

Dr Fiona as a present for me so they went clothes shopping to buy me things. They had no idea how conservative I was or what a teenage girl from the Swat Valley would wear. They went to Next and British Home Stores and came back with bags of T-shirts, pyjamas, socks and even bras. Yma asked me if I would like shalwar kamiz and I nodded. 'What's your favourite colour?' she asked. Pink was, of course, my reply.

They were worried I wasn't eating. But I didn't like the hospital food and I was worried it was not halal. The only things I'd eat there were the nutritional milkshakes. Nurse Julie discovered I liked Cheesy Wotsits so brought me those. 'What do you like?' they asked me. 'Fried chicken,' I replied. Yma discovered there was a halal Kentucky Fried Chicken at Small Heath so would go there every afternoon to buy me chicken and chips. One day she even cooked me a curry.

To keep me occupied they brought me a DVD player. One of the first movies they got me was *Bend it Like Beckham*, thinking the story of a Sikh girl challenging her cultural norms and playing football would appeal to me. I was shocked when the girls took off their shirts to practise in sports bras and I made the nurses switch it off. After that they brought cartoons and Disney movies. I watched all three Shrek movies and *A Shark's Tale*. My left eye was still blurry so I covered it when I watched, and my left ear would bleed so I had to keep putting in cotton-wool balls. One day I asked a nurse, 'What is this lump?' placing her hand on my tummy. My stomach was big and hard and I didn't know why.

'It's the top of your skull,' she replied. I was shocked.

After I started to speak I also walked again for the first time. I hadn't felt any problem with my arms or legs in bed apart from my left hand which was stiff because the bullet had ended up by my shoulder so I didn't realise I couldn't walk properly. My first few steps were such hard work it felt like I'd run a hundred kilometres. The doctors told me I would be fine; I just needed lots of physiotherapy to get my muscles working again.

One day another Fiona came, Fiona Alexander, who told me she was in charge of the hospital press office. I thought this was funny. I couldn't imagine Swat Central Hospital having a press office. Until she came I had no idea of the attention I'd attracted. When I was flown from Pakistan there was supposed to be a news blackout, but photographs were leaked from Pakistan of me leaving and saying I was going to the UK, and the media soon found out my destination was Birmingham. A Sky News helicopter was soon circling above, and as many as 250 journalists came to the hospital from as far away as Australia and Japan. Fiona Alexander had spent twenty years as a journalist herself, and had been editor of the *Birmingham Post*, so she knew exactly how to feed them material and stop them trying to get in. The hospital started giving daily news briefings on my condition.

People just turned up wanting to see me – government ministers, diplomats, politicians, even an envoy from the Archbishop of Canterbury. Most brought bouquets, some of them exquisitely beautiful. One day Fiona Alexander brought me a bag of cards and toys and pictures. It was Eid ul-Azha, 'Big Eid', our main religious holiday, so I thought maybe some Muslims had sent them. Then I saw the postage dates, from 10 October, 11 October, days before, and I realised it was nothing to do with Eid. They were from people all over the world wishing me a speedy recovery, many of them schoolchildren. I was astonished and Fiona laughed. 'You haven't seen anything yet.' She told me there were sacks and sacks more, about 8,000 cards in total, many just addressed, 'Malala, Birmingham Hospital'. One was even addressed, 'The Girl Shot in the Head, Birmingham', yet it had got there. There were offers to adopt me as if I had no family and even a marriage proposal.

Rehanna told me that thousands and millions of people and children around the world had