

## Sawbones Episode 86: Sweating Sickness

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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. Welcome to *Sawbones*, a Marital Tour of Misguided Medicine. I am your co-host, Justin McElroy.

### **Sydnee:**

And I'm Sydnee McElroy.

### **Justin:**

Syd. You know what time it is?

### **Sydnee:**

It's. I mean, nighttime?

### **Justin:**

Summertime.

### **Sydnee:**

It is summertime. What it... Hold on. Wait, would you like to share what you're quoting-

### **Justin:**

Summertime.

**Sydnee:**

When you call summertime with that in intonation.

**Justin:**

The hit film, [laughs] film, *Grownups 2*. Summertime.

**Sydnee:**

Yeah, that's right. *Grownups 2*.

**Justin:**

The, the, um, [crosstalk 00:01:30].

**Sydnee:**

That you not only watched, but you're now quoting?

**Justin:**

Summertime. It's not actually summertime. Uh, I know summertime doesn't start until June, but I... 20th. I think personally... I think officially summer should start June 1st.

**Sydnee:**

Why?

**Justin:**

I think this is all very confusing. I think it should be, uh, winter is December, January... December, January, February.

**Sydnee:**

Okay.

**Justin:**

Okay. Spring, March, April, May.

**Sydnee:**

Uh-huh [affirmative].

**Justin:**

Summer, June, July, August. Fall, September, October, November.

**Sydnee:**

Well, but it doesn't... it's not like-

**Justin:**

Don't care. I know what to-

**Sydnee:**

It doesn't follow our man made calender-

**Justin:**

... about to... If your about to say some crap about, about the Equinox. I don't wanna hear it.

**Sydnee:**

It follows... Yeah, it has to do with the length of days and the sun and the-

**Justin:**

It's made up sun and it's all made up. It's all solstice, whatever.

**Sydnee:**

That's not... What do you mean it's made up? No, that's-

**Justin:**

Summertiiiiiiiiime.

**Sydnee:**

... objective. That's observable.

**Justin:**

Summertime.

**Sydnee:**

The months are made up.

**Justin:**

It's hot. It's getting hot, Syd.

**Sydnee:**

It is getting hot. I have been in the swimming pool twice this week.

**Justin:**

Whoa.

**Sydnee:**

Whoa.

**Justin:**

I gotta get out there. Get my base. Just kidding.

**Sydnee:**

That's right. It's, it's in the 80s all week. You're gonna get pretty hot if you don't go hop in the pool.

**Justin:**

Um, and it's important to stay cool. Right? 'Cause unless you get sweaty and gross.

**Sydnee:**

And who wants to get sweaty and gross?

**Justin:**

Nobody-

**Sydnee:**

Nobody.

**Justin:**

... except our baby apparently because she's sweaty and gross ever since the thermometer crested 60 degrees. She's pretty much sweaty all the time.

**Sydnee:**

She's not sweaty.

**Justin:**

A little bit's clammy.

**Sydnee:**

No.

**Justin:**

No.

**Sydnee:**

It's just sugar.

**Justin:**

[laughs] Is it sugar? Okay.

**Sydnee:**

You know who didn't like getting sweaty?

**Justin:**

Uh, no, I don't. I don't know.

**Sydnee:**

People in Tudor, England.

**Justin:**

Oh, really?

**Sydnee:**

No. They hated it.

**Justin:**

People at Tudor's Biscuit World.

**Sydnee:**

No. Well, no.

**Justin:**

Hated getting sweaty.

**Sydnee:**

You have to get sweaty if you eat at Tudor's Biscuit World, because you're eating lard biscuits-

**Justin:**

Mm-hmm [affirmative].

**Sydnee:**

... and that makes you, like, your heart is working so hard, pumping against all that lard-

**Justin:**

Playing with fire.

**Sydnee:**

... you're gonna get sweaty.

**Justin:**

You're playing with fire, playing with your own life and health.

**Sydnee:**

Tudor's Biscuit World is a, is a biscuit shop.

**Justin:**

A local biscuit chain.

**Sydnee:**

A local biscuit shop here in West Virginia.

**Justin:**

And sweat plays a big role in it. Apparently.

**Sydnee:**

No, I think they do make their biscuits with lard though.

**Justin:**

That's awesome. It's delicious. What's the sweating, like, what, what... why all the talk? Why all the sweat talks Syd?

**Sydnee:**

Well, I thought we should for to, for to- for this episode, I thought it would be interesting if we learned about sweating sickness.

**Justin:**

I've never in my entire life heard of that.

**Sydnee:**

That's because sweating sickness has not been around probably since, like, 1551.

**Justin:**

We cured it. Congratulations to everybody.

**Sydnee:**

Well... [laughs]

**Justin:**

We vac- We found the cure. We beat it.

**Sydnee:**

What was the cure?

**Justin:**

Deodorant.

**Sydnee:**

[laughs]

**Justin:**

I guess. I don't know. I know nothing about this thing. I'm just pulling it outta my hiney.

**Sydnee:**

Um, no, the sweating sickness is something that I actually didn't know a whole lot about because it's not, it's not a thing now. Um, but we've had several listeners who've suggested it, uh, kind of, over the past year now. So, I'm gonna, I'm gonna make all of you happy. So, thank you, Chris, Chelsea, Melanie, Sheila, and Kate. Thank you for suggesting this.

**Justin:**

If you wanna suggest a, a show topic, by the way, you can, uh, send that to sawbones@maximumfun.org. You can send 'em on Twitter, but that's... am I correct? I'm assuming that's, like, not sometimes they get lost in a shuffle.

**Sydnee:**

They do. They do. And I check the email and I can, I can search for things. I keep, like, a list and I search for things that I think will make good topics. Um, so that I can remember who to thank. And as Kate will attest who I think emailed us in like March of 2014, like eventually we'll get you to your, to your topic. So.

**Justin:**

We got you Kate. We hope you're still listening. [laughing]

**Sydnee:**

I hope you're not mad that [crosstalk 00:05:07] we never did the talk 'cause we're doing it now.

**Justin:**

We are doing it now.

**Sydnee:**

There's just a lot of good stuff to do. So, sweating sickness-

**Justin:**

Mm-hmm [affirmative].

**Sydnee:**

... also called English sweating sickness.

**Justin:**

Is that like, uh, what was the disease that everybody had a different nationality for? Remember? Like, the, uh-

**Sydnee:**

Um...

**Justin:**

... the Turks called it German fever.

**Sydnee:**

The German disease and the French disease.

**Justin:**

Maybe syphilis. Was it syphilis?

**Sydnee:**

Was it syphilis?

**Justin:**

I feel like it was an STD of some sort, so. Anyway.

**Sydnee:**

It may have been syphilis.

**Justin:**

Someone will let us know.

**Sydnee:**



I think it was.

**Justin:**

Someone will let us know.

**Sydnee:**

But no, this one, this one was called the English sweating sickness because for a while it only appeared to affect English people. It was only in England initially.

**Justin:**

Mm-hmm [affirmative].

**Sydnee:**

And so it was called the English sweating sickness. It was also referred to Sudor Anglicus-

**Justin:**

Hmm.

**Sydnee:**

... which just means the English sweat. [laughs] So, you got the, you got the English sweat.

**Justin:**

That, that was my, that was my favorite, uh, Morrissey derivative band in the mid '80s, the English Sweat. They only had that one, uh, big hit, but, uh, it, it, it really, it was the song of a generation.

**Sydnee:**

Can I just say that if there isn't a band called the English Sweat-

**Justin:**

The English Sweat. It's like a real... I'm like freaking out over what a good band name that is.

**Sydnee:**

You should get it right now.

**Justin:**

Yeah.

**Sydnee:**

If you are a band and you don't have a name.

**Justin:**

Yeah.

**Sydnee:**

And you are in England.

**Justin:**

The English Sweat. It's really good.

**Sydnee:**

You've... You're welcome. You owe us money. We just gave it to you.

**Justin:**

Yeah, you... but you're welcome.

**Sydnee:**

So, there were a series of epidemics of sweating sickness. They actually, uh, started in 1485. Um, and, and as I said, they started in England and they spread, um... they eventually would spread to other parts of Europe and then disappear completely by 1551. Uh, the disease, which we read about and was known as the sweating sickness, was very deadly, very rapid and very sudden. So, it, it was often said that you would, um, be merry at dinner and or merry, merry at drinks and dead by dinner-

**Justin:**

Mm.

**Sydnee:**

... or some, maybe that was reversed. Anyway-

**Justin:**

Maybe that's my tagline for the Clue movie. [laughing] It's definitely one of those two.

**Sydnee:**

Merry at drinks and dead by dinner.

**Justin:**

Like that's a... that would be a really good name for soundtrack by the English Sweat.

**Sydnee:**

[laughs]

**Justin:**

Clue the Movie.

**Sydnee:**

Why Clue the Movie?

**Justin:**

'Cause it's merry at drinks and dead by dinner. It's like a dinner party Clue-

**Sydnee:**

Okay. Well, we could-

**Justin:**

... the movie.

**Sydnee:**

I'm TMing that too.

**Justin:**

Yeah. TM it all.

**Sydnee:**

Okay. So, anyway. So, you got this sweating sickness, um, it spread throughout a population pretty quickly. About two weeks, it was burn out, meaning that the... it had stopped spreading, it's, kind of, an expression. It has burned itself out.

**Justin:**

Mm-hmm [affirmative].

**Sydnee:**

'Cause it spread so quickly. Um, people couldn't-

**Justin:**

That it... that was its, its problem right?

**Sydnee:**

Yeah. You, you couldn't give it to enough people before you died. Um, and it, and it killed a lot of people very quickly.

**Justin:**

Lesson to all these diseases out there, you gotta take your time. Don't rush it. You'll burn out.

**Sydnee:**

No, the, the hallmark of a good plague, you gotta... it's gotta take a little longer-

**Justin:**

Mm-hmm [affirmative].

**Sydnee:**

... for you to develop symptoms. The best thing, if you're a, if you're a virus or bacteria out there and you're listening and you want advice on how to spread to people better-

**Justin:**

Thanks for tuning in, by the way. Wha- What an honor.

**Sydnee:**

[laughs] ... um, I would, I would advise that you, uh, be communicable before you're symptomatic.

**Justin:**

Mm.

**Sydnee:**

It's a great idea. Great move. Really sneaky-

**Justin:**

Cool pro tip for you.

**Sydnee:**

... really sneaky. So, I bet you could guess one symptom of sweating sickness.

**Justin:**

Sweating.

**Sydnee:**

Good job.

**Justin:**

Woo!

**Sydnee:**

That's a gimme.

**Justin:**

Yeah.

**Sydnee:**

Um, so yes, sweating sickness was named for the horrible, horrible sweats you got, but that wasn't the first symptom. So, let's talk about, uh, before we, we, kind of, track the, the plague throughout history. Let's talk about, um, the symptoms.

**Justin:**

Okay.

**Sydnee:**

The a... and a lot of this comes from the description and we'll talk about this guy a little bit later, a Dr. John Caius who wrote about the epidemic, the last one that we know of in 1551 and gives us, like, the best description-

**Justin:**

Mm-hmm [affirmative].

**Sydnee:**

... that, that we have of it. This is why we know so much about it. So, first you get a sense of apprehension.

**Justin:**

So, just a note to those of you who may be feeling a little anxious, you get a sense of apprehension. It may be nothing, or it may be the return of a five centuries, long dead virus that has, uh, returned to plague humanity and you're patient zero. So, it could be one of those two.

**Sydnee:**

So, good luck with that.

**Justin:**

Sleep tight.

**Sydnee:**

Uh, then you get shivers really, really hard, like, shivers, like, probably what we would call today rigors. Like, you shake uncontrollably.

**Justin:**

Mm-hmm [affirmative].

**Sydnee:**

Um-

**Justin:**

I had that once. You remember that one night, I had those-

**Sydnee:**

I remember.

**Justin:**

Rigors and it was, it was nothing in the end, but it was really, that was really unpleasant.

**Sydnee:**

'Cause then I got it like a month later.

**Justin:**

Yeah. That's... See... That's... See. Look at that. That's the secret, disease, you gotta take your time.

**Sydnee:**

I got it. And I thought I was getting the flu and we'd already had Charlie and I was, I was a disaster. I was so freaked out.

**Justin:**

You made me go to Walgreens, uh, in the middle of the night to go get, uh, uh, masks.

**Sydnee:**

Yes. And I wore a mask the whole time I was taking care... I was so worried. I was... hand sanitizer and anyway, it went away the next, I don't know.

**Justin:**

Anyway.

**Sydnee:**

I didn't have sweating sickness.

**Justin:**

You... Definitely wasn't that.

**Sydnee:**

[laughs] Um, after you get the shivers, you get giddy. [laughs]

**Justin:**

Oh. Okay.

**Sydnee:**

It's like a, a brief respite, I guess, because then you're gonna get a headache and you're gonna get pain in your neck and your shoulders and your limbs. And then you just get really exhausted. And this would be the, the cold phase. And this would last, like, three or four hours. After that is when the, the sweating part of sweating sickness would, would set in. So, you would just start, like, getting really hot and sweating uncontrollably. You would start to become a little confused, delirious, you'd get chest pain, your heart would start beating abnormally, and you could feel it. You get what we call palpitations, which just mean to you, like, you're aware of your heart beating. You can feel it beating really fast and hard. Um, you'd become intensely thirsty-

**Justin:**

Mm-hmm [affirmative].

**Sydnee:**

... and this would go on for a few more hours. And then you would just get really exhausted all over again and want to go to sleep or, or die is what generally happened. Once you fell asleep, you would die.

**Justin:**

Okay. Listen, if you are the one in charge of naming a disease, you definitely wanna highlight the most important thing about it. In this case, I'm not sure the sweating is, like, the big deal.

**Sydnee:**

[laughs]

**Justin:**

Maybe next time, this comes around, maybe call it Super Fast Death Disease. Like, that might be a more accu- like, so maybe people would take the proper precautions in dealing with it rather than, like, sweating sickness that doesn't, oh, you're dead in 24 hours. Excellent. That that's definitely something I wanna avoid. That's that's your hook. Right there. Day dise- day death disease.

**Sydnee:**

[laughs] It's like, it's like Freddy Kruger though that you don't, you can't fall asleep.

**Justin:**

Right. But you can't-

**Sydnee:**

Till you die.

**Justin:**

Right. But the sweaty... I mean, call it Freddy Krueger disease. That would-

**Sydnee:**

I know. That's what I'm saying. It could be like Freddy Krueger disease.

**Justin:**

Yeah. I'm into that Elm Street Disorder. Like whatever, [laughing] just don't... like sweating sickness doesn't communicate the, the import of what is... you were, you were experiencing.

**Sydnee:**

No, instead of the 24 hour flu you had, like, the 24 hour death.

**Justin:**

Yeah. Yeah.



**Sydnee:**

And this you... these outbreaks usually occurred in the summer. That's what the, the... all the different ones will talk about were mainly in the summer. Um, and they seem to strike, uh, people that don't normally fall ill in epidemics. So, young men, um, especially, like, people who are well to do wealthy people, a lot of royalty. Um, and then in one, in one account, mention the drunk poor, also get it.

**Justin:**

Hmm. Okay.

**Sydnee:**

So, if you're not rich, just don't get drunk because then you may be in trouble.

**Justin:**

Yeah.

**Sydnee:**

Um, once you got it, you weren't immune, so you could get it again.

**Justin:**

Great. Awesome.

**Sydnee:**

And since a lot of people died of it, if you got it a second time, that was, I mean, odds were, that was probably it for you.

**Justin:**

Rough.

**Sydnee:**

So, let's talk about... so this was the sweating sickness, and like I said, it started in 1485. And I just wanna, kind of, walk you through the different epidemics 'cause there weren't that many. So, I can tell you about all of them.

**Justin:**

Great.

**Sydnee:**

The first one started, uh, right at the end of the War of the Roses. I've had to read a lot about, like-

**Justin:**

So, that would be-

**Sydnee:**

Tudor, England.

**Justin:**

That would be, what do we be talking there? Like 1485-ish.

**Sydnee:**

Yeah. I, I just said that, but.

**Justin:**

[laughs]I wanted to impress you! for what it's worth. I read it off the screen, so-

**Sydnee:**

Oh, okay.

**Justin:**

I was trying to just-

**Sydnee:**

So, you just weren't listening.

**Justin:**

... I was just trying to be sneaky.

**Sydnee:**

You just, you just, like, that... you didn't, like... you nega-impress me.

**Justin:**

Sorry. You were saying.

**Sydnee:**

Oh. Okay.

**Justin:**

You were saying, sorry, go on. You were saying by...

**Sydnee:**

By War of the Roses. I mean, like, the actual War of the Roses, not that really great movie. Do you remember that great movie *War of the Roses*?

**Justin:**

There's a lot of diversions in this episode.

**Sydnee:**

[laughs]

**Justin:**

I'm realizing that.

**Sydnee:**

That movie.

**Justin:**

Great.

**Sydnee:**

It freaked me out when I was a kid.

**Justin:**

Next up-

**Sydnee:**

The married couple and they're, like, killing each other.

**Justin:**

Next up on Sydnee's movie reviews, it's *War of the Roses*.

**Sydnee:**

[laughs] Um-

**Justin:**

*Bird on a Wire* coming up after the break. [laughing] Sti- stick around the end of the show we've got *Romancing the Stone*.

**Sydnee:**

I'm just what? I'm 20 years behind or more.

**Justin:**

Yeah. You'll catch up.

**Sydnee:**

In the, uh, in the Battle of Bosworth, which was the, the first battle where we start to see this disease, men were affected and this actually caused Lord Stanley, who was part of King Richard III's side.

**Justin:**

Mm-hmm [affirmative].

**Sydnee:**

He... so he was, he was working for his side and he actually had his troops, um, retreat because they were also sick with the sweating sickness. But in part it was an excuse that he used because actually after he did that, he, um, betrayed the king and joined Henry Tudor... Henry VII later. And then the coup went on to be successful and Henry became king.

**Justin:**

Oh, gofigure.

**Sydnee:**

Yeah. Um, but he used, he used sweating sickness to do that.

**Justin:**

Mm-hmm [affirmative].

**Sydnee:**

Well, I always think it's cool when disease affects history.

**Justin:**

Yeah.

**Sydnee:**

Um, Henry's army then, uh, march triumphantly to London carrying the, um, the sweating sickness with them. It really hit in September of that year. And by the end of October it had burned itself out. That was it. September, October done. And several thousand people were dead.

**Justin:**

Way too fast.

**Sydnee:**

And, and because I guess at the time we kept better track of rich people who died than poor people. I know this fact that two lord mayors died, six aldermen and three sheriffs.

**Justin:**

[laughs] Yeah. I'm, uh, you, you gotta give the important statistics. A disease really sets itself apart by how many prominent figures in society it kills.

**Sydnee:**

This sounds like something that would be on, like, a really crappy high school test. How many aldermen died in the 1485 epidemic?

**Justin:**

Anybody can kill a bunch of hob- any disease can kill a bunch of hobos being can botulism kills a, a lot of hobos.

**Sydnee:**

[laughs]

**Justin:**

That's nothing you, you want to, you got, you want somebody in position of power. That's, that's something you can, that's a, that's a notch you can carve on your, on your bed post.

**Sydnee:**

Then it took down quite a few people. Um, it, it only spread as far as Ireland and then it disappears. And we don't hear anything about it-

**Justin:**

Mm-hmm [affirmative].

**Sydnee:**

... again until 1502. So, in 1502, the sweating sickness returns and this time...

**Justin:**

Dun dun duuuun!

**Sydnee:**

Yeah, accompanied by that music, always.

**Justin:**

Yeah, and a sneaky... It has, like, a sneaky cloak, like, a smiley whiplash, kind of, like, dun, dun, dun, dun, dun... Oh, that's different music. I don't know what music it has. All right. I'm still workshopping it.

**Sydnee:**

Well, think about it. It's probably written by the hot... that hot band, the English Sweat.

**Justin:**

It's gotta be the English Sweat tune.

**Sydnee:**

Um, so it comes back and this time it, it hits pre- somebody pretty important. Arthur Prince of Wales, who was the older brother of Henry VIII.

**Justin:**

Oh.

**Sydnee:**

So, think about that.

**Justin:**

Now, Henry VII, he got married to the widow next door and she'd been married seven times before. Figured that one?

**Sydnee:**

So, he's Henry the VIII.

**Justin:**

Yeah, Henry VIII he is, he is.

**Sydnee:**

I get it. I get it.

**Justin:**

Mm-hmm [affirmative].

**Sydnee:**

No, but I mean, think about, so he should have been king, right?

**Justin:**

Whoa. You're right. Look at, look at you sweating sickness. You know, you, you burned out pretty quick but you had a major impact.

**Sydnee:**

Do you know who, uh, Arthur was married to?

**Justin:**

Um, I don't.

**Sydnee:**

You're gonna look ahead and you're gonna just say it 'cause it's written there on that sheet of paper.

**Justin:**

Uh, oh wait, you know what, let me think about it was it, was it Catherine of Aragon- I seem— Catherine or Christine of Aragon. It's one of the two.

**Sydnee:**

There wasn't... I don't think there was a Christine of...

**Justin:**

It's definitely... you're right.

**Sydnee:**

Yeah.

**Justin:**

I think it was Catherine of Aragon.

**Sydnee:**

Yes. So, Arthur Prince of Wales was married to Catherine of Aragon. Now there are, there are probably, like, history, buffs and historians and stuff out there right now who are, like, we all know this. This is so stupid.

**Justin:**

Right.

**Sydnee:**

I didn't know any of this. [laughs] So, this is new to me. So, he was married to Catherine of Aragon. Uh, so she also got the sweating sickness, but she lived, Arthur died. Catherine married... ?

**Justin:**

Henry VIII.

**Sydnee:**

Henry VIII.

**Justin:**

Okay.

**Sydnee:**

So, I, I gue- ma- was that normal? Maybe?

**Justin:**

Apparently. Uh, I mean, I don't know. Everything was, kind of, weird back then. Weird and gross.

**Sydnee:**

So, she married his brother, Henry VII, and then of course, Henry VII-

**Justin:**

If anything ever happens to me, I want you to marry Travis.

**Sydnee:**

Nope.

**Justin:**

Okay. Griffin.

**Sydnee:**

No, I'm not gonna marry your brothers.

**Justin:**

Okay. Well, think about it. Don't rush to judgment.

**Sydnee:**

One. One, um, they're, kind of, already married.



**Justin:**

Technically yeah.

**Sydnee:**

And two, I mean, they're your brothers.

**Justin:**

It's weird.

**Sydnee:**

It's weird.

**Justin:**

And they're not as cool as me, I guess.

**Sydnee:**

Well, I mean, obviously that part too.

**Justin:**

That's the most important thing. Okay. I'm sorry to keep interrupting.

**Sydnee:**

And, like, also, like, your brothers-

**Justin:**

Gross.

**Sydnee:**

... that's just weird. That's weird.

**Justin:**

Yeah.

**Sydnee:**

That's... they're like my brother or anyway. So, she... and I mean, you, I think we all know this. Maybe we do. I don't know. I, kind of, knew this. Maybe not all the names and dates, but, kind of, knew this. So, he was married to Catherine. Catherine bore him a daughter, but no sons. And he didn't like this because then the throne would go to a woman and there was really no precedent... uh, good precedent for that at the time.

**Justin:**

Mm-hmm [affirmative].

**Sydnee:**

... and that made him nervous. And so he was, I guess, already this, kind of, guy anyway, but he was looking around for maybe somebody else.

**Justin:**

Mm-hmm [affirmative].

**Sydnee:**

And of course then fell in love with-

**Justin:**

Anne Boleyn.

**Sydnee:**

Exactly.

**Justin:**

Yeah.

**Sydnee:**

And he wanted to divorce Catherine, but of course he couldn't 'cause they were Catholic. So, he created the Church of England. So, that he could-

**Justin:**

Sweating sickness at you look at you!

**Sydnee:**

... he could divorce Catherine.

**Justin:**

... look at you, you Butterfly Effect little disease. Just flapping your wings and causing typhoons all over. Go- Look at you.

**Sydnee:**

That, that's why I wondered, like, do you think if there wasn't sweating sickness or if Arthur had not gotten it, do you think we'd have a Church of England?

**Justin:**

It might... maybe it would be called something else. Dave's church.

**Sydnee:**

Do you... Who's Dave and why did he make the Church of England?

**Justin:**

I don't know. Sydney. I'm not a soothsayer see sweating sickness existed, the English Sweat existed. And so we have... you know, we live in this reality.

**Sydnee:**

I think that it's fair to say that at some point there would've been somebody in England who wanted to divorce somebody else and would've started the Church of England in order to do it.

**Justin:**

Any other big outbreaks?

**Sydnee:**

Uh, there were a couple outbreaks in 1507 and 1517. A little bit smaller, but they did hit Oxford and Cambridge and, and killed a lot of, uh, students there. Um, but then it, kind of... it was quiet for a little while.

**Justin:**

Oh, good. Excellent. Tell me about that.

**Sydnee:**

Well-

**Justin:**

When did it come back? Had to make a comeback, right?

**Sydnee:**

It does make a big comeback but before we talk about it's comeback, why don't you follow me to the billing department?

**Justin:**

Let's go.

[ad break]

**Justin:**

So, we had, um, we, we had a, kind of, a lull last I remember. And then things, uh, were about to pick back up. I'm afraid

**Sydnee:**

That's right there... we get a really... 1528 we get a really huge epidemic of, um, sleeping sickness that finally breaks free from England and spreads to other places throughout Europe. So, um, as, as it starts ravaging Europe, and I'll talk about all the different places it went. Um, I think one interest point is now Henry VII is, is the ruler and it hits London pretty hard

**Justin:**

Mm-hmm [affirmative].

**Sydnee:**

... and he is freaked out. He was actually, uh, famously, kind of, obsessed with sleeping sickness.

**Justin:**

Mm-hmm [affirmative].

**Sydnee:**

He was really scared-

**Justin:**

Sweating.

**Sydnee:**

... or it's not sleeping. Yeah. Thank you. Sweating sickness. Um-

**Justin:**

That would be more accurate by the way.

**Sydnee:**

That yeah.

**Justin:**

That's more terrifying than sweating.

**Sydnee:**

It's pretty terrifying. We've never talked about sleeping sickness. That'll have to be another... but, but sleeping sickness is pretty terrifying. Um, so... no sweating sickness, Henry VII was, kind of, obsessed with it, terrified he would get it. Um, he, he had a lot of different, like, his own, like, concoctions, like, different, um, medicines he made for himself and, like, pulses and things. He would tell people, like, do this and you'll definitely not get slee- sweating sickness, but, um, when it hit London-

**Justin:**

Here's a fun dinner party to go to.

**Sydnee:**

[laughs] His plan to, to not get, it was just to run.

**Justin:**

Smooth.

**Sydnee:**

Keep moving, stay on the move. It can't catch you.

**Justin:**

[laughs]

**Sydnee:**

So, he takes off from London-

**Justin:**

It's like the Incredible Hulk. [laughing] He's just going from town to town to... country, to country-

**Sydnee:**

Just running from sweating sickness.

**Justin:**

... with his thumb out stretched, always one step ahead. [laughs] Sweating sickness.

**Sydnee:**

He does. He's in, like, a different house every other day. I mean, he really [laughs] he really takes off.

**Justin:**

Moving on to the next town. He sees one person get overly sweaty. He's like, well, I am sorry, I'm sorry friends that I've made here. I'm moving on.

**Sydnee:**

And this is really triggered. His first move was actually triggered because you know, the sweating sickness hit London and he's, he's married to Anne Boleyn at this point. And Anne Boleyn, uh, one of her hand maidens false ill with sweating sickness. And so he takes off leaving her behind.

**Justin:**

Cool.

**Sydnee:**

Not the handmaiden. I mean, obviously the handmaiden, but leaving Anne Boleyn behind.

**Justin:**

Oh, listen, Annie, you're looking a little sweaty. Uh, Papa's got, uh, head on down that once in my way. And I will catch you on the flip flop.

**Sydnee:**

Her father ends up getting it as well. And then finally, she also becomes ill with sweating sickness.

**Justin:**

Mm.

**Sydnee:**

So, Anne Boleyn had sweating sickness. So, there are actually a lot of, I guess, that there are... you can, you can read a lot of the love letters written back and forth between Henry and Anne, if you're interested in that, kind of, thing.

**Justin:**

Mm-hmm [affirmative].

**Sydnee:**

Um, I stumbled on those as I was researching this and there are some about the illness, you know, him writing her and being, like, oh my love, gosh, I hope you get better. Also, um, please don't come where this... like, don't follow the address. Don't don't come visit me. [laughs] I'll have moved on by then. And I really don't wanna see you until you're better.

**Justin:**

That's a cool king.

**Sydnee:**

Sorry. Um, and her letters they were all like, I just hope I live so that I can continue to serve you. My Lord. I love you.

**Justin:**

Yeah.

**Sydnee:**

Um, but when she is ill, you can tell that he loves her [laughs] because while he does not go to her or send her to him, he does send his second-best doctor.

**Justin:**

Oh, nice.

**Sydnee:**

Second best to care for, for her. Do you know what that doctor's name was?

**Justin:**

I do not.

**Sydnee:**

Dr. William Butts.

**Justin:**

Oh, no. [laughs]

**Sydnee:**

So, Dr. Butts-

**Justin:**

Oh, no.

**Sydnee:**

... is sent on a mission to save Anne Boleyn from sweating sickness. This is real life. This is not, this is not, like, a TV show that you're watching on the BBC. Although, it probably is on a TV show on the BBC.

**Justin:**

Yeah. That's...

**Sydnee:**

But, but no, this is really, this was really what happened.

**Justin:**

Poor Dr. Butts.

**Sydnee:**

But he saved her. She lived.

**Justin:**

Oh, good job. Dr. Butts.

**Sydnee:**

Oh, wait, she probably just lived-

**Justin:**

Yeah.

**Sydnee:**

... he probably didn't do anything, but she lived. And, um, he forever after was in their favor and got lots of probably money and presents in it and prestige from it. Um, but this epidemic spread all over Europe. So, we see cases in Germany, Switzerland, Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Lithuania, Poland, Russia, all of these outbreaks last about two weeks. But all in, all it carries on for about a year before it goes away. And everybody hoped that was the end of it. But it wasn't.

**Justin:**

But no.

**Sydnee:**

Because as we referenced, the very last outbreak was in 1551. Um, this one again is, is mainly just in England. Dr. John Caius, who I had already mentioned was a famous doctor of the time. And he wrote a very, like I said, a very thorough account of what the sweating sickness was like. That's what most people read today, his, his, kind of, account of it. Um, and he treated a lot of people for it, uh, not successfully, but he did including a lot of royalty and became very famous for it.



**Justin:**

What was his advice?

**Sydnee:**

So, his advice, first of all, here, here are his thoughts on what causes sweating sickness. Maybe... he does say infection.

**Justin:**

Okay, good job.

**Sydnee:**

Yeah. He also says maybe an impurity of the spirit.

**Justin:**

Ah, see, he lost me.

**Sydnee:**

Probably brought on over eating.

**Justin:**

Oh no.

**Sydnee:**

Especially meat or bad meat or rotten fruit. [laughs]

**Justin:**

It's one of the two.

**Sydnee:**

Either meat or bad meat. Or rotten fruit, which I mean, to be fair, like, it is a bad idea to eat bad meat or rotten fruit.

**Justin:**

Yeah. He was, kind of, he was, kind of, um, no, no pun intended picking some low hanging fruit there. I mean, you probably shouldn't eat bad meat.

**Sydnee:**

Don't eat bad meat.

**Justin:**

Don't eat bad meat. It's got bad right in the name old timey people

**Sydnee:**

The... [laughs] Maybe just don't eat meat because we're not very good at telling if it's bad or not yet.

**Justin:**

Yeah, we have no clue.

**Sydnee:**

We don't know. So... we... just don't eat meat. Um, but he thought it would cause an excess of humors. So, so don't, don't eat those things. Uh, you could also get it maybe from evil mists.

**Justin:**

Possibly evil mists.

**Sydnee:**

Maybe dump ground.

**Justin:**

Mm. Yeah. Well, the evil mist rise out within dump grounds. So, that's, sort of, part and parcel.

**Sydnee:**

Oh, there, obviously, obviously, or maybe just the climate in England.  
[laughs]

**Justin:**

Bad break.

**Sydnee:**

Just sorry. That's why only, that's why it was mainly contained to England. It's just the climate there, the, the damp evil mist.

**Justin:**

So, how can I, how can I avoid getting it.

**Sydnee:**

Uh, so you can avoid it by eating fresh fruit and lots of fish. Um, especially there was a lot, he talked about catching fish about, like, going and getting fish and eating them. That was important.

**Justin:**

He just liked fishing.

**Sydnee:**

[laughs] Uh, wear-

**Justin:**

For you.

**Sydnee:**

... wear clean sweet smelling clothes-

**Justin:**

Mm-hmm [affirmative].

**Sydnee:**

... uh, get out in the fresh air.

**Justin:**

Sure.

**Sydnee:**

Exercise is important. So, specifically exercises that might help you, uh, hunting, hawking, I guess, like-

**Justin:**

Hawksmanship, falconry.

**Sydnee:**

Is that the same thing? So, they do that with Hawks?

**Justin:**

I would think. Yeah.

**Sydnee:**

That sounds terrifying.

**Justin:**

They're just bad at it. They're terrible at it.

**Sydnee:**

[laughs]

**Justin:**

You train 'em they leave once they never come back. No one... no, uh, Hawking is terrible.

**Sydnee:**

So, if you don't... if you're not a fan of Hawking, perhaps tennis, that was his other recommendation. Just try tennis.

**Justin:**

I would go for tennis. It's so much easier to find rackets than spare Hawks.

**Sydnee:**

He also just has a lot of advice about how everybody is, kind of, um, he thinks everybody's, kind of, weak now. Everybody's, kind of, a wimp. And he just... he, kind of, says, like, be a tough man and you won't get it. Like, be tough-

**Justin:**

Just be a big burley fellow.

**Sydnee:**

... be a tough guy. He talks about how men today are all like women, which is pretty offensive all around for everybody.

**Justin:**

Yeah. Everybody loses in that one.

**Sydnee:**

Um, you could treat it. So, if you could... if you didn't avoid it, let's say you didn't wear sweet smelling clothes and you're not into Hawking or tennis. Uh, you can treat it by, um, letting your body sweat it out. So, so just encourage the sweats. You're already gonna sweat make 'em worse. And he recommended a few herbs for that tanzer, feverfew or wormwood. He also recommended that you get some gentle rubbing from whoever I guess-

**Justin:**

And PS-

**Sydnee:**

does your rubbing.

**Justin:**

PS probably just keep all these things on hand because again, pretty fast acting a, a pretty fast acting disease. Maybe keep some jars of these lying around the house.

**Sydnee:**

Yeah. You probably don't have time to go pick these.

**Justin:**

If you don't already have a, a professional rubber-

**Sydnee:**

[laughs]

**Justin:**

... you should probably look into that right now.

**Sydnee:**

Just hire a rubber to hang around with you, um, drink warm drinks, that's to encourage the sweating. And it also advises that if you are caring for somebody with sweating sickness, that you should pull their ears or nose, if they try to fall asleep in order to keep them awake.

**Justin:**

Push through. Yeah.

**Sydnee:**

Because you know, the, the dying, um, also if they do make it 24 hours, then they're probably out of the woods.

**Justin:**

Woo!

**Sydnee:**

Um, you're, you're gonna feel lousy by the way for, like, another week or two, but you're probably not gonna die. Uh, then at that point he says, you can put on clothes. I guess they've been naked the whole time?

**Justin:**

This whole time they've been naked.

**Sydnee:**

[laughs]

**Justin:**

I've been picturing this. I haven't been anybody naked. Naked tennis. Are you sure?

**Sydnee:**

[laughs] I missed that, that they were naked.

**Justin:**

Naked Hawking. Are you crazy? That's not a mouse. Crazy Hawk.

**Sydnee:**

That was good, honey.

**Justin:**

Thanks, Syd.

**Sydnee:**

I liked that hawking joke.

**Justin:**

Thanks. It is my best Hawking joke I have, [laughing] I have so many, but I had to narrow it down to one.

**Sydnee:**

That's Justin's next book, a collection of Hawking jokes. Um, but they can't go out for two days. So, you can put on clothes, but you can't go out for two days. Uh, and for good measure, he, he, tacks on the end of this, that if you, your disease... if your version, your strain of sweating sickness is caused by the supernatural, then nothing he says is gonna be helpful. So, sorry.

**Justin:**

Okay, excellent.

**Sydnee:**

Um, after this that's really the end of sweating sickness.

**Justin:**

Yay!

**Sydnee:**

So, it burns itself out in about a year. There was something in 1718 that happened in France that was called the Picardy sweat, which we now theorize maybe was the same, kind of, thing, but it was a little different. So, that probably wasn't.

**Justin:**

Okay. So, Sydnee, what, what was it, like, what was actually causing this?

**Sydnee:**

So, we're still not sure, but we had some ideas. Um, we thought maybe it was some sort of illness that was spread by crowding and sanitation, probably because it first started during-

**Justin:**

War-

**Sydnee:**

War time-

**Justin:**

War time right.

**Sydnee:**

... right? Um, we have theorized that maybe it was relapsing fever, which is a bacterial infection that's spread by ticks, but they probably should have had a rash or a tick bite, like, a, like, a black mark. Anyway, it didn't quite fit. Some people have thought about anthrax, like, like, the... you inhale. Um, but the most likely theory at this point we have is, uh, hantavirus, which is a virus that, um, the most famous outbreak was in, uh, in the United States. Back in the nineties, there was an outbreak in, like, the four corners area-

**Justin:**

Mm-hmm [affirmative].

**Sydnee:**

... the four states, it was almost called the four corners virus, but they thought that would kill tourism. So, that's why it wasn't.

**Justin:**

Correct.

**Sydnee:**

Yeah. That's why it wasn't called that. So, it's hanta virus. Um, but, uh, it's a little tricky 'cause hanta doesn't usually spread from human to human and this, we think pretty much did. Um, but the theory to that, this is pretty interesting why this may have been hantavirus because the symptoms are pretty similar is that hanta is spread by, it was spread by mouse droppings. Like, especially if, like, you were in a house where they— mice had been and they've pooped and you swept the floors and it, like, made the poop and dust and everything, kind of, go up into the air and you inhaled it and then you would get this hantavirus, which caused a bunch of respiratory problems and then you would die.

Um, they thought that in these big houses, like, these big rich manor houses that these, you know, royalty would've lived in, there were a lot of, uh, servants who were sweeping a lot of floors. There was a lot of food sitting around and probably a lot of mice. So, that was one theory as to why maybe-

**Justin:**

Hmm.

**Sydnee:**

... maybe it was the same thing, um, at this point that's our best guess. Um, but, uh... and then, and there was even a thought at some point, like, maybe we should go dig up some really, really old corpses and try to test them for hantavirus.

**Justin:**

Nah. You know what, let's not. How about we just don't, that's another option.

**Sydnee:**

But that, that seemed, kind of, silly 'cause as for now, I don't think you need to, no matter how apprehensive you're feeling right now, I wouldn't worry too much about sweating sickness.

**Justin:**

Uh, I wanna say a big thank you to, uh, the Maximum Fun network for having us on. They've got a ton of great shows. You can go listen to [maximumfun.org](http://maximumfun.org), *The Goose Down*, *Lady to Lady*. I've been getting into more *Judge John Hodgeman*. I've always been a fan, but I've been really been, uh, listened to a lot of that lately. Um...



**Sydnee:**

I just listened to this one called *My Brother My Brother and Me* for the first time.

**Justin:**

Oh, man. Hachi Machi.

**Sydnee:**

That oldest brother sounds pretty cute.

**Justin:**

Oh, man. Hey, uh, do you like *Sawbones*? Do you like, uh-

**Sydnee:**

I hope so. You're listening.

**Justin:**

... clothing your shirt, clothing, your clothing, your torso. Well, good news. We have a brand new, uh, *Sawbones* T-shirt available at [maxfunnsstore.com](http://maxfunnsstore.com) and, uh-

**Sydnee:**

Um, please go check it out because it's super cool.

**Justin:**

Uh-huh [affirmative].

**Sydnee:**

And it was designed by my sister Teyor Smirl.

**Justin:**

So, please go by one of those, uh, also follow Taylor she's, uh, @Teylor\_smirl.

**Sydnee:**

Mm-hmm [affirmative].

**Justin:**

I think there's an underscore there.

**Sydnee:**

Yes.

**Justin:**

I'm pretty sure. Um, and, uh, check out some of... more of her art.

**Sydnee:**

She's a super talented artist.

**Justin:**

taylorsmirl.tumblr.com and that's T-E-Y-L-O-R S-M-I-R-L.tumblr.com to see some more of her work. She's crazy talented. It's a really fun shirt. It's, kind of, got like a tattoo biker vibe. Uh, but I think it's, it's really sweet. You can get that again at maxfunstore.com. If you already got one, send us some pictures on Twitter or we're @sawbones on Twitter, send us those so we can retweet them, uh, 'cause we'd love to see that. Uh, there's more merch on there for, uh, uh, all the MaxFun shows. Uh, also, we're, uh, hitting the road in September, Syd.

**Sydnee:**

Yes, we are.

**Justin:**

We're gonna be headed to Portland, Vancouver and Seattle. Now our, uh, Portland shows already sold out, but there's still tickets available for Vancouver and Seattle. Uh, you can get those at [bit.ly/vanmbmbam](http://bit.ly/vanmbmbam) for the Vancouver show 'cause we're gonna be there with *My Brother, My Brother and Me*, or you can get a [bit.ly/mbmbam](http://bit.ly/mbmbam) Seattle. And, uh, tickets are, like, 20 bucks, I think, 20, 25 bucks.

**Sydnee:**

And it's actually in the end of August, not September.

**Justin:**

Sorry dear. You're right the end of August. Uh, but those are gonna be really fun if you're gonna be out for PAX in Seattle. Uh, we're, we're doing a show the Saturday night of PAX. So, go buy tickets for that, um, 'cause we'd love to see out there and thanks to The Taxpayers for letting us use their song "Medicines". You can find them on Twitter @thetaxpayers. But that's gonna do it for us until next Wednesday. We have another medical topic to delve into I'm Justin McElroy.

**Sydnee:**

I'm Sydney McElroy.

**Justin:**

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

[theme music plays out]

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