

Mothers Grave S3 Ep2 Amanda

Transcript

[00:00:00] **Dana:** Hey friend. Welcome to I Swear on My Mother's Grave. Out of all the podcasts you could possibly listen to and topics to explore, you chose this one. So thanks for being here. And remember, this show isn't just about the loss of our moms. It's about, and for us. It's about you, the living, the person who's listening, the child, the mother, the daughter, the son, the friend, the aunt, the person left. This is for you. So, hi.

[00:00:46] This interview took place in person about seven days before my wedding last June. It was on a Sunday and I was feeling all the feels. And what's amazing is Amanda, today's guest gave me a lot of the same advice that the brilliant Lauren gave me from season two about how to make sure my big day isn't just about the loss of my mom, that it's about Jonathan and I.

[00:01:08] She also said that everyone is gathering for you. They are there to witness your new journey and celebrate you. They're excited for you. So take in all that love because it's intense. She said it's sort of like a reverse funeral that you get to enjoy while you're still living.

[00:01:26] Yeah. That kind of beautiful wedding advice.

[00:01:29] I talk all about my wedding, which took place on the patio of my nana's nursing home in the Lauren episode from last season, so go check that out if you haven't. And because now I'm an old married woman of eight months, I thought, let's just skip right over all that stuff. We've heard it because I've mastered marriage and grief.

[00:01:48] Right, right. Not quite.

[00:01:51] But Amanda, today's guest, who is an arts educator and an arts facilitator, and an artist, and a creator, and a dear friend, has so much more to say around loss than just giving me wedding advice. In this episode, Amanda shares the shocking moment. She discovered she was adopted in her early twenties. How her lone wolf mother loved to party. What meeting her birth mother in a coffee shop felt like. Why the smell of gasoline reminds her of her childhood and how spending time with her own young daughter, Lola, is the most time she has ever spent with someone she is biologically related to.

[00:02:29] This is Amanda Acevedo.

[00:02:43] **Amanda:** My mom had like a super addictive personality, smoking, drinking, shopping, home shopping network, addicted to it. Uh, the invent of AOL? Addicted to it.

[00:02:57] **Dana:** Really?

[00:02:57] **Amanda:** Anything you could be addicted to cooking books, addicted. I mean, it's just like it would consume her.

[00:03:05] **Dana:** Yeah.

[00:03:05] **Amanda:** Like every new thing. And I'm like, was she trying to fill, she just, to me feels like someone who was always trying to fill this void.

[00:03:15] **Dana:** Mm-hmm.

[00:03:16] **Amanda:** And as an adopted person myself, so my mom was adopted and then adopted me. I do think it leaves, it makes you feel like there's this void to fill.

[00:03:29] **Dana:** Mm-hmm.

[00:03:30] **Amanda:** That somehow you're not whole, like you're missing something. I didn't know my mom was adopted.

[00:03:36] **Dana:** You found out your mom was adopted at 17.

[00:03:39] **Amanda:** When I was 17.

[00:03:39] **Dana:** And then later you found out you were adopted at 22.

[00:03:42] **Amanda:** Yes.

[00:03:42] **Dana:** And we're gonna get to that.

[00:03:43] **Amanda:** And she just casually mentioned to me one night when I was 17 that she was adopted and that felt really shocking to me.

[00:03:51] **Dana:** How did she say it? She just making dinner or she?

[00:03:55] **Amanda:** Her and I would go, I lived in this little lake town in northern Illinois and there was like a pub at the end of our street. Jesse Oaks. Loved this pub. We'd go up there. My dad worked nights, so like once a week her and I would go up there and I have no idea what she was talking about, but I can clearly remember her saying something about her parents. And it must have been because I was adopted. And it, it feels like one of those moments where, in a very cliché way, like my whole body paused.

[00:04:27] **Dana:** Hmm.

[00:04:27] **Amanda:** And I was like, what are you talking about? I truly don't know that. And she was like, yes, you do. Got very dismissive right away. Oh, you know that about me. And I was like, no, I think that's something I'd remember.

[00:04:40] **Dana:** Yeah. Whoopsy you, oops. Forgot. Oh yeah. Oh, that old story.

[00:04:45] **Amanda:** But in typical Amanda fashion, I'm like, do you know your birth parents? Do you know where you came from? How old were you when you were adopted? Blah, blah, blah. Bombarding her with questions. In retrospect, I'm sure her knowing I was adopted, which I didn't at the time, she just froze up and she was like, can we stop talking about this? Also? Don't mention it to your dad.

[00:05:06] **Dana:** Whoa.

[00:05:08] **Amanda:** And I did drop it because she was somebody who could become very like silent and cold. In moments.

[00:05:18] **Dana:** Did she answer any of those questions?

[00:05:20] **Amanda:** God, no. And before she died, we barely scratched the surface on that stuff.

[00:05:25] **Dana:** Wow.

[00:05:26] **Amanda:** She was a person that, it's like, I could always tell there was so much going on under the surface, but like really struggled to let that stuff come out.

[00:05:39] So like, and that she was drinking like a lot.

[00:05:41] **Dana:** Yeah.

[00:05:42] **Amanda:** She'd get kind of like weepy and sad.

[00:05:45] **Dana:** So like this photo, which is her in a really fancy dress and a beautiful foyer or library with wealthy people in house. Yeah, in in Lake Forest? Yeah. In suits. Everyone's dressed up. And you said she doesn't look like the mom I know. So then is that or she doesn't look like my mom.

[00:06:03] **Amanda:** Even the fact that her hair is brown because she dye it blonde like her whole life. After she was like a certain teen age. She always had a cigarette in her hand and then like a glass of white wine. I mean like some of my earliest memories are her asking me to go get her Marlboro lights.

[00:06:22] **Dana:** Oh.

[00:06:23] **Amanda:** Like from this little room that was in our house called the Pink, cuz it had pink carpet. And she'd be like, go gimme some Marlboros from the pink I'd run and like grab her cigarettes for her.

[00:06:35] So I found out I was adopted cuz I stumbled upon the documents right after I graduated college.

[00:06:44] **Dana:** And in your house?

[00:06:45] **Amanda:** In my house. Looking for my passport. For God knows why.

[00:06:50] **Dana:** Yeah.

[00:06:51] **Amanda:** And I did not tell my parents right at that moment. So skip ahead. So that's 2006. And my mom died less than like almost three and a half years later. My mom, and I feel like you've talked about this too, like was sick for a really long time.

[00:07:13] **Dana:** Yeah.

[00:07:14] **Amanda:** But those people in that photo raised her Christian scientist with

[00:07:18] **Dana:** Oh.

[00:07:19] **Amanda:** Our people that don't traditionally go see doctors.

[00:07:22] **Dana:** Yeah. I didn't know that. I didn't know that that's what she was raised by or what was what she was around. Yeah.

[00:07:27] **Amanda:** Yeah. And while she didn't think of herself as religious in any way, I think that stuff really gets into your head.

[00:07:33] **Dana:** Mm-hmm.

[00:07:34] **Amanda:** I barely saw doctors as a child. We bar-- you know, we kinda tried to, I mean, I fell down the stairs and bit through my tongue as a kid and didn't go to the doctor. So, wow. We like really would only go in an emergency, can't even think of one right now, but, I mean I, she told a, her best friend told me a story that as a kid, she broke her arm ice skating.

[00:07:54] **Dana:** Mm.

[00:07:54] **Amanda:** And she never went to the doctor.

[00:07:57] **Dana:** Wow.

[00:07:57] **Amanda:** They have these people that like pray over you, not trying to be judgmental, but it did impact her when she got older in these three and a half years, she must have had cancer for years.

[00:08:08] **Dana:** Mm-hmm. But never went to a doctor. Never went and asked what was wrong.

[00:08:12] **Amanda:** She must have been miserable...

[00:08:13] **Dana:** yeah.

[00:08:13] **Amanda:** For years.

[00:08:14] **Dana:** Yeah.

[00:08:14] **Amanda:** And I don't know, I don't know if you saw that with your own mom, like feeling pain, but really not trying to acknowledge.

[00:08:20] **Dana:** Yeah. Or she would go and say like, they can't do anything or it's gonna cost too much money, so I just wanna get in and get out. But I think she was so skeptical of like what they could do for her, but

[00:08:28] **Amanda:** that's a good way.

[00:08:29] **Dana:** And she didn't get a lot of answers. There were a lot of things she didn't get answers about.

[00:08:32] **Amanda:** And that's, I think another issue that came up. This idea that she felt a certain pain, but no one was pinpointing it.

[00:08:38] **Dana:** Correct. Yeah. Yeah.

[00:08:40] **Amanda:** Until she had her esophagus. A hundred percent pretty much blocked.

[00:08:46] **Dana:** Wow.

[00:08:46] **Amanda:** Cancer.

[00:08:47] **Dana:** Wow.

[00:08:48] **Amanda:** The doctor was like, it's not like the beginning.

[00:08:51] **Dana:** Mm-hmm.

[00:08:51] **Amanda:** And this is like the end. So I don't know what you've been feeling for years, but that's pretty intense.

[00:08:58] **Dana:** Could she eat?

[00:09:00] **Amanda:** Well, and this is the problem. She was, she never ate, like she definitely had like eating disorder stuff going on.

[00:09:11] I mean, it was something that like really bugged me as a kid, but as you learn, as you become an adult, you can't like badger someone into changing their behavior.

[00:09:21] **Dana:** Mm-hmm.

[00:09:21] **Amanda:** I think I thought like I could passive aggressive her into eating, quitting smoking.

[00:09:26] **Dana:** Right, right.

[00:09:27] **Amanda:** Being less of a wino. This doesn't work that way.

[00:09:29] **Dana:** Yeah.

[00:09:30] **Amanda:** She always called herself a lone wolf. So she was adopted. Only child.

[00:09:35] **Dana:** Okay.

[00:09:35] **Amanda:** I was adopted only child, so I felt like, She had this attitude also that you had to like suffer alone.

[00:09:44] **Dana:** Yeah.

[00:09:44] **Amanda:** And that we were all alone.

[00:09:46] **Dana:** Hmm. What's that about?

[00:09:50] **Amanda:** I think she felt she was so different than, than her parents.

[00:09:54] And like I said, she wanted to be an artist. They were like, you can go to college if you're a teacher. Only. She wanted to be wild. They wanted her to be like prim and proper, go to Lake Forest High School with like the grandkids of Abercrombie.

[00:10:09] **Dana:** Mm-hmm.

[00:10:09] **Amanda:** And Fitch you know, just, she didn't fit into that world.

[00:10:12] And I think it, it made her feel like she had to be alone. I, I don't want her to sound depressing. She was actually like a really good time.

[00:10:23] **Dana:** Yeah.

[00:10:24] **Amanda:** She was thought herself as like really fun. Do you remember that stupid song from the nineties? Like, we like to party.

[00:10:31] **Dana:** Yeah.

[00:10:31] **Amanda:** That was her little mantra.

[00:10:32] **Dana:** Uhhuh, we like to party.

[00:10:34] **Amanda:** She's like, boom, we like to party. She loved to throw parties, post parties.

[00:10:38] **Dana:** Yes.

[00:10:39] **Amanda:** Have people over. She, all my friends loved her.

[00:10:42] **Dana:** Yeah, same.

[00:10:43] **Amanda:** She would like really look at people, talk to them.

[00:10:46] **Dana:** Same. Yeah. Yeah. Great host.

[00:10:48] **Amanda:** Great host.

[00:10:48] **Dana:** Yeah. Amazing at that. Yeah.

[00:10:51] **Amanda:** Listener. And I loved that about her. My friends loved her.

[00:10:56] **Dana:** Yeah.

[00:10:57] **Amanda:** I feel like everyone loved her, but I also saw this, this sad side of her.

[00:11:02] **Dana:** Mm-hmm.

[00:11:03] **Amanda:** And because I didn't know I was adopted, I didn't know why I always, I always, as a kid said I felt like the mom.

[00:11:11] **Dana:** Mm. As a child you said that?

[00:11:13] **Amanda:** I felt like the mom.

[00:11:14] **Dana:** You said, how old were you when you first said that?

[00:11:16] **Amanda:** I feel like I remember saying that to friends in middle school that like she, there was just something about her that wasn't nurturing.

[00:11:26] **Dana:** Mm-hmm.

[00:11:27] **Amanda:** In that specific way. She kind of was more like a friend. And that sounds so great. But I think as a kid I was looking for

[00:11:37] **Dana:** Yes.

[00:11:37] **Amanda:** A more nurturing person.

[00:11:39] **Dana:** Did you feel like a lone wolf, like this feeling that she had, did you feel that?

[00:11:43] **Amanda:** I think yes, because as an only child I obsessively wrote in diaries.

[00:11:48] **Dana:** Hmm.

[00:11:49] **Amanda:** And I, I like write to them like they're a person.

[00:11:52] **Dana:** Hi. Like hi.

[00:11:54] **Amanda:** Yeah.

[00:11:54] **Dana:** Friend. And yet today you said, before I turn this mic on, you said I was gonna journal and write about my mom. And that's the last thing you wanted to do. You didn't wanna think about it, you didn't wanna journal, you didn't wanna pro, well you didn't wanna talk about or think about her yet.

[00:12:06] **Amanda:** Yeah.

[00:12:06] **Dana:** In that way. But as a kid, you're saying you wrote everything in your diary.

[00:12:10] **Amanda:** Just like write, write, write. Because my parents both worked. I was a very like, independent child. I think I desired more companionship from them.

[00:12:24] **Dana:** Mm-hmm.

[00:12:25] **Amanda:** But as a kid, I just don't think, I felt like they dealt with me better when I got older in terms of like our relationship.

[00:12:32] I was very close to both of them in certain ways. But yeah, I mean, when you're a child, you wanna be around like children.

[00:12:38] **Dana:** Yeah.

[00:12:39] **Amanda:** And I spent a lot of time around adults.

[00:12:40] **Dana:** Yeah. And you're buying your mom's cigarettes and you're doing the things like, like you said, that isn't you, you're the mom.

[00:12:46] **Amanda:** I just felt like she was so silly and I, that's not in my nature.

[00:12:52] **Dana:** Mm-hmm.

[00:12:53] **Amanda:** And I've always liked being around silly people. You're

[00:12:56] **Dana:** more adult, mature, serious. I mean, yeah. I think you're hilarious. But you know,

[00:13:01] **Amanda:** I remember she always felt like she had to loosen me up.

[00:13:04] **Dana:** Like, you're too stiff. You're too.

[00:13:05] **Amanda:** Yes.

[00:13:05] **Dana:** We like to party as she said.

[00:13:07] **Amanda:** Yeah. We like to party. Or my parents, because I was so, like, I loved to be on time.

[00:13:13] I was very upset if things were running off course. This is not how they are. And when we would have like parent teacher conferences, my parents would do the same thing to us and it upset me every time my dad would put on this fish tie that's literally like a fish. Sure. My mom would put on this big pink hat that had a big pink feather and they'd be like, okay, eggs we're ready to go.

[00:13:35] And I was like, wow. I like break. I remember once I broke down crying and they were like, we're just being silly. It's okay. And I was like, you don't look right. You don't look right. This is not how you're supposed to be at the parent-teacher conference when I was like in elementary school.

[00:13:49] **Dana:** Wow. I want a photo of this.

[00:13:50] We don't have any, I mean, I have, do we?

[00:13:51] **Amanda:** The hat is somewhere because we had an estate. My dad is remarried. Wonderful woman. Cherry.

[00:13:59] It's like I went from like dead moms, zero moms to like stepmom's adoptive mom, like or the biological moms.

[00:14:05] **Dana:** Yeah. You're a mom where, yeah.

[00:14:07] **Amanda:** It's kind of intense, honestly. But. Or I always tell Chris, I'm like, I went from being an only child.

[00:14:13] With like my mom. And then she's dead. To being like a stepmom who has three daughters, a biological mom who has two daughters that are actually my half sisters. Like, it's a little, that's overwhelming.

[00:14:23] **Dana:** Yeah. That's, that's a lot. That's a lot.

[00:14:25] **Amanda:** I, I'm like, I can only child. I'm an only child.

[00:14:28] **Dana:** And I went from like, I don't wanna talk about my mom ever, or address it or acknowledge her, her pain.

[00:14:32] Well, let's create a show about it.

[00:14:34] **Amanda:** That's reminding me how you were talking about going back to your wedding.

[00:14:38] **Dana:** Yes.

[00:14:39] **Amanda:** And I don't, I don't want you to feel like let still be about her not being there.

[00:14:44] **Dana:** But for me there's so much, I think so much of my sadness right now, what right now and what I feel a lot of the time is that I'm sad that she is not here.

[00:14:56] I'm not always sad about missing her. I have a sadness that she can't see, even though I never thought I'd be married and, but I also never thought I'd lose my mom at 67. But I think I have the sadness that she can't watch me excel or grow or be beautiful and so, or happy and joyful in love. Like she doesn't get to see that anymore.

[00:15:19] Or maybe she does. I just don't know if I believe that. So I think that's some of my sadness is like, I would like her to see me in this dress that I think she'll, she'll have notes on it. So I'm sad that she's missing out and I don't think it's like a revelatory thought that's happening right now, but I just sad for her.

[00:15:36] **Amanda:** It's okay.

[00:15:36] **Dana:** Yeah. Yeah.

[00:15:37] **Amanda:** It is devastating.

[00:15:38] **Dana:** Yeah.

[00:15:39] **Amanda:** I mean, I think it's, I think it's just fair to acknowledge

[00:15:44] **Dana:** yeah.

[00:15:44] **Amanda:** That all these things our moms miss out on for the rest of our life.

[00:15:48] **Dana:** And you could, you could lose 'em at 18, you could lose 'em at 20, you can lose 'em at 30, you could lose 'em at 40. And it's still like, it is devastating.

[00:15:54] Now, Lola, she doesn't get to see your child.

[00:15:57] **Amanda:** I know. She doesn't get to know Lola.

[00:15:59] **Dana:** Yeah.

[00:15:59] **Amanda:** Who she'd freaking love because she's such like a boss bitch. Even as a baby even runs the show, I just think it's okay that be like, it will always be devastating. And it, I will acknowledge that and I can still go on.

[00:16:15] **Dana:** Yeah.

[00:16:15] **Amanda:** I don't wanna pretend that it's okay.

[00:16:17] I think there are moments I've tried to pretend

[00:16:19] **Dana:** Yeah.

[00:16:20] **Amanda:** Something that isn't authentic. And I do, the reason I love this podcast is I don't think,

[00:16:28] **Dana:** oh, this is good. Yeah. Plug plug while I wipe my tears. I need that tissue yet. Yes.

[00:16:34] **Amanda:** Thank you. We don't acknowledge the human experience in, in all of its fullness, which is a deep sorrow loss.

[00:16:45] We don't, we don't grapple with it. We don't let ourselves feel it echo throughout our lives, and I think my life has been more rich in the moments that I just acknowledge the spectrum that I'm experiencing. That on my wedding day I can feel this devastation that she's not there. But also focus on all of the wonderful things. And they both are there.

[00:17:13] **Dana:** Did you acknowledge her that day some way? Did you talk about her? Did you think about her? Did you speak about her? Did you pray? Did you look, look at a candle? Did you look, what'd you?

[00:17:21] **Amanda:** Do? A lot of those things that probably are less on the religious spectrum. It's funny, I had these pastors, so I did go through my like Presbyterian phase in high school.

[00:17:34] **Dana:** Mm-hmm.

[00:17:34] **Amanda:** And in, and these, this lovely husband and wife, pastor team who were always just chill, cool people. They accepted you sort of wherever you were at in your journey. And like for me, I was always like, I

don't really believe in religion, but I really like the community it brings. And they're like, cool, you can come join, you can come hang out.

[00:17:54] And when my mom was in the hospital towards the end, Greg, the, the lovely man in this couple visited her. And you know, I don't know why doctors asked her this, but they asked her what religion she was and she was like, oh, I'm a Presbyterian and that's because this pastor was Presbyterian. My dad are like, okay.

[00:18:15] They also, this is just an anecdote about her in the hospital. She, two months before she died is when she was like diagnosed with stage four esophageal cancer. The doctor came in, he's like, have you been a smoker? And she's like, yes, I have. And he's like, well, are you still smoking? She's like, no, I quit. And he was like, wow, when did you quit? And she was like, yesterday. Not as a joke.

[00:18:36] **Dana:** Oh, delivered.

[00:18:38] **Amanda:** Delivered. Not straight face. You would never like child. That as a joke. That was dead faced. Honest. Yesterday. Yesterday I quit yesterday. When you, congrats when you were at the hospital.

[00:18:48] **Dana:** When you were not legally allowed.

[00:18:49] **Amanda:** Can't sneak out for a cig.

[00:18:51] **Dana:** You were not allowed to smoke.

[00:18:53] **Amanda:** I don't know why. My dad and I love that. Yesterday. You're like, well, well, it's completely serious.

[00:19:00] **Dana:** Yeah. I love it. She was not funny on purpose.

[00:19:03] **Amanda:** No, not funny on purpose. She did not like being made fun of, which my dad is a teaser. Mm-hmm. So I kind of became that way. She was very sensitive.

[00:19:14] We used to blare it was this Eagles song called Get Over It, which is not nice. And when my mom would get upset, we would like blare it in the house just like too loud.

[00:19:24] **Dana:** So mean.

[00:19:24] **Amanda:** So mean, mean.

[00:19:26] **Dana:** Well you're trying, she's tr you're like, I'm trying to have more joy.

[00:19:28] **Amanda:** See, I'm trying to loosen up, loosen up for the party.

[00:19:31] **Dana:** No. Like, no. So I guess we could take the metaphor of full scope of emotions and living in it and go back to when you were 22.

[00:19:41] **Amanda:** Yeah.

[00:19:41] **Dana:** And you found these papers.

[00:19:43] **Amanda:** Oh God. I don't even think at that time I had like a thought in my brain because I, I am a person that like grapples with things in the abstract.

[00:19:57] Now I know that, so I'm 22, I, I see an adoption certificate that has my name on it, so sure. That's a document that's saying something about your life, but like what does that actually mean about the past 22 years?

[00:20:11] **Dana:** Mm-hmm.

[00:20:12] **Amanda:** I don't even know if right now I could fully say. I think I felt the most hurt because I was an only child and I thought that I had this closeness to my parents that other people didn't have.

[00:20:29] They had a business when I was growing up, so I spent like six years of my life just like by their side at the store.

[00:20:36] **Dana:** Hmm.

[00:20:36] **Amanda:** So I just,

[00:20:37] **Dana:** what kind of store? What was it?

[00:20:39] **Amanda:** It was called the Plaster Hangup. Okay. And it was a place where you would, uh, my dad made all the plaster objects, like those pottery places people go now and they glaze stuff and blah, blah.

[00:20:49] Yeah, it was that. But plaster, my dad, he made all these rubber molds. He poured the plaster, he put little hooks. He had to like carve the edges, so they were nice. I loved that part of the process. My mom was at the store working as a teacher for 10 years. She worked as a teacher during the day and ran the store.

[00:21:07] **Dana:** Wow.

[00:21:07] **Amanda:** Some, I don't, how do you do that? I truly don't know. She ran the store part where kids and people would come in, pick out anything from like an ornament to a huge statue.

[00:21:17] **Dana:** Hmm.

[00:21:18] **Amanda:** Paint it. There was this whole little process. You put a base coat on cuz the plaster's porous. You'd paint it and then you'd put this spray that smells like gasoline.

[00:21:27] Sometimes. Chris and I are at the gas station and I'm like, smells like my childhood. And he's like, that's bad. Did you guys wear masks? Hell no. Hell no. I was like, I just, uh, inhaled all these fumes.

[00:21:37] But, so I spent a ton of time with them at that store. That's a lot of time as a kid. And so I just felt betrayed and I know everyone has these moments with their parents where there's like, I mean, not everybody finds out they're adopted, but.

[00:21:52] **Dana:** A secret is revealed or a thing comes out or, or they say something that you're like, I never knew this.

[00:21:57] **Amanda:** Yeah.

[00:21:57] **Dana:** And you're old enough. I mean, at 20? I mean, I would think.

[00:22:01] **Amanda:** I think I was old enough at zero right?

[00:22:02] **Dana:** At zero. I guess you're right. Wait. Yeah. But if it was about like, we're waiting for her to get older, it's like, well, that's a choice.

[00:22:09] **Amanda:** So when I finally, about a year later told my mom I knew, she like immediately started sobbing and her first words were, I am such a terrible mother. Which felt sad.

[00:22:23] **Dana:** Yeah.

[00:22:23] **Amanda:** Like it was a burden on her too.

[00:22:27] **Dana:** Hmm.

[00:22:27] **Amanda:** She had had such a bad experience in terms of in her mind how she treated her parents. But I think it's not that simple of being like, I'm not your child. I'm adopted. And always friction, not feeling like she belonged that

[00:22:44] **Dana:** right

[00:22:44] **Amanda:** she didn't want that with me. And part of it was selfish. She didn't want us to fight, but oh my God, we fought anyways because we were so different as people.

[00:22:52] **Dana:** Right. Right.

[00:22:53] **Amanda:** Except I had to spend my life wondering why I wasn't more like my parents.

[00:22:58] **Dana:** Correct.

[00:22:58] **Amanda:** And there was a clear explanation for that.

[00:23:00] **Dana:** Right.

[00:23:00] **Amanda:** Um.

[00:23:01] **Dana:** Is that what immediately happens once you learn, you go, oh my God, this explains this and this and this, or this makes everything make sense why I'm not.

[00:23:07] **Amanda:** Oh, I have, I mean,

[00:23:08] **Dana:** immediately?

[00:23:08] **Amanda:** That beautiful mind moment of like all these little things,

[00:23:11] **Dana:** little things popping off

[00:23:12] **Amanda:** and I'm like, oh,

[00:23:13] **Dana:** it does visions, memories.

[00:23:14] **Amanda:** It made sense.

[00:23:15] **Dana:** Yeah.

[00:23:15] **Amanda:** It's not, I didn't question it for a second.

[00:23:18] **Dana:** Yeah.

[00:23:18] **Amanda:** But it, I had been asked outright by some friends why I didn't look like my parents, but I was like, I do. Or why I didn't act like my parents. Oh. But I, I hadn't figured it all out, but I had had the same wonderings in certain ways. I used to pretend I was an orphan child looking for my parents as a child.

[00:23:36] **Dana:** What?

[00:23:36] **Amanda:** That was like my favorite game to play.

[00:23:38] **Dana:** For real?

[00:23:38] **Amanda:** Yeah. And I thought maybe it's like, oh, cause I like the musical Annie. But then you wonder, can that ever be a secret?

[00:23:46] **Dana:** Hmm.

[00:23:47] **Amanda:** Like can people really, they can hide the information, but they can't hide the way they treat you. And I'm not saying that I had bad treatment, I had a great childhood.

[00:23:59] But there are ways I think about this with Lola. I think a very profound experience has been that Lola is the first person I am biologically related to, that I've ever spent this much time with.

[00:24:12] **Dana:** Hmm. Wow.

[00:24:15] **Amanda:** And somebody that like does these kind of experiments, that would be inhumane. I'd be a great test subject because like, you can't do this to somebody.

[00:24:23] But I lived half my life thinking one thing. Now I'm realizing I never spent any time with anyone biological. Does that matter? Or not? Science is out, right? Nature, nurture.

[00:24:33] **Dana:** Nature, nurture.

[00:24:34] **Amanda:** But it is, it can, it feels intense to me.

[00:24:37] **Dana:** How, like what, what do you say that, what does that, what does that mean?

[00:24:40] **Amanda:** I think some of it's coming from me that I'm like, I'm just like, I have to stop myself from being almost like clingy to her in like a, just, she can be so consuming.

[00:24:52] And maybe that's like a mom thing.

[00:24:53] **Dana:** Mm-hmm.

[00:24:54] **Amanda:** But I think she looks almost exactly like I did at this age.

[00:25:00] **Dana:** Does she, does she act like you already? Can you tell, can you see, can you,

[00:25:04] **Amanda:** I mean, she's a control freak, so Yes.

[00:25:10] Bossy--,

[00:25:10] **Dana:** silly boss and bossy bitch. She said.

[00:25:12] **Amanda:** Yes. Bossy bitch. I mean, I mean, she is,

[00:25:15] **Dana:** Do you think about like loving someone more because you're, they're biologically yours. I'm just saying a phrase. I don't think this is true.

[00:25:22] **Amanda:** I know.

[00:25:22] **Dana:** I'm just asking what that feel. How would you know? Cuz you, you, you, I mean you could know how you felt love, but it isn't like you adopt one kid. You have one biological.

[00:25:33] **Amanda:** I know.

[00:25:33] **Dana:** And everybody would say we love them the same, but I'm just so curious about that. Right.

[00:25:37] **Amanda:** Well, do you love anyone the same?

[00:25:38] **Dana:** Well, so I guess you're right. Well, well we could have two biological kids and love one more. You don't know. You're never gonna admit it.

[00:25:44] **Amanda:** Yeah. Or like what is that? I've always wondered like, loving people the same, you don't love anything the same.

[00:25:50] **Dana:** Yeah, it's true.

[00:25:51] **Amanda:** It doesn't even have to be quantitative. It's like I love this kid cuz they're this way and I love this kid, this kid cuz he is this way and I hate that kid cuz there was shit in this way. I hate that kid cause there were shit this way.

[00:25:59] Like, it's not so simple. I think about how with Lola be, I don't, I'm never worried about boundaries. I don't know how to put this so it doesn't sound weird, but for my parents, they adopted me.

[00:26:16] **Dana:** Mm-hmm.

[00:26:16] **Amanda:** I don't think that they loved me less. I think they loved me differently. But like for my dad, for instance, like, does it feel different to have like a little girl that's adopted versus your own little girl?

[00:26:29] **Dana:** Hmm.

[00:26:30] **Amanda:** And like how you might feel weird about certain boundaries. Like I felt that my parents were in certain ways closed off to me that other people's parents didn't seem. But I just think at the, at we were strangers when we met. Right?

[00:26:50] **Dana:** How did they talk? How did your mom talk about it eventually? I think it was very null and void.

[00:26:56] Like, am I right? Like once you confronted, once you said, Hey, she said I'm a bad parent. And then you had, you didn't have kumbaya moments every week about it, right?

[00:27:05] **Amanda:** No. The hard thing is, I was really angry at her having to do with the way she treated herself. I don't know, like with your own mom, like seeing her get sick and sort of struggled through that. Were you two able to like talk about that?

[00:27:25] **Dana:** No. No, no. I would try, but she didn't really want to engage.

[00:27:31] **Amanda:** Yeah. And that's how my mom was.

[00:27:33] **Dana:** Yeah.

[00:27:33] **Amanda:** And so she was sick, but she would not go the distance to figure out. And I spent like a year almost not talking to her.

[00:27:43] **Dana:** For real?

[00:27:43] **Amanda:** Didn't know what to do.

[00:27:45] **Dana:** Yeah.

[00:27:45] **Amanda:** At some point I just like radio silenced her like the six months before she was diagnosed with this cancer, which then I'm like, do I feel guilty about that?

[00:27:54] **Dana:** Yeah, yeah, yeah.

[00:27:56] **Amanda:** But she didn't wanna get into it.

[00:27:57] **Dana:** Right. So she's not gonna wanna, she's not gonna wanna get into her sickness, so she's certainly not gonna wanna get into the fact that you were adopted. They're two separate things, but they're connected.

[00:28:04] **Amanda:** They are connected. Yeah. So she would have to be dealing with her own stuff to be talking about my stuff.

[00:28:10] **Dana:** Yes. Yeah.

[00:28:11] **Amanda:** And I just had this dynamic with my parents that I feel like I, I would press. But they both were good at like shutting it down. They didn't wanna go there. Like I, I don't know. My dad could write vulnerable things, but not as much like in the moment do a q and a about 'em.

[00:28:33] **Dana:** Yeah.

[00:28:34] **Amanda:** And my mom, I don't know. She just couldn't really talk about it.

[00:28:41] **Dana:** How did you know it was open? Was that in the papers that you found? How did you learn that it was an open adoption?

[00:28:48] **Amanda:** Oh, it was not.

[00:28:48] **Dana:** It was not.

[00:28:49] **Amanda:** Oh, I like Google.

[00:28:50] **Dana:** Oh, it was not, oh, it was, oh, I thought it wa Okay. I apologize. I thought it wasn't open. You went and found,

[00:28:55] **Amanda:** oh, I Google.

[00:28:57] **Dana:** Got it.

[00:28:57] **Amanda:** God, what did people do without the internet?

[00:28:59] **Dana:** Yep. I thought it was open. Yeah. Hmm.

[00:29:01] **Amanda:** Oh, no. Chris knows that I could like, stalk anybody online, not trying to be creepy. It's just I found this person without her name got it, being

[00:29:10] **Dana:** got it.

[00:29:10] **Amanda:** Anything in like five minutes.

[00:29:12] **Dana:** Wow, wow, wow.

[00:29:14] **Amanda:** I don't know how. I, I feel like I, I feel like I wrote it down somewhere so I should revisit it, but I wrote this like hilarious in my mind I was like, I'm gonna try to s write the most professional sounding email that's like, dear person on September 16th, 1983, perha per chance, you

[00:29:35] **Dana:** per chance!

[00:29:35] **Amanda:** had a child. So I write this email, this woman writes me back right away and she actually wrote, I did give a child up on that day, but through a different agency than you named.

[00:29:47] And I was like, well, oh, I had a Birth certificate at this point. I, so I'm adopted from a, an agency that's local. I was born in Chicago. This woman lives here still. That's how we've connected.

[00:30:00] **Dana:** Yeah.

[00:30:02] **Amanda:** And which is kind of like

[00:30:03] **Dana:** where in Chicago?

[00:30:05] **Amanda:** She was from Beverly.

[00:30:07] **Dana:** Okay.

[00:30:08] **Amanda:** And I'm, I'm purposefully not saying her name cause

[00:30:12] **Dana:** Sure.

[00:30:13] **Amanda:** It was not open.

[00:30:14] **Dana:** Yeah. Of course.

[00:30:15] **Amanda:** She was raised Irish Catholic.

[00:30:17] **Dana:** Mm-hmm.

[00:30:17] **Amanda:** I think her living mother does not know still.

[00:30:22] **Dana:** Okay.

[00:30:23] **Amanda:** Because similarly, I think it's like, this is how I think my parents started to feel, once a secret is kept that long, it's like, how do you reveal it without just everything exploding?

[00:30:37] And what this woman said to me is like, my mom would be devastated I didn't tell her this.

[00:30:42] **Dana:** Yeah.

[00:30:42] **Amanda:** For 30 now, almost 40 years.

[00:30:44] **Dana:** It could just wreck havoc.

[00:30:46] **Amanda:** And, and she's old. She's, and just like, is it worth it? I don't know. That's up to them.

[00:30:52] **Dana:** Mm-hmm.

[00:30:53] **Amanda:** Like, But she was from Beverly Irish Catholic in school. And this happened I think at the, at the end of her junior year going into her senior, I think.

[00:31:05] **Dana:** Mm-hmm.

[00:31:06] **Amanda:** And I was supposed to be born before her, the year started, and I was two weeks late. So she like dropped out of

[00:31:16] **Dana:** Oh, my

[00:31:16] **Amanda:** the semester. And she lived in the same city as her family and kept it from them. And I was born on her mother's birthday. And she went to her mother's birthday party two days after wedding birth to me.

[00:31:30] **Dana:** No. And they didn't know that Sh she did. Well, did they not? Did they see her? They maybe They didn't see her for nine months.

[00:31:36] **Amanda:** They didn't see her. I mean, maybe they saw her at the beginning.

[00:31:39] **Dana:** At the beginning, yeah. And then as she got Progressive, oh my, oh my goodness. She told you this when you met her?

[00:31:44] **Amanda:** Oh yeah. The first time I met her, when also she realized that her college boyfriend, who she had given me up for adoption with, was not, the father was so much like a different person.

[00:31:56] **Dana:** Whoa. So whoa.

[00:31:58] **Amanda:** It was a lot. I was like, wow, this story just like complicated, you know? So for her, wow. It's one thing to meet your child you gave up for adoption 30 something years ago.

[00:32:06] **Dana:** Yeah. Yeah.

[00:32:06] **Amanda:** Than to, I feel like I don't even know where it is

[00:32:09] **Dana:** Oh my god.

[00:32:09] **Amanda:** There's a picture I showed her where she was like, you look not like my boyfriend, but my really good friend that, you know, stuff happened.

[00:32:20] **Dana:** When you saw her, what did, did, were there moments in the conversation where you were like, huh, mom.

[00:32:27] **Amanda:** Think it's because she is so different from my mom. Like Linn.

[00:32:33] **Dana:** Than Linn. Yeah.

[00:32:34] **Amanda:** She is so different. And so I think I still have Linn.

[00:32:39] **Dana:** Mm-hmm.

[00:32:39] **Amanda:** As my mom.

[00:32:40] **Dana:** Yeah.

[00:32:40] **Amanda:** And I'm just like, this woman's not like her

[00:32:42] **Dana:** or like me. I can't even see, see it. I can't even see. Yeah.

[00:32:45] **Amanda:** Or even like my stepmom who I adore.

[00:32:47] **Dana:** Yeah.

[00:32:47] **Amanda:** I think it's just like a lovely human. She is so unlike my mom that sometimes I'm like, it is like, it's like a stranger in that way.

[00:32:56] **Dana:** Yeah.

[00:32:57] **Amanda:** And those aren't even all good, good qualities. It's just like she was so the good and the bad. They were these like,

[00:33:04] **Dana:** yeah,

[00:33:04] **Amanda:** she was like a spectrum on like both sides. I'm like, was this woman like maybe had some mental health challenges from nothing that came out on just for herself. It was just had so many demons or I wonder like, isn't that why maybe you drink that much or smoke that much?

[00:33:22] **Dana:** Yes, yes. What are you cover? What are you, it's somebody referenced it as tears, like it's like their version of tears. Right? Sometimes like maybe the drink is like its own version of sadness and like what you're covering up. I mean it's, it's a biologic or it's a, it's a chemical addiction, but there's also something else that's going on.

[00:33:41] When we talked on the phone, you said, I don't know. If I should, is this person, your biological mom now gonna be a part of your daughter's life? Is she now a grandmother? Right. To her. And you talked about labels, the labels, the labeling of mom and biological and stepmom and so much, your new mom.

[00:33:58] **Amanda:** Got a mom here, mom's here. Mom over there. Yeah, it's like boom. Mom's everywhere. They're all real different from Linn, which is funny, but I think

[00:34:05] **Dana:** And when do you tell Lola? That's the question of the hour?

[00:34:07] **Amanda:** Well, well, I'm gonna tell her as soon as she can understand words.

[00:34:11] **Dana:** Great.

[00:34:11] **Amanda:** Because,

[00:34:12] **Dana:** great.

[00:34:12] **Amanda:** I think what I have found is that will be complicated too, because how are you explaining this?

[00:34:19] And I, I have to acknowledge that as a child, I did not have to grapple with being adopted. And that sounds like a very painful experience for some people.

[00:34:31] **Dana:** Mm-hmm. Right. You had like a, it's like a blessing. You got till 22, right?

[00:34:36] **Amanda:** Yeah.

[00:34:36] **Dana:** It's, it is, it isn't right and right.

[00:34:38] **Amanda:** It is and it isn't, but it's also taking something away from someone.

[00:34:41] **Dana:** Yes.

[00:34:41] **Amanda:** Like I do feel that that takes away autonomy over my life in some ways and not malicious. Think my parents did it out of fear, out of some selfishness, out of some self-preservation.

[00:34:56] **Dana:** Mm-hmm.

[00:34:56] **Amanda:** But I think cuz I did have a good childhood and a good relationship with them, I don't feel like being angry all the time.

[00:35:06] **Dana:** Mm-hmm.

[00:35:06] **Amanda:** I definitely have resentment, ask Chris. Love to get into some of my resentment, but at the end of the day, if my dad passes away tomorrow, I will be devastated and I'm not willing to like upend everything about a relationship.

[00:35:24] **Dana:** Yeah.

[00:35:24] **Amanda:** Even if I'm not happy with it. Right now. This wo this a adopt, uh, biological mom. See, I, I struggle. Yeah. Freaking terminologies. I never used it. My parents would be called Scott and Linn would be called my adoptive parents in traditional terminology, I guess. And like this woman and the guy who she did tell this college friend of hers about me,

[00:35:48] **Dana:** What'd he say?

[00:35:49] **Amanda:** Right before I went to grad school, so she never mentions it again. I mean, two or three years go by and I'm about to go to grad school, so I'm leaving Chicago for a year.

[00:35:58] **Dana:** How old were you when you met her? Remind me.

[00:36:01] **Amanda:** I think I met her in 2015. So I found out in 2006.

[00:36:07] **Dana:** Right.

[00:36:09] **Amanda:** My mom died 2010. A lot of adopted people feel more empowered to go find their biological parents when a, a parent dies once

[00:36:15] **Dana:** a parent dies. Yep.

[00:36:16] **Amanda:** Because I do think it would've hurt my mom's.

[00:36:18] **Dana:** Yep. I've heard that.

[00:36:19] **Amanda:** Yeah, I do. I They feel there's a freedom there and then you already have

[00:36:23] **Dana:** Yeah.

[00:36:23] **Amanda:** Certain rifts that I think were being healed.

[00:36:26] **Dana:** Yeah.

[00:36:26] **Amanda:** And I can people take it as a value judgment adopted parents.

[00:36:30] **Dana:** Mm-hmm.

[00:36:30] **Amanda:** Um, even though it, it is more about the adopted kid.

[00:36:34] **Dana:** Or you're trying to then fill a void. Maybe your mom dies and then you're like, I'm gonna go find this other mom. Right. Or

[00:36:40] **Amanda:** So I waited a couple years cuz I was like, I do not wanna go looking for a mom

[00:36:45] **Dana:** just lost one need a minute here, let me,

[00:36:47] **Amanda:** yeah. And I don't want a mom. I don't want a mom because what if I look into her and she's dead and I have to mourn

[00:36:52] **Dana:** Oh, oh, oh, oh, oh oh.

[00:36:55] **Amanda:** Or what if you stumble upon somebody who needs things from you, you don't wanna give. Like they want, they didn't have kids. They didn't.

[00:37:03] **Dana:** Ooh didn't think of that? Yeah. Yeah, yeah. Yeah.

[00:37:05] **Amanda:** So I was like nervous about a lot of those things and really meditated on them.

[00:37:10] **Dana:** Okay.

[00:37:10] **Amanda:** Before I reached out, because I was like, I could be opening some can of worms, I ended up with a great scenario. She is married to someone, not anybody that had to do with me. They had two kids. They have a nice life.

[00:37:26] **Dana:** Hmm.

[00:37:27] **Amanda:** So she doesn't need anything from me. I think she felt relieved to hear that, like, I felt good about my life.

[00:37:34] **Dana:** Hmm.

[00:37:34] **Amanda:** Who knows how sh I was honest with her about not knowing because I feel bad because I know my father. Like if he listens to this, he is going to be mortified that I tell people the truth.

[00:37:49] **Dana:** You really believe that? More.

[00:37:52] **Amanda:** Does it set him free or does it implicate him in doing like this kind of fucked up thing to his kid? Both probably. I just think my parents could be a little also like, it's nobody's business but ours. It's a lot of people.

[00:38:05] **Dana:** Yeah.

[00:38:07] **Amanda:** And I get it. Like my mom's illness, like at the end, she didn't want even her best friends to come see her.

[00:38:14] **Dana:** Hmm.

[00:38:14] **Amanda:** Like was your mom like that? Oh, like, like a creature that crawls under the porch. Doesn't, no.

[00:38:19] **Dana:** My mom stopped seeing friends stop cuz she looked so sick and different and yeah. She wasn't reaching out to people. There were uncles wanted to visit. People would come to town and say we should swing by and she wouldn't call them back. Yeah. Because it was shame and she was, she just looked really bad and her stomach was distended and she couldn't really walk and there were just, I get it.

[00:38:38] Or it wasn't just like, cuz her roots weren't done. Even though that was,

[00:38:41] **Amanda:** it was part of it.

[00:38:41] **Dana:** It was part of it. Let's be, let's be honest. I remember, I, I, my grandma and I went to see my mom like in the last year, year of her life. And

we walked into the house and it's a memory I'll never forget cause I hadn't seen my mom in a long time. And when your mom's sick and you come and see her and you haven't seen her in a while, it's horrific. Cuz she's even worse. Right? And she's just looked so bad and her neck was swollen, all this stuff. And she just looked really sick and, and we were almost, we, it took our breath away. Uh, I, I think I covered my mouth.

[00:39:06] I think I, I tried to be respectful but I was like, oh my god. And, and I think I said out loud, you look so different. I'm, I'm, I I'm sorry that you're in so much pain cuz you look really sick. And my grandma said, and your and your hair looks horrible. And, and hey, that's, and that's what we talk about a lot on this show is like the, they're very close.

[00:39:26] My mom and her mom. And yet quite a sick, sick relationship of like, stay beautiful, stay young, too bad, too bad you didn't get your roots done. Too bad I still look fabulous at 90 while you are dying. I mean, kind of like this competitiveness, right? This. Anyway, and my mom was like, I can't believe you're talking about my roots when I can't walk.

[00:39:44] Right. But my grandma was like, no, I'm worried about that too. But your hair looks like shit. Right? But like, you could be, you could. Yeah. And, and, and yet she couldn't though that, that the hair stylist would've had to have come into the house. So, Yes. That's all to say is totally shut out a lot of people.

[00:40:01] And my mom had a hard time keeping friendships anyway. It was just hard for her, I think with women. And she just had, I think, I think it was hard for her. I noticed that as I got old, as I've gotten older, I have a lot of friendships cause I work at them. And I could tell, and women especially, and my mom just didn't have that as, as much. And I think she lost people through the years and or let them go or, or was, was in so much pain and sadness and, and depression and shame of a divorce that she pushed them out.

[00:40:31] Yeah.

[00:40:31] **Amanda:** It's hard.

[00:40:32] **Dana:** Do you have like, advice for someone, you're, you're part of these adoption groups now, you said,

[00:40:38] **Amanda:** oh God, you no adoption groups.

[00:40:39] **Dana:** Oh, I thought you, well you've been looking into the, that world.

[00:40:42] **Amanda:** I just,

[00:40:42] **Dana:** you've dabbled

[00:40:43] **Amanda:** toed it.

[00:40:43] **Dana:** Okay. You've toed it.

[00:40:44] **Amanda:** There is a whole community. I feel like if I'm following the narrative correctly, Twitter, TikTok has, has sort of connected all these adoptees. They're coming in hot. They got a lot of feelings, reels, videos, thought, just a lot of stuff like, I'm gonna educate you about adoption. It's a lot for me.

[00:41:03] **Dana:** Okay. I I, so when I say if you have advice for someone, your advice might be

[00:41:07] **Amanda:** just like, ease in, I, I'm sort of like a little overwhelmed by it all. Because to me, since it's a newer group of people that are connecting and finding their voice, it reminds me of like a lot of social movements where at first it's like a lot of telling people how to feel. And like, this was your experience, this is our experience.

[00:41:30] And that to me isn't like speaking from a place of self knowing that like, you're part of a community, but you're having your own individual experience.

[00:41:40] **Dana:** Mm-hmm.

[00:41:40] **Amanda:** But I get it. When you're unheard for so long, you kind of come in hot.

[00:41:45] **Dana:** Are these groups specific to people who are learning about adoption later in life? Is that what you're saying? That, that.

[00:41:50] **Amanda:** It's more. There's this whole idea online of like abolish, adopts adoption. Adoption is trauma.

[00:41:58] **Dana:** I see.

[00:41:59] It's exactly, you're taking people from countries, or even that concept, right? Or taking people from their home, their home countries, or putting them into different families.

[00:42:06] **Amanda:** Yeah, like we'd rather children than create the support systems

[00:42:09] **Dana:** to keep them with their families,

[00:42:10] **Amanda:** to keep them with their families.

[00:42:10] **Dana:** Mm-hmm.

[00:42:12] **Amanda:** But to me, it's like a very quick like abolish adoption, like isn't very nuanced.

[00:42:19] **Dana:** I see.

[00:42:20] **Amanda:** And like, I don't like love un nuanced anythings. So I just, and I am, and this is my nature more. I don't like to be told like, you're in the fog and you're coming out of it. Like there's all these little adoptee terms.

[00:42:37] **Dana:** But I am grateful to just hear these perspectives, wonder about my own experience. Some of it, I'm sort of like, I'm living this weird existence where sometimes I hear them say things and I'm like, but isn't that how all children feel? Or, I mean, I was adopted. I didn't know. It's, it's confusing. If you're gonna ask me for advice for adopted people, I, I, I'm probably the worst person to ask. I think I am a person that's, I like to do my research. I'm really curious.

[00:43:10] You're good at Googling.

[00:43:11] **Amanda:** So good at Googling. Google. Google. Google.

[00:43:14] But I, I think telling my own version of the story, having my own autonomy over my narrative is more important at the, at the end of it all.

[00:43:28] **Dana:** Hmm.

[00:43:28] **Amanda:** I don't wanna be uninformed, but I think it's okay to be like, my story's connected to these other ones, but it's, it's, it's separate.

[00:43:37] I think a lot of artists feel this way that are storytellers.

[00:43:40] **Dana:** Mm-hmm.

[00:43:41] **Amanda:** Like dead moms. I have a really close friend whose mom struggled with cancer for over 10 years, and when their mom passed, which was after my mom, they, they sort of were like, you're the person with the dead mom, and we're gonna talk about, talk about it, talk about it.

[00:43:59] And it brought up a lot for me, it was a l it was really hard, but I tried not to make it about myself, but I wondered sometimes about that. And offhandedly, one day they were like, talking to you about my dead mom wasn't even like that helpful for me.

[00:44:13] **Dana:** Wait, what? Hold on, hold on. Offhandedly. Like,

[00:44:17] **Amanda:** offhandedly.

[00:44:18] This is just it. It it. If neither here nor there, other than the fact that I was like, what I think they were trying to say is that for, and I felt this way too for a while. They were like, we both have dead moms. We have the same story. We both feel the same ways about it. And then they had come to a place to be like, my journey with my mom's illness and death.

[00:44:40] Is always gonna be different Yes. Than yours. And I, I didn't have a dead mom friend when my mom died. Right. Cuz I was only like 28. Right. And that sucked too. Yeah. And I think I would've done the same thing that this person did. Been like your mom's dad, and like, we have all this in common, let's talk. But then would've years later been like, oh, the way I'm gonna have to grapple with this.

[00:45:03] **Dana:** Yeah.

[00:45:04] **Amanda:** The rest of my life will be similar and different.

[00:45:07] **Dana:** Yeah. And it doesn't,

[00:45:07] **Amanda:** it's gonna ripple for you.

[00:45:09] **Dana:** And it doesn't matter how many conversations I've had or interviews convers or thoughts and processing, it's still, I'm alone in this, even though I learned I'm so not alone. Right.

[00:45:19] **Amanda:** Yeah.

[00:45:19] **Dana:** It's like these whole, I hold both of those, those truths.

[00:45:23] Like a lot of the things I say, other people feel that, but my journey's, my journey and some days I need this and some days I don't want to talk to people.

[00:45:34] **Amanda:** But this journey, like I actually think, and I'm not like a Pollyanna, I think. The, the solitude.

[00:45:43] **Dana:** Mm-hmm.

[00:45:43] **Amanda:** In isolation, we feel grappling with like, the hardest parts of life is it's intimate. So it has to be intimate. Like it has to be personal to you. And I think the fact that you let yourself think, talk grapple.

[00:46:02] **Dana:** Laugh.

[00:46:02] **Amanda:** Yeah. Laugh like the, it's morbid.

[00:46:06] **Dana:** Yeah.

[00:46:06] **Amanda:** But it's funny. This is what closure is and isn't, there is no book that is gonna close. Right. There's no box that we're gonna tick. You don't show up to work in three years and like, not feel.

[00:46:20] I, I had this experience when I was in college and I befriended this staff member at my college who was like 15 years older than me, whose mom also died at 28. And she was like, you, I can't explain this to you now. Cause she was telling us a story about her mom. She was in her forties. She just started weeping.

[00:46:37] And she was like, there are moments that it feels like it happened yesterday and until you experience grief like that, I can't explain to you how it happens, but I'm like, I get it now.

[00:46:49] **Dana:** Mm-hmm.

[00:46:49] **Amanda:** It is always raw. It's, it's not consuming me. I mean, the day when my mom died, I cried every single day for a year and I don't do that now. Got this tattoo for her and I always laughed cuz she thought tattoos were for sailors. But I'm like, she would freaking love,

[00:47:06] **Dana:** You got your body tattooed. But she is like a center of attention. Center of attention. On your forearm, is it a swan?

[00:47:12] **Amanda:** It is a swan because I grew up on a lake.

[00:47:14] **Dana:** Yes.

[00:47:15] **Amanda:** I like swans because they are gorgeous.

[00:47:19] **Dana:** Yeah.

[00:47:20] **Amanda:** But they're mean as hell. They're actually like, kind of scary. They're ugly when they're born, right? Like they're actually kind of complicated creatures who are always trying to like, they kind of give the appearance of beauty and there's just something about that that's like, connects to who my mom was like she wanted to like appear as something, but she was just so complicated and complex, as all people are.

[00:47:44] But she was just so afraid of people seeing that part of her.

[00:47:49] **Dana:** That's beautiful. I did not know that. And I've never seen that. I need a photo of that.

[00:47:53] **Amanda:** I will need that. I, I loved the tattoo artist that did this. I was like, make her name look like little waves underneath the salon. So it does say, Linn,

[00:48:01] **Dana:** I love it

[00:48:02] **Amanda:** in the spelling of the name cuz she added an N for the drama.

[00:48:05] **Dana:** Of course. Of course she did. So looking at that, looking at me sitting in this room today, September, June 11th, seven days before my

wedding. Let's bring it back to me. I'm kidding. No. What are you thinking about Linn and is as you're thinking about Linn, are you, is are, you still think, are, is anything coming up around your biological mom?

[00:48:26] So I guess there's two questions today.

[00:48:29] **Amanda:** Yeah.

[00:48:30] **Dana:** And I think it's pretty Linn centric, but I'm just curious. Right. We, we held space for your biological mom. But yeah. Tell me your mom's full name, how you're feeling about her in this moment, and if there's anything else coming up for you about your biological I'd be curious to hear it.

[00:48:42] **Amanda:** Yeah. Linda Marie Gall was her maiden name, so, okay. Linda Dunn, but like to go by Linn, l i n n Jade, if she had her choice.

[00:48:56] **Dana:** Mm.

[00:48:56] **Amanda:** Of chosen names. Jade.

[00:48:59] **Dana:** Ooh.

[00:48:59] **Amanda:** She wanted like a fun name.

[00:49:00] **Dana:** We like to party.

[00:49:01] **Amanda:** We like to party. I

[00:49:04] **Dana:** Jade would like to party.

[00:49:05] **Amanda:** Yeah. Jade loved to party. I think what I've been thinking a lot about lately was if I, I wish I could have known her longer.

[00:49:19] Because I think more of her true self desires and history would've been revealed slowly.

[00:49:27] **Dana:** Mm-hmm.

[00:49:27] **Amanda:** It would've taken the years, but I think she would be pretty content with like where my life is. Not that that matters, but I feel like she'd, she'd love it all. She'd love that Chris is an actor.

[00:49:43] **Dana:** Mm-hmm.

[00:49:43] **Amanda:** She'd love the name Lola, which is not Linda, but I thought she'd love the drama of, it starts with an L little nod, Linn. And I don't know, when I see pictures of my mom, we're not biologically related, but there's like this little mischievous like look in her eye. Mischievous. And I think Lola like has that little twinkle.

[00:50:03] I never had that twinkle.

[00:50:05] **Dana:** Mm-hmm.

[00:50:05] **Amanda:** I was like a by the book kid. So that, that vibe kind of is beautiful to me when it comes to the biological mom who I do have a relationship with. That is very hard to navigate. It's hard to meet someone who's essentially a stranger at the age of 30 and figure out how to even build that relationship no matter how lovely they are.

[00:50:29] But yeah, I had this profound realization, profound to me, not the universe, that Lola could grow her whole life knowing her, but I didn't. And I don't know if that means anything or not. It just means that my daughter's relationship to this person will just be really different than mine, and I have to figure out what that means for me.

[00:50:54] And so life is just constantly trying to navigate like what it's throwing at. Like I have to navigate a lot. Like I think I was a person that felt so comfortable. I'm an only child of two people and I live my life and I try to do everything perfectly. And then it's like been kind of fallen down the stairs ever since, but in a fun way. Like sometimes it's maybe even so, sometimes it's like, holy shit,

[00:51:19] **Dana:** sometimes it's a spiral staircase, sometimes there's a banister. You know, like there's just different types of

[00:51:24] **Amanda:** Yeah,

[00:51:24] **Dana:** sometimes there's carpet on it. I know sometimes there's not just wood.

[00:51:27] **Amanda:** And I did fall down the stairs and you know what?

[00:51:29] Yeah, I was just fine.

[00:51:31] **Dana:** You were just fine.

[00:51:33] **Amanda:** Got a little scar just fine. So I think that's like where everything has felt since I saw that certificate. It's just like, no one's life is that. No one's life is the story of perfection that maybe they want to construct for themselves and that's okay. And I wanna embrace it and be transparent about it, which can be hard sometimes.

[00:51:55] **Dana:** Yeah. You're the best.

[00:51:57] **Amanda:** No thank you.

[00:51:57] **Dana:** It was a pleasure.

[00:51:58] **Amanda:** No, this was wonderful. Thank you.

[00:52:00] **Dana:** You're amazing.

[00:52:01] **Amanda:** Actually, my heart feels full. I think I was, there was a little piece of me that when I was getting this breakfast sandwich before I came in, And I was like, I think, I feel like I'm stalling. Like I actually feel nervous in a way I haven't felt in a really long time to talk about her.

[00:52:21] **Dana:** That's really interesting.

[00:52:23] **Amanda:** I think I just

[00:52:24] **Dana:** Well, you didn't wanna journal, and I think you said this too before we started.

[00:52:29] **Amanda:** So much of my life has been about her death because she died in 2010. Yeah. That's, that's a lot of my adult life. Yeah. That's been about her death.

[00:52:39] **Dana:** Yeah.

[00:52:39] **Amanda:** And to have to like remember my life with her is, I just haven't gone there in a long time.

[00:52:58] **Dana:** Amanda's mom and my mom did like to party and host most likely with a cocktail or a glass of wine in their hands. But then the party is

over. The guests leave the house is a mess. You're exhausted, dehydrated, and you probably didn't eat cuz you were being the hostess with the mostess. I wonder if my mom ever ended a party or a Christmas Eve dinner, hosted with our neighbors and some family friends and felt truly satisfied, proud of herself, full of good conversation and joy.

[00:53:32] Someone from my childhood recently sent me a photo on Facebook and said, I was just going through some of our old ornaments and I found this your mom was the best host. It was a picture of a metal wreath, green and red. Very basic, simple but classy. And my mom would put them on all the plates around the dinner table on Christmas Eve with a cloth napkin through them as if the ornament was a napkin holder and a take home gift all in one.

[00:53:59] Now, this is way before Pinterest and all of the amazing decor ideas of the world has to offer now, but in 1992 in the Midwest, she was crushing it. The house was immaculate. The Christmas tree covered in beautiful gold bows and elegant ornaments were perfectly and evenly placed on the tree. Her hair and her DKNY dress looked amazing sometimes.

[00:54:20] She made two soups for Christmas Eve dinner, and all I can remember is how she never sat down. Or well, well, she did sit down, but for like four minutes at a time, continually going into the kitchen to get stuff or refill a glass or help a guest. It was hard for her to rest, to sit, to be present, to eat.

[00:54:38] When the party was over, did she regret everything that she said? Did she feel lonely? Was the living room couch wrinkled? Was the soup too salty? My mom had a tendency to keep score as well and feel resentment at times, like she gave way more than she received, overextending herself sometimes by her own choosing. Hmm, I wonder where I get that trait.

[00:55:04] I bet my mom was sad that not enough praise was heaped on her for those adorable ornament gift napkin ring holders. The ornament, my childhood friend from 30 years ago still has and still remembers exactly who gave it to her.

[00:55:21] At the top of this conversation, Amanda said, it will always be devastating, Dana.

[00:55:28] We don't acknowledge the human experience in all of its fullness, which is a deep sorrow. Loss, we don't grapple with it. We don't let ourselves feel it echo throughout our lives.

[00:55:39] She said, I think my life has been more rich in the moments that I just acknowledge the spectrum that I am experiencing. In the weeks after our conversation, Amanda's father's health suddenly took a turn and the illness he'd been suffering from became terminal.

[00:55:55] Amanda was traveling back and forth to Arizona to spend more time with him and making sure her daughter Lola got all the fleeting grandpa time that she could get.

[00:56:04] This past January, I logged into a storytelling event over Zoom with one of my favorite storytelling companies on the planet, Second Story, to listen to Amanda talk about her adoption discovery, her father's final days, and her Chardonnay drinking mother who loved to celebrate.

[00:56:21] So I invite you now to grab a drink or a snack or a coffee, and join us at Haymarket Brewery in downtown Chicago as we bear witness to more of Amanda's full human experience. Talk to you soon.

[00:56:39] We'd like to introduce our next storyteller of the evening. Uh, Amanda loves talking and her freckle speckled face will definitely turn red as she tells her story today. She rocks, glasses and bangs with shoulder length, brown hair, and there's no hiding. Her natural gray highlights. Amanda's hands and eyebrows have a life of their own when she talks. Please welcome to the stage Amanda Acevedo.

[00:57:17] **Amanda:** I had just spent three restless weeks in Oxford, Ohio, living in an empty apartment feeling completely untethered. After four years of letting myself be consumed by the college experience I was living in a suspended pause. Before my first post-college job started. As those weeks wore on, I suddenly felt dissatisfied with all my decisions. My long-term job prospects seemed dim and nothing was panning out. I only had a three month summer commitment to fuel me, and I had no idea what would come after that.

[00:57:57] Days before boarding my plane, I drove six hours to my parents' house in Illinois and my mom was thrilled to have a few more nights with me.

[00:58:06] She loved any excuse to celebrate, and this could be an extension of the post-college graduation festivities. We could spend those days cooking our favorite meals together, drinking wine, and chatting late into the night. As we waited for my dad to come home from his evening shift, I felt the stress of having three days to unpack four years.

[00:58:30] So I invited my high school bestie Lauren to join me for a whirlwind day to help, and she suggested I find my passport since I should be prepared for anything. And I knew exactly where to look. My family kept all important documents in a metal lockbox that was locked with the key, permanently resting in the keyhole.

[00:58:53] It held titles to cars, all our medical records, old birth and death certificates, and I figured this is where I'd find my passport and retrieved the box from a dusty shelf in my dad's bedroom. When Lauren and I popped open the lid, my passport was resting right on top, but she noticed that below all the papers and envelopes, there were smaller items, and I caught glimpse of what appeared to be my dad's college id.

[00:59:20] So we decided to investigate silver dollars collectible baseball cards. An old McDonald's watch that I seem to recall my dad claiming was worth a lot of money and a few of my baby teeth, which is gross, all laid strewn at the bottom. And at the very bottom, we found this manila envelope folded in quarters with no label, nothing.

[00:59:50] It barely looked like it had been opened. The creases were not as worn. The color was brighter. It's large size. Everything about it seemed to stand out awkwardly from the other documents. So unceremoniously, I unfolded the envelope and looked inside certificate of adoption, followed by my name, Amanda Jane Dunn.

[01:00:16] I could feel the breath catch suddenly, and my lungs and my heart began pounding. My head felt cloudy and my palms began to sweat because I didn't know I was adopted. I didn't know I was adopted. I was seeing that I must have been adopted. I mean, the paper says that I'm adopted, so I'm adopted. I could sense Lauren talking to me, but the moment froze in the stillness.

[01:00:44] I let this revelation wash over me. I felt betrayed that my parents would keep this from me. As an only child, I was extremely close to my parents. They were my biggest supporters, often my confidants, they were the kind of parents I could go to with anything. No problem. Too serious. Nothing insurmountable.

[01:01:05] So my lack of ability to see this truth made me sick to my stomach. Lauren remembers that. I said, what the fuck? What the fuck? What the fuck? Over and over again. And then time went backwards and forwards. In elementary school for Girl Scouts, we were each asked to create a timeline of our life and pictures.

[01:01:25] I asked my parents why we didn't have any photos of my mother pregnant or of me in the hospital as an infant. This was explained away by the limited technology of the eighties. We didn't take as many pictures back then, my dad said, or throughout my entire life. Why had my parents been so mystified by our contrasting personalities?

[01:01:45] They were constantly commenting on or making fun of my love of order, timeliness and structure. This always struck a nerve with me. I didn't know why they were fixated on our differences. Or at my grandmother's funeral, when I was a teenager, my father's childhood friend, Vicky was paying me a compliment and said, ever since your parents got you, you really changed their life, or that every few years, meeting my parents for the first time, a new friend would say, you don't look like them.

[01:02:17] I can remember staring at photos of my mom and dad when they were young, tracing my features back to them. I have her smile. I have their brown hair, I have his eyes. Lauren's voice grounded me back in the present. So, are you gonna tell your parents you found this bewildered? I wondered what exactly I could say to them.

[01:02:41] I was terrified that a conversation with them would make this all real. Lauren and I were meticulous as we put everything back in the box exactly as we had found it. With the adoption papers seemingly undisturbed at the very bottom. When I saw my parents later that day, I was a hot mess of denial, deep hurt and anger, and I attempted to spend as little time with them as possible, which was out of the ordinary.

[01:03:09] Usually I spent all spare moments with them, often canceling or delaying plans with friends. I'd spend afternoons out in the yard helping my dad water his many petunias and impatiens, or I would prep the pontoon boat for our pre-dinner cruise around our small charming lake. Afterwards, I'd stand at our kitchen island, chatting with my mom while she cooked dinner, and then late into the evening sitting around our small dimly lit kitchen table.

[01:03:38] But instead, I spent a few evenings distractedly chatting with them at dinner. Otherwise, I was out of the house or alone in my room, and inside I stewed. We were three lone wolves against the world. My mom liked to say her little mantra about our close-knit family, but now I felt like the lone wolf that had been lied to.

[01:03:59] My parents were full of secrets and an epic elaborate lie that was about me. How dare they? How could they, what the actual fuck? I was

devastated. That next year is a blur. I would call each of my friends one by one day after day, recounting the story of finding the papers over and over and over again.

[01:04:24] Each recounting I hoped would make it more real or come with an assurance that nothing had really changed. It's just paper. I quickly started seeing a 35 year old divorcee and became consumed in our whirlwind romance. By winter, I was having, I don't even know what to call them, emotional outbursts, screaming at my college friends in a hotel room, icing out my roommate and closest friend getting blackout drunk and stumbling home four miles by myself in the dead of night in Chicago.

[01:04:58] The compartmentalizing was seeping through any crack it could find. One November night, over a year after finding the papers, I was at my parents' house to have dinner with my mom. We fell back into our pattern of hours of after dinner conversation, sitting at the kitchen table in the glow of the twinkling Christmas lights she diligently hung each season. She was tipsy, sipping her third glass of Chardonnay and on an impulse. I said, I know that I'm adopted, you know.

[01:05:37] My mom froze, expressionless. After a brief moment of silent shock, she burst into violent sobbing tears, and the first words out of her mouth were, I'm such a terrible mother. She then stumbled away from the table, wine in hand. Now, see, I had spent the previous year spinning around and round asking question after question, who in my life knew this about me and who didn't?

[01:06:07] How much scaffolding did my parents construct to hold up this lie? Was this situation like fucked up at all? Was I my dad's daughter from an affair? I wasn't. But mostly I wondered why. Why did they feel like they had to keep this from me? But the minute I heard those words, I'm such a terrible mother. I felt shame for bringing it up in such a callous way, and I felt compassion for my mom.

[01:06:38] I realized she had carried the secret too. In that moment, I started to understand how a little lie becomes a big lie. How not telling me became easier and harder the older I got? How there must have been so many moments she wanted to say something, but maybe she never had the right words. Or she was afraid of what would happen after the truth was revealed.

[01:07:02] When my mom died three years later, I was unsure if she had ever told my dad about our conversation, but I had a hunch she didn't, sitting in our sad family room, which felt lifeless without her. The day before her funeral, I

told my dad everything that I knew without any perceivable emotion or even looking at me.

[01:07:31] He said, how long have you known? Over four years? Suddenly he looked flustered and upset. He looked me in the eyes and asked, well, why did you wait so long to tell me?

[01:07:48] Well, I wondered the same thing y'all.

[01:07:53] Years later, I found and met my birth mom. And when I finally saw her for the first time in a small coffee shop in Portage Park, I looked deeply at her. Every feature, every manner is wondering were we alike? It was odd to sit across from a stranger and know that we were intimately connected, and I thought when I met her, maybe this magic moment would happen.

[01:08:20] I would recognize her as my mom, but there was no moment of daughter meeting mother, and instead it was just two people sharing their journeys, which is what I had told myself was all I wanted. But deep down, I did think meeting my birth mom would somehow make whole what was shattered the day I found my adoption papers.

[01:08:45] And what it has taken time in hindsight for me to realize is that no one can do that for me, not my friends, not the divorcee, not my mom, not my dad, not even my birth mom. Even if every question I have gets an answer, even if I could know every detail and gather every last bit of information about my adoption, I can't undo what happened.

[01:09:12] I can't change the truth. Just this Thanksgiving, I was sitting next to my dad, who's now dying of liver failure. The majority of the week we spent at his house in Arizona, he remained in one position on the couch, lying on his side, pillow between his legs, eyes glued to the screen, watching ESPN, and I wondered if I'd ever have the courage to ask him some of the questions I hoped to ask before.

[01:09:44] Why didn't you tell me I was adopted? Can you tell me more about how it all came to be? Why can't you acknowledge and talk about this? On the last day of our visit, I sat down next to him, inhaled deeply, took his cold hand into mine. But before I could speak, he squeezed my hand and said, thank you for being here.

[01:10:11] I love you, and I don't regret anything. And I silently squeezed his hand back.

[01:10:21] When, when I meet new people, it feels right. Complicated necessary to tell them that I'm adopted. It's an identity I've started to claim, and the more I say it, the less it feels like a secret, shameful label I was never meant to know about. And each time I tell someone, the words feel more true, that I'm adopted.

[01:10:52] I'm adopted. I am adopted.

[01:11:15] **Dana:** The third season, which is crazy to say, of I Swear on My Mother's Grave podcast would never be possible without our editor. Amanda Mayo from Cassopeia Studio. I also wanna thank our music composer, Adam Ollendorff, our graphic designer and illustrator Meredith Montgomery, our copywriter Rachel Claff, and Tony Howell and Jonathan Freeland for all of their work on our beautiful website.

[01:11:37] And as always, thank you to Heather Bodie for her emotional, spiritual, social, physical, for well, for all of the help over all of the years. Thank you and all of you. Thank you for listening, for subscribing, for reaching out, for telling all of your friends. I know that this club, this complicated, messy club isn't fun to be in.

[01:11:59] But I'm so glad that you're here. I couldn't do this without you, so thank you for being a part of this community. And if you haven't signed up for our newsletter, please do so at our website, which is dana.black.org. Not just because I wanna sell you stuff, but because I wanna keep talking to you and you talking to me.

[01:12:16] So go check that out. There's personal stories, I'll tell you about the season, and you'll learn about some live retreats that we're curating. One retreat at a time. So, yeah, thanks for being here. I hope you'll come back. Will you come back? Don't leave me like my dead mom. You know what I mean? Come back, please.

[01:12:33] I'll talk to you soon.