

Sawbones 46: Corpse Theft and the Resurrection Men

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MC:

Hey guys, after the show, be sure to join us at the bar and get a dollar off your drink with your ticket from this show, uh. Guys, give it up for Sawbones!

[audience cheers]

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 plays, audience cheers]

Justin:

Sorry, setting up my triple redundancy recording, uh, backup. Hi everybody, welcome to Sawbones, a Misguided Tour of Medical... Wait, wait, lemme try again.

Sydnee:

Back it up.

Justin:

Just an edit here.

Sydnee:

It's all the Pepsi Max.

Justin:

Just cut at this point.

Sydnee:

Distracting. Hi everybody!

Justin:

Cut at any— Hello everybody! And welcome to Sawbones, a Marital Tour of Misguided Medicine. I'm your co-host Justin McElroy.

Sydnee:

And I'm—

[audience cheers]

Sydnee:

And I'm Sydnee. [laughs]

[audience cheers louder]

Justin:

Killin' me. You're killin' me. Uh, this is Sawbones which is the, uh, medical history show we do together. Uh, and today, we're doing it in New York City. New York...City.

Sydnee:

Fancy.

Justin:

Not only the home of some of the best salsa, uh... But, uh, I mean there's so many— It's such a big— I mean, it's the Big Apple, y'know. There's so many— Uh, Lady Liberty here. Uh, pizza... Like, the first pizza was here.

[audience laughs]

Justin:

Um, the first, uh— I mean, got, like, with both the Ghostbusters. Um, just...

Sydnee:

My sister's here.

Justin:

Your sister's here. Sydnee's sister, Teylor is here. Um, she's literally here by the way. Hi, Teylor! Um...

[audience claps]

Justin:

All right! Um, is there anything I'm forgetting?

Sydnee:

Uh, well, it's also the home of the first riot in America.

[one audience member woos]

Justin:

This one's not... It's not really as—

Sydnee:

Yeah, the first riot that ever happened, can you believe it? Right here in New York.

Justin:

It's not really as, like, good as my Ghostbusters ones or...not really happier—

Sydnee:

It's pretty— I mean, it's a big— It's a big thing...

Justin:

Well, so what was it about? I'm assuming it was over, like [speaks quietly] the Yankees, or... You guys like to fight on that one, right?

Sydnee:

[laughs] Ah, well, I mean it was in 1788, I don't think it—

Justin:

What's your Original Ray's Pizzas— The battle of the Rays.

Sydnee:

Well, I mean, predictably, it was about cadavers, you know. Corpses, dissecting dead people.

Justin:

Go back to the beginning.

Sydnee:

[laughs]

Justin:

You've lost me and we're five minutes in. I'm lost.

Sydnee:

Okay. Well, I wanna tell you about the first riot, but before we get there, I need to kind of give you some history of dissections. So we're gonna talk about cutting up dead people for a while.

Justin:

It's— Right now, I assume there is a percentage of this audience that has not listened to Sawbones before now. You'll be able to tell them because they're looking at the person that brought them like this. [pauses, audience laughs]

Sydnee:

"What is this?" [laughs]

Justin:

"What is this show?!"

Sydnee:

"What is happening?"

Justin:

"Is this art? You promised this wasn't art."

Sydnee:

So, um, of course, I went to medical school and key to medical education is dissecting a cadaver, so— To learn anatomy, not for fun. Not for funsies, for learning. Um...

Justin:

But also you thought it was fun.

Sydnee:

I mean— No, it wasn't fun.

Justin:

[crosstalk] One of the big questions you're confronted by, I guess.

Sydnee:

Yes, that's fair.

Justin:

All right. All right, profound.

Sydnee:

It was profound.

Justin:

Fair.

Sydnee:

Um, and that's kind of intrinsic to learning about the human body. You have to, y'know, cut it open and take a peek inside. And we've been doing that for a really long time. In Ancient Egypt, they used to dissect corpses, although not really to learn about them; it was just part of the burial process so they could, like, you know, put their organs in all the nice little jars.

Justin:

They thought that or— They thought the organs maybe went bad at a different rate from the rest of the body?

Sydnee:

That wasn't it [laughing].

Justin:

"Your stomach's gonna smell bad first. We're gonna put that in a jar."

[audience laughs]

Sydnee:

They'd pickle them.

Justin:

Perfect. Delicious.

Sydnee:

So— [laughs] So it was okay. It was cool to dissect bodies because it was part of a religious, y'know, belief. Um, in Greece, it was actually technically illegal to do that? But people did it anyway and nobody really stopped anybody. So... [laughs]

Justin:

They were do— There were a lot of things happening in Greece at the time, you have to understand. This was, like, way down the priority list.

Sydnee:

Exactly. And it was purely in pursuit of knowledge. So a lot of the physicians would, y'know, dissect cadavers, and they'd have their medical students around, and it was all very... I don't know, everybody wearing togas and they looked very serious.

Justin:

[laughs] Y'know, Greece?

[audience laughing]

Sydnee:

You guys know what Greece is like, right?

Justin:

You remember Greece. It's Greece! Y'know, just Greece.

Sydnee:

And they published all kinds of drawings and texts and they put together all kinds of collections of this information, which was really important, because in Rome it was illegal and they took it seriously.

Justin:

It was a hard line against it.

Sydnee:

Yes. There was no dissecting. I'm sure that people tried, but for the most part it wasn't widespread, which is why a lot of, uh, Galen - who was one of the prominent Roman physicians - a lot of his drawings and his anatomical writings are all either secondhand - they were all based on the Greek stuff - or they were from primates that he dissected.

Justin:

Hm.

Sydnee:

And just kind of said, "It was a human!"

[audience laughs]

Justin:

"Trust me!"

Sydnee:

"I promise!" Which is why it was, actually, a lot of it, uh, turned out to be kind of wrong.

Justin:

Oh, good!

Sydnee:

But that was a big problem in anatomy for a long time was trying to reconcile that. A common misconception is that the church was against dissection. That is not true.

Justin:

We have actually maybe said that at some point during our [laughing] podcast before, actually.

Sydnee:

[laughing] Yes.

Justin:

We may have perpetuated that particular myth, that's [crosstalk].

Sydnee:

I think I have. I think I have because, as I dug into this, I thought, "Well, of course the church is against it, obviously. Any kind of, like, progress that, y'know— "

[audience laughs]

Sydnee:

If we're talkin' medieval times...

Justin:

Talkin' about the Middle Ages, it's very different. Don't get all— Don't get your hackles in a cockle, or whatever it is they're—

[audience laughing]

Justin:

Okay? You too. Chill. We're just saying, at that time, a little—

Sydnee:

[crosstalk] There was the whole, like, y'know, "What's the center of the universe? Earth? Something?"

Justin:

Whole thing. Okay? Back then. Not now.

Sydnee:

Okay. And! We're redeeming them: the church wasn't against it.

Justin:

Right.

Sydnee:

No.

Justin:

So, that was a strong misconception, so sorry about that.

Sydnee:

No, um [laughs] there's actually, it was a papal edict that was totally misinterpreted. At the time, it was common practice if you were a soldier and you died overseas, away from your home country, they knew that you'd wanna be buried in your home country. So to get you back there without having to carry, like, a lot of dead bodies back...

Justin:

Mm-hmm.

Sydnee:

They would cut the bodies into little pieces, boil them, remove the bones, and then take the bones back home to bury them. [silence] Well that's... [while laughing] That's how the Pope felt.

[audience laughs]

Justin:

Okay. All right! Finally, me and the Pope find common ground.

Sydnee:

[laughs]

Justin:

Except for the hats, we both love the hats.

Sydnee:

The pope said, "Please don't do that." [laughs]

Justin:

"That's gross, guys."

Sydnee:

"That's really gross. Please stop." And somehow that was misinterpreted as, "Don't dissect cadavers for educational benefit."

Justin:

Hm! Well, all right. Good to know.

Sydnee:

So, you know, so that seems they're doing okay, you know. Um, in the Middle Ages, as we've mentioned, people were really into gross stuff.

Justin:

To use clinical terminology.

Sydnee:

So dissection started to become really popular. And it was, like, a big deal. If you were gonna dissect a corpse, you would sell tickets; it was like the circus, or the [laughs] the fair coming to town. "We're gonna dissect people!"

And, I mean, everybody came. This started in 1315, so a long time ago, y'know. You'd have the anatomist, and then, I don't know, just a ton of people hangin' around, eatin' popcorn, [laughing] having some drinks.

[audience laughs]

Justin:

How bored are they?

Sydnee:

Did we have popcorn in 1315?

Justin:

What?

Sydnee:

Yeah, we did, right?

Justin:

Yeah, we— I invented popcorn in 1315.

Sydnee:

You did?

Justin:

Somebody did; it might as well be me. I want the royalties! I'm sorry.

Sydnee:

Uh, Da Vinci of course secretly dissected people.

Justin:

Ahh...

Sydnee:

He wasn't supposed to, but he did.

Justin:

On the sly.

Sydnee:

It was all for that—

Justin:

That's what The Da Vinci Code is about, actually. It is, really.

Sydnee:

It was all for that Vitruvian Man thing. That was it.

Justin:

He just really wanted to perfect the Vitruvian Man?

Sydnee:

He just wanted to make it perfect, y'know?

Justin:

See, I— You haven't— You can't joke! I believe everything you say, 100% of the time. No questions.

Sydnee:

No, and the Catholic Church actually, um, paid for a dissection to take place at one point. They, uh, hosted one? [laughing] They kickstarted the dissection.

[audience laughs]

Justin:

[laughs]

Sydnee:

Uh, in 1533, there were conjoined twins who died, and they wanted to see— This was the reasoning, they didn't know where the soul was. And so they dissected the twins to see where's the soul and do they have one or two?

[audience laughs]

Justin:

Haven't their families been through enough?

Sydnee:

I don't know.

Justin:

I bet they couldn't find it and their assumption was, "Well, conjoined twins don't have souls. That's pretty messed up, conjoined twins."

Sydnee:

This was actually pretty commonplace. There were a lot of religious figures who were dissected, especially people who were to become saints later, to see if you could tell the difference when you looked inside the body of a really holy person as opposed to...me, or you, or...

Justin:

[laughs]

Sydnee:

One, a nun, Chiara of Montefalco, she later became a saint.

Justin:

Okay.

Sydnee:

So, after she died, she was dissected, and again, this was purely, we're just trying to figure out the answer here, and was claimed that they found a crucifix in her heart.

[audience laughs]

Justin:

I wanna make sure you guys got that one, too. S'guys, this doesn't carry over well for the podcast recording audience, but you guys'll— No, I'll have them call you here and just ask you why I love life.

Sydnee:

More likely, they did find this: they claimed that there were three gallstones in her gallbladder.

Justin:

Perfect.

Sydnee:

But they thought this represented the holy trinity, so.

Justin:

Oh, okay, yeah, yeah.

Sydnee:

So, proof.

Justin:

What if there had been four? Then they would've been, "Whoa, we got this all wrong."

Sydnee:

Then she wouldn't be a saint, I guess.

Justin:

Just another dude.

Sydnee:

Um. In the 17th and 18th century, that's when you'd— If you've ever seen, like, operating theaters, like where they have all the, y'know, kind of like this, only round and then we'd be cutting somebody up.

Justin:

Imagine exactly like this, except Sydnee was cutting my body parts out.

[audience laughs]

Sydnee:

Yes! You can imagine that, right? In your mind's eye... [laughs] So— And that was also really popular and a lot of the times, again, it was medical students, but, you could buy tickets because if you're gonna do something, why not make money off of it?

Justin:

Sure.

Sydnee:

So you could sell tickets and then if you were a dignitary or a visiting royal, you were always welcome to come and view a dissection as part of your royal privilege.

Justin:

I guess.

Sydnee:

I guess. [laughs] If that's what you wanna do. Um. But the problem was this is where— We're getting somewhere, I promise.

Justin:

I believe you. I have utmost faith in you.

Sydnee:

The problem was that only certain people were allowed to dissect. So there was the Royal College of Physicians and then there was The Company of Barber-Surgeons.

[audience laughs]

Sydnee:

Equally important.

Justin:

I know which one I trust so far.

Sydnee:

And, between the two of them, they were allowed ten dissections a year total. That was it.

Justin:

Why?

Sydnee:

It was...arbitrary. Just because they didn't want, you know, people cutting up people left and right. They wanted it to be [laughing] a very— First, they wanted the right people doing it, so you had to be an official dissector.

Justin:

Okay.

Sydnee:

And secondly, they didn't want it to, uh, you know to be too base, like, "Oh, well the commoners are...[crosstalk]"

Justin:

It wanted to keep it special. Want to maintain some of the magic, cutting a person up into little pieces

Sydnee:

[crosstalk] I'm assuming...ticket prices?

Justin:

Maybe— That's right, who wants to take— It would be like if WrestleMania happened twenty times a year. That's not [crosstalk].

[audience laughing]

Justin:

If there's ten WrestleManias a year, then you got something.

Sydnee:

So, because there was this growing demand, more medical students, we need to dissect more corpses. They said, "Well, we'll make up the coolest named act ever." The Murder Act of 1752 which allowed physicians to dissect the bodies of murderers who had been condemned to death.

Justin:

Perfect.

Sydnee:

And it actually added, um, crimes that were not just punishable by death, but punishable by dissection.

Justin:

Ugh.

Sydnee:

'Cause it was considered, like, an insult even beyond: "We're not just gonna kill you. Then we're gonna send you to a medical school and students are gonna cut you up."

Justin:

That would— That is unsettling, I would say.

Sydnee:

Yeah.

Justin:

I would not— I would probably avoid those crimes. I avoid most crimes anyway, just between you and me. But those'll be— I would add those to the list, certainly.

Sydnee:

But this still didn't meet their demand for cadavers.

Justin:

Ah.

Sydnee:

We still need more. Uh, and so that's when we give rise to graverobbers, and the Resurrection Men.

Justin:

The Resurrection Men?

Sydnee:

The Resurrection Men.

Justin:

I wanna be a Resurrection Man! That's the coolest thing I've ever heard!

Sydnee:

You know - do you know what they do?

Justin:

I don't care, I'll do anything!

[audience laughs]

Justin:

Anything to be a Resurrection Man. This would— "This is Justin, he's a Resurrection Man." Sounds like a Quentin Tarantino movie.

Sydnee:

This would be, like— There'd— This would be, like, typical Resurrection Man heist if you wanna compare it to that.

Justin:

Oh, my God, you're friggin'— Okay, so wait a minute! Just to clarify: not only am I something called a Resurrection Man, but I'm doing heists? Okay. What's next? Cool hat?

Sydnee:

You'd probably wear a hat.

Justin:

Sidearm? Sidearm. Sweet shovel? Okay, what's going—

Sydnee:

Yeah. Well let's, okay. So [laughing] Resurrection Men would be paid to go to a cemetery in the middle of the night.

Justin:

Mm-hmm.

Sydnee:

And they were pros at this. They could do all of this within an hour, under an hour. Uh, they would find a grave, usually they're looking for somebody who was poor and definitely has to be recently dead.

Justin:

Okay.

Sydnee:

Because we didn't embalm people, we didn't preserve them, so they had to be very recently dead. So, and, the hope was that it would be somebody nobody would miss.

Justin:

Terrible.

Sydnee:

And they would just dig up one end of the grave, throw all the dirt onto a tarp, they would drill little holes in the top of the coffin, like perforated so they could break it open

Justin:

Okay.

Sydnee:

Pull the body out with a hook on a chain.

[audience makes noises of discomfort]

Justin:

That's the exact proper noise, audience, good job. As if we trained beforehand.

Sydnee:

[crosstalk] Put the clothes— Put the clothes back in, so you got to dress 'em, put the clothes back in.

Justin:

Put potatoes inside the clothes.

[audience laughs]

Sydnee:

[laughs]

Justin:

I did this stunt, sneakin' out when I was a kid, sure. Put a straw— Put, like, a mannequin head on top.

Sydnee:

[laughing] Wait, you did this when you were a kid?

Justin:

Paint— You paint a face on a balloon...

[audience laughs]

Sydnee:

[laughs] And then replace everything and be gone and you could never tell they were there.

Justin:

[whispers] Resurrection Men: in theaters this fall.

Sydnee:

If they a lot of them have to take, like, public transportation and they would say, like, this is my drunk [laughing] this is my drunk buddy that I got with me. [laughs]

Justin:

So you're telling me it was an old timey Weekend at Bernie's?!

[audience laughs]

Justin:

Okay, so just to triple check: I'm something called a Resurrection Man, I'm doing heists, and I'm doing Weekend at Bernie's as well? I'm— I've screwed up my life so bad! There was a whole other path for me!

Sydnee:

Um, [laughing] some, uh, some students and doctors didn't wanna have to pay people so they would just do it themselves, but they were never as good at it, which is why people would get caught a lot. Um. The peak season was [laughing] November to March 'cause everything was cooler. You can imagine.

Justin:

Sure. And festive.

Sydnee:

And medical schools even had, like, secret entrances for them to deliver the bodies, like a secret place, you know, the back way.

Justin:

Oh, okay.

[theme music plays]

[ad break]

Sydnee:

Families of course got wise to this and came up with all kinds of ways to guard graves against this. Um. Sometimes, it would just be as simple as they keep the body at their house until they knew it was decomposed enough that nobody would steal it. [silence]

Justin:

[distressed groan]

Sydnee:

Sorry. Um...

Justin:

I wanna go back to the Resurrection Men.

Sydnee:

You could just— You could just hire a guard or you could guard it yourself or they would build cages around the entire grave.

Justin:

I got a lot to think about, I'm gonna go ahead and splurge on a corpse guard.

Sydnee:

[laughing] It was called a, uh, a mort safe.

Justin:

A what?

Sydnee:

Mort. Safe.

Justin:

Okay.

Sydnee:

A mort safe, yeah. Um and sometimes they'd get found out because, so a couple of dignitaries were visiting a local medical school, and they recognized one of the cadavers on the table as U.S. senator John Scott Harrison who was the son of President William Henry Harrison.

Justin:

Great— Are you a relative or? "Harrison! That's my favorite old timey U.S. senator! I got his baseball card. The dog!"

Sydnee:

But these dignitaries knew him because they were his son and his nephew.

[audience 'oh's]

Justin:

Okay, now I understand that. It's like your grandpapa's favorite story: "Then, I realized it was my dad. Your great, great, great-grandfather."

Sydnee:

"William Henry Harrison."

Justin:

"William Henry Harrison." What? No.

Sydnee:

The [laughs] Now, as you can imagine, people need bodies. They'll pay a lot of money that— You know, the medical schools will pay a lot of money and they, you know, families were gettin' wise, the authorities were trying to stop grave robbers. Well, what's the easiest way to get a dead body then?

Justin:

War.

[audience laughs]

Sydnee:

So they started a war— No! No, murder.

Justin:

Murder! Murder most foul.

Sydnee:

[laughs]

Justin:

I would— Murder was my second guess.

Sydnee:

So this led to— In Edinburgh, there were the Burke and Hare murders. Um, sixteen people were murdered altogether. And they were all— The doctors said they didn't know that this is where the bodies were coming from, um, but they would get their victims drunk, and then suffocate them because at the time, I guess, you couldn't figure that out that that's what happened, like, a dead body - the police were like, "We're baffled! We have no idea how they died!"

[audience laughs]

Justin:

[laughs] "This poor purple and blue man! His life was already so difficult! Look at how large his tongue was. Can you imagine his struggles? His poor— [laughs] He was so poor he could only afford a rope for a necktie. [laughing] Heartbreaking! This case is closed!"

[audience laughing]

Sydnee:

[laughing] Eventually, they did get caught, um, and as punishment, uh, Burke was— He had capital punishment, they state killed him. They dissected him and displayed him as punishment and they took his skin and made a purse out of it which you can still go see at the Museum of Edinburgh - at the Police Museum of Edinburgh to this day.

Justin:

Cool museum!

Sydnee:

I know! Now, here's the thing. So all this was happening— A lot of what we talked about is in the UK.

Justin:

Okay.

Sydnee:

Um, they eventually passed the Anatomy Act which allowed them to execute, um, like, all dead criminals, no matter how they died which I guess solved their problems, but in the U.S...

Justin:

Dissect, dissect.

Sydnee:

Dissect. Yes.

Justin:

Okay, got it.

Sydnee:

But in the U.S., that wasn't good enough. Um, so we had some laws that we started to, y'know— Over in the U.S., we're a brand new country at this point. We're trying to, uh, develop our own medical schools, and have our own doctors, 'cause we don't. We don't have many doctors at all, even the ones that came over from England.

And so in the year 1784 and 1790, we start, um, adding, again, dissection as a punishment for murder so that we can have some bodies too. Uh, but grave robbing was still definitely happening, so we were coming against the same thing.

So we're gonna finally talk about the riot. In 1788, there was a young med student named John Hicks, and he was working at New York Hospital, dissecting a corpse, as was common practice. And it probably was a corpse that was robbed from a grave.

Justin:

Okay.

Sydnee:

He noticed some kids playing outside and...

Justin:

I thought you were gonna say he found kids inside the corpse. Like a full on, like, Jaws-type scenario.

Sydnee:

He noticed kids playing outside, and they were trying to peek in the window to figure out what he was doing. So I guess he has a terrible sense of humor?

Justin:

He killed the kids.

[audience laughs]

Sydnee:

No [laughs]. He picked up the cadaver's arm which had already been detached and waved it out the window at the children and said, "You kids get away from here. This is your mother's arm and I'll slap you with it if you don't go away."

Justin:

"Y'know, Mr. Rogers was so different in the old days. You could barely even watch his show. It was very mature."

Sydnee:

Now, the kids were pretty scared.

Justin:

Yeah.

Sydnee:

And unfortunately in that weird twist of fate, one of the children had recently lost their mother. So they went home and told their dad who got together a posse...

Justin:

Of Resurrection Men! Yes! "Justin are you with us?"

"You know me. I'm in. What're you even askin', fool? Let me get Ol' Bullet Tosser." That's what I call my gun. "Brad Pitt, Clooney, Matthew Lillard."

Sydnee:

[crosstalk] "Brad Pitt, George Clooney, Matt Damon."

Justin:

I don't know why Matthew— You gotta have one like breakthrough performance where it's, like, "Hey, this was a much better [inaudible] than I thought it would be."

Sydnee:

So they went down to the graveyard first to check to see if this was true. And, unfortunately, her grave had been robbed.

Justin:

Oh, no!

Sydnee:

Now there's no evidence that any of that was connected, it was just one of those weird coincidences. But that was all the evidence, of course, they needed.

Justin:

'Cause they're old-timey dudes and they're, like, just jived to be able to go kill somebody.

Sydnee:

[laughing] And they're mad!

Justin:

They are mad!

Sydnee:

They're mad! So they storm down to the college - there's about a hundred of 'em. They completely destroy the anatomy lab, they just wreak havoc on the

whole hospital. They beat the crap out of some medical students, 'cause why not. They're always in the way.

Justin:

Right.

Sydnee:

Um, they also raided the home of one prominent doctor in town whose name was Sir John Temple, and as best as we can figure, the reason they picked him is 'cause they thought his name was surgeon. Sir John? This is - seriously! This was the best— Nobody could support, "Why this guy?"

Justin:

Nice job, guy. Nice work.

Sydnee:

Why this doctor? "Surgeon Temple. We're gonna get him." So, a lot of the— So the authorities stepped in and they actually put a lot of the doctors and students in jail for protection.

Justin:

Oh, okay.

Sydnee:

Because this mob was growing and they knew people were mad. And they were not done because the next day, they returned with five thousand men and they were gonna storm Columbia College as well.

Uh, so they took off, they went down to Columbia, they wreaked some havoc there, beat some more people up, tore some more stuff up, and then they decided, "All the doctors and students aren't here, they're in jail. We're headed to the jail."

So they got to the jail. At that point, the governor had already called in the militia. So they were met by the militia, and the governor, and Alexander Hamilton was there, 'cause why not.

[audience laughs]

Justin:

Now you - this is starting to sound like a dream.

Sydnee:

[laughs]

Justin:

And then Sylvester Stallone was like, "I'm really proud of you." [crosstalk]
...that's based on a real dream I had.

Sydnee:

We had to hear about that earlier.

Justin:

Sydnee's heard about it, like, three times.

Sydnee:

It gets better every time! [laughs]

[audience laughs]

Justin:

Just finish your stupid story.

Sydnee:

So, there was a wealthy baron who sees it— We got the stand-off, we got all these men who are angry, and we got the militia, and the governor, and [laughing] Alexander Hamilton, and everybody, and there's a big standoff.

And this baron is standing there, and this local wealthy guy. He's like, "Don't shoot them! We can resolve this peacefully." And then one of the men in the mob just chucks a rock at his head, knocks him out, and [laughing] as he gets back up he goes, "Shoot 'em all!" And so they did and they opened fire. Now, luckily there were a lot of doctors nearby.

[audience claps]

Justin:

They knew right where to find 'em.

Sydnee:

So many were wounded, only 8 people died. So. That, which I mean I—
Eight people that's not...

Justin:

Still a lot, I mean it's still the sizeable amount—

Sydnee:

So America's first riot but, y'know, we didn't do too much damage. And after that, that led to a lot of changes in anatomy laws, and the U.S., they started saying, "You know what? Why don't we also include, um, bodies that haven't been claimed?"

So within 48 hours, if a body hadn't been claimed, they could, y'know, send it to the med school. Um, although that didn't include soldiers, and, um, it didn't include people from out of town [laughing] on the basis that if you're from out of town, maybe somebody is coming to find you. So if we die here, we're cool.

Justin:

Well, I don't know about "cool."

Sydnee:

Unless we look like vagrants, 'cause if we look like vagrants, then we're free game.

Justin:

[sarcastically] Oh, good. Cool.

Sydnee:

I don't know what that looked like [crosstalk].

Justin:

What an excellent, excellent, uplifting coda for this, uh, [laughs] episode of Sawbones. Anything else about how we— Corpses, or what's gonna happen to us when we die in New York? Anything else you wanna tag on?

Sydnee:

Well, now, of course, it's a lot more common to donate your body to science. Um, that was, you know, rare and frowned upon for many years. But nowadays, it's accepted that that is a wonderful gift that you can provide, you know, our - all of us, not just medical students, but society.

Justin:

Yeah.

Sydnee:

Uh, it's still— I thought this was in— I didn't know this: unclaimed bodies are still sent to medical schools and dissected. That's still in place. Although there are many more bodies that are donated, that is still done. Which I thought was bizarre.

Justin:

Hm! Go figures. That is bizarre. Uh, folks, that's gonna do it for us for, uh, this episode of Sawbones. Thank you so much for listening to our program. I know you're - don't really have much choice because you're here.

[audience laughs]

Justin:

It's locked.

Sydnee:

We locked the door. [laughs] Can't leave.

Justin:

Yeah. It's a real fire hazard in here actually, and you - if this is your first time listening, we make a new episode every, uh, Tuesday. It's on the Maximum Fun network. You can find it, SawbonesShow.com.

Thank you to the, uh, Taxpayers for the use of our theme song - their song, Medicines, which we use as the intro and outro of our program. Uh, thank you so much to The People's Improv Theater for having us here in this lovely building. Thank you to you. Uh, until next time, I'm Justin McElroy.

Sydnee:

I'm Sydnee McElroy.

Justin:

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

[theme music plays]

MC: Ladies and gentlemen, thank you so much... [fades out]