

Sawbones Episode 58: Acne

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Intro (Clint McElroy):

Sawbones is a show about medical history and nothing the hosts say should be taken as medical advice or opinion. It's for fun. Can't you just have fun for an hour and not try to diagnose your mystery boil? We think you've earned it. Just sit back, relax, and enjoy a moment of distraction from that weird growth. You're worth it.

[theme song Medicines by The Taxpayers plays]

Justin:

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

Sydnee:

And I'm Sydnee McElroy.

Justin:

Sydnee, good news. We're done with the podcasting business.

Sydnee:

Oh. What?

Justin:

No more podcasting.

Sydnee:

Wait.

Justin:

No more doctoring for you. No more writing about video games for me. We're done with all of it.

Sydnee:

Did, did we want to be done with all... Was this a goal?

Justin:

We did. Yes. This is our goal, and finally, I'm ready to make our dreams come true with the release of my new product that I just invented in my head. It's called Jake Up.

Sydnee:

What, what do you do with that?

Justin:

Jake Up.

Sydnee:

Jake Up? Like-

Justin:

Jake Up.

Sydnee:

... like wake up or-

Justin:

No. Like makeup. This is-

Sydnee:

Like makeup?

Justin:

We're freeing-

Sydnee:

You're going to make-

Justin:

Sometimes-

Sydnee:

... you're going to create makeup?

Justin:

... sometimes I get a s- a zit, right, and I got to be camera ready 24/7.

Sydnee:

Well, no, you do a podcast, so you actually-

Justin:

I have-

Sydnee:

... you don't, you don't have to be.

Justin:

... Well, no, the paparazzi, though, the paparazzi. 35,000 followers on Twitter, you're going to get some paps.

Sydnee:

You never, you never leave the house.

Justin:

Going to get some 'razzis.

Sydnee:

You, you, I mean, literally, you don't leave the house.

Justin:

So I got to be camera ready all the time.

Sydnee:

Except to, like, go to my parents' house, like, you don't leave.

Justin:

There's a stigma, though, for guys using makeup, I think. So what my product, Jake Up, does is it removes that stigma. Right? It removes that stigma so you can, uh, enjoy, uh, being camera ready as a fella-

Sydnee:

Is, is that the-

Justin:

... constantly.

Sydnee:

... is that the only reason that guys don't wear makeup, the stigma?

Justin:

And the laziness. I mean, they're lazy.

Sydnee:

Yeah. Because I'm going to tell you, it's not like you're missing out on anything. There's no joy in it.

Justin:

It's not particularly pleasant. But now, guys have that option with Jake Up. So that is my, um, my million dollar idea.

Sydnee:

What in particular are you trying to hide there?

Justin:

Acne. I mean, basically just acne.

Sydnee:

That's, well, I mean, that just means you have youthful skin. Right?

Justin:

That's true. That's-

Sydnee:

Still having acne in our 30s, that's-

Justin:

Yeah.

Sydnee:

... that's my excuse.

Justin:

[laughs] Mine, too. That's something that people with acne say, though. Just to make-

Sydnee:

Yes. [laughs]

Justin:

... themselves feel better.

Sydnee:

Uh, you know, acne is something that a lot of people have asked us to talk about that we've-

Justin:

Well, I think we should.

Sydnee:

Yeah. I think we should.

Justin:

We've come this far.

Sydnee:

I know. We've, we've gotten many, uh, tweets and emails. People are really interested in acne. I think it's those Proactiv commercials. I think everybody's-

Justin:

Sure.

Sydnee:

... they've got all those celebrities with their beautiful-

Justin:

Seems legit.

Sydnee:

... beautiful skin. So acne, and when I'm talking about acne, I'm talking about acne vulgaris-

Justin:

Mm-hmm [affirmative].

Sydnee:

... which, that makes it sound worse.

Justin:

It does make it sound worse. Let's just stick with acne for now.

Sydnee:

Yeah. So that's the kind of acne that, I mean, I hope you know what I'm talking about, the kind of acne you get on your face when you're, like, going through puberty, or a 31-year-old woman who it's never gone away.

Justin:

[laughs]

Sydnee:

Either way [laughs] you know, uh, you can have pimples, like the little whiteheads, blackheads. Um, most of the time, like I said, it hits you in puberty, associated with changes in your hormones.

Justin:

Right.

Sydnee:

There's some bacteria that are associated with it, your oil glands. Uh, anyway, it usually goes away as an adult so-

Justin:

Usually.

Sydnee:

Usually. And this has been a problem since King Tut.

Justin:

I would imagine even before that, perhaps.

Sydnee:

Well, probably. But the first we know about. Uh, the ancient Egyptians recognized acne as an issue, and King Tut had acne scars.

Justin:

Wow. Really?

Sydnee:

Yes. So King Tut definitely had acne, because he was, like, a kid king.

Justin:

Sure.

Sydnee:

You know, he was, like, 12 or something. I don't know. Five.

Justin:

Four?

Sydnee:

An age that a child is.

Justin:

Baby king, basically.

Sydnee:

Yeah. Uh.

Justin:

We're not historians, folks. We're just-

Sydnee:

Yeah. [laughs]

Justin:

... we're just observers.

Sydnee:

If you've been listening to our show for a while, you know that. [laughs]

Justin:

Yeah.

Sydnee:

And you also know that we don't know about anything else, literally anything.

Justin:

We barely know about this.

Sydnee:

Definitely not animals-

Justin:

Certainly not that.

Sydnee:

... as many people have pointed out. Thanks for all the dormouse info, everybody.

Justin:

Yeah. We get it.

Sydnee:

The pictures were adorable. So they found, uh, not only acne scars on King Tut's skeleton, which how do you... or mummy.

Justin:

Ew. That's some bad acne.

Sydnee:

How do you, how do you find-

Justin:

How much chocolate was that cat eating?

Sydnee:

... how do you figure that out? I guess was there, like, tissue there, like, mummified t- I don't even want to think about it.

Justin:

No.

Sydnee:

Yuck. Uh, but they also found acne treatments among his possessions in his tomb, because you know, kings would be buried with all their stuff, and I think sometimes their slaves as well, like, living slaves. Well, he was buried with, like, his, you know, Persa-Gel. [laughs]

Justin:

[laughs]

Sydnee:

His Retin-A. [laughs]

Justin:

For the afterlife.

Sydnee:

You've got your gold. You've got your jewels.

Justin:

I prefer to think of an afterlife where I didn't-

Sydnee:

You've got your Neutrogena. [laughs]

Justin:

... I, I'd prefer to think of an afterlife where I didn't have to worry about acne anymore, thank you.

Sydnee:

He just wanted to get his look right.

Justin:

Yeah. I don't, I don't blame him.

Sydnee:

The Greeks had acne.

Justin:

Mm-hmm [affirmative].

Sydnee:

And they actually recognized that it was connected to puberty. Uh, the, one of the words they used to describe acne actually means first growth of the beard, so-

Justin:

Hm.

Sydnee:

... so they saw this connection between, you know, the time when men were becoming men and getting acne. Aristotle wrote about it. Hippocrates wrote about it. Um, and if you get into this, this is, I, I was looking into the history of acne, there is a lot about the history of the word acne.

Justin:

Really?

Sydnee:

People are all writing about this. I started reading this paper that was called The History of Acne, and I thought that would be helpful. It was written in 1951. I thought, "Well, this will be interesting."

Justin:

Mm-hmm [affirmative].

Sydnee:

No. It was six pages about the word acne.

Justin:

Wow. Really?

Sydnee:

Somebody's doing this-

Justin:

[laughs]

Sydnee:

... this research. [laughs] There were m- and there's more. There's lots. If you want to know the history of the word acne, the internet has lots of information for you.

Justin:

It's got you covered.

Sydnee:

I don't want to tell you anything else about it, because I thought it was boring.

Justin:

Aw.

Sydnee:

Sorry. Well, so let's talk about ancient acne, interesting stuff.

Justin:

Yes.

Sydnee:

The Egyptians thought it was-

Justin:

Not words.

Sydnee:

No. Not words. The Egyptians thought it was caused by telling lies.

Justin:

Okay. That's, it's not.

Sydnee:

No. [laughs]

Justin:

Although teenagers love to lie.

Sydnee:

Uh, and they would use honey sometimes for a cure. Also sometimes, uh, sulfur.

Justin:

Oof.

Sydnee:

Uh, they also advised you could try wiping at your pimples with a cloth while watching a falling star. [laughs]

Justin:

That is a complicated remedy, right there. That might be our hardest to execute yet.

Sydnee:

You have to be really prepared. Like, have the cloth next to your face at all times just in case.

Justin:

Standing outside, staring up.

Sydnee:

Mm-hmm [affirmative].

Justin:

Now you have acne, and you have a crick in your neck.

Sydnee:

[laughs]

Justin:

That's unpleasant.

Sydnee:

They thought that it would cause the pimples to fall off-

Justin:

Oh.

Sydnee:

... like the star.

Justin:

No.

Sydnee:

No. And they also used a lot of charms and spells and-

Justin:

Sure.

Sydnee:

... you know, offers to the gods. Uh, the Greeks also liked sulfur. That was one of their biggest, uh, treatments. They also, uh, would mix the sulfur with molasses-

Justin:

Hm.

Sydnee:

... make, like, a paste and put it on your face. It probably did dry out your skin to some degree, which is a lot of what, um, some acne cures really just do, is dry your skin out and attempt to, you know, stop the oil production that's causing the zits and whatnot. They also had a lot of other plant based remedies.

The Romans liked that, too. Sulfur is a big thing. And then they would, like, put sulfur in their mineral baths and hang out in their bathhouses all day with-

Justin:

Mm-hmm [affirmative].

Sydnee:

... sulfur treatments, that backne.

Justin:

The bath we went to in Bath, uh, had, had a strong sulfur element.

Sydnee:

So there you go. That would've been a great, well, treatment, I don't want to say cure-

Justin:

Well, no.

Sydnee:

... at the time, for acne. I don't know. Keeping your skin clean, I guess. Uh, Pliny, of course, had something to say about acne, Pliny the Elder.

Justin:

Sure. Classic *Sawbones* favorite, Pliny the Elder.

Sydnee:

Yeah. [laughs] Our recurring character, Pliny the Elder.

Justin:

[laughs] Our, our one recurring character, Pliny the Elder.

Sydnee:

He advised-

Justin:

As played by the indomitable Kristen Wiig. Take it over. Take it away, Kristen. [laughs]

Sydnee:

If you're waiting for me-

Justin:

No. No. No. No.

Sydnee:

... to do an impression of Kristen Wiig doing an impression of Pliny the Elder-

Justin:

I'm going to be waiting for a while, huh?

Sydnee:

... you [laughs] you, you do not know your wife. [laughs]

Justin:

I do not have enough room on this hard drive for the amount of silence that would occur.

Sydnee:

That is not coming. Sorry, listening audience. [laughs] Uh, but he would, he would advise you to use butter, okay, and mix it with a little bit of lead.

Justin:

Oh, fantastic advice, Pliny. You really nailed it this time. You know-

Sydnee:

Lead?

Justin:

... your, your streak is, is unbroken of great treatments. Butter and lead.

Sydnee:

I like to think he said, somebody came to him and was like, "Oh, Pliny, wise elder." I don't know if people said that to him, if they, like-

Justin:

No.

Sydnee:

... called him Pliny the el- "Pliny the Elder, you wise man, how do I treat my acne? "And he was like, "Really? That's, that's what you have to worry about? I don't know. Go put lead on your face, kid."

Justin:

Pl- Butter and Lead was the name of the western I filmed starring Paula Deen back in the early 2000s.

Sydnee:

[laughs]

Justin:

It was-

Sydnee:

How'd it do?

Justin:

... widely panned.

Sydnee:

[laughs]

Justin:

I would say almost, almost universally panned.

Sydnee:

You can probably dig that up on YouTube.

Justin:

I'm certain.

Sydnee:

Um, sell salt therapy was another popular, uh, treatment that came along for acne much, much later. It's based on, it was created by Dr. Schuessler. This is a part of homeopathy, so anybody familiar with homeopathy may have heard of this. And it's based on the idea that the body is made of 12

minerals that you have to keep in balance. And so you give people various mineral salts in homeopathic doses, and then they, their acne vanishes.

Justin:

Sure.

Sydnee:

Which you know, if, I guess if you're going to use homeopathy to cure something, if you're going to rely on homeopathy solely, I guess it might as well be acne.

Justin:

Yeah. At least that's going to work eventually.

Sydnee:

Yeah.

Justin:

Much like hiccups.

Sydnee:

And acne's not going to hurt you, and not curing it isn't going to hurt you, so I guess I'm okay with that. I guess that's-

Justin:

So if you're going to use homeopathy, use it on your acne.

Sydnee:

Yes. Because I mean, you know, it's acne, guys. Uh, in the 1930s, acne went by a different name.

Justin:

Which was?

Sydnee:

Chastity pimples.

Justin:

Not as good.

Sydnee:

I like that name, though. Now, I, I assumed it was because if you had really bad acne, your-

Justin:

You were a, a-

Sydnee:

[laughs]

Justin:

... an always alone.

Sydnee:

You're [laughs] forced to be chaste.

Justin:

Forever alone. Yeah.

Sydnee:

Like, no. This isn't, like, uh, you know, you're not chastity by choice. It's chastity by-

Justin:

By, by nature, I guess? [laughs]

Sydnee:

[laughs] No. Just, you know, nobody, nobody wants to do it with you.

Justin:

That's-

Sydnee:

That was kind of my theory.

Justin:

... that's hurtful, but I guess you're allowed to throw-

Sydnee:

Well, I don't know.

Justin:

... throw around-

Sydnee:

I thought in the '30s, that nothing-

Justin:

... judgment like that.

Sydnee:

... was politically correct.

Justin:

That's true. It was a crazy time.

Sydnee:

People said all kinds of, of inappropriate stuff. But that isn't what it, what it was referring to. They thought that virgins were more likely to get pimples, that if you chose to be chaste, you would end up with, uh, pizza face.

Justin:

That's just unfair. That's cruel, honestly.

Sydnee:

Yeah! I, I don't know if that was like a-

Justin:

Like our teens need more pressure-

Sydnee:

[laughs]

Justin:

... to, to participate in premarital sex.

Sydnee:

You know some guy came up with that.

Justin:

Yeah. What if Adam Ielin- Levine was in those ads?

Sydnee:

[laughs]

Justin:

Yeah. I used to have a problem with acne, ladies.

Sydnee:

N- You know how I fixed it?

Justin:

Ladies.

Sydnee:

I guess that's a little better than it's, what if, like, it's the world ending? Let's do it.

Justin:

Let's do it.

Sydnee:

You're going to get acne. Let's do it.

Justin:

Let's go for it.

Sydnee:

Uh, but they thought it was because you need to rid your body of certain toxins through sex and-

Justin:

Hm.

Sydnee:

... if you don't, you'll get acne-

Justin:

I bet you-

Sydnee:

... which-

Justin:

... I know who came up with that. Men. [laughs]

Sydnee:

Yeah.

Justin:

Guaranteed.

Sydnee:

Which by the way, not a great line. Like, I need to rid my body of toxins on you.

Justin:

Yeah. That's, that, not, not oozing with romance.

Sydnee:

Yeah. I'm good. I don't want your toxins. Thanks. Uh, they also sometimes would use laxatives as a cure in this time period-

Justin:

Oh.

Sydnee:

... as well as, uh, radiation therapy [laughs] sometimes, which I would not recommend, like X-rays-

Justin:

Yeah.

Sydnee:

... became popular in the early 1900s. Uh, also, uh, on the flip side, there was a theory for a while that masturbation caused acne, so-

Justin:

That probably just seems like chronologically-

Sydnee:

Yeah. Because they also, uh, posited that thinking about sex would cause it, so you're a teenager.

Justin:

Yeah.

Sydnee:

You're going through puberty. Your hormones are raging.

Justin:

I would've been riddled with terminal acne as a teen.

Sydnee:

[laughs]

Justin:

I think.

Sydnee:

Well, thanks for sharing that.

Justin:

As a teen!

Sydnee:

Still.

Justin:

How do we cure it, Sydnee? Everybody knows we hate it. How do we fix it?

Sydnee:

So some cures for acne. Okay. One that was very popular for a while was to avoid spicy foods and strong beverages, which just underlines the fact that food, you know, what you eat and drink, has been tied to or thought, you know, to cause acne for a long time, even though there's not a lot of basis for that.

Justin:

Hm.

Sydnee:

So that's a pretty harmless one. Just don't eat anything spicy and don't drink anything strong. And that includes, like, really strong coffee, not just, like, booze.

Justin:

Right.

Sydnee:

Uh, one less appealing cure that was used for many, many years was urine.

Justin:

Ugh.

Sydnee:

Just rub urine on your face.

Justin:

Just pee right up there?

Sydnee:

Yeah. You don't have to drink it or anything. Don't get gross. You just rub it on your face.

Justin:

Just rub the urine on your face.

Sydnee:

The best-

Justin:

Doesn't matter whose it is.

Sydnee:

Well, it, it doesn't matter. Anybody's will do.

Justin:

Mm-hmm [affirmative].

Sydnee:

But your best is a baby's urine.

Justin:

Oh, right.

Sydnee:

So-

Justin:

I was wondering what babies were for.

Sydnee:

That's what babies are for. Have a baby. They pee in a diaper. You just take that sucker off. Make sure it's just a pee diaper.

Justin:

Thank you.

Sydnee:

Yeah. No, no poopy diaper. And rub that wet diaper all over your face.

Justin:

All over your face. Go on. You've earned it.

Sydnee:

And your [laughs] acne will vanish.

Justin:

It will not.

Sydnee:

And your face will smell like baby pee. [laughs]

Justin:

You'll have a pee face.

Sydnee:

[laughs] Uh, continuing on the baby theme, you could also try diaper cream.

Justin:

This must be a p- big problem for parents, because they're really-

Sydnee:

[laughs]

Justin:

... looking to get all the meat off the buffalo of having a child around, huh?

Sydnee:

[laughs] These are great reasons to have babies, guys.

Justin:

Yeah.

Sydnee:

If you don't have one yet, and you have acne, there you go.

Justin:

What are you waiting for?

Sydnee:

Uh, again, I don't know if maybe diaper cream, certain ones are more drying than others, depending on what the ingredients are.

Justin:

Perhaps.

Sydnee:

Because I mean, I remember once as a teenager, I read that toothpaste would work, and I tried toothpaste on my face.

Justin:

I've heard that, I think. Yeah.

Sydnee:

Yeah. And I mean, it will dry your skin, so, and then your face smells [laughs] minty fresh, better than baby pee.

Justin:

Yeah. It's better than baby pee. Yeah.

Sydnee:

Yeah.

Justin:

For sure.

Sydnee:

Uh, another cure I found was don't have sex for two weeks.

Justin:

Just hormones or something?

Sydnee:

No. I mean, none of these work, honey. I mean-

Justin:

Oh, I know. I'm just saying-

Sydnee:

... did you think these were real cures? [laughs]

Justin:

I'm trying to guess why the reason would be that maybe they would work.

Sydnee:

I, I think, I mean, it's that link between something to do with hormones and sex and acne. People were just kind of trying every iteration of that, like, do have sex, don't have sex, stop thinking about sex.

Justin:

Whatever. Give it a shot.

Sydnee:

I don't know. Let's talk about sex.

Justin:

Ba...by?

Sydnee:

[laughs] Uh.

Justin:

Let's get that diaper filled with pee.

Sydnee:

[laughs] Uh, as I mentioned, X-rays were used for a while, uh, back when X-rays were popular for everything.

Justin:

Oh, good.

Sydnee:

Yeah. I wouldn't recommend that.

Justin:

No.

Sydnee:

That's a dangerous-

Justin:

Uh, there, I think you're running a small risk of getting a worse problem than acne.

Sydnee:

Yeah. Just a few.

Justin:

Your head swells up like kringi- Ken Griffey Jr., in that episode of, uh, uh... Sorry. No. Darryl Strawberry in that episode of The Simpsons where he has the, the tonic, you know, the one?

Sydnee:

You love that episode.

Justin:

That's one of my favorites. Yeah.

Sydnee:

Uh, you could also try-

Justin:

God. It might be Ken Griffey Jr. Go to our Facebook page to tell us, because I can't remember.

Sydnee:

We're, uh, I figured you were going to make us stop until you figured it out.

Justin:

Nope. Nope. No time for that. I got to know about more acne cures.

Sydnee:

Uh, you could try a cabbage leaf bound to your face. Just, like, peel off a cabbage leaf. I think you're supposed to, like, wash it off and, um, get it all wet and clean and then, like, tie it to your face.

Justin:

Fi- Well, I am happy to have a use for cabbage, finally.

Sydnee:

[laughs]

Justin:

What's it been for? Gross.

Sydnee:

Um, arsenic tablets were recommended.

Justin:

[laughs] Because it got so bad you just couldn't take it anymore.

Sydnee:

Yeah. I guess that's when the acne is just-

Justin:

I'm done.

Sydnee:

I'm, I'm over it. [laughs]

Justin:

I'm fed up with this world.

Sydnee:

People keep te- [laughs] people keep calling them chastity pimples.

Justin:

That's, that's just mean.

Sydnee:

I've taken all the laxatives I can take.

Justin:

I'm done.

Sydnee:

I have this cabbage strapped to my face.

Justin:

[laughs]

Sydnee:

I wiped my face with a baby diaper earlier. [laughs] I haven't had coffee or beer in months.

Justin:

Everything's the worst.

Sydnee:

I'm taking arsenic. Uh, garlic is a popular home remedy.

Justin:

Mm-hmm [affirmative].

Sydnee:

Um, now, I think this presents a different problem.

Justin:

What's that?

Sydnee:

As long as we're talking about unpleasant odors.

Justin:

Ew. Yeah.

Sydnee:

Again, I think chastity pimples would be appropriate if you have wiped garlic all over your face.

Justin:

Your face smells like garlic and pee and the cabbage that I can clearly see on there. I'm not into this anymore.

Sydnee:

This, I think, would be guaranteed to help you avoid vampires-

Justin:

Right.

Sydnee:

... and anyone with a nose. [laughs]

Justin:

[laughs]

Sydnee:

So-

Justin:

Just people in general.

Sydnee:

... as long as your vampires have noses, they are included.

Justin:

What about home remedies?

Sydnee:

There are lots of different things. Um, drinking a lot of water is a popular one. Did anybody ever tell you that? Because I heard that a lot growing up.

Justin:

Yeah. I think so.

Sydnee:

You need to drink more water, and your acne'll go away. Uh, staying well hydrated is a big, is a big thing people will say.

Justin:

It couldn't hurt.

Sydnee:

No. I mean, there are plenty of good reasons to drink water, so I'm never going to nix that. But, um, uh, if, if that's what you're banking on to cure your acne, I don't think it's going to work.

Justin:

Mm-hmm [affirmative].

Sydnee:

Uh, vinegar. Again with the rubbing stuff on your face that's not going to smell good.

Justin:

Yeah.

Sydnee:

And, and still, you know, drying out your skin and killing, you know, trying to help kill the bacteria on your skin, I, I can see where they're going with this, but acne's a little more complicated than that.

Justin:

A lot of these cures sound like they were invented by parents to keep their teenage children chaste.

Sydnee:

[laughs]

Justin:

Oh, oh, oh. That's no problem. You just rub some, uh, baby pee and vinegar and garlic on your face and go to school that way.

Sydnee:

And the boys will love you.

Justin:

The, the, the gals will be lining up.

Sydnee:

Now, you're not going to tell Charlie this, are you?

Justin:

No. No. She'll-

Sydnee:

Okay.

Justin:

... she'll never listen to this podcast.

Sydnee:

[laughs]

Justin:

I want to teach her everything.

Sydnee:

Uh, cucumber is a recommendation. Um, again, I guess that can't hurt.

Justin:

Tighten up the eye skin, I guess.

Sydnee:

Yeah. And then rub it all over your face. Lemon. Uh, th- some of these can be dicey if, like, you have an op- like, if you have a zit that you picked at.

Justin:

Oh.

Sydnee:

Can you imagine?

Justin:

Unpleasant.

Sydnee:

That'd be really bad. I, I wouldn't do that if you're one of those pickers. Don't pick, by the way.

Justin:

Yeah. That's bad.

Sydnee:

That isn't a good idea. You got, your hands are filthy. Trust me. They're just filthy. Um, and then there were a lot of special teas-

Justin:

Hm.

Sydnee:

... that were recommended. You just drink these really special herbal teas and-

Justin:

Again, probably not bad for you.

Sydnee:

No. But again, I don't think they're going to cure your acne. Now, once treatment I found was a, uh, a Wicca chant.

Justin:

Okay. I'm ready.

Sydnee:

Um, so first, you have to mix together some dirt and some vinegar and some water.

Justin:

You're halfway to salad dressing.

Sydnee:

[laughs] I like, I like that mixture, because vinegar and water have been done. How can we mix it up? How can we make it new?

Justin:

Dirt.

Sydnee:

Dirt. Let's put some dirt in there. Your mom thought your face was too dirty. Well, we're going to show her. We're going to make it dirtier [crosstalk 00:20:00].

Justin:

Take that!

Sydnee:

So I guess you make some sort of paste. You, uh, rub this all over your face. And then there's a chant that you have to say.

Justin:

Mm-hmm [affirmative].

Sydnee:

I don't know. Do, I have the chant here. Do you want to, like-

Justin:

Hit me.

Sydnee:

... sing it for everybody.

Justin:

No.

Sydnee:

I thought you could come up with something.

Justin:

No. Just a stage reading, I think, will be fine.

Sydnee:

I think you're, you're usually good at this kind of thing.

Justin:

Uh, cure my skin of zits and rash and make it smooth in a flash. Blemish vanish, pockmarks too. Magic, make my skin anew.

If you're an actual Wicca listening to this show, I don't know if that is real or not, and I'm sorry if I got the pronunciation wrong.

Sydnee:

[laughs]

Justin:

My wife made me do it.

Sydnee:

[laughs] I thought you would sign it or something. That wasn't nearly as exciting.

Justin:

I don't want to mock their, their religion.

Sydnee:

I just thought you'd give it, like, a funky beat.

Justin:

I mean, I try to give everything in my life a funky beat. That's, that's how I live my days. But, uh, I didn't feel like that was the appropriate moment.

Sydnee:

And you've still got a zit, so it didn't work.

Justin:

Yeah. It did not. Well, to be fair, I didn't have any dirt or vinegar on hand.

Sydnee:

I prefer, I found a, a method from Chinese folk medicine which just called for rubbing peach blossoms on your face.

Justin:

Finally, something to make your face smell decent.

Sydnee:

Yeah. I like that, because you know, maybe you have zits, but you know, in those intimate times, your, your special someone gets close, and-

Justin:

Oh, my.

Sydnee:

... [sniffs] "Mmm!"

Justin:

"Is that peach blossoms?"

Sydnee:

[crosstalk 00:21:18] "oh, you smell like peach blossoms."

Justin:

"This almost distracts from how your face looks."

Sydnee:

[laughs] "Did you, did you do that for me?" And then they're really touched. So, uh, one of the best cures that I came across was actually, it, it, it's kind of complicated. It's from the British Medical Journal, but it's way back in 1878, so take that for what you will. And here, if you're really that interested in [laughs] curing your acne, here is their recommendation.

Justin:

Okay. Go.

Sydnee:

So take a tincture of iodine.

Justin:

Mm-hmm [affirmative].

Sydnee:

And a sulfur vapor douche or a vapor bath.

Justin:

Okay.

Sydnee:

Let's say a vapor bath.

Justin:

Let's say a vapor bath, indeed.

Sydnee:

And then, if your sebaceous glands and follicles, so if all the, if your, you know, if your pores on your face, if all the little pimples on your face should become overloaded, so basically, I think if you've got whiteheads-

Justin:

Mm-hmm [affirmative].

Sydnee:

... they should be relieved by pressure between the finger and thumbnail. Well, that's not exactly groundbreaking, I don't think.

Justin:

Right. That's squeezing. Got it.

Sydnee:

Uh, and then frequent washings with warm water and oatmeal, after which a good rubbing with a flesh brush-

Justin:

What?

Sydnee:

... will remove the contents of a number of the pimples.

Justin:

I do not know what a flesh brush could be.

Sydnee:

A flesh brush.

Justin:

Very interesting.

Sydnee:

That sounds horrible.

Justin:

That's terrible. That's like a deleted scene from *Saw*.

Sydnee:

So this, so we've already gone through now a tincture of iodine, a sulfur vapor douche-

Justin:

Oatmeal bath.

Sydnee:

... squeezing all your pimples, an oatmeal bath, and now a flesh brush.

Justin:

Right.

Sydnee:

Now we're on to a cooling zinc or calamine lotion, to be painted upon the face with a camel hair brush two or three times a day.

Justin:

This is like you're having to devote your entire life to acne treatment. No one has the time for this.

Sydnee:

D- Is that what, like, are camel hair brushes, is that standard? Is that easy to come by?

Justin:

I think that's, like, nice back then, maybe.

Sydnee:

Back then? I don't-

Justin:

[crosstalk 00:23:14].

Sydnee:

We're going to have to find some camel hair. I don't even know where a camel is.

Justin:

Mine is, uh, badger hair. My shaving brush is badger hair.

Sydnee:

Badger hair?

Justin:

Is that weird? Yeah. Badger hair.

Sydnee:

Uh, now, you're not done. I know this has already sounded-

Justin:

Ugh!

Sydnee:

... complicated enough but-

Justin:

I'll just keep the acne!

Sydnee:

... you're not done, because you may have gotten rid of the, uh, overloaded pimples. You know, you've removed their contents with your flesh brush. But there's still some troublesome redness that you may want to get rid of.

Justin:

Okay.

Sydnee:

So apply, uh, the acid nitrate of mercury with a spun glass brush.

Justin:

[laughs] There are a lot of brushes required for this procedure.

Sydnee:

Um, then, once you've done that, once you've, you've applied acid nitrate of mercury, that sounds terrible, with your spun glass brush, not your camel hair brush-

Justin:

And not your flesh brush. [laughs]

Sydnee:

... and not your flesh brush, and not your fingers, and forget about the douching right now, divide each engorged vesicle with the point of the lancet. So I guess you need a lancet. And you're going to, um, cut open anything that's swollen.

Justin:

Ugh.

Sydnee:

And if you bleed a lot, apply a small ring of silver or steel. Then-

Justin:

[laughs]

Sydnee:

... then [laughs] you're still not done. So you've cut open your face. You're bleeding. You're going to insert a minute grain of nitrate of silver.

Justin:

Okay. Wonderful. This is getting better and better.

Sydnee:

And this-

Justin:

Now I'm just turning myself into a *Mad Max: Beyond Thunderdome* style for each show.

Sydnee:

[laughs] So you've got cuts all over your face. You have y- uh, you've put silver or steel on them.

Justin:

Okay.

Sydnee:

And now you're putting the silver inside these cuts, and that's hopefully going to stop the bleeding. That's the idea there, the silver nitrate.

Justin:

Perfect.

Sydnee:

Uh, the only problem is, it's going to leave a small black discolored spot, the silver nitrate is.

Justin:

To replace the red spot.

Sydnee:

Yeah. To replace the pimple, you now have a small black spot. But don't worry, because you can remove that, too.

Justin:

Oh, good.

Sydnee:

Just put some iodide-

Justin:

Get five more brushes.

Sydnee:

[laughs] Get, kill some more camels, get, and get a solution of iodide of potassium, and put those on the black spots. And those will remove the black spots. And now, your acne is cured.

Justin:

Just like that, in just 17 simple steps. And that's what Proactiv is. Order the box.

Sydnee:

[laughs]

Justin:

See if we're lying.

Sydnee:

That's what-

Justin:

It's just all that stuff.

Sydnee:

[laughs] That is exac- that is Proactiv.

Justin:

That is Proactiv.

Sydnee:

You've always wondered.

Justin:

And that's the-

Sydnee:

The commercials make it seem like a miracle cure.

Justin:

Yeah. That white box, it looks small in the commercials. It's actually the size of a refrigerator. It's just brushes and brushes and brushes.

Sydnee:

Uh, I like that at the end of this description, the author writes that, um, "The above treatment may appear somewhat heroic for so common an eruption." So at least he recognizes, like, I mean, I guess if you want to do all this, but-

Justin:

What about-

Sydnee:

... you know, maybe just, like, wait.

Justin:

... what about the stuff that, like, d- like, that we're still told has a impact on it, like chocolate or stress? Are those-

Sydnee:

So, so chocolate is not true.

Justin:

Okay.

Sydnee:

There have been some s- uh, some thoughts that maybe a high sugar diet, more carbohydrates in your diet, could increase the production of acne or increase your problem with acne. But even that is tenuous.

Justin:

Mm-hmm [affirmative].

Sydnee:

But chocolate has not been proven, so don't worry about chocolate so much.

Justin:

Okay.

Sydnee:

Um, stress is not linked to acne, either, so don't worry about that. Um, so those are two things that people tell you, along with drinking a lot of water that, I mean, probably aren't true, although you know, don't eat too much chocolate, drink a lot of water, and try not to be stressed, those are all good advice.

Justin:

Yeah.

Sydnee:

One thing that a lot of people think is that you're supposed to scrub your face really hard, that if you clean your face often and scrub it with a washcloth or some sort of rough, you know, surface, that that'll help prevent acne. That's actually bad.

Justin:

Oh.

Sydnee:

You don't want to be constantly abrading your skin with, like, a rough cloth, because you're actually just going to encourage the production of more oil and, and more zits. So, um, you know, it's good to keep your skin clean. There are lots of over the counter treatments for acne. And at the end of the day, most of us outgrow it. Not all of us, but most of us do, so-

Justin:

Um.

Sydnee:

... don't stress about it.

Justin:

Don't stress. It won't change your acne anyway. [laughs]

Sydnee:

[laughs]

Justin:

Thank you so much for listening to our show. We hope you've enjoyed it. If you want to follow us on Twitter, we're @sawbones. Thank you to The Taxpayers, for the, uh, use of their music for our intro and outro. Thank you to you for, uh, listening. If you get a chance to rate or review our show on iTunes or give us a subscription, that would sure help us out.

Uh, thanks to the Maximum Fun Network for having us on their show. We got three new shows on the Max Fun Network, *Destination DIY*, *Baby Geniuses*, and... Oh, no. My brain has just collapsed on itself. *The Flophouse*. There it is. I knew it was in there somewhere. Uh, we've got those, uh, three programs. Of course, all the other shows that are already there. So go to maximumfun.org and, uh, check that totally out.

Either way, until next Tuesday, I'm Justin McElroy.

Sydnee:

I'm Sydnee McElroy.

Justin:

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

[theme music plays out]

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