

Sawbones Ep 021: Self-Surgery

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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 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 am your co-host Justin McElroy.

Sydnee:

Hey, I'm Sydnee.

Justin:

Sydster, Dr. Syd, what's going on, babe?

Sydnee:

Oh, just, you know, not, I'm not feeling too good today.

Justin:

You, you don't sound great to me right now.

Sydnee:

Ah, no. Um, just a little, little tummy pain. Just a little...

Justin:

Let me...

Sydnee:

Hooo.

Justin:

... let me feel right here. Let me see where it's tender.

Sydnee:

Ah!!

Justin:

Okay, that's bad. Whoa, my audio just spiked really bad. I'm sorry for those at home. Sydnee did not mean to be in such mortal, mortal pain. Uh, what's going on sweetheart?

Sydnee:

Please don't do that again.

Justin:

I won't do that again. Just tell me what's, tell me what's wrong. We're going to get through this.

Sydnee:

Well, um...

Justin:

Did you, is it gas?

Sydnee:

No.

Justin:

I know you like when I ask is it gas.

Sydnee:

No.

Justin:

Is it gas?

Sydnee:

No. If I wasn't hurting so badly, I'd punch you.

Justin:

What's wrong, sweetheart?

Sydnee:

Uh, I, um, I, see, okay. I've got this pain. It's kind of down in, like, the right, um, lower part of my stomach.

Justin:

Mm-hmm [affirmative], mm-hmm [affirmative], mm-hmm [affirmative].

Sydnee:

Um, I'm, oh God, I'm running, I think I'm running a fever. Yeah, I'm definitely running a fever.

Justin:

You probably think you're making it obvious to people, uh, what's going on with you, but us, us, uh, us noobs, uh, need a little bit of guidance. What's, what's, what's the problem, sweetheart?

Sydnee:

Honey, I hate to break it to you, but I think I got an appendicitis.

Justin:

Oh no.

Sydnee:

Yeah.

Justin:

Ah, okay. So podcast-

Sydnee:

I keep, and I ke- I keep drinking this beer to try to make it go away. It's not going away.

Justin:

Uh, okay, that can't be advisable, medically speaking.

Sydnee:

Well, I just, I hate doctors.

Justin:

Uh, yep, well, oh, wow, really? Huh.

Sydnee:

Yeah. I just can't, I can't stand them and hospitals. Ohh, I don't want to go to the hospital.

Justin:

All right, so what do-

Sydnee:

And surgery. I don't want to go under anesthesia.

Justin:

What are you going to do after you pick up your Oscar for awesome acting? What are you [laughs] what are you going to do?

Sydnee:

I don't know what you're talking about.

Justin:

What are you going to do?

Sydnee:

I was, I know this is going to sound kind of crazy.

Justin:

Go on. I'm here for you.

Sydnee:

But, I mean, you know, I went to medical school and, like, technically that license, I mean, it gives me a right to do anything, you know?

Justin:

Like...

Sydnee:

I mean, I have the right to, to do surgery if I want to do. I mean, I don't have privileges anywhere because I'm a family doctor, but I d- I can do it.

Justin:

You could do, I mean, you could do it

Sydnee:

I mean, I've seen them in med school. [laughs]

Justin:

Wait. Okay, wait. Wa- wa- wa- wa- wa- whoa. Sydnee, are you, are you right now in, in our home, suggesting that you are going to take out your own appendix?

Sydnee:

I just think it's the most reasonable option.

Justin:

That seems unlikely.

Sydnee:

It's just, I mean, it's no, it's no big deal. I'll just, I've, I've got to get down to the hospital. I've got to steal some local anesthetic. Um, hopefully some sterile drapes and a scalpel.

Justin:

Okay. I'm going to make you a deal, okay? Here's my deal. Are you, are you willing to hear me out?

Sydnee:

Okay. We don't have much time, though, probably.

Justin:

All right. Uh, here's my deal. You take this pill that will make your appendix stop hurting for a half hour. It's Appendisol.

Sydnee:

What [laughs] what...

Justin:

You take this pill. [laughs]

Sydnee:

Di- is this a patent medicine?

Justin:

This is Appendisol and it'll make your appendix stop hurting for a half hour, and you, if you can show me there's any historical basis for doctors doing this sort of thing, I, I will let you remove your appendix.

Sydnee:

Are, are you sure this isn't just...

Justin:

Bottoms up.

Sydnee:

... like, an opium that... Oh. Wow. I, that really works.

Justin:

Not bad. Not bad, right?

Sydnee:

That's some good stuff.

Justin:

Mostly meth.

Sydnee:

Oh. Whoo.

Justin:

All right, you've got 30 minutes. Go.

Sydnee:

I'm going to be riding this dragon for 30 minutes. [laughs] I'm excited.

Justin:

Ride the, ride, ride the snake. Tell me about doctors who have performed surgery on themselves.

Sydnee:

Well, I'm not breaking new ground here, Justin. People have done this before. Um, back in 1949, there was a doctor in Colorado, George Balderston, and, uh, he didn't, luckily for him, didn't have an appendicitis. Um, but he did wonder what it was like to be under anesthesia. He wanted to see what the experience was for, he was a surgeon and he did, you know,

surgeries, and so he wanted to see what the experience was like for his patients. So he decided, you know what? You don't need your appendix. May, might go bad at some point. I'd better just take my own out.

Justin:

Okay. [laughs] Okay. I have a problem with Dr. George Balderston. I'm assuming he's dead, so I can't bring it to him directly.

Sydnee:

Well, he did survive the surgery. Spoilers, sorry.

Justin:

Okay, that's fine. Dr. George, I can dig you wanting to, um, see what anesthesia's like. Um, I don't know why you had to choose that moment to remove your appendix. That seems like sort of throwing, um, good money after bad, like you're, you're, you're trying to see the affects of anesthesia. That's fine. Why can't you see the affects of anesthesia on you, like, trying to do a Sudoku?

Sydnee:

[laughs]

Justin:

Like, I don't know why you had to see, like, I got to see how bad this is. Let me get a knife.

Sydnee:

Well, uh, he just wanted an authentic experience, you know. His pat- he wasn't-

Justin:

You can get an authentic experience by, like, doing some light gardening wh- on, on anesthesia. Why do you have to choose that moment to do surgery on yourself?

Sydnee:

Uh, I think the most amazing part is he didn't use a mirror to do the surgery.

Justin:

Hmm. Hmm. Hmm.

Sydnee:

I don't know. I've, I've tried to envision the position you'd have to lay in to get a good view and not use a mirror.

Justin:

I think it's downward facing dog, right? [laughs]

Sydnee:

He was back to work in two days.

Justin:

God bless him.

Sydnee:

Yeah, he'd also, there was also some thought that the reason he did it is because he had been kind of criticized publicly by a member of the community who said that he had done a surgery and that he'd botched it and he wasn't a good surgeon, and so he wanted to-

Justin:

[laughs] Where, where do they get off?

Sydnee:

[laughs] He wanted to prove to everybody...

Justin:

Questioning Dr. George. [laughs]

Sydnee:

Uh, he knows what he's doing.

Justin:

He's a [laughs] he's a seasoned pro.

Sydnee:

He was not the only one, uh, in history to remove his own appendix.

Justin:

Really?

Sydnee:

No. There's actually what I think is a, a pretty cool move. So unlike Dr. Balderston, Dr. uh, Rogozov, which is a name some people may be familiar with, he was a, uh, s- he was a physician at the Soviet Research Station in Antarctica ar- Antarctica back in the '50s and '60s.

Justin:

No bee, no native bees in Antarctica. We learned that from *The Chase* yesterday.

Sydnee:

That's right. There are no bees there.

Justin:

There might be bees [laughs] but they are, they are, like, tourists.

Sydnee:

[laughs]

Justin:

They are not native bees.

Sydnee:

They're just visiting. They're just visiting bees. Can you imagine how cute they are with their little Hawaiian shirts and their...

Justin:

Little bee parkas, striped, striped parkas.

Sydnee:

... little bee cameras.

Justin:

Love it. Okay, so tell me about this cat.

Sydnee:

So he, like I said, he was the only physician stationed at this, um, at this research setup, uh, you know, out in the middle of nowhere, and he started having symptoms that he diagnosed, he finally realized were an appendicitis.

Justin:

Mm-hmm [affirmative].

Sydnee:

So you've got to figure that's pretty scary. It's 1961. Transportation home is not readily available. Um, an appendicitis is a time-limited condition. You know, you've got to do something about it before it ruptures and...

Justin:

Because if that, that thing bursts, it's, it's, it's bad news bears.

Sydnee:

It usually is. Um, you know, there, of course, it can rupture and it can kind of wall itself off in, like, a little pocket of infection so it's not always immediately fatal, but yes, it's a bad situation. It can flood your system with toxins. You can become se- septic. You can definitely die. Uh, and that's what he thought was going to happen.

He actually wrote about how he was getting sicker and he knew what was happening and he didn't want to tell anybody else around him. He had, like, a mechanic and, like, a geologist and other people who were very intelligent but had no idea how to do surgery. And he didn't want to tell them what was going on because, you know, he knew the end was coming.

Justin:

So what'd he do?

Sydnee:

So he decided to take matters into his own hands.

Justin:

Literally.

Sydnee:

So he got his friends, actually I think it was a mechanic and a meteorologist who were at his sides and handed him instruments. He used local anesthetic and a mirror and removed his own appendix.

Justin:

Fantastic.

Sydnee:

Pretty amazing.

Justin:

That's pretty great.

Sydnee:

Yeah.

Justin:

See? See, George? See, Dr. George? That's how you do it. Wait for the need to arise.

Sydnee:

Yeah, I think it's more heroic when you actually need to. To continue kind of the theor- the, the, the storyline here that you really don't want to be stationed in Antarctica for any reason, there was another doctor in the '90s, Dr. Jerri Nielsen, who, there's actually a great book written about this and I think there was a movie based on it too. She was stationed alone there, the only doctor. She discovered, on self breast exam, discovered a lump in her breast.

Justin:

Wow.

Sydnee:

She, uh, biopsied it herself. She actually teleconferenced with, uh, doctors who did those procedures to tell her how to do the biopsy on herself, which is pretty amazing.

Justin:

That, yeah, that's crazy.

Sydnee:

Uh, and not only, she did one, but then the, the way that she kind of, um, stored the s- the tissue and sent it to be, you know, examined under microscope and all that, it wasn't, it didn't work. It wasn't viable, so she had to do a second biopsy on herself. But, I mean, she, she did it and she diagnosed herself with cancer and then gave herself chemo there.

Justin:

Whoa.

Sydnee:

Yeah. Yeah. I mean, she...

Justin:

Whoa.

Sydnee:

... she was doing it through, with the help of, you know, doctors teleconferenced in but...

Justin:

Yeah.

Sydnee:

I think it's pretty, I think it's pretty amazing.

Justin:

That's fantastic. Wow. I, I don't have a joke to say. That's, like, the hardest core thing I've ever heard. [laughs]

Sydnee:

Well, I, I thought it was the hardest core thing I ever heard, but as I was kind of looking into this idea that, I mean, my thought was probably only doctors did self surgery, um, because why would you think about doing surgery on yourself if you didn't at least have some familiarity with anatomy, physiology, anything?

Justin:

Scalpels.

Sydnee:

Yeah, scalpels. Um, you know, how blood works.

Justin:

Mm-hmm [affirmative]. [laughs] Blood, bones, all the, all the important parts.

Sydnee:

So, uh...

Justin:

Gully works.

Sydnee:

What I found is that what I have dubbed civilians, or non-medical personnel, are actually, um, maybe even more likely to attempt surgery on themselves.

Justin:

[laughs] Unsurprising.

Sydnee:

[laughs] Than those of us in the medical profession.

Justin:

Really, if you think about it. Yeah, I can do that.

Sydnee:

And th- there are lots of reasons-

Justin:

People watch Ma-, people watch, uh, cooking shows and think they can be on *Master Chef*. Like, I don't know why, I don't know why we don't all immediately assume, like, well, I, I'm, I watched *ER* until it got bad. I, I watched most of *House*. I think I can handle it.

Sydnee:

I, I saw a Clooney stick that straw in that guy's neck. I got this.

Justin:

Yeah, I'll stick a straw, I'll stick a straw in my neck.

Sydnee:

Um, so there, there have been, uh, like I said, non-medical personnel who have attempted various surgeries, some, um, because they had to, others because, I don't know, the doctor seemed like an awfully long way away. Um...

Justin:

Lazy. You're saying we're lazy.

Sydnee:

[laughs]

Justin:

Pathologically lazy.

Sydnee:

One, one patient that definitely had to was, uh, as recent as 2000, um, Inez Ramirez, who performed her own c-section.

Justin:

What could have necessitated that?

Sydnee:

She was-

Justin:

How did this catch her by surprise?

Sydnee:

She was laboring on her own. She had labored for many hours and realized, uh, she didn't have, she was in a remote area, didn't have a, a midwife or a physician or a nurse or anyone to assist her. Realized that the baby was not going to come. This was her, um, I believe, fifth child, so she was familiar.

Justin:

Mm-hmm [affirmative].

Sydnee:

And she decided...

Justin:

She knows a clinger when she sees one.

Sydnee:

... there's only one way that this baby's coming out. So she got, I believe, a kitchen knife and performed a...

Justin:

No.

Sydnee:

... an auto-c-section.

Justin:

Auto-c-section here meaning, like, to herself.

Sydnee:

Yep.

Justin:

Just sliced it open and cut that bab- what if she had a scar already- I wonder if she had already had a c-section. Because that would be almost sort of like tracing in a way. I think that would make it a little bit easier if you had a scar to work off of.

Sydnee:

Uh, no, it doesn't. [laughs]

Justin:

You, that you know of.

Sydnee:

It doesn't.

Justin:

You don't know [crosstalk 00:12:54]

Sydnee:

No, this, if, if she had, there's just more...

Justin:

Big talk, big talk.

Sydnee:

... there's just more scar tissue that you have to get through.

Justin:

Oh man. That is rough.

Sydnee:

Yeah. No, but she performed her own c-section. The reason that it's fun to tell this story on a podcast is that she did survive, absolutely.

Justin:

Huh.

Sydnee:

I, I believe she actually sent one of her young children, like her six-year-old son, to call for help.

Justin:

[laughs] Not the baby, I'm assuming.

Sydnee:

And, and she covered up, no, not, not the newborn. [laughs]

Justin:

Hey, listen. Listen [crosstalk 00:13:19] This family's about nothing if not [laughs] self-sufficiency.

Sydnee:

[laughs]

Justin:

You are going to go learn the use of-

Sydnee:

This is a fair trade. I just cut you out of my own uterus. You're going to go for help.

Justin:

You can pick up an iPhone and push the buttons. U- c- use Siri, okay? I'll let you cheat, baby.

Sydnee:

[laughs] She, although to be fair, hopefully if she had Siri, that would have been the first call.

Justin:

One would hope. If he, if she, if she had a, even one to two bars I think is enough to, to get 911 on the horn.

Sydnee:

[laughs] She, uh, she survived and the baby survived. Uh, they, the child got help and, um, she was taken to a hospital where the wound was repaired and, uh, she had damaged her bowels and stuff, too, and anyway, they fixed everything up and she did better. It's a really heroic story.

Justin:

Yeah, that's, that's pretty great. Next time I hope she goes to a hospital, though. I do- I don't think that's a trick you want to repeat. You know, why tempt fate? That's what I say.

Sydnee:

This, this heroic story is, I think, a little bit in contrast to, let's go back pretty far to, uh, Boston Corbett, who, again, I'm sure you know who that is, Justin.

Justin:

Uh...

Sydnee:

Obviously.

Justin:

If my history does not fail me, that was the inventor of the Mallomar. Boston Corbett.

Sydnee:

That's, that's completely wrong.

Justin:

Okay, who was Boston Corbett?

Sydnee:

He's the soldier who killed John Wilkes Booth.

Justin:

Okay. All right.

Sydnee:

Uh, he performed surgery on himself, uh, obviously not a c-section and not an appendectomy. Um, but he castrated himself.

Justin:

Now, why did he do that?

Sydnee:

He was tempted by prostitutes. He was a God-fearing man, did not want to give into this temptation, and so he thought this was his only, uh, recourse.

Justin:

It must have been hard for Boston after killing John Wilkes Booth, because he knew the publicity was coming. [laughs]

Sydnee:

[laughs]

Justin:

He knew, he knew that the, that the reporters were going to start swarming, like listen, guys, I'm happy to answer a few surface questions. Let's not get too personal.

Sydnee:

[laughs]

Justin:

Boston's made some decisions, okay?

Sydnee:

There's a lot of skeletons in this closet.

Justin:

And not as many bones as you would think.

Sydnee:

[laughs]

Justin:

Um...

Sydnee:

No, wait. Do you think...

Justin:

I removed my penis bone.

Sydnee:

Wait. Do you know [laughs] do you know what castration is?

Justin:

That's, uh, I know it's where you remove the, the, um, the, uh, um, uh, the balls.

Sydnee:

Can we say testicles? We're adults here.

Justin:

The testicles.

Sydnee:

Just making sure.

Justin:

The testicles.

Sydnee:

And for the record, there is no penis bone.

Justin:

Well...

Sydnee:

I'd just like to say that publicly.

Justin:

Agree to disagree.

Sydnee:

In humans.

Justin:

Agree to disagree.

Sydnee:

Uh, I think what's great about this story is that he, he castrated himself and then he went to, um, his, uh, church, his prayer house, I believe, uh, said some prayers and then went and had a nice dinner and then went to the doctor [laughs] to seek medical attention for his open wound where he castrated himself.

Justin:

I wonder what dinner...

Sydnee:

[laughs]

Justin:

... is the right pairing for having just removed one's testicles.

Sydnee:

Uh...

Justin:

That's for better men than me to say. I, I, uh, I myself would only let a seasoned medical professional remove these testicles.

Sydnee:

[laughs] Only, only the best.

Justin:

Suffice it to say. Well, and also, think about it. You're Boston Corbett, killed the man who killed Lincoln. Who's going to challenge you on your manhood? Hey, I killed John Wilkes Booth. You can't s- you can't make jokes at my expense.

Sydnee:

Doesn't matter that I removed my own testicles.

Justin:

A lot of peo- uh, John Wilkes Booth actually made fun of him. That's the, that's, that's what a lot of people don't know.

Sydnee:

Oh, that's why it happened.

Justin:

It had nothing to do with Lincoln.

Sydnee:

No, it had nothing to... Oh.

Justin:

Yeah.

Sydnee:

Hidden history.

Justin:

Yeah.

Sydnee:

Eh?

Justin:

[laughs] Hidden history, our new, our new podcast where I lie and Sydnee enables.

Sydnee:

[laughs] I hope he had a steak, or just something really decadent. Oh, uh, Justin, I'm sorry, that's my pager going off.

Justin:

Oh. Oh, yeah, go ahe- go for it. We'll wait.

Sydnee:

Okay. I'll be back.

Jesse:

Hey, it's me, Jesse. MaxFunCon 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 any more bed capacity, so expect it to sell out quick. Head to MaxFunCon.com the day after Thanksgiving to grab yours.

Sydnee:

Okay, sorry, I'm back.

Justin:

Oh, no problem. Is everything okay?

Sydnee:

Yeah, just try to avoid using any, um, you know what Band-Aids are?

Justin:

Yeah.

Sydnee:

Stay away from those. Definitely just stay away, just for the next two to three years.

Justin:

Who's next on our list, Syd?

Sydnee:

Uh, so next I want to continue with our, um, non-medical personnel who performed surgeries on themselves. Uh, Johannes Latheus is, uh, one of my favorites. We're going way, way back to 1620 and, um, Johannes removed his own bladder stone.

Justin:

Those can be unpleasant. I know that, um, now, okay, can I ask you a question and you promise not to make fun of me? Is that different than a kidney stone?

Sydnee:

Well, it's just in a different place.

Justin:

The bladder.

Sydnee:

Same idea.

Justin:

Okay.

Sydnee:

Uh...

Justin:

You know, Griffin used to get kidney stones.

Sydnee:

I know. They're very painful.

Justin:

Oh boy. He did not like them.

Sydnee:

Yeah. They're very painful and so do, so are bladder stones.

Justin:

Now, he went to the doctor, like a wussy. Uh, he didn't have the guts. Despite my encouragement, he did not have the guts to remove it himself.

Sydnee:

Well, he's a wuss, unlike Johannes, who...

Justin:

Tell me, what's, what...

Sydnee:

He, he decided, you know, this bladder stone is driving me crazy. He could feel it. He, because it was that big.

Justin:

Wow.

Sydnee:

And so he decided, um, that he was just going to take it out himself. Uh, before he did it, he did, um, ask his wife to go to the fish market.

Justin:

[laughs]

Sydnee:

[laughs]

Justin:

Why?

Sydnee:

Well, he, I, he just didn't want her around. I mean, it was a [crosstalk 00:19:31]

Justin:

Oh, okay, he was just trying to get her out of the house.

Sydnee:

Yeah.

Justin:

That was what passed for fun in those days.

Sydnee:

"Yeah, why don't you hit the fish market, honey?"

Justin:

Hey, listen.

Sydnee:

"Oh, okay. Thanks, Johannes!"

Justin:

"Here's two pence."

Sydnee:

[laughs]

Justin:

"Go treat yourself to a nice haddock."

Sydnee:

He just got his, he got his brother to help him. So see, Griffin could have just called you up.

Justin:

Mm-hmm [affirmative].

Sydnee:

Gotten some help. See, and, and what he did is he, uh, he told his brother, so if you'll just pull aside my scrotum real quick, um...

Justin:

You know, family connections can run really deep.

Sydnee:

[laughs]

Justin:

There, there are very few things I wouldn't do for my brothers. Uh, but the moment I hear the words, "Just pull aside my scrotum" slip past their lips, well, folks, I'm on the nearest Grayhound back to Huntington.

Sydnee:

[laughs]

Justin:

Guaranteed.

Sydnee:

Uh, he, in the meantime, grabbed the stone, kind of through the perineum. You know what that is? That's the area...

Justin:

Oh, that's the taint.

Sydnee:

Oh, don't use that word. Yes.

Justin:

That's the taint.

Sydnee:

That's that area there.

Justin:

That's the taint.

Sydnee:

He grabbed that and just used a knife that he had...

Justin:

[laughs]

Sydnee:

... he'd gotten, [laughs] that he'd prepared somehow, gotten clean in some way, in some manner.

Justin:

After, after [laughs], after what historians agree was at least six to eight hours of sharpening.

Sydnee:

[laughs]

Justin:

No, no, no, uh, no, no, not quite yet.

Sydnee:

Probably a little more. Little more.

Justin:

No, little sharper. Just a little sharper and I think we're ready to go.

Sydnee:

[laughs] He completely sharpened out of existence three knives before finally...

Justin:

[laughs]

Sydnee:

[laughs] ... finally settling on this one.

Justin:

"No, no, okay, this is, no, no, nope, that one broke. I whittled it into infinity. Need a new knife. Gosh, you guys, these knives, huh? Don't make them like they used to."

Sydnee:

So he made an incision in, in his perineum, and the way it is described, all of this is described by Dr. Ni- Nicolaes Tulp, who, uh, wrote down, like, accounts of different kind of medical oddities at the time. Um, and the, the way he describes what he did next, so he, he made an incision and then by standing again and again managed to make the wound long enough to allow the stone to pass. I, try to work tho- out those mechanics in your head.

Justin:

I do- I...

Sydnee:

Because I can't.

Justin:

No. I don't care who is in, I could have 40 Billy Blanks encouraging me to do those particular calisthenics...

Sydnee:

[laughs]

Justin:

... and I still don't think they would have the desired effect.

Sydnee:

He eventually had to reach in and actually remove the stone, um, just put his fingers up there and pull it out.

Justin:

Just go for it.

Sydnee:

Um...

Justin:

Just bored of the whole thing.

Sydnee:

Thank goodness at that point, he actually got someone who knew something about medicine involved, called, called someone for help because he had a big, a big hole where it shouldn't be.

Justin:

Well, his fingers got stuck.

Sydnee:

[laughs]

Justin:

What do you want him to do?

Sydnee:

Um, and it healed up, actually, pretty nicely and he survived his, um, his bizarre procedure.

Justin:

See? We rely on doctors so frequently, uh, but little did you know, we rarely really need with a capital N...

Sydnee:

Uh, I don't, I don't know.

Justin:

Capital-N need them.

Sydnee:

This was a 4 cm stone, too.

Justin:

Woof.

Sydnee:

Pretty big. Um, Deborah Sampson is a pretty cool character. She's from 1782.

Justin:

Mm-hmm [affirmative].

Sydnee:

Member of the Continental Army posing as a man.

Justin:

Wow, cool.

Sydnee:

Yeah. Um, and she, uh, fought bravely, took two musket balls to the thigh and her, uh, comrades, uh, started, you know, carrying her to the hospital, you know, because she had, she'd been shot in the thigh. Uh, but she was, um, adamant she didn't want to go because she knew she'd be discovered, so they managed to get her to the hospital where she took off and ran away, limped away, rushed away.

Justin:

Let's not, not, not run away.

Sydnee:

Not ran away.

Justin:

Not ran away.

Sydnee:

Uh, but escaped and then dug one of the two balls out of her own thigh to avoid being found out as a, as a woman. The other one remained there and she had a limp all her life.

Justin:

Deborah Sampson, you are the coolest person that has ever been alive.

Sydnee:

Pretty awesome.

Justin:

Pretty awesome, Deborah Sampson.

Sydnee:

Um...

Justin:

I think you a- a- at that point, can't you just, I, I th- I would think that they would not make a big fuss. But don't you think that cou- she could have, you know what? Shame on you, Deborah. I think if you had just owned up to it and said, "Yeah, I'm a woman and I've got two musket balls in my leg. So who is tough now?"

Sydnee:

"And I am going to take them out myself."

Justin:

"Watch me."

Sydnee:

You know what I actually think is sad, is I think she was actually wounded again later and then they did find her out. She, you know, was in a condition

where she couldn't hide it and, um, she was taken in for medical attention. They figured out she was a woman and she was, uh, discharged from the army.

Justin:

Nuh-uh.

Sydnee:

Unfortunately, yeah.

Justin:

Well, u- unfortunately yes, but let's just assume that Deborah, despite her apparent real thirst to kill people, uh, and defend this great country, maybe was, was through with the whole enterprise at that point, right? I mean, she had probably had her fill of warfare. I know I would have. I could have a musket ball within a football field's range of me and be pretty much done with war.

Sydnee:

[laughs]

Justin:

Maybe Deborah was ready for a break. [laughs]

Sydnee:

I, th- let's tell the story that way.

Justin:

Yeah, let's go with that.

Sydnee:

I like it better. It's a happier ending.

Justin:

You know what? You know what? I'm going home. War is dumb. I don't want any part of it.

Sydnee:

War is dumb...

Justin:

War is dumb.

Sydnee:

... and I got shot.

Justin:

[laughs] I got shot three times, I'm out.

Sydnee:

And, and your biggest, and you know what your biggest 'ish is, that I'm a, that I'm a woman.

Justin:

Wow.

Sydnee:

So I'm over this.

Justin:

Wow, man. Shame, you know what? Shame on you.

Sydnee:

[laughs]

Justin:

Shame on all of you.

Sydnee:

Shame on all of you.

Justin:

Shame on all.

Sydnee:

Take a long, hard look.

Justin:

Think about what you're doing.

Sydnee:

Uh, so before I tell you about my, my favorite doctor...

Justin:

David Tennant.

Sydnee:

Well, that should be everyone's favorite doctor, clearly. But my favorite doctor who performed surgery on himself...

Justin:

Okay.

Sydnee:

... which hopefully David Tennant hasn't.

Justin:

[laughs] Look out, David. Don't do it.

Sydnee:

Don't, David. Please. Please. Sydnee's asking. Um, in the 1970s there's a, there's a patient that I want to talk to you about first who, um, could not control his, uh, libido and w- performed, um, many acts of onanism. If you get my drift. And in an effort to control that he, uh, also-

Justin:

Masturbation.

Sydnee:

Thank you, Justin.

Justin:

My pleasure.

Sydnee:

He removed-

Justin:

Literally.

Sydnee:

He removed both of his testicles, similar to our, our previous, um, patient.

Justin:

Mm-hmm [affirmative].

Sydnee:

Uh, but this wasn't enough. He still found that he had the desire, you know, that, that he, his sexual desire persisted. So he actually attempted a procedure where he was-

Justin:

One, one would assume there was a lull. [laughs]

Sydnee:

Well, yeah. [laughs]

Justin:

For at least a few days.

Sydnee:

I would think. I would think. Uh, he actually attempted to, uh, cut the nervous input, the, denervate, so cut the nerves to his own adrenal glands because he thought they were releasing the hormones that were causing the problems.

Justin:

Accurate?

Sydnee:

Uh, th- this is so much more complicated than that. [laughs]

Justin:

Yeah, there's a lot of other issues.

Sydnee:

There's a lot of, there's a lot going on here.

Justin:

[laughs]

Sydnee:

Um...

Justin:

Yeah, no kidding.

Sydnee:

Uh, but I think it's pretty fascinating. He actually read a lot of, um, surgical texts and an- anatomy books to try to figure out how he could, I mean, not remove his adrenal glands. He wanted to go in and just cut the nervous input to them, which is kind of fascinating.

Justin:

Y- yeah. I mean, I, I guess. Seems misdirected.

Sydnee:

Lu- luckily he was, he was disco- he couldn't com- complete the procedure. He called EMS. He got help and, uh, he also got psychiatric help at the same time, thank goodness.

Justin:

Hey, listen, I think it was the right call.

Sydnee:

Uh, I, I want to tell you about, lastly, my favorite doctor who, um, who not, who did n- did not only do one surgery on himself but actually did three.

Justin:

Okay.

Sydnee:

Dr. Evan O'Neill Kane, uh, lived from 1861 to 1932.

Justin:

Barely.

Sydnee:

[laughs] Well, that's not far off. He was a surgeon from Pennsylvania, and he was actually, you know, a pretty cool guy overall. He opened his own hospital. Um, he was, at the time there were railway surgeons, which, uh, you could think of it similar...

Justin:

That's a, that's a euphemism for hobos, right?

Sydnee:

No, like a, you know, like a flight surgeon or somebody who...

Justin:

Okay.

Sydnee:

So, I mean, you think about at the time there would, there would be these, uh, long trips by railway and you needed somebody who could, uh, you know, perform procedures and stuff, a doctor.

Justin:

You couldn't always wait to get into the nearest, nearest town. Yeah.

Sydnee:

So, so that's pretty cool. He was a railway surgeon, so he did some, like, uh, kind of neat trauma stuff. He, he created ways to, like, administer IV fluids faster. Well, not IV fluids, I should say administer fluids faster. It's hard to get an IV started, so he would put them through the skin into the subcutaneous tissue.

Justin:

Especially on a train.

Sydnee:

Well, that, that, exactly. And uh, it wasn't the, the best way to give somebody fluids but it worked in a pinch and, uh, he, uh, started using music therapy in the operating room to calm patients down, which actually there is some basis for.

Justin:

All right, let's get to the cutting.

Sydnee:

He also, uh, once, um, his own finger became infected and he knew that, uh, it was an, the kind of infection that can become life threatening, so he just went ahead and amputated it himself.

Justin:

This is the problem with being a railway doctor. There's nobody, it's not like they have a backup. It's not like there's another one.

Sydnee:

So he took care of it on his own.

Justin:

"Stop the train!"

"We can't. We're busy."

Sydnee:

"Cut your finger off."

Justin:

Cut your finger off. We're in a rush. Like, look outside of you. Kansas City is, like, right there. Please stop the train.

Sydnee:

"I'm sorry, sir, you're just going to have to cut that finger off."

Justin:

"Just going to have to come off. We're... "

Sydnee:

"Could you do it in the other room?"

Justin:

"We've got a schedule."

Sydnee:

"That's going to bleed."

Justin:

"We've got a schedule to keep."

Sydnee:

So he amputated his own finger, which in and of itself is not the craziest of surgeries. But he didn't stop there. He was intrigued by this idea that, I mean, I'm an in- "I'm independent. I don't need help from anybody. I can do surgery on myself."

Justin:

Very Beyonce of him.

Sydnee:

So at the age of 60, he went into the hospital with symptoms that he knew were an appendicitis. Uh, he, while waiting for the OR to be ready and the surgeon to come tend to him, thought, you know what? We could do this with local anesthetic. They don't need to put me to sleep. We use ether too much. We need to stop using so much of that. I'm just going to do this myself.

Justin:

That's a weird time to take that stand, really. You should really have that figured out before you get into the OR.

Sydnee:

So they took him back to the OR and, uh, and he got all prepped and he had assistants and he was in a, you know, in an operating room and everything. He had a surgeon standing by, um, to help out should things go awry. [laughs] And he removed his own appendix.

Justin:

Okay. That's, all right, you're right. That's pretty, that's pretty wild.

Sydnee:

Uh, but that wasn't enough.

Justin:

He's not done. Okay.

Sydnee:

That was not enough, um, not for, not for Doc Evan. He decided at the age of 70 when he had, uh, an inguinal hernia that he needed repaired that he had, um, sustained an injury, I believe, while riding a horse and it had bugged him for a few months and he thought, you know what? I can fix this.

Justin:

[laughs]

Sydnee:

Uh, this is a little riskier procedure, uh, uh, because of its proximity to the femoral artery. Uh, you don't want to cut that. So, um, it took him an hour and 55 minutes.

Justin:

Good, take your time.

Sydnee:

But, but he repaired his own hernia.

Justin:

Don't want to rush.

Sydnee:

He used, again, only local anesthetic, and the o- at the very end he began to, uh, kind of drift off with just, like, the last couple stitches left to go, and so another surgeon had to jump in and help out. Um, but what was interesting about it is that, uh, like I said, not a normal guy. One of the things he liked to do to patients, uh, when he finished up the surgery was stitch his initial into their skin as he closed.

Justin:

What, so they just had a K there?

Sydnee:

No, he knew the patients probably wouldn't like that, so he, he stitched a K in Morse code onto his patients.

Justin:

[laughs] The Banksy of his time.

Sydnee:

[laughs] So that was what, actually at the very end of his own self surgery he couldn't finish the, the K, [laughs] the Morse code K at the end of his, uh, his hernia repair.

Justin:

Now, it's worth noting, everybody at home, that, uh, Dr. Evan O'Neill Kane, uh, lived a, a, he did this surgery when he was 70 and at the most, he lived to be 71.

Sydnee:

[laughs]

Justin:

So maybe it didn't go super hot.

Sydnee:

To be fair, he did, uh, develop pneumonia after the surgery [laughs] and...

Justin:

No surgery for that, is there, tough guy?

Sydnee:

No, but I think it's, I think it's pretty amazing that he did these, you know, it's nice to know, for me personally, that, you know, maybe I could do my own hernia repair. What do you think?

Justin:

Sydnee, real talk. Real talk now. Forget about the appendicitis that you took Appendisol for, because that's...

Sydnee:

Right, because that fixed that.

Justin:

The, that came over the wire recently. That's permanent, a permanent fix for appendicitis. What would it take for you to actually do... You would, you, I, you are, like, the toughest person I know. You probably would be interested in doing this, this to yourself, right?

Sydnee:

I think I would. I think that, um, I, I would be pretty hesitant in, you know, living in an area where I can easily get to a hospital and a surgeon should I need one.

Justin:

Because if you die in that scenario, you're a goofball.

Sydnee:

Right. Right, um, but if I were in a situation where I, I had no help, I mean, I certainly, you know, people all the time remove their own stitches and staples and that kind of stuff after surgical procedures.

Justin:

That actually happened to me when I lost my fingernail. I lost the stitches. They came out on a, when the fingernail got caught on a carpet. [deep sigh]

Sydnee:

That was pretty traumatizing.

Justin:

I guess I, you didn't include me on the list, but, I mean, I guess maybe I belong there. I don't know.

Sydnee:

I, I think I would do some minor procedures, like a, like a cyst removal maybe or, like, if I had something to cut open and drain. Um, I could see a scenario where I would pull my own tooth out maybe.

Justin:

Would you be more li- okay, here's a-

Sydnee:

[laughs]

Justin:

That's, that's where-

Sydnee:

You know, tie it to a doorknob and slam it. [laughs]

Justin:

Here's my que- here's my question. Would you, and, uh, be honest. Would you be more li- uh, open to doing surgery on yourself or me?

Sydnee:

Oh, on you.

Justin:

Great. Fantastic.

Sydnee:

Well, I could see what I was doing much easier.

Justin:

Fantastic. Wonderful. You don't want me to go to the hospital. I'll just to go to the hospital.

Sydnee:

Well, when it's necessary. I mean, you know...

Justin:

No, it's fine.

Sydnee:

... a lot of the things we didn't talk about, there are lots of-

Justin:

Yeah, your appar- you got a blood lust, apparently.

Sydnee:

I'm, no, I'm just saying...

Justin:

Got to get the J-Man on the table.

Sydnee:

There are a lot of cases of people who had limbs trapped under things and have to amputate them themselves. You know, there's, like, that whole movie about it. And those are all...

Justin:

So you want to go 127 Hours on me.

Sydnee:

So what I'm s- yeah, what I'm saying is that when you have to do it, you do it.

Justin:

How about you do me a favor...

Sydnee:

It's what you do.

Justin:

... and if you're with me, you just go ahead and call somebody. Could you do that? Could you just call someone?

Sydnee:

Well, I'll, okay, I'll call somebody, but in the meantime maybe somebody needs to take action and I'm just saying...

Justin:

No, you, you should try the phone first, Sydnee.

Sydnee:

I'm just saying I've got the guts to do it.

Justin:

We hope you have the guts to join us for another episode of *Sawbones*. We're here every Friday and we hope you, uh, have enjoyed, uh, listening to the show half as much as we enjoyed making it. Thank you to people tweeting about the show like Cheryl Klein, Leah, Sarah Anne, Michelle Lambing, Steve Kim, Matt Pascal, Ian Kelley, Matt Armstrong, Benjamin Reid, Frank Konanen, I guess, Meredith Faber, Claire Bear, Paul, Matthew Page. Uh, so many of you are tweeting about this show, and gosh, do we ever appreciate it.

That's our only way of getting the word out so, um, please, please, please tweet about the show. Use the, uh, a, @sawbones, not at the beginning because then everybody doesn't see it, but, uh, and g- give us a review on iTunes if you can. That would be amazing.

Sydnee:

Oh yeah, and thank you so much for the nice reviews, all the people who say they listen to our show, who are playing it to their classes, like school classes.

Justin:

Oh, a little intimidating.

Sydnee:

I'll, I'll try to keep them factual.

Justin:

Uh...

Sydnee:

I'll do my best.

Justin:

Thank you to, uh, to everyone reviewing, God, there are so many reviews. You guys are really, really the best. Uh, Ho- Holly Cow, Salamanda, uh, Enjoy the Science, White Gunpowder, Tapono158, uh, uh, Supernatural 920, Alexa Nan B. Thank you so much to, to folks tweeting the, uh, or reviewing the show on iTunes. That, that is a, another huge help to us.

Sydnee:

You can tweet at us too, by the way, @justinmcelroy.

Justin:

And she's @sydneemcelroy, S-Y-D-N-E-E. And, uh, we're @sawbones if you want to tweet to us, and we're a part of the Maximum Fun Network. Uh, there's, uh, so many other shows you can go there and enjoy, like *Stop Podcasting Yourself*, *Judge John Hodgman*, *Wham Bam Pow*, *One Bad Mother*, *Jordan Jesse Go*.

Sydnee:

My Brother, My Brother, and Me.

Justin:

Stop Podcasting Yourself. So many others. It's a wonderful network. We're so pleased to be a part of it, but most of all we're pleased to be part of your lives for a half hour every week. So, uh, thank you so much. Don't know if, uh, we're going to have a show next week. That's, that's a question that we're still trying to figure out.

Sydnee:

We're going to do our best. We're going to be, can we say where we're going to be?

Justin:

Uh, yeah, we're going to be at the, the...

Sydnee:

The Doctor Who Fiftieth Anniversary Celebration in London.

Justin:

Oh, God, we can't wait. It's like the nerdiest thing ever.

Sydnee:

We're so excited.

Justin:

But we got family staying at our house, so don't even try it, robbers.

Sydnee:

Don't even try to break in. We have two giant cats.

Justin:

We have guard cats and a security system, so sh- stuff it. And, uh, that's going to do it for us [laughs] on *Sawbones*.

Sydnee:

[laughs]

Justin:

Uh, until we see you next Friday, uh, or the Friday after that, possibly, 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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