

## Sawbones Ep 25: Hangovers

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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 am your co-host, Justin McElroy.

### **Sydnee:**

And I'm Sydnee McElroy. What are you, uh, what are you taking a drink of there, J-Man?

### **Justin:**

Well, Syd, it's a little, a little hair of the dog [laughs].

### **Sydnee:**

Oh. Hair of the dog, huh?

### **Justin:**

You know, hair of the dog. I had kind of a rough one, uh, yesterday, and I just need a little-

### **Sydnee:**

Yeah?

### **Justin:**

... hair of the dog.

### **Sydnee:**

Got a little carried away last night, did you?

**Justin:**

Yep.

**Sydnee:**

Yeah?

**Justin:**

Just a pinch of the hair of the old puppy.

**Sydnee:**

Yeah? Celebrating too hard?

**Justin:**

A little pinch of the old hair of the dog.

**Sydnee:**

Well, it's- it's, um, it's a little late in the day for that. How- how long you been, you been having some of that hair of the dog there?

**Justin:**

Well, Syd, I had a little kind of a rough one yesterday, so I'm having a little hair of the dog today, and, uh, well, I- I mean, I had a little- little hair of the dog yesterday in the morning, because I'd had kind of a rough one the day before that.

**Sydnee:**

Uh-huh [affirmative].

**Justin:**

I guess I'd had hair of the dog, yeah, the- the day before... okay, so I guess since Christmas? Yes, that's right. Since Christmas, hair of the dog.

**Sydnee:**

Okay. Now, when you say "hair of the dog," you mean that you're- you're drinking in the morning.

**Justin:**

Just a drinkypoo in the morning-

**Sydnee:**

[laughs]

**Justin:**

... uh, a- a, uh, a little taste of something warm.

**Sydnee:**

With alcohol? With-

**Justin:**

A little taste of something-

**Sydnee:**

... with some alcohol in it?

**Justin:**

S- a taste of something cheerful, Peter O'Toole said.

**Sydnee:**

Uh-huh [affirmative].

**Justin:**

Just a, just a little hair of the dog every morning.

**Sydnee:**

Now, tell me, though... Okay, in the morning, how long though... 'Cause like I said, it's not morning right now, so, um, how far into the day do you continue this?

**Justin:**

Well, here's the thing about hangovers that I have discovered, we're talking about hangover cures today, uh, on- on the show, and I want to let you in on my little secret. Hair of the dog, the thing about it is if you don't have a drink after the hair of the dog, sometimes- sometimes that old dog, he'll catch up with you. You've got to stay one step ahead of the dog. You have to keep having his hair-

**Sydnee:**

[laughs]

**Justin:**

... once you've had it in the morning. So, I guess what I'm saying is I [laughs] drink all day.

**Sydnee:**

So, you've been drinking continuously since Christmas.

**Justin:**

Drinking continuously since Christmas, yes, that is correct.

**Sydnee:**

Um, is-

**Justin:**

Listen-

**Sydnee:**

... does that make you... I mean, how do you feel [laughs]?

**Justin:**

Uh, good? Good [laughs].

**Sydnee:**

I mean, you know-

**Justin:**

Not super productive-

**Sydnee:**

Uh-huh [affirmative].

**Justin:**

... uh, a little balance-

**Sydnee:**

D- does-

**Justin:**

... issue from time to time.

**Sydnee:**

Yeah. Does your boss know this?

**Justin:**

He does not. I work on the internet. That is one of the things that makes hair of the dog work so well for me.

**Sydnee:**

Right, but, like, uh, has your spelling been really bad when you, like-

**Justin:**

No breathalyzer on Google, baby.

**Sydnee:**

[laughs]

**Justin:**

No breathalyzer on Google.

**Sydnee:**

Uh-

**Justin:**

I can get onto Prodigy no matter how many I've- I've pounded down. There's no worries m- for me.

**Sydnee:**

[laughs] You see, there's a problem with this theory.

**Justin:**

Hit me.

**Sydnee:**

I mean, eventually you've got to stop, right?

**Justin:**

No. [laughs] No, no, no, no, no, cannot- cannot... can no stop. Can no stoppy-

**Sydnee:**

Okay.

**Justin:**

... for the J-man.

**Sydnee:**

Well, let me rephrase that as... with a more, yeah, definitive. Eventually you have to stop.

**Justin:**

Okay, all right. I will take that as gospel. But failing hair of the dog, uh, just f- fistfuls of the hairiest dog, uh, for days and days and days, since Christmas, uh, w- what- what do you have for me, Syd? What have our- our ancestors tried to do when they've had a few too many sips of something cheerful?

**Sydnee:**

Well, it- it's funny, w- you start off with hair of the dog, which is, uh, the oldest known cure for a hangover.

**Justin:**

Oh, yeah. It's been around for a while, huh?

**Sydnee:**

Yeah, uh, uh, since there's been alcohol there's probably been the idea that, "Hey, I feel really bad after I drank a lot of alcohol. Maybe I just shouldn't stop drinking it."

**Justin:**

Yes. Yes.

**Sydnee:**

Now, I mean, of course the logical problem with that is at some point you do have to stop, and then, you know, you're headed for a really righteous hangover. Um-

**Justin:**

Sure. It's like put- putting money into a bank that you eventually will withdraw with tears-

**Sydnee:**

Yes, exactly.

**Justin:**

... and Advil.

**Sydnee:**

[laughs] Uh, but good luck, 'cause there wasn't, you know, Advil in, like, caveman days.

**Justin:**

That's right. They just had logs that they would hit themselves over the head with-

**Sydnee:**

[laughs]

**Justin:**

... and black out.

**Sydnee:**

Um, you know where the name c- "hair of the dog" comes from?

**Justin:**

Uh, no, I do not.

**Sydnee:**

It was, uh, for a- an old, um, cure for rabies, or thought to be. Obviously it was not a cure for rabies, but a, but a thought.

**Justin:**

It's about as good a cure for rabies as it is a cure for hangovers.

**Sydnee:**

[laughs] If you, if you could literally, you know, imbibe or- or ingest some of the hairs of the dog that bit you, then you would cure your rabies. It wouldn't, don't do that. If you think you have rabies, please immediately report to your nearest ER.

**Justin:**

No one's ever survived except once.

**Sydnee:**

Um, I- I like some other terms, just before we talk about some more cures, some other terms for hangovers that I found.

**Justin:**

Mm-hmm [affirmative].

**Sydnee:**

So, before... "Hangover" came around, like, uh, 1900 or so, and "hangover" used to be just a word for, like, anything that was left over, but, um, it began to be specifically applied to that feeling that's left over after you drank, and I think it's really a great, it's a great word for that. Um, especially when you consider that prior to that we would call it sometime maybe, uh, the "morning fog."

**Justin:**

Morning fog. See, I like that. That's classy.

**Sydnee:**

[laughs] "Oh, I have just a bit of the morning fog."

**Justin:**

Just a touch of the morning fog.

**Sydnee:**

Uh, you'd call it the "bottle ache."

**Justin:**

Bottle ache? I don't know. That's... that... I think that screams so- sort of chemical dependency to me.

**Sydnee:**

Uh, I- I really like the "jimjams."

**Justin:**

The jimjams [laughs].

**Sydnee:**

"I got the jimjams."

**Justin:**

That's festive.

**Sydnee:**

Doesn't that sound like a great thing to have?

**Justin:**



It actually sounds much more fe-... I was gonna say, it sounds much more festive than you actually feel, uh, when you are... have the- the- the... those specific jams.

**Sydnee:**

[laughs] I know. "Hello, I won't be into work today. I got the jimjams."

**Justin:**

Jim-jams.

**Sydnee:**

Yeah. Well, can't blame you there. Uh, it was also called black dog, and, uh, busthead.

**Justin:**

Busthead?

**Sydnee:**

... which I think is- is kind of descriptive.

**Justin:**

Kind of on the nose though, isn't it?

**Sydnee:**

Yeah. Um, some other ways... You know, we talked about the oldest cure probably is the idea that you just keep drinking. Uh, the Ancient Greeks had a great idea, and this is I think especially, um, helpful this time of year, or in our new year.

**Justin:**

Mm-hmm [affirmative].

**Sydnee:**

You could eat some boiled cabbage.

**Justin:**

Which your mom has tried to foist on us every new year-

**Sydnee:**

Yes.

**Justin:**

... since we have been together for at least a decade. I don't know-

**Sydnee:**

Uh-huh [affirmative].

**Justin:**

... if she was into it before then.

**Sydnee:**

Oh, yeah. As long as I can remember. And I have... I mean, I eat it when she, when she is relentless.

**Justin:**

Yeah.

**Sydnee:**

I never enjoy it.

**Justin:**

But she doesn't, which is, which is fascinating.

**Sydnee:**

No. She says she does.

**Justin:**

She says she does.

**Sydnee:**

Uh, supposedly the strong smell would clear your head. I- I... maybe it would induce vomiting, and then-

**Justin:**

Mm-hmm [affirmative].

**Sydnee:**

... I don't know, then you feel better?

**Justin:**

Or just, like-

**Sydnee:**

Get that rush of endorphins [laughs].

**Justin:**

Ugh, brush with death. Put things in perspective.

**Sydnee:**

Uh, yeah [laughs]. "Uh, boy, this is, this is much worse than that hangover I had, 'cause I... now I'm eating boiled cabbage."

**Justin:**

Right.

**Sydnee:**

Uh, the Greeks also had a god of hangovers.

**Justin:**

I like that.

**Sydnee:**

Uh-huh [affirmative].

**Justin:**

That's direct.

**Sydnee:**

Pausikrepalos.

**Justin:**

Pausikrepalos.

**Sydnee:**

I'm sure that's how that's pronounced.

**Justin:**

Yeah.

**Sydnee:**

Um, and they would, in their... On their, like, drinking, uh, vessels, their, you know, cups that they drank out of, they would engrave, like, prayers

and, you know, uh, plead... pleas to him to, you know, please don't give me a hangover.

**Justin:**

Yeah. I, yeah. Now I just pray that to Jack Daniels. "Please, please-"

**Sydnee:**

[laughs]

**Justin:**

"... Jack, be kind. Be gentle."

**Sydnee:**

Uh, the- the Ancient Egyptians also had a goddess of drunkenness that you could pray to, Hathor um, and if you said a specific prayer to Hathor while you were drinking, then you would spit up all of your alcohol and you wouldn't have a hangover.

**Justin:**

Too expensive, though.

**Sydnee:**

Uh, I'm guessing you could probably forgo the prayer and just drink enough, and then-

**Justin:**

Yeah.

**Sydnee:**

... you'd spit up all your alcohol.

**Justin:**

It will, it'll get out there eventually. Maybe that's a... how that got started. "I don't know what happened."

**Sydnee:**

[laughs]

**Justin:**

"I felt so bad, and then I prayed, and I threw up. And I got better!"

**Sydnee:**

"It was, it was Hathor!"

**Justin:**

"Thanks, Hathor!"

**Sydnee:**

Um, the- the Romans had their own idea, specifically Pliny the Elder. You remember Pliny?

**Justin:**

Oh, Pliny. What was Pliny's, what was Pliny's game? What was Pliny into?

**Sydnee:**

Uh, so, Pliny, uh, recommended a couple different things. First of all, try, uh, eating some raw owls' eggs.

**Justin:**

Gro- what are we cha-... I've never even seen an owl.

**Sydnee:**

You've never seen an owl?

**Justin:**

No.

**Sydnee:**

Like, not even in, like, a book or online or something?

**Justin:**

I mean, yes, Sydnee, like, I saw-

**Sydnee:**

Like, a cartoon owl?

**Justin:**

... I saw, like, the *Sorcerer and the Stone* and stuff. Like-

**Sydnee:**

Uh, like, *Harry Potter*?

**Justin:**

Yeah, like, I saw *Harry Potter*, Syd. I mean, like, in my day-to-day where I could go- go up there and [laughs] scoop tho- scoop those eggs.

**Sydnee:**

Well, you're not out at night a lot. You need to go out at night and look in the trees. That's when the owls are out, right?

**Justin:**

Yeah. That's, I guess. Isn't that what... I guess they're hunting then. But I don't think they, like, burrow or hide or something [laughs] during the day.

**Sydnee:**

They, like, eat mice. They should be your best friends.

**Justin:**

Yeah, I do appreciate that, owls. Good looking out, owls.

**Sydnee:**

So, the idea behi-

**Justin:**

I will never eat your eggs. That's a Justin McElroy guarantee, owls.

**Sydnee:**

[laughs] I'm sure that they're- they're very thankful for that. Well, uh, you know, the idea of eggs as a cure, you actually find again and again in- in, like, hangover cure lore, because, uh, eggs contain cysteine, and it's thought that you're low on that when you have a hangover, so you should eat them. Um, I don't know that raw owls' eggs are a great idea, or raw eggs of any kind. Um, you could if you didn't like that, Pliny recommended fried canary.

**Justin:**

Where are those? Where's a canary?

**Sydnee:**

Oh, like, I mean-

**Justin:**

I know coal mines. That's it.

**Sydnee:**

You've got to go [laughs], you've got to go to a coal mine-

**Justin:**

I don't want tainted, like, coal-smelling canary.

**Sydnee:**

... ta- take the canary, deep-fry it, because the-

**Justin:**

That's not bad.

**Sydnee:**

... Ancient Romans had deep-fryers.

**Justin:**

Yep. That's how they cooked their turkeys [laughs].

**Sydnee:**

I've never seen that at a fair stand before.

**Justin:**

Just, like, "Step right up. Just like the Ancient Romans did, it's fried butter."

**Sydnee:**

[laughs] "Deep-fried canary." Or you could try some roasted sheep intestine.

**Justin:**

Delicious. See, this is... He's cooking up, he's cooking up something like your hangover cure, a Big Mac and fries [laughs].

**Sydnee:**

[laughs]

**Justin:**

I like this.

**Sydnee:**

I don't, I don't think that a Big Mac and fries are anything like a roasted sheep intestine.

**Justin:**

It's the best they had, Sydnee. Don't look down on your ancestor, Pliny the Elder.

**Sydnee:**

I- and I... As we go through, I'm gonna give you some more kind of ancient cures, and a lot of them I think are just kind of gross stuff that maybe again, I don't know if the idea is, like, let's make people throw up, um, but the Mesopotamians had an idea that you could mix licorice with beans and oleander and oil, and while you're at it throw some wine in there.

**Justin:**

Hey, why not? A little hair of the dog. [laughs]

**Sydnee:**

My guess is that [laughs] the wine was doing the work there.

**Justin:**

Yeah, I think the wine was doing all the heavy lifting.

**Sydnee:**

And all that other stuff just sounded good.

**Justin:**

Yeah. We'll cover it up with that stuff to pretend it's a cure, but, like, really, it's wine.

**Sydnee:**

The- the Assyrians had a- another gross idea, which is you should gri- grind up a swallow's beak-

**Justin:**

Ugh. Like, what is wrong with these people?

**Sydnee:**

I don't, I don't know where you get that, and- and

**Justin:**

And what is the swallow supposed to do after that? Huh? Where does the swallow go from there, you know?



**Sydnee:**

Well, I- I I- I love that you would consider the swallow in this scenario, but I- unfortunately I doubt it survived the de-beaking.

**Justin:**

They're just gonna fry those up too, huh? God, these savages.

**Sydnee:**

Yeah. Well, I mean, why not? [laughs]

**Justin:**

It's already there.

**Sydnee:**

Yeah. And you already fried up all the canaries [laughs].

**Justin:**

Yeah. Why not add a little aperitif.

**Sydnee:**

You've got to do something new to stay relevant at the fair.

**Justin:**

That's right [laughs].

**Sydnee:**

You can't be frying up canaries every year, you've got to switch to fried swallow beak.

**Justin:**

"That's a, that's a, that's a- a- a 17 BC game. This is 13 BC, you've got to get with it."

**Sydnee:**

[laughs] Y- and now of course, swallow beak when you-

**Justin:**

I don't know when anything happened by the way. Don't email me with like-

**Sydnee:**

Yeah, no.

**Justin:**

... "Romans were..." Uh, i don't, I don't... I can't.

**Sydnee:**

No. And he can't do, like, backwards time either.

**Justin:**

I can't do backwards time.

**Sydnee:**

[laughs]

**Justin:**

That show, that show *Dinosaurs* was exceedingly confusing to me.

**Sydnee:**

[laughs] It was to everyone.

**Justin:**

Yeah.

**Sydnee:**

The... How many, how many years was it on the air? 'Cause that's the most confusing part.

**Justin:**

Yeah. Like, many, many years.

**Sydnee:**

[laughs]

**Justin:**

And then it ended with... Okay, no, I don't want to spoil it, but it's- it's crazy. Look it up.

**Sydnee:**

Um-

**Justin:**

Anyway, sorry.

**Sydnee:**

So, you don't want to just take your swal- your ground swallow beak like powder. You want to mix it with something so it's more of like, um, a tonic.

**Justin:**

Yeah.

**Sydnee:**

And the obvious choice would be myrrh.

**Justin:**

And that is how we got Coca-Cola. That is-

**Sydnee:**

That's where it comes from.

**Justin:**

That is where that comes from.

**Sydnee:**

I think that it w- it sheds a whole new light on why the three wise men were bringing some myrrh.

**Justin:**

"Baby J."

**Sydnee:**

"Hey."

**Justin:**

"Had a crazy one."

**Sydnee:**

"You're gonna need this [laughs]. Trust us."

**Justin:**

"Got a fourth wi-... This fourth wise man, all swallows' beaks. Don't even worry about it."

**Sydnee:**

"There's- [laughs] there's gonna be a, there's gonna be a wedding someday."

**Justin:**

Yep.

**Sydnee:**

"You're just gonna get this crazy urge... There's gonna be wine everywhere-"

**Justin:**

Yeah.

**Sydnee:**

"... next thing you know ."

**Justin:**

History's frattiest miracle.

**Sydnee:**

[laughs]

**Justin:**

[laughs] We'll pull it off.

**Sydnee:**

"Y- y- and you're gonna need this myrrh the next morning."

**Justin:**

"You're gonna need it, trust me. You and all 12 of your homies."

**Sydnee:**

[laughs]

**Justin:**

"There's enough myrrh for everybody."

**Sydnee:**

Um, the Mongolians took it a step further. Uh, why not try some pickled sheep's eyes?

**Justin:**

Um, I mean, again, if you think about things you're in the mood for, that's gotta be so low on the list when you're hung over.

**Sydnee:**

Which, I- y- I think it's actually, they beat out, um... Because in the Middle Ages they came up, of course everything was gross in the Middle Ages, we know that-

**Justin:**

Sure, yeah. Ab- absolutely.

**Sydnee:**

Everything was gross. Um, but somehow what they came up with-

**Justin:**

Can you imagine what King Arthur's beard smelled like? Like, the worst. Everything was the pits-

**Sydnee:**

[laughs]

**Justin:**

... in the Middle Ages [laughs]. No question.

**Sydnee:**

Everything was gross then. But i- it's crazy, because they couldn't even beat the Mongolians. You know, picked sheep's eyes, that's a, that's a high bar, and the best they could come up with was raw eel.

**Justin:**

Eh. Up your game, Middle Ages.

**Sydnee:**

[laughs] I mean, like, that's a, that's, um, you know, a delicacy.

**Justin:**

Yeah.

**Sydnee:**

That's, like, a sushi thing.

**Justin:**

Lots of, lots of people are into that.

**Sydnee:**

Right. And you can have some raw eel. So- so, they did. Um, and- and they also had some bitter almonds. I don't think that probably that helped much either.

**Justin:**

[laughs] Nice try, guys.

**Sydnee:**

Um, I like, in the 1600s we see one of our first, like, medicines that was created. I guess, uh, um, maybe an early version of, like, a patent medicine, um, Goddard's drops, created by Dr. Jonathan Goddard. And basically what these drops were, uh, were ammonia [laughs].

**Justin:**

Okay, unpleasant.

**Sydnee:**

Yeah. And that's- tha- that was the primary ingredient. And then they had a lot of other, uh, what they called irrelevant ingredients.

**Justin:**

[laughs] I, the one... I would also agree with them in that assessment.

**Sydnee:**

[laughs] They, um... but they varied. Uh, some things you might in your Goddard's Drops were, um, m- bits of skull from a hanged person.

**Justin:**

I mean, they say they have bits of skull from a hanged person, but I don't know.

**Sydnee:**

Who can trust packaging, you know, in the 1600s?

**Justin:**

That's like, that's like saying the- the barbecue sauce I buy has a little extra love from KC Masterpiece. I can't guarantee that Mr. Masterpiece actually put a little extra love in every bottle of sauce. I can't guarantee that.

**Sydnee:**

[laughs]

**Justin:**

There's no way of proving that.

**Sydnee:**

But I believe, I believe that he does.

**Justin:**

That said, if you haven't tried KC Masterpiece-

**Sydnee:**

[laughs]

**Justin:**

... hanged man skull edition, it is delicious. A little gritty, but worth it. Super earthy.

**Sydnee:**

Uh, if you can't get that flavor, you could try the dried viper flavor.

**Justin:**

Oh, good. That's better, 1600s.

**Sydnee:**

Yeah. Um, Goddard's Drops were actually pretty popular. Um, why I couldn't tell you.

**Justin:**

I actually think it s- becomes so much more history... uh, easy to parse history once we get into branding. That's the problem with everything prior to l- apparently the 1600s. I can't keep tabs on anything. There's no brands. Why was nobody into branding?

**Sydnee:**

Um, you hadn't shown them the way yet?

**Justin:**

I... Yeah, apparently. Apparently I've been alive for 500 years-

**Sydnee:**

Right.

**Justin:**

... and I invented branding [laughs].

**Sydnee:**

Well, your first leap was back to the 1600s [laughs].

**Justin:**

I keep hoping every leap will be the leap home, but not yet.

**Sydnee:**

Not... [laughs] But you're just leaping around branding things.

**Justin:**

What did I come up with in the 1800s?

**Sydnee:**

[laughs] Um, you weren't very creative in the 1800s. Uh, what do we have a lot of laying around, um, near our chimneys? We- we've got some soot.

**Justin:**

Dead children.

**Sydnee:**

Why don't we... Oh, well, there's that. That's not a good hangover cure.

**Justin:**

Who we tried to make clean the chimney.

**Sydnee:**

It- it is sobering.

**Justin:**

It is sobering, that's true [laughs].

**Sydnee:**



[laughs] Um, why don't you try some soot in a glass of warm water?

**Justin:**

Yuck-a-roo. I guess we've got to do something with it.

**Sydnee:**

[laughs]

**Justin:**

"Got all this soot."

**Sydnee:**

"I don't know, put it in some warm water, drink it after a rough night."

**Justin:**

"This has become our... the main national export in London, is soot. And we have [laughs] nothing, no purpose for it."

**Sydnee:**

[laughs] I didn't see that part on Mary Poppins.

**Justin:**

Yeah. The only e- the only practical use of soot was to make Dick van Dyke look cheeky and more charming. That's it.

**Sydnee:**

[laughs] As if that's possible.

**Justin:**

I know. He's America's sweetheart from then, back then.

**Sydnee:**

From back then.

**Justin:**

In olden times.

**Sydnee:**

I don't think it was 1800s [crosstalk 00:17:18]. [laughs]

**Justin:**

Dick van Dyke is the sweetheart of the 1800s.

**Sydnee:**

Okay.

**Justin:**

Next. Move on.

**Sydnee:**

Uh-huh [affirmative]. Um, uh, still in the 1800s, why don't you try drinking some vinegar, um, and then rubbing some of it on your temples? That doesn't sound terrible, but if that doesn't help the next, uh, the next step in this process is to throw [laughs] a bucket of cold water over the person who's hung over.

**Justin:**

That actually seems like the most practical one we've come across so far, actually. Unpleasant, sure, but effective.

**Sydnee:**

Well, you'd get really angry, so then you wouldn't be-

**Justin:**

"Grr. I'm wet!"

**Sydnee:**

... so focused... yeah. "Now I'm really wet-"

**Justin:**

"Cold."

**Sydnee:**

"... and I'm mad at you. Why did [laughs] you throw a bucket of cold water on me?"

**Justin:**

"Why did you do that?"

**Sydnee:**

Um, it... There also, uh, we see one of the first, um, kind of hangover, like, drink cures. You know, li- nowadays there are lots of, like, drinks that, like,

bartenders like to tell you about, like, "Oh, yeah, just do a shot of this, you know, pickle juice and something," and it's also always got alcohol in it. And that'll cure your hangover. In 1878, we got the prairie oyster.

**Justin:**

Hit me.

**Sydnee:**

So, it was, uh, raw egg yolk, wochest- worshe- Worchest-

**Justin:**

Worcestershire?

**Sydnee:**

Worcester- Worcester-

**Justin:**

Worcester?

**Sydnee:**

Worcester- Worcester, uh, Tabasco, vinegar, salt and pepper, and then usually some kind of alcohol thrown in for good measure. But those are the ingredients that are consistent.

**Justin:**

Yeah, don't like it.

**Sydnee:**

So, do a quick shot of that.

**Justin:**

Nope.

**Sydnee:**

You'll feel something. It was Tabasco.

**Justin:**

Yeah. I mean, you're gonna get an effect. And I imagine there's a lot of these cures were built around, you know, some sort of physical effect the food had on your, on your... uh, whether it's the heat, you know, from the,

from the Tabasco sauce, or just the yucks from the picked sheep's eyes, you're gonna feel something.

**Sydnee:**

You're gonna feel something. Well, and I- I don't know if that, I think we've said this before, that the idea that if something made you feel different, maybe it was working somehow.

**Justin:**

Mm-hmm [affirmative].

**Sydnee:**

I mean, I guess that's where this comes from. And a lot of it is also just, you know, everybody who, everybody who likes to drink has that thing that they'll tell you always works for them.

**Justin:**

Right. Just like everybody's got their hiccup cure.

**Sydnee:**

Exactly. And so, and that, and that's been pervasive throughout history. Every- every-

**Justin:**

Mine, by the way, a spoonful of sugar. Trust me. Not just for the medicine. A spoonful of raw sugar, just eat it. I cured her sister last week.

**Sydnee:**

Is this a hiccup cure?

**Justin:**

Hiccup cure.

**Sydnee:**

Okay.

**Justin:**

Perfect.

**Sydnee:**

I thought you meant you cured my sister of a hangover.

**Justin:**

No.

**Sydnee:**

And she's 13, so that would be inappropriate.

**Justin:**

Yeah, she's got a couple more years before I need to start curing her hangovers.

**Sydnee:**

She- she's gonna have to ride out her hangovers on her own and learn her own hangover cures.

**Justin:**

Yeah. Yes, young lady. Learn this lesson.

**Sydnee:**

Uh, in the, in the late 1800s, early 1900s we also of course stumbled across cocaine.

**Justin:**

Hey!

**Sydnee:**

And cocaine!

**Justin:**

Cocaine, it's back! Yay!

**Sydnee:**

It's good for everything!

**Justin:**

Man, Pliny the Elder and cocaine. This is like a reunion special.

**Sydnee:**

[laughs]

**Justin:**

Everybody's here.

**Sydnee:**

Um, one of my favorites, in 1905 we've got more branding, so Justin must have been there.

**Justin:**

Yeah.

**Sydnee:**

Um, it was, uh, a product called Mercurin and it was initially used for seasickness. Um, but what they found is that if it helps with, like, the dizziness and wooziness of seasickness, maybe it would help with hangovers. And so they started marketing it for hangovers, and it... they had this whole story about how it was discovered, these herbs from a remote part of India, and brought back and- and given to us, and it was great. Um, in reality it was powdered potato.

**Justin:**

Okay. Not helpful, but mix that with a little boiling hot water, you've got yourself a side.

**Sydnee:**

And some butter.

**Justin:**

A little butter, a little salt and pepper.

**Sydnee:**

Mm-hmm [affirmative].

**Justin:**

Get that going.

**Sydnee:**

And I mean, there's certainly something to be said about eating a lot of carbs to make you feel better after you have a hangover.

**Justin:**

Tr- yeah.

**Sydnee:**

Um-

**Justin:**

There's probably more pleasurable ways of intaking them, certainly.

**Sydnee:**

Uh, another cure I really like, in 1938 the, um, there was a bartender who came up with the idea at a party of, um, taking a bottle of chilled Coca-Cola-

**Justin:**

Okay.

**Sydnee:**

... and you shake it up, you know, so it's gonna spray out when you open it, and then you spray it into a glass of milk.

**Justin:**

Okay.

**Sydnee:**

And then you drink that.

**Justin:**

Okay. Done.

**Sydnee:**

Uh, what's great is that they recommend that you follow it up with a nice, long nap [laughs], and then you're gonna feel great.

**Justin:**

Well, okay. Yeah, well, sure. Also, be suspect of any hangover cure invented at a party, 'cause that's a guy saying, "Hey, you know what might work tomorrow?"

**Sydnee:**

"Let's try this."

**Justin:**

"Let's give it a shot. I don't know. Somebody put this in a book that I'm doing this."

**Sydnee:**

[laughs]

**Justin:**

"So future people will read it and be like, 'What?'"

**Sydnee:**

"Why did they do that?"

**Justin:**

"'Why did they do that?' But we won't tell them we never tried it."

**Sydnee:**

Oh, and you know that then some hipster's gonna read about it and try it.

**Justin:**

Yep.

**Sydnee:**

For sure.

**Justin:**

Brunch.

**Sydnee:**

I don't know, maybe it's delicious.

**Justin:**

It's the new brunch hit.

**Sydnee:**

I haven't had Coke and milk. Let me know.

**Justin:**

It sounds a little weird.

**Sydnee:**

Um, now as we move, uh, across cultures we see a lot of different, um, ideas, that some of these are still kind of in practice. Um, well, not all of them. But, uh, I- in, uh, Haitian voodoo culture, um, if you take, um, pins and jab 13 of them into the cork of the bottle that, uh, you drank-

**Justin:**

Take that- [laughs] that bottle.



**Sydnee:**

... yeah, then that can cure your hangover. So, make sure that you drank something out of a bottle with a cork, I guess.

**Justin:**

I would get about... I would probably get about, hmm, three or four pins in before I was like, "Ugh, hair of the dog."

**Sydnee:**

[laughs]

**Justin:**

"This is taking forever."

**Sydnee:**

I'm- I'm beginning to think you have a problem, we can-

**Justin:**

"I already stuck myself three times. I'm just gonna hair-of-the-dog this."

**Sydnee:**

Well, we can talk about that later. Uh, the Germans have a word for- for a breakfast that you're supposed to eat when you have a bad hangover called, uh, katerfrüstück, and it's a breakfast of herring, pickles and goulash. I don't know. I don't know, Germany. I love your beer, but I just don't know about this one.

**Justin:**

I don't know about that. Who else?

**Sydnee:**

Uh, the Russians, don't, uh, don't- don't eat or drink anything. Just hop in the sauna, sweat it out and maybe, you know, flagellate yourself with some birch branches.

**Justin:**

That sounds good. I'm into that.

**Sydnee:**

You know, then you can bleed it out a little bit.

**Justin:**

I think that would actually... You would come out of that a little... feeling a little better. [crosstalk 00:23:10] I think that one would work.

**Sydnee:**

Again, you'd feel a little something.

**Justin:**

You'd feel something.

**Sydnee:**

Um, one of the earliest American cures, there was something called jackrabbit tea. Um, again, I- I d- I don't think this has persisted, but maybe it has, and it's actually a tea made from rabbit droppings.

**Justin:**

I'm cool. I'm okay, thank you.

**Sydnee:**

Yeah. I don't know, cowboys. Um-

**Justin:**

I guess you just did whatever, you lived off the land.

**Sydnee:**

The- there's a book that I have, I have discovered in my reading, and now I desperately want to read, which is... uh, was written in 1972 by Kingsley Amis, and it was called *On Drink*.

**Justin:**

Mm-hmm [affirmative].

**Sydnee:**

And it's a book about drinking, as you may imagine.

**Justin:**

Mm-hmm [affirmative].

**Sydnee:**

But it included, uh, a lot of, um, hangover cures, as well as kind of a discussion of hangovers in general. One of his big theories was that the

physical part of the hangover is bad, but the metaphysical part of the hangover is actually much worse.

**Justin:**

Uh, like the spiritual part?

**Sydnee:**

Yes, like the, uh, the guilt that you feel, the, um, imbalance that you feel, that you, you know, let... you let yourself go, you were out of control, you did things that you regret, uh, that that part of the hangover is much worse, and so that really if you want to fix the hangover you kind of, you know, get your psychological house in order, which I think is pretty interesting.

**Justin:**

Um, yeah, the other thing about, uh, Kingsley Amis, uh, he wrote, uh, about James Bond. My dad just talked about him when we were at the, uh, murder mystery.

**Sydnee:**

Well, hey.

**Justin:**

He- he, uh, wrote about, um, James Bond. Isn't that weird?

**Sydnee:**

That is weird.

**Justin:**

He wrote the, uh, *The Book of Bond*, and, uh, the *James Bond Dossier*.

**Sydnee:**

Well, it makes sense that he would also write about drinking.

**Justin:**

Yeah. He's a f- he's a real renaissance man.

**Sydnee:**

[laughs] Um, he did have some actual, uh, physical cures as well. Um, there was, uh, maybe like some beef paste and vodka.

**Justin:**

Hmm, okay. Okay. No, but that's fine.

**Sydnee:**

What about some baking soda and vodka?

**Justin:**

Okay, see, I'm s- I... uh, I see a trend forming.

**Sydnee:**

There- there were a lot of cures that ended with "and vodka."

**Justin:**

"And vodka."

**Sydnee:**

"And vodka," the cure.

**Justin:**

There's a lot of sca- there's a lot of really scary stories that start that way too [laughs].

**Sydnee:**

[laughs] If you didn't like that, or, you know, if you don't like vodka, uh, you could try his other method, which was, um, and he al- he notes that y- if your partner is willing, you should have some really vigorous sex with them.

**Justin:**

Yeah. I mean, okay, first off, good on you, Kingsley. Gotta get consent. Totally with you on that. I'm not so sure the partner is the hurdle to the vigorous sex.

**Sydnee:**

No.

**Justin:**

I'm not sure that he or she is going to be the stumbling block for- for that.

**Sydnee:**

I- I don't know, but... I don't know about you, but when I have a real bad case of the jimjams-

**Justin:**

[laughs]

**Sydnee:**

... [laughs] the- the last thing I want to do is have vigorous sex.

**Justin:**

Yeah, literally last.

**Sydnee:**

Um, but maybe Kingsley's right, and if you just power through, you'd feel great.

**Justin:**

Yeah, who knows? We'll never know [laughs].

**Sydnee:**

Or you're gonna take very unromantic turns throwing up afterwards.

**Justin:**

Either way.

**Sydnee:**

Um, I- I do want to talk a little bit about, before we finish up, um, there are... nowadays there are, like, some hangover pills, anti-hangover pills that are on the market.

**Justin:**

I've seen some of these, yeah.

**Sydnee:**

Yeah, things like, uh, you've probably heard of Chaser, things that you can take before, like, when you're drinking, before you drink and when you're drinking, and they'll help prevent a hangover. Um, the history of this concept actually goes back to the Russian Academy of Sciences trying to develop an anti-hangover pill for the KGB-

**Justin:**

Hmm.

**Sydnee:**

... which I think is really cool. The idea was that they wanted the agents to be able to drink [laughs] as much as they wanted and not get drunk, you know, so they could stay sharp and all KGB-ish and all that.

**Justin:**

Yeah, right.

**Sydnee:**

Um, now, the- the- the pill that they invented that they gave their- their agents did not help with the getting drunk. They definitely still got drunk.

**Justin:**

There was a *Get Smart* episode that involved this as a subplot, where Maxwell Smart had a pill in his mouth, uh, that would absorb the alcohol as he drank it, and then of course, uh, he accidentally swallows the pill, and-

**Sydnee:**

Ah.

**Justin:**

... gets incredibly drunk.

**Sydnee:**

And gets really drunk.

**Justin:**

Yeah. It's funnier when you see it.

**Sydnee:**

I- I love *Get Smart*.

**Justin:**

Yeah.

**Sydnee:**

Yeah, but that... Well, that's probably what it was based on.

**Justin:**

I'm sure.

**Sydnee:**

Um, the... Now, you did get drunk anyway, but, uh, what they said is that it did help with hangovers, that it'd prevent hangovers. Um, now of course, it varies with what- what you drink, how much you drink, what your age is, what your individual body chemistry and all that, um, but the idea is that it absorbed the toxins so you wouldn't get the hangover the next day.

Um, this is kind of the basis of current, you know, anti-hangover pills. There's no, there's no great evidence for this stuff. There are always studies that are done, they're smaller, obviously they're not regulated through the FDA, so they don't have to be as rigorous, um, but it's based on something that actually sounds like good science.

**Justin:**

What- what is that?

**Sydnee:**

So, have you ever heard of, like, if somebody eats or drinks something that they're not supposed to or takes a bunch of medicine they're not supposed to that they- they get activated charcoal in the emergency room?

**Justin:**

Yeah.

**Sydnee:**

Okay, it's based on that idea. The- the stuff that's in Chaser and a lot of these pills, there's something called Alcohol-X and something called RU-21, get it? Are you 21?

**Justin:**

Got it.

**Sydnee:**

Um, is, uh, vegetable carbon. So, it's- it's kind of like activated charcoal. It's a bunch of carbon, and the idea is that it will bind and filter out toxins from your stomach. Um, the- the problem with that, uh, is that it's, well, for one, you're absorbing the alcohol into your bloodstream pretty quickly.

**Justin:**

Mm-hmm [affirmative].

**Sydnee:**

So, you know, i- if you're taking it after you've drank, it's definitely not gonna work. Um, and the other thing too is that, you know, it depends on how much you drink and how fast, and, ugh.

**Justin:**

I imagine that hel- hurts, uh, it makes the research more difficult too, because hangovers are something that, a- as we have both proven, are notoriously difficult to control for.

**Sydnee:**

Yeah.

**Justin:**

Um, so, y- you know, getting the same kind of hangover twice and seeing, you know, testing between the two, I- I imagine it's pretty difficult.

**Sydnee:**

Well, and they're very subjective and conditional.

**Justin:**

Right.

**Sydnee:**

You'll see people power through a hangover that they might have another day when, let's say it's a Saturday and they don't have to do anything, that just floors them.

**Justin:**

Mm-hmm [affirmative].

**Sydnee:**

So, it's... It is hard to do research on this. The idea is that, um, the thing that gives you a hangover is called a conjoiner, and it's-

**Justin:**

Conjoiner-

**Sydnee:**

A conjoiner, and it's the stuff in alcohol that basically makes anything you're drinking different from grain alcohol, the stuff that gives it color or aroma or flavor. Anything that adds that, uh, your body has trouble processing, and so you get, you get really sick.



**Justin:**

So you're saying, "Stick with grain alcohol."

**Sydnee:**

N- tha- I am not saying that.

**Justin:**

Got it.

**Sydnee:**

I am not saying that.

**Justin:**

Got it.

**Sydnee:**

Uh, a- along these same zli- same lines, that's probably why some people swear by burnt toast.

**Justin:**

'Cause of the carbon.

**Sydnee:**

It's the carbon.

**Justin:**

Mm-hmm [affirmative].

**Sydnee:**

Um-

**Justin:**

Maybe that's why you like burnt popcorn. Same thing.

**Sydnee:**

Maybe it is, because I drink all the time.

**Justin:**

No, well, no. I mean, I wasn't saying that, sweetheart, I just was saying sometimes you like a little burnt popcorn.

**Sydnee:**

I- I do love burnt popcorn. Along the same line with these other things I've mentioned, there's one other compound called Dawn 808 that was developed by a South Korean businessman. Same idea as these other pills, but what I like most... best about it is what Dawn, D-A-W-N, stands for.

**Justin:**

Hit me.

**Sydnee:**

Drinkers Are Winners Now.

**Justin:**

[laughs] Finally getting their day. Drinkers are the winners now.

**Sydnee:**

I- I don't know if this stuff really helps. Anecdotally, people will tell you that it does. Uh, it's probably not dangerous 'cause it's just a bunch of vegetable carbon. So, um-

**Justin:**

Okay, Sydnee, give me the real actual boring cure for hangovers.

**Sydnee:**

Uh, the... Well, the best cure for a hangover is kind of like the best, the best way to not get pregnant.

**Justin:**

Just don't.

**Sydnee:**

Yeah. I mean, don't have sex, don't get drunk. Um, if you really don't want to have a hangover, y- you know, don't drink a whole lot. Um, but if that's not [laughs], if that's not a possibility for you-

**Justin:**

Seek help.

**Sydnee:**

[laughs]

**Justin:**

Talk to somebody.

**Sydnee:**

Um, you know, a lot of people think that a hangover is just dehydration. It's more complicated than that, but certainly fighting the dehydration can help. So, trying to drink a lot of water while you're drinking, although that can be kind of a bummer, but while you're drinking, and then certainly the next day. Replacing your electrolytes, um, you know, with things like- like Gatorade or Pedialyte or whatever. Um, resting. You're gonna feel crappy, you need to rest. You-

**Justin:**

The one, the one that I s-... that actually does work for me is the one we learned from, uh, that episode of, um, *How Stuff Works*. Just take some ibuprofen, drink a whole lot of water and then sleep for, like, a half hour. [crosstalk 00:31:34] back.

**Sydnee:**

I think that- that magic sleep does help [crosstalk 00:31:37], and there is... a lot of people will say that if you take something like ibuprofen or aspirin or Advil the night before, um, but, like, right before you go to bed, that that'll help.

**Justin:**

Oh, yeah, that's the other thing.

**Sydnee:**

Yeah.

**Justin:**

One ibuprofen before bed, and then drink a lot of water with it.

**Sydnee:**

Now, one thing you want to be careful about we should note, and you'll read this, is that one, I don't have good evidence for that, and two, alcohol thins your blood, um, medicines like ibuprofen, aspirin, they do the same thing, and you don't want to cause a hemorrhage, you know, or bleeding in your stomach, so you want to be careful with that one. Most people can tolerate it, but, you know, if-

**Justin:**

Ask your—

**Sydnee:**

... it's something you don't do well with-

**Justin:**

If you're planning on self-treating-

**Sydnee:**

[laughs]

**Justin:**

... your own hangovers, talk to your physician and get- get ready for some weird looks, b- and some concerned "hmm"-ing. But, uh, uh, give it a shot anyway.

**Sydnee:**

Overall, learn from your mistakes, you know.

**Justin:**

You know.

**Sydnee:**

It's no [crosstalk 00:32:26], it... You know, having a good night out is a good idea, but if you're paying for it the whole next day, or-

**Justin:**

From Christmas until two days after New Year's.

**Sydnee:**

I mean, look, Justin's gonna have a rotten day tomorrow.

**Justin:**

For a few days, let's be honest.

**Sydnee:**

'Cause you're- you're done with that drink.

**Justin:**

Oh, man.

**Sydnee:**

We're... Yep, we're done.

**Justin:**

Hey, drink, we had a good run. And Sydnee, you and I had a good run today talking about hangover cures, just another one of the many topics we've covered here on *Sawbones*. We do this, uh, nearly every Friday, took a little break for the holiday, had some family in. Priorities. That's what, that's what's-

**Sydnee:**

I hope, I hope you all did too.

**Justin:**

That's what Suze Orman talks about, people first, you know?

**Sydnee:**

Then jackets.

**Justin:**

Then jackets [laughs].

**Sydnee:**

[laughs]

**Justin:**

Uh, we, uh, we missed you very much though, and we are back now, and in the interim we got a bunch of new, uh, brothers and sisters, um, uh, on the Maximum Fun Network. There are five new programs, well, four new programs and one- one reborn program. Uh, uh, we're gonna be talking about all of them over the next few weeks.

I'm sure I want to talk about one, *Song Exploders*, one of the new shows. Um, it is a really interesting, uh, po- little podcast where, uh, one song is examined by the artist that created it, and after playing the song they walk you through, you know, the instruments, the idea behind it, the recording process, just the whole song, really take it apart. Um, and, uh, I thought it was really fascinating.

**Sydnee:**

Sounds really cool.

**Justin:**

Yeah, get on board. Uh, there are whole lot of other shows on the Maximum Fun Network, uh, classic, classic MaxFun shows like *Judge John Hodgman*. *Stop Podcasting Yourself*, *Jordan*, *Jesse, Go!*, uh, *International Waters*, *Bullseye*.

**Sydnee:**

*My Brother, My Brother and Me*.

**Justin:**

Uh, thank you so much. *Wham Bam Pow*. Whe- uh, my brother Travis McElroy, who co-hosts *My Brother, My Brother and Me* with me, is on the new episode of *Wham Bam Pow* talking about, uh, *Back to the Future*. So, uh, go-

**Sydnee:**

Oh, gosh, I'm sure he has a lot to say about that.

**Justin:**

Yeah, he has some opinions.

**Sydnee:**

[laughs]

**Justin:**

Uh, so go listen to that, and, uh, thank you to The Taxpayers, who provided the theme song for our show. Uh, you can go check out their stuff, uh, all over their website, and I believe they're just @thetaxpayers on Twitter. So, go follow them and thank them for being so generous to us. Uh, and, uh, thank you very much for listening to our show. Share it with somebody you care about this week, and be sure to join us again next Friday for another episode of *Sawbones*. Until then, I'm Justin McElroy.

**Sydnee:**

I'm Sydnee McElroy.

**Justin:**

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

[theme music plays out]

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