

Sawbones Episode 105: Snakes

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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'm your co-host, Justin McElroy.

Sydnee:

And I'm Sydnee McElroy.

Justin:

Well, this is an odd situation we find ourselves in, friends.

Sydnee:

Yeah. We, we did not foresee, um, doing this show again.

Justin:

Well, we... but if by this show, you mean this podcast, we did totally foresee that.

Sydnee:

Well, no. We did foresee that. No. I mean, we planned on it.

Justin:

Um, we did a, a, a, a bunch of live shows in the Pacific Northwest. We recorded them all to share with you. And, uh, there was an odd problem with one of them where, uh, Sydnee lost her audio, and you couldn't hear

Sydnee. You could only hear me, thereby making it pretty much the worst podcast in history.

Sydnee:

[laughing]

Justin:

It's the medical history podcast where a, a dunderhead just like shouts at the darkneses.

Sydnee:

Yeah.

Justin:

-in ill-informed-

Sydnee:

Pau-pauses.

Justin:

-questions.

Sydnee:

-for long periods of time, and then reacts to, to seemingly nothing.

Justin:

To nothing.

Sydnee:

It was, it was... there was booby-trapped. I, we sat down at the table, which was miced for you and your brothers.

Justin:

Yeah.

Sydnee:

And you sat down at your mic, and I had to choose the Griffin or the Travis mic.

Justin:

Mm-hmm [affirmative]

Sydnee:

And I chose poorly.

Justin:

Yeah, so-

Sydnee:

'Cause the Travis mic didn't work. Uh, is it the... Do you guys do that intentionally to him? Do you-

Justin:

Yeah.

Sydnee:

-turn off his mic intentionally? [laughs]

Justin:

Yeah. Nah, not on purpose. Uh, but lets... but so what we're going to do is we're going to try to replicate that show for you as close as, as we possibly can. So, [throat clearing] here we go.

Hey, everybody. What's up, Oregon?

Sydnee:

Hey, Portland. You need to cheer.

Justin:

Portland.

Sydnee:

Everybody cheer. There's wooo.

Justin:

Wooo.

Sydnee:

Clap. Yay.

Justin:

What's going on, Portland?

Sydnee:

We're so happy to be here.

Justin:

I know-

Sydnee:

In Oregon, where we are.

Justin:

I know a lot of stuff about, uh, Portland. I've been, um, reading up, Syd.

Sydnee:

Well, tell me what you know.

Justin:

Um. [popping sounds]. The land of ports. I don't actually know anything.

Sydnee:

You don't know anything about Portland?

Justin:

Well, we've been on the road. It's hard. You know?

Sydnee:

[laughs] And you tend to do all your studying on the road.

Justin:

I tend to do all-

Sydnee:

All your, all your Oregon studies.

Justin:

All my growth.

Sydnee:

On the Oregon trail.

Justin:

Um. Oh, gosh.

Sydnee:

Oh, no.

Justin:

What do you, what do you- Okay, hotshot. What do you know about Portland?

Sydnee:

Uh, well. I mean, not much. Just the, like the obvious stuff that everybody knows. Like the, the fact that the most, uh, that the only venomous snake in Oregon is the Western Rattler. That's like the only... I mean, but everybody knows that. Right?

Justin:

This seems like not the... I mean, it seems like lame material, but trust me. It did gangbusters in Portland.

Sydnee:

[laughs] They, they loved this kind of stuff.

Justin:

They loved this stuff.

Sydnee:

They love jokes about the Western-

Justin:

They loved jokes about Portland.

Sydnee:

-Rattler.

Justin:

Jokes. I use that in air quotes. A bit like talking about Portland snakes. They love it. Um, why on earth do you know that, Sydnee? [whispering] I know why she knows it, but just play along.

Sydnee:

Uh, I know that because I thought we should talk about snake bites. Snakes and snake bites-

Justin:

So-

Sydnee:

-today.

Justin:

-we're going to conclude our three part series on, uh, putting pets on blast, with the first part of our series, putting pets on blast.

Sydnee:

Don't get confused.

Justin:

Don't get confused.

Sydnee:

We're just going to talk about snakes.

Justin:

Just snakes. We're just talking about [inaudible 00:04:06], talk about snakes.

Sydnee:

Now, uh, if you are in Oregon, where we were and are in this fiction that we've created, um, you would know the Western Rattler. Uh, so that you're aware, because it has a triangular head. It has vertical pupils. It's olive brown to gray. And most importantly, it rattles.

Justin:

It's a rattler. Rattle. Rattlesnake. Yeah.

Sydnee:

It's a rattlesnake. Like it's going to hit the rattle, so.

Justin:

Rattling.

Sydnee:

Um, and that's important to know, because not all snakes, of course, are, are poisonous. Right?

Justin:

What do I need to worry about?

Sydnee:

You need to worry about rattlesnakes. You need to worry about copperheads, uh, water moccasins, or, or cottonmouths, also, and coral snakes. Those are the poisonous ones. I mean, don't worry... I mean, like don't worry about them. Like, don't stay up at night worrying about them, but. I mean, if you see one, I would walk in a different direction.

Justin:

Don't get bit by it.

Sydnee:

Yeah. Just like don't, don't like stick your hand close to it. Um. About seven to eight thousand people in the US do get bitten by snakes each year.

Justin:

Mm-hmm [affirmative]

Sydnee:

And, uh, only, only about five die.

Justin:

Oh-

Sydnee:

So, that's not a-

Justin:

-well, that's... The, the odds are ever in your favor there.

Sydnee:

Yeah. [laughs] Still don't touch them. But...

Justin:

No, no, no.

Sydnee:

And, and people have a lot of strange ideas about to treat snake bites.

Justin:

I would think so, yeah. Because you have to come up with something, and out in the wilderness usually, right? You're not thinking about it, and preparing for it. So, you just got to try to see what works.

Sydnee:

Exactly. And what, what's strange though, is that now people do think about it and prepare for it, and still do some really dumb things.

Justin:

The one that I know for sure works is that you cut open the bite and you suck out the venom.

Sydnee:

So, the first one I'm gonna tell you not do is to cut out the bite [laughs], the bite and suck out the venom.

Justin:

Oh, no.

Sydnee:

No. That is, that's probably the most common misconception, that when someone's bitten by a snake, you need to, real quick, like suck the poison back out. Or, or make an incision kind of in the wound and then, and suck the poison out of that. This has never been proven to work. Um. And in fact, it can be really dangerous, because one thing to know about snake bites is that many of them are, are dry bites, meaning that they don't actually contain venom.

Justin:

Mm-hmm [affirmative]

Sydnee:

So, you got bitten by snake. That sucks. Not, not trying to say it doesn't. But there wasn't any venom, so that's better. You're not going to die.

Justin:

Right.

Sydnee:

Um. In that case, if you then were to cut open the wound and stick your, you or someone else's dirty mouth on it, 'cause your mouth is dirty.

Justin:

Sorry.

Sydnee:

Sorry. All, and mine too. Our mouths are dirty. They're full of dirty, dirty bacteria that you don't want in an open wound. Um, you're probably going to do a lot more harm than good. Um, even if there was venom in there, you almost certainly couldn't get it out. Um, certainly not all of it. You can almost certainly not act fast enough-

Justin:

Mm-hmm [affirmative]

Sydnee:

-to get any of venom out, even if you could through mouth suctioning.

Justin:

Right.

Sydnee:

Um, and because like fangs are curved, you're probably not even sucking in the right place.

Justin:

You're probably just getting a mouthful of blood.

Sydnee:

Uch.

Justin:

Uch.

Sydnee:

Yeah. In general, suction does more harm than good. Um, but people have been doing it for a really long time, so why do we think that it helps?

Justin:

Um, I don't know.

Sydnee:

This probably goes back to Roman times. So, it was noted that there was a, a certain people who lived in, in northern Africa. Um, the Psi-Psil-Psy-Psy-Psily?

Justin:

Psylli or Psylli?

Sydnee:

Psylli.

Justin:

Uh.

Sydnee:

Probably Psylli-

Justin:

One of the two.

Sydnee:

-but let's say Psylli because-

Justin:

It's fun.

Sydnee:

It's fun.

Justin:

Got to get your fun where you can.

Sydnee:

Psylli people. P-S-Y-L-L-I of northern Africa, lived, uh, in an area where there were lots of snakes. And people were bitten by snakes more frequently because, you know, there were lots of snakes. Um, and so much so that it was thought that they were immune to the snakes, um, and that, um, they had some sort of like special relationship with the snakes, and a better understanding of like snake bites and healing. Uh, and so it was also believed that their saliva, the-these people, their saliva, was kind of an anti-venom.

Justin:

It probably kick started as a cover story, to cover up the fact they're embarrassed about getting snake bite, bitten again. Like, "Oh, no. You don't understand. I've a very special relationship with this snake."

Sydnee:

[laughs]

Justin:

"I know what he's saying. It's just a back and forth."

Sydnee:

"I'm building up an immunity,"

Justin:

"It's a cultural exchange, really, more than anything."

Sydnee:

"You just wouldn't get it. It's a Psylli thing." [laughs]

Justin:

Psylli thing. You wouldn't understand.

Sydnee:

Uh, so the, the story was that, um, because their, their saliva had this special property, that they could spit on your snake bite and that would heal it. Um, and this may have been turned into a story of, uh, you know, when it was once seen like one these healers, um, sucking the venom out of a bite, um, or spitting on the bite, you know. App-applying their mouth to the bite in order to use their magical, you know, healing saliva.

Justin:

Mm-hmm [affirmative]

Sydnee:

And then they both, you know, lived to, to tell the story and pass it along. Maybe that's where this comes from. Um, it-it is, it is interesting these, these people, um, really milked this reputation. Like, they liked that they were known as snake healers. Like snake healers.

Justin:

Basically had their [crosstalk 00:09:15].

Sydnee:

Snake charmers.

Justin:

If you will.

Sydnee:

If you will. Um, they, uh, I mean, they played it up, because this was probably how some people made their living.

Justin:

Mm-hmm [affirmative]

Sydnee:

You know. Healing people's snake wounds. Um, they claimed that their breath could cure wounds. They pla-, they claimed that they identify the snake that bit you by the taste of the venom they were, you know, sucking out of your wound.

Justin:

I completely celebrate their opportunism. I do question... It seems like kind of a short grift, to me. It seems like you only get a couple of those, just really, totally, definitely not working before people start to question your, your prowess, if you will.

Sydnee:

Yeah, but that's never true with this stuff, right?

Justin:

Yeah.

Sydnee:

It doesn't matter how often it doesn't work.

Justin:

You blame yourself. "Ah, I guess it was too deep."

Sydnee:

Well-

Justin:

"I should have gotten here quicker."

Sydnee:

And the fact is, think about it. Like I said, a lot of snake bites are dry bites. So, the person probably did get better in those cases.

Justin:

That's true.

Sydnee:

Because there wasn't venom, there.

Justin:

Yeah.

Sydnee:

Also, do you wonder if like they're like training snakes to bite people? [laughs]. Because like-

Justin:

Oh, okay.

Sydnee:

-there aren't a lot of... I mean, how are there enough people getting bitten by snakes to support this as a livelihood?

Justin:

A, they just charge exorbitant rates. And they also do like the insurance packages where you pay them up front, in case, uh, uh, decrease rate in case you get bit by a snake.

Sydnee:

Do you think they like, they created that snake island? Remember when we watched that documentary about that snake island?

Justin:

Yeah.

Sydnee:

You think they made that place?

Justin:

Um, I mean, they, it seemed like they would have a pretty chill hang there.

Sydnee:

[laughs]

Justin:

Nobody's gonna bother 'em.

Sydnee:

They, uh, they had... They definitely cornered the market on anti-venom, and, and snake bite maintenance. Um. And, uh, and this was even who, um, one of our favorite, our favorite friends of the show Pliny, would advocate-

Justin:

Yeah.

Sydnee:

-uh, you to go to. If you were bitten by a snake, he, his first, um, his first, uh, thought was that you should go visit the Psyilli people. Um. He, uh, it, he also noted though that if you couldn't get to them, if you're too far away, and if you're not there like among, among these people, you probably are too far away-

Justin:

Right.

Sydnee:

-if you just got bitten by a snake. Um, then instead you could use something called a snake-stone. Also called a poison stone, or a venom stone. And they... so these, these stones, these weren't just... I mean, they were advised by Pliny, but there were, um, a lot of people who used them. They were usually these like crystalline rocks. They're kind of these pretty rocks, and they had marble in them. And so, they had like a-a kind of pattern, is what they looked like. I mean, if you Google them and look at pictures, they kind of look like a snake skin pattern.

Justin:

Mm.

Sydnee:

They just had naturally occurred. Um, they were sold for a really high price. Um, and you would just hold on to it, in case you got bitten by a snake. Um, and then if you did, that's when you deploy your snake-stone. [laughs]

Justin:

[laughs]

Sydnee:

Um, by dipping it in water, and then drinking the water.

Justin:

I don't know from an effectiveness perspective, from a working, in a working sense, I don't know if that would be a slam dunk.

Sydnee:

No. No. I don't-

Justin:

`Cause it's just a rock.

Sydnee:

Yeah. It's just a rock in water.

Justin:

Yeah. I don't think that even sounds particularly... Once it dissolved and fizzed, that could be very satisfying.

Sydnee:

[laughs]. Do you think it was though, this where the pet rock comes from?

Justin:

Um.

Sydnee:

Like, the idea? Like, that you should own a rock?

Justin:

W-W-Well, maybe they're like, they try... They bought one of these stupid rocks. They tried to cure their snake bite with it.

Sydnee:

Mm-hmm [affirmative]

Justin:

It didn't work. Their brother still died, and then they had to cover up with the fact they had spent two dollars on a fake snake rocks. And they had to say, "Well, no, no, no, no."

Sydnee:

"No. It's my pet."

Justin:

"It's my pet. I keep it as a pet."

Sydnee:

[laughs]

Justin:

Yes.

Sydnee:

Uh, Pliny also had some other, other strange cures you could try. Um, roasted garlic in oil. Just delicious. Uh, less delicious-

Justin:

You cook the snake in roasted garlic and oil. What an idiot.

Sydnee:

[laughs]. Yeah, that's to make it pay for biting you.

Justin:

Take this. You're delicious.

Sydnee:

It's your last meal, you know.

Justin:

Yeah, right.

Sydnee:

Um. Uh, less delicious, you could also try myrrh, tannin, curdled milk, uh, boiled frogs.

Justin:

Ew.

Sydnee:

Dried weasels. Hippo testes.

Justin:

[laughs]

Sydnee:

Uh, raw sparrow. Dove meat, which just seems mean.

Justin:

That's just terrible.

Sydnee:

That's just mean.

Justin:

You're the idiot who got bit. Don't punish the dove.

Sydnee:

[laughs] Or, or bat blood with thistle. Would you... When I read these cures, I-I wonder if like, you know those, um, those dice that you can buy, like adult dice?

Justin:

Mm-hmm [affirmative] Like-

Sydnee:

You know?

Justin:

-one, kiss on elbow, that kind of thing?

Sydnee:

Yeah. Like that kind of thing. Like, do you think that he had like weird ingredient dice? Like different parts-

Justin:

Right. Yeah.

Sydnee:

-of like body parts.

Justin:

Right.

Sydnee:

And then different animals.

Justin:

Says-

Sydnee:

And it's like-

Justin:

-here's there's, um-

Sydnee:

-dove... meat. Bat... blood.

Justin:

Says-

Sydnee:

Hippo... testes.

Justin:

Right. So here it says, uh, rub... fox... oatmeal on your forearm.

Sydnee:

[laughs]

Justin:

Huh. Okay. I don't know. I don't know how it's going to fix your migraine, but you heard me. I mean, the, the dice. You heard me, not the dice. What are dice? Just me. Pliny.

Sydnee:

That's it. I mean, I think that's the only explanation for, oh, where did he come with these...? I mean...

Justin:

Just straight after them.

Sydnee:

Those aren't even closely related. Boiled frogs and dove meat. Like, how do you, how are those, how are those two things...? Like, what are...? How are they ever the same treatment for anything?

Justin:

It's just taking a scattershot approach, I think, Syd. And maybe he thinks if he stalls you enough with cooking of these different animals, and catching them, and cooking them and eating them, you won't come back to him for a refund. 'Cause he'll have... You'll have died. [laughs]

Sydnee:

[laughs]

Justin:

You can't get him.

Sydnee:

I didn't mean for this to also be episode where we put Pliny on blast.

Justin:

Nah. Pliny's our boy.

Sydnee:

No.

Justin:

What about the, uh, Native American, Syd? They, he, it seems like they would interact with a lot of snakes, out in the frontier.

Sydnee:

They would, and they did. And before I tell you about that, why don't you come with me to the building department?

Justin:

Let's go.

[ad break]

Justin:

Okay, Syd. You were going to tell me about Native American cures for snake bites.

Sydnee:

That's right. So-

Justin:

You promised.

Sydnee:

I promised, I will deliver. The Cherokee had lots of, uh, remedies for snake bites. So, they would mainly have encountered, uh, they did and do, mainly encountered two different types of poisonous snakes. Rattlesnakes and copperheads. And it's weird because, I-I guess, they had like a reverence for rattlesnakes-

Justin:

Mm-hmm [affirmative]

Sydnee:

-but they hated copperheads. They just-

Justin:

That's kind of a double standard. That's weird.

Sydnee:

[laughs] They just... The copperheads were total jerks. But re... I, maybe, my theory is this, because like rattlesnakes are at least cool about it. Like, when they show up in the neighborhood, they're like, "Hey,-

Justin:

"Hey."

Sydnee:

-rattle, rattle."

Justin:

"I'm here."

Sydnee:

"Hey, I'm here."

Justin:

"Hope there are no scary Native Americans around. I'd hate to have to bite somebody."

Sydnee:

"Cause I will bite them, 'cause I will be startled by human presence."

Justin:

[laughs]

Sydnee:

[laughs] But the copperheads don't do that.

Justin:

No.

Sydnee:

You just accidentally step into a bush and then...

Justin:

Boom.

Sydnee:

Your leg falls off. That's not really what happens.

Justin:

No.

Sydnee:

That would be awful. It was just a... It sounded more dramatic.

Justin:

Right.

Sydnee:

[laughs] Um, i-included in the main treatments are some for dream snake bites.

Justin:

What's your dream snake bite?

Sydnee:

[laughs]

Justin:

Oh, gosh. How long do I have?

Sydnee:

[laughs]

Justin:

Um, I guess I'm on a beach. Sandy. It's warm. Uh, I got a daiquiri in my hand, and-

Sydnee:

Or a pumpkin spiced latte.

Justin:

Or maybe a PSL.

Sydnee:

[laughs]

Justin:

It's autumnal. The leaves are falling off the trees. And I got a copperhead just friggin like latched, bit down really deep into my leg. I guess it's my dream snake bite.

Sydnee:

Oh. [laughs] That sounds awful.

Justin:

What are-

Sydnee:

Um.

Justin:

What are you talking about?

Sydnee:

It's scary because a dream... No, like a snake bite that happens in a dream, they thought was just as important as a real one, and could kill you.

Justin:

Mm. Okay.

Sydnee:

So you had to know how to treat that one, as well. Uh, some of their treatments include tobacco. Um, sunflowers. There were lots of different plant species that you could try. Lots of things that, uh, would just kind of make you puke. We've talked about like lobelia before. Just things to make you sick. Which is based on, like we've talked about this before, the idea that if you take something and it makes something happen, it's probably working.

Justin:

Mm-hmm [affirmative]

Sydnee:

So, something that made you puke, or poop, or pee a lot, or-

Justin:

Right, right, right.

Sydnee:

-whatever. It probably helped. Um, there, there was an herb that was used a lot, and it was named, aptly, Rattlesnake Master.

Justin:

[laughs]

Sydnee:

[laughs]

Justin:

That's a great brand.

Sydnee:

[laughs] That would work. Um, and in general, it, your treatment was usually gonna involve both like imbibing something, and topically applying

something, and then also maybe blowing some smoke from something else on it.

Justin:

Uh, cover all your bases. That's what I say when I get bit by snakes.

Sydnee:

Uh, there are many... Um, when we talk about like some traditional treatments like tra-traditional, uh, from India treatments, uh, swimming in shallow ponds.

Justin:

Oh!

Sydnee:

Um, prayer. Mud. Uh, various plant based, kind of herbal remedies. Um, sometimes, I guess, patients used to be urged, and maybe still to this day, not to go to the doctor, because the belief was that it would get worse.

Justin:

At this time, uh, in human history, probably not that far off.

Sydnee:

Maybe so, yeah. That, that's very true. Um, in antiquity, a long time ago, they may have a traditional Indian treatment may have been to tell you to go bite the snake that bit you.

Justin:

Yeah. That doesn't help, but it makes you feel better.

Sydnee:

[laughs] Again, it's kidnda like...

Justin:

And, and he'll pass-

Sydnee:

-eating the snake.

Justin:

And he'll pass the word on to the next guy. Like, "Och, don't bite Jerry, or other people that are shaped like Jerry."

Sydnee:

[laughs]

Justin:

"'Cause he, they will bite you back. It sucks."

Sydnee:

"They bite back."

Justin:

"They bite back. It sucks."

Sydnee:

The, well listen, snakes.

Justin:

Tell your friends.

Sydnee:

You're, we're putting you on notice. We bite back. [laughs]

Justin:

We bite back.

Sydnee:

Um, or if you, if you don't have, if you can't find the snake, maybe you could just put some dirt on it.

Justin:

Yeah.

Sydnee:

Sure.

Justin:

Why not? Sure.

Sydnee:

Why not?

Justin:

Dirt's good for you, right?

Sydnee:

[laughs]. Um-

Justin:

Medicine as a ten-year-old football player's dad.

Sydnee:

[laughs]

Justin:

Like, "Rub some dirt in it. It'll be fine."

Sydnee:

"It'll be fine."

Uh, on the western frontier, in the US, uh, the mainstay of snake bite treatment and treatment for anything else, was whiskey.

Justin:

[singing] God bless, America.

Sydnee:

[laughs]

Justin:

[singing] Land that I love.

Sydnee:

And, and what... Well, what should you do with the whiskey?

Justin:

Drink it.

Sydnee:

Yes. That's right.

Justin:

Oh. Yeah.

Sydnee:

Just drink it. Just drink lots of it. Uh, there was a belief that whiskey had this magical ability to kind of like seek out. It was like smart bomb. It could find the poison in your body and just like, pow!

Justin:

Whiskey's basically a dumb bomb, ironically enough.

Sydnee:

[laughs] Um, there were many reports of people drinking up to two quarts of whiskey, and being fine from their snake bite.

Justin:

Mm.

Sydnee:

And, I guess, recovering from the-

Justin:

Must not have been very good whiskey.

Sydnee:

-from the whiskey. Um, I read one, uh, 'cause they... I-It used to make like the newspaper. Like the, the, you know, your local like mining town newspaper.

Justin:

Mm-hmm [affirmative]

Sydnee:

Would publish stories of people getting bitten by snakes. [laughs] And like what happened to them. And so, you get these like reports of like, "There was a three-year-old who was bitten by a snake, but don't worry. We gave him a bunch of whiskey and he's fine."

Justin:

[laughs]

Sydnee:

Also, he's got a vicious drinking problem now. [laughs]

Justin:

Perfect.

Sydnee:

Uh, if the whiskey didn't work, you could cauterize something. So, it's-

Justin:

This seems unlikely, but I'm glad to know there's a backup plan.

Sydnee:

Um, and I'm sure you were more open to trying cauterizing a wound, once you've had a lot of whiskey.

Justin:

Sure.

Sydnee:

'Cause then you just... I mean, it's basically like-

Justin:

"Yeah, cauterize it. Go, Go nuts!"

Sydnee:

It's like branding it. Just get some piece of metal really hot and st-stick it on there.

Justin:

Mm-hmm [affirmative]

Sydnee:

Um, now if you were a teetotaler, and you want to stay away from the whiskey-

Justin:

Mm.

Sydnee:

Um, then, unfortunately, your alternative is you can make a salve out of egg, and salt, and gunpowder.

Justin:

Boy, you are a... And by the way, don't let anybody question your dedication to teetotaling, if you get a snake bite and you don't do the thing the doctor tells you should do. That's a really, that's a hard line. You are not lo-, you are not a person looking for excuses to drink.

Sydnee:

[laughs]

Justin:

I give you your credit.

Sydnee:

Uh, this was a time in history where I don't think it took a lot of like effort to talk someone into drinking whiskey. [laughs] I think everybody was pretty fine with it.

Justin:

Yeah.

Sydnee:

You could also try, uh, taking two straws, and sticking them into the bite wounds, like, one into each puncture wound. And then pour some milk into them.

Justin:

Oh, cool. That's like the most unpleasant thing I can think of, to do with that.

Sydnee:

Um, indigo and lard was another popular combo.

Justin:

Mm-hmm [affirmative]

Sydnee:

Indigo and lard, that's a... Do you, do you like that band, that's a great musical act? Indigo and Lard.

Justin:

They're so good. I saw them open for Fleet Foxes last summer. It was amazing.

Sydnee:

You could also try a poultice of some green onions and salt. Which again, like, that's just yummy.

Justin:

Yeah, you're making yourself delicious for the next snake. [laughs]

Sydnee:

Or another one. You could try splitting a chicken in half, and, and pressing part of the chicken up against the wound.

Justin:

How long?

Sydnee:

Uh, well, until the chicken turns green. That's not so yummy...

Justin:

Per-... Oh, great. That does not sound particularly delicious-

Sydnee:

No.

Justin:

-though.

Sydnee:

No. Um, also, salt, pork and garlic could be used together, as well.

Justin:

Okay. Now, it's a dry rub. Great.

Sydnee:

Um, I-I-I kind of feel like a lot of these snake bite treatments were like, like a kid came running in and was like, "Mom, help. I just got bitten by a snake." And she just grabbed like whatever-

Justin:

Was in the kitchen.

Sydnee:

Was here.

Justin:

Like, "Here. Make this into a poultice."

Sydnee:

"Do this?"

Justin:

"I got marmalade, and hair gel, and flour."

Sydnee:

I don't think they had hair gel.

Justin:

Well, it was, um.

Sydnee:

Pomade.

Justin:

Pharmaceutical hair gel. It wasn't just for casual use.

Sydnee:

[laughs]. "Um, go ask your father. I don't know. [laughs] I don't want to have to deal with another snake bite today, Bobby."

As a last resort, you could use amputation-

Justin:

Mm-hmm [affirmative]

Sydnee:

-of the limb. That was, that was sometimes attempted but, um, you probably didn't wanna attempt that 'cause, you know, we didn't have like anesthesia, or-

Justin:

Or you want-

Sydnee:

Sterile.

Justin:

-your arm.

Sydnee:

Yeah. Well, yeah. I mean-

Justin:

Like you don't want-

Sydnee:

-we're assuming you want your arm.

Justin:

You don't need to come up with reasons why people would be, at this point in time, anti-amputation.

Sydnee:

[laughs] There were lots... I mean, it wasn't, we weren't very good at it, yet.

Justin:

Right.

Sydnee:

Um, but you had to be sure to boil the limb in milk afterwards.

Justin:

The one that's no longer on you?

Sydnee:

I guess.

Justin:

Okay.

Sydnee:

I don't know what, I don't know what utility it would be to boil like your other hand in milk. [laughs]

Justin:

Yeah. I-I guess. That... Yeah, that seems-

Sydnee:

[laughs]

Justin:

-just adding insult to injury.

Sydnee:

Um, now in addition to the fact that we now know you should not suck out the poison-

Justin:

Mm-hmm [affirmative]

Sydnee:

Um, there are, there are a lot of other remedies that are from like 200 years ago, that people still try today.

Justin:

Like what?

Sydnee:

So, one, um, a tourniquet. Uh, it has been thought for a long time that if you, if you like apply a tourniquet, like the, the poison can't go any further. It's not going to get, you know, to your heart, was the, was always the thought, to get pumped to the rest of your body. Um, so you just apply a really tight tourniquet to your arm, or whatever, and then you'll be okay. Uh, that's not a good idea. Um, you want the toxin to be diluted. You're also going like damage the cells in that limb. Also, you might u-, lose the limb because of the tourniquet.

Justin:

Right, because it's keeping all of the poison localized, right?

Sydnee:

No.

Justin:

And it cuts off your circulation.

Sydnee:

It cuts off your circ-... yes. I mean, it's more important. I mean, yes the poison, but more importantly, just like the tourniquet itself is extremely dangerous. If you do not know what you're doing, don't use a tourniquet.

Justin:

Right.

Sydnee:

Tourniquets. This is like a little, here's a little public service announcement for you. When we, when we use tourniquets in the field, it is a life or limb situation. Meaning that, okay, we're going to chance losing your arm, b- because the alternative is that you die.

Justin:

Correct.

Sydnee:

And that's the only time that you should ever use a tourniquet. If it's not a situation where you're gonna, you're either gonna die or lose the limb, don't use one. If you're not sure, just don't. Leave it to somebody who is.

Justin:

Right.

Sydnee:

Good, good tourniquet advice. Um, don't ice it. People still think that. Nope, you need blood flow. Don't drink any alcohol. Don't drink any caffeine. I don't know why, I don't know why people are still thinking that whiskey would be a treatment for a snake bite

Justin:

It's more an excuse.

Sydnee:

But don't do that. And don't try to trap the snake.

Justin:

I see, I think that's important.

Sydnee:

Why do you think it's important to trap the snake?

Justin:

Then you know what bit you. So they know what anti-venom to give you.

Sydnee:

Uh, some good advice, that I, that wou-, I was going to get to, but I'll give you a sneak peek, is to look at the snake that bit you. Try to remember some details about it.

Justin:

You just don't need to capture it and make an example out of it.

Sydnee:

Exactly. You don't need that-

Justin:

Got it.

Sydnee:

-snake. It's not like, it's, that's a little bit of magical thinking, that you need the actual snake that bit you in order to make the anti-venom. No. It's good if you can notice some details about it, if you can keep your mind, your wits about you, and see like what color it is, what markings it has. Did it rattle? That kind of thing can be helpful to the doctor that you're going to see. Um, but, uh, trapping the snake is a bad idea. I actually... That's one of the stories that I have heard, is someone who was bitten by a snake, and, uh, their family captured the snake-

Justin:

[laughs]

Sydnee:

-before they loaded them up into the car to drive them to the hospital. And in the car, on the way to the hospital, the snake escaped. [laughs]

Justin:

Oh, gosh.

Sydnee:

And so, they had to like stop on the way to the hospital, and like, you know, evacuate the car.

Justin:

Right. 'Cause snake.

Sydnee:

Because there's a snake in the car. And wait till the snake, you know, slithered out. And then they jumped back in the car and came. And so, they didn't have the snake, and they'd been delayed, so. In gen- And somebody else could have gotten bitten. So in general, like don't, don't try to trap a poisonous snake.

Justin:

Period.

Sydnee:

Just, you know. Look at it. Like, you all have phones now. Just take a friggin picture.

Justin:

Mm-hmm [affirmative]

Sydnee:

Right?

Justin:

You got to really have your wits about you.

Sydnee:

Yeah. Uh, the best advice for snakes is like don't get bitten, um, for several reasons. Many that we've already gone into. Like, you know, it's bad, depending on what kind of snake it is, what kind of poison it is. I mean, it can, it can kill you. It usually won't, but it can cause a lot of damage, you know, to the, to the body part that was, uh, that was injured. Um, but also, snake venom, uh, snake anti-venom is really, really expensive.

Justin:

Mm.

Sydnee:

Super expensive. Uh, there was a student at UC San Diego who was bitten by a rattlesnake. Spent one night in the hospital, and was charged \$143,989 for the encounter. Of that, 128,000 was just for anti-venom he was given.

Justin:

Hatchi matchi.

Sydnee:

128,000. So, um, why is it so expensive?

Justin:

Uh, 'cause it's hard to make.

Sydnee:

That's, did you read ahead, or did you know that?

Justin:

Uh, we've done this show before, but also, I knew that one.

Sydnee:

Okay. Well, that was pretty good.

Justin:

Thank you.

Sydnee:

How do you make anti-venom?

Justin:

You got to milk it. You got to milk the snake.

Sydnee:

[laughs] That's right. You have to milk the snake.

Justin:

You got to get his little nipples.

Sydnee:

No. No. Milk is like, it's the glands. The-

Justin:

Oh, okay.

Sydnee:

-poison glands. It's like near the fangs.

Justin:

Boy, that's a... Stay in school, kids.

Sydnee:

[laughs]

Justin:

That's a tough job. [laughs]

Sydnee:

[laughs] Um, it is hard to milk a poisonous snake. Uh, and you have to milk it over, and over, and over again, and then milk a whole bunch of other poisonous snakes in order to get enough venom to then create an anti-venom, which is part of why it's so expensive. Also, the-there's some things I could say about the pharmaceutical industry, that I won't, but it's more than just, more than just the anti-venom. More than just that.

Justin:

It's not that, you just got to know how to milk a poisonous snake.

Sydnee:

Like, well, it's more than just that, but okay. Um, it took one guy three years, 69,000 times, to milk one pint of coral snake venom, in order to make the anti-venom to coral snakes.

Justin:

It took one jerk, one misguided afternoon, in the hospital refrigerator, to drink the whole thing.

Sydnee:

[laughs] Why did he drink it?

Justin:

He thought it was a Capri Sun.

Sydnee:

[laughs]

Justin:

The guy had been storing it in a Capri Sun pouch the whole time.

Sydnee:

Oh, that's a bad idea.

Justin:

So short-sighted.

Sydnee:

After you milk the snake, and you've got a lot of venom, you've got to cool it down. You've got to inject that into another animal, um, to create like the antibodies to it.

Justin:

[crosstalk 00:32:40]

Sydnee:

Um, horses are used a lot because they're big. They live a long time, and they're really nice. That's what I've read.

Justin:

Yeah. Majestic.

Sydnee:

Well, they're, they're nice about it. Like, they let you stick them with a needle again, and, and we don't... Like, they don't kill the horses. This isn't, they're not, you know, they're not killing them, Um, they need their, them to make antibodies to them. So, they have to be alive.

Justin:

Sure,

Sydnee:

Um, and the... How exactly do they do that, and the horses come out okay, is a secret, so I can't explain it to you. I don't-

Justin:

It's okay.

Sydnee:

I don't know the secret. Like, I'm not keeping this secret from you. I just don't know. Um, but they make the antibodies. They get blood from the horse. They centrifuge it, and then they wait ten years for the FDA to

approve it. And, voila. We have anti-venom. So, it's really expensive, and it's scarce, and it's hard to get, depending on where you are. Um, I don't know that it's readily available, like at my hospital.

Justin:

Right.

Sydnee:

We would have to order it. Um, it, there's a cool story about a snake handler, Bill Haast, Bill Haast, yeah, who had a better way, he thought, of getting this, this, super, exclusive anti-venom. He just injected himself with diluted cobra venom for years.

Justin:

Mm. It's a hard dose to get right. I mean, you got to really make sure you nail that from the beginning.

Sydnee:

Yeah. Yeah. I mean, you got to be really careful with that. Um, but he, he wasn't that concerned because he challenged it many times by getting bitten-

Justin:

Oh, really.

Sydnee:

-by snakes. Lots of times. He lived-

Justin:

Oh.

Sydnee:

-to tell about it.

Justin:

Wow.

Sydnee:

He then went around the world, uh, donating his blood to snake bite victims-

Justin:

I-

Sydnee:

-because on the basis that his blood was an anti-venom now. And his wife claims that all of them survived. Which-

Justin:

I-

Sydnee:

-makes him kind of a cool dude-

Justin:

I-

Sydnee:

-by the way.

Justin:

I-I'm suspicious of this dude. How did he know the person was going to get bit by a snake? You know, he'd have to be really thinking that far ahead. How did he know where he needed to be to donate his blood to a snake venom?

Sydnee:

Well-

Justin:

He's in league with the snakes.

Sydnee:

Well, no. He would like fly there.

Justin:

Right.

Sydnee:

Like, when they got bitten.

Justin:

But like, and they didn't die in the interim?

Sydnee:

I guess he... Maybe, he, I, he must have been [crosstalk 00:34:36]-

Justin:

He was already there, because he planned the whole thing.

Sydnee:

[Laughs]

Justin:

Bill Haast, snake assassin.

Sydnee:

[laughs] Um, you know-

Justin:

The Black Mamba.

Sydnee:

-I meant to mention. So that I told you that they use horses to make the anti-venom.

Justin:

Mm-hmm [affirmative]

Sydnee:

The-there are a lot of different animals you can use. Um, the ones they like to use are horses, but I read that, one article that said it's noted that another good option for this are actually sharks.

Justin:

Oh, great.

Sydnee:

Um.

Justin:

Like out of the frying pan and into the fire, huh?

Sydnee:

[laughs] But, uh, but they noted that that's a lot more difficult. It's a lot more difficult to work with a shark than it is a horse.

Justin:

No, yeah. I would say so.

Sydnee:

[laughs] I don't know who figured that out.

Justin:

It's like every... You know how everybody called horse, the sharks the horses of the sea? Although... Oh, wait a minute. No one does that, because it would be insane.

Sydnee:

[laughs] I don't wanna see a shark all hopped up on snake venom. [laughs]

Justin:

Oh, yeah. Right. Exactly. You're welcome, by the way, Syfy Network. There's your next friggin movie. What do I actually do if I get a snake bite, Syd?

Sydnee:

Stay calm.

Justin:

Okay. Done.

Sydnee:

Hold still.

Justin:

Okay.

Sydnee:

Call 911.

Justin:

Got it.

Sydnee:

Get to a hospital as soon as possible.

Justin:

Okay.

Sydnee:

Um, you're welcome, if you feel so inclined, to clean the wound out with soap and water.

Justin:

Can't. Too freaked out.

Sydnee:

Okay. But you... Well, okay. Call 911. Get to a... Just... And let me know. I'll handle it. Just... I mean, I will take care of it. Um, not... I mean, that wasn't a general offer to the public.

Justin:

Right. Just me.

Sydnee:

That was aimed at you, Justin. Like, if I'm there, public, and you are bitten by a snake, I will help you out.

Justin:

Nice.

Sydnee:

But don't like wait for me to come.

Justin:

Got it.

Sydnee:

'Cause I don't know. I don't know that you got bitten by a snake.

Justin:

She's no Bill Haast.

Sydnee:

[laughs]

Justin:

She's not planning these attacks ahead of time.

Sydnee:

Uh, so clean it. Cover it with a dry dressing. And like I said, try to remember what the snake looked like, but don't. Catch it. Please.

Justin:

That's unnecessary. Uh, thank you so much, Portland. You've been an amazing audience. Thank you to those of you who are listening to this, uh, audio podcast, that definitely recorded from this show. Uh...

Sydnee:

Where we are definitely live in Portland, and not at our home in West Virginia.

Justin:

Yes. Uh, and thanks to, uh, Taxpayers for letting us use their, um, intro and outro, uh, song, *Medicines*, as the introduction for our program. Uh, thank you to them.

Sydnee:

And I wanna thank somebody, Maureen Price, uh, who gave, uh, uh, Justin to, by way of Justin to me, a really sweet card and a super cool pen that lasts for seven years.

Justin:

Yeah, and thanks. I-

Sydnee:

So thank you.

Justin:

I didn't mention this, but thanks to the, uh, to th-th-the beloved fan in, um, Vancouver, that gave us the great books for Charlie. That was very sweet of you. Uh-

Sydnee:

Absolutely. Thank you.

Justin:

Thank you so much. Uh, that's going to do it for us, folks. Until the next time. We, uh, uh, uh, get together with you. Should be next Wednesday, if all goes according to plan. My name is Justin McElroy.

Sydnee:

I'm Sydnee McElroy.

Justin:

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

[them music plays out]

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