

supported me and prayed for me. Then I realised that people had saved my life. I had been spared for a reason. People had sent other presents too. There were boxes and boxes of chocolates and teddy bears of every shape and size. Most precious of all perhaps was the parcel that came from Benazir Bhutto's children Bilawal and Bakhtawar. Inside were two shawls that had belonged to their late mother. I buried my nose in them to try and smell her perfume. Later I found a long black hair on one of them, which made it even more special.

I realised what the Taliban had done was make my campaign global. While I was lying in that bed waiting to take my first steps in a new world, Gordon Brown, the UN special envoy for education and former prime minister of Britain, had launched a petition under the slogan 'I am Malala' to demand no child be denied schooling by 2015. There were messages from heads of state and ministers and movie stars and one from the granddaughter of Sir Olaf Caroe, the last British governor of our province. She said she was ashamed at not being able to read and write Pashto although her grandfather had been fluent. Beyoncé had written me a card and posted a photo of it on Facebook, Selena Gomez had tweeted about me and Madonna had dedicated a song. There was even a message from my favourite actress and social activist, Angelina Jolie – I couldn't wait to tell Moniba.

I didn't realise then I wouldn't be going home.