

# E3: Amanda Kanninen

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## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

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## SPEAKERS

Sophie Warrick, Music/Sound Design, Amanda Kanninen



Music/Sound Design 00:23

[Audio collage fades in and out]



Sophie Warrick 00:37

Hello amazing people! Welcome to Queer Backroads, a podcast that focuses on queerness in rural Minnesota. I'm your host, Sophie Warrick, and my pronouns are she/her/hers. I'm a fat queer, curious creative, currently located in the Twin Cities, but I grew up in Bemidji, a small town in northern Minnesota. My art practice focuses on a lot of different topics and mediums, but most importantly, it focuses on love and asking questions. According to the Movement Advancement Project, and estimated 2.9 to 3.8 million queer people live in rural communities across the United States. This podcast aims to tell their stories. There is some explicit language in this podcast so consider this your warning. You can visit my link tree at [linktr.ee/SophieWarrick](https://linktr.ee/SophieWarrick) to learn more about this podcast project, find organizations to uplift and show notes and transcripts of each episode. That's L-I-N-K-T-R DOT E-E SLASH S-O-P-H-I-E-W-A-R-R-I-C-K. My guest today is someone that makes incredible art, is capable of practically reading my mind and has some great meme content. They're curious, they're straightforward, a bit of a spitfire and above anything else, she can pull off any hair color. Without further introduction, I'm going to pass this to conversation between Amanda Kanninen and myself.



Amanda Kanninen 02:11

Um, my name is Amanda Kanninen. I use a she/they pronouns. I'm a writer, and zine maker, and I currently live in St. Paul.



Sophie Warrick 02:22

What are three things that I should know about you?



Amanda Kanninen 02:24

I guess I would say that I'm autistic, um, I'm a really big fan of like counterculture, which includes punk, goth, club kids. Um, and I think a lot. Too much for my own good. (Sophie laughs)



Sophie Warrick 02:46

I love that. What do you always think about? Like, it can be like random thoughts of like, like Scooby Doo and Shaggy, like eat in their free time? Or it can be like, wow, I'm super stressed because I have so much to do. And I can't think, stop thinking, about all the things I need to do. So that's the spectrum.



Music/Sound Design 03:09

[Ambient birds fade in]



Sophie Warrick 03:09

(Voiceover) The 36 Questions That Lead to Love are a set of questions developed in the 1990s by psychologists and other researchers to see if two strangers can develop an intimate connection just from asking each other a series of increasingly personal questions. To be honest, I really don't understand the science behind it. But I really do love the idea of asking someone intimate questions in order to get to know them quickly. I'll ask a few questions to each guest every episode.



Music/Sound Design 03:45

[Ambient birds fade out]



Sophie Warrick 03:46

If there's something that you've always dreamed of doing and if you've done it or not? Oh, I think my biggest dream has been, like a dream since I was 12, is to publish a book of poetry. You have not done that yet. I released my own zines, but like I want like an actual like book, you can go in a store and buy! What do you wish the world had more of?



Amanda Kanninen 04:08

A very good question. I think to keep it like simple for myself, so I don't over think that but I think people need to listen to each other more and not always speak I think there's a lot of value in just like taking your step back and like listening to someone and not even like saying anything back just like fully taking in their words and like understanding their perspective.



Sophie Warrick 04:39

Mm hmm. I like that. I like I've asked this question to everyone so far, and I like still haven't really come up with an answer yet.



Amanda Kanninen 04:50

It's a hard question because there's so much to do. And it's like, well, how complex do you want to get with that?



Sophie Warrick 05:02

Exactly, yeah! [Ambient birds and mandolin fade in and out] I guess could you tell us a little bit more about where you live currently and where you grew up? So I currently live in St. Paul. I just moved here in the fall and transferred here from schools. I'm -- I've moved a lot, which I normally like, I said in my email, but I moved a lot, but I mostly grew up in a small town in Luverne...okay, sorry, I lost my train of thought. You're good!



Amanda Kanninen 05:55

And then I also spend like my teen years and like Fremont, California, so like, that's where I feel. I've like grown up.



Sophie Warrick 06:08

Where it -- can you describe where Luverne is? Oh, Luverne is like 30 minutes from Sioux Falls. So like, if you want to go to a Walmart, in Luverne, you have to drive 30 minutes or an hour if there's really bad snow, to get to a Walmart. And there's like one, McDonald's, a Taco Johns, because it's not good enough for a Taco Bell. Like football games are like the biggest thing you can do there. I remember like, if I didn't show up to church, people would ask me why wasn't in church and it used to be like, I was sick? Uh huh. I'm sorry?! I was definitely one of those towns where, like, there was a town and there was like a lot of rural kids as well. But like, it's what was also really funny about this place. So like Minnesota, right? Land of 10,000 Lakes. No lake. Not at all. (Sophie laughs) We didn't have one we had like kind of a manmade river, but it was like not a fun one. Oh my god, there's like, there's like so much to say about it. Say whatever you like! I'm curious. Like, I've never I've never heard of Luverne before, um, for having lived in Minnesota for pretty much like my entire life. Is there anything that it's like known for at all besides just being in a small town outside of Sioux Falls? I don't think it is known for anything. I know. We have like a pretty good football team. Like I never cared for it. I think we had one murder. That was like was a big deal. I remember hearing as a kid a lot. And I think we had like a county fair, but like, basically, Luverne is the county fair. So I don't really think it counted for everything. Mm hmm. You gotta love those small town county fairs, though. They're the best because everyone's... Oh, they were so fun, like, people not great, but at least like the fair was fun. Like, I still have like memories, and like cravings of like fair food and like running around. For sure. Some of my favorite memories, my family had a food truck growing up. And some of my favorite memories were driving all over Minnesota to just go to different county fairs. And it's so fun to watch the people that go to county fairs and like, just the people watching that happens in small town county fairs too. And just how everyone knows everyone, and everyone knows every food truck or like every vendor that's there because it's the same people that go to all the other like citywide events, you know, that are put on it so...



Amanda Kanninen 09:03

I completely understand. So my mom did craft shows when I was a kid, and she always did the county fair. And I remember like running the booth seeing all my friends seeing people like she I remember she got so popular with like other jam ladies, who were like copying her jams but they were never as good because my mom used all natural things. She didn't use dye and the other ladies would dye their items. Disgusting. (Both laugh)



Sophie Warrick 09:34

That's cool. I've never -- that's cool that you got to go to all the craft fairs and stuff. I was always jealous of the kids that got to be at those. They're pretty fun. I mean, I felt like I was just taught like salesmanship really young. And like my mother would always tell like people I was the baby. She'd be like, yeah, I want just have you by there and people would be like, oh my god, baby. I'm gonna buy some jam now. Babies draw people in what can we say, you know?



Amanda Kanninen 10:04

They do.



Sophie Warrick 10:06

Cool. And then can you describe like a little more about like, um, just Luverne in general maybe like your house growing up and where you physically lived or just more about maybe your school experience stuff, something like that? So I lived in town, I actually lived really close to my school and the schools were all connected to each other. So it was like the elementary, this little like, weird entryway that was like enclosed. And then it would be like the middle school high school. So like, you could travel in between them. And I grew up in this weird house that was like 100 years old. It looked like a barn. And there was like, a parlor like this was like, well, like we had like, kind of two living rooms like as a kid, like there was the living room. And then there was like, a parlor where we would like hold Christmas, or like other parties, and there was like an attic. And we'd like found a lot of weird stuff on our house when we moved in like a water bed and like a typewriter. And there was like bats in our house sometimes.



Music/Sound Design 11:17

[Ambient birds fade in]



Sophie Warrick 11:18

The challenges of real life often lead to different consequences and opportunities for queer people, and can amplify queer people's experiences of both acceptance and rejection. Because of this is due to community wide ripple effects. rural life and communities are deeply interconnected. And so experiences in one area of life can create ripple effects that touch many other areas of life. Like, that house it was so weird. I'm so fond of it. And the town itself, especially like school. Like, especially when I moved people would never believe me, but I was like, yeah, I knew all my classmates. First and last name.

I don't know most people's last names now. But like, I would even know some of their middle names. I think my class total. Maybe 60 kids? [Ambient birds fade out] Uh uh.



Amanda Kanninen 12:05

Like there was like at least three classes and like, with like, 20 kids in each?



Sophie Warrick 12:18

Uh huh. Do you know how many people Luverne, like what the population is? I do not, I would have to be something I would have to look up. But it was definitely a town where you know, everyone. Yeah.



Amanda Kanninen 12:33

Or even if you don't know, everyone, they know you, especially as a kid, like, I had a lot of adults come up to me and being like, you're so and so's kid? And I'd be like, yes...



Sophie Warrick 12:42

Yes. Correct. Or like when people will I know your dad! And it's like, okay, who are you? I got that a lot. And I'm, I'm the youngest in my family. And I had two older sisters. So especially when I was going to like middle school and high school, your Hannah's sister, your Sarah's sister and be like, yes? Yes. Correct. Who are -- right people would always be like, this is who you are. And I'd be like, yeah, but like, who are you? I don't know who you are, though. Like, please introduce yourself?



Amanda Kanninen 13:12

No, that's a really good point. I remember moving to California. And I was like, and I spent like, one year in middle school, and I'm going to high school. I remember all my friends were like, what high school are you gonna go to? And I was like, what? You have those options here? And like the fact that like, when I like graduated from there, it was like, I think my class was like, 2000 kids, it was a really big change my first year from going to like, super small town. Like, where do you want to eat? There's only like, maybe seven places in town.



Sophie Warrick 13:50

It's wild. And like, why I know that you said something earlier about, like, you go to church, or you wouldn't go to church. And someone would be like, why weren't you there? And that that resonated with me too. Because you know, the same people that you go to church with are the people that you see Monday morning for school. And so like if you didn't want to do something, or you didn't show up to like, people notice and people will call you out on it because they see you everywhere else. And they're like, Well, why don't you show up?



Amanda Kanninen 14:18

Nah, I remember, like in middle school, I had to go to the psych ward. Coming back from that was so awful, because it was such a midwest small town reaction of everyone bombarding me with like, where were you? Where did you go? Are you okay? Are you sick? And then people randomly hugging me and being like, are you okay? What's wrong? And I'm like, we're not friends. Like we're only kind of friends because I have to deal with you for the rest of my life till I leave this town. How it was, was the weirdest experience coming back. I remember that day so well, because I just I didn't feel real. Like it, I was just like, I don't like anyone here. Why are you all talking to me, go away?



Sophie Warrick 15:11

Mm hmm. Thank you for sharing that. I know a lot of folks resonate with that and have had similar experiences to, especially with like, you know, anything related to mental health or with your physical health, like everyone knows, because... I don't know about you. But I remember I would -- my mom would find out about stuff about my classmates before I would. And she'd be like, oh, like so and so's mom told me that this kid did such and such. And I'd be like, how did you know that? Like, I didn't know that.



Amanda Kanninen 15:46

Like, that's just like small town, like discourse. Like, like, either for your friends or your family. You just learn, you know, like, oh, so and so's mom is getting a divorce. And you don't even like know them that well, like, you've talked to them, because you have to talk to them. But like, you just things pass by so quickly, I feel that there's like, nothing goes on, like nothing goes on. You like gossip is so huge, like the amount of times I would like, go to church. And people would be like, oh, we're gonna help you out and then just not.



Sophie Warrick 16:22

Exactly! I remember too -- oh, my gosh, so much of what you're saying is like, oh, yeah, like me too. Because I remember my dad doesn't go to church with us. But my mom and I would always go to church. And because my dad didn't come with us, he like my I remember, my confirmation teacher came up to me one day and was like, oh, it's such a bummer that your parents are divorced. Like you're such a good kid. And I was like, Huh?! Cuz my parents aren't divorced, but my dad just doesn't come to church. And because he didn't like everyone thought that my parents were divorced. I was like, oh my god, y'all like no, like, that's not true at all. But you're just so like, you know, the gossip spreads and the rumors spread. It's wild.



Amanda Kanninen 17:07

That's so funny. So my dad works for the government. And he like was just, he was single a lot, my dad just like, wouldn't be home for like, two, three months at a time. And people thought my parents divorced. Like they just did. And they've been they were together. They've been together for 30 years. And like people I remember people being like, oh, I'm so sorry. Your parents got divorced from them like they're happily married! He's in Montana. That's not my fault...



Sophie Warrick 17:38

Like you just have to have that weird like, since when did they get to my parents are divorced? Oh, like, wow, I didn't know like, y'all.



Music/Sound Design 17:44

[Ambient birds fade in]



Sophie Warrick 17:47

General societal stereotypes and pop culture portrayals of queer people suggests that queer people live solely in urban settings. While stereotypes in portrayals of rural communities rarely, if ever include queer people, except as targets of anti-queer violence, or as people yearning to leave their rural home to migrate to more accepting urban areas. These assumptions and narratives create a singular problematic understanding of how to be and where to be, queer in the United States.

 Music/Sound Design 18:23  
[Ambient birds fade out]

 Sophie Warrick 18:24  
And then I just also was curious, um, where you feel most at home? I'm super curious, because I know that you've said that you've moved a lot. And so when you think of home, what do you think of?

 Amanda Kanninen 18:36  
When I think of home I think of like, my family, like being, like being like, the feeling at home for me is like being with people who I know, care for me and love for me. And like understanding me, it's like a very like, true safe space where I can just like relax and decompress. I don't have to mask I can just be myself without fear of judgment. I'm not really attached to places anymore. Like there's places I love. Like to me, home is more family.

 Sophie Warrick 19:11  
I love that. I feel like that's what it should be right? Like, places aren't permanent.

 Amanda Kanninen 19:18  
I think so. Plus, like, I feel like it my family is just I'm like my family's just like struggled a lot. And I feel like being closer with my family than like being with like, a home is just like a stronger connection. Like, I like truly like love and care for my family. Like I I'm not torn up and we have to go somewhere else because I'm like, places, places don't leave. I mean, they go up and down, but like they don't leave, but like people leave and I'd rather be closer to people than places.

 Sophie Warrick 19:52  
Yeah. That was very beautifully said.

 Amanda Kanninen 19:55  
Aw thanks, I like, it's funny like when I said I was like I don't think that made sense.



Sophie Warrick 20:01

No, I loved it. It made perfect sense to me. Where does your family live now?



Amanda Kanninen 20:06

Currently? Well, my parents live in LA. Mm hmm. Um, my oldest sister lives in Lincoln. My middle one lives in San Francisco.



Sophie Warrick 20:18

Wow, y'all are all over the place!



Amanda Kanninen 20:23

We really are. It's really inconvenient for Christmas.



Sophie Warrick 20:28

I believe it. I'm just wondering if you've ever thought about moving back to Luverne at all? And what that might mean for you, if you would move there?



Amanda Kanninen 20:37

I don't think I would move back. Just because like when I think about being in Luverne, like, I think about how the whole time I grew up there, I always felt different. And like, I go to places now, and I don't feel that as much. But like being there was so prevalent that I was the weird kid. I was the emo kid. And I was just like, I don't think I could do that again. But I would like to visit just because it's such a quirky place in its own way. Not like always a good way. But like, plus, we do have to go back because we have a storage unit there. Well, and I would love just to visit is like see, like people because I think i think of some of these people. I'm like, I wonder if they changed in the slightest? And the answer is probably not. (Both laugh) I just want to see it for my own eyes again, but I don't think I could stay there permanently.



Sophie Warrick 21:37

Thank you for sharing that. It's very, I have a very, we're very similar Amanda! Oh, my lord. But I don't know just everything you're saying of just wanting to check it all out again, and

see what's changed and what hasn't, and how people have changed and who hasn't...

 Amanda Kanninen 21:56

It might be like a healing experience. Because I'm someone I don't like to hold grudges. Because I don't think you're like leads anywhere. And I just think it'd be like good to see it in like my adult form instead of like, this, like inner child. And I feel like when I think of Laverne, it's all these like feelings about that I felt as a kid, I felt I was a teen, which a lot of them are, like negative. So I would like to see as an adult and be like, baby, I don't think I'll have like, great reactions, but I would like to see him be like, hmm not for me, but like, there's some quaintness about it, hopefully. [Ambient birds and mandolin fade in and out]

 Sophie Warrick 22:57

I'm just wondering why you think it's important to talk about queerness?

 Amanda Kanninen 23:01

I think it's important to talk about queerness on so many levels. Not only like for representation and to show, like, the whole idea of queerness because I feel like when you like look at the media, it's a lot of like white queerness... and queerness is so much bigger than that.

 Sophie Warrick 23:22

Mm hmm.

 Amanda Kanninen 23:22

I just think it's important to talk about queerness because I think queer is such a like, it's one of my favorite words because it means so much and I think talking about the queer experience is truly beautiful. Just because like I feel anyone I know who's queer has like, just like a really good perspective on things and they usually like, have taken a lot of thought to like, explain those things. And I don't know I've always found queerness beautiful, like even watching, like documentaries of like, older queers talking. I just find it so beautiful.



Sophie Warrick 24:03

Do you have a favorite queer documentary or anything like that?



Amanda Kanninen 24:07

Whoa. I'm gonna go...Oh, my god, it was flipped in my head. Um, wait, no. Burning in Paris is that's what it's called. Did I mess up the name?



Sophie Warrick 24:19

I don't know that I've seen that one.



Amanda Kanninen 24:21

Um, it's about voguing in like New York, I really recommend it. It's about like the whole ballroom scene. Super good. And then also I really like the Marsha P. Johnson documentary.



Sophie Warrick 24:35

That's a great one.



Amanda Kanninen 24:38

I want makes me cry every time.



Sophie Warrick 24:40

Mm hmm. Yeah, big time. I like I liked what you were saying about just like the queer experience and how you know, queers just have such a unique, not even unique because, you know, lots of folks are queer, but just a different perspective than a lot of other people. And I think like, some non-queer folks forget that, like queerness isn't like all about sex, like, it's not about like, your sexual identity, it's not about your gender identity, like queerness is so much more than that. It's, you know, the art you make the way we think the even like down to like the food we make. And the way we just simply like live our lives is so much more than just boiling, boiling queerness down to your sexual and gender identity. So I just really, I appreciate what you said there.



Amanda Kanninen 25:42

No, I, I totally agree with your saying because I feel like what I need a lot of straight people. A lot of them are just like, every queer person's like an activist. You're all like, out of the fronts, like, all of you are like, constantly telling people about our pronouns. And I'm like, nah, man, like, to me, like a lot of queerness is about community. Like, one of my favorite things I used to do before COVID is that I would have like a queer dinner. You know, and it wasn't even like a queer dinner, it was just like happened to be all my friends are queer.



Sophie Warrick 26:19

Mm hmm.



Amanda Kanninen 26:20

But it was just like a really good like coming together. Sometimes the meal didn't make sense. Sometimes it did. But it was just like a really nice time. Just like being with your friends in a safe place, like enjoying a meal, like, like, anyone can do that. But like, when it's like all queer folk, it just feels it really does feel like chosen family.



Sophie Warrick 26:44

I also wanted to ask if you had any advice for queer youth that might be struggling with their identity, or talking about queerness? Specifically, if you have anything to say, to queer folks that might be in Luverne right now, that, for whatever reason, might stumble up across this podcast, what you might say to them?



Amanda Kanninen 27:05

I guess my first thing I'm going to say, that's kind of cheesy, because we all have heard a side note, we're not alone. There's several queer people out there. They're just, like hidden, and it sucks that you might have to hide, but there's like literally no rush to go out of the closet, especially if it's like, not safe. And I know when I was a young, queer, and like, on the internet, I saw so many labels, so many labels, and it overwhelmed me completely. And I would just want to tell like young queer people that you don't have to label yourself if you don't want to. Or if you want to try things, it's completely okay to try things. I think a lot of people always get worried. They're like, well, what if I, what if I identify as a lesbian, and then I realize I'm not a lesbian, I'm like, it's okay. Like, no one is going to be mad at you. Like, it's completely fine. Like, even if you want to, like change your pronouns, just to

see, like, do I want to know if I like being called they? That's really good, you should try that. Like, I feel like, I'm now trying it like you are still full, like, you're still going to explore your queer identity, your whole life. And it goes through a lot of ups and turns, but there are people there for you, that may not be there, but there are going to be queer people in your life you're gonna come across, and they will feel like your family.



Sophie Warrick 28:32

Mm hmm. And we're sitting with that. I love that you said all of that. Because everything you just said is just so important. In the idea of someone hearing what you just said, just warms my heart, because it's just beautiful, and everyone should know that and hear it from another queer person. So thank you for sharing that.



Amanda Kanninen 28:57

Of course.



Sophie Warrick 28:59

Um, and then yeah, um, at the end of this little podcast, I just want to give you a chance to promote or shout out any work that you're doing, or any projects, you want to promote events, whatever. So if you have anything that you'd like to promote, feel free to tell us about it.



Amanda Kanninen 29:19

Sure, I'm recently selling zines. They're just pocket zines right now. Um, so I'm really excited about that. If you're interested in buying one, I have an Instagram for them under @WhatsHerFaceZines. And I'm hopefully going to print some color stuff soon!



Sophie Warrick 29:37

Nice!



Amanda Kanninen 29:38

It's just, printing is money. So I'm hoping to get more art out there. That's my goal. I don't have any big projects, but I'm trying to just get more art out there and share more art.



Sophie Warrick 29:52

Yay! I'm so excited. I ordered some zines from Amanda. I'm really excited about them. And then um, if anyone wants to reach out to you at all -- how might they be able to contact you?



Amanda Kanninen 30:03

I guess best way to contact me is probably through Instagram. I have two Instagrams. The first one, like I said, is @WhatsHerFaceZines but my main account is also @NotBynes, just want to say that joke there.



Music/Sound Design 30:29

[Ambient birds and mandolin fades in]



Sophie Warrick 30:30

(Voiceover) You just listened to a conversation between Amanda Kanninen and myself, Sophie Warrick. Thank you so much to Amanda for joining me on Queer Backroads. I'm so thankful for your art, your zines and absolutely everything that you bring to the world. To all my rural queers, I know you're out there. I hope you're listening and I hope you're finding your community. If you're interested in show notes and transcriptions of each episode, you can visit my link tree at [linktr.ee/SophieWarrick](https://linktr.ee/SophieWarrick). You can also learn more about this podcast project and various ways to contact me if you're interested. I hope that your day is filled with light and love and I challenge you to try something new today. At the end of each episode, I asked a question for you to ponder for as long as you like. What makes you feel comfortable? What makes you feel uncomfortable? Thanks for listening.  
[Ambient birds and mandolin fades out]