

Sawbones 396: Twelve Days of Christmas

Published December 21st, 2021

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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: [singing] Hello everybody, and welcome to Sawbones! [speaking] My name is Justin McElroy. I'm the cohost.

Sydnee: You... You forgot the marital tour of misguided medicine.

Justin: [singing] It's a marital tour of misguided medicine!

Sydnee: And I'm Sydnee McElroy.

Justin: I'm introducing some... Gregorian chant vibes in this one.

Sydnee: Yeah, what's that all about?

Justin: Do you remember that time in the 90s when Gregorian chant was like, *a thing*, for a minute?

Sydnee: It was real—

Justin: And then—

Sydnee: It was really in.

Justin: God, y'all. Look into it. There was a bit where Gregorian chant had a moment.

Sydnee: Well, in the 90s we were just trying everything. For a little bit.

Justin: We were trying a little bit of everything.

Sydnee: We were like “Gregorian chants? Is this something?” Uh... Swing.

Justin: We got—

Sydnee: Remember swing came way back—

Justin: Swing?

Sydnee: —Came back in a big way for like five minutes in the 90s?

Justin: We invented a genre for every country that isn’t America. It was called World [wheeze] World music.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Justin: It was American music and World music.

Sydnee: Everything that’s not American. World.

Justin: Everything that’s not American. It doesn’t— Listen.

Sydnee: The 90s were a wild time.

Justin: It was a wild time.

Sydnee: And I know you think you understand it, ‘cause you’re all wearing the fashion of the 90s now.

Justin: Yes. It’s not the same.

Sydnee: But you had to live it.

Justin: Yeah, you had to live it.

Sydnee: [chuckles]

Justin: Um, wait til *Stranger Things* gets there. You’ll see. Um, this is Sawbones. We’re doing a very silly episode this week.

Sydnee: Yes. I feel like... we're all very stressed. The holidays are coming, which inherently has stress involved. You know, 'cause you wanna do all the stuff so that it's a good time for everybody. Um, but I think we're also stressed because the elephant in the room, the... Omicron-covered elephant in the room.

Justin: Yeah.

Sydnee: I don't know if elephants get Omicron.

Justin: Ugh.

Sydnee: That was weird. That was a weird way to word that.

Justin: That's a weird image. Yeah.

Sydnee: Um, and everybody's stressed because we don't know what it means, and that's— I felt like we should address why are we not doing an episode on that right now? Why are we doing something silly and fun and holiday themed. Because I think... you probably know all there is to know about it at the moment.

Justin: Yup.

Sydnee: Which is, it's still too early to know. It's very contagious. Hopefully, it is less severe than Delta.

Justin: I'll go on the record and say that it is.

Sydnee: There are factors that are pointing that way, but it is early.

Justin: Specifically, expert witness, Justin McElroy.

Sydnee: And that is— No. That is what all the scientists are saying is "Yes, of course we hope that, because... it's more contagious."

Justin: Just say— I'll say it. It's the end of COVID, baby.

Sydnee: No, no.

Justin: We're all gettin' out.

Sydnee: I am not saying that.

Justin: Get in the car.

Sydnee: Of course I hope that. Of course I hope that! I want to go places and see people!

Justin: We were so wrong about the beginning of this, I just wanna be right about this. I wanna call my shot and say that Omicron will be the end of COVID. Okay.

Sydnee: It would be nice to think that a milder, more contagious strain would out-compete Delta, and make this a less deadly disease.

Justin: Why are you putting it in a boring way?

Sydnee: That would be very nice. I hope that that happens. Well— Ideally, I hope that everybody gets vaccinated, 'cause if you get vaccinated—

Justin: That ain't happenin'! [chuckles] Ship's sailed! Nobody wants it!

Sydnee: Then even if you get COVID, you don't get severe illness or die. So.

Justin: I'm relying now on virus mutation to get us out of this, 'cause humanity cannot do this on its own.

Sydnee: [sighs] I mean... I don't know. Anyway, we don't know enough.

Justin: Omicron, baby. That's the way.

Sydnee: I hope that's the direction it's going, um.

Justin: It's going to fix everything.

Sydnee: I would, even if you are vaccinated and boosted— Well, first of all, if you're not, go do that. And secondly, if you are, I would be a little more, um, cautious about, if you have symptoms of something, don't assume it's not COVID.

Justin: Yeah. And don't assume that just because Omicron is a weak COVID that it's gonna get us all out of this. That's jank.

Sydnee: No, because there are still immune-compromised people.

Justin: Of course.

Sydnee: People who are more— who have underlying chronic illness—

Justin: Yes.

Sydnee: —that are going to be more susceptible to severe disease. And so, to continue to protect others around you, get vaccinated, get boosted, wear your mask.

Justin: And get hyped! 'Cause COVID is on the way out, thanks to Omicron. A weak COVID that can hang.

Sydnee: No— Don't— You keep saying that and you're gonna give it an air of authority because it's on this podcast, but we don't know that.

Justin: Remember it was me that said it, not Sydnee.

Sydnee: I hope that that is true.

Justin: You can tell the difference.

Sydnee: But we don't, we just don't know yet.

Justin: [whispers] I know it's true.

Sydnee: We just don't know yet.

Justin: [singing] On the first day of Christmas, my true love gave to me, a false sense of security.

Sydnee: Hey. That was good.

Justin: That was me to you. [laughs] That was good. You like that soundbite?

Sydnee: That was good. Although you didn't— I will say that's not true because I don't believe you. [laughs] I know better! I know better! Follow the science and the science is developing. We're getting answers slowly. A lot of scientists are working on it.

Justin: Honey, get off the boring box.

Sydnee: Let's talk about "The 12 Days of Christmas."

Justin: Yes.

Sydnee: This is what we're doing. This is the topic.

Justin: This is what we're doing.

Sydnee: We're gonna talk about "The 12 Days of Christmas", except in a Sawbones style.

Justin: Yes. What if the so— What if the 12 days of Christmas, each one was not simply a gift, but a veiled threat, I guess?

Sydnee: [laughs] What if your true love doesn't have good intentions?

Justin: What if your true love is attempting to kill you with these gifts. So Sydnee wanted to take this song and pervert it, as is her fashion.

Sydnee: That is what I do— Remember when I— This was inspired by, we once did an episode of, uh, Santa is sick.

Justin: Yeah.

Sydnee: Where I talked about—

Justin: All the illnesses that Santa has.

Sydnee: — all the illnesses that I think Santa might have.

Justin: That's a classic. We need to bring that one back too.

Sydnee: This is sort of in that spirit.

Justin: Um, yeah. So this is our last episode of this calendar year.

Sydnee: Yes.

Justin: We won't be here next week, and then we'll be back, hopef— We'll probably talk about Omicron... pretty early next year. [chuckles]

Sydnee: Yes, I think once there is more information for me to share. Right now it would be a lot of guessing.

Justin: Yes.

Sydnee: And, you know, there's plenty of guessing out there. [chuckles]

Justin: Alright, now this is a little bit of a competition, although I don't think we'll be able to choose which is best, but we will, uh... We each brought our own, just to see how the differed.

Sydnee: Right.

Justin: The first is... [sings] For the first day of Christmas, my true love gave to me...

Sydnee: [sings] A partridge in a pear tree.

Justin: Okay Syd, why is that bad?

Sydnee: Okay. I focused on the pear part of this, alright.

Justin: Okay.

Sydnee: There's a lot you can say about partridges.

Justin: Yeah.

Sydnee: Well, let me say this.

Justin: There's a lot of birds in this.

Sydnee: They're game birds.

Justin: Yeah.

Sydnee: You can eat them.

Justin: Yeah.

Sydnee: I haven't.

Justin: Most of these are, uh, game birds.

Sydnee: Yeah, most of these are birds.

Justin: This was a song—

Sydnee: Is about birds.

Justin: Well, about feasting.

Sydnee: Hmm. [chuckles]

Justin: So a lot of these songs were, uh, like a lot of the early gifts were like foods that you would bring to a celebration.

Sydnee: And like, even the word pear tree is probably just— Did you read this? Is like a... sort of stemmed from the word "pertriz" for "partridge" or something. Like probably had nothing to do with pear tree.

Justin: Okay.

Sydnee: Anyway.

Justin: Anyway.

Sydnee: But they're all about birds, but pears are a controversial medicinal fruit.

Justin: Why's that?

Sydnee: So, a lot of— We've talked about on Sawbones, a lot of different fruit and vegetables or herbs or plants have been like investigated

throughout the ages, for like “Is this medicine? Is this poison? I don’t know.” Uh, raw pears were thought to be poison for a long time. But they thought if you baked `em you were cool, because people were like “These taste good, so we should bake `em and eat `em.” But by the 1700s, they did have a medicinal value.

Justin: What’s that?

Sydnee: So, you could use dried pears for belly fluxes.

Justin: Mm.

Sydnee: Diarrhea.

Justin: Oh, yeah.

Sydnee: So, basically I think that their true love is trying to stop `em up. This is kinda harmless.

Justin: They’re tryin’ to stop—

Sydnee: They’re not trying to kill `em, they’re just trying to like stop `em up.

Justin: They’re trying to treat their diarrhea.

Sydnee: They’re trying to trea— Well, we don’t know that you have diarrhea. If you don’t have diarrhea, your true love is just tryin’ to constipate you with some pears.

Justin: You’re gonna go with mine on this one. Pears contain a naturally occurring toxin, amygdalin, which when you eat, your body releases cyanide in your guts. And, I mean, so they’re fatal.

Sydnee: So they’re fatal. Well—

Justin: So they’re fatal.

Sydnee: We should clarify. Eating a pear is not fatal. [chuckles]

Justin: Eating a pear is not fatal, because it would take 100s, perhaps...

Sydnee: [laughs]

Justin: The range— We've talked about this before, but the range of seeds that you would need to eat is so baffling. The range that is, is commonly accepted is like, between 150 and 1000s. [chuckles] So it's like, there's—

Sydnee: Nobody knows.

Justin: Nobody know. It would take a whole lot.

Sydnee: Now, to be fair though, it is, it is threatening in the sense that, uh, it is a whole pear tree. It's not a pear, it's a whole pear tree. Now, it is— You could—

Justin: Okay, so you might be able to gen up enough seeds.

Sydnee: —generate— Yes, enough seeds. 'Cause you're going continue to produce pears.

Justin: Okay. I think. Who do you think wins that one?

Sydnee: [disappointed] You won that one.

Justin: Okay.

Sydnee: I was really reaching.

Justin: [sings] On the second day of Christmas, my true love gave to me...

Sydnee: [sings] Two turtle doves.

Justin: Sydnee, let me tell you my problem with turtle doves.

Sydnee: Yes.

Justin: Trichomoniasis... Was that yours?

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Justin: Oh no.

Sydnee: I can't believe you found this!

Justin: This is good, right?

Sydnee: I'm so proud of you. Go ahead, go ahead.

Justin: You told me you're proud of me.

Sydnee: Tell me what you have.

Justin: So, trichomoniasis is commonly found in doves and pigeons, and is a big problem for turtle doves, which used to be a lot more common throughout.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm. Yes, it is.

Justin: But in part because of trichomoniasis, they uh, it's been a problem, especially for a lot of endangered pigeons.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Justin: Um, it can result in high mortality for young pigeons. Um, it's been passed around a lot of different birds, especially in the UK, where a lot of these birds are common. But! In humans... it is the most common, curable STD!

Sydnee: That's true! Well, now— You do know it's a different trichomonas.

Justin: That is arguable.

Sydnee: You can't get— so the trichomonas that you get—

Justin: The problem with turtle doves is that they give you STDs.

Sydnee: No— [chuckles] The trichomonas gallinae, which is what affects doves and other birds, like you mentioned.

Justin: Uh-huh.

Sydnee: Is different from the trichomonas vaginalis that affects humans. They are both trichomonas. So yes, this is also why I chose this. Because turtle doves are also supposed to be like, a lovey thing. It's like a symbol of love and affection.

Justin: Yeah.

Sydnee: And the fact that they also have this sort of vaguely related, sexually transmitted infection.

Justin: It's good.

Sydnee: It's not sexually transmitted in turtle doves. Did— I also learned this. Trichomonas is an ancient pathogen, and it used to cause illness in dinosaurs, we think.

Justin: Mmm.

Sydnee: A frounce-like. When, uh, this trichomonas gallinae, when it affects birds of prey, it's called "frounce".

Justin: "Frounce"?

Sydnee: And so—

Justin: That's an unpleasant word.

Sydnee: Dinosaurs could get the frounce.

Justin: [in a gruff dinosaur voice] "Uugggh... Gary. I got the frounce."

Sydnee: You can get it—

Justin: Remember that episode of *Dinosaurs* where—

Sydnee: Where he got the frounce.

Justin: —he got the frounce.

Sydnee: Mmm.

Justin: Ed got the frounce.

Sydnee: You could get, you get lethargy and fluffed up plumage, and drool.

Justin: [sighs] Did you see— Did you see the frounce reunion, by the way? [chuckles]

Sydnee: Oh my gosh.

Justin: On HBO Max.

Sydnee: Well, that's a tie, I guess. Because we both came up with trichomonas and the turtle doves.

Justin: Uh, okay. [sings] On the third day of Christmas, my true love gave to me...

Sydnee: [sings] Three French hens.

Justin: Another delicious game bird. If you're into eating animals. A lot of people aren't. Dig in.

Sydnee: That's fine too.

Justin: Alright, I started last time, it's your turn.

Sydnee: This one's an easy one.

Justin: Okay.

Sydnee: Avian flu.

Justin: Avian flu.

Sydnee: That's what yah gotta watch out for in these chickens!

Justin: Okay.

Sydnee: I mean, not specifically. This sounds like I'm like hatin' on French chickens specifically...

Justin: Yeah.

Sydnee: It's just any.

Justin: And actually it's not, um, it's not 'cause they're French. Apparently the words just sounded similar.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Justin: For the species and the bird.

Sydnee: They're just like from, they're like foreign hens.

Justin: Yeah, exactly.

Sydnee: [chuckles] Fancy foreign hens. Sort of like World music in the 90s.

Justin: Yeah, right.

Sydnee: These are like hens that aren't, I guess in the UK is probably where this song is— I don't know. Anyway, yeah. Avian flu.

Justin: Uh, mine is that hens, especially if they have fertilized eggs, can be really dangerous. They can attack you, they can go— they can try to peck you, it can be bad. If you e— But they don't know if the eggs are fertilized or not. So if they have any eggs. So it's best to move them away from the eggs. If they're like unfertilized and you need to harvest them, it's best to move them away from the eggs. Now, roosters on the other hand? Some are just mean. And you got— It said, on the article I read, "You gotta get rid of 'em to protect your flock".

Sydnee: Oh...

Justin: So they— Yeah. I thi— It didn't say what it mean—

Sydnee: I didn't know, I didn't know roosters were mean.

Justin: Some roosters are— If you have a mean rooster, you have to get rid of them.

Sydnee: [laughs]

Justin: And I don't want— This piece didn't—

Sydnee: You heard it from— Justin McElroy thinks roosters are mean!
[laughs]

Justin: This piece didn't clarify how you get rid of a mean rooster. I guess you just get it an apartment in the city? Until it figures things out?

Sydnee: Yeah. Anger management?

Justin: Something. Um. [sings] On the fourth day of Christmas, my true love gave to me...

Sydnee: Well, who won the last one?

Justin: Ummmmm... You did.

Sydnee: I did?

Justin: Yes.

Sydnee: Avian flu is scarier than chickens.

Justin: Avian flu is scarier than getting pecked by—

Sydnee: I don't know—

Justin: Hens.

Sydnee: Hens.

Justin: French hens.

Sydnee: French hens. They're— Well, I mean, they're descended from dinosaurs, as we have established.

Justin: Yes. Doesn't make 'em chickens. [chuckles]

Sydnee: Scary.

Justin: Doesn't make 'em chickens.

Sydnee: Hens?

Justin: French hens! Are not chickens!

Sydnee: Yeah, they're related— they're just a kind of chicken.

Justin: It's not— They're French hens!

Sydnee: No, it's a specific kind of—

Justin: Are French hens— Siri! Are French hens chickens?

Sydnee: It's just a kind of chicken.

Justin: You're a kind of chicken right now. Are French hens chickens?
[laughs] The first search result is "Are French hens considered birds?"
Yes. Okay, yeah, you're right.

Sydnee: Yes. I mean they're just chickens, hon.

Justin: Yeah, you're right.

Sydnee: Why you makin' me— Faverolles chicken.

Justin: Favorite chicken.

Sydnee: Is a French breed of chicken.

Justin: Okay.

Sydnee: They're you go.

Justin: They're chickens. We all agree.

Sydnee: They're chickens.

Justin: They're chickens.

Sydnee: They've got like a big, uh... ruff. A big beard or something.

Justin: [sings] On the fourth day of Christmas, my true love gave to me...

Sydnee: [sings] Four collie birds.

Justin: No, you can't. That's cheating.

Sydnee: It's not calling.

Justin: That's cheating. You chea—

Sydnee: It's supposed to be collie.

Justin: What— It's supposed to be "collie"?

Sydnee: Collie. Not calling.

Justin: It's not calling?

Sydnee: No. Well, I mean, that's what we say now. That is commonly accepted now. You're not wrong.

Justin: Okay.

Sydnee: But it started as "collie". That's the root of mine.

Justin: Alright. So go on.

Sydnee: "Collie birds" is what it was originally. Do you know what collie is referencing?

Justin: No.

Sydnee: That they were coal colored.

Justin: Oh! Interesting, okay.

Sydnee: Black. They're blackbirds.

Justin: Ohhh...

Sydnee: That's the deal. Could be ravens or just blackbirds, but they were coal colored.

Justin: Okay. Now, that's an interesting fact, but it doesn't get us anywhere near a diagnosis.

Sydnee: Well, um, I was just sorta playing around, for fun here, and decided that what if they had black lung?

Justin: It is fun.

Sydnee: [laughs]

Justin: There's little— There's little funnier, or more fun than black lung.

Sydnee: We all know the dangers of coal to the lungs, and these are... collie birds. I had nothing. You run ou— After a while, all these birds are just birds!

Justin: Syd, I'm—

Sydnee: And they have bird illnesses, which are scary, and we talk a lot about it! We did a whole episode about how scary birds can be, medically.

Justin: If I can just say, Sydnee, I wish— I feel like you kinda cheated on that one, 'cause it feels like you're kinda just pulling stuff out of your butt. Is that fair to say?

Sydnee: It was a loose association.

Justin: Okay, a loose association. And you're embarrassed, would you say?

Sydnee: I'm not embarrassed.

Justin: Okay. Mine is "four calling birds", because 24% of all car crashes involve phone calls.

Sydnee: [cackles]

Justin: Hands-free or otherwise. So you get one of these birds. It's on the phone every day.

"Hey, what do you wanna have for dinner tonight?"

"Uh, I don't know. I'm driving! Leave me alone."

24% of crashes. You're not safer with a hands-free, folks. Stay off the phone.

Sydnee: Are you, um, letting the birds drive, in this scenario?

Justin: No, the bird is calling you! They're calling birds! They're calling you on the phone, constantly. You're just trying to dri— You're just trying to get to Kroeger and back, and they're like "Hey, do you wanna watch— Do you wanna watch *Orange is the New Black* tonight?"

Sydnee: Which one of these is a worse loose association?

Justin: I think this one's a tie too.

Sydnee: Okay.

Justin: This is a tie.

Sydnee: Fair enough.

Justin: [chuckles] [sings] On the fifth day of Christmas, my tru—
[spoken] I'm gonna lose the next round pretty badly. On the fifth—

Sydnee: [sings] Five golden rings.

Justin: [chuckles, snorts] Okay, Syd. [chuckles]

Sydnee: Well, I went quite literal here.

Justin: Okay.

Sydnee: Five golden rings seems excessive to me. That seems like a lot of golden rings, and a lot of gold.

Justin: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: And over-exposure to gold, you can develop gold toxicity.

Justin: Okay.

Sydnee: This is actually a problem because gold compounds can be used in the treatments of certain illnesses, like rheumatoid arthritis.

Justin: Yes.

Sydnee: And if you get too much gold, you get skin rashes. Uh, you can get bleeding in your GI tract, you can get vomiting. Um, it can actually suppress your bone marrow. I mean, there's bad stuff that can come from too much gold. So, I think this is a pretty clear threat. I'm gonna give you so much gold that you're gonna get gold poisoning.

Justin: Um... That, uh, that is pretty good. Mine, actually, kinda in a Sawbones sort of fashion, I found the story of Dutch-born Johann van der Smut.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Justin: You ever heard his name?

Sydnee: No.

Justin: So, Johann van der Smut was Dutch-born, and he actually was in a, a smelting accident. A "schmelting accident", as he said. Uh, and he actually lost his genitals in the schmelting accident, uh, in the 1970s. And, um, he actually had his genitals replaced with a gold key that activated that Preparation H tractor beam. And he— thwarts Austin Powers by teaming up with Doctor Evil.

Sydnee: Oh my gosh, this is fake!

Justin: It's *Gold*— It's *Goldmember*. It's not fake, it's historical.

Sydnee: This is fake. I don't even— I was sitting here looking at you going "What are you— Where is this story from?!"

Justin: Yeah, it's the story of Johann van der Smut, who is Dutch-born—

Sydnee: But this is from *Austin Powers*?

Justin: [imitating Johann] He loves gold.

Sydnee: [chuckles]

Justin: So that's a big danger.

Sydnee: This is from *Austin*— Which *Austin Powers* is this from? I don't remember this one.

Justin: *Goldmember*.

Sydnee: Oh, I never saw that one.

Justin: Well, I know what we're doing after we finish this recording!

Sydnee: [laughs] Um... I don't— I mean, yours— You get the award for creativity.

Justin: Thank you, but I think you win that round. Okay, I think we've got one more before the break.

Sydnee: Uh...

Justin: [sings] On the sixth day of Christmas, my true love gave to me...

Sydnee: [sings] Six geese a-laying. [spoken] Okay. Did you know that a lot of different wild avian species like geese have been found to be reservoirs of antibiotic-resistant enteric bacteria?

Justin: No.

Sydnee: Things like E-coli. Bacteria that live in your enteric— Meaning live in your intestinal tract, um, there is a much higher rate of resistant bacteria in animals like geese. So like they're harboring these deadly pathogens [chuckles] that antibiotics will not work for. Um, not just geese, but geese are among them, and so they— These birds could be

carrying an infection that under normal circumstances would be easily curable with antibiotics.

Justin: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: But the geese have made it... a superbug.

Justin: Wow. Um, for mine, I regretted doing a bird attack for French hens, because these geese are laying.

Sydnee: Ohhh...

Justin: And they are really dangerous. Now, it's interesting. Canadian geese attacks on humans have become a big problem because... we are expanding into their territory.

Sydnee: Ohhh...

Justin: Yeah. So by removing—

Sydnee: So it's on us.

Justin: Yes, of course. By removing some of their natural habitats, and they're getting defensive because they have, you know, their nests there. Especially if they're laying. Now normally it would be the male Canadian geese that would do the attacking. Um, but uh... I mean, I think it counts.

Sydnee: Uh, do you know, there used to be a flock of Canadian geese that lived out back of my grandparents' house. And we named two of them Peg and Al, that we would see— Which sort of dates when this would have— [chuckles]

Justin: That's from *Married With Children*.

Sydnee: When this would have occurred. [chuckles]

Justin: [sighs]

Sydnee: I think I win.

Justin: Yeah, you win that one too. And we've got six more days to come and uh, fight over. Mine just get worse. So hang in there.

Sydnee: Because first we've gotta go to the Billing Department.

Justin: Let's go.

[ad break]

Justin: [sings] On... the... seventh day of Christmas, my true love gave to me...

Sydnee: [sings] Seven swans a-swimming. [normal] I feel like you've gone up. Key.

Justin: [singing in a high voice] I've... I sound good to me.

Sydnee: Like we're modulating the key.

Justin: I'm sorry. It won't be as nice if people edit it together.

Sydnee: [laughs]

Justin: [sings] Seven swans a-swimming.

Sydnee: Yeah. Okay. Are you gonna start this time?

Justin: Yeah. This one, this is entrapment. This one's entrapment. Because... the swans, especially if you're in the UK, where this song is very popular.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Justin: Um, all of the swans are owned by the Queen.

Sydnee: Ohhh...

Justin: So, swans—

Sydnee: Yeah, it's a big deal to hurt a swan there.

Justin: Swans are— Not just hurt, but take. If they're a-swimming? And you're like "Here, I got these for you as a gift. Just come take 'em out of the water real quick." You're gonna get busted, pal!

Sydnee: That's true.

Justin: By the Queen! Are you kidding me with this?!

Sydnee: That's very true. Yeah.

Justin: They used to be—

Sydnee: You can't mess with swans in the UK.

Justin: So the deal is, hundreds of years ago they were hunted to the point of endangerment, and so they... And this is no longer a pro— Well, they were hunted so the Queen said "Okay, these are all mine". But now they're currently endangered, so the Queen's protection is sort of like to help the species populate.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Justin: The Queen actually has someone who works for her, named the Queens' Swan Marker, that is in charge of making sure that you uh, that all the swans are cared for. Now—

Sydnee: That is so interesting.

Justin: [in a hushed voice] It's not just living swans. Dead swans belong to the Queen as well. So if you want to get a swan taxidermied, you have to get permission from the Queen's Swan Marker. True.

Sydnee: That seems— Is it a cumbersome process? Like, how easy is it?

Justin: I bet it's, I bet it's pretty smooth.

Sydnee: [chuckles]

Justin: Uh, the other thing is that, um, the Queen also owns all the whales and dolphins. [chuckles]

Sydnee: So was it— Was the Queen just pickin’ animals that she liked?

Justin: Yeah. “I own all the—”. The Queen owns all the dolphins and whales, folks. There you go. The Queen owns all that.

Sydnee: I’ve never wanted to be a Queen, but in this exact moment, all of a sudden, I wanna be a Queen.

Justin: Yeah.

Sydnee: `Cause if I can just claim like, you know, all the diet Dr Peppers belong to me...

Justin: Yeah. Uh, what about— what about swans for you, Syd?

Sydnee: Uh, okay. Again... similar to geese, I did learn that swans are reservoirs for lots of bacteria, like campylobacter and salmonella. However, the bigger problem for me was the swimming.

Justin: Okay.

Sydnee: Because I didn’t really think about the angle of entrapment by the Queen, you know, but it’s a big drowning risk if you’re tryin’ to— if you’re swimming around, trying to catch seven swans.

Justin: Yeah.

Sydnee: They probably don’t wanna be caught.

Justin: Yeah.

Sydnee: So, I feel like you’re drawing your true love out in to the water. You know, best of luck.

Justin: Yeah. Are you— To drown them?

Sydnee: That’s dangerous.

Justin: To drown them?

Sydnee: We’re supposed to— Like, that’s the whole thing here!

Justin: I ge— You just got a little dark for my tastes.

Sydnee: You're trying to get `em beheaded!

Justin: [laughs] I don't think that's the punishment.

Sydnee: No, I don't think— Maybe it was at one point.

Justin: I thi— Can you hand that one to me? That seems—

Sydnee: Yeah, you get that one.

Justin: That seems like I get that one.

Sydnee: Yours is better.

Justin: Okay. [sings] On the eighth day of Christmas, my true love gave to me...

Sydnee: [sings] Eight maids a-milking. [normal] I— I feel like we may have come up with the same one on this one.

Justin: Mmm, we'll see. You go ahead.

Sydnee: So, for me this one was the most obvious. This was actually the first one I thought of when I came up with this topic. This is why we're doing this.

Justin: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: Cowpox.

Justin: Okay. [chuckles quietly]

Sydnee: Is that not yours?

Justin: Go ahead.

Sydnee: How is that not what you thought of?

Justin: It's pretty different. Go ahead.

Sydnee: Okay. Cowpox, you may remember, we discussed in our episode on smallpox. It's a viral infection, um, that can cause, like, skin lesions.

Justin: Okay.

Sydnee: Like pox. Like these marks on your skin. Um, and it is in the same family as smallpox. Which of course, it was a deadly illness that killed many many many people before we vaccinated against it and essentially eradicated it. It only exists in test tubes in places.

Cowpox is very similar, but is much milder, and so in the original like vaccination discovery process by Jenner, that's what he noticed, is that milkmaids would get cowpox from milking cows, and then they wouldn't get smallpox.

Justin: Right.

Sydnee: Because it was an early form of, uh, variolation. You get this cowpox, you develop an immunity that will also protect you from smallpox.

Justin: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: So infecting people with cowpox could be a way to prevent them from getting and dying of smallpox. So, you're trying to give 'em cowpox, is the point.

Justin: Well I'm here to tell you that dairies are terrifying places to work at, according to WorkSafe, which is an organization in New Zealand that talks about the dangers of dairy farming and what you can do to like, sort of address that.

Like, moving rotary platforms passing fixed rails can potentially trap or crush a person. So you're gonna need to fit a banana rail between the rotary platforms backing your carry rails. That's just like one thing. They're— Poor drainage on a dairy farm. I mean, it's gonna be slippery. That's a hazard. Cra—

Sydnee: That sounds— I don't know much about dairy farms, but "poor drainage on a dairy farm", that sentence, sounds nightmarish to me.

Justin: Poorly designed cow entries and exits that have turns, ramps, or steps are too steep. Okay? That's a danger, folks. Kicking cows!

Sydnee: [gasps] Oh, you mean like the cows kick you.

Justin: [cackles]

Sydnee: I was gonna say, don't ever kick— Why would you ever kick a cow?! That's terrible!

Justin: Distressed cows. There's dangers all over this thing! You're gonna need kick rails, you're gonna need banana rails, you need non-slip matting. You need to make sure that the machines are guarded.

Sydnee: You really went deep into dairy farming.

Justin: It's dangerous in there, y'all! Wet and slippery surfaces! There's hoses and pipes! There's overhead obstacles! This place is a warzone!
[wheezes]

Sydnee: I don't—

Justin: They have a thing called a "rope rail" to protect you from the cow's butt! It's terrifying in there!

Sydnee: You always— You talk about this stuff and I'm not a huge fan of milk, and I always think "Maybe I should just not have dairy anymore". And then I remember the existence of cheese and ice cream, and I go "Well..."

Justin: Well...

Sydnee: And I just ate yogurt again, 'cause I do every day, and then I think "Don't get... Let's not get hasty, Sydnee". [chuckles]

Justin: Um, okay. So... I think yours is probably better.

Sydnee: Mine is like...

Justin: Mine's a stretch.

Sydnee: ... Hallmark medical history right there.

Justin: Yep.

Sydnee: Cowpox, Jenner, smallpox vaccines.

Justin: [strained singing] On the ninth day of Christmas, my true love gave to me...

Sydnee: [sings] Nine ladies dancing. [normal] I feel like we came up with the same one here too.

Justin: There's absolutely no chance of that happen— going.

Sydnee: You didn't reference the dancing plague?

Justin: No. I'm not— I'm getting new—

Sydnee: In 1518? You're getting new stuff?

Justin: I want people to have new stuff! I'm not playing the hits.

Sydnee: I'm doing like Sawbones hits.

Justin: I know. Yeah. Okay, so do yours.

Sydnee: Well, okay. We did a whole episode about it. In 1518—

Justin: And a chapter in our book.

Sydnee: And a chapter in our book. People started dancing, nobody knew why, and some people danced until they died. And it was like, they couldn't stop. It was a contagious dancing epidemic. And... I mean, obviously that's what he's trying to start here, this true love. He sends these nine dancing ladies to her. Or him.

Justin: To get a dancing—

Sydnee: To the— To the— To the person.

Justin: A flashmob, is what you're saying.

Sydnee: Yeah. Yeah. And then what if the whoever is in the song that is singing, the person, they start dancing. Until they die.

Justin: Mine? Capoeira.

Sydnee: [laughs]

Justin: Capoeira...

Sydnee: Okay, you've already won, but go ahead and describe it.

Justin: ...is a marital art, is a martial art that was created by, um... enslaved African people in Brazil. Uh, and it is a very fluid sort of martial art.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Justin: And actually they were banned from practicing it, so they introduced music into the martial art to make it appear as though they were practicing dancing.

Sydnee: It looks like dancing.

Justin: It looks like dancing, but it's actually a martial art. And often in... You know, where this is a more serious competition, people will attach like knives to their feet for capoeira. So, it's a dangerous thing, and there are MMA fighters that got their start in capoeira, and bring some of that technique into the octagon.

Sydnee: That, that was a good one.

Justin: It is terrifying.

Sydnee: Very cool and like not—

Justin: They send nine ladies?!

Sydnee: Nine ladies—

Justin: Trained in capoeira to me?!

Sydnee: Coming at you. Yeah.

Justin: No way.

Sydnee: That's the end, for your true love.

Justin: That's the end.

Sydnee: Um, that was good on— There was a video game that I have played in my life, I feel like you should know, where one of the characters that you could fight with, I feel like you— It was one of the fighting games, and one of the characters did capoeira. Like, that was their fighting style.

Justin: It's Eddy from *Tekken*.

Sydnee: Oh.

Justin: Eddy Gordo.

Sydnee: Yes, I have played *Tekken*, so that would be— that would be it.

Justin: Yep. Um, uh, [sings] Theeee... tenth day of Christmas, my true love gave to me. Ten lords a-leaping. Ten lords a-leaping.

Sydnee: Are they the jumping Frenchmen of Maine?

Justin: No, because I'm not doing old stuff!

Sydnee: Well I am!

Justin: All new.

Sydnee: It's the holidays, it's time for memories of... shows gone by, and in 1878, some uh... some loggers, some lumberjacks. [chuckles] Some lumberjacks in Maine, who happened to be of French descent. Like French-Canadian descent, uh would have these— had all these increased

startle reflexes. And were like, the smallest noise and they jumped. Hence the jumping Frenchmen of Maine. Though to be a culture-bound syndrome. We've done an episode on this too.

Justin: Look it up.

Sydnee: Um, but contagious, in a sense. They all were doing it.

Justin: You know who we haven't done an episode on?

Sydnee: Mmm.

Justin: The Lord! [claps] Of! [claps] The Dance! [claps] Michael Flatley!

Sydnee: Ooo!

Justin: The lead of River Dance.

Sydnee: Did he ever leap?

Justin: Sorry, what?

Sydnee: Did— Was leaping part of River Dance?

Justin: I'm sure, yeah. I mean, he's leaping— They do everything. He's leaping all over the place. What are you talking about?

Sydnee: Honey. They do—

Justin: This is the Lord of the Dance!

Sydnee: They do everything but move their arms!

Justin: No, he does move his arms. He introduced arm movement. That's Michael Flatley's contribution to Irish step dance!

Sydnee: Ohhh... I didn't know he was allowed to move his arms.

Justin: Yeah, he invented it. The first he moved his arms—

Sydnee: All the people behind him don't move their arms.

Justin: Yeah, because they don't wanna distract from his great arm movements.

Sydnee: [chuckles]

Justin: This is the Lord of the Dance, folks. Feet of flames! Michael Flatley!

Sydnee: Can we also talk about that in the 90s...

Justin: Yes!

Sydnee: ...this was huge!

Justin: This is like part and parcel with the Gregorian chant thing.

Sydnee: And the swing dancing moment.

Justin: There was this moment where everybody was like "Hey all, we're wild about this one guy that does Irish step dance, named Michael Flatley. The Lord of the Dance".

Sydnee: And everybody wanted to do Irish step dance! It was in one of those shows we did! We did a showcase and there was a part where my mom choreographed an Irish step dance for all of us to do, in the middle of the showcase.

Justin: Did you know Michael Flatley's from Chicago?

Sydnee: No.

Justin: Seems weird, right? Both his parents are Irish. But, anyway. So, he's an incredible dancer, but— Okay, "What's the danger?", you're saying.

Sydnee: Yeah, what's Michael Flatley gonna do to you? [chuckles]

Justin: What is the danger of Michael Flatley? Well, okay. Michael Flatley— [muffled laughter] This is a stretch. I'm not laughing at this next thing.

Sydnee: Okay.

Justin: What I'm gonna say.

Sydnee: Okay.

Justin: Michael Flatley... um, is a— He grossed, in his career, he has done shows for more than 60 million people in 60 countries. This is the biggest dude on the planet, basically. Has grossed more than one *billion* dollars, the Lord of the Dance, Michael Flatley.

Sydnee: In dancing. He really is the Lord of the Dance.

Justin: He's the Lord of the Dance.

Sydnee: That is not an exaggeration.

Justin: If you have not seen— Go back and look at like old River Dance commercials. It's so wild. Like people—

Sydnee: Oh, it was huge.

Justin: We were deeply into River Dance for a bit.

Sydnee: Me too! I'm not throwing shade. I was deeply into River Dance for a minute.

Justin: Michael Flatley retired in 2016, due to constant spinal, knee, and foot, and rib pain.

Sydnee: [sadly] Aw...

Justin: Michael Flatley has grossed over a billion dollars, so how are you gonna keep food on the table with a Michael Flatley who's used to a certain lifestyle, right?

Sydnee: Oh, I get what you're going here.

Justin: Dude's raised over a billion dollars, and now you've got a support him.

Sydnee: Now you have to s—

Justin: Except, wait! Now there's nine?! Nine Michael Flatleys!

Sydnee: Well, now there's Ten.

Justin: Ten Michael Flat—?!

Sydnee: Ten.

Justin: Well, nine in addition to...

Sydnee: Oh.

Justin: ...the original Michael Flatley. So you have ten Michael Flatleys, who have grossed over 10 billion dollars, none of whom are working. They're all at your house like [in a British accent] "Can I get an iced tea, love?" [normal] I know he's from Chicago, but... I needed a different—

Sydnee: He's from Chicago, he has Irish parents, and he has a... British accent?

Justin: [in a Chicago accent] "Da— Da lemonade. Da beers. Get me da beers."

Sydnee: Oh, now Chicago is the accent that Michael Flatley has.

Justin: He's from Chicago, so...

Sydnee: Right. I know.

Justin: Makes sense.

Sydnee: Okay.

Justin: Faith in the core. I win. [chuckles]

Sydnee: You win.

Justin: I just said I won.

Sydnee: I do appreciate— No, you win. And I do appreciate remembering that River Dance is fierce.

Justin: Oh, y'all. Get into some like Michael Fl— Uh, Rachel? Can you put a little bit of a wild, um uh, Michael Flatley Lord of the Dance commercial?

Sydnee: I feel like you have to see it...

Justin: I'll accept Lord of the Dance, or Celtic Flames, or Celtic Tiger Line.
[wheezes]

[intense River Dance audio plays]

Sydnee: I feel like you have to see it.

[sounds of explosions, crowd cheers]

Narrator: Michael Flatley, the Lord of the Dance—

[audio fades out]

Justin: Okay, go ahead. Listen, we are running out of time. We have to go pick up our child from school. We have to blow through these last two. Let's go. [sings rapidly] On the eleventh day of Christmas, my true love gave to me...

Sydnee & Justin: [sings simultaneously] Eleven pipers piping.

Sydnee: This is obvious. This is COVID times. You can't go around blowing wind instruments in public. This is a huge risk. There are spit valves on those things, right?

Justin: On what?

Sydnee: Those are on the other ones. Not the wind instruments.

Justin: I don't know— I don't know woodwinds. Woodwinds probably have spit thingies.

Sydnee: Do they too? Anyway, there's stuff flying, particles are everywhere. You've got eleven people coming at you.

Justin: Pipe smoking is associated with a number of illnesses, include— You think it's safer 'cause you don't inhale. There's a chance of elevated risk of cancers in the mouth, including of the tongue, larynx, and throat. And there's also an elevated risk of lung and pancreatic cancer if you inhale.

Sydnee: Alright, are you saying that they're going to share their pipes? Or is this a second-hand smoke deal?

Justin: No, it's pipe— No, there's pipers piping. I mean, it's dangerous to—

Sydnee: Yeah, but how is it dangerous to the, you know, the person singing the song.

Justin: Oh, you think that— You think the people who identify their career as a "piper" are going to be able to pay their own medical bills? No. You're already bankrupted by Michael Flatley.

Sydnee: [chuckles]

Justin: And his nine Michael Flatleys. Okay? You're ruined by this point.

Sydnee: I think I win with instruments blowing COVID. Blowing Omicron everywhere.

Justin: Uh, Omicron is actually very good, and it's going to save us all.

Sydnee: Okay, no, don't— We don't know yet. We don't know.

Justin: [sings loudly] Tweeeeeelve days of Christmas, my true love gave to me...

Sydnee: [sings] Twelve drummers drumming. [normal] Okay. You want me to go first?

Justin: Can I do mine? 'Cause it's not—

Sydnee: Yeah, okay. You do yours.

Justin: Yours is better. Um, I bet. It almost has to be. Uh, when you drum, you are hit— you have to be in great shape. It's exhausting, right?

Sydnee: Yeah.

Justin: And there's— There is a... You get exposed to what are called "continuous hand arm vibrations".

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Justin: Which um, they call 'em H-A-V-S.

Sydnee: Oh.

Justin: HAVS. Yeah. There's a study on the effect of this.

Sydnee: Sure.

Justin: And apparently, this is interesting, this is something that effects people who use power tools too.

Sydnee: Mmm.

Justin: Where the vib— Which, remember when I started having so much—

Sydnee: Yeah...

Justin: So many problems...

Sydnee: When you started woodworking.

Justin: When I started woodworking. That vibration can be actually really damaging. It can lead to a variety of muscular-skeletal disorders, from the vibration in the hand going up the, the arm. So it's something that affects drummers, right.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Justin: Where it can lead to a lot of problems, but it also affects like people who work with power tools and stuff like that. Which I thought was interesting, 'cause I didn't know what had affected me, but it's that vibration can actually have some deleterious effects.

Sydnee: This is very interesting.

Justin: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: But I would argue that, while that would affect the twelve drummers who are drumming... What about the person that the song is about?

Justin: Uh, how do you mean?

Sydnee: Uh... In— I mean the whole idea is these drummers would be dangerous to the person receiving the gift. Receiving the twelve days of gifts.

Justin: Right.

Sydnee: Okay, so my argument is that the problem is anthrax.

Justin: What?!

Sydnee: You can get anthrax from animal hide drums. There have been cases of this, obviously not a lot, but this has occurred. The first case that occurred in the United States was in Florida.

Justin: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: In 1974.

Justin: Sounds right.

Sydnee: There was a case of cutaneous anthrax. I mean like, with a skin lesion. Uh, it was associated with a goat-hide bongo drum that had been purchased in Haiti.

Justin: By, I assume—

Sydnee: And anthrax can live in the soil, so it was on the, on the hide, on the goat hide that was used to make the drum. And then when you start banging away on your bongo drum, you get it, you know, you get those particles all over you.

Justin: So—

Sydnee: They get on your hands, they can go up in the air. Twelve of these people? Drumming away? All around you?

Justin: Yeah, you're right.

Sydnee: Anthrax flying everywhere?!

Justin: If you've got 12 drums, one of 'em's got anthrax, statistically speaking.

Sydnee: [chuckles] I should clarify, this is incredibly rare, so please do— If you're a drummer, please don't be stressed. And it's only from animal hide drums. I don't know what else drums are made of, but...

Justin: The judges have spoken and oh my gosh Sydnee, you're not going to believe this, but it's a tie.

Sydnee: It's a perfect tie.

Justin: They say we're both very much in love and they're proud of us. Uh, is what the judges said. Um, and that's gonna do it for us this week, on Sawbones.

Sydnee: We hope this was a brief respite.

Justin: Yes.

Sydnee: Um, from real medical things. In the meantime though, now that you're done laughing. Enjoying how... I mean, we just— It was just hilarious, I think. But, uh, you should go get vaccinated. Or boosted. And wear a mask. And continue to be aware that not everyone... has the opportunity to be vaccinated yet. Specifically young, young children. We have one.

Justin: Yeah.

Sydnee: And there are others. And there are immune-compromised people who, even if they can get vaccinated, might be less likely to respond to the vaccine, so they are still at risk. So, be cautious, be aware, take care of each other.

Justin: Uh, right now, as you are listening to this, there is a new Candenights spectacular for you to enjoy. Head on over to bit.ly/candlenights2021. That's what it is. [Bit.ly/candlenights2021](https://bit.ly/candlenights2021). Uh, tickets are \$5, with an option to give more, and you can, you're uh... supporting Harmony House, which is a fantastic organization.

Sydnee: A local organization in Huntington that works to help people facing homelessness, to receive services to get them housed, and then I do free medical there.

Justin: We've got another one of our Sawbones holiday specials in there, continuing our epic saga. It's 15 minutes long. [chuckles]

Sydnee: You say that likes it's really long. They've been longer.

Justin: They've been longer. Uh, we've got special guests like Hank Green, Jean Grey's there, Paul and Storm, Adam Brody, B Dave Walters, and many more. It's gonna be great.

Sydnee: I sing a song.

Justin: Sydnee sings a song.

Sydnee: Justin sings with me.

Justin: Yes, it's gonna be great. Ah, but bit.ly/candlenights2021. Please please please please. It'll be available for another couple weeks, or another week, as you're listening to this. So please go download it and listen to it. Or watch it, I guess.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Justin: And listen to it.

Sydnee: Watch it. Watch and listen.

Justin: Okay, that's gonna do it for us. Oh! Thanks to The Taxpayers for the use of our theme song "Medicines" as the intro and outro of our programme, and thanks to you for listening! That's gonna do it for us. Until next time, my name is Justin McElroy.

Sydnee: I'm Sydnee McElroy.

Justin: And as always; don't drill a hole in your head.

[outro music plays]

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[animal roar]