

Podcast: [What If World](#)

Episode: 46: What if grapefruit were alive and wore shirts?

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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 Hugo and Laina.

Hugo: I'm Hugo and I'm eight years old.

Laina: I'm Laina and I'm five years old. We both like fruit.

Hugo: And our what if question is what if grapefruit were alive and wore shirts? Bye.

Laina: Bye!

Mr. Eric: Wow, what a healthy couple of kids you are, and what a very cool question. We're going to jump into that story soon. But folks, I want to let you all know the next couple of stories are going to be a little shorter than usual. You see, next week, Miss Karen and I are getting married! Yes, it's for real. I'm a very lucky host. We'll be back in full swing by the end of September.

Okay, that's enough excuses out of me. Let's give these patient kids their story. What if grapefruit were alive and they wore shirts.

[Rising harp scale.]

Mr. Eric: Once upon a time, a family of grapefruit lived with their momdad, who was a grapefruit tree. You see, grapefruit, like most citrus fruits, are self-pollinating, and this family of fruits' momdad was the biggest citrus tree in the neighborhood.

Grapefruit Momdad: Boy, kids.

Grapefruits: Don't you mean, oh boygirl, kids?

Grapefruit Momdad: Oh, girl kids, and boy kids and boygirl kids. I'm getting pretty filled up with fruit. I think it's time a few of you flew the coup.

[Record scratch]

Kid 1: But mom, we can't fly, we're grapefruit.

Kid 2: Yeah, we can't even fall very fall.

Kid 3: Or we'll go smoosh!

Grapefruit Momdad: Do you think I'm going to let anything bad happen to my family? Mm-mm. I bought a brand new shirt for whichever one of you's big enough to leave the tree.

Mr. Eric: Now, seeing as these grapefruit didn't have arms or legs, their momdad couldn't tell if any of them were raising their hands.

Grapefruit Momdad: So, is anybody ready? I know it's scary out there but you can't stay here forever.

Mr. Eric: One of the bigger grapefruit looked up towards the tree.

Gil: I've been in this one-tree town long enough. It's time for me to move on.

Grapefruit Momdad: Oh, Gilbert. You're so brave. Just remember, you can always come back to visit.

Gil: Okay, Momdad. But why do I have to wear this shirt?

Mr. Eric: The tree limb Gilbert grew up on was lowering to the ground and shook him until he fell the last foot and landed softly in the grass atop his shirt.

Grapefruit Momdad: Well, that tells everybody you're a talking grapefruit so they shouldn't eat you.

Gil: Are you saying the only thing keeping people from eating me will be this polo shirt?

Grapefruit Momdad: Well, most of the people in the world aren't out to eat you. The shirt just tells them it's against the law if they do.

Gil: Okay Momdad... I hope this works.

Mr. Eric: And Gilbert Grapefruit rolled around until he managed to squeeze himself into the tight, stretchy polo shirt. And the color popped right up as the tiny little dimple at the top of his head poked through.

Gil: I guess I'll be off, then. Bye brothersisters and sisterbrothers.

Other Grapefruits: Bye, Gilbert! Bye, Gilberta! Bye, Gilbert!

Mr. Eric: And Gilbert or Gilberta... let's just call it Gil, rolled off down the street. The barely grown up grapefruit had never been out in the big wide world and Gil wasn't sure what to do with itself. It rolled up to a fruit stand to ask for some advice.

Gil: Hey, fruit. My name's Gil and I just came off my tree. Do you have any advice for me?

Mr. Eric: But the fruit didn't say anything back.

Jalopo: I'm-a sorry.

Mr. Eric: A kindly old man at the fruit stand said.

Jalopo: But these aren't the talking-a living fruit. These-is a kind-a you eat.

Mr. Eric: You sell fruit for people to eat? That's barbaric!

Jalopo: Hey, not everything come alive in What If World.

Mr. Eric: Said Jalopo, pointing to the junk yard behind him.

Jalopo: See, out of all these cars-a behind me, only Pintopio came alive. And out of all these fruits in front of me, you the only one I ever seen-a talk.

Gil: Well, what does something do when it comes alive?

Mr. Eric: Asked Gil.

Jalopo: Oh, the usual. Learn to fly, but then if people judge you for some reason. And later, everything's okay.

Gil: Well, I don't think I'm going to learn to fly. I don't even have arms, let alone wings. How did Pintopio learn to fly?

Jalopo: Oh, he just use his magic doors.

Gil: Oh, could you give me some doors to wear?

Jalopo: I'm sorry, little grapefruit. Only cars wear doors.

Gil: Oh, well, all right.

Mr. Eric: Gil was about to roll away when it felt something tickling the top of its head.

Gil: Hey, what's that?

Mr. Eric: The grapefruit looked up. It was the tassles hanging down from the long scarf of a very tall giraffe.

Giraffe: May I buy an apple, please?

Mr. Eric: Asked the giraffe.

Jalopo: Oh, yes of course. Let me wrap-a that up for you.

Gil: A-choo!

Mr. Eric: Gil sneezed. The tassles were still tickling.

Gil: Excuse me, your tassles are tickling me.

Giraffe: Oh, I hardly noticed you. You are wearing a shirt, though. I suppose I should be careful.

Mr. Eric: And the giraffe used its front hoof to kick its scarf until it wrapped around its big long neck.

Gil: Ms. Giraffe,

Mr. Eric: Asked Gil.

Gil: How'd you know what to do when you became a talking giraffe?

Giraffe: Well, as soon as I put on this fancy scarf I knew it was my job to be professionally fancy. So I started a fashion magazine.

Gil: Well, that sounds fun. You know if you just gave me one of the tassles off of your scarf, it'd be big enough to make me a scarf of my own.

Giraffe: You? Oh, little grapefruit. Only giraffes wear scarves.

Gil: Oh.

Mr. Eric: Said Gil. Jalopo handed the giraffe her bag of apples and when she turned to leave, her tail lashed out behind her, smacking Gil and sending him rolling down the road.

Gil: Whoa! I really should have practiced stopping more!

Mr. Eric: Said Gil as he rolled downhill until—

Gil: Oof!

Mr. Eric: He fell still at the base of a stubby wooden peg.

Petey: Ah-ho there. I see a grapefruit ripe for eating, even if it is a little dirty.

Mr. Eric: It was Petey the Pirate. Gil had bumped into his peg leg and came to a stop.

Gil: Excuse me, I'm actually an alive grapefruit.

Petey: Then what are you doing rolling down hills. Go get a job.

Mr. Eric: Said Petey. Pulling back his peg leg to give the grapefruit another push.

Gil: That's just the thing. I don't know what to do with myself ever since I left the tree. I thought maybe I could fly like a Ford Pinto, or be fancy like a giraffe, but it was all folly.

Petey: That's no way to talk. Especially since I can't understand the world folly.

Gil: Like a foolish mistake.

Petey: Well, you're awfully smart. You'll figure it out. I sure did.

Gil: But what made you know you were gonna be a pirate?

Petey: Well, this peg leg.

Gil: Okay.

Petey: And this eye patch.

Gil: Sure...

Petey: And, of course, this parrot!

Parrot: Raaa! Petey the Pirate is patches and peg legs and parrots!

Gil: Well, a peg leg and patch would be really easy to make. Then maybe a parrot would find me.

Petey: Well, that is how it happened for me, but—

Parrot: Pegs and patches and pirates are for parrots.

Gil: Hey, I thought the parrot was supposed to repeat after you.

Parrot: Where'd you get that idea?

Petey: You heard the bird. Pegs and patches and pirates are for parrots. Now, shoo before you get me in trouble.

Gil: All right...

Mr. Eric: Said Gil and started rolling down the hill once more. Night was falling on Gil's first day out in the real world. But the poor grapefruit just couldn't figure out what to do with itself. The gentle slope of the hill leveled off and a long well-lit boardwalk, neon signs, buzzing over shops and restaurants, and plenty of people bustling about, enjoying their evenings off. Gil saw a bunch of karate kids coming out of class wearing their gis and belts.

Gil: Hey, kids. Do you think I could wear karate clothes like you?

Mr. Eric: A curly-haired boy looked down at him.

Boy: Why are you asking us? Any guy or girl can wear a gi, even if you're round and squishy.

Gil: Hey, round and squishy is a good thing among grapefruits.

Boy: I'm not saying it isn't. I'm saying if you want to wear something different, just ask your parents.

Gil: But my parents are one tree and they could only afford one shirt.

Boy: I don't know, grapefruit. Sounds like you need a job.

Mr. Eric: And the little boy ran to catch up with his parents. Gil rolled away from the dojo until it saw a shop. All kinds of clothes in the window. It looked both ways before rolling across the street and pushed through the light wooden door, hearing a little jingle as the door swung open.

Gil: Hello?

Mr. Eric: Said Gil. But the store seemed empty.

Gil: Is anyone there?

Sorta: Of course someone's here.

Mr. Eric: Said a voice above the grapefruit. Gil looked up to see a dusty old fedora hat floating in the air. Suddenly the creases on top of that hat started moving like a mouth.

Sorta: You think just because I'm not a normal person I don't matter or something?

Gil: No, I just didn't see you floating up there.

Mr. Eric: Said Gil to the floating fedora.

Sorta: Well, kid, what do you want. I'm trying to close up here.

Gil: I want everything. I want to try on all the clothes in this whole store.

Sorta: Eh, go for it for the next three and a half minutes.

Gil: Wait, you're not going to tell me what I can and can't wear?

Sorta: What, do you think I'm some magical hat that tells you exactly who you're gonna be just by sitting on your head for two seconds?

Gil: Are you a sorting hat? That would be a really big help right now.

Mr. Eric: Said Gil.

Sorta: Whatever gets you out of here in the next 180 seconds.

Mr. Eric: And the hat floated down to land on top of Gil, though it was so big it covered the grapefruit all together.

Sorta: Hmm, lemme see, uh, you'd look good in a \$300 blazer with some artisanal cotton candy boots, uh...

Gil: [Muffled]

Mr. Eric: Said Gil from beneath the hat.

Gil: I think you're just making this stuff up.

Sorta: Making it up?

Mr. Eric: The hat floated back into the air.

Sorta: Of course I am. I'm just a sorter hat. I can't tell anybody what they're supposed to be. I can only tell people what they might be. That's why I opened this costume and clothing shop.

Gil: Well, I think it's just the most beautiful place I've ever seen.

Mr. Eric: Said Gil, rolling around and looking at every possibility. Imagining itself wearing suits and dresses and pirate clothes and leotards and gis and armor and superhero capes and comfy knit sweaters.

Sorta: You really mean that, kid?

Gil: I do! I would love to live in a place like this.

Sorta: [Laughs] It's not a home, kid. It's a business. But if you want a job, come back first thing tomorrow.

Gil: Yes, yes sir, Mr. Sorta Cap, sir.

Sorta: You can just call me Sorta. Why don't you grab yourself a new shirt on the way out. That white one's filthy.

Mr. Eric: And Gil looked up at all the clothes again.

Gil: But which one should I pick? Who should I be?

Sorta: Any of them. All of them. None of them. As long as you dress appropriately and you're nice to customers I don't really care.

Gil: That's the nicest thing anyone's said to me, today.

Sorta: Sheesh, kid. You've had a tough day. Now here, take this red and white striped shirt and get out of my store 'til tomorrow morning, please.

Gil: With pleasure.

Mr. Eric: Said Gil, putting on the pirate shirt and rolling out of the store as Sorta locked it up behind the grapefruit. Gil decided to roll back and sleep under the tree it grew up in tonight. But before the grapefruit could get very far—

Parrot 2: [Squawk] Are you a pirate?

Gil: I'm a grapefruit dressed as a pirate?

Parrot 2: Well, are you any good at repeating?

Gil: Are you any good at repeating.

Parrot 2: Wise fruit, eh?

Gil: Not yet, but I'm getting wiser.

Parrot 2: Aw, I don't think you're pirate material, yet.

Gil: I guess not. But I'm still figuring myself out.

Mr. Eric: But the parrot was already flying away.

Parrot 2: Good for you.

Mr. Eric: The end.

[Falling harp scale.]

Mr. Eric: All right, Hugo and Laina. I hope you liked your story. I'd like to thank Karen Marshall, my editor, producer, and future wife. Or present, depending on when you hear this. And I'd like to thank Craig Martinson for our music and Jason O'Keeffe for our art. And all you kids at home who are taking time to figure out who you want to be.

Until we meet again, keep wondering.

[What If World theme song plays.]