

Amanda

"State your name!" a clear, stern female voice ordered. Across from her, wispy and unsure, the answer came: "Judith Noelle Miller." The woman smiled smugly but kept her voice firm. "You are not Judith Miller. You are Amanda Millicent Woods. If you lie to me again, you will be punished. Do you understand?" Very slowly, the little girl nodded as tears began to form in her radiant green eyes. "Very well then" the woman replied, "who are you? What is your name?" The girl looked distressingly at the small, black loafers her inquisitor wore beneath a sensible pair of slacks and a long, white lab coat. Three tears splashed on the shoes as, quaking fearfully, she replied. "I'm...I'm Judith" she breathed pleadingly, beginning to cry, "Judith Miller. I live in Washington DC. My address is..." But she never got to finish because the woman encircled her waist and lifted the girl to her eye-level. "Now you listen to me, you little pain in the neck" she yelled fiercely. "Your name is Amanda. Not Judith. Amanda. This little fantasy of yours ends right now, or else I'll..." But at that moment, the door opened, and the raven haired nurse turned in time to see a clear-eyed, square faced young doctor sporting neatly cropped brown hair. Yawning lazily, as if he was bored by the effort of moving, the intruder raised his hand regally and, looking at the woman, spoke in slow, idle tones. "That will do, Willamina. Please deposit one little girl on the nearest patch of floor." Willamina released the girl, who landed on her feet with a soft thud. "We seemed to have achieved the desired result" she remarked, and promptly left the room. The doctor and the little girl were left alone in a small, windowless room containing only a functional sofa and a small coffee table. They sat together, and he began to ask her a series of questions.

Two weeks ago the weepy little girl, who was indeed named Amanda Woods, lay in an off-white machine that seemed to combine an MRI scanner and Snow White's glass coffin. Her robin egg blue hospital gown had wrinkled in several places but the little girl was so tightly encased that adjustments were rendered impossible. She shivered badly, feeling entombed, and unable to hear or see the doctor that stood at the control panel. Carefully examining the controls, the square faced man, Dr. Aaron Lorr, pushed three buttons in rapid succession. Instantly, Amanda's face pinched into an unholy agony, and her fists collided with the glass. Her eyes rolled violently in her head as silent screams escaped her lips. Just as she thought the terrible pain would kill her, it was gone. She suddenly felt pleasantly warm and surprisingly cheerful. Dr. Lorr released the glass lid of the machine and it slid away, allowing Amanda to sit up. She did so, smiling brightly, and asked for her mother. Amanda was an orphan. That had been the first evidence that their efforts to create a specific alternate personality in their test subject were bearing fruit.

Amanda Millicent Woods was born in one of Miriam's busier correctional facilities early in 1990. She never knew her mother, who died in the process of giving birth, or her father, who had long ago vanished. The city placed her in the care of Morgan Dulles, a bitter old woman, who gave the child her name, and little else. The very instant Amanda turned one, Morgan hauled her into a standing position. "Quit crawling and walk like you're supposed to!" she cried, releasing the child carelessly. Amanda fell dozens of times and cried incessantly before finally learning to walk a week later. If she cried for too long, she was spanked. By her second birthday, Amanda was quiet as a mouse no matter what happened. At five, when she began to show signs of multiple personalities, Morgan cast Amanda from her house, offering the explanation that "it's cheaper this way." A month later, emaciated, plastered with rags and chattering nosily, Amanda did not think

twice about entering an unmarked van whose occupants offered her food and shelter. The moment she did, however, the world went black.

Dr. Lorr carefully inserted a hypodermic needle into a guiding sleeve he had earlier driven into Amanda's skull. She had felt very little pain so far, but that was about to change. When the needle had cleared a path, the doctor inserted an electrode to a certain depth in the brain. "It begins" he murmured seriously, and activated the device. Violent convulsions seized the five year old's frail body. Lorr watched stoically as her head whipped about and her teeth rattled. When Amanda resembled nothing more than a fish out of water, violently flopping and struggling for air, Dr. Lorr silenced the machine and, injecting the child with a sleep inducing chemical, left her to a looped recording of a happy little girl named Judith.

Judith Miller, aged five, was happy indeed. She wasn't hungry, unloved or in dire pain. Instead she giggled happily in the arms of her mother as her father told the story of Jack and the Beanstalk, complete with a deep voice for the giant. Weakened by sleep, and traumatized by the shocks, Amanda's brain began to sop up the tape loops and soon, every time she was exposed to pain, it was blocked from her memory as the alternate personality of Judith rose to control.

Amanda was seven now, and had as many personalities. One reverted her to mental infancy and caused her to place all her hopes in the hands of her doctors. Another brought her great terror and could be used to elicit obedience. A third caused her to do great harm to herself and could be used to keep her from revealing the work Dr. Lorr had done. Still another made her love the doctor unconditionally, despite the tortures he put her through. Amanda was no longer a little girl. Now she was a collection of people that comprised a precisely made weapon.

But that weapon needed testing. Especially the Judith alter. Doctors Willamina Bride and Aaron Lorr worked out of Salvare Hospital for the Mental Energy Research Institute. The Institute had a great interest in Judith and another child that had not been explained to them. It was, however, made perfectly clear that only a perfect copy of Judith would do. So each day, Dr. Bride drew out the alter and tried her best to convince the girl she was Amanda. But every time, her memory of the previous inquisition blocked, she faithfully insisted she was Judith Noelle Miller. One night, late in her eighth year, that assertion would be tested.

As the real Judith Miller was captured by MERI operatives, a single scream escaped her lips. By the time she arrived, however, a new child occupied Judith's bed. She had been subjected to cosmetic surgery to look like Judith, tape loops and reprogramming to sound and act like Judith, and as her aunt questioned her, she noted all Judith's injuries, though most seemed to be healing. And Ms. Washington unknowingly accepted her new daughter, as did all of Miriam. And Amanda's new personality soon became the only one allowed to shine.