

Podcast: [What If World](#)

Episode: 19: What if we stopped having birthdays?

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Transcription by Keffy

[Rising harp scales followed by the What If World theme song.]

Lyrics: What if kittens played the glockenspiel? And what if unicorns were real? What if you could fly or travel back in time, we welcome you to What If World. What If World. This is What If World.

Mr. Eric: Hey there folks and welcome back to What If World, the show where your questions and ideas inspire off the cuff stories. I'm Mr. Eric, your host, and today we've got a question from a little girl named Noelle.

Noelle: My name is Noelle. I like babies. [Unclear]

Parent: Translation: What if we stopped having birthdays?

Mr. Eric: Oh, Noelle, what a great question. I bet you're really good with babies. So, let's find out what would happen if we stopped having—

Ms. Biz: Excuse me, I'm going to have to ask you to cease and desist on this particular story.

Mr. Eric: What? Who are you?

Ms. Biz: Ms. Biz, and I think you'll find my paperwork quite in order.

Mr. Eric: Um, yeah. Oh gosh. Wow, this is very impressive paperwork.

Ms. Biz: My paperwork is always impressive and as you can plainly see, I need you to not tell this story until after my son's third birthday party.

Mr. Eric: Oh, um. Is—yeah, that's no problem. When's his third birthday party?

Ms. Biz: It's happening right now and it cannot be interrupted. I'm about to have another baby and I want him to know that he will always be my special little man.

Mr. Eric: Oh, congratulations, Ms. Biz.

Ms. Biz: Thank you. So please make sure his birthday party goes off without a hitch.

Mr. Eric: Yeah, well, I think that'd probably be a lot easier if you were at the birthday party, right?

Ms. Biz: Now that you mention it, yes, I must be going. Please sign here.

Mr. Eric: Oh, oh yeah. Okay. Right... on.

Ms. Biz: Yes. And here. And here.

Mr. Eric: ...on this line.

Ms. Biz: And here. And here. And here. Please sign here. Initial here. Please sign here. Let me just stamp this. See here where I've highlighted?

Mr. Eric: Yeah... do I sign here?

Ms. Biz: No, don't sign there. No. Nonononono! That's the one place you're not supposed to sign it. All right—

Mr. Eric: Folks at home, I'm going to be stuck filling out this paperwork for a while, so...

Ms. Biz: And here, here, here, and here. Please sign here. Turn this paper over. This is the drawing of paperwork my son drew. Isn't it great. Please don't sign it, you'll ruin it.

Mr. Eric: Oh yeah... sorry. Why don't you just enjoy the story and we'll—

Ms. Biz: Here and here. Please sign here.

Mr. Eric: —check back in later, huh?

[Rising harp scale.]

Mr. Eric: Once upon a time Buster Biz-Business was about to celebrate his third birthday.

Buster: I'm three today. I wanna have cake.

Mr. Eric: At that very moment, his mom, Ms. Biz, walked in with a beautiful little cake with three bright candles on top.

Ms. Biz: [Speaking quickly] Happy birthday to you, happy birthday to you, happy birthday dear Buster, happy birthday to you. Here you are, be careful of the fire. Don't forget to make a wish.

Buster: Mommy, when's the baby gonna come out your belly.

Mr. Eric: Ms. Biz climbed into a seat. It was a little bit difficult with how big her belly was.

Ms. Biz: Well, son. Let's just say that by this time next year you'll probably have a little brother or sister walking around this apartment.

Buster: Oh, that soon.

Ms. Biz: Very soon, yes. But you'll always be my special little boy.

Robotic noise: Biz call biz call biz call.

Mr. Eric: Ms. Biz's phone was ringing.

Ms. Biz: Excuse me son, this is a very important biz call. I am going to walk over to the other side of the room during this phone call and please don't lean too close to the flame and please wait for me to blow out your candle, I would not want to miss this special moment in your life.

Buster: Okay, Mommy!

Mr. Eric: Ms. Biz picked up the phone and started having a quick conversation on the other side of the room.

Voice: Hey kid, would you blow out these candles already?

[Record scratch]

Buster: Who is that?

Jimmy: It's me, Jimmy.

Margaret: And me, Margaret.

Hugo: And me, Hugo.

Buster: Hi Jimmy, hi Margaret, hi Hugo. Who are you?

Jimmy: We're birthday fairies, kid.

Buster: No, you look like candles.

Margaret: Of course we look like candles. This is what birthday people wish on.

Hugo: Yeah, please make a wish soon. I think my brain already melted.

Buster: Oh, sorry. Um. I wish we stopped having birthdays.

Jimmy: Hey, no birthdays! Come on, you'll put the three of us out of a job.

Buster: Yeah, but momma said by next birthday I'm going to have another brother or sister and I like just me and momma.

Jimmy: Kid, that's crazy.

Margaret: I have to agree.

Hugo: I don't know. My brain melted.

Buster: Well, that's my wish, birthday fairies, so, okay thanks.

Mr. Eric: Just then, Ms. Biz came back.

Ms. Biz: Buster, who were you talking to?

Buster: Oh, nobody, just time for me to blow out the candles.

Jimmy: Wait, kid, I'm not sure you understand the sociological and metaphysical consequences of—

[Loud spluttery sound of blowing out candles]

Buster: I blew out all the candles.

Ms. Biz: Excellent work, Buster. Now it's 7 o'clock, time for bed.

Buster: Okay, mommy.

Mr. Eric: And Ms. Biz put Buster to bed and the next morning, he woke up to the sound of crying.

[Crying baby sounds]

Mr. Eric: Buster walked out of his bedroom rubbing at his eyes. And there sat his mother with a little baby in her arms.

Buster: Mommy, I don't get it. You weren't supposed to have a little baby.

Ms. Biz: That's right, Buster. The baby did come a little early but we got our friend Randall Radbot to come here and watch you while I delivered the baby right at home last night.

Buster: Wow, I just have been sleeping really deeply.

Ms. Biz: Yes, we were all quite surprised you didn't wake up.

Randall Radbot: Hey, Buster. 'Sup dude. You got a little sister. Barbara Biz-Business.

Babs: [Cries]

Buster: But Mommy, I thought the baby wasn't gonna come.

Ms. Biz: Buster, we talked about this. You can't stop time. Babs was gonna come one time or another.

Buster: But we were supposed to stop having birthdays.

Ms. Biz: What days?

Randall Radbot: What days?

Buster: Birthdays.

Randall Radbot: Birth-whats?

Buster: Like, the day you get older.

Ms. Biz: I don't think there's anything such thing as birthdays. I'm 36, you're 3, and Randall Radbot is—

Randall Radbot: 457.

Ms. Biz: Exactly, so there's nothing to worry about.

Buster: I guess my wish didn't come true.

Mr. Eric: The next couple of months were tough on Buster. Mr. Business was out on business trips all the time. Between work and the baby, Ms. Biz only spent about half as much time with Buster as before. So Randall Radbot came by a lot more often to help out around the house.

Randall Radbot: Wow man, your little sister's getting big for someone who was just born today.

Buster: What do you mean just born today? She must be three or four months old. She's already sitting up and everything.

Randall Radbot: Yeah, I guess it was like 100 todays ago or something.

Buster: What do mean 100 todays ago?

Randall Radbot: You know what I mean, it's like, there hasn't been a tomorrow in a long time, but everyones getting older. Weird.

Mr. Eric: Buster was starting to worry, but he didn't quite understand what was happening. Do you all have any idea what might be going on? Many more days went by. Ms. Biz was back to work full time and little Babs was walking and climbing all over the apartment.

Buster: Babs, slow down. You're gonna get hurt.

Randall Rabbot: Oh, chill out, Buster. She's not even a year old, dude.

Babs: Dude dude dude dude dude dude dude dude [continues]

Buster: See, she talks. So she's a year old and I must be four.

Randall Rabbot: What do you mean, dude? You're three. You'll always be three. Just like your mom's 36. What's to get, hume. You're young, so let's play and have fun.

Mr. Eric: Randall Rabbot busted out his guitar and drums and they started jamming. Babs even picked up a tambourine and banged it around. They passed so many days playing and laughing. Mom and Dad joined in the fun whenever they got back from work. And so many long, happy days passed that way that Buster sort of forgot about birthdays.

Buster: Hey, Mom, what do you want to do today?

Mr. Eric: Said Buster. He was a very big boy now. Almost six feet tall.

Ms. Biz: Buster, your mom's a little tired from work today and she's still got dishes to do, so maybe if you help out we'll have a little more time to play.

Buster: Okay, Mom. Just step aside and let me wash these dishes.

Mr. Eric: Buster rolled up his sleeves and walked to the sink. It was full of steamy hot water and shiny, sharp knives and forks.

Ms. Biz: Wait, I'm sorry. I don't know what I was thinking, you're three years old. You can't be around all this hot water and sharp instruments.

Buster: Mom, I know I'm three, but I can totally handle this.

Babs: Mom, I will help, too, if you just let me out of this crib!

Ms. Biz: Well, Babs, it's like I'm such a good mother I can understand your baby language.

Babs: It's not baby language. I am speaking English.

Buster: Mom, she's right. I can understand her, too.

Ms. Biz: You're just such a good big brother, I knew you always would be.

Buster: No, Mom, I think it's something else. There's something really fishy going on here.

Mr. Eric: Ms. Biz put down her sponge. Her hands trembled ever so slightly and her graying hair fell forward as she hung her head.

Ms. Biz: Buster, Babs, you're just a toddler and an infant, so I know this is hard for you to understand. But...

Mr. Eric: She slumped forward, her eyes fluttering, her head falling toward a sink full of hot water and sharp cutlery, but Buster caught her.

Buster: Mom, you need some rest.

Mr. Eric: Ms. Biz's eyes snapped open again.

Ms. Biz: Nonsense. Why, when I was 35, I used to work six 12-hour days in a row.

Buster: But Mom, you're not 35. You haven't been for a long time.

Ms. Biz: Oh, shush now. I'm only 36.

[Door bell rings]

Buster: Babs, can you get that?

Babs: Duh, of course.

Mr. Eric: Babs stood up and stepped out of the crib, a full grown young lady wearing a very large onesie.

Randall Radbot: Whoa, Babs. What are you doing answering the door. You're a baby.

Babs: Ugh. I'm not a baby. I just happen to be zero years old.

Randall Radbot: Whoa. That is a lot of attitude, but it's okay. Babies just cry a lot. I understand.

Babs: Ugh, I'm not crying!

Mr. Eric: And Babs stomped back to her crib.

Ms. Biz: Thanks Randall, for coming to babysit. I've just been getting so tired at night lately.

Randall Radbot: No prob, Ms. Biz. We're like family.

Mr. Eric: Randall started bringing in his guitar and his little electric drum set and his little keyboard, and finally a tambourine for Babs.

Randall Radbot: So like, I brought enough instruments for all of us tonight. I figure, beep boop, if Ms. Biz has a little energy left, she could bop along with us.

Ms. Biz: Oh, you know I'd love to, Randall, but I'm so tired I think I'm just going to make myself a cup of tea and go to sleep.

Buster: Mom, I will make you some tea, you just sit down and—

Randall Radbot: Whoa, Buster. Don't you dare go near that stove. A three-year-old cannot play with the stove.

Buster: But I'm, well, if I'm three, I'm an extremely precocious and gifted three.

Babs: Yeah, Mom, Randall, just let him make some tea. It'll be totally fine.

Mr. Eric: Said Babs.

Randall Radbot: Uh, don't you mean, like, goo goo ga ga, or something, baby?

Babs: UGH.

Mr. Eric: Ms. Biz wearily walked to the stove and turned the knob to light the pilot.

[Click click fwoomf]

When Buster saw that little flame dance atop the stove, it all finally clicked.

Buster: Mom, I need you to throw me a birthday party.

Ms. Biz: A what-day party?

Buster: A birthday party.

Randall Radbot: A birth what-what?

Babs: Ugh, he's saying 'birthday party.' I mean, I don't know what it means, but that's what he's saying.

Ms. Biz: That Babs is getting awfully fussy, I think she needs a diaper change.

Babs: Mom, don't you dare.

Buster: Everybody stop. Listen to me. I think, somehow, I got rid of birthdays.

Randall Radbot: Hume, just come on over here and chillax like a normal three year old.

Buster: I'm not a normal three year old. I'm probably close to 20 now.

Ms. Biz: Honey, I'm sorry but that's impossible. I had you when I was 33 and now I'm 36, so you're three years old.

Randall Radbot: Speaking of which, look at the time. It's 7:15. This little guy's got to go to bed.

Babs: Randall, Mom, will you just listen to Buster? I think he's right. I look a lot bigger than most of the babies I see.

Buster: I know it's hard to understand but just give me a cake and put three candles in it and light them, and I think I can fix this.

Ms. Biz: I don't understand, why would anyone melt wax on top of cake.

Randall Radbot: You toddlers have the wackiest ideas.

Buster: Babs, come here. Help me make a cake.

Babs: YES, absolutely!

Mr. Eric: And the two of them busted out a recipe book, flour, sugar, eggs, butter, bowls, a little bit of food coloring.

Ms. Biz: Look at my kids playing at cooking together, how cute.

Randall Radbot: Yeah, it's as if they can actually read.

Babs & Buster: We can read.

Randall Radbot: That's so cute. I gotta save this memory to my hard drives.

Mr. Eric: Before long, they'd whipped up a cake and Randall Radbot insisted on putting it in the oven himself. When it was done, Buster found three old, half-melted candles at the back of a drawer and poked them into the fresh-baked cake.

Buster: Now, Mom, where's our lighter?

Ms. Biz: Son, in the fun and games there's no way I'm letting you play with fire.

Randall Radbot: It's ok, Ms. B. I'll just light it up with my little finger jet nice and safe.
[Fwoof fwoof fwoof!]

Buster: Now, everybody, please repeat after me. Happy birthday to you. Happy birthday to you. Happy birthday, dear Buster. Happy birthday to you.

All: Happy birthday to you. Happy birthday to you. Happy birthday, dear Buster. Happy birthday to you.

Mr. Eric: As soon as the song ended, those three tiny candles started dancing even brighter.

Jimmy: Oh hey, it's this guy.

Margaret: What do you want over here?

Hugo: I definitely got no brains left.

Buster: Listen, birthday fairies, I made a mistake. I want there to be birthdays again, please. I wish it.

Jimmy: What? What-day fairies? You wished away any kind of fairy we used to be.

Margaret: Now we're just fires, Buster, sorry.

Hugo: I don't know if I'm fire or cake.

Buster: But that's not fair. Listen, when I made the wish, I didn't understand the ramifications of—

Jimmy: Not fair? You didn't want a little sister and you didn't care if it put us out of a job.

Hugo: And now I think my mouth is melting, too-oo-ooo.

Buster: Well, I was three. Probably wasn't very responsible of you three to give that kind of power to a three year old.

Margaret: He's got a point, there.

Jimmy: Yeah, guess you're right, kid.

Hugo: Heememeheheghmhm.

Jimmy: Then it's settled. We put things back the way they—
[Fwooo!]

Mr. Eric: And as Buster blew out his three little candles, he was sitting in his old high chair next to his very pregnant young mother.

Buster: Mommy, I did it! I did the thing!

Ms. Biz: Yes, you blew out the candles, very wonderful.

Buster: No, I saved the birthdays and Babs helped.

Ms. Biz: Babs? Where'd you hear that name, Buster.

Buster: It's what we say for Barbara. You're gonna have her tonight. And Randall Radbot gonna come watch me.

Ms. Biz: Oh, you kids and your imagination. Well, my—ooh. Mm. Well, it is past your bedtime, Buster, so why don't you get to bed. Maybe I will give that Randall Radbot a call. Pretty good idea.

Buster: Okay, Mommy.

Mr. Eric: But then he came right back around to give his mother and her belly a big hug.

Buster: I can't wait to have a little sister. We're going to bake a cake together.

Mr. Eric: Ms. Biz looked down at her son. Her eyes sparkled and a smile lit her face.

Ms. Biz: Well, Buster. I'm glad to see you so excited. I love you very much and I'm sure your little brother or sister will, too. Now, off to bed.

Mr. Eric: As little Buster drifted off to sleep, the memories of the wish he'd made and unmade started to drift away as well. But when he woke up in the morning and met his little sister for the first time again, he just knew they were gonna be best friends someday. The end.

[Falling harp scale.]

Mr. Eric: Oh, wow. What a good big brother. And what a good little sister, too, don't you think? Kids at home, what if everyone thought you were a baby no matter how old you got. I think that's what happened to Buster. Noelle, you gave us such an awesome question this week. I hope you liked the story it inspired.

I'd like to thank Karen Marshall, my editor and producer. Craig Martinson, my theme song creator and performer. And all you good brothers and sisters out there for being kind to your siblings.

Until we meet again, keep wondering.

[What If World theme song plays.]

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