

The little baby girl cried in her cradle. On and on and on... No one came. In her mind, and in her heart, a sadness began to form and there was no one coming forth to prove to this little lost child that there was a world out there that wanted her. As she grew, the sadness continued to grow and no one showed very much interest in her at all. This innocent baby, with the golden hair and bright blue eyes, had been given the name of Melanie. Once she had been given her name, it seemed as if everyone had done all that was necessary for her. Occasionally, a milk bottle, grimy and coated with dried milk from the last few feedings, would be tossed at her. A bottle that was not soothing, just *filling*.

As if by a miracle the baby grew, and learned very early, how to survive. Perhaps out of retaliation against her mother that lavished no attention on her. Perhaps her very survival was so that in the future, she would be able to find a voice to bring attention to the level of neglect that had fallen upon her since birth.

Melanie taught herself to stand while trying to escape the pen that her mother called her bed and a short time later, using the same reasoning, she taught herself to walk in an attempt to escape this neglect that people might mistakenly call her home.

It was Melanie's good fortune that one of the neighbors noticed that she was left alone and called in the authorities. At this point a Social Services case worker was called in to assess the situation - with her mother assuring the concerned government employee that it was just a mistake; someone else's fault. This time she alleged that a baby sitter caused all this for her poor, unfortunate mother. Both mother and child knew that the baby sitter had never actually existed; this person was created in her mother's mind.

The case worker listened intently to her story and left after speeches were given, a series of instructional classes had been scheduled, and directions forcing her mother to feed her on a regular basis, and to find a day care for her during the day were insisted upon.

Melanie almost innately knew just how shallow these meaningless gestures actually were. With no other family there was no one to intervene on her behalf. There were no Christmas festivities, no birthday celebration, and no Thanksgiving dinner. After all, there was nothing or no one to be thankful for.

Melanie had survived against all odds and once she turned five the state demanded that she must be given an education. The state had, just as the neighbors had those three years before, provided a gift of freedom to Melanie.