

301c ages to remember that it reminded me of the Miss. World Contest and the way the newly crowned Miss World had to walk gracefully down that long catwalk with tears streaming down her face and everyone looking at her and clapping. My back was broken and I did not realize it and neither did the Doctors who should have been looking after me. The way I walked with everybody laughing at me and my face full of joy that I was going to see my baby was a mockery of that and as I walked down the ward a huge and beautiful picture came into my mind of Jesus when the soldiers crowned him with thorns, put a purple cloak around his shoulders and placed a broken reed in his hand. It was like looking at a beautiful oil painting but it was alive and when I saw the look of such pride and love in Jesus eyes as he looked at me I became quite deaf to all the laughter in the ward and just concentrated on going to see my baby. By the time that happened we were nearly out of the ward anyway and from there it was not far to get to the lift and up to the Premature Baby Unit.

There was a sign on the door of the Premature baby unit that said "Parents Only" were allowed to visit which pleased me because it meant that it was somewhere where my baby and I could be alone without my mother and my family barging in on us. By the time I got to the corridor in the unit I was exhausted and I was leaning heavily on the rail in the corridor of the unit. The Sister of the Premature Baby Unit came out of a room on the right and when she saw me she came forward quickly and took my arm and told the nurse who had brought me that I had only just had a baby and that she should

302c have brought me in a wheelchair.

The Premature Baby Unit and the Special Care Unit were two rooms on the right hand side of the corridor with large windows so that anyone could see straight in. There were quite a few babies in different incubators in the room on the right but only my baby was in the room on the left and she was very much smaller than all the other babies. I recognized her straight away and the sister noticed that I did and she said to me "you saw her last night didn't you?" I said yes and I realized that the room my baby was in was the same room that I had dreamed about in my pregnancy. It did look like a science laboratory and I realized that where I had seen the dawn breaking and something being wrong with the baby in my dream it must have been exactly what it had been like at 4am that morning when something had gone wrong. I was so glad that I had seen my baby when she was born so that I recognized her again because I am sure that if I had not been able to recognize her as my own I would have thought that someone had taken my healthy baby away because I was an unmarried mother and had given me a sick one that no one wanted. All my life I had always been given things that were broken or damaged and it would have been too much for me to accept that even my own baby could not be given to me whole and perfect. It was all too much for me and I did not say a word but the agony inside my heart was unbearable that yet another thing had gone wrong for me in my life and I felt that it just could not be possible that it could have happened to us.

I saw the huge distortion that had

303c. come up on my babys abdomen and it looked awful. Two Radiologists were in the room with a portable X-ray machine which they were using over the incubator at an awkward angle because they had difficulty getting the machine into the room. Horrible thoughts of all the Radiation that my child was getting flooded into my head but there was nothing that I could do about the X-rays they were taking because they had to find out how to cure my child. When the Radiologists had finished they gave my baby an injection that they put into the top of her leg and I felt that they should have asked me if it was alright for her to have the injection first. It seemed to me that right up until the evening before, my baby had been safely tucked up inside me but once she was born she had been snatched away from me and my position as her mother counted for nothing with everyone who had taken her from me because nobody asked or told me anything about her. I did not object to her having the injection if it would do her any good but I minded not being asked about it because she was still my child. When the Radiologists had finished they told the Sister, nurse and I that we could go into the room and I felt incensed that any one should be able to tell me when I could see my own child as I should have been allowed to be with her all the time but I gently said nothing.

The Sister was young and very kind and gentle and she watched me intently as I calmly watched my baby have the injection that the Radiologists gave her but she did not offer any explanation about what the injection was for. The Sister came into the room with me and both the Radiologists looked as if they were nearly in tears as they saw me stand quietly beside the incubator and just stare at the awful mess that the night staff had made of my tiny scrap of a baby. I said nothing at all and I

304c just stood there looking at her in absolute disbelief. My baby had no drips or oxygen or anything as nothing at all was being done for her and she just lay in her incubator pathetically drugged. There was a huge swelling on her abdomen that looked hard and which was lined with heavy dark blue veins. It looked so ugly and so out of place on such a beautiful baby but even despite it being so huge and so very obvious I still felt really convinced, just the same as I had been when I had first seen her the night before, that it was her vagina that they would find something wrong with and the thought of that was too awful to bear.

The Sister gently explained that the lump had come up during the night when the night staff had fed her. She said that she was not really supposed to tell me this but a Doctor who did not belong to Lewisham Hospital and who had been drunk had treated my baby when he was not really supposed to. I had heard the Doctors from the party go up to the Special Care Baby Unit and I presumed that they had been thrown out like the Registrar had said that they would be but apparently they had not been thrown out and one of them had treated my baby in a way that he had no right to have done. The Sister told me that it would not have happened if she had been on duty and she told me that my family could do something about it. She told me that she was putting her job 'on the line' to tell me what had actually happened but she said that she believed that I had a right to know even though the Doctors had discussed the matter early that

305c. morning and had 'elected not to tell me'. She said that the Doctors wanted to send my baby to Great Ormond Street and she explained that it was a childrens hospital where they 'specialized' and she explained that it was in London near Harley Street. If she had not told me that it was in London I would have thought that they were taking her to Plymouth because the only place name I knew that began with 'Great' at that moment was Great Yarmouth and it vaguely reminded me of David Copperfield and Dickens. I vaguely knew it was a port and the only port I could have put my finger on if I had been given a map of Great Britain was Plymouth and so I thought they were taking her there until the Sister explained otherwise and if she hadn't I just would not have known. She said very kindly that their own doctors at Lewisham Hospital had seen my baby and there was really no one in Lewisham Hospital who could help her and that Great Ormond Street was her only chance. She asked me if I could come into her office as there were some forms to sign and she spoke to me so kindly and gently as if she was so very sorry and really meant it. I took in her kindness and it meant such a lot to me but I wondered ironically why they needed the formality of me signing forms as my signature meant nothing. If I refused they would still take her as it was all arranged and had all been done before they had even considered telling me. The Sister gently urged me to come into her office and said that I really ought to sit down as well. We went to her office which had an awful red carpet on the floor and I sat on a black leather chair with no arms to it. She sat beside me at her desk and explained that the Doctors at Great Ormond Street would probably do some tests at Great Ormond Street and then they might send her back but she might need an operation and that if she did need one it might be very difficult to do it

306c. because she was so very tiny. I knew what she was saying and that she meant that they didn't think my baby stood a chance. The Sister said that I needed to sign some forms which would let the Doctors do anything they thought best, but as she spoke I got a distinct feeling that it was not necessarily my baby that they would do what was best for and so I came straight out with it and said that if my baby died and the Doctors at Great Ormond Street wanted to use her heart or something, was that what the forms that I was signing were for. The Sister looked straight at me as if she had not expected me to ask that. She seemed to have hoped that I would just accept the situation and sign the forms without asking any questions. She told me that they had got those forms but that she would not ask any mother to sign them herself because she just could not bring herself to do it but she said that the Doctors might ask me to because there was not very much chance to save my baby. She said how sorry she was and as tears prickled in my eyes I bent my head and thought 'so am I, so very sorry'. I could not believe that such a tiny life could end so soon because my baby was too beautiful to die. I felt that I had never had anything in my life to call my own and that even my own baby that my own body had made was being taken away from me and if she went it would be the end of everything for me. I told the Sister that I would only sign whatever forms that were necessary to save my baby's life but that it was HER who they were to save and that even though I did not want to be selfish I did not want any parts of my baby used to save someone.

307c. else's baby. The sister nodded her head seriously and said that was alright and took one of the forms out of a pile of forms that had been got ready for me to sign and she left it on one side. She told me that the forms that were left were for any possible operations and whatever tests the Doctors at Great Ormond Street thought were needed to save my baby, but she told me that I would have to wait until the Doctors came to sign them anyway because those forms had to be signed in front of a Doctor. She asked if I wanted my baby christened and I nodded. She checked what religion I was from some notes that she had for my baby and I recognized some of them as being my notes from the Ante-natal Clinic. I wondered how they had got up to the Premature Baby Unit and I was glad that I had said that I was a Roman Catholic even though I did not actually belong to the Catholic Church because she just telephoned the local Catholic Church and asked for a priest to come to the hospital quickly to baptize a premature Baby and if I had just put down Church of England for my religion when I had been asked for it in the Anti-Natal Clinic then my baby could have been baptized into the Church of England without the matter having been given any proper thought. I also felt very concerned about the fact that the nurses on the Premature Baby Unit would have actually christened my baby themselves without calling a proper priest even though there was no sudden emergency and even though I was only downstairs they would not have asked me to come up to be present at my own baby's christening if I had not insisted. The sacraments were too precious for lay people to touch and if my baby was to be christened then I wanted it to be done by a proper priest who had the power that comes from having sacrificed his whole life to God, or else if

308C. there really was no time to spare then I myself would have christened my own baby because I had given up my whole life to have her.

The Sister asked me if I wanted the babys father to see the baby because if I did now was the time or he might never see his child. I said no and then I said what my mother had told me to say 'that he knocked me about and that I did not want anything to do with him' She looked at me as if she knew that it was a previously rehearsed phrase but she understood and she asked me if I was sure. She said that if there was a father then I could be spared signing the forms as it was his legal right to do it but I did not want anyone else signing my baby away and I said that I was definitely sure. The Sister understood and she took some of the forms that she had got ready and started to fill in some details about the babys parents that needed to be sent to Great Ormond Street. I felt waves of faintness coming over me as if I was having difficulty remembering anything at all and when the Sister started to fill in the form she was suddenly slightly alarmed to find that when she asked me my name I had no recollection what so ever of what it was. She tried to help me by coming right beside me and holding my hand and saying very softly over and over again and re-phrasing the question as she asked me "What's your name?... Do you know what your name is?... Can you try to remember your name?" She was really worried about me and she kept looking at my name band and checking something on it. It was over a year before the day came when as usual I was going over and over

309c. that incident and so many other incidents that had happened in Lewisham Hospital and trying to work out what on earth had happened to me that I realized that my name must have been on that name band and began to wonder instead why she had kept asking me what my name was if she could see it on my name band.

As I sat in her office at the time I struggled and struggled as waves of faintness swept over my mind and subsided to remember anything at all, even what my name was. The Sister looked appalled and she asked me if the Doctors had just given me an injection or any tablets on the ward before I had come up to the Premature Baby Unit. I said no to the injection but when she asked me about the tablets I remembered what the nurse had brought me and I told her that it was a green one. The Sister said that she did not approve of what the Doctors were doing to me and she told me that it was the tablet that was making me forget everything. She seemed to know that my memory was flooding back to me in what seemed like waves in my mind and then subsiding away from me too quickly for me to be able to catch anything to remember from it and without me trying to explain how I was feeling the Sister watched me for a moment until the right moment when my memory flooded towards me and then she quickly asked me again what my name was. I said "Anne Maple" because it sounded vaguely familiar but I had no way of being sure and somehow it just did not sound as if it belonged to me. The Sister wrote that down and then tried again but this time to get me to tell her my age. I struggled again but this time the waves in my mind seemed to have become more rigid and they did not flood back so easily and it was

310C. much more difficult to dip into that empty black void in my mind and pull out an age. I do not know what I said but my age was on my name band and she put that down and tut-tutted but not at me. After that the waves seemed to close in over my mind blotting everything out and as it was obvious that I just simply could not remember anything she gave up and said that she had to send for my family and she asked me if I had got a mother. I said yes and agreed to let the sister get my family as if I had no idea of what I was talking about and when the Sister asked me for my address and telephone number I had absolutely no idea of what she wanted although I could remember it quite clearly afterwards. The Sister told me that it was alright and that she had got it in my notes anyway. She took me straight back into the Special Care room to see my baby as if she thought that was the best way to bring me back to my senses by letting me see my baby and when she got me back into the room beside the incubator she called one of the nurses to get me a stool to sit on quickly. Once I could see my baby I seemed to feel better and I sat looking at her with a nurse beside me while the Sister and a pupil midwife got on the telephone, possibly to someone else inside the hospital, and told them to get my mother to the hospital as quickly as possible and to get the Police to get them if necessary. I heard everything that was going on but I did not seem to show any recognition of that and I just sat staring at my baby in her incubator and the ugly lump on her abdomen that

311C. Should not have been there.

After a few minutes the priest from the local catholic church arrived in the unit and he was out of breath because he had just run all the way up the stairs. He said that he had not been able to get the lift to come because it was either stuck somewhere or else it was being used and so he had run up the four flights of stairs 'just incase' he had not made it up to the Premature Baby Unit in time. The sister explained that it was not that kind of emergency baptism although it was urgent because the baby was going to Great Ormond Street Hospital for a major operation and she was very tiny to have it. The sister looked at the priest as if to warn him not to say anymore in front of me and I noticed the difference in the way the sister explained what was wrong with my baby more openly to other people than she did to me. The priest was very nice indeed and after he had said hello to me and looked at my baby and remarked sadly how tiny she was, he looked at the sister and told her for a joke to please tell him next time whether it was a case to run for or if he had time to walk because half the shoppers in lewisham High Street were staring at him and crossing themselves as they saw him dashing along the High street to get to the Hospital and after running up four flights of stairs he was still out of breath. I think the Priest thought that he would arrive at the Hospital to find the baby breathing its last breath and when he found that he could at least have walked up the stairs he wished that he had done so but his run up those stairs was not wasted because it was something that I never forgot. When I saw him rush in like that I knew

312C. that he valued the act of baptism so much and he cared enough that one tiny baby should receive it before she died that he had bothered to run all the way to her from his church and I never ever forgot it. The Sister asked me if I had a name ready for my baby and I said yes and struggled to remember what it had been but I had no recollection of it at all. The Sister saw my difficulty and she asked the Priest if she could talk to him in her office for a moment and he said yes of course and followed her out of the room. While they were gone for a few minutes I struggled and struggled to try to remember the name that I had chosen, but I had absolutely no recollection of it at all. I could not even remember my own name and I did not know what to do because I could not think of anything at all. Then suddenly I saw two long names in my mind that were written in golden letters with light streaming from them and I heard a mans voice say "Her name shall be ELIZABETH CHRISTIANA" so that I was left in no doubt about it. The Sister and the Priest came back ready to do the Christening and when they asked me about the name I had to say 'Elizabeth Christiana' because I could not think of anything else at all. The Sister knew that was not the name that I would have chosen and she told me that I could change the names later on if I wanted to. The Priest looked at her quickly as if he was going to say that I could not change the names but she looked at him quickly as if she was trying to remind him of something that she had said to

313C him in her office and he suddenly said nothing. I knew that it was the drug that I had been given that was making me forget everything and I think they were thinking that there probably was not going to be any later on any way so it did not matter. I already knew that once my baby was baptized I could not change her name because baptism was too important for that and once a baby was christened for the first time that name remained on that child's soul for all eternity, but I did not mind that I could not remember the name that I would have chosen because suddenly 'Elizabeth Christiana' sounded like the most beautiful name in the whole world and I could still see the printed golden letters streaming down with light in my mind. I did not even have any recollection that 'Christian' was one of the names that I would have chosen anyway and the name just had to be the only two words that were printed across the blankness of my mind and it seemed as if heaven itself must have put them there.

The Sister told me that I could hold my baby once she had been christened and the sudden realization that I could do that came as an unexpected surprise because I had not expected to be able to, but I saw a look cross the Priest's face as if he was dismayed that I had not been allowed to hold my baby before if it was possible for me to and he seemed to think that might be why I was in such a state of shock and he was perfectly right. He would have christened the baby in my arms if it had meant that I could hold her any sooner but everything was ready for him to baptize her in her incubator so he just did it

314c as quickly as possible so that I could hold her as soon as it was over.

The Sister called six Pupil Midwives and nurses in to watch the Christening and they stood in a kind of guard of honour along one side of the room where the window to the corridor was. They were all wearing the bright yellow dresses the same as the Sister which only the staff on the Premature Baby unit wore and although the Sister was English each one of the nurses came from a different part of the world and it seemed most appropriate for my baby somehow. I did not really want anyone at all except the Priest and myself at my babys christening because I liked anything to do with God to be quiet and private and I had so little in my life that I did not see why I should have to share the most precious moments in it with other people but I knew that those nurses worked hard and they were good and so I was glad to have them there.

I suddenly realized that my babys Christening was turning out to be better than I could have planned it myself and I was glad that it was happening early because it meant that it could take place in a way that it would not have been allowed to happen in church. There were no Godparents and I had not wanted any because there was something so very precious about my child that no one less than the saints themselves were good enough to guide her feet on the path to heaven and I just did not want ordinary people getting involved

315c with this child. There was no Christening dress either and I realized that I was having my own way about that too. My mother had tried to insist that if the baby was a girl she was going to make the Christening dress herself with yards and yards of lace and white silk and a lace shawl that looked like a brides veil so that she could carry her forward dressed like the bride of Christ but pretty dresses meant nothing to me and as my baby was being christened in her incubator she was completely naked and I realized that I was giving her into Gods hands just as he had made her and completely unmateri-ally. It was done modestly too as the only man present was bound by a vow of chastity and I liked that but I could not think why.

I was glad that my baby had been born prematurely and that she had been taken straight away from me because by the accident of fate that had brought about this early Christening it meant that I was able to put the most precious gift that I had ever been given into Gods hands before they put her into mine and I held her for the very first time. It suddenly seemed as if the whole thing had all been part of Gods perfect plan and it did not matter what we had been forced to suffer in order for it to come about. It meant that I gave the precious moment of holding my treasured newborn baby for the first time to my beloved father in heaven and I stood back in second place and it felt as if all the wrong that had been done in the fact that I had not been able to become a nun was put right in that moment because nothing could ever mar the eternal joy

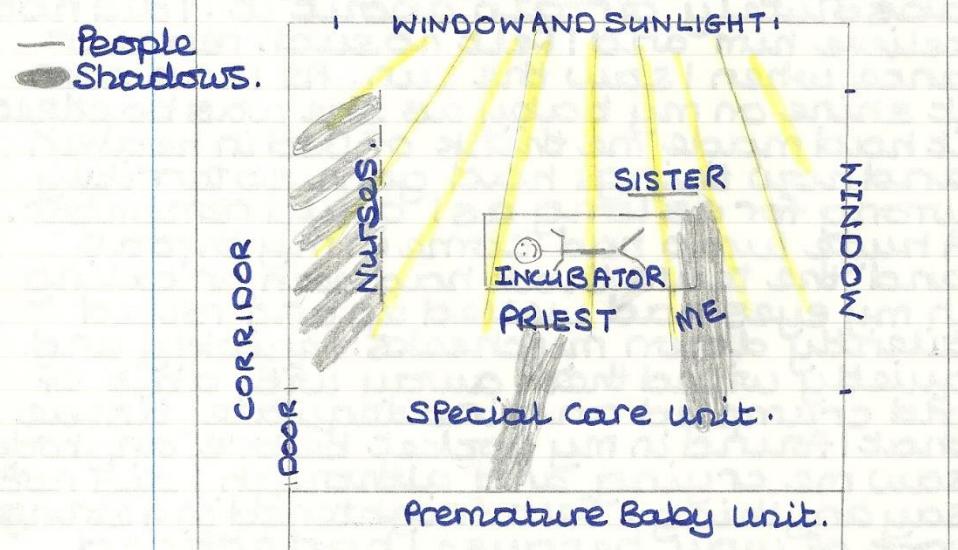
316c. of that heavenly moment when an earthly mother stood back and let God in heaven have the most precious moment of the whole of her life.

The Sister stood on the right hand side of the incubator by the baby's feet and I sat on the high stool that the nurse had sat me on by the opposite side of the incubator to the Sister. The Priest stood beside me by my baby's head and the nurses stood where they had lined themselves up. I wondered why they did not come right round the incubator but somehow everyone seemed to be in their right place and there was an air of sudden hope in the room as if something really special was going to happen and it was a beautiful feeling that everybody seemed to feel. The priest undid the top of a small brown bottle that he had brought with him and poured the colourless liquid onto some cotton wool and put his hand through one of the portholes in the incubator to make the sign of the cross on my baby's forehead as he said "Elizabeth Christiana, I baptize thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost"; And that was it, all done in the most simple and beautiful service that I had ever seen. There were no Godparents, no promises and no ceremony because she was just put into the hands of her heavenly father and the rest was left to him in perfect trust which was how I would have liked a church service to be and as the Priest made the sign of the cross on her forehead the sun came bursting through the clouds most

317c unexpectedly as it was a very dull, cold November day with no sign of any sun whatsoever and the sunlight absolutely flooded right into the room and straight down onto the baptism that was going on in the incubator. The light was so bright that everybody turned round to look at it and the warmth from the sun was so great that it felt as warm as a hot summers day in the middle of summer. Even my sick baby began to look stronger in the strong sunlight and when the Priest looked up at the brilliant sunshine in the middle of what he was doing he looked relieved as if he had been worried about my baby and I because we were in such desperate circumstances and it was quite obvious to everyone that if my baby died the shock of it would kill me but when he saw the sun come bursting through the clouds like that he knew that everything would be alright and he said so. It was quite obvious that the odds were stacked high against my baby surviving but he turned to me and said "This child will be quite alright" as if he was absolutely certain about it. I did not believe him and I felt no such reassurance when I saw the sun. As I had seen it shine on my baby as she was baptized it had made me think of God in heaven and how things had gone so terribly wrong for as long as I could remember. A huge lump had come in my throat and the tears that had been prickling in my eyes had welled up and rolled silently down my cheeks. I quickly and quietly wiped them away with a bit of old crumpled and inadequate tissue that I found in my pocket before anybody saw me crying and although I did not say anything I felt frightened in a strange sort of way because I had noticed

318c. something about the sunlight that nobody else had seen. Everyone was so busy looking up at the light that nobody looked behind themselves at their own shadow but from where I was I could see both the strong sunlight and the sharp shadows it cast and I noticed that while there were shadows of everybody in the room and we were all in the direct line of the sunlight, neither my baby, or the incubator she was in, or I and the stool that I was sitting on cast any shadows at all. It was as if we were not there and it was horribly uncanny. The Priest was standing behind the thick metal base of the incubator which was solidly between him and the window that the sunlight was coming from but there was a full length shadow of his two legs behind him and nothing at all of the solid incubator in front of him and when I saw that, it was so uncanny that it frightened me.

Diagram of Special Care Unit.



39c. When the Priest had finished the baptism he told me that my baby had been baptized in Chrism and that what he had done had confirmed her as well as given her Extreme Unction so that she had received all three sacraments together. He asked me which Parish I was from so that he could tell my Parish Priest about the baptism but I had to tell him that I did not know. The Sister told him my address and he named a few Catholic Churches that I lived near to and out of the short list that he recited off I recognized the name of St. Mary Magdalens at Brockley. Once I had got that far I was able to go on and remember that I went to mass every week but that I had not made my first Holy Communion. The Priest was kindness itself and he tried to help me as we struggled in conversation to try to work out how it was that I went to church but that I wasn't a confirmed Catholic. I seemed to think that I was a Catholic or at least I wanted to be one and I knew that I had always been to church and that most of my family were Catholics but I did not know very much else. I could picture the altar at St. Mary Magdalens as easily as if I was actually standing looking at it surrounded with beautiful flowers with the crucifixion statues above it but I seemed to think that it was not there that I went to church and I still could not name the church that I did go to. The Priest asked me if I went to the Church of England as they were referred to as being 'Catholic and universal' but I knew it was not that and the Priest agreed that it did not fit in with me knowing St. Mary Magdalens church so well. He said that he could telephone Fr. Michael Lee at St. Marys and ask him if he knew me but I seemed to think that he might not know me even though I

320c recognized his name. The Priest and I did not seem to get very far with our conversation and I certainly wasn't much help although I was certainly trying. The Priest seemed to suspect that I wasn't a Catholic at all and that I just wanted my baby baptized but I did not know and as the Sister did not know me she couldn't help answer the Priests questions either. The Priest had been so kind and helpful in trying to ask me some questions about my circumstances but at that moment he gave up and he became ever so kind and gentle that I could never have believed that such love was possible unless I had seen it for myself. He bent right down so that he was at my level and he took hold of my left arm and he explained to me ever so kindly and full of common sense that it did not matter if I was a Catholic or not. He said that I did not have to be a Catholic to ask to have my baby baptized. He said that every baby however tiny belonged to God, especially sick ones and that there was nothing to worry about because through what he had just done with the chrism, God had my baby in his very special care now. I did not say anything but I nodded slowly to agree with him and I thought about what he had said and I thought about what I had thought of about giving my precious baby into Gods hands before he put her into mine and it all seemed to make sense.

What struck me most of all was the Priests absolute gentleness and kindness and when I looked at him and saw that he was a Catholic I knew that I would never be content

321C with myself until I had become a Catholic so that I could pass on that gentle kindness to someone else who needed it. Even if I had never been inside a Catholic church in my life, those few moments of seeing such Christian love put into practise would have made me want to be inside a church. I had been through so much, especially the night before with so many people crowding in on me and the domestic being allowed into the room, then with the woman who had borrowed a doctors coat so that I would think she was a doctor coming into the room with so many other people; I had trusted my baby into the Paediatricians care only to have found that one of the Doctors had damaged her and now I did not know who to trust. I kept looking at the Priests clerical collar and as my tortured mind was aware only of his kindness and the fact that he did not actually belong to the hospital I realized that priests needed their clerical collars and nuns needed their habits and veils to make them easily recognizable to people in the state that I was in. It was a visible sign of a trust that would not be betrayed and it spelt out immediately that the kind of love they showed could be found again in a church, where it would be quiet and far from a maddening crowd of people who would stare and laugh. I had a strange feeling that somehow I would go back to his church to look for that kind of love again, not to need it myself but to become filled with it to share it with others in need but that seemed a long way off and quite impossible then as at that moment I could only think of the terrible agony of my own sick baby. As I looked at that priest I felt a sense of him having ignited a flame within me as if a light from a candle that he held had been passed to me so that two flames were now burning. It was the flame of Holy Orders and no one looking at me sitting there would ever have guessed for one

322C. moment that I held it as I was the most unlikely person in the world to think of the religious life but it was such a good and holy feeling and it had been ignited all because he had cared enough to run up those stairs rather than wait for the lift in order to baptize one tiny scrap of life before she breathed her last and because I was in such a state of mental agony that the sight of that priests clerical collar was like the very welcome sight of a friendly policeman's uniform on a dark night far from home to the spiritually lost.

The Priest gave me a card on which was written his name: Fr. Nolan, and he showed me that the printed card also gave the church that he came from in case I wanted to find him at any time or needed my child's certificate of baptism because he would put it in the Church Register. He said that his church was only along the road in Lewisham High Street but although I had passed the church before and I knew that it was right opposite the bus stop I went to if I had been to the busy shopping center, I had absolutely no recollection of the shops or the High Street or anything at all. The Sister told me that the Hospital was in Lewisham High Street but although I knew that I was in Lewisham Hospital I had absolutely no recollection of anything outside the main entrance and I accepted the card from the Priest as if I was a perfect stranger to the whole area who was genuinely grateful to know where somewhere was. The Sister was worried about the fact that I could not remember anything and she said that it would pass and told one of the Pupil Midwives to get my baby ready so that I could hold her as soon as

323C possible. The Priest told me very kindly that he would pray for me and my baby and he asked the Sister when the operation would be. She told him 'Today' as if she knew for certain which was not the 'may be' that she had told me but what she was saying did not register itself with the fear that I would normally have felt that she was telling me one thing and him another and that she was standing right in front of me to do it because all I felt was a sickening kind of grief that she was saying that my baby was going to die. She had told me that if my baby had to have an operation then she would not stand a chance and when she told the Priest that my baby was actually going to have it I felt as if she had just handed me my baby's death warrant. I knew that if my baby died I would die too because I had been through too much and I would have had nothing else at all to go on for and at that moment I knew what it felt like to actually die of a broken heart because you had lost everything and had literally got nothing else to carry on for. I had hoped for my baby for too long and too deeply to turn back and if she was taken away from me altogether I felt as if I would just cease to exist in order to go with her or else I would go completely mental.

The Sister quickly took a pink label off my baby's incubator which had 'Baby Maple' written on it and she wrote 'Elizabeth Christiana' on it before anyone forgot what name the baby had been christened but somehow that precious name and the golden letters streaming with light in my mind were the only things that I could not forget. The Sister showed me the baby's weight in kilos that was written on the card and she said that it was five pounds and four ounces.

324c. She said that it was a great pity about the lump that had come up on my baby's abdomen because my baby had a very good weight for a premature baby and she was very well formed. She asked me if I had actually seen my baby the night before and I told her that they had shown her to me. She gave me the pink card to keep as if she wished that it was the baby that she could give me to keep rather than just a piece of paper and she showed me that the time that my baby had been born at and then admitted to the Special Care Unit had been written on the card. Someone had written that my baby had been born at 11.40 and admitted to the Unit at 11.55 and the Sister said that my baby should have been admitted quicker than that because it only took two minutes to dash a baby upstairs and she said that she did not know what they were doing all that time. I corrected her and said that my baby had been born at 11.33 and that they had been examining my baby before she was resuscitated. The Sister looked at the Priest as if she was really worried about what was going on and she tried to ask me what had happened during my labour as if she was trying to find out if something had gone wrong. I told her that my breathing had stopped when they had given me a Pethidine injection and that I had struggled to wake up but she did not seem to think that just one Pethidine injection could have done so much damage. The Sister told the Priest that she was very worried about what was going on and she asked him if she

325c. could speak to him in her office again but I do not think there was anything that he could do and soon after that he left the ward.

The Pupil Midwife gave me a low chair to sit on by the other side of the room where the nurses had stood for my babys christening and she began to get my baby ready for me to hold her. She put a tiny paper nappy on her and dressed her in a white cotton nightdress and wrapped her in a white cellulose blanket. She lifted her out of the open topped incubator and went to give her to me to hold but she didn't seem to know which of my arms to put her in and so she paused and asked me which was my good arm. I tried to think and I knew that I had been taught that one of my arms was good to use and the other was bad but I could not think which was which and so I said that I did not know. The Sister had come back into the room and she asked me if I was right or left handed and I had to say that I did not know. I considered each arm and I decided that my ability to use them was equally balanced. Then I felt a feeling of obedience come over me and I vaguely remembered that I must use my right hand and so I quickly said that I was right handed so I would hold her in my left hand and use my right hand to do things for her with. It seemed the most sensible thing to do to me but the sister looked concerned and said that I ought to hold my baby on my good side. I told her quite firmly that my left side was my good side and she asked me why I used my right hand if that was my bad side. I said that I used my right hand because I was right handed and she looked puzzled. Then she looked at the Pupil Midwife and they seemed

326c to have a brainwave together and decided enthusiastically that it was the reason why I was 'so good' at getting myself about. I could not work out what they were talking about but the sister was saying that if I was continually using my bad side it would exercise it so much that it would make it virtually normal. There was nothing wrong with me but the Pupil Midwife seemed alarmed that I should be allowed to hold my baby at all and she asked the Sister "But what about the baby?" as if she disapproved of people with 'good hands and bad hands' holding their babies. The Sister was very enthusiastic about it and she told the Pupil Midwife to let me hold my baby which side I liked because she said that I knew what I was doing and she said that she thought that even severely handicapped people who could not use their bodies at all should be allowed to have their babies near them as she did not approve of a baby being taken away from its mother just for that reason and she said that I obviously wanted my baby very much indeed. I did not understand what was going on and I could not see why people would not let me hold my baby because of being left or right handed or because of what they had done to me on the labour ward.

The Pupil Midwife put my baby into my left arm and I held her for the first time. She was absolutely beautiful and a much better colour than she had been the night before or even before she had been Christened and I absolutely loved her but

327c. there was no feeling of joy. A terribly sad feeling of heartache shot through me that because she was so beautiful and because it should have been such a beautiful moment it hurt so much more deeply that I was not being given her and told "here is your baby to hold and to keep" but "you can hold your baby for a moment but you can't keep her because we've made a mistake and damaged her and we are going to take her away and give her an operation that will kill her!" It was a moment that was so full of heartache and sadness that even the sun that was still shining became watery like a winter sun as if it was crying through the clouds and I noticed in one eerie moment that even all the birds in the park next to the hospital that I could see outside the window had gone completely silent which they had not been before.

I sat holding my baby and I did not want her to be taken away from me. She was too beautiful to die and I sat looking at her in wonder at just how very beautiful she was. She was not red and wrinkled like most babys because once her colour had come back she had the complexion and delicate features of a real English lady. She was the most precious thing I had ever had and for the first time in my life that I had actually got something of my own to keep I could not believe that she was not going to be mine after all. I knew what it was like to have absolutely nothing of my own and after waiting for so long to meet this new life who was going to be my best little friend I could not believe that she was not going to stay around to be friends with me. I could not understand why it was always me who lost everything

328C. and it seemed to me that other people had so much but my baby was all I had got and I could not see why I had got to loose her or why it was always me. Actually holding her had made the agony of handing her over even worse but it was no worse than the agony of not holding her had felt like. The whole thing was one awful headache and at least by holding her I got some comfort for a few moments by knowing what it was like to feel a little bundle in my arms that was as light as a feather or to feel the slight warmth of life that radiated into my arms from within the blankets. If I had never held her I might never have seen her beautiful face and as I sat staring at her with tears in my eyes the Sister told the Pupil midwife to come out of the room with her to give my baby and I a couple of minutes alone together.

They went off and I sat looking at my little girl. She looked very drugged and although her eyes were too heavy for her to open she opened her mouth and puckered her lips as if she was trying to cry but no sound came. My heart went out to her and I wondered in anguish if she was in pain from the swelling. It was so unfair that it had happened and that she had been so needlessly damaged. I could not believe how she could have been alright when I had seen her the night before and now a huge distension had disfigured her and all through her having been tube fed. The Sister had said to me that it should never have happened and that it would never have happened if she had been on duty and I wished to heavens that I had been there on the

329c. Special Care Baby Unit myself as I would have seen to it that no drunk had treated my baby either. I wished that I had insisted on being taken to my baby's side when I had left the labour ward and that I had not let them take me to the ward. There was no difference between lying on a trolley next to my baby's incubator than in lying in a proper bed on the ward and I would rather have been next to my baby. I began to panic that so much had happened while I had thought that my baby was being properly looked after and I did not want to leave her side again at all. I felt guilty that I had not been beside my child to see that she was alright even though I had been in bed where I was supposed to be and if I had insisted on being beside my baby I would probably have been accused of being un-co-operative. My own rest in bed had cost my child her life because I had not been beside her to protect her and I felt that I could never let myself rest like that again. I could not believe that it could all have happened and I just could not believe that my baby was going to die because she had not lived long enough. She was so beautiful and I could not stop wondering at just how beautiful her face was. She had such a gentle aristocratic look that made her look every inch an English lady. Her closed eyes had long dark eyelashes and her mouth was like a perfect cupid's bow. She had such a sweet tiny nose which had small white spots across it and rosy cheeks which looked very healthy and not at all red and wrinkled as a baby would usually have. She had the most normal adult complexion and if it had not been that she looked so drugged she would have looked like a tiny adult and I would not have been surprised if she could even

330c. have talked. I tried with great difficulty to raise my arms to lift her up in them to kiss her and by bending my head down to her with great difficulty and creaking noises in my back I managed to reach her to plant a tiny kiss on her forehead where she had just been baptized and with another manoeuvre I managed to move myself to kiss her right cheek but could not reach across to kiss her left cheek so I blew a little kiss across to it with my lips. Then I carefully lowered her in my arms and held her close to cradle her. There was the sound of people behind me and a man making a fuss outside in the corridor and as I turned my head slightly to see what was going on I realized that I had an audience of people outside in the corridor looking at my baby and I through the window. My baby and I were alone in the room and I realized that we had not been left alone at all because the people in the corridor who were all Doctors and nurses were standing there for the sole purpose of watching us and seeing how we behaved. An elderly male Doctor was kicking up a fuss and the Sister rushed into the room to see what I was doing and she asked me "Did you kiss her?" I said yes and she asked me why I had kissed her on the place that she had just been baptized and if I had done it in order to wipe it off. I said no and I was astounded. I told her that I had kissed her to give her my blessing and the Sister looked as if she was going to burst into tears. She told me that it was alright as if to reassure me and she stormed off back out into the corridor and was really cross with

331c. the Doctor out there. She told him that there was nothing wrong with a mother kissing her baby and she said that I should be left alone because my baby was going to be taken away from me in less than an hour anyway. She asked the Doctor if he did not have any pity at all. He ignored her and asked her why I had not lifted my baby up properly if I had wanted to kiss her and why I had bent down towards her if I had wanted to kiss her. The Sister told him furiously that I had done the best I could and that he was not to forget that I could not move my arms properly. She told him that if he had got any pity in him he would have gone into the room and lifted my baby up for me so that I could have kissed her easily if I had wanted to, instead of him standing out in the corridor staring through the window at me like he was looking at some caged animal and throwing up his arms in horror if I so much as moved to kiss my own baby. She told him that he had seen how I reacted and that it was a very normal reaction for a mother to kiss her new born baby and that now he had seen it he could go and so could the rest of the Doctors. He told her furiously that it was not a normal reaction for a mother to kiss her baby 'In A CASE LIKE THIS' and that it was EXACTLY what they were watching FOR!. He was very cross that the Sister had spoken to him like that because he was a senior member of the staff but she managed to get them to go further along the corridor towards her office especially since there was another mother in the next room who was trying to breast feed her premature baby and it was making her feel very uncomfortable because quite a few of the young doctors who were supposed to be looking at me, were looking through the next window at her. When they had gone the Sister told the pupil midwife that she had never known things to be so bad and that the whole lot of those Doctors wanted to be thrown right out of the hospital. It was the same as it had been the night before.

332c. when the Pupil Midwife had been trying to write down what my reactions were and it made me feel so uncomfortable that anybody could want to see what my feelings were that I felt that I would never be able to let anyone see any sign of how I felt ever again.

My feelings felt completely frozen and I just sat there quite still and looked down at my sleeping baby. She was the most beautiful treasure that I had ever been given and nothing else could ever have compared with her at all. Nothing else I had ever been given had ever had the life in it which only God can give and my heart ached with immeasurable grief that she was going to be taken from me. It felt like the end of the world and a complete blank came down in my mind so that the agony of thinking about the future was cut out and I did not have to think about the worry of it because the present day I was in was already too much to bear. I clung to the hope that the tests they were going to do at Great Ormond Street might help to clear the blockage and if they did then the Sister had said that they might send my baby back but I knew that it was hoping against hope and I knew that the Sister had been quite definite when she told the priest that the baby was going to have an operation today. I knew that there was no real chance at all but I just could not accept it, my baby had to live, I just could not bear her to die. I would willingly have suffered instead of her and I could not bear her to be hurt. I blamed myself for having given in and accepted that one Pethidine injection because I knew that if I had been conscious all through my labour then my baby would have breathed better at birth and not needed intensive care and then there might not have been

333C. any mistake about feeding her. If I had been beside my baby and someone like the technician who had put the drip in my arm the night before had started fumbling about with putting tubes down my baby's nose in order to feed her I could have insisted that a proper doctor should do it even if it had caused a lot of trouble about it.

I had planned so many good things for my baby. I wanted to be her friend and I wanted her to live long enough to know me and like me. I had so many good things to show her and tell her about and she had all the beautiful things of this world to see, if only she could live. I felt my feelings swimming through the depths of desperation and realized that nothing at all in this life is as important as good health, as without it everything is worth nothing and I knew the agony of losing somebody you love because they did not have enough health to keep them alive. As I sat wallowing in my sorrow and silently cradling my baby the Sister came back and said that they were having difficulty getting my family to come to the hospital and she seemed annoyed and said that they had tried several times to leave messages with neighbours and would have to get the Police to go round there. She said that the baby would have to go back into the incubator incase she got cold and she put her back. She went off and I sat alone looking at my baby in her incubator. Then a man who was very well dressed in smart clothes came into the room. He quickly glanced at the baby in her incubator and went over to the window and held up some X-rays which he had brought in with him and which I got a very good look at. They showed a large mass in her abdomen and the shape of two bright kidneys. He stood with his back to me looking at the X-rays against the light of the window for a long time and then turned round and to my surprise he cut me dead by giving me a look of disgust and cont-

334C. empt. I did not know what I had done wrong and after he had gone the Sister came back in and told me that he was Dr. Gars the doctor who my baby was under. She asked if he had spoken to me and I said no. The Sister said that she was not surprised and she paused and as if she had got to say it, she spoke very quietly and said that no one at the hospital was going to condemn me and they only wanted to try to help me but if there was anything that I wanted to tell them she said that I could do it. I was very willing to do anything that I could and I asked what they wanted to know and said eagerly that I would tell them anything they wanted to know. The Sister sighed as if I had missed the point and then she got up and went out of the room back to her office. When she came back later with a pupil mid-wife she said that they had got to get the baby ready to go in a portable incubator to Great Ormond Street and she said that she was annoyed that my family had not turned up yet. The Pupil midwife asked her if they knew and the Sister said yes as if she was annoyed about it and she but - butted. Then she said that I could hold the baby again when she was ready and then changed her mind and said that I could hold her straight away and as soon as the pupil midwife had put a blanket around her she let me hold her and this time I chose to hold her in my right hand.

The Sister told the pupil midwife to get the things ready for her to go to Great Ormond Street in and she pulled a Silver foil space - suit out of a drawer full of them and a tiny paper nappy and a fresh white nightdress. When they had the things ready the Sister asked if they could have the

335c. baby to put the things on her. Every second that I could spend with my baby was so precious that I was so glad that she had considered letting me hold her while they were getting the things ready as we should have been together for every available second. The Pupil midwife took her and quickly changed her to be able to give her back to me as soon as possible. As she went to put the white nightdress on her, the sister who was sitting beside me spoke quickly and asked her if there was a pink one. She looked at me and it was obvious that she was trying to make things easier for me and she said that it was not much, it was only a hospital nighty but at least I could see her in something pretty. The pupil midwife found just one pink one in a drawerfull of white ones and put it on her. She got the silver foil cape and I knew what it was from the shape of it. The sister explained that it would open out and fold around the baby with its hood like a space suit to keep her warm in the ambulance. I vaguely struggled with ideas in my mind about convection and so forth but could not find the words to explain them and I silently nodded as if I was grateful for her simple explanation.

She asked the pupil midwife if she could go in the ambulance with the baby and she said that she would. They discussed what she should wear which was a cape over her ordinary uniform and then the sister told her to go over and get something to eat from the canteen quickly as she would be gone from the hospital for some hours. She said that there was an ambulance strike and told the pupil midwife that she might have to get a mini cab back to the hospital and she told her to book it to the hospital and not to pay it out of her own money saying that she knew what she was like and very good but she must not afford it herself

336c. because nurses did not earn that kind of money. She said she would try to sort something out with the ambulance-men when they came about getting her a lift back as they were very good. She looked at her watch and told the pupil midwife that if my family did not turn up soon they would have to send the baby without them but Great Ormond Street would not like it. When she said 'without them' she was not referring to my family and I wondered if the Sister meant the forms that I had got to sign but she was guarding her conversation in front of me and I felt too submissive and afraid to ask. The pupil midwife went to wrap the baby in a white cot blanket on top of the space suit for warmth but the Sister stopped her quickly and with a touch of urgency in her voice she told her not to use the white blanket but to use a yellow towel and went on to say that it was bright and colourful and looked better. She spoke as if she was trying to guard what she said in front of me but as if she expected the pupil midwife to understand. She also did not seem to want the baby dressed in white and I wondered why and I immediately found that because I was sitting right beside the Sister I could listen into her mind and hear what she was actually thinking which was that they dressed babies in white for the mortuary and that the next time I saw my baby she would be in there, if they let me see her. What they were thinking was awful but I sat looking at the Sister as if I was utterly fascinated that I could listen into another persons thoughts. I had never been able to do that before and although I had realized during the night before when my breathing

337c. had stopped, that I could know anything I wanted to if I could use it to help someone else I had not realized that I would even be able to know the things that other people did not want me to know if they were trying to hide the truth from me. I had a new way of understanding everything but I knew that nobody else could see and hear the things that I was now able to and so I felt terribly alone with it all.

The Pupil midwife put my baby back into my left arm and I held her while the Sister carried on explaining to me what baby spacesuits and space blankets were for. I was listening to her politely but although I was glad of her thoughtfulness, I suddenly realized that she was talking to me as if she was talking to a child who knew nothing rather than an adult who had suddenly forgotten everything, but what she was saying and the way that she was talking seemed to remind me of my biology lessons at school and for a few moments I had a sudden insight into the fact that I already knew far, far more about what she was saying than she was giving me credit for and I spoke up for myself. I said that I had done O' level Biology at school and that I knew all about spacesuits from the Physics lessons. The Sister said to me quite incredulously "have you done Physics and Biology?" as if that was the last thing that she had expected. She said that I was very young to have done my O'levels and she told the Pupil Midwife that I must have done them at least two years early. I said no and told her that I had done them a year later than I should have done but the Sister just ignored that. She asked me where I went to school and I said that I had left school nearly two years before, but that I had been to Askets Girls School which I could remember quite clearly once we started talking

338c about it. The Sister told the Pupil Midwife that if I had already done my exams like that then it was why I thought that I would be able to cope with my baby on my own. I had never seen the Sister before that morning and I wondered how it was that she seemed to know all about me because she had said the same thing as the Pupil Midwife the night before and yet I had not seen her before either. I could not see why they had to look for a reason for how I behaved and why they kept digging around for reasons as to why I might not be able to take care of my baby. I worked so hard that I thought they should have accepted me straight away as a very good mother and I felt puzzled and worried about the whole situation but I was so heavy headed from the drug that I had been given that all I felt was shock from the situation and I could not tell anyone what was wrong because I felt so 'knocked out'.

The Pupil Midwife and the Sister did everything to help me make the most of what everyone thought would be the only time that I ever held my child but although I did not say anything, all I felt was a terrible agony that they were giving me my baby but only because they were taking her away from me. The Sister told me that I was not actually supposed to hold the baby and that even if the baby had not been sick I would still not have been allowed to hold her but she did not say why, she just said that she had let me hold her 'under the circumstances'. The Pupil Midwife suddenly thought of something and she opened the blankets and lifted

339c. out the baby's tiny hand to let me see it  
and without letting the baby get cold  
she left her tiny hand peeping out of the  
blanket she was wrapped in for me to  
look at. It was the baby's left hand and  
it was so perfectly formed. She had long  
fingernails and the long white tips of  
the nails were perfectly pointed like the  
manicured finger nails of a grown  
woman. The Sister said that it really  
was a shame about the swelling on my  
baby because she was perfect other-  
wise and although she was premature  
she was not like any other premature  
baby because she was fully formed.  
She pointed out that even the bigger  
premature babies in the next room did  
not have such features as their eye-  
lashes or such healthy looking skin  
and she said that some of them had  
no fingernails at all yet. My baby  
had all those things and although  
she was tiny she was more fully  
developed than some of the full term  
babies on the wards.

The Sister pointed out that the baby  
had two tiny 'stork marks' just under  
the outer edge of her right eye and  
she said that they might have come  
from forceps having been used at the  
delivery. I told her that there had been  
no need for them to have been used at  
all as the baby had been born before  
the Registrar had used them to pick  
up her head with. She seemed to know  
that already and she said that things  
had been quite out of order. She told  
the Pupil Midwife that she would not  
be surprised if something had gone  
wrong on the labour ward and she  
said that someone had not put down  
the correct time that the baby was  
born at or when she was admitted to  
the Premature Baby Unit. The Sister  
told the Pupil Midwife that I said that

340c. the baby was born at 11.35 and that she was still on the labour ward for some twenty five minutes after that which was a very long time when a baby was not breathing properly. She said that the baby should have been rushed up to the Unit immediately and as what I had said fitted the state that my baby was in more accurately, she did believe what I said had happened. She told the Pupil midwife that the Unit was fully equipped with life saving equipment and the fact that my baby had not been brought straight to it was disgusting. She said that it only took three minutes after a babys birth to dash the baby up to the Special Care Unit because they had practised it for the hospital administrators when the hospital had been full of news reporters and cameramen during the previous summer when the Kristen Bullen baby who had been snatched from her pram had been brought to the hospital. She said that the hospital authorities had shown off in front of the newspaper reporters to show them how efficient the hospital was, in being able to rush a baby straight from the delivery room to specially equipped rooms in the hospital's special care baby unit in the hope that they would receive donations of money and equipment for the unit, but she said that nobody could bother to run a baby upstairs to the unit in three minutes flat when there were no newspaper reporters standing there to take their picture. She said that nobody could give a damn about a poor unmarried mothers baby who nobody knew about and

341c that what went on when there were no reporters about in the hospital was a scandal. She said that the hospital had more equipment than it could handle because the people using it did not know what they were doing with it. She said that some of the patients would stand a chance of getting better if the Doctors left them alone and that what had happened to my baby would not have happened if they had not tampered about with her. I knew that was true from what they had done to me and although the Sister was talking to the Pupil midwife about it and not to me I still felt better when I listened to what she was saying because she was right and to hear someone who had some control over mine and my baby's life speak out for the truth helped to take away some of the awful fear that I had felt because so much had been done to us against our wishes.

The Sister carried on telling me about the tiny marks on my baby's face and she went on to say that if it had not been the forceps that had made those marks then it might have been the beginning of a strawberry birthmark and that if it had been, my baby had been lucky that it had not grown any bigger because some of them could be quite unsightly. She said that I would be 'able to tell' by whether it faded or not because if it faded it was 'stork marks' and if it did not then it was a very tiny strawberry birthmark. The Sister asked me if anyone in our family close to me had a strawberry birthmark and I said no because the only person I knew of who had one was my Godmother Lilian Miles but she was no real relation at all, and so I did not mention her. The Sister seemed to think that I was not being

342c. very honest with her because she already seemed to know otherwise. It seemed as if she was trying to get me to talk about myself and when I said that nobody had one the Sister seemed almost annoyed that she could not get me to talk very much but I really knew nothing else to say. It was only a very long time afterwards that I remembered that my sister had lost the pigment in the skin on her nose and people including Dr. Galvan called it a strawberry birthmark when it actually wasn't one at all. The Sister kept looking at my face and she said to me "haven't you got one?" as if she was trying to get me to talk but I still said no because I had not got one and she seemed less willing and friendly to talk to me after that.

The Sister carried on talking and told me very firmly that the baby had got to go to Great Ormond Street Hospital because Lewisham Hospital had not got Doctors with the specialized knowledge needed to deal with what was wrong with her. She seemed to think that the baby would be better off at Great Ormond street because she said that if she needed an operation it could be done by people who knew what they were doing and she said that there were Doctors at Lewisham Hospital who could try to operate but it would not be much good and my babys only real chance was at Great Ormond Street. She said that the Doctors at Lewisham Hospital had caused what was wrong and so it was better to let someone else sort it out. As she told me all that so firmly and not for the first time, I got the

343c impression that she was saying it ever so nastily because she spoke to me so firmly and it was years afterwards that Psychiatrists had to explain to me that the Sister had been trying to make me cry because it would have helped to lessen the state of shock that I was in but I would never have cried in front of other people and I felt too strongly that I had got to be brave for my baby's sake, to allow myself to cry. I just sat looking at my tiny baby and the Sister gave up and talked to me more kindly again. She told me that the Doctors at Great Ormond Street might be able to pass through what was blocked in my baby without an operation and that if they could then in a few days they might send her back and I could go to the Unit to see her whenever I wanted to. I said yes and the Sister looked at the Pupil Midwife as if she was really worried that she could not get me to say much more than yes or no but although she did not think that was much to say it felt as if I was saying an awful lot and when I said more than that it seemed as if I was talking for ages to me when actually I had only said a few sentences in order to answer what the Sister wanted to know and if she had not spoken to me I would not have spoken at all and she seemed very worried about it. She undid the towel and spacesuit that was wrapped around my baby and she lifted up the pink nightdress to show me the huge lump that had come up on my baby's abdomen. I saw the lump close to and it looked hard and ugly, with great blue veins across it. The Sister touched it gently with her fingers as if she was trying to get me to touch it but I just stared

344C at it in disbelief that things could have gone so wrong for my baby and I when we had nothing else in the world at all, but I did not utter a sound and the Sister looked at me so sadly and carefully covered up the lump again and put the spacesuit and blanket together again.

The Sister sent the Pupil Midwife off to get her meal and she sat beside me in silence as we looked at my baby lying in my arms. After a while there was the sound of a bell ringing at the entrance to the Premature Baby Unit and when the Sister went to answer it I heard her show my mother into her office. She spoke to her for a few minutes and then she let my mother come on into the Special Care room alone. I did not think that the Sister would have allowed her to come into the room and I did not want my mothers cigarette smell or her smokers cough near my newborn baby and I did not want my mother involved with my baby. I wanted to tell her to go out but a strange feeling of submissiveness came over me and I thought that it might look worse for me if I was rude to my mother as the Sister had sent for her to come, so I stayed quiet.

My mother leaned over my baby and said "Arr, shes lovely, she looks just like a little doll". Then she remarked that the baby DID look odd, as if the Sister had just said that to her and she was repeating it. My mother said that what was wrong with the baby's face was that she had no eyebrows but the baby did have thin blonde perfectly shaped eyebrows and so I could not see what she was talking about.

345c. The Sister came back into the room quickly bringing a doctor with her. He was young coloured and ever so nice. He explained to my mother that the baby had a blockage in her abdomen and was being sent to Great Ormond Street Childrens Hospital to see if they could treat it. He spoke to my mother as if it was her who had a right to know everything and he moved to lift the babys clothes as if he wanted to show the lump on my babys abdomen. I did not want my mother to see my baby undressed or for the Doctor to tell her about my baby and without saying anything I gently held my baby more closely to me and put my hand protectively over where the Doctor was going to lift her clothes without touching his hand so that he let go of my babys clothes from his fingers. The Doctor looked at me as if he suddenly realised that I did not want my mother to see it and he started to make it obvious that he was talking to me and not to my mother as if he was shocked that he had previously started to ignore my feelings. He asked me if I knew what cystic fibrosis was because they had tested my babys meconium for it and it had tested positively. A vague flash of hope ran through my mind that he used the correct medical terms to me and had not talked down to me. I recognised that it was a childrens illness and when he asked me if we had it in our family, I said no. He looked at my mother for confirmation and smelling of cigarette ash and smoke she bent down to where the Doctor had bent down to my level on the low chair and said to him "yes we have, my Grandfather had cysts on his kidneys and he died of it." The Sister looked across at my mother as if she was shocked at her and as if she knew in that one moment what my

346C. mother was like and she did not approve of her. I said to my mother that Cystic fibrosis was different and a look of despair came over me as if I had so much to deal with that I could not cope with my mother as well. The Doctor and Sister looked at me as if they were both trying to reassure me and the Doctor was especially worried. They both understood that even in the State that I was in I knew more than my mother did who they had fetched in to reassure me and give them more information and it was not what they had expected at all. The Doctor asked if there were any abnormalities in our family and very calmly and in full control of the situation I tried to recollect vague memories of what there were but my mother pushed in loudly and in a very self confident manner She Said "There's nothing, nothing at all, There's nothing wrong with any of my side of the family at all". The Sister asked "What about your husband's family - Anne's father?" My Mother retorted nastily that she knew nothing about him and the Sister said to my mother very kindly "Then you're an unmarried mother too" but my mother was indignant and said that she was not she was properly married. "Estranged" volunteered the Sister and my mother said indignantly that there was nothing wrong with her marriage and that she had meant that she knew nothing of any deformity in his family. She said that there was nothing wrong with anyone in the family and then added "although Anne is another question" as if she really hated me but I knew my mother and I knew that she was trying to defend herself. The Sister looked interested but the Doctor did not want to talk anymore as he wanted the forms signed. The Sister lifted the baby from me so that the Doctor could rest the forms on my lap

347c. after he had found a board for me to rest them on to write. my mother held out her arms for the baby, but the Sister took no notice. "Can I hold her?" my mother asked, trying to bring the Sisters attention to the fact that she was standing there with her arms ready and waiting for the baby. She spoke nicely but firmly as if the baby was hers and she had a right to hold her. "No" said the Sister "The mother has hardly held her, I'm sorry but she's the one that counts." my mother held her tongue but she was obviously annoyed and I felt relieved that the Sister had bothered to think about my feelings because I had not had my baby for long enough myself to start thinking about letting other people hold her. We had been apart all night and so we were really in the first hour of our time together just the same as we would have been in the first hour after the delivery if everything had gone normally and it was too soon for visitors, in just the same way as I would have been horrified if my mother had walked into the delivery room in the first hour after my babys birth and had seen me lying on the delivery table in all the mess that I was in, which should have been a totally private time.

The Doctor showed me where to sign the forms but he asked me if I could read the printed forms first because they were quite detailed. He asked me if I could read and he was quite willing to let me read them myself but he seemed to think that I would not be able to. I told him that I could read it and I knew that I had always been very good at reading but when I started at the beginning of the form it dawned on me with horror that I could no longer read. I poured over every word on the first line but I did not know what the words meant and it was like looking at a foreign language. I carefully studied the form while the Doctor who saw that I was in difficulties explained each paragraph to me without

348C. making it too obvious that he was actually reading it to me in front of my mother. When I was quite satisfied that I understood what was on the forms from what he was saying, and also after I had asked the Doctor quite distinctly to be sure that the forms were only for procedures that would save MY baby's life, I went to sign the forms with the biro he offered me. I do not know if it was shock, or my nerves at the prospect of signing my baby away, or something left over from the sudden fear that I had felt moments before, that the Sister might have let my mother hold my baby and then the sudden relief that she had not, but I suddenly felt quite faint again. I had a job to get hold of the pen properly as my hands had gone rigid again like they had during my labour but I determinedly took hold of the pen and tried to write my name. My mother said "Anne Maple" very lowly, telling me what to write and what my name was and pointing to the place that was so obvious on the paper as if she was talking to a simpleton. I vaguely realized that she had always spoken to me like that before but that this time because I seemed so slow and ill, no one thought that there was anything unusual about it. I tried to write and I found that I could not write. My mother tried to take the pen away from me and the forms and said "Shall I do it, this is what they've brought me here for" and she looked round at the Sister and Doctor for support but the Doctor said "Let her do it" as if he wanted me to sign my own forms. I was determined not to let anyone else, especially my mother sign for my own baby's operation and so with strong

349c. determination I signed my name slowly. My signature came out so shaky that I could hardly recognise it as my own writing and as I suddenly remembered that my handwriting was usually so beautiful I could not understand how I could not write properly. As soon as the forms were signed the Doctor got up with the sister who had by then put the baby back in the incubator and they both asked my mother if she would come into the office with them. I vaguely thought as they went that I should insist on being present if anything was being said but I felt too dopey to do it and I consoled myself that I was having a few minutes alone with my baby apart from not wanting to face the awful hurdle of trying to walk back to the office again. At the time I thought they had gone into the office to talk for a few moments and then to tell my mother that she could go or that she was not to upset me or something but they had in fact asked her to sign the forms that were to be sent with my baby. She witnessed what I had signed and then she signed a complete set of the forms including the consent form that the sister had taken out. My mother did not know what she was signing for as she could not understand forms like that and she genuinely believed that because she had been asked to be the person to give her consent for my baby's operation as the baby's next of kin, because I was too shocked to know what I was doing, she thought that she was signing her consent to be the baby's next of kin and that those forms were giving her my place as the baby's mother. She did not give any thought to the operation that she was signing for and her only thought when she signed those forms was that by signing them she was getting herself a baby. I did not

350c. know that my mother had been asked  
to sign any forms and as far as I  
knew it was only the forms that I had  
signed that went to Great Ormond  
Street with my baby.

After some time my mother came back  
into the room alone and sat beside  
me as if she had been told to do it  
and she said "Anne" slowly in her  
sickly voice "Is there anything you  
want to tell me?" I said "No" quite  
matter of factly and very sure of  
myself because I had nothing to say  
to her and I did not want to tell her  
anything of what had gone on in  
the delivery room or any of my private  
business because I just was not on  
those kind of speaking terms with  
my mother. I did not want her anywhere  
near me let alone to have to talk to  
her because as far as I was concerned  
she was just a dirty, filthy, revolting  
old woman and I only tolerated her  
because God had said "Thou shalt  
love thy mother and thy father" so we  
sat in silence until the Sister came  
into the room. The Sister looked at my  
mother and my mother looked at her  
and said "no" and shrugged her  
shoulders as if the Sister had told her  
to ask me if I wanted to tell her any-  
thing but I had said no. I would have  
talked to the Sister if I had known what  
she wanted to know but I didn't and  
I could not even work out what she  
was thinking this time as there was  
just nothing there in my mind.

The Sister went over to the window  
and then turned and asked my mother  
if she wanted to go to Great Ormond  
Street with the baby. I quickly said  
no and I was quite alarmed about  
it but the Sister looked at me quickly  
and gave me a look as if to tell me  
that I was not to worry as she was