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# I Am Malala

How One Girl  
Stood Up for  
Education  
and Changed  
the World

WINNER  
*of the*  
NOBEL PEACE  
PRIZE

MALALA YOUSAFZAI

*with* PATRICIA McCORMICK

YOUNG READERS EDITION



Praise for

# I Am Malala

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A 2015 Amelia Bloomer Project List Selection  
A 2015 CBC Children's Choice Book Awards Finalist

★ "A searing and personal portrait of a young woman who dared to make a difference."

—*Publishers Weekly* (starred review)

"Although her efforts to attend school, and the subsequent attack she endured, make for a powerful story, Yousafzai writes just as vividly about her daily life as a child in Pakistan....Yousafzai's fresh, straightforward voice creates an easily read narrative that will introduce a slew of younger readers to both her story and her mission."

—*Booklist*

"[Yousafzai's] strong voice and ideals come across on every page, emphasizing how her surroundings and supportive family helped her become the relevant figure she is today."

—*School Library Journal*

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Little, Brown and Company  
New York Boston

The author and the publisher have made every effort to ensure that the information in this book is correct. The events, locales, and conversations are based on the author's memories of them. Some names and identifying details have been changed to protect the privacy of individuals.

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### *Dreams*

Every spring and fall, during the holidays of Big Eid and Small Eid, my family visited one of my favorite places on earth: Shangla, the mountain village where my parents grew up. Laden with presents for our relatives—embroidered shawls, boxes of rose and pistachio sweets, and medicines they couldn't get in the village—we'd go to the Mingora bus station and see just about everybody else in town all crowded together and waiting for the Flying Coach.

We'd stack our gifts—along with the sacks of flour and sugar, blankets, and trunks that other families were taking—on top of the bus in a great towering pile. Then we all crammed inside for the four-hour trip up winding, rutted roads to the mountains. For the first quarter of the journey, the road was a series of zigs and zags that followed the Swat River on one side and hugged sheer cliffs on the other. My brothers took

great pleasure in pointing out the wreckage of vehicles that had fallen into the valley below.

The Flying Coach would climb higher and higher, until the air turned cool and crisp. Eventually we saw nothing but mountain after mountain. Mountain, mountain, mountain, and just a sliver of sky.

Many of the people in Shangla were very poor and did not have modern facilities, such as hospitals and markets, but our family always put on a huge feast for us when we arrived. A feast that was especially welcome at Small Eid, which marks the end of a month of daytime fasting for Ramadan. There were bowls of chicken and rice, spinach and lamb, big crunchy apples, pretty yellow cakes, and big kettles of sweet milky tea.

Even when I was only seven or eight, I was considered a sophisticated city girl, and sometimes my cousins teased me because I didn't like to go barefoot and I wore clothes bought at the bazaar, not homemade like theirs. I had a city accent and spoke city slang, so they thought I was modern. If only they knew. People from real cities like Peshawar or Islamabad would have thought *me* very backward.

When I was in the village, though, I lived the life of a country girl. In the morning, I got up when the rooster crowed or when I heard the clatter of dishes as the women downstairs made breakfast for the men. Then all the children spilled out of the houses to greet the day. We ate honey straight from the hive and green plums sprinkled with salt. None of us had any toys or books, so we played hopscotch and cricket in a gully.

In the afternoon the boys would go off fishing while we girls went down to a stream to play our favorite game: Wedding. We would choose a bride and then prepare her for the ceremony. We draped her in bangles and necklaces and painted her face with makeup and her hands with henna. Once she was ready to be given to the groom, she would pretend to cry, and we would stroke her hair and tell her not to worry. Sometimes we would fall down laughing.

But life for the women in the mountains was not easy. There were no proper shops, no universities, no hospitals or female doctors, no clean water or electricity from the government. Many of the men had left the villages to work on road crews and in mines far, far away, sending money home when they could. Sometimes the men never made it back.

The women of the village also had to hide their faces whenever they left their homes. And they could not meet or speak to men who were not their close relatives. None of them could read. Even my own mother, who'd grown up in the village, couldn't read. It is not at all uncommon for women in my country to be illiterate, but to see my mother, a proud and intelligent woman, struggle to read the prices in the bazaar was an unspoken sadness for both of us, I think.

Many of the girls in the village—including most of my own cousins—didn't go to school. Some fathers don't even think of their daughters as valued members of their families, because they'll be married off at a young age to live with their husband's family. "Why send a daughter to school?" the men

often say. "She doesn't need an education to run a house."

I would never talk back to my elders. In my culture, one must never disrespect one's elders—even if they are wrong.

But when I saw how hard these women's lives were, I was confused and sad. Why were women treated so poorly in our country?

I asked my father this, and he told me that life was even worse for women in Afghanistan, where a group called the Taliban had taken over the country. Schools for girls had been burned to the ground, and all women were forced to wear a severe form of *burqa*, a head-to-toe veil that had only a tiny fabric grille for their eyes. Women were banned from laughing out loud or wearing nail polish, and they were beaten or jailed for walking without a male family member.

I shuddered when he told me such things and thanked God that I lived in Pakistan, where a girl was free to go to school.

It was the first time I'd heard of the Taliban. What I didn't realize was that they weren't only in Afghanistan. There was another group in Pakistan, not far away in the tribal belt (known as the FATA). Some of them were Pashtuns, like us, and they would soon come to cast a dark shadow over my sunny childhood.

But my father told me not to worry. "I will protect your freedom, Malala," he said. "Carry on with your dreams."