

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.