

Sawbones 118: Fasting

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[theme music plays]

Justin:

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

Sydnee:

And I'm Sydnee McElroy.

Justin:

Just kind of inhaled there, as if—drama.

Sydnee:

I was going to say. [laughs]

Justin:

What?

Sydnee:

You sounded like you—you sounded like you weren't sure what you were going to say. Like you—you didn't know what followed.

Justin:

I never am. I just open my mouth and let the magic come out.

Sydnee:

Do you have—do you have different, like, different people that you pretend to be, like different aliases?

Justin:

This is—

Sydnee:

And you just couldn't remember like which—

Justin:

Well, and different—

Sydnee:

... oh my gosh, like wife you're with at this moment, and all of a sudden, like it's all coming crashing down around me! You have many wives in many places, and—

Justin:

No. Uh, no. No.

Sydnee:

... I've just figured it out, based on that long pause on our podcast.

Justin:

None of what you're saying is accurate. I just ha—I have different personalities for every show.

Sydnee:

Oh, okay.

Justin:

Every podcast I'm on is a slightly different Justin. Different permutations. Different ma—

Sydnee:

What would you—

Justin:

... different masks.

Sydnee:

What—what do you call this Justin that I get?

Justin:

The—the dumb one. [laughs] Dumb Justin.

Sydnee:

Oh.

Justin:

I have to play down my inherent, uh, smarts and street smarts, if you will.

Sydnee:

[laughs] That—that you demonstrate so well on your other shows?

Justin:

Yes. I'm—on those, I'm very savv—I'm the savvy one on most of the... anyway. I'm hun—um, I'm hungry. Well, I was hungry. Let me back up.

Sydnee:

[laughs]

Justin:

I just ate lunch. [laughs]

Sydnee:

Uh, that—that's a triumph in our household right now, because we were sick.

Justin:

[groans]

Sydnee:

And I'm sorry we—we missed you guys last week, but we were all quite sick. We blame it on our baby, who made us sick. She got got.

Justin:

She got sick first. The night of Candenights show, uh, she was very sick. She had a high fever. We—

Sydnee:

We almost canceled.

Justin:

We almost canceled, yeah. But—

Sydnee:

But she got... her fever came down, and she was doing okay, and my wonderful parents stepped in to save the day. And, um, so—

Justin:

Uh—

Sydnee:

... we—the show must go on.

Justin:

... so, but then she just sort of passed it around.

Sydnee:

Yeah.

Justin:

But, uh, she's well now. We're well. Uh, I'm, uh, I never got it.

Sydnee:

She—

Justin:

Knock on wood.

Sydnee:

No, she had, uh, she had an adenovirus, which by the way, do you know how it's transmitted?

Justin:

Uh, yes, but only because you gleefully told me, fecal to oral.

Sydnee:

Yeah. It's the fecal-oral route, which is like, upsetting that I got it. I won't dwell on that too long.

Justin:

Yeah, don't—don't even think about that, but I am stoked. I just ate lunch. Happy to have an appetite again. I did— didn't have much of an appetite because you guys like, were just puking and—

Sydnee:

Right.

Justin:

... and snotting everywhere.

Sydnee:

We were—we were pretty sick, and neither of us felt like eating much, but we're doing better.

Justin:

I just ate some orange slices.

Sydnee:

Charlie's okay. Yeah.

Justin:

And some Triscuits.

Sydnee:

Why'd you say that like it was a really like sexy thing? [laughs]

Justin:

Triscuits.

Sydnee:

Triscuits.

Justin:

Triscuits are, well, Triscuits are... the sexiest cracker. [laughs]

Sydnee:

[laughs]

Justin:

If you think about it.

Sydnee:

But—

Justin:

Except—except from maybe like Club crackers, because what are they doing in there?

Sydnee:

[laughs]

Justin:

In that club.

Sydnee:

I actually, um, I will tell you that I—I love Triscuits. I was, um, Justin, you can attest to this, I was saying the other day that I wanted to have a party someday.

Justin:

Mm-hmm.

Sydnee:

Uh, which is just—where I only serve Triscuits with all the different, uh, recipes that they have on the side of the Triscuit boxes. Like each flavor has like a different topping recipe.

Justin:

There was a Triscuit recipe—

Sydnee:

[laughs]

Justin:

... where it was an hour of preparation [laughs] of steak, that you then put on a Triscuit. You cook it for—

Sydnee:

[laughs]

Justin:

Like an hour of stuff, and then it's like, and then put it... shh, then put it on a Triscuit. [laughs]

Sydnee:

You make a Chimichurri sauce for it, and then put it on a Triscuit.

Justin:

Then put it on a Triscuit. Uh, but, yeah, we have an appetite again.

Sydnee:

It's um—

Justin:

No more, uh, no more, uh, fasting for—for us.

Sydnee:

And, uh, and we can usually agree that, uh, a sign, uh, that eating again, regaining your appetite, is a sign that you're getting better.

Justin:

Mm-hmm.

Sydnee:

I think. Um, but, you know, some people thought that maybe not eating was the key to, uh, to good health.

Justin:

Um, well—

Sydnee:

That's been a theory throughout medical history, that maybe just avoiding food altogether is the—is the way to true health.

Justin:

Not a good long game, if you really think about it. That doesn't make a lot of sense long term.

Sydnee:

Like you would think that that would be obvious, but it wasn't always.

Justin:

Uh, okay. Well, tell me about it, Syd.

Sydnee:

Let's talk a little bit about fasting and starvation. Um, I want to thank a few people who have recommended this topic. Thank you to Katherine and your little sister, Victoria.

Justin:

Mm-hmm.

Sydnee:

Who wants to be a pediatrician, by the way.

Justin:

Oh, cool.

Sydnee:

Go for it, Victoria. Thank you Corey, Allen, Ally and Carly for all recommending this topic. Now, as I said, depriving yourself of food has been thought to be spiritually beneficially for a really long time.

Justin:

Now, I do— I do know about that.

Sydnee:

Like a religious fast.

Justin:

Jesus went into the desert, four days, four nights, and just Satan tried to tempt him with Triscuits—

Sydnee:

[laughs]

Justin:

... and he wasn't having any of it.

Sydnee:

Is that what it, Triscuits?

Justin:

Maybe not Triscuits, but I—

Sydnee:

Well, if they had steak on them though, I can see where that would be...
[laughs]

Justin:

I— yeah, very tempting.

Sydnee:

Uh, there are lots of religious grounds for fasting. Um, and this goes back to like the Greeks thought that... the ancient Greeks thought that demons

could enter your body while you were eating, and so fasting was a way to, you know, purify your spirit, was to cleanse yourself.

Justin:

Okay.

Sydnee:

Um, and then certainly that's been used in— in, I— I would wager to say the majority, if not all, major world religions in different times of the year, maybe different religious seasons. Um, I know for instance, having been raised Catholic, that lent was a time when fasting to various degrees—

Justin:

Mm-hmm.

Sydnee:

... would occur. And it was a way of like, um, you know, like cleansing yourself in a spiritual sense, right?

Justin:

Right.

Sydnee:

But not— not so much like to make you healthy. Um, it was suggested, back during the Salem witch trials, that maybe all the girls would get better if they just stopped eating.

Justin:

Hmm, no, that's not cool.

Sydnee:

No. But again, this was more of a spiritual connection. And when we look through like the like what we kind of consider some of our great thinkers, medical and otherwise throughout history, everybody—

Justin:

Oh, by the way, pretend— pretend earlier, when I said they would get better if they stop eating, pretend that I said, uh, I didn't know that Cosmo was in charge of the Salem witch trials.

Sydnee:

[laughs]

Justin:

Cosmo magazine. Because like, image.

Sydnee:

[laughs] What do you think Cosmo magazine is about?

Justin:

Or like girl stuff, Seventeen magazine? Which magazine tells girls to stop eating?

Sydnee:

All magazines, and everything on TV, and everything.

Justin:

Okay, well, pretend that—

Sydnee:

[laughs]

Justin:

... I don't know where you find the joke there, but pretend that I said that. Whatever—

Sydnee:

Except for— except for me. No.

Justin:

Whatever the funny and tasteful choice would be, pretend I said that.

Sydnee:

[laughs] That's not true anymore. When I was growing up, I think that that was true. I think that's probably not as true nowadays, right?

Justin:

It's better.

Sydnee:

It's better. It's better.

Justin:

Or at least there's a consciousness of it. Like, yeah, I think— I think, for sure.

Sydnee:

Yeah. But, um, but there—

Justin:

But not to say that this, uh, problem is fixed. We're just like, oh, thank goodness, female body image got all worked out.

Sydnee:

Yeah.

Justin:

Like it— it didn't, sorry.

Sydnee:

Because those Dove commercials, they fixed everything.

Justin:

Thank you, Dove. [laughs]

Sydnee:

Uh—

Justin:

And Jello.

Sydnee:

[laughs]

Justin:

Did Jello do some? Thank you Jello, and Dove and Goliblocks.

Sydnee:

[laughs] Through— throughout— throughout history—

Justin:

And that soup commercial with the two gay dads. That— I don't know, that's not connected, but— but it made me feel good.

Sydnee:

But I do like it.

Justin:

Really happy.

Sydnee:

I do like that commercial. Uh, throughout history, a lot of great... so, you know, considered great thinkers, have talked about how you should fast. Like Paracelsus, who we did a show on—

Justin:

Mm-hmm.

Sydnee:

... said that fasting was like the key to good health. Uh, Hippocrates, uh, extolled the virtues of fasting. Benjamin Franklin said fasting was a good idea. There's actually—

Justin:

That's hypocritical. I've seen pictures of Ben Franklin, he was not that into fasting.

Sydnee:

He meant for everybody else. [laughs]

Justin:

Everybody else to leave more for him.

Sydnee:

[laughs]

Justin:

Hey, you should— you should fast on those canopies that that guy just brought.

Sydnee:

[laughs]

Justin:

Don't eat those, those are Ben's.

Sydnee:

Like he had gout, right? Didn't Ben Franklin have gout?

Justin:

Uh, I'm sure he did.

Sydnee:

I feel like he had gout. And so like, I mean, he was eating some pretty rich stuff.

Justin:

Gout.

Sydnee:

Gout. Um, you've already forgotten what gout is, haven't you?

Justin:

It's where you eat rich food and your feet hurt.

Sydnee:

Okay. Pretty good. Close enough. Uh, it's actually inscribed on an Egyptian pyramid, that human's live on one quarter of what they eat, on the other three quarters lives their doctor.

Justin:

Hmm.

Sydnee:

Do you under— you know, insinuating that—

Justin:

That you eat—

Sydnee:

... you should eat about a quarter of what you eat, because you're—

Justin:

Based on—

Sydnee:

... all that other food you eat makes you unhealthy.

Justin:

Based on what, pyramid?

Sydnee:

[laughs]

Justin:

You don't know me. Have you reviewed the literature, pyramid?

Sydnee:

[laughs]

Justin:

Before you told me how to live my life. You are made of rocks. How dare you
[laughs]

Sydnee:

[laughs] And you're a mystery, we don't even know how you were built. It's amazing.

Justin:

You— did you get your body image from like the slaves that built you? Like because compared to them, I bet most people do look like garishly overweight. Like I don't... I just don't get where this pyramid gets off passing judgment on people.

Sydnee:

Do you know, when I was in health class, as a— a— in middle school—

Justin:

Did you ever have a pyramid for a teacher in health class?

Sydnee:

[laughs] No, I didn't.

Justin:

No, because they don't know anything.

Sydnee:

[laughs] But I told— my health teacher in middle school told me that it— they told us all, because it was in our boy-girl like mixed health class, before we separated out—

Justin:

Sure.

Sydnee:

... to learn about like your bodies changing.

Justin:

Yeah.

Sydnee:

They told— he told us—

Justin:

Your middle school body.

Sydnee:

... that, um, boys are shaped like upside down pyramids, and girls are shaped like pyramids, and that's how your bodies are supposed to be shaped. [laughs]

Justin:

Sorry, what? Excuse me?

Sydnee:

Like we're smaller at the top and then we get really wide at the bottom, and boys are supposed to be really wide at the top [laughs] and smaller in the middle.

Justin:

That is in— that— that is just like, was your teacher Sir Mixalot?

Sydnee:

[laughs] Um, in the late 1800s, we really see, uh, starvation and fasting used as like a medical treatment. Uh, Dr. Edward Dewey wrote a book called The True Science of Living. And in it, he initially suggested that maybe a lot of disease is the result of you're eating too much food, and so you're creating too much digestive juice, and like you're— you're swallowing all this digestive juice, and that's making you sick.

Justin:

Okay.

Sydnee:

So he advised skipping breakfast.

Justin:

Nonsense. My favorite meal of the day.

Sydnee:

Now, one of his patients, and also his publisher, Charles Haskell, uh, subscribed to this theory, uh, lived by it, uh, claimed that it cured him of every disease he had, and made him feel amazingly better. And so he wrote a book about starving yourself even more. So, you know, if you think skipping— skipping breakfast is good—

Justin:

Okay.

Sydnee:

... imagine skipping all your meals. And it was called Perfect Health: How To Get It And How To Keep It. And basically it was about depriving yourself of food for various periods of time, in different ways.

Justin:

Mm-hmm.

Sydnee:

Um, actually, Upton Sinclair wrote a book about fasting.

Justin:

Hmm.

Sydnee:

You know who wrote The Jungle?

Justin:

Yeah.

Sydnee:

Uh, he wrote The Fasting Cure, which was nonfiction.

Justin:

Interesting.

Sydnee:

Um, uh, a big event in the— the history of fasting, is in 1880, when Dr. Henry S. Tanner, uh, fasted publicly in New York. He wanted to prove that the medical establishment was wrong [laughs], when it said that, you know, like you need to eat to live. Like the— [laughs] that established—

Justin:

What the—

Sydnee:

... medical truth was wrong, that the human body could go just fine without food for very long periods of time. So he fasted for 42 days, in public, in New York, like on a stage—

Justin:

Mm-hmm.

Sydnee:

... he's at a pool stage, and, uh, to prove that the human body didn't need food. Like, and he did this twice, because the first time there were some question as to how much it was— it was observed, and then he repeated it, supposedly completely in the public eye. And he—

Justin:

David— he was the David Blaine of his time.

Sydnee:

Exactly. I mean, like the same idea.

Justin:

Mm-hmm.

Sydnee:

And— and the— the story goes, that he absolutely didn't eat. He got sick at first, and then he got better. And like doctor's would stand around every day taking bets on how many more days until he died. But that he lasted 42 days, and he—

Justin:

Then died.

Sydnee:

... didn't get sick. And then at the end of... no.

Justin:

No.

Sydnee:

At the end of his fast, he just started eating everything, like didn't even have to like slowly introduce food, he just ate whatever he wanted and he was fine.

Justin:

Now, I've watched a lot of, uh, fast breaking videos on— on YouTube, and those people normally start with something like water, and then orange juice.

Sydnee:

That's— and that's what you're supposed to do, because you can get— you can get pretty sick if you have been fasting for a long time.

Justin:

Maybe don't start with water, that wouldn't make any sense.

Sydnee:

No.

Justin:

Water is part of the fast.

Sydnee:

[laughs]

Justin:

But like orange juice.

Sydnee:

Yeah. And I should say that, Dr. Tanner did— he did drink liquid. He was going to— he wasn't going to at first. He was going to deprive himself of food and liquid. But like—

Justin:

Okay, well, that's... that would not have gone as well [laughs]

Sydnee:

[laughs] And— and— and now, he did that for like five days or something. Three, five days. Something like that, until he was pretty sick, and then somebody was like, maybe you should let yourself drink water? And he goes, oh, maybe I will. So.

Justin:

I— good on him though, for realizing like, okay, listen [laughs] this— I'm not going to— I'm not going to die on this hill. This one's on me.

Sydnee:

[laughs]

Justin:

This— this [laughs] one's on Hank, I do need liquids. Sorry, everybody.

Sydnee:

Now, into this— into this fasting milieu is born, um, a character that I think deserves a lot of the time of this episode, uh, for, um, for her investigations into the starvation diet, so to speak. And her name is Dr. Linda— Linda Hazzard.

Justin:

Mm-hmm.

Sydnee:

She was born in Minnesota, in 1867, and she, uh, she grew up, she was not a trained doctor in any way, or any kind of medical professional.

Justin:

Okay.

Sydnee:

Um, she practiced, um, uh, homeopathy, and some various alternative medicines. Um—

Justin:

Now, you did say doctor at the beginning of her name?

Sydnee:

Yes, because she was known as a doctor, because of some sort of old like law in— in Washington, which is where she practiced, which grandfathered her in as a— as a licensed physician under some laws that were supposed to apply to alternative practitioners who didn't go to traditional medical schools.

Justin:

Mm-hmm.

Sydnee:

And so, anyway, as a result of that, she— she was known as Dr. Hazzard, even though technically she was not in any way a— a doctor.

Justin:

She started— she published her book in the same year that they, uh, uh, published the pure food and drug act, right? 1908, wasn't the pure food— pure food and drug?

Sydnee:

Yeah. Uh, 1912.

Justin:

1912. Okay.

Sydnee:

Yeah. Yeah, but— but, I mean, round the same time. And there— there was a big movement against like, um, medicines in general. Yeah, I mean, we've talked about this, like there was this like undercurrent of alternative medicine that was arrive— arising at this time.

Justin:

Sure.

Sydnee:

So there were a lot of doctors who were very invested in kind of overturning the established medical system.

Justin:

Because the government was also at this point refining a lot, uh, in 1908, early 20th century, like really refining like what medicine could be and what the rules were for it, restrictions in practices. And of course, anytime that

happens, you're going to have people pushing back against that, with, you know, uh, alternatives.

Sydnee:

Ex— exactly. And it seemed pretty harmless, because her idea was, she published *Fasting For The Cure Of Disease*, and she was a licensed called fasting specialist, which is a thing you could be. Um, and basically, she believed in this, in order to treat her patients, and she'd be in practicing this in the early 1900s, treating patients with this regimen, um, of basically bowel rest, meaning that sometimes your bowels just need a break, so don't put anything in them, um, for long periods of time, intense fasting.

Uh, and— and when I say fasting, I don't mean like... I— I guess I shouldn't say anything in them. There were days where maybe you wouldn't eat anything, but most days you would get like maybe a cup of vegetable broth twice a day. Or one orange for the entire day.

Justin:

Mm-hmm.

Sydnee:

Or a couple of— a cup of broth and maybe a t— a tablespoon of orange juice later, or something like that. Um, you would— you would pair this fasting, which would go on for weeks and weeks and weeks, by the way, months and months. I mean, not— not for 42 days, for months.

Justin:

Mm-hmm.

Sydnee:

You would pair it with enemas. Long enemas. Hour long enemas.

Justin:

Oh, Syd.

Sydnee:

Uh, to clean you out. And also, uh, very vigorous massages.

Justin:

Oh, gosh.

Sydnee:

Um, these massages were actually documented to be like so intense, that patients were practically beaten. They would be left bruised. Um, she would do them herself sometimes, and she would just pound on her patients and scream eliminate.

Justin:

Eliminate?

Sydnee:

Eliminate, while they— while she was doing it.

Justin:

Exterminate.

Sydnee:

[laughs] Eliminate.

Justin:

I'm on the Darlek diet.

Sydnee:

Um, the, uh, and so her patients, as you can imagine, were— were really put through the ringer with this treatment. Um, these enemas, by the way, would last, like I said, for hours, and so they actually had— she had these special bathtubs that were outfitted with like, um, supports that you could lean on, so you could stand up in the bathtub and lean on this like cushioned supported—

Justin:

Mm-hmm.

Sydnee:

... while they did the enema. Because you were likely to pass out, because it went on for so long.

Justin:

Tell me they got a magazine.

Sydnee:

What?

Justin:

Did they get a magazine or something?

Sydnee:

Uh, I don't think so.

Justin:

Uh.

Sydnee:

I don't know. I— they didn't document if they had magazines or not. I'll have to read more. [laughs]

Justin:

Yeah, see if you can find out for me.

Sydnee:

Um, as you can imagine, this— so— so Dr. Hazzard, uh, practiced in Washington. She set up a place, um, that had initially been known as Wilderness Heights, in— on a little town called Olalla, but became known, because of this, as Starvation Heights, um, because this is where she set up her sanitarium and where she practiced. Uh, many patients, as a result of this regimen, starved to death. This was, uh—

Justin:

Sure, because the lack of food.

Sydnee:

Yes, because you need that. Um, if— if your— if her patients died, by the way, you know, she did her own autopsies.

Justin:

Mm-hmm. That's convenient.

Sydnee:

Yeah. And, uh—

Justin:

And shady.

Sydnee:

... and then she would... and also, she's not a doctor, so what is she doing? And then she would, um, have the patient buried quickly and discretely with a local funeral home that she kind of had a deal with.

Justin:

Mm-hmm.

Sydnee:

Um, now, uh, like I said, a lot of patients were dying under this regimen, but there were two that finally kind of spelled the end of this awful— of this awful treatment by Dr. Hazzard. Uh, they were two British sisters, named Claire and Dora Williamson. Now, they have some minor medical problems. Um, these were two younger women, who, um, had probably a lot of money and a lot of time.

Justin:

Mm-hmm.

Sydnee:

And a lot more concern for some of their minor medical issues, like for instance, I believe Dora had what was called a dropped uterus at the time.

Justin:

Oh.

Sydnee:

I don't even know if she really had anything. But the point is, they weren't sick, but they did have a passion for alternative medicine, and they really wanted to try this, what they called the most beautiful treatment, that Dr. Linda Hazzard could provide.

Justin:

[laughs]

Sydnee:

So they went to, uh, to put themselves under her care, expecting to go to the sanitarium at Olalla. That was part of the draw for them, is that they read about this beautiful wilderness, where they would stay and, you know, see animals running around, and the trees, and it would be gorgeous. Um—

Justin:

And not be able to eat them. Can you imagine that?

Sydnee:

[laughs]

Justin:

Watching animals, just not being able to eat them.

Sydnee:

That would be terrible.

Justin:

Hey, deer, come here, I want to take a bite out of you.

Sydnee:

[laughs]

Justin:

I'm very hungry.

Sydnee:

That's how deer work.

Justin:

Hey, deer.

Sydnee:

Uh, instead, they initially spent a couple of months, um, in a small apartment in Seattle, because the sanitarium wasn't yet ready when they got there, uh, eating tomato broth, um, like a cup a day, and getting enemas constantly. After two months, they were finally transferred to the sanitarium at Olalla, and they weighed about 70 pounds at the time they made it there.

Justin:

That's disgusting.

Sydnee:

Yeah.

Justin:

God, that's savage.

Sydnee:

Um, uh, despite the fact that they, by all accounts they were not doing well, they continued with the regimen. Uh, however, they did send— oh, and they didn't tell most of their family, because their family already kind of gave them a hard time for all of the different alternative treatments that they were fans of.

Justin:

Mm-hmm.

Sydnee:

And so they didn't want to get more flak from their family. So they did send a letter to their childhood nurse, uh, to let her know what they were doing and where they were, just to kind of update her. And whatever they put in that letter was so bizarre and sounded so nonsensical, that she actually set sail, she was out of the country, to go investigate at Olalla, uh, what was going on. By the time she got there, Claire had already died.

Justin:

Oh.

Sydnee:

Uh, Dr. Hazzard informed the nurse that it was related to medicines that Claire had gotten as a child, that they had done so much damage to her body, uh, and given her cirrhosis, is what she claimed, that even the starvation couldn't save her. So she was dying anyway, it wasn't the starvation's fault, it was, you know, it was— it was happening.

Justin:

Mm-hmm.

Sydnee:

The starvation was her last hope. Uh, Dora was 50 pounds at this point, um, barley hanging on. And, uh, Dr. Hazzard had tried to get her declared, uh, insane, so that she could take over control of her estate. Uh, Claire had already signed over all of her possessions, uh, money, belongings, future fortune, everything, to the Hazzard family.

Justin:

Mm-hmm.

Sydnee:

To Linda Hazzard and her husband. Um, and, uh, her— the decision making for Dora had already been put in their hands as well. Um, it actually took one of their wealthy uncles bribing the Hazzards with \$1,000 to even let the nurse get Dora out of there.

Justin:

Yikes. So like, did they bust her?

Sydnee:

Well, Justin, if you want to find out about that, you're going to have to follow me first to the billing department.

Justin:

Let's go.

[theme music plays]

[ad break]

Justin:

So I want Linda to go to the pokey, Sydnee, and you're the only one who can send her there for her time.

Sydnee:

So, as you can imagine, um, with these kind of two high profile victims of— of Linda Hazzard, um, the authorities began to get involved with what's happening at Starvation Heights.

Justin:

And the crime solving nurse.

Sydnee:

And the crime solving nurse.

Justin:

Hot on her— on her tail.

Sydnee:

And the rich uncle.

Justin:

In— in my film, that's Helen— Helen Mirren.

Sydnee:

[laughs]

Justin:

And Hugh Dancy is probably the— the, uh, rich uncle. But like Helen Mirren is totally the nurse. She's like, take no prisoners.

Sydnee:

So she reported this. Uh, they— they all did, uh, with Dora's help, once, uh, Dora was well enough to be able to— to form a sentence, probably. Um, they reported all this to the authorities, and, uh, and that's when the investigation began. And it— and it really became clear what Linda Hazzard was doing at her so-called sanitarium.

Um, she had starved at least a dozen people to death. Before, uh, their deaths, she often, uh, had convinced them, or coerced them, into handing over, um, their own, you know, physical valuables that they had with them, control of property that they may own. Um, she was executive their— executer of their estates, often.

Justin:

Oh, gosh.

Sydnee:

Appointed that before they even died. Um, and so, uh, there was, you know, there was a belief that not only was she... maybe this wasn't all well-intentioned, you know, like I'm trying to fix these people—

Justin:

Yeah.

Sydnee:

... and it's just going so wrong. Like maybe there were some sinister motives. Um, she was even accused, uh, because it was noted that when, um, when the Williamson girls nurse went to see, uh, Claire, and went to see her at the funeral home.

Justin:

Mm-hmm.

Sydnee:

Uh, that it didn't look like her. And it was even— there was even, um, stated that maybe Linda Hazzard was paying off the morgue to get healthier corpses to display at the funerals, so the patient's families wouldn't know how bad they looked before they died.

Justin:

That's so gross.

Sydnee:

Because if they had seen, they would have said like, oh, what did you do to— what did you do to my loved one?

Justin:

Mm-hmm.

Sydnee:

So— so, maybe. Now, I don't know if that's true. But, allegedly.

Justin:

That doesn't make sense, because what did they do, a head swap too? Because of the— because like I would think they'd recognize, right?

Sydnee:

I don't know.

Justin:

I don't know.

Sydnee:

I don't know.

Justin:

I don't know.

Sydnee:

Maybe. Maybe.

Justin:

It's not our weird old rumor.

Sydnee:

Uh—

Justin:

We didn't start it.

Sydnee:

[laughs]

Justin:

[laughs]

Sydnee:

They uncovered a diary of one patient. You can find this diary actually online, of one man who underwent, um, Linda Hazzard's treatment, and he kept like all of the meals he ate each day.

Justin:

Uh-huh.

Sydnee:

Just like a list of how he felt each day and what he ate.

Justin:

Bad. Hungry.

Sydnee:

And you can just... yeah. [laughs] And you can read, as he's just feeling worse and worse, and like—

Justin:

[laughs] January 5th, super-duper hungry now. No, seriously, super hungry.

Sydnee:

[laughs] And it would almost seem like a punishment. Like, you know, February 27th, for breakfast I had two oranges, so no lunch or dinner, and that kind of thing. And like, and he feels worse and worse, and then finally the diary ends abruptly when he dies of starvation.

Justin:

Right, because of the lack of food.

Sydnee:

So in, uh, in 1911, so there's a huge trial, in 1911, uh, Linda Hazzard was charged with manslaughter. And let me just say, uh, there were doctors who tried to come to her defense, who— who believed in this, and tried to come testify that, no, she was right, the medical establishment was wrong. You can totally starve yourself.

These patients were going to die anyway, she did the best thing she could for them. So that just proves how sick they must have been, because even starvation didn't work. Um, so she— despite all this, she was charged with manslaughter in 1911. She only did two years of hard labor at Olalla, before being pardoned by the governor.

Justin:

Hmm.

Sydnee:

Why, I don't know.

Justin:

Uh, onlookers at the pardoning noticed that his stomach was rumbling. And so, maybe he was in on it too [laughs]

Sydnee:

[laughs] But she was pardoned. Now, she did not— she did have her license revoked when she was, uh, when she was, you know, charged with manslaughter, and she did not get her license back. Um—

Justin:

Her fake license [laughs]

Sydnee:

But she was free, so she went to, uh, New Zealand, where she had actually amassed quite a following there.

Justin:

Mm-hmm.

Sydnee:

Uh, practiced for a while. She did get in trouble, got fined there for practicing as a doctor when she in fact wasn't. Um, and then went back to Olalla, in 1920, and built her sanitarium there again.

Justin:

Again.

Sydnee:

Uh, but she didn't call it a sanitarium, she called it like a school of health, so that technically, you know, wasn't.

Justin:

Okay.

Sydnee:

Like she got away with not having a license, because she didn't call it, you know. Um, and the authorities watched her very closely, and as far as I know, nobody died in the last, uh, in those 15 years that it, you know, it was in operation. It burned down in 1935.

Justin:

Yeah.

Sydnee:

Um, now, Linda got pretty sick a few years after that, in 1938, but luckily she knew just what to do when one gets really sick.

Justin:

Medicine?

Sydnee:

No, she starved herself.

Justin:

Oh, now, Linda.

Sydnee:

So she died of starvation in 1938.

Justin:

Because of the lack of food, again, yeah.

Sydnee:

Right. [laughs]

Justin:

Yeah, it's a predictable path here.

Sydnee:

[laughs]

Justin:

Because it's like, you know, almost like you need food.

Sydnee:

Supposedly the house where the Hazzards used to live is haunted. I found that, like on a like weird Washington site, like you could read about like—

Justin:

Yeah.

Sydnee:

... the haunt— like all the noises they've heard, and they found a copy of her book laying on the stairs—

Justin:

Mm-hmm.

Sydnee:

... and they didn't know where it came from. And you can still see the remains of the sanitarium there, if you feel inclined to visit. Um, it sounds like a really beautiful place, other than this awful history.

Justin:

Mm-hmm.

Sydnee:

Uh, now there are still people today who claim that fasting works. You can find a lot of, um, what they call alternative medicine sites. I wouldn't even call this alternative medicine, um, I would call it quackery—

Justin:

[laughs]

Sydnee:

Where, uh, [laughs] where it is claimed that if you fast, like for instance the water fast, where, you know, you just drink water, um, that you can, uh, you can cure your diabetes, your high blood pressure, basically any problems you have.

Justin:

Now, it's worth noting though, that you— you are not specifically calling out— there are lots of different like eating methods and diets that have been tagged with like fasting. You're not talking about all of those, right? Like you're not talking about like— like the fast diet, for example, is something that I— I actually tried, and— and— and the one where you—

Sydnee:

No, that's different.

Justin:

... just eat like 600 cal— those are like limited, very limited scope fastings.

Sydnee:

Yeah. I would be very careful in general about eating— about, uh, uh, extreme limitation of caloric intake. Um, we have a lot of science that says it— not only is it not good for you to go without food or to go with very little food, but it's not even really good for weight loss in the long run, um, because it slows down your metabolism.

Justin:

Mm-hmm.

Sydnee:

So I— I would not— I would not recommend cutting out food as a viable plan for anything, for whatever your desired outcome is. Um—

Justin:

Mm-hmm. If you're full.

Sydnee:

There—

Justin:

That's a good reason.

Sydnee:

I mean, yeah, like if you're full, stop eating [laughs]—

Justin:

[laughs]

Sydnee:

... but— but like, but then when you're hungry again, like eat again [laughs]

Justin:

Right. Yeah, for sure.

Sydnee:

Like don't stop forever, I think is the thing.

Justin:

Ying and yang, ebb and flow.

Sydnee:

Um, because like, well, the— like that water fast that I was reading about, like you eat like a very small amount of food, sort of like the Hazzard plan, for three or four days, and then you have nothing but water for like 10 or 11 days.

Justin:

Mm-hmm.

Sydnee:

Like I would never recommend that. That's not a— that's not a good idea.

Justin:

Yeah.

Sydnee:

For people. Certainly people who are ill. And, you know, they have this like paper that I found published, where it says like this will cure hypertension and we have patients that were cured of hypertension. I would— I would be very skeptical about that, I'd like to see that. Well, I wouldn't reproduce that, because that sounds like torture. Um, but also like, if you lose weight, your blood pressure might go down some. And if you're not eating, you're going to lose weight at first. In the long run, you're going to do more harm than good to your body.

Justin:

Mm-hmm.

Sydnee:

So like just be sensible. Eat a— eat a healthy [laughs] well balanced diet.

Justin:

Yeah.

Sydnee:

And exercise. And don't starve yourself.

Justin:

Uh, you wouldn't think that would be revolutionary advice, but there you go.

Sydnee:

No. And also, food tastes good [laughs]

Justin:

Delicious. Uh—

Sydnee:

You're missing out on all those Triscuits and all that soup.

Justin:

Uh, Syd, we got, uh, some, uh, very nice gifts and cards during the Candlesnights season, uh, both at our live show and in the mail.

Sydnee:

We did.

Justin:

What— what have we got?

Sydnee:

We got— we got a lovely postcard from Isaac. Uh, we got a, um, a— a card from Valerie, who also, uh, made me a shower cap, which was super cool. Um, in addition, from Em, we got a picture of a rad cat for Charlie. And, uh, from Andrea, uh, happy holidays and cookies. And finally, from Amanda, sent us some delicious chocolate. So thank you, guys all.

Justin:

We— we got a great jacket for Chuck at the—

Sydnee:

Yes. Absolutely.

Justin:

It— it's hard. When we get this stuff in the mail, we always write it down, but when we're doing shows, we don't get people's names sometimes.

Sydnee:

When you give us stuff in person, we have a bad habit of not writing down. I— because that's awkward, isn't it, like in an interaction? Like, hold on—

Justin:

Hold on, let me take a note.

Sydnee:

... let me— could you— could you write your name down—

Justin:

Let me take a quick note.

Sydnee:

... so I don't forget to say it later when we record. Um, because I got a super cool knitted like dissected frog.

Justin:

Mm-hmm.

Sydnee:

You saw that? Which is awesome, and up displayed in our home already.

Justin:

It is.

Sydnee:

And I love it. And thank you very much. And if you tweet at me, I will call you by name and thank you [laughs]

Justin:

[laughs] Uh, thank you so much to the, uh, Max Fun network for having us as part of their, uh, extended podcast family. You can to maximumfun.org to check out all their great shows, like Stop Podcasting Yourself, uh, One Bad Mother, Oh No Ross And Carrie, uh, and— and many, many more. So go check those totally out.

Thank you to the Taxpayers, for letting us use their song Medicines as the intro and outro of our program. They're on Twitter, uh, @thetaxpayers. Go and find their stuff for sale, wherever fine music is sold I believe. And, uh, that's going to do it for us. Until, uh, next time, I'm Justin McElroy.

Sydnee:

I'm Sydnee McElroy.

Justin:

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

[theme music plays]

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