

651C. you now" as if it was a joke. Then she took hold of my arm band that said I was eighteen years old and looked at it. I was suddenly aware that even though it said that I was Anne Maple, R.C. on C3 ward and eighteen years old with a hospital number, and all those details were correct, I had not seen anybody put it on me. She read that I was eighteen years old and she laughed at that with the other Sister and said that she would see to it that I got a new name band. I knew it was because of my age but I did not know why they seemed to think that I was much younger as I was actually eighteen years old even though I felt and looked like an old woman.

Mrs. Carter in the next bed had finished her supper and she got up from the table and went to get some magazines from her locker which she gave to me as if in defiance of the nurses having taken my book away from me. The Sister did not seem to want me to have them but Mrs. Carter had given them to me already. The Sister seemed annoyed that I had been given them and trying to keep in control of the situation she said that it was very kind of Mrs. Carter and that even if I had not learnt to read yet I could still enjoy looking at the colourful pictures. She said it in a loud voice so that all the patients could hear and I felt a suffocating feeling come over me about what she had said about my reading. I had been able to read easily but I could not work out why it was so difficult now or explain the frustration I felt. The Sisters seemed almost afraid of me being able to read anything and forbade the patients to give me any newspapers,

652c. saying that the news would be
too much for me. A feeling of
panic rose inside me as I remembered
my mother saying how nice it would
be for me to have my picture in
the newspapers and of the scene
at the end of the ward with the
reporter and I panicked that something
about me and my baby had already been
printed. There seemed to have
been people trying to persuade
me to have my picture taken earlier
and now people trying to keep
newspapers away from me and
I wondered what on earth was
going on. It was the photographs
that I was terrified of and with that
terror came a fear for my baby
and I wondered what on earth
the connection was as it seemed
to be the same fear. I did not
let my own fears show and listened
to the Sisters telling the
patients that I had a very
understanding mother and then
telling me that I would be better
off at home with my mother. The
Sisters tried to cheer me up by
saying that my mother could
cook me all the food that I was
used to. They said that my mother
had spent a long time telling them
about all the things that I liked and
disliked and how to cook it for me,
and they told me how lucky I was
that she spent so many hours just
looking after me when she had a
whole family to care for too. They
said that at home I could cry all
I wanted to and my mother would
be there to comfort me as she had
said that I was used to having a
good cry on her shoulder. I knew that
all my mother had told them was
the opposite of the truth because

653c. she was afraid that they were going to take me away from her, but I was so ill that as the Sister carried on talking I tried to work out what on earth she was talking about. She seemed to be talking about a dearly loved girl and of her being me but it was all completely strange to me and a kind of puzzled blankness came over me. What made it even more confusing was that I also did feel a complete stranger to myself and it was like making me see double images all over the place. After lying on that delivery table for so long fighting against the darkness and fighting to breathe, I had got off it a different person with a completely altered personality but the difference between those two personalities was not the difference that the Sisters were referring to and in my mind it made the problem even worse. I needed time to sort out my new identity because it suddenly seemed that all the trivialities of life no longer mattered to the new person that I was. Only the things that upheld the precious light of the existence of life itself were worth worrying about and the struggle against death was a recent terror that I knew would turn into a fear that would stay with me for the rest of my life; between those two extremes a quietness had taken over that was like a whole new personality. I had always been serious natured but now I felt as if I would never laugh or smile again. I felt that while people in the world struggled to find a meal to eat or ached with sickness or where anyone faced death themselves or the agony of watching helplessly while someone they loved lay sick and dying, I could never again find anything to laugh about. I had

654c. always been very aware of other peoples suffering and I had cared about them with a sense of responsibility beyond what most other people feel but now that I was living through suffering night and day I knew what it was like to have no escape from it and I knew that what I was going through had already shocked me too greatly for me ever to forget it. I seemed to have passed through a kind of human transition and found myself to be looking at life from a completely new perspective. All the concern that I had ever felt for the plight of other people could never compare with the depth of what I felt now. The suffering was so great that I had become a completely new person. I felt as if I could never laugh over jokes or talk about rubbish while other people faced life and death and the struggle to keep the two apart. I felt that I would always face the suffering with those who were suffering and as if I was beyond material things ever mattering again. More than not wanting material things, I felt that I could never bear to waste time again. I had lain on that delivery table and seen the eternal clock of this whole universe and I had felt its tremendous magnetic power, so I knew the shallow frame of my own mortality. In that experience I had left behind me the human crystallis of materialism and I was a new person. I felt completely different and much quieter but that I needed time to breathe while I got used to myself. With the Sisters chatting on and on they seemed to be showing me a double kind of difference in my personality that I could not cope with. They were

655c. so sure that they knew all about my life at home and they spoke so definately of a girl who was adored by her parents but I knew it was not me and I felt so frightened by the way that the sisters were so convinced that my life was just like they were saying. Most frightening of all was the fact that if I had spoken up and accused my parents of not being like that at all, the Sisters would have thought that I had gone quite out of my mind because they had seen my parents for themselves and they just could not see through my parents false, gushing, over concern for me. I knew that I had no chance at all to speak up for myself because if the Sisters thought that I was having some mental turn of mind then they would never allow me near my baby and she was the one thread of hope that I was clinging onto. The most horrifying thing of all was that the helpless individual that my parents had tried to convince people that I was had somehow come about over night. I had suddenly become so helpless and there was just no one to stand up for me and tell the hospital that I was usually the one who worked so hard for my parents. Those people involved who could have told the truth, like my parents, would not do it and those people, like my relatives and neighbours who would have spoken up for me, did not dare to do it against my parents. I was still able bodied but I was only a shadow of what I had been and at great expense to my ever decreasing energy. I felt like a broken clock that ticks on for a while when you shake it even though it won't keep going for long. For me to have become so ill at any other time would have been bad enough but what was so ironic was having

656c. it happen at the most important moment of my life, the birth of my child, when I most needed to be in control of everything. Seeing that I was down on my luck, my parents had just stamped in and convinced everyone that I was normally like that and quite useless, and because of that I was not only not getting any help while I was in hospital but the worry was making me worse than I should have been. I was also in such a state of terror that my baby would be taken away from me that I was completely unable to defend myself. What made it worse still was that my parents knew exactly what I was afraid of as they themselves had taught me and sharpened the fear in me and so by pushing me into the situation that I was in they had the key to keep me locked in that state of suspended terror.

The people around me like the doctors and sisters who were convinced of my parents sincerity were forcing me deeper and deeper into the prison of my own fears by keep on talking to me as if they knew me and all about me, when in fact they only thought they did. I was too ill to get up and put the situation right. Everyone seemed to have the upper hand over me and the situation that I was in and even the fact that everyone in control of the situation was up and about, fully dressed and in charge of everything, made me feel that I was alone, only in my nightclothes, in a borrowed bed and physically weak and helpless. It would have been different if people were helping me to get better but it seemed as if my parents had

657c. barged into the hospital and snatched away any approval that the hospital staff might have had of me so that I was getting no help at all. What the Sisters were saying made me feel as if I was being made to look into a lot of mirrors with each one reflecting a different and distorted picture of me and because I could not think, I could not find a correct image to show them what I really looked like. One thing that did not help me was that I had never had a proper name of my own, that had been definitely mine. My parents had made no secret of the fact that they had called me 'Anne' out of hatred and so I had never properly accepted it as my own. I had been called 'Stephanie' by my father's family and at school, and 'Peace' by the children of God but the people who had called me 'Stephanie' or 'Peace' had frittered out of my life and just as I had no one to call me by a name that I freely accepted so I had no one to stand by me either. I was afraid of the name 'Anne' because in our family prophecy she was a girl who would suffer and die and although I wanted a name I didn't want to label myself with my parents hatred, so somehow I was as afraid of my own name as I was of the people who called me by it and that now included the hospital staff.

As the Sisters talked to me about my lonely home life I seemed to keep groping around what they were saying and looking at the distorted pictures of myself that reflected from what they were saying about me but I just could not find myself in them. The pictures of such parental love mocked me lying there in my tattered nightdress and in the wretched state that I was in and as the Sisters showed me one distorted reflection of myself

658c after another I felt as if I wanted to hurl something at just one of those mirrors so that they would all smash together, but being mirrors I had such an awful feeling that bad luck would shower all over me that it seemed to hold me back from doing it by fear. I seemed to have nothing to hurl at those mirrors either because there was nothing that I had to show for all the hard work that I had done except my own broken body and that, ironically, was exactly what everyone could see of me.

A state of utter despair took over me as the sister chatted on and on and in my tortured mind one image after another mocked me and laughed at me and I could not break through the awful state that I was in without appearing to make everything worse for myself. It was as if I was in a hall of mirrors at a funfair and that I could not find a way out of the stuffy smoky atmosphere because the mirrors were packed together so tightly that any escape was impossible. By the time the two sisters left me I was in a state of just staring hopelessly into the air and saying yes or no when I was encouraged to speak in either a positive or negative way. If they said to me "you want to go home, don't you?" I just said yes as if I didn't know any other answer and if they said "you don't want to stay here, do you?" I seemed to just say no as if I had lost all my willpower and I was so weak that I just seemed to be pulled in whatever direction people wanted me to go. There were moments when the only words I knew were yes and

659c. no and sometimes when I said one or the other it seemed to be the opposite of what I wanted to say as if the wires in my brain were crossed and what I wanted to say was crossing over to opposite sides. As the sisters left me I knew that I had agreed to go home far against what was best for me mentally or physically and as the sisters went they looked at me just staring into space with every ounce of confidence and willpower gone out of me and they both agreed together that I was more settled now. I noticed that after that they did not stop the nurses from coming near me although when the nurses did have cause to come near me they still did not talk to me. They no longer waited until I had gone out to the bathroom to leave me water to drink, medicine or something to eat but instead they came right up to my bed and left it on my locker while I was still in bed and despite me trying to gain their attention they just gave me a look of contempt and walked off making it obvious that they were not going to speak to me.

I slept for a while and when I woke up it was visiting time and I found that I was better but still sleepy. Other patients had visitors at their beds and I thought that no one was coming to see me which pleased me as I needed a rest but the noise from other visitors in the ward was almost unbearable. No one was being particularly noisy but the general hub-bub of noise from so many people sounded unbearably loud to me and I felt very uncomfortable that a ward where I was lying in bed in my nightclothes had suddenly become a place open to the public where anyone could walk in and see you. I hated

660c. even my own parents seeing me
in my nightclothes and although
I was well covered up by the
bedclothes and had not removed
my dressing gown since the vicar
had seen me without it, I still
felt very uncomfortable and if I had
not been so sleepy I would have
got up and spent visiting time
in the bathroom or somewhere
private until all those people had
gone.

As I lay there my Mother came
bustling along to my bed rather
late and with her huge shopping
bag filled with knitting for
herself. She was quite distraught
and genuinely upset with me
and it took me some moments to
get any sense out of her while she
got a chair and sat on it. She
was near to tears and they were
genuine and she kept saying
to me "You dirty bitch, you dirty
filthy bitch". When I tried to find
out what on earth had upset
her she told me that she was
late because the Sisters had
come out to the waiting visitors
and asked for Anne Maple's
mother. She had gone into the
office with them and she said to me
"They've told me all about you,
you dirty bitch. I know you
didn't want to have that baby
but you didn't have to do
that to it after all I've told you
about drugs". I immediately
felt full of horror and shame
that the hospital had told my
Mother that I had accepted
that pethidine injection and
of all the damage it had caused.
I knew that my baby would
have been alright if I had not

GGI C. had it and I knew that my mother would never forgive my cowardice in accepting a pain killer. I felt so humiliated that the Sisters had the right to take my mother into the office and tell her what drugs I had been given and about my labour. I was over eighteen years old and such matters should have been my own private affair. I did not want my family knowing about my labour or delivery. I had a horror of my parents seeing me undressed and if someone had told them what had happened at a time when I had been undressed then that was the same thing and for the Sisters to give them the details of what had happened to me while I lay undressed on that delivery table tore through my mind with the same horror. I knew how my parents perverted minds worked and I wanted them kept out of my private affairs. My mother went on to say that I had made a fool of her, and that I had deceived her. She said that the sisters had told her that I had been booked in to stay in hospital for ten days and booked for a hospital delivery since my first ante-natal appointment in June. My mother said that I had made a fool of her and wasted all her time taking me to different doctors to get a home delivery. I struggled to regain my strength to argue with her for my baby's sake because I did not know what was going on between my mother and those sisters in the office and I knew that I had to fight against the weak state that I was in to sort my mother out before she did some real damage as she was in a most peculiar mood. I told her that the ante-natal clinic had booked me for a hospital delivery and to stay

662c for the following ten days while I was at my first appointment and that after that when I had gone in to see the Doctor I had decided that I would be better off at home than in hospital. I said that I could not take my own name out of the hospital book and that I had gone looking for a doctor for a home confinement because I had genuinely not wanted to go into hospital. I said that I had not deceived her and I said that she had not 'taken me' to different doctors, she had come to them with me. My mother was furious when I said that and if the ward had not been so full of people I think she would have beaten me to death for saying that to her. She kept looking around the ward as if she was annoyed that there were other people about because she was beside herself with rage and she could not get her hands on me to hit me in front of so many people. She was furious and I tried to explain to her that although I had wanted a home delivery I was glad to have come into hospital when she had let so many people into the house. I tried to explain to her that it had not been possible to have the baby at home. I said that just one midwife would never have managed the delivery alone. I said that it had taken eight doctors to do the delivery as my breathing had stopped but my mother just could not understand it that I had not wanted people in the house when I was in labour and

663c. She said that she had wanted as many people there as possible around her when she had given birth to her children and she told me that I had always been a 'strange girl'. She said that if my breathing had stopped it was a different story from what the hospital had told her about it. She asked me why the Sisters had told her to throw out all the baby clothes and everything, especially since the pram had arrived that day. I was horrified to think of all the baby clothes that I had spent so much time and care knitting, being thrown out. If they were thrown out I would have nothing to dress my baby in and even all the money the baby clothes had cost and the effort to collect all my treasured baby clothes for my baby was nothing compared to the absolute abuse of people treating me as if I neither had nor was going to get a baby. I told my mother in a panic that she was not to touch those things or go through my room. She looked awkward and said that she had 'sorted my room out and had made some alterations in the room for me but nothing had been thrown away that she could not put back'. I wondered what on earth was going on while I was lying in bed trying to rest after the birth of my baby and I felt that I had been allowed no time at all to rest and recover from the delivery, without my family planting far more problems on me than they usually did and on top of my worry about my baby. My mother said that the Sisters had said that there was to be nothing to remind me of the baby when I arrived home and I began to panic and told my mother not to touch the baby's things at all. A Sister saw us talking and came up to the bed smiling

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664c cheerfully and asked my mother if she had spoken to me. My mother said that she had and then she asked her what all this was that they had told her to get rid of the baby's things and then when she had come and talked to me I had said that I did not want them got rid of. The Sister smiled at me and said that they had thought it best that I have a clean start to go home to and that I put all this behind me so it was best for everything to be out of the house already when I got home. I asked her outright if my baby was dead and I said that even if she was dead I would still keep all her things even though she had never yet had them on her. Tears began to prickle in my eyes and the Sister looked annoyed and said that they had not heard anything from Great Ormond Street that the baby had died yet. She was annoyed that what they had thought was for the best about the baby's things had met with my disapproval. She seemed to think that I was most ungrateful that no one could do anything to please me and that I would not let them just tell my mother to throw out my precious baby clothes. I felt as if I was in some kind of nightmare that I could not wake out of because it was real and it was unbelievable that I could actually be living through it. I just did not know where the Sisters could have got the idea from that they could help me by getting my mother to throw away my hard worked for and treasured baby clothes. The sister told me to talk to my Mother,

665C. as if she was speaking to me like a child, and then she told my mother that she and the nurses would be in the office if my mother needed any help with me. my mother did not seem to think she would need them and she couldn't seem to make out what the Sister was on about. After the Sister had gone my mother calmed down a bit and she was more on my side once she could see that it was not me who wanted the baby things thrown out. She kept asking me what I had done to myself, saying that she knew but she wanted to hear it from me. I said to her that I had accepted one painkiller and that it had stopped my breathing but she kept saying "it wasn't a pain killer you took, you dirty bitch." So I thought she meant the enema that I had let them give me and when I thought that the Sisters must have told my mother that I had not been able to stop myself from what it did to me in front of everyone because no one had let there be any screens around me as I lay in that delivery room, an awful feeling of fear of my mother and shame and awful humiliation at what had happened came over me. I thought miserably that even if the delivery ward staff couldn't have pulled some screens around me, at least they didn't have to have told my mother. I felt as if it was the lowest humiliation yet that I was going through. My mother and I sat in silence and I felt so ashamed as my mothers hatred and anger burned on me as she sat and stared at me as if she would have liked to beat me up if no one had been around.

Later my next door neighbour Janet and her husband came in and without realizing it they broke the awful silence as my mother greeted them and talked to them quite normally as if nothing was wrong. Janet talked to me asking me how I was and

666c. when my mothers attention was taken by something else and she was not listening, Janet pointed out my speech to her husband saying that it had not been like that when I had borrowed the book from them on Thursday evening and he agreed with her. Janet told her husband that I had spoken a little bit like that when I had asked to borrow the carrycot but it was far worse now and she wondered what they had done to me since I had been in hospital. She said that I looked as if something had gone very wrong and the hospital ought to be helping me. Janet looked accusingly towards the Sisters office and then said to Barry, her husband, that she did not think my parents realized that anything was wrong, she said that they just seemed to think it was because I had just had a baby, or else she wondered if the hospital had pulled the wool over my parents eyes. Janet got a bit worried and then asked her husband if she had been like I was after she had given birth to their son, Iain, as if she was suddenly aware that she might have been like me and not have realized it. Barry assured Janet that she wasn't like that and she said thankfully that she hadn't thought so. She looked around the ward and said that she didn't like the way the whole ward was being kept in bed. She said that she knew the ward and the routine because it was not all that long since she had been in the ward with her baby son and since then they had both visited the ward frequently when other friends of theirs had been having

667c. their babies. Janet reminded Barry that it was never usually like this and he agreed with her. Janet said that it was strange that a whole ward full of women were being kept in bed and she said that she did not like the way that I was lying in the bed either. She told her husband that I was lying at a most peculiar angle and not moving as if I had broken some bones or something. She said that when she had once been in hospital after a car accident she had seen orthopaedic patients lying and moving in the same manner as I was but not maternity patients. Barry said that it was difficult to tell when I was lying in bed but he did agree with her. Janet said that she had an awful suspicion that I could not walk or something, and that the nurses were keeping me in bed so that my family did not see and they had kept everyone else in bed so that no one asked why it was me who was not up and about. She told her husband to look around at all the other patients because even though they were all in bed, they were sitting up and moving about normally. She said to Barry that it looked to her as if I could not move my arms or legs properly. She told him that it looked to her as if the nurses were literally covering something up with the bedclothes and she wondered if something had happened to me that the nurses were keeping quiet about. Janet said that it was strange that I was quite conscious but yet so sleepy and that I did not seem to be able to move or speak properly. She said that I was too young to have had a stroke as only old people had them but something was wrong. Then Janet turned round and asked the girl in the next bed to me on my left why all the patients were in bed and she told Janet that it

668C. was because the nurses did not want me out of bed at visiting time. Janet thanked her indignantly and told Barry that she had thought so. They both told my mother to go to the office and ask to see a Registrar and ask him exactly what was the matter with me but my mother said that she had already been in the office and had long talks with them. Janet and Barry said that they knew but they did not think the hospital was being very honest with my parents. They said that they were sure that something more had happened to me and perhaps even to the baby. They said that I should not be being kept in bed like this and that other patients definitely were not usually in bed. My mother talked to Janet very simply saying that it was only a few days since I had had the baby and so I would be in bed for ten days even if I went home, as she was with all her children. Janet said that it was not like that nowadays and now they got you up as soon as possible even if it was just to sit by the bed for the first day and that by now I should be walking about. My mother looked really pleased and said that it was good because the nurses must have listened to her and be giving me good old-fashioned treatment as she had told them to. She said that she had told them that I was a VEGETARIAN, and that she did not want me given any drugs whatsoever or for them to touch me. She said that she had told them to leave me completely alone

669c. and that ten days in bed was the correct old fashioned treatment. She said that she had been made to have ten days in bed with each of her babies and it had been hard on her because when the midwives had got her up for the first time on the tenth day she had been as weak as water and she had been too weak to look after the babies properly when the midwives had left but it was a hard lesson that she had learnt and ten days in bed was the proper treatment. She said that the nurses must have listened to what she had told them about me. She said that she had told them that I needed good plain oldfashioned treatment as nothing else agreed with me. She kept saying to Janet that she had told them not to do anything to me, to give me no meat and definitely not to let me have any drugs. Janet suddenly seemed to think that was the answer. She said that it was no good telling the Doctors to give me no drugs now as they had probably already given me drugs in labour and she wondered if what was wrong with me was some kind of allergic reaction. She said to my mother that she had told her that the hospital must be told if I was allergic to anything, and that my mother ought to have told me too. Janet and Barry firmly urged my mother to go straight to the office and ask for them to get the Doctors and they told my mother to be firm with them and to demand to know the truth. They told my mother that if she was firm they could not refuse to tell her as she was my next of kin and I felt kind that the Doctors could be made to tell my next of kin what was wrong but not me. My

670c. Mother did not seem to think she ought to make any fuss in the office but to please Janet and Barry she went and came back within a matter of minutes saying that the Sisters had said that all that was the matter with me was that I wanted to go home. My mother said that she had made definite arrangements for me to go home the next day but she said that the Sisters had told her that she had got to make her own arrangements for getting me home as there were no ambulances and it had got to be in a taxi and not on a bus. My mother said that the Sisters had told her that there was an ambulance go-slow and there was no transport available so I had got to get myself home and at my own expense. My mother asked me if I had any money for it and Janet said that it was disgusting to send me home already and she told my mother to make the Sisters put me in another ward where I would get proper attention. My mother told Janet for my that she had made arrangements with the Sisters to look after me herself and spoke to her as if she was telling her to mind her own business and so Janet gave up and very kindly offered to collect me in her car the next day and my mother accepted her offer. All the arrangements for me to go home were just being made around me and I lay there thinking vaguely that it all seemed so different from what I had wanted. It also seemed a long, long way to go to get home

671c. through all those streets between the hospital and home, when it still seemed miles to walk down the ward to the bathroom. I wanted to wait incase my baby came back to lewisham Hospital but I was equally anxious to be at home to keep my eyes on my precious baby clothes as they were my means of looking after my baby. There had already been a fuss over me not bringing them into the hospital with me and if they disappeared altogether I would have nothing to dress my baby in and I could not prove that I had planned to care for her. I thought that at least at home I could keep my eye on the baby clothes and I could also do things in my own time as I was finding it too much to appear perfectly capable of looking after myself in front of the nurses so that they did not judge me too quickly and think that I would not be able to manage my baby. I was so tired and weak and I felt that if I did not have to do things so quickly I would get better more quickly. At least I could take longer to wash and dress myself and also I would not be pushed to wash my hair when I was too weak to do it just for the sake of having to look capable in front of the nurses. I would not have to be on view in a public place in only my nightwear either which I found really humiliating, so I knew there were some things in favour of going home. My mother told Janet that the district nurses would be coming to see me each day, and I felt better to hear that as I knew I would have the opportunity to talk to them. I thought that the district nurses could not just walk into my own home and see me there without speaking to

672c. me. I thought that they could not just ignore me when I had tried to speak to them like the nurses had done in the ward if I was in my own home. I thought that they would have to speak to me even if it was only out of politeness. My mother said that the district nurses would bring me news of my baby and when I heard that I decided that I would have a better chance of finding out how my baby was at home from them than from the nurses in hospital. I thought too that far from the nurses thinking that I had not brought baby clothes to the hospital with me because I did not want to take my baby home, they could not think that because I would have everything there to show the district nurses and they could see for themselves all the beautiful things that I had made. I began to look forward to going home but in the back of my mind I wondered how my attitude could have changed so much when I knew that I did not really want to leave the hospital. I wanted to stay in incase my baby came back and somehow I had come into hospital to have a baby and I could not believe that I just had not got one. All the time my mother seemed to be getting more and more in control of everything and I vaguely struggled to work out why I was not up and about and sorting everything out like I usually did and I decided that I would be better off at home where I could sort things out and take my time to do things. I was vaguely aware

673c. of my mother saying that there was so much to be done at home and hinting that she could soon put me to work at home. Janet was quite alarmed about that and she said that if I was coming out of hospital they would only be sending me home to rest. She said that I must not do any lifting or housework as it was too soon after having the baby and even if I had not got a baby I must still rest. My mother just looked away from her as if Janet did not know what she was talking about and said that she was sitting up in bed peeling vegetables the same afternoon that she had had my brother. She said that these days people cossetted themselves too much but Janet just said that the midwives would probably tell me what to do and it was best to follow exactly what they told me to do. I just lay there agreeing with everybody and I just felt that I did not really know how on earth this nightmare of having no baby had ever happened at all. Amid all the noise and confusion my brother and sister came in having come to the hospital with my mother and having been wandering around the hospital buying sweets for themselves again in the hospital shop. They asked if the baby was back yet and they said that they were waiting to hold her. My brother and sister were only a couple of years younger than I was and yet they had absolutely no idea at all that you could not just pick up a premature baby and hold it for fun. Years before I had reached my sisters age I would have known better and have been quite scientifically interested but my brother and sister just had no idea and they seemed so dull and ignorant. I wished

674c. that they had not come to the hospital at all especially since the sister had mentioned that they were wondering if my brother was the father. I did not want to be associated with them especially since I was so ill and could easily be dismissed as being as ignorant as they were, simply because I had become physically slow. I was nothing like any other member of my family at all and I had never been like them and I knew that my family were taking advantage of my sudden weakness as if they had always wanted to be in a position where they were in control of everything and could get their own back on me for everything that they hated about me but most of all my level headed ability to manage everything so capably. I told my brother and sister that the baby was not back at all and without asking me how I was, they got chairs and sat themselves down as if they had wasted their time coming to the hospital in the hope of seeing the baby. Everyone was talking to each other and no one except Janet and her husband seemed to want to talk to me. It was alright except for the noise they made and I seemed to cope with them all there, then after a while I realized that there was still about three quarters of an hour before visiting time would end and it suddenly seemed a long, long time away. Every minute seemed to drag out and

675c. Seem endless and the noise of all my visitors talking seemed to get louder and louder. Then the rest of the ward seemed noisier too and the noise of each set of visitors around each bed seemed to become louder and louder. The noise and confusion made the ward sound like a market place and it just went on and on. In the midst of it all I just lay there politely as if nothing was wrong and my outwardly calm body gave no indication of the despairing turmoil that was going on inside my mind as I felt that I really could not stand it any more but I just seemed unable to do anything but behave in the most exact and correctly polite manner. I seemed to know that the drugs they had given me had taken away my ability to defend myself and as I could not speak up for myself and say that I had had enough, I just carried on beyond what I could stand. It was like touching something that was hot and not having the nervous reflex to remove my hand and yet I knew I was getting badly hurt. I was just lying there in a false kind of serenity and feeling that what ever I had to endure, even if it was too much, was alright and I must not make a fuss about it. Deep in my mind I knew that I ought to be firm and ask all my visitors to go but I was afraid of the fuss my mother would make and of the damage a scene on the ward would do to the nurses attitude towards me and consequently whether or not they got a doctor to tell me how my baby was. They were so sympathetic to my mother and she had such a way of getting

676c. control of other peoples support
and getting them to agree to
anything she wanted just by
knowing how to talk them
round to seeing her point of
view. I could never do that
because I would not lie, be
dishonest or uncharitable about
other people by running them
down in my conversation, so I
had no chance at all to hold my
own against her.

My visitors seemed to be making
more noise than anyone else
and I knew they were making
too much noise for the rest of
the ward let alone for me even
though the ward was generally
noisy that evening. As one nurse
passed my bed on the way to
the office she stopped by my bed
and remarked that I had too
many visitors. I was so relieved
that she had noticed and I
waited for her to ask them to
go so that I could lie there
and rest but she did not. She
just smiled and said that
it did not matter if I had
more visitors but only because
I had no baby. She said
how lucky I was to have such
a caring family and she smiled
at my mother especially, as if
the nurses were all so friendly
with my mother. I just did not
know how to say to the nurses
that I wanted my family to go and
I felt that the situation was
exactly the opposite of what
the nurse had said and that
if I had no baby then I did not
need more visitors because I
needed quiet and rest and
some understanding to help

677c. my grief. I was so aware that no one realized how I felt at all and I just could not be rude and tell my visitors to go. I needed someone to look after me while I was ill and my Mother was so forceful that she had taken charge of the situation and the nurses were letting her say how I was to be looked after and so I was being deprived of proper care. The most awful thing about it was the way my mother was all smiles and gushing over with so much concern for me that no one could see through it and realize that she was actually being spiteful to me. I was just too vulnerable to do anything about it and I just could not work out how I had got into this dilemma. It was just a question of having lost control of the situation through being weak and my mother was not going to give me any chance to get it back. I had never been so weak before and I could not fight through the false state of serenity I was in. My body was just carrying on as not mal and coping serenely with letting everything just carry on around me even though it was not what I wanted or what was right for me. My mind had gone a long way past what it could cope with through worry and exhaustion and I was in mental agony but it just did not show physically at all. I knew that I had been given drugs by the nurses but I felt sure that the ordinary doses they were giving me were having a much more profound effect on me because I was so weak, and because I had never had drugs before but my body was just carrying on like a machine because my ability to

678c. stop and rest had been taken away from me. I was also terrified of my mother being given my baby because she had just taken over the whole situation, and that alone forced me to keep going and not give in and rest incase my mother did anything else. It was a war of nerves between us and my mother seemed to be getting a very deep satisfaction out of taking control of everything and seeing that I did not get my baby. I knew that she had always hated me and taken everything had away from me but a sudden insight come over me that I had never ever seen my mother enjoying herself quite so much and a sudden chilled fear came over me that there was more to my mothers hatred than I had ever realized. It suddenly seemed that my mother was not 'harmless' at all, and it was as if I saw into the depths of my mothers personality in a way that she had never ever uncovered before and I saw the lust of a cold blooded and vicious murderer in her eyes. I could not believe it; It had been like looking at a calm sea and never before having seen the dangers in it. I knew what my father was like but not my mother. I would never have believed it possible and I only caught a glimpse of it, a kind of tormented hungry look in her eyes, but it chilled me with fear because I knew I was what it had focused itself on. I just seemed to get an insight that

679c. there was something more terrible in my mother than had ever been disclosed but I could not work out what it was. No one would ever have believed me either and it was a most terrifying situation to be in. I felt that if I tried to tell someone that I thought my mother was mad they would swear it was me that was mad and I would lose my baby to her. I just had to carry on as best I could and so I just carried on as if I was in perfect control of everything which seemed to annoy my mother even more as she seemed to want some outward show from me that I had given in to her and she did not get it, but keeping up such control wore me out. My mind went on and on exploring depths beyond what it could endure that I had never realized that it possessed as the strain of my visitors and visiting time with all its noise and confusion dragged on and on. At last I was aware of the bell going for the end of visiting time but the visitors still did not go. People were really reluctant to get up and go and the time seemed to drag on and on and ten minutes later most of the visitors were still hanging around in the ward. My visitors especially did not go and my mother did not seem to think that the bell applied to her at all. She told Janet proudly that the nurses had told her that she could stay with me all the time if she felt that I needed her. I said that I was alright and that I definitely did not need her and Janet very tactfully offered my mother and brother and sister a lift home in her car. Finally nearly a quarter of an hour after the end of visiting time they went and it was a good ten minutes later before the

680c ward was completely clear of visitors and a lot quieter. I lay in bed worrying about my baby and then when a nurse passed my bed I called out "Nurse" quite firmly. I had rehearsed exactly what I wanted to say to her in my mind as I had lain worrying in bed and when I called out "Nurse" firmly, she came over to my bed but she was annoyed about it and listened to what I had to say without speaking to me as if she really did not want to talk to somebody like me and I could not understand how I had suddenly become somebody who everybody thought was too despicable to speak to. I asked her quite firmly if I could see a doctor yet, but my speech was so pathetic that trying to sound as if I was being firm about it made me sound really pathetic as if I was struggling to maintain some kind of dignity in circumstances where I was being totally humiliated. The nurse asked me sarcastically if I was sure I wanted to see a doctor and I said yes. I said that I had been waiting since Saturday afternoon for one to come and with that she went off in the direction of the office without saying anything. The Sister who had spoken to me on Saturday afternoon and had told me that she was not allowed to tell me what was wrong with my baby came along the ward and up to my bed. She said that the Doctors could not come to see me because they were all too busy with other mothers on the Labour Ward. She spoke

681 to me as if she was reproaching me for being so selfish and she said that I did not want to deprive other mothers of the Doctors attention by asking them to come to me, did I? I said "No" very politely and I said that I just wanted to know what was wrong with my baby. The Sister got a chair and sat down beside my bed with me. She spoke to me very simply as if I was a child and as if I did not quite remember and asked me to repeat to her what my mother had just told me at visiting time about what was wrong with my baby. I said that we had only talked about arrangements for me to go home and that I had not been able to tell my mother what was wrong with the baby because no one had been to tell me. I said that my mother had kept asking me the day before to tell her what I knew was wrong with the baby and I said that I could not tell her because I did not know. I only knew that the baby had a blockage and had been operated on. I said that I had waited three days to find out what they had found. The Sister looked exasperated and said "and your mother hasn't told you?". I began to panic inside myself as I began to wonder if they had told my mother what was wrong with my baby and not me but I remained in control and with all my pride I said "No, how can she? no one has told me". The Sister began to look alarmed as if she realized that things were not all they should be between my mother and I, and she said that she would telephone to see if a Doctor could come to see me. She went off and some minutes later came back from the office saying that the Doctors could not come. She sat

682c. beside me and told me that my baby had been born with Vaginal Atresia and Hydrometacolpos. The blockage had been where her vagina was not hollowed out and so her uterus had been blocked with fluid. Then I nodded eager to hear the rest as I had seen that my baby's external genitalia had not been normal when they had shown her to me after resuscitating her and I thought to myself that I had been right about that. Even so, that was not too drastic and I nodded approvingly as the sister said that it had been put right when they had operated on my baby. The sister seemed as if she expected me to cry or show some great display of emotion and she only seemed annoyed when I asked if that was all that was wrong. The sister said that there were two other very serious handicaps that they had found, and fear came over me as I waited to be told what they were because, once again she sounded as if she was just keeping me in suspense and that she was not going to carry on and tell me what it was. I would have been alright if she had gone on to tell me what the two things were but she did not. I desperately needed to know and I could face up to anything at all but it was waiting to be told and having people keeping me in suspense about it that was mental agony. I asked the sister what the other two things were but she would only tell me that she was not allowed to tell me as only a Doctor could do that and

683c. she said that they would come when they could. I felt as if I was suspended in mental agony because the staff were being brutal with me that they knew what was wrong but then they were drawing out the mental agony by telling me that they knew what was wrong but could not tell me what it was. They were tormenting me by keeping news of what I was so desperately worried and concerned about away from me. It was the second time the Sister had sat beside me and told me that she knew what was wrong but that she was not allowed to tell me and it would have been better for her not to have done that at all than for her to have tormented me with it when I should have been told the truth about what they knew and not just that they knew and that I was not going to be told. Fear pricked all over me as to what it was that was wrong if no one would tell me but even then I still wanted to know what was the matter with my baby. The Sister tried to end on a brighter note saying that I had heard enough for one time, which I had not because I wanted to know everything, and she said that she expected that I wanted to sleep now and that she would get a nurse to fetch me something to make me sleep. She asked me if I would like an injection that would give me a good nights rest but I said no thank you quite definitely and I said that I would wait for the Doctors to come. The Sister said that the Doctors would come as soon as they were finished but that it would not be just yet and she suggested the injection again. I said no thank you and I said that I was going to have a bath just then anyway and the Sister tried to be firm with me saying "Well, after your bath then" and she got up and went off. I got up

684c. carefully and took my things down to have a bath. I did not know how I was going to manage to get into and out of the bath but the problem was solved because someone else was in the bath and I had to make do with a wash at the hand basin, so I took my time over it. As I washed I was full of fear for my baby and as I hoped and prayed that she would be alright as I stood there washing I cried a lot. As many times as I finished crying and washed my face so I seemed to cry again. My face was already swollen from where I had been crying all afternoon so I looked a sight and apart from washing my face I could not do anything about it. I emptied all the tissues I had used into the waste paper basket and then washed the rest of myself. I badly needed a fresh nightdress but my mother had most definitely not brought one in for me and I was most uncomfortable in the hot and sweaty one that I had to put back on. My back was making the most awful creaking noises as I dressed and undressed myself and I felt really awful as if I was suffering from a really bad attack of flu. I went back to my bed and slowly began to tidy my locker up and sort the things in it out. I found that once again my bed had been made in my absence and fresh water left beside my bed. The nurses seemed to be very particular about seeing that I was properly cared for but I felt that they would have done better to give me one extra pillow and to have talked to me which would have made me feel more comfortable. A nurse came up to me as I was tidying my locker to see what I was doing and without speaking

685C. to me at all, even to say a few kind words, she went off and loudly told the Sister that I was sorting my locker out. The Sister sent two nurses over to me with the other nurse and they looked in my locker and asked me if anyone had brought any drugs in for me and I was really bewildered and said 'no' because of course they had not. The nurses looked through my things thoroughly and then went off without speaking to me but they made it really obvious that they were not speaking to me on purpose. It really upset me that none of the nurses would speak to me and when they had gone I put the things back into my locker without tidying it properly and I got straight back into bed because that seemed the safest place to be and I was too terrified to do anything at all. I had just lost every ounce of confidence even to tidy my locker seeing that such a simple thing could even bring people to search it for drugs that I most definitely had not got. I felt totally bewildered that they could think I might have any. After all the years that I had suffered without even so much as being allowed to take an aspirin for a headache that other people took for granted let alone ever being allowed any antibiotic for the terrible chest infections that I had suffered from winter after winter, I was the very last person ever even to have medicinal drugs that other people took for granted, let alone anything else; It was just unthinkable and I lay there for ages crying quietly. I was even afraid to cry properly incase that was wrong too. It was the most frightening situation that I had ever been in and when I cried it was more like silent tears that I just could not hold back from overflowing from the oceans of tears behind my eyes and then rolling in silent streams down my cheeks.

680c. as I tried to mop them up with one sodden tissue after another. As I began to recover myself I felt as if I was living through a nightmare that could just not be real and I just could not believe that it could all be happening. I lay there and my arms just ached and ached to hold my baby girl with an actual physical pain. Other mothers had gone upstairs to watch television and I wondered again how they could go off to watch television and leave their babies. I knew that if I had my baby with me I would never dreamt of going off to watch the television because I would be so proud of my baby that I just would not be able to take my eyes off her to watch the rubbish on television. I knew that I would be so busy caring for my baby that I would not need anything else to do. As I lay there a Domestic came along pushing a trolley full of night drinks and she asked a nurse where all the patients were as she wanted to get the night drinks done. The nurse said that she would go and find them and when the nurse had gone, the domestic began to leave drinks on the lockers of the patients who she knew always had a particular drink. The ward was quiet and dim as only the lamps on the wall behind each bed were on and not the main ward lights so it looked very restful. It looked so peaceful and it felt warm in the ward and I began to feel very grateful to be in such a nice warm place. I was glad to be in such a lovely big bed which since it had just been made felt comfortable. The white sheets were so clean and it was such a luxury to have proper linen sheets since we only had the cheaper

687c. Bri-Nylon fitted ones at home and these sheets felt so much cleaner, starched and of better quality. I also felt very grateful to the nurses that they had given me my own bed to be in and as I struggled to remember why it meant so much to me that they had given me my own bed at all, I wished with an awful headache that I had one of the beautiful transparent plastic baby cots with my own precious baby in it too and I hoped and prayed that she would be alright. I didn't care what the two handicaps were as I was so determined to make life fun for her whatever the matter was. It was just my baby herself that I was worried about incase she didn't make it and we would never have the precious gift of each others friendship and love. I was really upset and my mind ached with worry over what the two unknowns, and as the Sister had said, 'serious' handicaps could be. I could only think of two ways inwhich you could be handicapped and that was that you could be mentally handicapped and physically handicapped but all I could think of about that was that there were ways to overcome them if only she would live. I became afraid that if she was on a respirator or something the Doctors might think that she was too handicapped to live and that they had the right to switch it off. It was a defeatists attitude to just switch off a machine and turn someone's life off. I hoped that if my baby was being given painkillers that she was not suffering what I had been through during my delivery and that the doctors would give her a chance especially if she was too ill to even show them that within her lifeless and still body she was very much alive but I hoped and prayed that she was better than that and that she was quite conscious and responding to everything

688c. so that the Doctors would be in no doubt about the viability of her life. The Domestic who was serving the evening drinks arrived at my bedside and asked me what I would like and she said that she had plenty of hot milk. It smelt delicious and I said yes please. She put two spoonfuls of sugar in it and gave it to me but she had no saucers and she even took the spoon back to use for someone else, but the cup felt as warm as a hot water bottle in my hands and I was so grateful for the warm milk to drink, for the sweetness of the sugar and the warmth in my hands. I got out the honey that my mother had brought in for me and the huge tablespoon to eat it with and I put two big tablespoonfuls of honey into the hot milk as well as the sugar. It was absolutely sweet and delicious and as soon as I had drunk a few mouthfuls of it my strength came flooding back into my limbs and I felt so much better and stronger. I was so grateful for the warm drink that I did not realize how gratefully I thanked the Domestic for the drink and how much I really meant it. She moved the trolley off to the next bed and as I sat drinking the milk my eyes filled with tears because I was so glad that someone had given me milk to drink and a bed all to myself to sleep in and that I was warm in hospital. I sat warming my hands on the cup and sipping the drink that seemed to be nourishing me like a whole meal and I could not explain the peculiar feeling of being 'cared for' that I felt from being given milk to drink because it

689c. seemed to mean more to me than just any drink would have done and I just could not remember why. A few minutes later another Domestic came down the ward and asked the Domestic on our ward why she was being so long and what was the matter, and I suddenly realized that the Domestic who had given me the milk to drink was standing beyond the end of the next bed watching me and she was staring at me and crying. I did not feel particularly sorry for myself, in fact with warm milk and a warm bed to sit and drink it in I felt very fortunate indeed and counted myself as being lucky to have what I had "got" but the Domestic was crying over me. She told the Domestic who had come to find her that "It that girl" indicating towards me and using her handkerchief to wipe her eyes and her nose. She said "She thank me for jest a cup of milk like she never have it before, she got no baby, She got nothing, look her clothes, She in rags! and she thank me like that for jest a cup of milk. I oughta thank her for lettin me be the one to give it her. She got nothing, nothing at all and she thank me like she never have nothing like it ever before." The two Domesticics were both very plump motherly Black ladies who looked kind hearted but the Domestic who had come looking for her friend was very firm with the one who was crying. She told her that no white girl should make her cry, and then she came over as if she was going to sort it all out and she asked me if I had never had milk before. I felt a bit taken aback and I felt awkward that I had inadvertently made her friend cry and I said rather meekly that "yes, I had had milk before." She nodded as if she had thought so and then she went back to sort her friend out saying "See, she have it before, she just depressed." The

690c. other Domestic who had been crying agreed with her and said "She depressed alright, she loss her baby and those nurses don't take no notice of her." Her friend told her that she should not get upset over it because there was nothing she could do and she offered to help her do the drinks as they were late and they carried on with the rest of the night drinks. When they came back almost straight away collecting the cups and complaining that none of the patients had finished their drinks, they stopped opposite my bed and came across to me. They asked me when I was going home and when I said 'Tomorrow' the Domestic who had been crying added miserably that she thought so or she would have liked to have brought some better clothes in for me. She said that she would have brought me in one of her own new nightdresses rather than see me without. She said "you want somethin pretty girl, to cheer yourself up." and as she took my empty cup and went back to her trolley she told her friend "These white people and their missionaries! They don't look after their own. She need somebody to come to her and give her clothes and things, she got nothing and nobody come to her. She got a mother, I seen her but she no good at all." As they stood looking at me she seemed to become more hopeful about the situation and she said to her friend thoughtfully "That girl gonna be somebody, Ar seen it in her face. God want somethin good fer that one, she gonna be SOME BODY!" and she stared at me so strangely as if she was trying to work out what it was. Her friend was also staring at me

691c. strangely and she seemed to believe the other Domestic against her better judgement. She admitted to her "It like light coming from her face and she so GENTLE. She not like the others that come in here to have their babies. She different, there no sin in what she done. She very young but she still innocent. I don't care what those nurses say she done, This one done nothin' wrong." Her friend agreed by saying "There somethin' about the way she sitting so gentle in that bed in that blue nightdress an' her great big brown eyes lookin' at you so lost, She remind me of a little dove." Then they started to discuss the reporters that they had heard had come to the ward and they asked me if I was someone famous or if I was on the 'telly'. I said no and they agreed that I could not be because I had no good clothes and so they said goodbye and went off trying to work out who I could be and saying "That girl SOME BODY." And then they were gone and I never saw them again but I remembered their kindness and I appreciated their concern and I knew that they were right to have ignored the nurses and talked to me, despite having been told not to.

Much later that night when the nurses had come out of their report in the office they started doing the drug round and bottles were given out to the mothers of babies who needed them. Some mothers were feeding and changing their babies and other babies were just crying while their mothers were out in the bathroom getting ready for bed. While all that was going on, a group of pupil midwives came onto the ward with a tutor midwife and the nurses on our ward seemed to expect them

692C. to arrive on the ward but it was not as if they usually visited the ward like that. It was very late and they seemed to have come down from the labour ward where they were on night duty. I heard the Sister who was in charge of the group say to them in an authoritative voice "Now we will all go along as if we are making a ward round, and then stop at her bed as if its routine. So when you get up there just stop and chat to a few mothers in the beds before hers and then she won't be aware of what we are doing." A sickening feeling quietly began to make its presence felt in my stomach because I realized that this group of nurses were playing the same sort of game of pretence that the nurses on the ward had played when they had told me that if they told me that my baby had got to be christened then I would know that she was seriously ill and then they had come and told me that she had got to be christened without saying that it was because she was seriously ill so that I was left to draw my own conclusions. I knew straight away that they were talking about me and sure enough they walked up the ward, stopped briefly to admire the two babies in the two cots next to the two beds before mine and then they gathered around my bed. The Sister who looked very senior and who had 'TUTOR' on the badge on her white dress gave me a huge and very false smile and asked me how I was. I smiled politely and despite my eyes being swollen from crying for so long, I mustered every ounce of my pride and quietly and politely told her "I'm quite alright thank you". She laughed

693c. and tried to get the Pupil midwives who she had brought along to laugh with her as she said "You don't look alright to me! Tell me, how do you feel about the news that your baby has been born with deformities? Tell me, what are your feelings?" She was so confident in herself that she was showing the Pupil midwives how to talk to me and ask me questions but it made me feel totally humiliated that she could bring a group of people to look at my grief and question me so tactlessly. It seemed awful that people could actually come and stand around me and have a look to see what my grief was like but no one would help me. They wanted me to talk about my inner most feelings but no one could get a Doctor to tell me how my baby was and put me out of my misery. Despite the indignation I felt, I could still not bring myself to be rude to anyone and I would not use bad manners to defend myself whatever anyone put me through. I just sat there and with a gentle but icy politeness and speaking more slowly as if I thought she had not quite heard me properly the first time, I said again "I'm quite alright thank you" very formally as if that was my final comment about the matter and I ended on a note that finished the conversation in no uncertain terms and sounded as if I was then expecting her to leave my presence. The Tutor looked really embarrassed as if it was not what she had expected from me at all and the group of Pupil midwives just looked at me as if it was not what they had been told to expect either. They were staring at my face and listening to the way I spoke as if they had just realized that there was something more serious going on than they had been led to expect and the whole group of them seemed to turn against the Sister Tutor. One of the Pupil midwives, a little Chinese

694C. sort of one, became quite indignant about what was going on and she asked the Sister Tutor very firmly why they had all been brought down to the ward like this and what was going on. She asked the Tutor what had happened to me and the Tutor got very alarmed when she said that, as if the nurses were not expected to know that anything had happened to me at all. Some of the other Pupil Midwives seemed a bit uneasy about what was going on and when the Sister saw that the group of nurses were not on her side at all but on mine she tried to get them all away from my bed as quickly as she could. She said to them in a very loud and nervous voice, that she seemed to want the whole ward to hear as well because everyone was looking, that this was not the reaction that she had wanted them to see and she apologized to them that some people did not show their feelings very easily. She told the Pupil Midwives that perhaps it was too late to be on the ward because the patients were tired, and that they all ought to go back to the labour ward and she tried to hurry them away but the Chinese sort of nurse was not very keen to go because she seemed to want to talk to me herself to find out what was going on. The Sister Tutor would not let her stay and she seemed alarmed that the nurses were questioning what was going on. It was the second time that a group of nurses who were not actually working on the ward had been brought along to my bed and then hurried away and I got the distinct impression that the senior staff on the labour ward were trying to get people to come and

695c see me who would later verify that I was alright or something and that the nurses had come along alright but had become suspicious when they saw my face and heard me struggle to speak.

They left the ward and a very short while later an older and very kindly grey haired senior nursing officer hurried up the ward to my bed. She had obviously been sent for as she was very concerned that I was alright and as she sat beside me she was kindness itself. She asked me how I was and when I told her politely that I was alright she nodded very enthusiastically as if she understood that I was using every ounce of my pride to be able to cope alright with what was going on in the strange situation that I found myself in. She did not try to make me break down and say that I was not alright when it was obvious that I was doing the best I could to keep myself together. She was so very positive and practical and she also had some authority and simply with her forthright concern for my well being, she made it clear, not that she 'could' help me if I did what she wanted me to, but that she 'would' help me because she considered it the right thing to do to treat me like a human being. It wasn't just a spur of the moment effort that she put on for my benefit either, it was the sum total of her whole life that had been dedicated to nursing. The nursing officer asked me to tell her in my own words what I had been told was wrong with my baby and so I told her that the sister had told me that my baby had been born with vaginal atresia and hydrometacarpus, that she had been successfully operated on and that my baby had two other serious defects that I was waiting for the Doctors to come and tell me about. The nursing

696c. Officer listened and nodded kindly
and then she asked me how I felt
about going home. I said that I did
not care where I was as long as I
knew how my baby was but that if
she was coming back then I wanted
to stay in to be with her. The nursing
officer spoke quietly and sadly and
said that she did not think that
my baby would be coming back at
all and she said that I should not
worry about the two more serious
defects because I probably would
not have to cope with them anyway.
She told me that my baby was
having breathing difficulties and
that she was very small to survive
even without having just undergone
the ordeal of an operation. I was
grief stricken but I did not cry and
I knew that it would not have been
so hard to bear if the hospital staff
had not made such a great mystery
of what the two serious defects
were. Not telling me was blowing
them up in my mind like a balloon
that was getting bigger and bigger
and it was mental agony because
I could not think my way beyond
them. If I had been told what they
were I could have begun to think
about what to do about them and
begin to plan some adapted way of
life to make life fun for my child
but I could not begin to plan any
adaptations until I knew what
it was that my child would need
to adapt to. The way to help a child
that could not walk but who
could see was totally different
from the way to help a child who
was blind but who could walk.
Until I knew which way I had got to
turn I could not do anything but
experience the elongated horror of

697C. other people knowing what was wrong but keeping it from me. I felt that I had a right to know how my baby was but as kind as she was, the nursing officer did not seem as if she was going to add any more to what I knew. She only seemed to want to know what sort of mental state I was in and she seemed to reassure herself that I would talk about it all but only to one person at a time and not in front of people who came to watch me. She asked me if I felt that I needed quietness and when I said "yes" thankfully, she told me very kindly but to my despair that she thought I would be better off at home. She said that the Sister had told her what a loving family I had at home and that I had been having so many visitors, so at home I would have my family around me all the time and visitors could come and go all day long in the privacy of my own home. She said that my family could give me better attention than the nurses as they were used to me and could give me all the things they knew I liked at home and she said that she thought it would be very much better for me if I went home the next day where everything would be familiar to me. She sounded as if she genuinely wanted to help me in whatever way was best for me but I felt so depressed that I just could not find a way to explain to her that it was not like that at home at all. My parents had spent so long talking to people in the office that their version was stacked too high against me for me to try to get anyone to believe the truth. Even if they had believed me I knew that I had nowhere else to go except home and that if I caused any trouble then it would be worse for me with my parents when I did get home, so I just said that I wanted to see the Doctors about the baby before

698c. I went anywhere and that I was waiting for them to come. The nursing officer seemed concerned that I had been told to expect the Doctors to come at all and she just said that they would be round to the wards the next day. She said that she was sorry about what I was going through and that she hoped everything would turn out well for me. Then she went off because she was obviously very busy elsewhere in the hospital and I just lay in bed utterly convinced that the Doctors were still busy delivering babies on the labour ward and that they would come to see me as soon as they were finished. The nurses pulled the curtains around my bed and everyone else's bed for the night and then they left me two sleeping tablets in a plastic cup that they just put on my locker and left. They did not speak to me even to tell me to take them and as I was not going to take them I just left them there. I had no intention of taking sleeping tablets and going to sleep incase I missed any Doctor who came to see me and I was tired enough to go to sleep on my own without tablets if I had wanted to. So I lay there in bed long after the lights had been dimmed to the night lights, fighting sleep and watching the stars in the sky outside the window next to my bed while I waited and waited for the Doctors to come and tell me how my baby was which I still firmly believed they would do as soon as they could.

All night long I kept vigil, quietly praying to God for my baby's life and bauling anxiously in my prayers at the sound of any footsteps that came along the ward in the expectant hope that it might be one of the Doctors but it never was. As the ward lights

699c. came on in the morning I was still waiting, devastated with tiredness in mind and body, for the Doctors to come and I was actually feeling sorry, not for myself, but for the Doctors who I was stupid enough to believe had been up all night saving lives on the labour ward and who had still not yet managed to get to see me. The Sister drew back the curtains around my bed and for the second time she was annoyed to find that I had not taken the sleeping tablets that were still on my locker. She told the nurses off and then told me off and then said to the nurses that I was to be MADE to take the tablets that I was given. I thought to myself that I had not needed sleeping tablets and that if I had wanted to sleep then I could have done so because I could have just gone straight off to sleep by myself, but I had not wanted to because I had purposely stayed awake waiting for news of my baby and I had every right to have done that as any good mother would have kept vigil all night over her sick child; It was the natural thing to do. Even the nurses seemed as if they could not understand why there was so much concern that I be given sleeping tablets when they had not heard a sound from me all night. Seeing that the nurses were on my side I asked the Sister if a Doctor was coming to see me about my baby, but the Sister ignored me and furiously told the nurses that if I had been kept properly sedated then I would not be asking questions like this. The Sister went off to the drug trolley and one of the night nurses said to the other nurse who had been told off with her "They want to tell her, shes got a right to know, shes still the baby's Mother" as if she could not understand why they did not just tell me what was wrong. I felt terrified of what was going on and of what unknown reason there was as to WHY no one would tell me what else was wrong with my baby. The Sister came

700C. back with two yellow tablets that she insisted I had to take and after a while I found myself wondering why I had bothered to ask the Sister if the Doctors were coming when what I had said had upset her. I also began to feel completely worn out but no longer sleepy as if I had gone past being tired. I was determined to look as if I was still in control of what happened to my baby and that she would definitely come back to me, so I rather unsteadily got up and went to the bathroom to make myself look presentable. On the way back from the bathroom I tried to stop and talk to some of the other mothers who were seeing to their babies bottles, to try to be friendly with the other new mothers but although my mind was quite clear and I knew exactly what I wanted to say I found that my speech had become most peculiar since I had taken the tablets that the Sister had given me, whereas before I had taken the tablets my speech had been quite clear when I had asked the Sister if I could see a Doctor about my baby. I found that I was moving my mouth as if I was drunk, my mouth was numb and what I wanted to say was not coming out clearly. I started to begin a conversation with a clear idea of what I wanted to say but I could not seem to get the whole idea across to the person I wanted to speak to. I seemed to begin and then as I talked my opening sentence seemed to lengthen itself out of all proportion as I seemed to go on and on explaining what I meant in meaningful but different ways as if I could not seem to get any further on with what I wanted to say. I knew exactly what I wanted to say because the whole thing was clear in my head but my mouth was so tired