

Sawbones 541: Dr. Pope

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Intro (Clint McElroy): Sawbones is a show about medical history, and nothing the hosts say should be taken as medical advice or opinion. It's for fun. Can't you just have fun for an hour, and not try to diagnose your mystery boil? We think you've earned it. Just sit back, relax, and enjoy a moment of distraction from... that weird growth. You're worth it.

[theme song 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. ... And that's it. We have nothin'.

Justin: That's the show. No, I was gonna say, "Habemus papam."

Sydnee: Hey, that's true, Justin!

Justin: "Habemus papam to you."

Sydnee: We have a pope. Did you Google that, or do you remember it from Conclave?

Justin: No.

Sydnee: How did you know to say it?

Justin: Uh, I got it— Uh, I got a email.

Sydnee: Oh, you got an email that said that.

Justin: From the Diocese that said, "Hey, habemus papam."

Sydnee: Ah. Okay. They had to tell you first.

Justin: "J Man."

Sydnee: The Diocese had to let Justin know.

Justin: "J Man, the smoke, we saw it. We're about to break this story on the news, but we wanted to let you know first, captain. The new pope has arrived." Pope Leo XIII, is that right? XIV?

Sydnee: XIV.

Justin: XIV.

Sydnee: XIV, yes.

Justin: Yeah, that's much better. You know, they skip the 13th pope. There's no 13th in any of the names; they skip from 12 to 14.

Sydnee: That's not true, Justin. That is absolutely not true, and I know—

Justin: And I just learned that! I just learned that it's not true.

Sydnee: Well, there you go.

Justin: So we're already learning a lot. You just learned two facts in one, listener!

Sydnee: That's not true, because in today's episode, Pope Leo XIII plays a very— He has a mention. He's got a cameo in this episode.

Justin: Really?

Sydnee: So I can tell you for a fact, there was a XIII. Because we were thinking about the new pope.

Justin: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: It's very exciting. He was born in Chicago. I love Chicago! I famously love Chicago. [chuckles]

Justin: Yeah, Sydnee does love Chicago.

Sydnee: I talk about it a lot.

Justin: We would probably live in Chicago, if you guys didn't get so darn cold all the time.

Sydnee: Yeah, why does it have to be cold there like it is sometimes? But otherwise, I love Chicago. So—

Justin: Well, let me just say, first American pope and I am just so glad that the great stuff over here has been recognized...

Sydnee: [forceful laugh]

Justin: ... and honored. We have absolutely been crushing it, lately.

Sydnee: I don't think that's...

Justin: So happy that God, in His infinite wisdom, saw fit to elevate us to this incredible honor.

Sydnee: I don't—

Justin: Thank you, God, as always.

Sydnee: I don't think that's what's going on.

Justin: That is... we been crushed it.

Sydnee: But he is—

Justin: Brought to you, courtesy of the red, white, and blue.

Sydnee: Uh-huh, yeah.

Justin: [laughs]

Sydnee: No, I like that the official declaration is, he's the second pope from the Americas.

Justin: Oh, sure, that's fine.

Sydnee: Let's reduce our importance in this. Anyway, he was born in Chicago...

Justin: This is not a pope review show.

Sydnee: This is not— Well, we are gonna talk about a pope. We're not gonna talk about the new pope, although I am looking forward to him reversing all the rivers in Italy, as I assume he will...

Justin: Yeah.

Sydnee: ... just like in Chicago.

Justin: Yeah.

Sydnee: I love Chicago.

Justin: It's a good pull, Syd.

Sydnee: Maybe make him green...

Justin: Make him green...

Sydnee: ... on Saint Patrick's Day.

Justin: Yeah!

Sydnee: I don't know.

Anyway, that got us thinking about popes and medicine. Now, we usually think about, "What did popes do before they were popes?" Well, they did other... religious stuff, right?

Justin: You don't have a...

Sydnee: Like, that's what you assume. [chuckles]

Justin: You don't have a [laughs] lot of what you might describe as, like, non—traditional popes. Non—traditional students being elevated to pope, like a late—in—life switch to the clergy...

Sydnee: Yeah.

Justin: When you're like, "Well, you know what? It's not too late. I might squeeze in there." [chuckles]

Sydnee: You don't hear— There's not a lot of popes with side gigs. [chuckles]

Justin: Yeah, right.

Sydnee: But, no, they usually...

Justin: [through laughter] There's not a lot of multi-hyphenate popes.

Sydnee: No, there aren't.

Justin: [laughs]

Sydnee: And even— I was watching interviews with the new pope's brothers, who were talking about how as a kid, he used to make them play church, and he would be priest. He always wanted to be pope, really.

Justin: Yeah.

Sydnee: And that's usually true. They're usually, like, priests and missionaries and bishops become seniors, they're cardinals, and then they become a pope. They don't really have another sort of thing that they did.

Justin: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: But once upon a time, there was a doctor Pope.

Justin: [sing-song] They call him Dr. Pope!

Sydnee: [laughs]

Justin: [laughs] [sing-song] Good morning, are you...

Sydnee: I would also like to...

Justin: ... Dr. Pope?

Sydnee: As I was researching what is commonly known as the only doctor Pope, the only physician pope – there's only been one pope that we accept studied medicine and was a physician prior to his pope life, prior to his papacy. We're gonna talk about him.

I did have several people mention that there was a long time where there was another pope, Paul, who was thought to have been a doctor, so there was some discrepancy. Like, "Is this pope we're gonna talk about Pope John?"

Justin: Hey, are there any antipopes in this story? I just found out about antipopes, when I was looking at the timeline.

Sydnee: Yeah, I'm gonna let you tell people about antipopes.

Justin: Oh, good. I just learned about it yesterday, so I'm something of an expert! [chuckles]

Sydnee: Yeah. So Pope John XXI was the only physician pope. Pope Paul, who was sometimes referred to as a physician, never studied medicine, but was a big fan of sending treatments and cures to friends when they got sick. They'd be like, "I'm sick," and he's like, "No, I got just the thing for you."

Justin: Freelance. He was a freelancer.

Sydnee: [amused] So he was just, like, a freelancer, but not a doctor.

Justin: A hobbyist. [laughs]

Sydnee: We all know a person like that.

Justin: Yeah.

Sydnee: Who you're like, "Man, I was feeling this. I had a stomachache, or my head hurt or whatever." And they're like, "Oh, oh, oh! I have the best thing for you. Nobody's gonna tell you about this. Let me make it up for you. I'll make you a bottle of it; drink this, you're gonna be fine."

So Pope John XXI was the only actual doctor Pope that we've ever had. So let's talk about him.

Justin: Okay.

Sydnee: Who was this guy? What did he do? And then how did he become pope? And of course, there's gonna be some, like... you know, Conclave intrigue...

Justin: Conclave-style drama. We love it.

Sydnee: Of course there is! If you haven't seen that movie, you really should. [chuckles]

Justin: Yeah, it's good. Great, very exciting.

Sydnee: Yeah. So— Okay. Pedro, who—

Justin: Pascal.

Sydnee: No, Julião.

Justin: That would've been quite a twist.

Sydnee: No. Of Lisbon. Was born sometime between 1210 and 1220.

Justin: Hmm.

Sydnee: We obviously don't know a ton about his early days. We know his parents, and that he was born some time in that decade. Clearly, we don't have a lot of details if we're like, "He was born some time in this 10-year span."

Justin: Notoriously cagey about his age, like all folks. [laughs]

Sydnee: [chuckles] The details are more— I mean, it's the 1200s. It's a long time ago.

Justin: Yeah.

Sydnee: Details are murky.

He studied at the University of Paris – that's really where, like, you can read about what he did and wrote and said, is when he's studying at the University of Paris.

Justin: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: His life, up until then, we don't really know. I mean, back then, you really had to do something big. Like, we didn't have the printing press yet. [chuckles]

Justin: Yeah.

Sydnee: So it would be a big deal, if you were elevated to a point where we wrote about you.

So at the University of Paris, he studied under William of Sherwood – or William Sherwood, who was a famous English philosopher, scholar, logician – like, Francis Bacon was a contemporary. We're talking about the time where the idea of science and reason and logic is starting to spread again.

Justin: M'kay.

Sydnee: Like, we're about to enter the Renaissance, right? So we're beginning to...

Justin: To dovetail.

Sydnee: Yeah! Yeah. We're beginning to think about these things again. And of course, William of Sherwood, obviously we would all know who he was.

Justin: Yes.

Sydnee: Because of his very famous mnemonic that helped students remember all of the valids of logistic forms.

Justin: Let's, Sydnee, hear it.

Sydnee: Well, Justin...

Justin: [hoarse laughter]

Sydnee: [sarcastically] As we can all quote from— You could quote it from memory, I'm sure.

Justin: But I shan't. I don't do it as well as you do it. You've always done it so much better than me.

Sydnee: "Barbara celarent darii ferioque prioris, Cesare camestres festino baroco secundae, Tertia darapti disamis datisi bocardo ferison habet, quart'insuper addit..."

Sydnee and Justin: [simultaneously] "Bramantip camenes dimaris fesapo fresison."

Justin: Gosh. It's like...

Sydnee: We all know it!

Justin: It's, like, in my bones. You know?

Sydnee: When I read that this was, you know, the most famous mnemonic poem that all students of syllogism know.

Justin: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: I felt so small. [chuckles]

Justin: Yeah. Well...

Sydnee: I mean, I've never studied... you know, logic.

Justin: Syllogism. Well, it's just you're not a student of syllogism, so why should you be expected to, like... ?

Sydnee: It's just— It was the way it was presented. Like, you know... the famous...

Justin: Ah, I know.

Sydnee: ... mnemonic device to— Anyway. So my point is that he was studying science; he was studying logic. This was where he began to make a name for himself. He studied with other great thinkers, and he began to be

known at that point as Peter of Spain, or Petrus Hispanus. And his first work... Or Peter of Hispania; there's a lot of names.

Anyway, his first work was published under that name, and it was the *Summulae Logicales*, the *Tractatus*, and it was a textbook that they used at that point.

Justin: Hmm!

Sydnee: For the study of logic, mainly derived from Aristotle... thoughts.

Justin: To what extent to you have to be "from Spain" to get "of Spain," like, appended to your name? Like, if I was gonna be Justin of West Virginia, how... Like, would I just have to be the biggest Justin in West Virginia, or like the first, or how do you claim that?

Sydnee: Well, I mean, he was from Portugal, so...

Justin: He just rolled up, and he was like, "Now, I'm of Spain."

Sydnee: Yeah. I mean, he was studying at the University of Spain. So...

Justin: It's kind of like with how Madonna got the British accent, when she married Guy Ritchie.

Sydnee: Exactly. He just got to be "of Spain..."

Justin: [amused] "Of Spain."

Sydnee: ... 'cause he wrote a book while he was there.

Justin: Yeah.

Sydnee: And I will say, I read so much about... Because it was a really long time ago, and because we don't have all of the greatest written records of everything, there was a lot of debate: "Is Peter of Spain, and Petrus

Hispanus, and Pope John XXI... Is this all the same guy?" Like, there is a question there.

Now, we are pretty certain this is all the same guy. We feel very confident that we are talking about a singular human, when we talk about him. But there was a long time where there was a thought, like, "No, no, no, no. There was a pope who was named, you know, Peter, who was not from Portugal, he was from the Dominican. And that was this guy. And then this was a different guy..."

Justin: The name switching is tough for history to keep track of, I bet.

Sydnee: True.

Justin: When we get into old-timey stuff, it's like, "Which one was this?" 'Cause it's harder to keep track of the records, right?

Sydnee: No, it's absolutely true. And we'll even get into, like— There's some dispute as to whether this was actually John XX or XXI. So anyway, the point is, we're pretty certain now that Peter of Spain is the same guy who would later become pope. Meaning that this guy who studied logic, who wrote a textbook...

Justin: About logic!

Sydnee: ... about logic and reason, that was used at the time in universities, also then went on to study medicine. And that was pretty normal, again, at the time. You know, if you are a scholar, and you're studying one field, you're studying theology, you're studying reason, you're studying science... You may move into medicine.

Justin: You know, it makes sense. Kind of an overlapping of all this.
[chuckles]

Sydnee: Exactly— Well, everything was still pretty intertwined. We're just beginning the period of the Renaissance, so the idea that we're gonna start separating out especially, like, religion and science, and religious practices and medicinal practices, they're still tightly connected at this point.

So him being a member of a religious order and then also studying medicine... Even though we didn't have another doctor Pope, that wouldn't have been that strange, right?

Justin: Mm, makes sense.

Sydnee: So he decided to focus on medicine, that became his area of interest. And he gained a great reputation. After he studied medicine, he became a teacher and a scholar of medicine. There is evidence that he practiced within his community, that there were people who went and saw him, and that he provided medical care for people. So he didn't just think and talk about medicine with students; he practiced medicine.

And then at one point, he published his first medical text, which was called A Dietetic Treatment of Surgical Patients, at the request of one of his colleagues, who said...

Justin: This is too good.

Sydnee: [chuckles] "You know so much about treating surgical patients, and... I think you should write a book about it!"

Justin: And then it's like, "But what if you get too busy to help?" And he's like, "Why would I get too busy?" He's like, "I don't know. Maybe... What if you... become pope? Just, like, to pull a random one? You know..."

Sydnee: Yeah. That's true. "Have you thought about that?"

Justin: "I'm a local physician. What are the odds of me, a doctor, [amused] becoming pope?"

Sydnee: I can tell you the odds of me, a doctor, becoming pope.

Justin: What's that, Syd?

Sydnee: Zero.

Justin: Zero.

Sydnee: Yes.

Justin: Yes.

Sydnee: They wouldn't let me.

Justin: Because... ?

Sydnee: Well... that list is long, but...

Justin: You're too busy? Too busy?

Sydnee: [chuckles] I think "girl" would be first.

Justin: Okay.

Sydnee: In the reasons.

Justin: Yes. And not "American," anymore, though!

Sydnee: No, that wouldn't be a problem.

Justin: The cheeseburger ceiling has been shattered. Thank you.

Sydnee: I don't know, though. A pope from Chicago is one thing. A pope from West Virginia? ... The world isn't ready. The world will never be ready.

Justin: No, I don't think.

Sydnee: No. And certainly [amused] not a lady pope. [chuckles]

Justin: [haughtily] "A lady pope."

Sydnee: "A lady pope." We don't let that happen.

So his greatest medical work – so he published this, and he began to be well known as a physician. But then he wrote the Thesaurus pauperum, which is also the Treasury or Pharmacopeia of the Poor.

Justin: Oh!

Sydnee: So it's the poor man's medical book, basically.

Justin: Cool.

Sydnee: Like, here is a collection of stuff that the idea is, you can put this stuff together, probably, in your own house.

Justin: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: So here are a bunch of treatments and cures that you could have this book on your shelf...

Justin: Yeah.

Sydnee: Somebody's got a sickness. You look through, there's something in here. You can probably piece together...

Justin: Yeah. If you can't afford a trip to the physiker...

Sydnee: [chuckles] Nope.

Justin: ... you gotta try to handle it on your own.

Sydnee: You can use stuff that you can find in your own kitchen, or barnyard, or someone's body! [chuckles]

Justin: Or kitchen barnyard! If you're in one room.

Sydnee: [amused] Yeah. So, um, he...

Justin: And the owl nests. Check the local owl nests – you never know what sort of unguents and treatments you might find.

Sydnee: So he collected all of these. And really, like, if you look through it—I've been reading through it. And I'm reading through it, it was copied and recopied in Old English. I'm having a heck of a time.

I will tell you, there's so many cures for eyes. There are some articles about him probably written by ophthalmologists, where he is known as the pope ophthalmologist. Not just the pope doctor, but the pope, specifically...

Justin: [chuckles] He wanted to call dibs.

Sydnee: Yeah. Like, dibs. And he did, he wrote an entire other book about eyes. But he also wrote a lot about treatments for the eyes in this book. There's a lot of stuff he wants you to pour in your eyes.

Justin: [laughing]

Sydnee: And it's always tough, 'cause like the S's are F's in these...

Justin: Yeah, that's true.

Sydnee: ... in these books, and so it's hard to read what— Anyway, I know that, like, cream made of sheep's milk is popular. There's something with white ginger and salt pounded together, and pouring that in your eyes. There's a lot of stuff that he is trusting you wanna put in your eyes, in this book.

I mean, they're really recipes. And now, some of them are kind of gross...

Justin: Sure.

Sydnee: I mean, very gross. And then there are others that almost have, like, a magical edge to them. Like, you do it at certain times of day, or... You know what I mean? Like, we're still drawing on this kind of time period,

where everything... And that's probably spiritualism, is what he's connected to.

Justin: Well...

Sydnee: As much as he is the science, he's drawing on a belief system.

Justin: He is, but aren't you, like— Okay. This is complicated, but like... At this time period, when we don't have a full and holistic... like, a full, complete understanding of all this science that are involved with this... I think it's easy for us to look back, and say that there is this clear— like, it's a blend, but when you don't know it all... you probably are having to take some things on faith.

Right? There is guesswork. There is, like, best guesses, and things like that.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm!

Justin: Right?

Sydnee: And I mean, you definitely see that reflected. Like, it's kind of a mixed bag. He has a lot of science in what he's attempting to do. Like, he's trying to use logic. Like, "This works for this, and this works—" You know, he's trying to apply that. But at the same time, he was still big into astrology.

Justin: Oh, okay.

Sydnee: So, like, the planets have a big influence on your body, and your health status, and that's reflected in there. But on the flip side, he does move us away from superstition. You don't see a lot about charms, or demons, or the idea of, like, "This is a punishment from God," versus "This is possession." Like, you don't see that stuff reflected in there anymore.

Justin: That's good.

Sydnee: So he's moving us away from that.

Like I said, he wrote a whole book about eye diseases specifically. Liber de oculo, and um... it didn't have a lot in it that was right. [chuckles]

Justin: Well, sure. Okay. You know.

Sydnee: But, I mean, it was referenced and built upon.

Justin: Yeah! A lot of people read it. Wasn't [laughs] that something?

Sydnee: Michelangelo copied prescriptions from it, later on.

Justin: Hey, come on!

Sydnee: So it was, you know...

Justin: High praise indeed. That's a blurb!

Sydnee: It's a—

Justin: Michelangelo says... You know, the reviews are in. Michelangelo says, "I copied some pictures from this. I love it!"

Sydnee: It was a stone in the ivory tower of academia.

Justin: Yeah.

Sydnee: Yeah. But then he has stuff in there where he's like— So he was really famous specifically for something that he called his aqua mirabilis, "wonder water."

Justin: Miracle water.

Sydnee: Or "wonder water," is what people would call it. He was a household name. Like, you would know this. Kind of like Dr. Spock.

Justin: Now, wait... Dr. Spock, or Mr. Spock?

Sydnee: Dr. Spock from...

Justin: This is so important.

Sydnee: The doctor that everybody used to listen to about kids.

Justin: Okay. Thank you, yes, Dr. Spock.

Sydnee: Yeah. That kind of colloquial, like, folk. You know what I mean?

Justin: Yeah.

Sydnee: Like, everybody had this guy's book on their shelf.

Justin: Yeah.

Sydnee: And we're talking, like, people were copying it. This is a big deal. So anyway, everybody knew about wonder water. It was either filings of silver...

Justin: Sorry, I'm a little disappointed. I thought we were gonna talk about Star Trek for a second. I'm...

Sydnee: No, Dr. Spock.

Justin: Okay. Yeah, okay.

Sydnee: Everybody knew about wonder water. It was filings of either silver, gold, or copper in a boy's urine. [chuckles]

Justin: [bursts out laughing] Sure, yeah! Of course, yeah.

Sydnee: So... [laughs] And there were gross things in there. Like, I could decipher that you could put pig poop in your nose, if you had a nosebleed.

Justin: I don't like the boy urine.

Sydnee: What?

Justin: I don't like the boy pee. There were also some gross things.

Sydnee: Well, even— I don't know, what's grosser? Boy pee, or pig poop in your nose?

Justin: [amused] The oldest question...

Sydnee: [chuckles]

You could drink the ashes of a swallow, if you're drunk. Terpine suppositories, I think, for fevers.

Justin: Whoa!

Sydnee: And then he talks about eating the— And I really tried to google this, and figure out what this is. The leghtes of a sheep, L-E-G-H-T-E-S. If anybody knows what piece of a sheep I'm supposed to eat...

Justin: [holding back laughter] Just eat the whole thing, and be safe.

Sydnee: L-E-G-H-T-E-S. I don't know what...

Justin: Hoof to snout.

Sydnee: ... what part of a sheep that is. And I kept getting, like, "Did you mean lights? Did you mean sheep lights?" And then they're showing me, like, these little yard decorations that are lit-up sheep. And I'm like, "No! I don't want sheep lights."

Justin: Sheep lights?

Sydnee: "I'm trying to figure out what I'm supposed to eat..."

Justin: Please.

Sydnee: "... because I'm drunk! I don't know."

Justin: "I'm drunk! I'm hungover. I need to eat sheeps."

Sydnee: He also describes something that he calls an Iliac passion, which is probably an early description of appendicitis.

Justin: Ooh!

Sydnee: And that is pretty cool.

Anyway, so all of this to say... it was a mixed bag, in terms of our modern understanding of disease. But he became a household name for the recipes that he published that anybody could access medical treatment. So how did this doctor...

Justin: Become pope?

Sydnee: I'm gonna tell you. But first, we gotta go to the Billing Department.

Justin: Let's go!

[theme song plays]

[ad break]

Justin: So how did his doctor... Well, Syd, you set it up for me last time.

Sydnee: Oh!

Justin: So I thought that, like...

Sydnee: Okay.

Justin: This time, I could reverse it, you ready?

Sydnee: Try it again.

Justin: Okay. [animated tone] So how did this doctor...

Sydnee: [animated tone] Become pope?

Justin: Wow, that was good, Syd.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Justin: Really good.

Sydnee: That sounded really exciting. So it's important to understand... [chuckles] There was a lot of turmoil in the Church of Rome, at this time. I say "at this time," as if that was the only time in history where... This idea where we have this really powerful Church, and then we also have all these monarchies, and they're all competing for who's in charge – as if that wasn't probably always causing some degree of tension. You know?

Justin: Yeah.

Sydnee: I would imagine. There was a previous pope, Innocent IV, who had excommunicated the previous emperor of Rome, and who had created this split between different factions. There were the Italians and the French, who were really, like, battling for who is gonna run the Church, who's going to have the most influence over the kingdom, over the combined, you know, world powers.

There was a lot of power at that point, because of this excommunication in the hands of the French Catholics. And specifically Charles Anjou, who eventually would become King of Sicily, and was very important – you can read all about this guy, if you want to. All of his conquests, and all of his various...

Justin: If you got a free afternoon, yeah.

Sydnee: [chuckles] All of his wars and actions. Whatever.

But the point is, he would use his reign to influence the election of the next pope. This was very common at the time, that you would have all these political leaders. And to this day, I would say it's fair that there is a political influence in what is happening in those conclaves, and as they're choosing the next pope. Obviously, the fact that we have an American pope right now, we keep talking about... I don't think anybody knows for certain what that means politically.

Justin: Right.

Sydnee: But it's hard to think it doesn't mean something.

Justin: It means... It means something.

Sydnee: Right?

Justin: It made some sort of impact, certainly.

Sydnee: So yeah, so anyway... At that point, we have a lot of influence from this prominent... French Charles. [chuckles] Over... Over the Church.

Justin: [amused] Charles of French. Charles of French.

Sydnee: He would use his reign to influence the election of the next pope, after [with Roman numeral X] Gregory X died.

Justin: Sorry, he preferred [pronouncing initial X] "Gregory X."

Sydnee: [laughs] Okay, Greg X.

Justin: [powerfully] "Call me Greg X!"

Sydnee: Pope Greg X.

Justin: "Call me Papa Greg X!"

Sydnee: And uh, [with Roman numeral V] Pope Innocent V, who was the next pope to take over who Charles wanted, was very happy...

Justin: They needed a break, after [chuckles] Pope Greg X. They needed a nice, innocent...

Sydnee: An Innocent.

Justin: ... cool pope.

Sydnee: [pronouncing initial V] Innocent V. So Innocent V takes over, and he really— he's okay with sort of taking orders from Charles. Like, he elevated his powers, in many ways. Gave him more, expanded his titles. I don't know, everybody is like, emperor and king, and ruler, and whatever of something. So he gave him a lot more power. And he didn't mind to do that, and Charles was very pleased with this.

But unfortunately, Pope Innocent V only lasted six months. I mean, they're mainly kinda older guys...

Justin: You gotta get some [amused] young...

Sydnee: [chuckles]

Justin: ... young popes, y'all! Gotta get some young popes.

Sydnee: So after Pope Innocent V died, Charles wanted to ensure that the next conclave went his way. So he decided, "We've gotta put pressure on these cardinals to do this fast. And if they know I'm watching, and if also I make it super uncomfortable – the whole conclave process, I'm gonna make so uncomfortable – that I can use that pressure to get another French guy, or another guy who will be loyal to me, in this seat.

So he issued a series of decrees for the Lyon Council, for this conclave. And basically, not only would the cardinals be sequestered – which they still are to this day, right? We know, they put 'em all in there. A lot has been said about how they can't have Instagram, which I guess all the— I don't know if all the cardinals were on Instagram.

But, [amused] we put 'em all in there. They can't communicate with the outside world until they're done, and have picked a pope. And then they can come back out.

Justin: That's why they picked it so fast, this time. I'd be like, "Listen."

Sydnee: Instagram.

Justin: "We can't— We gotta get out. Listen, we gotta get out. I'm missing all my stories, guys. I gotta get out."

Sydnee: Well, Charles of Anjou did not have Instagram to pressure them with, but what he did have is access to food and wine.

Justin: Nice.

Sydnee: So what he said was, "Not only are we gonna lock you in this building." By the way, it's July. Okay?

Justin: Okay.

Sydnee: It's hot. We're in Italy, it's hot. "But not only are we gonna lock you in there, we're shutting all the doors and windows." It was said that not a bird would be able to enter this conclave.

And there's no air conditioning. You know, it's the 1200s. "So it's super-hot, and we're going to give you a limited amount of only bread and wine. That is all you get. You get bread and wine, and you only get so much. So if you stay in there too long, you will all starve to death. So I would advise you to pick a frickin' pope, and be quick about it."

Justin: "A French one, please."

Sydnee: Yes. So they did all this, he did all this to pressure them and try to get them to act fast. But it didn't work. They instead did choose one of the Italian cardinals, which was a big deal. Because he really was trying to wrestle away all this power from Italy, so he didn't want an Italian cardinal elevated to pope.

But one became Pope, Pope Adrian V. But the conclave shenanigans did work in some way. Because it was so hard on his body, it took such a toll on him, this process, that Pope Adrian V was only pope for [holding back laughter] 38 days.

Justin: It's tough.

Sydnee: Before he passed away.

Justin: That's tough.

Sydnee: Yes.

Now, one of the few things he was able to accomplish in his very short papacy was to, um, revoke all of those rules [chuckles] that had been put in place for the previous conclave.

Justin: Yeah.

Sydnee: Like, "We won't do that next time!" [laughs]

Justin: Yeah. [laughs]

Sydnee: "It'll be better for the next guy!"

So then they had to do another conclave. Okay, well, first of all, it was delayed. Because everybody had just gone home, right?

Justin: Right.

Sydnee: Now, you gotta get 'em all back. And again, there aren't planes or anything. So you gotta get all the cardinals back. So it took an extra, like, ten days than it was supposed to, to pull everybody back.

And all of the townsfolk in Viterbo – that was the province where this was taking place – were becoming very restless. They're mad, they're yelling in the streets and pounding on the doors, and they want this thing to happen. So there's a lot of public pressure on it, and there's still a lot of political pressure on it.

So everybody's watching this conclave. The heavy favorite was Cardinal—Deacon John Orsini, but he was an Italian again.

Justin: Okay. Need a change of pace.

Sydnee: Right. And they're scared now, because they almost got starved [chuckles] last time.

Justin: Right. Yeah.

Sydnee: Yeah. And so they're like, "Aw, man. We really don't wanna make French Charles mad by letting Orsini be pope." So in a much shorter conclave than was predicted, the cardinals decided on a compromise candidate.

Justin: Can I guess?

Sydnee: Yes.

Justin: Is it Peter of Spain?

Sydnee: It is Peter of Spain, Portuguese Cardinal Pedro Hispanos, Pope John XXI. Now, on an interesting note, we are only certain of 19 Pope Johns prior to this pope.

Justin: Mm.

Sydnee: Which would make him John XX.

Justin: Wouldn't it be easy to ascertain the John before him, at least? [chuckles]

Sydnee: Well, there are some writings where he is noted as John XX, originally.

Justin: Okay.

Sydnee: But then when he died, it said it was marked as John XXI. So there's a chance it was a typo.

Justin: Okay.

Sydnee: Is why this happened. And, like, an extra line got etched somewhere, right? So that's possible.

Justin: That's the problem with Roman numerals!

Sydnee: Others think that this is because the reign of John XIV got split in half, 'cause he was in prison for a period of time. And when he came out, some people think that we started calling him John XV, as if he's all new. Like, a shiny, new pope.

Justin: A rebrand. [laughs]

Sydnee: But yeah. Forget John XIV, he went to jail. John XV got outta jail...

Justin: Yeah, John XV, yeah, he's a good guy.

Sydnee: So there's a chance that...

Justin: He's learned his lesson.

Sydnee: [chuckles] That's why, is that the same guy was both John XIV and XV; we just sort of divided it up. Others think that it's the antipope...

Justin: Yes.

Sydnee: ... to Gregory V...

Justin: Yes!

Sydnee: ... who was also called "John XVII." Would you like to tell us what an antipope is, Justin?

Justin: Okay. Listen, this is probably wrong, but this is my understanding of it. It's basically a pope that is elevated in opposition to a different pope, or a pope that is chosen by a conclave usually supported by a sect within the church, or a part of the government. That's an antipope.

Sydnee: And they think that because there's an antipope, that was John XVII, that this may have thrown off the count.

Justin: Yes. Sometimes, it's unclear historically which is a pope, and which is the antipope. Especially in this time period, there's a lot of antipopes running around.

Sydnee: [chuckles] There is also a legend that may have influenced this.

Justin: Ooh!

Sydnee: By the way, I read this whole thing. I don't think— I have no reason to believe this is true, but I do think it's fun to share this kind of legend. I mean, so... Just take this for what it is. This is a fun story. There's a legend of a popess.

Justin: Ooh!

Sydnee: Popess Johanna, who followed her lover into the monastery. She

didn't want him to leave her, so she pretended to be a monk. Pretended to be a man who took the name John.

Justin: Mm.

Sydnee: And did so well... [chuckles] that she ascended through the ranks, and was named pope.

Justin: Oh. So that's more of a conspiracy theory, maybe?

Sydnee: It's a conspiracy theory, because the idea is that then she got pregnant, and she had a vision that either she could, like, have the child, conceal this whole thing, and continue to be pope, and then she'd go to Hell. Or she could admit, and then repent, and then she would be welcomed into Heaven.

Justin: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: And so she did that, and so it was no longer pope. None of this was true. But anyway, this was one of the theories as to how the John count got thrown off.

Justin: Right.

Sydnee: So one of the first things he did was agree that with the last pope, that we shouldn't starve the cardinals.

Justin: Yeah. I'm glad we could reach a consensus [chuckles] on that.

Sydnee: Do you know, also, why there was this stir around it?

Justin: Mm-mm.

Sydnee: It took them three years to elect Pope Gregory X.

Justin: Oh, that's irritating!

Sydnee: That's how long that conclave lasted.

Justin: Oh, that's so irritating.

Sydnee: So you can see why there would be this, like, "Can't we make these guys hurry?" sort of argument. Now, obviously, you shouldn't starve them, but I can understand why they were thinking, like, "How do we limit this?"

Justin: "This is pretty ridiculous. Yeah, this is ridiculous. We gotta put some time limits on it."

Sydnee: Right. He was not liked by the higher clergy, [amused] because he was very approachable to everyone.

Justin: Oh! Okay.

Sydnee: He was easy to talk to, and he seemed like a regular guy.

Justin: [laughs]

Sydnee: And so the other cardinals and such didn't like him much. He was called "Learned and silly, a wise fool upon the sacred chair. A man without presence or dignity, who [laughs] loved learning and hated monks."

Justin: Loved learning, hates monks.

Sydnee: Loved learning, and hated monks. He did many things that argued him to be guilty of falling in levity, and does not deserve commendation, unless it be for one thing, and that was that he assisted young scholars, especially the poorer sort, with money and preferment. So his scholarliness, his education, his focus on academia was actually something that they really didn't like about him.

Justin: Mm.

Sydnee: That actually was a major strike against him. And at the time, part of this is because the study of science and medicine is still kind of magic. It's not magic, but it's very closely related to magic still.

Justin: Mm. Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: We haven't moved to that time period, where we can clearly separate, like, "That is a medicine, and not a potion."

Justin: Yeah.

Sydnee: The two things were very intertwined. So anyway, he was not particularly loved among the other people within the Vatican. He liked the Franciscans, and the work that they did for the poor. He wasn't a Franciscan, but he was a big fan of the idea of helping the poor. He tried to address tithing. Tithing was a big deal, at the time. The churches had to send a 10th of everything they collected to Rome.

Justin: Oh, yeah.

Sydnee: Like, to the Church, right? And he had all these people from, mainly, Scotland and England coming to him, saying, like, "Can we stop this?" Like, "Can we please? We're all poor here. People are rich, and we're poor, and stop taking our money."

Justin: "This is a fancy place you got here. This is ridiculous."

Sydnee: I know. "This is ridiculous." And he did redirect money for a while, but it was to the Crusades.

Justin: Aw, no!

Sydnee: And his papacy was fairly short. So he didn't necessarily, you know, achieve a whole bunch of stuff. He tried to unite some churches, he tried to convert some people. He didn't really fight Charles of Anjou, but he didn't bow to his whims either.

And then he found out that there were some documents from Harrison Oxford that were creating a stir. There may be some heretical documents, people were responding to them. Anyway, he was called upon. "We're going to send you these documents; we need you to study them, and tell us how this relates to the Church, to Catholicism." Right?

Justin: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: So he had had a study chamber built behind the Papal Palace. So his own little— Which, again, this was unique. He had his own little place.

Justin: His own little study shack.

Sydnee: Yeah. His own little study shack. It was an old temple of Hercules, and now it's a study chamber for the Pope. And on May 14th 1277, the pope went into his study chamber with these documents to figure out if they were heretical or not.

Justin: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: And the ceiling crashed down upon him, and crushed him.

Justin: Wow.

Sydnee: He died six days later. For a while after he died, people started trying to spread rumors that he was a necromancer, and he was about to sell his soul to the Devil, and that's why the roof crashed in. That's... not true.

Justin: Yeah.

Sydnee: But his enemies did try to malign his character.

Justin: Pretty rock and roll, though. Pretty rocking story. [chuckles]

Sydnee: And I promised Pope Leo XIII would get a mention here. He was buried there, and then really we didn't talk much about him for a long time.

Until 1886, when Pope Leo XIII and the Portuguese ambassador erected a new monument to him. Um, because he was the first pope from Portugal.

Justin: Cool! Well, there you go. That's the story of Dr. Pope.

Sydnee: He was a doctor, and he was the pope. He was Dr. Pope.

Justin: Thank you so much for listening to our podcast. It's called Sawbones. Thanks to The Taxpayers for the use of their song "Medicines" as the intro and outro of our program. Thanks to everybody who came out and saw us at the Renaissance faire – I know we said that previously, but thank you again.

Sydnee: Thank you so much. It was such a great event.

Justin: Yep. That is gonna do it for us. 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!

[theme song plays]

[acoustic sting]

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