

Sawbones 005: Opium

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Clint: Sawbones is a show about medical history, and nothing the hosts say should be taken as medical advice or opinion. It's for fun. Can't you just have fun for an hour, and not try to diagnose your mystery boil? We think you've earned it. Just sit back, relax, and enjoy a moment of distraction from that weird growth. You're worth it.

[theme music plays]

Justin: [sadly] Hi everybody. Welcome to Sawbones. It's a marital tour of misguided... What is it? Medical tour of misguided medicine. Whatever. I'm Justin McElroy.

Sydnee: Justin.

Justin: You got to introduce yourself.

Sydnee: I'm Sydnee McElroy. What's wrong with you?

Justin: Oh God, it's nothing. It's this darn baby. No matter what I do—

Sydnee: Wait, where did you get a baby now?

Justin: It's our fictional intro conceit baby.

Sydnee: Okay, good.

Justin: And this darn baby just won't stop crying.

Sydnee: Well, what have you tried so far?

Justin: Uhhh... Ignoring it?

Sydnee: Okay, not a great start. But keep going.

Justin: Putting my finger in its mouth?

Sydnee: Okay. That's not... that's not recommended.

Justin: Anbesol.

Sydnee: What do you think... So, okay, so you think the baby's teething?

Justin: Yeah, that's my thought. I think the baby is having some teething issues.

Sydnee: I'm hoping, if you put your finger in its mouth, and you gave it Anbesol...

Justin: No, I had an endgame, yeah, for sure.

Sydnee: Okay. You didn't just think that he or she, I can't tell the gender of this baby, was hungry?

Justin: No, no, no. I think the baby is teething, and I think that's central to sort of the problem I'm having.

Sydnee: Well, y'know, I am a physician. Maybe I could suggest something?

Justin: You're saying maybe I should have turned to you first in the care and treatment of our fictional intro conceit baby?

Sydnee: Well, always.

Justin: Okay, fair enough. What do you got? What do you suggest?

Sydnee: Have you considered Doctor Fahrney's Teething Syrup?

Justin: Doctor Fahrney's Teething Syrup? Do tell!

Sydnee: Doctor Fahrney's Teething Syrup is a revolutionary new formula that includes the three main things you definitely, definitely want to give babies.

Justin: Hit me. Milk?

Sydnee: No.

Justin: Tender loving care?

Sydnee: Nope, not that either.

Justin: Plenty of oxygen?

Sydnee: Oh, come on! Alcohol, morphine, and chloroform.

Justin: Oh no! [laughs] That doesn't sound to me, a non-doctor, like a great blend for baby.

Sydnee: That's exactly what babies need. Not just for teething, the uses are practically endless. Does your baby have a cold?

Justin: Uh, no.

Sydnee: But what if—what if he did?

Justin: Oh, he won't now.

Sydnee: Does your baby have diarrhea?

Justin: He might.

Sydnee: Perhaps colic?

Justin: All those things.

Sydnee: I know that doctor says that your baby doesn't have worms, but your doctor's probably wrong. Your baby has worms.

Justin: You're saying Doctor Fahrney's Teething Syrup is the uh, is the solution?

Sydnee: It's the solution to everything. It's the cure-all.

Justin: You said it's revolutionary and new. How recently was this brought to market?

Sydnee: This was like the 1850s?

Justin: Perfect.

Sydnee: About.

Justin: Okay, great.

Sydnee: And you should just dose it until you, y'know, get the effect you desire. So usually that's sleeping.

Justin: A good, hard sleep, I imagine.

Sydnee: And quiet.

Justin: Really quiet.

Sydnee: Mommy and Daddy need some quiet time.

Justin: Sydnee, I know alcohol. I know chloroform. But I want to know more about morphine.

Sydnee: Well, Justin, you've come to the right place.

Justin: Have I though?

Sydnee: So, let's start back before morphine, though.

Justin: Okay.

Sydnee: Because morphine's something everybody's heard of.

Justin: Everybody's got some morphine.

Sydnee: Right. Everybody's got morphine these days.

Justin: Everybody's got some morphine kicking around.

Sydnee: No, let's go way back. Let's get in the way, way, back machine. The Wayback Machine. The time machine. I don't remember.

Justin: That you have.

Sydnee: That I have. And let's go back to 3400... 34... 3400, that's the year I want to go to, B.C. [laughs]

Justin: Okay. We're kind of jumping all over time. It's very disorienting.

Sydnee: Sorry. I'm taking you back to the poppy fields of Mesopotamia.

Justin: Oh, it's beautiful here!

Sydnee: Isn't it?

Justin: Thank you for whisking me away.

Sydnee: Take a deep breath. Well, not—not too deep. [laughs]

Justin: Why not?

Sydnee: 'Cause I want you to take another one afterwards. [laughing]

Justin: Okay.

Sydnee: So this far back, people were cultivating poppies.

Justin: Because they were beautiful?

Sydnee: They were beautiful, and because you could, um, smoke them.

Justin: Oh, really? They just discovered that, huh?

Sydnee: Well, yeah. They would like, heat them up and then inhale them. I mean smoke them; you didn't set them on fire.

Justin: I guess primitive man was basically just smoking anything he could get his hands on.

Sydnee: Pretty much. And you could eat them.

Justin: Oh, great. Did it have the same effects?

Sydnee: Well, they called it... They were like, 'the flowers of joy.'

Justin: Oh, fun.

Sydnee: So, I can imagine that yes, they had the same effects. [laughs]

Justin: I'm sure it was a nice, mellow high.

Sydnee: But there was no medical use of opium at this time. This is purely just funksies.

Justin: Okay.

Sydnee: Just good times.

Justin: Just party.

Sydnee: That is until 460 B.C. So, we're jumping forward. Way, way forward. But then also way, way back, still.

Justin: Still back, but less back.

Sydnee: Still back but not as back. And that's when—you remember Hippocrates?

Justin: Sure, right. He... Yeah, for sure. Bleeding? Is that when we talked about Hippocrates?

Sydnee: Well, he wrote an oath, too.

Justin: Oh, that's right. The Hippocratic Oath.

Sydnee: That guy.

Justin: That guy. Do no harms.

Sydnee: And stuff.

Justin: And stuff. "Do no harm and stuff," Hippocrates, 460 B.C.

Sydnee: There was more to it, but...

Justin: So, Hippocrates, 460 B.C., what did he drop on us?

Sydnee: So, he was the first one to recognize that there were some medical uses for opium. And it's still opium at this point. We're not talking morphine. And he began to recommend that people use it for pain. Women should use it for their various diseases.

Justin: Diseases of women.

Sydnee: Meaning, y'know, when women aren't doing what you tell them.

Justin: Oh, okay. Not listening.

Sydnee: When they're "hysterical."

Justin: Ahh. Okay.

Sydnee: Because their uteruses are moving all around inside their bodies and making them crazy.

Justin: Man, those were simpler times, huh?

Sydnee: That's where hysteria comes from, did you know that Justin?

Justin: I did not, Sydnee.

Sydnee: Yeah, it was the theory that when women were misbehavin', that their uteruses were just roaming around in there, making them go crazy.

Justin: [gasps] This is, of course, not medically accurate?

Sydnee: No, no, this isn't true.

Justin: Fair enough.

Sydnee: As far as you know. They also used it as a styptic, which is something, an antihemorrhagic. It stops bleeding.

Justin: Oh, okay. And that works? It wasn't a fake usage?

Sydnee: I don't know why that would work, exactly, so...

Justin: [laughs] Okay, good. Nice job Hippocrates.

Sydnee: [laughs] But they tried. But it was also used for pain, which is probably did work for.

Justin: Sure.

Sydnee: So that's fair. For many, many years after that, it's mainly used, occasionally for pain, but really still recreational purposes. Until 1527.

Justin: So, 2000 years, just kicking around, recreationally.

Sydnee: Yeah, some people are... I mean, people might make up, like, "I really gotta take that, man, because my elbow hurts."

Justin: My ancient elbow!

Sydnee: My ancient elbows, from this rock that I've been...

Justin: I've been carrying this mummy all day.

Sydnee: Pounding on them. [laughing]

Justin: Building a pyramid really takes it out of you. At the end of the day, I like a nice, cold opium. Pass the poppies, kemo sabe! It's time to unwind.

Sydnee: I don't even know where you are or when you are.

Justin: Opium. I'm doing a TV commercial in ancient Egypt, Sydnee. Get the net.

Sydnee: [laughs] So 1527, opium is reintroduced, only now, it's called laudanum.

Justin: Okay, same... I mean, is there a difference between opium and laudanum?

Sydnee: Laudanum is like a tincture of opium, basically. It's a syrup or a mixture of opium with liquid to produce, like, a syrup.

Justin: Okay.

Sydnee: So, a liquid now. Usually mixed with... Well, and I should say, it usually is a liquid form is what we think of laudanum. There were also pills. But mainly, it was just alcohol and opium.

Justin: Delicious.

Sydnee: They also made pills, these tiny little black pills, that they called 'stones of immortality.' And those were made out of opium and citrus juice and gold, of course. You gotta put gold in there.

Justin: Yeah, right, if you want to be healthy.

Sydnee: Right. And then sometimes you'd like, grind up some pearls and some musk and some amber and mix them all into these little pills.

Justin: Now, was this still being used for health at this point, or are we talking still like, joyful times?

Sydnee: Well, no, this is when we really started to say, "No, this is a pain medication. This is used not for fun, although it was fun, this is—when you're hurting, you should use this for pain."

Justin: So that was 1527?

Sydnee: Yes.

Justin: We saw that.

Sydnee: And this was still kind of something that like, your local apothecary might put together for you, but not necessarily like, um, being sold. Y'know? It wasn't commercially available.

Justin: Still a controlled, inasmuch as there was control over that sort of thing.

Sydnee: Yeah. I mean, not a lot of control. But by 1680, Thomas Sydenham was the first one to kind of come out with his version. Like, this is

a formula for laudanum. It is made this way every time. It's not just something that Mom mixes up at home.

Justin: This is the Pepsi of laudanum.

Sydnee: Right. Exactly. Sydenham's Laudanum.

Justin: That's not a great name. I think I would have gone with something catchy. It's 1680, so you could... Pretty much any brand name you want. You could call it Microsoft Laudanum, Frito-Lay Laudanum.

Sydnee: The taste of a new generation.

Justin: The taste of a new generation. Get on board. Start getting those trademarks early.

Sydnee: But then like, 20 years later he came out with New Laudanum.

Justin: New Laudanum.

Sydnee: And that was terrible.

Justin: Nobody liked it.

Sydnee: Everybody hated that. Then there was Crystal Laudanum, nobody liked Crystal Laudanum.

Justin: Everybody liked Crystal Laudanum! They could not get enough.

Sydnee: Could we not get on Crystal Laudanum? Or Pepsi, I guess.

Justin: Yeah, you're still on a case about Crystal Pepsi.

Sydnee: I don't understand why you liked Crystal Pepsi.

Justin: I thought it was pretty good.

Sydnee: No, it wasn't.

Justin: You don't remember it. You were too young; you couldn't appreciate its subtle effervescence.

Sydnee: It wasn't good. Anyway, Sydenham's Laudanum didn't—

Justin: This has been our classic Crystal Pepsi bit that you've all been waiting for.

Sydnee: We talk about Crystal Pepsi a lot. I used to ponder it while you were trying to fall asleep at night.

Justin: Yeah, it was great. I would be trying to fall asleep at midnight or 1:00 AM, and from across the bed I'd hear, [Sydnee voice] "Do you remember Crystal Pepsi?" Yeah, I do, sweetheart.

Sydnee: That's exactly what I sound like, by the way.

Justin: That's a pretty good impression. The people at home don't know what you sound like, Sydnee. How would they have any frame of reference?

Sydnee: [laughs] You're right. They're clueless.

So, this laudanum had a formula. It was mixed with sherry, and then like, some herbs and some nutmeg and some castor and some saffron and—

Justin: That sounds nice.

Sydnee: And basically—

Justin: Smooth laudanum.

Sydnee: It was prescribed... Well, "prescribed", I'm using air quotes that nobody can see. It was given to you for everything. Eeverything.

Justin: Give me an example.

Sydnee: Are you hurting?

Justin: I am, right now.

Sydnee: Here's some Sydenham's Laudanum. Are you having trouble sleeping?

Justin: Yep.

Sydnee: Here's some laudanum. Did you get dysentery?

Justin: Yep.

Sydnee: Too bad. But here's some laudanum.

Justin: And this goes back to the classic Sawbones rule, cure-alls cure nothing.

Sydnee: Exactly. And this persisted until they were finally, in 1803 in Germany, they were finally able to isolate the active ingredient of opium. Prinium somniferum.

Justin: And this is... Until then, we didn't know why exactly or how exactly it worked. I guess we probably still don't know, in 1803, we probably still don't know how, exactly, chemically, it was affecting us, right?

Sydnee: No. We didn't. But we knew the important part by 1803.

Justin: We knew something was up.

Sydnee: Yeah. We knew the part that was really important, the morphine. So, 1803 is when we finally see morphine isolated. And at that point, it revolutionized. It was God's own medicine.

Justin: God's own... Is that what they really called it?

Sydnee: Yep, that's what they called it.

Justin: Thanks, God. You did us a solid again.

Sydnee: And you gotta think, at the time, you know, we are kind of being snarky about it because it got people high, but we also didn't have any other strong pain medication yet. So, when you were, you know, getting your leg amputated...

Justin: Sure.

Sydnee: You know, I mean...

Justin: Thanks, God. I sincerely appreciate—I apologize for my earlier irony, God. You really are doing me a solid.

Sydnee: You know, morphine was pretty important.

Justin: Right.

Sydnee: And it was much safer, because it was the one alkaloid. It was purified. We knew exactly what it was, we didn't have all of the other parts of the opium. You know, the poppy derivatives that you didn't want in there.

Justin: Did we start seeing fewer of the like, um, these sorts of like, fun blends?

Sydnee: No.

Justin: No? Okay. [laughs]

Sydnee: Not at all. I meant, at that point, as the 1800s progressed, you did see Merck and Company, which I have to assume is still the pharmaceutical company Merck. The origins of it.

Justin: I would assume.

Sydnee: They began commercially manufacturing morphine. And that was certainly being used by doctors, y'know, for pain-relief in medical settings.

But laudanum was still being sold over the counter to everyone. To everyone. It was mainly still mixed with alcohol, but I mean, you found it with anything. With mercury, with chloroform, with whiskey, with wine, with cayenne pepper, with hashish, belladonna... I mean, ether.

Justin: Designer laudanum.

Sydnee: Exactly. Laudanum with everything. And again, being used to treat everything. So, at the time, it was very popular for women to look pale and frail and kind of sickly.

Justin: So, it's basically like the late '90s.

Sydnee: You know, that's a good point. So, it was popular to look like Kate Moss.

Justin: Okay.

Sydnee: And what better way to do that than a nasty opium addiction?

Justin: I mean, I could think of a better way, but I'll grant you your conceit.

Sydnee: It's the 1800s, they couldn't.

Justin: They couldn't. [laughing] Their imaginations were dulled by laudanum.

Sydnee: You had two choices. Either get TB or look like you have TB by, y'know, drinking laudanum.

Justin: [whispering] What's her secret? Is it TB? "No. I only look like I have TB."

Sydnee: [laughs] It's kind of funny that, at the time, men were attracted to women who may have a communicable disease. Who looked, at least, like they had one.

Justin: An effect you can still see in sororities all across America. Come on. That's just a joke.

Sydnee: Come on Justin.

Justin: Just a goof.

Sydnee: That's not fair.

Justin: Come on.

Sydnee: It's very much still being marketed towards women. Now, men are definitely using laudanum as well, but women are still being told to use it for menstrual cramps and aches and pains. And especially marketing towards women because they're being told to use it for their babies, as we discussed.

Justin: Oh, God.

Sydnee: So, not only was Dr. Fahrney's Teething Syrup popular, but there was Godfrey's Cordial.

Justin: That sounds nice. That sounds kind of high-falutin', I think.

Sydnee: I think it sounds high-falutin'. That contained opium as well. Water, spices, and, as I was corrected from our previous episode, "tree-kol."

Justin: Treacle?

Sydnee: Not "treck-ol."

Justin: Oh, I didn't know. Thanks listeners.

Sydnee: That was very, very popular. Steadman's Powder. Atkinson's Royal Infants Preservative.

Justin: Oh my. [laughs] Aren't we grandiose with our morphine?

Sydnee: And this was being doled out to households by the, I mean, hundreds of gallons a year, people were prescribing it.

Justin: Well, I mean, because they got addicted to it. Right?

Sydnee: Well, people were addicted to it for sure, but they were also giving it to their infants in these mass quantities. That's the scary part. And actually, and this is not a joke, it actually probably contributed to infant mortality at the time.

Justin: Wow, really? Like a discernable amount?

Sydnee: Yes. A fair amount. Because the doctors at the time would describe the way the infants looked as "wizened, like little monkeys."

Justin: Aw, that actually sounds kind of cute, though. To me.

Sydnee: Well, it's not.

Justin: [laughs] Okay.

Sydnee: They were wasted, they didn't want to... They were high all the time. And they were infants, they couldn't tell you that, but they stopped eating. A lot of the babies suffered from malnutrition. I mean, not that parents knew what they were doing. That was certainly not the goal. That was not the desired effect.

Justin: No, they didn't intend that, certainly.

Sydnee: No. But like you said, it was very popular to give to your baby, and to take. I mean, at the time, especially in the 1850s, everybody was dying of dysentery and cholera, so you might as well take some laudanum.

Justin: Enjoy yourself while you're here for crying out loud.

Sydnee: As you may or may not know, opiates constipate you, so it actually probably did work for diarrhea.

Justin: Oh, that's good.

Sydnee: So, you know, your stomach's hurting, you're having diarrhea, you take some laudanum. It probably eased those symptoms. And hey, if you had a cough, it would get rid of that too.

Justin: Well, there you go. See, there's two legitimate treatments, for this highly, highly addictive substance.

Sydnee: And that was the problem, right? Is that people just didn't know, at the time, how addictive it was. Or maybe they did, they just didn't want to accept it. In that same time period, they finally figured out how to inject morphine as well.

Justin: Oh, good.

Sydnee: And so that was then they—

Justin: I miss the flavor though. You can't beat a cold Godfrey's Cordial out on the porch, listening to your cousin hack up his lung because of the TB. You're just enjoying an ice-cold Atkinson's Royal Infant Preservative over ice.

Sydnee: You really should have done commercials for them, I think.

Justin: I think that would have gone down pretty good. I think I could have really made a name for myself.

Sydnee: In the 1840s, it's interesting, opium was a subject of much controversy, not just because everybody was addicted to it, but because it was the cause of a war.

Justin: Oh, really?

Sydnee: Between China and England.

Justin: Why would they fight over that?

Sydnee: Well, it had to do with their trade at the time. So, China was shipping a lot more to England than England was shipping to China. And England was not pleased with that.

Justin: Sure.

Sydnee: So, they basically just started dumping tons of illegal opium on China.

Justin: Oh, in Chinese culture this was remembered as “The Sweetest Day Ever.”

Sydnee: [laughs] Well, that’s—

Justin: “Get down to the beach! You have to see, this is amazing!”

Sydnee: “All these English people are here, and they’ve got so much opium!”

Justin: “They’ve got so much opium! I’m losing it!”

Sydnee: The Chinese people were pretty thrilled. The Chinese government was not.

Justin: Yeah, less than thrilled?

Sydnee: And a war ensued.

Justin: Oh man. Hopefully it’s paid up. We settled that.

Sydnee: As you may have guessed, because you live in the year 2013, the story of opium doesn't... It's not the happiest of endings.

Justin: Where do we go from here?

Sydnee: At this point, we're in the late 1800s. Opium is widely used, for, theoretically, medical purposes, and it's being abused. And the thing is, it's not taxed the same way that alcohol is taxed, so it had really become like, the working-class drug. You'd had a long day in the mines, the mill, the...

Justin: The textile plant.

Sydnee: The textile factory. Wherever you were. And on your way home, you don't swing by the pub and pick up a pint, if you can't afford it. You swing by the druggist and you pick up a bottle of laudanum.

Justin: I would imagine... and this is a guess, on my part. This is not historically based, but I would imagine at this point the pharmacists sort of knew the score, right? Like, they couldn't be blind to the addictive properties or some of the damaging properties of opium at this point, right? They can't still be pleading innocent.

Sydnee: No, I think you're probably right. At that point, the pharmacists certainly knew because they were doling out so much of the stuff. And, you know, women were just going through bottle after bottle.

Justin: So, what's the timeline here, Syd? Because I have a feeling that it probably accelerates.

Sydnee: So, things are about to go horribly wrong. In 1874, heroin was first invented. Well, not invented, isolated.

Justin: Uh ohhh. Hello, heroin. Came to ruin the story.

Sydnee: So, heroin—

Justin: Ruin everybody's good time.

Sydnee: Heroin shows up. And for a while, we actually think we're on to something good. Because we've realized that people are addicted to opium, and so by 1895, the Bayer company, as in the makers of aspirin, Bayer aspirin—

Justin: And Bayer heroin, in finer stores everywhere.

Sydnee: Well, yes. They started producing Bayer heroin. They could dilute morphine and produce a less potent form of heroin that they began to use a few years later to try to get people off opium.

Justin: You would think if your company's called Bayer, and you're going to name a product that you're going to bring to market, you would pick something that slips off the tongue a little easier than Bayer heroin. It's kind of like rural juror.

Sydnee: [mumbling] Bayer heroin. Can I have some Bayer heroin?

Justin: [mumbling] Need some Bayer heroin.

Sydnee: Well, every time you say it, you sound like you're high.

Justin: Oh, this is convenient.

Sydnee: So, you can get away with being high.

Justin: Sure, okay.

Sydnee: So, at that point, heroin is being used as a cure for morphine and laudanum addiction. Which doesn't go well.

Justin: Does not pan out, huh?

Sydnee: So, at this point, heroin addiction is just through the roof. So, by 1903, if you're not addicted to laudanum, if you're not addicted to morphine, you're now addicted to heroin.

Justin: Perfect.

Sydnee: So that's finally when, um, at least in the US, the Pure Food and Drug Act is passed, in 1906. Which is the first time that you are required to tell a consumer what is in whatever they're buying.

Justin: 1906? Sheesh.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm. So, you can't just sell them, you know, Dr. Fahrney's Magic Teething Syrup. You've got to actually list what's on it.

Justin: Very clearly list, yeah.

Sydnee: Although, to be fair, in the picture that I looked at, of Dr. Fahrney's Teething Syrup, it very clearly said that it's got alcohol and morphine and chloroform in it. [laughs]

Justin: Oh yeah, it is not, in any way, oblique about what it is offering to your baby.

Sydnee: No, it is not ambiguous. Yes. But people realized... I mean, this is the first attempt to start to regulate. By 1914, the Harrison Narcotics Act was passed. And that was when it was required that a doctor or a pharmacist had to prescribe the narcotic, and they had to be registered with and agency in order to do that.

Justin: Is it tracked, do you know? I mean, you think they would have tracked who was doling it out and when?

Sydnee: That's what they were starting to do. That's what they were trying to do at this point. I mean, certainly it is now, but that's what... This was the beginning of that effort.

And then, by 1923, the selling of narcotics just in stores and on the streets became officially illegal. So, you could only get it from a licensed physician or pharmacist who was able to prescribe those.

Justin: Syd, I want to do opium, okay? How do I do it?

Sydnee: Well, you can't.

Justin: Okay, but I really, really want to do opium. How does it work?

Sydnee: Okay, well, it's illegal. But if it wasn't and I was going to let you do it, then you would smoke it.

Justin: Just put it in my pipe over there and...

Sydnee: No, because you don't—

Justin: Just light up?

Sydnee: Well, not exactly, 'cause you don't actually... You don't burn anything. You just heat it up. And as you heat it up, and it begins to vaporize, the alkaloids in it that are active, and the main thing is morphine. So, it vaporizes the morphine, and then you inhale the steam, and you know, you get high.

Justin: [whispers] You get high.

Sydnee: You get so, so high.

Justin: Okay. So, no actual lighting of it.

Sydnee: No, it's just like, uh... It's kind of like an Easy-Bake Oven.

Justin: [laughs] Basically.

Sydnee: [laughs] Just a light bulb.

Justin: Hey, you told me something interesting recently about... We had been talking about something related to this, and you told me about a word that got its start within opium dens. Do you remember this?

Sydnee: Oh, hipsters!

Justin: Hipsters?

Sydnee: Yeah, so the term hipster originated in opium dens from people who would lay on their side or lay on their hips while they smoked opium. And so, they were called hipsters, and that was the...

Justin: Is this true?

Sydnee: Yeah.

Justin: Okay.

Sydnee: Or so the book I was reading said it was true.

Justin: [laughs] Alright. I'll take your book's word for it.

Sydnee: If anybody knows that that's wrong, please let me know. But as far as I know, that's absolutely true.

Justin: Oh, they will. It's the internet.

Sydnee: Yes, I know. Somebody's going to let me know. Have you ever heard, Justin, about poppy seed muffins or bagels and the dangers of that, if you have to take urine drug tests?

Justin: It's an old wives' tale, right?

Sydnee: No.

Justin: No?

Sydnee: No.

Justin: Uh-oh.

Sydnee: One poppy seed bagel can cause a false positive for opium on your urine drug screen for up to 48 hours.

Justin: Wow. Good to know.

Sydnee: Yeah, that is good to know. And it's a great excuse if you have been smoking opium.

Justin: So take that, Blockbuster Video. That's my excuse. That's what happened, really.

Sydnee: And if you do smoke opium, you are in good company.

Justin: Do tell.

Sydnee: There were many famous opium addicts.

Justin: That caterpillar.

Sydnee: That caterpillar from—

Justin: Alice in Wonderland.

Sydnee: ... Alice in Wonderland was definitely the most famous of all.

No, a lot of poets and authors. So, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Percy Shelley, Thomas De Quincey, George Crabbe. Pretty much all the romantic poets. Well, except for William Wordsworth. But everybody else. They were all using opium. Mary Todd Lincoln was addicted to laudanum, did you know that?

Justin: Oh man. Does anybody get off this train?

Sydnee: No. I just like to make sure every time we do one of our episodes that I insult one of the Lincolns. [laughs]

Justin: [laughs] We've got your number, Lincoln family.

Sydnee: We got you on watch. Doing laudanum. Your husband's doing mercury.

Justin: We're going to make you all famous.

Sydnee: Finally.

Justin: Finally.

Sydnee: Finally, the Lincolns are going to get the recognition they deserve.

Justin: Putting you on the map. Sydnee, I know you told me I can't do opium. Fine, whatever. But we are still using some branch of this family tree today in medical care, right?

Sydnee: Absolutely. Opium itself, so if we're talking about tincture of opium, or laudanum, they still exist as schedule 2 drugs. Tincture of opium is what you'd use now, because you'd actually want to get rid of some of the substances that can cause a lot of nausea and vomiting, so you would purify it more.

But it's only limited to the use for severe diarrhea, sometimes in terminally ill cancer patients, and they use it off-label sometimes for babies who are born to mothers who are on opiates, so they're addicted.

Justin: What do you mean by off-label?

Sydnee: Sorry, that means that it's not approved by the FDA. It's not a use that it got approval for. So, doctors are using it even though that doesn't come in the literature. We don't have evidence for it.

Justin: Okay.

Sydnee: And then there are still, of course, all of the branches of morphine. So, as they purified all the different substances in opiates, we got

hydrocodone and oxycodone and hydromorphone and all of the different narcotics that are used for pain control today.

Justin: Here at Sawbones, we can't offer you a smooth, mellow high, but we can offer you just a half hour of relaxation. A little distraction from your day-to-day worries and cares. And we certainly appreciate you giving us that privilege every week.

Sydnee: Absolutely. No, we thank you for tuning in, and we would much prefer you to listen to our show than do any drugs, please.

Justin: We have a new Twitter account. Thanks to some dear friends, we were able to pull some strings, and we got @Sawbones. So that's where you can follow us on Twitter. Pretty cool. Pretty easy to remember.

We also have a web page, it's sawbonesshow.com, but that just redirects to our Maximum Fun page where you can find us and all the other fine Maximum Fun programs. So, make sure you check those out.

I know Jordan, Jesse, Go!, another hit podcast there, just started a Kickstarter campaign where they want to buy one thousand ice cream cones for some people in Denver.

Sydnee: Hey, let's move to Denver.

Justin: [sarcastic] What a fine, fine idea. Save on that seven dollars' worth of ice cream.

Sydnee: I love ice cream!

Justin: Me too. I love ice cream too. We are on Twitter ourselves. I'm @JustinMcElroy, she's—

Sydnee: @SydneeMcElroy.

Justin: S-Y-D-N-E-E. And if you would be so kind and you got a couple minutes, head over to iTunes and subscribe to our show, review it. Recommend it to friends. It would mean the world to us.

Sydnee: Yeah, we love to hear from you guys. Feel free to tweet at us any corrections you have on my pronunciations.

Justin: You can also email us, Sawbones@MaximumFun.org. Got that this week, too.

Sydnee: Absolutely.

Justin: All kinds of branches of contact. Hope you'll take advantage of one, and we hope you'll join us next Friday for another Sawbones. I'm Justin McElroy.

Sydnee: I'm Sydnee McElroy.

Justin: As always, don't drill a hole in your head.

[theme music plays]

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