mother blessed me with prayers.

I still presumed that the reason they weren't with me was because my father didn't have the money to pay for my treatment. That's why he was still in Pakistan, to sell our land in the village and also our school. But our land was small and I knew our school buildings and our house were rented, so what could he sell? Perhaps he was asking rich people for a loan.

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Even after the call, my parents were not completely reassured. They hadn't actually heard my voice and were still cut off from the outside world. People who visited them were bringing conflicting reports. One of those visitors was Major General Ghulam Qamar, head of military operations in Swat. 'There is good news coming from the UK,' he told my father. 'We are very happy our daughter has survived.' He said 'our' because now I was seen as the daughter of the nation.

The general told my father that they were carrying out door-to-door searches throughout Swat and monitoring the borders. He said they knew that the people who had targeted me came from a gang of twenty-two Taliban men and that they were the same gang who had attacked Zahid Khan, my father's friend who had been shot two months earlier.

My father said nothing but he was outraged. The army had been saying for ages that there were no Taliban in Mingora and that they had cleared them all out. Now this general was telling him that there had been twenty-two of them in our town for at least two months. The army had also insisted Zahid Khan was shot in a family feud and not by the Taliban. Now they were saying I had been targeted by the same Taliban as him. My father wanted to say, 'You knew there were Taliban in the valley for two months. You knew they wanted to kill my daughter and you didn't stop them?' But he realised it would get him nowhere.

The general hadn't finished. He told my father that although it was good news that I had regained consciousness there was a problem with my eyesight. My father was confused. How could the officer have information he didn't? He was worried that I would be blind. He imagined his beloved daughter, her face shining, walking around in lifelong darkness asking, '*Aba*, where am I?' So awful was this news that he couldn't tell my mother, even though he is usually hopeless at keeping secrets, particularly from her. Instead he told God, 'This is unacceptable. I will give her one of my own eyes.' But then he was worried that at forty-three years old his own eyes might not be very good. He hardly slept that night. The next morning he asked the major in charge of security if he could borrow his phone to call Colonel Junaid. 'I have heard that Malala can't see,' my father told him in distress.

'That's nonsense,' he replied. 'If she can read and write, how can she not see? Dr Fiona has kept me updated, and one of the first notes Malala wrote was to ask about you.'

Far away in Birmingham, not only could I see but I was asking for a mirror. 'Mirror,' I wrote in the pink diary – I wanted to see my face and hair. The nurses brought me a small white mirror which I still have. When I saw myself, I was distraught. My long hair, which I used to spend ages styling, had gone, and the left side of my head had none at all. 'Now my hair is small,' I wrote in the book. I thought the Taliban had cut it off. In fact the Pakistani doctors had shaved my head with no mercy. My face was distorted like someone had pulled it down on one side, and there was a scar to the side of my left eye.