**Reading text: *Emergency***

I cannot stand the sound of ambulances. The sound of their sirens howling goes right through me. I jump every time I see a police car or a fire engine. I cannot bear the sight of blood, especially when it is my own. I panic when somebody faints, fall over or cuts himself. In short, I am no good in an emergency. I freeze, while others, braver and more practical than I am, take charge of the situation. I am envious of such people: they remain calm; they make the patient comfortable (having taken a course in First Aid, they know exactly what to do about broken ankles, burns and heart attacks); they send for the doctor; and, as if this were not enough, they make cups of tea for the patient’s anxious relatives, and see that everything that should be done is done.

It is alright for them, these self-confident people who know the right thing to do. Mind you, I am glad they exist, because, if it were left to me, the whole world would drown; bleed to death or die of heart failure, while I searched all my pockets, vainly trying to find the scrap of paper on which I once scribbled the telephone number of these nearest hospital.

As for coping with injuries, my own or anyone else’s, well, on one of my really *good* days, I might be able to put a plaster over a *very* small cut in the time it would take someone else to reset a broken leg, put it in splints, give a blood transfusion, and cook a three-course meal for the victim’s family. On the other hand, there is one thing I am really good at: I am a wonderful hospital visitor. A fortnight ago, for example, little Michelle, the daughter of some good friends of ours, had an accident and had to go into hospital for treatment. As I work quite near the hospital, I decided to pop in and see her. I took her some grapes to eat, and some comics to read. The grapes were just the way I like them: ripe and sweet and juicy. The comics only had one or two good cartoons, but I enjoyed doing the puzzles (especially the kind where you have to join up dots to make a picture). I also watched TV for a while, and a kind nurse brought me a cup of tea. Michelle was not very hungry, so I ate her super for her.

Yes, there is no doubt that my strong point, when it comes to emergencies, is my wonderful ‘bedside manner’.