



# **In Two Minds: How does a girl from an average middle-class family grow up to be a cold-blooded murderer?**

*Megan Jenirson*

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From a psychiatric ward, Melissa Baker tells her story.

Melissa lives with her mother, father, brother and Melissa's imaginary friend, Dawn. To the outside world her family look perfectly normal but behind closed doors they have a secret – Melissa's father is a raging alcoholic who abuses his daughter.

As time goes on Dawn becomes much more than just an imaginary friend, she develops into Melissa's way of coping.

Melissa believes she leaves Dawn to endure her father's abuse so she doesn't have to accept it was she, herself, who suffered. As a result her life becomes a roller-coaster ride and self-destruction leads her to end up in a psychiatric unit. She is diagnosed with a mental illness but goes on to appear to recover and lead an outwardly normal life, meeting a man and having children. All is not as it seems though; her partner is a controlling brute.

At thirty years old she picks up the courage to leave him. Life is good for a while but the stress of being a single mum soon gets on top of Melissa resulting in her becoming complacent with her medication once again. Dawn, Melissa's alter ego, creeps back into Melissa's life, sucking her into a world of addiction. As a result Melissa loses a socially accepted job at her children's school and returns to her former profession, prostitution.

As the children grow up, Melissa finds herself having an affair with Danny, a married man who promises to leave his wife.

A few years on and still in the same predicament, Melissa discovers her mother is dying. The situation provokes Melissa's married man to finally leave his wife.

A few weeks after Melissa mother dies she finds out she is pregnant with Danny's baby. Both of them are delighted but there is more trouble around the corner. Melissa and her brother find out that their mother's partner, Michael, has cunningly stolen their inheritance.

Broken-hearted, Melissa wants answers. One night she finds herself at her late mother's house where the pain of the past drives her to stab Michael to death.

Her lawyer proves diminished responsibility, explaining why Melissa is re-counting her story from the psychiatric ward. She claimed Dawn had come back because she stopped taking her medication caused by the overwhelming sadness she felt after losing her mum. That, mixed with hormonal influences from the pregnancy, caused the return of her dissociative disorder.

As we re-join Melissa in the room she tells her story from, we realise she is not being released at all and has been institutionalised indefinitely. Danny does not exist and rather than going home she is actually being moved to a long term, high dependency psychiatric unit.

We leave Melissa nursing a doll, believing it to be her baby. In reality she conceived while working as a prostitute but lost the baby shortly after.

At the end of the story the reader is left to decide if Melissa was really ill or just plain deviously cunning.

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