

**Podcast: What If World**

**Episode: 070: [What if baby sisters were Greek gods and phoenixes turned into tacos instead of ashes?](#)**

**File Length: 19:04**

**Transcription by Keffy**

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 Pilar.

Pilar:                    Hi, my name's Pilar. I live in Louisiana. I'm six years old. I like basketball and my question is: what if baby sisters were Greek gods. Thank you.

Mr. Eric:                Pilar, when I was a kid, I had a t-shirt that said "Basketball is Life." Now, of course, I never got very good at basketball, but I still really like it. When I got your question, mentioning Greek gods, it reminded me of another question from Rigley. Now, Rigley emailed in this question and—

Howverati:             [All of his dialogue is sung operatically] When you get an email question...

Mr. Eric:                Oh, boy.

Howverati:             You must call on Howverati.

Mr. Eric:                No, I musn't.

Howverati:             Oh, yes you mu—

Mr. Eric:                No, no no no no. I, folks at home, I'm recording this episode on April 1<sup>st</sup>, so if you remember our last April Fool's Day story, Howverati insisted on singing a question then, too.

Howverati:             T'was not I who insisted, t'was the fans who knew that you must have me sing again.

Mr. Eric:                The fans? You've been talking to our fans.

Howverati:             Not talking, but listening. You should learn how to try and I know that they want me to sing.

Mr. Eric: Ugh. Okay, folks. I just got the new studio set up and I guess he's just really testing the acoustics, here. Howverati, can we just get your April Fool's song over with so I can tell the kids a story?

Howverati: What if Mr. Eric, wounded Howverati with his words?

Mr. Eric: Is that the question?

Howverati: No.

Mr. Eric: Okay. Could you please read Rigley's question? You don't even have to sing it, just say his question.

Howverati: [Now singing to the tune of "Habanera" from Carmen] My name is Rigley and I like Greek mythology. My what if question is what if phoenixes turned into tacos instead of ashes?

Mr. Eric: Perfect, Howverati. It wasn't over the top at all—

Howverati: Turned into tacos! Instead of ashes. Oh, phoenixes are tacos.

Mr. Eric: Yeah, like that, Howverati. You don't need to—

Howverati: Rigley likes Greek mythology and I will sing about Zeus and stuff.

Mr. Eric: You have a lovely falsetto but we really need to get to the story.

Howverati: Now, don't you dare or I will fire a lightning bolt at your underwear.

Mr. Eric: Okay, I'm sorry, folks. It's April Fool's in a new studio, and there's just a lot of crazy stuff going on. But let's find out what if baby sisters were Greek gods and phoenixes turned into tacos instead of ashes.

Howverati: My name is Rigley and I like Greek mythology. My what if question is what if phoenixes turned into tacos instead of ashes...

[Rising harp scale]

Mr. Eric: Our long time listeners might remember episode 19, what if we stopped having birthdays. In that story, a boy named Buster got a baby sister named Babs. Now, their mom, Ms. Biz, cared about Buster and Babs a lot, but she and Mr. Business were out a lot and that left their babysitter, Randal Radbot, in charge.

Randall Radbot: All right, Buster, beep boop, come on out of their, let's see you in your new basketball jersey?

Mr. Eric: Buster was older now, old enough to finally play team sports.

Buster: Um, it's a little big.

Randall Rادبوت: Oh, don't worry, little hum. When your body, like, downloads its next patch or whatever, you'll be big enough to fit.

Buster: That's not how humans work, Randall.

Mr. Eric: Buster came out wearing his basketball sneakers, blue shorts that went down past the knees, and a blue and gold jersey, with a big picture of a clock on the front, and the number 19 on the back.

Buster: The Wentbridge Timers. What a silly name for a team.

Randall Rادبوت: It's all right, dude. Wentbridge just has a lot of clocks and watches and stuff. It's basically all Mr. Eric ever told us about the school.

Mr. Eric: Oh, I was afraid of this. Folks at home, on April Fool's stories, sometimes if I'm not careful what I say, What If World will sort of like put words in my mouth. I don't know how they do it, but just listen carefully and I'm gonna make sure there are no more mixups.

Randall and Buster were already at the basketball game because Mr. Eric had spent too long talking to the folks at home. Ugh, no I didn't!

[Whistle] went the whistle. The basketball was tipped off and the game was underway. Buster was tall for a human, but of course Wentbridge had giants on the team, meaning he played point guard.

Randall Rادبوت: Yeah, Buster!

Mr. Eric: Cried Randall Rادبوت as he bounced Babs, Buster's toddler sister, on his lap.

Randall Rادبوت: Deposit balls into hoops at a higher rate than the other team deposits balls into other hoops. Did I get it right?

Mr. Eric: Randall asked Babs.

Babs: Ka-basketball.

Randall Rادبوت: Ka-basketball, indeed.

Mr. Eric: Buster was playing really well and having a giant as your center didn't hurt either. But they were playing against the Grumblers and even

though the Observatorium was a much smaller school, every Grumbler had a secret weapon, their magic wand.

Zizi whipped out her wand and froze a basketball in midair. But before it could fall to the ground, Buster was there, grabbing the ball in mid stride and dribbling it hard to knock off all the ice.

Randall Radbot: It's not fair those kids get to use magic.

Babs: We got giants.

Randall Radbot: Well, yeah, then I guess that's kind of fair.

Mr. Eric: Buster threw up the rock and swi—uh-oh. There was still too much ice around the ball, it wouldn't get through the hoop. It looked like a jet of flame lit up around the ball, and then the icy orange ball was bright and warm as the sun. Then a little golden chariot appeared, and Helios, Greek god of the sun started dragging that ball across the court!

Randall Radbot: Not fair, no summoning Greek gods.

Mr. Eric: But just then, Helios's son Phaethon stole the mini golden chariot and the ball. The crowd went wild!

Crowd: [Cheering] Helios was robbed! How many players can each team have?  
[Whistle]

Mr. Eric: The ref, Mr. Mouser, blew his whistle.

Mr. Mouser: Each team has six players. Foul on Mr. Eric.

Mr. Eric: Hey, wait. What? How does that even work?

Mr. Mouser: Both teams get two free throws.

Mr. Eric: Oh, well, that makes sense.

Mr. Mouser: And Mr. Eric says, cheeky Greeky cheetah, three times fast.

Mr. Eric: I'm not going to say I'm a cheeky Greeky cheetah—cheeky Greetah cheat. I'm not doing it.

Mr. Mouser: Well, then we'll all just wait.

Mr. Eric: And suddenly, all the fans turned to look at me. What? No, they started watching the basketball. No, they're... okay, everyone's looking at me.

Just play the game. Everyone started playing the game again. Nope, they're not. They're not playing.

Ralph: Just take the foul, Mr. Eric!

Mr. Eric: Said Ralph, the giant, impatiently.

Cheeky Greeky cheetah, cheeky Greeky teeter, [stammers].

Mr. Mouser: Now you have to start over.

Mr. Eric: Cheeky Greeky cheater, cheeky Greeky cheater, cheeky Greeky cheater.

Ralph: Finally. The little sun turned back into a basketball and Helios and Phaethon flew off, still fighting over their chariot.

Randall Rادبوت: All right! Let's keep playing some really weird basketball!

Mr. Eric: Cheered Randall Rادبوت. But as he did, the two little Greek gods wrestled each other out of that chariot and it fell right on top of little Babs!

Babs: Ow.

Randall Rادبوت: Hey, watch it up there, mythological gods!

Helios: I'm sorry. My son stole my chariot. May I have it back, please?

Randall Rادبوت: Not until you learn to play safely with it.

Babs: My chariot.

Randall Rادبوت: That's right, Babs.

Mr. Eric: The toddler had taken the little chariot off her head, and as she sat inside it, a golden wreath appeared on her head, and suddenly she was draped in little flowing robes.

Helios: But she shall get it all sticky!

Mr. Eric: Cried Helios.

Randall Rادبوت: You should have thought of that before you reenacted your Greek myth in our gymnasium.

Helios & Phaethon: Yes, Randall.

Randall Radbot: You can come back for it next sunrise, but until then, you two deities need to think about what you done.

Helios: Wuh.

Mr. Eric: And Helios and Phaethon disappeared. Meanwhile the game raged on. The Timers were trailing by three. It looked like the Grumblers might pull off an epic upset! Buster had the ball. The clock was ticking down. He was at the three point line. He took the shot. He made it! Buster had tied up the game! There were just two seconds back on the clock. It looked like the Grumblers were gonna pass the ball to Zizi and she was going to try a shot from all the way across the court.

Randall Radbot: Oh man, I love her game but I like, hope she misses anyway.

Babs: There must be a victor.

Mr. Eric: Said Babs. Two little white spectral horses were dragging her golden chariot closer to the court and she looked on as if in a trance.

Randall Radbot: Uh, yeah, Babs, that's what overtime's for. Please don't fly away from me.

Babs: There must be a victor and to them goes the glory.

Mr. Eric: Randall was pushing through the crowd and extending his arms out towards Babs just as Zizi got her hands on the ball and the final two seconds started ticking away.

[Whoosh!]

The basketball was flying all the way across the court...

[Record scratch.]

When Cthunkle appeared in the middle of the court and he had a hundred tentacles and in every tentacle there was a basketball and at the last second he shot fifty basketballs into each hoop from half court scoring 300 points.

[Buzzer]

Oh no, it happened again.

Mr. Mouser: The winner is Cthunkle.

Zizi: Aw!

Players: Hey, no fair!

Scully: Nice going, Uncle Cthunkle!

Cthunkle: Oh ho ho ho. April Fool's!

Mr. Eric: Cthunkle, I thought we were going to have a nice, normal April Fool's story this year.

Cthunkle: Abnormal is normal on April Fool's.

Mr. Eric: Yeah, you have a point there. But wait, Babs was running away. Did you see her?

Cthunkle: I only saw myself scoring 100 sick baskets.

Mr. Eric: I know, but she's a toddler and something weird was going on with her.

Cthunkle: I bet she has been twisted into an undiscovered dimension, lost for all time.

Mr. Eric: Oh, there she is, right in front of you.

Cthunkle: Exactly as I said she would be.

Mr. Eric: No you didn't, you said she'd be in some, like, scary dimension 'til the end of time, or something.

Cthunkle: I think we need the instant replay.

[Rewinding sound]

I bet she has been twisted into [different voice, edited in] right in front of me [back to original voice] lost for all time.

Mr. Eric: That—Cthunkle, you doctored the instant replay!

Cthunkle: Prove it.

Mr. Eric: Ref Mouser, can you just clear things up, here?

Mr. Mouser: Of course. You see, in this story, I'm a referee, but sometimes I'm Secretary of State and once I was in a band.

Mr. Eric: Okay, you don't need to draw that to peoples' attention right now. I just meant, ah hey dids.

Cthunkle: You've lost your marbles, Mr. Eric.

Mr. Mouser: I'd just like to stay at one job for a couple of stories.

Babs: To the victor goes the glories.

All: Huh?

Mr. Mouser: Oh, right.

Mr. Eric: Babs was still standing in front of Cthunkle, and she held up a golden wreath matching the one upon her head.

Buster: Hey, hey, wait, no fair!

Mr. Eric: Buster was running towards his sister.

Buster: I tied up the game and then this guy came and scored 300 points, but he's not even on any team.

Babs: That's what made it even more impressive.

Mr. Eric: Babs, you're freaking me out a little bit. What's going on with you?

Randall Radbot: Uh, I think she's like, the Greek goddess Nike or something. It's a long story. Can we get the instant replay?

Mr. Eric: Um, excuse me, only Mr. Eric can call for the inst—

[Rewinding sounds]

Phoenix: Ca-caw!

Mr. Eric: The phoenix flew through the air, turning Babs into the Greek goddess Nike before turning itself into a taco. The end.

[Falling harp scale]

[Record scratch.]

Mr. Eric: Wait, I did not say that! The story is still happening.

Cthunkle: You heard him, folks, phoenix turned into a taco, story's over.

Buster: So that's it?

Mr. Eric: Complained Buster.



Buster: I lose the game and all I get is this crummy taco? Ugh, hard shell.

Mr. Eric: And Buster brought the taco to his mouth.

Taco Phoenix: Rrrr.

Babs: Don't do it.

Mr. Mouser: I think that's a phoenix.

Cthunkle: Don't stop him, I want to see what happens.

Mr. Eric: But the hard shell of the taco was already sprouting perfect, fiery feathers.

Buster: Ow, hot!

Mr. Eric: Buster dropped the taco and it fell, flapping, towards the ground.

Taco Phoenix: Caw!

[Triumphant music]

Mr. Eric: Two little cubed tomato bits turned into a little red beak.

Taco Phoenix: What's the big idea?

Mr. Eric: The taco phoenix said, landing on the ground, none too softly.

Buster: Great. I lost the game and I don't even get a taco.

Taco Phoenix: I barely got to be in this story, and then I got turned into a taco.

Buster: What's your point?

Babs: Most of us lose more often than we win.

Mr. Eric: Huh, ain't that a fact. I've been trying to just tell a nice normal story all day.

Cthunkle: Yes. And while I won this basketball game, I lose every time I try to take over What If World.

Mr. Mouser: And I apparently lose my job every couple of weeks. Thanks, Mr. Eric.

Buster: Babs, or Nike, or whatever, you're my little sister, so give me the golden laurels.

Cthunkle: [Laughs] Not this time, boy! I win this story and the laurels are mine.

Mr. Eric: And as Cthunkle cackled, the golden laurels on his head suddenly lost their luster.

Buster: See, he doesn't even deserve it.

Mr. Eric: Babs/Nike turned to her brother.

Babs: He hath spoiled his own victory. This trophy is only a trinket.

Buster: Okay then, give me my trophy.

Babs: No.

Buster: But I didn't lose.

Taco Phoenix: Raaw. You lost.

Randall Radbot: Yeah, Buster. You had giants, they had magic. Cthunkle had a hundred tentacles with basketballs.

Cthunkle: Why isn't my crown shiny anymore.

Babs: You have been defeated by your victory.

Cthunkle: What does that even mean?

Mr. Eric: And this whole time, Abacus and his Grumblers had been waiting in a line at the middle of the court to shake hands and tentacles with the other players.

Zizi: Good game.

Mr. Eric: Said Zizi.

Abacus: Good game.

Mr. Eric: Said their coach, Abacus.

Lola: Good game!

Mr. Eric: Said Lola the Rabbit. And they seemed to be glowing, ever so slightly, just the way the laurels once had.

Cthunkle: No fair.

Buster: No fair.

Mr. Eric: Cried Cthunkle and Buster. The Taco Phoenix was still trying to flap its wings.

Taco Phoenix: Maybe it's not fair, but you got to keep on trying.

Mr. Eric: It had formed taloned feet out of little curved slices of onion. It was hopping and fluttering just enough to start getting off the ground. Then it started to show with that same warm light. The gymnasium had cleared out and everyone started going their separate ways. Cthunkle slipped back to whatever dimension he's stuck in this week and Randall Radbot scooped up Buster and Babs.

Randall Radbot: Man, what a weird day, huh? It's like, sometimes I had absolutely no idea what was going on.

Mr. Eric: Said Randall Radbot, starting to rust ever so slightly, at the joints.

Randall Radbot: Uh, I mean, it was like, good weird, though, right?

Babs: I've enjoyed being the goddess of champions.

Buster: Well, at least one of us had fun.

Mr. Eric: Buster had trouble sleeping that night so he got up early the next morning and asked his mom if she could take him to the basketball court across the street from their apartment building.

Ms. Bizz: Of course, Buster. I'm sorry I missed your basketball game.

Buster: I know, there was an emergency at work. I don't think I behaved very well when I lost.

Ms. Bizz: Well, sometimes it's hard to behave in the moment when all those powerful emotions are rushing through you.

Buster: I know, I know, Mom. I just, can we just shoot some hoops?

Ms. Bizz: Of course, my number one son. Randall Radbot, can you look after Babs?

Randall Radbot: Beepbeep bopp boo. Sorry, I'd powered down for a minute. Of course I'll look after Babs.

Mr. Eric: It was still dark when they got to the court, but as they took their warmup shots, the sun started to peek through the tall buildings behind them. It was a cold morning, but the sun glowed warm on Buster,

warmer than usual. It looked like Helios had finally taken his chariot back from Nike.

And as the sun stretched across the—

Taco Phoenix: Caw! Phoenix taco attack!

Helios: No! Don't take my chariot.

Mr. Eric: Hey, Phoenix Taco, I was gonna tell a nice, sweet ending.

Taco Phoenix: Forget that. You made me into a taco. I'm taking this chariot and the sun. You can all play basketball in the dark.

Cthunkle: Mua hahaha! Where's your precious sun, now, Mr. Eric?

Mr. Eric: Well, you just saw it was stolen by a giant phoenix taco.

Buster: It's okay.

Mr. Eric: Said Buster.

Buster: The street lamps came back on. I'm just happy to be playing basketball with my mom.

Mr. Eric: Even without the rising sun upon him, Buster seemed to shine and if you looked closely, there was a sparkle on his brow, like little golden laurel leaves, resting on his head.

The end.

Cthunkle: Question mark? [Evil laughter]

[Falling harp scale]

Mr. Eric: Well, Pilar and Rigley, I hope you liked your story. I'd like to thank Karen Marshall O'Keeffe, my editor and producer, Jason O'Keefe for our artwork, Craig Martinson for our theme song, and all you winners out there, for learning how to lose.

Until we meet again, keep wondering.

[What If World theme plays.]