

Sawbones 532: Henry VIII

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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'm your cohost, Justin McElroy.

Sydnee: And I'm Sydnee McElroy.

Justin: So happy to be here with you, Syd, my first and only wife.

Sydnee: Yes.

Justin: It is—

Sydnee: That's, I mean, I hope?

Justin: Bum bum buuuuum. In West Virginia, at least. Dun dun duuuuun! No, I just have one family.

Sydnee: I don't like this, this is not a joke that I enjoy.

Justin: I can barely keep up with the family that I have. The [chuckles] idea that I could maintain a second is absolutely infeasible.

Sydnee: No, I— Actually, I believe that. I also—

Justin: Just the one for me, thank you.

Sydnee: I also think that you would probably like accidentally call me the name of one of your other wives or something, you know, like I would... you wouldn't be able to— You'd get confused.

Justin: Hmm, yeah.

Sydnee: You'd bring me like regular Dr. Pepper instead of Diet Dr. Pepper one day, and I'd go... [gasps dramatically]

Justin: [gasps] Dun dun duuuuun. And then the drama would really escalate.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Justin: This is so—

Sydnee: I don't like this.

Justin: No, me neither.

Sydnee: Justin.

Justin: I just want the one wife, thanks.

Sydnee: So... I was inspired, not by the prospect of your having multiple wives, for this episode.

Justin: No.

Sydnee: No, Harmony House is having its second annual Renaissance Fair.

Justin: Yes.

Sydnee: This year on May 3rd.

Justin: Yes.

Sydnee: Here in Huntington, West Virginia.

Justin: Yes.

Sydnee: You're— If you're interested, you can check out our Facebook page.

Justin: Yes.

Sydnee: Harmony House. We have a separate event page for the Renaissance Fair.

Justin: Wow, you're really clocked in.

Sydnee: I know.

Justin: And technological.

Sydnee: And you can just look at it, and you can come! You can buy a ticket and you can come.

Anyway, I am a board member, and so we've had all these conversations prepping for Renaissance Fair, and they've been very strange conversations that I have had to... provide my input on, things that I really have no expertise on.

So for instance, like when it comes to like insurance, for sword swallowing or fire eating, what's that all about? Or—

Justin: Yeah, probably rough, probably pretty pricey I would think.

Sydnee: Or having to reach out to a city councilmember and saying like, "Do we have an ordinance against sword fighting?"

Justin: I think so.

Sydnee: We don't.

Justin: Good.

Sydnee: Now—

Justin: Now that's how I'm going to start settling stuff from now on.

Sydnee: Do we have an ordinance against fortune telling within city limits? We did!

Justin: We did.

Sydnee: Until last year.

Justin: Okay.

Sydnee: So phew.

Justin: Ooo.

Sydnee: Bullet dodged on that one, right?

Justin: Yeah, yeah. Wait, do we have an ordinance against bullet dodging? Like in *The Matrix*.

Sydnee: Oh my gosh.

Justin: [chuckles]

Sydnee: See I don't even know, I gotta call again. [chuckles] So these were all things that I've been trying to figure out, which you must do when you're helping to organize a Renaissance Fair.

I should say "helping," my mom's taking the lead, I don't wanna take credit. However, one of our bigger questions was, "How much room do you need for jousting?" Justin.

Justin: Well at least two horses [chuckles] wide, right? I would think at least two horses of space.

Sydnee: Well but— [chuckles]

Justin: Maybe at least a for— a few horse breadths in between to get the jousting going.

Sydnee: I think they run from far away.

Justin: And gotta run from at least probably 10 horse— I would say 12 horse lengths, that would be my guess.

Sydnee: And then we started talking about, in the space we were holding this, at the Riverfront Park, we were like, "Well, does it need to be on

grass, right? Shouldn't it— It should be on grass. It feels like it can't be— Can we shut down Veteran's Memorial Boulevard and hold a giant jousting tournament?"

Justin: Perhaps.

Sydnee: "On it? I don't know."

Justin: No.

Sydnee: And I thought— And I said, "Well I feel like it should be on grass for— maybe for the horses." I don't know anything about horses. But then also if somebody falls off, isn't that what happens in jousting. And I started thinking about jousting.

Justin: Okay.

Sydnee: What ha— Like what happened back— What were the medical implications of jousting? Like did you get stabbed or just sort of like rammed off of your horse? Did you get trampled?

Justin: Yeah.

Sydnee: Did people die? So—

Justin: Yeah, it seems like it would be a really rough day for whoever's in charge of healthcare. Like if there was a show about medieval doctors, I feel like jousting day would be a big episode, maybe a two-parter.

Sydnee: Yes, right? Like that would be— You'd have so many techniques and ways of dealing with jousting. They must've had a doctor on site. I don't know, 'cause I started to dig into jousting as a concept and I quickly arrived all— at all these articles about Henry VIII.

Justin: Okay. Was he a big jouster?

Sydnee: Yes.

Justin: Okay.

Sydnee: A big jousting, and more importantly, Henry VIII sustained a jousting injury.

Justin: Mmm.

Sydnee: That may or may not have changed the course of history.

Justin: Really?

Sydnee: This felt like *Sawbones* to me, this is our sort of thing. It is possible that at one point in history, and I mean that we know that this is true. Somebody gets sick, suffers some sort of medical... thing that changes who they are, or maybe somebody dies from something and it changes human history in some way.

Justin: Wow.

Sydnee: That is— That person was so significant that it becomes... Everything changes.

Justin: I mean—

Sydnee: Because of medicine.

Justin: I hope that that hasn't happened to me. Like I don't think that I have gotten like a case of diarrhea that changed the world, but I may not know yet, you know what I mean?

Sydnee: That's true.

Justin: That's kinda wild to think about.

Sydnee: History books will write.

Justin: History will have to decide how important my BMs have been.

Sydnee: I hope that if a medical thing happens to me that changes the course of human history, it's something cooler like jousting, and not diarrhea.

Justin: Yeah, but I know myself, and honestly I'll take what I can get.

Sydnee: [chuckles] Do you know— You've already alluded to multiple wives, so I'm guessing you know a little something about Henry VIII.

Justin: Just 'cause I know there's a musical.

Sydnee: Right.

Justin: About the six wives, called *Six*.

Sydnee: Yes, there's a musical about the six wives, that I would very much like to see at some point but I haven't. But I do— I have read about the six wives.

Justin: Yes.

Sydnee: So I don't know the musi— I don't know the songs.

Justin: No.

Sydnee: I know the wives.

Justin: And don't email us to say that we should, because we don't.

Sydnee: We should.

Justin: We should.

Sydnee: I also kinda knew like he changed the church so he could get divorced. I knew that part.

Justin: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: He was married, he made a whole new church, the Church of England.

Justin: A whole new— Yeah.

Sydnee: So that he could—

Justin: Not a new church, a new... Not a church building.

Sydnee: No, I mean like a new—

Justin: Church family. New—

Sydnee: The Church of England.

Justin: Yes, that church.

Sydnee: The concept.

Justin: Yeah, got you.

Sydnee: The religion.

Justin: Yeah.

Sydnee: The faith of the Church of England.

Justin: Flavor of faith—

Sydnee: Yes.

Justin: — is what we typically call it.

Sydnee: Flavor?

Justin: Yeah, he invented a new flavor of faith.

Sydnee: Genre.

Justin: [chuckles]

Sydnee: So I did— but I didn't know about this pivotal jousting accident, and the fact that not only has it been theorized by historians, modern scientists and physicians and researchers have tried to look back and dig through historical record to figure out—

'Cause like we can't do an autopsy, but what— Is it possible that there was something significant that happened to him that made his behavior drastically different in later years of his life? Which of course since he was

king, influenced the decisions he made and the things that he— the actions he took.

Justin: Sure.

Sydnee: And—

Justin: So we have some historical precedents for this in *Sawbones*. I think Finneas Gage.

Sydnee: Yes.

Justin: Is the one that springs to mind, right?

Sydnee: That's a good corollary to what we're gonna talk abo.

Justin: Oh, okay cool.

Sydnee: So let's start with pre-1536. This is the year of the— We will get into the historic jousting incident in 1536, but prior to that, what was Henry VIII like? So we have some documentation of him as a kid. Not a ton because he had an older brother, and so—

Justin: Henry VII or VI.

Sydnee: No, that was his dad.

Justin: Oh.

Sydnee: Was Henry VII.

Justin: Okay, got it.

Sydnee: But Henry VIII had an older brother who was presumed to be heir to the throne, right? And so— I mean I guess that's just the way it works when you write history, you don't really need to write about the second son.

Justin: Yeah. 'Cause who knows?

Sydnee: Because you figure that the first one's the one who's gonna do stuff.

Justin: I mean 100%.

Sydnee: [chuckles]

Justin: I think history always works that way, Syd, and I mean reality works that way I think, you know.

Sydnee: Well and I think like we kinda see— I don't know, I feel like I always knew a lot more about Prince William. Not now.

Justin: No.

Sydnee: Now I feel like we know a lot about both.

Justin: Yeah.

Sydnee: 'Cause you know, Harry and Meghan and...

Justin: The whole thing.

Sydnee: Yeah the whole thing. There's so—

Justin: The whole thing, we all remember.

Sydnee: I'm sure.

Justin: Nation was in shambles.

Sydnee: [chuckles] I'm sure people in the UK have a lot more invested in that, I just— I— As an American I'm like, "Mmm, that seems dramatic."

Anyway, there— We think he was a good kid. There's some documentation that he was— There was a Spanish ambassador who wrote that he wa— "There was no finer youth in the world than young Henry."

Justin: Uh-huh.

Sydnee: Yeah, that he was a— he was a great guy. He was described as lighthearted and merry in one written account. There was one that said he was prudent and wise, and free from every vice. So just a great-

Justin: Just a great, all-around dude.

Sydnee: So— And his athleticism was praised! He was great, he loved sports, he was an avid all thing sports at the time, so jousting certainly but also like... he would do archery.

Justin: It— You know what I'm realizing on here? It is so hard for me to picture like royals from this period in anything other than like what they wear for portraiture. Like you're talking about him being athletic, and all I can see is some dork in like the big poofy sleeves and a dumb crown running around on a football field.

Sydnee: Well.

Justin: Looking like the Burger King King.

Sydnee: Here's a description of his physical appearance.

Justin: Okay.

Sydnee: Okay, if this will help.

Justin: Okay.

Sydnee: "His Majesty is the most handsome potentate I have ever set eyes on."

Justin: Okay

Sydnee: "Above the usual height."

Justin: Mm.

Sydnee: "With an extremely fine calf to his leg, and a round face so very beautiful it would become a pretty woman."

Justin: Just say a Justin McElroy type. Like that's the problem with history is they waste all these words. Like he's just exactly like Justin McElroy.

Sydnee: He's Justin McElroy.

Justin: He's Justin Mc— He's a Justin McElroy type.

Sydnee: A very fine calf.

Justin: Very fine calf.

Sydnee: You're very proud of your calves, aren't you.

Justin: I'm not.

Sydnee: That— You saw that, you saw "fine calf," and you were like, "That's me."

Justin: "Hm, that's me. Okay."

Sydnee: "They're talkin' to me."

Justin: "I did marching band." [giggles]

Sydnee: He had some bouts of illness which were typical for the times, like he had smallpox once.

Justin: Yeah. Yeah dude. What, pre-medicine?

Sydnee: Yeah.

Justin: [chuckles] No kidding. He's literally pre-med.

Sydnee: Well, I mean like the kinds of illnesses we expect for the time.

Justin: Yeah.

Sydnee: He had smallpox, he had malaria a couple of times.

Justin: [sighs]

Sydnee: Even if the bouts were serious, we don't have any records they were any less—

Justin: Man, if you made it to 50 back then, you were a real one, huh?

Sydnee: Mm-hmm. I mean malaria a couple times, smallpox once.

Justin: A couple times. Sheesh.

Sydnee: He also— He suffered a lot of sporting injuries, he was a wrestler, like I said he did archery, tennis, or course a joust. So he, you know, had some injuries related to that. And he did have one issue that plagued him his whole life, this was documented prior to the jousting incident. He had chronic leg ulcers.

Justin: Hm.

Sydnee: And I've tried to read, because there are a number of health conditions he develops later in life that you definitely could get chronic ulcers on your legs from them.

But he had them even when he was younger, and it is suggested that it may have been because, and I don't— I only found this in once account, so I'm not— I'm not saying this is true, but it is possible that the leg ulcers originally stemmed from the very tight garters that he would wear.

Justin: Oh sheesh, yeah.

Sydnee: To show off his very fine calves.

Justin: Oh wow. Wow. Well that's hubris, you know. It's rough.

Sydnee: Do— Is this a lesson for you, Justin?

Justin: No.

Sydnee: Do you wanna think about this?

Justin: I'm not gonna stop it, I'll take the pain. What? What, a little cut off circulation?

Sydnee: You know those—

Justin: Whatever.

Sydnee: [chuckles]

Justin: I don't need circulation.

Sydnee: The tight garters that you wear.

Justin: Yeah I don't need—

Sydnee: To show off your calves.

Justin: I don't need blood. I've got these calves, I've got all the appreciative looks, I don't need blood in my calves.

Sydnee: Now the argument that Henry VIII changed later in his life, and a lot of this is based on— I found this great article that a neuroscientist and some other researchers from Yale did in 2016, and they published this, where they begin to outline a series— Because they were talking about his personality in the early years, and then—

Justin: What changed.

Sydnee: — what we're gonna get to later. So, they were discussing that there were a series of traumatic head injuries, and then we're gonna culminate in the big one. But there are a couple things that did happen prior to 1536 that may lead us in a certain direction.

So first is in March of 1524. The king was jousting, and he had a visor that he would wear when he was jousting, which I found one account that said that the visor actually had his face on it. Like a picture of his face.

Justin: [laughs]

Sydnee: [chuckles] On the visor.

Justin: That's a good look.

Sydnee: Which is kinda cool, if you think about it.

Justin: It's cool looking.

Sydnee: But he had not pulled his visor all the way down, and so he got struck in the head—

Justin: Mm.

Sydnee: — by the jousting lance. And I don't see that he— that it was like pierced or anything, but he fell off his horse, he was kinda knocked out of it for a little bit. I don't think he lost consciousness but he was like confused, like concussion-y.

Justin: Sure, yeah.

Sydnee: Kinda of stuff. And that he, from that point on, he had recurrent headaches. So like migraines were something that he suffered because of jousting already.

Justin: If I'm that other dude, if I'm that other dude, I'd just keep on ridin'. Just keep on ridin', brother. Keep on ridin' til you get to Italy or somethin', man.

Sydnee: Well, I mean—

Justin: Don't stop. Don't go back.

Sydnee: You just knocked the man off.

Justin: Yeah!

Sydnee: I don't know.

Justin: Whatever.

Sydnee: Like didn't they—

Justin: Yeah, I'm gonna put that in the faith that my monarch, I'm gonna trust that my monarch is gonna be a good sport about me stabbing in the eye? Nope! Peace, I'm going to Floren or whatever. [chuckles]

Sydnee: That—

Justin: I'm going to Gilder. [laughs]

Sydnee: I'm going to the fictional nations mentioned in *The Princess Bride*.

Justin: That's how far I'm going, that's how far away I'm going from this guy.

Sydnee: Out—

Justin: I'm going to Gilder or Floren. [wheezes]

Sydnee: Out of reality. [chuckles] So, there was another incident that he sustained while— It says, "while hawking," which from what my understand— "Hawking" as in H-A-W-K-I-N-G, hawking.

Justin: Yeah.

Sydnee: He was out, it was some sort of hunting activity that they—

Justin: Like falconry.

Sydnee: Yeah, that you do with a hawk.

Justin: Yeah! Hawking!

Sydnee: He was out hawking in the— [chuckles]

Justin: Hawking!

Sydnee: I didn't know that you could use "hawk" that way, I didn't know what—

Justin: I think if you'd asked me to know the gerund, I think I would've nailed it.

Sydnee: I'm in West Virginia, when somebody says they're hawking, I think they're about to like—

Justin: Yeeeeeah, hawk a loogie.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Justin: Yeah.

Sydnee: They're gonna... pa-too.

Justin: Are they gonna— Or selling.

Sydnee: And I don't wanna see that.

Justin: Selling stuff, hawking.

Sydnee: They're gonna show— When they're hawking, they're gonna [chuckles] show me something in a dish and ask me what it means.

Justin: Oh, no good. I don't wanna think about that.

Sydnee: So he attempted to— He was pole vaulting over a hedge, I guess as part of the hawking activities, and he fell— like the pole broke. This visual.

Justin: That'd be so embarrassing.

Sydnee: What were kings out there even doing?

Justin: I know.

Sydnee: Like you are the fucking king, and you are pole vaulting a hedge.

Justin: Pole vaulting?

Sydnee: The pole breaks, that's gotta be so embarrassing, and he falls like headfirst into a ditch.

Justin: Oh my gosh, I would quit being king. I would go join that other guy.

Sydnee: And he has to be pulled out of the ditch like legs first, so—

Justin: Is this the same day?

Sydnee: This is— No this was— [chuckles]

Justin: [chuckles]

Sydnee: This was the next year.

Justin: Okay.

Sydnee: This was 1525.

Justin: I was gonna say.

Sydnee: Yeah. No, he— 1524, he's hit in the head with a jousting lance, falls off his horse. 1525, he pole vaults over a hedge, pole breaks, he's dragged out of a ditch by his feet.

Justin: Sure.

Sydnee: It's thought that he may have lost consciousness because he's dragged out by his legs, which makes you think like why wasn't he getting up? So you know, anyway. So like these are kind of— The reason I'm mentioning these is there's sort of this like drumbeat of head injuries.

Justin: Yeah.

Sydnee: That are leading to January 24th, 1536. So—

Justin: [sings] Eastern Standard Time.

Sydnee: [chuckles] So, he is at Greenwich Palace, where he was born, where his daughter Elizabeth I was born. He is 44 years old, he's in good shape at the time, he's jousting Sir Henry Norris, who was a close friend of Anne Boleyn, his second wife at this point.

Justin: Mm.

Sydnee: And he's on his second wife. We haven't really— We kinda skipped through the Catherine of Aragorn stuff.

Justin: Right.

Sydnee: But anyway, he's on his second wife. He is jousting with Norris and he tries to like thrust his lance towards Norris, I guess as he— They're riding their horses towards each other. You know how jousting looks, right?

Justin: Sure, jousting stuff.

Sydnee: We've all seen it in movies or whatever.

Justin: Jousting.

Sydnee: Right, so he's like running at the— he's riding the horse at him, and then he hits his saddle with his jousting lance, instead of like Norris himself, and so he hits the resistance. You can kind of imagine, and so it like rebounds him off of his horse instead.

Justin: Okay.

Sydnee: And then by all accounts he also got trampled by his horse.

Justin: Oh no!

Sydnee: Like his horse fell on top of him as he fell, the horse fell on top of him.

Justin: Poor guy.

Sydnee: Right.

Justin: That's a rough day.

Sydnee: And he was out for a while. And reports vary at this point, there were some that were like, "Naw naw naw, he got up pretty quickly," and other were like, "No, it was a few minutes." And there's one account— [chuckles]

Justin: [wheezes] "His Majesty!"

Sydnee: There—

Justin: "His Majesty sprung up, it was nothing for him."
But it's like, "I don't know. He seemed like he was maybe lying there for like a second. Like a couple minutes."

Sydnee: Well and there was one account, which I will say the account—
There is an account that says he was down for two hours, or that he was unable to speak for two hours, meaning that he was in some sort of altered state of consciousness.

Justin: Okay.

Sydnee: For two hours following the event. And that person who wrote that account I will say was in France at the time, so was not present. This was all second or third hand. But anyway, one way or another, this was a significant enough injury, we know this.

Justin: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: Anne Boleyn was so upset, I— she didn't witness, there's no account that she actually witnessed his fall, but then with the state of him afterwards. That it was so traumatizing to her that they attribute her following pregnancy loss to this.

Justin: Wow, really.

Sydnee: That this incident was so shocking. Now we don't know for sure that that's— Obviously we cannot make that medial claim. But whatever happened to him seems to be pretty extreme and severe by most accounts, one way or another, right?

Justin: Right.

Sydnee: And then he wakes back up. And this is where we think history changes forever. And I'm gonna tell you.

Justin: Oh.

Sydnee: What we think happened to him.

Justin: Sydnee.

Sydnee: But first we gotta go to the Billing Department.

Justin: [sighs] Let's go.

[transition theme music plays]

[ad break]

Justin: Alright Syd, history was about to change forever, I think you said?

Sydnee: Possibly. [chuckles]

Justin: Okay.

Sydnee: 'Cause I mean, you know, we're all just guessing, right?
[chuckles]

Justin: Right.

Sydnee: So the question is, at this point there are there— this paper from Yale, and there have been others who have suggested this, this is not just one research paper.

I love, by the way, if you're somebody who writes historical research papers like this, if you take the time to say like, "I'm a neuroscientist and I understand the human brain, and I'm gonna use that knowledge to try to figure out if Henry VIII had a traumatic brain injury," thank you, thank you.

[chuckles] You make the world so much more interesting when you take that knowledge and apply it.

Justin: [chuckles]

Sydnee: In that way. I mean there's all sorts of altruistic ways we can apply this knowledge, right, that make the world better today and in the future, and hopefully we do that.

But if you also do this fun, fanciful little thing, you bring me much joy, and I assume you too listeners, 'cause you're listening. So anyway, did he suffer a traumatic brain injury, or TBI, I'm gonna say TBI a lot, 'cause that's quicker. Do you know what a TBI is?

Justin: Traumatic. Brain. Injury.

Sydnee: But what—

Justin: I'm insulted, frankly.

Sydnee: What is happening? What is happening?

Justin: [chuckles] A brain is injured in a way that is caused by damage to it. What do you mean?

Sydnee: So there's two sorts of ways that like you get knocked in the head.

Justin: Right.

Sydnee: And TBIs can be suffered, there are a number of ways, if you have encountered this concept, there are a number of places that we talk about it I think popularly today.

Justin: Okay.

Sydnee: Certainly in the military we have people who have suffered TBIs from— usually from like concussive forces, explosions nearby and the— that sorts of thing.

Justin: [sniffs loudly]

Sydnee: Or being in some sort of explosive, you know, that is a source of TBI, certainly in the military. Also in sports, right? We talk about TBI a lot in terms of football, for instance.

Justin: Sure.

Sydnee: People who have had multiple, you know, hits to the head.

Justin: Traumatic brain injuries.

Sydnee: Right. Obviously TBI can occur any time you get knocked on the head pretty hard, right?

Justin: Right.

Sydnee: It doesn't have to be those scenarios. So a TBI, there are two kinds of injuries that can take place. First is the actual force of the injury. So was the brain knocked around in the skull so to speak, which is kind of what happens with a concussion.

Justin: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: But this is obviously more severe than a concussion. With a concussion, we expect your symptoms to go away, eventually. This is not that.

Justin: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: The symptoms don't go away. So you get compressive forces, you get tearing, and pulling, and sheering on the brain, you know on the neuronal fibers, the nerves—the stuff that makes up the brain.

Justin: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: Is actually getting injured.

Justin: Okay.

Sydnee: But then there's also the secondary stuff that can happen, right? Because after there's that physical sort of trauma to the brain tissue, there's swelling that can follow, stuff can bleed, there can be pressure from that, there can be areas of the brain that don't get oxygen for a while because a blood vessel has been torn.

Justin: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: Or because of the compression of the blood, or whatever, right? Or the swelling. So there's a couple different ways that damage is happening, and so the way that that manifests, the way that we then look at somebody clinically and say, "Mmm, you have the signs and symptoms of a TBI," will look different from person to person.

There are certain things that we see pretty commonly. Amnesia is one of them. You can have trouble, you get memory issues following a traumatic brain injury, okay.

Justin: Okay

Sydnee: We can see changes in sort of your like frontal lobe stuff, and when we say, "frontal lobe stuff," this is when we're gettin' into the Finneas Gage territory.

Justin: Sure, right.

Sydnee: Like the you.

Justin: Your personality stuff.

Sydnee: Your personality, the you of you. You can see people become more apathetic or not care about things as much, or not seem as emotional or passionate or engaged about things as they used to be. And again, different from person to person. This also gets into like impulse control.

Justin: Sure.

Sydnee: And emotional regulation, so people who... You know, previously were pretty levelheaded.

Justin: All of a sudden, yeah.

Sydnee: Pretty calm, all of a sudden are impulsive, prone to bouts of anger, do things that they wouldn't do before like hurting other or engaging in high-risk behaviors that they wouldn't have done previously. Or things like impulse control like eating a lot.

Justin: Hm.

Sydnee: Like very direct like... "I'm going to keep eating this bag of chips until I get sick. I can't stop myself" impulse control too.

Justin: Mm.

Sydnee: When— I think we think impulse control and we always think like intentional, like... "I'm mad at you so I'm gonna punch you," and then I do it because I have no impulse control. But it's also that like [sighs] you almost think like that automatic kind of reaction.

Justin: Right.

Sydnee: "This tastes good, eat it. Taste good, eat it, taste good, eat it." You know?

Justin: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: So like all kinds of impulse control. Some executive dysfunction, so like planning.

Justin: Mm.

Sydnee: The idea that you could take a problem and break it down and find different solutions. Or like diplomatic relations, perhaps. I'm beginning to—

Justin: If you're a king, for example.

Sydnee: Right.

Justin: Right.

Sydnee: All the areas, like, "How can we resolve this without going to war?"

Justin: Maybe.

Sydnee: All of that sort of stuff can be damaged. And then you can also have symptoms like headaches and insomnia. And this can also lead into,

because you've got your pituitary organ up there, which is in charge of a lot of endocrine stuff, so hormones and things like that. That can be changed as well.

Justin: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: So when you have a traumatic brain injury, we can see problems with like growth hormone deficiency in some cases, or like hypogonadism. And the reason I say that specifically is that there are a lot of— there's documentation later on in Henry VIII's life of some issues with like performance, with impotence.

Justin: Mmm.

Sydnee: And this is different from descriptions of a pretty amorous guy previous, right? Like we know he had six wives.

Justin: Right.

Sydnee: He also had... quite a few affairs in there.

Justin: Yeah.

Sydnee: That's, again, disputed historically. We know of some of the affairs.

Justin: We don't want him to sue us.

Sydnee: There are there affairs we think he had.

Justin: Okay.

Sydnee: I mean like you know before he was with Anne Boleyn, he was with her sister, Mary. [chuckles]

Justin: Yeah.

Sydnee: That's also a theme.

Justin: Yeah.

Sydnee: Do you know his first wife, Catherina of Aragorn, was initially married to his older brother.

Justin: I think—

Sydnee: But then his older brother died.

Justin: I think— Didn't you tell me that earlier?

Sydnee: No.

Justin: Oh, sorry.

Sydnee: I did tell you his older brother died, but I didn't tell you—

Justin: Ahhhh.

Sydnee: — that he then went to marry Anne.

Justin: That is why the connection was there.

Sydnee: Yeah. Which was all like an arranged, political, diplomatic. Like the Pope was in on it, and all the kings, and you know, you know.

Justin: Well you know how these things goes.

Sydnee: I mean he was betrothed when he was 10. So.

Justin: I mean.

Sydnee: Anyway, so all— This is what a TBI can look like. And there are a lot of things that happened after this jousting incident in Henry VIII's life that kind of lead to— I think if you...

Did you have any inclination as to how you would describe Henry VIII's character? I mean you knew about his six wives. Did you have any thought of who was this guy? Other than that he got married a lot.

Justin: I feel like too much content... on the podcasts that I do lately... has been generated by how little I know about the things that other

people know. And it's not my favorite thing in the world, but I will say this.

Nothing, I mean nothing, I think that he was maybe a bigger fella, and... a rotund guy, which I respect. A— We stan. He was— I think he had a beard and a gilded hat, and I think maybe in one of the pictures [chuckles] I'm seein' a turkey leg. I don't know if that's like a personality thing, or if it was just like one time he had that.

Sydnee: It kind of is later on in his life.

Justin: Okay.

Sydnee: I mean that's not— There are not— Nothing you're saying is wrong.

Justin: Thank god.

Sydnee: I think I kind of assumed, and maybe this is was a woman coming at this, I kind of assumed he was a jerk.

Justin: Okay.

Sydnee: Like my perception of him is that he was not a nice guy.

Justin: Yeah.

Sydnee: I mean he had two of his wives executed.

Justin: Doesn't seem nice. Seems mean, seems like a mean thing to do.

Sydnee: He was willing to create a new religion to divorce a woman.

Justin: But.

Sydnee: [chuckles]

Justin: From another perspective, he was willing to create a new religion to marry another woman. And you know, if the romantasy books have taught us anything, you know, people love it when you're willing to make

big sacrifices, like tear off an opposing god's head or whatever to prove your love.

Sydnee: His—

Justin: So in that sense, it's pretty metal that he made a whole new religion just 'cause he loved the other— the second one so much.

Sydnee: That is again I think debatable.

Justin: [wheezes]

Sydnee: Historically, because... Okay, I didn't know all this prior to researching this, but I've read a bunch of articles about Henry VII.

Justin: I'm not repping this, I'm just floatin' it. I'm just floatin' it, history. I'm just floatin' it.

Sydnee: I— What I'm saying is that his first wife, he didn't wanna marry her in the first place. He eventually did agree to marry her, and then she was not able to produce him a male heir, and he was very upset about this. And he wanted—

Justin: Now that I can relate, buddy.

Sydnee: He had— [chuckles] He actually—

Justin: High five.

Sydnee: He'd actually had—

Justin: Just kidding.

Sydnee: Uh-huh, I'm ignoring that. He'd actually had a male child with an affair, and he was considering trying to have him recognized officially, so that he would have a male heir.

Justin: Yeah.

Sydnee: And then he... started having an affair with Mary Boleyn, and then he met [chuckles] her younger sister Anne, and was like, "Oh, now I

like this one.” And so he was trying to figure out how he could marry Anne in pursuit of a male heir. So I— a lot of this is tied up with gross men stuff.

Justin: Yeah.

Sydnee: Just saying.

Justin: Yeah, I’m sorry.

Sydnee: I don’t know if there was love.

Justin: For men again, as always.

Sydnee: So anyway, after this jousting injury and he came to, he seemed different. And I don’t mean immediately, I don’t mean that somebody wrote like, “After he woke up, he was a total jerk.” But when we start to look into some of the descriptions of him and the actions he took afterwards... he’s a little more tyrant-y, he’s a little more despotic.

Justin: Okay.

Sydnee: So—

Justin: And maybe it was the thing contributing to that, right?

Sydnee: There’s some— Yes, and there are some specific bouts of like forgetfulness. Like one of his wives he would order his guards to come get and take to the Tower of London, and then when they showed up to get her, he was like, “What are you doing here? Get out!” ‘cause he forgot.

Justin: Oh yikes.

Sydnee: So like there’s some well documented kind of amnesia episodes afterwards. He also seemed to become really irrational and impulsive. He definitely had people executed before, but he seemed to have a lot more people executed for a lot more specious reasons after.

People would suddenly become enemies of the crown overnight, who he previously had confided in, or were trusted advisors, or were family

members. He would suddenly decide were actually against him, kinda became paranoid about that.

Justin: Okay.

Sydnee: And he became pretty different. These intense bouts of rage, he just changed. I will say at this time, in addition to the traumatic brain injury, the... one of the ulcers on his leg that he had suffered for a while which had been healing had opened back up, probably as a result of the horse falling on him, I would guess.

Justin: Right.

Sydnee: And it is well documented that this injury also contributed to a change in his personality, because his leg was so damaged that his doctors told him "You really shouldn't do any of these sports things anymore. You should probably spend most of your time seated or laying down."

He became a lot more sedentary afterwards and stopped engaging in things that he had previously, as far as we know, really enjoyed. And there were a lot of bouts of melancholy.

Justin: Makes sense.

Sydnee: And depression, by you know, modern standards, that followed that.

Justin: So you're saying there—

Sydnee: So there's more to it.

Justin: — there could be other—

Sydnee: Right.

Justin: — conflating factors.

Sydnee: There's some other stuff. So and of course he would go on, only four months after this incident, he would accuse Anne Boleyn, his wife at the time, of adultery, incest, witchcraft, and conspiring to kill him. And

then also he was mad 'cause she didn't provide him with a male heir either.

Justin: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: And he had her executed.

Justin: Oh.

Sydnee: Only four months after this.

Justin: Yeah, it's weird.

Sydnee: So definitely a shift. He would— Just to kind of— Since we've all heard of the six wives, he went on to marry Jane Seymour, who did produce him—

Justin: Dr. Quinn, Medicine Woman, of course.

Sydnee: Different one, different Jane Seymour.

Justin: Different Jane Seymour.

Sydnee: Did produce him a male heir who would go on to become King Edward, but she died after that. Not— He didn't kill her.

Justin: That's good.

Sydnee: She just died. He then married Anne of Cleaves. Because he saw a portrait of her that was really pretty, he agreed to marry her, but then when she showed up he was like, "This is not the—" Like, "The internet lied" kind of.

Justin: Yeah.

Sydnee: Like [chuckles] "I regret— I regret swiping on this one."

Justin: Okay.

Sydnee: But it was too late, he had to marry her, and so they never consummated their marriage and he had it annulled right afterwards, and

he basically said, "It's not my fault, the portrait tricked me, she wasn't very pretty."

Justin: Okay.

Sydnee: Which again—

Justin: That's—

Sydnee: — seems pretty—

Justin: — pretty messed up.

Sydnee: Right. Okay. He then married the very young Katherine Howard, who took a bunch of lovers, so he had her beheaded. And then—

Justin: Are you trying to like justify why he did all this? Like is this like a reclaiming of Henry?

Sydnee: What I'm saying is— No, what I'm saying is his behavior...

Justin: Got really weird.

Sydnee: Got really weird. His final wife outlived him, Catherine Parr. Other than the treatment of his wives, he also frequently would have people executed and, you know, engage in warfare throughout his later years.

And again, a lot of the descriptions of how he would behave with his court were dramatically different in especially like the last 10 years of his life, than they were in previous years when he was described as a guy people really liked, as like a really transformational, important, cool king that changed England forever. And led to the reformation, obviously, the Church and all that.

Justin: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: There's also the health problems and the compulsive eating that is noted, at one point when you talk about the turkey leg, this is probably were you're getting this. He may have eaten up to 13 dishes a day, the majority comprising meat such as lamb, chicken, beef, game, rabbit, a

variety of birds like peacock and swan, and he drank 10 pints of ale a day, as well as wine.

Justin: [quietly] Hatchie matchie.

Sydnee: He continued to have problems with gout, with that diet you can understand why.

Justin: [chuckles] Fair.

Sydnee: Lot of rich foods. He had all these boils on his legs and ulcers, it was extremely painful, so he's also in chronic pain.

Justin: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: There should note. And he... you know, again, was kind sedentary in those later years. As you said, he— they— His suit of armor.

Justin: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: Is displayed because they had to have it specially made, because he did gain quite a bit of weight, and so they had to like specially make a suit of armor for him to continue to wear when he would go out, I guess in full armor dress in later years. And he had mood swings and all of that. Now not everyone thinks this.

Justin: Mmm.

Sydnee: A lot of people have written about Henry VIII's change from when he was young to when he was old in personality, in the kind of guy he was and what influence that may have had on the course of human history.

Some people say he had syphilis, this has never been proven. Some people say this was probably due to diabetes, which he may well have had, and maybe he had some, you know, like mini strokes and some vascular damage as a result of that. Some people think he had hyperthyroidism that never got diagnosed.

Justin: 'Kay.

Sydnee: Other people thinks he had psychosis, that this was a behavioral health problem that nobody ever— You know, nobody knew or knew how to treat at the time. And then other people say, “You know what? I don’t think he ever changed.”

Because to be fair, he created a whole church to divorce his wife before the jousting thing. And also, his first act as king was to have two of his dad’s advisors executed. So like he kinda liked executing people.

Justin: Okay. No, that’s fair.

Sydnee: Even before.

Justin: That’s fair.

Sydnee: But I think it’s interesting that, on that day in January in 1536, a guy fell off a horse, and maybe changed all of human history.

Justin: Yeah.

Sydnee: And maybe it’s a good lesson to us all that we shouldn’t have one guy in charge. [chuckles]

Justin: Okay.

Sydnee: Or one girl, or one person. Because—

Justin: But definitely not one guy. [wheezes]

Sydnee: De— Yeah. Well.

Justin: We can all agree on that.

Sydnee: But I mean I think it’s a good reminder why power should be shared!

Justin: Yeah.

Sydnee: Because if we just put one human in charge, there’s a chance that that human will get in a jousting accident, and fall off a horse, and

the horse will fall on him, and then when he wakes up he'll be different forever, and we've put him in charge.

Justin: Thank you so much for listening to our podcast, we hope you've enjoyed yourself and maybe learned a little somethin'. Thanks to the Taxpayers for the use of their song "Medicines" as the intro and outro of our program.

If you wanna stop on by the McElroy Family merch store, you can go to mcelroymerch.com. The reason I mention it is because 10% of proceeds this month will go to support Harmony House, which is a cause that's very near and dear to our hearts. So if you wanna go over there and buy some stuff, we'd really appreciate it.

[theme music fades in]

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

Sydney: I'm Sydney McElroy.

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

[outro theme music plays]

[ukulele chord]

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