

Podcast: [What If World](#)

Episode: 43: What if Abacus P. Grumbler turned me into a lion and a chicken could ride a cloud?

File Length: 18:54

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 two questions from brothers Carson and Charlie. We're going to start with Carson's.

Carson: My name is Carson. I like cars, and my question is what if Abacus P. Grumbler turned me into a lion?

Mr. Eric: Okay, I listened to this a dozen times. I think you said you like cars, so that's what I'm going with and if I'm wrong, I do apologize. But I definitely heard the second part. What if Abacus P. Grumbler turned you into a lion? So we'll have a Carson character in this story. Well, let's hear your little brother's question.

Charlie: Hi, my name is Charlie and I like ears a lot and my what if question is, what if a chicken could fly a cloud?

Charlie's dad: That's Charlie. He really likes ears a lot and his what if question is what if a chicken could ride a cloud?

Mr. Eric: All right, Charlie. And thank you to Carson and Charlie's dad. Let's find out what if Abacus P. Grumbler turned me into a lion and a chicken could ride a cloud?

[Rising harp scale.]

Mr. Eric: Once upon a time, two adopted boys lived on a farm. The eldest was a human and his name was Carson. The youngest was a chicken called Charlie. They were both found in the wild by their dad, whose name, of course, was Charson. And he was a big walking ear of corn. Now, he did his best to raise these kids on his own, but humans grow up a lot faster than talking chickens and sometimes Carson would tease little Charlie.

Carson: Hey Charlie, when you're my age, you're only going to be up to my knee.

Charlie: Bok bok, I don't mind. I am what I am.

Mr. Eric: But they got along a lot of the time, too.

Carson: Hey Charlie? I threw my frisbee up on the roof again, can you fly up there and kick it down?

Charlie: Okay, but you'll have to give me a little toss.

Mr. Eric: And Carson scooped up his little brother and gave him a toss up into the air and little Charlie flapped his tiny chicken wings so he could get the rest of the way up to the roof.

Carson: Thanks Charlie!

Charlie: No problem, here's your frisbee. Oh, and here's an old plate.

Mr. Eric: And he kicked that off too. Crash [plate breaking].

Charlie: And here's a tire, how'd we get this up there?

Carson: I think we bounced it.

Charlie: Okay. And here's a pepperoni pizza, gross.

Carson: No, I love pepperoni, kick that down here, too.

Mr. Eric: And as Charlie pushed down that big tire and kicked off that old pizza, he spied a sputtering old car in the distance. It was one of those round looking cars, like an old buggy, with chipped away brown paint. And the paint that wasn't chipped away was so faded by the sun it was almost gray.

Carson: Hey, Charlie, don't be afraid to jump down, I'll catch you.

Mr. Eric: Said Carson.

Charlie: It's not that. There's a car driving here.

Mr. Eric: Said Charlie.

Car: [Tired, sputtering engine noises]

Mr. Eric: The car sputtered and spat and gasped and coasted down the last little hill to rest right beside their barn. Their farmer father, Charson, heard the commotion and came out of their house.

Charson: Now, who could that be driving down to my house in the middle of the day. We usually take the corn in the pickup down on Sunday.

Mr. Eric: The car was still smoking a little. Carson, Charlie, and Charson, carefully crept towards the car and saw Abacus P. Grumbler stuck inside.

Abacus: How dare this confounded contraption?

Carson: I think it's a cool car, Mister.

Mr. Eric: Said Carson.

Abacus: Cool, indeed. The air conditioning is broken. It's a hundred degrees in here! And I can't get the door open.

Mr. Eric: But the boys loved fixing up cars with their dad and they were ready to help.

Carson: Okay, Mister. First thing's first, you've got to unlock that door.

Abacus: Why would I want to lock myself in such a thing?

Carson: It's that little kind of button there. Yeah, yeah. You just gotta pull it up.

Mr. Eric: Abacus finally found it but the lock got stuck halfway.

Charlie: Don't worry, I've got it.

Mr. Eric: And Charlie stuck his little beak into the lock and [crack] got it the rest of the way.

Charson: Good team work, boys.

Carson: Nuh-uh, it was all my idea.

Mr. Eric: Said Carson.

Charlie: But I fixed the lock.

Mr. Eric: Said Charlie.

Abacus: I think it's lovely that you both are so helpful, but I'm still inside this car.

Mr. Eric: Cried Abacus.

Charson: Okay, Mister.

Mr. Eric: Charson pulled the handle of the door and Abacus tumbled right out. His wizard hat fell right off, revealing a mop of sweaty white hair and beard.

Abacus: Thank you. Thank you. I was trying to find some place secluded to practice my magic, but I must have let a little loose in the car, and...

Charson: No, you just ran out of gas.

Mr. Eric: Charson had the hood open.

Carson: And coolant. And windshield wiper fluid.

Charlie: And power steering fluid.

Charson: Your air filter's none too fresh, either.

Abacus: Well, that's why I primarily deal in magic, you see. Speaking of which, I owe each of you a spell.

Charson: Um, you haven't quite sold me on your magic being safe.

Mr. Eric: But Carson was already blurting out.

Carson: I want to be flying like my brother.

Mr. Eric: And Charlie was shouting.

Charlie: I want to be an ear of corn like my poppa.

Abacus: Oh, trust me, sir. I'm a professional. I'm perfectly skilled with magic.

Charson: Well, then. I suppose my corn fields could use some rain clouds. Been a dry month.

Charlie: Cock-a-doodle-da-bra.

Charson: Okay, let's see that magic, Mister.

Abacus: Ah yes, of course, of course. You were all just talking so fast, but I think I got it. Lion and ears and clouds.

Carson: I said flying, not a lion—

Charson: Well, more specifically—

Charlie: Well, I... I meant...

Mr. Eric: But Abacus was already pulling his wand out of his sleeve and swinging it in the air as the wind whipped and lightning struck, and the car honked for good measure.

Abacus: Abra-ca-lion and ala-ka-ears, and also this guy's rain cloud fears!

Charson: Oh boy.

Mr. Eric: And Carson was growing fur, a tail, claws, a mane and big sharp teeth as he became a lion.

Carson: Wow. This isn't what I asked for, but it's pretty cool.

Mr. Eric: And a swirl of brown mist, the same color as Charlie's feathers, gathered around his little chicken head.

Charlie: Uh, brown isn't really a corn color...

Mr. Eric: But he hadn't turned into an ear of corn. He'd just grown two big brown human ears on either side of his little head.

Charlie: Awk, at least they match... Wow, is that what I sound like?

Mr. Eric: And Charson looked up as the wind kept whipping and clouds kept gathering.

Charson: Hey, it looks like he's going to get one right, kids.

Mr. Eric: And as all those rain clouds drew together, suddenly. [Boing boing boing boing boing boing] they started bouncing off each other like little fluffy basketballs. And they bounced away across the skies leaving just one tiny little raincloud hovering over their house, giving off a very light drizzle.

Abacus: There you go, you'll never have to worry about rain. Except on your roof.

Charson: No, I wanted rain.

Abacus: Whoever asks for rain? That's silly.

Charson: Maybe a farmer with a thousand acres of corn.

Abacus: Oh...

Charlie: Could you all talk a little more quietly.

Mr. Eric: Whispered Charlie, trying to cover his big ears with his little wings.

Carson: Oh, Charlie.

Mr. Eric: Said Carson, now a lion.

Carson: You quit complaining about your awesome ears and your delicious wings...

Charlie: I like my wings just fine.

Carson: I like them just fine, too.

Mr. Eric: Said Carson. And before he knew what he was doing, he'd pounced towards his little brother. Charlie tried to fly out of the way but his ears were too heavy for him to get very far. He'd only flown a few feet before he crashed down on Abacus's cap.

Abacus: Now, see here, Chicken. You've got your ears, no need to claw at me.

Carson: Charlie, I just want to play!

Charson: Carson, you get ahold of yourself. Lions may eat chickens but son of mine is gonna eat another son of mine.

Mr. Eric: But Carson was already stalking towards Abacus and Charlie.

Carson: You know, I wouldn't mind chewing on that wizard a little, either.

Abacus: I'll have you know Abacus P. Grumbler is no one's chew toy. Except that one time I turned myself into a chew toy.

Mr. Eric: Carson leapt at Abacus and Charlie but Farmer Cobb was too fast. It was Charson versus Carson, a giant ear of corn wrestling his out of control lion son!

Charson: Now, I know kids rough house but this is a little too rough.

Mr. Eric: Charson Cobb wore overalls over his cornhusk but his son had already scratched through both layers. Meanwhile, Abacus was acting fast.

Abacus: Aba-ca-cloud get over here so I can fly away on you!

Mr. Eric: And the little rain cloud flew down from the roof of the house and landed right beside Abacus and Charlie.

Abacus: Well that cloud is only big enough for one of us.

Charlie: Bok!

Abacus: You're right, you're right. You should take it. I'll figure something out.

Mr. Eric: And Abacus lifted his wand in a shaking hand as Charlie hopped onto the cloud. Suddenly, the cloud zipped right past Abacus. Charlie couldn't pull away fast enough and they knocked the wand right out of Abacus's hand.

Charlie: Cloud, why'd you do that?

Charson: That's right, boy. Get out of here. Aaah!

Mr. Eric: Farmer Cobb was doing his best, but in the battle of corn versus lion, there's only ever one winner.

Abacus: Uh, here kitty kitty kitty.

Mr. Eric: Said Abacus, trying to lure Carson away from his father.

Carson: Kitty? I'm not a kitty, I'm a lion!

Mr. Eric: And Carson let his father go. He was missing a few pieces of corn and his whole husk! But other than that he'd be okay. I don't know if we'll be able to say the same for Abacus, though.

Charlie: Cloud! Turn around.

Mr. Eric: Charlie was squawking at the cloud as loud as he could. So loud it hurt his big brown ears. The cloud finally manifested a stormy little gray arm and tapped on a sign right under Charlie's taloned feet.

Charlie: Don't talk to flyer while cloud is in motion. Well, then why don't you stop being in motion?

Mr. Eric: And the fluffy little cloud finger tapped the sign again.

Charlie: Oh no, little cloud.

Mr. Eric: And Charlie gripped the cloud tight with his taloned feet and then opened his wings wide. Suddenly the cloud tipped and veered and changed directions, and Charlie found that if he turned his wings just so, he could tell the cloud which way to go. That wing helped him go left. This wing helped him go right. And then, when he moved his big ears up or folded them down, they caught the wind just so and his cloud went up or down.

Charlie: That's why you were so clumsy, you're not aerodynamic.

Mr. Eric: And the cloud tapped that Do Not Talk sign again.

Abacus: Oh, where's my wand, where's my wand, where's my wand?

Mr. Eric: Abacus had crawled under his old car to get away from Carson the lion. But he couldn't find his wand anywhere.

Carson: Here wizard, wizard, wizard.

Mr. Eric: Carson slowly stalked around the faded gray brown buggy, clawing at bits of Abacus's robe every time they peeked out from under the car.

Abacus: [Whimpers]

Charson: Now Carson, I'm your pop, and you've got to listen to me. 'Round these parts we don't eat brothers and we don't eat strangers.

Carson: Fine, I'll just chew him up a little and then spit him out.

Charson: Okay, now you're listening, wait, what? No, you can't do that neither.

Carson: I just really feel like scratching on something, Dad?

Charson: Well, I think a giant ears of corn might make an awful good scratching post, huh son?

Mr. Eric: And Charson opened up his two spindly little corn husk arms as if asking for a hug from his lion son.

Carson: Aw, Pa. You're the best.

Mr. Eric: And just as Carson was about to make a chew toy out of Farmer Cobb, swish! Charlie whizzed by on his flying rain cloud and...

Charlie: I think I know what you really want.

Mr. Eric: Said the chicken.

Carson: Huh?

Mr. Eric: Answered Carson. Being a big cat, he couldn't help but follow this quickly zipping cloud as it zoomed this way and that.

Carson: Ooh, look at that thing go. I want that thing to get—ooh, where is it now?



Mr. Eric: And Carson bounded after Charlie and his cloud, but couldn't catch them.

Charlie: No, you don't want us.

Mr. Eric: Said Charlie, flying his cloud so low to the ground that the dust got wet.

Charlie: You want this!

Mr. Eric: And Charlie reached down with his beak to pick up that old pepperoni pizza.

Carson: Ooh. Pepperoni.

Mr. Eric: And Carson was sprinting after the pizza so close on Charlie's tail that the chicken could hear his brother's heart beating. [Buh boom, buh boom, buh boom]. Or was that his own? [buh buh buh buh buh]

Charson: No, son! Get out of here!

Mr. Eric: Cried their father.

Abacus: Yes, do get out of here. Stop flying towards this car!

Mr. Eric: Screamed Abacus. And just as Charlie closed in on the car, he let go of the pizza, watching it fly through the open door of the car, opening his wings wide and flipping his ears straight up in the sky, scraping right over the top of the car. And was flying safely away as Carson the lion leapt right inside that car after the pizza.

Charlie: Abacus, the door!

Mr. Eric: And from beneath the car, Abacus carefully reached up with one hand and [Creak, click] clicked that stuck door closed again.

Charson: Son, you did it!

Mr. Eric: Cried Charson.

Abacus: Well, technically, I closed the door.

Carson: No!

Mr. Eric: Growled the lion. He was already finished with the pizza and trying to get out, but the stuck lock held fast.

Abacus: Well, we'll just say it was a group effort.

Mr. Eric: Said Abacus, as he crawled out from underneath the car.

Charson: Now, Mr. Grumbler, I consider myself a patient man. But you turned my son into a lion who tried to eat us, so I'm gonna have to ask you kindly to leave.

Charlie: Aw, Dad, he didn't mean it. He did his best to help.

Mr. Eric: Said Charlie.

Abacus: Besides, don't you want me to turn him back, first?

Carson: Aw, Dad, no!

Mr. Eric: Said Carson.

Carson: I like being a lion.

Charlie: Yeah, and I like my ears.

Mr. Eric: Said Charlie.

Charlie: They help me fly on this cloud.

Charson: That sounds like it defies physics, son.

Abacus: Well, it's a moot point either way.

Mr. Eric: Said Abacus, who'd finally found his wand.

Carson: Is this what you're looking for?

Mr. Eric: Asked Carson.

Abacus: Now, boy, break that wand, I can't undo any of the magic it cast.

Mr. Eric: And Carson's teeth snapped right through it.

Charson: Oh, son.

Mr. Eric: And Charlie flew back towards the car.

Charlie: Now we're stuck this way forever.

Carson: Yeah, isn't that great?

Charlie: That depends. Are you going to eat me?

Carson: No, I'm not hungry anymore. Plus, you're my brother, little as you are, you fought off a lion for your family. That was pretty cool.

Charlie: You would have done the same.

Abacus: Well, without my wand, I'll be needing a ride home, seeing as my car's ruined, too.

Charson: I'll pull the pick-up around. Charlie, you do not let your brother out of that car 'til we're ready.

Charlie: Okay.

Mr. Eric: Farmer Cobb walked off to get his car and Charlie had one more good idea.

Charlie: I was thinking, Carson. Maybe you just need a good chew toy.

Carson: Oh, that would help a lot. I just need to get out all this lion energy sometimes.

Mr. Eric: Charlie flew around the side of the house and came back 'round pushing that big old tire that they'd found on their roof.

Carson: Man, we have a really useful roof.

Mr. Eric: Said Carson.

Charlie: [Laughing]

Mr. Eric: Laughed Charlie.

Abacus: Two minutes ago, you were literally trying to eat him and now you're cracking each other up?

Charlie: That's how it works.

Carson: We're brothers.

Mr. Eric: Their corn cob father pulled the pick up around and standing in front of Charlie as well as Abacus, Charson opened the door and watched his lion son pounce on the old tire.

Carson: Ooh, this so great.

Charlie: I thought you might like it.

Abacus: Huh. Maybe I'm lucky I was an only child.

Carson & Charlie: [Laughing]

Mr. Eric: The end.

[Falling harp scale.]

Mr. Eric: Charlie and Carson, I hope you liked your story. I'd like to thank all our past and future reviewers as well as Karen Marshall, my editor and producer. Craig Martinson, our theme song artist. Jason O'Keeffe, our What If World illustrator, and all you kids at home who keep trying to accept the changes in your life, even when they seem as tough as getting turned into a lion.

Until we meet again, keep wondering.

[What If World theme song plays.]

©2017, Eric O'Keeffe/What If World