

'The Girl Shot in the Head, Birmingham'

I WOKE UP on 16 October, a week after the shooting. I was thousands of miles away from home with a tube in my neck to help me breathe and unable to speak. I was on the way back to critical care after another CT scan, and flitted between consciousness and sleep until I woke properly.

The first thing I thought when I came round was, *Thank God I'm not dead*. But I had no idea where I was. I knew I was not in my homeland. The nurses and doctors were speaking English though they seemed to all be from different countries. I was speaking to them but no one could hear me because of the tube in my neck. To start with my left eye was very blurry and everyone had two noses and four eyes. All sorts of questions flew through my waking brain: *Where was I? Who had brought me there? Where were my parents? Was my father alive? I was terrified.*

Dr Javid, who was there when I was brought round, says he will never forget the look of fear and bewilderment on my face. He spoke to me in Urdu. The only thing I knew was that Allah had blessed me with a new life. A nice lady in a headscarf held my hand and said, '*Asalaamu alaikum*,' which is our traditional Muslim greeting. Then she started saying prayers in Urdu and reciting verses of the Quran. She told me her name was Rehanna and she was the Muslim chaplain. Her voice was soft and her words were soothing, and I drifted back to sleep.

I dreamed I wasn't really in hospital.

When I woke again the next day I noticed I was in a strange green room with no windows and very bright lights. It was an intensive care cubicle in the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. Everything was very clean and shiny, not like the hospital in Mingora.

A nurse gave me a pencil and a pad. I couldn't write properly. The words came out wrong. I wanted to write my father's phone number. I couldn't space letters. Dr Javid brought me an alphabet board so I could point to the letters. The first words I spelt out were 'father' and 'country'. The nurse told me I was in Birmingham, but I had no idea where that was. Only later did they bring me an atlas so I could see it was in England. I didn't know what had happened. The nurses weren't telling me anything. Even my name. Was I still Malala?

My head was aching so much that even the injections they gave me couldn't stop the pain. My left ear kept bleeding and my left hand felt funny. Nurses and doctors kept coming in and out. The nurses asked me questions and told me to blink twice for yes. No one told me what was going on or who had brought me to the hospital. I thought they didn't know themselves. I could feel that the left side of my face wasn't working properly. If I looked at the nurses or doctors for too long my left eye watered. I didn't seem to be able to hear from my left ear and my jaw wouldn't move properly. I gestured to people to stand on my right.

Then a kind lady called Dr Fiona came and gave me a white teddy bear. She said I should call it Junaid and she would explain why later. I didn't know who Junaid was so I named it Lily. She also brought me a pink exercise book to write in. The first two questions my pen wrote were, 'Why have I no father?' and 'My father has no money. Who will pay for all this?'

'Your father is safe,' she replied. 'He is in Pakistan. Don't worry about payment.'

I repeated the questions to anyone who came in. They all said the same. But I was not convinced. I