

Getting Curious with Jonathan Van Ness & Amanda Seales

JVN [00:00:00] Welcome to Getting Curious. I'm Jonathan Van Ness and every week I sit down for a gorgeous conversation with a brilliant expert to learn all about something that makes me curious. On today's episode, I'm joined by Amanda Seales, where I ask her: How do you make me LOL so hard? Welcome to Getting Curious, this is Jonathan Van Ness, this is such an exciting reunion, we literally have a guest that I have chills on my triceps to welcome. We have Amanda Seales, who is a comedian, an actress, a writer, a producer and more. But I have to say, we have a lot of ground to cover today because we have a lot of mutual loves and things that we have to get to.

You just moved into a new house. And we were just talking about it on this Zoom. And I hate that you guys can't see it, but I'll just verbally describe it for you. We are, well, at least according to my computer and how I receive light, I am getting this, like, lavender-pink wall that is so pretty, and I love it. I think you're in your office, maybe, and this green nature right outside this window. Oh, yeah. She was just saying that, she was just, like, "Oh, I feel like I should be looking, like, the, you know, whatever, Cancer sign in me, like, it feels like it should be done," and then I was, like, "I don't know, it's already so pretty." It's everything. And then also Amanda mentioned that she has a theater room in her house, but then she did away with it. But I was like, "Oh, my God, good job for having a house that has a theater room." But then she's like, "I did away with that. I want to tell you why." And that's what happened. I didn't know this is going to be our intro but I'm rolling with that. People want to know, like me: why did you get rid of it?

AMANDA SEALES [00:01:38] I got rid of it because we basically have a living room, but we didn't have, like, a family room? And I, you know, I don't think I ever conceptualized the difference until like, it was in my own space. And the living room in this house is very much like, it's a living room. It's a sitting room, like, and my partner was like, "I just don't feel like we should have a TV in here. Like, it just feels, like, very serene." And so I was like, "You know what, you're right." But if we don't have a TV in here, like, we are TV people, like, we gather on the couch and we watch TV.

JVN [00:02:13] It's, like, your cuddly, cute den TV room?

AMANDA SEALES [00:02:15] That's what it's going to be. This is the first time I've ever bought a house. The process is bananas. And also just let me just tell you guys some things. If you're buying a house, some things to look for, that they will fucking not tell you. Because you get an inspection done. But the inspection is really just to make sure that everything works and is not dangerous and nothing's leaking. Ultimately, that's really what the inspection is. They're not, like, going to tell you if things are done, like, they'll tell you if

something's up to code, but they're not going to tell you like, is this doing-, is this, like, the best it could be? So, for instance, like our air conditioners, like air conditioners are working. But if I had known before, I would have said, "You need to replace this air conditioner here that's 10 years old and that that is on its last leg." Yes, we have water filter systems in three sinks.

JVN [00:03:11] I love that. Erin Brokovich, you better! She told us we had to, on this podcast, so I love that you did that for yourself.

AMANDA SEALES [00:03:17] Did? Yeah. So it's like, "OK, awesome." And the woman who was like selling us this house is like, "Oh my goodness, it has a water filtration system,; but not this, not the listing agent, but the seller. And then come to find out, like, my partner was, like, "I just feel like the water is, like, tasting weird." And I'm, like, "OK." He's like, "Well, let me just see, let me just call the people." So the water filtration people come, and they're like, "Listen, like, it's not like your water is closed or anything, but they have not replaced these filters since they got them, since they got them four years ago." So, like, that's something that I feel like if I had known, I would have said, "You need to replace the filters on the water filtration system."

And some people are probably listening right now are, like "You dumb bitch. How did you not know that?" But the problem is there's so, it's so overwhelming that you just don't. You don't think about every bit like there's so many things to think about, and it's also happening so fast, you know, so then they had, like, a sprinkler system in the backyard. But the sprinkler system is not, like, working the way it's supposed to, and that's the thing. So what happens is you'll get something, like, working, but not working the way it's supposed to. So this house has been a journey and I am learning a lot, I've just been humbled many times. I was humbled by our patio umbrella the other day.

JVN [00:04:37] I've been humbled by our roofs. I've been humbled by ceilings. I've been humbled by some ladders. I've been humbled by some, some cave-ins. I, I always thought that I would never be in a position to be a homeowner till I was, like, I just never saw it. So I just I, just didn't think I'm sympathetic to this. I like it was this is what I thought I wanted to be successful for so that I could do. And I'm not complaining because it's fierce, like, I love it. However, I feel that my triceps just thinking about the stress because it's literally you put all this stuff into it and then I think about not to keep bringing up Erin Brockovich but that movie is like mostly why I am who I am and a lot of ways, not in some ways, but well, in my drama, I feel like I'm very, I want to give a snappy retort, not in terms of, like, being a good person. I just, you know, but so what she says, you know, she's like, "This is my time away from my kids. And if that's not personal, I don't know what is." And I feel like that's a lot of times what work is. You know, you're doing all this. You can help your family and provide

for your cats and like for your husband and your stuff. And it's like, that's personal when you can't be you know, it's a lot to build this. OK, wait. So I love that. I love that was our entry moment. I first knew of who you were from Insecure, obvs. That was my first introduction. Then I was, like, "Wait, she's genius," because this was Gay of Thrones era.

AMANDA SEALES [00:05:58] Like twenty sixteen.

JVN [00:05:59] Yeah, like 2016. You are a comedian, you're a brilliant standup comedian. You also are someone who has your own podcast, you have Small Doses, which we love. You also have your book Small Doses, which we love, which people should read. What has been because you're, like, really a full multi-hyphenate. You can't help it that you're doing all these things and you're very sought after and this is what you're doing. So what is, what is, like, the thing that creatively, I know that it's comedian, because I feel like I follow you and you're, like, "I'm a comedian first," but what are the other things you're like, "Oh, this is really fun, and I just really am, like, into this thing right now or just generally all over."

AMANDA SEALES [00:06:35] I'm really liking the process of creating and developing shows. So I have this partnership with Bunim/Murray who created, like, Real World, and they created Project Runway and the Kardashians. And so, so we have this residency where basically I create shows, and I work with them to, like, put packages behind that and then we go out and sell them. And so it's very fortunate for me because I have, like, all the ideas, but I didn't have the infrastructure to do that. Right. And so they have the infrastructure, but they didn't have necessarily, like, a voice like mine, particularly, like, a Black woman voice. And so we work together, and now I'm getting the opportunity to take things that were just, like, ideas that I would like to do eventually, possibly, perhaps someday, one day. And now I'm able to work with a company that can actually build them out into real products that can be, you know, put to the marketplace. And so that was something I was very, like, tenuous about doing.

And I also just was very kind of, like, protective of my art spirit, like, "OK, do I really want to take this out to the marketplace? Because what if no one buys anything?" And I haven't sold anything yet, but at least just the, the process of doing the full makeup of something has, has been something I never got to do. Like, I just, I was kind of denied that. I denied myself that because I really kind of talked myself into thinking I wasn't at the level of the people in Hollywood who were selling shows. I talked myself into thinking that I didn't have the temperament or, like, the disposition to be a part of this business in this way and to the point where I almost literally just talked myself out of this town. I was just like, "I just, I'm going to quit. I don't really want to be a part of this."

JVN [00:08:28] When was that?

AMANDA SEALES [00:08:29] That was, I mean, October of last year, I was just like, "I'm good, I don't wanna do this anymore, this is trash."

JVN [00:08:38] That was, like, a year. 2020 was-

AMANDA SEALES [00:08:42] 2020 and 2019 were very, like-, 2019 was, like, the year that I kind of, like, quote unquote "made it." But then simultaneously there was, like, all these downsides to that that I had not anticipated. And it really was, like, a gut blow. And it really made me like, really, genuinely question like, "OK, do you still want to keep going because you're an overachiever. If you keep going, you will achieve. But, but, but now, you know, these are the things that come along with the achieving in this space. So do you still want to do that or do you want to switch gears?" And I basically just kind of came through the other side of feeling that way. And I went through, like, a, like, a little trauma experience.

And I just kind of came up the other side of all that saying, like, "Oh, yeah, no, I actually do want to do this, okay!" And I also had a lot of, like, I did a lot of work of, like, rebuilding my confidence and, like, re-centering why I would want to do this. And ultimately, it literally came down to like, well, "I have really good ideas. And as long as I get to do them with the people, that I should be OK. So just focus on that." Whereas I know a lot of people who, like, it doesn't matter who they're doing it with, as long as they're going to get a check and the opportunity. But at this point, like, my thesis is, like, "If it's not fun money, I don't want it." And I know that that is incredibly privileged to be at and I have worked very hard to get to this place. And if at some point I am not in this place, so be it. But that's where I'm at right now.

JVN [00:10:24] And you got to be present, you know, so.

AMANDA SEALES [00:10:28] You gotta be present!

JVN [00:10:34] I just had an intrusive thought of one of my favorite posts of yours of all time. Of all of the whole of Instagram, like, I'm talking like Instagram in totality. Yes. You have one of my favorite posts ever, because I-, for the first time in my life, I was like, "Oh, someone does that thing I do," which is when you're, like, it's, like, "And someone leaves a comment. But other people like it. I got time today. Block!" Before I heard that song, I was, like, I was, like, I did that really pretty frequently, like, if someone said something really gnarly. I'd be like, "The fuck?"

AMANDA SEALES [00:11:15] "You're going down, too, like, this person said this whack shit, and you liked it? Fuck you, too!" [CROSSTALK] I have sat there and blocked, like,

thirty five people in a sitting and, you know, and I'm kind of lying because I don't know that I had time to do it, but I made time. I made time.

JVN [00:11:36] So how did you get such a genius idea to make this song? And I feel like this was like in the midst of the pandemic. And as someone who is, I was just informed, I guess I thought I knew everything there was to know. But then, like MTV VJ, didn't know. I knew that you had a Master's Degree in African-American Studies, I knew this from Columbia. And I was like, you can't, you're I mean, the way that you process in your brain, and the things that you and you know, you've got to be a genius and thank you. Sorry, but you like me. And, too, I feel like we I also I mean, when I met you in real life for Gay of Thrones, like, we had to break down so much in that episode, you have an uncanny ability to break down a lot of information quickly and not that many people can go toe to toe with me in the series of Gay of Thrones. And you actually you, you really, like, no, I was, like, I was almost like, worn out. I was like, "She's so funny. She's like, this is so good."

AMANDA SEALES [00:12:34] That was a fucking wild episode. I can't even remember what the exact episode was. But I do remember that there were many things. Many things.

JVN [00:12:40] We had a lot, a lot. And in that season there wasn't many, a lot of things. I think that was like it was the first or second episode of that season. And for whatever reason in that season, that episode was lit, there was a lot to cover.

AMANDA SEALES [00:12:57] But we have something very similar about us. We obsess about things we like, that's what it seems like.

JVN [00:13:02] Yeah, yeah, we do.

AMANDA SEALES [00:13:04] We become experts. Like, it's not enough to like Game of Thrones. No, we have to. There needs to be a whole show to break the whole thing.

JVN [00:29:13] Well, you know, it's actually kind of shameful for me about your fandom of Game of Thrones compared to if we were like comparing not that it's a comparison, but like I actually didn't understand anything about it at first, like when we very first started in the first season of it, like Erin, who you remember, the director was, like, yeah, "Have you seen this show?" And I was like, we were actually pitching a different show. You're going to die at this story. We were pitching, like, a little news recap show in, like, 2015, like, back in the day, kind of in that style, like, rapidness. And they were, like, "Oh, well how did Game of Thrones start?" And I was like, "Oh we were in the salon." And Erin was, like, "Are you watching this crazy show?" And I was like, "Oh my God, yes. And then, you know, that little boy had a sash, honey. She was angry this." And then I was and but, then I realized

that I was recapping Sparta, that other like mediæval show, like it was so mad. I had never seen Game of Thrones when I started recapping it. But then because we started on season three and then I'd seen it, and I was, like, "I'm obsessed. This is like the most amazing show I've ever seen." And then I got obsessed and then we took it, like, way more seriously. But it did take us a whole season to get like that.

AMANDA SEALES [00:14:17] I get it! I didn't get into season two, first season of Game of Thrones. I was like, "I don't know what you people are watching. This is just like a lot of white people just doing some bullshit." But then my homeboy was, like, "There's dragons," and I was like, "I'm sorry, what?" And he was like, "I know that I've been trying to get you to watch this show and I just finished the season. There are Dragons." Yes. And I was like, "Well, now we're talking about something different," because I'm a geek. So once you, like, once things like like that enter the conversation, I'm like, "Now, this is different. Before it was just white people doing weird shit. But now there's dragons so that, that ups the ante."

JVN [00:15:01] It's a whole other thing. But wait, that song that I'm obsessed with. What's the first one? Do you remember the first sentence of that song? I don't know why I'm having that-

AMANDA SEALES [00:15:11] Peeping in the comments. And I saw some bullshit. Other people like it. Because they on bullshit too. But I got time today, block! I've got time today, I'm blessed! All you hating-ass Internets, I got time today!

JVN [00:15:30] Yes, I love that! So you're just, like, minding your own business, sitting on the couch, and then, like, that tune comes into your head and you're, like, "I'm going to have to..." How do you do your comedy? How do you get inspired?

AMANDA SEALES [00:15:42] I don't-, Instagram has basically become this, just, very voyeuristic element to this shit that I would have been doing if it wasn't here. Like, there's, there's literally no I'm doing something. I'm, like, "I guess I could put that on Instagram." It's not the other way around. It's not like, "What can I put on Instagram? Let me think of a song." It's, like, I'm sitting by myself, like, "People leave a comment, and I saw some bullshit-", because I'm erasing, because I'm blocking people and I'm, like, "Oh, this is a song!" Like, I have a whole song I put on iTunes, and that came because somebody DMed me. Somebody texted me a dick pic and their number wasn't in my phone. And I was, like, "Who the fuck? Why the fuck? How the fuck are you sending this to me?" And he was like, "Oh, wrong number." And I was like-

JVN [00:16:34] Well, I have an important question. As a queer person who is obsessed with dicks. Was it, like, a nice dick or was it, like-

AMANDA SEALES [00:16:44] There's no such thing as a cis-gendered, heterosexual woman, we do not like dicks, typically we do not like dicks that are not solicited.

JVN [00:16:55] Even if it's, like, if it was, like, really pretty and then it was in your phone cause you're, like, "Oh my God, what if we hooked up, like, ten years and just forgot about it." But, like, this because-, you prefer, like, a face pic, like, like, "Hey, Amanda, I miss you," like, yes.

AMANDA SEALES [00:17:08] I would like a body.

JVN [00:17:10] Oh! I also do love a-, I think because I was like brought up in my twenties as, like, a very, like, you know, cis gay man. I don't know why, but, like, if someone shows me a picture of their dick, I'm, like, so flattered. I'm just, like, "Oh my God, thank you! This is, like, so nice!"

AMANDA SEALES [00:17:29] I'm, like, "Put that away!" Dicks aren't sexy to me.

JVN [00:17:33] That's because I also feel like when you're not allowed to, like, be obsessed with dicks, when you're obsessed with dick, whereas, like, I feel like, you know, ladies, like, guys are just shoving dicks and they're just grabbing their dicks, dicks, dicks, dicks. Whereas when you want dicks but you're deprived of dicks, you're just, like, thirsty for dick for, like, a long time, you know. And I really was a dick-deprived for such a long time when I really just was so thirsty. I just was like, oh, was like an eggplant sausage pie. And I couldn't get one anywhere I looked. But so anyway, so he texted that you're like, "Fuck off." And then what happened?

AMANDA SEALES [00:18:05] Well then, he was like, "It was the wrong number." And I'm like, "How are you sending a dick pic to a wrong number? Like how is that even possible? Because that means you're sending it to someone whose number is not in your phone?"

JVN [00:18:15] And then what happened? Did you respond?

AMANDA SEALES [00:18:15] And I was like, so he-, so I asked my followers, I was like, this person is that he hit me back and was, like, "Oh, like, basically calm the fuck down, you know, like, you need to get over it." And I was, like, "Oh!" So then I, I told my followers on Instagram, I was like, check this out, someone just sent me an unsolicited. Can you all please send him pictures of birth? Because I want you to ruin vaginas for him. And I, and I

put his number. And so people literally sent him pictures of babies, like, coming out of, like, was, like, coming out of the birth canal. And he texted me and he was, like, "You bitch!" [CROSSTALK] And I just, like, put that on my Instagram. And it went viral like millions, millions like people in my dreams, like Chance the Rapper was like, "You need to make a song, to make that a song." I was like, "Really?"

JVN [00:19:23] Yes! Are we going to get into-

AMANDA SEALES [00:19:26] And I did. And you can purchase it on iTunes.

JVN [00:19:28] But what about, like, do we need you to, should you, not to tell you to do so because you're, like, a creative person who has, like, a very full plate, but, like, maybe you should, Amanda. Just start, like, do it just like it's like a little notes folder on your phone. You get the tune, you get the jingle, you maybe write-, I feel, like, are you the new, like, gorgeous Black Lorde?

AMANDA SEALES [00:19:48] You know, I had a whole music career. I've put out four independent albums where I'm singing and I'm rapping and I have music videos. And, like, this was a whole thing, like, studio, all. Yeah. Like I had a whole career as a recording artist. what was about to happen with Hollywood actually did happen with music where the business was making me hate music and the notion of not liking music is was like unconscionable to me. But at a certain point and I had told, you know, Janelle was just, like, "I can't believe this story!" But it's true! I was at this Janelle Monae show, I was with Q-Tip, I remember. And Janelle Monae was performing, and I just, like, started crying and he was like, "Are you OK?" And I was, like, "Oh, I'm never going to make it in music because I'm not anywhere close to this level of musically talented." And I'm just but it was like and it's not it wasn't even necessarily about Janelle, but it was, like, something just came through me that let me know "This isn't this isn't your path." And, you know, for some people, they would take that. I was like, "Oh, you're doubting yourself," but I don't doubt myself. So if I feel that-, that's my intuition.

JVN [00:20:02] That's my intuition! "Do you know who I am? I can do a fucking two-and-a-half twistin fucking backflip from, like, a standing on my fucking trampoline. Don't tell me about my fucking intuition, OK?"

AMANDA SEALES [00:21:10] Like, I know my intuition. Like, people would say, like, "Oh, Amanda, you're a dream killer," and it's, like, "I'm not a dream killer. I'm, like, a super real realist." So, like, if someone tells me something that's their dream and it doesn't make any fucking sense and you ask for my advice, I'm going to be honest. I'm not going to be a prick, but I'm going to be like, honest with you.

JVN [00:21:27] I can attest to this with you, because when we first met on Gay of Thrones, I had just met this guy. And he was, like, really, really hot. But then it went way, way, way too fast. And then we went on this, like, one really long date. But I felt like it was, like, too boyfriend-y already. And then he just ghosted me and stopped talking to me. You were like, well, we were in the makeup room at Funny or Die. And you were, like, "Well, it was, like, too much of, like, a long established thing in, like, one day." Because we had this, like, brunch, that went to this thing, that went to this thing. And the next thing I knew, we were, then, like, that one Thursday that we hung out after the brunch, it was, like, I came to his house, he was already, like, in his, you know, gym short outfit. And we, like, watched Family Guy. And then he fucked me and he was asleep by, like, nine thirty. And I was, like, "We're an old married couple and it's been two days." And you were like, "That was-," and you were, like, I was like, "Is he going to be about it again? And you're like, "Not if he hasn't called you for, like, nine days since then sweetie, and you hit him up..." And I was like, "Oh," but you were really sweet about it. But it was good, but it was really good for me. It was really-

AMANDA SEALES [00:22:17] It's release! It releases you! It liberates you! [CROSSTALK] Let me tell you something. My homeboy had, had a van, he had got this van. And, and he was, like, "I'm going to have a, I'm going to have a mobile studio." And I was like, "How does that work?" And he was like, "Well, you know, because everybody's like-," this is, like, in the early 2000s, like, you know, "Because everybody's trying to rap now and, you know, because of independent labels, everybody can, so, you know, I'll be able to, like, just go to people's hoods and they can just get in the van and record." And I was like, "So there'll be equipment in this van." And he was, like, "Yeah." And I was, like, "So you're going to bring a van full of expensive recording equipment to the hood, to the hoods that you are not from?" And he was like, "I mean, OK." And I was like, so, I was, like, "Well, OK. I said, secondly, how is it going to be soundproofed? So you're going to proof the whole van. But then, like, just out of, if we're speaking in generalities, I feel like your clientele are Black men and height might be an issue. So are they sitting in the van?"

And like, like, do they get. And then where is the engineer sitting and like, he hadn't thought any of this through, and he was like, "Yo, you're killing my dream." And I was like, "I'm walking through the dream with you. It's like we're walking through a home, and you're like, 'I want to build this, this, this.' And I'm just letting you know that, like, you want to build what would need a five-bedroom home. But you're trying to do that in, like, a one-bedroom trailer, and it's not realistic." And he was, like, mad at me for like a week. And then he was, like, "So I decided I'm going to do van." And I said, "What?" He's going to start a moving company. Here we are fucking 15 years later, he has multiple trucks and a

whole fucking moving company that has sustained him even when he moved to a whole other coast.

So, if you have people who are in your life who are realists, even though they may be, it may feel caustic, it may feel abrasive, oftentimes what they're telling you is coming with the best of intentions. I don't mean people who are stank. Some people think they're realists and really they're just mean. And that's not the thing, but it's, like, I definitely feel like a lot of times we underestimate, we under appreciate the people in our lives who are like that. My mom is a realist. She's stank too. But there have been times where she's just kept it one hundred. And I was like, "Ah!" But then after I was, like, "Dammit, she nailed it."

JVN [00:25:02] OK, since you brought up your mom, who's the cutest little baby?

AMANDA SEALES [00:25:07] Yeah, now that she's retired, now that she's retired. Yeah, she's the cutest ever.

JVN [00:25:10] Well, you know how Instagram is, we a lot of times show people, like, the best of. So, you know, I, just for me. But that post and the fact that you literally paid her house off before you got your house, it literally just choked me up. That, that was the sweetest thing of all time. And then when she was, like, "Are you recording that?" Like, come on, I have chills on my thighs from talking about it. Was that, like, that has to be one of your top three, like, right? Like, top three, like, career moments? Or post or, like, life moments?

AMANDA SEALES [00:25:46] No, because that was not even, that's just top three life moments, like, I would say. Number two is that I, like, own a house with a pool like that. I literally said that today, like my my partner was outside while I was swimming my laps and I, like, came to the side of the pool and I was like, "I own a house, I grew up, and I bought a house, the pool, and I have a dog." These are the two things, all I wanted in life, JVN, was a dog and a pool.

JVN [00:26:14] All I ever wanted was like a shit fuck ton of animals, like, I just wanted, like, so many and, like, you know, I could always only ever and they always liked everybody else in my family better. And now I just have, like, all these animals and like, you know, me and my husband feed them so they like us.

AMANDA SEALES [00:26:29] You know, there's these life moments that happen and you're, like, "This is not even career." This is, like, in the, in the Lifetime Intimate Portrait of Amanda, you know.

JVN [00:26:42] That's gonna be there.

AMANDA SEALES [00:26:43] It's going to be there. It's in the Lifetime Intimate Portrait.

JVN [00:26:47] I wanna see your Lifetime Intimate Portrait.

AMANDA SEALES [00:26:49] I wanna see it, too!

JVN [00:26:49] Is that like, Behind The Music, or is that like when they, like, re-dramatize your life, and it's, like, a Lifetime movie of your life? Because I love, I don't know what's wrong with me.

AMANDA SEALES [00:26:58] Intimate Portrait is more so, like, that's when they interview people, like, you have-

JVN [00:27:03] Why can't we do both? [CROSSTALK] Because really we need more of the Intimate Portrait, like, now, but then in, like, twenty years, maybe, like, that would be a gorgeous, like, anthology.

AMANDA SEALES [00:27:16] Like, I mean, listen, all the work that I'm working on right now and that I'm, like, putting together and pitching and selling is the last forty years of my life. Like, different pockets. So there's, like, me and my mom and then there's, like, Amanda Seales Is Difficult, which is just about, like, the journey of me realizing, like, you know, some people don't like me, and I don't know why the fuck that is, but I need to figure it out because they're making me not like me.

JVN [00:27:41] But that's my favorite thing, that's one of my other favorite things you ever said was. "Yeah, I am difficult. Difficult to lie to, difficult to fuck with, difficult to-," what was, like, there was, like, some more.

AMANDA SEALES [00:27:50] To screw over. Yeah, all of those things.

JVN [00:27:53] I sai that to my dad, I fucking ripped that quote from your Instagram. I said that shit. I literally, and I and then someone said that to me professionally, and then, but in that sense, because it wasn't in private, I, like, had to quote you, because it was, like, you know, public. I was, like, "In the words of Amanda Seales, honey, yes, I am difficult. I'm difficult to fucking lie to. I'm difficult to fuck over. So call me difficult!"

AMANDA SEALES [00:28:18] People just want you to receive their bullshit. Like, people want you to receive their bullshit so graciously, so peacefully, like, so silently. And I'm just,

like, and if you don't do that, then you're difficult. Like, I remember going to a photo shoot and I got to the shoot and the clothes were, like, they were just really bad, like, they weren't good. And she only had, like, two shirts. And I was, like, "So, are there any other options?" And, like, I knew that I was so conscious of my tone, because I knew that I'm about to challenge a scenario that is going to be difficult for the other person. And she just caught this big attitude. And I was there by myself, and she was, like, you know, "I don't understand what the problem is." And I was like, "Well, I mean, I explained what the problem is. So is there any way, like, what are our options in terms of, like, solutions?"

JVN [00:29:16] "You've got a bag of clothes in your trunk, you've got a sweater you can steam, what's going on?"

AMANDA SEALES [00:29:19] "What's, like, what can we do?" And she was, like, "I mean, I just don't even like the whole energy right now." And I was like, I, there's other people in the room. And I was like, am I, "What am I and what am I doing wrong here?" And you know what it was she was, like, "I mean, I shouldn't be hearing this from you, actually, I should be hearing this from your publicist." And I was, like, "Well, I'm not sure why that would matter, like my publicist isn't here and I'm here. So would you have preferred that I called my publicist? Like, stepped outside, called my publicist, and then had her call you?" "Yes." And I'm like, "Well, who's being difficult now?" Like, that to me is difficult, like, we're physically standing in the same room 10 feet from each other, but you would prefer me call someone who is on another coast to talk to you because that would serve your ego better? You would receive that better? That's and so, you know, it's really it took me a while. So to get to understanding when I'm being difficult and when I, like, when I actually give a fuck and when I'm not being difficult, I'm just being Amanda.

JVN [00:30:24] Correct me if I'm wrong, is that when, like, after something happens, we're like, "Yeah, like, I was right." But then other times afterwards we'd be, like, "Maybe I should have taken a little off the fast ball?" Because sometimes that happens to me, like, three hours later, and then I'm, like, "Ah! Now I've gotta send an e-mail or, like, apologize or something."

AMANDA SEALES [00:30:44] Yes, yes, yes. You're, like, "Fuck it, I'm a good person, so I can't just let this ride. Shit, now I got to fuck it, dammit. Accountability, God damn it, these morals." Because most people I feel like, you know, they'll write it off as, like, "I'm human. I make mistakes."

JVN [00:31:01] I feel like you could push it for, like, four hours. If it's really egregious, like, I feel like I can push it for like four hours late, like, like when it happens I'll be like, "Wow, I'm just not gonna tell anybody." And then, like, 30 minutes later, I'm like, "I'm just gonna tell my

therapist." And then, like, an hour later I'm like, "Well, if I tell her she's going to make me talk to somebody else," she can make me feel the same way. And then, like, and then I'm, like, "Oh, like, I just won't tell her, I'll be fine. It's fine." And then like, I'm, like, "You know, honestly, it's just easier, if I'm really not feeling good about this, I'm just ultimately, like, I know I'm going to need to go back," and then I just, like, do it.

AMANDA SEALES [00:31:36] Then I end up telling everybody, because it's part of the therapy that I'm, like, revealing to everybody, like, "So this happened, and this happened. And then I had to do this. And so, you know, it's fine. It's fine. It's fine." You know, I, I really I really just feel like a lot of this, like, journey and path of being difficult and whatnot is also, in my case, attributed to, like, being a Black woman and being in spaces where, like, there's already preconceived notions about what I'm going to say, and how I'm going to say it, before I even open my mouth. And then, my name used to be Amanda Diva. And so when my name was Amanda Diva. Like, I found out that literally just by my name being Amanda Diva, people were already like, "Oh wow, she's going to give us hell." And it was, like, so I had this, like, albatross around my neck because people think I'm walking in, like, fucking Norma Desmond. And I'm just going to be like, "I don't know, I'm frightened, I know my way around here." Like, that's not what's going to happen, like, I'm not Maria Callas, like, relax.

JVN [00:32:48] I'm taking, like, a hard left because I just realized that we only have ten minutes left to, like, I've just been thinking this like a million times that I didn't get to it. I feel like you didn't have your partner when we met and I feel like I'm so happy for you. No, I really it's just like. Yes.

AMANDA SEALES [00:33:04] You know he's my college sweetheart.

JVN [00:33:05] What?!

AMANDA SEALES [00:33:07] Yeah. It's, like, a whole love story.

JVN [00:33:11] And then it, just, because you guys were babies and then you had to find out about the ways of the world and then he slipped into your DMs?

AMANDA SEALES [00:33:18] No, I literally one night just texted him, like, literally 12:37 at night, was, like, "Send me your Instagram." We hadn't talked in five years. We'd had a falling out. We had been friends, but we had a falling out. We hadn't talked in five years. And one night I just sent him a DM was, like, "Send me your Instagram." And then by 7:30am the next morning, we well, he called me. Like, he sent me the Instagram, and then I, like, looked at the Instagram

JVN [00:33:45] Like, you're, like, "Oh, he looks really good."

AMANDA SEALES [00:33:47] I was, like, okay, so he has a daughter, he has a BMW, I see he's grown, OK? [CROSSTALK] I, like, texted him and was, like, because he had called me in June and I was like, "Why did you call me in June? To see how you were doing shit?" And I was like, "Fine, whatever." And then like two hours later I was like that. And I was like, "You know what? I don't even understand why you would just contact me and not keep it real with me. You know, we had a fall out five years ago," that I, like, went off on the text and he called me. I was like, "Why are you calling me?" And so then we had, like, a small argument and then we hung up and then he called me back and I'm like, "Why are you coming back?" And he's like, "Because I promised myself, if we ever, that if you ever spoke to me again, I would never let you stop speaking to me again."

JVN [00:34:33] Oh, I'm soaking wet. I'm, I'm a puddle on the ground, I can't! Oh, my God, that's the hottest thing I've ever heard!

AMANDA SEALES [00:34:38] So then we were able to, like, have a convo convo. And then we fell asleep on the phone. And then the next morning he called me and I was like, "So what are we doing?" Like, literally when he called me, I was like, "What are we doing? Because I'm not able to just, like, be your homegirl." He's like, "Well, I guess we go together, then." I was like, "So, all right. So now we go together." And that's how it's been. And I didn't know that he had been living nine minutes away from me for three years.

JVN [00:35:04] Ah! Ok, also, I don't know, like what this means about me, but, like, whenever someone gets a hot partner, and I get really happy for them and then they tell me the story, and I'm, like, married and happy now. So this is just like my muscle memory from, like, when I wanted to find a man, when I would hear the story like, like I felt my body wanting to do. I wanted to, like, go in and, like, lift my tits up. I really, like, when I hear the-

AMANDA SEALES [00:35:31] I have a thing where I, like, hold my tit. I'm just, like-

JVN [00:35:35] I just I, like, not to be, like, really, like, out, if someone is, like, hearing this story when I'm hearing this story because it's, like, hearing other people's love story makes me glow or something. I don't know. We have, ah! Four minutes, six minutes! Oh my God! OK, wait! Then the other thing I was going to say, you didn't ask, but I just have to say it, and I know I said it in your DMs this one day: I am obsessed with this natural hair color so hard core now. Like, you were blonde for the longest. No, I've thought it, like, eighty-seven times, like, every every fifteen seconds. And I don't know how I didn't mention it but, just,

so pretty. And if you ever want to go light again, like, you know, obviously I support you, like, I'll love whatever you do, you have such pretty hair.

AMANDA SEALES [00:36:05] But you know, it's funny, I can't, I see pictures of myself with the blond hair, and I'm like, "Oh, I don't even know who that is."

JVN [00:36:11] When you post it now, I'm like, because it's like you're these ringlets, your texture, this shine, the fullness. Oh, my God. I mean, I know it's always giving me life. I mean, I was marveling at it back because I got to do your little baby here when I was doing it. Yeah. You're just, like, I just want to say slow clap for the man, slow clap for the hair. It's working for me so hard. Now we have to talk about gymnastics for the last five minutes.

AMANDA SEALES [00:36:35] Yes we do. I want to go to Gold Over America, I need to figure it out.

JVN [00:36:40] You're vaccinated, you're flirty, you're thriving. You obviously have to go to Gold Over America. It's, like, literally, Simone did the damn thing. She, like, assembled, like, I mean, to get Chellsie Memmel, genius, like, I mean, that literally gets everybody in our age bracket. That's like, "Well, now I have to go."

AMANDA SEALES [00:36:54] Now I have to go.

JVN [00:36:55] Like, now I can't *not* go. Do you follow anything, like, anything gymnastics on Instagram and, like, do you follow, like, the, the gymterwebs on Instagram?

AMANDA SEALES [00:37:02] Yes, I do. Oh yes.

JVN [00:37:04] So if any of you guys are, like, fucking not getting your life together and like aren't processing the grief and trauma of the world through your, like, fandom of gymnastics like I do: that was so exciting that she got invited to world camp. But then she was like, "Oh, like my bar is just like, ah, I just really want to be prepared when I get out." Yes. So they invited her to come.

AMANDA SEALES [00:37:21] Who, Chelsea? I know, and she said no.

JVN [00:37:25] Which, you know, I guess I love a boundary and everything, but, like, I guess it's like what you're saying just realistically knew I was like a fucking individual all around champion. She was, like, "My skills just aren't where I want them to be right now."

AMANDA SEALES [00:37:35] But I watch her. She's not there.

JVN [00:37:37] Oh, on beam it felt nice at Nationals, and that double Yurchenko was nice. If she was, like, Irish or, like, if she was Irish.

AMANDA SEALES [00:37:50] But she's not. And that's the thing. And she's also, and I think also, it's about consistency for her because I watch, I mean, I follow Chellsie Memmel's page, like, she responds to my DMs.

JVN [00:38:06] I'm obsessed, I'm so obsessed with her, yeah, yeah.

AMANDA SEALES [00:38:06] And I think that it really shocked her like to come back to competition and, like, she didn't, she was maybe, the first day was good, but then it was like, "Oh, I don't like this did not land well the second day," and, like, the end, like, there's a stamina you need to have for that. And I think that she, she was saying about her bar skills, I think that she's just like, "I don't want to go places and be a mascot. I want to go places and be a contender."

JVN [00:38:38] Yes. And she just needs, and she just needs-, but I think she could still do it. Like, just give me, what, I mean, because, as long as she's not on a time clock, if you're back at thirty two, you can, like, I feel, like, she's got a few more years to go back. I think she could be on a World team. I feel like she could be on a World team again.

AMANDA SEALES [00:38:52] She doesn't have the start value, though. Like, her, I really, like, her bar routine right now-

JVN [00:39:00] Okay, but let's think about, let's think about beam.

AMANDA SEALES [00:39:02] But even her beam, she's giving you an Arabian, but she's, she's working on connections, but, like, she doesn't have the connections that she needs for the start value. I just saw her do an Arabian to a back, an Arabian back handspring front Aerial. Right. Then I saw her do Arabian back handspring, piked Arabian.

JVN [00:39:34] That-, her back handspring piked Arabian, that would be the Memmel. If she got that on beam, know one's-, that, that back handspring, step out, piked Arabian is the prettiest thing I've ever seen.

AMANDA SEALES [00:39:44] Thank you. So, I think in her mind, it's, like, "It's not good enough for me to just, like, come back and do, like, the skills I was doing. I need to come back and be better."

JVN [00:39:52] And she could do it. She could. So we're thinking, yes, it could, just not right now, she needs, like, another year or two of training with her cute dad.

AMANDA SEALES [00:40:00] And you know what? She could be a specialist. [CROSSTALK] Cause she could do a bar, I mean, on bars, I see her, you know, she's Staldering all the way through, like she's giving you. I see her working-

JVN [00:40:13] Like, she needs, just, she just needs to get her-

AMANDA SEALES [00:40:15] Jacks, and-

JVN [00:40:16] Yes. What's it called when you it's, like, isn't it, like, a Pak Salto when you go from high bar to low bar?

AMANDA SEALES [00:40:21] Yes. In between the bar. Yeah.

JVN [00:40:23] And then she needs to go back, when you're ready to go back up.

AMANDA SEALES [00:40:25] But the question, like, so then there's, like, variants, like, she could do that, like, in a basic way, which is just, like, a Shostakova, which is just a free hip and go back up. Or she can do a Malony and put her toes on there, you know, I mean, like. [CROSSTALK]

JVN [00:40:40] What's the one with the half twist?

AMANDA SEALES [00:40:41] I think that's a Komova One or a Komova Two, it's very confusing.

JVN [00:40:45] Oh, that Komova. She had multiple things, I didn't realize she was, like, killing it so hard in 2011 and 2012.

AMANDA SEALES [00:40:49] I had no idea. It's true.

JVN [00:40:51] Was I sleeping on Komova? Top three favorite gymnasts, top three favorite gymnasts. And then we have to go because it's been an hour unless we're going to talk about gymnastics on your podcast.

AMANDA SEALES [00:41:00] Which we are absolutely going to do.

JVN [00:41:02] Well maybe that's just what we use as a driver. So if you guys are just, like, if your whistle is whetted and you were just like, "Oh, shit, like, they just were about to talk about gymnastics, but now they have to go over to gorgeous Small Doses hosted by Amanda Seales, and that's what your truth is." So walk your little baby fingers over to the 'Gram. You only got to just take your little baby just toe in just the very shallow depths of our gymnastics pool. So I hope you jump in. The water is great. Actually, though, I have one more thing, which is the part where I say to people, like, this is the end of the podcast, it's, like, Yogini recess. Is there anything we would be remiss to mention? Where can people find you? Is there anything that you just really need to, that we just need to-. We really didn't even talk about I love how much you speak to social activism, and your activism, and to everything that you are passionate, which I love, which really we needed to get to but that's, like, a whole other hour, which really... Will you come back for a second episode?

AMANDA SEALES [00:41:49] I would be honored. I would be honored.

JVN [00:41:51] Yeah, we have to have you back, there's, like, when you're a beautiful blooming onion like Amanda Seales. You can't just go in one when there's like so many layers.

AMANDA SEALES [00:42:01] Thank you. I would be honored. And you could follow me and Amanda Seales on Instagram and we just launched the Smart Money. And Black Patreon is coming October 1st because people like my content. So I'm going to be giving them more! [CROSSTALK] And I'm excited about that. I'm excited and we are also smart, funny and black is my show. It's basically a game show, variety show that we do a live version of, which we haven't been able to do because of the pandemic. But the first one back will be October 16th at the Wilbur Theater in Boston. And listen, everyone is welcome. The show is for black folks, but everyone is welcome in terms of allies. Come on through. Have a good time thing. Dance, all the things we also at the Apollo, November 12th for the New York Comedy Festival. So very excited to actually get to be back on stage. But if you can't come out and you're not going to be in those cities, then you can catch us on Smart, Funny, & Black In The Crib is the free show that we do, virtually at Smart, Funny, & Black's YouTube. And our next one is October 1st with our Queens of the Countdown from when 106 & Park and another from MTV fame. It's going to be Y2K fabulousness. I'm very excited.

JVN [00:43:09] Yes! And that's so exciting that you get to play the Apollo. That's amazing.

AMANDA SEALES [00:43:12] So we did the Apollo in 2019, and I'm not even lying, at one point in the show, I levitated. Like, the energy was so intense and palpable, I left the

ground, I saw my soul fly out of my body and be like, "Bitch, you're doing a good job. You're doing a good job." And I came back into my body and was, like, "This is wild!" So we are very excited to be going back to the Apollo. And, you know, we all are in this weird time right now and people are sad and depressed and conspiracy theorists and crazy. And so, you know, we need some community.

JVN [00:43:49] We really need some community. We really need some comedy. I love you so much. I'm so glad that you came on the show. Thank you so much. We're so grateful for you and everything you do.

You've been listening to Getting Curious with me, Jonathan Van Ness. My guest this week was Amanda Seales.

Amanda and I kept rolling on our conversation, and you can listen to the second half on her podcast Small Doses.

You'll find links to her work in the episode description of whatever you're listening to the show on.

Our theme music is "Freak" by Quiñ - thank you so much to her for letting us use it. If you enjoyed our show, introduce a friend and show them how to subscribe.

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Our editor is Andrew Carson.

Getting Curious is produced by me, Erica Getto, and Emily Bossak.