

51c. in and put my suitcase beside me. The Ambulanceman gave my notes to the sister just as she was being called away and then they wished me luck as if they thought I was going to need it and then they went away. The ambulancemen were both so friendly, thoughtful and good natured and when they wished me luck they sounded strange that they were so careful not to mention the baby when they spoke. It was beginning to be obvious that people were trying not to mention the baby and it was more obvious than if they had casually said something. I knew that it was not because I was an unmarried mother because the midwife and the ambulancemen were too nice to have minded whether I was married or not. Dr. Galvan was different but when I thought about it I realized that even he had chosen his words carefully and not spoken about the baby to me. I hurriedly pushed any stupid ideas out of my mind that anything might be wrong and I convinced myself that the ambulancemen must have thought that I was a bit standoffish because I had been too tired to talk to them in the ambulance and so they had not liked to pry into my private affairs and mention my unborn baby.

As the ambulancemen disappeared two policemen who were waiting nearby looked across at me and then they looked at each other as if I was a bit of a joke. One of them asked me if I was having a baby and when I nodded to say that I was they looked at each other and one of them said 'Good Heavens!' The policeman who had spoken to me asked me how old I was as if they were going to tease me about it and say that I was too young to be having a baby or something, but when I told them very icily that I was eighteen years old the policeman looked shocked and apologized profusely. He

52c. really meant it and he said that if he had realized that I was that age he would not have asked me and he told me that he had thought I looked about half that age. I told the policeman that I knew and that it was alright but I felt tired of people looking at me and thinking that I was years younger than I was and I was even used to the bus conductors thinking that I was being funny when I asked for a full fare on the buses.

I felt a bit alarmed at what the policemen said because they had the same attitude as the receptionist who had seemed to think that I was a naughty girl whose parents should have had her tucked up in bed at home. I knew that I was not married and I would rather have been a nun than a mother but I had accepted the responsibility of having a baby very realistically and I was very well fitted to be a parent. I had been changing nappies and making up feeds for babies since I was two years old and I had practically brought up my brother and sister. I was used to coping with children and I had shouldered the burden of the whole problem of the responsibility of my family for years and years so I actually had the practical common sense knowledge of a woman who had worked hard to bring up a large family. As well as that I also had a good understanding of the physical and psychological development of a child that took motherhood a long way beyond just keeping a child clean and well fed. I had the understanding that my own mother had lacked and because I knew how much I had suffered because of what my parents had put me through

53c. I was determined that nothing would deprive my child of its right to a happy and secure childhood. I had respected my child as an individual with his or her own rights since the moment of conception and I was ready to provide my child with all the loving care and means needed to enjoy the life that was beginning for it. I knew how to care for my child rather than smother, how to guide rather than over protect and how to stand back and give my child his or her freedom to leave home and go their own way when they were ready to. I knew how to look at the world through my child's eyes rather than my own which is something some parents never achieve and if being young had any effect on my ability to be a parent it was that it helped me to understand my child from a closer angle.

I knew that things would be hard at times and I would have liked to have had an understanding husband to help me but I had not got one and I knew that my child and I were better off with Norman keeping as far away from us as possible. As far as my child was concerned I was better off being unmarried because it was better for the child to have only ever known one good parent than two parents who could never have been happy together. I knew that I was going to do everything I could to see that my baby grew up to be a happy and responsible adult and although I knew that many other parents felt the same way as I did I knew that I must be better fitted to be a parent than most of the married people who went into Lewisham Hospital to have a baby because I had seen quite a few of them in the Anti-Natal Clinic and had heard them asking such stupid questions that anyone would have known the answer to. They

54c. were all worrying about not knowing what to do when their babies were born where as I knew exactly what to do because I had always had to care for younger children and do baby-sitting and I certainly had far more practical experience than most of the other 'first baby' mothers and even some of the older mothers. They all seemed such 'worriers' and had been afraid of sleepless nights and such silly things as not being able to cope with everything where as I had been made to cope with running our home on top of having done a full day at school and my homework. Apart from all the serious problems that my family presented I had found myself working long into the night doing housework or nursing the sick animals that my mother had fetched home and so I had learnt as a teenager how to fight tiredness and then go to school again as normal the next day. My body had been trained to carry on beyond tiredness to see that our family was cared for and so any sleepless nights ahead of me held no fears for me. I also had plenty of patience that the other parents did not seem to have and that was so necessary for caring for children. The other parents seemed to be afraid of hardship or of having to put themselves out in any way but I had known only hardship and suffering in all my life and I had been forced to cope time and time again so I knew from experience how to cope with problems and exactly what was the right thing to do.

I looked at the two policemen and wanted to give them one of my profoundly educated statements about child psychology or something

55c. that I had come out with from time to time at school that had shocked the teachers that I understood so much despite looking so young, so dull and never getting good marks for my homework because I always had too much housework to do at home. The two policemen were surprised to find that I was not as young as I looked and I would have liked them to see that I was not as stupid as I looked either, but it was too complicated to explain that I was not too young to have a baby. I was too tired to be bothered to search my brains for the right words and so I just let it go.

I wished that I had better clothes on, some make up and a prettier pair of shoes than the size seven 'sensible' flat shoes that the babycare books suggested for expectant mothers but that nobody else seemed to wear. I knew that if I had been better dressed and had worn make-up I would have looked older and then they would not have thought that I was so young and immature but I had not had the money for such things. I had lived on and spent my dwindling savings until I had been allowed some social security money but when that came my mother had left me to pay for most of the things we needed in the home. I thought back over all the Christmas presents from the whole family to relatives and friends abroad that my mother had spent my money for me on and all the tins of spare food to stock the cupboard for while I was having the baby and for Christmas that my mother had made me buy and carry home. I had paid my mother two weeks of my allowance money as she had said that she was going to have to have extra money for her house-keeping if she was going to have to cope with out me in the house for ten days while I was having the baby, so that I had paid my

56c. mother two whole weeks of my allowance money to let me have ten days off the housework to have my baby. I had also bought a carpet and furniture for the house, as well as new clothes for my brother and sister. My mother had found me two outsize dresses for five pence each at a jumble sale and she had told me to make them do for maternity dresses and so with all that I had found that I had to buy with my money I had neither had the chance nor the opportunity to buy myself clothes. My mother had told me that my brother and sister needed new things and not me because they had to go to school and no one saw me because I was at home all day. I could remember how embarrassing it was to go to school without the right clothes and so I had paid up for clothes for my younger brother and sister and had gone without new things myself.

As I sat waiting in the casualty department I humbly reassured myself that the maternity dresses and other little things that I had wanted had been given up for a good cause but I had a sad sort of feeling that I would have loved to have looked nice in pretty maternity dresses like the other mothers did. It seemed so ironic as well that my mother had no plans for my next weeks allowance money and so apart from paying for my keep the rest of that weeks money would have been mine and I could have bought a nice maternity dress as I wanted to. Suddenly I was in labour and my pregnancy would be over in a matter of hours and so I had never even had a proper maternity dress and it seemed to me as if I always got so close to getting something I wanted and then I never got it but

570. I knew that it was the babys welfare that was important and not material things for myself and although I looked a sight in my clothes I knew that my soul and my conscience were crystal clear because I had chosen to be unselfish and put others before myself and that was more important.

At that moment the casualty sister came back and I told her that I had an overwhelming urge to push the baby to be born which I felt that I could do there and then. The sister laughed in a good humoured way as if she thought that I had no idea of what labour was all about and she told me that I was only in the very earliest stages of labour because she could tell just to look at me. She was going to leave me in casualty for a bit but she just happened to open my ante-natal card that the ambulance man had left with her and whatever she happened to read there made her change her mind as if she was surprised at something and she showed what was on the card to a nurse who was with her without letting me see and told her to take me straight up to the labour ward. The nurse took my suitcase in one hand and pushed me in the wheelchair with her other hand which was quite difficult for her to do and I felt sorry for her having to struggle along like that. So as we came to some heavy plastic double doors I leaned forward in the wheelchair to push one of the doors open for us to go through which the nurse could never have managed to do as both her hands were full. As I pushed the door open the door seemed to stick and then it sprang back catching me painfully on the top of my head. The nurse asked me if I was alright and although my head hurt badly I said that I was fine and did not tell her how much it had hurt.

58c. The nurse was about the same age as me and we chatted together as she pushed me along. I had never wasted words in talking unnecessarily and I had always been able to talk easily to other people when I was away from my family but just then I would have liked to have sat quietly and not have talked at all but when the nurse chatted to me I chatted back so cheerfully that she would never have guessed how tired I was. The nurse pushed me along a very long corridor and although the corridor was only dimly lit it looked bright and warm compared to the dark night outside. The brightest thing in the corridor was the League of Friends shop where all the lights inside it had been left on after the visitors at visiting time had deserted the corridor and shop for the night, and as we passed the shop it looked welcoming and the gifts in the shop window looked very bright, colourful and attractive. I saw a notice on the wall of the corridor giving the numbers of the wards and saying which floors the labour ward and premature baby unit were on and I felt so happy that my time had come and that I was so close to having my baby. When we reached the lift the nurse had to put down my suitcase to pull open the old fashioned lift doors and wheel me in to the lift and although she seemed very capable, everything seemed a lot for her to manage because the wheelchair and my case were so large and awkward. She asked me if I had got anything in the case because it felt so light and she said that just a carrier bag would have done. I apologized to her and said that someone else had packed it for me and that I had not even got a carrier bag. The nurse told me not to

59 c. worry very cheerfully and then told me that she hoped the lift was not going to play up tonight as it was slow to start and she said that it was old and got stuck at times.

When we got upstairs she wheeled me round a corner to the right and rang the bell beside the labour ward door. The bell rang very loudly and as we waited I noticed that all the doors ahead in the labour ward were wide open so that anyone could see in or walk in or out and a sickening feeling came over me that there was no privacy even here in a labour ward where a woman needed her privacy protected more than ever. On hearing the sound of the bell a nurse came out of one of the rooms and I was surprised to see that she was not wearing sterile gowns or a special uniform as I would have expected her to, but she was just in an ordinary uniform and white cotton apron. I could just imagine that nurse sitting around in the nurses canteen or rest room with spilt coffee and cigarette ash all over the place and I got the impression that the place was not clean enough for a baby to be born in.

The nurse was very friendly and had a warm smile and confident manner that spoke of good nursing experience and so I found that reassuring. I just thought that the nurses ought to change out of the uniforms that they wore in the rest of the hospital while they were in the labour ward. The labour ward nurse encouraged me to get out of the wheelchair and told me to go into the first room in the labour ward but as I went to stand up I found that I could not do it. The nurses went to offer me an arm each to help me up but even that was not enough to get me up as I seemed to have become a dead weight. The labour ward nurse who was older than the casualty nurse and further on in her training, remarked to her that I should have been a stretcher case and the casualty nurse defended herself

GDC. and said that I had been alright in casualty. The casualty nurse offered to push the wheelchair into the labour ward and help the labour ward nurse to get me into bed but the labour ward nurse refused to allow the wheelchair to be pushed into the labour ward. She made a joke of it and said that they did not want a wheelchair that had been wheeled all over casualty's dirty floor being wheeled all over their clean labour ward floor as it was not allowed. She said that they just had got to get me up and across the few steps into the room somehow and she said that I should be able to manage it. I sat in the wheelchair not knowing what to do because however hard I tried I just could not move at all and somehow between getting into the wheelchair ten minutes earlier and arriving at the labour ward I had lost the power to move. I was also speechless and more than being unable to talk, as if I was just struck dumb, it seemed that trying to think of something to say in my head before I spoke it was even more difficult than actually talking. I sat there trying to work out what to do and trying to work out if I had forgotten something that I ought to remember as I seemed to feel a bit puzzled about something and I could not work out what it was. The nurse who had brought me up to the labour ward from Casualty put down my suitcase against the doorway of the labour ward and then both nurses lifted me by my arms with all their might until they had got me upright so that I was standing on my feet. The nurse from casualty had taken my left arm and when she had helped me to get just inside the doorway she reminded the labour ward nurse that my suitcase was beside the door.

61c. may incase it got forgotten and then she said goodbye to us and took the wheelchair and hurried off to the lift to get back to casualty. I could manage without her help but at first I relied heavily on the labour ward nurse who held my right arm. My legs and feet felt numb as if I had been sitting or kneeling awkwardly and had lost the feeling in them, but as soon as I forced them to walk the feeling began to return in my legs and I managed to take a few steps. As soon as the nurse saw that I could walk on my own she let go of me and went on ahead into one of the rooms and I only managed to stay upright by the sheer good fortune that my back had become so straight and rigid that when I moved my back did not bend at all and cause me to fall over.

I remembered that the labour ward nurse had told me to go into the first room in the labour ward and although she had gone on into one of the rooms, I waited for her to come back and show me into the room that I was supposed to go into because I did not like to just open a door and walk into a room in someone else's place without being properly invited to go in because it was not polite to. The nurse saw me hesitate and she called me to come into the same room that she had gone into. She explained that the first closed door that I was hesitating about was actually a store cupboard and she said that she had meant the first delivery room and that she had not stopped to think that I would not know that the first room was actually the second door. I staggered to the door way of the room that the nurse was talking to me from and then waited in the door way. The room was lit only by the light from the corridor as the nurse had not put the light on and she seemed so familiar with the place that she did not seem to mind that she was moving around in the darkness. She asked me why I was standing in the door way and why I did

62c. not come on into the room and when I told her that it was because there was no light on and I could not see in there, she came over and switched the main light on and laughed about it in a friendly sort of way as if she seemed to think that I was a bit fussy.

I walked into the room very unsteadily and the nurse watched me cautiously as if she had just noticed the way I was walking. My right foot was numb and my leg felt as if I had tight socks on it and I limped as I walked and seemed to stamp my foot down because I could not feel anything in my legs but as I walked the feeling was coming back into my body all the time. In the room there was a bed beside the door and a locker beside the bed but there was no chair to sit on and so I just stood beside the bed in a daze, half afraid to move incase I fell right over. The nurse left me standing there beside the bed and she went off; when she came back she had brought my case, a hospital nightdress and another nurse to take overseeing to me and she told the other nurse that she was anxious to get off duty as she had been told that she could go early because the labour ward was quiet and she told the new nurse that it was not often that any one let her go off early so she was going.

As the two nurses talked I looked at my suitcase and vaguely wondered how such a piece of property could actually belong to me as I never had anything of my own and I felt so scared and obedient to do what ever I was told to do that I did not even know that I had the right to touch and open my own case which seemed suddenly strange and not how I would normally have been. Somehow I was just rigid with fear at what was going to happen

63c. but I did not seem to realize it. The new nurse told me to get into the nightdress which I did as quickly as I could while trying not to fall over. I felt as if I was in a bit of a daze and I did not even ask for the door to be closed or some screens to be fetched while I changed, which was most unusual for me as I could not normally bear anyone to be in the same room as me while I was changing. I wanted to have the bath that you are promised in maternity advice books that told you what happened when you arrived in hospital to have the baby and I did not seem to be going to be offered one and I did seem to have enough sense to ask for one which was a most unusual way for me to start behaving. I found that I could not seem to think and I could not speak, I just stood there in the hospital nightdress feeling very tired and dirty, with my clothes pathetically bundled in my arms in a way that made me understand what it was like to be a refugee as I stood there waiting to be told what to do next and I had a strange feeling of being in a state of shock and being too numb to do anything except exactly what I was told to do.

Moments later I was surrounded by half a dozen pupil midwives who seemed very young to me. Some of them like the two nurses who I had previously seen were from the day shift and were just going off duty and the rest of them were starting night duty so that there were twice as many nurses about on the labour ward as there should have been. They stood in the room and had a good look at me and muttered that they had better fetch the sister but they spoke to each other and not to me, they only spoke about me and not to me and I had long lost my voice. The nurse who had been asked to take over from the labour ward nurse who had by then gone off duty, gave me a look of disgust and hastily took my clothes away from me and stuffed them into the locker next to where I was standing, leaving

64c. me standing there with nothing. I just stood there looking a bit bewildered because I really had no idea what I was supposed to be doing next and she seemed annoyed that I was so useless. She told me to get onto the bed which I did with very great difficulty. Everyone seemed to be watching me but no one helped me as I struggled to get onto the high old fashioned bed. The bed was pushed against the wall in the corner of the room and I did finally manage to get onto it. I sat there on the top of the very wide bed looking at the nurses and wondering why they seemed so annoyed that I had such a struggle to climb onto the bed. I looked at the beautiful soft blue flannelette nightdress that they had given me to wear. They had brought me a brand new one that looked like a beautiful long dress on me and it had pretty yellow and pink flowers all over the material that looked like little coloured daisies. I had never worn anything so nice before it was better quality material than any of my day clothes and it had been beautifully sewn by machine. We did not have pretty clothes for bed at home because my mother had always found us things from jumble sales that would 'do' us and so it was the first time that I had ever worn anything so nice and new but as I sat looking down at the beautiful night-dress one of the nurses who was standing looking at me moved across to me and pulled the top of the nightdress across so that it overlapped at the top opening where it had no buttons and gave me a filthy look as if I had no modesty. It was not even a low cut neck but I felt ashamed that I had not noticed that myself but all that I had

65c. noticed were the pretty flowers on it and the soft material.

A plump and friendly black sister came into the room and said good evening to me ever so nicely. I nodded to her to say good evening back but I could not find my voice to speak with. The sister picked up my Ante-Natal Card that had been put on one side by the labour ward nurse after the Casualty nurse had left it with her, and the sister read it to herself. The pupil midwives all crowded round her reading it over her shoulder and the sister spoke to them as if she did not mind me hearing what she said to them because she just seemed to assume that I already knew what had been written on the card and that I knew exactly what was going on. She did not explain anything to me and she did not realize at all that no one had let me see what was on the card or that I had actually been sent into hospital without being told why. She told one of the nurses to call the houseman and she kept looking at me as if she was a bit puzzled because she had been friendly to me and she seemed to expect me to say something back to her but I just sat looking at everyone and said nothing. She just did not realize that my mind had gone completely blank and that I could not remember any words to speak with, I just waited for someone to tell me what was going on and I felt afraid because nobody did.

Out in the corridor the sister told the nurses to get me ready and she picked out one of the nurses who she told to go over to the Ante Natal Clinic to get my case notes. The case notes for mothers in their last month of pregnancy were kept in a trolley on the labour ward every night incase any of the mothers came into hospital during the night to have their babies but I was only eight months pregnant and so my notes were still in the Ante Natal

66c Clinic. The Sister gave the nurse a bunch of keys and picked out what the nurse was to use for her but the nurse did not want to go. She said that it was dark and empty in the Ante Natal clinic because she had been in there to collect notes before when it was locked up at night and she said that she was scared of the dark and had been terrified in there because of all the empty cubicles in the clinic. She refused very politely and said that she was very sorry but she was just not going over there alone. Several of the other pupil midwives volunteered to go over to the Ante Natal clinic with the nurse or instead of her but the sister would not have it. She told the nurse not to be so silly and that if she could not venture out into the dark alone at night then she would never be any use as a midwife. The Sister told the nurse that if she did not go over to the clinic then she would write that in her report and the nurse seemed to think the Sister was being most unfair with her and she began to be quite cheeky to the Sister. The nurse told the Sister that she would go over to the Ante-Natal clinic but she would not go in there alone because she was going to get a porter or someone to actually go in there with her and if she could not find anyone then she would ask a nursing officer to go in there with her. The Sister seemed alarmed about it that she let one of the other nurses go with her. The two nurses were back in no time at all and the Sister started to tease the nurse that it had not been that bad in there had it but both the nurses said very firmly that it was awful in there and that they had heard the most peculiar noises in the empty place as if there

67c. were several other 'invisible' people in there 'tearing the place apart' even though there was nobody there, and when both the nurses genuinely said the same thing the sister did listen to them about it more thoughtfully. The nurse said that they had found my notes out on the desk which was not where they should have been, and that they were in two files as if someone had been sorting them out but had just left them out and The nurses said that they had just brought the papers in one file although they had not stopped to sort them out. The Sister told the nurses to sort the notes out and then she went off somewhere.

The two nurses went over to a corner of the room that I was in and sorted the file out by fitting pages into the file that the doctors had written on each time that I had been to the Ante Natal Clinic and matching them into place by the dates on my Ante-Natal Card. There seemed to be some confusion that the pages did not fit together with the dates and several of the other nurses who went over to help them said that the two files were not for the same patient. They checked the name, address, age and religion and said that it was definitely all mine and so they just had to put it all together as best as they could. While several of the nurses took my notes apart and sorted them out into order two of the other nurses arrived to shave me. They called several other pupil midwives into the room to watch because there was only one other patient in the labour ward and so there was nothing much for the nurses to do. I only wanted one or two people in the room but when I asked for the people who were only watching to go they were most indignant and said that I could not have that. They told me that a lot of people would

68c. be in and out of the room all the time
and that even more people would be
present at the delivery. They were
almost sarcastic about it and said
that it was just too bad if I did not
like it because I had just got to put
up with it. They asked me if I had the
baby's father with me and when I said
no, they told me that in that case I
would definately have a lot more
people around me at the delivery.
Apparently they would have allowed
me more privacy if I had got a husband
or someone else with me who wanted
to be present at the birth but as I
did not have anyone with me then
I was to do as I was told. It sounded
to me as if they wanted students to
see my delivery or something even
though Lewisham Hospital was not
a teaching hospital and the nurses
just seemed to accept that if a
delivery was not going to be a family
occasion then it would be used to
the best medical teaching advantage.
The nurses were so stern that they
did not want any nonsense from
me that I found that I was just
struck dumb in a most horrible
way that I was so shocked with fear
that I could not speak and it
seemed awful to me that a woman
who was brazen enough to want
her husband or family to see her
give birth could be allowed more
privacy than she did not need than
someone like me who had deliber-
ately turned up alone because I
needed to be alone. The nurses
told me that any of them could
come in to watch anything that
was done to me and they would
not even close the door to the
corridor because it seemed as if
once they knew that I did not like

69c. the door open then they made sure that it stayed open as if they thought that was the best and quickest way to get me over my modesty.

When the nurses started to shave me no one explained what they were going to do or asked me if they could do it. I only knew what was going on because I had read that it would happen in childbirth books because the nurses would not let me see what was on the medical tray they brought, which only turned out to be a bowl of soapy water and a razor and nothing for them to have kept hidden, and all they said to me was to tell me sharply to open my legs as if they expected me to be very difficult or something. I had never ever been difficult at all, all I wanted was quiet and privacy and because they would not let me have it I was terrified of them all and I found that I could not even open my mouth to speak. As the nurses shaved me one of the ones who was watching saw a spot on my skin and she pointed to it without saying a word so that the nurse who was shaving me could see and all the nurses drew back and said 'ugh!' as if they were quite revolted and were concerned that I might have V.D. and be dirty as if they were actually looking for signs of that on me. Even though I knew that spot was harmless I still felt ashamed and what was left of my battered nerves shrivelled into fear. I wanted to insist on being allowed absolute privacy and to tell them to leave me alone but I was too terrified to say a word.

The same nurse who shaved me told me sternly to roll over onto my side and when I did as she told me she gave me an enema. They had brought it in ready to use and had not shown it to me or

70c. told me that they were going to use it and if I had not guessed that it was an enema I would have had no idea of what was happening to me. I had never been in hospital before and I had never seen an enema before and it was only when I saw the label and read that it was a phosphorous enema when the nurse put down the empty plastic bag that I found out that I had guessed correctly about it being an enema. Even then, the nurse quickly removed the thing away from where I could see it when she saw me read the label as if they were making every attempt they could to stop me from knowing what was happening to me. I expected the enema to work straight away and I asked the nurses for a bedpan which they quickly brought me. They also fetched a tiny and most inadequate screen that anyone could see straight through and put it at the end of the bed only. They would not put any screens at the side of the bed and said that I must just take no notice of the eight or so people in the room and they said that I must just take no notice of the eight or so people in the room. They would definately not close the door to the corridor and my mind felt as if they were shattering it to pieces. When I just passed the enema the nurses were so furious with me that I felt as if it was some awful nightmare that could not actually be happening to me.

One of the nurses took the bedpan away and two other nurses took the screens away which I wanted left where they were or put across the doorway if the door was not allowed

71c. to be closed. The nurses that were left in the room started to question me about why I had not been to the Clinic on the day before and when I said that I had missed my appointment because I had not felt well the nurse just snorted about it. Another nurse asked me why I had not been to any of the childbirth or relaxation classes and I wanted to tell them that I had actually gone along to the relaxation and childcraft classes but that when I had seen no one else without a husband going in and that all the other mothers had looked so nice in their pretty maternity dresses, I had been so ashamed of the sight I looked and of being on my own that I had been too ashamed to go in and had walked back home. I wanted to tell the nurses that I had not particularly needed to or wanted to go to the classes because I had heard some of the stupid questions that other mothers asked in the Anti-Natal Clinic and I did not want to join in any discussions or lectures at their childish levels. I had done so much biology at school that I did not want to sit and be talked down to by someone giving a simple demonstration of how to clean and sterilize feeding bottles when I could name more types of microbes than the person giving the lecture probably could do themselves and I always cleaned everything religiously clean so that if I sterilized a bottle the whole thing would have been completely sterile. I had plenty of experience of handling babies because I had been changing nappies and giving bottles since I was actually two years old, and I had the practical experience behind me of an older woman who had worked hard to bring up a large family. I told the nurses around me that I

72c. had borrowed a lot of different books on relaxation and childbirth from the public library and from friends and I had read them instead of going to the classes because I could learn faster on my own and when I said that I saw a flicker of interest cross the nurses faces but it was not enough to satisfy them and they still kept questioning me sternly. I felt suddenly afraid because I had thought that the classes were optional and until that moment I had never realized that they took a list of who had turned up or not that went down on a patients medical records from which the medical staff could make a positive or negative judgement about the patient.

The nurses kept saying that according to their records I had not made one appearance at their classes and they kept saying that I had 'not even come once, not even once' and I found myself thinking that I had got good reason not to have, but that I was so scared of the whole situation that I could not tell them that incase they got even more livid with me. They seemed to know all about me but I had never seen any of them before at all and I was not like they seemed to be suggesting. As far as I was concerned the fact that I had not been to any of the classes was good because I had not needed to go and even if I had not been too ashamed to go, I had still not gone to the hospital intending or expecting to learn anything new because I really did know a lot more than the classes taught and

73c. it would have taken a lecture on the finer points of handling difficult deliveries or something intended for Doctors at the Royal College of Obstetrics and Gynaecology to have interested me.

One of the pupil midwives told me that they had got to get the Doctor to see me because my bump was too small for my dates and she said that I had only got myself to blame for it. The nurses were most definitely blaming me for what was wrong and I could not work out why they were saying it because I had not done anything wrong. The pupil midwife who told me that my bump was too small for my dates prodded my stomach very deeply with her fingers with no thought for my baby and not in the expert way that the doctors had always done. She just kept jabbing my stomach sharply as if there was no baby in there anyway and so it did not matter. She told me nastily that something had obviously gone very wrong and I felt suddenly cold and shivery at her words and I drew in my breath sharply as she prodded my stomach very deeply and definitely not how she should have done it as if she was defying me to tell her not to because she could see that I was too terrified to.

I could hardly believe what the pupil midwife was telling me that something was wrong or that everyone seemed to think that it was all my fault without any question because that was the complete opposite of what everyone had kept telling me throughout my pregnancy. Everything suddenly seemed to be going unbelievably wrong and I felt betrayed by the doctors because I began to wonder if they had known all the time that something was wrong and had deliberately told me otherwise.

74c. I had asked several times if everything was alright because I had only put on a few inches around my waist and the doctors had always answered me by asking me if I would consider having an abortion and when I had always said no they had replied by firmly reassuring me that everything was perfectly alright. When I heard what the nurse said I began to wonder if they had only reassured me because if I would not have an abortion then there was nothing else that could be done. Suddenly at the last moment I had been abruptly told that something was wrong after all and because I felt that the doctors had not been honest with me I lost my trust in them at the one time when I needed it most crucially. I felt that the doctors must have known that something was wrong all the time because my lump had been too small for its stage in pregnancy all the time and that if something was wrong at that moment then it had been wrong all the time and that all the precious months that I could have had as time to adjust my mind to the fact that something was going to be wrong had been stolen from me by the doctors who must have looked me straight in the face and told me bare faced lies.

There was the sound of a bleep out in the corridor which I had never heard before and the houseman who had seen me in the clinic and been very nice to me, came into the labour ward. The Sister met the houseman outside the open door of the room that I was in and he asked her if it was her who was bleeping him. She said that it was

75c. and he said that he had thought so and that it was why had had come straight to the labour ward than trying to answer his sleep by telephone. He added that he had only been in one of the Maternity wards so it had been as quick to come straight to the labour ward as to try to telephone and if it had not been the labour ward sleeping him then he could have just the labour ward telephone to find out who was. The Sister asked him if he could see me and then she spoke to him in a much lower voice that I could not hear properly and then he came straight into the room to see who I was and when he recognized me he smiled at me and said "Hello, its an old friend of ours" very slowly and thoughtfully and in a very friendly manner. The houseman was very good looking and the nurses all seemed very attracted to him because in a matter of moments they were all round him like bees round a honey pot. I rather liked him myself but that night I was glad to see him because he was the only person out of them all who I had ever seen before and since I knew that he cared about his patients I felt a lot safer with him around.

The houseman asked the nurses for an examination tray and while they rushed off to get it he told me that he was going to examine me. When they came back pushing a trolley the Sister stayed to watch and all the nurses came round to watch including some who the Sister called in from the corridor. I did not like so many people around me and I did not want them all watching me while the doctor examined me and so I asked him if just the Sister and perhaps one nurse could stay to chaperone with the door closed and if all the other nurses who were not needed could leave because I did not want people watching me. The Doctor refused very firmly and said that I could not because in my case I would

76c. have a lot of people around me, and he said that the door could not be closed because the doors were kept wide open in case of an emergency, which made me feel very uncomfortable. The doctor seemed to have doubts for a moment about what he had said and he asked me if I had the babys father with me. I said no and felt afraid because I did not want the babys father present and then the doctor shook his head as firmly as before and said that then I would most definitely have a lot more people to watch my labour and delivery. He confirmed what the nurses had said about a birth being used for teaching purposes if it was not to be a family occasion and I felt awful because I was afraid of people looking at me undressed and it seemed to me that the only thing the hospital staff would take any notice of to allow me any privacy was my babys father who I was equally afraid of. The Houseman told the Sister that it did not matter anyway because even if the father did come along he would not be allowed to watch this delivery, and he spoke as if there was going to be something different about my babys birth. I felt cold and shivery and as if I had a peculiar kind of headache as well as being afraid because so much was going wrong. I felt so awful with so many people looking at me undressed and even worse with the door to the corridor wide open. There was no privacy at all and it was the worse thing that could ever happen to me. When the Doctor had finished examining me he turned straight to the Sister and

77c. told her that it was definitely a' premature breech' and that Mr. Buckle the Consultant would have to be sent for.

I only learnt at that moment that my baby was going to be premature and be born in the breech position by listening to their conversation. I knew that the baby was early but the word premature had not crossed my mind and when I thought about it I realized that it was right of course. I felt annoyed with myself for having done so much housework because it must have been that which had brought on early labour on and I felt even more annoyed with Dr Galvan and several of the district midwives who had told my mother that it was quite alright for me to carry on as normal during my pregnancy when she had asked them because I was objecting to doing it all. My mother had kept reminding me of their words when I had been too tired to carry on and I knew that no one had realized just how much housework it was 'normal' for my mother to expect me to do each day.

The Houseman on the Labour ward talked to the Sister quite openly in front of me but he did not say a word to me even to mention to me that my baby was going to be premature or that I was going to have a breech birth. They both seemed to think that I knew all about what was wrong and I realized that the 'premature breech' must have been what was written on my F ante Natal Card that everyone had been so careful not to let me see and the Houseman and the Sister, who were very firm with me about hospital procedure but still friendly towards me, had just not stopped to consider that I had actually been sent into hospital without being told why. I realized that when I had felt the baby slip back inside me and to the left of my abdomen that the

78c babys position must have become breech then at that moment because the last time the doctor had examined me at the clinic the baby had been the right way round and I had only felt it move that once. I felt really cross with my mother because if she had let me call the midwives twelve hours earlier when I had first asked to and if I had been in proper medical care I could have given birth to the baby at that moment without trying to hold off giving birth and the position of the baby would not have become a breech. Even though I could not turn the clock back and put things right I decided that things were not too bad because I knew of a lot of people who had been premature and who had grown up quite alright. I even felt that it might even be safer somehow if my baby was coming into the world feet first because if the baby was premature then its head would be better protected if its feet came first. Premature births and breech deliveries went together as being quite usual so that if a baby was premature then it was often in the breech position as well as far as I could recall and so it seemed to me that it must be natures way because nature had its own good reasons for doing things.

The Doctor was annoyed with me that I had not been to the Ante Natal Clinic the day before because he said that they could have tried to turn the baby then but it was too late now. I told him that the baby had only turned since about four o'clock that afternoon since I had been in labour but he said that I could not possibly know. I told him

79c. that I had known exactly what position my baby was in through out my pregnancy and even which ovary the egg that had created it had come from because my body was just that sensitive that I knew exactly what was happening in it all the time and I felt really afraid when the Doctor and nurses just laughed at me as if I was a huge joke, because I had never stopped to think that other people, especially doctors and nurses, would not accept just how much I knew about myself.

The Doctor told the Sister that he was going to break my waters and they sent a nurse to get a trolley for that with the things that the Doctor needed on it. The Doctor asked me again if I had anyone with me and when I said no he looked sorry for me even though it was what I wanted to have no one with me. I very politely made it clear that I did not want anyone with me and that if he had anything to say he could say it to me without asking for a next of kin but when I waited for him to say something to me he still did not say anything. I wanted to know if it was right for them to want to break my waters because the sensations in my abdomen had become so weak and slowed right down to nothing after the pupil midwife had prodded my abdomen that I thought they were stopping. They could hardly have been called contractions because there was certainly no pain and I thought that if they were stopping and the baby was premature then if the labour stopped by itself then surely it would be better because the baby would have longer to grow. When I raised the question with the doctor he thought I was objecting and starting to be difficult and he quickly insisted that it had to be done and he would offer no explanation except that it was routine

so. and that everyone had to have it done. I did not like what they were doing but I did not have enough medical knowledge to argue with them about it. If the doctor had told me the facts, for and against what he was going to do, in a battery of medical jargon like some enthusiastic young medical student then I would have felt that at least he knew what he was talking about and I would even have understood what he was talking about but he would not go into any explanation to me at all and he just insisted that it was to be done. I had no choice to object to what they were doing because I had nowhere else to go to have my baby, there was no point in trying to walk out of the hospital and go somewhere else because no other hospital would take me and if I had tried to leave the labour ward at that stage in my labour they would just have kept me there forcibly or sedated me which I did not want. So however badly they treated me or however much I objected to whatever they were doing to me I had no escape from it and they were certainly not going to let me ask for any explanation of what was going on or allow me anything that I wanted, even the common decency of a little privacy that I needed with a desperation deeper than my whole existence. There were no other people on the labour ward to ask if they could see me instead because all the staff had come into my room and they were all of the same opinion that there would be a lot of people watching me and that I was to do as I was told without any explan-

81c. ation from them. So I knew that this was the place where my baby was going to be born because there was nowhere else to go and that these were the people who were going to deliver my baby because it was them who were on duty there and it felt as if I was trapped in a horrible situation that I really had absolutely no escape from. In any other situation, such as if I had just broken my leg I could have refused to let them treat me until they sent me to a better hospital with different staff but my babys birth was so inevitable and the time before the birth was running out all on its own, that I knew that these were the people who were going to handle my babys delivery whether I liked it or not and what frightened me most of all was that their attitude towards me personally was so hostile and I did not know why. They all seemed to think that they knew all about me but I had never seen any of them before except the Houseman and they were all openly blaming me for the state that I was in when all that I had done was to have done too much housework for my mother and even that had been 'on medical advice' from Doctors and midwives who had given my mother advice about me against my wishes, and because I had been strictly taught that it was good for me to be doing housework for my mother I could not see what I had done wrong. I was caught in a situation that I did not understand and that I could not do anything about because the staff would not answer my questions and because I was so afraid of making their attitude towards me any worse by making a fuss I had no choice but to give in and let them do what they thought was right and all I could do was to hope that they knew what they were doing because I had most serious doubts that they did not know what was the best thing for my baby and I in a way

82c that made a most awful fear come over me. The Houseman told the Sister that I was very well dilated, a good six centimetres." The Sister said "So she is ready then?" but the Houseman said no and he told her that even though I was well dilated there was no sign of the baby because my uterus had not started to expel the baby and my waters had not broken. He broke my waters but when he did it there was hardly any water at all and the sister said that they had not broken. The Doctor said that they had broken but that some women carried very little water and I only had a trickle.. Once my waters were broken I got strong sharp pains across my abdomen that came every few minutes and that I recognized straight away as contractions because they were nothing like the soft pulling sensations that I had been feeling before.

The telephone rang in the corridor and several nurses went to answer it and came back to say that the switchboard were saying that Mr. Buckle the Consultant could not be reached at his home. The Houseman looked concerned and said that Mr. Buckle 'must have gone out' and he said irately that he did not like the idea that a Consultant had gone out when he was on call even if it was 'friday night!'. The Houseman told the Sister that I would have to make do with a registrar but that it was 'not right because Consultants should deliver these premature breeches.'

The Doctor went over to the corner of the other side of the room where he filled out my notes on a shelf on the wall and he asked me what time I had gone into labour. The midwife

83c had been most insistant on the same point over the telephone earlier when I had asked her to come to see me at home because I was in labour. She had insisted that she did not want to know when the sensations in my back had started but when I had thought that I might be in labour because I had felt something in my abdomen. I had told her that I had first felt my muscles in my abdomen moving at four o'clock that morning when I had woken up from my sleep but the Houseman said that the midwife had written 4pm and not 4am on my Ante Natal card. When I told him that it was four o'clock in the morning he would not believe me because he said that I would have called someone earlier and he wanted to know why I had not done so but he would not listen for me to explain. The Houseman's attitude seemed to be a very changed one from the attitude in the Ante Natal clinic where the staff had kept saying to everyone that they were not to rush to get to the hospital until their contractions came strongly every ten minutes as they would only be kept sitting around doing nothing and if it was a home confinement then there was no rush to call the midwives because once they were called they had to stay with you and as labour lasted a long time they did not want to be sitting around in your house for a couple of days. I knew that labour lasted a long time because my Great Grandmother had been in labour for four days and I knew other people who had been in labour for two whole days so I knew that it was true and I had been careful to be considerate in calling out the midwives even though it had been my mothers fault that I had been delayed a further twelve hours in telephoning them and I felt an awful feeling of

84c suffering that I could not tell the Houseman what my mother had said.

The Houseman told the nurses that if I had been in labour since four am and not four pm then I had been in labour for about seventeen hours and not five and he said that if that was so then it was a different situation but he said that he did not think I had been in labour all that time at all. I tried to tell him that I had felt the same sensations that I had been feeling in my abdomen, in my back since ten to one the previous day and I said that according to my calculations I had been in labour for thirty two hours already and not seventeen but the Houseman would definitely not believe that. He was prepared to accept that there could be some mistake about it being four am or four pm because I was so widely dilated but he said that if I had been in labour since the day before then I would be absolutely exhausted and he told me that I was not. He told me that many women get backache in their pregnancy and if yesterdays backache was all that I had experienced then I had got away with backache in my pregnancy very lightly. He seemed to think that I had no idea that I was going to be in for a lot of pain in labour and I felt a sinking sort of feeling come over me that they did not realize just how tired I was. Tiredness never seemed to show in me and I did not know how to get across to them that I was absolutely exhausted. I felt that I was not only at the end of my labour and not at the beginning of it but that I was also at the end of my tether because I felt that I could not take very much more of it all.

85c. The Houseman asked me if I had got any one with me and then he asked me where my family were and if they knew where I was. When I said that my family were at home and that they knew that I was in hospital, he asked me if I would like someone to fetch them for me and I very firmly said no thank you to him. I had come into hospital to get away from my family and I did not want anyone to go and get them at all. The Houseman ignored me and told the Sister to see if she could find a telephone number for my family in the telephone books and when she came back saying that she could not find one, even though I had told them that there was not one, she asked the Houseman if he wanted her to get the Police to fetch them. The Houseman said no and that he had only wanted to get someone to verify my story but I felt a slight feeling of panic that they did not believe me and that they would just get my family to come to the hospital even if I did not want them to come. I had come into hospital to get away from my family's prying eyes and I did not want them to be allowed near me but I also began to have a worse fear of my family speaking to the Doctors as if I felt that if my family were allowed to speak to the Doctors then they would take over completely and take my baby from me but I pulled myself together and pushed that thought out of my mind because it was not going to happen if I could stop it. As the Houseman spoke I also knew that even if he had spoken to my mother who was the family spokesman and who told everyone else what to say, she would never have admitted to the Doctor that I had been in labour for so long. I knew my mother and I knew that

86c. if she did come to the hospital she would only have told the Doctor in her calm but bossy manner that I was talking a lot of nonsense and making a lot of unnecessary fuss about myself because I had seen her do it time and time again to teachers, social workers and the Police when I had run away from home and begged them not to send me back home. Lies just rolled off my mothers tongue and because she was so determined and forceful no one ever listened to me. I did not want her to come to the hospital because I wanted the Doctors to listen to me and I knew that if she did come then she would squash my only chance of getting them to believe me. I told the Doctor that I did not want my family to be fetched and as he had no way of contacting them he said alright. Apart from not wanting anyone to fetch my family I did not want anyone to know that there was anything wrong at home either incase they wrote it down on my babys records. I wanted my baby to have the clean start in life that I had never had and I most certainly did not want my baby to start life as a social case known by a file of case notes like I had been all my life simply because I came from a bad home.

The Houseman asked me if I would like anything for the pain, and thinking that it would be nice to sit up in bed for the rest of my labour chatting to the nurses or reading and feel no discomfort at all, I agreed to have something. I expected the doctor to give me a couple of phenotic tablets and I

87C. was surprised when he sent two nurses to get an amount of Pethidine which he wrote down. While they were gone a very nice nurse came up to my bed and spoke to me, she was only an ordinary student nurse and not a pupil midwife since there were a mixture of both sets of nurses on duty, but she had more sense than all the other nursing staff put together because she was so kind. She talked to me for a bit so kindly and as soon as I felt that I had found a friend in her I found my voice again and because I felt better I began to talk to her and get my questions answered because she would have told me anything that I wanted to know. I asked her if this was the actual room that my baby would be born in because I thought that she might tell me where the delivery room was so that I could work out in my own mind where they would take me and so that I would know that when they took me there the delivery was imminent even if no one told me what was going on. I expected to be taken to a room something like a small surgical operating theatre or something but to my dismay the nurse said that this was the room that I would be in for the birth and she pointed to a black narrow table across the room and said that they would just move me onto that when I was ready to deliver. I looked around the room and thought that it was an awful place for a baby to be born in and I realized that my thoughts were almost echoing what my mother had thought to herself before I was born.

The room was dirty and the paintwork was faded and shabby. There was a washbasin on the wall in front of the bed I was in and the washbasin had obviously just had some repair work

88c. done to it because the rubble and lumps of cement and dust that the builders had left was still littering the floor and in a pile against the wall. I remembered my own bedroom at home that was spotlessly clean and looked as if it expected a baby, there was a stark difference between my own room and this one where my baby was going to be born and it was awful to think that I had come into hospital expecting it to be safer than my own home only to find that it was dangerously dirty. I had also expected to find quiet and privacy in hospital and to be shown some respect but I had not been allowed any privacy and I had been made to feel ashamed and embarrassed. I had been in labour longer than the Doctor or anyone else thought and I was sure of it and I had no faith in the Doctor having broken my waters as well as having a feeling that there was worse to come. I did not like the way the staff were taking control of the situation without stopping to consider if what they wanted to do was the best thing for my baby and I. I was not afraid of pain but I could not bear people seeing me undressed and I knew that I was going to have to face the ordeal of that and of people touching me which was too much for me to bear because it was the one thing that held me in terror. There was no escape from the situation and it was made unbearable for me because the Doctor would not answer the questions that I asked him. I could not stand it and in a few silly words I told the

89c. nurse that I wished that I could be put right out of it and know nothing about it all. The nurse remonstrated with me gently by asking me if I really wanted to miss seeing my baby be born. I said that I definitely did not want to miss that but I was worried and I wanted someone to stay with me and talk to me. The nurse seemed delighted to hear that and she said that if that was all I wanted then I had nothing to worry about because someone would stay with me all the time. She said that a nurse would be allocated to stay with me all the time. and that she would ask the Sister if she could do it. As soon as I knew that I would not be alone I felt completely at ease again and I said that I did not think that I even needed any pain killers at all. The doctor looked around from writing my notes and he was pleased that I was more cheerful because he had not really known what was the matter with me and when he heard that I was so worried because I wanted someone from the hospital to stay with me he seemed quite relieved that the answer to my problems was so simple. He would have cancelled the drugs if I did not need them but when the two nurses came back they had already drawn up the injection into a syringe and needle that they had ready to give me and they were annoyed that the drug would be wasted. I was a bit surprised to see a fully drawn up injection because I had only expected a couple of Asprins or Phasic painkillers which would have been more than sufficient for me. The nurses looked at the Houseman as if they were expecting him to insist that I had the injection when they saw me objecting because it was routine that all mothers were given Pethidine by injection

90c when they arrived on the labour ward but the doctor did not insist at all. He told them that it was up to me if I had it or not because I had dilated to more than six centimetres without anything and it was possible that I actually did not need any pain-killers. The nurses were furious because the drug would be wasted it went against everything that they were being taught as pupil midwives and because they wanted me in particular to have the whole of what was in that syringe that they had drawn up, and as they said that they kept looking at the features of my face in exactly the same way as Janet our neighbour had been doing. The Doctor said that it was up to me but after taking one look at the furious look on the nurses faces I gave in and let them give it to me rather than make a fuss. As soon as I looked defeated the nurses did not waste a second because they pushed up my night-dress, wiped my leg quickly and stuck the needle into my leg as quickly as they could before I changed my mind. I did not need the injection but I thought that it was only a painkiller that would not do me any harm so I let them give it to me and did not worry about it.

The Houseman finished writing my notes and he walked to the door, he told me to have a good long sleep and said that he would see me later on in my labour and then he went off. I was not tired and now that they had finished examining me for a while I felt more at ease and wanted to chat to the nurses or read and I wanted to ask questions during my labour about how things were progressing because

91c. I was scientifically interested in everything. The Sister came back into the room and when the nurse who had been talking to me asked her if she could be the nurse allocated to stay with me the Sister said no. The nurse was finishing her shift and was late off duty already but she would willingly have given up her own time to stay and befriend me but the Sister would not let her and after the nurse had promised me that someone else would come she said goodbye to me before the Sister sent her away. Some of the other nurses went away too because there was nothing left to watch and I found myself alone as I waited for someone else to come to me but no one came. When just the Sister and two nurses were left in the room the injection began to work and I started to feel sick and dizzy. I felt awful and I started to have difficulty catching my breath. I had quite a lot of pain in my abdomen and I moaned quietly because the pain in my abdomen had started to be sharp and uncomfortable when the doctor had broken my waters but it did not feel as if it was anything to do with the baby being born because something else hurt and it felt as if the babys head was pressing against something that was very sore in the left side of my abdomen. I was lying flat on my back because I had been told to lie down while the Doctor examined me and there was only one pillow on the bed. I wanted to sit up so that I could breathe better and so I reached behind me to the bars at the back of the old iron bed so that I could pull myself up by them as my arms felt so tired but the Sister saw me lifting myself to sit up and she told one of the nurses to stop me. She told the nurse to look at how strong I must be to be able

92c. to lift myself up like that and she told the nurses that it was women with that kind of strength who got deranged with pain during labour and could injure midwives because she had seen it all before. I felt shocked at what she said as I had never thought that, I gathered that I was supposed to lay flat and so I lay still at once to show them that I had no intention of doing anything wrong like they said. I moaned quietly because I could not breathe and I could not think of the words I needed to tell them and if I could not sit up I could not do anything to help myself and I lay there struggling to think of what else I could do that would be allowed by them. The Sister heard me moaning and she shouted at me sharply to 'shut up'. She said that she did not want to hear a sound from me or else she would 'shut me up properly'. Her words seemed to echo round my head and sink deep into my mind as if I was in a state of hypnosis, and I found that I could only do as I was told. Once the Sister had shouted at me to shut up I became too numb in my head to utter a sound let alone to find any words to talk with.

When the Sister saw me laying still, unable to speak and breathing noisily, she told the two nurses to come out of the room, to turn the light off, close the door and leave me alone to sleep. The Sister went off out of the room and the two nurses should have followed her but they had been chatting to each other and they hung about still deeply engrossed in gossiping about

93c. their boyfriends. From what I heard them saying there was a party or something on in the Hospital that evening that anyone who was 'anybody' in the hospital had been invited to and those who were not had been left on duty but those on the labour ward had fixed up something for themselves as long as it stayed quiet but they did not say what it was. I felt lost, alone and afraid of being left alone in the dark.

The injection was working quickly then and its effect was taking over my whole body strongly. I felt dizzy and dopey as if I was losing control of my consciousness and the ability to work my body. I tried to struggle against it and fight to keep conscious because I wanted to ask for someone to stay and talk to me and if that failed then at least I could have begged them to leave the light on. As I tried to catch the nurses attention I realized that my body had become too heavy for me to move at all. My arms and legs had become dead weights and I just could not move them. I could feel my arms laying still either side of my body and I tried to move my fingers but even by concentrating all my strength into one finger to try to move it I still could not lift it up to move it. I tried to move any part of my body but I could not do it because it was just a total dead weight. My whole body was just completely immovable but as I struggled to move it I found that I was moving something else and that was my soul which was fluttering about inside my body as if it had taken wings like a beautiful butterfly and it was detaching itself from my body for the first time and was starting to move because it wanted to

94c fly and I had a strange feeling like
you get when you go up or down in
a lift.

I had always been aware that my body and my brains could function quite separately because I had a very well developed ability of being able to sit and talk to somebody and concentrate on what they were saying while at the same time up in my head my brains were working out a completely different exercise, like my homework or my shopping list that I could 'write out' in my memory and use later to save the time, but although I knew that I had a soul as well that felt things in a much more human way than the sensory feelings and acquired knowledge that my body and brains functioned on, I had never realized before that my soul could detach itself from my body and brains and function quite separately on its own. It felt as if my soul could leave my lifeless body and fully functioning brains behind in it, and travel off wherever it wanted to go and more than that it was starting to do it. In the circumstances that I was in, it became a terrifying experience mostly because I did not want to leave my body and I fought to get my soul fitted exactly back into place in my body. It struck me with sickening horror that this was why rigor mortis set into a dead body to stop those fully functioning brains from making the body get up and function once the soul had left it and although it was a horrible thought, it became a frightening reality in that situation. It was only the thought that I could not bear my mother or anyone

95c. else to have my baby that gave me the strength to fight to keep my soul inside my body to stay alive. My soul felt like a gentle, beautiful, light heavenly body and once it was out of my body it wanted to float upwards towards the eternal light that it loved so much and I fought to get back inside my body as if I was trying to put heavy clothes on myself.

Once I got back into my body I found that I could control my brain again but only as if I was working a computer that was only working on a very low power. I could feel all the normal impulses from inside my body that told me that I was warm and very much alive but I could not feel the outside of my body or move my body at all. My face felt heavy and I could not open my eyelids. My eyes were the closest part of my body to my brain and apart from my ears that could still hear everything that was going on but that had no means to call for attention in themselves, my eyes were the closest and nearest chance that I had of attracting help towards myself if I could show a flicker of life to anyone by opening them. So I struggled with my brains to get them to open my eyelids and I had to do it by trying to 'think' my eyelids open by using the 'power' or 'energy' of my soul for extra 'electricity' and I could think so clearly that I was doing it quite intentionally. My brains were so useless to me that it took an agonizing time to make them start sending messages again and I tried and tried to do it as if I was trying to knock my way out of a living tomb that had me locked inside it. As hard as I tried I only seemed to come up against a brick wall of failure

96c. in my head and in the end I gave up
in despair after a few moments of
failure while I tried to think of
another way to do it. Just as I
gave up, pictures started to flicker
in my brain and I realized to my
joy that my eyes had opened and
I tried to look out into the room
only to find that my eyelids then
closed by themselves as the delayed
message that I had decided to give
up trying to see and to try another
way, reached them. Then they
opened again by themselves as
the next message that I could
see after all reached them before
they closed again because the
message that my eyelids had
closed had reached them. Straight
away I realized that I had to be
more patient, even though I was
terrified, because my eyes were
only opening and closing as
delayed messages blundered
their way through to them seconds
later than my body was normally
used to. I knew that what I had to
do was to keep looking and not give
up which would change the
message that my brain was
sending out, then, given time,
my eyes would stay open. So I
stared into my eyelids until
they did open and when they did
I struggled against tiredness
to keep them open. My eyelids
were as heavy as the rest of my
body and I had to fight to do it
until I succeeded.

I felt as if the injection had taken
all my strength away and once
I had mastered control of my eyes
I tried to move my mouth to speak
but I could not do it. I tried to
call or even moan just one word

97c 'help' to get someone to help me but no sound came. My throat was parched dry and it ached terribly. My tongue slumped backwards pulled by its own weight and although I had heard of that happening from my previous first aid lessons, I had never dreamed that it could ever happen to me. My chest went rigid and could not suck air in and I struggled to suck air in or out but my head was too muddled to control my body. I could feel that I could not breathe and that even as just a few seconds only passed I was suffocating very quickly. At the same time as I could feel myself suffocating I could also see the two nurses who were standing engrossed in their conversation right at the foot of my bed but I could not move or speak to attract their attention and they were so busy talking that they just did not see me. As I struggled to call to them or to try to breathe there was an awful rattling sound as the last of the air in my body tried to get through my vocal cords. It was terrifying because I was quite conscious and I could think so clearly. My eyelids shot wide open as if I was being throttled and in the last moments before darkness blasted through my head I saw the nurses who should already have left the room, and left me alone in it if they had done what the Sister told them straight away, hear the throttling noise and dive straight towards me in a desperate attempt to help me. The last thing I saw was the look of terror and disbelief on the nurses faces as they rushed towards me and then everything went completely pitch black.

98c. The next moment my soul shot right out of my body and as far as it could go into space. I found myself floating in space with the stars twinkling all around me out in space, each one millions of miles away in the night sky. I was looking down at the whole earth with its continents and oceans and its own light around it, looking exactly like a picture of the earth taken from from the moon only it was actually happening. I found that I was in a kind of hazy light that surrounded the earth and protected it and for the first time in my life I felt quite safe and warm and happy. There was no pain and I had no worries, I felt free from my cumbersome body and free from the need to keep having to breathe. I felt quite safe in the place that I found myself and that I could stay there for as long as I wanted to because there was no time. There was no pull of gravity and I was in a place that had a kind of equilibrium that made me feel warm, safe and at total peace. All through my life I had prayed "Dear God, Please make me good and kind and gentle", and in that place my soul became as I had always prayed for it to be. I was totally filled with a feeling of sublime goodwill towards the earth and everyone on it that I felt as if I wanted to do everything I could to offer help to them all where ever it was needed. I wanted to do so much good and to look after them all and protect even the tiniest living creature from any harm at all and I had the feeling that in that place in space I could know anything I wanted to if I could use it to help others but I was also filled with such goodness, kindness and gentleness that I would only ever use it to help others.

990. I felt that I was in that place for a time comparable to a thousand years of our time on earth and yet it seemed timeless. Then I found myself suddenly and rudely brought back from such peace and blissful solitude, and I opened my eyes in the delivery room to bright lights and total confusion. I expected only a few moments to have passed in the delivery room and for the two nurses to be beside my bed as if I had only closed and opened my eyes but instead of that at least five minutes or more must have passed. The bed that I was in had been roughly moved away from the wall and the Sister was standing on my left in a state of agitated panic over me and although I could not understand what she was on about she was furiously telling me off, telling me that I should have told her and that I was a 'naughty girl'. There were a lot of nurses standing around the bed that I was in and although they were all alarmed they were not cross with me, in fact their attitude had changed to be most helpful towards me. The room was in the most awful mess because they had wheeled trolleys into the room and moved things about without leaving them so that they looked tidy, and there was the most awful fuss going on over me and everyone seemed in a state of agitation over what ever I had done.

Suddenly a crowd of medical staff dashed in from the corridor carrying pieces of equipment and they had obviously been running. The Sister rushed to the door and a Doctor who seemed to be in charge started to quickly apologize to her that they had taken so long to get there. He said that they had been tearing up and down the stairs looking for one of the wards because no one had realized that C 6 was the labour ward and he told her that if the labour ward telephoned like that again then they were to say that

100c it was the Labour ward so that everyone would know exactly where to come. Out in the corridor and on the stairs we could hear people shouting quickly that they had found it and then a lot more people came into the labour ward. The Doctor who seemed to be in charge was going to rush straight into the room that I was in and everyone else wanted to follow in as well, but the Sister would not let them. She stood in the doorway and pulled the door close to her so that they could not see in and there was a fierce argument going on at the door in which a woman doctor was shouting angrily at the sister to let them past her because they must get to the patient straight away, but the Sister would not let them. She stood firmly in the doorway holding onto the door so that they could not see into the room and she stood and argued with them that it had all been a mistake and that one of her nurses had just panicked and put out a crash call on the phone. She said that it had not been necessary for them to come because I had just had a 'little turn' and they had brought me round from it alright themselves. There were strong protests from several of the doctors in the crowd outside the door that the Sister would not let them get to me and they told her that they must see me to check that I was alright and that she had no right to say that they could not see a patient. Another Doctor arrived outside the door and asked what was going on and the Sister recognized him and opened the door wider to let him into the room but she pulled it towards her again quickly so that none of the