

## Sawbones 33: Plastic Surgery

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### **Intro (Clint McElroy):**

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[theme music plays]

### **Justin:**

Hello everybody, and welcome to Sawbones: A Marital Tour of misguided medicine. I'm your co-host, Justin McElroy.

### **Sydnee:**

And I'm Sydnee.

### **Justin:**

Sydnee, we finished watching the Oscars on Monday morning 'cause we had to go to bed.

### **Sydnee:**

They were on too late.

### **Justin:**

Too late, right?

### **Sydnee:**

Who can stay up that late?

**Justin:**

Nobody can stay up that late.

**Sydnee:**

I can't anymore.

**Justin:**

And after watching the Oscars, Syd, I kinda wanna... I kinda feel like I need to refresh my look.

**Sydnee:**

All right, I mean, I can understand that. There were certainly a lot of beautiful people.

**Justin:**

I wanna be one of the beautiful people. I think—

**Sydnee:**

You mean kind of like Adele Mendoza? What was her name?

**Justin:**

Adele Menendoza, uh...

**Sydnee:**

Menendoza.

**Justin:**

No, I feel like that's really the only thing holding me back. I keep getting passed over for the big nominations, for the big awards and I feel like that's... that a new look could help separate me from the pack.

**Sydnee:**

Well, I mean, have you been in any movies?

**Justin:**

Oh, baby, that's all politics.

**Sydnee:**

The... Well, I mean, 'cause you know, that may be a bigger hurdle. Like the fact that it may be hard to be nominated for best actor if you haven't actually been acting in any films.

**Justin:**

No, no, no, all politics. Uh, it's all in who you know, Syd. It's all in who you know.

**Sydnee:**

Well, who do you know?

**Justin:**

That's the point, I don't know anybody. Nobody wants to talk to me. I don't have a fresh look. What I'm thinking about is maybe a little help. A surgical help.

**Sydnee:**

A little, a little surgical help?

**Justin:**

Exactly.

**Sydnee:**

Oh, I don't think that's a good idea.

**Justin:**

Well, I, uh, do.

**Sydnee:**

Surely, nobody in Hollywood has had plastic surgery.

**Justin:**

No, it doesn't happen there, but once you're in Hollywood...

**Sydnee:**

That's... They're just naturally, that beauty, right? Beautiful, right?

**Justin:**

Yeah, once you're in Hollywood, you don't need it anymore...

**Sydnee:**

Oh.

**Justin:**

... but you have to get some to get there. So that's what I'm needing and I was hoping before I go into the process, uh, you can kind of educate me a little bit about the topic because this... and this may surprise you, I know literally nothing about it.

**Sydnee:**

Mm. Now, that sounds about right, wanting to jump head first into something that you have zero knowledge about. That's...

**Justin:**

I'm par for the course.

**Sydnee:**

That's Justin McElroy all over.

**Justin:**

The beginning of plastic surgery, Sydnee. Take me on back.

**Sydnee:**

All right. Well, before we get started, I wanna say thank you to Richard who recommended this topic of plastic surgery.

**Justin:**

Thanks, Richard.

**Sydnee:**

Um, and, uh, we'll be talking about... I wanna tell you about plastic surgery and I'm kind of, like, putting together, 'cause some people like to pass out, like, uh, reconstructive surgery versus, um, purely cosmetic surgery. We're just kind of lumping it all together for the beginning.

**Justin:**

Yeah.

**Sydnee:**

Okay? Um, the term...

**Justin:**

Especially, 'cause I'm assuming plastic wasn't invented.

**Sydnee:**

Yes.

**Justin:**

Yeah.

**Sydnee:**

No. Well, I mean, I'm guessing that the word plastic, as in like, you know, plastic?

**Justin:**

Mm-hmm.

**Sydnee:**

The substance? [laughs]

**Justin:**

Yes, right.

**Sydnee:**

You know, plastic stuff.

**Justin:**

Plastic. The future of plastic.

**Sydnee:**

I don't know how to describe it other than that it's plastic.

**Justin:**

No, it's plastic.

**Sydnee:**

Right. Come's from the same root, the Greek plasticos, which means fit for molding.

**Justin:**

Mm.

**Sydnee:**

Which I certainly think plastic is.

**Justin:**

Yes.

**Sydnee:**

I mean, like, it's every— Like, we're a— Like everything's made of plastic.

**Justin:**

Yeah. Absolutely. Everything's made of plastic.

**Sydnee:**

Like, we are, right?

**Justin:**

We're basically plastic.

**Sydnee:**

Everything.

**Justin:**

Like, like, like that little girl in Small Wonder.

**Sydnee:**

Yeah, exactly.

**Justin:**

People made of plastic.

**Sydnee:**

It's the future. Um, so the first mention of plastic surgery comes from an ancient Egyptian text, the Edwin Smith Papyrus. I'm gonna guess that Edwin Smith is the guy who found it.

**Justin:**

Yeah, yeah. "My name is Concernicus."

"I am Filibradon."

"Um, I'm Edwin Smith?"

**Sydnee:**

[laughs] "This is my papyrus."

**Justin:**

"This is... I found this... I wrote the papyrus? If anybody wants to check it out?"

**Sydnee:**

'Cause that's a... I mean, 'cause that's definitely, like, 3,000 to 2,500 BC ancient Egyptian text. There's no way there was an ancient Egyptian dude named Edwin Smith.

**Justin:**

No. Absolutely not.

**Sydnee:**

So I'm assuming Edwin...

**Justin:**

Sounds like a folk singer.

**Sydnee:**

...Edwin found it. [laughs] Edwin found it and he read it, and he wrote folk songs about it...

**Justin:**

Mm-hmm.

**Sydnee:**

...and discovered a passage about, uh, nasal reconstruction.

**Justin:**

Hmm.

**Sydnee:**

So that long ago, they were talking about after somebody had broken their nose, trying to rebuild it to make it look better.

**Justin:**

Mm.

**Sydnee:**

Um, actually in ancient Egypt, most plastic surgery was done on the dead.

**Justin:**

Uh, why?

**Sydnee:**

So it wasn't to make you more beautiful or to look better in any way, um, that actually would've been a bad thing because the Egyptians felt like in the afterlife, you look exactly like you look on Earth...

**Justin:**

Mm-hmm.

**Sydnee:**

...and this was very important so that people could recognize you.

**Justin:**

Huh.

**Sydnee:**

Uh, they didn't want you to be mistaken for somebody else in the afterlife. So what they would do, in order to ensure that after you had died you would

be easily recognizable, um, they would enhance your most prominent features.

**Justin:**

Sort of make a caricature of yourself.

**Sydnee:**

Yes. Of yourself.

**Justin:**

Of yourself, right?

**Sydnee:**

So for instance, Ramses II, after he died, um, they put... they took a bone and some seeds and stuffed them up his nose so that it would stand out very prominently because they felt in life, his nose was his most prominent feature. So they wanted to ensure that in the afterlife he would be recognized.

**Justin:**

Can you imagine the dude whose job... like the guys who had to do that? Like they just stuffed a bunch of stuff up Ramses' nose and one pats the other on the shoulder was like, "Hey, this is what we—"

**Sydnee:**

"Strong work today, buddy."

**Justin:**

"This is what we... We did good work. This is what he would've wanted."

**Sydnee:**

[laughs] "This is what we wake up for, really."

**Justin:**

"This is... Yeah, this is, this is why we went to school for eight days."

**Sydnee:**

[laughs] This is... I'm guessing funerals were different and there weren't, like, open caskets so they didn't, like, have the family, like, grieving looking over going, "It's, wait, is that..."

**Justin:**

"What is that in his nose?"

**Sydnee:**

"What did they put in his nose?"

**Justin:**

"He looks great, though. So prominent."

**Sydnee:**

Um, Queen Nunjmet, she had it much rougher, I think. Um, they stuffed bandages into her cheeks, this is after she died of course, into her cheeks and in her belly, uh, in the same kind of way, if you think about somebody getting like silicone injected into things to make them plumper and bigger and curvier, um, to make these stand out more. So I think I would be really upset if somebody tried to make my stomach bigger after I died.

**Justin:**

Yeah. That's kind of mean. It's a little cruel. I think that person had it out for her.

**Sydnee:**

I'm assuming that this was... I mean, we're talking about different standards of beauty. And there was a long time where really, you know, chubby cheeks and a pot belly and hips, and that was the standard of beauty.

**Justin:**

Hmm.

**Sydnee:**

So maybe that, maybe that was it. She was just known for that.

**Justin:**

Yeah. It was her look.

**Sydnee:**

So can we bring those days back?

**Justin:**

Real Christina Hendricks kind of thing going on.

**Sydnee:**

Um, there... It is thought that they may have done this stuff on living people as well. Um, I... Obviously they found that, that Edwin Smith Papyrus that described, you know, rebuilding a nose. So, uh, there's thought that they knew how to do it. Um, but there's little proof that they did it a lot.

**Justin:**

Hmm.

**Sydnee:**

I mean, you got to think about, we're talking about an age before anesthesia, so people probably weren't rushing to have, you know, elective surgeries done.

**Justin:**

Yeah. Yeah. That, that wouldn't... The, the cost-risk analysis on that wouldn't really pan out.

**Sydnee:**

[laughs] They found some evidence that they would use reeds to, like, insert inside the nose, you know, to hold it in a certain position while it was healing. So they... this probably was done at least some, but not very often.

**Justin:**

Hmm.

**Sydnee:**

Um, when it really took hold... where it really took hold was in India. So around 800 BC, um, there's evidence that, uh, surgeons started doing more, especially nose jobs, rhinoplasty, or a nose job. That seems to be like the first thing that really took hold. Um, and it spread from India, uh, all the way to Europe, through Italy. And, um, a lot of the original techniques were a surgeon named Sushruta. Sushruta.

**Justin:**

Okay.

**Sydnee:**

And, uh, he would, uh, cut skin from the cheek or the forehead. Uh, if you... if this were a nose reconstruction...

**Justin:**

Okay.

**Sydnee:**

...take that skin, twist it over a leaf and then sew it into place over the nose.

**Justin:**

Oh.

**Sydnee:**

So, I don't think you would result in anything that looked...

**Justin:**

Good?

**Sydnee:**

... like a nose.

**Justin:**

Not nose-ish. Kind of a tree person kind of vibe, like an ent sort of.

**Sydnee:**

It would, [laughs] it would be an interesting pattern.

**Justin:**

Yeah. It would be something.

**Sydnee:**

Um, it would look like skin, I suppose.

**Justin:**

Ish.

**Sydnee:**

Which I think was the idea. I mean, we're talking about people who probably didn't go to him to say like, "I really don't... I really think my nose is a little bumpy?" I mean, I think these were people who probably...

**Justin:**

Like, I don't have a nose.

**Sydnee:**

Right. Exactly.

**Justin:**

I've got to get that nose look that all my friends and family seem to be so into.

**Sydnee:**

I'd really like a nose back, please.

**Justin:**

I want the nose thing.

**Sydnee:**

I don't think the noses were functional, I would imagine.

**Justin:**

Yeah. Probably not. There're various sensors and connectors. We wouldn't have known how to wire those in.

**Sydnee:**

Yeah. You couldn't have used them for smelling or for wiggling.

**Justin:**

Just for scaring neighborhood children.

**Sydnee:**

What else do you do with your nose?

**Justin:**

Exclusively. What? I don't know, you're the doctor.

**Sydnee:**

Smelling.

**Justin:**

Smelling, that's right. Yeah, that one.

**Sydnee:**

I can't wiggle it. I think only Samantha could wiggle it.

**Justin:**

Yeah. I can't.

**Sydnee:**

You're trying to right now.

**Justin:**

I'm trying to right now, I can't.

**Sydnee:**

No, you can't do that.

**Justin:**

I can my ear.

**Sydnee:**

Twitching it, you can twitch it? Kinda flare? Ooh, you can flare.

**Justin:**

I can flare. Even flare your nostrils to display anger to other bulls.

**Sydnee:**

To other bulls?

**Justin:**

To other bulls in your neighborhood.

**Sydnee:**

[laughs] The, um, the British physicians, actually, once it... you know, this technique started spreading to Europe, uh, traveled to India and tried to learn these techniques. And that's how they eventually took hold in the UK, is that they would move to India and learn them.

**Justin:**

Wow. I— They should have just called me, I would've, like, told them how to do this crazy thing that doesn't really work that well and kind of looks kind of bad.

**Sydnee:**

They should have called you because they had phones and you were alive then.

**Justin:**

So, I'm sorry. Would the leaf like... I'm trying to visualize this. Like, so you wrap the skin around the leaf and put the leaf... sew the leaf on the person's face?

**Sydnee:**

See this confused me too, 'cause...

**Justin:**

"It looks natural, doesn't it?"

"It doesn't. It looks like a leaf, like a skin leaf."

**Sydnee:**

I looked at some diagrams of this and it looked like the piece of skin that was being sewn over the nose, it looked like a leaf, but I can't imagine that the actual leaf was still there, but that it retained the shape of a leaf 'cause you used it to spread the skin.

**Justin:**

Okay.

**Sydnee:**

I don't know. I mean, if they were actually sewing the leaf into the face, I mean, well, I mean that'd be bad.

**Justin:**

Yeah. It would be...

**Sydnee:**

You probably get infected and die.

**Justin:**

Yeah. Probably pretty unpleasant.

**Sydnee:**

I don't think a face infection does that well back in those days.

**Justin:**

Yeah. Yeah. Except fill in face with like anything at all kind of infection, I'd say.

**Sydnee:**

Yeah. Exactly. But like intentionally sewing a leaf onto your head, that just seems like a recipe for danger. Um, the, uh... this continued to be popular because there was an ancient, um, barbaric custom of cutting off your enemy's nose and upper lip, uh, not killing them, just removing that to show that, you know, they've been defeated. And so I think that's why this interest in rebuilding noses became so popular for a while.

**Justin:**

They still do, still do that in Quiz Bowl tournaments at a lot of local high schools.

**Sydnee:**

[laughs]

**Justin:**

It's a big problem, actually.

**Sydnee:**

Like those kids don't have it hard enough.

**Justin:**

Yeah. Really.

**Sydnee:**

Come on.

**Justin:**

How are they supposed to keep their glasses on? Did you even think about that?

**Sydnee:**

No. They're focusing on their massive wedgies that they're always getting.

**Justin:**

[laughs] I need reconstructive surgery for this nuclear wedgie that I got.

**Sydnee:**

[laughs] I don't know why we're making fun of them. That was us.

**Justin:**

Yeah. But not anymore. Take that. Everybody's got their own cross to bear, kids.

**Sydnee:**

Um, the Romans also practiced, uh, reconstruction of ears, mainly. I think what's interesting about the surgeries that they did is that it was, uh, considered, um, against their religious beliefs to, um, dissect humans. So they wouldn't have known much of... about anatomy, like, Roman surgeons based on any real experience.

**Justin:**

Hmm.

**Sydnee:**

Um, you know, to dissect a cadaver or anything, that wasn't something that would've been done. So they base it all on Greek anatomical drawings to try to figure out how to reconstruct ears, which is pretty fascinating to think about trying to do that just based on a picture.

**Justin:**

Yeah.

**Sydnee:**

Um, the Romans really got into this stuff though, because if, as you may be familiar with, they spent a lot of time naked.

**Justin:**

Right. They loved it.

**Sydnee:**

Right.

**Justin:**

Bath houses, [crosstalk].

**Sydnee:**

Exactly. So if you're gonna spend a lot of time, you know, lulling about naked in a bathhouse, uh, you get really concerned with how your body looks and in particular, parts of your body that people usually wouldn't be able to see, but now all of a sudden, you know, because of culture, everybody sees them...

**Justin:**

Mm-hmm.

**Sydnee:**

...and can start comparing them.

**Justin:**

Right.

**Sydnee:**

So all of a sudden genital reconstruction surgery became popular.

**Justin:**

Alterations or just reconstruction?

**Sydnee:**

No, I should say alterations.

**Justin:**

Okay. Okay.

**Sydnee:**

Reconstructing it to look different. [laughs]

**Justin:**

Reconstructing it to look like my neighbor Dan's.

**Sydnee:**

[laughs]

**Justin:**

Danicus.

**Sydnee:**

[laughs] Circumcision was the most popular one. So that doesn't seem so radical.

**Justin:**

Right.

**Sydnee:**

Um, but that extended to even like, uh, for men, breast reductions became popular.

**Justin:**

They just wanna nail their look. It's a high pressure atmosphere around the bath. Danicus is just letting his, uh, his olive branch hang out there. And you know, it's a little intimidating.

**Sydnee:**

[laughs] So that... I think that, um, that is maybe an area of plastic surgery that is not explored in full enough today.

**Justin:**

Mm-hmm.

**Sydnee:**

Maybe we could learn some techniques from the Romans. Uh, they also, um, in this kind of same, uh, vein, you know, they hated things that made you

less beautiful. So scars were a common thing to try to get, uh, plastic surgery to have removed and redone.

**Justin:**

I doubt that they could do that very convincingly.

**Sydnee:**

I can't imagine how they were able to do that, considering that they'd probably cause bigger scars.

**Justin:**

"We could put a worse scar on top of it. Would that be good?"

**Sydnee:**

I... The, the main thing that they hated were scars... for a man to have a scar on his back.

**Justin:**

Really? That was like a big deal?

**Sydnee:**

It was a big deal. The reason being that the implication is that you have a scar on your back, you turned your back on your enemy and tried to run away.

**Justin:**

Oh, weird.

**Sydnee:**

So you looked cowardly and shameful.

**Justin:**

Hmm.

**Sydnee:**

And so they would, uh, they would try to have those scars removed, or the other implication is that you may have been a slave and been beaten. And again, that was something you didn't want people to know if you had been a slave, and then were freed.

**Justin:**

Back wounds, a big deal.

**Sydnee:**

Yeah. So, um, the other segment of the population that had a lot of reconstructive surgery, uh, gladiators.

**Justin:**

Really?

**Sydnee:**

It was not uncommon for a gladiator to get their nose or ear chopped off.

**Justin:**

So they had to get sort of a fake, fake nose or ears.

**Sydnee:**

Exactly. Well, especially— I mean, well only. I was gonna say, especially if they survived.

**Justin:**

Yeah.

**Sydnee:**

Yeah.

**Justin:**

I think only if they survived.

**Sydnee:**

[laughs] Um...

**Justin:**

Nobody's that vain afterwards.

**Sydnee:**

Well, because you know, if you're a gladiator and you survive the ring, you go free.

**Justin:**

Yeah, right.

**Sydnee:**

Right? I mean, that's the deal with gladiators.

**Justin:**

Do you get riches? Seems like you get riches.

**Sydnee:**

Do you get riches too?

**Justin:**

I would think you probably some riches 'cause you got to get a starter or else, you're just gonna end up right back in slavery.

**Sydnee:**

I didn't know that you also got riches. I do know... I thought you just got... Well, maybe you do. I don't know.

**Justin:**

Maybe they just help you get on your feet, help you get a decent telemarketing gig or something.

**Sydnee:**

I don't know. Call Russell Crow and ask him.

**Justin:**

I'm sure there's some sort of service that helps those people find a footing.

**Sydnee:**

Job rehabilitation, performer, gladiators.

**Justin:**

Exactly. "Uh, special skills. I can kill a lion. You have a lion problem? 'Cause I can take care of that."

**Sydnee:**

"I only have one ear."

**Justin:**

"I have one ear so I can keep a secret, I guess?"

**Sydnee:**

So they, in order to fit into society better and to, you know, get their telemarketing jobs...

**Justin:**

Mm-hmm.

**Sydnee:**

... they had to, uh, have their noses and ears reconstructed. So that was also something that was done. Um, Galen, we've talked about him a lot, a

physician at the time did rhinoplasty. So he did some nasal reconstructions. He also did surgeries on droopy eyelids.

**Justin:**

Yeah.

**Sydnee:**

It was purely cosmetic at that point.

**Justin:**

Right.

**Sydnee:**

Yeah.

**Justin:**

Unless they drooped so much that you couldn't see.

**Sydnee:**

Well that's fair. Now that's... those were really droopy eyelids.

**Justin:**

Super droopy.

**Sydnee:**

That is a thing. That actually is a thing that's done.

**Justin:**

I'm sorry if you have that, by the way.

**Sydnee:**

Yeah. No.

**Justin:**

I didn't mean to make fun of you.

**Sydnee:**

That is a rough thing. And that is a real surgery and I don't think you could call it cosmetic at that point, 'cause that's purely...

**Justin:**

Yeah, you just kind of need it.

**Sydnee:**

...functional. You can't—

**Justin:**

To see.

**Sydnee:**

Yeah. But I don't know... From what I read, I don't know that he was purely doing it for functional reasons. I think it was also, you know—

**Justin:**

Get that fresh.

**Sydnee:**

[whining] "My eyelids are droopy."

**Justin:**

"Help me! My penis is too small. Reconstruct it."

**Sydnee:**

[laughs]

**Justin:**

"And also while you're in there, use that skin from my eyelids."

**Sydnee:**

The Romans would've been totally into that, though.

**Justin:**

Yep.

**Sydnee:**

They were a very vain culture. So the idea... I think that, um, our current idea that it's okay to alter your body, to make it more, uh, pleasing to you...

**Justin:**

Mm-hmm.

**Sydnee:**

...if there's something you feel like you need to do for you, I think the Romans would've totally jived with that.

**Justin:**

Mm-hmm.

**Sydnee:**

They would've said, "Oh yeah. If we had known how to put people to sleep..."

**Justin:**

"We would've been into it."

**Sydnee:**

Yeah, "Or make things that didn't look so weird."

**Justin:**

"If we didn't make everything out of leaves..." They had wood. Seems weird.

**Sydnee:**

No, those were... See that was in India. Leaves were in India. They were mainly just taking skin from various places in Rome.

**Justin:**

Hmm.

**Sydnee:**

Um, now this kind of started falling out of favor in the middle ages.

**Justin:**

I bet religion ruined it.

**Sydnee:**

Yes. There's, well, two reasons, religion and superstition. So...

**Justin:**

Well...

**Sydnee:**

[laughs] Nope.

**Justin:**

Hey, not gonna touch that one.

**Sydnee:**

Nope. Not going there.

**Justin:**

Nope, nope, nope, nope, nope.

**Sydnee:**

Don't even. Uh, so the church was a big reason. Um, the... Especially the Pope declared it sinful to alter your body. You know, it was your gift from God and to make any changes to it, especially if you're talking about cosmetic, you know, the way that it came out initially, um, would've been a huge, um, sin. And so that was one big reason. And then the second was that, uh, people, for whatever reason, we've talked about this before, got really stupid for a while, and...

**Justin:**

[laughter]

**Sydnee:**

... and they thought that surgery in general may be evil because you're allowing somebody else to spill your blood and then you're supposed to live through it. And that implied some sort of magical power.

**Justin:**

Oh, God, come on.

**Sydnee:**

And that maybe it gave the surgeon control over you. Maybe they were doing some kind of spell.

**Justin:**

Come on, middle ages people.

**Sydnee:**

They really weren't clear on it, they just thought it sounded fishy.

**Justin:**

We did take a big step back, didn't we?

**Sydnee:**

Yeah, we did.

**Justin:**

Like things seemed to be going, like, on a pretty cool path, and then we just chilled.

**Sydnee:**

We were at a time where we were...

**Justin:**

The anti-chill. We didn't even chill, we, like, took two steps back.

**Sydnee:**

We got really stupid. People were laying around naked in bath houses going, "Hey, I think I'm gonna go get my penis done to look more like yours next Tuesday."

**Justin:**

Yeah. Like we figured it out.

**Sydnee:**

"Oh, that's a great idea, Maximus. Get that done."

**Justin:**

"Do it. Go for it. Live... Stand in your truth."

**Sydnee:**

"Live your life."

**Justin:**

"Find your passion."

**Sydnee:**

And then like, and then you fast forward and all of a sudden we're like, "Don't take out my appendix, you sorcerer." [laughs]

**Justin:**

"I don't know what spells you're going to use that for."

**Sydnee:**

"I'd rather die!" 'Cause, um, cause you would.

**Justin:**

'Cause I will. I will, in fact die.

**Sydnee:**

Not that I doubt that surgeons would've been very good at appendectomies then anyway.

**Justin:**

No they're just like reaching and grabbing whatever lump of flesh they can... It's like claw machine at the movie theater. They're just grabbing whatever they can latch onto and yanking it out.

**Sydnee:**

But now to be fair though...

**Justin:**

"I hope this fixes it."

**Sydnee:**

We're also talking about a time period where it probably wasn't a big deal to go down to the graveyard, dig up some bodies and dissect them for science. That was the kind of thing they would've been into.

**Justin:**

Mm-hmm. That's fine.

**Sydnee:**

Yes. Because it... I don't know 'cause everybody was doing something gross at the time.

**Justin:**

Yeah. Middle ages were the pits.

**Sydnee:**

Um, with the Renaissance, some interest, you know, was renewed. Uh, and there were some surgeons that attempted, uh, instead of human skin, they thought, "Hey, why don't we try with the other animals? 'Cause, you know, 'cause it was always disfiguring in another way if you have to take skin off of you somewhere...

**Justin:**

Mm-hmm.

**Sydnee:**

... and they weren't very good at that either, and it was incredibly painful and they didn't know how to harvest it without leaving a lot of other scars. So why don't we take some pig skin?

**Justin:**

I was really hoping you'd say bear arms, but that's okay. All right. We'll do pig skin first.

**Sydnee:**

Like give people bear arms?

**Justin:**

Like the arms of a bear.

**Sydnee:**

So like remove their arms and then put bear arms on them.

**Justin:**

Bear arms on them. Yes. Sweet. How sweet would that be?

**Sydnee:**

I don't know if you have the strength of bear arms, if you just attached, you know? 'Cause I'm assuming that's why you'd want those, right?

**Justin:**

Yeah.

**Sydnee:**

Like for the strength factor?

**Justin:**

Well, the muscles, you just connect the wiring, I guess. You just connect everything, tie everything together.

**Sydnee:**

They definitely were capable of that.

**Justin:**

Yeah. Well would you be?

**Sydnee:**

No, I'm not a surgeon.

**Justin:**

Could you give me bear... Could a surgeon give me bear arms?

**Sydnee:**

Um, I don't think a surgeon would give you bear arms.

**Justin:**

Don't I have the right to bear arms?

**Sydnee:**

[laughs] Was that where all this was leading? Was that... This whole thing, was this a big setup for that?

**Justin:**

I'll never tell!

**Sydnee:**

If it was that, I'm sorry to everyone listening. [laughs] Really? Really?

**Justin:**

You're just mad 'cause you walked right into it, my trap.

**Sydnee:**

Could you have some caffeine or something before we continue?

**Justin:**

You just walked right into it, you feel like a mark.

**Sydnee:**

Drink some coffee or something.

**Justin:**

'Cause I made you my patsy.

**Sydnee:**

Is this best you got tonight?

**Justin:**

You just mad 'cause you're taking the fall for that.

**Sydnee:**

[laughs]

**Justin:**

It was a good grift, it was a long con and you fell for it.

**Sydnee:**

Oh, our unborn child heard that.

**Justin:**

[laughs]

**Sydnee:**

That's what he thinks of his dad now. The best he's got, or she.

**Justin:**

Listen, he's lucky if his dad's not peaking right now, okay?

**Sydnee:**

[laughs] Um, the, uh, the skin, the pig skin that they would transplant onto human, again, we're probably mainly talking about noses, uh, would usually— Well, would always die.

**Justin:**

Sure.

**Sydnee:**

Uh, it didn't work. And the reason that they figured this probably happened is that it was, um, it was feeling sympathy to its donor and must die with its donor pig.

**Justin:**

Yeah, that's a good excuse. Good job, guys.

**Sydnee:**

"Aw, it just felt so sad."

**Justin:**

"So sad. That was some pig though, right? Oh well."

**Sydnee:**

[laughs] Um, which you know what that made me wonder though?

**Justin:**

What?

**Sydnee:**

I wonder if somebody tried, because if they thought that the natural thing would be, "Well, maybe we can take some skin off of this pig without killing it." You think anybody tried that?

**Justin:**

To take the pig skin without killing it?

**Sydnee:**

Without killing the pig and then transplant it to the human and see if the skin still died. I mean, if you thought it died with the donor...

**Justin:**

Possibly.

**Sydnee:**

I don't know.

**Justin:**

Yeah.

**Sydnee:**

Just something I thought about as I was thinking.

**Justin:**

Yeah. Okay, Jeffrey Dahmer. Maybe you just, like, try to curtail those thoughts for me.

**Sydnee:**

Like, you don't eat bacon. What are you— It's a pig.

**Justin:**

Not bacon stripped from the living pig as it squeals in agony and yet is preserved through witchcraft.

**Sydnee:**

[laughs] I didn't say you take it's skin and then you—

**Justin:**

You said take it skin while it lives.

**Sydnee:**

... and then you fry it up and eat in front of it. "Nom, nom, nom. Watch this pig!"

**Justin:**

"Oh, Wilbur, this is delicious!"

**Sydnee:**

No.

**Justin:**

"You don't have any idea. You're so good. You sure you don't want any? Huh, just kidding. Om nom nom..."

**Sydnee:**

[laughs] You can take skin off of a human and they live.

**Justin:**

Yeah, but like...

**Sydnee:**

I mean, like, for skin grafts, for transplanting skin from one body part to another.

**Justin:**

Who could stop them— Once you start cutting the pig and you know the bacon's right underneath there, who's gonna be able to stop themselves? Nobody.

**Sydnee:**

Well, tell me how you... how good would you be at finding the bacon in a pig?

**Justin:**

I would just shout at it until it told me. I'd like Jack... I'd go full Jack Bauer. I'd kill its family in front of it. "Where's the bacon?"

**Sydnee:**

[laughs] You freak out when we get bone-in chicken breasts.

**Justin:**

[laughs] Fair. That's fair.

**Sydnee:**

Um, so...

**Justin:**

Anyway, where were we?

**Sydnee:**

Obviously, we weren't making any advances with pig skin.

**Justin:**

And we weren't making any advances with our podcast. So it all came out the wash.

**Sydnee:**

I wonder if that... if immediately after that they said, "You know, this really isn't working for faces. Maybe footballs?"

**Justin:**

"Maybe? We've got, we've got all... I just bought all this pig skin!"

**Sydnee:**

"We all this pig skin, what of else could we do with it?"

"I don't know, some oddly shaped sporting equipment?"

**Justin:**

Quick, some—

**Sydnee:**

"That only Americans will love?"

**Justin:**

Someone invent the touchdown!

**Sydnee:**

Um, let's steal the name from soccer and then call it soccer.

**Justin:**

[laughs] "What's soccer?"

"Exactly."

**Sydnee:**

I don't know.

**Justin:**

Exactly.

**Sydnee:**

"We just made it up so we can take football." Um, so the, uh, the real father of modern plastic surgery is probably Gaspare Tagliacozzi. That's how I'm gonna decide that's pronounced.

**Justin:**

I like that. It sounds good.

**Sydnee:**

Mm-hmm. And uh, he saw a big need because people were losing a lot of noses to syphilis at the time.

**Justin:**

Mm-hmm.

**Sydnee:**

Um, and, uh, and so he, you know, wanted to help you reconstruct your nose. And, um, it was kind of a, if you had— If you think about it, it would

be kind of a mark of shame at the time that you would lose your nose and you didn't have one, but people also would assume you had syphilis.

**Justin:**

Mm.

**Sydnee:**

So he reconstructed noses...

**Justin:**

Sort of like when you spill water on your pants. It's like... It's already kind of embarrassing, 'cause now your pants are wet, everybody thinks, thinks you peed yourself.

**Sydnee:**

Not on pregnancy pants!

**Justin:**

No. That's water resistant.

**Sydnee:**

I learned that today. Water resistant.

**Justin:**

You peed your pants today?

**Sydnee:**

No, I poured my water bottle on myself accidentally.

**Justin:**

Oh. Eh.

**Sydnee:**

Shut up.

**Justin:**

A tough road for this kid to hoe, huh?

**Sydnee:**

Anyway. So they reconstruct— He reconstructed noses from arm skin, but the problem with these noses twofold, um, one, uh, they didn't look like a real nose. I mean, that's...

**Justin:**

Yeah.

**Sydnee:**

... that's probably the biggest issue is that you still knew that that was... Okay, well that's not a real nose. And since losing your nose was a sign of, you know, you probably had a venereal disease and maybe you were of loose moral character and all these horrible things that were associated with it and the religious attitudes, um, it really didn't help you as far as your standing in society.

**Justin:**

Right.

**Sydnee:**

You know, they—

**Justin:**

Nobody was fooled, basically.

**Sydnee:**

Especially for women.

**Justin:**

Right.

**Sydnee:**

You know, if you were a woman who had... who lost your nose to syphilis and then you had it reconstructed, I mean, your husband was gonna divorce you, almost for sure.

**Justin:**

Mm-hmm.

**Sydnee:**

And that was a reason for divorce. Actually, he could just leave you.

**Justin:**

Ah, wonderful.

**Sydnee:**

I know. Thanks. Thanks men, again.

**Justin:**

Thanks, history.

**Sydnee:**

Thank you again.

**Justin:**

Don't look at me!

**Sydnee:**

I'm just saying, again.

**Justin:**

Okay.

**Sydnee:**

Uh, so it was a really rough road to hoe, especially for women. But the other reason that these, uh, noses weren't particularly effective is that if you blew them too hard, like, you know, blew your nose...

**Justin:**

Mm-hmm.

**Sydnee:**

... and you did it too hard, it would fall off.

**Justin:**

Oh, you hate to have that.

**Sydnee:**

[laughs]

**Justin:**

Nothing's gonna ruin your family picture faster.

**Sydnee:**

So cold and flu season must have just...

**Justin:**

Oh.

**Sydnee:**

... grizzly.

**Justin:**

Awkward.

**Sydnee:**

I mean just been grizzly.

**Justin:**

Super awkward.

**Sydnee:**

Can you imagine?

**Justin:**

No.

**Sydnee:**

Like Halloween!

**Justin:**

"Uh, you know, Gary, you sound a little congested. Do you want..."

"Nope, nope, nope, nope, nope, nope, nope. I'm just gonna just hand with this, okay?"

**Sydnee:**

"No, I'm gonna stay like this."

**Justin:**

"Is that all right? Good."

**Sydnee:**

"It's cool."

**Justin:**

"I'm fine."

**Sydnee:**

"It's cool."

**Justin:**

"I'm gonna take some, uh, Greek NyQuil."

**Sydnee:**

As you can imagine, a lot of advances weren't made...

**Justin:**

Not Greek, you know, whatever time period we're talking about.

**Sydnee:**

We're doing Italian.

**Justin:**

Italian! Italian NyQuil.

**Sydnee:**

Um, [laughs] is that how you say it?

**Justin:**

Yeah.

**Sydnee:**

[Emphasizing first syllable] NyQuil.

**Justin:**

That's the brand, NyQuil.

**Sydnee:**

Like Mario.

**Justin:**

Yeah. [imitating Mario] It's-a me, NyQuil!

**Sydnee:**

[laughs] Um, as you can imagine, again, we're not talking about a lot of advances in this field because, um, surgery was, well, one, it was really dangerous. You know, the risk of infection and blood loss, um, it was huge. And so to go under the knife electively, uh, was... it was just not a popular thing to do. But the other was that there was no anesthesia. And why would you wanna do it if you're gonna hurt like crazy the whole time?

**Justin:**

Well, and I bet also, you know, we've talked... uh, we've noticed a lot since we got pregnant that there's not a whole lot of research, uh, about pregnancy in terms of like what's safe and what's not because no one wants...

**Sydnee:**

True.

**Justin:**

...to be the test case for it.

**Sydnee:**

No, yeah.

**Justin:**

And it seems like this would be a similar situation where like, if there's a new procedure, someone wants to try out like, no one wants to be the Guinea pig for that, because it's largely elective and it could, you know, kind of mess your scene up. You don't have that pressure of like, well, this might save my life...

**Sydnee:**

Mm-hmm.

**Justin:**

...which seems like the optimal situation for somebody who wants to test out a medical treatment.

**Sydnee:**

No, you're exactly right. I mean, why... If you could live... You can live without a nose, you can live without an ear. Why submit yourself to any of this?

**Justin:**

Yeah.

**Sydnee:**

So, um, it was really, as we move forward with the invention of anesthesia and the perfection of those techniques that shows advances in this field, and I mean, that's true for, for all surgeries, not just plastics, but, um, you really, weren't seeing a lot of advances until, um, patients could get through it without being in excruciating pain and maybe dying of shock.

**Justin:**

Right.

**Sydnee:**

Um, and then you start seeing, uh... I think it's one— Before we move forward with the, with, um, all the advances in modern plastic surgery, in 1814, there was one British military officer who had to have his nose replaced. Um, and this is when we're really moving into the era of some anesthetics and when people started to be able to survive surgeries a little more. Um, and it was because he, uh, had too many mercury treatments. He lost his nose.

**Justin:**

Huh.

**Sydnee:**

I like that tie in with our mercury episode.

**Justin:**

Yeah.

**Sydnee:**

Um, but it's really, as we move into the 1800s that we see people, uh, doing more and more plastic surgeries, um, where, you know, anesthesia's growing, we're starting to learn how to do things, again, without pain and without killing people. The first American, uh, to really, you know, do plastic surgery as a profession, John Peter Mettauer, and, um, he built his own tools, which I think is kind of cool.

**Justin:**

It is cool.

**Sydnee:**

So he read and studied what people in other countries were doing, and then he started repairing mainly cleft palates.

**Justin:**

That's noble work.

**Sydnee:**

Mm-hmm. So he did a lot of cleft palate repair. He also did, um, hypospadias.

**Justin:**

Don't know that.

**Sydnee:**

That's a, that's a medical condition where, um, you're born with your urethra, so it's for a male, and your urethra instead of coming out the tip of your penis is on under, on the underside.

**Justin:**

Oh gosh.

**Sydnee:**

Kind of on the bottom. And I mean, it's still something that happens from time to time and it's something we can repair. Um, and he spent time repairing that as well.

**Justin:**

Oh.

**Sydnee:**

So that's some noble work there.

**Justin:**

Yeah.

**Sydnee:**

Um, however, it, it was still slow going really until we hit the 1900s, because we're still up against this idea that it's God's plan for you to have a cleft palate and you can't tamper with it.

**Justin:**

Spoken like anybody who has a not cleft palate.

**Sydnee:**

Exactly, exactly. Um, and so a lot of surgeons just wouldn't learn these techniques, uh, criticized him and it made the growth of plastic surgery until the 1900s very, very slow. But the thing that changed that was World War I.

**Justin:**

Oh yeah?

**Sydnee:**

And I mean, it was really, again, out of necessity. Uh, you know, soldiers coming back from World War I had all kinds of injuries that, I mean, you know, we're talking about people who not only had, you know, facial injuries, but lost limbs and plastic surgery was really, um, the field to do anything that, you know, that didn't seem like necessary for survival, but would certainly make your quality of life better.

**Justin:**

Mm-hmm.

**Sydnee:**

Plastics started to take over a lot of that. And so they became more popular and broader. And we started to see that, you know, there's a lot more to plastics than, um, just doing things that make people prettier, you know, but there's a lot of, uh, reconstructive surgery that can be really helpful for people.

And so then, um, surgery became more widespread. At first, it was kind of a scattershot, if you were getting like a real plastic surgeon or somebody who just thought, "Hey, I could build a nose."

**Justin:**

[laughs] "I— Maybe I could."

**Sydnee:**

Well, and as we're moving into the early 1900s, you're still dealing with a lot of fake, kind of quack doctors who aren't doctors.

**Justin:**

Mm-hmm.

**Sydnee:**

Um, you'd get away with that back then. Uh, but, um, they established societies of licensed plastic surgeons and started to, you know, come up with qualifications for it. And then, uh, the field just blossomed from there, especially in the 50s and 60s, that's when we start to see the real... the purely, just cosmetic procedures beginning to, uh, grow hugely in popularity as, um, uh, our ideal of beauty started to change.

**Justin:**

Mm-hmm.

**Sydnee:**

Um, the idea that you could, uh, alter your own appearance and become more beautiful, that you didn't have to just settle for whatever you were born with, that you could, um, fix your... you know, get a boob job or fix your nose or whatever. Whatever you didn't like about yourself, you could fix. Really took hold in the 60s and from there it just exploded.

**Justin:**

How big is it now? It's pretty common, yeah?

**Sydnee:**

About 15 million people worldwide, yearly, get plastic surgery.

**Justin:**

Wow, huge.

**Sydnee:**

So...

**Justin:**

Uh, I tell you what Syd, actually this episode has kind of turned me off a little bit. I'm probably gonna hold off till I can decide the exact celebrity I want to emulate, probably Bieber. I'm leaning Bieber.

**Sydnee:**

I like you just the way you are.

**Justin:**

Ah, thanks, pumpkin.

**Sydnee:**

I'd rather you not.

**Justin:**

I like you just the way you are. And I like our listeners just the way they are. They are so kind to tweet about the show, Katrina— Ka— Kratrina.

**Sydnee:**

Quatrina.

**Justin:**

Quatrina. There we go. Quatrina said she was missing her Tuesday Sawbones fix, well...

**Sydnee:**

It's coming.

**Justin:**

It's coming. Now we're making it as we speak. Uh, Adam Ashley, Jane Lumberjack, Nick, Christine Aarons, Matthew Estano, Will for— Will Run For Fun, Mark Turnbull, Amanda Zoey, Brenda Thaney, Sarah Bay, Sam Lindsay, Steffers, uh, Jennifer Spies, Alex, so many others, thank you for tweeting about our program.

We're @Sawbones on Twitter, if you wanna follow us there. Um, if you could, take a moment and go review us on iTunes and ask somebody, you know, to do the same. Gosh, that helps us out a whole bunch when you do that, we sure appreciate it.

**Sydnee:**

And it makes me really happy when I read them.

**Justin:**

Syd reads all of them, so...

**Sydnee:**

Mm-hmm. Well, the nice ones make me happy.

**Justin:**

Dun, dun, dun. So go leave us a nice review if you can. And hey, why don't you listen to some of the other programs on the Maximum Fun network for kicks? Why not? You've earned it. There's the Goosedown, there's Jordan, Jesse, Go! There's Judge John Hodgman, there's One Bad Mother.

**Sydnee:**

My Brother, My Brother and Me.

**Justin:**

Oh, thank you so much, sweetheart. I do appreciate that. So many more. Go totally listen to all those. Talk about our show on the forum, it's at MaximumFun.org, as are all those programs we mentioned before.

Thank you to The Taxpayers for letting us use their music at the beginning and close of our program. That song is called Medicines. You can find it at Better Music retailers everywhere, uh, online, presumably, or wherever you buy music, I'm not gonna judge.

And, uh, thank you so much for joining us for another episode of Sawbones. Be sure to join us again next Tuesday for another episode. 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]

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