

Sawbones 073: Paracelus II

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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 music plays]

Justin:

Hey, everybody. Welcome to Sawbones, um, a marital tour of misguided medicine. I'm your co-host, Justin McElroy.

Sydnee:

And I'm Sydnee McElroy.

Justin:

Uh, before every episode, Sydnee and I like to talk a little bit about how we're going to introduce the topic at hand.

Sydnee:

We come up with all our great comedy bits.

Justin:

All the great— You know, all the great bits that you know and love from Sawbones, they—

Sydnee:

That you just— You listen to our show just for those.

Justin:

Mainly for the bits. Uh, we like to talk about this a little bit before we, uh, introduce an episode of the program. Uh, in today's episode, uh, we are talking about some cat, I don't know his name, but when we were—

Sydnee:

Oh, I will tell you his name in a minute.

Justin:

When we were trying to come up with, uh, exactly how we would introduce this topic, the way Sydnee pitched this gentleman to me was he was a weird dude who did some weird stuff. And then he died.

Sydnee:

I mean, it's true.

Justin:

I mean, it about sums it up, right?

Sydnee:

Yeah, I just— It was hard to— You know, I mean, he did a lot of different weird things. And so, sorry.

Justin:

Well, Sydnee, tell me about this— Sorry, I got bad ice. You know, if you let ice sit too long, it's like a weird taste?

Sydnee:

No, I don't like—

Justin:

This ice has a weird taste.

Sydnee:

I don't... See, I don't like too much ice. Also, I'm drinking beer. So if I put ice in my beer, what—

Justin:

You're my nonny.

Sydnee:

What kind of person—

Justin:

You'd be my nonny.

Sydnee:

Nonny puts ice in beer?

Justin:

And a little salt.

Sydnee:

Okay, well, a little salt. It depends on what— I mean, like, there's beer salt specifically for, like, Coronas and stuff.

Justin:

Who's this weird dude?

Sydnee:

But what about ice? Really?

Justin:

I don't know. That's how she likes it.

Sydnee:

Okay. No, I don't know about the ice. So let's talk about—

Justin:

[gags] I need new ice [laughs]. Nonny, make new ice. Ew, it was that fish. It was that rotten fish in there that we discovered tonight. It went—

Sydnee:

I know that we— We couldn't figure out what was smelling bad in our [laughs] refrigerator. And we didn't think that maybe the fish we'd had in there for two weeks could have been it.

Justin:

Dun, dun, dun.

Sydnee:

So that was the problem.

Justin:

CSI solved that.

Sydnee:

You think we would have figured that out? Well, we almost ate it tonight when we open up the package to cook it and almost died.

Justin:

Almost died just from that fish.

Sydnee:

Just from that.

Justin:

Anyway, uh, don't worry about us. We had some extra cod.

Sydnee:

[laughs]

Justin:

So everything works out great. Sydnee—

Sydnee:

Like you do.

Justin:

Like you do. Sydnee, tell me about this weird dude who did weird stuff and then he died.

Sydnee:

Okay, so we are going to talk today about a weird dude named Paracelsus. That is probably if you've ever heard of him and you probably haven't. That's the name you've heard of. Paracelsus. However, that is not his full name. And I think his full name is important.

Justin:

Mm-hmm.

Sydnee:

He became known as Paracelsus later. Initially, he was known Philippus Aureolus Theophrastus Bombastus von Hohenheim.

Justin:

Wow, that's a lot of name.

Sydnee:

Yes.

Justin:

I mean literally, and just sort of, like, holistically, that's a lot of name to process.

Sydnee:

I mean, I'm hoping that when he became known as Paracelsus, it wasn't like a Madonna thing. It wasn't just, like, "Well, now I go by Paracelsus," or I guess more of a Prince thing. You know?

Justin:

Mm-hmm.

Sydnee:

I'm hoping that's not what it was. It was like, "No, now I am Paracelsus Philippus Aureolus Theophrastus Bombastus von Hohenheim."

Justin:

They retracted all the beginning name.

Sydnee:

Exactly.

Justin:

Yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Sydnee:

Can you imagine that, calling his name, like, if you're his teacher?

Justin:

Uh, Perry?

Sydnee:

[laughs]

Justin:

I'm just going to say Perry.

Sydnee:

And the kind of guy he is, he would have not— He would have not been cool with that.

Justin:

No.

Sydnee:

First of all, I want to thank Kayla for suggesting this topic.

Justin:

Thanks, Kayla. If you want to suggest a topic for our show, email sawbones@maximumfun.org.

Sydnee:

I was not familiar with Paracelsus. So I looked him up, did some digging and I am glad that I did. So first of all, this was a long time ago. He was born in 1493.

Justin:

Not that long ago, in the grand scheme of Sawbones.

Sydnee:

I guess that's true.

Justin:

Yeah.

Sydnee:

I guess that's true. He was born in what is now Switzerland. He was, uh, a Swiss/German. I don't know what country or kingdom or whatever it was.

Justin:

He made great chocolate. I saw it on—

Sydnee:

No, that's Swiss Colony.

Justin:

Oh, okay.

Sydnee:

Do you remember those catalogs?

Justin:

Hmm, no.

Sydnee:

The Swiss Colony catalogs?

Justin:

No.

Sydnee:

You don't remember those?

Justin:

We actually reached our diversion limit already, and we're four minutes in. So ...

Sydnee:

Sorry. It's a chocolate catalog. Anyway, I mean, like, it had chocolate in it.

Justin:

Okay, I'll take your word for it.

Sydnee:

So he was a man of many, of many hats. He was a physician. He was a botanist. He was an alchemist.

Justin:

A lot of hats. None of them personalized, because where are you going to find that one?

Sydnee:

It'd have to go all the way around.

Justin:

They are—

Sydnee:

You know?

Justin:

They always have Perry at the gift shop.

Sydnee:

Saw it all the way around the hat.

Justin:

They always— They never have that whole name.

Sydnee:

[laughs] Right? Can you imagine if we went to Disney World and needed one of the—

Justin:

Oh yeah, stitched on the Mickey Mouse—

Sydnee:

His name sewn on the back of the Mickey Mouse ears [laughs]. Uh, so, he was also an astrologer and a cultist. And he is known as the founder of toxicology.

Justin:

Wow, okay. Good job, buddy.

Sydnee:

And like many of our famous ancient doctor dudes, he was kind of a mixed bag. So, um, he was raised by his father who was also a physician. And he actually started... Well, he started schooling at the age of 14 and he actually started his medical training at the age of 16.

Justin:

Wow, doogie, a real doogie over here.

Sydnee:

Now, with that in mind, though, I don't know that he ever actually completed formal medical training.

Justin:

With a name like that, why would you need to?

Sydnee:

No. Uh, he did a lot of traveling. He had been exposed to a lot of, like, mining when he was younger from the area where he was, and so he learned a lot about rocks and minerals and metals. And he actually was described [laughs] in one of the, uh, sources I read about him as a journeyman miner, sometimes.

Justin:

Okay. I mean, needed a few extra bucks, get out there and pickaxe, go to town.

Sydnee:

[laughs] He took to... Much like Minecraft, he took to roaming the countryside.

Justin:

I'm into it.

Sydnee:

And, uh, killing giant spiders and mining.

Justin:

Hitting pigs until they drop meat.

Sydnee:

Pork chops.

Justin:

Yeah.

Sydnee:

And mining for minerals. Um, he studied at a lot of universities in his travels, uh, but he wasn't really impressed by them.

Justin:

Oh, yeah?

Sydnee:

This is... And this is kind of a hallmark of Paracelsus. Uh, he was not really impressed by much.

Justin:

Hmm.

Sydnee:

He actually said that, um... He noted that he could not figure out how the high colleges managed to produce so many high asses.

Justin:

Uh, actually, a lot of high asses coming out of the modern college system.

Sydnee:

[laughs]

Justin:

Unfortunately. Okay, I'm done.

Sydnee:

Okay. And I'm using that as in reference to a donkey, which is why it's acceptable...

Justin:

Right.

Sydnee:

... at this moment. To be fair.

Justin:

Right, that is not a violation of our—

Sydnee:

This is not, no. This is not, no. It's like a donkey. You know. Um, he eventually, you know, thought that he probably knew better than all of the people that he studied under. And this is actually where the name Paracelsus comes from.

He felt that he was following in the footsteps of Celsus, who was, like, this ancient Roman doctor who was well regarded and who was thought to be a genius. And, uh, Paracelsus, meaning like next to or, you know, after.

Justin:

Yeah. Right.

Sydnee:

And he kind of thought he was, like, better. Like, "You know, Celsus? I'm better."

Justin:

"I'm Celsus II."

Sydnee:

[pauses] Electric Boogaloo, is that where you're going?

Justin:

The next Celsus.

Sydnee:

The Reckoning.

Justin:

The Reckoning.

Sydnee:

And, and so he took that name Paracelsus at this point so that he could share to everybody, like, "Hey, just in case you're wondering..."

Justin:

Right. You know how you were way into Celsus? Well, get ready for the next generation.

Sydnee:

Uh, he spent some time as an army surgeon for a while. So let's hope at this point, he had actually learned how to do surgery from somebody, although who knows who knew how to do surgery. It was like the 1500s at this point.

Justin:

Right.

Sydnee:

They don't know. Um, it's interesting because you'll read that he was taken captive in Russia at some point. And he either escaped, is what I read most commonly, is that he was captured by the Tartars and he escaped or! Or he became a favorite of the court, like, the royal court there.

Justin:

Mm-hmm.

Sydnee:

And became a friend to them. So he was, like, released because everybody loved him so much. And he hung out there with, like, the royal family. And then they took him on more travels, which is actually how he ended up at some point, like Constantinople and he found opium and that—

Justin:

Or, you know, it could have been both. Maybe he was taken captive, and just over time, he sort of wormed his way into the social strata and, uh, became a beloved court figure. Possibly.

Sydnee:

Either that or he escaped.

Justin:

Either that or he escaped.

Sydnee:

Eventually, he settled down and started practicing medicine. And he had ... He'd kind of built up a reputation at this point. Um, and you, um, read this a lot if you read about Paracelsus, that there's all this folklore that surrounds him of all the people all over Europe and Asia and, and all over that he cured in his travels. Now, I can't find mention of a lot of these people.

Justin:

Mm-hmm.

Sydnee:

I don't know who they are, but whoever it was, whatever he did, and by, you know, the time he settled down in the 1500s to start practicing medicine, he was quite the guy.

Justin:

Sounds like he was maybe selling some of his own hype there.

Sydnee:

Probably. And he was asked to teach at the local university at this point. So he was not only practicing medicine, but he was teaching medicine. And this is where his reputation for being arrogant really is founded.

Um, he was very— He thought that he knew better than, not just everybody who was practicing medicine at the time, but everybody who would practice medicine pretty much before him. So—

Justin:

Well, statistically speaking, probably so. Considering the time period he lived in.

Sydnee:

But let me point out, he was not just a physician. He was also an alchemist and an astrologer.

Justin:

Okay.

Sydnee:

So—

Justin:

You're getting off of the path a little bit.

Sydnee:

So yeah, uh, but he would make a big show of burning medical texts.

Justin:

[laughs] 'Cause those were easy to come by the 1500s, right?

Sydnee:

Yeah. And so he would take these ancient tomes that were, you know, the foundation for everything that they did at the time and burn them to show that he...

Justin:

[laughs]

Sydnee:

... [laughs] disagreed, um, and make, like, kind of public spectacles out of it.

Justin:

Yeah.

Sydnee:

He called basically all of their doctors quacks and then included, you know, Hippocrates and Galen and Avicenna, all of the kind of fathers of medicine...

Justin:

Not...

Sydnee:

... that you were following that way.

Justin:

Not Pliny, though, right? Not Pliny.

Sydnee:

You know, he didn't mention Pliny, but I bet he also thought Pliny was a quack.

Justin:

It weirdly— Uh, he didn't mention Pliny, but Pliny mentioned him.

Sydnee:

[laughs]

Justin:

It ... Nobody knows how it happened, but Pliny totally had a section about him.

Sydnee:

Pliny could do that. I have faith in Pliny. Um, he also... I thought this was kind of a cool thing he did. He would give his lectures at the medical school and the university.

He would give them in German when, at the time, it was traditional that you would give any kind of, um, higher learning type lecture, especially in a

medical school, in Latin. Because that way you could only ... You were only passing on information to other people who were of the same level of learning as you.

Justin:

Code. Secret code, right?

Sydnee:

Yeah. Like if you know Latin, then you're of a certain position in the social strata and in the you know, educational hierarchy, and so you get to know this information. We would never lecture in whatever the local language was, because then it would be available to the general public. And he didn't believe that. He thought that the common man should have this information just as, you know, kind of the ivory tower folks. So—

Justin:

I'm with him there. Okay.

Sydnee:

I agree. I thought that was a pretty cool thing.

Justin:

It was... He was the WebMD of his time.

Sydnee:

[laughs] And he did ... I will say this, he believed in as opposed to just reading, you know, the— the writings of Hippocrates and assuming that he had it all figured out and not thinking for yourself. He said, "Why don't we try to observe the natural world?"

He kind of hinted at the idea of a scientific method, like, you know, testing things, figuring out what works, and not just doing what people before us have done. So these were some good ideas. Um, he... Uh, it's unclear if he believed in magic, because that was a popular thing at the time.

There were still a lot of physicians who believed in magic and would tell you that, like, curses were the reason you were sick and that kind of thing.

Justin:

Mm-hmm.

Sydnee:

And in some places, they'll say, "Well, he did not, like the other physicians at the time, believe in magic." But he did have some magical thinking that I'll get into when we kind of get into the astrology stuff. He did disagree with the four humors system.

Justin:

Good.

Sydnee:

Which was still the predominant thought at the time. He disagreed with bloodletting.

Justin:

Good.

Sydnee:

And I think this is probably, uh, one of the most important things that he did at the time was that he did not feel that infection was part of the natural process of a wound healing. You know, because it was believed that, like, the wound—

You would get a wound, like, in battle or something, get struck with a sword or whatever. And you were supposed to, like, rub dung in it or something like that, and then it would get really infected and that was normal. Like, that's what's supposed to happen.

Justin:

Sure.

Sydnee:

And he said—

Justin:

It's a good burn.

Sydnee:

Yeah and he said, "No, maybe we should leave it clean?" Maybe not rub stuff in it. Maybe just like let it be...

Justin:

Medieval spearheads, maybe.

Sydnee:

Maybe that's a better idea, which was, you know—

Justin:

Okay. Well, I mean, he seems cool. I'm into it so far. I'm not crazy about the book burning but you know, got to stay warm somehow.

Sydnee:

But here's the problem. So as I mentioned, he was also an astrologer. Uh, he believed in ... And this is where I would argue he does have some magical thinking. He believed that talismans could cure a lot of different illnesses [laughs].

Justin:

Okay.

Sydnee:

So he created a lot of different talismans that you could wear, depending on your illness, as well as your zodiac sign to protect you from the illness.

Justin:

So he invented Etsy, pretty much.

Sydnee:

There you go [laughs].

Justin:

Basically.

Sydnee:

He knitted talismans.

Justin:

He knitted talismans.

Sydnee:

[laughs]

Justin:

Bespoke zodiac talismans [laughs].

Sydnee:

Uh, he also invented his own alphabet to use on the talismans. So, like, I guess you would have your name on it. So they were personalized, they were personalized talismans that he would make you. And—

Justin:

It's Para-ease for strength. Trust me, that's what it says. It says strength.

Sydnee:

[laughs] And he used the alphabet that he invented that was called the Alphabet of the Magi.

Justin:

[laughs]

Sydnee:

And it was, uh, an angelic alphabet, I guess divinely inspired.

Justin:

This guy's like a— This guy's like a living Led Zeppelin album [laughs].

Sydnee:

[laughs] This is— This has to be in Pyramid catalog, right?

Justin:

Right.

Sydnee:

Like, you have to be able to find this. Like, an original—

Justin:

One more thing, ancient wisdom teaches us the power of the zodiac.

Sydnee:

... Paracelsus, Alphabet of the Magi talisman.

Justin:

Ancient Dr. Paracelsus created the Alphabet of the Magi to help us transmute the wishes of the universe...

Sydnee:

[laughs]

Justin:

... and to realize potential. With this necklace, just 59.99...

Sydnee:

[laughs]

Justin:

... you will be able to harness the potentiality that the universe has in store for you.

Sydnee:

Send in your name.

Justin:

It's 59.99, shipping and handling.

Sydnee:

If you want it personalized...

Justin:

Want it personalized?

Sydnee:

... that's going to be an extra \$35.

Justin:

We do ship internationally.

Sydnee:

Um, he also... By the way, I mentioned that he had traveled to Constantinople and he learned about opium there. And in this time period, he also kind of invented laudanum...

Justin:

Oh, yeah?

Sydnee:

... the tincture of opium and alcohol.

Justin:

How does one kind of... How does one kind of invent something?

Sydnee:

Well, I mean, he just did.

Justin:

He just did? Okay, got it.

Sydnee:

Yeah, he was one of the first people to be using and pushing the idea of laudanum, which is kind of a double-edged sword there.

Justin:

Yeah, we got into some rough patches with that...

Sydnee:

Yeah. That—

Justin:

... in the next few hundred years.

Sydnee:

It seemed like a good idea at the time. I mean, it's great. We didn't have a lot of pain medicine, but still. Um, he... So I mentioned that he didn't believe in the four humors. He believed that all disease boiled down to three substances.

Justin:

Okay.

Sydnee:

Sulfur, mercury, and salt.

Justin:

No.

Sydnee:

No.

Justin:

[laughs]

Sydnee:

But he thought that all diseases were caused by an imbalance, too much of one of these things. And he kind of saw them as, like, akin to the body. Like, the salt was the body, mercury represents your spirit, and sulfur represents your soul. I'm not sure why those two things are different, by the way.

Justin:

So his problem with the four humors system is that it was overly complex.

Sydnee:

[laughs]

Justin:

There were really just three different things.

Sydnee:

Exactly.

Justin:

Got it.

Sydnee:

And he came up with the idea that while in high doses, these things could poison you. You know, if you had too much of one or the other. Uh, if you have the right amount of sulfur, mercury, and salt in your body, then that's good.

And he was the one who came up with the idea, and I think actually quoted him on another episode without realizing it, that the dose makes the poison.

Justin:

Mm-hmm.

Sydnee:

That, you know, something taken in small doses may be good for you, but if you get too much of it, then it can be poisonous. Which is why— Part of why he's known as the father of toxicology.

Justin:

If this is the reason you listen to the show, that dose makes the poison would be a pretty sweet tattoo, if you want to get one.

Sydnee:

That would be a sweet tattoo.

Justin:

Wouldn't it be a sweet tattoo?

Sydnee:

Yeah. I'm not going to do that, but do it.

Justin:

No.

Sydnee:

It would be.

Justin:

Get it under your caduceus. That'd be cool.

Sydnee:

But then I'm quoting Paracelsus, and he also believed that there were seven centers in the body that corresponded with the then seven known planets...

Justin:

True.

Sydnee:

... and seven minerals.

Justin:

True. Can prove.

Sydnee:

[laughs]

Justin:

Ready? Heart, lungs, brain, genitals, feet, hands, butt. How many are we at?

Sydnee:

[laughs]

Justin:

[laughs] Well, let's track.

Sydnee:

No. Keep going.

Justin:

Tummy.

Sydnee:

Uh-huh.

Justin:

Spirit.

Sydnee:

Okay.

Justin:

Will, imagination.

Sydnee:

That was a bad job.

Justin:

That's not a job.

Sydnee:

Definitely more than seven, too.

Justin:

Way more than seven. Trim a few off in editing. I'll fix them in post.

Sydnee:

So at the time, and this is more problematic. So the seven known planets were the sun, the moon—

Justin:

[laughs]

Sydnee:

Okay, we're already off to a bad start [laughs].

Justin:

All right, all right, Isaac Mizrahi.

Sydnee:

[laughs] And then Jupiter, Venus, Saturn, Mars, and Mercury.

Justin:

Okay.

Sydnee:

By the way, what about Earth?

Justin:

[laughs] You can't see ... I can't see Earth.

Sydnee:

I guess that's true, but maybe—

Justin:

I'm looking it up. I can see, I can see seven planets [laughs].

Sydnee:

Maybe it's still geocentric type time.

Justin:

It must be... Man, it must be rough for people on planet sun.

Sydnee:

[laughs]

Justin:

It seems like a bad gig.

Sydnee:

And if, um ... So you could, you know, you could call upon, like, the powers of these planets to help you, like, it— Like for instance, if you have a

problem with your heart, then that corresponds to the sun and the mineral you need is gold.

Justin:

Okay.

Sydnee:

So you take some gold and you'll get better, but if you take too much gold, you'll die.

Justin:

Okay.

Sydnee:

Um, similarly, let's say your gallbladder is giving you trouble. Then you could ask Mars for help or you could just take some iron.

Justin:

Okay.

Sydnee:

These are not good ideas, by the way.

Justin:

I wouldn't do any of this.

Sydnee:

And now, I will say this was a revolutionary idea that something, like, some sort of chemical or mineral could be used for medication. At the time, medicines were all herbal, right? They were all plant-based.

So the idea that you would make something in a lab, well, or what would, you know, be akin to a lab, use chemistry was pretty revolutionary. But again, it was kind of based on the wrong idea because he thought that, like I said, diseases were caused by poisons from the stars, only poisons if they're in certain doses, and coming out combined with certain things.

Justin:

Mm-hmm.

Sydnee:

So you know, kind of off track there.

Justin:

All right. Well, he tried.

Sydnee:

Um, he did come up with the idea of using mercury for syphilis.

Justin:

Hey, that— And that's, that's a good treatment or bad treatment? I mean, I don't remember the episode—

Sydnee:

No. I mean, it was, it was— What— No, it's not a good treatment. We don't use that. But it was a popular treatment for syphilis for many, many years to come. So, I mean, he left his mark. It wasn't a great mark, but he left it.

Justin:

Yeah, literally, for a lot of people using mercury to treat syphilis. Um, the ... So you mentioned there's some, like, there's some folklore about him. Can you hit me with some of that?

Sydnee:

Justin, I would love to hit you with some folklore. But before I do that, why don't you follow me on down to the billing department.

Justin:

Let's go.

[theme music plays]

[ad break]

Justin:

Syd, I'm ready. Whisk me away with the, uh, the folklore based around my man, Pary.

Sydnee:

So I think, you know, like I said, I tried to dig up all the different... what exactly made this guy such a legend? One story in particular that I thought was interesting is... So we've talked about the plague before.

Justin:

Indeed, we have.

Sydnee:

Yes, and it lasted many centuries. So the plague of the 16th century, that iteration of the plague, uh, was obviously devastating whole towns, and nobody was making a lot of headway in treating it. And we talked about all the ridiculous things, strapping chickens to them, and, you know, a lot of bloodletting.

Justin:

Sachets of potpourri in your mask.

Sydnee:

And yes. In your, in your giant nose mask.

Justin:

Horrifying masks, but... Eh, if I ... By the way, if I see one of those plague masks, seriously plague? Take me. Just take me away. At least I won't be scared of the guys with a weird crow beaks.

Sydnee:

Who are using their canes to examine you.

Justin:

No.

Sydnee:

Who come at you with a cane so they can lift your clothes up...

Justin:

I hate it.

Sydnee:

... and look underneath and go, "Yup, he's dying."

Justin:

"Help. Somebody, anybody!"

Sydnee:

So, and nobody was— Well, nobody's making much headway with the plague. It is said that Paracelsus did. However, when you hear how he did, I think I'd be a little ... I don't know. I'd be almost skeptical.

Justin:

I'm a lot less judge-y than you, but why are you skeptical?

Sydnee:

Okay, so he went to a small town that was being completely devastated by the plague. And he decided, you know, uh, he ... This is actually one of the reasons he's credited as being one of the forerunners of homeopathy. Remember, like cures like.

Justin:

Right.

Sydnee:

So if you take a small, small substance of the thing that's making you sick, it will make you better. So he had this idea, like, all these people were really sick, they were ... He noticed that a lot of them were, like, having a lot of gastrointestinal distress, throwing up, having diarrhea.

So he made pills for them out of bread, that's fine. But he also would use a little bit of the patient's own excrement, or vomit or something, something that came out of them that was probably pretty gross. He'd get a tiny little bit on a needle point and put it into the bread pill.

Justin:

Oh, you're ruining good bread.

Sydnee:

And then you would take that.

Justin:

I used to make bread pills from the school rolls, you know, that you get on your tray?

Sydnee:

Oh, were you one of those? Were you one of those kids?

Justin:

You rip the white stuff out of the school roll and you, of course, you throw the weird roll rind away. Um, crust, if you will. I don't know, thank you. And you just roll it into a ball. And I wouldn't swallow it. I'd go ahead and eat it, but you roll it into kind of a bread pill there.

Sydnee:

That's the wrong answer. You're supposed to dip it into the ice cream scoop shaped mound of mashed potatoes.

Justin:

Perfect. That's an excellent choice too.

Sydnee:

Yeah.

Justin:

Man, I love school rolls. Anyway, that's it.

Sydnee:

You, you probably wouldn't have liked these pills [laughs].

Justin:

That's another podcast, or upcoming podcast, is all about school rolls.

Sydnee:

Now—

Justin:

You cannot buy them. You cannot buy those, or weird rectangular school pizza. Don't even try. They're not available

Sydnee:

And, and you know you can't buy school rolls based on the simple fact that Justin does not weigh 600 pounds.

Justin:

Right. If you got to hook up, by the way, PO Box 54...

Sydnee:

[laughs]

Justin:

... Huntington, West Virginia 25706.

Sydnee:

If you see Justin on My 600-Pound Life, you know, we found school rolls
[laughs].

Justin:

[laughs]

Sydnee:

So—

Justin:

Imagine I get on TV and I get to eat a bunch of school roles, okay, yeah, don't mind if I do.

Sydnee:

Oh, no, please don't. If you know where they are, don't tell us. Don't tell us. So I— It is said that this worked really well and that it— This town did fared better than most during plague.

Justin:

Did it? The poop bread pills worked pretty good?

Sydnee:

That's why I have a problem with this.

Justin:

Yeah, I need some empirical evidence.

Sydnee:

There was also a very famous classics publisher. I think that sounds so sophisticated for the time period. Like, we're making bread poop pills for people to take for the plague. And then there's a classics publisher who was well known throughout the are...

Justin:

Right.

Sydnee:

... uh, named Frobenius, who—

Justin:

[laughs]

Sydnee:

The [laughs] ... The way the—

Justin:

[laughs] God, if that's not the most wedgie-able name ever.

Sydnee:

[laughs]

Justin:

Nuclear wedgie for... What's his name again?

Sydnee:

Frobenius. That was—

Justin:

[laughs]

Sydnee:

Now, dude, that was his last name.

Justin:

Not since—

Sydnee:

I think it was Johann Frobenius [laughs].

Justin:

Not since Minkus has there been such an, uh, an innately wedgie-able name.

Sydnee:

So Frobenius had some sort of leg problem, as far as I can ... Now and this again, like, he ... So he had a leg problem. I don't know what that means. I don't know the nature of his leg problem, but whatever it was, Paracelsus supposedly fixed it.

Justin:

Hmm.

Sydnee:

And he was celebrated for fixing his leg. But then Frobenius died later of said leg problem.

Justin:

Okay, well—

Sydnee:

So it must have been a pretty big leg problem. I would love to know what the leg problem was.

Justin:

Yeah, I ... Uh, it's hard to say.

Sydnee:

So I— But this is part of what made him a name. Um, he also was then sued, I think, in conjunction with this incident, uh, and to flee the town. Which is kind of a theme in his life, like, he would travel around to these different places, practice medicine, supposedly save everybody's life, but then have to flee before he could even take his writings with him.

Justin:

Sort of like, uh, an old-timey version of the Bill Bixby Incredible Hulk, just moving from town to town. At the end of it, [imitates sad Hulk music], with his thumb out because he killed everybody with his weird poop bread pills.

Sydnee:

[laughs] But then, I guess he would go to the next town and be like, "Hey, you know what I did back there?"

Justin:

"Good news. Don't call them."

Sydnee:

And say, "Don't ask them. Well, you can't call them. There are no phones."

Justin:

Don't... Okay. "Don't telegraph them."

Sydnee:

No.

Justin:

"But, um, things are going great there and I helped everybody and they just said that I need to come share my special gift with you."

Sydnee:

"So I'm going to come help you now."

Justin:

"Congratulations. What a thrill this must be for you."

Sydnee:

"Do you have any bread?"

Justin:

"Or poop."

Sydnee:

So he... So, like I said, he's writing. He's traveling all over Europe. And it's important to know that as he leaves different places, he leaves so quickly often because he's upset someone, that he leaves his writings behind wherever he is.

So he's writing down his ideas and theories. And, like, taking on, you know, hundreds of years of medical knowledge and then he's abandoning these papers and taking off.

Justin:

Mm-hmm.

Sydnee:

And sadly, it is among these many travels that he then dies.

Justin:

No.

Sydnee:

Uh, nobody really knows why. He was found dead in the White Horse Inn, in 1541. And it was— There was actually one site that thought it was like a—

Justin:

He would've been 41... 48!

Sydnee:

48, mm-hmm. Pretty good at the time.

Justin:

Yeah, not bad. Not a bad run.

Sydnee:

No. So, uh, you know, who knows? There were, um, a million things at the time that killed people that early. But, uh, and there was... There was actually one side I read had kind of like a conspiracy theory about it, like, oh, maybe he was taken out—

Justin:

[laughs]

Sydnee:

... because he was challenging the popular medical knowledge of the time.

Justin:

Right.

Sydnee:

I would doubt that. Um, but as with most people who, you know, make a small impression in their life, but then leave behind tons of writings, he was much more celebrated in his death.

So about 100 years later, people start finding and collecting and putting together all of this, this stuff that he wrote and left all over Europe, basically. And people begin to use this as a basis for a new medical theory and take on the ideas of Hippocrates.

So all of a sudden these, you know, giants of medical knowledge are being uprooted by this group of physicians, if you want to call them that, who are saying we don't need to read books about medicine to be doctors. We just need to look at the natural world. And for some reason, this was a religious movement too. So also read the Bible and then you can be a doctor.

Justin:

Oh.

Sydnee:

But you don't need to study, or go to school, or have any formal education or training to be a doctor.

Justin:

He would've— He really is the WebMD of people.

Sydnee:

[laughs] You don't need to know anatomy. That was, part of their movement was, like, anatomy is whatever. You know. You did need to know chemistry. They did think that was important.

Justin:

Okay.

Sydnee:

Drug companies would love these people.

Justin:

[laughs]

Sydnee:

[laughs] You don't need to know anything about the human body but you do need to know how to make drugs for it. So if you could do that.

Justin:

Perfect.

Sydnee:

And it—

Justin:

That's where the money is.

Sydnee:

And this is where his impact is really seen, is this led to the widespread use of chemistry as well as different minerals and metals and medicine and the idea that, hey, maybe we could make medicines, not just, like, get stuff out of plants and give it to people, but maybe we could cook stuff up and it

would have an effect on people. Which obviously is something that is commonplace and we do every day now.

Justin:

Hmm.

Sydnee:

Um, one little thing I thought I would mention. If you, if you read about Paracelsus, a lot of places you'll see the claim that his name is the origin of the word "bombast."

Justin:

He had a... bombastius, isn't it?

Sydnee:

Bombastus von Hohenheim. That's not true. Um, they thought that because of the way that he... Like I mentioned several times, he was known to be a very arrogant guy who said a lot of, you know, deprecating things to the people around him.

Uh, that is not the origin of the word, but I think it should be. I thought I would leave you with one more quote from him to illustrate my point. Uh, "Let me tell you this. Every little hair on my neck knows more than you and all your scribes. And my shoe buckles are more learned than your Galen and Avicenna. And my beard has more experience than all your high colleges."

Justin:

Oh, so fresh.

Sydnee:

So—

Justin:

Thank you, Pary. Thank you for everything, my friend.

Sydnee:

I think I'm kind of a fan.

Justin:

Yeah, I'm into it. Uh, that would not make as good of a tattoo. But I guess if you wanted to put your whole back to it, why not? Uh, thank you so much to the Taxpayers for letting us use their theme song, uh, Medicines. Well, it's our theme song. It's just their regular song, Medicines.

Um, uh, thank you to people who are tweeting about the show, Jennifer Miller, Elizabeth Laher, both of them were wondering where the show was. So here it is. Now, you're hearing it.

Sydnee:

[laughs]

Justin:

Uh, thank you to, uh, let's see, Jacob Mercy, uh, Jacqueline, Liz, Harvatine, Corey Hadden, Corey Russell, two Coreys there, and Nicole Finch. Uh, JC Loops, JP Burke. That four-eyed kid, Greg Dolberg. Karen. So many others.

Uh, we're @Sawbones, uh, on Twitter. So you can follow us there. Also, um, if you can leave a review, uh, on iTunes for our show. That would certainly help to spread the word. Subscribe, tell somebody you know. And, uh, if you leave a review, make sure to tell us. I'm Justin McElroy, uh, @JustinMcElroy on Twitter.

Sydnee:

And I'm @sydneemcelroy.

Justin:

Thanks to the Maximum Fun network for having us, uh, as part of their family. Uh, there's a ton of great shows you can, uh, go listen to right now. Stop Podcasting Yourself, uh, two, uh, very lovely Canadians, uh, just sort of, uh ... Just chatting, sometimes with a guest. They're really funny fellas.

I think you're really going to like that. Uh, Jordan, Jesse, Go! is another great, sort of, talk comedy program. Uh, Destination DIY, The Goosedown, uh, I could go on.

Sydnee:

My Brother, My Brother and Me.

Justin:

Thank you. Uh, is there anything I'm forgetting, sister?

Sydnee:

Nope.

Justin:

And, uh, thank you so much to you for listening. We'll be back with you next Tuesday with another episode of Sawbones. Until then, I'm Justin McElroy.

Sydnee:

I'm Sydnee McElroy.

Justin:

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

[theme music plays]

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