

Sawbones Episode 106: Aah, Real Monsters!

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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]

Sydnee:

Hello and welcome to *Sawbones*, a marital tour of misguided medicine. I'm your co-host Sydnee McElroy.

Raleigh:

And I'm your other co-host Raleigh Smirl.

Sydnee:

So you may have noticed this isn't Justin.

Raleigh:

Sorry.

Sydnee:

Again. You don't have to-

Raleigh:

Oops.

Sydnee:

You don't have to say you're sorry. They like me better anyway.

Raleigh:

They like me better.

Sydnee:

That's fair. They do. They do like you better. So, um, as you may be aware, uh, it is, well, it was probably by the time you're listening to this, national podcast day.

Raleigh:

Woohoo!

Sydnee:

uh, a very important holiday for those of us who in part make our living podcasting. And of course, uh, because it is America's, I would say biggest holiday?

Raleigh:

Biggest holiday, bigger than Christmas, bigger than Labor Day.

Sydnee:

[laughs] The two big ones, Christmas and Labor Day. Only bigger, only topped by National Podcast Day. And as a result, of course, all the youth of America are assigned to a podcaster. You should know about this. Your kids were assigned to a podcaster. To, you know, to learn from, to shadow.

Raleigh:

Mm-hmm [affirmative]

Sydnee:

Take your, take your podcast protégé to work day, so to speak.

Raleigh:

Because that's what we're all being taught how to do now, I guess is just be podcasters.

Sydnee:

Listen, if you're not, it's a, I mean, it's a cool gig.

Raleigh:

Mm-hmm [affirmative]

Sydnee:

It's a ton of fun.

Raleigh:

I'm wearing my PJs, drinking some hot chocolate, and we're just talking about medicine.

Sydnee:

It's great. It's great. And there are all kinds of awesome people who listen to your show. Anyway. Well, I will, later when we're not recording a show, I'll tell Raleigh about wonderful. The life of a podcaster is, um-

Raleigh:

As if I heard, haven't heard enough about it already.

Sydnee:

[laughs] I've been trying to talk her out of being an, an actual doctor and just talking about doctory things on a podcast instead.

Raleigh:

And calling myself a doctor. Like, Hey, I'm the doctor, listen to this!

Sydnee:

[laughs] The only thing better than that would be just to like, be Doc McStuffins, if you can swing that.

Raleigh:

I mean, I'm not a cartoon character and I don't take care of animals.

Sydnee:

Yeah.

Raleigh:

And this isn't Disney junior.

Sydnee:

Close enough. So, Raleigh was lucky, and I think lucky enough to be assigned to me on national pod... You don't think?

Raleigh:

I mean, I was kind of forced into being assigned to you.

Sydnee:

[laughs] I, I think, I think it's an honor and a privilege. Um, you know, you weren't, you weren't cool enough. I to be assigned a *WTF* with Marc Maron, and you weren't strange enough to be assigned a *Night Vale*.

Raleigh:

That was the one I was really aiming for. [laughing] Either *Night Vale* or *MBMBaM*.

Sydnee:

Hey. *MBMBaM*!

Raleigh:

Apparently I wasn't brother enough to get into *MBMBaM*. And I wasn't weird enough to get into *Night Vale*.

Sydnee:

[laughs] Listen, what you should have done. If you, if you'd had more foresight, you should have just gotten into *Serial*, because that's really where the money is gonna go, so. Anyway, I'll quit naming podcasts that teen girls don't listen to. Uh, so no, Raleigh got stuck with me. So, uh, so she's here, uh, in place of Justin who, I don't know, he's somewhere else.

Raleigh:

I would say I'm sorry but I know you like me better. So you're welcome.

Sydnee:

He's too busy. Uh, I'm assuming that someone has been assigned to shadow him. Oh gosh. And the boys.

Raleigh:

Probably someone really weird. So he got the bad end of the deal 'cause Sydnee got me.

Sydnee:

I bet there was a huge line though, for people who wanted to shadow *Adventure Zone*.

Raleigh:

Oh, I'm sure.

Sydnee:

Yeah.

Raleigh:

I mean, I was on that list too, but this is like my fifth choice.

Sydnee:

Thanks. Good. Great. So, uh, since you're here, uh, shadowing me reluctantly, I thought that I would let you pick, you know, our topic. What do you wanna, what do you want me to teach you about with all of my podcasting and medical wisdom?

Raleigh:

So Sydnee, since just a few hours here, probably it has been when everyone's listening to this things are gonna start getting spooky. It's gonna be October. Month of spooks and scares, and haunted houses, and candy. [laughing] So tell me all about the Halloween diseases.

Sydnee:

The Halloween diseases?

Raleigh:

You know, the ones you can only get on Halloween, the ones that are all about being spooey and being scary, and you can only get them on October 31st.

Sydnee:

I don't. Um, who, who told you that there were Halloween diseases?

Raleigh:

We learned all about them in podcasting school.

Sydnee:

[laughs] Is that what mom told you would happen if you ate all your candy on Halloween?

Raleigh:

Maybe.

Sydnee:

Is Halloween disease, the thing where you afraid of your neighbor putting a razor blade in your apple?

Raleigh:

No Halloween disease is the one where it's like, I turn into a vampire or I turn into a werewolf.

Sydnee:

Ooh.

Raleigh:

Or like, everyone thinks I'm a witch.

Sydnee:

Oh, I gotcha. Okay. So, um, just to clarify, do you actually believe that there is a medical condition that will turn you into a werewolf?

Raleigh:

Sydnee, that's why I asked you the question.

Sydnee:

Okay. You don't know. Okay. So I just need to fill in this, this gap in your knowledge.

Raleigh:

I'm like 90% sure there's a disease that you get that turns you into a werewolf. That you only turn into a werewolf when there is a full moon, you cannot control yourself.

Sydnee:

[laughs] And like, and like all teenage girls, I'm assuming that you desperately hope there is a disease that turns you into a vampire because there are just so many cool teen vampires out there.

Raleigh:

Because then someone like John Green would write a novel about me.

Sydnee:

Did he write a vampire novel?

Raleigh:

Teen Girl Vampire Number Four.

Sydnee:

I didn't know. He wrote about vampires too. Everybody writes that.

Raleigh:

John Green writes about everything.

Sydnee:

Everybody, writes. Yeah. Everything teen girls love. Um, well, Raleigh there, I don't know that I can, I can grant your wish and tell you that there are actual causes of like real, real life werewolves and vampires and whatnot. But uh, throughout history we have had a lot of diseases that have kind of, um, that have probably contributed to like these myths to, to what we think of as vampires and werewolves and witches. Um, so I think maybe that would, would that like... Satisfy your-

Raleigh:

I mean, I don't appreciate calling them myths [laughing] because they're actual factual, everything is satisfactual Halloween diseases.

Sydnee:

[laughs] Well, um, well let's just go through, we'll go through these. I think, I think this will, this will slake your thirst for blood, the diseases.

Raleigh:

For blood, because I also have vampire disease.

Sydnee:

Okay. All right.

Raleigh:

Happy Halloween!

Sydnee:

Do, do you sparkle in the sunlight?

Raleigh:

Don't tell anybody.

Sydnee:

Okay. That's cool. So, um, there, there are a lot of these myths of different. We're gonna, we're gonna mainly talk about werewolves and vampires and I'm gonna talk a little bit about witches. But, um, these myths have been perpetuated throughout the years by, I don't know, we don't really know, right? Like this is all just like medical historians and people looking back and going, why do we think there are werewolves? Perhaps it was because we

didn't understand this. So these are the most common theories as to why we, we think these kinds of things exist. Um, and it's usually diseases or disorders that have a lot of kind of unusual or just different, like a lot of different systems of the body might be affected by one thing, and something that we may not have easily been able to understand hundreds and hundreds of years ago.

Raleigh:

Right. Because everyone was talking about the hip new Halloween diseases.

Sydnee:

Right

Raleigh:

It was the first time anyone had ever talked about them. So everyone thought they were real. And now you're crushing their dreams back in the, you know, the 16th century.

Sydnee:

These time traveling people from 16th century.

Raleigh:

They're listening to our podcast right now Sydnee, and you're making them really sad. It's October the spoopest month of the whole year. And you're making them sad.

Sydnee:

[laughs] I appreciate that. I think you're saying spooky and I'm gonna, I'm gonna insist that you continue saying that.

Raleigh:

That's what the word is. It's spooky S-P-O-O-P-Y spooky.

Sydnee:

So, uh, our first spooky disease, um, is lycanthropy. Uh, lycanthropy is also the word that you could use to just refer to like the idea of a werewolf. Like, lychan referring to like wolves and like just the, the cons, like you could say, like in, um, in a, in a world where there, where really there're werewolves lycanthropy-

Raleigh:

You mean this world.

Sydnee:

Right. In the, of course. In the real world where there are werewolves, lycanthropy is like the existence of the, the fact that there are werewolves. Um, but it is also in reference to a psychiatric disorder, uh, which is basically the delusion that you are like a wolf.

Raleigh:

Doesn't everyone get that around Halloween.

Sydnee:

Do you believe you're a wolf?

Raleigh:

Don't you?

Sydnee:

No.

Raleigh:

[howls]. I'm sorry. I can't help it!

Sydnee:

[laughs] Uh, lycanthropy is, it's related... It can be like part of, um, another psychotic disorder, something like schizophrenia. Or it can be just a fixed delusion all unto itself, that you think you're some kind of beast or animal or creature. And then most famously would be a wolf just in this context. But I mean, it doesn't have to be a wolf. It could be any kind of animal.

Raleigh:

Right.

Sydnee:

Um, the, uh, one of the most famous cases that I read about was from 1589. So this is like, and that's why I think this probably perpetuated the werewolf myth because it's been written about for a really long time. And it's pretty simple to understand why somebody would be confused, because if you have this delusion, then you would go up to someone and say, "Hi, did you know I'm a werewolf?"

Raleigh:

I do that every day. I'll get to a random person in the hallway at school. "Hey, did you know I'm a werewolf? Great, bye."

Sydnee:

How many of those people do you think, like percentage wise, do you think, believe you?

Raleigh:

Pretty sure about 92%.

Sydnee:

You know-

Raleigh:

The other 8% just kind of go, "Well, third time I've heard at that today. Just gonna keep walking."

Sydnee:

[laughs] That's just what high school is like now. Um, I would say that in 1589, if you started telling people that you're a werewolf, uh, you may have had a lot, a lot of people, maybe 100% of people who actually even if they didn't believe you on some level, went "Well, maybe I don't know. Possibly."

Raleigh:

Yeah. Aren't we all,

Sydnee:

Perhaps you are. So he, he in his delusion claimed that he had a, a belt made of wolf skin that if he wore would then turn him into a wolf.

Raleigh:

Sydnee, I have one question about this whole thing and it just, where can I get that belt?

Sydnee:

[laughs] Well, I think you have to go to Germany.

Raleigh:

Can I get it on eBay.

Sydnee:

You can get everything on eBay, right?

Raleigh:

Find, meet this belt right now.

Sydnee:

Look up Peter Stubbe's, wolf skin belt, magical wolf skin belt, as soon as we're done. But he, um, also claimed in addition to the, uh, having this belt, he also claimed that he had killed and eaten like 25 people. Now, um, the sad part. So this is the sad part. This isn't funny here. The sad part of this is that, I mean, he, he probably hadn't right? Like this was probably part of his delusion is that he probably never did anything wrong, but this was the time before unfortunately we didn't understand this kind of thing. So, um, he was tortured until he confessed to all the, confessed to all of these probably fictional crimes that he'd committed. He was then beheaded and burned at the stake on Halloween.

Raleigh:

On Halloween?!

Sydnee:

On Halloween in 1589.

Raleigh:

The the spoopest of all spooey.

Sydnee:

Which sound like, like this sounds like the beginning of a really scary movie, by the way. It, I bet it is! I bet this is the beginning of a really scary movie. [crosstalk 00:12:40]

Raleigh:

I'm in the process of writing it. Wolf skin belt.

Sydnee:

Well, this would be a great- Yes.[crosstalk 00:12:44]

Raleigh:

A horror day, Halloween the spooey extravaganza.

Sydnee:

But, but a really, but a really sad story and highlights, you know, a lot of people, Raleigh, you, you probably don't know this. A lot of people ask us on the show to talk about, um, mental illness and psychiatric diseases. And we don't very often because, um, because a lot of it gets to, it's just, it's kind of

sad. And it's like, we like to be funny and like and we, you know, like to poke fun at things. And, and, um, and this of course was, is a very sad thing because this guy probably had a, you know, a psychiatric disease and it wasn't recognized. Um, and you see a lot of that, like people who had these kinds of delusions and especially in the con- the context of like that was something people were afraid of. So that maybe the way your, your delusion manifested.

Something like you're a werewolf or you were a witch. Um, then because people didn't have a good understanding of mental illness, then you would have been persecuted as such. And there were actually, you know, you've probably heard about like witches being burned at the stake throughout history.

Raleigh:

Yeah.

Sydnee:

Do you know a lot of people were for being werewolves.

Raleigh:

Really?

Sydnee:

Yes. Same idea though. They were, I mean, they weren't werewolves. They were just people who had some sort of illness that led them to look or act or think or believe they were a werewolf. And-

Raleigh:

But Sydnee, what if they were? What if they were actually werewolves? These people back in the 16th century had cracked the case. They figured it out, but no one believed them because it was the 16th century. And now we're just totally blind to the fact that werewolves do exist.

Sydnee:

I feel like there's probably like a whole internet group who, who would agree with you on this?

Raleigh:

Well, I mean, yeah.

Sydnee:

[laughs] Who would back up the story.

Rileigh:

I'm the leader of this internet group.

Sydnee:

Oh, okay. [laughs] Another, another cause of, um, of some unusual behavior throughout history is, uh, ergot poisoning. Um, now this ergot is a fungus. Um, and it grows on grain. And especially like if grains are like, you know, if you harvested a bunch of grain and like put it in a big pile in a silo or whatever.

Rileigh:

Mm-hmm [affirmative]

Sydnee:

And then it got damp, that is a perfect setup for growing this fungus. And the problem is that, um, people didn't understand this, so they would use this grain to make bread and they would eat it.

Rileigh:

Well, that's not good.

Sydnee:

No, because now you are eating this, this ergot. Um, the, the Greeks actually understood that there was something special about it because they would, um, like there were some ceremonies where they would advise, you drink a little bit of it before you could visit certain temples.

Rileigh:

So the Greek people told you, "Hey, drink this mushroom. You're gonna feel great before you go to church."

Sydnee:

[laughs] More or less. That's what it was. Yes. It was a way to, you know, get you into the right, like groove.

Rileigh:

Get ready to do some praisin' and some blazin' on this mushroom.

Sydnee:

Um, there were two strains, there were two strains. One, one strain of this, uh, fungus unfortunately caused something that was called St. Anthony's fire. And this was not, this was, this had nothing to do with hallucinations.

This was a kind of gangrene where you could like lose your limbs, um, because it made your blood vessels constrict, get real tight, and cut off blood flow. Um, and uh, and it, the only thing really famous about it is that it was called St. Anthony's fire. Because there was a hospital where everybody went to back in the 1100s to get care for it. And it was the patron St. was St. Anthony. Um, but the more famous strain of this caused more of a central nervous system problem. So it would, it, it would act on your system kind of like a drug that I'm certain you have never heard of Raleigh called LSD.

Raleigh:

What is it again?

Sydnee:

LSD. That's good! That's great. You've never heard of LSD.

Raleigh:

Oh, you mean ecstasy?

Sydnee:

No, uh, a little different.

Raleigh:

But still...

Sydnee:

A similar idea. It's like something that would make you... like a designer drug that makes you feel, um, I don't know.

Raleigh:

Ready to go to church!

Sydnee:

Yeah. Ready to go to church. It's exactly what LSD does. I don't know. I've never done LSD full disclosure. I don't know what it does.

Raleigh:

All right...

Sydnee:

I mean like I know what it does. Seriously! Don't tell mom I've done LSD.

Raleigh:

Okay.

Sydnee:

I really haven't. Um, so this can cause um, like hallucinations. Uh, it can cause you to have like delusions of things like metamorphosis, you know, thinking that you're turning into something else, like another creature. It can also cause some unpleasant things like seizures and vomiting and diarrhea and blindness and deafness. So when- unfortunately it can kill you. Um, but this again could be responsible for a lot of werewolf myths or um, or witches as well. Uh, because a lot of people ate this bread and they would have these hallucinations and whatnot, and kind of talk out of their head. And there are some theories that this may be what was responsible for, have you heard of the Salem witch trials?

Raleigh:

I have.

Sydnee:

There's there's a-

Raleigh:

Heard about the witches.

Sydnee:

Exactly. There's a theory that this is what was going on with those girls, that were accused of being witches that maybe one had- maybe they had poisoning. And so they began to accuse the other one of being a witch.

Raleigh:

It's all connected the, the werewolf disease, they were hallucinating that they were, but really the people who had this mushroom poisoning were hallucinating, hallucinating that other people were. So everyone thought everyone was a werewolf all the time.

Sydnee:

Everybody was pretty confused for a while.

Raleigh:

It was a confusing time.

Sydnee:

It's, now to be fair, this has been disputed because, um, why, why- everybody was eating this bread, Um, why did it only affect these young women? I don't know. That seems kind of weird. Right? So it could have been something like more of like a mass psychogenic illness or, or just a really awful prank, has been suggested. Like they accused this girl of being a witch and it was just like a really mean thing that some other girls did.

Raleigh:

That's not even like funny.

Sydnee:

No.

Raleigh:

That's just like, come on. We're all just trying to be cool werewolves together and go to church and feel great.

Sydnee:

Do LSD.

Raleigh:

Do LSD, go to church, praise it and blaze it.

Sydnee:

But there is some thought that, that throughout history that because ergot poisoning has been a problem many times throughout the centuries. Maybe that's been responsible for some weird behavior that has led people to believe in supernatural type things.

Raleigh:

I would have to think somewhere along the way that was responsible for some sort of weird thing sometimes.

Sydnee:

It sounds like it, right?

Raleigh:

Right.

Sydnee:

Now. Um, one disease, I'm not really gonna go into because we did a whole show about it. But just to mention it is rabies because I don't think you can

talk about like werewolf myths and not mention and rabies. Um, again, it's transmitted by the, by the bite of a dog, which sounds... I mean, right? Like you become werewolf by getting bitten by werewolf. Right?

Raleigh:

Right, right.

Sydnee:

So like you get bitten by a dog and then you get this awful illness that among other things that it does to you also makes you maybe hallucinate, you may kind of lose control of yourself, bite other people as well.

Raleigh:

Zombies! It's all connected!!

Sydnee:

Yes. It's also been tied into zombies. It has. It has. So maybe, maybe part of the werewolf, werewolf origin story comes from observing people with rabies. I don't know. It fits.

Raleigh:

Sounds like it could be possible.

Sydnee:

For more on rabies. Please listen to the *Sawbones* episode on rabies.

Raleigh:

Believe me I already have, for my studies for my podcast class.

Sydnee:

Good. I'm glad they're teaching you what matters. So Raleigh, you probably wanna hear about some more spooky diseases.

Raleigh:

I do!

Sydnee:

And I'm gonna tell you about those right after we visit the billing department.

[ad break]

Sydnee:

So Raleigh.

Raleigh:

Mmhmm?

Sydnee:

I wanna tell you about porphyria.

Raleigh:

About what?

Sydnee:

Porphyria is a disorder that comes from the Greek word for purple.

Raleigh:

I like purple.

Sydnee:

I know. Purple is your nickname, right?

Raleigh:

A little bit.

Sydnee:

Back in, back in your tennis days?

Raleigh:

Back in them days.

Sydnee:

How did you get the nickname Purple, by the way?

Raleigh:

It was around a very spooey time of year that's coming up on us quite fast. It was around Halloween. Uh, and I went to my first tennis practice wearing an entire purple track suit. And my tennis coach called me the one eyed, one horned flying purple people eater, and then to shorten it, it was just Purple.

Sydnee:

So he really did you a favor in like made you popular among the other kids with that nickname, huh? [laughs]

Raleigh:

So popular. It's like, "Oh, you're Purple. What does that stand for? Oh, you're a monster with one eye and a horn? Okay, bye."

Sydnee:

So, um, so maybe instead we can call you porphyria.

Raleigh:

I think that's kind of a mouthful.

Sydnee:

I think it is it it's also a, a disease. So like a disorder-

Raleigh:

So probably not.

Sydnee:

Not a disease a disorder. Um, it is a genetic disorder in which you can't, uh, properly make something called heme. Now you need heme. It's part of hemoglobin. You've probably heard of that.

Raleigh:

You need heme!

Sydnee:

You need heme, for your hemoglobin. Uh, we don't really say it that way. It's just hemoglobin. Just, I was highlighting the word heme.

Raleigh:

Trying to sound hip.

Sydnee:

I didn't want you to think. I, I actually say hemoglobin.

Raleigh:

Heme-oglobin.

Sydnee:

Um, hemoglobin of course is the part of your red blood cell that carries oxygen. So it's, I mean, pretty, pretty important.

Raleigh:

I mean, if we didn't have 'em, we would just all be vampires.

Sydnee:

Well, we're getting there. Don't get ahead of yourself.

Raleigh:

Sorry.

Sydnee:

Um, there are a bunch of different steps in it. There's a pathway. Your body has a lot of different pathways that it goes through to make different substances that you need. Right? And there are a bunch of steps in the pathway to create heme and porphyria actually refers to a, kind of a, a constellation of different disorders, um, that all result from different errors in that pathway.

So it depends on where the problem is, kind of what step that shows how this disease might manifest in a different patient. And some types are more common than others. Um, but in general, the idea is that you don't make enough of the heme that you need to create the hemoglobin molecule to carry oxygen to your body, which is a problem because you don't have that.

But then the other thing is that all the stuff, uh, because it doesn't because your pathway doesn't work, there are byproducts that build up.

Raleigh:

Oh no.

Sydnee:

Does that make sense? So like you're making something and you, it turns into one thing and then you've gotta add something else to it, to turn into something else and you gotta add something else to it to make it something else. Well, somewhere along that chain, it gets stopped and it just keeps accumulating that thing where it got stopped.

Raleigh:

Okay.

Sydnee:

And you don't want all of that toxic byproduct, you need to break it down and you can't. So then you get sick.

Raleigh:

Doesn't sound good.

Sydnee:

Yep. You get sick in a variety of ways. Now, Raleigh, I know I had asked you this earlier. You did not watch a lot of *Scrubs*?

Raleigh:

I didn't.

Sydnee:

Scrubs is one of my favorite medical TV shows. I've mentioned this on the show before, and I think it's one of the most realistic as well. And for all of you *Scrubs* fans out there, this is the thing where JD and Turk had the urine sample and they were supposed to figure out what was wrong with the patient. And they accidentally left it outside in the sunlight and it turned purple. And so then they Googled purple pee and they diagnosed the patient.

Raleigh:

I've never seen that show before in my life.

Sydnee:

I guarantee there are, there're at least 10 people right now who are like, "Oh, I know what they're, I know what she's talking about." I promise.

Raleigh:

And I'm not one of them.

Sydnee:

Okay. Well the, they matter more than you right now.

Raleigh:

Well, okay!

Sydnee:

How do you like that.

Raleigh:

Bye everybody.

Sydnee:

So yes, that is one of the interesting, uh, this is true about porphyria. That is one of the, kind of the interesting facets about it is that you, your urine will turn like a purplish color in the, in UV light, in the sunlight.

Raleigh:

That seems like during the Halloween season, that would be kind of a cool thing to do.

Sydnee:

Well, I will tell you that I di- I diagnosed this once as a resident and I took the, I was very excited when I took the urine sample and ran out front of the hospital and stood at the entrance to the hospital, holding this cup of pee up to the sun.

Raleigh:

And that was the moment that everyone around Sydnee realized how cool she was.

Sydnee:

[laughs] I took it. Uh, it turned a little purple that day. I took it home and put it in my window sill. Poor Justin had to deal with it.

Raleigh:

You took a person's pee home??

Sydnee:

I just, it was, that, I was learning.

Raleigh:

Okay. All right.

Sydnee:

I brought it back, to show how purple it got.

Raleigh:

Did you? Like-

Sydnee:

I did.

Raleigh:

Or did you like replace it with lemonade.

Sydnee:

To show how purple it got. It got really purple.

Raleigh:

I'm sure all your, your cool doctor, friends were like, "Oh my God, Sydnee got to take home the pee!"

Sydnee:

No, actually everybody kind of made fun of me for it.

Raleigh:

Well, well...

Sydnee:

Um, and, and this is okay, this is okay to joke about because this is very treatable now. Now thank goodness we have, we have treatments for this condition. As you can imagine for a long time, we had no idea what was happening to people unlucky enough to have this, um, because you really have to understand the complex physiology to, to understand this disorder. Now we knew that there was something that was like a collection. We used to call it like a blood liver disorder.

Um, dating back to Hippocrates who described this without knowing what was causing it. Um, that wasn't until like the mid to late 1800s that we started understanding hemoglobin. And then after that, that we were able to actually like, you know, define the illness. Um, famously King George III had it, who, uh, was occasionally I think known as like the mad king. Because it can create among other, like many, many different symptom of this, it can create some, um, hallucinations and delusions and kind of periods of time where, where you are not yourself, um, like psychosis.

Raleigh:

So it's all cycling back to the werewolves.

Sydnee:

Exactly. And actually we're gonna get into a little bit of vampire mythology here too. Um, it's also been suggested, by the way, that maybe Van Gogh had this.

Raleigh:

So this is why there's an whole episode about *Dr. Who* about Vincent Van Gogh is because he had this.

Sydnee:

Well sorta.

Raleigh:

Yeah, I get it now.

Sydnee:

That's one of the best episodes of *Dr. Who*.

Raleigh:

Go watch it right now. Please pause this episode of *Sawbones*.

Sydnee:

Yes.

Raleigh:

Go watch that episode and come back and talk to me once you've watched it.

Sydnee:

Vincent, go watch the episode of *Dr. Who-Vincent*. It is, it's amazing. Yeah. I would highly recommend it. Um, in addition to some, some psychiatric problems in central nervous system problems, it can cause a lot of strange symptoms. You can be really sensitive to sunlight.

Raleigh:

Vampires.

Sydnee:

You can in, you can get these blisters on your skin and as they heal, they grow extra hair.

Raleigh:

Werewolves.

Sydnee:

Uh, you can get other changes in your skin like sores or discoloration, um, or specifically like the skin around your mouth can stretch away. And even your gums can recede, which will make your teeth appear much more prominent.

Rileigh:

So this is also zombies, this is also werewolves, and this is also vampires.

Sydnee:

It can. well, and yeah, because it can reveal like your incisors more.

Rileigh:

Mm-hmm [affirmative]

Sydnee:

Um, you can, you can lose, uh, parts of your body, your nose, your ears, your eyelids, your fingers. Um, and, and patients with this may have a little bit of increased sensitivity to foods with a lot of sulfur in them for example?

Rileigh:

Garlic.

Sydnee:

You got it.

Rileigh:

Vampires. Boom. Case cracked.

Sydnee:

So there's been a lot of, of people who like to think about such things who've suggested that maybe this is the root of, of not the, not the root, but con- you know, like contributes to both vampire and werewolf mythology.

Rileigh:

It's like a two oh in one deal.

Sydnee:

Yeah. Because you got a couple different, you know, people who would suffer from this. Um, may, you know, unfortunately, um, and not so much now again, because it's treatable, but back before we understood it, take on kind of an other worldly appearance after a while from, you know, the different, the different manifestations. And so, um, maybe this was part of why, why we had these kinds of strange mythologies.

Raleigh:

That's why we have Edward and Jacob. So you're all welcome.

Sydnee:

That's it. They just both have porphyria.

Raleigh:

Right.

Sydnee:

We can treat that. Like they can, I mean, if they wanna call me.

Raleigh:

But we don't want to anymore.

Sydnee:

But let me tell you, if Jacob wants to call me, he can call me anytime.

Raleigh:

Sydnee!

Sydnee:

Justin's not on this show right now. All I'm saying is...

Raleigh:

I'm only offended because I'm team Edward.

Sydnee:

What?? Are you kidding me?

Raleigh:

Sydnee we've had this conversation before.

Sydnee:

If that cute werewolf wants to come run it over here. And ju-

Raleigh:

I have a 38 page document [laughing] that is an argument of essay on my computer right now that is explaining why Edward is better than Jacob in 38 different ways.

Sydnee:

Are you kidding me? When he is running around with just his jeans on and his shirt off.

Raleigh:

Sydnee. Sydnee.

Sydnee:

And he is all outdoorsy. He smells like the woods.

Raleigh:

[through gritted teeth] This not the time to have this conversation.

Sydnee:

Okay. I just can't. Okay. We'll get into this later. Our last, our last disorder that I wanna talk about is extremely rare, but probably very obviously when I tell you about it, um, contributed to the werewolf myth throughout, throughout history. It's called congenital hypertrichosis universalis.

Raleigh:

Say that in human, please.

Sydnee:

Uh, it's also known as human werewolf syndrome.

Raleigh:

Okay. So werewolves.

Sydnee:

On, uh, this again, this is a very rare disorder where you just, I mean, you basically grow a lot of hair everywhere. Um, you can have it like a localized, um, manifestation of it. So you just have a lot of hair in one, one or two places, or you can just have it everywhere. You're just, even your face. There just everywhere.

Raleigh:

So this is also where like Bigfoot came from?

Sydnee:

You know, that's really interesting. Maybe. Maybe any, any kind of-

Raleigh:

Is this the guy who had this disease with really big feet?

Sydnee:

Maybe. Because we've known about this for a really long time. People have, um, when you think about like people who were like sideshow performers, like uh, Jojo, the dogface man, Lionel, and the lion face man, the wolf man, the bearded woman, they may have all, I mean, depending on which side show, which person they may have been suffering from this. We have documented cases of all of those people having this disorder.

Raleigh:

Well, it's not very funny.

Sydnee:

No, well, no.

Raleigh:

It's supposed to be comedy Sydnee.

Sydnee:

Well, sorry. The first known case, by the way that we know of, of this, dates back to 1648, uh, Petrus Gonsalvus of the Canary islands. Um, and the only thing that's I think interesting about that is if you look at like, you can Google him because they're like family portraits, because several other people in his family had this. And there are these very like, you know, there old like really stoic looking portraits of people.

Raleigh:

I know exactly what you're talking about.

Sydnee:

Where they're looking just really serious and they're, they're dressed like-

Raleigh:

It's like all old portraits ever.

Sydnee:

Yes. And they're dressed like very, you know-

Raleigh:

Very fancy.

Sydnee:

Yeah. Very fancy. And they're just kind of stand, and you know, they must have stood there for like ever.

Raleigh:

Well and you know, those are also the kind of portraits I have to loop this back to Halloween somehow that are always in haunted houses.

Sydnee:

Yes. And like the eyes are cut out and the eyes are watching you, right?

Raleigh:

Like in the haunted mansion ride at Disney.

Sydnee:

Or Scooby-Doo.

Raleigh:

Or Scooby-Doo.

Sydnee:

[laughs] There's a portrait of him. Like just like this that you can find, except that he's, you know, unfortunately covered in hair.

Raleigh:

Maybe that's Bigfoot. Maybe that's just a portrait of Bigfoot. He got so embarrassed. He ran out in the woods and now he lives forever.

Sydnee:

It's definitely Petrus. But it's an interesting point that you bring up that he, that maybe this also contributes to the myth of Bigfoot. Although I feel like, as I'm saying this, there are probably people listening at home going Bigfoot is not a myth. Bigfoot is real.

Raleigh:

It's not a myth.

Sydnee:

I think you just believe in all of this stuff.

Raleigh:

Of course! It's Halloween.!

Sydnee:

Well Raleigh, have I satisfied your need for some, for some spooey content?

Raleigh:

Even though spooey month of the year, doesn't start for about another two hours. I'm already feeling pretty spooey.

Sydnee:

Well, good, well good. I, I, I think it's interesting to talk about, you know, of course, like I said, not these things, aren't these things aren't funny. In the sense that we think of funny. Luckily a lot of these things are treatable now.

Raleigh:

Right.

Sydnee:

Um, and certainly we have a better understanding of things like psychiatric disorders. Um, but it's interesting to think about how these different things that we didn't understand throughout history may have contributed to the movies that we-

Raleigh:

The spooey movies.

Sydnee:

That we love and will be watching for the next 31 days.

Raleigh:

I'm ready.

Sydnee:

Are you ready?

Raleigh:

I'm so ready.

Sydnee:

Uh, thank you to The Taxpayers for letting us use their song *Medicines* for our intro. Uh, thank you, Raleigh.

Raleigh:

You're welcome

Sydnee:

For joining me on...

Raleigh:

On the spoopest spooey episode of *Sawbones*.

Sydnee:

[laughs] I really enjoyed sharing. Take your podcaster to work day with you.

Raleigh:

Happy Halloween, everybody!

Sydnee:

[laughs] Um, we hope you have a very, uh, spooey October. Justin will back, um, much to your, uh, pleasure or chagrin.

Raleigh:

Unless something poopy happens to him!

Sydnee:

Unless Raleigh decides to kill him because she's enjoying this so much. Um, Justin will be back with us next week. Um, in the meantime, thank you guys so much for listening. We'll- we'll see you next week. So until then, uh, I'm Sydnee McElroy

Raleigh:

And I'm Raleigh Smirl.

Sydnee:

And don't drill a hole in your head.

[theme music plays out]

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