

151c. going on but I could not speak to tell them that I did not want anyone to know my business and that even if they could not allow me any privacy on the labour ward they did not have to telephone the B.B.C. and let the whole country know what was happening to me. I started to panic about it and then everything went black again.

The next time I came to my senses I was lying on my left side feeling clean and comfortable. Someone had put me in the recovery position which I recognized from my first aid lessons at school years before and who ever had done it had done it properly and so I could breathe easily. The room was still and quiet and I was surrounded by machines that were all switched off, one of which I now know to be a short wave diathermy machine because I saw the distinctive large black heat plates positioned towards my back. The Houseman was standing in front of me on the left of the delivery table and he seemed to be standing there defiantly as if he was determined not to leave his patient even if he was told to and despite the fact that everyone else, except one pupil midwife, had gone off out of the room again. The pupil midwife was standing behind me on the right hand side of the delivery table and she was putting folded pieces of white linen (possibly pillow cases) that she had warmed on the radiator behind her, onto my back where the lower part of my spine ached with an agonizing pain but it did not appear to be bleeding or anything. The Houseman was staring ahead of him and looking into the darkness outside the window towards the other wards. I was in agony because the lower part of my back ached so much and I said to the Houseman "My back aches so much". He said "It's only the

152c. baby being born, my dear" and he spoke quite absent mindedly as he stood looking out of the window. I said to him "yes, I know, but if only I could have a hot water bottle on my back then I would not feel a thing" because I felt that a nice bit of heat from a hot water bottle was all that I had needed in the first place and I deeply regretted having accepted the Pethidine injection that they had given me. When I spoke for the second time the houseman suddenly realized that it was me that had spoken and he quickly looked at me. He seemed most thankful that I had regained consciousness and that I had answered him in a clear sentence. The Houseman was very kind and he seemed eager to help me in any way that he could. I looked at him standing beside me looking very masculine and protective towards me and I felt that his presence and kindness made up for me having no kind and understanding husband with me to hold my hand, and with the houseman standing there I felt that at least someone had stood by me even if he was only standing there for medical reasons. I wished that I had been conscious the whole time so that I could have talked to him and have asked him questions about how my labour was progressing but I was so tired that I could not make the effort to speak again.

The Houseman said to the pupil midwife "where can we get a hot water bottle from? Geriatrics?" as he would have sent for one if it would have helped me but the pupil midwife replied coldly that hot water bottles were not allowed. It was a hospital rule that hot water bottles were not allowed, even

153c. to ease pain, in case the patient got scalded which in most situations was a sensible thing to say but I felt that I should have been allowed that kind of pain relief if that was what I needed because I could have managed right through my labour with heat for pain relief and even if I had got scalded a bad scald, which probably would not have happened, would only have damaged my skin and would have only taken months or weeks to heal whereas the epidural they gave me, which was approved of by the hospital, tampered with my spine and caused permanent damage which was far more serious. The Pupil Midwife was so hard in the way she spoke, and she said to the houseman "Besides its nearly all over", and the Houseman looked at her with pity as if he could not understand how she could be so hard hearted. The Pupil Midwife took two folded pieces of linen off the radiator behind her and put them on my back where it ached so much. I could feel the warmth from them where they had been warming on the radiator but they were not as warm as a very hot hotwater bottle would have been and so the folded pieces of warm cloth were useless against the excruciating pain that I was in. I knew that the Pupil midwife was trying to help me and so I said thank you to her and told her that it was better but of course it was not better at all because it was not as hot as the intensity of the pain.

I wondered why I was still not being asked to push if my labour was nearly over, and I looked at the clock and found that I could tell the time again because I could see that it was nearly five past eleven. A lot of people were about in the corridor and a

154c. young woman doctor in a white coat arrived at the doorway leisurely pulling an incubator along. She announced herself to the Houseman as "Paediatrics" using only the one word to announce herself. She lounged against the wide open doorway and when she saw me looking across to see her she gave me a disgusted look and she turned her head away from me to snub me as if she would not lower herself to speak to me. She looked well made up with make-up and she looked a bit 'bitchy' but I still could not understand why she seemed to dislike me so intensely. The Houseman turned round to speak to her and he was very friendly towards her. He said to her "Come to take the baby away?" and as I heard him say that the room swam in front of my eyes and then everything went black again. I think the Houseman thought I was slipping back into unconsciousness as he looked at me when the room seemed to start swimming in front of my eyes, but I felt as if I was fainting from shock even though I was lying down because all the fears of my childhood were realized in his one casual remark to the lady paediatrician.

About five minutes later by the clock I came to my senses again feeling very ill and finding it very hard to think. The Registrar and a lot of other Doctors and nurses and sisters had come into the room and the Registrar asked the Pupil midwife if I was ready? and she said yes. The Registrar told her that she should have

155c. come in to watch the television with them all but she was not very friendly towards him and she just said nothing to him. She was Black and the Registrar told her cheerfully for a joke that she would be pleased to know that Miss Black South Africa had won the Miss World Contest that they had been watching earlier and that it was one up for Black Apartheid, but although she smiled towards him she was still not very pleased about having been left to look after me. The Registrar had a sort of Australian accent and I was asked by Psychiatrists if it was a white South African accent, but I did not know. One of the Doctors quickly told the nurse that Miss. Finland had won it and he looked at the Registrar as if he thought he should not make jokes to a Black nurse like that because it was unkind when it was not true but she smiled about it.

At the same time I found a very young and inexperienced woman in a white coat (who I thought was only a technician because she was not with the other Doctors and they did not seem to know her and she did not have their experience) standing on my left and trying to fix the needle of a drip into the vein of my left arm where it bent on the inside of my arm at my elbow joint. The Houseman flew at her and asked her what on earth she was doing. He told her to be more careful and he said furiously that enough had gone wrong already. He checked some papers, possibly my notes but the papers that he looked at were not in the same place as my notes had been, and he told the woman furiously that the drip had been written down as having been put up ages ago. He said that the birth was imminent and that as far as he was concerned it was too late to start putting it up now because as soon as the baby was born I could eat and drink anyway. The woman ignored the

156c. Doctor and told him that the Sister had told her to be putting it up and she carried on putting the drip up in the midst of a furious row that was going on between the Doctors in the room over everything that had happened, and at one time the woman turned to them and indicated to them the fact that I was wide awake and she said that: "She's listening to all this you know!" They quietened down a bit but the Registrar told them that it was alright because I could not understand and I saw the Houseman look at him as if he was getting alarmed about it all. At that moment I distinctly got the impression that the Houseman genuinely thought that the Registrar was mistaken about which patient he thought I was. The woman who was trying to put the drip up gave up with the higher vein after several attempts and started trying to get the same needle into the vein above my wrist. She started taking my brothers watch off my wrist, which was the only watch on my arm then, and I said to her "That's my brothers watch" because I was a bit worried about anybody taking it away from me but I did not mean any offence in what I said. The woman had been about to give the watch to one of the nurses who was beside her and she was furious with me when I spoke. She sounded as if she was still smarting from just having been told off by the Houseman and she was really nasty to me. She said "Its alright I'm not going to pinch it. Here have it you spoilt little madam!" and then she roughly snatched my other wrist and put it on there. The Houseman saw what she did and he glared at her but he held his temper and did not say anything to her even though it was obvious that he was getting annoyed

157c. with the whole situation and that he thought that things had gone too far out of control.

When the woman put the needle into my vein I was watching intently because even though I was still sleepy I was most interested. She was annoyed that I was watching her and she told me to look the other way so that I did not see what she was doing. Although I did not like people touching me I was no coward when I was actually having anything done to me and I had a very strong pain threshold indeed. I was also very interested in medicine and it would have taken my mind off things for them to have let me watch what they were doing. Even though I had some difficulty in speaking I tried to explain to the woman that I was interested and that I had wanted to be a Doctor at one time myself. The woman really turned on me as if I had insulted her personally and she said to me really spitefully "You, a DOCTOR!" as if she hated me. I said yes very politely and then I told her that I had been to the Haberdashers Askes Girls Grammer School but I had failed my exams; so that she would understand just how much I knew. All the Doctors in the room had stopped to listen to me and the woman who was putting up the drip looked at them as if she was asking them if that could be true because that was not what they had told her. The Houseman almost shouted at them all, "It's her voice, listen to it, I've told you before we've got the wrong patient" The other doctors did not say anything but they kept looking at me as if they were trying to recognize my face. The Registrar seemed as if he hated me for some reason and he told them all nastily that it was 'her alright' and when the other Doctors were slow to show any sign of agreeing with him he just laughed and broke the awkward silence by saying "Don't tell me we've got two of them" as if it was still not going to change the way that they

158c had treated me. The other doctors checked through my notes and although they were puzzled about it they came to the conclusion that I was still the patient who they had thought I was. The woman fixing up the drip carried on doing it once they told her that I was the right patient for it and then a nurse bandaged my arm onto a black plastic board. I looked up and read the 'Dextrose Saline' Label on the transparent bag of clear fluid and I thought to myself 'that's sugar and salt' and I looked to see that there were no air bubbles in the tube going from the bag to my arm and there were not.

I must have closed my eyes again and the next time I opened them a few moments later I found a nurse on my left and a sister on my right trying to sit me up ready for the delivery. Even though I had been in labour for a long time I still felt that it seemed too soon for the baby to be born and I had a strange sort of feeling that my body was still set for a long labour of two more days and that if the doctors had not interfered and speeded everything up by breaking my waters then my labour would not have been over until Sunday morning after I had given birth to a baby boy. I also felt as if I would have been more ready for the delivery if I had been allowed to remain fully conscious throughout my labour and if I had been allowed to know exactly what was going on all the time. I also needed someone to talk to me at length and in detail about what had happened to me when my breathing had stopped. It had been a frightening experience to me but it seemed much more as if everyone was trying to stop me knowing or finding out what had happened at all and that no

159c. one was going to talk about it at all. All the childbirth books that I had read had given me more information than the Ante-Natal class talks would have done but none of them had covered anything about what had gone so terribly wrong to me, any more than the Ante - Natal class talks would have done. There were so many extra machines around me that I would have said belonged in an operating theatre rather than a delivery room and I needed someone to tell me explicitly what all those machines were each for and exactly what was happening to me. I was so aware that so much was going on but I was too exhausted to ask what I wanted to know and it made not knowing what was going on even more difficult to bear. It gave me an awful feeling of suffering to realize that no one would tell me anything and that because I could not talk to them no one would tell me anything that I did not ask.

My head felt peculiar as well. The moment when my breathing had stopped was scarred across my mind like an ugly black ravine but there were also other strange dark clouds in my mind that should have held the memories that led up to the birth of my child but that instead held frightening memories of knowing only pain and darkness, and of fighting the darkness. Even when I had been able to hear what was going on in the room I had still not been able to see at times and I felt that no one could ever give me a detailed enough account to help me piece together what had happened to me and to give me an entirely complete account of the events that led up to the birth of my child. I wanted to know so many details of everything that had gone on in the room and although it was nothing less than I would have remembered myself if I had been awake and had seen it all happening, I did not realize that no one could ever

160c. give me such a detailed account because even if they had been willing to they would probably never have seen all the tiny details that I would have noticed and remembered. It was so terribly important for me to piece together every single moment of the time that I had been unconscious and for me to know every detail of what had happened to me just so that I could get myself together again properly.

Having a baby was the most important thing that could ever happen to me in my life or to any other woman and it would hold an even more precious place in my memory than my wedding day if I had ever had one. If it was meant solemnly, a wedding was a most beautiful thing because it was a simple and binding oath that solemnly joined two lives together for life, but even that was only a promise of things to come because having a baby was actually taking part in creating new life and having my baby was something that I should remember for the rest of my life. I felt as if the complete memory of having my baby had been stolen from me in just the same way as if someone had torn up half the photographs of my wedding day, if I had ever had any, and that was something that my pride could not accept. I had a tremendous sense of being a link in a long chain of people who were my ancestors right back to the beginning of time and as if I was in the position of pushing the next link into its place and of pushing myself back into second place. Not being fully conscious during labour and not being able to work to deliver my child was setting difficulties into, and leaving a weakness in, the clasp between the latest two

161c. links in that historic chain, one of which was me and the other of whom was my baby.

I felt that if I had been fully conscious all the time and had physically worked with each pain to deliver the baby then I would be mentally as well as physically prepared for the birth. Somehow my mind and my body had been working at two different rates and so I was just not ready to give birth. I could not adjust my mind around the times when my mind had known only darkness and when things had progressed around me with the labour ward staff doing things with me and yet leaving 'me' out of it. I felt as if I needed my body to stay dormant for exactly the same amount of time that my mind had been switched off for my mind to catch up with my body's progress and to adjust itself before anything else happened to me. With the delivery of the baby about to happen there was no time for that because if I waited and slept as I needed to then I would miss the baby's birth and that would be many times worse.

My head seemed to feel really peculiar but it seemed much more than an ordinary headache or anything that I had ever had before. It was a peculiar feeling in my head that made my memory feel strange as if all through my life, and before, I had always had a continuous memory of everything that had ever happened to me and suddenly there was a great jagged split across it where my breathing had stopped and that time seemed longer than my whole life time put together. It felt awful and the times of struggling against the darkness seemed even worse. There had never been a time when all my senses had not all been fully active together and there had never been a time when I had not been fully alert to everything that was going on around me as

162c. even when I was asleep I could become fully awake at the slightest noise in the room and know what was going on, and that ability was terribly important to me. Even if I had no power to stop people doing things to me that I did not want them to do I still saw everything that was done to me and I never forgot it, and somehow despite everything that I had been through I had somehow kept enough faith in myself, like the last remnants of my pride, simply because I knew what had happened to me. Even if the truth was a very different story from what my parents told other people I still kept enough faith in myself that enabled me to carry on simply because I knew that it was me who knew the truth because it had happened to me and I had seen it and not forgotten it. My memories were most painful but I still clung to them even if it hurt me to remember what had happened. Suddenly I found myself in a situation where things had been done to me against my will but since I had not been able to see what was going on this time and because I did not have a complete memory of what had happened to me it was more than my mind could take.

I had experienced losing charge of my ability to direct what people could or could not do to me or around me right before the birth of my baby when I felt most vulnerable and it was almost too much to bear. I felt that I should have had the right to be fully conscious the whole time of my labour and to work to control every one of my labour pains properly myself. It seemed to me that the labour ward staff had taken one look at me and had thought that as a young unmarried mother I would just not be able to cope with the pain and they had given me a vast excess of drugs which had only

163c. made things worse for me because it was actually being young and being used to coping alone that had made my body put up such a fight against the drug because it wanted to cope by itself. I also felt that the labour ward staff had deliberately given me so many drugs in order to make things easier for themselves instead of trying to make things easier for me simply because they had wanted the labour ward to be kept quiet while they watched the Miss. World Contest on the television in the fathers waiting room because they could not go to the party that was going on in the hospital.

Normally if I had arrived on the labour ward presenting a difficult delivery then it would have been understandable if the hospital had not had enough staff to deal with me or insufficient equipment to help me or too many patients all needing attention but since I had turned up when the labour ward was fully staffed, there was only one other patient on the ward and the staff had more machinery and drugs than they should ever have used on me, it was inexcusable that I had not had their undivided and best professional attention. Instead it had been my misfortune to turn up at the hospital when there was some kind of party going on that evening. Anybody who was 'anybody' had been invited to it and those who were not were left on duty. Some of the staff would have been on duty anyway but from what I could gather they had decided to take over the television room where fathers usually waited and have a little party of their own in there while they watched the Miss. World Contest on the television in there. There were some doctors not even connected with the labour ward in there who would normally have been in the doctors rest room and it was them who had telephoned into the Uri Geller

164c. programme. The Houseman had meant what he had said earlier when he had told me to have a 'good long sleep' because they had wanted the labour ward to stay quiet while they enjoyed themselves and I had been left alone and heavily drugged at a time when the labour ward staff should have been helping me to breathe properly during my labour instead. I felt as if what had happened to me had wrecked my whole body and mind and it was a horrible feeling to be in such a terrible physical state just because my self-control had been taken away from me by people who had thought that they had known better than me and who had thought that they could do what they liked with me and my baby.

I felt as if I had just been through the most peculiar reaction to the Pethidine injection that I had been given and I felt so full of despair because it had been so unnecessary because I could have controlled the pain myself. Labour was hard work and painful and my whole life had given me the mental stamina that I had needed to be able to cope with it. I had wanted to be able to breathe with each pain and I felt as if I had been robbed of my dignity because the right to do that had been taken away from me. Even though I had felt every pain strongly through the darkness of unconsciousness it was not the same thing as if my mind and body had been consciously working together to experience each pain and deliver the baby and somehow if I had either been fully conscious or if I

165c. had been fully unconscious under an anaesthetic for a Caesarean Section then things would have been different but what I had experienced was neither one thing nor the other and I felt as if what I had been through had devastated my whole mind.

I also felt a failure because I had not controlled my own labour in my own way and it had been actually feeling every pain and knowing that I had been robbed of the chance to do anything about it that had been so harmful. As each pain had roused me to consciousness too late for me to be able to do anything about it and breathe to control it, I had felt as if each pain was mocking my useless effort to control it and telling me that I was a failure at being a mother. Labour was not only a process which would bring my child into the world, it was a process which would finally shape me into being a mother, and I felt that if I had failed at staying in control of my labour then I was no good at being a mother and that I had failed my own child even before it was born. Although I did not realize it at the time it was actually then in the time immediately before the birth that the post natal depression that I suffered afterwards actually set in. I was not someone who ever let depression affect me even though I had lived through some very depressing circumstances and in just the same way I had always had the upper hand over pain and had never given in to it. What I had been through during my labour had made me realize that I had just lost the fight against pain because my own self defence against pain had been taken away from me in a way that I had never ever expected to happen in my whole life, and at the same time I had been completely defeated in my fight against any depression even before it set in because pain and depression were too closely linked

166c and I was used to fighting both with the same piece of self defence.

Even though I felt ashamed to face my baby when it was born because I had failed at the first hurdle of being a mother and failed my child even before it was born, it was the negative attitude of the labour ward staff that had done the most damage to us. It was too obvious that they did not like difficult deliveries but they did not have to dislike me and my baby as well. It seemed as if they kept saying that I was "too young", "too small for my dates" the baby was the "wrong" way round and that everything had gone "irretrievably wrong". The labour ward staff seemed as if they had to blame somebody for it all and as it was me who was having the baby I seemed to be the one who got the rough end of their opinions and who got blamed for everything that was wrong. Nothing was actually quite as bad as their attitude towards me because what I needed was some positive encouragement to get me over any difficulties that I was going to go through and actually if the attitude of the labour ward staff had been more positive altogether then perhaps not so much would have gone wrong anyway.

Everyone, especially in the ante natal clinic, seemed to have had the attitude that if anything went wrong then it was quite unnecessary and it was entirely my own fault because they had actually offered me an abortion and I had not accepted it. Everyone at the clinic had kept telling me that I was lucky to have been offered an abortion because lots of girls wanted

167c. abortions and they did not get them but I could not understand how they could have said that to me because I had never even asked about having an abortion and there had never ever been any question of me even wanting one. It had been the doctors themselves who had been so insistant that I should have an abortion even though when I asked them 'why' they were suggesting it they would never ever answer me with any reason at all. When I refused an abortion I was completely shunned by everyone who saw me in the clinic including the nurses who treated me as if I was irresponsible or something and as if everything that went wrong after that was my own fault and not theirs, and they carried on treating me the same way even after it was too late for me to have an abortion. When I had pointed out to one of the midwives that I had come to an Ante-Natal Clinic and not an abortion clinic and that it was too late for an abortion, she had just replied that it was never too late for me to have an abortion because the doctors would perform a very late abortion on me, even right up to the last moment, in order to get rid of the baby that I was expecting, but when I asked her why everyone was so insistant that I should have an abortion her only reply was that I must ask myself the answer to that question. There was no answer because I did not know why and I was certainly not having an abortion especially when there was no reason for it. The ante-natal clinic staff had made up their own minds about what they thought best and I felt afraid of their attitude towards my baby and I. They should have let me make my own decision about what was best and when I had made my decision they should have abided by what it was that I wanted.

168c. I knew myself well enough to know ~~that~~
that I could live with the consequences
of what happened to me and my baby
if I did not have an abortion much
easier than I could have lived with my
conscience if I had accepted an abortion.
I knew myself inside out and I knew
that if I had let them give me an
abortion it would have played on my
conscience for a long, long time
afterwards and that my feelings
of doubt about it would have got
worse and not better. I was someone
who would have eventually quietly
committed suicide - A life for a life -
even if it was my own that I took
simply because I was someone who
never forgot or forgave anything
and I could never have forgotten that
I had taken a child's life or have
forgiven myself for it.

Even if my baby had been handicapped
I did not even think it was wrong to
bring a handicapped child into the
world. I thought it was wrong to
plan to have a child if it was known
before conception that there was any
possibility at all that the child
could suffer in any way because
that was the kindest thing to do,
but once a life had begun I would
never end it. I believed that all handi-
caps were curable and that the
cures for the things that were wrong
only had to be found. As far as I saw
it I thought that if people aborted
handicapped babies then the solution
to their handicaps would never be
found because people only search
for something when there is a need for
it because it is an instinct of human
nature to do so. To remove the need
for a cure to be found in that way
was not the answer and I did not
like the whole attitude of the hospital

169c. staff that if something was not exactly how they wanted it to be then they did not like it and they had the right to remove or destroy it. In the moments before my baby was born I had the most strange feeling about what the attitude of the labour ward staff was going to try to do to my baby and it frightened me.

As well as that, the labour ward staff seemed to have taken charge of everything to do with me having my baby and they had robbed me of my right to do anything towards delivering my baby so forcibly that I had a peculiar feeling that they had taken the 'care' of my baby away from me as well. I felt that instead of making me feel a failure the pain that I should have been working to control should have been heavily impressing on my mind my part in delivering my child into the world, not just at the moment of delivery but for the much longer responsibility of delivering my child to the world as a fully responsible and well educated adult at the end of my child's childhood. I felt that the whole process of labour was an operation that should have been engraving my responsibility towards my child deep into my subconscious. I realized that it should have been cementing a rock like foundation that should have endeared my child to me with a proud possessiveness that would positively identify the child that I had worked to bring into the world by the effort of my own blood, sweat and pain as being positively my own. That vivid memory, even when pushed right to the back of my subconscious would never let me forget my child and the protection I owed to my own flesh and blood, so that even in the most daunting circumstances when my own safety ought to be paramount the welfare of my child would come first

170c. simply because of that memory etched deeply into my brain. It was a very deep feeling as strong as the paints themselves but I felt as if something had gone amiss because I could feel that the right feelings that I should have had were missing. I felt as if what I had just been through had damaged all my proper feelings because everything had been alright until I had come into hospital. I felt as if I had lost the kind of feeling that would make me go out and search for my child or worry if he was late home when he was older. Instead of the right kind of feelings I had a sort of feeling that it was not my responsibility to take charge of what happened to my child and that someone else would see to it even if my child was in trouble. I knew that I had a strong enough personality to break through that negative feeling but if I had not recognized it there and then I could see myself becoming the kind of parent who sat at home comfortably watching television while my own child was out with a group of vandals wrecking park benches and painting up walls. I had a sort of feeling that I would not even seem to think that it was my responsibility to intervene because the responsibility of taking an active part in what my child was doing had never entered my mind because it had been prevented from doing so even before my child was born. If I did not exercise proper control over my child it would not be that I did not care or that I did not know what was going on even if I did not like to admit it, but that I could not help it because all the

171c. right feelings had never entered my mind. If I had wanted to do something positive about it when my child got more than I could cope with then I would probably have had a terrible feeling that I wanted to go 'back to work' and to be 'in control' of my life again but going out to 'work' was not the same kind of 'labour' that had robbed me of my proper feelings towards my child. Going 'out to work' would only be running away from the situation that I was in and all the better material things that I could buy for my child could never be a substitute for the proper attention that I ought to be giving my child. The feelings that were missing between my child and I could not be replaced by any amount of hours that I worked as it was the wrong kind of work and the feeling that I wanted to go back to work was that I wanted to go back through my labour pains and find what was missing but it was too late for that. Apart from the fact that control of my labour should never have been taken away from me, my hours in labour could never be replaced and going 'out to work' later on could only make things worse.

The way I felt during labour seemed to set the pattern for what things were going to be like later on for my child and I and even before my baby was born I felt a sense of loss that I had done everything wrong and that it could never be put right. The way I felt might have been very different from the way someone else might have felt but I had been strictly brought up to feel that something could only be mine if I had worked to my utter limit to earn it and so I had an awful sense of loss that my child would never be properly my own because I had failed to do my proper share of work in labour. I suddenly felt that for all the

172c. long hours of work that I had been made to do during my life, that kind of work was not important at all as long as I did not owe anyone anything and that the only few hours of real work that I would ever do in my whole life that would ever be of any real importance had been taken away from me and I felt as if I would never be able to put that right between my child and I. I knew that I must overcome the sense of loss that I felt and I quickly pulled myself together. I consoled myself that everything was not lost because there was still the bonding between my child and I that would begin with physical touch when I held my baby soon after it was born and that time was only moments away. So instead of feeling sort of sad about everything I forgot my pride and thought of my baby. Throughout my pregnancy I had convinced myself that I was having a baby boy incase Normans terrible dream came true that I would have a baby girl and that something would go terribly wrong and I would die. I suddenly realized that the terrible fear that I had had of that happening to me for so long had just gone and I felt free of it. Right at the last minute before the delivery I finally accepted that I had a fifty-fifty chance of having either a boy or a girl and because I had lost my fear of dying I finally accepted that I did not mind if the baby was a boy or a girl and I knew that I would love whichever one it turned out to be. The excitement of waiting to find out the surprise of what my baby was going to be lifted my spirits in order to help me over the last and most excruciating pains, and the joy that I knew I was

173c. coming up to the moment of finally being able to meet my baby face to face and hold the child came flooding back to me and it made me feel more ready for the delivery.

As the nurse and the sister struggled to sit me up I became much more fully conscious and I could think much more clearly. I felt sure that they must have given me something to bring me round and I wished that they had done that earlier, but it might only have been that they had sat me up. All the time that I had been lying down unconscious, for what had seemed like a whole eternity, I had felt so strongly that I wished that someone would just sit me up and prop my eyelids open because my eyes could see but I was just too weak to open my eyelids myself. I knew that the part of my brain that could show any reaction had kept switching itself off to save itself being damaged and it had been even more horrific that at times I had been so fully aware of what was going on without having any means at all of reacting to it but during all that time I had felt that if only I could sit right up I would not only have had a better chance of trying to co-ordinate my brains and then my body but I would also have had a better chance of gaining control of my breathing. I had not only needed someone to sit me up but I had also needed someone to continually talk me through the awful situation that I had been in because I could hear quite clearly even if I could not make any response at all. I had felt as if I had been trapped underground with my means of escape having been blocked and after having been like that for so long I could have come out of it all like a mental wreck. The greatest fear of all that I had felt was that no one would

174c. give me enough time to break out of
that situation and I felt that even if
I had needed a very, very long time in
which to do it then all the time in the
world should have been given to me
if that was what I needed because
I was still there even if I could not
get my body to work around me. It had
seemed so ironic that all the time
that I was putting up such a desperate
fight the medical staff were un-
wittingly doing everything that
was lessening my chances of getting
myself back to consciousness and
when they finally sat me up I felt
very much better because my head
was the right way up and in all the
things that they had done it was the
first thing that they had done that
had actually done something positive
to help me.

AS I became fully aware of everything
that I saw in the room I found that
lamps on long stands had been set up
in the room around the delivery table
and they were all on and directed
towards me making me painfully
aware of their brightness and of the
fact that I was completely exposed
from the waist downwards in full
view of everyone in the room. The room
had extra heating on in it as there
were two large electric fires on the
floor either side of the delivery table
with long trailing flexes all over
the floor from the fires and the long
arc lamps that anyone could have
tripped over. There were two trolleys
of instruments laying uncovered
beside the bottom of the delivery
table ready for the delivery and
the incubator had been wheeled
right into the room. There were several
small machines on trolleys on my
right and they all appeared to be

175c. monitors that I had just been wired up to. I could hear two very loud heart beats coming from the machines beside me and they were two completely different sets of heart beats (ie two complete lub-dubs each.) I was wired up to a completely different heart monitor that was on the top of the bedside locker on my right and that machine was silent. The two heart beats that I could hear were coming from the machines that were attached to my abdomen by an elastic belt and wires. The two heartbeats that I could hear sounded very fast and I thought that neither of them sounded quite as it should have done but one of the heart-beats sounded exhausted as if it was about to stop because it could not go on any longer.

I felt worried that the heartbeats did not sound quite right but their loud consistant beating in the room offered me a kind of reassurance that the noise and confusion of the medical staff could not do. The beating sounds reminded me of my own time in my own mothers womb where they had talked to me in the darkness right up until the time that they had got faster and faster until they had pushed me out to be born and I wondered what my baby had listened to. I could remember how my own mothers heartbeats had become so rapid that they had sounded as if they could not take any more but it sounded as if it was my babies heart beats that were rapid and could not take much more rather than mine which looked little more than a gentle line on the monitor that occasionally jumped a little and I felt awful that so much had gone wrong for the baby already and it was not even born yet.

The Sister and the nurse were having a terrible time trying to sit me up as

170c. they could not get my legs to bend properly and my feet were rigidly locked pointing inwards at a peculiar angle. I tried to gain control of my body and I struggled hard to do it but the tremendous effort that I made had only very little effect on my body. The nurse who was trying to sit me up suggested to the Sister that they should leave me and she wanted to lay me down because I was so dopey and let me sleep through the birth of my child. A feeling of panic flooded through me because I realized that they would have actually let me miss the birth of my own child, which was the most important thing that could ever happen to me in my whole life, just because they had over drugged me and even though my body was so useless, my mind was fully alert and I felt alarmed that they did not seem to realize it. Then the Sister spoke very firmly to the nurse and told her that I "must see the birth as it would help later." When she spoke to the nurse the Sister sounded as if she wanted me to see the baby because it was dead or something. A feeling of panic came over me when I heard the tone of the Sisters voice because it was obvious that something was very, very wrong, and because I was too weak to speak and had no way of asking what was wrong, and they probably would not have told me anyway, I only managed to reassure myself that the baby could not be dead by resolutely listening to the loud sounds of my babies heartbeats that told me that the baby was alive.

The nurse and the Sister were both

177C. struggling to put my legs into some stirrups that they had fixed onto the sides of the delivery table but they had great difficulty doing it because my legs had become a dead weight. The nurse said to me irritably "You might try to help" as if I was being difficult but there was nothing more that I could do because I could not feel anything from my neck downwards, except the pain in my abdomen that had dulled slightly. The Sister and nurse finally got my legs up into the stirrups and then they pulled me up into a sitting position by my arms. They got hold of my hands and tried to put my fingers round a piece of metal on each of the stirrups so that I could hold onto them and keep myself up in a sitting position but it was no use because my hands were locked in a bent position and I could not take hold of anything. Apart from the fact that I was so weak that I had no strength at all I just could not unlock my fingers to move at all. As soon as the nurse and the Sister expected me to hold onto the stirrups they let go of me to move away and do something else because they were busy but they had only fixed my fingers around the pieces of metal as best that they could despite the fact that my fingers were bent up and as I had no strength or power in my hands or arms to hold myself there I just fell straight back down. There were no pillows behind me and the back of my head hit the surface of the delivery table with an almighty crash because I was too weak to stay upright.

The nurse said to me in disgust "Don't you want to watch your baby be born?" and I tried to think of the words to tell her that I could not feel anything in my arms or legs but I could not find the words to tell her because the way she had spoken to me so harshly had numbed any chance I

178c had of trying to think of the words with which to say what I wanted to tell her. As I lay there trying to get myself together I noticed that I was wearing a different nightdress because the first one they had given me had been a blue one, the one I had seen myself layed out in had been a white one, and the one that I now found myself in was a pink hospital nightdress but it was not a new one. I could not remember anyone changing me at all and I felt horribly dirty that someone other than myself had changed my clothes and seen me undressed and I knew that would not have been necessary if they had let me remain concious so that I could have changed my own clothes myself. The nurse and the sister sat me up again and this time the sister held me up by putting her arm across my back so that I did not fall down. She was the Sister who had seen me sweating blood and she was much kinder than the nurse. As they were sitting me up the houseman and the Registrar came in from the corridor and washed their hands at the washbasin but although they did use a tablet of soap that was lying on the side they did not spend more than a moment washing their hands and then just dried them on a paper towel which I did not think was enough because they had not been at all thorough. Neither the Houseman or the Registrar put on any kind of gloves, mask or gown because they just came over to the delivery table ready for the delivery in their ordinary white ward coats with their pens, books, bleeps and stethoscopes all sticking out of their pockets and their white coats were not as clean as they should have been for the wards

179C let alone a labour ward delivery room and I was not very pleased about it. The Registrar was wearing a dark coloured hand knitted pullover over his shirt and even though it was woolen and hairy it was not covered up because his ward coat was not done up or covered. A lot of other people came into the room as well and some of them, and all of the nurses and sisters, put on short white paper, not plastic, sleeveless gowns that covered the front of their dresses or white coats very inadequately and did not cover their sleeves or arms at all. The paper gowns were also tearing as they put them on and so they were useless as well as getting in their way. As well as the paper gowns everyone except the Houseman and the Registrar put white paper masks on and then crowded around the delivery table to watch.

One of the pupil midwives asked the Domestic who was outside the door if she wanted to come in to watch and the Domestic came into the room and asked the nurse if she was sure it was alright. The nurse said "yes its alright, shes only an unmarried mother so it doesn't matter." The nurse did not speak nastily to the Domestic about me and she just seemed to have a very casual attitude the same as the rest of the labour ward staff had that when an unmarried mother came in with no one with her then they did not have to worry about what went on, and that was actually their accepted attitude. So the Domestic accepted the gown and mask that she was offered and put them on and came and stood right next to the delivery table with the nurses on my left ready to watch. The door to the corridor was left wide open for any passing porter or anyone else who happened to be about to look

180c. in if they wanted to. The whole attitude of the labour ward staff was that my delivery was a 'free for all' and that anyone who wanted to watch was welcome to because I was only an unmarried mother and as there was no one to stand up for me and object if too many people crowded in on me they could do exactly as they pleased. They were so wrong and I needed absolute privacy even more because I was an unmarried mother and had been through a much more traumatic experience than most other women. I wanted to ask for everyone who was not actually needed in the room for the delivery to leave, and especially for the Domestic to leave. I thought that if the Houseman and the Registrar had delivered the baby, two of the paediatricians who were there had taken care of the baby once it was born, four anaesthetists had seen to the heart monitors and two of the pupil midwives and the Sister had taken care of the nursing duties then that would have been more than adequate professionally qualified people to have seen to the delivery safely and properly but the small room that I was in was so crowded with people who had just come in to watch that there were about a dozen people not even connected with the labour ward in the room apart from too many nurses who had nothing to do except just stand and look which made me feel most uncomfortable.

There were so many people moving about in the room that everyone was in everyone else's way and with wires all over the floor it was positively dangerous. I was half

181C afraid that if one of them tripped over one of the wires on the floor and knocked one of the arc lamps over then it would come crashing down on me because the lamps looked top heavy and since they were directed towards me I felt sure that if they fell it was me that they would fall on. I did not normally worry like that but I just felt that I could not take being knocked about anymore and as if I was so physically weak that even one more accident could be disastrous. None of the people who came in to watch were even medical students which if they had been I could have understood even if I had only wanted as few people there as possible. Doctors from other wards had come up to watch simply because they were not very busy as well as people who were not even Doctors or connected with the labour ward simply because the hospital was quiet and there was nobody about to tell them that they could not come in. One small group of people who came up actually came up from the party that was on and although at least two of them were Doctors one of the women who they had brought up with them was only a medical secretary and she hesitated about coming into the room. The Doctors who she was with told her to come on in because it was alright and she actually stood right outside the door and asked them if one of them would lend her a white coat to come into the room in so that I would think that she was a Doctor. They lent her one and when she came into the room and I saw her she looked like the woman who had fixed the drip up in my arm, but the woman who had fixed the drip up had worn her own white coat and had been in a bad mood where as this one was a bit merry as if she had just had one or two drinks. She was not drunk but she should not have been on the ward and the two Doctors who had brought her

182c. in and who were fussing over her
looked to me as if they had been
drinking quite a bit more than she
had. The Registrar saw them and he
was annoyed that they were there. He
told them to go and get themselves a
coffee to drink and they went off but
they did not go very far away because
we could still hear them talking
very much more loudly than they
would normally have done if they
had not been drinking.

I felt disgusted about it and I
wanted to ask for everyone who was
not needed on the labour ward to
go, especially the Domestic, but I did
not dare to say anything because
I was so afraid that the moment I
objected to anything they would
give me another injection to put me
out again and I was determined
not to miss seeing my baby be born
just because I had asked for the
Domestic to leave. The Domestic was
obviously on much better terms with
the labour ward staff than I was,
simply because she worked there and
I did not, so I had to endure it but
it did not do my nerves any good.

As well as not wanting so many
people there I felt embarrassed
because I knew that I must have
looked a sight, my hair was wet
with perspiration and untidy and
I realized that I must have been
foaming at the mouth or vomiting
and it was all dried in around my
mouth in an awful mess. I felt really
awful and there were so many
people in the room just standing
looking at me and waiting for the
delivery but there was not one of
them who would even wet a paper
cloth and wipe my face for me. Not
one of them even spoke to me either

183c not even to say one word to me which was awful for me because somehow it would not have been so bad to have had so many people around me, especially since I had no one else, if they had all been nice and friendly and had tried to help and encourage me with my pains but they all just stood there looking at me. I got the most awful feeling that it was more than just all those people not feeling like speaking to me, it was as if they were actually treating me with contempt and that they were actually cutting me dead and I could not work out why or what I was supposed to have done. It was more than just the way that the staff felt because they very strongly gave me the impression that it was much more official than that, sort of as if it was actually written down on my notes in some way that I was to be treated like that, but I could not work out what it was that I could have done to cause them to be like that. I had been treated badly in the Ante-natal clinic but what they were doing now was different from the kind of nastiness that they had shown to me in the clinic as it seemed as if it was no longer just my opinion that they did not approve of but as if I had actually done something criminally wrong that they were actually accusing me of and I had absolutely no idea what it could be. If I had done anything at all it was that I had done far too much housework for my mother and I would have thought that after all I had been told about doing housework to keep me busy I would have expected them to have been pleased with all that I had done but it did not seem to be anything to do with that.

The Registrar stood directly in front of me at the bottom of the delivery table which had been folded down to make it shorter and the Houseman stood just behind him on his left beside the trolleys of instruments.

184c. I could not believe that the moment had come for the baby to be born because there was no sign at all of it being a sterile procedure. There were no green theatre cloths like you see on television at the actual birth of a baby, even though there were so many people in the room, nor was there any sign that anyone was making any effort at all to keep anything, like the surgical instruments, hygienically covered up in that dirty shabby room. I felt incensed that no care was being taken and that everything was so informal. Apart from somebody having neglected to see to it that the delivery room and instruments were clean and safe, I also felt that somebody could have seen to it that I was better covered up for the sake of my own decency. I only had a night-dress on that they had rolled right up to my chest and I felt so awful with so many people staring at me and I felt that if the labour ward staff had to ask so many people in to watch my delivery then it would have done no harm for them to have used proper sterile theatre cloths to cover over each of my legs and my stomach as far as possible because even if it had not been strictly necessary to do that for medical reasons at least it would have made me feel much better to have been covered up with so many people staring at me.

Even the Registrar looked embarrassed about the way that all the people who had crowded into the room were staring at my exposed private parts because some of the people who were not used to the labour ward seemed to think it was very funny to see me with my legs trussed right

185c. up in the air and they were giggling and sniggering about it. The Registrar looked away out of the window as if there was nothing that he could do about it even though he knew that it was all his fault for letting them into the room and it was as if he had to look away because he could not look me in the eye for what he had done to cause me such embarrassment. As the Registrar looked up out of the window towards what I could see as the night sky from where I was on the delivery table a serious look came over his face and I thought he must be looking up to heaven and saying a silent prayer for help and guidance before the delivery because that was what I would have done and because whenever I looked up to heaven it was always to say my prayers I did not stop to think that when someone else looked towards the sky they might not be praying. Two years later when Psychiatrists tried to piece together what had happened that night they seemed to think that the Registrar and the Houseman, who had been looking out of the window in the same direction earlier, had been doing so because they were worried about how much of what had gone on in the labour ward that night had been seen by nurses on the next ward. Apparently the nurses on B5 ward had telephoned the labour ward earlier to say that through the open delivery room window they had seen one of the labour ward patients sit up and fall off a trolley and that the patient was lying unattended on the floor. I never ever saw or met the nurse concerned but when the Psychiatrists were trying to sort out what had happened they found a nurse who had been working on B5 ward that night and who remembered enough of what had gone on to be able to tell the Psychiatrists that a nurse coming back from a coffee break and another nurse who had been sent to borrow something from the labour ward had seen me fall from the labour ward trolley. They had thought that no one was with me and they had

186c. told the nurse in charge of B5 who had telephoned the labour ward to ask them if they knew that one of their patients was lying unattended on the floor. All the nurses on B5 and other wards had heard the commotion on the labour ward when the Cardiac Arrest Team had been called up and the nurse in charge of B5 had asked them what was going on in there. She had also told the Senior night sisters who had come up to the labour ward and it was one of them who had closed the delivery room window and washed my feet some time after wards, but the labour ward staff had still tried to cover up the rest of what had happened.

At the time I did not know all that and because the Registrar was looking up to heaven I was silly enough to think that he was saying his prayers. I looked up as well but because I was looking in the opposite direction from the Registrar and from a different angle I saw the night sky and a few faint stars and not the ward opposite that he was looking at. In my mind I said the Our Father Prayer silently and beautifully before my baby was born and I put everything that would happen in to the safekeeping of Gods hands.

When the Registrar had finished gazing at the window he looked back suddenly and told me to start pushing with my next contraction. He was ready for a long wait while I painstakingly started the long ordeal of trying to push the baby to be born and as he thought that I would not be able to feel my own contractions (due to the injection that should have numbed me from the waist downwards) the Doctors were going to tell me when a contraction was starting. I did not say anything but I did not need them

187c. to tell me anything because I could feel each contraction sharply just the same as I had felt all the pains despite the useless pain-killers that I had been given. I suddenly did not want my baby to be born because I wanted to keep my child safely inside me. There were so many people in the room waiting to take the baby away from me in the incubator that they had ready and with the Registrar who had been so nasty to me in the Ante-Natal clinic standing right in front of me ready to take the child I felt that I just did not want to deliver my baby into his hands. I was in such a vulnerable situation of helplessness and as there was hardly anyone in that room who I would have trusted with my baby it was such an awful feeling that they could do anything that they chose to do to my baby and I, and I could do nothing to help us. I could see the Registrar looking at the trolley of silver instruments laid out beside the delivery table and I knew that I must give birth as quickly as possible for the babys sake before the Registrar started tampering about with his instruments incase he damaged the baby as I did not trust him. So I took a deep breath and right at the beginning of the next pain before anyone could even tell me that a pain was starting, I carefully and quickly pushed the baby out all in one gentle go. I have never seen anything like the look of disbelief and horror on the Registrars face because he had never seen anything like the strong control I had over my abdominal muscles and I had certainly never done any exercises to make them like that. He realized at that moment that if I could feel the beginning of a pain at the very beginning of it before they were ready to tell me then my abdomen was very fully sensitive and I must have been able to feel the whole of every pain very sharply, which I had done. The Registrar was not even scrubbed up ready to deliver the baby and I felt annoyed towards him because I could have delivered the baby like that hours

188c. before if he had not told me not to.

The Registrar quickly took hold of some instruments on the trolley as the baby was born completely horizontally. The baby was born with an arm and leg first, then the whole head and body horizontally and then the other arm and leg very quickly but the whole head, body and legs came down all together horizontally and not head first or feet first so that I delivered a baby more than three times the width of a normal baby's head. The Registrar had picked up a long silver knife that looked like the sort of knife that my teacher had used to sharpen pencils with in school and he jabbed the short blade into me as far as it would go and then threw it down on top of the trolley of instruments which a few people tut-tutted about and a nurse quickly removed it. Although I did not realize it at the time, and perhaps even more because I expected him to have asked first to see if I minded before he did it, the Registrar had cut me for an episiotomy. An Episiotomy is supposed to be given to stop a mother from tearing as the baby is born but I was cut in a very deliberate way after my baby was born which made it completely unnecessary. Later on I was told by the Psychiatrists who had spoken to one of the midwives about it, that it had been done deliberately and unnecessarily in order to 'mark' me. She told them that an old episiotomy scar was often the only way that midwives could tell whether or not a mother was lying if she turned up expecting another baby later on at another hospital and claimed that she had never had a baby before, especially if she had once had a baby before she was married that she did not

189c. want her husband to know about. The midwife had said that if every woman was 'marked' every time she had a baby then there would be no doubt about her past medical history and that I was a strong case for being 'marked' because I was the typical sort of unmarried mother who would have tried to hide my past out of shame.

AS the baby was born the Registrar picked up the babys hands and feet and wound them into the fingers of his left hand as if he was a milkman picking up milkbottles, then he picked up a pair of forceps which he used to handle the babys head as he lifted the baby from the delivery table onto a table or trolley that someone quickly pulled in front of the Registrar from under the delivery table. The Registrar looked as if he was trying to demonstrate how to use forceps to everyone but it was too late to use them and when the Registrar used the forceps to pick the babys head up with after the baby was born which he should not have done there was a lot of tut-tutting about it amongst the other Doctors present and especially the Paediatricians. The delivery counted as being a forceps delivery as forceps were 'used' or should have been but the forceps were not actually used to deliver the baby at all as the Registrar only used them to hold the babys head with as he lifted the baby up after the baby was born. At that stage it was too late to use the forceps and it would have been safer if the Registrar had used his own hands to cradle the babys head as he lifted it. As the baby was born all the lights dimmed for a few moments so that the room became darker and gloomy and then grew brighter. It was frightening because no one was anywhere near the main light switch or touching the wall sockets at all and everyone noticed the lights and looked at each other because the darkness was

190c really eerie and weird. *Author's own opsi*

As the Registrar picked the baby up I saw that the child was so blue that it was black all over but it was a much bigger baby than I had expected it to be with very long legs. The baby must have been so tightly folded into my tiny womb that I wondered if I had not felt any movements because the baby must have been too tightly cramped to move at all. When the Registrar had put the baby onto the table or trolley in front of him he gave the baby a thorough examination before he handed the baby over to the paediatricians to be resuscitated. He looked at the baby's back for Spina bifida, he checked the baby's legs and hips for abnormalities and he checked the baby's ears and mouth for any sign of abnormalities. When he had done all that he bent the baby's hand to look for any tell-tale line that would have shown that the baby was a mongol. That was always something that Doctors had always done to me at school medicals because I was dark haired and dark eyed and when my face was swollen from having tetanus and kidney trouble I had often been suspected of being a mongol. I had hated the way Doctors had always bent my hands looking for the line that left them none the wiser because even though I had the line I did not have mongolism and it was a horrible thing to watch the Registrar do that and to know that he was actually deciding whether my baby should live or not by whether or not my child was like me. I wanted my baby to live at all costs and it was terrifying to realize that there was nothing that I could do to help my own new born baby. Since my legs were tied up in the stirrups and

191c. because I was unable to move I felt a feeling of panic flood through me that the medical staff had rendered me like that on purpose so that I could not interfere with whatever decision they made, especially since they had wanted me to be kept heavily sedated as it was going to be a difficult delivery. At that moment I felt that it was what the Registrar was doing that was a very 'difficult' matter because in checking to see if my baby was normal or not before he decided whether or not to resuscitate the child the Registrar was playing at being God which was something that I was very strongly opposed to. I was most concerned that the Doctors should have begun resuscitating my baby straight away without waiting to search for any handicaps and if I had been able to move and I had found that the Registrar had found something wrong and had decided not to resuscitate the baby then I would have snatched my child and given it the kiss of life myself. It was a most terrible thing to actually see your own newborn baby in front of you in the hands of people who you knew you could not trust and to be so tied down, unable to move and helpless to help your own child yourself. There was also a nurse standing on my right hand side next to the Sister and she was holding a needle ready in a fully drawn up syringe. She was actually waiting for the Registrar to tell her whether or not to use it and I knew that if he told her to, then he would have found something wrong with my baby and had decided not to resuscitate. She would have given me the injection to put me right out to sleep and I would have come round much too late only to be told that my baby had been 'stillborn' because the Registrar had decided not to resuscitate the

192c. child. I would never have had any chance at all to have proved that my child could have lived if they had decided to let it. It was so obvious that the labour ward staff had agreed before hand on exactly what they were going to do and at no time at all had anyone consulted me for my opinion at all. I felt trapped in a situation that was so wrong and that I had absolutely no escape from and once I felt so terrified I found that I could not speak at all to say how I felt or what I thought and it was terrible.

I began to panic as the Registrar examined the baby because I knew that every second that a baby received no oxygen after its birth counted drastically because it was causing brain damage. I knew that they should have begun to resuscitate the baby immediately and as I watched the Registrar while he was searching my child for handicaps that the baby did not have I actually knew that there and then he was actually creating the handicaps that the child would always suffer from and I was perfectly correct. The Registrar was so determined to handle the whole labour and delivery as he believed every birth should be handled so that every baby was born healthy but the way that he was doing it was by seeing that only the healthy ones survived and there was an awful atmosphere in the room as if not everyone approved of what he was doing at all but nobody said anything. I found thoughts rushing through my mind in a panic about the race

193c for life that I could remember at the very beginning of my own life and of how someone with less physical abilities than another person always had some special gift that was better for them than any of the physical qualities they possessed or they would never have won that race in the first place but I had no way of putting it all into a sentence and so I was lost for words which made what I was suffering so much more intense. I had never expected it all to come to what was happening and so I was unprepared for someone to be actually deciding whether or not my baby should live in front of my very eyes.

Only when the Registrar was satisfied that the baby was not handicapped did he clamp and cut the cord and hand the baby over to the paediatricians to be resuscitated. He had searched for the handicaps quickly but research at all could be quick enough without depriving my baby of those vital moments of oxygen and I felt most alarmed that the Registrar had done it because I felt that he should have acted positively and immediately to save the child at all costs. Something made me take a look at the clock as the baby was born and I found that I could tell the time as clearly as I had been able to think of the Our Father prayer moments before the baby was born. In fact I can still picture the clock on the wall above the door as easily and clearly as if I was still actually in the room looking at it. It was eleven thirty three and I got the strangest feeling that it was really terribly important that I must always remember that exact time.

As soon as the Registrar had decided

194C. that the baby should be resuscitated
the nurse put down the injection
that she had been holding and
she picked up a second one that was
also drawn up and laid ready, the
sister picked up a third injection
that was also laid ready and
both the injections were injected
into my right leg at the same time.
One was injected into my thigh
and the other was injected into
my calf, and they were both given
to me without telling me what
they were going to do or asking
me about it. I later found out
that one injection was synometrine
which was to make my blood clot
and the other injection was a long
term contraceptive that I would
never have agreed to having. I had
completely refused to even consider
thinking about post natal con-
traceptives in the ante-natal
clinic as it was pointless because
I had no husband and because I
did not believe in contraceptives of
any kind whatsoever on religious
grounds. The Registrar had said
to me in the Ante-natal clinic that
he did not want hear any "Pope-ish
nonsense" when I had put forward
my Catholic views and without me
being told anything about it the
Registrar had ordered me to be
given a contraceptive injection
that I was to be given at the birth
and that I was not to be told
anything about it. I was given it
and by the time Psychiatrists
discovered the fact on my medical
records I had also had side
effects from it and had been back
into hospital to be treated for it
and the hospital Doctors had still
managed to keep me from finding

195c out the truth about the nature of the injection that they had given me. The Psychiatrists also discovered that I had been given enough of the contra-ception injection to stop me having a baby for at least two years and at the time I had no idea that any contraceptives could be given by an injection as I had thought they were given as pills but I was told that injections were given in cases where a mother refused contraceptives on religious grounds so that she knew nothing about it. I was horrified about it and I felt that for me to have refused to think about any contraceptives was enough for the Doctors to have respected my wishes.

As the Sister let go of me to give me the injection I fell backwards again because I could only stay upright when someone was holding me and I knew that I was going to crash my head again. I knew that it was vital that my baby should have the Doctors full attention while they were seeing to resuscitating the child and I had an awful feeling that I must not distract them even for a moment by falling, so I quickly used my brain and remembered which nerves had worked which parts of my body and where they had run along my limbs. I had always been able to feel everything that went on inside my body because I had such a very sensit-ive body and I had always been able to find enormous amounts of strength at moments when my very strength should have failed me but as I strug-gled on the delivery table it was like trying to work in the dark and being hampered because I could not see because I had no feeling at all in my body. I quickly ran a maze of messages down my body telling it not to fall and

196c. even though I could not feel my back, my arms or my legs, nerves that were numb worked on flesh that had no feeling to try to keep control of my body. It was not very efficient and I still fell back but I slipped gently rather than fell heavily and although it took a superhuman effort to do it and it would not have been necessary if the staff had been looking after us properly, I knew that it was important for some reason that I should do that and in the absence of having anything else to give my baby that piece of self sacrifice became my birthday gift to my child as it was born.

All the Doctors and everyone who had come to the delivery room to see the birth were looking at the baby who was still very black and blue in her skin colour. There was a general disappointment that there was no gross abnormality in the baby and from what I could hear them saying they had expected the baby to have been born without any skull because they were using a torch to look at the back of the babys head and were making remarks that the Registrar had been totally mistaken about it. One of the pupil midwives was most disappointed about it and she complained to the Registrar that she had stayed on duty an extra two and a half hours because she had never seen one of those babys be born and that after waiting for it there had been nothing after all. The other Doctors agreed with her and they all seemed a bit annoyed that there was no gross abnormality and that the Registrar had wasted their time in getting

197c. them to come along to see the birth, but the Registrar only laughed about it and said that obstetrics was like that and that you could not always tell accurately with a breech presentation. It seemed as if I was the only person in that room who was glad that my baby had been born without any handicaps and as I considered it to be abnormal to be sorry that a baby had been born without any handicaps I felt as if the whole lot of the labour ward staff and the people who had come to watch the delivery had got a perverted sense of judgement and that I was the only sane person in the room which made me terrified of them handling my baby and treating us. I knew that the Doctors and everybody else were only looking at the situation from a medical point of view but it also meant that they were not looking at us as human beings with our own lives to live and that was a very wrong approach for them to have if they were going to treat us medically.

As the baby was born the pain in my abdomen stopped abruptly and so did the loud sound of rapid heartbeats that were exhausted. Once they had stopped then the other set of rapid but weaker and fainter heartbeats could be heard very clearly. One of the nurses was very surprised and remarked that there was still another set of heartbeats. She said that there must be another baby but the Sister told her that it was probably only an echo of my heartbeat and she told the nurse to switch the machine off because it was probably not working properly anyway. Several of the nurses moved to see to the machine and the Sister told the nurses to move as many of the machines away from me as possible in case I was frightened by them but I was not frightened by them at

198c. all and infact I hardly took any notice of them at all because I was more interested in looking at my baby. If I would have been frightened by them at all it would have been during my labour when so much was going on and going wrong that anyone should have been alarmed about but the way the sister spoke sounded as if she thought that since the few minutes before the birth was the only time that I had been fully concious albeit still heavily drugged that must have been the first time that I had known what was going on or seen the machines and it alarmed me that she did not know that I had known and heard almost everything that had happened during all that time but had just been unable to see or move. I could still hardly speak or move at all and I felt that I had no way of even beginning to try to explain to anyone the awful suffering that I had gone through.

When the Registrar made it clear to the Doctors that he had found nothing wrong with the baby the Paediatrician who had brought the incubator up to the labour ward told me "You've got a little girl!" as if they would not even have told me the sex of my baby if anything had been wrong or the baby had been stillborn which I felt was very wrong indeed because I had carried that baby for so long and had been through so much that I needed to see and know everything as soon as it was happening, but as kindly as possible, in order to get my mind to adjust to what was happening to my body. I felt really shocked when they told me that I had a little girl because I had known through out my

199c. pregnancy that I was expecting a baby boy and when they told me that I had got a baby girl I was so shocked that it was the first time in my whole life that I had ever, ever been wrong at all about what was happening to me, that although I desperately loved and wanted my baby girl I could not believe entirely that I did not have a baby boy as well. When I realized that I had a little girl I remembered Norman's awful dream that I would have a little girl and die and I felt terrified. In the moment of feeling terrified a whole picture of the terrible agony and struggle that life was going to be for my little girl and I in the future flashed in front of my eyes like a film that was being run at a very fast speed and as I saw it in front of my eyes I saw a kind of electric storm of white flashes and blurred vision for a few moments as my mind felt as if it reached the edge of human endurance and went beyond it because I had come through so much that had gone wrong in my life right up to my child's birth when I expected something good to happen. I had struggled beyond what I could bear with so much hope only to find that there was nothing for me at my baby's birth and to 'see' that the worst and most pitiful struggle of my life actually still lay ahead of me and I felt that it was more than I could bear.

I remembered our old family prophecy about two girls and that 'the beginning of one would be the end of the other' and that the one called Anne would die and I was terrified of it. I knew that I had seen death but I just did not realize that I had died so it seemed as if what I had been through was still in front of me and it was too much to bear. As I began to feel more and more afraid I heard a woman's voice, one of the lovely

200c. voices that had sung to me say in a ~~soft~~^{OPPI} beautiful calm, kind and gentle voice "The baby is the Onyx Stone" as if she was trying to reassure me and help me to realize that such suffering would only do me very much good. I could not see the woman who spoke and no one else could hear or see her and even though she spoke so kindly I could not feel reassured because I just felt numb and empty of all further thoughts and feelings because I could not imagine how it could all be really happening. I knew that I had seen a flash into the awful and inevitable future and I knew from my previous dreams that there would be nothing that I could do to stop it happening and I felt overwhelmed by it all. Everything that I had seen in that moment did come true over the next seven years and by each twist of fate that happened there was nothing that I could do to prevent it happening however hard I tried.

The Paediatrician asked me sarcastically "Did you want a little girl?" as if she thought that because I was not married the baby could not be wanted either way if it was a boy or a girl. I knew that none of the people in the room could understand the depth of what I had just seen but I felt that the Paediatrician did not have to be so nasty in the way she spoke to me. I wanted my baby at all costs but I was worried about everything that lay ahead of my child and I now that I had a baby girl. I took hold of my self control and braced myself to face the struggle against the tremendous odds that would lie in front of us in the future and then I spoke defiantly to the Paediatrician and said "yes, I wanted