

When Malala returns to Mingora in the Swat valley, she finds that her father has a major problem: he has no income to pay the teachers at the Khushal School. Malala suggests that he talk to General Abbas, the commander. He realizes that this is a good idea. Malala sends an email to Abbas, and in response he sends the Khushal School over one million rupees, enough money to pay all the teachers for more than three months. Ziauddin is overjoyed by this turn of events.

Malala is grateful to General Abbas for his donation to the Khushal School, but she continues to find fault in the way he runs the military in Pakistan. In Mingora, people are bullied and intimidated by the army, just as they were under the Taliban. Malala and her father give interviews in which they criticize the army for failing to bring the Taliban leaders to justice. Malala becomes increasingly interested in journalism after spending time giving interviews and making radio broadcasts.

As 2009 comes to an end, Malala does well on her school exams, coming in first. The first half of 2010 is uneventful, compared with the years preceding it. In July, Malala turns 13 years old. Around this time, monsoon floods begin in the Swat Valley, threatening the homes of thousands of people. In the past, the trees in the valley formed a natural barrier against the floods—now, just as her father had warned years ago, the trees have been chopped down, and floods are a serious danger. Bridges are destroyed, electric power lines collapse, and buildings flood. There is a general feeling that Allah is punishing the people—first with an earthquake, then a flood. Some people even suggest that Americans have engineered the flood and earthquake using military technology.

Following the floods, violence escalates. Taliban soldiers, still secretly living in the valley, blow up more schools and kidnap people they judge to be dangerous to Islam. Several of Ziauddin's friends are murdered for protesting the Taliban in print. Malala is frustrated and frightened by the lack of progress in the valley. She resolves to become a politician when she grows up—someone who can bring progress to her country.