

shopping, but it's not the same as she can't talk to her friends and neighbours about what she bought.

A door bangs in the house and my mother jumps – she jumps these days at the slightest noise. She often cries then hugs me'. 'Malala is alive,' she says. Now she treats me as if I was her youngest rather than eldest child.

I know my father cries too. He cries when I push my hair to the side and he sees the scar on my head, and he cries when he wakes from an afternoon nap to hear his children's voices in the garden and realises with relief that one of them is still mine. He knows people say it's his fault that I was shot, that he pushed me to speak up like a tennis dad trying to create a champion, as if I don't have my own mind. It's hard for him. All he worked for for over almost twenty years has been left behind: the school he built up from nothing, which now has three buildings with 1,100 pupils and seventy teachers. I know he felt proud at what he had created, a poor boy from that narrow village between the Black and White Mountains. He says, 'It's as if you planted a tree and nurtured it – you have the right to sit in its shade.'

His dream in life was to have a very big school in Swat providing quality education, to live peacefully and to have democracy in our country. In Swat he had achieved respect and status in society through his activities and the help he gave people. He never imagined living abroad and he gets upset when people suggest we wanted to come to the UK. 'A person who has eighteen years of education, a nice life, a family, you throw him out just as you throw a fish out of water for speaking up for girls' education?' Sometimes he says we have gone from being IDPs to EDPs – externally displaced persons. Often over meals we talk about home and try to remember things. We miss everything, even the smelly stream. My father says, 'If I had known this would happen, I would have looked back for a last time just as the Prophet did when he left Mecca to migrate to Medina. He looked back again and again.' Already some of the things from Swat seem like stories from a distant place, like somewhere I have read about.

My father spends much of his time going to conferences on education. I know it's odd for him that now people want to hear him because of me, not the other way round. I used to be known as his daughter; now he's known as my father. When he went to France to collect an award for me he told the audience, 'In my part of the world most people are known by their sons. I am one of the few lucky fathers known by his daughter.'

A smart new uniform hangs on my bedroom door, bottle green instead of royal blue, for a school where no one dreams of being attacked for going to classes or someone blowing up the building. In April I was well enough to start school in Birmingham. It's wonderful going to school and not having to feel scared as I did in Mingora, always looking around me on my way to school, terrified a *talib* would jump out.

It's a good school. Many subjects are the same as at home, but the teachers have PowerPoint and computers rather than chalk and blackboards. We have some different subjects – music, art, computer studies, home economics, where we learn to cook – and we do practicals in science, which is rare in Pakistan. Even though I recently got just forty percent in my physics exam, it is still my favourite subject. I love learning about Newton and the basic principles the whole universe obeys.

But like my mother I am lonely. It takes time to make good friends like I had at home, and the girls at school here treat me differently. People say, 'Oh, that's Malala' – they see me as 'Malala, girls' rights activist'. Back in the Khushal School I was just Malala, the same double-jointed girl they had always known, who loved to tell jokes and drew pictures to explain things. Oh, and who was always