

Charlie Webster



CHARLIE WEBSTER, PRODUCER OF THE SCAMANDA PODCAST, GIVES US THE INSIDE SCOOP ON THE REAL AMANDA RILEY



Charlie during a recording



Charlie was intrigued by Nancy Moscatiello's investigation



Charlie at work



Amanda Riley



Charlie making her documentary

# THE SCAMANDA SENSATION



Amanda faked a terminal cancer diagnosis

**Q How did you first hear about Amanda's story?**  
During Amanda's trial, Nancy Moscatiello was hoping to draw media attention to the case and a mutual friend put us in touch. I was intrigued by Nancy's own persistence. She wasn't getting paid to investigate the story, she was pursuing it during her own time and at her own expense. And of course I was also fascinated by Amanda herself. It was hard to believe she was lying, and I asked Nancy if she was 100% certain Amanda didn't have cancer.

**Q What were your next steps?**  
Plenty of people who knew Amanda wouldn't speak to Nancy because they believed the claims of harassment. Luckily, they were more willing to talk to me. Once Amanda had been convicted, Nancy and I discussed the best way of presenting the story. I

suggested a podcast format, which would really allow us to go into the nuances – and that was how Scamanda began!

**Q Why did Amanda's story resonate with you personally?**  
Amanda's story is not just about financial fraud, it's also about psychological manipulation and its effects. In my previous work, I've spoken about growing up as a victim of domestic abuse. I recognised Amanda's actions as narcissistic, gaslighting behaviour. While we often hear about this in the context of intimate relationships, it's discussed far less in the case of friendships and community. But even though it can be subtle and hard to spot, it's still sadly quite common.

Amanda sat down with people who were struggling both mentally and physically and pretended that she was going through the same thing – that's

psychological manipulation. But I was also interested in Amanda's 'why?'. Why was she lying? Was anyone else involved? What made Amanda double down on her lies? Did she believe her own lies? There were so many questions.

**Q How do you think she got away with it for so long?**  
Of course, no one wants to attack someone who appears to have cancer. Nancy was painted as a horrible person, harassing an innocent young mum with a terminal illness. That was the view right up until the conviction, and even then, many of Amanda's friends struggled to believe the truth.

There were also difficulties from a legal point of view. It's not illegal to lie! Our justice system is adversarial to behavioural crimes, instead focusing on what's easily physically provable. Amanda was ultimately convicted for wire fraud of approximately \$100,000, or £79,000. The cash and time donations, not to mention the

emotional distress, were much harder to address legally.

**Q Have you met Amanda yourself?**  
After Amanda's conviction, I approached her as she left the courthouse and introduced myself. I wanted to see if she might speak to me on the record. I didn't go in shouting, 'Give me an answer', which I think other people have tried to do to her. I wasn't there to judge, just to try and understand. I found her charming and polite, and she really looked me in the eye when we spoke.

When Scamanda was released, I was still waiting for her decision on an interview. However, I've been in touch with Amanda ever since her conviction and we've spoken multiple times in prison.

**Q Why do you think she did it?**  
Nancy thinks that her motivation was purely financial, but I don't think so. I was in two minds about

calling the show Scamanda, as I always think of a scam as a premeditated con. Whereas for Amanda, I think she initially lied for the attention, self-worth and validation. I don't think it was ever about buying a Ferrari. She was adored and treated as a local celebrity and the lie just kept going.

Listeners to the podcast have asked if I think she has Munchausen's syndrome, a mental disorder where a person fakes illness or injury for attention. I purposefully avoided mentioning Munchausen's in the podcast as Amanda has never had a professional diagnosis.

**Q Scamanda's a huge success. How does it feel?**  
The response has been phenomenal. It was the number one new show on Apple podcasts in 2023 and the most downloaded. I think Amanda's trial will definitely influence the way we think about similar cases in the future. People are already

analysing her story, searching for better ways to secure convictions for this type of crime – it's not as uncommon as you might think! However, I am anxious that the publicity around this case doesn't make anyone sceptical of those who are truly ill.

**Q Did any more information come out after you released the podcast?**  
Several people have reached out to us since the podcast. Some knew Amanda during her cancer scam. One woman, who suffered from Hodgkin lymphoma herself, reported that Amanda had attempted to befriend her. She told us she had found Amanda's attentions uncomfortable, saying she seemed 'so happy' to be sick.

We also spoke to some old colleagues of Amanda's from her time as a resident advisor at San José State University. It turned

out that she often mentioned an unspecified illness during this time too, using it to avoid her duties as an RA. It's clear Amanda had been lying in some form for years before the start of her blog.

**Q Can you tell me more about the upcoming Scamanda docuseries on ABC?**  
I knew I wanted to make a TV show when the Scamanda podcast became so popular. The series will reach a wider audience and those who've listened to the podcast will be able to put faces to the voices. The docuseries will include updated interviews as well as several new participants who'd previously requested to remain anonymous. This includes the person who first emailed Nancy! The show features footage of Amanda, and an in-depth look at her childhood.

Amanda's fully aware of the documentary. It's important to me to keep her informed, no matter what she's done.

**Q What do you think will come next for Amanda?**  
As of this interview, Amanda is in a prison medical facility and has told me she's not very well, although not with cancer. She and Cory are getting a divorce. During her statement at the sentencing, she never actually admitted to lying about cancer. By the date of her trial, she'd moved to Texas, and we received information that she was still turning up at hospitals and claiming to be sick. This was even after she'd pled guilty.

But, having spent the last few years speaking to Amanda, I think that she understands what she has done, is sorry and truly regrets it. She's admitted to me that she lied. Amanda tells me she just wants to do her time and work on mending the harm she's caused.

● Scamanda can be streamed on-demand with a Hulu subscription. Charlie Webster appears on the show as both narrator and creator.

By Olivia Dunnett. Pictures: Laura Ribba/Reda