

## Sawbones 247: The Oregon Trail

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**Intro (Clint McElroy):** *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:** Hello everybody and welcome to *Sawbones*, a marital tour of misguided medicine. I'm your cohost, Justin McElroy!

[audience cheers]

**Sydney:** And I'm Sydney McElroy.

[audience cheers louder]

**Justin:** Huh. They were about the same that time. Weird.

[audience laughs]

**Justin:** Uh, what a thrill it is to be back here in Portland, Oregon.

[audience cheers]

**Justin:** I think our first show here was at the Aladdin Theater?

[audience cheers]

**Justin:** Uh, which is a beautiful venue in its own right, and it is such a thrill to be here with all of you in this fine city, with a—

**Sydney:** I still remember sitting backstage of that theater holding little baby Charlie, fast asleep.

[audience aww's]

**Justin:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** Listening to you guys do your show.

**Justin:** Yeah. All those great... gags everybody treasures. Um—

**Sydnee:** [laughs]

[audience laughs]

**Justin:** —back when they were good. Um... I used to like those guys.

**Sydnee:** [through laughter] She was—she was just running up and down the hallways *screaming* her head off right before we came out here, and we were like, "Please stop!"

[audience laughs]

**Sydnee:** She's fine, she's happy. It was happy screams but, like, "Stop!"

**Justin:** It's just fine, screaming.

**Sydnee:** "Don't scream!"

**Justin:** "Please stop screaming."

**Sydnee:** If you hear her screaming, she's fine. She's just—

[audience laughs]

**Justin:** Uh, so we're here in Oregon. [pauses]

[audience cheers]

**Justin:** [snorts]

**Sydnee:** Establish the place.

**Justin:** That. Establish that. It's important.

**Sydnee:** Got it.

**Justin:** Because—Sydnee, take it away.

**Sydnee:** So, we always—[laughs] we always like to do episodes that are themed around the place that we are when we do live shows, and we were thinkin' about Oregon, and what do we know about Oregon? Well, when I think about Oregon and diseases—

[audience laughs]

**Sydnee:** The Oregon Trail always comes to mind.

[audience cheers]

**Sydnee:** An—an actual trail, and also a game, that many of us—a computer game that many of us played, and a *great* episode of *Teen Titans Go!* also.

**Justin:** Yeah. Excellent episode.

**Sydnee:** Yeah. One of the top five. We've seen them all, 30 times each, [through laughter] and that's one of the top five, easily.

**Justin:** So we're—so, as Oregon Trail—or, as I assume you all know it, The Trail—

[audience laughs]

**Sydnee:** [laughs]

**Justin:** Uh, where does that bring us to in terms of *Sawbones*, the podcast, Sydnee?

**Sydnee:** So, I was thinking. There were a lot of diseases that you could get on the Oregon Trail, both the game and, like, the actual trail, and it would be fun if we kind of played a game tonight!

[audience cheers]

**Justin:** Of Oregon Trail.

**Sydnee:** Yeah.

**Justin:** Okay.

**Sydnee:** Yeah. And, uh, I will use our family as—[laughs quietly]

[audience laughs]

**Sydnee:** —um... patients.

**Justin:** So we're all—all of us, all the McElroys and Smirls, piling into a big Conestoga.

**Sydnee:** Yeah, although actually they wouldn't—they probably wouldn't have ridden in them. That would put a lot of burden on the animals. To drag them. You usually just walked along—I know! I learned this. You usually just walked along the side, unless you were, like—

**Justin:** I'd ride.

**Sydnee:** —super little, or sick—

[audience laughs]

**Sydnee:** No, you usually couldn't—

**Justin:** They're like, um—

**Sydnee:** —you didn't get to ri—I just lear—I learned this! You didn't get to ride in it.

**Justin:** Yeah, but they're, like, *my* oxen, sooo...

[audience laughs]

**Justin:** I think *I'll* ride, 'cause—

**Sydnee:** But they—they have to get you all the way—

**Justin:** Eh, I bought 'em.

**Sydnee:** All the way—do you know—do you know where the Oregon Trail actually, like—like, the span of it?

**Justin:** Well, one end's in Oregon.

**Sydnee:** [laughs] That's good.

[audience laughs]

**Sydnee:** That's good. Actually, the end in Oregon is, like, here. It's the Willamette Valley. That was—that's where we are!

[audience cheers]

**Sydnee:** Right? That's where Portland is. I looked it up on a map. And it started all the way at the Missouri River, so it was, like, 2,170 miles.

**Justin:** Was it like that, or was it exactly that?

**Sydnee:** It was exactly that. I looked that up. And it was very popular, from the year 1846 to 1869, something around 400,000 people—

**Justin:** Nice. Thank you. Good.

[audience laughs]

**Sydnee:** This is your fault. This is your fault.

**Justin:** Good work. 1869 doesn't actually count, defo different number, but I appreciate the spirit.

[audience laughs]

**Sydnee:** And that's—that's when the Transcontinental Railroad was finished and people were like, "Um... *that* might... be better... than this wagon thing." Because so many people got sick and died on the journey. Like, 16,000 I think is the estimated—

**Justin:** So what can I do to impact this?

**Sydnee:** Okay. Well, what do you wanna be? Like, where's your role on the wagon train?

**Justin:** I should be the doctor.

[audience laughs]

**Justin:** If our family's on there, I should be the doctor.

**Sydnee:** Do you feel... qualified?

[audience laughs]

**Sydnee:** For that?

**Justin:** I have listened to at least two thirds of a medical history podcast.

**Sydnee:** [laughs]

[audience laughs]

**Justin:** Uh, for 200 and... some episodes, at this point, so I feel roughly... equally equipped to a pioneer doctor.

[audience laughs]

**Justin:** I feel like if you were the doctor, it would be unrealistic, 'cause you would know anachronistic things.

**Sydnee:** That—you know? There's actually some logic to that.

**Justin:** Thank you.

**Sydnee:** You are probably qualified [through laughter] to be a doctor in 1850. That's actually—

[audience laughs]

**Sydnee:** —that's probably true. [laughs]

[audience cheers and applauds]

**Justin:** Thank you. A *pioneer* doctor.

**Sydnee:** Mm-hmm.

**Justin:** They call me.

**Sydnee:** So—

**Justin:** Frontier medicine. That's my thing.

**Sydnee:** Okay.

**Justin:** Hard learned.

**Sydnee:** [laughs] Okay, doctor.

**Justin:** Wisdom of the hills.

[audience laughs]

**Sydnee:** Alright, Dr. McElroy.

**Justin:** I need you to turn your—

**Sydnee:** The other Dr. McElroy.

**Justin:** —um—please, call me Dr. McElroy.

[audience laughs]

**Justin:** Um, can you turn—I need you to turn your laptop, 'cause I don't want pryin' eyes.

**Sydnee:** Oh.

**Justin:** Yeah. The temptation's too great.

**Sydnee:** You don't want—oh, that's true! You can't know [through laughter] what I'm going to kill off our family with.

**Justin:** I don't wanna—there's people who have a vantage point that they're like, "Oh, bullcrap. Look at it. He can see her screen." So I don't wanna get—when I get all of these right, I don't want to be accused of... malfeasance.

**Sydnee:** Well, okay. Before I start—before I start with our ailing family, what have we brought on this wagon train?

**Justin:** Medicine.

**Sydnee:** Yeah.

[audience laughs]

**Sydnee:** Do you wanna try any—just, any medicine—

**Justin:** Uh...

**Sydnee:** —that might have existed, and maybe—

**Justin:** Cocaine?

[audience laughs]

**Sydnee:** That's actually fair. [laughs]

[audience laughs]

**Sydnee:** Yeah. They may—probably not, but they might've. They might've had—I mean, maybe. Maybe somebody had cocaine.

**Justin:** Uh, Quigon?

[audience laughs]

**Justin:** Quinine—quinine.

**Sydnee:** Quinine, yeah.

**Justin:** Quinine. Um... Neosporin.

**Sydnee:** [snorts] No. Alright.



**Justin:** Uh, Nyquil?

**Sydnee:** No. Any—

**Justin:** Ibuprofen.

**Sydnee:** —although NyQuil is a good example of, like, the—the genre of medicine. As in, like, it doesn't really do anything other than maybe makes you feel better about being sick. [laughs] And then you get better.

**Justin:** Band Aids.

**Sydnee:** Okay. Band—bandages. Yeah.

**Justin:** Bandages, okay, you're right. I forgot—copyright, trademark. We don't wanna get into that.

[audience laughs]

**Justin:** Um...

**Sydnee:** [laughs]

**Justin:** Sticks?

[audience laughs]

**Justin:** No, wait—

**Sydnee:** Well—

**Justin:** —I'll find sticks there. I'm not gonna burn down these—these fu—friggin' prima donna oxen, who apparently can't be bothered to carry their owner's weight. I'm not gonna make 'em carry a bunch of super heavy sticks, either.

**Sydnee:** So... okay. This isn't terrible, this list. Just to give you an idea—

**Justin:** Water.

**Sydnee:** —[laughs] of what you might actually have brought—actually, quinine is not a bad answer. We had figured out that quinine worked for malaria, [through laughter] and so we were using it for every fever that happened. [pauses] That won't work. But, they did do that. That was a popular medicine you would have. You would probably have some laudanum, which is opium.

[scattered cheers]

**Sydnee:** Because—you're sick, we don't know how to fix you. Here's some opium. So you would probably have some of that. Whiskey was the cure-all to end all cure-alls.

[audience cheers]

**Sydnee:** And it was usually, like, the number one thing you had in a medicine chest. You had your whiskey. So...

**Justin:** Got that, yeah. I was planning on bringing that—

**Sydnee:** [simultaneously] I'm surprised you missed that!

**Justin:** No, I didn't miss it! I just didn't know I had to count it among the medical supplies!

[audience laughs]

**Justin:** I definitely *brought* it.

**Sydnee:** Uh, you probably had some vinegar, because vinegar is also a—it's been a popular cure-all, so you would've been using that for lots of different stuff. Uh, cholera it was a popular treatment for. It doesn't work, but it was a popular treatment for that. Um, maybe some peppermint, that was good for stomach stuff. And then you forgot surgical instruments.

**Justin:** I did say bandages.

[audience laughs]

**Justin:** I was gonna craft the sticks into—

**Sydnee:** You count—wait. Bandages as surgical instruments?

**Justin:** After you're done... you wrap up in bandages. After you're done with surgery.

**Sydnee:** Uh-huh. So some—any guess?

**Justin:** Also, a needle—

**Sydnee:** Surgical instruments? Any guess?

**Justin:** Needle driver. [pauses] And a needle. And thread. And...

**Sydnee:** [through laughter] Okay?

**Justin:** For sutures.

**Sydnee:** That—hey, sure!

**Justin:** And also forceps. And that's it.

[audience laughs]

**Sydnee:** Okay. Well, probably not the forceps. But, like, a needle and thread, that was good!

**Justin:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** That was good.

**Justin:** Thanks.

**Sydnee:** Uh, a saw. A saw was essential.

**Justin:** Oh, no! This is gonna get bad before it gets good, huh?

**Sydnee:** It's gonna get bad.

**Justin:** Dag!

**Sydnee:** And you need a knife.

**Justin:** I'm gonna saw my Dad's leg off! Dag!

**Sydnee:** No scalpels. Butcher knife.

**Justin:** Knife.

**Sydnee:** And then usually, like, an awl? Like, a shoemaker's awl?

**Justin:** Augh!

**Sydnee:** Very popular surgical tool of the time for, like...

[audience laughs]

**Sydnee:** ... prying—prying various things?

**Justin:** Yep.

**Sydnee:** I don't know. But that was pretty good!

**Justin:** Thanks!

**Sydnee:** Alright. So, let's start with our family. Who gets sick first? Well—

**Justin:** Griff... in. It's Griffin.

[audience laughs]

**Sydnee:** Griffin has arrived at our campsite. We've bedded down for the night.

**Justin:** [laughs]

**Sydnee:** And Griffin shows up, and he raps on your tent or whatever. We probably don't have a tent.

**Justin:** I went, "Hu—hello?"

**Sydnee:** He's like, "Hey. Justin."

**Justin:** "Hello?"

[pauses]

**Sydnee:** Griffin has diarrhea.

[audience laughs and cheers]

**Justin:** "Okay—okay, so why are you waking me up?"

**Sydnee:** [laughs]

[audience laughs]

**Sydnee:** I—I know—I—I understand. I know what you're thinking. "Griffin always has diarrhea."

**Justin:** Right.

**Sydnee:** But—

[audience laughs]

**Sydnee:** [laughs] But this time, it's... *bad*.

**Justin:** It's bad. Okay? Wh—

**Sydnee:** Like, it won't stop...

**Justin:** Won't stop.

**Sydnee:** And it—it looks like... water? With just, like, some rice floating in it?

[audience groans]

**Justin:** Ahhh.

**Sydnee:** It's bad.

**Justin:** Okay. So—

**Sydnee:** And his tummy hurts. [laughs]

**Justin:** His tummy hurts. How are his eyes?

**Sydnee:** [laughs]

[audience laughs]

**Sydnee:** [through laughter] I mean—I mean, sad! Very sad!

**Justin:** Sad.

[audience laughs]

**Justin:** Tears. Lotta tears. Okay. Griffin has... cholera.

**Sydnee:** Hey, very good!

[audience cheers]

**Justin:** Thank you.

**Sydnee:** Griffin has cholera! It felt like the—

**Justin:** And now—

**Sydnee:** —the right place to start. It was the most feared diseases of the Oregon Trail.

**Justin:** It—here's the thing, though. Before I would treat for cholera, I would have to monitor Griffin for at *least* two days, to make sure if this was just 3 o' clock diarrhea, or cholera diarrhea.

**Sydnee:** So—so your decision is to just monitor him for 48 hours? Is that your final answer?

**Justin:** No, it's not my final answer!

**Sydnee:** Are you sure?

**Justin:** Yes, I'm gonna—here's what I'm gonna tell him to do.

**Sydnee:** Okay.

**Justin:** I'm gonna say, "Listen. We don't have cholera figured out yet."

[audience laughs]

**Sydnee:** That's true, we don't. We don't.

**Justin:** "But, I'm gonna give you some... I want you to drink a lot of water, to keep you hydrated."

**Sydnee:** Okay. [laughs]

**Justin:** "And I want you to take some... [extended pause]

[audience laughs]

**Sydnee:** Some what?

**Justin:** "Quinine."

**Sydnee:** [laughs] Okay. Well, you may have told him that—

**Justin:** "To the shelf... with the other medicines."

[audience laughs]

**Justin:** "Set it down, 'cause you don't wanna—[laughs] ingest it!" No, I would—I would—you know what? I'm trying to be responsible as a frontier doctor. I don't wanna give us all a bad name. I'm just gonna tell him to drink a lot of water and hope for the best. Final answer!

**Sydnee:** That's—okay. That's actually not terrible advice, and there's a chance Griffin survives this one. Um—

**Justin:** [holding back laughter] Somebody roll a d20.

**Sydnee:** [laughs]

[audience laughs]

**Justin:** Sorry—sorry, I misspoke. A D-tummy.

[scattered laughter, one more loud than the rest]

**Sydnee:** [laughs] So, depending on where—

**Justin:** Thank you, person with the loud laugh. I appreciate you.

[audience laughs]

**Justin:** Very good! Better than I deserved! Appreciate you very much!

[audience laughs]

**Sydnee:** Depending on where he gets his water, because then we could be gettin' in to some other stuff, but depending on how clean this water he's ingesting—he may make it if he drinks enough, because that was the big problem with cholera, is you got dehydrated and you died. If you could maintain hydration... he might make it. You may actually have saved Griffin.

**Justin:** It's up to you, DM!

**Sydnee:** Well... um... yeah, Griffin is okay for the moment.

**Justin:** [yells] Yeah!!

[audience cheers]

**Sydnee:** Just a—

**Justin:** On fire!

**Sydnee:** —just—just so you know, some other things—opium was a really popular treatment for cholera, and it—opiates cause constipation, so actually... so actually, it didn't fix it, but you may have thought it was working! So that—that is something you could've tried. Um, turpentine enemas, also. We would've accepted turpentine enemas.

[audience groans]

**Sydnee:** Those don't work, but they were popular!



**Justin:** Uh, alright, so Griffin's saved.

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[theme music plays]

**Justin:** Hi, everybody! It's your frontier buddy, Justin McElroy, here with a few sponsored messages for you. I hope you're enjoying the episode. I know I had a lot of fun makin' it.

Uh, before we get into this, I just wanna give one last reminder, 'cause this is our last episode comin' out before the launch of our book on October 9<sup>th</sup>, this Tuesday!

This coming Tuesday, *Sawbones the Book—The Sawbones Book* is actually what it is called—either way, it is—if you're a fan of our show, you are going to really like this book, and we're really, really proud of it, and we need your support.

The first week of a book launch is huge in determining whether or not you get to make another one! So please, if you—if you wouldn't mind, if you're financially able to, please go pick up a copy of the book, and tell people about it on social media, or wherever you talk to people.

It would really just mean the world to us, and if you've been a fan of ours this far, we appreciate it. It's the only reason we're makin' this book, and we really hope you enjoy it. We're really proud of it. We're proud of the words we've written in it, the illustrations that Sydnee's sister Teylor did are beautiful, and, uh, we think it's really gonna be awesome, so if you go to [bit.ly/thesawbonesbook](http://bit.ly/thesawbonesbook), you can find it online, or ask for it in a bookstore, if you wanna go that route, but please, if you could pick up the book, it would just—it would just mean the world to us.

But anyway, on to our sponsored messages!

First up is ZipRecruiter. You know, hiring the old fashioned way used to be a real pain in the patoot, folks. As somebody who's been in the position of hiring and—not really firing. I don't think I've ever fired anybody. But I've hired people before. Goin' through a stack of positions, trying to find the proverbial human needle in a human haystack of humans—eugh. This got grisly—uh, it is not fun!

Luckily, there is ZipRecruiter! It's the smarter way to hire. Ziprecruiter.com/sawbones. They've got this matching technology that finds the right people for you, a hiring person, and it invites the people to apply.

It says, "Hey you, I'm gonna—I'm a needle... collector. And I heard about a—somebody's lookin' for haystack—through this haystack, for you. I'mma take you out to them. I know the way... out of here."

The metaphor got... muddled. Uh, it's no wonder that ZipRecruiter is rated number one by employers in the US. That's from hiring sites on Trustpilot with over 1000 reviews. Right now, our listeners can try ZipRecruiter for free at ziprecruiter.com/sawbones. That ziprecruiter.com/sawbones.

Also, want to have a discussion with you—that sounded more serious than this is. We're gonna talk about Amazon Prime. We're supported in part by Amazon Prime Video channels. It is a benefit of Amazon Prime. Members can access great entertainment instantly. You make a TV lineup that you love from a hundred plus premium and specialty channels like Showtime, Stars, HBO, CBS All Access, and more. And you can start a seven day free trial of any of the channels you haven't tried yet.

You only pay for the channels you want with Prime video channels, and you can start your free trials of over a hundred channels by visiting tryprimechannels.com/sawbones. We love Amazon Prime Video in our house. Sydnee's been watching all of *House* [laughs] on it. Uh, they have a lot of great—this is weird, but they have a lot of great old compilations of TV advertisements? If you are the special sort of person like myself that enjoys that sort of thing—did I mention the Tick?! Man, I love the Tick.

Anyway, go to tryprimechannels.com/sawbones, and give it a shot right now! And, uh... that's gonna do it for all our ads this week, so without any further ado, let us return to the... show.

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**Sydnee:** Uh, okay. Now, we just went back to sleep, and now your Dad's here.

**Justin:** "Oh God, Dad, go to sleep. Yes, I heard about Griffin's diarrhea! He's go—he lives, trust me."

**Sydnee:** No, but he's worried 'cause he also has diarrhea.

**Justin:** "Aw, God!"

**Sydnee:** But—and he's gonna tell you this whether you wanna know it or not—his is bloody.

**Justin:** "Bloody. Bloody diarrhea. Okay. [sighs] Mac, I told you to stop eatin' so much sugar. You have diabetes."

**Sydnee:** [laughs]

[audience laughs]

**Sydnee:** It's not the diabetes.

**Justin:** "God Almighty." Uh, does he have any other symptoms that seem out of place for him?

**Sydnee:** I mean, his tummy's really crampy.

**Justin:** "Oh, your tummy's cramping—"

**Sydnee:** "[groaning] Yeah..."

**Justin:** "—and you're pooping blood... [pauses] You..." well, we can rule out cholera.

**Sydnee:** Mm-hmm. [snorts] We already had that one.

**Justin:** [simultaneously] From a narrative perspective.

[audience laughs]

**Sydnee:** No.

**Justin:** Um... you know what? I'm not 100% certain what this is, but I'm gonna say *diphtheria*!

[pauses]

**Sydnee:** No...

**Justin:** Is one of the wronger answers!

[audience laughs]

**Sydnee:** No. It starts with the same letter. [laughs]

**Justin:** D-d-d... diarrhea? We already—

[audience laughs]

**Sydnee:** Well—

**Justin:** Dystopia? For *me*.

D—uhhh, ya—dis... tee—deya—

**Sydnee:** Everybody knows it!

**Justin:** Hold on one second, I'm gonna say "One, two, three," and then you give me a hint, but whisper it, okay? Shh. One, two, three.

**Audience:** Dysentery!

**Justin:** Dysentery, Syd. Is it dysentery?

[audience laughs]

**Sydnee:** Your Dad's got dysentery.

**Justin:** "Aw. Luckily, I always travel with a bunch of helpful ghosts, Dad."

[audience laughs]

**Justin:** "So know... that you have *dysentery*."

**Sydnee:** What are you gonna tell him to do?

**Justin:** "Drink... lots of water."

**Sydnee:** [laughs]

[audience laughs]

**Justin:** "That's huge."

**Sydnee:** Here's the problem—

**Justin:** "I want you to take some opium, because it's gonna constipate you—"

**Sydnee:** Okay, okay. But the problem is, he's drinkin' from this river and right upstream, there are just a bunch of animals poopin' in the river. And, um... he keeps drinking from this river.

**Justin:** "[loudly] Well, Mac, we can rule out the animals."

**Sydnee:** [simultaneously] So do you—do you want him to—

**Justin:** "That's nature."

[audience laughs]

**Justin:** "So we know it's not *them* makin' you sick. Have you—have you cursed anybody lately, my friend? Or done—done somebody wrong on a business deal? Anything... like that? Uh, okay. So we're gonna—Mac, we're gonna stick with water and opium."

**Sydnee:** Yeah.

**Justin:** "To constipate you."

**Sydnee:** Well—

**Justin:** "And just drink a lot of water!"

**Sydnee:** So—so the good news is, the water is helpful, and dysentery—he probably would be okay, so—so your Dad's gonna pull through.

**Justin:** Why is—

**Sydnee:** *But—*

**Justin:** Hold on, wait.

**Sydnee:** But—

**Justin:** Yeah?

**Sydnee:** —he's got a *wicked* laudanum monkey on his back now.

**Justin:** Okay. I did give him an opium addiction.

**Sydnee:** Your Dad is *so* hooked on laudanum now.

**Justin:** My Dad's got an opium addiction now. Sydnee—

**Sydnee:** That's on you, man.

[audience laughs]

**Justin:** Alright. It was a little irresponsible to give my Dad so much opium.

**Sydnee:** You could've said to soak his feet in Epsom salts. Which was a popular remedy—[quietly] that doesn't work.

**Justin:** I didn't know we had that! You didn't list that amongst our, uh, resources.

**Sydnee:** [laughs]

**Justin:** Okay.

**Sydnee:** Okay. Uh—

**Justin:** Do we have a holocaust cloak or a...

**Sydnee:** [laughs]

**Justin:** ... uh, a wheelbarrow you haven't mentioned to me?

**Sydnee:** Now, just a quick update. I will say, Griffin has been drinking from this same river, so... things aren't lookin' good.

**Justin:** That's—that's the next doctor's problem!

[audience laughs]

**Sydnee:** Alright. Travis is sick.

[pauses]

**Justin:** Uh...Ay...Ugh.

**Sydnee:** Oh, no...

**Justin:** Okay, why?

**Sydnee:** Oh... man, he... he's tired, and he's got a fever, and his throat is so sore.

**Justin:** Probably talked too much.

**Sydnee:** [laughs]

[audience laughs]

**Sydnee:** He's got a fever! You're his big brother!

**Justin:** Alright, lemme talk to him. "Have you been talk—have you been talkin' too much?"

[pauses]

**Sydnee:** "[hoarsely] No."

**Justin:** That's—that's subjective.

**Sydnee:** "[hoarsely] I'm really sick."

**Justin:** "Yeah, okay. You're really sick, you got a fever, your throat is scratchy... you've got... any other symptoms?"

**Sydnee:** Well... he's noticed that he's starting to have some trouble breathing? He feels like there's something, like, stuck back here, like a bunch of really thick mucus?

**Justin:** Got asthma. No, wait! He's got allergies!

**Sydnee:** No.

**Justin:** Yes!

**Sydnee:** No.

[audience laughs]

**Justin:** Yes! Allergies! Don't try to throw me off the track!

**Sydnee:** No.

**Justin:** Okay.

**Sydnee:** But you—you almost guessed this earlier. I mean, you did guess it—

**Justin:** Diphtheria.

**Sydnee:** Yes, he's got diphtheria.

**Justin:** Yes!

**Sydnee:** So, Travis has diphtheria. You don't ever see this anymore. You know why?

**Justin:** Why?

**Sydnee:** Vaccines.

[extended cheering]

**Justin:** Um...

[cheering continues]



**Justin:** Here's what I'm gonna do for your diphtheria.

**Sydnee:** Yeah. So he's got—by the way, he's got a pseudo-membrane. It's like a big, thick coating of mucus—

**Justin:** I don't know anything about diphtheria. I thought it was a butt thing. Clearly—

**Sydnee:** [laughs]

[audience laughs]

**Justin:** —but I'll now—I'll now treat this disease that two minutes ago I thought was bloody diarrhea!

**Sydnee:** What are you gonna do for his throat?

**Justin:** [sing-song] Cough drops.

**Sydnee:** We don't have those.

**Justin:** We have Fisherman's Friend, probably!

**Sydnee:** Mm-mm.

**Justin:** Water. [laughs] But *not* the animal dookie water!

**Sydnee:** [laughs]

**Justin:** I've been reading some literature, everybody!

[audience laughs]

**Justin:** And stink river is off limits!

**Sydnee:** Now—

[audience laughs]

**Sydnee:** —do you have any other ideas? He's really having trouble breathing now, man! You've gotta do something!

**Justin:** Uhhh—okay. Somebody give me a ballpoint pen.

[audience laughs]

**Sydnee:** Are—are you gonna George Clooney this?

**Justin:** I'm gonna George Clooney it. I'll take out the ink part, obvs. Jam it into his throat.

**Sydnee:** Okay. For the moment, you've saved his life.

**Justin:** [loudly] What?!

[audience cheers]

**Sydnee:** For the moment. We're just gonna let go all the infections that are gonna happen as a result of this, but at the moment, you've probably—you've—

**Justin:** I'm gonna tape—then I'll tape it up. Tape it in.

**Sydnee:** A—a tracheotomy is actually something they used to do for diphtheria, 'cause they didn't know how else to treat it. We didn't have antibiotics. They didn't know how to treat it, and so—

**Justin:** Whoa, hello!

**Sydnee:** —just help people breathe.

**Justin:** Clue? I think I just got a pro tip. I'll give him some antibiotics.

**Sydnee:** Well, we don't have those, but...

**Justin:** Okay. Dadgummit. [snorts] Alright.

**Sydnee:** You have also—and I'm glad you didn't choose this, 'cause it would not have been a good outcome. You could've also said, "I want to take a piece of bacon sprinkled with black pepper and wrap it around his throat," which was a very common treatment.

**Justin:** [through laughter] I had that on a Blue Star donut upstairs!

[audience laughs]

**Sydnee:** It was a big ol' piece of bacon. That wouldn't work. Man, you're doin' good! Everybody's living, so far! I mean, Griffin is definitely still pooping, but—

**Justin:** But he's always pooping! I've got him back to his normal standard of life!

[audience laughs]

**Sydnee:** Now Teresa is sick.

**Justin:** Aw, man!

**Sydnee:** I know.

**Justin:** I like *her*!

[audience laughs]

**Justin:** [through laughter] It's all been so easy up to this point!

[audience laughs]

**Sydnee:** And, like everybody else, she's havin' some tummy troubles, but she's also got a rash. She's also got a headache. She's got a high fever. And, just to throw this in there, we—we just made it through the Rocky Mountains.

**Justin:** Okay. She's got Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever.

[scattered laughs]

**Sydnee:** Maybe.

**Justin:** Come on!

**Sydnee:** [laughs]

**Justin:** Um...

**Sydnee:** So it was common on the Oregon Trail to be diagnosed with Mountain Fever. That's what it was called, Mountain Fever, and it basically meant you were in the mountains, and then you got a fever..

[audience laughs]

**Sydnee:** ... mountain fever. It may have been, in some cases, Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever.

**Justin:** Okay. Griffin had that, for real.

**Sydnee:** Yeah!

**Justin:** You remember?

**Sydnee:** I know. That's why I didn't give it to Griffin.

**Justin:** Yeah. It would've been too real.

**Sydnee:** Too real.

**Justin:** He would've had some flashbacks.

**Sydnee:** I didn't want—yeah. That seemed mean. It also might've been something called Colorado Tick Fever. It could've been typhoid. It could've been Scarlet Fever. It could've been all kinds of different things. Nobody knew. It was just a fever. You've been in the mountains and you have a fever. What do you do for every fever?

[pauses]

**Justin:** Opium.

[audience laughs]

**Sydnee:** Maybe! But quinine.

**Justin:** Quinine, okay.

**Sydnee:** It doesn't work. But that's what they probably would have done.

**Justin:** Okay, I gave Teresa quinine.

**Sydnee:** But let's say that she, uh, had one of the less egregious fevers, and Teresa's okay.

**Justin:** Oh, alright! Yay!

[audience cheers]

**Justin:** I'm a great doctor!

**Sydnee:** Now, my Mom—

**Justin:** Oh, God.

**Sydnee:** —has also shown up with a rash.

**Justin:** Oh, no. Oh, man, I—okay. Okay.

**Sydnee:** She's got these big, flat spots all over. They're, like, kind of pinkish, rose colored. It's a pretty—it's a pretty bad rash. Her stomach hurts. She doesn't really wanna eat anything.

[pauses]

**Justin:** Okay, so she doesn't want to eat anything and she's got a rash? It is... Scarlet Fever.

**Sydnee:** No.

**Justin:** [quietly] God.

**Sydnee:** What's my Mom's first name?

**Justin:** Oh, she's got typhoid!

**Sydnee:** Yeah, I gave my Mom typhoid!

**Justin:** Okay. Oh, 'cause Typhoid Mary, I get it!

**Sydnee:** Yeah!

**Justin:** Okay, good! So she has typhoid.

**Sydnee:** Yeah.

**Justin:** Now, this one I'm gonna treat properly, because I don't want your Mom to be mad at me.

**Sydnee:** Mm-hmm.

**Justin:** So, I'm gonna give her—

**Sydnee:** That's fair.

**Justin:** —uhhh... rock candy. And that's just—I give that to everybody to kind of buoy their spirits. And—

**Sydnee:** Give her some whiskey. [laughs]

**Justin:** —give her some whiskey and water. Not together. But also together, but... a lot of water. *Not from stink river*. And, um... I'll give her some... ibuprofen.

**Sydnee:** We don't have that.

**Justin:** I'll give her some quinine.

**Sydnee:** Yeah! You probably would've. You may have also put some leeches on her. I hope you didn't.

**Justin:** Let's say I did.

[audience laughs]

**Sydnee:** [through laughter] Are—are you t—

**Justin:** It's been so easy up to this point.

**Sydnee:** —are you trying ensure that my mother succumbs to typhoid fever before this episode is over?

**Justin:** No, I want your—no, I want your Mom to live. So I give her quinine and water.

**Sydnee:** Yeah. And—

**Justin:** And the rock candy, which may or may not help. I don't know.

**Sydnee:** —let's just say she got better, but now she's cooking dinner for all of us.

**Justin:** Aw, no.

**Sydnee:** Oh, no.

**Justin:** Oh, no!

**Sydnee:** Aw, man!

**Justin:** That's terrible news!

**Sydnee:** Aw, man. It's the Oregon Trail. You knew it was coming. [laughs]

**Justin:** [laughs]

**Sydnee:** Um, in the meantime, my little sister Rileigh... her—only 18 years old, and she shows up and she's got a fever, and she's got this rash. It's a bunch of red dots. It started up at the top. It looks like a bucket of paint dumped over her head, slowly spread down. She's got a cough. She's got coryza, which means, like, runny nose and stuff.

**Justin:** Is it measles?

**Sydnee:** You got it!

**Justin:** Yes!

[audience cheers]

**Justin:** Alright. How's her water intake?

**Sydnee:** [laughs]

[audience laughs]

**Justin:** Uh, no. I'm gonna give her...

**Sydnee:** Mm-hmm?

[pauses]

**Justin:** Um... uh—um...

**Sydnee:** Let me give you a clue. It was very—it was very important at the time not to let it go back in. that was the thought, that measles was coming out, and that's what the rash was, and if you didn't do certain things, it would go in.

**Justin:** Nail clippers. Or scissors. To clip the—them off.

**Sydnee:** No—oh no—oh no!

**Justin:** Um—

**Sydnee:** So a variety of ways to make sure that it doesn't go in.

**Justin:** A suction cup? A little one? Tiny plunger?

**Sydnee:** No. I mean, like, fake medicine stuff.

**Justin:** Ech... a Biore Pore Perfect strip?

[audience laughs]

**Sydnee:** So you're not gonna give her any tea made with sheep droppings?

**Justin:** No! I don't know what you're talkin' about!

**Sydnee:** [holding back laughter] That's what she needs! It's 1850! That's what you would've given her!

**Justin:** Listen, I'm not gonna save 'em all, okay? I knew she had measles, and then I hung my head sadly.

[audience laughs]



**Justin:** "[holding back laughter] I'm afraid it's measles. There's nothing more I can do. I'm so sorry."

**Sydnee:** The—the good news is, she's probably gonna be okay.

**Justin:** *Man*, I'm good at this!

[audience laughs]

**Sydnee:** Not because you did anything. You didn't do anything.

**Justin:** Just, like... measles aren't a big deal?

**Sydnee:** No, measles are a huge deal, but most people aren't gonna die.

**Justin:** Statistically speaking, she's fine. Okay.

**Sydnee:** But they are a big deal, which is why—again, not to sound like a broken record, but it's really important to get your vaccines! 'Cause they and don't get measles!

[audience cheers]

**Sydnee:** [holding back laughter] Like my sister.

Uh, speaking of my sisters, my other sister Teylor.

**Justin:** Okay. What she got?

**Sydnee:** Um, she looks really cool about it. She's sick, but she looks super cool. 'Cause she's pretty pale, and she's got this great cough, [quietly] that's bloody sometimes—

**Justin:** She's got tuberculosis!

[scattered cheers]

**Sydnee:** But she's gotten really good at poker as a result. [laughs]

**Justin:** Uh, I am—I know this one already. I'm gonna give her water and laudanum!

**Sydnee:** Probably, yeah. Are you gonna tell her—just keep on... goin' West!

**Justin:** [simultaneously] Goin' West. We're already—

**Sydnee:** Just keep on truckin'!

**Justin:** You are already doing the thing that is most advantageous to you, that is get to an arid climb.

**Sydnee:** Mm-hmm.

**Justin:** So do that, and laudanum. Lots of it. [holding back laughter] As much as you can stand.

**Sydnee:** [laughs]

[audience laughs]

**Justin:** There are *no risks* that we have found!

[audience laughs]

**Sydnee:** One, um—

**Justin:** Don't ask my Dad! He's a—he's high.

[audience laughs]

**Justin:** So you can't trust him, and his opinions on laudanum.

**Sydnee:** One popular treatment you may have recommended is smoke some cigarettes, they're really good for tuberculosis.

**Justin:** Win some, lose some. Who's next?

**Sydnee:** Rachel's sick! Her gums are bleeding! She's got a rash! She's so tired!

[pauses]

**Justin:** Wanna phone a friend? If you know the answer, please shout it?

**Audience:** Scurvy?

**Sydnee:** That's right, she's got scurvy!

**Justin:** Scurvy! Scurvy! I'm gonna give her.. some water.. I know what I would actually give her. It's this time and period—you know what? They might've known this. Lemons. And lots of 'em.

**Sydnee:** You may have heard this by now, so yeah. I'm gonna let you—

**Justin:** Listen, I've heard a rumor.

**Sydnee:** —I'm gonna let you actually fix Rachel. Everybody else maybe got better on their own, but you actually fixed Rachel.

**Justin:** Rachel, listen. I heard a rumor in a newspaper.. and I know this is gonna sound silly... but I want you to eat a lime.

[audience laughs]

**Justin:** And it will fix your disease. It doesn't sound any different than any of the other things we've said, right? Just eat this whole lime.

**Sydnee:** Now, if you didn't have any citrus fruits—which, I'm gonna be honest, even if you knew this you probably don't—you may have recommended drinking vinegar, because it's kind of tangy? Like—[holding back laughter] like citrus? And so there was a lot—there were a lot of overlaps. Like, well, vinegar—it seems similar.

**Justin:** I'm so tragically sorry... but we have no limes.

**Sydnee:** Alright. We—we're almost through.

**Justin:** What happened to Rachel?

**Sydnee:** Oh, she—uh... oh. Didn't we have a lemon? Let's say we had a lemon.

**Justin:** You said we didn't have any.

**Sydnee:** I said you may—[quietly] you might not have.

**Justin:** Okay. Yes, fine, we had a lemon.

**Sydnee:** Okay.

**Justin:** You're the DM! You're kind of softhearted to do this game.

**Sydnee:** I am! I don't wanna kill off our fa—it doesn't matter. Mom's still cookin' dinner for us, and she's got typhoid, so we all—

**Justin:** Yeah, that's—that's—

**Sydnee:** —we all go in the end.

**Justin:** —kind of a fun nihilistic streak, go ahead, Syd!

**Sydnee:** Uh-huh. Um, my Dad didn't want the bison to go to waste—

**Justin:** Aw.

**Sydnee:** —that we—that we were supposed to have finished off two weeks ago. It's been sittin' out. It's the summer. He's got the summer complaint.

**Justin:** [laughs loudly]

**Sydnee:** That's what it was called, folks! The summer complaint.

**Justin:** What was—what was it called?

**Sydnee:** Food poisoning.

**Justin:** Food poisoning.

**Sydnee:** Yeah.

**Justin:** That was called the summer complaint? I thought you were talking about the symptoms, sorry.

**Sydnee:** No, [through laughter] it's called the—it—because, like, it would sit out, like, your meat, and get hot, and...

**Justin:** I would give him a lot of water.

**Sydnee:** Mm-hmm.

**Justin:** And hang in there, man. [pauses] I'm all out of rock candy, or I'd treat you to some of that.

**Sydnee:** He's another one—he's gonna be okay. Um, other than please don't eat all that old bison anymore.

**Justin:** [laughs] But I didn't figure it out.

**Sydnee:** Uh... Paul's been struck by lightning!

**Justin:** Oh no! What—Paul—uh, what do I—what do I do for Paul?

**Sydnee:** I mean, there's nothing you can do... You can do nothing.

[audience laughs]

**Justin:** He was—he shouldn't have been carrying that mic stand.

**Sydnee:** [laughs]

[audience laughs]

**Justin:** In that thunderstorm. And now Paul is tragically—so I can't save Paul?

**Sydnee:** [holding back laughter] No, you can't save Paul.

**Justin:** Paul died. Paul did die. We're all gonna bury Paul.

**Sydnee:** [through laughter] He got struck by lightning! What do you want?

**Justin:** Listen, everybody. If we could just take one moment of silence for Paul.

**Sydnee:** It was a—[laughs quietly]

**Justin:** It's a great time to visit Paulandstorm.com.

**Sydnee:** [laughs]

**Justin:** And listen to some of his music. [choked up] That's what he would've wanted! I'm sure it's on iTunes! I think it's what he would've wanted!

**Sydnee:** Now, Justin—

**Justin:** I miss Paul.

**Sydnee:** —while you were out wandering the prairie, thinking about how much you miss your friend Paul, you have tragically been bitten by a snake.

**Justin:** [high pitched] What?! I'm not—the doctor can't doctor himself!

[audience laughs]

**Sydnee:** Uhhh... you're gonna have to. What are you gonna do? You just got bitten, hurry! What are you gonna do?

**Justin:** This is time when I'm gonna call on all my friends that I've saved throughout the entire game.

**Sydnee:** [laughs]

**Justin:** [holding back laughter] And summon each of their crystals to have them—

**Sydnee:** The rest of us are slowly dying of typhoid right now, so quick, quick! What are you gonna do?!

**Justin:** I gotta save myself. I'll suck out the poison!

[scattered laughs]

**Justin:** [holding back laughter] And swallow it.

[audience laughs]

**Sydnee:** It's not working. It's not working. It's spreading. The leg's gotta go.

**Justin:** "Aw, dunk! Alright. Well... I know what I have to do." And then I died.

**Sydnee:** [laughs]

[audience laughs]

**Justin:** Wow. Charming. Hey, thank you all so much for joining us!

[audience cheers]

**Justin:** Um, thank you to this—the—uh, Paul and our whole family for dying, and—listen, we've got a book comin' out on October 9<sup>th</sup> called *The Sawbones Book*.

[audience cheers]

**Justin:** If you have not preordered it, I beg of you, please, [bit.ly/thesawbonesbook](http://bit.ly/thesawbonesbook). Please preorder it. It really would mean the world to us. Uh, thanks to The Taxpayers for the use of their song "Medicines" as the intro and outro of our program. And, uh... that's gonna do it for us, Syd, right? Hey?

**Sydnee:** Yeah. I think—yeah.

**Paul:** [speaking very close to the mic] Come in to the light with me.

**Sydnee:** [laughs]

**Justin:** Aw—

**Paul:** [speaking very close to the mic] Justin...

**Justin:** I'm coming, dead Paul! I'm coming!

[audience laughs]

**Paul:** [speaking very close to the mic] All are welcome...

**Justin:** [through laughter] Join us again next week for *Sawbones*, my name's Justin McElroy.

**Sydnee:** I'm Sydnee McElroy.

**Justin:** [through laughter] And, as always, don't drill a hole in your head. See ya!

[theme music plays]

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