

251c. strings drawn up tightly.

The Pupil midwife told me that she was just going into the corridor to ring for a porter and she said that she would be back in a moment. I did not want her to go and leave me because I felt afraid to be left alone and my abdomen felt so precariously tight that I felt that if I moved even an inch I would haemorrhage. Even though I did not want to be left alone I still did not want crowds of people around me as I could still remember the horror of all the people crowding round to see what was happening to me at the delivery and my nerves could not stand it. In my mind pictures of the horror that I had been through in labour were showing themselves in shot after shot across the screen of my thoughts and since I could not turn it off it was worse when I was left alone. Even so, at that moment I was still expecting it to stop soon and I just thought that it was still so soon after it had happened that I could not forget it. I had absolutely no idea that it would always be like that for the rest of my life and that I had just got to learn to live with it. Worse than that I thought that the horror that I had been through was over and that, as long as my baby lived, things could only get better for us. I had no idea that the worst nightmare of all was still ahead of us. The Pupil midwife came back from the telephone twice to check that I was still alright while she waited for whoever she was telephoning to find her somebody to help her to get me to the ward that I was going to. Then she came back and waited anxiously until she heard somebody arrive out in the corridor and she went out and found a domestic who had been borrowed from the theatres because their own night domestic and all the Porters were on their break. She told the Domestic that the labour ward staff were all on their break too and she said it as if she did not think it was right at all.

252c.

The Pupil midwife pushed in a trolley from the corridor and asked the Domestic if she could help her get me onto it and down to the ward and she apologized to the Domestic and said that there was just no one else to help her. The Domestic was a middleaged woman who was very kind and helpful. She had hair that was nicely set as if it had just been permed and she wore white shoes and a green overall. She came in smiling but when the Pupil Midwife turned the main lights in the room on full the Domestic looked aghast. I must have looked absolutely drained of colour in my face and she said to me "Have you had a rough time?" as if she was really shocked and sorry for me, and when she said that I saw the Pupil Midwife's face change as she looked quickly at the Domestic as if she had forgotten that the Domestic would notice how I looked and that nobody was supposed to let me know that I had been through a bad time. I told the Domestic that "No, it was fine" as if I was trying to be brave and polite but the Domestic noticed that there was no cot and she looked embarrassed. The Pupil Midwife told her that the baby was in special care and gave the Domestic a warning look as if she was not to talk about it. The Domestic nodded and was embarrassed and I felt left out of it all and let down, as if they knew something more about it all than I did and it undid some of the good that the Pupil Midwife had done in talking to me because I felt that they were not being completely honest with me.

As I listened to the Pupil midwife and the Domestic I realized that I was very much more sensitive to what they were saying and doing than I usually was because I was so ill. I had always been very aware

253c. of what other people were upto, especially when they did not want me to know, but I suddenly found that I was more aware of other peoples thoughts and feelings than I had ever been before. Somehow because I was so still and weak my brain seemed to have far more energy than it usually had and to be capable of far more because that energy was not being used by my body. My eyes seemed to watch every movement and so I saw every move and expression that other people made and I listened to the expression in their voices with twice as much understanding as I should have had. It seemed as if the energy my body normally used when it had proper feeling was being redirected to my senses and they seemed to be twice as alert as if they were automatically compensating for my body in order to give me a full quota of perception, even if that full quota of perception had altered its normal order of priorities. I understood then how much sick and disabled people must feel in their 'still' bodies and I knew for myself how much more easily their feelings must get hurt than their bodies do. In the situation that I was in I saw the look that passed between the Pupil Midwife and Domestic that they hoped I had not noticed and because I was lying so still and ill on the delivery table and unable to do the normal things that I would have done, I understood that look so much more painfully than I would normally have done and it cancelled out a lot of the good that the Pupil Midwife had done in talking to me because it spelt out that they were only kidding me along that my baby was fine because they did not want me to know the truth. Sadly, even if they had agreed not to talk about the baby in front of me before they had come into the room to take me to the ward I might still have known and seen through their pretence because somehow when you are that ill you do just seem to 'know' things and what they

254c. needed to do was to tell me the truth but to be very 'positive' about keeping my hopes up.

Despite all that I was still grateful for their kindness and sympathy and I needed their company. They saw that I had seen them look at each other and they were embarrassed about it. The Pupil Midwife seemed to feel inadequate and she hurried up to get me to the ward as quickly as she could. She told the Domestic that there were more staff on duty on the ward if 'anything happened' and that I really ought to be going to Intensive Care and not to a ward, and when the Domestic asked her why I wasn't then, she gave her another awkward look as if they were not to talk about it. The Pupil Midwife seemed as if she wanted to hand me over to someone more experienced than her as quickly as possible but actually she was one of the few people who actually did anything positive to help me.

When they were ready the Pupil Midwife and the Domestic discussed how they were going to get me onto the trolley. There was absolutely no one else to help them and the Pupil Midwife told the Domestic that it was just not right. She said that at my delivery so many people had crowded into the delivery room that it had been a disgusting disgrace which had caused me a lot of unnecessary embarrassment but that when I needed just one or two of those people to actually do something to help me like getting me onto a trolley then nobody could be found. She told the Domestic that staff shortages were rubbish because a delivery room could fill to over crowding if there was something interesting going on and she told the Domestic that they were short of staff being in the right place at the right time.

255c. The Pupil Midwife and the Domestic had no idea how they were going to get me onto the trolley because it had no brakes on it and so it was going to take both of them to hold it against the delivery table. The Pupil Midwife said that I ought to be lifted over onto it but as there was just nobody else to do it she asked me if there was any possibility of me sort of climbing or rolling myself over onto the trolley. The Pupil Midwife helped me to sit up and held onto me with her hand while she got herself behind the other side of the trolley and held it against the delivery table with her own body, and the Domestic did the same at the bottom end of the trolley. I sat there for a moment thinking about how I could get over and the Domestic and Pupil Midwife watched me as if they did not like to move me or pull me too much because it was better if I did it in my own time. My legs were numb but when I thought about it I realized that I could move each leg in turn by picking it up under the knee with my arms, even though they had no proper feeling in them, and then try to swing it over as I clumsily lifted it. There was no other way to do it and it took a while to do it because I ended up dragging it over clumsily rather than swinging it as I was trying to do. I could not feel the trolley with my left leg and in consequence my leg hit the trolley and landed heavily to which the Pupil Midwife said 'steady on' and laughed about it but she was pleased with me because they could never have got me over on their own. I got the other in the same way and then I got my body over by laying down once my legs were over and pulling myself over the rest of the way by my arms.

The Pupil Midwife and the Domestic were really pleased with me and I was only too eager to be helpful but later

256c. on even my helpfulness turned against me because no one knew that my back was hurt and that it had only just happened to me in the labour ward. The staff swore that I had arrived at the labour ward as a cripple in a wheelchair unable even to stand up unaided. Without realizing what I was doing I had got myself off the delivery table and onto the trolley in the delivery room was the way that physiotherapists show patients to move themselves but I had only moved myself like that because it was the easiest way that I could think of to do it at the time. The hospital swore that I could only have moved like that if someone had shown me how to do it previously in a hospital. Once the Pupil Midwife and the Domestic had seen me move like that it meant that the hospital became under the impression that I was normally like that and so they escaped any blame that they did not realize that I had only just been hurt.

Once I was onto the trolley the Pupil Midwife told me that they were taking me to C3 ward and then she asked the Domestic if she could help her to clean up the room afterwards because there was nobody else to help her. The Domestic said yes and told the Pupil Midwife that it was alright because the theatres were not busy. The Domestic looked around the room and said that it was tidy and that it was just the blood on the floor that needed clearing up. She looked around at the floor but when she looked at the floor at the bottom of the delivery table she looked as if her stomach turned and she told the Pupil Midwife that she was used to blood but not

257c

all that!' The Pupil Midwife agreed with her and said to the Domestic 'that some women bleed a lot but she poured!'. The Domestic went closer and looked at the blood on the floor then she told the Pupil Midwife 'That's not all blood', and she bent right down and said to her again 'That looks like green poison as if it's full of puss or something. The Pupil Midwife nodded and agreed with her and she looked puzzled and said that she did not know what it was. She told the Domestic that the Doctors had taken a long look at it because they were puzzled about it and the Placenta. When they were ready to go to the ward the Domestic picked up my suitcase and guided the trolley out of the ward while the Pupil Midwife pushed the trolley from behind my head. They wheeled me out of the labour ward, then we went by the lift to the floor below and within a few minutes they were wheeling me into C3 ward.

In the darkened maternity ward all the curtains were drawn around each bed except those that were empty and it was quiet. The Pupil Midwife and the Domestic wheeled me along the ward and paused at a table in the middle of the ward where a night sister sat reading. The Sister smiled at me and asked me my name. She had a very good natured Irish accent but when I told her that my name was 'Anne Maple' she had to ask me to say it again as if she could not understand it. I said 'Anne Maple' again and when the Sister thought she had caught what I was saying she asked me what I had had and where my baby was. I told her that I had got a little girl and that she was upstairs in the special care baby unit. The Sister looked slightly concerned and she checked what I said with the

258c. Pupil Midwife by asking "Special Care or Prem.?" The Pupil Midwife said "Special Care but the baby is alright, just had a rough time." The Sister looked reassured and told them to take me to one of the beds at the far end of the ward on the left, so the Pupil Midwife and Domestic wheeled me down to the end of the ward and found me a bed that looked alright. A nurse in a white uniform came along to help draw the curtains round the bed and then she went to help get me onto the bed but the Pupil Midwife told her not to help me. She told her that I could do it myself and she said "She's marvellous, watch her." I got onto the bed by the same method that I had used to get myself from the delivery table onto the trolley while the two nurses and the Domestic watched me but the Maternity ward nurse in white thought that it was wrong for me not to be lifted across so soon after just having had a baby although she did not say much about it because the Pupil Midwife was actually a senior nurse compared to her because she was only an auxilliary nurse even though she was much older and possibly more experienced than the Pupil Midwife. The way that I got onto the bed was the only way that I could do it and it was amazing how much control I was getting over my body even though I could not feel it. The Pupil Midwife was pleased with me and told me that she could see that I was going to manage well with my baby, as if she thought she was giving me all the encouragement that I deserved or something but I felt puzzled because it was the second time since I had come into hospital that

259c. I had been spoken to as if there was some kind of 'official' doubt that I would not be able to care for my baby in a way that nobody had ever suggested before. As well as that I wondered what she meant because she had said that she could see for herself that I was used to doing things for myself and I wondered how she could tell that from just watching the way that I had moved my legs from the delivery table to the trolley and from the trolley to the bed. Then the Pupil Midwife and the Domestic said goodbye to me and went off leaving me with the nurse in the white uniform.

The nurse that I was left with was older than the other nurses and she was plump and motherly. She had just the right way of making a patient comfortable in bed and once I was comfortably propped up on the pillows I began to feel much better. She chatted to me for a few moments and then before she went away she told me that if I wanted anything I was just to pull the cord on my lamp switch behind my bed and when she saw the light on she would come straight away. She went off and closed the curtains to leave me alone to rest and when the curtains were drawn it felt as if I had my own tiny room in the ward. The ward was warm and the bed that I was in felt so clean with its white linnen sheets. It was lovely to be in such a big bed and it had been years since I had known the luxury of proper linnen sheets. I felt like a queen laying there propped up against the pillows and I folded my hands in prayer and said a prayer of thanks for a safe delivery and a beautiful baby girl. I felt so holy as if all the pain that I had been through and then being washed and put in clean clothes and clean sheets had taken every trace of sin away from me. It was a beautiful feeling and

260c. it radiated from me in a feeling of Grace within myself and an outward love of a very pure and special kind towards my new and beautiful baby girl. She was the most precious gift that I had ever had and I absolutely treasured her. My only wish was to hold my baby and get to know her but instead of that I had to make do with thinking about all the good and wonderful things that I had planned for her. I felt that she was so perfect that I would never want to ask for more than her and that nothing less than the service of my whole life was enough to offer her in return for the joy that her life had brought to me.

I was so sure that the Doctors were letting the baby rest and giving her good care and I felt sure that the next time I saw my baby she would be very much better so I rested my hopes on that and lay there listening peacefully to the quiet sounds in the ward. At one stage I looked across at my notes that the nurse must have put on the window sill when she brought them down with me instead of giving them to the Sister and I thought about reading them but although they were for my name it clearly said not to be read by the patient on the brown folder I would not break the rules and do what was wrong. I suddenly realized that doing what was right and not what was wrong was now coming to me easier than it had ever done before and it seemed as if there was automatically no choice between right and wrong because I could no longer ever choose what was wrong only what was right. The brown

261c. folder that my notes were in looked quite thick with papers and I wondered how it had accumulated so many papers in the few hours that I had been in hospital when my notes had only previously contained three or four large pages in the Ante-Natal clinic.

As I lay there in the bed I remembered having read that it was sometimes difficult to pass water after giving birth and so I decided to ask for a bedpan to see if I had got that problem or not. I pulled the long cord to the lamp behind me that the nurse had left close to me and when the nurse came along I asked her if I could have a bedpan as I was not allowed out of bed. She brought me one and when I could not go she stood obligingly outside the curtains in the ward pouring water from a jug into a glass and back again as loudly as she could to try to encourage me to go with the result that light went on in the vicinity of the few beds next to me and across the ward as half a dozen other patients heard the water being poured and had to get out of bed and go to the bathroom themselves. Even after all that I could only pass a trickle which seemed strange because I was someone who could always pass a bucket full when asked to and I had never known my bladder to be empty in my life. The nurse told me to drink plenty of water and went off to test the trickle of water that I had passed then she came back and told me that it was normal and left me a jug of water and a glass. She stayed and chatted to me for a while and found out from the Sister for me that I would be able to see my baby after breakfast which would be over by about half past eight. I was so pleased because I could not wait and I really thought that I should not have had to wait because my place was beside my baby and every effort should have been made to keep us together. I should not have

262.C. had to ask for news of her either as the people who delivered my baby should have seen to it that I was kept fully informed as a matter of practise. The nurse in white unpacked my things and put them in my locker and she told me to ask my family to take the case home when they come in at visiting time. I did not want my family to come in at all to see me or my baby but I presumed that visiting hours were only about a quarter of an hour long and so I cheered up when I thought that to see my family for a quarter of an hour for ten days was not too bad as my baby and I had all the rest of the time to ourselves. I felt so happy about my baby that not even the thought of my family coming in could spoil it.

The nurse went off when somebody else needed her and I lay in bed looking at the stars in the night sky out of the window on my right as I lay in the bed. From far away in another ward I heard what I thought was a woman screaming for a long time in pain. I thought that she was probably in agony or something with cancer or some other painful and incurable illness and so I lay there praying for her. I felt so fortunate that my pain had been nothing like that because I had not screamed out aloud and at least in a sort of way my pain had ended once the baby was born, all that was left was the pain in my mind and when I remembered all I had been through I prayed for the woman who was screaming, even harder. AS the sky lightened slightly and morning came the lights went on in the ward and there were loud yells as babies woke up for their feeds. I could hear other mothers begin to get up and draw their curtains and I heard them chatting to each other and fetching bottles for their babies from a trolley. Some cots were pushed into the ward from

263.C what must have been the nursery beyond a doorway on my left and I recognised the cry of one baby as she was pushed in. As her mother came to collect her cot the other mothers remarked that they had heard that one crying in the night and they told the mother jokingly that she had got 'a right yeller there!' All the mothers laughed nicely and I realized that the person in the night who I had heard screaming in pain was not a woman in pain in another ward but a baby crying in the nursery. To me, because I had never been in a hospital before and because I had heard such terrible things about hospitals from my mother, I had mistaken a small cry, (distraught though it was,) coming from nearby, for sounding like a loud cry coming from further away in another ward. I felt relieved but thought that it was a bit funny that I had been praying for a hungry baby in mistake for a grown woman. The baby probably had a very healthy cry and she was certainly rather cross with her mother but it seemed wrong to me to take babies to the nursery even for the night as mothers and their babies needed to be close to each other and so I thought that my prayers for that little one had not been wasted as it probably was a lot for a baby that was so small to feel the pain of separation.

The nurses started drawing the curtains back from each bed along the ward but the Sister stopped them drawing mine back and told the nurses to fetch me a bowl of water so that I could wash because she did not want me to see all the other mothers with their babies. She said that I was probably going to be moved to another ward anyway and she told the nurses that the Special Care Unit had been on the phone and then she lowered her voice to tell the nurses something that she obviously did not want me to hear. I just thought she was telling them that I could see my baby at half past eight as she had said in the night and if

264. C. they moved me to another ward I expected to be moved to the Special Care Baby Unit to be with my baby as I had heard of another hospital where there were rooms for mothers in the Special Care Unit so that mothers could be near their babies and I thought that it must be the same in Lewisham Hospital. I did not mind seeing the other mothers with their babies even if I had not got mine with me because they were new mothers the same as me and I wanted to make friends with them. I just wanted to chat about babies with the other mothers in a way that somehow only new parents seem to know how to and that no one else ever quite seems to understand. I just wanted to get on with the joys of motherhood and even though I still had to wait to see my baby there was no reason why I could not begin making friends with the other mothers and chatting about my baby, but the curtains were firmly drawn around me and as I was left on my own I could not say anything.

The sister brought me some warm water in a brand new blue bowl and asked me if I would like to wash myself; Minutes later this was followed by a nurse who brought me a second bowl by mistake and when she realized she told me that I was really honoured if the sister had seen to me herself because she didn't usually do any work on the ward. She asked me if the sister was my actual sister or some relative or if I just knew her and she said that she asked because she said that it was written on my notes that I had a sister who was a 'sister' (meaning a nursing sister) in the hospital and the nurses were wondering which ward she worked on and if it was that sister but I said that the sister was

265.c. not a relative and that I did not know anyone in the hospital. The nurse seemed to believe what was written on my notes rather than what I said and she seemed to think that it was me who did not want anyone to know that I was in the hospital. The nurse said "It's alright, we know you are nothing like your sister, because it's on your notes about it and we know you don't want your family to know you are a patient here!" The nurse carried on talking about this 'sister' that I did not have and from what she said it sounded as if they thought I was a bit of a tear away and that everyone thought a lot of my sister who the nurse mentioned was older than me. I did not have any such older sister at all and as I knew they were mistaken I just let it go and said nothing more except to say quite firmly that I had no older sister and that I knew no one in the hospital.

When the Sister came back to check that I was getting on alright I noticed that she was going out of her way to be nice to me. She chatted to me for a few moments and I answered all her questions. She seemed to have really taken me under her wing and she seemed to know an awful lot about me, because she said that she knew I was all alone and had no proper caring relatives. She seemed very eager to befriend me and she wanted to help me to find somewhere to live because I was alone with my baby. I was grateful to have found such a good friend who seemed to understand the problems I had so exactly, even though I had never told anyone, and someone who did not want to send me back to my parents like everyone else who I had gone to for help wanted to. She seemed to be so willing to help me but then I seemed to put my foot in it and she completely changed her whole attitude. She asked me which part of

266.c Ireland I came from so I told her very nicely that I was not Irish. The Sister was very obviously Irish by her Irish accent and she looked at me incredulously as if she could not believe what I was saying and said to me "but you've got an Irish accent and you told me your name was O'Mally". I said "Anne Maple" and politely corrected her. The Sister stood there in disbelief and then in horror as she began to stare intently at my face the same as the houseman had done the night before and looking from one side of my face to the other in horror as she compared what she saw there. Then she furiously stormed out from behind the curtains which were round my bed and she went off down the ward. I never saw her again and I thought that she was just annoyed that she had wasted her time on me because she had thought that I had come from the same country as her, but she had actually stormed off to telephone the doctors because she was worried about what had happened to me. Although I did not realize it, I did sound as if I had a thick Irish accent, where I was having difficulty in speaking because one side of my face seemed numb as if I had just been to the dentist. Later on during my stay in hospital the sister swore in front of my parents and the doctors that I had given my name as O'Mally and so did the receptionist in Casualty. The notes were correct for the surname 'Maple' but there was a mix up over the circumstances of the social background of the case. I knew that I had said 'Anne Maple' quite clearly and even if the staff could not make out what I was saying then my name was

267.C. printed quite clearly on my Ante - Natal card. What the hospital were most concerned about was that I had arrived at the hospital calling myself by a different name which they swore was O'Mally and they created an awful fuss about it. I had only said 'Anne Maple' and I was absolutely certain about it. A nurse came and took the bowl of water away and a domestic brought a jug of fresh water behind the curtains and put it on my locker. Then the nurse came back and started to draw the curtains back from around my bed. As she did so I caught sight of some of the other mothers with their babies and I had a good look at the ward which looked old and dingy and the bare floor boards made me feel that you might get splinters in your feet if you walked on it. As the nurse started to draw back the curtains I felt hesitant about the other mothers seeing me in a nightdress. I did not mind seeing them in theirs if they did not mind people seeing them in their nightclothes, but nothing less than proper day clothes were good enough for anyone at all, even my family, to see me in, let alone the other mothers who were members of the general public even if we were all in a hospital ward together. I would have got dressed and sat beside my bed but I was afraid that if the staff saw me dressed they would send me home because the Registrar had already been so forceful about me going straight home. I desperately wanted to stay in so that I could be with my baby and so I thought that the more I looked like a patient the better my chances of staying with my baby would be, even if it meant the humiliation of other people seeing me in a nightdress.

The nurse had hardly finished drawing one side of the curtains back when the nurse in white who was still on

268.C. duty pushed up a trolley. She asked the nurse to leave the curtains drawn around me and so the nurse pulled them back. Outside the curtains the nurse in white told the other nurses that she was going to give me a vulval swab and that the sister had told her to keep me occupied so that I did not go up to the Special Care Unit because there was trouble over the baby. She spoke quietly to the nurses but I could still hear every word she said clearly and fear struck my heart. I wanted to get straight out of bed to go and see my baby but I was too petrified with fear to do it. They had taken my baby away from me so quickly without even wanting to show her to me that I felt petrified with fear that if I demanded to see my child then they could say that I was making a fuss and send me home without letting me see her at all. I just felt totally shocked and terrified that they were holding my baby that I loved away from me and I felt a most horrible feeling that even though there was no reason that I could think of for it there was some awful trouble that my baby and I were suddenly in that was all a terrible mistake.

The nurse in white finally came behind the curtains and she chatted to me as she gave me a vulval swab. She was as friendly as she had been during the night but there was something false about our conversation because she just carried on talking to me as if nothing was wrong and as if what she had just said to the nurses about my baby and I outside the curtains was of no connection at all with the cheerful small talk that she was keeping me occupied

269. C. with. She talked to me as if it was just not important that I should know anything about what was happening to my baby and I. She had just said one thing to the nurses and she was saying something completely different to me and as far as I was concerned she had got her priorities round the wrong way as it was me who was so emotionally involved in what was happening to my newborn baby that I should have been the first to know the truth about what was going on even before the nurses because my baby was my own and not theirs. However much the nurses cared about my baby as their patient they could never care about her as much as I did as her mother. They might have handled her birth but they had not been the one to feel the pain of giving birth to her and keeping from me any news of how she was, hurt me more dreadfully than all the labour pains because it was hurting my feelings of separation very deeply. Somehow because I was the one who had an emotional tie with my baby that could not be severed with the ease that the umbilical cord had been cut, I should have had priority over all the nurses to know how my baby was, first before anyone else. It was only by the way the nurses were behaving that I began to realize that I was not just being pushed into second place behind the nurses to know how my baby was but I was actually being pushed aside so that I was out of everything that was going on and I was even being lied to, as if it was none of my business what was happening to my newborn child.

As soon as I realized what was going on I felt frozen with fear and afraid of the situation that I was in. Somehow I was too terrified to break out of the situation that I was in and demand to see her

270. C. In case everyone turned against me and did not let me see my child at all because it was the hospital staff who had got her and me who was now in the position of having to ask to see my own baby. So the awfully false situation just carried on and the nurse stood beside me doing what she had to do and chatting to me as if I had not heard what she had just said to the nurses outside the curtain. She talked to me as if nothing at all was wrong and I just lay there putting on a brave face, behaving like the perfect patient and chatting back politely with all the 'right answers' while all the time inside myself I felt completely numb with the most awful sickening fear that something was very dreadfully wrong. All the time the nurse was talking to me I wanted to tell her to stop the stupid charade that she was playing with me. I wanted to demand that they let me see my baby but I was so scared that if I made a fuss then they would either give me something to make me sleep or send me home and I wouldn't get to see my baby at all.

The nurse asked me if I had managed to wash myself and I said that I had. Something about the way she spoke to me sounded more official than the way that she had spoken to me in the night. It was as if the nurses were no longer delighted that I could be helpful to them as the Pupil Midwife who had brought me to the ward had been in the night but as if the nurses had been told to assess exactly what I could do and could not do for myself. I brushed that thought out of my mind and decided that I was too

271.c. apprehensive about the whole situation to be thinking properly but a lingering doubt bothered me as if I was beginning to sense something that was going on that I did not like. I also felt a bit resentful that I should be 'assessed' while I was so tired and weak after the birth of my baby. I had a strange feeling about it and I felt that if I had to be assessed then all the active, efficient housework that I had done at home should be taken into account, as much as the fact that I was lying in bed recovering only hours after having been through a very difficult delivery. I was puzzled as to why I should need to be assessed anyway as there was no need and it suddenly seemed such an odd situation to be in, as if things were happening around me, that did not really belong to me. Everything was real enough but I was being treated differently from how I would have expected and yet no one told me what was going on or why. As the nurse was doing the vulval swab she found two blood clots each about 2" long and 1" wide of thick solid red tissue. She tried to avoid letting me see them but I still saw as she wrapped them up in a blue paper towel and saved them for the doctor to see. I could not understand her wanting to hide them from me as it was my body that they had come from and since I was not at all squeamish I should have been able to see anything I wanted to. I felt frustrated by her stupidity but I did not say anything.

The nurse asked me if I could pass some water into a bedpan for her to test and she put a bedpan under me. She lifted me easily by putting one arm under the arch of my back but my backbones made a peculiar grating noise as she lifted me. She asked me if it was my back that had made that noise and if

272.c. it hurt. I said that it was my back but it did not hurt because I could not feel anything in my back and so nothing hurt. She told me to pass water and pressed my stomach with the palm of her hand. She asked me if I normally had to have someone to press my stomach for me to empty my bladder and I said no because I didn't. I had an awfully strange feeling about the questions that she was asking me, as if they were a bit odd but I knew they asked people all sorts of questions in hospital so I let it go but the questions she was asking me did not seem appropriate to me. It was a bit odd and I could not think why. The nurse told me sarcastically to pass water on my own then if I could do it as if she just did not believe me but she did not leave me in privacy to do it. She stood right beside me watching me which I would not normally have stood for, but this time I was afraid of the situation and did as she asked me to. I knew that I was being assessed to see what I could do and what I could not do and I just knew that whether or not they let me see my baby depended on me showing them that I could do as much as possible for myself despite being so terribly weak. I should have demanded to see my baby there and then and to know what was going on but I was just too afraid of them all to do it. I was only concerned with getting to see my baby that I did everything they told me to even if it meant that I lost my dignity. My whole character seemed changed as well. My normal reservations were still in me but after all the humiliation that I had

273. c. suffered everything else had lost its importance except my precious baby and in a desperate bid to be able to keep contact with her in circumstances that were fast becoming like some awful nightmare I just let people get away with the things they told me to do even if it meant the humiliation of passing water in front of a complete stranger when she told me to.

The nurse asked me if I would like to put one of my own nightdresses on. She told me that it would make me feel better to be in one of my own nightdresses instead of the hospital one but when she got one of mine out from the locker where she had put them away in the night and she looked at it properly in the light her face changed when she saw how batty it was. She looked embarrassed when she saw that the others were no better and she asked me if I had a bedjacket or something. I had not got one and so she told me brightly that I would have to get my family to buy me some nice new things and bring them in for me. I thought that it was a big joke to think that my family would buy me something new and bring it in for me but I said nothing and just nodded to agree with her that I could do with some new things. Then she asked me where my make-up was and I said that I never wore any. She looked a bit puzzled and asked me if no one had ever prescribed me cosmetics on the N.H.S for my disfigurement. She was staring at my face like other people had done since I had come into hospital and feeling really puzzled I asked her "What disfigurement?" She looked at me as if she was really anxious about something that was going on and she said to me "Is your face normally like that or has that just happened to you?" I did not

274.C. Know what she meant about my face and I asked her "like what?!" She sighed and looked at my face as if she was appalled at what she saw and she asked me if I had seen my face in a mirror. I said no and wondered what she was talking about. She asked me if I had got a mirror and when I said "no," she went and tried to borrow one from any of the other patients. When no one had one she came back and stared at my face again and then said to me "If that has only just happened to you then perhaps you ought not to look in a mirror just yet anyway." She asked me if I was usually able to walk about like other people and feeling really puzzled I told her quite firmly that I could. She explained to me very tactfully that the Doctors did not know that and that they were coming to assess me and what I could do. She said that I must tell them that I could walk normally like other people because, they didn't seem to realize that. She said that she would tell them but when they came round to see me I must be sure to tell them myself as well. I said that I would but I could not see why there was so much fuss about it.

She asked me if I had thought of a name for the baby and I said "Rebecca Christiana" which I had decided on months before. She told me that if anyone asked me if I wanted the baby christened then I must realize that they only christened babies in an emergency and that my baby must be seriously ill. She asked me if I had been through a bad time in labour and for the first time I admitted that it had been bad although

2.75. c. I did not talk about it. She nodded as if I did not have to say anymore and said that she could tell by my face. She seemed so different from how she had been when she had first come behind the curtains and she now seemed to be worried about something that was going on with the Doctors even if it put her job at risk to tell me. She told me that I must tell the Doctors that I could remember what I had been through in labour and she told me that since Mr. Buckle the consultant had not been there on the labour ward I must tell him everything that I knew about what had happened to me. She said that all the Doctors would stick together over it but I must speak up and not be afraid to tell them. She said that my mother would be coming in to see me and that my family would stick up for me. Then she looked at my face again and said "your mother will hit the roof when she sees you!" I felt afraid of my family coming in and of my mother taking control of everything but I promised the nurse that I would tell the Doctors about what had happened in the labour ward when they came round to see me. The nurse said that she had to go because the ward was busy and she quickly pulled the curtains back from around the bed and pushed the trolley away.

In the ward a domestic was giving out cups of tea from a trolley and as I saw the tea trolley a strange instinct of danger came over me about the cup of tea she was going to give me. I even knew exactly which cup she was going to give me and when she did I was exactly right. When the domestic asked me if I took sugar I politely thanked her and said that I would prefer to drink the water had been left on my locker. A senior sister that I had not seen before was hovering about by the domestic but she was not actually helping her and she and the nurse who I

276. c. had been talking to who had come back by then, tried to encourage me to have a cup of tea saying that I needed to drink plenty as I had difficulty passing water during the night. I agreed to drink plenty and summoning all my strength I got hold of the glass of water on my locker and started to drink it. I even told them that I would have another one straight away as well and then a strange thing happened because the sister looked irate and said to the nurse that it wasn't what she meant to happen. The nurse offered to take the glass of water that I was drinking from me and take it to the kitchen to fill it with fresh water for me. I thanked her and said that it was fresh but the nurse seemed determined and tried to persuade me to let her have the glass so that she could take it to the kitchen and fill it with ice-cubes and bring it back for me to drink. I was suspicious about their insistence over just one glass of water and I wondered why they were so intent on getting the glass out to the kitchen and bringing it back to me to drink from if I would not drink the tea that they were insisting I have. I just smiled at them in a friendly way and said "no, thank you" to the nurse very politely and said that it was alright because I did not want ice in it. The sister and nurse were both visibly annoyed and the sister said to the nurse "she's a wily one!" Then she told the domestic that she had better have that cup before anyone else got it by mistake and they picked up a cup that was set slightly aside from the others by now, but which I had known when I

277. c. first saw all the cups together that it was the exact one that they were going to give me, possibly because there was a spoon in it as if to mark it and it already had milk in it because the domestic was going to pour tea straight on it which she had not done with any of the others. The nurse and the sister took the cup down to the office and they were annoyed about it. I felt a strange feeling come over me that I must be dreaming and it was as if they had put drugs in that cup and wanted to give them to me without me knowing about it but I fought to reassure myself that they just would not do that sort of thing. I knew that drugs were given properly in hospitals and that if they wanted to give me something then they would have just given it to me properly, but then again I wondered with a sickening feeling why they had just been so careful to keep that one cup, that I had not even touched, separate so that the other patients did not get it and why they had been so insistent about me having it.

I felt so alone and vulnerable as if some awful nightmare was just beginning that I had not expected to happen but I calmed myself and thought that the only important thing was that I must get to see my baby. I would have liked to get out of bed and go straight to see my baby but I was too scared to do it. I was afraid of the hospital staff and I remembered what it had said in the book I had been reading before I came into hospital, that some babies have to be taken off for special care and rest after a difficult delivery and that the more fuss a mother made about it then the longer it would be before she saw her her baby. It sounded stupid to me because even if a baby could not be picked up and needed to rest then a mother could still sit and watch her

278.c. baby in its incubator. The mother would not be disturbing the baby's rest by watching over it and there was something very beautiful about a mother watching over her sleeping baby. It was just a stupid midwives rule and all mothers and babies should have been kept together all the time. It was ridiculous to say that a baby needed rest before its mother could see her own child as a mother should have had the right to be beside her child all the time. I knew that I had to stay calm or I would not be allowed to see her as soon as possible and I felt rigid with fear of the people with whom the decision lay of whether I saw my baby or not. I knew that they could also separate us completely by sending me home and I was terrified of that.

Everything that I had read in the book that Janet had lent to me seemed to be having an overpowering effect on my mind as if I just could not forget it. In fact it seemed as if my memories of everything that had happened since ten to one on Thursday and that had led up to the moment when my breathing had stopped were so vividly clear in my mind that they seemed to be holding my mind and everything I did in some kind of deadlock that I could not escape from. I felt as if I wanted to keep going over what I had done in that time in exactly the same way as I had done it in order to lessen the mental pain of what I could remember. It became frighteningly real to me that it was why ghosts were seen to re-live the events that had happened immediately prior to their death and it seemed as if you had to re-live what had happened in order to accept it if what

279. c. ~~ever~~ had happened when you died had been so terrible that you could not accept it. It was actually the ordinary things that had happened that became so much more important when you realized that they had actually preceded your own death. For a start you would not have wasted what little precious time you had left doing them, but as well as that there seemed to be some kind of period of time surrounding a death when your memory grew so acute that if you did not die peacefully you were drawn back to that moment in time like a magnet. For me that moment had been ten to one on Thursday and my mind kept going back to that as if by doing so I might be able to do things differently and change what had happened afterwards because it seemed so awful that such an ordinary series of events had led up to something so tragic. Bending over to switch off the cleaner had triggered off the rest of what had happened to me and if I had died then for years afterwards someone might have seen the ghost of a young pregnant girl on the top landing of our house bending over to switch off that cleaner from time to time when the time was right or the weather was going to be stormy, until my mind had finally accepted what had happened to me or things had been changed enough in that house for it never to happen again to anyone else.

Some time after the nurse in white had gone from my bedside a nurse came up to my bed from the office with a plastic medicine cup with two yellow tablets in it that she asked me to take and I did as she asked. She seemed to expect trouble from me by her firm attitude even though I had neither been asked to take the drugs before or in any way had refused to co-operate with the

280. c. nursing staff at all. I was very friendly towards them and I could not understand what was going on as I was only concerned with getting to see my baby. The nurse was very surprised when she found that I took the tablets when she asked me to and when I had done so she left my bed more at ease than when she had arrived at it, as if she thought that I was not going to cause the trouble that she seemed to have been told to expect. Within moments of having taken the two yellow tablets I began to feel as if all the worries I had about the nurses were beginning to melt away and with that feeling went some of the feeling that I would have to fight to see my baby and even though I still desperately wanted to see her I began to feel that she would be quite alright without me there. The ward also suddenly began to look a nicer place and I did not mind so much about it being dingy as the flowery curtains and pale yellow counterpanes seemed to look brighter and more attractive. I also forgot to mind being in my nightdress in front of other people and although deep down I felt that I ought to be on my guard, especially as I was wondering if something was wrong with my baby and I felt sure I ought to be asking questions about it, I suddenly began to feel that perhaps it was not so important that I ask after all. I felt a kind of tiredness come over me as if I would let people do what they liked with me but in the midst of feeling very easy going, I felt puzzled as to why I was not speaking up for myself as I should have done and it seemed as if my willpower had just collapsed on me just when I needed it.

The domestic brought breakfast along on a trolley and was complaining

281.c. bitterly that everything was late which she told the other patients was because the staff had been held up by the doctors over me. I had seen no sign of any doctors and so I did not believe the domestic that there had been any fuss over me but the domestic made it clear that she was not joking about it and asked me why I did not take my medicine for the nurses without all the fuss of having to put it in my tea. I had known that I was right about that cup of tea but I had not made any fuss about medicine being given to me properly. The other patients laughed about it and said that they had seen me take my tablets straight away for the nurse so it wasn't true but the domestic was too busy to listen and just asked them what all those doctors were doing in her kitchen then? and she did not seem to want anyone to reply to that because she was too busy. I had some cereal, a boiled egg and bread and marmalade which the domestic put on a tray on my locker and I was surprised at what an effort it was to feed myself. I felt as if all my strength had left me but even though I was so tired the breakfast tasted delicious (like the sort of food I had eaten on holidays to stay with my relatives) and the food gave me a little more energy in my body after I had eaten it and finished my breakfast.

The girl in the next bed seemed about my age and she was very nice. She started chatting to me and told me that she had been a teacher. She said that she had just had a little girl who she was going to call Josie. She said that Josie - Carter went together nicely as Carter was her surname. She told me about her husband and from the way she spoke she sounded as if they were so happy together and she mentioned her parents who were coming up from Wales to see her. She said that Josie was their first grandchild and she spoke so lovingly of her husband's family that they all sounded

282.c. such a happy family. There had been no jealousy amongst their family about who had been the first to know about the baby when she was born as they had all been overjoyed together. Mrs. Carter asked me if I had got lots of things ready for my baby and I said that I had. She told me that through being a teacher she had been lucky because the mothers at the school had given her all the big things that she needed such as the cot, pram, and lots of nursery furniture. She said that she had hardly had to buy anything and although I felt really pleased for her I could not help but think that because she had a good job she could have afforded to buy the things she needed and it seemed to me that people with plenty of money got given even more things than they needed but people like me, who had nothing and had found it such a struggle to get the things I needed together, did not get given anything. No one had given me anything at all but I did not feel jealous or mind at all as I had managed to get all the things ready that my baby would need and I felt pleased for Mrs. Carter that people had been generous to her.

The more Mrs. Carter spoke about her husband, the more sure I became that I had made the right decision about Norman as I knew that we could never have been happy together like Mrs. Carter and her husband, although I could have found that kind of happiness with a person as nice as Mr. Carter sounded. Mrs. Carter told me who each of her vases of flowers was from and she had so many that the table at the end of her bed was packed with them and other little presents. I listened to what she said but I was feeling tired and could not seem

283.C. to connect the vases of flowers with the people she was talking about especially since I did not know the people she was talking about and could not picture them in my mind but I could see how pleased she was with her beautiful flowers and how much receiving them had meant to her. Everyone on the ward seemed to have a lot of flowers and Mrs. Carter showed me the fruit and sweets that she had been given as well and told me about the other presents that people had brought in for her and the baby that her husband had already taken home for them. She showed me some small fluffy soft toys on her locker and said that her husband had bought one of them downstairs in the League of Friends shop. She said that it was a surprise because although her husband was very good she had not thought that he would actually go into a shop and buy a soft toy for the baby, but he had surprised her. Another mother across the ward agreed with Mrs. Carter and said that it was surprising what new fathers would do immediately after they had seen their new born baby and she told us that her husband had cried. The more I heard them talking the more I knew that Norman could never have been the kind of husband I wanted. He never saw any joy in anything small and sweet like a cuddly toy for a baby because everything he bought had to be the biggest and the best and the most showy for everyone to see. He could not stand anything small and pretty, even if he was buying it for me and that was what I would have liked. He would give things to me but he would never share anything because all he wanted to do was to be in direct control of everything that went on. His large presents were actually his way of covering up how mean he really was, especially in front of other people. I was suddenly very glad that I was a single parent because

284.c. it was better for me to be alone with my baby than to be married to someone who could have made my life an absolute misery and I was glad that my baby was a whole month early because it meant that I had got a whole month on my own with my baby before Norman and his family would expect the baby to be born and then would start causing the trouble they had promised to cause.

Mrs. Carter chatted to me and tried to be so friendly but I found that I could not find any sentences in my head with which to return the friendly chatter as my mind was quite clear but it was utterly blank. I could understand what was being said to me and I could think clearly but I could not recall anything in particular to talk about myself. I felt embarrassed about it and I tried my best to carry on a normal conversation with her as if nothing was wrong by saying 'yes' to everything she said when it sounded appropriate to do so. It was a bit of a one sided conversation and Mrs. Carter looked at me strangely as if she wondered if I was fully intelligent or not but she carried on talking to me just the same and I got the impression for a moment that it was more out of kindness that she carried on talking to me and that not everyone would have done that. Mrs. Carter told me about the ward routine and which people visited the wards and when they came, including the Registrar from the registry office next door who came to the ward on one day a week in order to register the babies names. Mrs. Carter told me the complete cycle of events that happened on the ward each day beginning with the early morning feeds

285c. and all the meal times, feed times for the babies, rest times, bath times and ending with the baby feeds at 2am in the morning. I listened to every word she said but my mind felt too tired to retain what she was saying as she said it and then I could not remember it. I struggled with trying to remember what she had said and then I had to ask her what the times were again. She seemed a bit put out that I had not been listening properly but she obligingly repeated a shorter version of exactly what she had said but she stuck more to the meal times and baby feed times and left out the things she thought were not really necessary like the times when the Domestic cleaned the ward, which she had included before. I found that I could still not incorporate the times at which she said the different things would happen at with each particular event that she was talking about, nor could I retain the order of the cycle of events that she was telling me because once they were in my mind they seemed to swim about in different circles so that I could not keep them still to put them into the order in which my mind had received them. They seemed to be like children arriving at a party who arrived slowly and in order but once they had got through the door they each dashed off in different directions to play different games that there was no time to catch them all together to get them to sit down and eat something before they ran wild. It was actually worse trying to remember them when Mrs. Carter repeated it more slowly the second time as each one seemed to have an even better chance to get further away and it was even harder to get them all together. It would have been better if she had told me everything more quickly so that I could have got hold of the whole lot together in my mind without any breaks between them so that

286c. I could have stopped them running wild in my mind and swimming round in peculiar circles that would not stay still so that the things in them could be put into order.

When they did finally stay still I found that I could not move the things that I had remembered, across my mind. They seemed to have splashed themselves across my mind and frozen like sticky-paper stars that had been pasted all over a piece of black, blank cardboard. As I tried to sort them out I found that I could only look at one of them at a time on its own as if the things in my mind were so far apart that I was searching for them by looking down the wrong end of a long narrow telescope and so I still could not sort them out. My mind remained perfectly clear and I was far more awake to everything that was going on than I normally was and I felt that if the long narrow tube that had placed itself in my mind for me to think through, had gone then I could have remembered everything that Mrs. Carter was saying to me as she said it. It took me several months before that long narrow tube finally went from my mind and when it had done, I was able to recall Mrs. Carter's conversation word for word and then sort it into place in my mind even though it was months after that conversation had taken place. I was even able to recall both Mrs. Carter's accounts of the ward routine and the first one was easier to remember because it contained far more details, but at the time that she was actually telling it to me I just could not make sense of it and I had to just carry on with the conversation with Mrs. Carter as if

287c. nothing was wrong rather than let her think that I was stupid or something.

After a while a nurse came round and gave out some menu cards that were to be filled in for several days at a time and when I saw the dates on the card it reminded me of the date that my baby had been born. I knew that the day before had been the 22nd of November and so I realized that she had been born on the 23rd November and that would be her birthday every year. That meant that I was going to be bringing up a little Sagittarian and not a little Capricorn as I had been expecting to. If she had been one day earlier she would have been a Scorpio like her father and that made me shudder to think about it because he was even born on the 2nd November which was "All Souls Day" and the devil's birthday! Another patient lent me a pen so that I could fill in the menu cards but when I tried to read what was on the card I found that I suddenly had the same problem with reading what was there as with understanding what Mrs. Carter had said to me. I could read and understand each word but when I went on to the next word I could not remember the word that I had just read. I knew what each word meant very clearly but it was like only being able to see one at a time as if I had been mentally blinded. It took me some moments before I could work out a system of reading them very fast so that I tried to take in all the words together as one word as long as a sentence and then when I could hold that in my mind I could split it up and work out what each bit meant then I understood it quite clearly and could make the right choices of what I wanted. I seemed to have lost some part of my ability to remember anything and 'take in' what was told to me and without

288c. it I could not talk or read properly but out of reading and talking it was easier to read because I had something written in front of me to see that put a pattern of what I had got to remember into my head because when Mrs. Carter spoke to me I only had the sight of her lips moving to remember and that held no previous meaning to me. I think I was actually too ill to have been filling in menu cards and talking to other patients because I should have been having a complete rest after all that I had been through but it was surprising what I could still manage to do long after I was past being exhausted and some inner instinct to protect my baby made me carry on as normal in order to see her as soon as possible.

As soon as I had deciphered the menu cards I filled in exactly what I wanted. I knew that I was forbidden to eat meat and so I left out the meat selection on each card and gave myself the same selection of various vegetables and a pudding that I would have been given at home but when the nurse took the cards away she showed mine to the staff nurse and told her that I could not even fill in a menu card properly. They spoke about me as if they were assessing what I was capable of and the nurse spoke sarcastically to the staff nurse and said "Is this a meal?" The two nurses thought that I had no idea of how to ask for a meal but what I had filled in was exactly what I had been rigorously disciplined to do with severe punishment from my mother and I could not have eaten the meat anyway. The Staff

289c. nurse came across with the other nurse and asked me crossly what 'meal' I wanted because vegetables on their own were not a meal. I told her that what I had put down was all I wanted and she asked me if I was a vegetarian. I told her that my mother was a vegetarian and I had been brought up to that. She said to me spitefully "Don't tell me that all you have eaten during your pregnancy is vegetables?" and I said no because I had been very careful to eat the Soya foods that my mother got from Health food shops. I told them that I really could not eat any of the rest of what was on the menu and their attitude seemed to soften because the nurse said to the staff nurse that she did not blame me because she could not touch the hospital food either and especially not the meat. They let the matter go but I felt very uncomfortable about it because I did not want them to think that I was strange because I did not eat meat. It had not been my fault or my choice that I had been made to be a vegetarian and I did not like the way that I seemed to be being assessed in everything I did in a way that the nurses were not doing to the other patients.

After that I waited to go to see my baby and I watched the other mothers with their babies which made me want to hold my own even more. The domestics came along with a trolley and took the breakfast things away, then some of the other mothers got their things ready and made their way to the bathrooms to get themselves washed and ready for the day. When I saw their pretty bath towels and lacey toilet bags I felt ashamed that I did not have such pretty things but I knew that I had my baby and she was more important than any material

290c. possessions at all. I waited to go and see my baby and I wished that I had some pretty baby cards to fill in to send to people but I suddenly realized that I had no one at all to send any to. I could hardly send a card to any of our relatives because none of them knew that I was having a baby except my Aunt Marion and the only person who I could call a friend was Janet who lived next door and she would probably know sooner than the card would arrive.

A girl came up the ward to a bed opposite and asked the girl there if she was ready to go up to the premature baby unit but a nurse quickly went over to them and told them to go up there quietly and not to let 'her' know where they were going as she indicated towards me. They both looked across and gave me a strange look and I realized that the nurses did not want me to go up to the Special Care Baby Unit to see my baby. I must have looked as if I was getting a bit alarmed and the nurse looked quickly down the ward in the direction of the office on the ward as if she had been told not to let me know what was going on and that she had got to reassure me quickly before anybody saw. She came over to my bed and said that I could go up to see my baby in a little while but that I had got to see the Doctor first. I thought that was reasonable enough but the nurse went off down the ward in the direction of the office as if she had decided that she ought to tell somebody what had just happened. A few minutes later another nurse came down the ward to my bed and chatted to me quickly and nervously about my baby. She said that she

291c. would arrange for me to go up to the Unit to see my baby. She told me nervously that my baby was fine and that I would know if anything was wrong with my baby if they came and asked me if I would like to have her christened. She said that if I was asked to have her christened then I would know that there was something seriously wrong. The nurse went down the ward and into the office and almost straight away another nurse who turned out to be a pupil midwife from the Premature Baby Unit, left the office where a lot of doctors and midwives had gathered, and she walked up the ward to my bed like something out of a pantomime and stood beside my bed ready to say her lines as if she was too terrified to say anything except exactly what she had been told to say.

She said to me "Have you got a name ready for your baby because we would like to have her christened for you!" It was like a bomb hitting my mind because after what the other nurse had just told me I knew that they were telling me that something was seriously wrong with my baby but what hurt most of all was that not one of the doctors or even the sister could approach me and tell me to my face that something was wrong and tell me what it was. I needed someone to talk to me kindly and I wondered why they had to put on such a show of pretence instead of telling me the truth. I mustered all my self control and said that I had thought of the name Rebecca Christiana for a girl but that if there was going to be an early christening then I would arrange that myself and I could see to it when I went up to the Unit to see my baby for myself. The Pupil midwife was most insistent that I did not have to go up there at all and she told me that the staff in the

292c. Unit could christen my baby themselves. I said that if there was no time to get a priest then I wanted to be the person to christen my own baby. The Pupil Midwife seemed pleased that I was so determined to see my baby and she said to me "so you definitely want to see the baby?" I said yes and began to panic that anyone could think that I might not want to see my baby. The Pupil Midwife very firmly took my part and nodded kindly. She explained that she was from the Special Care Unit and that my baby had got a swollen abdomen that had come up at 4 am that morning after she had been fed during the night. She said that the hospital Radiologists were doing some tests on her at the moment but that they did not know what was the matter with her. I began to panic that they had fed her without asking me because I was going to feed her myself and also that they were actually doing tests on my baby without having told me or asked me first. I was furious that it had happened in the night because I had lain awake all night thinking that she was alright and I realized that I should have insisted on being with my baby all the time. I told the Pupil Midwife that I did not want to listen to any more but that I wanted to go straight to the Unit and see for myself what was going on so that I could sort everything out that was going on with my baby. The Pupil Midwife said that she thought the Doctors wanted a word with me first and that she would tell them that I was insisting on seeing my baby at once and she went

293c back to the office to do it for me.

After a few minutes another nurse came down the ward to my bed from the office with a large green tablet that she told me very firmly that I had GOT to take before I saw the Doctors or else they could not allow me to see my baby. I asked her what the tablet was and she told me that it was only an iron tablet but I could tell that she was lying to me. I put the tablet in my mouth intending to take it out when she had gone but once it was on my tongue I swallowed it in almost a reflex action and she went off. I knew instinctively that it wasn't an iron tablet and I wondered if I should get it out but realized that I couldn't without going to the bathroom to make myself sick and then the nurses would have seen and been able to accuse me of being un-co-operative. I was so weak in my body and the drug was so strong that only a few moments after having taken it a kind of electric storm rushed in front of my eyes as the effect of the drug hit me. Every ounce of my strength drained straight out of my body and I sank back into the pillows because I was too weak to move. After a few minutes a nurse came back to me from the office and asked me a simple question and as I struggled to move my lips to utter a sound to speak and answer her and found that I couldn't do it, she looked pleased as if that was exactly what was supposed to happen and she went straight back to tell the people in the office.

Then a very strange thing happened to me because in the state that I was in of being so weak and unable to speak I began to hear very clearly and I found that I was listening in to a conversation that was going on in the office which I was too far away to hear and I could do so

294c. without the noise of the patients on the ward getting any louder. There was a Doctor on the telephone in the office who was talking to somebody else on the telephone and I quickly recognized the voice of the Doctor on the other end of the telephone line as being Dr. Galvan. The Doctor on the telephone this end turned out to be Mr. Buckle who was my Consultant and the two Doctors were having a worried conversation about me. Mr. Buckle was in trouble because he had not been on duty when he should have been and Dr. Galvan was expecting trouble because I had been more seriously ill than he had realized. He should have stayed with me and seen me into hospital himself and he had not given me any proper ante-natal care. He sounded as if he was still smarting from having been bitten by my mother's dog and he was obviously annoyed about the whole thing as anybody would have been. He spoke quite sympathetically about me and told Mr. Buckle that I would be very upset about the baby, but he warned Mr. Buckle that if there was going to be any trouble it would come from, and he said "... The Mother", meaning my mother. Dr. Galvan was a G. P. working on the District and because he was involved in the Community he looked at our family as a whole unit with my mother and father as the head of that family. He called me 'the daughter' and my child 'the baby'. He ignored the fact that over night my mother had become the Grandmother, I was now the Mother and my baby, a girl, was my daughter. He carried on

295c telling Mr. Buckle about my mother who he described as being completely eccentric with a house full of animals. He told Mr. Buckle that she was a very heavy smoker who hated hospitals and who would refuse any kind of orthodox medicine. He told Mr. Buckle to keep 'the mother' right away from the baby but because Mr. Buckle was so used to dealing with 'mothers and babies' he took 'the mother' to mean me and he had no idea that Dr. Galvan was actually talking about the 'Grand-mother' when he said 'The Mother'. I was also unmarried and Dr. Galvan had never accepted me as a mother who was expecting a baby but as a girl who was in trouble and he had continually told me that I needed my mother's support in my situation. He still looked on my mother as 'the mother' of our family and although I did not realize it properly at the time it was there that the nightmare that was about to begin had all started. Mr. Buckle said that he would sort every thing out and that he was glad that Dr. Galvan had warned him but it was obvious to me that they were talking at crossed purposes as to who 'The Mother' was.

As soon as they ended their telephone conversation three Doctors, the Consultant, the Registrar and the Houseman, all came down the ward together pausing briefly at each bed as they made their way down to my bed and stood around me. The consultant came right up beside my bed and leant heavily on the bed with his fists. The Registrar stood beside him but he would not look directly at me and the Houseman stood at the end of my bed staring at my face as if he did not approve of what was going on. I did not like Mr. Buckle leaning on the

296c. bed like that because I felt that all the pain that I had been through had given me such a feeling of grace and purity that I did not want it spoiled even by a man touching the bed that I was in, but I did not say anything as I did not want to upset anybody. The Consultant would not look directly at me as he spoke to me and as he was talking to me he kept smiling at the woman in the next bed as if he would rather have been doing anything else except talking to me. He told me that I could go up to see my baby, but that she had a blockage in her abdomen that was causing some concern. He made no mention of the fact that it had come up after she had been fed as the Pupil Midwife had told me and he was obviously not going to tell me. I remembered my Mother's brother who had died of a blockage in his abdomen and horrible thoughts of his Post Mortem started to creep into my mind until I sternly pushed them out again. The Consultant told me that the baby was in the care of the hospital now and so there was no need for me to stay on in hospital. He told me that I could be allowed to see the baby but that I should push off home as soon as I liked because I was fit to go and I was not needed in the hospital. I was terrified of what he was saying because I did not want to go away from my baby, and the way he spoke sounded to me as if the hospital were glad to have got my baby away from me. I tried to speak to tell Mr. Buckle that I did not want to leave my baby but I could not say anything as I

297c. had completely lost my power of speech, and the Consultant was not looking anyway. Only the Houseman gave me a look of pity as he saw me struggling to talk to the Consultant because he definitely did not approve of what the Consultant and the Registrar were doing to me. I think that if it had been left to the Houseman he would have told me what was wrong properly and when he saw the Consultant ignore my effort to try to move my mouth to speak he gave him an awful look as if he did not know how he could be so cruel. It was a very cruel thing to have done for them to have given me that green tablet which had taken away the last of my strength and my speech before they told me about my baby and it seemed almost as if they had done it on purpose so that when they told me about my baby they had already removed my ability to speak and to be able to complain about the injustice of what had happened.

To try to end on a lighter note the Consultant said that he had just spoken to my G.P. on the telephone and he went on to say that Dr. Galvan had told him 'all about me.' He laughed as he turned towards me and he smiled at me with a look of humour as if he thought that I was a bit of a character. He told me that Dr. Galvan had told him that I was a very heavy smoker and for a joke he asked me just how many cigarettes a day I managed to smoke my way through. I fought with all my strength to make my mouth form the words and I said to him "I have NEVER smoked!" I was speaking as if my mouth had just been given a dental anaesthetic but the Doctors understood me quite

298.c. clearly. Mr. Buckle looked at the Registrar and shrugged his shoulders as he walked off to the next bed saying loudly enough for all the other patients to hear that if I would not tell the truth about that then I would not tell the truth about anything else either. Even the Houseman looked at me as if he thought that I had let him down by not telling the Consultant what he wanted to know but I really had never smoked in my life. The nearest that I had ever come to a cigarette was when my father had lit one for me when I was four years old and encouraged me to try it because he thought it was funny to see a child smoking but I had not smoked it. I was too ill to try to tell the Doctors and they would not have believed me anyway because they knew my chest was bad from the 'struggle' I had found with my breathing the night before in the labour ward. My chest had always been bad because I had spent eighteen years living in the same rooms as my mother and breathing in the air filled with the smoke from all the cigarettes my mother smoked each day. I had a smoker's chest but I had got it second hand through no fault of my own and because they did not believe me about that they would not carry on any further conversation with me about my baby or anything else at all and they just went off to the next bed. If they had stayed a bit longer I would have told Mr. Buckle that I knew he had just spoken to my G.P. on the telephone because I had 'heard' the whole conversation between him and Dr. Galvan, I was merely puzzled as to how it could

299.c. have happened and I could have told him every word that had been exchanged between the two doctors, but he did not have time to be bothered to listen and so the moment passed and he never knew.

As soon as they had gone on to the next patient, a nurse who had been waiting and watching from nearby came straight to my bed and said that she was going to take me up to see my baby. She got my dressing gown and slippers out of my locker and I got out of bed to put them on. It was a very high and old fashioned bed that I was in and as my legs did not reach the floor I let my legs slide down the bedside until they reached the floor and then I levered myself up until I stood and balanced upright there without falling over. I stepped into the slippers that the nurse had put in place on the floor and she helped me to put my dressing gown on. The dressing gown was miles too big and I did not remember it having been quite as big as that before but when I was ready I began the long walk down the middle of the ward to get to the lift in the corridor to go upstairs and see my baby. As I began to walk I realized that my legs were completely numb because I had no feeling in them at all but I remembered how to work them with my mind and by feeling for the floor with my feet I managed to walk step after determined step along the ward but I was swaying from side to side as I went. When the nurse saw me swaying she asked me if I needed a wheelchair but I said no because I could not let anyone delay matters while they fetched one in case they changed their minds about letting me see my baby. I knew that if they had thought that anything was the matter with me they would definitely have put me back to bed and have

300c. stopped me seeing my baby at all so I determinedly carried on without even stopping. I was aware of the Doctors standing and watching me as I went down the ward as if they thought I was a very odd character and the consultant shook his head and laughed at the sight I looked. My nightdress was tatty and hung below the dressing gown that was miles too big for me and hung off my shoulders. I knew that I looked a sight and was the sort of person that people either stare at or turn away from and this time they chose to stare and laugh. Even the other two Doctors and the rest of the patients started laughing at me as if the sight of the way that I was walking was hilariously funny but I took no notice of them. I lifted my chin in the air and thought only of my baby and the joy I felt in my heart that I was going straight to see her. It took every inch of my pride to carry on walking with everyone laughing at me because I was swaying from side to side as I walked and misjudged each step because I could not feel anything in my legs. Even the nurse was embarrassed to walk beside me as she heard everybody splitting their sides with mirth as we walked down the whole long length of the ward. Every pair of eyes in the whole ward had turned to stare at us and I could feel their eyes burning on me as I walked along and they all kept laughing. A strange feeling came over me that the walk down that long ward with everybody staring at me was reminding me of something but that it was the wrong way round and it took me