

701c. that it was like trying to walk through dense mud in very heavy boots and I could not get very far in what I wanted to say. It was the drugs that were doing it to me and what I was going through was happening to me because my mind had already been stretched beyond tiredness and beyond what it could humanly bear BEFORE I had been given drugs that were intended to make me even more 'tired'. At the tremendous level of reaction that I was going through there was also no way that I could recover myself because what was going on was causing permanent damage. I felt terribly embarrassed about the way I spoke because the other patients were listening to me and the people who I stopped to talk to seemed to be embarrassed that I had stopped to talk to them and they tried to look away as if they thought that if they took no notice of me then I would go away. Two of the patients near my bed began to talk about me as if I was not there and I felt hurt when one of them said to the other that they could see quite clearly what the nurses meant about me now. I felt so awkward and so terribly lonely because everyone thought I was always like that, when only I knew that it was the way that I was being treated that was doing it to me. I went back to sit on my bed and I wondered why on earth all this had happened when having a baby should have been such a happy time.

I was so upset by the whole ordeal that the hospital had put me through and I just could not believe that not only had my baby been taken away from me but that no one would tell me what the two other things were that were wrong with her. I had an awful feeling that the staff were not going to tell me what the two things were until my baby was dead, as if they somehow thought that it would not sound so bad to tell me what was wrong with my baby if she no longer had to live with those two unknown handicaps after all. I wondered if they would even let me see my baby when she was dead or if they would

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702c. get my Mother to arrange the funeral instead of me and I wondered if I would even be told anything about it at all. I wondered if the shock of my babys death, if she did die, would kill me soon enough for us to be buried together or if my Mother would have me cremated so that there was nothing left of me and have my baby buried in a proper grave that she could visit each week and tend. That was the most likely thing that my mother would most probably do and although I should not have been thinking like that the awful realization came over me that it was an actual probability. I do not think I would have felt so bad if the nurses on the ward had talked to me but it seemed as if I could only have someone to talk to if my reaction was of any use to them for teaching purposes, and I wondered why they were not treating the other patients like it. I could not understand why they were treating me like it and not speaking to me and because no one was showing me any human kindness I felt so alone. I had no husband at all and I was the only person on that ward who did not even have a boyfriend to visit me. All the other patients, married or not, had someone who they were close to, to visit them but as I could not count on my family I had no one at all. The Staff on the ward seemed to think that I was alright because I was swamped with visitors but with the exception of Janet and Barry, our neighbours who had come to see me, the rest of my family just put even more strain on me and they were so gushing with false concern that they were hiding my needs from the nurses because the nurses could not see through it. I think my parents would even have laughed at me if I had said that I needed someone to talk to and they would have been even

703c. more obstructive if they had thought that I was wanting to talk to someone other than them because they would just not have let me. I needed someone nice to talk to, and more than anything I needed to be with my baby especially if she was dying. If my baby's life was only to be a few short days long then we needed more than ever to spend every moment of that time together so that when it was all over I could think that if her life had only been a few days long then at least we had spent every moment of that short time together, but the hospital staff were deliberately robbing us of that time together and I was purposely being kept away from my baby at a time when I should have been with her all the time. Even if all I had been able to do was to stand there beside her incubator and feel grief stricken as I watched her die, at least I would have been with her and at least she would have had her mother with her. I did not expect to be able to nurse her with the professional skills that were necessary but if the staff had found me one tiny unimportant thing that I could have done for her, even throwing her dirty nappy in the dustbin, at least I could have said that I had done everything I possibly could for her in her short life, but instead of that I felt that I had done nothing for her and that I had been allowed no part in it at all. I felt useless and unwanted and I knew that my baby owed everything that was done for her to other people and not to her own mother. I felt robbed of so much and I felt suffocated that the people making decisions about us actually thought that the way they were handling things was sparing my feelings when in fact what they were doing was killing me with despair and pushing my feelings

704c so painfully deep inside me that it would be far more difficult for me to get over what was happening to me. I felt devastated that the hospital staff could think that the best thing for me was to carry on as if nothing had happened to me and that they had told me to make a new start when I got home. It was like trying to sweep an elephant under a bathmat and it just could not be done. I knew I would never ever forget either of my babies or get over what I had been through, because my babies births were too deeply imprinted on my mind and that would affect the rest of my life. It was imprinted on my mind forever and so it was not something for the staff to try to get me to conveniently forget at all but something to let me see, and know, and experience so that I would have a better chance of getting over it later. Even while I was there in the ward and all that was happening to me I knew that it was the things that people were trying to pretend had not happened that would hurt for the longest time, simply because I had not been allowed to talk about them freely with people who were professionally involved.

As I lay there the normal ward routines went on and at breakfast time I found that I had great difficulty eating because I could not feel where my mouth was properly. I got boiled egg yolk down my dressing gown and I was so embarrassed that I could not eat any more of it. I felt dirty now that my clothes were dirty and I felt that this added humiliation at a time when I very much needed to make a good impression and be in control of everything, was just too much. After

705c. breakfast I tried to keep busy even though my hands had become very clumsy. I found that by sitting on my bed and moving slowly I could tidy away the book on my locker and make myself look occupied without letting the nurses see the difficulty I had developed and without making a spectacle of myself in front of the other patients. As the morning wore on and the effect of the tablets began to wear off, I seemed to get better control of my body and so I ventured back to talk to the other patients again but I still did not seem to be like my usual self and I seemed to be talking in a rambling sort of way and much louder than I wanted to.

A ward clerk came along and she was very stern with me, she seemed to know all about me and she gave me a filthy look. She filled in some forms about me and asked me for my G.P's name. I tried to tell her that I did not want him to come near me or to come to see me at home and that I just wanted to have the women midwives to see me or if I had to have a Doctor when I got home I wondered if there was a woman Doctor who could come to see me instead of Dr. Galvan, but she just told me that I should have thought about that before and have changed my Doctor. I told her that I HAD tried to change my Doctor and that I had been to twenty two other doctors to try to get changed to another doctor but that no one would take me on while I was pregnant. I said that I had even been to the family practitioner committee but that I had not sorted anything out. She said that she knew all about that and that I had caused Dr. Galvan a lot of trouble. When she said that I asked her why she had asked me who my G.P was if she already knew. I asked her very politely and quietly but she became really rude and said that she did not want any

706C. cheek from me. She asked me if I wanted to go home and I said that I wanted to see a Doctor about my baby first before I went anywhere. She ignored what I said and said to me very loudly as if she was talking to an idiot really nastily "YOU - WANT - TO - GO - HOME - DON'T - YOU - YES ?" as if I was foreign and did not speak English or something. I was getting really afraid of her as she was so like my mother and I just said 'yes' quickly because I was getting so afraid of her. When I said 'yes' she carried on talking to me as if she was saying something that she had been told to say to me but as I listened to her it just sounded to me as if it was all a mistake and that what she was saying must be meant for somebody else and not for me. She said "I have to warn you that you are discharged home to your own G.P. Anything stupid you do is down to you yourself and you are not to come back to this hospital at all. You are not to come back here for your post natal check up as your own doctor will see to that so that when you leave here you are completely discharged from here and we do not want any complaints from you after you have gone". As I listened to her I just could not believe what she was saying or what on earth I had done to be treated like that. I was sickened at the thought of having to go to Dr. Galvan for my Post natal check up and have him examine me and I just felt sheer panic that after having had to come into hospital for my confinement they could then just take my baby away after an accident that they had caused to her and then just literally throw me out of the hospital and tell me not to come back when

707c. they had hardly even told me what
had happened to my baby and how
she was. The Ward Clerk told me that
the Social Worker would be coming to
see me and I politely but firmly said
that I did not want one at all. She
became really nasty and said that
everyone who came into the Hospital
had to see the Social Workers. She
asked me very firmly if I was on Social
Security and when I said yes she
said that I had to see the Hospital
Social Worker or else my money for my
baby would be stopped and if I got
no money for my baby they would stop
mine too. I wondered what on earth
was going on because I had never
thought that people on Social
Security money had to see Social
Workers. I had not realized that the
Hospital had the power to stop the
D.H.S.S. giving me money to live on if I
did not do what they wanted me
to. I wished that I had some other
means to support myself but I knew
that I could not do without any Social
Security money for a while. It was
my only means of keeping my baby
and I together and so I just could not
do without it. I had no choice but to
see the Hospital Social Worker but I was
grief stricken that my baby and I had
to become problem cases just to get
enough money to eat and live. I was
the last person who needed a Social
Worker as I could manage everything
myself and I wanted to give my baby
a better start in life than I had had
and that meant not being a social
problem. It just was not fair.

When the Ward Clerk had gone, Mrs.
Carter in the next bed told me quite
seriously that the Hospital Staff
should not talk to me like that. She
asked me very kindly, as if she was

708c. trying to help me find out what they were treating me like this for; "If I had "DONE" anything illegal or something? I was genuinely bewildered" and said 'no I hadn't done anything at all'. Mrs. Carter believed me and told me that I ought to speak up for myself a bit more and I realized that she did not realize that it was because I could not talk properly and also because I was just too terrified to do it, that I could not speak up for myself.

The next person who came along the ward was the Family Planning Lady. She came round the ward bed by bed and most people told her what their arrangements were. When she got to me she already knew me by name even though I had never seen her before and she asked me very firmly what contraceptives I planned to use. She got a chair to sit beside my bed on and she began to discuss the matter with me as if I was thoroughly ignorant, not so much about contraceptives but about having used them carelessly and as if I was someone who would need a lot of explanation from her. Very politely but firmly I cut into what she was saying and thanked her and said that I did not want anything. She smiled at me and said that I was not to be embarrassed to talk about it with her and she studied my notes which she had with her. She said that she was going to give me contraceptive advice as what I had had would only last me for three months and then I would not be protected. I had only planned

709c. to say no thank you and to end the conversation there but she did not seem to understand that I was not 'embarrassed' and that I simply did not want contraceptives. So I firmly told her that I had no use for any contraceptives what so ever. I said that my baby's father had left me six months ago and that he would definitely not be back. I told her that I had certainly never wanted to sleep with him in the first place and that I was most adamant that there would never be anyone else. My voice was full of bitterness and what I was saying was obviously what I was going to stick to. The woman looked at me as if she was puzzled about it but that she believed me. She seemed to look at me as if she had got the wrong idea about me from the nurses or someone else and as if when she talked to me she could see that it was quite a different story from what she must have been told quite officially in the nurses office. She had obviously come along to see me being very sure of her facts and she called me Mrs. Maple without looking at my notes but by going by my bed number. She had seemed quite prepared with what she was going to say to me and then seemed to find herself in a very different situation from what she had been told to expect. It was different from the Sister the night before who had hurried away as if she had made a fool of herself, because this woman sat there staring at me as if she was trying to sort it out in her mind and work out what was going on. To make what I had said to her sound even more like my final statement

710C. on the matter, I told her quite plainly that I had never ever used contraceptives nor ever would. I said that I was a Roman Catholic and that I did not believe in their use at all. I said that children were a gift from God and their coming should never ever be prevented. She looked at me as if she was horrified at what I was saying but it was not me who she was horrified with. It was more as if she realized that there had been some terrible mistake in the Doctors and nurses opinion of me and I realized that she was staring at my face. She suddenly got up and checked my religion on my arm band and on my notes. Then she checked something else on my notes that she was very careful not to let me see. She seemed to realize that I was not being difficult about it but that I genuinely had a very strong religious objection to contraceptives. Then she snatched up all my notes and everything else including the charts on the end of the bed and without saying a word to me but with such a look on her face as if something really unethical had gone on and she was not having anything to do with that sort of thing, she hurried off as quickly as she could to the office. When I thought about it fear came over me that she had said that 'what I had been given would only last me three months' and I wondered if I had been given something already. The Registrar who had taken charge

711c. of the delivery was the same doctor who had been so adamant about me needing contraceptives in the ante-natal clinic on my first visit and had said that he knew my sort and that I would soon be off with another man. I wondered if one of the two injections they had given me at the delivery was a contraceptive by injection but I thought that contraceptives were pills and not injections. It was contraceptives that all the rows about my ante-natal treatment had begun over and it seemed awful that if I had refused contraceptives so adamantly, they had just given me one by injection without asking me or telling what they had done and I was terrified of being so powerless against people who could just do what they wanted to me because I had no defense against them nor did my baby and they had damaged her.

Some minutes later the ward sister came hurrying along the ward to my bed in an awful state. She asked me in a most agitated manner if I had a sister and when I said yes she groaned and asked me if she was a patient in the Ante-Natal clinic. I said 'no' and she kept asking me if I was sure, as if she was sure I was wrong. She asked me if we had the same initials and I said no. She asked me what her name was and when I said 'Stella Maple' she said "You have got the same initials (S.M.) but I thought to myself that Stella had no 'A'. She asked me how old I was, as if she dreaded the answer and when I said 18 she looked really shocked and said "And, SHE'S the one who is 14?" and I said 'yes' as if I wondered how she could have known, but she did not stop to explain. She went into a

712c. state of complete agitation, telling several nurses on the ward that the Ante - Natal Clinic were on the telephone asking for my sisters notes back and saying that they had been sent to this ward from the Labour ward on Friday night. She was in quite a state and told the nurses "Thats what's happened!", "they've got her notes mixed up!", "she's got a sister and they've mixed their notes up!" She hurried off to sort it out and the nurses who were left looked really dumbfounded and kept looking at me very apologetically and one of them said to the others "that it was a serious matter for that to have happened?"

Some time much later, a nurse came up to my bed with a white tablet and asked me to take it. I asked what it was for and she said that it was for me to take before I saw the doctors. I felt so relieved that they were coming at last to tell me about my baby that I did not refuse to have it and I took it straight away. The nurse told me to lie on my bed and not to get off it, which I obeyed. From time to time a nurse came and took my pulse and then I seemed to forget that I had been promised a visit by the Doctors and I saw the Social Worker that I had seen in the Ante - Natal Clinic come along the ward up to my bed. She found herself a chair and pulled the screens around my bed. I did not want to see a social worker at all but I

713c. made up my mind to be polite to her. I had no intention of telling her any of my business and so I decided to use her visit to make it perfectly clear that I could cope perfectly well and that I did not want any help from her at all. She sat beside me and started by asking me some very easy questions that had no relevance to her visit and as I replied I found that I could not refuse to answer them as my mind just forwarded the answers to my mouth which quite obediently spoke them. I did not mind answering her questions but I found that I had no control over whether or not I answered at all. It seemed as if the tablet they had given me had opened a door in my mind that only I should have had control over and it was as if my mind was being raped because she could get into my mind to know whatever she wanted to and I could not stop her. Whatever she asked me I found myself telling her and it was not that I would not have told her but that she had control of the time sequence. I should have been left to tell her what I wanted to in my own time even if it had taken a very long time but she was taking everything out in a matter of moments and leaving me feeling quite shattered. As the questions became more involved I found myself rambling on and on about things that I did not really feel were important enough to talk about. Silly little worries like all the time my mother and sister had spent getting ready to go to the Animals Fair Bazaar at Vauxhall when I had spent all that time getting their

714c. things ready and then the
fact that they had thrown the
Sandwiches to the birds and
littered the kitchen with their
things, on the day that I had
come into Hospital. The Social
worker asked me exactly where
this 'Animal Welfare Bazaar'
had been in Vauxhall, and went
over and over the fact that my
Mother had definitely left me
to go so far AFTER I had told her
that I might be in labour since
the day before, and I said 'yes'
most definitely. The Social
Worker made me go over all the
details of the Egg, Beans and
Chips that my Mother had
brought me to eat from the
kitchen and whether or not she
had given me a drink with it,
which she had not but we
established that she had
definitely given me a drink
when I had had my dinner
the day before when I was
supposed to go to the Ante -
Natal Clinic and then I did not
go and that I had definitely
had a drink of hot Orange
Juice in the night that she
had given me before I had
gone back to bed and slept
without calling a midwife to
come. She asked me if I had
wanted to get the midwives
before I had had that drink
and then afterwards I had not
felt bothered about it. She
seemed very concerned and as I
spoke she was meticulously
writing everything down. She
seemed a bit cross with the
Doctors when I told her that they
had not believed me when I had

715c. told the Houseman how long I had been in labour but she did not seem to think that I had been through such a bad time in labour. She seemed to think that I had been given all the pain relief I could possibly have had and when I said that I had not wanted anything and that I had fought it to keep awake and know what was going on she looked right at my face as if she could see that I had done just that and she was worried about it. She filled several pages of her notebook with exactly what I said and although I did not want to talk about it all and I tried to fight against talking in order to maintain my dignity and self respect, I still found myself talking on and on. I found that I could say what I wanted to instead of my mind being lost in tiredness and my speech rambling along and never getting anywhere but it was forced out of my head too soon and I felt as if it would turn out to do me more permanent harm than any good. I was even telling her the more personal things that I never spoke to anyone about. I mentioned the struggle I had had to wash myself and of how I had not let the nurses see my struggle and I told her about what had gone down the toilet on Saturday night that the plumber had found on Monday morning. She asked me why I had not gone to one of the nurses and I told her how Mrs Carter had called a nurse because I looked so ill and then that I had not been able to remember what I wanted to say. I saw the Social Workers face stiffen as if she thought I was a dangerous mental case or something and she

716c. said that I could not blame the nurses as they were busy and it was not enough that I had not told somebody. I tried to explain how it had been when everyone crowded round the delivery table but she said that they were only there to help me. I said that no one helped me and that no one had wiped my face but she did not seem to think that was very important. She said that every second counted at a delivery and that they could not pause in delivering a baby just to wipe my face. I said that it was not like that because they were just standing staring and waiting for the baby to be born when they did not wipe my face but she said that they had probably scrubbed up and could not touch anything else. I said that no one had scrubbed up and just the two doctors quickly washed their hands and not very well before the delivery. I said they did not gown up and they did not even begin to resuscitate the baby for five minutes after she was born while they had searched her for handicaps. The Social Worker was getting really uncomfortable as she listened and had stopped writing as if she could not write all that down. She said that she thought that I did not want the Doctors to examine me or my baby and that was the real problem with me. She said that I had to expect Doctors to examine me when I came into hospital to

717c have a baby and she said that if I really could not have faced the delivery why hadn't I come back to the Hospital instead of trying to sort things out myself? She said that under the circumstances I could have had a late abortion but I said that I had never wanted an abortion. She stopped and listened as if she believed me and she said that she remembered from when she had seen me at my first Ante - Natal appointment that I had said that to her then but she told me reproachfully that I seemed to have changed my mind a few weeks ago. I said that I had not changed my mind at all and she asked me why I had not come back to the Hospital so that they could have sorted me out. I said that I had wanted a home confinement because it was more private than in hospital but she spoke to me reproachfully and said "So you did it yourself at home?" I said that I got everything ready at home for the delivery and that I had sterilized everything and I expected her to understand like the midwife had when she had seen the things, but the Social Worker just said "You are lucky you didn't die". I said "yes, I know because the midwife could never have managed by herself especially when my breathing stopped". The Social Worker looked at me as if no one had told her anything about my breathing and she said questioningly "You are a very heavy smoker aren't you?". I said that I had never ever smoked at all and she asked me several times if I was sure and each time I told her the truth that I did not smoke. She seemed puzzled and worried about that and then she asked me to tell her what tablets I had taken while I was pregnant. I

718c. told her that I had taken a few iron tablets, one each day as prescribed but when I had bled a bit I had stopped taking them. She seemed really puzzled about that and asked me why. I said that it was in case I lost the baby. She asked me if that was not what I wanted and I said 'no' of course not, my baby was all I had to live for. She really believed me and after I had told her about the cystitis tablets, how many I took each day and for how long and why I had not gone back to the Doctor for antibiotics (which brought us back to my mothers health food addiction, which she seemed very thoughtful about indeed) she made me affirm that I had taken nothing at all that I should not have done. I said 'no' and she believed me and was very nice to me but she seemed puzzled as to what was going on. At one stage the Social Worker seemed concerned that I was talking too loudly as she did not want the other patients to hear but she did not stop me talking. I seemed to gain a bit of control too and I managed to talk more quietly and with more dignity and after that we seemed to have more of a conversation than me just answering her questions. The more I talked too, the more she seemed to like me even though she seemed to wince at the struggle I was having to make my mouth form the words, but I was obviously making it clear that I knew what I was talking about and she understood me.

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719c. She did not ask me anything about my baby's father but she just read out to me what I had told her on the only other time I had seen her and then she asked me if it was the truth. I said yes and I was really surprised at how accurate she was as she had not taken notes when I had seen her before and she must have had a very keen memory to have remembered it word for word exactly as I had told her and to have written it down after I had gone and been able to recall it word for word five months later.

She asked me what I thought was wrong with my baby and what might have caused it and I told her that the sister had told me that my baby had Vaginal Atresia with Hydrometrolcos and I explained what it was so that she knew I understood. She seemed very surprised at my understanding and asked me if I knew what had caused it. I said that it was strange that my baby had been born with no vagina when that, by one massive coincidence, was the one thing I would have wished for her to be born without. I thought that at least with no vagina she could never be raped like I had been but I did not wish that in any over protective sort of way. I just thought it was quite ironic that it had happened and the coincidence of the fact had just dawned on me. The Social Worker just stared at me as if she was trying to make sense of what I was saying. I could not help what I had said and I genuinely thought that it was the most likely reason but after I said that she started talking to me as if she was talking to me quite

720c. normally and not as if she was having to simplify everything for my benefit. I told her that the Sister had told me that there were two other defects and that I was waiting for the doctors to come and tell me what they were. I said that the Sister had told me that only a doctor could tell me and the Social worker seemed relieved that she had got me to the point of the conversation that she seemed as if she most wanted to talk about. As if she was trying to encourage me to say it myself she said "And what do you think the two handicaps are?" She seemed to want me to guess and so I said that I only knew of two ways in which anyone could be handicapped and so I supposed she was mentally and physically handicapped. The Social Worker looked absolutely aghast as if she expected me to guess at any one of a million small defects that children were born with but it was all I could think of to look at it more broadly because the Sister had said that the handicaps were serious and to be mentally and physically handicapped were two serious handicaps. I looked really perplexed as if I could not think of anything else at all because you only had three dimensions to your life: physical, mental and spiritual and as I knew that nothing could handicap a baby's soul, then she must be mentally and physically handicapped. The Social Worker looked aghast and asked me if I had been sitting there thinking that

721c. to myself since Saturday when they had first told me that. I said 'yes' and added very quickly and defiantly so that she understood me properly that it did not matter to me what was wrong with my baby at all. I said that whatever my baby had wrong with her or how ever badly handicapped she was I could still find a way to make life fun for her. It was the life that she had that was important and the fact that she was alive, and it was the human candle of life itself that was so precious and my role as a parent was to help that light shine as beautifully as possible never mind what kind of body that life was contained in. I treasured my child as a person with her own personality and friendship to offer and I didn't expect a perfect baby as a right, as if I had paid for perfect goods and would return them to the manufacturers if they did not meet my expectations. It was not the body that was important anyway it was the spirit. The Social Worker just stared at me and then asked me if I had thought of the practical side of coping with a handicapped child, as if she thought that I just did not see the problems but I was so used to coping with difficult circumstances at home that I told her how I would find a way to make life fun for my child even if she was handicapped. I said that if she could not see then I would get toys with different textures for her to feel and if she could not walk I could push her everywhere in a wheelchair. I could take her out and about to the park and places of interest so that she could get out and about and

722 c. whatever she needed I could find a way to provide for her so that she would not miss out on anything. The only problem was that I was so afraid that she might not live. The Social Worker asked me if I had thought of the more practical problems such as if the child was incontinent and I just said very practically that if my child needed that kind of care then I would soon see to it. The Social Worker seemed to believe that I would and she said very quickly that I would be entitled to a lot of help from social services, as if she was suddenly worried that instead of me not wanting the baby as she seemed to have thought, she was beginning to wonder if I was going to cope all by myself with no help from anybody and that I might show them a few things about how they should look after handicapped people. She asked me if I had wanted a handicapped baby and I said "no, of course not, but you could not help how you are born can you?" and the Social Worker said "no you can't" as if she was very thoughtful and doubtful about it all. I said that I would have a difficult task if she could not feel things the same way as I had been on the delivery table feeling completely numb, and if she could not see or hear either. I knew that Helen Keller's teacher had reached past her pupils blindness and deafness by using her sense of touch but I wondered what on earth I would do if my daughter had no sense of touch either but I

723c. knew that if there was a way then I would find it.

It seemed for a moment that all my wonderful plans for my child had been snatched away from me but I did not let it deter me. I told the Social Worker that where a child had no senses at all, I wondered what the way past that was in order to find the living warm human being trapped inside a useless body but I said that if that obstacle was there in my child, then with Gods help we would move it and I meant that very practically. The Social Worker was watching me intently and when I had finished speaking she said very quietly that she was sorry and that it had all been a terrible mistake. She said that she was sorry that I had been made to wait so long to find out what was wrong with my baby, she said that she would see if she could get the doctors for me and she asked me if I knew how long it was since Saturday when they had told me that I had got to wait to see a doctor and if I knew that it was now Tuesday. I said 'yes' I did know and when I said that, she looked concerned and asked me if I had known each day what day it was and I said 'yes'. She seemed to think that I had been too drugged to know and she asked me if I had realized everything that had been going on in the ward all that time, and when I said 'yes' she asked me if what the nurses had been giving me had not made me sleepy. I said that it had made my body slow and difficult to move but it had not affected my mind because I would not let it and I said that nothing could touch my mind. I said that at times it had

724c. been hard to keep alert but that I had fought to keep awake while I had been waiting for the doctors to come. She asked me if I had slept at all while I had been in hospital and I said that I had slept for a few hours. She asked me if I had slept in the previous night but I said that I had kept awake waiting for the Doctors to finish on the Labour Ward and come to me. The Social Worker stared at me as if she was so horrified that she did not want to believe it but she did and she kept staring at my face and listening to the way that I was talking. She told me quite definitely that after she had spoken to the doctors and told them that I was ready to know what was wrong with my baby they would not keep me waiting any longer.

She talked as if the doctors were only waiting for her opinion and then she asked me if I was quite happy about going home. She did not mention my mother at all and I said that I was quite alright about going home as long as I could get news of my baby. The Social Worker told me quite definitely that I would get proper news of my baby and she asked me what I would do once I got home, if the doctors had told me what was wrong with my baby and I wanted to know more. I said that I expected that they would tell me everything and then my hopes fell with a sickening feeling as I saw that her eyes could not meet my gaze and she looked almost ashamed. I stayed quite in control

725C. and said that if they did not explain everything then if I could just find out the medical name of what was wrong with my baby then I could look up the rest in some medical books.

As if the Social Worker had suddenly seen exactly how I felt about books she said quite eagerly "Do you want books? would you rather read it in a book than talk to someone?". I said that I was alright talking to someone, as if I could not understand why nobody would talk to me, but I told her that I would understand books better than people. She asked me why and so I said that if you looked something up in a good medical book then you got the plain facts whereas if you asked somebody to tell you something they only told you as much as they wanted you to know. With that she seemed to think that she had got through to me at last and she said that she could understand it all now and help me. Her whole attitude towards me seemed to change and she became really friendly towards me. She quickly checked with me that I was not deaf and that I did not NEED things to be written down if I could not hear. I said 'no' and she said that she had not thought so. She asked me if it was that I did not like PEOPLE, so I told her that I liked people but books were better because people seemed so terribly slow, and books were more 'open' as you could just read what was there and nothing was hidden from you. She said that she agreed with me about people being slow, and she sounded to me as if she meant the nurses because she looked irately towards where she could hear them on the ward with the doctors. Then she said that she could get one of the

726C. nurses to take me down to the medical library that the doctors used if I wanted to. She explained where it was and talked as if she had no idea of the difficulty I had had to get up to the Premature Baby Unit let alone down to the library that sounded from the way she spoke as if it was down stairs and along goodness knows what corridors and corners. She told me that it was important that I get some explanation about what was wrong with my baby and she said that my own doctor might even be down there as if she intended to arrange that he was there to explain things to me. I would not accept these falsely created situations and I felt humiliated by it. I did not mind if for some reason nobody could tell me what was wrong in a straight forward manner, and I was quite prepared to look it up in a book if I could find out the name of it but when I had looked it up I did not want what was in the books 'explained' to me. What was written down in a book ~~was~~ the explanation and I did not need it simplified by any means at all. I only needed to read it to understand it. I told her that I wanted to see the doctors first to find out the name of the handicaps so that I could go and look them up but she still wanted me to go to the library first as if she wanted me to look it up first. I could not make her see that I could not look something up if I did not know what to look up. medicine

727c. as a subject was too vast for that. If they did not tell me what it was I could not guess from any one of a million different defects a child could be born with. If someone told me the name of what it was then I could look it up on my own. The Social Worker was insistant that I have a doctor with me when I looked it up and I felt mentally tormented that I could not understand why. I had to have a doctor with me if they made me look it up in a book on my own, but that doctors could not come and just tell me what was wrong and I felt mentally suffocated by it. The Social Worker seemed insistant that I guess and say what was wrong but I did not know and I had nothing to guess from so I could not and it seemed that they were only holding the information away from me until I said what was wrong and I could not because I had no way of finding out what it was. I tried to get her to understand that I could not go on much further with all this and told her that it was a long way to the Hospital Library and she offered to get a nurse to push me in a wheelchair. She said that she could come as well as the nurse and doctors as they were interested to see what books I would pick out. I did not want to go as I was terrified of those 'set ups' that I had been through in school medicals and said that I would wait until I had seen the Doctors who I was still expecting to come and see me. She offered to fetch some books to the ward for me and asked me what titles I usually read. I could only remember a few and told them to her. One I remembered in particular was Hutchinsons Clinical Methods that I thought might be a bit

728c useful in explaining medical tests and in an effort to try to explain to her how much I understood I told her that one had been my favourite book when I was fourteen years old and interested in medicine. She looked at me strangely and said to me very kindly that what was wrong with my baby would hardly be in that book if I had read it when I was fourteen and she said that she had never heard of the other books. I did not know how to explain to her without being rude, that being a social Worker I did not expect her to have heard of any of the books I mentioned as they were university level books and I HAD read them and fully understood them when I was fourteen years old and that it was that which was half the problem. so I stayed politely quiet and said nothing that might have sounded rude.

The Social Worker seemed to think that the library might not be such a good idea after all and she talked about me telephoning Great Ormond Street and talking to the doctors there myself. I told her that although it sounded ridiculous, I knew I could not talk on the telephone. I said that I had made one telephone call and had difficulty doing that but I just could not telephone Great Ormond Street. I found it hard to explain but I said that if I got on the phone all they would hear would be silence as I could not seem to speak at times.

729c. She seemed to get the idea that I did not want to talk about it all but it was quite the opposite. I wanted to know so desperately that I could not speak. It was like being so choked up emotionally that I could not speak, only it was even worse than that. There were no tears, just silence where I could not make my voice speak. It was hideous but I could not help it and although I could talk about everything else I was too struck with terror that they WOULD NOT tell me what I wanted to know even if I asked, that I COULD NOT ask, even though I desperately wanted to know. I could not make a fool of myself on the telephone to Great Ormond Street and I needed someone reliable to use the telephone and find out for me. The Social Worker did not understand at all. She smiled at me kindly and said that if I did not want to talk about it then I was obviously not ready to know what was wrong with my baby at all. I tried to make the Social Worker see that I was ready and that I should have been told straight away instead of being made to wait and worry, but she did not seem to see it that way. It was the fact that I had been made to wait and wait for so long already that had made me get into such a state that I could not ask. I was just terror struck that it must be something more horrific than had ever heard of for them to keep trying to make me guess about it. It was killing my mind to keep me waiting and it was such an awful feeling of suffering that I did not know how to explain it. I just knew that it was 'waiting' that was doing it to me and the worst thing about it was that the staff had told me that

730c they actually knew what was wrong but that they could not tell me and I had to wait. It was the same punishment that my parents had done to me for years for nothing, as they had made me guess what I had done wrong and when I did not know because I had not done anything, they still would not tell me for my punishment and made me wait and wait and still did not tell me. I only knew it as an awful feeling of suffering, but to feel it in hospital over my new-born baby with whom I was so emotionally tied, together with my own terror of being 'taken away' from my parents, it held me in a state of unspoken terror. The staff were making me wait to know everything as if they were waiting for me to be ready to know. They could not see that the longer I waited the worse state I got into and because of the state I was in they seemed to delay telling me for even longer. It was like a vicious circle that I was too ill to help myself out of. The time when I was ready to know was straight away and the way to tell me was to tell me the facts, all of them, as straightforwardly and kindly as possible without simplifying it as if I was an idiot. I should have been told first before some of the members of staff even. It was my baby and only a few days before I had been the closest person to her. Now they seemed to be telling everybody: nurses, social workers, physiotherapists, and my relatives before they told me and

731c. it should have been the other way round. I was the one who should have been told everything first even before they wrote down their notes, in fact I should not even have been separated from my baby at all because our emotional tie was too important. The staff were not emotionally involved whereas I was and I should have been told about my baby before all of them and because I was ill, I should have been told even sooner than someone else who was well enough to cope with waiting to know. What the suffering was doing to me was like a pain that painkillers could not help in the same way that the sedation they were giving me was not working properly either. What I needed was plenty of information about my baby and to be treated with kindness.

The Social Worker went on to talk about Great Ormond Street and she asked me if I was quite happy about going up there to see my baby. I said yes and that I wanted to see my baby as soon as I could. She told me that I could not go there for ten days at least and that I would have to make arrangements to visit the baby but she said that she would do her best to see that there were no problems there. A prickling feeling came over me at the way she spoke - because she made it sound as if I could not freely visit my own child but I knew Great Ormond Street was a specialist hospital and so I presumed that they must be so busy that visitors might be in the way. I knew I would rather my child had expert attention that would save her life than for me to insist on visiting her if I was going to get in the way of their machines, how ever dearly I longed to be with her. For the first time

732c I realized that the Social Worker had given me some hope that the baby was going to live after all if she was making arrangements for me to visit her. I was puzzled though about the way she spoke as if there was some reason why I could not visit her. There was just some indication in her voice that I had done something wrong and that my baby had been taken away from me and I just could not understand it at all. It seemed as if it was some unspoken understanding that no one was talking to me about but I had no reason whatsoever for anything like this to happen to me at all and it was like some hideous nightmare that I just could not believe was happening to me. The Social Worker asked me if I minded if she asked the Social Worker at Great Ormond Street to see me when I went there but she made it clear that I could not visit my child otherwise. I remembered the threats of the ward Clerk that I would get no Social Security money if I did not cooperate with the Social Workers and so I knew I had to agree. I knew that I had no other money coming in and if I could not claim some Social Security money for a while I would have to leave my baby with my mother while I went out to work and I just could not bear my mother being the one to care for my baby so I had no choice but to do as the Social Worker asked. I said that I agreed to see a Social Worker but I was upset that my baby and I had got to become problem cases

733c. under a Social Worker just to get some money that we were entitled to, as I had planned better than that for my child. The Social Worker said that she could stop my money from the D.H.S.S but she said that she was not going to because she could not see why, with some help, I should not have some care of my baby and I still needed some money for myself from the D.H.S.S at least for the next six weeks post natal time. She said that she did not think that I should be at home all day with my baby after that because I would find that the babys crying would get on my nerves and it was not advisable for me to spend hours on end with my baby. She said that the doctors would probably insist that I went back to work after that and that my Mother, a minder, or a day nursery had the care of my child. I was absolutely distraught because I wanted to bring my baby up myself and I just could not understand WHY I could not have my baby the same as all the other mothers. The only difference between them and I was that they were married and I was not and all I could see about that was that I was lucky that I had no husband to worry about as I could give my baby all my time and attention and she would never know what it was like to be beaten about by her father like I had been, especially, since Norman had turned out to be so much like my own father. My baby was all I had and I just could not understand how they could think a childs crying would get on my nerves as I had all the patience and common sense in the world. The Social Worker could see how upset I was about it and told me that she remembered how independant I had been when she had seen me when I had come to her office on

734c my first Ante-Natal appointment. She tried to console me and said that she could see that I would probably only have to see Great Ormond Street's Social Worker once and then not again and so I felt more hopeful.

As she sat talking to me, the Houseman and ward sister opened the curtains and came in on their way around the ward. The Houseman saw my anxious face turn away from the rubbish the Social Worker was talking about, and look straight at him expecting to get news of my baby at long last. There was an awkward silence and he looked at me as if he was ashamed of the whole thing and then as if he really meant it he said "I'm sorry, my dear, I have not got any news of your baby." My hopes fell and I could not understand why I had been waiting for him to come and then when he came he could not tell me anything. The Sister who had told me that only a doctor could tell me what was wrong was standing right beside him and she made no effort to explain that it was another doctor who was coming to tell me or make some other excuse. The Sister, Doctor and the Social Worker all seemed to have some kind of understanding that I was not allowed to be told anything and I just felt mentally suffocated by it. I just could not understand why and it just did not seem possible that it could all be happening. The Doctor told the Sister to get a paediatrician to come and see me and he said that I must be told and he seemed disgusted at what was going on. I could not

735c. understand why a paediatrician had to be the one to tell me and why any doctor could not just do it and tell me. All the time they spoke an awful feeling came over me that it was all too official. It was so different from the way that they were treating the other patients and I began to feel as if they thought, as Mrs. Carter had suggested, that I had done something 'illegal'. Yet no one said anything and it was more than just what my mother could have lied to the staff about me. It was quite official as if there was a legal procedure to follow that was much more than just Hospital policy, and because I had done nothing at all that I could think of that was wrong, I was terrified by it.

The Social Worker looked at the doctor as if she wanted to catch his eye without me seeing and she asked him, 'if she could speak to him about this in the office. The Houseman took a stand at that and told her firmly, as if he was sick of the whole thing, that if anything more was going to be said, it should be said in front of me. He said that too much had been said in the office. He said that everyone had been asked for their opinion of me but no one had asked me for my explanation. The Social Worker spoke to him urgently at that and said that she really did need a word with him and said that it was not quite about this. He was annoyed as if he did not quite believe her but he was not going to cause an upset in front of me. He spoke to me kindly and said that I did not need to worry that he was going to examine me. He said that he knew how I felt and that my G.P. would see to that. I felt panic that it was quite the opposite of how I felt because I could not bear my G.P. near me and I wondered how the Houseman knew anything

736c about it at all, even the opposite of the truth but I did not say anything. The Houseman said that I could go home and that I would be better off at home. He said to me "You are going home aren't you?" and I nodded sadly as if I did not want to go and he looked at me as if he did not approve of me going home either but the matter was not in his hands. He did not mention my family at all but he kept looking at my clothes and at my empty locker. Every locker on the ward was like a florist shop with flowers, cards and presents sent to the mothers and most of them had extra tables packed with flowers as well. Only one locker had no flowers at all and that was mine. It was completely empty except for the hospital jug of water and glass. I had not wanted any flowers incase they died but only because my baby was sick. I would normally have loved them but I had absolutely nothing else either. My mother had brought food in for me but no cards and my only present from my aunt and cousin had been taken home. He kept looking at the locker and my clothes as if it just did not fit the picture at all of me having such a loving family but there was nothing he could do. I knew the dilemma he was in as there was nothing you could do against my parents. They could convince anyone, Police, Social Workers and teachers of their loving concern by the way they talked. Lies just rolled off their tongues and hardly anyone ever even suspected it was not true. Most people thought I was

737C. lucky to have such caring parents and that I was ungrateful not to be thankful to them; No one ever saw what went on at home. As the Houseman looked at my locker and back at me, he kept looking at my face and my mouth, which felt so numb, and then his eyes misted up which I had never seen a man's eyes do before. He was near to tears over me and then he turned and walked outside the curtains and the Sister went with him. He said to her outside the curtains that it was 'awful', he had never seen anything like the state I was in but there was nothing he could do, he said that it was not his decision, it was Mr. Buckle's. The Sister said to him that I could not leave the hospital without being examined and he replied to her that he was not putting his name to anything saying that I was fit to go home. He said that I needed intensive medical treatment and possibly psychiatric help to get over this and if he signed that I was fit to go home in that state he could be struck off the register. He said that in his opinion I needed a lot of further investigation to find out what exactly was the matter with me as he was not satisfied with what my parents said. He said that it was only the fact that my G.P. had been so insistant, that the hospital could not go against him. The Houseman said to the Sister that if the Hospital Authorities wanted me to be sent home to my G.P. then they could come and examine me because he was not putting his signature on it. The Sister told him that he had got to admit that my Mother was very good. She could do an awful lot with me and it was best for me to let her look after me in her own way as she was certainly willing to. The Houseman made a noise of disapproval and told the Sister that if

738c she thought my mother cared for me so much she should have a closer look at my clothes and my locker. The Sister agreed with him as if she did not like it either and said to him "and she doesn't smoke either, its the Mother who smokes". She said that my Mother had even rolled herself one in the office while they were talking to her. The Houseman said "but then again she (meaning me) has got a very bad chest" as if he did not know if I smoked or not. He said that he could not do anything about it at all, it was all above him and he could only do what he was told. He said that he was not going to put his name to anything saying that I was fit to leave hospital and the Sister said that they could not get too involved with patients home lives either. So they agreed that they could really do nothing except get a paediatrician to talk to me and the Houseman said that he could not see what good it could possibly do to make me wait so long and he thought I should have been told straight away. He said to the Sister that I was to be told today with no more waiting and that it was not to be done by my parents either.

The Social Worker could hear everything they were saying and because she knew that I could hear it all too she tried to talk to me to distract my attention, So I managed to listen to her and what was going on outside the curtains. She got me a card with her name on it and said that if there was anything at all that she could do for me even after I had gone

739c. home then I could get in touch with her or just walk into the hospital and ask for her. I knew that she understood about the books and about me wanting to read and I liked her. As well as that she was the only person who had suggested that I came back at all. Without realizing it she saved my sanity because the worst thing of all that had happened was the way they had taken my baby away and were then literally throwing me out. The Registrars words that 'you can go now' as soon as they had taken my baby away from me rang through my head and I just could not believe that I had gone in there to have a baby and she had been taken straight away from me with only the Houseman stopping to think that I even had a right to see her. Then she had been taken miles away from me to another hospital due to an accident that the staff had done to her in feeding her wrongfully, then all the nurses and the ward clerk had just turned against me so inexplicably and having had my baby taken away like that without more than a few moments together, I was being told to go and not come back. Even the prospect of visiting my baby was dampened right down because it seemed that I was by no means free to see my own child when I wanted to. I felt as if I had 'lost' my baby even though she was still alive because I was being told that there was a doubt as to whether or not I could see her or look after her. I knew that my baby was very sick but all the time it was becoming increasingly obvious that my baby was being kept away from me for more reasons than that she was ill. It seemed as if she would have been taken straight away from me anyway and I just could not understand

74OC what on earth I had done wrong.
It was more than just my mother having been in the office and told them that I had always been a problem to her. She always spoke about me like that but now I was a woman with a child of my own and she could not do that anymore. I wondered why my mother was not treating me with more respect now as I had expected her to. Quite the opposite was happening and I knew that I had never seen my mother quite like this before. She had been alright for ages but now her whole insanity seemed to have vented itself on me and she was using the hospital staff to do it to me. Even so it was more than just my mother; it was too 'official' and I just could not work out what was going on. I was just in mental agony because so much was going on that I just did not understand. Somehow because the Social Worker had offered me the opportunity to come back it dampened down the agony of what I was feeling and I felt that if I could come back there to where I had last seen my baby then there was some hope that I might get my baby back as this was the last place that we had been in together.

As she was getting ready to go the Social Worker said that the Social Worker I had seen at school was Mrs. Baker from Rushey Green Social Services wasn't it?. I had been very careful never to mention that to them as it was all over and I wanted my baby to have a clean start and not be a problem case right from the start. I had not been in any kind of trouble at

741c. all I had only run away from home and I was shocked to find out that she knew about my school days. She said that I should not be shocked or embarrassed that they had had my school records out. She said that they had checked them as they had needed to know as much about me as possible so that they could help me. She said that she knew that I was having problems at school and everyone was only trying to help me. I said that I had left school when I was seventeen and I was finished with school. She said that was a pity but that she understood. I was annoyed and began to panic that they could get my old school records out and attach them to my baby even before she was born and without my permission. I knew my school records were not at all accurate and I thought I had left all that behind me when I had left school. The Social Worker seemed to think that she had found out all about me from my school records and that she now knew about all the problems I had but would not tell her but she was very wrong. She said that when I got home a health visitor would call and she could give me proper contraceptive advice in the privacy of my own home and she said that I should have been given proper contraceptive advice at school. I was livid but I stayed calm and told her that I had no intention of discussing contraceptives at all. I said that I knew all about them but I had no USE for them, firstly, I was Roman Catholic and secondly, I had no boyfriend what-soever. She looked at me so puzzled as if she believed me but that she was very doubtful about the whole thing because she could not seem to understand something. She got up to go and said that she had to catch the doctor before he left the ward. She pulled the curtains

742c. right back from around my bed and made me promise to get in touch with her if I wanted to, and after speaking briefly to the patient on my left she hurried off after the doctor.

When the curtains were drawn back I felt really embarrassed because the patients were looking at me and there was an embarrassed silence as they looked at each other and did not say anything. It was obvious that they had heard every word that had been said and they were embarrassed for me. I knew that you could hear everything through the curtains and I knew that I had been talking more loudly than I could help at times, especially at the beginning of the Social Worker's visit. A nurse was handing out small plastic carrier bags filled with free samples of baby toiletries and books and she gave one to each mother who was going home. She was just going off the ward when one mother who had got her bag asked the nurse if there was one for me. The nurse said that I was not going to be given one but the mother who was more outspoken than the others asked "why not?" The nurse did not answer her but went down the ward to the Sister and told her that the other patients were asking why I had not been given a bag of free samples. The Sister told her to ask me if I wanted one, so the nurse came back up the ward to my bed and without coming near me she asked me if I wanted a bag of samples, saying that it was filled with things for the baby to use and not me. I was so

743c pleased and so desperate to be treated like a new mother at last that I said 'yes' but the nurse just snorted indignant. She got me a bag and threw it nastily onto the bed and the other mothers looked at each other as if they had just about had enough of the way that I was being treated but I was not upset by it. Even that nurse could not upset me when I saw the lovely little things and I was so glad and excited as I carefully looked at each small item. The other mothers shared my joy and said that I would find the things very useful. They asked me what things I had got ready at home for the baby and with stars in my eyes and brimming over with maternal joy I told them about all the things I had got ready for the baby and of all the knitting and sewing I had done. One mother said that she had seen me knitting and said that it must have taken me ages to get all those things ready if I had made them all myself. I said that I could knit really quickly at home, as if I could not understand why I could not knit so fast in hospital, but although they agreed that it was difficult to knit in bed they sounded doubtful as if they wondered if I was right about having been quicker before I came into hospital. One mother saw my delight in the baby things and said to the others that she could not see how the nurses could say that I did not really want the baby, and I wondered how on earth anyone could say that either.

Later the nurses came round weighing the patients but they were very careful not to weigh me. One of the nurses said to the other one who was with her that the doctors were not going to put anything down on

744 cm my notes about me at all and then nothing could be said later. She said that I was definitely not to be weighed and I wondered from what my sister had said about my ankles having gone so "THIN" that she did not recognise me at all", if I had lost so much weight that they would not write down how much I now weighed. Lunch was served and the domestic made a fuss about me staying by my bed. She said that patients only had meals in bed for the first three days and then I had to join the others at the table and one of the mothers very tactfully told her that it was alright for me to stay by my bed because sister had said that I ought to, so the domestic gave in graciously. After lunch one of the mothers went home with her baby boy and while she got ready, the sister dressed the baby in a turquoise baby grow and a crotched matinee jacket that looked lovely. The sister brought him round the ward to show everyone how nice he looked and she stopped at my bed and showed me the baby. She told me to look at him and his clothes and she said that the clothes fitted him very nicely and were first size baby clothes. She told me that he was a normal size baby and what I was knitting would not fit a baby that size. I said that he was huge compared to my baby because he was really very very much bigger than mine (about 8 lbs) and I said that I had plenty of clothes that size and bigger but I was just knitting a couple of

745c. Sets of very tiny clothes that would fit my baby straight away as soon as she was born. The Sister looked at me really strangely and said "so you've got plenty of things ready for the baby to wear?" as if she thought otherwise. I said "yes" and she looked puzzled and asked me if I had known that I was going to have a premature baby. I said "No, but I just had a feeling a week ago that my baby would be very small". She said half to herself "Your baby is very small too, those clothes would fit her. It's not your fault if you did not know that premature babies didn't wear clothes in an incubator". I said nothing, I did know that premature babies did not wear clothes in an incubator but I still felt in my heart that my baby would wear what I was knitting when she was out of her incubator. The Sister seemed ashamed and apologized that she had brought a baby to show me when I did not even have one of my own, but I was pleased to see him and I thought he was so beautiful. The Sister muttered that she was terribly sorry and took him straight back to his mother and helped them get ready to go.

Other mothers who were going home or knew that they would be going home soon were exchanging each others addresses. I knew people who had made friends with other mothers and their new babies while they were in hospital and I wanted to make friends with the other patients too. They were making arrangements to meet each other outside the Hospital and they looked as if they wanted to ask me but they were too embarrassed to as I had no baby and they said it would be awful if my baby died and I came to see them at their homes with their new babies.

746c. They decided among themselves that it would be upsetting for me and so they just could not bring themselves to ask me. They also said to each other that the nurses did not seem to want me to have anything to remind me of the baby after I went home so they thought that perhaps they had better not ask me. I knew they were embarrassed but it meant that I lost out on making any new friends while I was in hospital and it made me feel so alone.

Later when the babies were being fed and changed the Sister and a nurse came along to my bed. They said that they were terribly sorry but would I mind if they telephoned my mother to come and get me now because the labour ward was absolutely full up and they needed my bed for another mother. I did not want to go home at all, I felt so insecure about leaving the place where I had last seen my baby but I thought of the other mothers who had no bed to go into. I wondered if they would keep the babies in and send the mothers home if there were no beds for them to go into and since I knew the fear that I had felt of being parted from my baby even for three nights while she was put in the nursery, I could not bear it for another mother to be parted from her baby while I was laying in a bed that I could let them have. So I had no choice but to go home because it was the right thing to do. I told the Sister that I would go and she looked around the ward at the other mothers and told the nurse

747c. with her that she did not like to send me home just because I had no baby. She told her that I needed a hospital bed more than anyone else on that whole ward, probably in the whole hospital and that I should have been going to the Intensive Care Unit, not going home and she said that she hoped to goodness I would be better off at home, as if she had grave doubts about it. After they had gone a mother with twin boys was brought onto the ward and put into an empty bed further down on the opposite side of the ward. The two babys in their cots who came to the ward with their mother were pushed past my bed to the nursery and my heart ached with a heart breaking agony as I watched them and ached and ached to have my own baby in one of those cots and care for her myself. I looked around the ward at how many empty beds there were and a faint doubt that the sister might have played on my sympathy to get me to go home crossed my mind as there seemed to be plenty of empty beds and I did not believe that there could be all that many mothers in the Labour Ward but I would not let myself believe that the sister had lied to me to get me to go home and I just tried to convince myself that I had done the right thing in the circumstances.

A nurse came up to my bed after a while and told me that she had telephoned my neighbour and she was coming to collect me in her car with my mother. I felt absolute panic that I had still not seen a doctor to find out what was wrong with my baby. It suddenly seemed as if they were sending me home to get me out of the hospital so that they could avoid having to tell me about her, so very firmly and

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748c politely told the nurse that I was not going to leave the hospital until I had seen a doctor and had been told exactly what was wrong with my baby. I knew I had to demand to see a doctor and so I said that I was just going to stay where I was until I had seen one. My nerves were tattered shreds and I was stuttering to get my words out and I was suddenly aware that the broken stammer of my words was echoing the shattered state of my mind. The effect of my four day ordeal was wrecking my speech because my mouth was so numb and I was lisping as well so it was awful trying to sound as if I was being firm with them when my voice was useless. The nurse pulled up a chair and sat on it and said very kindly "We can tell you about your baby, you don't need a doctor, we've only been waiting for you to ask about her". She spoke very simply as if I had just woken up from a long sleep or something and said "When you ask, you are ready to know". I felt fury rise inside me at the agony of having waited so long, and even having stayed awake all through the night waiting for the doctors to come when the nurses could have just told me all the time. I caught a glimpse of the truth that the sister could have told me in the first place and it was just too much for my mind to bear. My fury let rip and I must have shown her that I was in no mood for anyone playing games with me. I corrected her and said that a nurse was not

749c. allowed to tell a patient what was wrong with her baby, only a doctor could do that because the Sister had said so and that was why I had been lying in this bed waiting and waiting for a doctor to come since Saturday afternoon and it was now Tuesday afternoon. I said that I was not leaving the hospital without seeing a doctor and as for asking, I had asked and asked and asked. The nurse was really shocked and she was afraid. She was listening to the way I talked and at once it was obvious that what I said was not what she had been told at all. I think she wondered what was going on and I felt awful that she knew what was wrong with my baby before I did. It just did not seem fair that I had been made to wait and wait while other people had been told how my baby was before me. The nurse told me that she would see Sister about it. She went down the ward and I heard her tell the Sister that I had demanded to see a doctor. She sounded quite puzzled when she told the Sister that I had been waiting for a doctor to come all that time because I thought that only a doctor could tell me what was wrong. She told the Sister that I had been silently waiting all that time thinking that a doctor was coming to me. The Sister laughed and said "Poor lamb, she must have taken what I told her literally, you'd better get a doctor to her, she's ready for it now".

Within five minutes the nurse came back with some tablets that she said I had to take or I could not see the doctor. I took them and she told me that a doctor would be coming to see me as soon as possible. She told me

750c. that I would probably like my mother with me when the doctor talked to me and so they would wait until my mother arrived before the doctor spoke to me. I said that I would talk to the Doctor alone and that my mother could wait outside if she arrived. The nurse seemed to be on my side about me seeing the doctor on my own if I wanted to and she said that they could keep my mother in the office until the Doctor had seen me. She said that when the doctor came it would be a paediatrician and she would not be long. Quite soon a young Indian Lady Doctor arrived with a white coat over her sari. I recognized her immediately as the school doctor who had been very nice to me at school and had agreed to examine me without taking all my clothes off when I had been so afraid of being undressed. The paediatrician looked as if she recognized me too as soon as she saw me but she did not say so. In fact she kept saying that she did not know anything about what had happened at all and she kept insisting that she had not been on duty when my baby had come into the Premature Baby Unit, even though I had not mentioned anything about that. She told me exactly the same as the Sister had told me about my baby having been born with Vaginal Atresia and Hydramnios and explained briefly that it meant that her vagina was missing and that there was a blockage of fluid. I nodded and she said quite simply that it had been put right in an operation.