for the sleeves and then she draped her arms around Jatana's neck and hung there. "Melody my Melody," sighed Jatana. "Lie down my child and close those tired eyes. They are tired." Melody laid down and she kept very still. But she watched Jatana as she moved about the long room. The woman's heavy breasts lifted and swayed as the rhythm of her walk carried her through the room with an almost breathless sanction of body and soul. This was Jatana's grace -- her flesh and her flow of energy radiating through all of her limbs and creating about her a certain light that would have been continuous had it not been stopped by her face. She looked like a refugee from one of those far away lands. She had that kind of strangled beauty which breeds in large sunken eyes and tight skin drawn thinly over very high cheekbones. This tautness of the lifted skin made her lips seem full and sensuous. Her hair was ugly; it was torn and wild. Once it had been soft and had felt almost like water, but it was hard now because she bothered to brush it only once for morning work. She went to bed with it tangled because it annoyed her to waste time unpinning her high bun and combing out coarse knots. Besides, she had the child to tend to.

Jatana shivered when she realized that she was only wearing her slip. Quickly she drew the straps down her arms and let the material fall to the floor in a white pool at her feet. She reached for her own flannel gown and walked quickly but heavily towards the bed and she quietly climbed in. The child was still awake; her eyes were open but she laid very still and Jatana sighed, "Ah Melody, my Melody," and she softly stroked the little girl's back and she sounded again the melody of the old French song. So Melody closed her eyes and Jatana sang softly a bit more. Then she laid her head next to the child's and the cold hollowed her bones and set in the long chill which always stayed with her till the morning sun filled the room.

It was near six o'clock that the sun started pressing its way through the windows. Jatana rose quickly, picked up her white slip from the floor and then as she poured water into the basin Melody sat up in bed. Jatana did not say anything but she laughed as she looked at her tiny little thing drawn tightly together in the morning cold. Melody always sat like that and watched Jatana closely as she quickly struggled with her mass of hair. After the hair was reasonably secure on top of Jatana's head, Melody dropped her face back down on the pillow. She didn't need to get out of bed until her milk was warmed. She knew which sounds meant that her Mama was in the kitchen. And when she finally slipped down off the bed, she would crowd herself closely around the small wooden table and hold her cup with both hands to let the warmth of the milk pass through to her fingers. Then Melody dressed herself for school. She could fasten all the buttons of her smock and she always folded her stockings so evenly. Then she sat on the floor and traced the tiles until Jatana was ready to brush out her hair. Melody had fine blond hair which Jatana never bound tightly. It hung loose and long but the fineness made the ends straggle and so at school the children teased that Melody's mama didn't fix her. But Melody did not care much for the children at the school. She was friends only with Ramey, the other small girl in her class, and for this they were teased, "Little girls are baby friends little girls are baby friends." At this school Melody always drew pictures of beautiful flowers and wonderfully delicate birds and designs. She had traced these things so often on the tiles that she could draw them accurately and swiftly. The teachers found her to have a remarkable capacity for detail, unusual for children of eight or nine. She was talented but inconceivably repetitious. They had at first encouraged variation but the little girl was a bit odd; she would look up at them after they had commented and suggested and she would