

1c. At about ten minutes to one o'clock lunchtime on the twenty second of November 1973, I was hoovering the upstairs landing of our house when I bent down to switch off the cleaner and felt a strange cold sensation in my back. I had just finished cleaning the whole house ready for the weekend when all the family would be home from work and school, and I carried the hoover downstairs and put it away in the cupboard under the stairs. Exactly ten minutes after I had felt the first cold sensation in my back another one slowly radiated across it. I looked at my watch and saw that it was exactly one o'clock. I waited another ten minutes to see if I felt it again and at exactly ten minutes past one o'clock another cold sensation ebbed its way slowly across my back. I thought immediately that they were labour pains but since it was not pain that I was feeling and because it was far too early for me to be having my baby, I decided that I must be experiencing "testing pains".

On my last visit to the Ante-Natal clinic two weeks previously, I had heard two other mothers who were more advanced in their pregnancies than I was, who were discussing "testing pains" and saying that the Ante Natal sister had told them that in the weeks before labour a woman could expect what she called "testing pains" as the abdominal muscles prepared to go into labour. One of the mothers had been having strong regular abdominal pains but the sister of the clinic had told her that she was not in labour, as they were only "testing pains" and that when she actually went into labour she would know the difference because her labour pains would be painful. What I was feeling was absolutely painless and not at all strong and with over a month to go before the date that my baby was due, I just accepted that I could not possibly be in labour.

I was supposed to go to the Ante-Natal Clinic that afternoon for my fortnightly check-up, but after my mother had given me my lunch I became so tired that I decided not to go. I

2c. had not properly recovered from the previous few days illness that I had spent in bed and after having cleaned the whole house, which I would not have dreamed of leaving because it was my duty to do it and my Mother was beginning to get annoyed that I was laying about and the house-work was piling up, I felt exhausted. I was too tired to face the walk to Hewisham Hospital and knowing that I should not walk so far when I was that tired, I decided to telephone the hospital for an appointment on the next day when I would not be feeling so tired and I even put off the walk round to the telephone box until later on as well.

I stayed at home and sat very quietly in the kitchen for over an hour and rested. Even when I felt better I knew that it was of no use to go to the hospital because I had missed my appointment time and it was printed all over my Ante Natal card that if a patient arrived late then they would not be seen. I had heard patients arrive late before and I had heard the Ante-Natal Sister tell them off and more than the long walk to the hospital, it was the telling off that I could not face and so I stayed where I was at home. Later on my Mother and sister got ready to go out to a bring and buy sale that a friend of my Mothers was having in aid of a shelter for unwanted donkeys and as it was being held in the cellar of my Mothers friends house which was only a few streets away from our house and not too far to walk to my Mother persuaded me to go with them.

We must have spent about an hour and a half at the sale and the time passed very quickly. While we were in there it must have been raining outside without us noticing because when we came out we found that the pavements were wet. In the sky we saw two rainbows very close to each other and they looked beautiful.

3c. One of the rainbows was large and bright and the other one was smaller and weaker which is quite usual when there are two rainbows but as I looked at the sky and saw the weaker one fading more quickly than the stronger one, a strange uncanny feeling of fear and apprehension came over me and I could not understand why.

At the sale I had bought six different soft baby toys for my baby. The toys were brightly coloured and interesting for a child to look at and they had been safely made to be suitable for a child to play with. Each little boy animal had its own appealing character and I had thought when I first saw them that later on my child could have such fun choosing names for each one. When I got them home I put the toys along the mantelpiece of my bedroom to make the room look even more like a nursery ready for the coming baby and as I stood looking at them I felt so happy and excited about my forthcoming baby that the moon shaped mouths of the toys seemed to be smiling back happily and excitedly. They were only very humble handmade cloth toys and they had not cost very much money at all but they were just perfect for the baby and it really seemed as if they seemed to know it. As I watched them they almost seemed to come alive and be as excited as I was about the baby as if the toys were so glad to have been bought and to have found a home with me and my baby. They seemed so full of joy as if they could hardly wait for the tiny baby to be put into its cot for the first time and one day to open its eyes and gurgle at them in delight. As I looked at them I understood what Jesus said that if no one had taken any notice of him then even the very stones would have cried out, and as I stood looking at those dear little boys in my room and feeling so happy about my baby the moment of standing there became almost magical with the enchant-

4c antment of a beautiful fairy story.

By that time it had gone past four o'clock in the afternoon and all the time since ten minutes to one o'clock at lunchtime that day the same cold sensations had been continually passing across my back every ten minutes. There was no pain at all and even if the sensations that were crossing my back had been very painful I would not have worried because I could cope with pain very well but something else did begin to make me feel slightly afraid and that was the exact precision in time of when each sensation occurred. Contractions were supposed to occur every ten minutes at the beginning of labour and mine just happened to be occurring exactly as each ten minutes of the clock passed. Exactly as the large hand of the clock touched the ten to, 8'o'clock, ten past, twenty past, half past and twenty to, around the clock so each sensation occurred exactly on time to the very moment. I would have felt more at ease if they had occurred at five past, quarter past and so on in some other combination of numbers or even have been a few seconds out even once but they did not waver. The sensations had a kind of military precision about them because they were so precise. They were never a moment too early and never a moment too late and there was something about it that made me feel as if my body had taken charge of itself and was showing off at just how accurate it could be and it was the way it was showing off that frightened me. It was as if my brains were showing off at just how precisely they could control my body and they were boasting their head off that

5c. they could do things that people had never even heard of. It felt as if with its full colours flying my body was charging into a battle that I had never even suspected it knew about and the strangest feeling of fear came over me that this was not all that my body was going to show me that it could do.

At about seven o'clock I went next door to ask my neighbour Janet if I could borrow her childbirth book to revise breathing exercises just in case I was going to go into an early labour. I talked to Janet and her husband for a few minutes while they found the book and then I went home and read it through from cover to cover. I read the chapter about "backache labour" when the labour pain concentrated in the lower part of the mothers back but even after reading it I still did not think that I could possibly be in labour because it was not pain that I was feeling and because my baby was not due for at least another month. At about a quarter to nine I went to bed because I was desperately tired and after sleeping for about seven hours I woke up at about four o'clock in the morning. I quickly realized that the sensations were in my abdomen as well as my back and since they had also grown much stronger I realized that it had been them that had disturbed my sleep and woken me up. I timed the sensations for about twenty minutes and when I found that each sensation grew stronger until it reached a peak and then grew weaker like waves rolling up and down a beach I thought that they must be contractions and I felt sure that I must be in labour. I decided that the moment had come to mention it to my mother because later on when it was a more reasonable hour I would want to telephone the midwives and ask them to come.

6c. There was a light on in the kitchen that I could see reflected in my bedroom window which meant that my mother was up and about as she often was during the night and just that once I decided to get up as well to go and speak to her. When I opened the kitchen door I found that my mother only had the light on in the scullery that joined the kitchen by a doorless archway and so the light was dim in the kitchen. My mother had been doing her writing, burning her candles and reading her prayer books and she was out in the scullery making herself something to eat. My mother heard me open the door as I came into the kitchen and I told her very proudly that I did not want to start panic stations but I thought that my baby was on the way. As soon as I told my mother that, her whole attitude towards me changed and she became full of envy and hatred towards me, which I had not expected to happen since my mothers whole attitude towards me had changed to one of friendliness once I had started going out with Norman. My mother had been so nice to me especially while I had recently been doing so much of her housework and her sudden change back to her normal hatred frightened me.

My mother was in a temper of fury with me and she told me that what I had just said was "nonsense", she talked to me as if I was a silly child who did not know anything about having a baby and she told me that I was far too early to be having the baby. She asked me if I had seen a show and although I was not used to her asking me such personal questions I answered her that I had not. My

7c. Mother asked me if my waters had broken and again I had to tell her that it had not happened, so my mother got very bossy and told me that in that case I was definitely not in labour and if I was I would be rolling about on the floor screaming in agony. My mother said "Go back to bed you silly little girl" and as she spoke she emphasized the last few words as if she absolutely loathed the sight of me. Suddenly my mothers whole attitude towards me had changed completely and I felt puzzled as to why she had just called me 'a little girl' because ever since I had started going out with Norman my mother had been treating me like an adult which in all my life I had never expected her to do. As soon as I mentioned to my mother that I might be in labour she seemed to end the game of pretence that she had been playing for all those months and change back to her sadistic old self so quickly that it seemed as if she had been waiting and waiting for me to go into labour so that she could be more horrible to me than she had ever been before.

My mother told me to sit down on the settee in the kitchen while she went into the scullery to make me a drink of orange juice and after I had drunk it I went quietly back to bed as my mother told me to without making any more fuss. After I had been in bed for a few minutes my mother came bursting into my bedroom as if what I had said to her in the kitchen was still bothering her and she told me that she hoped I was not having any stupid ideas about calling doctors and midwives because my father and brother were asleep and since they went to work and school there was to be no ringing of door bells with people coming to the house to see me and disturbing

SC. them. My mother was in an awful temper with me and so I just looked at her kindly and did not reply to her incase what I said antagonized her any further. My mother seemed satisfied that I was quiet and had given up any idea of calling anyone to come and see me and after she had gone out of the room and closed my bedroom door I fell straight back to sleep.

I woke up late the next morning at about a quarter to nine but my mother was not annoyed about it. My father had gone to work and my brother had gone to school and later on after I had tidied up my mother made me go out with her to take the dogs for a walk. I could still feel the sensations coming across my abdomen and back and they were more frequent than every ten minutes but there was no pain at all and the sensations felt as if they had dulled so that I hardly felt them. I did not feel sleepy but I felt very quiet and I found myself doing everything my mother told me to without speaking at all. My mother made me walk slowly and we only took the dogs as far as the park and we did not actually go into the park, only as far as the gates, which was unusual as my mother usually insisted that the dogs must have a good run in the park. There was something so strange about what my mother was doing and about the way she kept looking at my face and smiling. It seemed as if my mother was acting something out by walking to the park with me but I could not think what it was and something about what my mother was doing frightened me in

9c. a most horrible way. When we got home my mother and sister started getting ready to go out for the day to an Animal Welfare Christmas Bazaar called the 'Animals Fair' which was held annually in London so that they could do some Christmas shopping. I helped them to get ready but they took so long deciding whether or not to go and how to get there and what they were going to wear that I began to feel annoyed inside myself towards them because I felt that if they did not go they had wasted all my time and precious energy that I had spent getting their packed lunch ready and laying their coats and bags out ready for them. At last they finally went just before lunch time at midday and after they finally closed the front door behind them the house seemed beautifully quiet.

My back ached at that time and so I made myself a hot marmite drink and filled a hot water bottle to put on my aching back and sat down on the settee in the kitchen. I had finished all the heavy housework the day before and had already tidied up and done the daily chores so I sat quietly and read the book about childbirth that I had borrowed the previous evening. At lunchtime my brother came home from school and he made himself some cheese rolls for his lunch. I did not tell my brother about the sensations in my back and abdomen as we never mentioned that sort of thing to each other but I really felt the need to have someone else in the house with me and so I asked my brother if he would stay home with me that afternoon. My brother said that he had an interesting lesson at school that afternoon and so he did not want to stay at home and miss it. I said that I understood and that it was only right that he went to school but I asked my brother if I could borrow his watch instead of him staying home with me. I knew that my brothers watch had a second hand on it and mine did not and I wanted to borrow his watch to time how

10c. long my sensations were lasting for. <sup>39</sup>  
My brother did not ask me why I wanted  
his watch and he just lent it to me. He  
was kindness itself and he even put it  
on my wrist next to my own watch for  
me. When my brother had gone back to  
school and the house was quiet again  
it felt quite comforting to be wearing  
his watch because the silver elastic  
watchstrap encircled my wrist so firmly  
that it felt as if someone was holding  
my hand and I suddenly realized to my  
amazement that I was lonely and I  
wished that I had some proper friends  
of my own to keep me company.

I sat in the kitchen reading and  
timed the sensations until the front  
doorbell rang early in the afternoon. I  
went to the front door and opened it to  
find one of our elderly neighbours, MRS. Scott,  
standing on our front doorstep. She was  
holding a Biggy Lizzy plant that she  
told me was for me which was most  
unexpected as she had never given me  
anything before in my life, but before  
she handed it over to me she said  
that she had got to tell me about it  
and she spoke the words as if she was  
reading her lines from the script of a  
play or something and it was really  
odd. She told me that she had started  
off with two small cuttings months  
and months before and that one had  
died in the summer. She said that she  
had grown them especially with me in  
mind and that today was the day  
that she had decided to give it to me.  
She showed me the plant and said  
that it was rather small and had  
not grown quite how it should have  
done but she told me that did not  
matter as she had still decided that  
I should have it. MRS. Scott remarked  
about how stormy the weather had  
become and how tired I looked and I must

110. have looked a bit sleepy because Mrs. Scott gave me a strange look, pressed the plant pot into my hands, pulled the front door shut even though I was still standing there and she went away which seemed strange because Mrs. Scott would normally have kept anyone talking for ages if she got the chance to.

I went back into the kitchen and I put the plant pot on the table. It was a very dull day and the weather had become quite windy as if a storm was brewing but in the kitchen it was warm quiet and cosy. I sat on the settee and timed the sensations across my back and abdomen since they had grown more frequent and were occurring at every five minutes and lasting for nearly two minutes each but there was still no pain at all. I took the childbirth book and to try them out I started to practise the breathing exercises that were suggested in it. There were three kinds of breathing levels, one for each of the three stages of labour and beginning with the first one I tried out all three. I relaxed and let my mind take my body through each level of breathing which I found so easy. As I finished the breathing exercise that was for the third stage of labour I found that the sensations were lasting for two minutes each with no break between them as contractions were supposed to in the third stage of labour. It felt as if I had taken my body through the three stages of labour in a matter of minutes by just using my mind and deep breathing but it seemed impossible and what I was feeling could not have been contractions because I could still feel no pain at all. When I tried the different breathing levels over again I found that I had complete control over

12c each sensation and could make it last as long as I wanted to or occur when I wanted it to or make it wait to happen, simply by using my mind and breathing at different levels since I seemed to have gained complete control over my body in my mind.

I thought about going to Lewisham Hospital to speak to someone about what was happening but I knew that the Ante-Natal Sister would only repeat what she had said to the other mothers about "testing pains" because I had no proper pain and my baby was nowhere near to being due. It was a long way to Lewisham Hospital and it seemed a silly thing to do to waste what precious energy I had in walking all the way to the Hospital when I knew exactly what the Sister would say to me. That afternoon was also the first proper rest that I had been able to take at home with my mother out of the house since I had left school seventeen months before. My mother was always making me work for her and only by working so hard had I managed to come to the agreement with my mother that she would let me have a short rest in the afternoons in the last few weeks before my baby was born. I was always so tired and my mother had only let me sit down and rest when I was too tired to carry on, so with my mother out of the house for the afternoon it seemed to me that it was the best time for me to start taking the rest that she had promised me. It was more than I could do to get up and walk all the way to Lewisham Hospital and

13c back for nothing on the first chance of a rest that I had found for myself for a long time and it was such luxurious bliss to sit down in the warm kitchen with nothing to do except read and rest by myself that I stayed there and put any ideas about going out of doors to walk for miles out of my mind.

I read for a long time and then I put the book down and I sat and looked at the warmth and friendliness of the kitchen. It was so very restful in the kitchen because the gas fire gave the room a warm glow and the clock sounded homely as it ticked away with a mind of its own, both of the dogs were peacefully asleep in their baskets and the room was slightly dim because it was stormy outside and I had not yet put the light on. From where I was sitting I could see straight out of the scullery window in front of me and I sat on the comfortable settee watching the seagulls circling around in the gusty wind above the school playing fields beyond the fence at the bottom of our garden. The seagulls were crying out loudly as they circled around and they sounded as if they were enjoying themselves in the bad weather. I watched them for a long time and the stormy weather outside made the kitchen feel even more warm, quiet, safe and homely to be sitting in.

At about four o'clock I got up to peel the potatoes ready for the evening meal because I was going to cook eggs, chips and baked beans for us all to eat. I felt tired when I stood up and as I moved about preparing the food I felt heavy and tired and I could feel my heart beating loudly and unsteadily in my chest. I decided to cook the food and then leave it in the oven on a very low light to keep warm

14c. which I would not normally have done but I knew that the food would be alright and I felt too tired to stand in the kitchen cooking it in the confusion that there would be when everyone arrived home. When the meal was ready I laid the table as beautifully as I normally did with a clean linen table cloth, cutlery and napkins but it seemed so far to reach across the table to lay the places on the far side of the table and I was so desperately tired that I did not know how I managed to stand there doing it.

The family arrived home a few at a time and my brother Cline and his friend Billy were the first to get home. I offered them the food but they were going out and had no time to eat so I thought to myself that I must remember to remove a place from the table but I was too tired to do it so I left it there. I wished that my brother would eat properly because he never seemed to sit down to eat a proper meal and it was such a shame because the food was hot, it was nourishing and it smelt delicious, and even if my brother was in a hurry the food was ready to serve onto the hot plates and there was plenty to offer to Billy as well but my brother was in too much of a hurry. My father arrived home next and he did not want to eat either which was not unusual even though we always offered him a full meal when ever we had ours. My father looked at me strangely and asked me if I was ill. I could not bear my father near me and even though I was never rude to him I

15c could not stand him near me and so I told him that I was alright so that he would go away from me. I knew that my father would make it his business to stand around in the kitchen oggling at me because I was pregnant if he thought that I was unwell or anything and so I told him that I was alright and thinking to himself that I was just the same as I usually was he went off upstairs to get himself ready for his Friday night Scout meeting and I soon heard the front door close behind him as he left the house.

My mother and my sister barged in next making a lot of noise and confusion and showing no respect for the fact that I had just made the kitchen look so tidy and ready for our evening meal with my last ounce of strength. They littered the place with their coats and bags full of Christmas presents that they had bought. The dogs got up to greet them and added to the confusion and as my mother opened the kitchen door and bent down to stroke the dogs I felt a strong sensation as if the baby was actually going to be born at that very moment and with sheer muscle control I held back from delivering the baby onto the kitchen floor. I would never want to give birth to my baby in front of my mother and sister and I realized that despite the fact that I still had no pain something was still happening and I wanted to be somewhere quiet and in proper medical care as quickly as possible. I wanted to telephone for the midwives to come or for me to get myself to Lewisham Hospital as soon as I could but I was afraid of the fuss that my mother would create. As I stood there I just refused to let my body expel the baby to be born and as

10c. I held the baby back by sheer muscle control in my abdomen I felt it slip right back inside me and slip to the left of my abdomen so that the baby was lying sideways across my abdomen. The baby had never moved before, not even to kick and it made me draw in my breath to feel it move so suddenly and as it turned sideways it felt as if the babys head pressed against something in the left lower part of my abdomen that was very painful and had troubled me for years and the pain from that was so excruciating that I almost bent over double.

My mother saw me and she took one look at me and told me that my face was absolutely grey and I was ready for her to fetch the doctor to me. I readily agreed to my mother getting a doctor because I had wanted that at four am that morning, over twelve hours before and now the position was urgent. My mother went off out to get the doctor but although Dr. Galvans surgery was only a few streets away and can be reached in a few minutes she was gone for ages while I waited and waited for her to come back. When my mother arrived back she said that she had lined up in Dr. Galvans surgery to see him, despite the fact that he had a receptionist and she needed a home visit, not for herself, but for me. My mother boasted that she had spent nearly an hour gossiping to Dr. Galvans receptionist who she knew very well until her turn came to go in to see Dr. Galvan. My mother had told Dr. Galvan that she thought I might be in labour and he had reassured her that it was probably just a false alarm. He had

17c. told her to go home and make me eat something, and he said that he would look in on me on his way home if he did not finish too late but he had told my mother to warn me that it was only 'a good will call' since it was obviously not medically necessary. My mother said that Dr. Galvan had thought it was very amusing that I was having a false alarm and he had joked with my mother that I would have plenty more false alarms before my time came with me panicking at every twinge and he had said that it was his job and my mothers to keep reassuring me.

As my mother talked about what Dr. Galvan had said I began to realize how very little Dr. Galvan knew me. He had been my doctor all my life but I had hardly ever seen him or spoken to him. It was my mother who had always done all the talking and I realized what a great gulf there was between the person that my mother spoke to him of, which was a nuisance and an incompetent fool, and the person that I really was. Dr. Galvan had no idea of how calm and capable I was nor of how much of the burden of my parents responsibility I had borne silently for years rather than let the family fall to pieces. I had never minded what people had thought of me before because I had always honoured my parents and let them say what they wanted to about me but at that moment I began to realize that those years of humble submission were going to affect whether or not Dr. Galvan chose to come and see me even though I needed to see him very urgently at that moment.

When my Mother came into the kitchen she noticed the Biggy Lizzy plant that I had moved off the table onto the mantelpiece and I told her that MRS. Scott had given it to me. My mother said that she had stopped to speak to MRS. Scott on her way out that morning but she did not say what she had said to her and I knew better than to ask

18C. because I knew that she would not tell me. My mother busied herself tidying up the kitchen and she started to complain that it was in a mess and ask me what on earth I had been doing all day not to have tidied up. I did not say anything but I felt a bit amused in a quiet sort of way that my mother and sister just could not see that the kitchen had been perfectly tidy and that they had made it in a mess in a matter of moments by just thoughtlessly littering their things about. It was only the things that my mother and sister had just laid down that my mother was picking up and complaining to me about, because everything else was still tidy.

My mother took the sandwiches that I had prepared for their packed lunch earlier, out of her bag and threw them out into the garden for the birds to eat the next day because there had been hot refreshments at the Animals Fair and so she had treated herself and Stella to a meal out and they had wasted the packed lunch. They had expected a hot meal to be ready when they came home but they had eaten so much while they were out that they were unable to even try the supper. My Mother opened the oven door and took the four wasted suppers and piled them onto one plate and told me to eat it for my meal. The food smelt delicious and I was ravenously hungry so I sat down on the settee with the huge plate on my lap and I ate the whole lot. I had never had so much good food put in front of me like that before and halfway through eating it my strength came back and I felt full of energy as if I found the courage to face anything.

All the time I was eating, my mother

19c. sat perched on a chair looking intently from my stomach to the clock and back again for a complete ten minutes without saying a word to me while she stared at me. I realized straight away that my mother was trying to catch sight of me having a contraction but I would not let her see that sort of thing because we had never been that familiar with each other and what was happening to me was my own private affair. The sensations were crossing my abdomen all the time like a record on a record player that had got stuck and my abdomen felt most uncomfortable because the baby was lying in a different position, so that it was getting quite difficult for me not to react to what was happening to me but I still would not let as much as a flicker of discomfort cross my face even for a moment and so my mother saw nothing.

Eventually my mother announced that I was definitely not in labour because she had been watching me carefully and since I had not felt anything at all in over ten minutes nothing was happening. She said that Dr. Galvan had asked her to watch me to see if there was any likelihood of a twinge of pain coming every ten minutes or so and since she could see that there was nothing at all she told me that I could forget any worries that I might have about being in labour. She spoke to me as if I had no idea of what to expect in labour but I just said nothing to her and carried on eating. I had timed the sensations myself and I was long past the stage of them coming every ten minutes but I did not want my mother even to see what was happening because I could not bear her near me, so I just said nothing and waited quietly for the doctor to come so that I could speak to him myself.

After a while my mother lowered her voice

20c. and spoke to me in a sickly sedgy sort of voice that completely revolted me as she came towards me and told me that Dr. Galvan had told her that she could put her hands on my abdomen to see if she could feel anything and she tried to coax me to let her do it in a way that sickened me. My mother had been after trying to get me to let her feel my abdomen to see if she could feel the baby kicking earlier in my pregnancy but I would never let her touch me. I had just laughed politely at her suggestions until she had quickly realized that I was not someone who would allow any one else to touch me at all and she had left me alone. No one except the doctors hands had touched me or felt anywhere near my unborn baby and once again I just laughed at my mother and said that of course she could not do that. My mother looked at me as if she hated the way that she could never have her own way with me and she looked at me with one of her looks that told me to wait and see what she was going to do to get even with me and then she went off and left me alone.

Dr. Galvan arrived just after six o'clock when his two hour surgery for Friday evening finished. He took me into my bedroom and listened to the babys heartbeat. He felt the babys position and the sensations in my abdomen and he was surprised to find how quickly they were coming. He said to me 'that's pretty strong isn't it?' and I nodded at him to say yes. I felt that I ought to tell him that it still did not hurt and that I was still not feeling any pain but I felt strangely passive and I could not seem to find the words in my head

21c to say anything with. Dr. Galvan said that he did not want to examine me further as he was going to leave that to the midwives but he said that the baby was on the way and it was early. He told me to telephone the midwives to come and he told me to do it straight away. He said that he was surprised that the contractions were coming so quickly and yet I was so quiet with them. He said that I must be in quite severe pain from the intensity of them but I told him that I could hardly feel them at all. Dr. Galvan seemed very thoughtful about it as if he did not know whether he should believe what I was saying because he could feel for himself how strongly my muscles were moving and then he told me that the midwives would bring some pain relief when they came and asked me if I was sure that I was alright until the midwives came because he would certainly consider giving me something himself. I assured Dr. Galvan that I was fine and he could see for himself that I was but he still seemed very surprised because he had never expected me to be able to stand any pain at all from what my mother had told him.

Dr. Galvan offered to telephone the midwives for me if I could not manage to do it myself but I was determined to remain active and capable so after thanking him I assured him that I could manage to do it. Dr. Galvan had hardly finished telling me to be sure to telephone the midwives straight away, when my mother opened the door without knocking and came straight in. Dr. Galvan did not look very pleased to see my mother because it was obvious that she had been listening at the door and my brother was also making his presence felt outside my bedroom window. When Dr. Galvan had

22c arrived my brother had gone round the side of the house leaving his friend Billy in our kitchen because they had just arrived back at our house and my brother was standing on the window sill outside my bedroom window trying to get the curtains parted with a stick that he had pushed through a gap at the top of the window so that he could look in and see Dr. Galvan examining me. Dr. Galvan and I both thought that it was a bit much that my family could not allow me any privacy at a time like that and Dr. Galvan was not pleased when my mother came in.

As soon as my mother had heard Dr. Galvan preparing to leave she had come straight into the room and she was full of her own importance wanting Dr. Galvan to talk to her and not to me. She started to apologize to Dr. Galvan that I had wasted his time but he gave her a hard furious stare and he interrupted her in his brief professional way and said to her 'No, no, she IS having it.' My mother looked at me furiously as if it was the last thing that she had expected for Dr. Galvan to take my part and even after he had told her that I was in labour she still had no intention of believing him. She just thought that I had somehow managed to fool him into believing me and I realized that my mother quite literally expected me to be 'rolling about on the floor screaming in agony' as she had said and she had no idea at all of what I was actually like as a person.

Dr. Galvan repeated what he had

23c said about getting a midwife to my mother and he told her that it must be done quickly. As Dr. Galvan went to leave he found that his hand was bleeding profusely. One of our dogs Tinker was vicious and he had bitten Dr Galvan as he walked in the front door and by the time Dr. Galvan was ready to go it was obvious that the dogs teeth had lacerated Dr. Galvans hand badly enough for him to need proper attention to it. Dr. Galvan told my mother that the dog needed to be taken to the vets but he was in a hurry to get home so he let the incident go and hurried away. After Dr. Galvan had gone my mother burst out laughing and was in stitches about Dr. Galvan having been bitten. My mother thoroughly praised the dog and made a fuss of him saying that she was going to find him 'doggie chocolate' for biting a nasty old doctor. My mother said that Dr. Galvan had probably taken himself off to give himself an anti-tetanus injection and then she laughed hysterically about that as well.

I felt so sorry for Dr. Galvan as he had been badly bitten and I knew from experience how much it must have hurt. I felt awful that it had happened while Dr. Galvan had been visiting the house on my account as well and I wondered how on earth I had come to be born into such a mad house as our home. When my mother found time to stop laughing she asked me if I had two pence for the telephone and when I said that I had she went off into the kitchen and left me to go off to the telephone box next to our local park. When I started out of doors the walk to the telephone box suddenly seemed a much longer way

24c than I had expected to be able to walk to and I began to regret not having taken up Dr. Galvans offer to telephone for me. It would normally have only taken me a few minutes to get to the telephone box if I walked quickly but just then it took me longer than that to get as far as next doors coping where I had to sit down to rest. I did not dare to go home and tell my mother that I could not make it to the telephone box because I knew that she did not really believe Dr. Galvan that I was in labour or that I needed proper medical attention and if I went back indoors my chance of getting a midwife would have been lost because my mother would say that midwives were a lot of non-sense and insist on seeing to me herself which I did not want at all. So I just sat on next doors coping in the dark until I felt able to carry on my way to the telephone box.

It was evening on the twenty third of November 1973 and it was dark and the air was cold. I did not feel cold in myself as I sat on next doors coping with their yellow and green privet hedge behind me. I felt quite warm perhaps even slightly hot, despite having no coat on and I was only aware that the air must be cold because when I breathed it in it hurt my lungs. It was not until someone told me afterwards that it was actually bitterly cold that evening that I realized that I should not have felt hot like that. The street was deserted except for parked cars and the lamp posts which

25c. were cheerfully alight making the street  
feel a safe place to be and as I sat  
there the whole of telegraph Hill felt  
terribly still and peaceful. Afterwards  
someone told me that it had been  
too cloudy that night to see the night  
sky properly but I sat on that coping  
for ages looking at the beautiful  
stars twinkling out in the night sky  
as if they were the most true and  
faithful friends that I had ever had.

I was too tired to get up and carry  
on and the longer I sat there the more  
tired I got and the less I wanted to move  
to get up. In my brain vague warnings  
were rushing around trying to remind  
me of my Great Grandfather sitting on  
a wall and getting colder and colder  
until he died, but the warnings did  
not seem to be able to activate my body  
as it needed just too much effort to  
do it. Our road was on part of a hill  
and was quite high up, and all at  
once like beautiful angels coming down  
from the night sky I found myself  
surrounded by the silvery white spirits  
of my Great Grandparents, my Grandfather,  
my Nan, some of my Great Aunts who  
had all died and my Great Uncle Arthur  
who had died on a good Friday. They  
were all the same people that I had  
known but they were all the same size,  
because my Great Grandmother was  
not abnormally small anymore and  
my Great Grandfather was not any  
taller than the others although they  
were all taller and more graceful than  
they had been in life. They were not old  
or ill anymore and while they had  
not become really youthful the best  
way to describe what they had become  
like was to say that they were the  
same people who had become even  
more beautiful than the nicest that  
they had ever been when I had known

26c them. They spoke to me in words that sounded like rounds of beautiful echoey music as they gently urged me to get up and carry on walking. My Great Grandmother especially impressed upon me that if there was one thing above all that I must remember it was that I must not stay on that wall getting colder and colder but I must get up and carry on walking. They were all so familiar because they were my relatives and I was so tired anyway that I was not afraid of them at all. They looked so beautiful and I was so fascinated by their huge wings that were gently and gracefully moving backwards and forwards as if in flight above and behind them that I just sat there looking at them. They looked so friendly and so lovely and as I looked at them I could see how much they loved me because they had known me but at the same time they seemed to know something more about me than I knew about myself and that was why they had come. They seemed to have a kind of confidence as if once they had died they had found out everything that anyone could know about this earth and because they belonged to God they had some superior knowledge that everything would definitely be alright in the end and that night they were having some share in making that possible. They kept telling me that good would triumph over evil but that I must remember that I had to get up and carry on, and when I finally forced my weary body to stand up they gently and silently faded back into heaven and I began to walk unsteadily up

27C the road again .

As I got further up the road I saw a light on in a neighbour's house and as it seemed such a long way to go to get to the telephone box and because I was half afraid that I might have the baby on the way to the telephone I decided to knock on the neighbour's door and ask if I could use her telephone. The neighbour whose door I knocked on was my mother's friend Mrs. Duffell and although she was a nice enough person in her own way she was a spiritualist medium and because she encouraged my mother in her strange ways she was really not someone who I wanted involved in what was happening that night. I only realized when it was too late that it was a mistake to have knocked on her door because once I had done it she became involved in what was going on and in order to have kept her out of it I should have tried to make it the rest of the way to the telephone box on my own.

Mrs. Duffell let me into her sitting room to use her telephone but she stayed beside me the whole time listening to my rather private conversation with the midwife and then she refused to take the money that I offered her to pay for the call. When she showed me out of her house after I had made the call she said goodbye to me in a very false and sickly sweet sort of way and she used my full name in a strange sort of way that sent a chill up my spine and really frightened me. I hoped I would not see her again for as long as possible but after I had left her house she put on her coat and followed behind me down the road back to my house. As soon as I got indoors she started ringing and barging loudly on our front door for my mother to let

28c. her in. I did not want her in the house at all and I did not like the way that I had only been talking to her a few minutes before but she had not asked me if I would like her to come back down to our house with me or to come down later on. She knew that I would not want her or any of the other neighbours in the house while I was having my baby and so she had just come down and asked my mother to let her in instead of asking me. Mrs. Duffell told my mother that she had come to help with my delivery as if she was saying that my body was my mother's property and that they were going to 'see to me' even though I would never have let them near me, and my mother eagerly let her in. My mother was full of importance at the events going on in her house and she seemed to think that the more guests that arrived the better because she loved a big audience and to be the centre of organizing it but for me her whole attitude and what she was doing was a terrible ordeal because there was just no privacy for me at all.

When my mother took Mrs. Duffell into the kitchen to make her a cup of tea I went straight out of doors again and knocked at our next door neighbour's house and asked if I could speak to Janet. I had not got anywhere to put my baby when he was born and so when Janet came to the door I asked her if I could borrow her carrycot because I was in labour and my new carrycot had not yet arrived in the post from Mothercare. Janet just could not believe that I was in labour but she looked at my face strangely and said that I looked very tired.

29c. Janet listened to me talking and then she smiled at me really sweetly and asked me very nicely, as if she was trying to make a joke of it, if I had been drinking. I was quite surprised when she said that because I did not ever drink at all and Janet looked very serious and thoughtful as she said that she knew I did not drink. She kept looking at my face and listening to the way I was talking but when she had made certain that Dr. Galvan had already been to see me and that the midwives were coming she told me that she would get her husband to get their carry cot down from the loft where they had put it when their son had outgrown it and that when they had got it ready she would knock on our front door with it, which I thanked her for.

My mother had opened the front door to see where I was and when I went indoors and told her about the carrycot she was furious with me. She said that the baby had got to go into an empty drawer the same as I had done when I was born, but I argued with her that I had been put in an empty drawer because my father had been too mean to buy me a cot and because he had not bothered to finish the cheaper one that he was making for me but that was not good enough for my baby. I told her that my baby was arriving unexpectedly early and my beautiful new carry cot, which would otherwise have arrived in good time, was still in the post. I said that under the circumstances a borrowed one filled with the new sheets and blankets that I had got for the baby was the next best thing that I could do and a cold hard drawer would not do. My mother was furious about it and I realized that because my ideas were not what my mother seemed to want with such determined desperation, I was making

30c. her more and more annoyed with me. my mother had not been like that while I was pregnant and it really hit me with shock, that she had been playing a real game of pretended niceness with me to stop me leaving home until it was to late to go and I had to have my baby in her house. I felt afraid of my mother and I realized that as I was getting more tired I was getting less able to speak up and defend myself and from the way my mother kept looking at my face it seemed as if that was exactly what my mother was waiting for and she was getting furious that I was still standing there arguing with her.

My mother walked off into the kitchen to join Mrs. Duffell in the kitchen and she invited Mrs. Duffell to stay the night. I could hear them talking loudly and excitedly together with no respect for my feelings and saying that before the night was out they were going to watch me screaming and help to deliver blood and gore as Mrs. Duffell said, and then she reassured my mother that she and my father were going to get their long awaited baby that they had tried to adopt from an unmarried mother before I was born, because Mrs. Duffells spiritualist circle had taken pity on my mothers story and after all she had been through she deserved a baby and the spiritualist circle had prayed for it for my parents. Mrs. Duffell and my mother were both pervertedly eager to watch me give birth and they had every intention of coming into the bedroom with me and I hoped with a hope

31c. near to panic that when the midwife arrived she would not let them near me as I felt sickened at their intrusion into my privacy.

The house seemed to be filling up with people because my brother and his friend were staying in so that they did not miss seeing anything that happened to me and my sister had hastily run down the road to fetch her friend Geraldine to watch what was going on. My mother was in the kitchen making tea for Mrs. Duffell and all the dogs were barking so that the house felt full of nosy and prying eyes and it was all noise and confusion. I went into my bedroom and closed the door on it all while I waited for the midwife to come and I wished that I had a lock on the door to keep my family out when the midwife arrived but I had not been allowed one even though I had asked for it. I was in some discomfort at that moment because of the way that the baby was lying across my abdomen and my body felt as if it did not know what to do to get the baby born now that it was in a different position. It felt as if my body was trying to start all over again with another labour but that my muscles seemed confused because they could not get the baby born because it should already have been born and they did not know what to do. I knelt down on my hands and knees and found the position very comfortable. I wished that the midwife would hurry up and come because I wanted someone with some sense to talk to and I wanted to ask her to send me to hospital, or anywhere else out of our house, so that I could get away from the noise and confusion. I needed to be somewhere quiet and peaceful where I could rest and talk to people with some sense. When I had tried to book a home confinement I had thought that my home would be quieter and more private than a hospital and I had expected my family to be polite and allow me some

32c. privacy when the time for the birth came.  
Everything had suddenly become so different from what I had expected and because my family had suddenly started to behave so awfully I wanted to get out of that house to somewhere quiet and private where people would behave professionally and not stare at me or treat me like a circusspectacle.

The front door bell rang suddenly and my mother ran quickly all the way down the hall to answer it. My mother brought the midwife along our hall to my bedroom and she kept apologizing profusely to her and saying that I had been 'so stupid and only just told her that I had been in labour all this time'. The midwife saw me because I had got up and gone and opened the bedroom door when I had heard the front door bell ring and she ushered me back into the bedroom very kindly and closed the door. My mother went to come into the room with us but she found the door closed in her face and I will never know if the midwife did it on purposed or not but from the wry smile she gave me when my mother was furious about being on the wrong side of the bedroom door I think she must have done. She had certainly taken one look at my mother and correctly guessed exactly what she was like and I was so grateful to the midwife for finding some privacy for me.

The midwife was tall, slim, black and highly efficient in her professional duties. She asked me if I had got the things ready for the delivery as if she was expecting me to say no but when I showed her that everything was all ready and packed onto the top of the wardrobe she was surprised and pleased. I got up to get the case full of things down for her but she insisted

330. on doing it for me. Apart from one young man who had got up and offered me his seat on a train months before when I was about three months pregnant the midwife was the only other person who had helped me in all those months and it seemed so strange for someone to be helping me because it was usually me who waited hand and foot on everyone else and who carried things around for them.

The Midwife opened the suitcase of things and she found that everything from the list of things that she had given me to get ready for the delivery was packed tightly into the suitcase and even the required number of buckets and bowls that had been on the list were waiting ready inside the wardrobe. Everything was new, clean packed in separate brown paper parcels and labelled. The midwife looked amazed and asked me if I had got all that ready and I said that I had and nodded happily at her that I had got everything so beautifully ready. I had spent hours baking enamel dishes in the oven to sterilize them and wrapping them in clean, ironed brown paper and labelling each individual item. The whole long list of items was complete and in perfect order with only one exception and that was a cracked old pudding basin which ironically after all the money that I had spent on new things turned out to be the one item that the midwife needed. My mother had given it to me when I had bought everything on the list of things to get except that one last basin and I did not have the money for it. I had said that it was no good because it was cracked but my mother had been so insistant that it was only for the midwives to put the placenta in after the delivery and that it went straight into the dustbin afterwards that she had told me not to keep making such a fuss and to wrap it up and put it in the suitcase.

34c. When the midwife asked me what the  
pudding basin was doing with the  
other things because it was cracked  
and I told her what my mother had said  
she laughed and asked me how many  
children my mother had given birth to.  
I said 'three' and the midwife laughed  
and said 'and she thinks a placenta  
would fit into THAT!' which had been  
exactly what I had thought and said  
to my mother. I had expected the placenta  
to be almost as big as the baby but  
my mother had been most insistant  
that a placenta was only a tiny little  
thing about as big as an apple. She  
had talked to me as if I was so stupid  
because I had never had a baby and  
did not know, but the midwife had  
just said that I was right and that  
was not the first time that I  
began to wonder if my mother knew  
anything about having a baby.

My mother had gone back into the  
kitchen to be with Mrs. Duffell and  
so the midwife took one of the new  
washing up bowls and went out to  
knock on the kitchen door to ask my  
mother for some hot water which my  
mother gave her. When the Midwife  
came back she washed her hands in  
the water, put on some surgical gloves  
and examined me. I waited for her  
to say something to me but she said  
nothing except that I would have  
to go into hospital and she did not  
say why. I nodded my head that I  
was willing to go into hospital and  
a look passed between the midwife  
and I as if she knew that I was so glad  
to go out of the house to get away  
from the noise and confusion. My  
mother, Mrs. Duffell and my sister  
had followed the midwife along from  
the kitchen when she had come back  
with the water and they had been

35c. listening at the door and arguing all the time that the midwife was examining me and the midwife and I just sat there for a moment listening to what they were arguing about out there. Mrs. Duffell was saying that the midwife had not taken much water to bathe the baby with and she was urging my mother to go into the room to see what she was doing. My mother was annoyed at having been left outside the door and she was saying loudly that she had a right to be inside the room and see what was going on if the midwife was delivering the baby. Mrs. Duffell kept urging my mother to go into the room because it was my mother's house and she could do what she wanted to in it and nobody could tell her that there was a room that she could not go into. Mrs. Duffell kept telling my mother to insist that she and my mother should both go and stand in the room to watch what was happening or they would miss it. Finally the midwife went to the door and opened it and my mother came straight into the room.

The midwife told my mother that I would have to go into hospital and although my mother was furious with me she could not argue with the midwife. My mother told the midwife that it was a shame because I was ready to have the baby and she wanted me to have it at home but the midwife ignored what she said and she told her to get an ambulance. The midwife told my mother to dial 999 and tell them that it was an urgent maternity case and as my mother went to go the midwife wrapped up the plastic gloves that she had used to examine me in a piece of blue paper towelling and she gave it to my mother and told her to put it into the dustbin on her way out. My mother went off and in the few minutes that it took her to dash to the nearest telephone and back because she missed anything, the midwife

36c. filled in some notes on my Ante - Natal Card and got a few things ready for me to take to the hospital with me. The only case available to pack anything in was the one with the delivery things in it and although it was far too big the midwife had to use it.

The midwife opened the case to take the things out and she had another look at all the things I had got ready for the delivery. She looked closely at the things for some few moments in silence as she picked up each of the neat little packages of cleanly wrapped items and read its label. She said that she was surprised that I had got all that lot ready because when she had given me the forms to sign to say that I had been warned about the dangers of a home confinement and still wanted my baby at home, she had thought that I was not being realistic or thinking that a hospital delivery would be safer for the baby. She had been really nasty to me at that time but now she had seen all the preparations that I had made her whole attitude towards me had changed because she could see that I cared very much about having a clean, safe delivery.

I had only wanted to have a home confinement because it would be more private at home with less people around me than in hospital and because no one would take my baby away from me at home. I had been told that if I went into hospital my baby would be taken away from me to the nursery for the first three nights because that happened to all the babies but I wanted to keep my baby with me so desperately that I was terrified of going into hospital over that. I had wanted to have my baby at home

37c. so that my baby could stay in its cot beside me the whole time and so that we would have time to get to know each other in the privacy of my own room. It was so very important to me to have time to spend together with my baby but it was equally important to me to have a safe delivery and I had prepared everything as carefully as I could and the room was spotlessly clean.

The midwife took the baby clothes out of the case and after she had looked at them very sadly she spoke to me very kindly and gently and told me not to take them with me to the hospital because I was not going to need them. She told me that if by any chance I did need them then my mother could fetch them in for me and because I could remember where it had said in the Ante-Natal booklet that when a baby was born in hospital the hospital provided the baby gowns for the baby to wear I just did not stop to think that she might mean anything else. The midwife looked at the Gold Star Harrington baby nappies which were the very best nappies that money could buy that I had got for my baby and she folded them away as if she was trying to put them out of my sight because she felt awful about the way that everything was so beautifully ready and I was not going to need them.

The midwife looked around for some things to put into the case for me but she was hard pressed to find anything for me. I had got everything I needed for the delivery and for the baby but since I had virtually no possessions at all there was so little for myself. The midwife packed what she could find and she noticed that I had spent my money on clean new things for the delivery and for my baby but not on silly fancy, frilly nightdresses for myself as if she was saying that I had been so sensible that it was such a shame that everything had

38c happened like this. I asked the midwife how long it would be before the baby would be born and she said to me 'It will all be over by midnight'. I thought that was very soon as I had expected at least twelve hours of strong pain as the childbirth books had all said.

A faint doubt crossed my mind as to why the midwife had rephrased the question and not mentioned the baby but I strongly reassured myself that she was just giving me an answer like that to stop me asking her a lot of questions that she must have to answer time and time again to parents and be fed up with. I suddenly felt that I did not want to ask anything more because I did not want to put myself into the category of people who did not know anything because if I had not been held back in school by the teachers I could have been in a professional position where I could have known as much as the midwife about what was happening to me and my pride kept me intelligently silent. My brain seemed to be making excuses for the way the midwife was saying things and it seemed to be coming up with its own sensible reasons for things rather than allow me to think that anything might be wrong. The midwife watched me for a while and then she picked up my notes again and added something to what she had already written and I later found out that she had written: "Mother very tense".

When the ambulance arrived in the street the ambulance man came loudly up the front path and rang heavily on the front door bell. My brother and sister opened the door to him and when he heard all the dogs barking he said 'Who's having puppies?' very merrily to

39c. my brother and sister. He came into my bedroom, smiled at me, picked up my suitcase and took my Ante Natal Card that the midwife gave him and waited for me to go with him. My mother came back into the room when the ambulance man arrived and she started pretending to be sweet and endearing towards me. I went to get up to go with the ambulance man but just then I felt a very strong wave of movement across my abdomen and so I sat still for a moment. It lasted a long time and because I sat there my mother impatiently bent down to me and spoke very loudly into my face saying "GET- UP- DEAR - YOU- ARE- GOING- IN- THE- AMBULANCE- NOW" as if I was a very deaf simpleton and she always had to shout simple instructions at me. I took no notice of her as I usually did and the ambulance man and the midwife made a face at each other behind my mothers back as if they would both have liked to have hit my mother because of the way that she was treating me. As soon as the contraction was over both the ambulance man and the midwife knew without me telling them because they could see my stomach muscles moving even beneath my thick dress. They ignored my mother and said 'alright' and 'better now' to me very encouragingly. I nodded to say yes and then got up and followed the ambulance man out to the waiting ambulance but my mother began to look alarmed because the ambulance man and midwife were being so nice to me. She had expected them to join her in talking down to me and when she saw that they were being so nice to me she did not like me going off out of the house with them. My mother started to argue with the midwife and she said to the midwife "she doesn't have to go you know, she can stay here you know and we can just call out a doctor at the last minute" but the midwife just looked at my mother coldly and said to her "This is

40c. the last minute and your daughter wants to go: my mother looked at me in disbelief as if she could not understand how it was that I could go off so willingly into hospital but I took no notice of her. Out in the hall my mother had previously lined my brother and sister up like a guard of honour to say good bye to me and something about the way she had done it made me think of the way she had hated her own brothers and sisters looking at her when she had come home from having 'scarlet fever' in Bedcley Mental hospital as a child as if what my mother kept doing was like something out of some crazy dream. The rest of the people who had come to our house were out in the hall looking at me as well and since I could not remove all those people I just closed my mind to the fact that they were all there and I ignored them as I walked straight past them all and out of the house which really alarmed my mother.

The Midwife wished me luck as I left the house and she came out to the ambulance with me. I climbed up the ambulance steps and sat on the right hand side of the ambulance where the ambulance man told me to sit while he put my suitcase into the ambulance with me, got out and folded up the steps and then closed the doors quickly before my mother could look into the ambulance. My mother had come out into the road with everybody else who had been in the house following behind her and when the ambulance man closed the doors of the ambulance without letting her see in before he went round to the front of the ambulance to get in next to his driver my mother started to get hysterical. She shouted at him 'Ere,

41c. that's my doorta you've got in there" as if she was mad that he had not let her look in because I was her property and since she had the right to see in, nobody had any right to close a door between us. My mother could see her last opportunity of keeping me at home was slipping away from her and she started to kick up a terrible fuss but the ambulance men ignored her and we just drove off. My brother told me later that my mother had been furious that the ambulance man had not let her look into the ambulance because she had wanted to see what I looked like in there and if they had made me lie down or not, and since nothing my mother did was out of any concern for my comfort I was glad that the ambulance man had not let her. My mother could not stand people looking after me and she did not like me being taken off into hospital. After we had gone my mother tried to start a conversation with the midwife and tell her how much she had done to look after me as a child and how she had painstakingly spent so long teaching me little things that I was so much slower than her other children to learn but the midwife would neither listen to my mother nor speak to her. My brother said later that they could all see the midwife clenching her teeth tightly to keep her lips sealed as she tried to keep her temper with my mother because she did not believe what my mother had said that I had only just told her that I might be in labour and she seemed to think that my mother had kept me from getting medical help until it was too late. The midwife stormed back into our house to collect her bag and as she left our house she slammed the front door loudly and then she slammed the gate after her and went off in her car. My brother said that my mother kept saying that now I had gone they would never let me come back to her once they had

42c got me into hospital and that they should all have gone to the hospital with me to have made their presence felt. Even though my mother had not actually seen into the ambulance my brother said that my mother spent a whole half an hour after I had gone, discussing how she could have got the whole family into the ambulance to come with me and where she would have sat them but I was only too thankful to have left them all behind and I desperately needed to be away from them all.

The ambulance man spoke to his driver, answered his radio, filled in a chart and then came and sat in the back of the ambulance with me. He had kept my Ante - Natal card with him and he studied it carefully and then he sat and studied me before he looked at the card again. I did not mind him watching me as he was so 'normal' and so different from my mother but I was suddenly aware that he was making sure that I did not see what was written on my Ante - Natal Card and I wondered what the midwife had written on it that he did not want me to see. The Card had been given to me at my first Ante Natal appointment and the nurse had said that the card was for my own reference and that I was to keep it with me all the time. At each of my Ante Natal appointments the Doctors and midwives had taken it away to write on it but they had always given it back to me and although they never seemed to write very much on it I had always read it and found out how I was from it but at that moment when I really needed to know what was going on I realized that nobody was going to let me see the card to read it. I felt an awful feeling that I could not

43c. explain come over me and I just could not ask about it. I just became totally obedient to what ever I was told to do because I felt that I had no say in anything and I had a twinge of doubt that something was wrong but I immediately reassured myself that everything was alright just as the medical profession had been doing to me for months.

The journey to Lewisham Hospital only took about ten minutes and the ambulance passed along familiar roads that I had walked along hundreds of times in the eighteen years that I had lived in Brockley. It was a beautiful night and although it was very bouncy in the back of the ambulance I felt warm and safe in there and not unduly anxious. I was glad to be going to the hospital without my family and I felt full of hope as if things were about to become alright in my life in a way that only having a baby could produce. My mother had told me so many times that 'WHEN I was grown up and WHEN I had a family of my own then things would be different for me and she would treat me differently' and since I was now eighteen years old and about to have a baby of my own it seemed to me as if the promised time that I had waited for as long as I could remember was only a little while away and I expected to be able to walk indoors with my new baby and be an acceptable person in my family's eyes. I knew that I would still have all the housework to do but I thought that I would not be treated like dirt any more. I thought that I would be a proper member of the family at last and even though I had not exactly planned to have a baby it did have its compensations because I thought that my family would realize that I had my own family now in my own baby. I was also glad of the new and more

44c interesting responsibility of bringing up a child that I was very well able to cope with and desperately needed as something to put my mind into since I had not made it to university, and I needed something alive to think about and plan for. Somehow doing all my family's housework did not seem so bad if I had some interest of my own in it all and my baby would be company for me. I thought of all the time my child and I could spend together and of all the things we could enjoy together and although I knew that it would be hard work to work to support us both I looked on it as being something worthwhile to work for and it gave me some incentive to do all the hard work that I had to do to keep the house nice. I also knew that my baby would be someone to love and for the first time I realized that my baby might one day return that love and love me too, which I had been so busy preparing all the things that the baby would need and want and like from me that I had never stopped to think of anything, even love, being returned.

I was so tired as I sat in the ambulance but I was also very happy and very excited about the baby that I could not wait for it to be born. The midwife had said that the baby would be born by midnight and I felt intensely thrilled at the thought that within a few hours I would hold my own bright eyed, beautifully wrapped newborn baby in my arms and I had absolutely no idea that everyone else knew that I would not. It was a moment of sublime ignorance as I sat there in that ambulance with my hopes so high about my baby when I just did

450 not think for a moment that both the mid-wife and the ambulance man knew that it was not going to be like that for me at all and yet they did not tell me. The memory of that evening is still crystal clear in my mind because I have never been able to forget a moment of it and I still shudder in horror every time I think of how I sat there thinking that everything was going to be so wonderful like a fool and yet no one would tactfully warn me that it was not going to be like that for me. I would rather have known the truth and it would have been much kinder if someone had gently told me what I did not realize.

Only two mild sensations crossed my abdomen while I was in the ambulance as the bouncing of the ambulance seemed to stop them and even though I gave no sign at all that they caused me to feel anything the ambulance man knew exactly how long they lasted because he was watching my stomach and even though I had a thick loose dress on he could still see my muscles contract and relax across my abdomen. The ambulance man told me that my contractions would be a lot stronger and last a lot longer later on in my labour and even though I had still not come to terms with thinking of the sensations that I was feeling as being contractions yet because there was no pain, I vaguely realized that the ambulance man did not realize that what I could feel had slowed right down as if it might even stop, nor did he realize how much I had already been through, how tired I was or how well I could control pain without as much as a flicker of discomfort crossing my face. I dismissed the idea of explaining it all to him because I knew that when I got to the hospital the doctors would see the

46c. situation for themselves straight away and I did not want to say much to the ambulance man because talking was beginning to be too much of an effort and I wanted to be serenely quiet. I wanted to concentrate on my own thoughts which could race on so much easier than spoken words and I wanted to fill my mind with silent prayers which I loved to do.

It was warm in the ambulance and I kept looking at the red blankets that made the ambulance look so bright and warm and cosy inside. It was dark outside and as we passed Hilly Fields Park I realized that I had never seen the trees look so still and peaceful in the quiet dark park. We passed Ladywell Police Station and as we came to the traffic lights that took us into Lewisham High Street and round to Lewisham Hospital, the traffic lights were red and the driver quickly sounded his siren so that we could go straight through the lights instead of waiting for them to change. It was fairly busy on the main roads around there and cars stopped all over the place and pulled over to let us through and I have never known such a feeling of warmth that came through to me, from the concern that those drivers showed by their action. Not one of those drivers knew who I was and not one of them could even see me sitting inside that ambulance but it was enough for them to hear that siren and know that there was someone in trouble inside that ambulance and they reacted to it by doing what they knew was the right thing. However

47c. fast they were trying to move along their own way to get to where ever they were each going to lost its importance for a moment when they heard that siren. Each one of them pulled over as quickly as they could and stayed still for a moment to let someone less fortunate than themselves pass in front of them and from that moment to this I have never ever heard the siren of an ambulance fire engine or police car without remembering what it was like to be inside that ambulance that night and the pausing in what ever I was doing to say a prayer for the people in trouble, for the people going to put themselves in danger to help them and for each and every driver or person who stops to let that ambulance, fire engine or Police car pass in front of them in order to help someone less fortunate than themselves. That night those drivers made me realize just how many good and decent people there are in this world and today it makes me realize that even in this busy world of modern machines we still get the chance to stand still in the quiet cool evening of Eden and explain ourselves to God by our actions even if we can not always see the power that exists in the little bit of good that we have done at the time.

The ambulance taking me to Newisham Hospital shot through the traffic lights as if they had a heart case on board and at first I thought it was a bit naughty of them to have used the siren when they could have waited for the lights to change and I thought that they had done it because they were used to having their own right of way on the road. The two ambulancemen made a joke to me about having to use the siren to make me laugh about it and I laughed good naturedly with them but then I began to realize that although the ambulancemen were laughing they could not hide the serious look in their

48c. eyes that they seemed to be trying not to let me see and we were also going faster than we had been. It seemed as if the ambulancemen were laughing and joking to keep me reassured but that they suddenly wanted to get me into hospital as soon as they could. I knew that both the ambulancemen thought that it would be ages before the baby would be born and it seemed as if it was me that they did not like the look of. The ambulanceman who was in the back of the ambulance with me kept looking at my face and even the driver kept looking back in his mirror to keep an eye to see that everything was alright. They both seemed to be listening in horror to the sound of my breathing which had suddenly begun to sound as if I had just finished running a marathon race in a way that was nothing to do with having the baby. When I breathed in deeply it hurt at the bottom of my lungs and even despite the noise of the ambulance engine I could not seem to breathe quietly enough to hide it. I felt embarrassed that they were concerned about it because I often breathed like that and even before we had got to the hospital it had stopped and I could breathe normally.

Within moments we were driving into the grounds of Lewisham Hospital and as we passed under the brick archway at the entrance I saw the huge red neon lights that spelt out Lewisham Hospital and the thought 'red for danger' crossed my mind but I pushed that silly thought out of my mind. By the time the ambulance stopped outside the casualty department I felt and looked much better and I could breathe easily again.

9c. The ambulance driver got out and opened the back doors of the ambulance and the other ambulanceman who had been sitting opposite me got out of the ambulance by jumping down into the road when his friend had opened the doors. He lifted my suitcase out and I went and stood by the doors to wait while the ambulancemen put the steps down. Then the strangest thing happened because the ambulanceman shouted at me loudly and desperately "DON'T JUMP! WAIT FOR THE STEPS!" as if he could not help himself saying it. Even the ambulance driver looked at his friend as if he was surprised at him that he had treated me so harshly because I had made no attempt to jump at all and I was standing there in a most ladylike manner waiting for the steps to be put down and for them to offer me a hand to help me down. The ambulanceman still seemed concerned and he spoke to me more gently but as if he could not help what he was saying as he repeated the words "Don't Jump, wait for the steps." I looked at him strangely and he seemed embarrassed because he knew that he had no need to have said that but I understood that he could not help what he had said. It was as if it was not him that was speaking and as if something was speaking through him and it was really strange. I got out of the ambulance and as I waited on the path for a moment I realized what a very strange night it was. There was just something about the night that was there in the air and it was strange and good and exciting.

I walked into the casualty with the ambulancemen and the driver fetched a wheelchair for me which I felt I did not need because I was now walking easily but I accepted it with thanks to be polite because the ambulancemen seemed so kind and I did not want to offend them. At the

50c. reception window the receptionist asked me my name, address and religion which I told her and then she asked me for a next of kin which I hesitated to give her. I knew what my family were like and I did not want their names put down to give them any chance of making decisions about me or my baby. I quickly thought about giving my Aunt Marions name and address because she was very knowledgeable and diplomatic and since she looked at both sides of a question before making a decision I knew that if I became in a position to need a next of kin I would have liked her to take charge in preference to my parents. I knew that I could trust her at that time which I could not do with my parents and I just knew that if my parents were called to the hospital in an emergency they would not have wanted to do anything more than take the baby home with them and if it had been a question of keeping me on a respirator or turning it off I knew that my parents would tell the doctor to see that I did not suffer any more and turn it off because they hated me. I was just about to give my Aunt Marions name and address when the receptionist asked me sternly if I lived with my parents, and when I said yes she put 'parents' straight down and 'same address' saying to me that she did not want any 'fancy nonsense' from me. I did not think that I would need a next of kin as I felt perfectly alright and so I just let the matter go without making a fuss to be co-operative with the hospital staff.

The ambulance men wheeled me straight past the waiting area to the casualty treatment area where they parked the wheelchair that I was