

Sawbones 141: The Presidents are Sick

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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]

[audience cheers]

Justin:

This is very far from me. Hello everybody. My name is Justin McElroy, and this is my wife, Sydnee McElroy.

[audience cheers]

Justin:

And this is our podcast, Sawbones.

Sydnee:

Is this a whole new intro that we're doing? [laughs].

Justin:

I have never remembered an intro when I went out on stage as long as I've lived, and dear, I don't plan to start now.

Sydnee:

Well, we're gonna rec—

[audience laughs]

Sydnee:

We're recording this, so could you do like the [laughs] thing you're supposed to... [laughs]

Justin:

Literally, I don't... Can you? [laughs].

[audience laughs]

Justin:

What's the— What's the first... Like, give me a few—

Sydnee:

Hello, and welcome to Sawbones, [laughs] a marital tour of misguided medicine.

Justin:

Misguided medicine. I am your cohost, Justin McElroy.

Sydnee:

And I'm Sydnee McElroy. [laughs].

[audience cheers]

Justin:

We nailed it.

Sydnee:

Do I have to do everything? [laughs].

Justin:

We nail— This is so— Did Travis lean this far?

Sydnee:

I don't know. I'm feeling very short.

Justin:

I'm feeling very, like, not lengthy enough.

Sydnee:

[laughs].

Justin:

Uh, thank you for having us here in your beautiful city of Washington D.C.
Uh, we went to your mall today.

Sydnee:

[laughs].

[audience laughs]

Justin:

Um, one—

Sydnee:

It's not the kind of mall [laughs] Justin likes.

Justin:

Very bad mall, not a good mall.

Sydnee:

[laughs]

Justin:

It's about as good a mall—

Sydnee:

Sorry.

Justin:

... as Piccadilly Circus is a circus.

[audience laughs]

Justin:

Um, but, uh, but we went to the mall where all of our nation's presidents are buried here in this city where, by law, all of our nation's presidents have been born...

Sydnee:

[laughs].

[audience laughs]

Justin:

... um, here and it's really inspirational.

Sydnee:

Uh-huh. Well...

Justin:

Well...

Sydnee:

We'll sort of.

Justin:

We—

Sydnee:

We actually... We went to your mall with a toddler. So what we did is we went to the Natural History Museum for an hour?

Justin:

We went, you and I—

Sydnee:

We went to the butterfly room.

Justin:

And then we ate in the cafeteria and left.

Sydnee:

[laughs].

Justin:

So it's a very fulfilling four hours.

Sydnee:

And then, [laughs], and then we sat on your mall and had a beer and tried to recover...

Justin:

From the excruciating—

Sydnee:

....from everything else we did.

Justin:

... excruciating— And she only tried to kill, like, four butterflies...

Sydnee:

[laughs].

Justin:

... so that was great.

[audience laughs]

Justin:

But, uh, no, it's great. This is, uh, it feels so historic being here.

Sydnee:

Well, it does. And so I thought in light of that, in the spirit of that, we'd have kind of a, uh, a historical topic.

Justin:

Uh, like what Syd?

Sydnee:

I mean, you know it's a history show. [laughs].

Justin:

Yeah. Oh, I don't know.

Sydnee:

I mean a presidential topic.

Justin:

Anybody had not listened to Sawbones before? Raise your hand.

Sydnee:

[laughs].

Justin:

Don't be afraid. Okay. Oh, it's a medical history show.

Sydnee:

[laughs].

[audience laughs]

Sydnee:

That's the whole pitch. What do you think?

Justin:

I'm not gonna pitch it more. They're already ready here. You already got their money.

Sydnee:

Too late.

[audience laughs]

Justin:

I don't care. Why care or don't? Go get a beer. Not now. I don't care.

Sydnee:

No, wait. No, I do. Wait 'till we're done.

Justin:

Wait 'till we're done.

Sydnee:

Come on.

Justin:

Rude.

Sydnee:

You just [laughs] watched a show about manners.

Justin:

Yeah, come on.

[audience laughs]

Sydnee:

So, uh, I thought we would talk about... A lot of our presidents weren't, uh, healthy.

Justin:

Mm-hmm.

Sydnee:

And so—

[audience laughs]

Sydnee:

[laughs] I thought we could talk about some of the presidential diseases, some different presidents and some of their medical issues...

Justin:

Okay.

Sydnee:

... and especially some of the really dumb ways we tried to address them.

Justin:

I think I speak for the entire audience when I say wooden teeth, case closed.

Sydnee:

[laughs].

[audience laughs]

Sydnee:

Uh, but in which I mean, that's the one I know.

[audience laughs]

Sydnee:

Well, and we'll start with George Washington. I think that's appropriate.

Justin:

Nice.

Sydnee:

Uh, because [laughs] he was our first president and he was also pretty sickly.

Justin:

Oh.

Sydnee:

Like he had a lot of stuff. He was probably— Like all the time that he was doing all the... You know, it's great. He's cool dude, obviously, but—

Justin:

Yeah.

Sydnee:

Like—

Justin:

The war and stuff were like, "Um, [crosstalk]—"

Sydnee:

But [laughs]—

[audience laughs]

Sydnee:

... he's pretty sick.

Justin:

Potomac, huge fan. Crossed it, like... What?

Sydnee:

[laughs].

[audience laughs]

Justin:

Oh my God, that was him, right?

[audience laughs]

Sydnee:

[laughs]. Big fan, yeah. [laughs].

Justin:

It's not a history-history podcast. All right?

[audience laughs]

Sydnee:

So he had to start with... He had diphtheria as a child, which is not, like, rare for that time period. It wasn't unique because, you know, this is, you know, I have to bring this up because this is before vaccines, which is why you don't get diphtheria now. Thank you, vaccines. Please—

Justin:

Whoo!

[audience cheers]

Sydnee:

... go get vaccinated. So, there's my brief plug for vaccines. [laughs]. Um, he got, he got TB. He also had tuberculosis, TB. And he got it, uh, while he was taking his brother to Barbados because his brother had TB and [laughs] it was thought that the air there was cleaner. So he took his brother thinking, "Oh, you got TB. I'm going to take you to Barbados, and then you're going to recover." And then he got TB, too. So that was a bummer.

Justin:

TB2, the sequel—

[audience laughs]

Justin:

... the way worse version of TB.

Sydnee:

He also got smallpox there, um—

[audience laughs]

Sydnee:

... [laughs] but he did recover, of course, obviously, uh...

[audience laughs]

Sydnee:

... but he always had... I guess he always had, like, the complexion to prove it after that.

Justin:

Oh, really?

Sydnee:

You know? Mm-hmm.

Justin:

So we're gonna... We just came here to talk, yay, about the president's complexions?

[audience laughs]

Sydnee:

And he also had dysentery a lot. Um, he [laughs]—

[audience laughs]

Sydnee:

He had one bout of dysentery during the French and Indian War that was reportedly so bad, his butt hurt so bad from this dysentery that he had to put, like, a pillow on the horse that he was riding, which put him in danger 'cause he was like elevated above everybody else, like a perfect...

[audience laughs]

Sydnee:

... target.

Justin:

Okay—

Sydnee:

But it was... Like, his butt hurt, so he's like, "Forget it. I don't care. I got to have this pillow."

Justin:

You know the word that's really bothering me in this? Reportedly.

[audience laughs]

Justin:

Because how's your report going? "Well, it's pretty good. The first part is about how my boss has such bad poops, he has to sit on a danger pillow..."

[audience laughs]

Sydnee:

[laughs].

Justin:

"...and dodge bullets. So I guess I'm pretty much done with my report I'm supposed to file."

[audience laughs]

Justin:

Reportedly. [laughs] Or he's like, "Someone get me a pen."

Sydnee:

[laughs].

[audience laughs]

Justin:

"History needs to know..."

Sydnee:

"I got to write this down."

Justin:

"... how my week has gone."

Sydnee:

"Nobody's gonna believe this."

[audience laughs]

Sydnee:

[laughs]. Other random illnesses, of course. He got malaria, he got tonsillitis, he got pneumonia. He had a big carbuncle, like a big, like, abscess infection on his face at one point that people thought was a tumor. It wasn't, thank goodness. It was just a big infection.

Uh, but what [laughs] got him, finally, was first, he got, um, epiglottitis, which was swelling of the epiglottis. He got an infection and it got so big that he couldn't swallow, which was bad enough, except what really probably killed Washington, uh, were his doctors?

Justin:

Oh, man.

Sydnee:

Because the treatment at the time for, well, anything was to bleed him, so they did. They bled about 80 ounces out of him.

[audience gasps]

Justin:

That's so many.

Sydnee:

That's a lot. [laughs].

[audience laughs]

Sydnee:

For reference, the human body has about 170.

Justin:

Oh man. So like near, like, half.

[audience laughs]

Sydnee:

So unfortunately, the president passed away soon after.

Justin:

'Cause of the blood.

Sydnee:

[laughs].

[audience laughs]

Justin:

But, uh, but luckily, you can still get donations of his blood today. There was just so much.

[audience laughs]

Sydnee:

Now, another president... Some of these presidents I was reading about, I know very little about. Uh, the thing I knew about Grover Cleveland is that he was president twice and not consecutively.

Justin:

Right.

Sydnee:

And there you go. He also... [laughs]. Here's the other thing I now know about him, and you will too. He also had a tumor in the roof of his mouth, um, early in his second term, but he didn't want anybody to know. His doctor told him, like, "That's cancer. We gotta do something."

And he didn't want any of his constituents to know 'cause he wanted to look strong, which I think that's still a thing. You know? Our presidents try to look tough. And so, he arranged for a fishing trip on a friend's yacht, and he

announced, like, "I will be gone for four days on a fishing..."

Which would be crazy now. Like, "You won't hear from me for four days. No communication. The country's running on its own."

Justin:

Yeah. Best of luck, everybody.

Sydnee:

I don't know what you... "Biden's in charge." [laughs]. "We're, we're out..."

Justin:

Out.

Sydnee:

"... four days." [laughs].

Justin:

Did he make it? We put him on the comp list.

[audience laughs]

Justin:

No? Um, the, uh—

Sydnee:

May I have a hug if you're here? [laughs].

Justin:

Um...

Sydnee:

But anyways... So he took off for four days—

Justin:

Okay.

Sydnee:

... on a yacht. He had six surgeons waiting for him—

Justin:

On the yacht.

Sydnee:

... to remove...

Justin:

That's a chill...

Sydnee:

On the yacht to, to—

Justin:

... assignment, though. Like if you have to get an assignment to go remove a president's mouth tumor, like, you could do worse than chilling on a yacht for four days.

[audience laughs]

Sydnee:

And they did. They did surgery. They removed the tumor. They removed five teeth and a big part of his jaw. They did it all through his mouth and he was very insistent on this because he had a mustache that he was very well known for. And he didn't want 'em to upset the stash so...

[audience laughs]

Sydnee:

... so they had to go through the mouth. And he came back and no one ever knew.

Justin:

Nice. Well, we knew.

Sydnee:

Well, now we know. I mean, we...

Justin:

Apparently.

Sydnee:

... we knew later.

Justin:

Do you think they rushed through it on the first day? It's like, "Oh, they're doing the pig roast tonight and I..."

Sydnee:

[laughs].

Justin:

"... would really like to get out to there and, um, I'd love a Mai Tai. You know what, guys? We're only gonna be here for four days, let's bang this out today."

Sydnee:

[laughs].

Justin:

"Let's get this tumor out..."

[audience laughs]

Justin:

"... and just enjoy ourselves. You know? You have one for us."

Sydnee:

A president that I think a lot of people are aware of, uh, got sick was William Henry Harrison. Um, do you remember William Henry Harrison?

Justin:

He had a bad— Not a very impactful president.

Sydnee:

No.

[audience laughs]

Justin:

Oh.

Sydnee:

And fairly short.

Justin:

Old Bill Harrison.

Sydnee:

So let me give you a little history 'cause it's kind of interesting, the story about— I don't know. I mean, most of us know that he was president for like 30 days and that's it. But he was born in Virginia. He served in the army.

[some audience members cheer]

Justin:

What's up, Virginia?

Sydnee:

He was the hero of the Battle of Tippecanoe.

Justin:

And Tyler too.

Sydnee:

And Tyler too, 'cause that was his campaign slogan, right? Tippecanoe and Tyler Too. So he was known as, like, a war hero. He also recaptured Detroit from the British in 1812. Without him, we wouldn't have Detroit. So there you go. Uh, he ran [laughs]—

[audience laughs]

Sydnee:

He ran on a log cabin campaign, which I read about that and I was like, "What does that mean?" So it's because his opponents tried to make him look like this old geezer kind of guy, like, he sits on the porch of his log cabin and he drinks his cider and we need to put him out to pasture.

Like, that was how they tried to [laughs] make him look 'cause that's what it meant, uh, back in the day to be old. You would sit on the porch [laughs] of your log cabin and drink cider.

Justin:

Yeah, so the—

Sydnee:

The old people used to do it.

Justin:

They would bring out logs from a log cabin. He would karate chop them in half and be like, "Now, who's an old man?"

[audience laughs]

Sydnee:

His supporters actually would give out that they kind of like went with it. They're like, "Fine, you wanna go with log cabin? We're gonna roll with it." And they made these bottles of whiskey shaped like log cabins, and it would give them out to people like, "Vote... Hey, vote for Harrison. [laughs]. Votes for old Tippecanoe, log cabin. We got it." They were actually made by the E.C. Booz company...

[audience laughs]

Sydnee:

... which is where booze comes from.

Justin:

How's that's B-O-O-Z, like flooz, but Booz.

Sydnee:

Right. Yeah.

Justin:

No E. We add an E now these days, I guess.

Sydnee:

[laughs]. Thanks, Justin.

Justin:

No problem.

[audience laughs]

Sydnee:

So—

Justin:

I didn't want anybody to tweet that hot fact and, like, put an E on there erroneously.

Sydnee:

[crosstalk] ...with booze. So as we know, he was our ninth president. It was the shortest term. He was a very, like, hardy outdoorsman. He was a farmer. He thought, "I can handle foul weather."

So when he gave his inaugural speech, we've probably heard this story, it went on for two hours. It was the longest in history, at 8445 words. Um, and supposedly, as the story goes, he caught a cold while he was out giving this very long speech. And he then got pneumonia and he died a month later, and then Tyler became president.

But let's pause for a second 'cause there's a really gross story about this beautiful city that I wanna share now. Um, until 1850, there was no sewage system here. So...

[audience cheers]

Sydnee: [laughs] Yay for sewage.

Justin:

"We used to know how to party!" What?

[audience laughs]

Justin:

Sewage is great, like...

Sydnee:

So waste would just kind of flow across the ground and just, like, end up wherever. And there was this marsh that formed about seven blocks from the White House, a marsh of human waste. And it was actually, like, orchestrated, like, "This is where we shall dump our waste."

And, like, you could take it out there yourself, like you could haul it there on your own, or they would even... You could pay somebody to, like, haul your waste to the White House marsh. [laughs].

[audience laughs]

Sydnee:

Um, this was a really dirty place, so it was like this big swampy marsh, and there were all kinds of bacteria there. There were mosquitoes swarming all over it, and there were probably a lot of diseases in there, including typhoid.

Now, we have looked back at President Harrison, and now we think he probably actually died of typhoid. It probably had nothing to do with his speech. It was probably the White House itself that did him in.

Justin:

Whoa.

Sydnee:

So—

[audience laughs]

Sydnee:

So there you go.

Justin:

I've always given that guy such a hard time.

Sydnee:

I know.

Justin:

Hey, I'm sorry. [looking up]

[audience laughs]

Justin:

Or I'm sorry. [looking down]

[audience laughs]

Sydnee:

[laughs].

Justin:

I don't know where he's channeling, up or down.

[audience laughs]

Sydnee:

[laughs].

Justin:

Listen, I don't know what he died from. I don't know if he was, like, a nice dude or not.

[audience laughs]

Justin:

Like, I sit here and judged a fool. I thought he died of a cold for 35 years..

Sydnee:

Now, we thought this [laughs] more because as we've studied other presidents, we think that other, similar things may have been, uh, the result of the, the White House marsh, as I'm always gonna think of it now. Um, Zachary Taylor, our 12th president, who was only president for about 16 months...

Justin:

Do you think there's such a Chipotle there now?

Sydnee:

[laughs].

[audience laughs and applauds]

Justin:

That'd be amazing.

Sydnee:

[laughs] I hope not, 'cause we'll probably accidentally eat there. [laughs].

Justin:

Yeah.

Sydnee:

Um, so President Taylor, in 1850 on the 4th of July, as part of 4th of July celebrations, he was going around attending fundraisers and he was out. So it was very hot day. He was outside most of the day, and he ate a lot of things.

He ate a lot of raw vegetables, which would have been washed in some sort of water. Um, he ate... Uh, this is one of the things I kept finding over and over again... a big bowl of cherries. [laughs] So he had a very large bowl of cherries, and he had many glasses of iced milk.

[audience makes disgusted noise]

Sydnee: I guess that was really popular?

Justin:

What? Iced milk, what's wrong with that? It's cold milk. What's wrong with you people?

Sydnee:

I don't know. Ice in your milk? So later that evening, he started getting profuse diarrhea and vomiting. He developed a fever. Uh, he became very ill. There were four physicians who took care of him. They tended to him day and night. They gave him the treatments of the time, which were mainly, like, opium and quinine, lots of mercury, all the good stuff.

[audience laughs]

Sydnee:

Uh, but nothing helped. And unfortunately, he died five days later. Now, um, what's strange is that we were never really sure what got him. Uh, it was recorded at the time that it was cholera, but a lot of diarrhea was blamed on cholera then.

So later on, people started thinking it probably wasn't cholera. So then it was thought, like, "Well, maybe it was typhoid since now we know there was this White House swamp and there was probably typhoid everywhere, um, maybe he got typhoid."

Except one historian in the 1990s [laughs], Clara Rising, thought, "You know what? Maybe he was poisoned." Now, why did she think this? [laughs].

Because Taylor adamantly opposed slavery despite the fact, as I found out, he was a slave owner. He did oppose slavery and he was fighting to ensure that all the new states that were being added out West would not allow slavery or slavery in those states.

And so, there were a lot of people in the South who wanted him dead. Uh, and the president that followed him after he died, Millard Fillmore, was fine with allowing slavery everywhere so there was this thought like, "Ooh, maybe he was assassinated by someone from the South."

So Rising was so convinced of this that she decided she wanted to prove it by exhuming his body. 'Cause she tried to get a hair sample first, but there was no hair sample.

She wanted to prove that there was poison there, uh, and she couldn't find any so she wanted to exhume his body. And the only way she could do that was if she found a family member and got their permission. So she starts calling everybody with the last name Taylor.

[audience laughs]

Sydnee:

This is what she did [laughs]. Uh, eventually, she found a guy who was a descendant of the president. His name was John McIlhenny, McIlhenny. He was 84 years old and he was the great, great, great grandson of Taylor. He's also, by the way, related to the guy who invented Tabasco sauce.

Justin:

All right.

[audience whoops]

Sydnee:

Just so you know. So, all these huge cases, like, she tracks on this guy. He gives permission, and then she has to get permission from the Jefferson County, Kentucky coroner, and the Department of Veterans Affairs. And she goes through all these hoops, and they exhume the body, and they study the hair looking for arsenic. And there's not any, because he died of typhoid.
[laughs].

[audience laughs]

Justin:

Oh.

Sydnee:

It's a crazy story [laughs].

Justin:

Wow, man. That's not how I thought it was gonna end.

[audience laughs]

Justin:

But to be fair, I probably would have heard about it before now if it had an ending like that.

Sydnee:

Uh, you'd think that'd be the first thing you'd find, like, when you Google him, like, poisoned.

Justin:

Um, if there is an afterlife and Taylor is watching from heaven, I hate that he had to go through that, huh?

Sydnee:

[laughs].

[audience laughs]

Justin:

What are they—

Sydnee:

I doubt he minded.

Justin:

Oh, no. Come on!

[audience laughs]

Justin:

[groans] It was just typh— Come on.

Sydnee:

It was the cherries. [laughs].

Justin:

It was che— Poor guy.

[theme music plays]

[ad break]

Sydnee:

The last President I want to talk to you about was James Garfield. He was our 20th president in 1881, like, that was the only year he was president. You'll find out why [laughs].

[audience laughs]

Sydnee:

Um, and I know what you're thinking. "Now, wasn't he shot?" We know what killed him, right? [laughs].

Justin:

That's not disease.

Sydnee:

Not... We know that one.

[audience laughs]

Sydnee:

Didn't he...

Justin:

Lead poisoning...

Sydnee:

Come on.

Justin:

... doesn't count.

Sydnee:

But, but there's more to it, okay? And let me say this. I found out a lot about James Garfield. He was kind of a cool dude. He was really smart. He was like a self-made man. Um, he could write in Greek with one hand and Latin with the other, like, at the same time. I don't know what utility you have...

[audience laughs]

Sydnee:

... in that.

Justin:

[coughing] Why would you want to? "I have to get two pressing messages out right now."

[audience laughs]

Sydnee:

[laughs]. You know what he's gonna do when he's drunk at a party every time, like, "Watch this. Cool, right, ladies?"

Justin:

"Cool, right?"

Sydnee:

[laughs].

Justin:

I wrote, "Fart," in both of them.

[audience laughs].

Sydnee:

So, he became president. And like I said, he was a really smart dude. He may have done a lot of great things. Unfortunately, we won't know because

this was the era of the spoil system, which meant that anybody who wanted a position in government, all you had to do was just go ask for it.

Like, you could get an interview with the president and demand, no matter what your qualifications or experience or anything. So like, he would spend lots of time, all the presidents did, interviewing people for government positions.

One of the people he interviewed was a man named Charles Guiteau, and he was kind of a loser, really. Uh, he had tried a lot of different things. He tried to be a lawyer for a while. He tried to be an evangelical preacher. Uh, he started a free love commune for a while [laughs], um, but even that didn't work. They actually kicked him out of his own commune [laughs].

Justin:

Oh.

[audience laughs]

Sydnee:

They told him—

Justin:

By trying to make that love a little too free.

Sydnee:

They started calling him Charles Get Out, which isn't like the most clever [laughs] play. But anyway... So he showed up at the White House and he demanded a job as minister to France, and they said, "No, because you don't have any experience doing anything."

So at this point, he decides that he's receiving messages from God that he needs to kill the president because he didn't make him minister to France. So that's what he decides to do. He shines his shoes and he gets a gun, and he goes to a train station where he knows Garfield is gonna be, and he shot him.

Now the thing about it is that where the bullet went in actually, probably if

you got to get shot, wasn't that bad of a place. The wound itself was not fatal. What happened after this is that because the bullet went at about 3.5 inches and it lodged kind of below his pancreas but just in the middle of, kind of a lot of nothing, a lot of not important stuff— I mean, everything is kind of important, but like not the most important stuff that you need.

It's okay. The bullet's okay. But all the physicians around were like, "We're gonna save the president," so they all rush the scene. And there were all these doctors who show up and they're all digging in this wound with their dirty fingers, trying to get this bullet back out to save the poor guy's life.

Uh, Lincoln wants to help. And so, he calls in Dr. D. Willard Bliss. Now, Justin, I have a note right here that I need you to read out loud, Dr. D. Willard Bliss.

Justin:

"Ask me what the D stands for, Justin."

[audience laughs]

Justin:

Okay. What is the D stand for?

Sydnee:

It stands for Doctor.

[audience laughs]

Justin:

That's good. I'll give you that one, Smirl, that's good.

Sydnee:

Listen, his mom named him Doctor. [laughs].

[audience laughs]

Justin:

I mean, cold shot right there, right?

Sydnee:

And he, what? And like, and as you would imagine, if you're named Doc— Like he was arrogant and he was reckless and he was a man who knew—

Justin:

"Well, you can't fire me."

Sydnee:

[laughs]. "No, I'm Doctor."

[audience laughs]

Justin:

I'll still be a doctor.

Sydnee:

"If you could take it away, I'm still Doctor." He had no regard for antiseptic technique. Not many people did at the time. Um, and he refused to believe, also, that...

He kind of looked at him and said, "I know where this bullet is, and it is definitely, um, on the right side of your body and not the left, so we're gonna keep probing towards the right side of your body and try to find this bullet." So he kept searching for the bullet. Uh, in the meantime, he was giving him like quinine, a lot of morphine, lots of brandy...

Justin:

How was it a debate?

Sydnee:

... some mercury [laughs]. Uh, he actually, at one point, called in Alexander Graham Bell, who had invented this thing which was—

Justin:

All right. Can you call a better doctor, please?

[audience laughs]

Sydnee:

[laughs]. It was called an induction balance device and it was basically a metal detector. And he called him in to use this brand new, what we would think of now as a metal detector, to just search the right side of his body for the bullet—

He wouldn't even let him look on the left. He was so certain that it was on the right. Well, obviously he didn't find the bullet and they kept digging and all and all. About a dozen or so doctors at some point had their finger inside this poor man. Um—

Justin:

Aww.

Sydnee:

Yeah. You can imagine, over time, the wound was like 20 inches long. It was—

[audience gasps]

Sydnee:

It was quite infected. It was pouring pus. Um, he got very sick. And 80 days later, he died, unfortunately. Now, what's [laughs]—

Justin:

How long?

Sydnee:

80 days.

Justin:

That's a cool 80 days, huh?

[audience laughs]

Justin:

That's a cool, that's a cool nearly three months to have for your last of them. Mm-hmm, good. That's definitely how I wanna spend them. Me too. I get

Phileas Fogg was like, "Hey, you wanna come chill on a balloon?" And then he was like, "No. What I'm gonna do is I'm gonna align the table and let doctors just, like, get up in there..."

Sydnee:

[laughs].

[audience laughs]

Justin:

"... 'til I'm dead. Okay?"

Sydnee:

At least... I mean, they did give him a lot of brandy.

Justin:

Oh, that's cool. That's cool.

[audience laughs]

Sydnee:

[laughs]. After he died, his murderer, Charles Guiteau, went on trial, of course, for it. They knew he was the one who shot him. And he actually, he pled guilty to shooting him. He admitted he did, but he pled not guilty to murdering him. And what he said was, "Listen, I just shot him. His doctors killed him."

Justin:

Fair, right? Fair defense?

Sydnee:

Which, while true, did not hold up. He was found guilty. [laughs].

[audience laughs]

Justin:

Nah, nah, nah, nah. "I was just trying to spook the guy. I don't know what happened."

Sydnee:

[laughs].

Justin:

"Just trying to put a scare into him." Um, wow. So, you guys, you guys don't come out great in this one, huh?

Sydnee:

No. [laughs].

Justin:

You guys don't come out...

Sydnee:

No. We... No.

Justin:

... too bright.

Sydnee:

We rarely do at this point in history [laughs].

Justin:

Yeah, it's not a hot time for you all.

Sydnee:

No. I mean, that's what every one of these, as you read 'em, it's like, "What did we do? We gave him, you know, like some opium and some mercury and some quinine, and then he died. I don't know."

[audience laughs]

Justin:

Um—

Sydnee:

We'll do it again next time and see what happens.

Justin:

Um, hey everybody, this has been so much fun. Thank you so much for having us. This was great.

[audience cheers]

Justin:

Um, we're gonna take a 15-minute intermission, and then we'll be, uh, right back with My Brother, My Brother and Me. But until then, my name is 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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