

Sawbones Ep 020: Fertility

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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 song Medicines by The Taxpayers plays]

Justin:

Hello everybody, and welcome to *Sawbones*, a marital tour of misguided medicine. I'm your cohost, Justin McElroy.

Sydnee:

I'm Sydnee McElroy.

Justin:

Welcome to a very special holiday episode of *Sawbones*!

Sydnee:

Probably the most special holiday of the year.

Justin:

And of course we're talking about my birthday. It's today!

Sydnee:

That's right. For real, today.

Justin:

For real, today, right now, as you're here listening to this.

Sydnee:

Right now, in this very moment, Justin's age is changing. As we speak, he is, he is transforming from... What, what are you turning, 20, 24 now? Tw-, about 24?

Justin:

Let's go with that.

Sydnee:

Yeah, about 24 now.

Justin:

Nah-

Sydnee:

Definitely.

Justin:

I'm 33 years old.

Sydnee:

Aww.

Justin:

Blah.

Sydnee:

Listen to that, proud, loud and proud.

Justin:

No one's-

Sydnee:

Shou- shout it out there!

Justin:

No one's ever been this old, ever. Did you know that?

Sydnee:

Oh, I bet our, I don't know-

Justin:

Even when-

Sydnee:

... parents would disagree.

Justin:

Even when Jesus got to 33, he was like, "Ugh, enough. I get it."

Sydnee:

Yep, that's how that story goes, and that's all we're gonna say about it.
[laughs]

Justin:

But Sydnee, here's the, here's what I wanna talk about today: when we have a child, uh, Justin, uh, McElroy Jr.-

Sydnee:

Definitely not gonna be that, but okay.

Justin:

Works great for a female-

Sydnee:

Nope.

Justin:

... or male, um-

Sydnee:

No, not gonna do that at all, but sure.

Justin:

... when we have Justin McElroy Jr., I wanna make sure that he/she-

Sydnee:

What about Sydnee McElroy Jr.? What about that?

Justin:

That could work, too. We'll talk about it.

Sydnee:

You like that?

Justin:

We'll fix it in post.

Sydnee:

Uh, maybe a new paradigm?

Justin:

Um, maybe a new, uh, pair of shoes for you if you let me call it Justin.

Sydnee:

That was sexist.

Justin:

You just like shoes. That's not sexist; I know you. I'm not br-, I'm not broadly generalizing your, your gender, I'm talking about you, specifically.

Sydnee:

Well, you like cereal.

Justin:

[laughs] Got me. I wanna make sure the baby not only shares my, uh, my great head of hair, um, my love of classical music-

Sydnee:

Man, I hope it does. Wait, what?

Justin:

Uh, I wanna make s-

Sydnee:

I was gonna say your hair, but I don't know about this music thing.

Justin:

Uh, I wanna make sure that it shares my birthday, which means that we're gonna have to have a lot of control over conception. I need to make sure it happens exactly when, how, where, and why I need to.

Sydnee:

Now, can I just make one point?

Justin:

Shoot.

Sydnee:

Your birthday's already kinda crowded.

Justin:

It is. My little brother, Travis, uh, he, he shares my birthday. He's three years younger than me, exactly.

Sydnee:

It's already a, a double McEl' day.

Justin:

So-

Sydnee:

So I, I don't know that we need to add a third, do we?

Justin:

Let's go for a triple. Um, uh, so, Syd, the im-, the important thing I wanna talk about here is fertility, because that's key to nailing this exact date.

Sydnee:

Right. There's always the option, if we just wanna make sure that we have a child born on the exact same day that both you and your brother Travis were born, we could just maybe call your dad and-

Justin:

Hey, let's-

Sydnee:

... ask-

Justin:

... let's never talk about this again. How does that sound? That goes down real smooth for me. Awesome.

Sydnee:

Fair enough.

Justin:

Awesome. Sydnee, how does the world get pregnant? [laughs]

Sydnee:

How does the world get pregnant?

Justin:

How has the world get pregnant? The usual-

Sydnee:

How has the world get pregnant, that's a great question that you ask, Justin, and so, uh, grammatically correct, is what really, what I really enjoy about it, more than anything.

Justin:

How does world get pregnant?

Sydnee:

How is the world get pregnant?

Justin:

Now-

Sydnee:

I think that's, that's a, [laughs] that's a question, if you start typing in, like, "How does the," on Google, I think, "How does the world get pregnant," probably, probably pops up.

Justin:

Syd, um, uh, normally we do chronologically, but i- i-, we're, we're not gonna do that. This is a little more sort of 'round the globe type, type situation.

Sydnee:

That's right. I do, I do wanna start, uh, way, way back, um, first, before we start taking our tour all over the world of how people have gotten pregnant through history. Um, I do wanna start back with one of our favorite characters, uh, Soranus-

Justin:

Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Sore-Anus. [laughs]

Sydnee:

Right. I know, I know, you like to say that.

Justin:

Someday, little baby Justin or Sydnee, all this will be yours. All these puns.

Sydnee:

All these puns.

Justin:

All these gems.

Sydnee:

Our listeners enjoy that one, in particular.

Justin:

Copyright will pass it down to the generations.

Sydnee:

Uh, so Soranus, uh, of gynecology fame, suggested that, um... So here's some tips that he gave on, okay, let's say that you are a man and you want to produce an offspring, okay?

Justin:

Okay, I do, go ahead.

Sydnee:

So th-, your first, your first, uh, task is choosing a lady.

Justin:

Okay. Done.

Sydnee:

Right?

Justin:

Yes, solid.

Sydnee:

So let's, let's say you haven't yet.

Justin:

Okay.

Sydnee:

So what you're looking for is somebody from the, this is from, straight from Soranus, from the ages of 15 to 40-

Justin:

Wait, so I haven't found you yet? Wow, I thought our, uh, terrifying Halloween episode was last week.

Sydnee:

Aww.

Justin:

Go on.

Sydnee:

Aww. Well, let's see how well ou-, how well I fit.

Justin:

Okay. Hit me.

Sydnee:

Okay. From the ages of 15 to 40.

Justin:

Done.

Sydnee:

Okay. Not mannish.

Justin:

Check.

Sydnee:

Compact?

Justin:

Ah, that one's too tricky.

Sydnee:

No, am I, I need to not be compact.

Justin:

Okay.

Sydnee:

So I, you don't want somebody who's mannish, compact, over-sturdy, or too flabby.

Justin:

No, none of this-

Sydnee:

Am I any of those things?

Justin:

No-

Sydnee:

Would say mannish, compact, over-sturdy, or too flabby?

Justin:

No?

Sydnee:

Now, on the plus side, you do want a woman who's very moist. [laughs]

Justin:

That's good. That's key, I think.

Sydnee:

Would you, would you... Don't even answer that question.

Justin:

Now, it says here our, I hate to read ahead, but it says for the man, uh, he should be long, strong, and down to get the friction on. Is that, is that acc-

Sydnee:

I didn't get that in my outline.

Justin:

... historically accurate?

Sydnee:

That's not something that Soranus would suggest. Don't demean the good name of the Sore-Anus with that kind of-

Justin:

Sorry, Sore-Anus.

Sydnee:

... nonsense!

Justin:

You're better than this.

Sydnee:

So okay, so we've got this great woman who's not, who, who's not sturdy, or not over-sturdy-

Justin:

This, this, this mermaid-

Sydnee:

This mermaid, this quite moist mermaid, and her uterus needs to also be, uh, n-, uh, not too dry or too moist, not too lax or too constricted.

Justin:

Okay.

Sydnee:

So how you find that out on, like, a blind date, I don't know.

Justin:

Well, you just-

Sydnee:

"Would you say that your uterus is too lax?"

Justin:

"Rate your uterus in a, let me, can I just put a, a humidifier in there real quick? I just need to-"

Sydnee:

"On a scale from very moist to very dry, where does your uterus fall?"

Justin:

"On a scale of no moss to lots of moss, how much moss would grow in your uteri?"

Sydnee:

No, [laughs] now let's say you find a woman that fits all of these criteria.

Justin:

Sh- she's apparently very forthcoming.

Sydnee:

Mm-hmm [affirmative].

Justin:

And adept at measuring her inner humidity.

Sydnee:

And she's also already agreed to have a kid with you.

Justin:

Okay, good.

Sydnee:

So hopefully it's at least been, I don't know, two or three days.

Justin:

Mm-hmm [affirmative].

Sydnee:

[laughs] Um, it, before you get down, you should eat a snack [laughs], which is good advice, I think, for any, for any kind of healthy activity.

Justin:

Sure.

Sydnee:

Have a snack first. Maybe have a good, a good rubdown? Nice massage.

Justin:

Okay.

Sydnee:

Get the muscles good and loose. And then you should be in a really good mood while you're doing it.

Justin:

Okay, I us-, typically, yes.

Sydnee:

This w-, this was his medical advice. I just wanna tell you, this was his medical advice.

Justin:

For fertility?

Sydnee:

For fertility. If you wanna conceive, have a snack and just, you know, make sure you're really calm and feeling good and happy. Also, um, you wanna make sure that the woman's head is, is big.

Justin:

You should have ordered that a bit better, okay?

Sydnee:

That's a good point. [laughs]

Justin:

When I was checking the woman for, for moistness and compactness, head size should have been part of that equation.

Sydnee:

Yeah. Yeah, you want a woman who's head is fairly big, and her eyes are also fairly big, but you don't want her forehead to protrude.

Justin:

Done.

Sydnee:

Okay? So big head, very moist, not compact, have a snack, have a massage, and go at it.

Justin:

Okay.

Sydnee:

Now, after you're done, the, the idea was that, that the woman's uterus was attempting to trap the man's, uh, sperm inside, and you don't wanna let it, like, dislodge. You don't wanna let it get out. So you wanna make sure and give your large headed, um, moist woman [laughs] some advice, which is: don't cough, don't sneeze, don't jump up and down, don't hold your breath, don't fall, don't lift anything heavy, don't sit on any hard chairs, don't drink alcohol, and definitely don't have a nosebleed.

Justin:

There's, like, okay, I mean, she could probably do most of those, but some of those seem out of her hands.

Sydnee:

She has to do them all. Do you want to have a baby or not?

Justin:

Okay, that's fair. And i- is there anything else she needs to do?

Sydnee:

Yeah. If you could just lay in bed for two days, eat some light grains, and then rub yourself with olive oil.

Justin:

Perfect. Then you'll be... Uh, is he stuffing the woman?

Sydnee:

[laughs]

Justin:

Or is she, is he preparing her for a feast?

Sydnee:

[laughs] This is, like, what Don Draper tells a woman to do.

Justin:

"Preheat your oven to 400, make sure to get some garlic under her skin... "
And I mean, this is like a literal bun in the oven. This is, this is too much.

Sydnee:

So this seems, this seems awfully complicated.

Justin:

Yeah, and made up. A little made up.

Sydnee:

I mean, great advice, definitely. Just really solid medical advice, I think.

Justin:

Yeah.

Sydnee:

Um, but awfully, awfully difficult for the average patient.

Justin:

It's complex. Give me something simpler.

Sydnee:

How about, would you rather just eat some hazelnuts?

Justin:

Yeah, that sounds great.

Sydnee:

Or if you don't wanna eat them, no, no worries, just carry them around in your pocket.

Justin:

Okay. I'm gonna call BS on you, old science dudes. Either eating hazelnuts, it puts something in your body that makes fertility easi-, better, or they're magic beans that you carry adjacent to you. Like-

Sydnee:

I'm sorry, they're magic nuts.

Justin:

Magic nuts that you, you carry with at all ti-, like, which is it? I mean, I kn-, I know you're not s-, big on science, but you can at least know the difference between inside your body and in your Levis.

Sydnee:

Well, I, I have to preface, a lot of the, the advice I'm gonna give at this point, you have to understand that, um, fertility in the, okay, we didn't fully understand the process of conception for a long time.

Justin:

No kidding.

Sydnee:

So [laughs] yeah. So there was a lot about it that, because it was a mystery, also seemed, uh, mystical, seemed kind of magical. And so you see a lot of overlap between, um, actual, what was considered actual medical advice, uh, for fertility during different times in history and what was really religious belief.

Justin:

Mmm.

Sydnee:

Um, it's a great intersect of the two. So you know, at the same time that your doctor might tell you to eat hazelnuts, he also might tell you to pray to a certain fertility God and make sacrifices and, and that kinda thing, because who knows? I mean, it, it, you know, the idea was that it was not in, it was not in doctors' hands; it was not in humans' hands, certainly.

Justin:

Mm-hmm [affirmative]. That makes sense.

Sydnee:

So you could also just, you know, have some cucumber seeds.

Justin:

Perfect. Why not?

Sydnee:

Which, which is really tricky, because the, the thought was that the cucumber itself, like, the flesh of the cucumber, would lower a man's libido,

although it made a woman much lustier. But either way, the seeds are gonna get you knocked up.

Justin:

It's a great visual. And it's, it could be pretty intimidating for a man, so that makes perfect sense, really.

Sydnee:

[laughs] It's a-, it's a, a lot of mythology, uh, surrounds the cucumber, not surprisingly.

Justin:

Yeah.

Sydnee:

Because men wrote the books.

Justin:

Yeah.

Sydnee:

Um, there's also ginseng, was suggested.

Justin:

What, what can't it do?

Sydnee:

Uh, in Norse mythology, it was suggested that, as I mentioned with this kinda intersect with religion, you may just wanna m-, um, give some apples to the Gods, like, sacrifice a lotta apples to the Gods.

Justin:

Mm-hmm [affirmative].

Sydnee:

Apples were known as, like, a, a fertility symbol, so maybe you could just leave some at the local temple.

Justin:

Mm-hmm [affirmative].

Sydnee:

Um-

Justin:

Or chuck it into the sky.

Sydnee:

[laughs] Or just throw it, through it into the sky at the Gods.

Justin:

"Here, take this!"

Sydnee:

"Take this apple!"

Justin:

"Give me a baby!"

Sydnee:

"I'm trying to get pregnant!" Um, the Celts also felt that apples were an important symbol, but you could just, um, keep apple blossoms in your bedroom. So just fill your bedroom with apple blossoms, and that-

Justin:

That's more economical, certainly.

Sydnee:

I'm a-, I'm assuming it's the bedroom that you're gonna, you know, go to town in later.

Justin:

Sure.

Sydnee:

There are also, like, if you just randomly read through, um, almost every country has come up with, at some point, that garlic was impoy-, important, that eating a lotta garlic, um, cinnamon, uh, t-, you know, a teaspoon of cinnamon every day, oysters are a known aphrodisiac, so maybe oysters could also get you pregnant. Eh, I don't know. Uh, the Aztecs preferred avocados.

Justin:

Hmm. Well, they're a super food.

Sydnee:

They are a super food, a- and delicious, I might say.

Justin:

Yeah, sure. Why not?

Sydnee:

So I don't know. I think, a- and, to that extent, I think it would be okay with me if a patient said, "I'm gonna try to eat some avocados to get pregnant." Okay, I mean, avocados are really good for you.

Justin:

They're great, yeah.

Sydnee:

So you know-

Justin:

It's not gonna hurt.

Sydnee:

... I don't think they're gonna help, but they're delicious. Hey, did you, do you know a good place to get avocados, 'cause-

Justin:

It's hard to get good avocados in our region.

Sydnee:

Yeah. No, the Walmart just does not-

Justin:

Just, they're not great.

Sydnee:

They're not very good.

Justin:

They're not great.

Sydnee:

No. Um, now, in renaissance England, they always had great ideas about everything.

Justin:

Mm-hmm [affirmative].

Sydnee:

And by that, I mean they had terrible ideas about medicine.

Justin:

Just enough to be dangerous, is what they knew.

Sydnee:

Right. So of course you would, um, for this treatment, you would visit your local barber, 'cause as we have mentioned in previous episodes, your barber was your surgeon and your physician. So visit your barber, and, uh, he would cook up for you a mixture of some, some really healthy things that you could drink that would get you pregnant.

Justin:

Such as?

Sydnee:

Well, just some milk from a mare.

Justin:

Horse milk.

Sydnee:

Horse milk.

Justin:

Mm-hmm [affirmative].

Sydnee:

Um, but you know, milk is good for you, right? Does a body good.

Justin:

Yeah.

Sydnee:

Right?

Justin:

Has all tha-

Sydnee:

Calcium, vitamin D.

Justin:

Cows or horses, I guess it doesn't really matter.

Sydnee:

So horse milk.

Justin:

Horse milk.

Sydnee:

Um, some rabbits' blood.

Justin:

[laughs] Perfect.

Sydnee:

And some sheep urine.

Justin:

Yeah, I mean, you gotta get sheep urine in there, otherwise what are you wasting your time with horse milk and rabbit blood-

Sydnee:

[laughs]

Justin:

... if you don't have some sheep urine in there. Syd, does it seem to you, and I don't know if this is, like, maybe this is a trend that I've just sort of, uh, created for myself with selection bias, but does it seem to you that our treatments for stuff, uh, there, there reaches this weird apex of unpleasantness versus knowledge that I think, like, around this period, like, around the m-, the, the middle of the millennium, where, like, we know a

little bit, but, a- and because of that, we, we know a little bit, but not enough to actually cure things, our treatments get very unpleasant. It seems like, especially, like, in early times, before we had any sort of way of measuring efficacy or, or research, or anything like that, it seems like our treatments were much more pleasing, you know? Like, "Eat some hazelnuts," you know?

Sydnee:

Sure.

Justin:

"Rub some oil on you." It seemed like when we were just making it up, we were much more inclined to make up pleasurable treatments for things.

Sydnee:

No, I think you're right. I think that, um, the idea was that things that you would c-, okay, if you would come into contact with hazelnuts on a regular basis and you're still not pregnant, then hazelnuts are probably not gonna work. So we need to put you into contact with something that would be a real shock to your system, that would really throw things kind of into a tizzy.

And so, you know, a- and also, the idea was that, at the time, um, you know, back in the good old days, uh, doctors could be elevated to, you know, like, God-like statuses. You know, as time went on, you know, what your physician said was all you listened to. And so if you're a physician, and you've got absolutely no idea what the right thing to do is, um, you better come up with something creative, you know?

Justin:

Right.

Sydnee:

I mean, if you're gonna make it up, you better make it up good.

Justin:

So we're just, maybe at this point, just trying the last thi-, like, we, we removed the possibility of pleasurable treatment, and now we're just like, "I don't know, horse milk? Maybe?"

Sydnee:

I don't know, horses have babies.

Justin:

Horses have babies, and they-

Sydnee:

And they feed them with their milk, so maybe...

Justin:

Maybe?

Sydnee:

And then-

Justin:

I don't know.

Sydnee:

And urine, we know we love urine. We know-

Justin:

Urine's great.

Sydnee:

... you know, for centuries we've been all about pee, so.

Justin:

Sterile.

Sydnee:

So maybe pee. I like that in the 1600s we kinda retreated back to, like, the better stuff, and said, "Welp, what about just sipping on some catnip tea?"

Justin:

Mmm. The cats seem to like it, and they have babies.

Sydnee:

[laughs] In the Victorian era it got even more buttoned up, um, you know, which makes sense. So you would go to your doctor, and if you could bring yourself to say something as, uh, horrendous as you want to get pregnant, which no fine Victorian lady would-

Justin:

It was actually no pregnancy, they had a zero pregnancy-

Sydnee:

It was no, certainly no one spoke of it.

Justin:

It's undignified.

Sydnee:

Um, but then your doctor would just tell you to get out of town. "Just go visit a spa and soak in a bath. Don't, don't talk to me. And let's pretend we never mentioned this. Don't ever talk about this again." So, oh, h- hold on a second, Justin.

Justin:

Mmm, what's that?

Sydnee:

Uh, sorry. I'm getting a page.

Justin:

No, go ahead and take it, that's fine.

Sydnee:

Okay. I'll be right back.

Justin:

We'll wait.

Jesse:

Hey, it's me, Jesse. Max Funcon is Maximumfun.org's annual gathering of friends in the mountains above Los Angeles. Join us this spring for comedy classes, talks, and parties with your new best pals. Tickets for the 2014 edition go on sale Friday, November 29th. And to be honest, we cannot add anymore bed capacity, so expect it to sell out quick. Head to Maxfuncon.com the day after Thanksgiving to grab yours.

Justin:

Hey! Is everything all right?

Sydnee:

Yeah, yeah! Everything's great. Um, um, I'm good to go, I don't have to go in. But just, um, try not to, um, eat any red onions that we didn't grow ourselves, okay?

Justin:

Um...

Sydnee:

Yeah, no big deal. Anyway, um, what I was gonna say next is that, uh, if we move onto China, um, a technique used to improve fertility was actually acupuncture.

Justin:

Oh, okay! That's unpleasant.

Sydnee:

Yeah, but it's still practiced today.

Justin:

Do you think you'd like acupuncture?

Sydnee:

No.

Justin:

Okay, me neither.

Sydnee:

No, I don't th-, and this is not, this is not me saying don't get it, 'cause certainly there are studies that would support that it benefits, uh, many different conditions in many different people. Um, I would definitely go to a licensed pra- practitioner, uh...

Justin:

Yeah, y-, no kiddin'! [laughs]

Sydnee:

Yeah. [laughs] Um, and it's still practiced today, and there's limited studies that suggest that maybe, in patients who are getting in vitro fertilization, it does help some. I don't know, I don't have big studies to support that, but who knows? Um, I, it definitely is a valid treatment for, uh, for many

different things, and while I, myself, am, am a little freaked out by needles, I know that's a weird thing, but I don't, I don't want them in *my* skin.

Justin:

That's fair.

Sydnee:

I would say check it out if you're interested, if you've got, you know, migraines, back pain, whatever!

Justin:

It's an experience. Open yourse-

Sydnee:

Talk to somebody.

Justin:

Open yourself up.

Sydnee:

You should find out about it, go talk to somebody. I'm not against it. Um, there are also, of course, a lotta different Chinese fertility herbs that are still available online. Uh, I did find, I will say, I, I was reading about this, and I found one woman who was, who was selling authentic Chinese fertility herbs, that was what the website said.

It says, "This is the one place you can come to find," you know, "the original mixtures of roots and, and," you know, "dried herbs and flowers and stems and," whatever, "that, that you are supposed to cook in your tea and then drink, and will definitely make you pregnant, and it is ancient Chinese secrets, and they are only people who have practiced Chinese medicine, you know, for, for thousands of years would know this." And then I went to the website, and the woman looking back at me was definitely one of the whitest women I've ever seen. [laughs]

Justin:

Mmm.

Sydnee:

So...

Justin:

Um, those people are fine, it, it's fine to buy stuff like that, just don't let them sell you a Mogwai. They're gonna try.

Sydnee:

[laughs]

Justin:

Eh, they, yeah, stop with the herbs, okay? For me.

Sydnee:

I just don't spend money on them, man. I mean, that's my, that's my, this is my policy: if it's not harmful and it's not expensive, hey, I don't know. We're never gonna do a study on that kinda stuff, so maybe. But if it's harmful or if it's expensive, no, no. Something's up. Something's up.

Justin:

Big Pharma will never let you find out the truth.

Sydnee:

That, well. We won't go, we won't go down that road.

Justin:

Okay. I'm trying to antagonize you.

Sydnee:

I know you're trying to antagonize me.

Justin:

Sydnee, tell me about our next treatment. I'm, I've got all this stuff already added to my Amazon cart. [laughs]

Sydnee:

Right, right. Make sure and get those authentic Chinese fertility herbs; those are my favorite. Um, so mandrake root is a popular, uh, was a popular fertility treatment. It's actually a, a biblical treatment for infertility.

Justin:

Okay.

Sydnee:

Um, I think it's interesting because, I mean, there's not much to say about that. You just dig up a mandrake root and, I don't know, eat it, and then you get pregnant.

Justin:

Perfect.

Sydnee:

Except for that, um, the myth that surrounds mandrake roots themselves, which you may be familiar with if you're a Harry Potter fan.

Justin:

Right, the, if you, if you pull them up, they'll be screaming and they'll attack you.

Sydnee:

Yeah, well they'll scream so loud it will kill you.

Justin:

Mmm.

Sydnee:

So it was great, I found one, um, set of instructions on how to dig up a mandrake root-

Justin:

Without dying?

Sydnee:

... without dying.

Justin:

Without being killed-

Sydnee:

Right.

Justin:

... by its siren song?

Sydnee:

So-

Justin:

Perfect.

Sydnee:

So if you wanna find out how to dig up a mandrake root and, and not die, or if you wanna do that, then the best way is to buy a dog-

Justin:

Okay.

Sydnee:

... and then train your dog to go get a mandrake root. [laughs]

Justin:

Best of luck, dog. I've lost more dogs-

Sydnee:

And then once your dog has dug up the mandrake root and then subsequently, unfortunately, died, uh, then you can go grab it.

Justin:

Oh, the dog does die.

Sydnee:

No, the dog dies-

Justin:

Okay, the dog dies.

Sydnee:

... in this scenario. The dog definitely dies.

Justin:

Can I train my dog to make sure no one's in earshot? Is that-

Sydnee:

[laughs]

Justin:

Is that a possibility?

Sydnee:

[laughs] No. But maybe you can train your dog to make sure certain people are in earshot.

Justin:

Ooo, I like that.

Sydnee:

Ooo! Ooo!

Justin:

What's up? How about that, Clouseau? You'll never catch me.

Sydnee:

No.

Justin:

Sorry, Poirot.

Sydnee:

[laughs]

Justin:

Good luck solving that one!

Sydnee:

[laughs] Um, the, I'm sorry, ASPCA, we didn't really kill any dogs.

Justin:

No. No dogs were harmed in the making of this made up treatment.

Sydnee:

Uh, I really liked one of the things that they tell you not to do in, um, Russian mythology is don't, uh, sit on the floor without a blanket.

Justin:

Why on Earth would that be the case?

Sydnee:

Because, um, if you sit on a cold floor, your ovaries will freeze and then you'll never get pregnant.

Justin:

Mmm. They're so temperamental.

Sydnee:

They, they are. That's the one thing you need to know about ovaries: t-, very temperature sensitive.

Justin:

A lotta people still wonder, "Why did God make it so women could sit on the floor?"

Sydnee:

[laughs]

Justin:

"Couldn't He have fixed their knees in a way that made that impossible?" But no, he trusted us with free will.

Sydnee:

That we would sit on the floor and freeze our ovaries whenever we so choose.

Justin:

It's natural selection, people.

Sydnee:

Uh, pomegranates are a big, um, feature in, in different cultures' fertility myths. Um, in Greek mythology, uh, it was advised that you could eat a pomegranate, you could give them as wedding presents, uh, to, you know, kind of bless the married couple with fertility.

Justin:

Was it, wouldn't it be sweet to buy wedding presents back in, like, ancient times? 'Cause nobody had anything. If you could find a thing, right? Like, you look at Dickensian England, people were given, like, oranges-

Sydnee:

For Christmas, yeah.

Justin:

... for Christmas, 'cause nobody had, nobody had anything! If you have a thing and you give it to someone, I'm sorry, they don't have it. They didn't have anything. Now, people have everything. I had to get someone a garment steamer for, for a wedding gift. Like, I, I, I don't know anybody that owns a garment steamer in real life, but everybody has everything!

Sydnee:

But for a wedding, you get one.

Justin:

Yeah, sure. I would actually like a garment steamer for Christmas. [laughs]

Sydnee:

For our wedding, how many copies of *Trivial Pursuit* did we get?

Justin:

Like, three of the same, th- the exact same *Trivial Pursuit*, which is our fault for putting it on the registry, I guess, but still.

Sydnee:

And it is a great game-

Justin:

It's great!

Sydnee:

... to be fair.

Justin:

Sure.

Sydnee:

Um, in Arabic culture, you could actually, uh, y- you can't use a pomegranate to get pregnant, but you can use it to predict how many kids you're gonna have. So do you wanna know how to do that?

Justin:

Absolutely.

Sydnee:

It's really simple. You draw a circle on the ground and you drop a pomegranate in the middle.

Justin:

Okay.

Sydnee:

However many seeds land outside the circle, that's how many kids you're gonna have.

Justin:

And, I mean-

Sydnee:

Well, it's not gonna get you pregnant, but it's kinda like that game we used to play, where you would, like, loop your fingers around your wrist and see how far up your wrist you could, you could go, and then that's how many kids you're gonna have.

Justin:

So we d-, we used to, they, um, we used to do pop tops to see wh-, and, and apples stems to see who you would marry. Did you, you do that?

Sydnee:

Oh, on the pop tops, and you pull it back and forth, and then-

Justin:

The letter-

Sydnee:

... and the letter? Yeah.

Justin:

We never threw pomegranates in a circle on the ground though. Of course, I didn't see a pomegranate 'til I was in college, so you can't really blame me.

Sydnee:

You know what my pop top always came off on?

Justin:

Tell me.

Sydnee:

J.

Justin:

Aww, I thought so!

Sydnee:

Aww.

Justin:

Did you just yank it off when you had a J? "I'm gonna marry that Justin McElroy."

Sydnee:

Some day.

Justin:

"Some day-"

Sydnee:

Some day he'll notice me.

Justin:

... he will be mine!"

Sydnee:

Some day he'll come back from church camp and call me.

Justin:

Listen, let's not get into that, okay?

Sydnee:

Uh, I I-, I really like one of the Japanese rituals for fertility, which involves, um, the entire community putting on a parade where they walk through the streets with a giant wooden penis.

Justin:

Okay, n-, okay, now, this is my que-, I have t-, many questions. I'm gonna narrow it down to two. First question: is this a communal activity-

Sydnee:

Oh yeah.

Justin:

... where, okay, but is it for communal fertility, or do you have to go to your friend's every time someone's pregna-, like, "Ah, you know, I really, we just carried a wooden penis for Debra. Couldn't you have just gotten in on that action? Couldn't you have decided you wanted to get pregnant then? My back is killing me, and my ego!"

Sydnee:

"If it's good enough for Debra, it's good enough for Susan!"

Justin:

[laughs]

Sydnee:

"Get the wooden penis!"

Justin:

"Get the wooden penis and clear the street of children!"

Sydnee:

[laughs] No, it really was a community thing. Like, "Let's get all woman, women pregnant! Yay!"

Justin:

Together.

Sydnee:

"Fertility!"

Justin:

[laughs]

Sydnee:

Um, I do like, this is kind of in line with your idea of having a baby on a certain day. Um, in, in India, there is, uh, there are some that believe that there is a specific hour, that you will feel when it comes, and it is the hour when it is time for you to have se-, have sex because, um, because your child has a destiny, and in order to fulfill their destiny, they have to be born on a certain day, at a certain time. A-, you know, it's kind of based in the, like, in, in astrology. And so you will know the hour to have sex, which will,

which will result in your child being born on that exact moment that will fulfill their destiny.

Justin:

We should mention that when we talk about these, uh, w-, uh, when we ascribe these theories of certain countries, we're not saying that these are current, w- wide-held beliefs-

Sydnee:

Oh, no, no, no, no, no.

Justin:

... in these nations. This is just sort of a-

Sydnee:

No, these, these-

Justin:

... Apocryphal-

Sydnee:

... are countries of origin.

Justin:

Right.

Sydnee:

These are just where these myths come from. There may be people today who still believe them, there may not. There are plenty of myths that still exist in the US, uh, that, that, you know, your, your mom might tell you when you try to get pregnant. That, "Oh, hey, I heard that this works!" Um, so, no. By, by no means am I saying that everyone in India thinks this is true. Uh, one that I stumbled across, which, again, uh, I believe was from a, um, a blog from a, a British woman who was trying to get pregnant, so I don't know what the original, like, um, uh, what, uh, country of origin was, but if you are trying to get pregnant, you can just take two hot bricks, spread honey all over them, and then kind of l-, uh, f-, like, fan your nether regions with the steam.

Justin:

[laughs] I like that. That's kinky. I'm into that.

Sydnee:

And then, and then you'll get pregnant!

Justin:

Sure.

Sydnee:

Nope.

Justin:

Honey ste-, the old honey steam method.

Sydnee:

The old steam trick. Like that one. It sounds pleasant? Maybe?

Justin:

Til you have to clean the bricks, then it's like, "What did I do?"

Sydnee:

Why are you cleaning the bricks?

Justin:

Gotta clean the honey off the bricks, we can just, just use-

Sydnee:

You just throw them away.

Justin:

Where will you throw a brick away?

Sydnee:

[laughs] In the trashcan?

Justin:

People will still try, they didn't have anything back then!

Sydnee:

I would probably put it-

Justin:

You can't just have a brick-

Sydnee:

I would probably put it in the bathroom trashcan, 'cause that really drives you crazy.

Justin:

Oh my God. Sydnee will put... Okay, our bathroom trashcan is the size of a Trapper Keeper. It is, it, it, so tiny. And Sydnee will jam the lar-, like, she will fill the entire trashcan with a single item. She'll, she'll try to stuff, like, a tarp in there. Like, "I'm done with this tarp."

Sydnee:

I never tried to put a tarp in there.

Justin:

"I'm done with this tarp and ru-, and bricks."

Sydnee:

He just doesn't like when I put bags of trash in the trashcans.

Justin:

Oh, "Then just put it outsi-," anyway. Anything else, Syd?

Sydnee:

Um, as I mentioned, you could always just pray to one of the, uh, hundreds of fertility Gods and Goddesses that are out there, that just span the ages and the religions. Um, that w-, that's always a possibility. Uh, more recently, some of the things I came across as myths, uh, for conception, um, after sex you can just lie on your back with your legs up in the air.

Justin:

That actually makes-

Sydnee:

Gra- gravity help.

Justin:

That makes good sense to me. Is that not-

Sydnee:

Nope, doesn't work.

Justin:

Darn it.

Sydnee:

Uh, some, some may suggest that you take Robitussin, because it contains guaifenesin, which is a, a substance that can thin out mucus. Um, idea being that if it can thin the mucus in your throat, it can thin the mucus on your cervix-

Justin:

Inaccurate?

Sydnee:

... and allow sperm to swim through. Yeah, there's no good studies on this, either. Probably doesn't work. Uh, won't hurt, but probably doesn't work. Um, uh, I-, there are some theories that there are certain lubricants that will help the sperm swim faster.

Justin:

[laughs]

Sydnee:

That's not true.

Justin:

Grease lightening!

Sydnee:

You know the whole thing about wearing boxers instead of briefs?

Justin:

Yeah.

Sydnee:

Not true.

Justin:

Oh.

Sydnee:

Nope, that's a myth!

Justin:

Wow.

Sydnee:

Not necessary.

Justin:

Great. Fantastic.

Sydnee:

And, um, then this is one that I read that I will have to say, it was listed as a myth, but it's definitely 100% true every time, this is coming from a physician, that women definitely need to have an orgasm in order to conceive.

Justin:

You heard it here first, guys.

Sydnee:

There you go. And that's definitely, men, that is true, that is true. Not a lie, not a m-, no matter what all science might say.

Justin:

Which is weird, becau-, it, that also explains why no one was conceived until the 1960s.

Sydnee:

[laughs] Um, and, uh, the only other thing I wanted to mention that's still recent is, uh, Feng Shui.

Justin:

Mm-hmm [affirmative].

Sydnee:

Um, there are some ideas in Feng Shui as to how you can get pregnant. Um, if you, if you just put some pictures around your house of maybe some elephants with their trunks down, perhaps some pictures of open pomegranates, or maybe just some pictures of babies. [laughs]

Justin:

That's goo-, that's-

Sydnee:

Just anybody's babies. Just babies.

Justin:

Just keep your eyes on the prize. It's like, motivational. "I want one of those!"

Sydnee:

"I'm gonna put a picture of them up there!" You can also, um, allow some, some other kids, not your kids, 'cause you don't have any, but allow some kids to jump on your bed that you're gonna later have sex in.

Justin:

That can, actually, kids jumping on your bed that aren't related to you is actually a pretty good contraceptive, too. That one works both ways. Like, "Ah, God. Nevermind!"

Sydnee:

I wish, I really wish, we shoulda thought to do that while we were passing out candy to trick or treaters. "Hey, g-, would you mind if we had your kids come inside, just real quick, uh, come upstairs to our bedroom and jump on our bed that we're gonna have sex in later?"

Justin:

"Listen, I, I-"

Sydnee:

"Are you cool with that?"

Justin:

"I don't know if you're satisfied with that fun size Snickers, but I gotta tell you, for a few minutes of bed jumping, I can get you into a full size Milky Way, no problem." [laughs]

Sydnee:

[laughs] Um, and then don't keep, uh, don't have a ceiling fan, because it cuts through your abdominal energy.

Justin:

Oh, everybody knows that.

Sydnee:

Right, right.

Justin:

The, so thank you so much for listening to our, uh, largely made up treatments for, uh, fertility. We hope that you will try all of them.

Sydnee:

Or none of them.

Justin:

Or none of them.

Sydnee:

Or if you're, if you really wanna get pregnant, you know, go see your, go see your doctor. Go see your family doc, go see your OBGYN, go talk to them.

Justin:

I- if-

Sydnee:

They could probably help you out.

Justin:

If-

Sydnee:

Or at least tell you how you really do it.

Justin:

If you have heard of, uh, some, some, uh, fertility treatments that we maybe missed, uh, email us, Sawbones@maximumfun.org is our email address. It's also a great place to just say hi, or suggest a topic for the show. Maximum Fun is also where you'll find a whole bevy of podcasts from our network, including but not limited to *Stop Podcasting Yourself*, *Judge John Hodgman*, *Wam Bam Pow*, *One Bad Mother*, *Bullseye Jordan*, *Jesse, Go-*

Sydnee:

My Brother and Me.

Justin:

Uh, thank you so much. There's also forums there, so go and chat with your friends. Uh-

Sydnee:

If you don't know where babies come from, maybe you could ask one of them.

Justin:

Yeah. We got a Twitter account, @Sawbones. Uh, I'm @JustinMcElroy.

Sydnee:

And I'm @SydneeMcElroy.

Justin:

That's S-Y-D-N-E-E.

Sydnee:

And always, you can review us on iTunes. Thank you so much when you do; I read all of them.

Justin:

All I want-

Sydnee:

I appreciate them.

Justin:

... for my birthday, you can give me one birthday present, review us on iTunes and then tweet about the show with a link to, uh, to, to tell your friends to do the same. And quick reminder, by the way, just a PSA: if you wanna tweet about our show, or basically anything, uh, if you start the tweet with the name of the thing you're tweeting about, only people who follow that thing will see that tweet, which kinda defeats the purpose. So, uh, keep that in mind whenever you're tweeting about anything, really.

Sydnee:

How to use Twitter-

Justin:

How to use Twitter-

Sydnee:

... from Justin.

Justin:

... 101, and if you wanna know how to use your body, or how not to, throughout the ages, make sure you join us every Friday for *Sawbones*. Until then, I'm Justin McElroy.

Sydnee:

I'm Sydnee McElroy.

Justin:

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

[theme music plays out]

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