everyone brought what they could. My father went to everybody he knew, asking for donations of food, clothing and money, and I helped my mother collect blankets. My father raised money from the Swat Association of Private Schools and the Global Peace Council to add to what we had collected at school. The total came to more than one million rupees. A publishing company in Lahore which supplied our schoolbooks sent five trucks of food and other essentials.

We were terribly worried about our family in Shangla, jammed between those narrow mountains. Finally we got news from a cousin. In my father's small village eight people had been killed and many homes destroyed. One of them was the house of the local cleric, Maulana Khadim, which fell down crushing his four beautiful daughters. I wanted to go to Shangla with my father and the trucks but he told me it would be too dangerous.

When he returned a few days later he was ashen. He told us that the last part of the journey had been very difficult. Much of the road had collapsed into the river and large boulders had fallen and blocked the way. Our family and friends said they had thought it was the end of the world. They described the roar of rocks sliding down hills and everyone running out of their houses reciting the Quran, the screams as roofs crashed down and the howls of the buffaloes and goats. As the tremors continued they had spent the entire day outdoors and then the night too, huddling together for warmth, even though it was bitterly cold in the mountains.

To start with the only rescue workers who came were a few from a locally based foreign aid agency and volunteers from the Tehrike-Nifaz-e-Sharia-e-Mohammadi (TNSM) or Movement for the Enforcement of Islamic Law, the group founded by Sufi Mohammad that had sent men to fight in Afghanistan. Sufi Mohammad had been in jail since 2002 when Musharraf arrested a number of militant leaders after American pressure, but his organisation still continued and was being run by his son-in-law Maulana Fazlullah. It was hard for the authorities to reach places like Shangla because most of the roads and bridges had gone and local government had been wiped out throughout the region. We saw an official from the United Nations say on television that it was the 'worst logistical nightmare that the UN had ever faced'.

General Musharraf called it a 'test of the nation' and announced that the army had set up Operation Lifeline – our army likes giving their operations names. There were lots of pictures on the news of army helicopters laden with supplies and tents, but in many of the small valleys the helicopters could not land and the aid packages they dropped often rolled down slopes into rivers. In some places, when the helicopters flew in the locals all rushed underneath them, which meant they could not drop supplies safely.

But some aid did get in. The Americans were quick as they had thousands of troops and hundreds of helicopters in Afghanistan so could easily fly in supplies and show they were helping us in our hour of need, though some crews covered the American markings on their helicopters, fearing attack. For many in the remote areas it was the first time they had seen a foreigner.

Most of the volunteers came from Islamic charities or organisations but some of these were fronts for militant groups. The most visible of all was Jamaat-ul-Dawa (JuD), the welfare wing of Lashkare-Taiba. LeT had close links to the ISI and was set up to liberate Kashmir, which we believe should be part of Pakistan not India as its population is mostly Muslim. The leader of LeT is a fiery professor from Lahore called Hafiz Saeed, who is often on television calling on people to attack India. When the earthquake happened and our government did little to help, JuD set up relief camps patrolled by

‘Is he right, *Aba*?’ I asked my father. I remembered how frightening the earthquake had been.

‘No, *Jani*,’ he replied. ‘He is just fooling people.’

My father said the radio station was the talk of the staffroom. By then our schools had about seventy teachers, around forty men and thirty women. Some of the teachers were anti-Fazlullah but many supported him. People thought that he was a good interpreter of the Holy Quran and admired his charisma. They liked his talk of bringing back Islamic law as everyone was frustrated with the Pakistani justice system, which had replaced ours when we were merged into the country. Cases such as land disputes, common in our area, which used to be resolved quickly now took ten years to come to court. Everyone wanted to see the back of the corrupt government officials sent into the valley. It was almost as if they thought Fazlullah would recreate our old princely state from the time of the wali.

Within six months people were getting rid of their TVs, DVDs and CDs. Fazlullah’s men collected them into huge heaps on the streets and set them on fire, creating clouds of thick black smoke that reached high into the sky. Hundreds of CD and DVD shops closed voluntarily and their owners were paid compensation by the Taliban. My brothers and I were worried as we loved our TV, but my father reassured us that we were not getting rid of it. To be safe we moved it into a cupboard and watched it with the volume low. The Taliban were known to listen at people’s doors then force their way in, take the TVs and smash them to pieces on the street. Fazlullah hated the Bollywood movies we so loved, which he denounced as un-Islamic. Only the radio was allowed and all music except for Taliban songs was declared *haram*.

One day my father went to visit a friend in hospital and found lots of patients listening to cassettes of Fazlullah’s sermons. ‘You must meet Maulana Fazlullah,’ people told him. ‘He’s a great scholar’.

‘He’s actually a high-school dropout whose real name isn’t even Fazlullah,’ my father retorted, but they wouldn’t listen. My father became depressed because people had begun to embrace Fazlullah’s words and his religious romanticism. ‘It’s ridiculous,’ my father would say, ‘that this so-called scholar is spreading ignorance.’

Fazlullah was particularly popular in remote areas where people remembered how TNSM volunteers had helped during the earthquake when the government was nowhere to be seen. On some mosques they set up speakers connected to radios so his broadcasts could be heard by everyone in the village and in the fields. The most popular part of his show came every evening when he would read out people’s names. He’d say, ‘Mr So-and-so was smoking *chars* but has stopped because it’s sinful,’ or, ‘Mr X has kept his beard and I congratulate him,’ or, ‘Mr Y voluntarily closed down his CD shop.’ He told them they would have their reward in the hereafter. People liked to hear their names on the radio; they also liked to hear which of their neighbours were sinful so they could gossip: ‘Have you heard about So-and-so?’

Mullah FM made jokes about the army. Fazlullah denounced Pakistani government officials as ‘infidels’ and said they were opposed to bringing in sharia law. He said that if they did not implement it, his men would ‘enforce it and tear them to pieces’. One of his favourite subjects was the injustice of the feudal system of the khans. Poor people were happy to see the khans getting their comeuppance. They saw Fazlullah as a kind of Robin Hood and believed that when Fazlullah took over he would give the khans’ land to the poor. Some of the khans fled. My father was against ‘khanism’ but he said the Taliban were worse.

My father’s friend Hidayatullah had become a government official in Peshawar and warned us,

as sending a message of hope and strength to the rest of the world. She was also our only political leader to speak out against the militants and even offered to help American troops hunt for bin Laden inside Pakistani borders.

Some people obviously did not like that. On 18 October 2007 we were all glued to the TV as she walked down the steps of the plane in Karachi and wept as she stepped onto Pakistani soil after almost nine years in exile. When she paraded on an open-top bus through the streets, hundreds of thousands of people flocked to see her. They had travelled from all over the country and many of them were carrying small children. Some released white doves, one of which flew to perch on Benazir's shoulder. The crowds were so large that the bus moved at a walking pace. We stopped watching after a while as it was clearly going to take hours.

I had gone to bed when just before midnight the militants struck. Benazir's bus was blown up in a wave of orange flame. My father told me the news when I woke up the next morning. He and his friends were in such a state of shock that they had not gone to bed. Luckily, Benazir survived because she had gone downstairs to an armoured compartment to rest her feet just before the explosions, but 150 people had been killed. It was the biggest bomb ever to have gone off in our country. Many of the dead were students who had made a human chain around the bus. They called themselves Martyrs for Benazir. At school that day everyone was subdued, even those who had opposed Benazir. We were devastated but also thankful that she had survived.

About a week later the army came to Swat, making lots of noise with their jeeps and helicopters. We were at school when the helicopters first arrived and were very excited. We ran outside and they threw toffees and tennis balls down to us, which we rushed to catch. Helicopters were a rare sight in Swat, but since our house was close to the local army headquarters they sometimes flew right over us. We used to hold competitions for who would collect the most toffees.

One day a man from along the street came and told us that it had been announced in the mosques that there would be a curfew the next day. We didn't know what a curfew was and were anxious. There was a hole in the wall to our neighbours' house, Safina's family, through which we used to communicate with them, and we knocked on the wall so they would come to the hole. 'What does it mean this curfew?' we asked. When they explained, we didn't even come out of our rooms because we thought something bad might happen. Later the curfew took over our lives.

We heard on the news that Musharraf had sent 3,000 troops into our valley to confront the Taliban. They occupied all government and private buildings which they thought were of strategic importance. Until then it had seemed as if the rest of Pakistan was ignoring what was happening in Swat. The following day a suicide bomber attacked another army truck in Swat, killing seventeen soldiers and thirteen civilians. Then all that night we heard *dar dar dar*, the boom of cannons and machine guns from the hills. It was hard to sleep.

On the TV the next day we heard that fighting had erupted in the hills to the north. School was closed and we stayed at home, trying to understand what was going on. The fighting was taking place outside Mingora though we could still hear gunfire. The military said it had killed more than a hundred militants, but then on the first day of November around 700 Taliban overran an army position at Khwazakhela. Some fifty men deserted from the Frontier Corps and another forty-eight were captured and then paraded around. Fazlullah's men humiliated them by taking their uniforms and guns and giving them each 500 rupees to make their way back. The Taliban then took two police stations in Khwazakhela and moved on to Madyan, where more police officers gave up their weapons. Very

11

The Clever Class

IT WAS SCHOOL that kept me going in those dark days. When I was in the street it felt as though every man I passed might be a *talib*. We hid our school bags and our books in our shawls. My father always said that the most beautiful thing in a village in the morning is the sight of a child in a school uniform, but now we were afraid to wear them.

We had moved up to high school. Madam Maryam said no one wanted to teach our class as we asked so many questions. We liked to be known as the clever girls. When we decorated our hands with henna for holidays and weddings, we drew calculus and chemical formulae instead of flowers and butterflies. My rivalry with Malka-e-Noor continued, but after the shock of being beaten by her when she first joined our school, I worked hard and had managed to regain my position on the school honours board for first in class. She usually came second and Moniba third. The teachers told us examiners first looked at how much we had written, then presentation. Moniba had the most beautiful writing and presentation of the three of us, but I always told her she did not trust herself enough. She worked hard as she worried that if she got low marks her male relatives might use it as an excuse to stop her education. I was weakest in maths – once I got zero in a test – but I worked hard at it. My chemistry teacher Sir Obaidullah (we called all our teachers Sir or Miss) said I was a born politician because, at the start of oral exams, I would always say, 'Sir, can I just say you are the best teacher and yours is my favourite class.'

Some parents complained that I was being favoured because my father owned the school, but people were always surprised that despite our rivalry we were all good friends and not jealous of each other. We also competed in what we call board exams. These would select the best students from private schools in the district, and one year Malka-e-Noor and I got exactly the same marks. We did another paper at school to see who would get the prize and again we got equal marks. So people wouldn't think I was getting special treatment, my father arranged for us to do papers at another school, that of his friend Ahmad Shah. Again we got the same, so we both got the prize.

There was more to school than work. We liked performing plays. I wrote a sketch based on *Romeo and Juliet* about corruption. I played Romeo as a civil servant interviewing people for a job. The first candidate is a beautiful girl, and he asks her very easy questions such as, 'How many wheels does a bicycle have?' When she replies, 'Two,' he says, 'You are so brilliant.' The next candidate is a man so Romeo asks him impossible things like, 'Without leaving your chair tell me the make of the fan in the room above us.' 'How could I possibly know?' asks the candidate. 'You're telling me you have a PhD and you don't know!' replies Romeo. He decides to give the job to the girl.

The girl was played by Moniba, of course, and another classmate Attiya played the part of my assistant to add some salt, pepper and masala with her witty asides. Everyone laughed a lot. I like to mimic people, and in breaks my friends used to beg me to impersonate our teachers, particularly Sir Obaidullah. With all the bad stuff going on in those days, we needed small, small reasons to laugh.

The army action at the end of 2007 had not got rid of the Taliban. The army had stayed in Swat and were everywhere in the town, yet Fazlullah still broadcast every day on the radio and throughout 2008 the situation was even worse than before with bomb blasts and killings. All we talked about in

not, their parents won't allow it. I have a father who isn't scared, who stands by me. He said, 'You are a child and it's your right to speak.' The more interviews I gave, the stronger I felt and the more support we received. I was only eleven but I looked older, and the media seemed to like hearing from a young girl. One journalist called me *takra jenai* – a 'bright shining young lady' and another said you are 'pakha jenai' – you are wise beyond your years. In my heart was the belief that God would protect me. If I am speaking for my rights, for the rights of girls, I am not doing anything wrong. It's my duty to do so. God wants to see how we behave in such situations. There is a saying in the Quran, 'The falsehood has to go and the truth will prevail.' *If one man, Fazlullah, can destroy everything, why can't one girl change it?* I wondered. I prayed to God every night to give me strength.

The media in Swat were under pressure to give positive coverage to the Taliban – some even respectfully called the Taliban spokesman Muslim Khan 'School *dada'*, when in reality he was destroying schools. But many local journalists were unhappy about what was happening to their valley and they gave us a powerful platform as we would say things they didn't dare to.

We didn't have a car so we went by rickshaw, or one of my father's friends would take us to the interviews. One day my father and I went to Peshawar to appear on a BBC Urdu talk show hosted by a famous columnist called Wasatullah Khan. We went with my father's friend Fazal Maula and his daughter. Two fathers and two daughters. To represent the Taliban they had Muslim Khan, who wasn't in the studio. I was a bit nervous but I knew it was important as many people all over Pakistan would be listening. 'How dare the Taliban take away my basic right to education?' I said. There was no response from Muslim Khan because his phone interview had been pre-recorded. How can a recording respond to live questions?

Afterwards people congratulated me. My father laughed and said I should go into politics. 'Even as a toddler you talked like a politician,' he teased. But I never listened to my interviews. I knew these were very small steps.

Our words were like the eucalyptus blossoms of spring tossed away on the wind. The destruction of schools continued. On the night of 7 October 2008 we heard a series of faraway blasts. The next morning we learned that masked militants had entered the Sangota Convent School for girls and the Excelsior College for boys and blown them up using improvised explosive devices (IEDs). The teachers had already been evacuated as they had received threats earlier. These were famous schools, particularly Sangota, which dated from the time of the last wali and was well known for academic excellence. They were also big – Excelsior had over 2,000 pupils and Sangota had 1,000. My father went there after the bombings and found the buildings completely razed to the ground. He gave interviews to TV reporters amid broken bricks and burned books and returned home horrified. 'It's all just rubble,' he said.

Yet my father remained hopeful and believed there would be a day when there was an end to the destruction. What really depressed him was the looting of the destroyed schools – the furniture, the books, the computers were all stolen by local people. He cried when he heard this, 'They are vultures jumping on a dead body.'

The next day he went on a live show on the Voice of America and angrily condemned the attacks. Muslim Khan, the Taliban spokesman, was on the phone. 'What was so wrong with these two schools that you should bomb them?' my father asked him.

Muslim Khan said that Sangota was a convent school teaching Christianity and that Excelsior was co-educational, teaching girls and boys together. 'Both things are false!' replied my father. 'Sangota

14

A Funny Kind of Peace

WHEN MY BROTHERS' schools reopened after the winter break, Khushal said he would rather stay at home like me. I was cross. 'You don't realise how lucky you are!' I told him. It felt strange to have no school. We didn't even have a television set as someone had stolen ours while we were in Islamabad, using my father's 'getaway' ladder to get inside.

Someone gave me a copy of *The Alchemist* by Paulo Coelho, a fable about a shepherd boy who travels to the Pyramids in search of treasure when all the time it's at home. I loved that book and read it over and over again. 'When you want something all the universe conspires in helping you achieve it,' it says. I don't think that Paulo Coelho had come across the Taliban or our useless politicians.

What I didn't know was that Hai Kakar was holding secret talks with Fazlullah and his commanders. He had got to know them in interviews, and was urging them to rethink their ban on girls' education.

'Listen, Maulana,' he told Fazlullah. 'You killed people, you slaughtered people, you beheaded people, you destroyed schools and still there was no protest in Pakistan. But when you banned girls' education people spoke out. Even the Pakistan media, which has been so soft on you till now, is outraged.'

The pressure from the whole country worked, and Fazlullah agreed to lift the ban for girls up to ten years old – Year 4. I was in Year 5 and some of us pretended we were younger than we were. We started going to school again, dressed in ordinary clothes and hiding our books under our shawls. It was risky but it was the only ambition I had had then. We were lucky too that Madam Maryam was brave and resisted the pressure to stop working. She had known my father since she was ten and they trusted each other completely – she used to signal to him to wind up when he spoke for too long, which was often!

'The secret school is our silent protest,' she told us.

I didn't write anything about it in my diary. If they had caught us they would have flogged or even slaughtered us as they had Shabana. Some people are afraid of ghosts, some of spiders or snakes – in those days we were afraid of our fellow human beings.

On the way to school I sometimes saw the Taliban with their caps and long dirty hair. Most of the time they hid their faces. They were awkward, horrible-looking. The streets of Mingora were very empty as a third of the inhabitants had left the valley. My father said you couldn't really blame people for leaving as the government had no power. There were now 12,000 army troops in the region – four times as many as their estimates of the Taliban – along with tanks, helicopters and sophisticated weapons. Yet seventy per cent of Swat was under Taliban control.

About a week after we had returned to school, on 16 February 2009, we were woken one night by the sound of gunfire. Our people traditionally fire rifles in celebration of births and weddings but even that had stopped during the conflict. So at first we thought we were in danger. Then we heard the news. The gunfire was in celebration. A peace deal had been struck between the Taliban and the provincial government, which was now under the control of the ANP, not the mullahs. The government had agreed to impose sharia law throughout Swat and in return the militants would stop

sat there in our famous mosque, Tabligh Markaz, like the master of our land. He was the guarantor that the Taliban would lay down their arms and there would be peace in the valley. People visited him to pay homage and kiss his hand because they were tired of war and suicide bombings.

In March I stopped writing my blog as Hai Kakar thought there was not much more to say. But to our horror things didn't change much. If anything the Taliban became even more barbaric. They were now state-sanctioned terrorists. We were disillusioned and disappointed. The peace deal was merely a mirage. One night the Taliban held what we call a flag march near our street and patrolled the roads with guns and sticks as if they were the army.

They were still patrolling the Cheena Bazaar. One day my mother went shopping with my cousin as she was getting married and wanted to buy things for her wedding. A *talib* accosted them and blocked their way. 'If I see you again wearing a scarf but no burqa I will beat you,' he said. My mother is not easily scared and remained composed. 'Yes, OK. We will wear burqas in future,' she told him. My mother always covers her head but the burqa is not part of our Pashtun tradition.

We also heard that Taliban had attacked a shopkeeper because an unaccompanied woman was looking at the lipsticks in his beauty shop. 'There is a banner in the market saying women are not allowed to be in your shop unaccompanied by a male relative and you have defied us,' they said. He was badly beaten and nobody helped him.

One day I saw my father and his friends watching a video on his phone. It was a shocking scene. A teenage girl wearing a black burqa and red trousers was lying face down on the ground being flogged in broad daylight by a bearded man in a black turban. 'Please stop it!' she begged in Pashto in between screams and whimpers as each blow was delivered. 'In the name of Allah, I am dying!'

You could hear the Taliban shouting, 'Hold her down. Hold her hands down.' At one point during the flogging her burqa slips and they stop for a moment to adjust it then carry on beating her. They hit her thirty-four times. A crowd had gathered but did nothing. One of the woman's relatives even volunteered to help hold her down.

A few days later the video was everywhere. A woman film-maker in Islamabad got hold of it and it was shown on Pakistan TV over and over, and then round the world. People were rightly outraged, but this reaction seemed odd to us as it showed they had no idea of the awful things going on in our valley. I wished their outrage extended to the Taliban's banning of girls' education. Prime Minister Yusuf Raza Gilani called for an inquiry and made a statement saying the flogging of the girl was against the teachings of Islam. 'Islam teaches us to treat women politely,' he said.

Some people even claimed the video was fake. Others said that the flogging had taken place in January, before the peace deal, and had been released now to sabotage it. But Muslim Khan confirmed it was genuine. 'She came out of her house with a man who was not her husband so we had to punish her,' he said. 'Some boundaries cannot be crossed.'

Around the same time in early April another well-known journalist called Zahid Hussain came to Swat. He went to visit the DC at his official residence and found him hosting what appeared to be a celebration of the Taliban takeover. There were several senior Taliban commanders with armed escorts including Muslim Khan and even Faqir Mohammad, the leader of the militants in Bajaur, who were in the middle of a bloody fight with the army. Faqir had a $200,000 bounty on his head yet there he was sitting in a government official's house having dinner. We also heard that an army brigadier went to prayers led by Fazlullah.

'There cannot be two swords in one sheath,' said one of my father's friends. 'There cannot be two

16

The Valley of Sorrows

IT ALL SEEMED like a bad dream. We had been away from our valley for almost three months and as we drove back past

Churchill's Picket, past the ancient ruins on the hill and the giant Buddhist stupa, we saw the wide Swat River and my father began to weep. Swat seemed to be under complete military control. The vehicle we were in even had to pass through an explosives check before we could head up the Malakand Pass. Once we got over the other side and down into the valley it seemed there were army checkpoints everywhere and soldiers had made nests for their machine guns on so many of the rooftops.

As we drove through villages we saw buildings in ruins and burned-out vehicles. It made me think of old war movies or the video games my brother Khushal loves to play. When we reached Mingora we were shocked. The army and Taliban had fought street to street and almost every wall was pockmarked with bullet holes. There was the rubble of blown-up buildings which the Taliban had used as hideouts, and piles of wreckage, twisted metal and smashed-up signs. Most of the shops had heavy metal shutters; those that didn't had been looted. The city was silent and emptied of people and traffic as if a plague had descended. The strangest sight of all was the bus station. Usually it's a complete confusion of Flying Coaches and rickshaws but now it was completely deserted. We even saw plants growing up through the cracks in the paving. We had never seen our city like this.

At least there was no sign of the Taliban.

It was 24 July 2009, a week after our prime minister had announced that the Taliban had been cleared out. He promised that the gas supply had been restored and that the banks were reopening, and called on the people of Swat to return. In the end as many as half of its 1.8 million population had left our valley. From what we could see, most of them weren't convinced it was safe to return.

As we drew close to home we all fell silent, even my little brother, Atal the chatterbox. Our home was near Circuit House, the army headquarters, so we were worried it might have been destroyed in the shelling. We'd also heard that many homes had been looted. We held our breath as my father unlocked the gate. The first thing we saw was that in the three months we'd been away the garden had become a jungle.

My brothers immediately rushed off to check on their pet chickens. They came back crying. All that remained of the chickens was a pile of feathers and the bones of their small bodies entangled as if they had died in an embrace. They had starved to death.

I felt so sad for my brothers but I had to check on something of my own. To my joy I found my school bag still packed with my books, and I gave thanks that my prayers had been answered and that they were safe. I took out my books one by one and just stared at them. Maths, physics, Urdu, English, Pashto, chemistry, biology, *Islamiyat*, Pakistan studies. Finally I would be able to return to school without fear.

Then I went and sat on my bed. I was overwhelmed.

We were lucky our house had not been broken into. Four or five of the houses on our street had been looted and TVs and gold jewellery had been taken. Safina's mother next door had deposited her

My father's friend Ahmad Shah called it a 'controlled peace, not a durable peace'. But gradually people returned to the valley because Swat is beautiful and we cannot bear to be away from it for long.

Our school bell rang again for the first time on 1 August. It was wonderful to hear that sound and run through the doorway and up the steps as we used to. I was overjoyed to see all my old friends. We had so many stories from our time as IDPs. Most of us had stayed with friends or family but some had been in the camps. We knew we were lucky. Many children had to have their classes in tents because the Taliban had destroyed their schools. And one of my friends, Sundus, had lost her father, who had been killed in an explosion.

It seemed like everyone knew I had written the BBC diary. Some thought my father had done it for me but Madam Maryam, our principal, told them, 'No. Malala is not just a good speaker but also a good writer.'

That summer there was only one topic of conversation in my class. Shiza Shahid, our friend from Islamabad, had finished her studies in Stanford and invited twenty-seven girls from the Khushal School to spend a few days in the capital seeing the sights and taking part in workshops to help us get over the trauma of living under the Taliban. Those from my class were me, Moniba, Malka-e-Noor, Rida, Karishma and Sundus, and we were chaperoned by my mother and Madam Maryam.

We left for the capital on Independence Day, 14 August, and travelled by bus, everyone brimming with excitement. Most of the girls had only ever left the valley when we became IDPs. This was different and very much like the holidays we read about in novels. We stayed in a guesthouse and did lots of workshops on how to tell our stories so people outside would know what was going on in our valley and help us. Right from the first session I think Shiza was surprised how strong-willed and vocal we all were. 'It's a room full of Malalas!' she told my father.

We also had fun doing things like going to the park and listening to music, which might seem ordinary for most people but which in Swat had become acts of political protest. And we saw the sights. We visited the Faisal Mosque at the base of the Margalla Hills, which was built by the Saudis for millions of rupees. It is huge and white and looks like a shimmering tent suspended between minarets. We went on our first ever visit to the theatre to see an English play called *Tom, Dick and Harry* and had art classes. We ate at restaurants and had our first visit to a McDonald's. There were lots of firsts although I had to miss a meal in a Chinese restaurant because I was on a TV show called *Capital Talk*. To this day I still haven't got to try duck pancakes!

Islamabad was totally different to Swat. It was as different for us as Islamabad is to New York. Shiza introduced us to women who were lawyers and doctors and also activists, which showed us that women could do important jobs yet still keep their culture and traditions. We saw women in the streets without purdah, their heads completely uncovered. I stopped wearing my shawl over my head in some of the meetings, thinking I had become a modern girl. Later I realised that simply having your head uncovered isn't what makes you modern.

We were there one week and predictably Moniba and I quarrelled. She saw me gossiping with a girl in the year above and told me, 'Now you are with Resham and I am with Rida.'

Shiza wanted to introduce us to influential people. In our country of course this often means the military. One of our meetings was with Major General Athar Abbas, the chief spokesman for the army and its head of public relations. We drove to Islamabad's twin city of Rawalpindi to see him in his

of the army operation to expel the Taliban that we had all had to leave and found ourselves in this situation now. So Madam Maryam and I wrote an email to General Abbas explaining the situation. He was very kind and sent us 1,100,000 rupees so my father could pay everyone three months' back pay. The teachers were so happy. Most had never received so much money at once. Miss Hera called my father in tears, grateful that her wedding could go ahead as planned.

This didn't mean we went easy on the army. We were very unhappy about the army's failure to capture the Taliban leadership, and my father and I continued to give lots of interviews. We were often joined by my father's friend Zahid Khan, a fellow member of the Swat Qaumi Jirga. He was also the president of the All Swat Hotels Association, so he was particularly eager for life to go back to normal so that tourists could return. Like my father he was very outspoken and had been threatened too. One night in November 2009 he had had a very narrow escape. Zahid Khan was returning to his home from a meeting with army officials at Circuit House late at night when he was ambushed. Fortunately, many of his family live in the same area and they exchanged fire with the attackers, forcing them to flee.

Then on 1 December 2009 there was a suicide attack on a well-known local ANP politician and member of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa assembly, Dr Shamsher Ali Khan. He had been greeting friends and constituents for Eid at his *hujra*, just a mile from Imam Deri where Fazlullah's headquarters had been, when the bomb went off. Dr Shamsher had been an outspoken critic of the Taliban. He died on the spot and nine other people were injured. People said the bomber was about eighteen years old. The police found his legs and other parts of his body.

A couple of weeks after that our school was asked to take part in the District Child Assembly Swat, which had been set up by the charity UNICEF and by the Kinar Kor (My Home) Foundation for orphans. Sixty students from all over Swat had been chosen as members. They were mostly boys although eleven girls from my school went along. The first meeting was in a hall with lots of politicians and activists. We held an election for speaker and I won! It was strange to stand up there on the stage and have people address me as Madam Speaker, but it felt good to have our voices heard. The assembly was elected for a year and we met almost every month. We passed nine resolutions calling for an end to child labour and asking for help to send the disabled and street children to school, as well as for the reconstruction of all the schools destroyed by the Taliban. Once the resolutions were agreed, they were sent to officials and a handful were even acted on.

Moniba, Ayesha and I also started learning about journalism from a British organisation called the Institute for War and Peace Reporting, which ran a project called Open Minds Pakistan. It was fun learning how to report issues properly. I had become interested in journalism after seeing how my own words could make a difference and also from watching the *Ugly Betty* DVDs about life at an American magazine. This was a bit different – when we wrote about subjects close to our hearts these were topics like extremism and the Taliban rather than clothes and hairstyles.

All too soon it was another year of exams. I beat Malka-e-Noor for first place again although it was close. Our headmistress had tried to persuade her to be a school prefect but she said she couldn't do anything that might distract her from her studies. 'You should be more like Malala and do other things,' said Madam Maryam. 'It's just as important as your education. Work isn't everything.' But I couldn't blame her. She really wanted to please her parents, particularly her mother.

It wasn't the same Swat as before – maybe it never would be – but it was returning to normal. Even some of the dancers of Banr Bazaar had moved back, although they were mostly making DVDs to sell,

reduced to rubble. The school, hospital and electricity station along the main road were all razed to the ground.

No one could understand how this had happened. People had lived by the river in Swat for 3,000 years and always seen it as our lifeline, not a threat, and our valley as a haven from the outside world. Now we had become 'the valley of sorrows', said my cousin Sultan Rome. First the earthquake, then the Taliban, then the military operation and now, just as we were starting to rebuild, devastating floods arrived to wash all our work away. People were desperately worried that the Taliban would take advantage of the chaos and return to the valley.

My father sent food and aid to Shangla using money collected by friends and the Swat Association of Private Schools. Our friend Shiza and some of the activists we had met in Islamabad came to Mingora and distributed lots of money. But just like during the earthquake, it was mainly volunteers from Islamic groups who were the first to arrive in the more remote and isolated areas with aid. Many said the floods were another reproof from God for the music and dancing we had enjoyed at the recent festivals. The consolation this time, however, was that there was no radio to spread this message!

While all this suffering was going on, while people were losing their loved ones, their homes and their livelihoods, our president, Asif Zardari, was on holiday at a chateau in France. 'I am confused, *Aba*,' I told my father. 'What's stopping each and every politician from doing good things? Why would they not want our people to be safe, to have food and electricity?'

After the Islamic groups the main help came from the army. Not just our army. The Americans also sent helicopters, which made some people suspicious. One theory was that the devastation had been created by the Americans using something called HAARP (High Frequency Active Auroral Research Program) technology, which causes huge waves under the ocean, thus flooding our land. Then, under the pretext of bringing in aid, they could legitimately enter Pakistan and spy on all our secrets.

Even when the rain finally ceased life was still very difficult. We had no clean water and no electricity. In August we had our first case of cholera in Mingora and soon there was a tent of patients outside the hospital. Because we were cut off from supply routes, what little food was available was extremely expensive. It was the peach and onion season and farmers were desperate to save their harvests. Many of them made hazardous journeys across the churning, swollen river on boats made from rubber tyres to try to bring their produce to market. When we found peaches for sale we were so happy.

There was less foreign help than there might have been at another time. The rich countries of the West were suffering from an economic crisis, and President Zardari's travels around Europe had made them less sympathetic. Foreign governments pointed out that most of our politicians weren't paying any income tax, so it was a bit much to ask hard-pressed taxpayers in their own countries to contribute. Foreign aid agencies were also worried about the safety of their staff after a Taliban spokesperson demanded that the Pakistan government reject help from Christians and Jews. No one doubted they were serious. The previous October, the World Food Programme office in Islamabad had been bombed and five aid workers were killed.

In Swat we began to see more signs that the Taliban had never really left. Two more schools were blown up and three foreign aid workers from a Christian group were kidnapped as they returned to their base in Mingora and then murdered. We received other shocking news. My father's friend Dr Mohammad Farooq, the vice chancellor of Swat University, had been killed by two gunmen who burst into his office. Dr Farooq was an Islamic scholar and former member of the Jamaat-e-Islami party,

He'd had nothing to do with the Taliban. He was just a simple shopkeeper. Afterwards the army apologised to her and said they'd been confused by his name and picked up the wrong person.

It wasn't just poor women who came to our house. One day a rich businessman arrived from Muscat in the Gulf. He told my father that his brother and five or six nephews had all disappeared, and he wanted to know if they had been killed or were being held so he knew whether to find new husbands for their wives. One of them was a *maulana* and my father managed to get him freed.

This wasn't just happening in Swat. We heard there were thousands of missing all over Pakistan. Many people protested outside courthouses or put up posters of their missing but got nowhere.

Meanwhile our courts were busy with another issue. In Pakistan we have something called the Blasphemy Law, which protects the Holy Quran from desecration. Under General Zia's Islamisation campaign, the law was made much stricter so that anyone who 'defiles the sacred name of the Holy Prophet' can be punished by death or life imprisonment.

One day in November 2010 there was a news report about a Christian woman called Asia Bibi who had been sentenced to death by hanging. She was a poor mother of five who picked fruit for a living in a village in Punjab. One hot day she had fetched water for her fellow workers but some of them refused to drink it, saying that the water was 'unclean' because she was a Christian. They believed that as Muslims they would be defiled by drinking with her. One of them was her neighbour, who was angry because she said Asia Bibi's goat had damaged her water trough. They had ended up in an argument, and of course just as in our arguments at school there were different versions of who said what. One version was that they tried to persuade Asia Bibi to convert to Islam. She replied that Christ had died on the cross for the sins of Christians and asked what the Prophet Mohammad had done for Muslims. One of the fruit pickers reported her to the local imam, who informed the police. She spent more than a year in jail before the case went to court and she was sentenced to death.

Since Musharraf had allowed satellite television, we now had lots of channels. Suddenly we could witness these events on television. There was outrage round the world and all the talk shows covered the case. One of the few people who spoke out for Asia Bibi in Pakistan was the governor of Punjab, Salman Taseer. He himself had been a political prisoner as well as a close ally of Benazir. Later on he became a wealthy media mogul. He went to visit Asia Bibi in jail and said that President Zardari should pardon her. He called the Blasphemy Law a 'black law', a phrase which was repeated by some of our TV anchors to stir things up. Then some imams at Friday prayers in the largest mosque in Rawalpindi condemned the governor.

A couple of days later, on 4 January 2011, Salman Taseer was gunned down by one of his own bodyguards after lunch in an area of fashionable coffee bars in Islamabad. The man shot him twenty-six times. He later said that he had done it for God after hearing the Friday prayers in Rawalpindi. We were shocked by how many people praised the killer. When he appeared in court even lawyers showered him with rose petals. Meanwhile the imam at the late governor's mosque refused to perform his funeral prayers and the president did not attend his funeral.

Our country was going crazy. How was it possible that we were now garlanding murderers?

Shortly after that my father got another death threat. He had spoken at an event to commemorate the third anniversary of the bombing of the Haji Baba High School. At the event my father had spoken passionately. 'Fazlullah is the chief of all devils!' he shouted. 'Why hasn't he been caught?' Afterwards people told him to be very careful. Then an anonymous letter came to our house addressed to my father. It started with '*Asalaamu alaikum*' – 'Peace be upon you' – but it wasn't

he leave Swat. 'Where can I go?' he asked my mother. 'I cannot leave the area. I am president of the Global Peace Council, the spokesperson of the council of elders, the president of the Swat Association of Private Schools, director of my school and head of my family.'

His only precaution was to change his routine. One day he would go to the primary school first, another day to the girls' school, the next day to the boys' school. I noticed wherever he went he would look up and down the street four or five times.

Despite the risks, my father and his friends continued to be very active, holding protests and press conferences. 'Why was Zahid Khan attacked if there's peace? Who attacked him?' they demanded. 'Since we've come back from being IDPs we haven't seen any attacks on army and police. The only targets now are peace-builders and civilians.'

The local army commander was not happy. 'I tell you there are no terrorists in Mingora,' he insisted. 'Our reports say so.' He claimed that Zahid Khan had been shot because of a dispute over property.

Zahid Khan was in hospital for twelve days then at home recuperating for a month after having plastic surgery to repair his nose. But he refused to be silent. If anything he became more outspoken, particularly against the intelligence agencies, as he was convinced they were behind the Taliban. He wrote opinion pieces in newspapers saying that the conflict in Swat had been manufactured. 'I know who targeted me. What we need to know is who imposed these militants on us,' he wrote. He demanded that the chief justice set up a judicial commission to investigate who had brought the Taliban into our valley.

He drew a sketch of his attacker and said the man should be stopped before shooting anyone else. But the police did nothing to find him.

After the threats against me my mother didn't like me walking anywhere and insisted I get a rickshaw to school and take the bus home even though it was only a five-minute walk. The bus dropped me at the steps leading up to our street. A group of boys from our neighbourhood used to hang round there. Sometimes there was a boy called Haroon with them, who was a year older than me and used to live on our street. We had played together as children and later he told me he was in love with me. But then a pretty cousin came to stay with our neighbour Safina and he fell in love with her instead. When she said she wasn't interested he turned his attention back to me. After that they moved to another street and we moved into their house. Then Haroon went away to army cadet college.

But he came back for the holidays, and one day when I returned home from school he was hanging around on the street. He followed me to the house and put a note inside our gate where I would see it. I told a small girl to fetch it for me. He had written, 'Now you have become very popular, I still love you and know you love me. This is my number, call me.'

I gave the note to my father and he was angry. He called Haroon and told him he would tell his father. That was the last time I saw him. After that the boys stopped coming to our street, but one of the small boys who played with Atal would call out suggestively, 'How is Haroon?' whenever I passed by. I got so fed up with it that one day I told Atal to bring the boy inside. I shouted at him so angrily that he stopped.

I told Moniba what had happened once we were friends again. She was always very careful about interactions with boys because her brothers watched everything. 'Sometimes I think it's easier to be a Twilight vampire than a girl in Swat,' I sighed. But really I wished that being hassled by a boy was my biggest problem.

20

Who is Malala?

ONE MORNING IN late summer when my father was getting ready to go to school he noticed that the painting of me looking at the sky which we had been given by the school in Karachi had shifted in the night. He loved that painting and had hung it over his bed. Seeing it crooked disturbed him. 'Please put it straight,' he asked my mother in an unusually sharp tone.

That same week our maths teacher Miss Shazia arrived at school in a hysterical state. She told my father that she'd had a nightmare in which I came to school with my leg badly burned and she had tried to protect it. She begged him to give some cooked rice to the poor, as we believe that if you give rice, even ants and birds will eat the bits that drop to the floor and will pray for us. My father gave money instead and she was distraught, saying that wasn't the same.

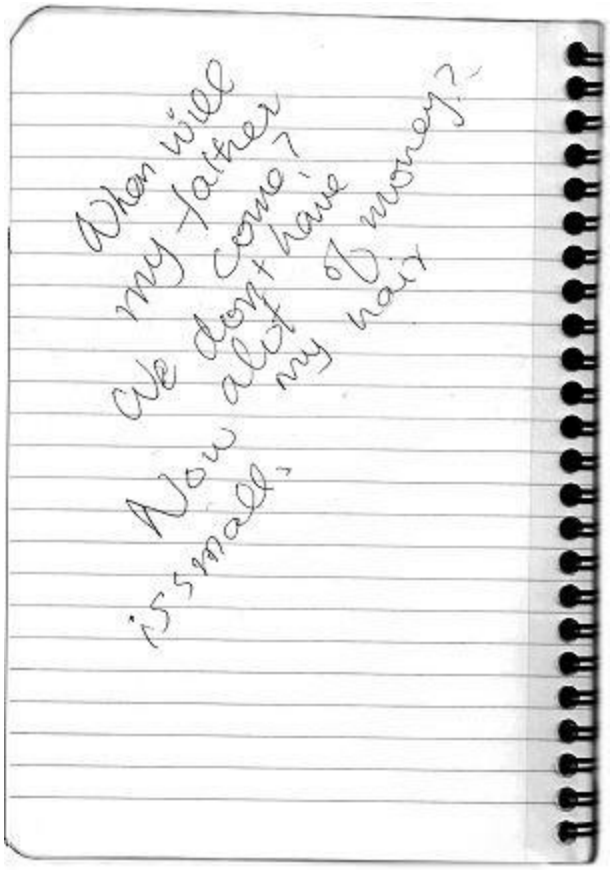
We laughed at Miss Shazia's premonition, but then I started having bad dreams too. I didn't say anything to my parents but whenever I went out I was afraid that Taliban with guns would leap out at me or throw acid in my face, as they had done to women in Afghanistan. I was particularly scared of the steps leading up to our street where the boys used to hang out. Sometimes I thought I heard footsteps behind me or imagined figures slipping into the shadows.

Unlike my father, I took precautions. At night I would wait until everyone was asleep – my mother, my father, my brothers, the other family in our house and any guests we had from our village – then I'd check every single door and window. I'd go outside and make sure the front gate was locked. Then I would check all the rooms, one by one. My room was at the front with lots of windows and I kept the curtains open. I wanted to be able to see everything, though my father told me not to. 'If they were going to kill me they would have done it in 2009,' I said. But I worried someone would put a ladder against the house, climb over the wall and break in through a window.

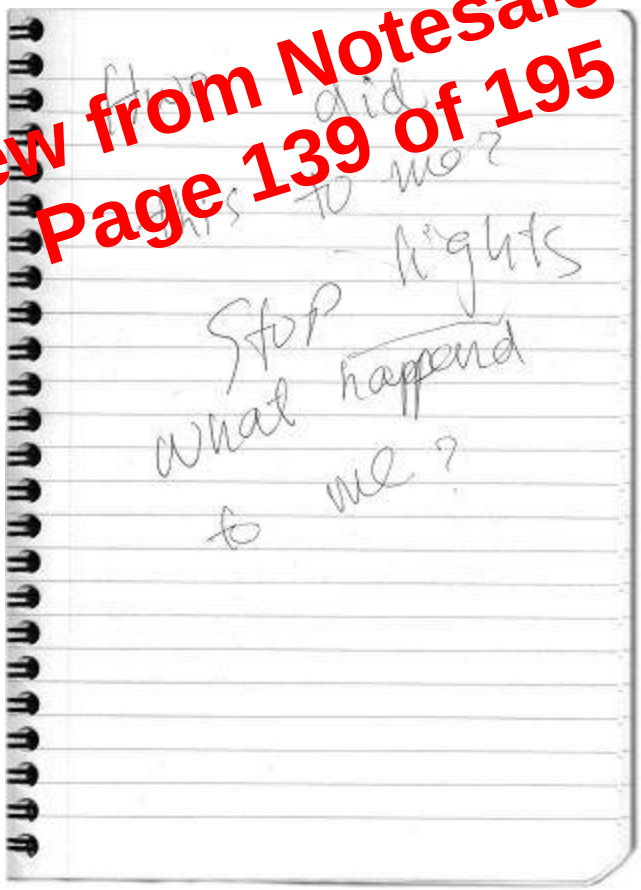
Then I'd pray. At night I used to pray a lot. The Taliban think we are not Muslims but we are. We believe in God more than they do and we trust him to protect us. I used to say the *Ayat al-Kursi*, the Verse of the Throne from the second *surah* of the Quran, the Chapter of the Cow. This is a very special verse and we believe that if you say it three times at night your home will be safe from *shayatin* or devils. When you say it five times your street will be safe, and seven times will protect the whole area. So I'd say it seven times or even more. Then I'd pray to God, 'Bless us. First our father and family, then our street, then our whole *mohalla*, then all Swat.' Then I'd say, 'No, all Muslims.' Then, 'No, not just Muslims; bless all human beings.'

The time of year I prayed most was during exams. It was the one time when my friends and I did all five prayers a day like my mother was always trying to get me to do. I found it particularly hard in the afternoon, when I didn't want to be dragged away from the TV. At exam time I prayed to Allah for high marks though our teachers used to warn us, 'God won't give you marks if you don't work hard. God showers us with his blessings but he is honest as well.'

So I studied hard too. Usually I liked exams as a chance to show what I could do. But when they came round in October 2012 I felt under pressure. I did not want to come second to Malka-e-Noor again as I had in March. Then she had beaten me by not just one or two marks, the usual difference between us, but by five marks! I had been taking extra lessons with Sir Amjad who ran the boys'



'Hwo did this to me?' I wrote, my letters still scrambled. 'What happened to me?'



I also wrote 'Stop lights' as the bright lights were making my head ache.
'Something bad happened to you,' said Dr Fiona.
'Was I shot? Was my father shot?' I wrote.
She told me that I had been shot on the school bus. She said two of my friends on the bus had also

supportive since the beginning.

Thanks to Pakistan's former High Commissioner in London, Wajid Shamsul Hasan, and especially to Aftab Hasan Khan, the Head of Chancery, and his wife Erum Gilani, who were a great support. We were strangers and they helped us adjust to this land and find a place to live. Also thanks to driver Shahid Hussein.

On the book, our special thanks to Christina, who turned into reality what was just a dream. We never imagined how a lady not from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa or Pakistan could show such remarkable love and understanding of our country.

We have been extremely lucky to have a literary agent like Karolina Sutton, who has thrown herself into this project and our cause with such passion and commitment, and also an incredible team of editors: Judy Clain and Arzu Tahsin were determined to tell our story in the best way possible.

Thanks go to Abdul Hai Kakar, my mentor and great friend of my father, who thoroughly reviewed the book, and my father's friend Inam ul-Rahim for his valuable contributions on the history of our region.

I would also like to thank Angelina Jolie for her generous contribution to the Malala Fund.

Thanks to all the teachers of the Khushal School, who have kept the school alive and maintained it in my father's absence.

We thank God for the day a lady called Shahida Choudhury walked through our door. She has become an incredible support to our family and we have learned from her the real meaning of being a volunteer.

Last and not least I would like to thank Moniba for being such a good and supportive friend and my brothers Khushal and Atal for keeping me still a child.

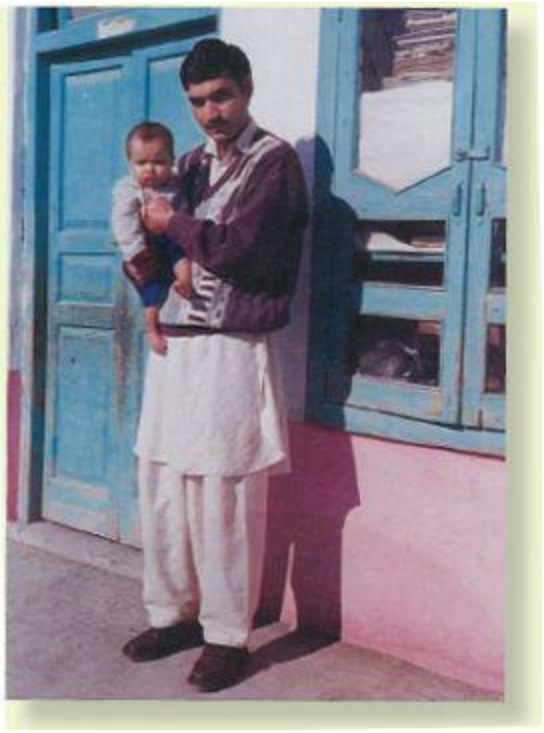
Malala Yousafzai

Any foreigner who has had the good fortune to visit Swat will know how hospitable its people are, and I would like to thank everyone who helped me there, particularly Maryam and the teachers and students of the Khushal School, Ahmad Shah in Mingora and Sultan Rome for showing me around Shangla. I would also like to thank General Asim Bajwa, Colonel Abid Ali Askari, Major Tariq and the team at Inter Services Public Relations for facilitating my visit. Thanks also to Adam Ellick for generously sharing his notes.

In the UK, the staff of Queen Elizabeth Hospital could not have been more helpful, particularly Fiona Alexander and Dr Kayani. My agent David Godwin was wonderful as always, and it was a real privilege to have as editors Judy Clain and Arzu Tahsin. I'm also grateful to Martin Ivens, my editor at the *Sunday Times*, for allowing me the time for this important project. My husband Paulo and son Lourenço could not have been more understanding as this book took over my life.

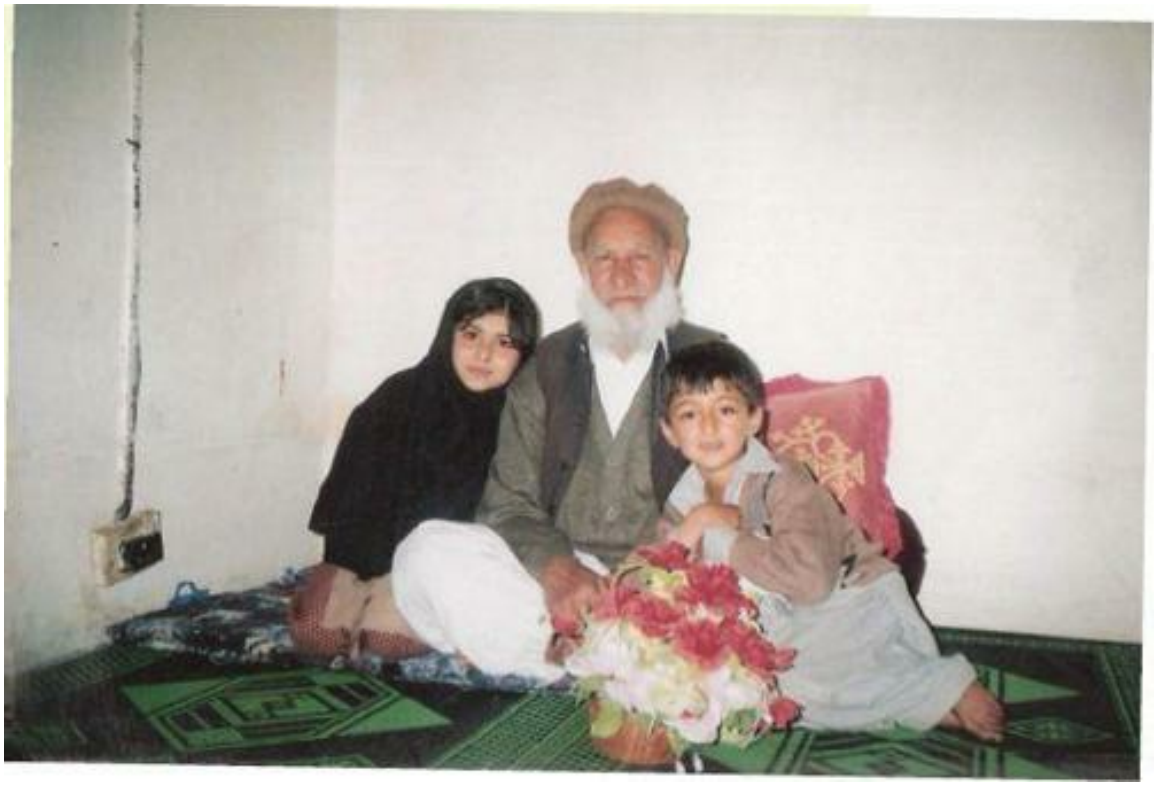
Above all, thanks to Malala and her wonderful family for sharing their story with me.

Christina Lamb

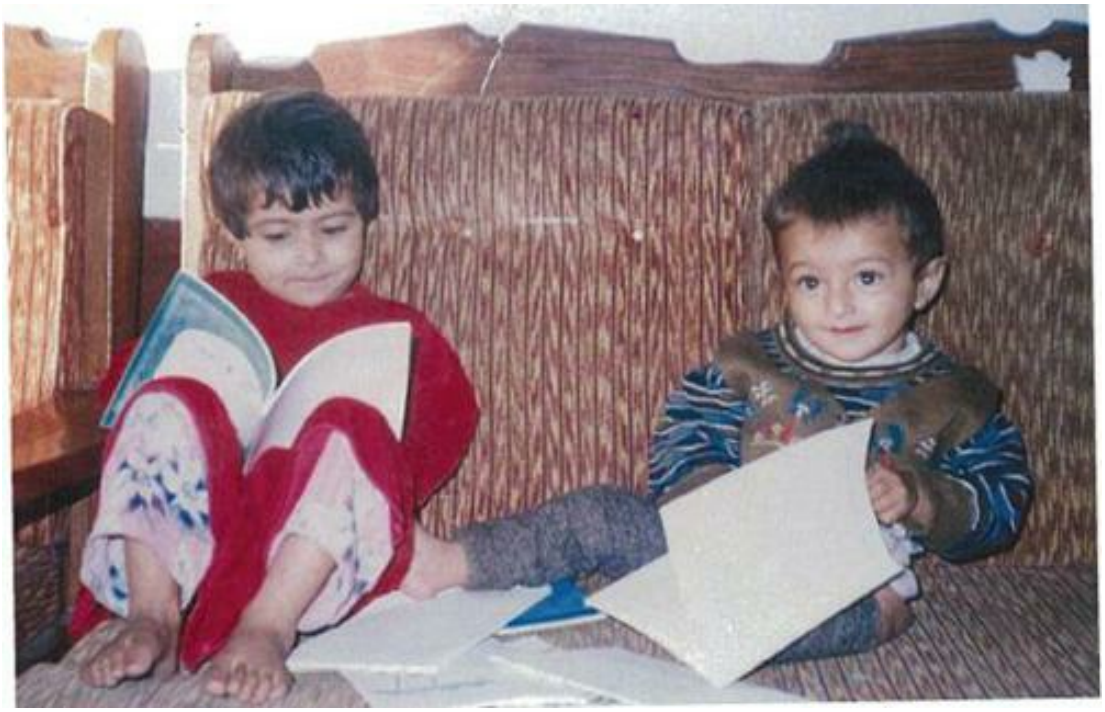


My father’s friend Hidayatullah holding me inside our first school building

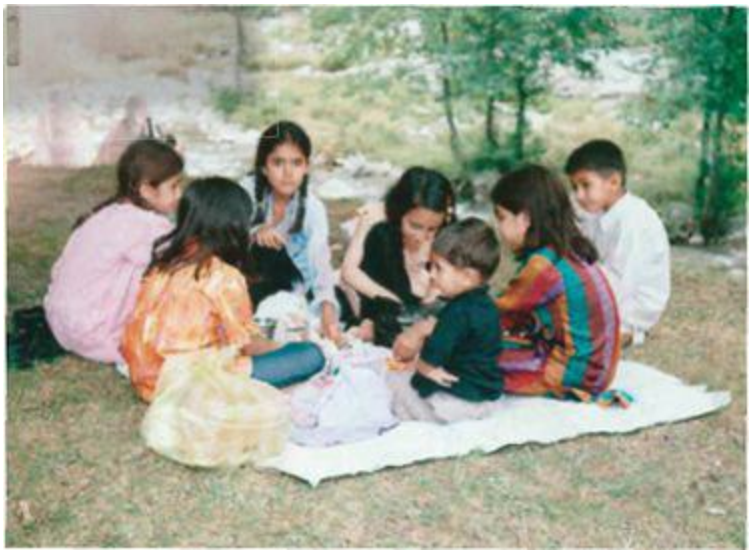
My father’s childhood home



Our paternal grandfather, Baba, with me and Khushal in our house in Mingora



Reading with my brother Khushal



A school picnic

Making a speech to honour the people killed in the Haji Baba suicide attack

In our garden in Mingora, building a snowman with Atal

At school reading a story: 'All That Glitters Is Not Gold'

First days in the Birmingham hospital

Our headmistress, Madam Maryam (left), with Shazia, one of the girls who was shot with me