

again and was rewarded on 6 December with my first trip out of the hospital. I told Yma that I loved nature so she arranged for two staff to take me and my mother on an outing to the Birmingham Botanical Gardens, not far from the hospital. They didn't let my father come as they thought he would be recognised, having been in the media a lot. Even so I was very happy, my first time back in the outside world, seeing Birmingham and England.

They told me to sit in the back of the car in the middle, not next to a window, which was annoying as I wanted to see everything in this new country. I didn't realise they were trying to protect my head from any bump. When we entered the gardens and I saw all the green plants and trees, it was a powerful reminder of home. I kept saying, 'This one is in my valley,' and, 'We also have this one.' I am very proud of the beautiful plants of my valley. It was odd seeing all the other visitors, for whom it was just a normal day out. I felt like Dorothy at the end of her journey. My mother was so excited she called my father. 'For the first time I am happy,' she said. But it was ice cold and so we went into the café and had delicious tea and cakes, something called a 'cream tea'.

Two days after that I had my first visitor from outside the family – the president of Pakistan, Asif Zardari. The hospital did not want him to come as they knew it would mean a media frenzy, but it was difficult for my father to refuse. Not only was Mr Zardari our head of state but he had said the government would pay all my medical bills, which would end up being around £200,000. They had also rented an apartment for my parents in the centre of Birmingham so they could move out of the hostel. The visit was on Saturday, 8 December, and the whole thing was like something out of a James Bond movie.

There were a lot of journalists gathered outside from early on, who naturally assumed the president would be brought to me in the hospital. Instead I was wrapped up in a big purple parka with a hood, taken down through the staff entrance and driven to the hospital offices. We drove right past journalists and photographers, some of whom were up in trees, and they did not even notice. Then I sat and waited in an office, playing a game called Elf Bowling on the computer and beating my brother Atal even though it was the first time I had played it. When Zardari and his party arrived in two cars they were brought in through the back. He came with about ten people including his chief of staff, his military secretary and the Pakistan High Commissioner in London, who had taken over from Dr Fiona as my official guardian in the UK till my parents arrived.

The president was first briefed by doctors not to mention my face. Then he came in to see me with his youngest daughter Asifa, who is a few years older than me. They brought me a bouquet of flowers. He touched my head, which is our tradition, but my father was worried as I had nothing but skin, no bone to protect my brain, and my head beneath the shawl was concave. Afterwards the president sat with my father, who told him that we were fortunate I had been brought to the UK. 'She might have survived in Pakistan but she wouldn't have had the rehabilitation and would have been disfigured,' he said. 'Now her smile will return.'

Mr Zardari told the high commissioner to give my father a post as education attaché so he would have a salary to live on and a diplomatic passport so he would not need to seek asylum to stay in the UK. My father was relieved as he was wondering how he would pay for things. Gordon Brown, in his UN role, had also asked him to be his adviser, an unpaid position, and the president said that was fine; he could be both. After the meeting Mr Zardari described me to the media as 'a remarkable girl and a credit to Pakistan'. But still not everyone in Pakistan was so positive. Though my father had tried to keep it from me I knew some people were saying he had shot me, or that I wasn't shot at all,