

Broadway Star Reveals the Idol That Nearly Destroyed Her

Amanda Jane Cooper is best known for her role as Glinda in both the Broadway and National Tour version of *Wicked*, but as she shares in a new short film from I Am Second, a storytelling organization, the bright shining role she plays on stage hasn't always mirrored her real life. In the new I Am Second film, she opens up about her struggles finding her identity and ultimately peace.

Cooper's love for theater started at a young age. At 15 years old, she saw *Wicked* when it first opened on Broadway, and from then on, she dreamed of playing the part of Glinda. She committed herself to the arts, studying acting and musical theater at Carnegie Mellon University, but in the process, she lost sight of her true identity.

"I didn't have an understanding of what made me matter; being on stage was what I did and who I was," Cooper said. "Without me even knowing it, success started to slowly become my God, and I told myself, 'If I can achieve this or get this role, then I'll be enough.'"

The pressure she felt led her to develop an eating disorder and a hatred for her body, which began a hard journey she would battle for years. Following her studies, she moved to New York where the struggle for acceptance and success only continued.

Cooper quickly secured off-Broadway roles and within eight months, she landed her dream job as Glinda in the *Wicked* National Tour.

Even though she received affirmation and applause from

thousands of people every night, she admits she was still very lost. She then moved to Los Angeles to pursue a TV and film career but despite landing roles on shows including ABC's *Selfie*, Disney's *Jessie*, CBS' *CSI: Crime Scene Investigation* and FOX's *Bones* and *Glee*, her struggles only compounded in Hollywood.

"This war inside me was just ravenous. It almost became a place of comfort because dealing with the pain was less scary to me than the pain of what it would take to change," Cooper said.

In her *I Am Second* video, Cooper discloses her internal battles with self-worth and addiction and how a conversation at an L.A. party eventually led her on a journey to find freedom and hope.

"I don't think I ever thought it was possible to be totally free, but I was wrong," Cooper said.

Years later, Cooper was offered to reprise her role of Glinda on the National Tour, where she played the role for twice as long as her first run, though this time her experience was completely different and for the better. Following the tour, she was invited to play the role of Glinda in the Broadway production of *Wicked*.

To watch the full film, visit .