

Sawbones 487: Knock Knock Hi

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Clint: 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: Hello everybody, and welcome to *Sawbones*, a marital tour of misguided medicine. I am your cohost, Justin McElroy.

Sydnee: And I'm Sydnee McElroy.

Justin: And Sydnee, I am so excited.

Sydnee: Me too.

Justin: I'm tenterhooks, I'm on eggshells, these are bad ones. What's a good— Cloud nine? Better.

Sydnee: Yeah, I was gonna say, eggshell— That's not a good—

Justin: That's good— That's not a good.

Sydnee: "I'm on eggshells." [chuckles]

Justin: Today we are joined by, I guess, kind of like an alternate universe reality. If there's a multiverse of our life experience.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Justin: [wheezes]

Will: [chuckles]

Justin: We are joined by Will & Kristen Flanary. You may know them better as the Glaucomfleckens. Am I saying that correctly?

Will: You are.

Justin: Glaucom—

Will: No, that was great.

Justin: The Glaucomfleckens.

Kristen: Yeah, nice job.

Will: Yeah, a lot of people trip over it, I get a lot of like, “glockenflocken,” “glockenspiel.”

Kristen: “Glockenspiel.”

Justin: I said it a hundred times in the mirror, so.

Will: [chuckles]

Kristen: Mm-hmm.

Justin: That— It was worth every second.

Sydnee: We did practice.

Will: It’s very good.

Sydnee: [laughs]

Justin: We did practice to each other.

Will: It’s good.

Justin: Saying it in different styles.

Will: Outside of ophthalmology, it’s an unknown term, but it’s an actually medical term. I don’t know.

Justin: I’m sure a lot of our listeners are familiar with your all’s work.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Justin: Especially 'cause they email us about it regularly.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Will: [wheezes]

Justin: To say, "Did you all know that there's this other parallel universe version of you guys?" [chuckles]

Will: [chuckles]

Kristen: That's funny.

Justin: Tell me about your— Give me the spiel, your pitch, your overall life journey.

Will: Yeah.

Justin: Condensed as much as possible.

Sydnee: [chuckles]

Will: Yeah, well, I mean—

Justin: Within reason.

Will & Kristen: [laugh]

Will: So—

Kristen: Yeah, how far can we actually go here?

Will: We'll keep it short.

Justin: You all have quite a winding journey. A lot of— Yeah, a lot of twists. We don't wanna leave anything out. [chuckles]

Will: Well, I was a pretty happy baby, growing up.

Kristen & Sydnee: [chuckles]

Justin: That's great. That's great.

Will: I was, you know. Kristen was a little bit of a rough around the edges.

Kristen: I was fussier, yeah.

Will: But— No yeah, we met in college.

Justin: Yup.

Will: And then went on to med school. You know, Kris—

Kristen: Well, you did.

Will: I went on to med school, Kristen was in grad school at Dartmouth. And absolutely hated it, it was like the worst experience of her life. And I enjoyed med school a little bit more...

Kristen: Yeah.

Will: ... Than you enjoyed grad school. But anyway, we didn't start the social media stuff really until resi— I was in residency in Iowa.

Kristen: Yip.

Will: And by that point, we had a couple kids, I was— also had—

Kristen: Well, you are really just breezin' through this. That's skippin' a lot here.

Will: Well, that's— it's—

Justin: [laughs] That did miss out— Yeah.

Kristen: [laughs]

Will: I'm tryin' to get to the good stuff here.

Justin: [laughs]

Kristen: Yeah.

Will: [chuckles]

Kristen: Well maybe you should go back in.

Sydnee: Skip the kids, get to the good stuff. [laughs]

Justin: Yeah.

Will & Kristen: [laugh]

Kristen: A few things happened in med school.

Will: A few things happened.

Kristen: That were rather important. [chuckles]

Will: Right, that's true. That's true. So, I guess I'll back up a little bit. We had our first kid in third year of med school, my third year of med school.

Kristen: Fourth year.

Will: Was it fourth year?

Kristen: Yeah.

Will: One of—

Kristen: We split though.

Will: One of the years.

Kristen: I don't know. Late in med school.

Will: I don't know. I took five years— I took an extra year, 'cause you know, I needed some extra time. But we had our first kid, and then not too long after that, I was diagnosed with testicular cancer.

Justin: Mm.

Will: So, I had that goin' for me in med school. Recovered okay, and you know, I was— as far as the comedy stuff, I had started doin' that in high school. I was doin' like some stand-up comedy, just amateur stuff, I was— I never called myself like a professional stand-up comedian.

Justin: Mm-hmm.

Will: Even though I did make 20 bucks once.

Justin: [wheezes]

Sydnee: [chuckles]

Justin: [laughs]

Will: Very excited about that. In med school, I did a little opening set at like a VFW kinda. I don't know.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Will: Anyway, rural Vermont, very exciting place for comedy.

Justin: [chuckles]

Kristen: [laughs]

Will: Anyway.

Sydnee: [chuckles]

Will: So yeah, I— we— I had the cancer thing, I recovered okay from that, was doing some stand-up comedy stuff. Not medical related stuff at that point really. And then we went to Iowa, where I went to— Kristen was very excited about that. Excited about moving to Iowa right?

Kristen: Yeah, when he told me that that was one of the programs that he was interested in. Which is, turns out, like it's one of the top programs in the country for ophthalmology.

Will: Mm.

Kristen: But all I heard was “Cornfields!”

Sydnee: Mm-hmm. [laughs]

Will: Yeah.

Kristen: So, when he told me about it, I was—

Will: She was skeptical, to say the least.

Kristen: I was not enthused.

Sydnee: Sure.

Kristen: Yeah.

Will: [wheezes] But I was thrilled. I was really happy to— it was a great program. We went out to Iowa, Iowa City. Shout out Iowa City, Hawkeyes, and... we had our second kid while we were there.

Kristen: During residency. So if you are keeping track at home, we now have a med school baby and a residency baby.

Will: Yeah.

Kristen: We’re doin’ everything correctly.

Will: Yeah, right, right, yeah.

Sydnee: That’s tough.

Will: Life was—

Sydnee: Yeah.

Will: It as busy, but we were gettin’ through it.

Kristen: Yip.

Will: And Kristen was working at a centre for gifted education, so doing some programming stuff, some marketing stuff. And then during residency, I had cancer a second time.

Justin: Ooph.

Sydnee: Gosh.

Will: Yeah, so—

Sydnee: That— I have to imagine too, I don't know if you were the kind of med student who had med student syndrome? Where like, you diagnosed yourself with everything that you learned about.

Will: Ahhh.

Sydnee: `Cause like I definitely did.

Kristen: He's the opposite.

Will: [laughs]

Kristen: Everything is fine.

Sydnee: [chuckles]

Will: Well, for others.

Sydnee: That'd be very—

Kristen: Ah.

Justin: [cackles]

Sydnee: I kept imagining—

Kristen: [giggles]

Sydnee: I kept imagining I had things—

Will: [chuckles]

Sydnee: — but I didn't.

Justin: [claps]

Sydnee: And so, for me, that would've been— I just can't imagine how—

Will: Oh yeah.

Sydnee: — anxiety-provoking, like, "Oh, I was right this time."

Justin: Twice!

Sydnee: "I had this fear—"

Justin: Twice! "I was right twice!"

Sydnee: "And it's ju—" Yeah. I— That must've been scary. [chuckles]

Will: Well, I was— Yeah, yeah. I mean I certainly at one point I had ALS, you know.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Will: And like all these other diseases that get stuck in your brain.

Sydnee: Yup.

Will: I totally relate to that. But it was kinda the opposite though, like when I felt this lump in my testicle, I tried really hard to convince myself it's— it was nothing. Like, "Oh, I'm just— That's just my epididymis."

Kristen: "Testicles are lumpy."

Justin: Hey.

Will: "It's just a little, you know, somethin' there."

Justin: You know what, Will? Let's use the platform here a little bit.

Will: [wheezes]

Kristen: [giggles]

Justin: What would you— 'Cause I'll be honest with you... I think that a lot of people with testicles have the sense, or at least I do. I'll speak for myself, right? I have the sense that if there was a problem goin' on down there.

Will: Mm.

Justin: It is solely my responsibility. I am the front lines of testicle care in this house.

Sydney: Mm-hmm.

Kristen: [giggles]

Justin: [wheezes] Especially since I— Nobody else has testicles.

Will: Right.

Justin: I'm the front line of testicles.

Kristen: Nobody has testicles in this house.

Will: Yeah.

Justin: What is—

Will: Even our dog had testicles.

Kristen: [giggles]

Justin: [wheezes]

Will: We took those.

Kristen: We got those removed.

Will: So, I am—

Kristen: So, no testicles here.

Justin: Did you get the fake ones? Those plastic ones that are supposed to— for the dogs that are supposed to...?

Will: [wheezes]

Kristen: No. [laughs]

Will: Oh.

Justin: Was it *Shark Tank* that had the—

Sydnee: Yeah.

Justin: Anyway.

Kristen: [laughs]

Will: Wow, that's a product, okay.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Justin: Yeah, they had a zippy name for it too that I don't recall.

Will: [laughs]

Justin: But like what should I be feelin' for?

Kristen: Mm-hmm.

Will: Yeah.

Justin: If people with testicles are worried about it, what would you be checkin' for real quick?

Will: So, I felt like it was just clearly like my testicle was growing another testicle.

Sydnee: Mm.

Will: It was like this— It was like my testicle was dividing. There was this huge— It was very hard feeling, like compared to a normal testicle, which is a little spongy, a little, you know, you could squeeze it a little bit.
[wheezes]

Justin: Yeah. Sure.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Justin: Little give in `em. [wheezes]

Will: But the— There's a little give to it, that's right. But this thing that was on the testicle was very hard. And—

Kristen: It was small though.

Will: It was rath— It was pretty small.

Justin: It was very small.

Sydnee: Mm.

Will: `Cause I caught it very early.

Kristen: Yeah.

Will: And— I mean fortunately, I just— I guess I just, you know, spent a lot of time just— I was very comfortable with my own testicles, so.

Justin: Gotta be thorough, right. Yeah.

Will: Gotta be thorough.

Kristen: Yeah, I feel like men don't need any extra encouragement to just be feelin' their balls, so.

Sydnee: [laughs]

Will: Yeah.

Kristen: You know, just while you're down there.

Will: Yeah, exactly.

Justin: Yeah.

Kristen: Have— Pay attention, some attention.

Justin: That's fair. That's something you've brought to my attention before, just a tendency to just have—

Sydnee: Well just sort of straighten or rearrange or sort of like—

Justin: [chuckles] Just sort of like rearrange it.

Kristen: Well yeah.

Justin: That's—

Will: Well, they get in the way.

Sydnee: Maybe not when you're in public, maybe. [laughs]

Will: When they're in the way.

Justin: While you're there, get a quick check in.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Justin: Okay so, the second time. The second...

Will: Yes.

Justin: Cancer diagnosis.

Will: So, the first time around is had the— I had my testicle removed. It's called an orchiectomy. It's a very straightforward, pretty easy surgery to recover from, and fortunately you don't really have to have two testicles for the most part.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Will: Like, fortunately you got an extra there, so.

Kristen: He's just a little bit off balance when he walked, but.

Will: Yeah.

Justin: [cackles]

Will: Just a couple little things. Yeah, exactly.

Justin: Do you— Well I'll ask, 'cause everybody's wondering, did they let you keep it?

Will: Oh, no.

Justin: Okay.

Will: No, they didn't.

Will: I mean, I didn't ask.

Justin: You're looking at me like I wasn't—

Sydnee: You— Mm.

Justin: Like you weren't wondering. Okay.

Sydnee: Not. [laughs]

Kristen: [laughs]

Justin: Ignore me. We'll strike that. No don't— It was just—

Kristen: I'm sure some people were wondering.

Will: Yes.

Kristen: Because I do not put it past any man who has to have their testicle removed to then put it on their shelf.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Will: "Look at this. Look what came outta me."

Justin: [wheezes] To have to dipped in like bronze.

Kristen: Yeah. Yeah.

Will: Yup.

Justin: Or some— [wheezes]

Will: [laughs]

Kristen: [chuckles] Right. [laughs]

Will: I mean when I take cataracts out, people are like, "Can I keep my cataract?"

Kristen: "Can I have it?"

Will: Like no, that's in a thousand pieces, you can't do that, but—

Sydney: It's a common question. We get that on the show a lot.

Justin: Mm-hmm.

Sydney: People asking like, "Are you ever allowed to keep your appendix? Are you ever allowed to keep your gall bladder?" Like I think a lot of people do ask that.

Kristen: Mm-hmm.

Will: Oh yeah.

Justin: Now this— Now I got a dirty look from her.

Will: Yeah.

Justin: This weekend, during the snow that we were all suffering from.

Sydney: Oh no, don't— Oh no.

Justin: Sydnee was digging through her drawers, rooting through her drawers, and she just kept finding teeth.

Kristen: Oh yeah.

Justin: And then I kept hearing her say—

Sydnee: The—

Justin: — “There gotta be more teeth in here.”

Kristen & Will: [laugh]

Justin: And she’s rooting through, looking for more teeth.

Sydnee: I don’t—

Kristen: I know exactly what this is. Yup.

Will & Justin: [wheeze]

Sydnee: Yeah, I don’t—

Kristen: [chuckles]

Sydnee: Hey, I don’t have a heart to throw them away.

Will: [chuckles]

Sydnee: But I had to put them somewhere where the children would never discover them.

Kristen: Right.

Justin: [snorts]

Sydnee: And they just landed in my underwear drawer. [chuckles] That’s where they landed!

Kristen: `Cause that's where you put all the things you don't want [chuckles] anybody finding. [laughs]

Sydnee: `Cause they're not gonna look in there. Like they're not gonna look in there.

Justin: [laughs]

Sydnee: So...

Kristen: [laughs]

Sydnee: But they're just loose in there, which does— it does make me look like, I don't know, a serial killer or something.

Will: Like, "This is—"

Sydnee: [chuckles]

Will: "This is fewer teeth than I would expect in my underwear draw. This is—"

Kristen: Yeah, you—

Sydnee: Yeah. [chuckles]

Kristen: I just hope that your teeth and your underwear didn't get mixed up.

Justin: [wheezes]

Kristen: And then it was like that movie, you know, what's the mov— [wheezes]

Will: That's teeth?

Justin: What's the movie where teeth and underwear get mixed— [wheezes]

Kristen: No no.

Sydnee: Which movie is this?

Kristen: The movie is where it's a—

Will: Oh, the woman has teeth in her vagina?

Kristen: Yes.

Sydnee: Ohhh yeah.

Kristen: [laughs]

Justin: Oh yeah.

Will: It's a movie, it's like a real movie.

Sydnee: Uh-huh.

Kristen: It's like a horror movie.

Justin: What? [sighs]

Sydnee: Vagina dentata.

Will: Apparently it was very well reviewed too.

Kristen: [laughs]

Justin: Yeah— It was old school too. It was—

Will: Tee— I think it was just called *Teeth*.

Kristen: Yeah, *Teeth*.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Justin: *Titanic*.

Will: It was called *Teeth*, yeah. There you go.

Justin: [wheezes]

Sydnee: [chuckles]

Kristen: Yeah, so be careful for that situation.

Sydnee: Alright.

Justin: Yeah, watch out.

Kristen: [chuckles]

Will: Well, no. So I don't have in the— So I don't have testicles in my underwear draw.

Kristen: Correct.

Justin: [snorts]

Will: They don't— I don't keep them there.

Justin: Good to know.

Sydnee: Sure.

Will: They're in a lab somewhere, both of them, 'cause the second time around I had— also had to have a second testicle removed.

Justin: Mm, right.

Will: Which was a more harrowing experience, 'cause I wasn't quite sure what to expect. I had to like, you know, do I bank sperm? Do I...

Justin: Mm, mm-hmm.

Will: You know, get a prosthetic testicle? I ended up not, I'm just goin' ballless. Which— And what I've learned is that testicles generally are kind of over-rated, in a lot of ways.

Justin: I'm sure, yeah.

Will: Like if you got— Yeah, I mean they're great for havin' kids, right?

Kristen: [chuckles]

Will: But you know, you—

Kristen: But how many times do you wanna do that, you know?

Will: Right, exactly.

Justin: Never again.

Kristen: And all the rest of the time they're just danglin' there.

Justin: Never again for the rest of my life.

Kristen: Exactly. [laughs]

Sydnee: No.

Justin: So.

Sydnee: Twice and done.

Justin: Twice and never.

Sydnee: That was us. [chuckles]

Kristen: Same.

Justin: Twice and never again.

Will: You know, there's supplemental testosterone, there's like a ton of different options now.

Justin: Sure.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Will: And so you can live a normal life.

Kristen: Well, so for those who aren't medical, I didn't realize... 'Cause I'm not a doctor, I didn't realize how... how many things testosterone does.

Sydnee: Mm.

Kristen: You only ever hear about it in like one or two very specific, you know, contexts and— But it's like very involved in your just like overall health also.

Will: Yeah, like your mood, your energy level.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Kristen: And like your bones.

Will: Yeah, yeah, exactly.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Will: So it's a really important hormone and it's, you know, easily replaced.

Kristen: Yeah.

Will: So.

Kristen: So.

Justin: Kristen, can you talk a little bit about your experience through this, when you are with someone who is like a medical professional.

Like I know that when I talk to Sydnee, I'm always kind of wondering like, "Are you toning this down? Are you making this like more comfortable for me to hear? Are you like dumbing it down so I'll get it?"

Kristen: Right.

Sydnee: Mm.

Justin: How did you all sorta like bridge that communication— Like make that communication work between the two of you, and like do you think that has been applicable to the work you've done since in science communication.

Kristen: That's a good question. If anything, I feel like it's the other way around. Like I'm asking him questions that he's like, "Wha— It doesn't matter. Why are you asking this inane like very specific, detailed, scientific question?" Like—

Will: You're a very detail-oriented person.

Kristen: Yeah. And my... graduate program, I went to grad school for social psychology and cognitive neuroscience, so I had to have quite a bit of biology.

Justin: Sure, yeah.

Kristen: And even took a med school class, and so you know, I have just enough to be able to like... Just enough to be dangerous, I guess.

Justin: Mm.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

Kristen: Where like, I can follow along and understand but I'm not gonna know all the ins and outs.

Will: Mm.

Kristen: But I feel like I kept up pretty well.

Will: Yeah.

Kristen: Like even in the sca— Like I was used to doing fMRIs on people's brains, so even when we went in for the scans to find out whether it was cancer or not, like I could see what—

Justin: Oh yeah.

Kristen: I could tell what I was looking at and all that.

Justin: Right on.

Kristen: So, I don't know, I think I annoy you with the questions—

Will: Well and—

Kristen: — more than you dumb things down for me.

Will: Well and I was learning a lot too, 'cause I'm an ophthalmologist.

Kristen: Yeeeah.

Justin: Sure.

Will: Right.

Justin: Yeah.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Will: That's a totally different type of ball.

Sydnee: Yeah. [laughs]

Justin: [wheezes]

Will: That's not the type of ball I'm normally talking about, so.

Kristen: About the same size though.

Will: Very similar.

Kristen: Yeah.

Will: Actually. But so yeah, it was— A lot of this stuff was new to me as well.

Justin: Wow.

Will: So we were learning a lot of it together and what the surveillance schedule is like, and... you know, like what can expect after. It was all— honestly, a lot of— Especially with the testosterone stuff, like that lev—

Kristen: That's been the hardest part.

Will: That—

Justin: Yeah.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Will: Because it— a lot of— It's a controlled substance, basically.

Justin: Sure yeah.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Will: And so the whole insurance and health— [sighs] It's a whole can of worms to get into, right. But you know, it's just very frustrating and—

Kristen: Well, and it's been like seven years I think now of trying to find the right dose.

Will: Yeah.

Kristen: And the right delivery method to get him to the levels that he needs, and in the meantime, his PMS has been like worse than mine has ever, been so you know, it's—

Will: It's never been more under control than right— then at this point though.

Kristen: Yes.

Will: We figured it out.

Kristen: Yeah.

Will: [chuckles]

Sydnee: Aw.

Kristen: Yes, we are finally making progress, but yeah, it was a process.

Will: Well, but what I learned, from talking to my urologist— Actually talkin' to a lot of urologists, so going to speak at different conferences.

I've spoken at a couple of urology conferences, and I've spoken to some people who have been in practice for over 30 years, and they said they have never— One— Like on person had seen one time in their entire career someone who had two primary testicular cancers, one in each testicle.

Sydnee: Wow.

Will: It's extremely rare for that to happen.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Will: Usually there's just one and that's it.

Kristen: One and done!

Justin: One and done.

Will: One and done, but I had two primaries and both— which I didn't realize was as rare, and so that makes it a lot harder to get the right testosterone levels.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Kristen: Yeah, 'cause he just needs way more than most people do.

Will: Yeah, yeah.

Sydnee: Sure. That—

Will: Because I have—

Kristen: Because most people still have one.

Will: Well plus, I'm just, I'm trying to get huge. I'm trying to lift.

Sydnee: [chuckles]

Justin: Sure, yeah!

Kristen: Yeah, you can see it.

Will: I'm really—

Kristen: He's very [chuckles] bulked.

Will: I— You know, I'm using this to my advantage.

Kristen: [chuckles]

Will: Because when I'm gonna be 60, like I'll have like quadruple the testosterone of my peers.

Justin: Yeah.

Sydnee: There you go.

Will: 'Cause I'm already on— 'Cause I'm already on the juice.

Justin: Yeah. [chuckles]

Sydnee: There you go.

Will: I'm already on the stuff.

Kristen & Justin: [giggle]

Sydnee: That's—

Justin: They'll come to you for the juice. "Do you have any extra?"

Will: That's right.

Justin: "Tell me how to deal with the juice."

Sydnee: That's really interesting. I understand those struggles. I provide gender-affirming care here in West Virginia. There aren't a lot of us who do, and so I understand the insurance struggles. I know the people who do the priors through our state Medicaid now. Like when I call, I'm like, "Oh hey. It's me again."

Kristen: [chuckles] Yeah.

Will: [wheezes]

Sydnee: "Testosterone." [chuckles]

Will: [chuckles] Right.

Sydnee: "Yup, same old same old."

Will: Yeah.

Sydnee: Because I have to go through the process every single time.

Kristen: Yeah.

Sydnee: And it is such a struggle, and it's also an area of medicine where I feel like we're still evolving our understanding of like dosing and what is the best schedule and the best amount, and it's individualized for different patients.

Justin: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: And so there's still so much we have to learn there, and it can be really challenging to find just the right thing for that patient.

Will: [sighs]

Justin: Okay, we're gonna take a quick break.

Will: Okay.

Justin: We'll go to the Billing Department.

Will: Alright, let's do it.

Kristen: [laughs]

Sydnee: Alright, let's go.

[transition music plays]

[ad break]

Justin: Okay, and we're back. Thank you, Justin and Sydnee. What an ad.

Will & Kristen: [chuckle]

Sydnee: Can I say, by the way, any of our listeners out— This has been very interesting to us. Outside of the US, we started to get these emails when we had the Billing Department, asking why did we have a Billing Department and what was the Billing Department.

That was a very interesting thing, as we started to do this show, like, "Oh, 'cause we bill you here."

Justin: We got— Yeah, here you gotta pay for it.

Sydnee: "Here in this country."

Justin: [wheezes] It's wild, yeah.

Kristen: Yeah. [laughs]

Sydnee: "Here in this country, we bill you for that, and so we have a Billing Department," but it was very interesting to get emails—

Will: Uh-huh.

Sydnee: — like, "Why would a doctor have a Billing Department?"

Kristen: Right.

Justin: Yeah.

Will: Yeah, like, "What are you talking about?"

Justin: It'd be like a firefighter showing up—

Sydnee: Ohhh. [chuckles] Yeah.

Will: [wheezes]

Justin: — and being like, "I need 80 bucks or I'm outie."

Kristen: Yeah.

Sydnee: Funny that they're like, "Why do you have this?"

Kristen: Yeah.

Justin: Alright, so, we're in residency.

Will: Yes. So, we— I'm in residency, I have lost both my testicles, we have two children. I have some sperm in the bank, a very expensive process, by the way.

Sydnee: Mm.

Will: It's a—

Justin: I'm sure.

Will: It's a whole thing. But... And then I graduated residency, got my first job, which is the job I'm still at now in Portland, Oregon, private practice ophthalmology. Lovin' life, it's great. Finally done with residency, get to start payin' back all my student loans. Kristen is... you were still working remotely.

Kristen: Yeah, I kept the job that I had in Iowa.

Will: With the same job you were at.

Kristen: Just inhibited to—

Will: Yeah.

Kristen: — remote work instead.

Will: And then at this point, I was starting to do the glaucomflecken thing. So I— That started as sec— I was a second-year resident, in— at Iowa, and it was more just I couldn't do stand-up anymore, I didn't have time to like go and do like open mics and comedy sets and things.

So, I used Twitter at the time, that was really the only thing I was on, as kind of a surrogate for stand up. So I was just tellin' my jokes on Twitter, generating a following. Moved to Portland, and then shortly after— Not shortly after, I guess a couple years later, things were going great.

Kristen: Well wait, hold on, hold on, hold on. Twitter was where the name came from, 'cause he was still anonymous at that point.

Will: Oh, that's right.

Kristen: 'Cause he was in residency and he didn't wanna like—

Justin: Oh, right.

Will: I was afraid of—

Kristen: — jeopardize anything. [chuckles]

Sydnee: Oh yeah.

Will: I was afraid of ruining my medical career. As many— As many trainees are whenever they're putting themselves out there on social media. Because there weren't a lot of people that were trying to do kinda what I was doing.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Will: With combining being a physician and legit like comedy. And so, there was— I did get like a lot of pushback. You know, a lot of people who are just like, "Oh, doctors, you can't be saying stuff like this. You can't be telling jokes, you can't— That's not professional."

Sydnee: Yeah.

Will: I got a lot of unprofessional accusations there—

Kristen: From the same demographic of person, for the most part.

Will: [chuckles]

Kristen: And I will just leave you to your imagination—

Justin: [chuckles]

Kristen: — of what demographic that was.

Sydnee: [chuckles]

Will: You know, it's just the old guard. It was, you know.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Will: 'Cause that's how— that's how physicians u— People are growing up revering physicians, and they're this, you know, you know, professional...

Kristen: Like a deity, almost.

Will: Exactly.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Will: Put 'em up on a pedestal. And so to see someone like, you know, makin' fun of themselves and other specialties, you know, it just like—

Kristen: Yeah, people accused you of like, "You're gonna erode the trust."

Sydnee: [scoffs]

Will: Yeah.

Kristen: "In doctors," you know.

Justin: Listen, there's a lot of doctors on TV—

Will: Yeah. [wheezes]

Justin: — that are already doing a killer job of that.

Kristen: Right?

Will: Right?

Sydnee: Yeah.

Justin: And do not need y'all's help whatsoever. [wheezes]

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Kristen: Exactly.

Will: The Dr Oz existed already, so—

Kristen: Yeah.

Justin: I mean, exists on the planet.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Justin: That really—

Kristen: [laughs]

Will: By the time I was doin' my thing. And— But it was a lot of fun. And I remember, by the time I left... Iowa, I had like almost 10,000 followers on Twitter. I was very proud of myself.

Kristen: Hot stuff!

Will: For like a while.

Sydnee: [chuckles]

Kristen: [laughs]

Will: “Look at thi— Look what I’ve built!”

Kristen & Sydnee: [chuckle]

Will: “This empire I’ve built with my 10—” No other social media platform, it was just Twitter.

Justin: Yeah.

Sydnee: Mm.

Will: And so... I— Me and my family and my 10,000 Twitter followers, we went out to Portland, Oregon. And you know, kept doing pretty much the same stuff, social media-wise, and life was good. And then the pandemic hit.

Kristen: Mm-hmm.

Will: You know, and that came with all kinds of challenges. We closed down the— our offices and...

Kristen: Mm-hmm.

Will: That’s when I started— I— All of a sudden, I had all this time on my hands, because as—

Kristen: And no testicles to be feelin’. So.

Will: Right.

Justin: [laughs]

Will: In that scenario—

Justin: That frees up 10 to 20 minutes every day.

Will: Riiiiight.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Justin: That’s all happening.

Sydnee: The time—

Will: So “What am I going to do with my—”

Kristen: [chuckles]

Will: Well, you know, as other physicians were being like, redeployed to the hospital to help during the pandemic, as an ophthalmologist, I was not asked to do that.

Sydnee: [laughs]

Will: Which probably surprises nobody.

Kristen: Shocking, right?

Justin: Yeah.

Will: And so, I started makin’ TikToks. And I started makin’—

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Will: You know, that was like really early— That was when TikTok, I don’t know if you guys remember or were on TikTok at the time, but it was— it just blew up.

Justin: Yeah.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Will: During lockdown.

Kristen: Yeah, ‘cause everybody’s at home and has nothin’ to do, so.

Justin: Everybody got on, yeah.

Will: Yeah.

Justin: I remember Sydnee, a lot of times during the lockdown, like hurriedly coming in to show me one of your TikToks.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Justin: And showing it to me, and like it— So it was wild to see you all, you know, pop up.

Will: Yeah.

Justin: And like—

Sydnee: Well, I also really appreciated the over-worked, under-appreciated family doctor.

Will: Right.

Justin: Yes.

Sydnee: That you depict.

Kristen: Very controversial character.

Sydnee: Yes. [chuckles]

Justin: [chuckles]

Kristen: Yeah.

Will: That was— That's the character that got me into the most trouble with people, actually.

Justin: Really?

Sydnee: Why?

Will: Yeah, yeah. You'd be surprised. I had a lot of... at— When I first started makin' videos with that character—

So this character, in case people don't know, it's this— It's a family medicine physician who is disheveled appearing, glasses askew, over-worked, under-appreciated. That's the point of the character.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Will: It's like, "Look how hard this person's working, and is not getting the appreciation they deserve." Well, I actually got—

Every time I'd put out a video with this character, I would get a couple emails from people, from family physicians, saying that I was pushing med students away from family medicine. Like I'm worsening the primary care crisis. [wheezes]

Sydnee: Aww, no. I mean I can understand why someone would like knee-jerk that, but the thing is it's the profession itself that is pushing students away.

Will: Right. [wheezes]

Sydnee: And lying about it. [chuckles]

Will: Right.

Kristen: Yes.

Sydnee: Lying about it doesn't help. Anyone.

Justin: Make it better if you don't want to lose people, yeah.

Kristen: Right.

Sydnee: And I try to always— 'Cause I work in academic medicine, and so I try to always be very honest with students. "This is what you're getting into." And try to help them see like I still am glad I made the choices I made.

Will: Yeah.

Sydnee: There— you can find a niche sometimes, so it's not everything all the time. I don't know. I mean, I didn't take it that way at all. For me, it's celebrating that we do all this stuff, I do feel like we get undervalued a lot of the time for it.

Will: And most people felt that way. Like that—

Sydnee: Yeah!

Will: This was just a few— It was just surprising, I didn't get that kind of pushback from any of my other portrayals of all the other specialties. Something about— And I— What I think it was is just like... family medicine physi— Primary care in general just gets... stepped on.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Will: A lot. In a lot of different way. So I feel like just— there's a little bit more sensitivity.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Will: Around, you know, people poking fun at primary care just in general. And so I think there was just some sensitivity there that I tapped into. But yeah, it's like I wasn't saying anything that no— people didn't already know.

Sydnee & Justin: Mm-hmm.

Will: Like, there's— It wasn't— I was just highlighting it.

Sydnee: Exactly.

Kristen: And if anything, like I felt like you were sympathy— are sympathetic to family medicine's challenges.

Will: Oh yeah. Well, that was the point of the whole—

Kristen: Yeah, that was the whole character, so.

Will: Yeah.

Sydnee: That— I felt like that definitely came through. And when you partnered that with your depictions of rural docs. Because the entire state of West Virginia is considered "rural," by definition. [chuckles]

Will: Mm.

Sydnee: So. [chuckles] I work with lots of rural docs, and so as a— with all my rural family docs, we love what, you know, what you do.

Will: Yeah.

Sydnee: And your depiction of what we do out there, kinda with limited resources and, you know.

Will: Mm. Yeah, those were very popular. People liked the rural [chuckles] medicine.

Justin: Where were—

Sydnee: I love those, yeah.

Justin: Where are we at? What year? I guess we're in 2020, right?

Will: Yes.

Kristen: Okay, yeah. In 2020.

Justin: Okay.

Will: Yeah, this is 2020.

Kristen: Okay 2020, it's like March I think you get on TikTok.

Will: March, yeah.

Kristen: April, we get our first mortgage.

Will: Yeah, we finally bought a house.

Kristen: We're in like—

Will: This is great.

Kristen: — our mid-30s at this point.

Will: Yeah!

Kristen: And we finally are able to buy a house.

Will: Yeah, very fortunate, and then—

Kristen: And then May...

Will: Is— May I— We went to— It was like right after Mother's Day.

Justin: Mm-hmm.

Will: I... We were—

Kristen: You're gonna— You're thinkin' "He's gonna be gettin' be some really nice gift."

Justin: Yeah.

Will: No, I woke up and I found a lump in my third testicle.

Justin: [wheezes]

Sydnee: [laughs]

Justin: Dun dun duuuun!

Kristen: [laughs]

Will: No, it was— Plot twist.

Justin: The twist no-one saw coming.

Will: Plot twist. No, I— we went to bed, and...

Kristen: On Mother's Day.

Will: On Mother's Day. And at about 4 o'clock in the morning, I started like gasping for breath in my sleep. Kristen— It woke Kristen up. Well you should tell the story.

Kristen: Yeah, I was gonna say, why are you telling it?

Will: [wheezes]

Kristen: You weren't there.

Justin: You weren't like really there.

Will: Yeah.

Kristen: [laughs]

Justin: Okay.

Kristen: Yeah no. Uh... He— Right, he started making these really weird sounds and It was 4:45, so I was like being awoken from a very deep sleep, right?

Justin: Right.

Kristen: And so I was a little groggy and confused. First, I thought he was just snoring, so I kind of like, you know, just "Ugh, quit it." Trying to push him over to get him to stop snoring, but he doesn't respond at all. Which was a little unusual, so then I started like kinda like—

Will: Slapping me in the face.

Kristen: Trying a little harder, like slap his face a little bit.

Sydnee: Mm.

Kristen: Not slap, but just kinda, you know. And he didn't respond to that, and so then I started gettin' really concerned, because the sounds also were like picking up in... They sounded like... I don't know, they just had this like, urgent, panicked, desperate quality to them. And so I called 911. And this is May of 2020.

Sydnee: Mm

Justin: [inhales harshly] Oh god, yeah.

Kristen: And he's making these like, respiratory sounds.

Sydnee: Ugh.

Kristen: And so obviously, I'm thinking...

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Kristen: "This is Covid related."

Justin: Sure yeah.

Kristen: We di— We hardly knew anything about it at that time, right?

Sydnee: Yeah.

Kristen: So— But I called 911. And I remember as it was ringing, I don't know why I did this, TV maybe, I don't know, but I just I put my head on his chest, and it like, registered that his chest is not moving.

Justin: Mm.

Kristen: And I don't hear anything.

Justin: Okay.

Kristen: But it didn't like sink in, it was just like a fact. Like I was going through some sort of like mental checklist, from who knows where. But I called 911, and she's the one, the dispatcher is the one that told me to start doing CPR, like I had no— I wasn't thinking anything about his heart, despite just having listened to it.

Sydnee: Mm.

Kristen: And not heard anything. So that was— It was just so bizarre. So I did 10 minutes of CPR. I couldn't move him off the bed. He's 6'4" and I'm like 5'3" if I have my shoes on.

And besides that, I have like— I have symptomatic hypermobility and I had just had a cervical disc replacement a couple months before. And I was kinda still recovering from that neck surgery.

Sydnee: Oh my gosh.

Kristen: And so I couldn't move him and have any confidence in my ability— Like I was worried about whacking his head on the nightstand and making everything even worse, right? So I just did it on the bed.

Will: This is poor timing on my part.

Kristen: Yeah.

Will: It was—

Kristen: Really very rude.

Justin: Yeah, very rude. I was gonna say.

Kristen: Yeah.

Will: Not great.

Justin: At least it was technically after Mother's Day, 'cause it was 4AM.

Sydnee: Mm.

Kristen: Yeah, right right.

Will: But I mean it was 10 minutes.

Justin: Yeah.

Will: She had 10 minutes of continuous chest compressions.

Sydnee: Wow.

Kristen: Yeah.

Will: Which for those of you who are not in medicine, it's— that's an extremely long time to be doing non-stop chest compressions.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Kristen: Yeah, well like I said, we just had a mortgage, and we had two little kids in the next room.

Will: [wheezes]

Justin: Yeah, man.

Kristen: “You are not leaving me here!”

Will: Yeah.

Justin: “Not today,” no yeah no.

Sydnee: Yeah. [laughs]

Kristen: [giggles]

Justin: “Over this—”

Kristen: “Over my dead body, not yours!”

Sydnee: [chuckles]

Justin: And Kri—

Kristen: So.

Justin: And Kris, please feel free to ignore this question if it’s too tough to talk about, but how often do you bring this up in arguments? Because for me, it would be—

Sydnee: [chuckles]

Kristen: [laughs]

Justin: — 100% of the time. Like 100%.

Kristen: It’s just a standing agreement. Like a blanket.

Will: Yeah.

Justin: [wheezes] You just stand— You don't need to verbalize it.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Kristen: Yeah. Just a look I give him.

Will: Like I don't— You don't win arguments anymore.

Kristen: [laughs]

Will: If— When your spouse saves your life.

Justin: Yeah, that right has passed. [laughs]

Will: It's done. [chuckles]

Kristen: [chuckles]

Justin: You can maybe get out with your dignity at this point.

Will: That's about it.

Kristen: Yeah.

Sydnee & Kristen: [laugh]

Justin: So talk to me about a podcast. How did that— How did you all like hit upon that? Where did that start?

Will: Well, I mean, that— [sighs] That started about a year and a half ago. And we had talked for a while as like we have so many interesting things that we've experienced in life. Like we should do something.

We already had— I had this social media following already, it was like we could do something together. So we had talked about doing a podcast, but like many things in life, it sounded like a lot of work.

Justin: Mm.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Kristen: [laughs]

Will: And so it was very easy to just like not do it.

Justin: Sure.

Will: But then, you know, we were approached by this group of— that was—

Kristen: It was a podcast network.

Will: It was a podcast— Well they were building a podcast network.

Kristen: Yeah.

Justin: Mm.

Will: Called Human Content, that's the producers that we're with now. And they had— they had been in the podcasting game, the media game for quite a while and they were starting their own thing now.

So it was a group of three people, and they reached out, they had seen my content and it was like, "Hey, you know, we're this podcast network. Do you wanna, you know, do you wanna talk through some ideas?"

And so just right timing with where we were, where they were, and we ran with it, and it's— You know, we called it *Knock Knock Hi with the Glaucomfleckens* because [chuckles] the videos that really catapulted my social media presence were these "first day of rotation" videos with med students.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Will: Where every single video I'd go in and be like, "Knock knock, hi. I'm the new med student."

Justin: Oh yeah.

Sydnee: Gotcha, yeah.

Will: So that was the origin of the—

Justin: Right.

Will: Of the title. And it's been... it's been a lot of fun. We've learned a lot, like, you know, doing a podcast together. And just doing something that's more long form.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Will: You know, having fun. We haven't talked about divorce yet.

Kristen: Yeah, well honestly.

Justin: Huge.

Will: So it's working pretty well, in terms of, you know.

Kristen: Yeah. Well he actually doesn't like to talk. Which is funny.

Will: [wheezes]

Kristen: 'Cause now he's a podcaster.

Sydnee: [chuckles]

Kristen: But this is the way that I get him to talk to me.

Will: [chuckles]

Kristen: Is like, "You have to do it now, 'cause we're recording, and people are—"

Sydnee: [laughs]

Kristen: "Are depending on you to do this, so."

Will: Yeah, I'm a little introverted by nature.

Kristen: Yeah.

Will: So it's, you know.

Kristen: So I really just trapped him. Into talking to me.

Will: [wheezes]

Justin: [laughs]

Will: But I feel like we could learn a thing or two from you gu— I mean you've been doin'— How long have you guys been podcasting?

Kristen: Yeah.

Justin: The 11 years that's June.

Sydnee: June.

Justin: Yeah.

Kristen: Yeah, that's so like early on for podcasting.

Will: I mean, you seem like reasonably happy with each other.

Kristen: [chuckles]

Justin: We used to do it— Well we used to do it— When we started we were doing a TV podcast, called *The Satellite Dish*. Well.

Will: Oh.

Justin: Before that it was a [chuckles] *Two and a Half Men* review show. Hosted by people that hadn't watched until Charlie Sheen left the show.

Kristen: [chuckles] Oh ho ho.

Justin: So we started with Ashton Kutcher, it was called *Losing the Sheen*, we made it eight episodes.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Justin: Before we're like, "I don't wanna watch *Two and a Half Men* anymore, sweetie." So yeah.

Kristen & Will: [laugh]

Justin: We did a TV podcast for a year after that called *Satellite Dish*, and then [chuckles] we got into the medicine.

Sydnee: And maybe that was— [sighs] Uh, I guess it was residency is what made that— 'Cause I would've been in residency at the time that we were doing that.

Justin: Mm.

Sydnee: And that was one, we just didn't have— I didn't have time to watch TV. And two, kinda what you alluded to earlier, I was trying to be careful about what— like the me that we were putting out into the world, while I was simultaneously going through my training.

And so, *Sawbones* was like the perfect solution for that. Like we'll do this show that's very— it's buttoned up in that way.

Justin: Right.

Sydnee: We'll talk about medical history.

Will: Right.

Sydnee: We're making jokes. But it's fine. It's professional.

Will: Mm.

Kristen: Right.

Justin: Have you all gotten to the point yet in working together on something like this where you— And I'm cheating a little bit, I know, because I heard you talking about it on a recent episode. [chuckles] Where you realize that as the two co-hosts, and also the two co-parents, you have no— There's no back-up plan for any of it. [wheezes]

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Kristen: [chuckles]

Justin: Like you were talking on the show about getting a note slipped under the door.

Kristen: Mm-hmm. [chuckles]

Will: [wheezes]

Justin: Which was crackin' me up.

Will: [chuckles]

Justin: Because we, like literally the day before with the snow day, similar like scenario, we told our kids like, "If you just go to the playro— Just go play for a half hour. If you could just play for one half hour, we will literally give you anything you want." [wheezes]

Kristen: Right.

Justin: "Like, we'll do anything."

Kristen: Yes.

Justin: "Just one-half hour."

Sydnee: We'll even cave on screen time. I'll like hand them an iPad.

Justin: Yeah.

Kristen: Yeah.

Will: Oh.

Sydnee: Like, "Just watch the YouTube videos that I wish you weren't watching, 'cause I don't think they have educational value. Just watch 'em, go for it."

Justin: Yup.

Kristen: Great.

Sydnee: "Watch the unboxings." [chuckles]

Justin: Yeah, how do you balance everything?

Will: There's a lot of bartering.

Kristen: Yeah.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Will: There's— We— So I definitely relate to that.

Kristen: For sure.

Will: It's gotten easier as they've gotten older, you know.

Kristen: Well and I think it helps like—

Will: You have younger kids than we do.

Kristen: Yeah.

Justin: Yeah.

Will: And so— I mean, if they were like— If we were trying to do this when they were like five.

Kristen: Pause, because we did. I— Well not podcasting, but I have been working remotely since 2017.

Justin: Of course, yeah.

Will: Oh yeah.

Justin: Yeah.

Kristen: From my home.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Justin: Yeah.

Kristen: And we did virtual kindergarten in that time period, we did— That was when like I had someone else as a boss, right.

Justin: Yeah.

Kristen: So, I had to, you know. So, I think that helps a little bit is they're just so used to it. I mean the young one, that's all she really knows. She—

Will: Yeah.

Kristen: She was two when I started working remotely, so we've had to set a lot of ground rules for like—

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Kristen: — what it means when this door is closed, and what's— what you can do, what you can't do, where you go if you need help and we're not available. You know, whatever.

Sydnee: [chuckles]

Kristen: And by "help," I mean like—

Will: [chuckles]

Kristen: — if they want a password or something.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Justin: Yeah.

Will: Unless bone is showing—

Kristen: Yeah.

Will: — we don't— you don't interrupt us.

Justin: Yeah. [chuckles]

Will: That's— No.

Kristen: Right.

Will: I don't know.

Kristen: No.

Justin: [wheezes]

Kristen: But yeah, that— I think that helped. We had some ground rules set to begin with, and yeah, now they're older and they understand what a podcast is, and can—

Will: Sometimes they'll still like the burt— bust in, and like, you know, we have to redo something.

Kristen: Right.

Will: But it happens. You know.

Sydnee: Our problem is our kids really wanna be on 'em now. Especially our oldest.

Kristen: Yeah.

Sydnee: She wants to be on the—

Justin: Yeah.

Sydnee: She wants to do her own show, she wants to be on the show, she has great id— She'll bring me ideas for *Sawbones*, like, "We don't need Daddy for this one, I have an idea."

Kristen: Well, it's the family business for you all.

Justin: Sure.

Sydnee: Yes.

Will: Yeah.

Justin: Right, yeah.

Kristen: Yeah.

Justin: They might as well learn the trade, right?

Kristen: Right.

Sydnee: [laughs]

Justin: As long as they're—

Will: Exact— Put 'em to work.

Kristen: [laughs]

Will: You know, just get— Starting 'em an IRA, there you go.

Justin: Right.

Sydnee: And there we go, mm-hmm.

Justin: Well, I wanted to ask you, the— you've been in the TikTok game, as you were kind of alluding to, pretty early.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Justin: Like I would say an early adopter, somebody who bubbled up pretty early. It is a platform that is, from my perspective, and we've only really made a push trying to like make more of a push into it the last year or so.

It seems like the platform is almost like... Like the most— What's the word I'm trying to say? It seems like the most notable thing about TikTok is how inscrutable the algorithm is, and how quickly it evolves.

Will: Yeah.

Justin: Like to what extent are you, as a content creator, trying to like anticipate that and stay ahead of it?

Will: Gaming the algorithm?

Justin: Or is it more about just making what feels— Yeah.

Will: I don't. In fact, probably to a fault. Like I am— I don't think about the algorithm at all.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Will: I literally— And that's the thing, like you'll see, and this happens with all social media platforms now, but particularly with TikTok and YouTube, you'll see people make videos about like, "What's best for the algorithm? How do you—" And Mr Beast, who's like the biggest, you know content creator in the world.

Justin: Oh yeah.

Sydnee: Yeah, we're familiar.

Justin: We know Mr Beast in this house, yeah.

Sydnee: [chuckles]

Kristen: Mm-hmm. Yeah.

Will: Yeah, right?

Kristen: That.

Will: He's—

Justin: Jimmy. Jimmy do u— Jimmy to—

Sydnee: [laughs]

Kristen: Yeah, that's right. [laughs]

Justin: To his friends that have been forced to watch all of his videos a hundred times.

Will: [wheezes]

Kristen: [laughs]

Justin: Jimmy.

Will: Like he's gone into detail about how he like obsessively has tried to tinker with his content, his thumbnails, whatever it is, to appeal to the algorithm.

Justin: Mm.

Will: And you can see the effect it has, right?

Kristen: Mm.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Will: So, you can do it, it— obviously it works. But I don't have the— I don't have the bandwidth to like— Like I could barely just make content.

Justin: Sure.

Will: And I have time to do that. Feels like I have time to do that, 'cause like, you know, I still work four days a week.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Will: You know, as an ophthalmologist, so I still have that career.

Kristen: Which as an ophthalmologist, is in fact full-time.

Will: That's full-time as an ophthalmologist, yeah.

Justin: [laughs]

Sydnee: [chuckles]

Will: And so, no I really don't think about the algorithm much. At all. I just— I make what I think is fun content to make.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Will: And I—

Kristen: It's always just been his hobby, and it just sort of accidentally became big, and then we were like, "Well I guess we have to do something with this behemoth that we now have."

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Will: Yeah.

Kristen: And so then we like turned it into a business, and I'm running the business side of things and the marketing, so I'm always like, "Hey, what if you did whatever? Like this is trending" or whatever.

Justin: Oh yeah.

Kristen: And he's like, "[scoffs] No."

Will: Like, "Maybe you actually should have a YouTube thumbnail.

Kristen: Yeah.

Justin: [wheezes]

Will: "Instead of just some random screenshot from your video."

Justin: Just screencap, yeah! [laughs]

Will: Which is exactly what I do, what I have been doing. And— But it's— Yeah, it's been a— I didn't get into this to be like, "Oh, I'm gonna make this a career."

Kristen: Right.

Justin: Mm.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Will: It really was my creative— It was a surrogate for doing stand-up, 'cause I loved doin' com— I love makin' people laugh, and once I started makin' the videos, like, "Oh, this is a whole creative outlet that I could really run with. Not a lot of people are doing this in medicine." And so I did— I feel like I came along at the right time.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Will: For video content.

Kristen: Yeah, a lot of it was just dumb luck. You know, timing.

Will: [chuckles] Which is, you know, a lot of the opportunity, and you know, so it's— yeah.

Justin: Well, I think it's interesting.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Justin: Like my job wouldn't have existed when I was— Like I didn't wanna do what I do when I was a kid 'cause it didn't exist, right?

Kristen: Right.

Justin: And I feel like this is— It has allowed people to make a... I'm able to make a living making a much more specific type of humor, and more specific type of content, than I ever could have, you know, 15, 20 years ago, right?

Kristen: Right.

Justin: Like I don't have to be... You know, the Smothers Brothers, like doing something that like, appeals to like a huge, wide range of people. I can make something pretty specific.

Will: Yeah.

Justin: That I know is going to hit with a certain number of people, that I think has only allowed— like only the internet has allowed us to do that.

Kristen: Yeah, for sure.

Will: And it's— and it helps, I don't know. It's helped me from getting burned out.

Justin: Sure.

Will: Doing all this stuff, to be able to just continue doing the things that I find interesting, you know.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Will: And I— Not doing it because... Like I— When I make a skit or something, I'm not thinking "Oh, the people are gonna love this." It's something like I— "Oh, I think this is funny."

Justin: Mm-hmm.

Will: "I'm gonna make this, and I hope people like it, but it's really like an outlet for me, and people just happen to really enjoy it." And so it's— And I think that's the key is like— what I tell people, you know, when people ask me like, "How do you get started doin' this social media stuff?"

Kristen: We're like, "I dunno."

Will: Like what— Maybe— [chuckles]

Kristen: [laughs]

Will: Yeah, there's a lot of that.

Kristen: You just— Yeah.

Justin: [chuckles]

Will: There's a lot of "I don't know, I don't know how it happened, but."

Kristen: [laughs]

Will: There's a lot of like, "It— You gotta do it for yourself first and foremost."

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Will: Because then it's just gonna be like a chore, you know, otherwise.

Sydnee: I— Yeah. That's 100% true. That's— I mean when we finally settled on the show that we've been doing for a long time now, it was because I was really interested in—

We didn't learn any medical history in my med school. We knew like nothing. Like occasionally you'd get a little anecdote, nothing, so it was something I wanted to know about. It was some—

We love just, I don't know, I love telling Justin about stuff I learn and him making jokes about it. Like that was just— It was natural, it was a sort of offshoot of what we were already doing.

Kristen: Right.

Sydnee: So, I really think that's the key. And then you'll kind of select for people who are like, "Oh, I also love that," and then you can kinda build that relationship with that audience over time.

Justin: But I would love to know from you Kristen, you've been— You all been hosting this show now for over a year, and you've talked to a lot of people in the medical profession and adjacent to the medical profession.

Are there conversations that you feel like you wish people were having more, surrounding medicine? Or things you wish people knew, more people knew, that they should be— that you wish more people were talking about?

Kristen: Sounds to me like you're asking me what my soap boxes are, and let me tell you, I have so many.

Will: [chuckles]

Justin: Okay, great.

Kristen: So. [laughs]

Justin: Please.

Kristen: I— So— Okay. We have this— I, I guess, have an odd perspective, having been adjacent to medicine this entire time, right? Like we met in college.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Kristen: Before he was even in med school, and then I was along for the entire ride. So, I had this kind of like insider, outsider perspective of, you know, what goes on in medical training, what goes on, you know, in medical education, what goes on in this— a practicing position.

And then on top of that, we have the patient side. He's been a patient of some serious things, I am a patient of some serious things. And then, you know, I have this... piece that I call it a co— I feel like a co-survivor.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Kristen: Of his cancer and his cardiac arrest. Because, you know, those things— And same with med school, anybody who's been partnered with somebody in med school, or even as a practicing physician, you know all of that stuff happens to you too.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Kristen: You know. And that is not really talked about. So that's really my main... like goal in using any kind of platform that we have is, for me, is just pointing that out.

That those people are there, and they have, you know, needs too and they are affected by the medical system. In many ways, you know, just as intensely as the med student, the resident, the patient, the— you know.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Kristen: You know, the specifics are different, but it happens to them too.

Justin: Mm.

Kristen: So that's one thing. Another thing that I really just have always harped on is just, you know, before you are a doctor, right? You are a human.

And I saw— That goes all the way back to watching him go through med school, because I saw that they are learning how to take care of human bodies, and they are not allowed to take care of their human bodies.

Sydnee: Mm.

Justin: Mm.

Kristen: You know, like you don't go to the bathroom all day, you probably have to skip lunch, you're not drinking any water because you can't take a break to go to the bathroom any day. All day.

And you know, they're not getting enough sleep, and there's all the stress. And there's just, you know, all the expectations of the medical training system on them, and so I always had to remind him, you know, "Hey, it's okay if you have a human need, because guess what, you're a human." You know.

Justin: Mm-hmm.

Kristen: Like the system you're in is gonna tell you that's not okay, but let me remind you that it is. And so I do that too, I wish people would talk more about that.

And that's a big part of what we try to do together too, is just highlight the humanity in medicine. Whether that's, you know, on his side it's kind of the humanity among physicians and nurses and other kinds of clinicians, and for me it's, you know, the patient family side of things. But—

Will: It's one of the great— best things about ophthalmology. I get unlimited bathroom breaks.

Kristen: That's true.

Justin: [exhales heavily] That's huge.

Will: Like I can— As— Whenever I want, I can go to the bathroom.

Kristen: Yeah.

Will: And so, phew.

Kristen: There you go.

Sydnee: [chuckles] I'm very jealous of that.

Will: Yeah.

Justin: [wheezes]

Sydnee: I don't have that. [laughs]

Will: [laughs]

Kristen: Oh.

Justin: Before we let you go, Will I just wanted to tell you, I'm 43 years old, everybody in my family has glasses and I don't. So I guess I'm wondering like, how cool am I? I guess would be the question, or like—

Will: You're very cool.

Justin: Is that like an amazing medical—

Will: You're a medical marvel.

Kristen: [laughs]

Justin: Marvel, that's a good—

Will: You're a marvel.

Justin: Miracle, marvel.

Kristen: Have you considered that your father is not your father?

Justin: Uhhh, wow.

Will: Ooo.

Kristen: I'm just gonna throw that out there.

Will: Oh.

Sydnee: Ooph.

Justin: No, he's on podcast—

Kristen: [laughs]

Justin: Anybody who's listened to the podcast that he is on with us is—

Will: [wheezes]

Justin: — has zero doubt that he is, in fact, my dad, to a fault, I think.

Kristen: [laughs]

Sydnee: Yeah.

Justin: If that's something. [chuckles]

Sydnee: Yeah, if the looks don't give it away, the sense of humor.

Will: [wheezes]

Kristen: Yeah.

Sydnee: A giveaway. [chuckles]

Will: I also am a non-glasses wearer though.

Kristen: Yeah, he likes to rub that in a lot.

Will: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: Ohhhh.

Justin: Ohhh.

Will: Which is unusual.

Kristen: He has never had an eye exam in his entire life.

Justin: [laughs]

Will: It— No.

Kristen: That is true.

Will: It's—

Kristen: He's gonna tell you it's not true.

Sydnee: Never?

Justin: Why even check it out right?

Kristen: It is true.

Justin: Like what are you doin'— [wheezes] What are you doin' in there, pal?

Sydnee: Well, are you sure you don't need glasses? [laughs]

Kristen: Right?

Justin: [chuckles] Just compensating.

Kristen: That's what I'm sayin'.

Will: I see just fine, thank you very much.

Kristen: [laughs]

Justin: "I don't need glasses, I just love to stand close to words."

Sydnee: Because—

Will & Kristen: [laugh]

Sydnee: When I'm just gonna say, when I got my glasses in sixth grade, I remember the first day I went back to school and went "[gasps] You all could see the board."

Justin: [laughs]

Kristen: Yeah.

Sydnee: I wondered why they put stuff up there. I couldn't see it, and I assumed nobody could see it.

Will: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: And I just thought "Oh, it's so weird teachers write stuff up there, nobody can see that." [chuckles]

Kristen: Yeah, leaves on the trees, when I got mine, I was like, "Woowow."

Sydnee: Yeah.

Justin: Yeah, the whole world!

Will: Mm-hmm.

Kristen: "There's like individual leaves up there! Not just a big green clump."

Sydnee: [laughs]

Will: My personal statement for ophthalmology is like I have perfect eyes and I want other people to have that joy that I have.

Justin: [cackles]

Kristen: [giggles]

Will: [chuckles]

Justin: So, we've already talked about the podcast. We are going to be appearing on an episode of the podcast.

Kristen: Yes.

Justin: So, people can check that out. Where can people find more of your work?

Will: So, you can find— We're on pretty much all of the social media platforms. You can just search for "glaucomflecken." It's— Spell it like it sounds.

Justin: Just do— Just type that in.

Will: It's easy.

Kristen: Mm-hmm.

Justin: [wheezes]

Will: Just "glaucomflecken." So, everything can be found on our website glaucomflecken.com.

We have a newsletter, which we just launched that not too long ago. It's very exciting 'cause it in— it brings in all the stuff we're working on. All the skits that I've posted recently, the podcast, we go into some deep dives on some medical related topics as well.

So if— [chuckles] For people that want more email, you can sign up for our newsletter.

Kristen: I just felt like he was puttin' his face in too many places.

Sydnee & Justin: [chuckle]

Kristen: I was like, "We gotta just make a one-stop shop."

Will: Yeah, exactly.

Kristen: For people, if they wanna see your stuff.

Justin: Oh yeah.

Will: Exactly, and our podcast, *Knock Knock Hi with the Glaucomfleckens*. And we're— we have interviews with people, that's what we do once a week, and then I'll also do these *Knock Knock Hi* episodes, where it's just me, and I go into— I pick a topic, some random eye-related topic, and just nerd out for about 30 or 45 minutes, so.

Justin: Cool.

Sydnee: Cool.

Kristen: I've been very surprised at how many questions people have about eyeballs, and how many people are willing and want—

Will: Oh yeah.

Kristen: — to listen to eyeball stuff.

Will: Yeah.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Kristen: I gotta admit like, I thought that was gonna be a flop.

Justin: Yeah, I hear—

Kristen: Like, "Who wants to hear about—?" [laughs]

Justin: I heard about—

Will: [chuckles]

Justin: On one episode, Will, you saying like, you were incredulous that people listened to the show during their work commute.

Will: [chuckles]

Kristen: Yeah.

Justin: Like— And this— And it's honestly, man, a first—

Will & Kristen: [chuckle]

Justin: I've listened to a lot of podcasts in my life. It's the first time I've ever heard a host say, "What are you doin' here?"

Will & Kristen: [laugh]

Justin: "What are you doin'? What— This isn't— What you— I have to make this, you don't have to listen to it. What's—" [chuckles]

Will: "What are you doin' with your life?" [chuckles]

Kristen: [sighs] Yeah.

Justin: Well Kristen, thank you so much for joining us. Make sure you check out all the Glaucomflecken's work because it is— If you like this show.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Justin: I mean you're pretty much sel— as close as we can get to perfectly selected to perfectly enjoy [chuckles] everything that they make.

Will: [chuckles]

Sydnee: Absolutely.

Justin: So make sure that you check it out. That is going to do it for us for this episode. Will and Kris, anything you all wanna plug before we head out? You just did some live shows, is that right? Or you're going to do?

Kristen: Yes.

Will: Yeah.

Kristen: Oh.

Will: We did a little test run of live shows in southern California, and basically it's called *Wife and Death*.

Justin: [chuckles] Good.

Will: [chuckles] And it's comedic slash serious—

Kristen: Like a tragicomedy.

Will: Tragicomedy.

Kristen: Multi-media stage show.

Will: That's right.

Sydnee: Oooo.

Will: And so we're planning on— It went really well.

Justin: Excellent.

Will: Had a great response from people, we're gonna— planning on going around the country at some point, it's kind of in the works, so yeah.

Justin: Come on out to West Virginia.

Kristen: Yeah, we're workin' on—

Justin: That'd be great.

Kristen: — a 2024 dates right now.

Will: There you go.

Sydnee: [chuckles]

Justin: Alright.

Kristen: So those'll be up on our website once we have 'em.

Will: Awesome.

Justin: Alright.

Will: And just thank you so much for having us again.

Kristen: Yeah, thank you.

Justin: Thanks for being here.

Sydnee: Thank you all.

Justin: Thanks to you for listening. Thanks to The Taxpayers for the use of their song "Medicines" as the intro and outro of our program. And thank you again to you for listening, we sure appreciate it. If you wanna pass along the show to somebody else, sawbonesshow.com is the URL. If you want to send us an email, it's sawbones@maximumfun.org.

[theme music fades in]

Justin: That's gonna do it for us for this week. Until next time, my name is Justin McElroy.

Sydnee: I'm Sydnee McElroy.

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

[outro music plays]

[ukulele chord]

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