

Podcast: [What If World](#)

Episode: 45: What if a mermaid named Meriah found a beautiful treasure and became a legend?

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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're going to start off with our first question from Lucy.

Lucy: Hi, my name Lucy and what I really like is mermaids and my what if question is what if a mermaid named Meriah found a beautiful treasure and she became a legend.

Lucy's Mom: Thank you.

Lucy: Thank you.

Mr. Eric: Hey Lucy, what a cool name for a mermaid. MER-iah. I would have never thought of that. That is such a good question, I feel like the story tells itself so I think I'll need to throw myself a curve ball. Good thing a little boy named August already did.

August: I'm August and I love sea monsters.

August's Mom: What's your question?

August: And my question is, what if sea monsters could fly?

Mr. Eric: Ah, yes, August. The old flying sea monster. Well, let's get straight to our story today. What if a mermaid named Meriah found a beautiful treasure and became a legend? Plus, flying sea monsters.

[Rising harp scale.]

Mr. Eric: Now, you might not have seen a map of What If World recently, but if you had, you'd know that Whattington D.W., capital of What If World, sits in a swampy little town right next to the Whatlantic Ocean. These folks really seem to like their question names. And not far from the

shores of the capital, deep under the sea, lay the city of Whatlantis. Are you noticing a pattern here?

Well, if you couldn't guess, the kind of Whatlantis was named King Whyton, and his daughter was a beautiful mermaid named Meriah. She was his only daughter and so was one day destined to be queen of Whatlantis. But there was a rite of passage for any king or queen under the sea.

Whyton: Daughter.

Mr. Eric: Said King Whyton. They were sitting, or, rather, floating, in the throne room.

Meriah: Yes, Father?

Mr. Eric: Said Meriah.

Whyton: You're 16 now. Are you prepared to be queen?

Meriah: Oh, I don't really think so.

Whyton: Why not?

Meriah: I've gone to all the best schools and had all the finest things under the sea, but I've never left the ocean.

Whyton: And so you shall not need to. Meriah, above the waves, the people are selfish. They pollute our seas and their very own skies. It's as if they do not love their own world.

Meriah: But how can you say that for sure if you've never met them?

Whyton: Meriah, I have defeated countless sea monsters. I don't need to face an army of land monsters, and neither do you.

Meriah: Very well, Father.

Mr. Eric: Said Meriah.

Meriah: Then what do you think I need to become ready to rule.

Mr. Eric: King Whyton's seaweed eyebrows rose in surprise.

Whyton: You don't know? What have I been paying these teachers for.

Meriah: Father, I'm saying I don't know, so shouting about the thing I don't know isn't going to teach it to me.

Whyton: Well, talking calmly to a man who is shouting doesn't make him feel any better about shouting!

Meriah: Okay, Father. Then just tell me, what do I need to do?

Whyton: The same as any king or queen before you. You must find a beautiful treasure to become a legend.

Meriah: Oh, Father. That's rather cryptic. Can you be a little more specific?

Mr. Eric: But King Whyton rose from his throne and swam towards his daughter with a stern look on his weathered face.

Whyton: It is a lesson we must each learn on our own.

Meriah: But what was the beautiful treasure you found?

Whyton: A simple pearl, or so I thought.

Meriah: Well, I can find a pearl. There must be thousands in the ocean.

Whyton: Not anywhere near here, daughter. The people of the land and my people under the sea, took every pearl we could find until there were no more oysters left to give them.

Meriah: But Father, that's horrible. You're no better than the people above the sea. How could that make you a legend?

Whyton: I cannot tell you the rest yet, my little Meriah. Go forth and find your own treasure.

Meriah: Silly Father and your mysteries.

Mr. Eric: And she swam out of the throne room, frustrated. The seas were stormier than usual. She could feel the waves tossing her back and forth as soon as she left the shelter of the castle. All the merfolk and fish and sea mammals were taking shelter. But Meriah just kept swimming higher and higher until she felt herself getting caught up in the current and swept towards the shore.

Whyton: Meriah!

Mr. Eric: She thought she could hear her father call after her in the distance. But she couldn't make him out through the dark, stormy waters. She was

being spun around and tossed up and down. She barely knew where she was.

Meriah: If my father thought stealing the ocean's last pearl made it a beautiful treasure, then he is no legend at all.

Mr. Eric: Thought Meriah as she let a whipping whirlpool spin her up into the air, above the surface of the water and cast her out over the swamps of Whattington D.W. Kersplash! She landed in a deep pool of water, not nearly as salty as what she was used to.

Meriah: This must be that polluted water my father spoke of.

Mr. Eric: But it wasn't polluted, she was just used to salt water. So what kind of water do you think she was in now, folks at home? That's right! She'd fallen in fresh water. She felt another set of gills open up lower on her neck. She'd never used those ones before. And after a few gasping breaths..

Meriah: Oh, I can breathe again.

Mr. Eric: She poked her head above the surface of this murky swamp water and saw that whatever storm had swept her up was affecting the land people, too. She saw a fluffy black and white cat running around shouting out orders as its fluffy fur got wetter and wetter.

JF Kat: Get these people out of here! If this storm doesn't stop, this whole city is gonna be under water!

Mr. Eric: Said Jojo Fluffy Kat, also known as JF Kat.

JF Kat: You there, little girl.

Mr. Eric: The president was talking to her!

JF Kat: What are you doing swimming around in a storm like this. It's dangerous!

Meriah: Not for me, I'm a mermaid.

JF Kat: Well, if you're not in danger, then you're part of the rescue mission.

Meriah: What? No, I just ran away from home to find a beautiful treasure and become a legend.

JF Kat: Listen, merlady—

Meriah: Meriah.

JF Kat: Mer-ever, mer important, not important. This is an emergency, which means we all gotta work together to stay safe. Now, are you gonna help me save people or are you just gonna keep focusing on your own problems.

Mr. Eric: Meriah could feel the swamp waters rise beneath her and she saw bubbles rising deep below the murky water.

Meriah: Bubbles? Someone might be down there.

JF Kat: Well, if it's any bigger than a goldfish, I'm not going to be able to save it.

Mr. Eric: Said JF Kat.

Meriah: You won't have to.

Mr. Eric: Said Meriah. She touched a gleaming blue sapphire set into her tiny tiara and it lit up the stormy skies with a rich blue light. Then she dove beneath the stormy swamp water. The blue light from her tiara helped her see beneath the murky depths. There, at the bottom of the swamp, huddled a family of frightened squid creatures.

Squid: [Blurbling]

Mr. Eric: Bubbled the biggest of the squid.

Meriah: I'm sorry, my Tentaclese is rusty.

Squid: [Blurbling]

Mr. Eric: It bubbled again, wrapping up the rest of its family with its big tentacles.

Meriah: Can you understand me?

Mr. Eric: Asked Meriah, and the whole family nodded once.

Meriah: I know you're frightened and you don't want to lose your home, but the sea is rising. It's coming this way, and it'll turn your fresh water into sea water.

Mr. Eric: The family looked to the surface, which seemed to get farther and farther away as the waters rose.

Meriah: I know you don't want to leave your home, but let's just find you a new place to stay for a while, and hopefully your swamp will be safe in a few days.

Mr. Eric: A tiny squid shook free from the big squid's grip and pushed itself through the murky water toward Meriah.

Little Squid: [Blurbling]

Mr. Eric: It said, gesturing to the rest of its family.

Squid: [Blurbling]

Mr. Eric: The big squid grumbled, and then they were all grabbing their things and swimming towards the surface. The smallest squid lingered for a moment.

Little Squid: [Blurbling]?

Mr. Eric: It asked.

Meriah: Not yet.

Mr. Eric: Said Meriah. I have to see if there are more people I can help down here.

Little Squid: [Blurple]

Mr. Eric: Nodded the squidling and it swam towards its family. She turned back toward the depths of the swamp, her tiara lighting the way before her. It looked like everyone else had already gotten away and just when she was about to swim back out of the swamp, the blue light from her tiara shone upon a shiny, white, round orb just barely peeking out of the mud.

Meriah: Could that... be a pearl?

Mr. Eric: Meriah thought. She was already swimming towards it.

Meriah: Maybe father took the last of the saltwater pearls, but freshwater pearls still exist?

Mr. Eric: Above her, lightning flashed and thunder shook the whole swamp. She had reached the strange white thing and was sweeping mud off of it as fast as she could.

Meriah: This is much bigger than any pearl I've ever seen.

Mr. Eric: She could barely fit her arms around it and she had to swim with all her might just to move it one inch out of the ground.

Meriah: This must be the biggest pearl in the world.

Mr. Eric: She thought, her eyes going wide.

Meriah: A treasure like this would make me a legend.

Mr. Eric: She touched the warm, white pearl, trying to think how she could get it to the surface.

Little Squid: [Blurbling]

Mr. Eric: The little squidling was back. It had one tentacle wrapped around Meriah's wrist and with one of the others, it was pointing, gesturing wildly towards its family at the surface. She looked up from the pearl.

Meriah: I told you to get out of here. I'll be all right.

Mr. Eric: Meriah said. But the squidling just wrapped another tentacle around her wrist and kept trying to pull her up towards the surface and the rest of its family.

Meriah: But what if that's the very last pearl?

Mr. Eric: Said Meriah. And the squidling looked confused.

Meriah: What if it gets lost forever in the storm.

Mr. Eric: And her whole underwater world shook again as a wave crashed over the swamp and sand and salt water started pouring down. Meriah forgot about the pearl in an instant.

Meriah: We have to get you out of here.

Mr. Eric: She said to the squidling, and they sped toward the surface. Soon she was the one pulling it. Crash! Another wave poured into the swamp. And with this one, a great sharp rock fell from the surface headed right for the little mermaid and her little squid friend. The rock cut through the water faster than she could swim and Meriah knew one thing. It was too big and too fast for her to get out of the way. Thinking fast, she used her mighty tail to flip the squidling back up towards its family and at the very last instant, she swam into a crevasse of the tiny rock as it dragged her back down to the deep.

Meriah: Oh, I hope I don't get trapped under this big rock.

Mr. Eric: Thought Meriah. But now that she was right up next to the rock she saw it was actually a stone monument. A question mark that had stood in Whattington D.W. for hundreds of years.

Meriah: Wow, that must be some storm.

Mr. Eric: Before she could swim out from under the great, sinking question mark, crack! It hit something hard and Meriah shook loose as a cloud of silty sea water rose into the air around her.

Meriah: I must have hit the bottom.

Mr. Eric: Thought Meriah. She tried looking around, but the force of the crash had cracked the sapphire in her tiara. It flickered and dimmed and then... it went dark.

Meriah: Oh no, I don't even know which way is up.

Mr. Eric: Meriah got her tail loose from the monument and started swimming around blindly until she felt a familiar surface.

Meriah: It's the pearl. Oh, and it's cracked. Another piece of history gone.

Mr. Eric: But then, out of the cracked pearl shone a warm glowing light and [groaning]. Something that looked like a... kind of giant red lobster monster pulled itself out.

Meriah: It wasn't a pearl.

Mr. Eric: Said Meriah, caring.

Meriah: It was an egg!

Crawdad Monster: Ooh, what a way to wake up.

Mr. Eric: Said that giant creature.

Meriah: Um, please don't eat me Ms. Lobster Monster!

Mr. Eric: Said Meriah.

Crawdad Monster: Eat you? You freed me. You and I are gonna be best friends. Besides, I ain't no lobster. I'm a crawdad. Cindy Crawdad.

Meriah: Pleased to meet you?

Crawdad Monster: And pleased not to eat you. Now what are you doing at the bottom of this swamp?

Meriah: Well, I was trying to save people but then I got distracted by a pearl and now I think they're all trapped in salt water.



Mr. Eric: Cindy Crawdad tasted the water with her great squiggly mouth feelers.

Crawdad Monster: Oh, that water ain't too bad just yet. Long as we all get out of here right now.

Meriah: But I can barely swim. I hurt my tail in the crash.

Crawdad Monster: Now you think I'm gonna let a little something like that get in our way?

Mr. Eric: Cindy reached out with her great pincer, but Meriah wasn't afraid and the colossal crayfish took the little mermaid and put her on its back.

Crawdad Monster: Now, let's go find your friends.

Mr. Eric: And the armored red plates that ran along Cindy Crawdad's back suddenly lifted and separated, making two great red wings.

Crawdad Monster: Hooo-ey!

Mr. Eric: Her armored wings spread wide and launched them towards the surface. They were flying through the water, straight toward that family of squid.

Meriah: Cindy, I think you're too small to hold that entire family.

Mr. Eric: Said Meriah.

Crawdad Monster: Well then, you better think of something quick.

Mr. Eric: And Meriah remembered the great whirlpool that had sucked her up and spat her out here in the first place.

Meriah: Cindy, how fast can you swim in circles?

Crawdad Monster: Well, it's been a century or two, but let's find out.

Mr. Eric: Cindy swam round and round and round and the last of the fresh water whirled around this family of squid and slowly launched them into the sky. A great murky tornado of water with Cindy and Meriah swimming at the top. JF Kat shouted up at them.

JF Kat: I asked you to help with the storm and you're making a mernado!

Meriah: JF Kat!

Mr. Eric: Shouted Meriah.

Meriah: Where's the safest lake?

JF Kat: It's 10 miles inland! You'll never make it!

Mr. Eric: Called JF Kat. But Meriah and Cindy were already spinning their mernado in that direction.

Squid: [Blurbling]

Mr. Eric: Asked the great squid, stuck inside the cyclone.

Crawdad Monster: Now, y'all can keep complaining, or you can start swimming and help us get to the next lake.

Mr. Eric: And the family of squid nodded and started swimming around in circles. They passed other swamps and ponds along the way and sucked up any freshwater creatures they could find who were in danger. And the mernado got bigger and bigger until it spat them all out into the late.

Abacus: Oh, what a lovely day to go fishing in my own little lake. It's been so quiet here since Cthunkle left and took all those squid monsters with him. Ha ha ha. Good riddance, I say.

Mr. Eric: The last squid to plunk back into that lake was the biggest one of all.

Squid: [Blurple] Abacus.

Mr. Eric: SPLASH! That last splash soaked the entire Observatorium, never mind Abacus himself.

Abacus: Ugh... welcome back Craig Kraken, and good to see you, too.

Mr. Eric: Cindy Crawdad spun out the mernado wider and wider, stretching it until it was just a big rain cloud slowly falling over What If World.

Meriah: Cindy, we did it. We saved all those people.

Crawdad Monster: I gotta say, that was some quick thinking on your part.

Mr. Eric: Said Cindy.

Meriah: Yeah, I mean, that mernado defies just about every law of physics.

Crawdad Monster: Oh, hush now. No point sticking a hole in a leaky barrel.

Meriah: I have no idea what that means.

Crawdad Monster: It means we ought to get you home now that this storm's dying down.

Mr. Eric: And Cindy shook her great red wings one more time, splashing Abacus with plenty of stinky swamp water.

Abacus: Oh, really? I was barely even in this story... ugh.

Mr. Eric: And they flew back to the shore. King Whyton was waiting at the beach, all five sapphires that ringed his crown shone as bright as they could and moved like searchlights across the beach and beyond.

Whyton: Meriah? Meriah!

Meriah: I'm here, Father.

Mr. Eric: She said, as Cindy Crawdad dove toward the beach.

Whyton: Oh, the storm! I was so worried. Meriah, jump off of that creature at once. I will defeat this sea monster and make you safe again.

Crawdad Monster: Now that's a fine how do you do.

Mr. Eric: Said Cindy, landing on the beach just a few feet from the king.

Meriah: Father.

Mr. Eric: Said Meriah, climbing down from the crayfish's back.

Meriah: She's not a lobster monster or a sea serpent. In fact, she prefers fresh water.

Whyton: Whatever manner of beast she is, she will not have you.

Crawdad Monster: King, I think you need to set your head straight.

Mr. Eric: As her red armored wings settled down in place along her back.

Meriah: Father, you said the great treasure you found wasn't just a simple pearl. What did you mean by that?

Mr. Eric: King Whyton put away his pointy trident and turned off the glaring sapphire lights atop his crown.

Whyton: Well, daughter. Somehow out of that last pearl came you.

Meriah: And then you realized the most beautiful treasures weren't things?

Whyton: But people. You've learned the lesson. But that still doesn't explain this monster?

Crawdad Monster: Don't you know a beautiful treasure when you see one, King?

Mr. Eric: Said Cindy.

Whyton: Beautiful? You're some kind of giant swamp creature.

Meriah: She is beautiful, Father. And if you can't see that, maybe you've still got some lessons left to learn.

Whyton: Me? But I'm a grown up.

Crawdad Monster: [Laughs]

Mr. Eric: Cindy laughed and her armored plates clattered.

Crawdad Monster: Fella, everybody I ever met who thought they knew everything sure as heck didn't know nothing.

Mr. Eric: And Cindy spread out her armored wings again and the sun shone upon them red and gold as it peeked through the storm clouds.

Crawdad Monster: Sweetie, thanks for setting me free.

Mr. Eric: Said Cindy to Meriah.

Crawdad Monster: Ocean might not be big enough for me and your pop, but give me a ring next time you come to land.

Mr. Eric: And with that, the great crayfish beat its wings, mist and sunlight swirling around it as she rose into the sky.

Whyton: Wow.

Mr. Eric: Said King Whyton.

Whyton: She really is kind of beautiful.

Meriah: Wow.

Mr. Eric: Said Meriah.

Meriah: You really can learn new things.

Whyton: Hey!

Meriah: [Laughs]

Whyton: I'm gonna get you!

Mr. Eric: And father and daughter chased each other back into the sea.

The end.

[Falling harp scale.]

Mr. Eric: Well, August and Lucy, I hope you liked your story. I also want to thank Karen Marshall, as always, my editor and producer. Craig Martinson, our musical artist. Jason O'Keeffe, our art artist, and all you kids at home who know that beautiful treasures really aren't that hard to find.

Until we meet again, keep wondering.

[What If World theme song plays.]

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