

Podcast: What If World

[Episode: 107: What if tigers lost their stripes?](#)

File Length: 00:23:17

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.

[Gentle bell music.]

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 Stacy.

Stacy: Hi, my name Stacy and I love tigers and I wanted to say, and I like [inaudible]. And my what if world is what if tigers lost their stripes?

Mr. Eric: Wow, what if tigers lost their stripes? Stacy, I want to thank you for being so patient, waiting to get your question answered. We have a patron who asked a question that started off the very same way. Let's hear Cece's question.

Cece: Hi, my name is Cece, and I'm six and my question is what if tigers lost its stripes and a fox with two tails went to Zack and Zizi's house? And what if a cat had a unicorn horn and unicorns with triple horns? Thank you! I love *What If World*. I also like playing with my pet cat Luna.

Cece's Parent: Thank you, we love *What If World*.

Mr. Eric: Okay, you two have both waited a long time to get your question answered.

Fred the Dog: Oh yeah, but Oliver and William and also Sam, they've waited a very long time to get their shout-out.

Mr. Eric: Oh, you're right. Thank you Oliver, William, and Sam.

Fred the Dog: Yeah, and thanks especially for choosing me to give your shout out. I think I give the most shout outs and so like maybe I should just be the host of this show from now on.

Mr. Eric: Fred, I appreciate your enthusiasm, but being the host is a lot of work. You have to record the show, and edit it and post it.

Fred the Dog: Yeah, I don't want to do all that. How about I just do the stuff that fun for me, and you do all the other work?

Mr. Eric: Hmm...

Pipey-O: That's-a mean-a suggestion. Everybody got-a do their part, okay?

Mr. Eric: Pipey-O, thanks for coming on the show.

Pipey-O: You're welcome, Mr. Eric. I'm-a here to give a big-a thank you to Caleb and James! Wheeeee!

Mr. Eric: Oh yeah, Caleb just got a question answered and we're really glad to have he and his brother James as a patron.

Fred the Dog: Oh, you better believe it.

Pipey-O: Of course I believe it. That's-a why I'm here!

Mr. Eric: And another big shout-out to Titus and J.J., two of our listeners from South Korea.

Fred the Dog: I hear that's a very nice country.

Mr. Eric: Yeah, one of my best friends lives out there.

Pipey-O: Maybe I jump in-a pipe and go visit-a South Korea one day.

Mr. Eric: Oh, I hope so, Pipey-O. Please take me with you if you do.

Now, let's find out what if tigers lost their stripes? And also a fox with two tails came to Zack and Zizi's house. And cats had unicorn horns and unicorns had triple horns.

[Rising harp scale.]

Cecelia Tailia: Oh, this is not good! It no good!

Mr. Eric: Cecelia Tailia was a two-tailed fox. She was running through the woods just a few feet in front of the galloping gait of a ferocious tiger!

Tiger: [Menacing growl!]

Mr. Eric: The tiger growled and roared and Cecelia Tailia could barely stay ahead.

Cecelia Tailia: I'm never gonna make it.

Mr. Eric: Cecelia burst into a clearing and saw a house at the edge of the woods with its door open just a crack.

Tiger: [Growl.]

Mr. Eric: The tiger pounced into that same clearing, landing right on top of the two-tailed fox. But looking down at its paws, the tiger saw that the two-tailed fox was nothing but smoke and air?

Tiger: [Confused growl.]

Mr. Eric: The illusory fox wisped through the tiger's fingers while the real fox darted into the house, closing the door behind it with a soft click.

Tiger: That tricky fox...

Mr. Eric: Grumbled the tiger, and stalked back into the woods.

[Time skip noise.]

Mr. Eric: Zack and Zizi were playing in the living room of their rocket ship house when Cecelia Tailia slid into their house in a panic.

Zack: Um, why is a two-tailed fox in our house?

Mr. Eric: Asked Zack?

Zizi: Oh, perfect!

Mr. Eric: Exclaimed Zizi.

Zizi: We parked outside the magic wood so I could do some mythic creature walking.

Mr. Eric: Zizi approached the two-tailed fox.

Zizi: Now tell me, are you a kitsune, a huli jing, maybe a kumiho?

Cecelia Tailia: Those are all different types of mythical foxes?

Zizi: The ones I know of.

Cecelia Tailia: Well, sure, yeah. I'm the most magical fox in the whole forest. Cecelia Tailia's the name, but you can call me Two-tail.

Zack: Hi, Two-tail. Who were you running from?

Cecelia Tailia: Yeah, I was running from a tiger.

Zizi: A magic tiger?

Cecelia Tailia: Oh, it's a right magical talking tiger. Not as magical as me, mind, but definitely one you'd want to check off your list.

Zizi: I don't know, tigers are dangerous.

Cecelia Tailia: Oh, no. That tiger's just grumpy.

Zack: Why is he grumpy?

Cecelia Tailia: She's a grumpy tiger because she's all covered in big black stripes.

Zizi: But isn't that what tigers look like?

Cecelia Tailia: Well, of course it is! Only trouble is, her favorite color is orange and her least favorite color is black.

Zizi: Well, I know some basic transmutation magic.

Cecelia Tailia: Oh, that'll be just perfect. Come on along!

Mr. Eric: Would you have gone into these tiger-ful woods with a two-tailed fox you'd never met? Well, I know I wouldn't. But Zizi had learned quite a few spells and Two-tail was such a clever and charming fox that before the children knew it, they were following her into that forest.

As they were walking through the magical woods, Zack stumbled over a fallen unicorn horn.

Zack: Oh, wow. I've never seen a unicorn horn this close.

Mr. Eric: Said Zack, forgetting he'd once had a unicorn as a pet.

Zizi: Cool!

Mr. Eric: Shouted Zizi, taking out her mythic creature book and ticking off a box.

Zizi: Unicorns can shed their horns when they want to grow a new one or a different one.

Cecelia Tailia: But the old horns still hold a fair bit of magic from what I heard.

Mr. Eric: Said Two-tail.

Cecelia Tailia: You ought to hold onto that in case you ever need a little extra magic.

Mr. Eric: And Zizi tucked the horn away in her wand-case as they traveled deeper into the wood. After nearly an hour of wandering through the dimly lit woods, the children came upon the tiger's lair.

Tiger: [Grumbling in her sleep.] Fox... I'll get you...

Zack: Wow, this tiger really wants to eat you.

Tiger: [Grumbling] I hate that fox...

Cecelia Tailia: Oh, she and I just had a little misunderstanding but once you take away those nasty stripes of hers, I know all will be forgiven.

Tiger: [In her sleep] ... get that two-tail... I'll bite the two-tail...

Zizi: Either way, I get to check off talking tiger from my list!

Cecelia Tailia: [Shushes] Just keep a little quiet. I want it to be a surprise, see?

Zack: Ooh... okay.

Mr. Eric: Zizi took out her wand and with a whisper of a spell, the tiger's stripes disappeared and even its white patches turned orange as did its nails, its nose, its tongue, and its eyes.

Zizi: Oops, I'm still learning.

Cecelia Tailia: [Snickers] No, that's perfect. [Laughs] She's gonna... just love it...

Zack: Are you sure?

Cecelia Tailia: Sure as sherbet. Now let's get out of here.

Mr. Eric: And Two-tail started leading the children away from the tiger's lair. Night had fallen by the time they got back to their rocket ship house and when Zizi went to pet Two-tail good night, she saw the fox had grown a third tail.

Zizi: Two-tail, you have three tails.

Cecelia Tailia: So I do. Seems like every time I perform a very good deed, I grow another tail.

Zack: Well, good night, Three-tail.

Cecelia Tailia: Good night, children. Thanks again for your help.

Mr. Eric: And later, tucked into their beds, the kids fell asleep to the sound of a distant low, rumbling growl.

[Tiger growl.]

The next morning, the kids woke up to see a giant orange cat rolling around in the dirt in front of their house.

Zack: Wow, Zizi, look at the size of that cat! That must be some kind of magical creature.

Zizi: I'm not so sure. It was really dark last night, but I think that's the tiger.

Zack: Ooh...oh. Well, she must be really happy to be all orange.

Mr. Eric: And Zack ran out to introduce himself.

Zizi: Zack!

Mr. Eric: Zizi scooped up her wand and ran after him.

Tiger: Heeey, get away from me.

Mr. Eric: Cried the great big orange cat.

Tiger: I got tricked again by that fox.

Zizi: I don't understand... I thought you wanted to be a big orange cat.

Tiger: Oh, it looks like he tricked both of us. I'm trying to roll all of this orange off of me. It's my least favorite color.

Zack: I thought it was your most favorite color.

Tiger: No! I always wanted to be a solid black tiger and get rid of these orange stripes and now it's all I've got!

Zizi: Oh, you poor kitty! Is there anything I can do for you?

Tiger: Yes. Give me magic of my own so that I can finally trick that fox.

Zizi: Well, I have been saving this old unicorn horn for a special spell, but I could turn you your favorite color and then we could just play together all day.

Zack: Yeah, we've never had a pet before.

Mr. Eric: Said Zack, forgetting he'd already had a pet dog, a pet bat person, a pet unicorn, and a pet rocket ship house, depending on the story.

Tiger: Oh, let me think. Change colors and play with a bunch of kids or get a unicorn horn that gives me more magical powers. Yeah, I can be orange for one more day.

Zack: Well, yeah, but—

Tiger: Hey. You're the ones who turned me orange, remember? You owe me.

Zizi: Okay, okay, fine.

Mr. Eric: Zizi went to the secret trunk that she hid under her bed and pulled out her prize possession: a twisty unicorn horn half as tall as her. Zizi climbed up on top of the big, orange cat and held the unicorn horn firmly to its forehead with one hand while wielding her wand with great precision.

Zizi: Agra-ca-tatch!

Mr. Eric: She cried, giving the wand a twist, and—the unicorn horn fused right to the cat's head.

Tiger: This feels weird?

Mr. Eric: The cat started to grow even taller, its claws turning into hooves. The fluff on its face migrating back to its head to make a long, silky, orange mane. Now the great orange cat was—

Zack: A great orange unicorn!

Tiger: What?

Zizi: I'm only in my second year of the Observatorium. I guess my transmutation still needs work.

Zack: On the plus side, we've got a unicorn pet! We've never had a unicorn pet before.

Mr. Eric: Well, they had. They had had two.

Tiger: Oh, it doesn't matter. I've got this big, orange horn and with its magic, I'll finally catch that fox.

Zizi: Okay, can you just let me down first, please?

Tlger: [Splutters.] Get off of me!

Zizi: Well, let me down!

Mr. Eric: And the big, orange unicorn bucked up high.

Zack: I'll get you!

Mr. Eric: Said Zack, diving to catch his big sister and they fell in a pile of knees and elbows as the orange unicorn galloped back into the forest.

Zack: Are you okay, Zizi?

Zizi: Yeah. Are you okay?

Zack: Been better.

Mr. Eric: The kids dusted themselves off and walked back into their house to see Two-tail napping on their armchair.

Zizi: You!

Cecelia Tailia: Me!

Zack: You.

Cecelia Tailia: You, too.

Zizi: No, you played a trick on us.

Cecelia Tailia: So I got my colors a little mixed up. You know foxes are colorblind.

Zack: Oh, that makes sense.

Zizi: No, it doesn't! You should still know the difference between the words black and orange.

Cecelia Tailia: Ha! Well, you're awfully clever.

Mr. Eric: Said Two-tail, although now she seemed to have four.

Cecelia Tailia: So, did you give her the unicorn horn.



Zack: We sure did. Now she's a big orange unicorn, so you better watch out.

Cecelia Tailia: [Laughs] A big ora—she's a big orange unicorn now. Oh, it's perfect!

Zizi: You wanted me to put that horn on her head?

Cecelia Tailia: Well, of course! Why do you think I dropped it in the woods?

Zack: You're not very nice.

Cecelia Tailia: Well, neither was that tiger. You see, they're a solitary lot. Awfully territorial, and a few months back she strolled into my forest and holed up in my favorite tree. I asked her very nicely to leave but all she offered to do was gobble me up.

Zack: Oh, I think eating someone is worse than tricking someone, Zizi.

Cecelia Tailia: That's right! I was just protecting me home.

Zizi: No, you were having fun at someone else's expense and you tricked us into doing it, too.

Cecelia Tailia: Oh, well wouldn't you do the same thing if it was your home on the line?

Zack: Um, probably.

Zizi: Definitely not.

Cecelia Tailia: Well, we'll just see then, won't we? Howie House? Will you show our friends to the door?

Mr. Eric: Suddenly, the house pitched forward and the back of it started lifting up, sending Zack and Zizi sliding right back out the front door.

Cecelia Tailia: Didn't even need to use me magic to hack this house. Much nicer than me old tree, thank you.

Mr. Eric: And Howie the rocket ship house took off into the air.

Zack: Aren't our parents still in there?

[Time skip noise.]

Poppa Loo: Honey, will you turn down the engine? I'm trying to read the newspaper.

Mamma Jamma: Honey, will you turn down the engine? I'm trying to take a bath.

Mr. Eric: And hearing them, Two-tail turned down the engines, setting the rocket ship house to hover 100 feet in the air.

Poppa Loo: Thanks, honey!

Mamma Jamma: Thanks, honey!

[Time skip noise.]

Zizi: I think we're on our own, Zack.

Zack: Well, then we've got to find that unicorn. Maybe she could fly us back up to the house.

Zizi: Oh no, but with those long legs and that magic horn, she could be anywhere in that magic forest, by now.

Zack: Oh, there she is. She got her horn stuck about two trees in.

Zizi: Oh! Okay, okay, good.

Tiger: This foolish horn is not as magical as I thought.

Zizi: Unicorn magic does not work out of malice.

Tiger: Aw, why didn't you tell me that. Malice is like, my whole thing.

Zack: Wow, Zizi, how do you know so much about unicorns?

Mr. Eric: It's because they each owned a unicorn. Their names were Hernosity and Sir Jonathan Rhinehart Fancyhooves III. It was episode 38.

Tiger: Will you two get me out of here?

Mr. Eric: Growled the orange unicorn.

Zizi: You know, I think we've gotten off to a bad start.

Tiger: The worst start, and continuation. Yes, it's basically all been bad.

Zizi: I'm Zizi, this is my little brother, Zack.

Stacy: Um, I'm Stacy. Please let me out.

Mr. Eric: And Zizi climbed up upon its back again.

Stacy: Ow! Watch the main.

Mr. Eric: And used her last spark of magic to unstick the horn from the tree.

Stacy: I'm free! Now, where's that fox?

Zizi: Oh, he stole our house. He's in the sky.

Stacy: He tricked you, too, did he? Well, climb on my back and we'll go get our revenge.

Zizi: We don't really want revenge, we just want our house back.

Stacy: Fine. You will get your house back and I will eat the fox.

Zack: Works for me!

Mr. Eric: Said Zack, scrambling up the orange unicorn's back.

Zizi: No one's eating anyo-oone!

Mr. Eric: But the unicorn was already galloping straight up into the sky. As they got closer to Howie the rocket ship house, a giant forcefield appeared around it.

Stacy: Force field, schmorce field.

Mr. Eric: Said Stacy, firing an orange jet of flame at the house. But the unicorn's beam couldn't penetrate that deflector shield.

Stacy: Kids, I'm not used to being a unicorn and I don't know if I can stop galloping in the air.

Zizi: Oh no! We're headed right towards the force field.

Zack: I'll help!

Mr. Eric: Said Zack, taking out his training wand. But its magic wasn't nearly strong enough.

Zizi: Oh, and I used up the best of my magic fusing the horn. Wait. Zack, hand me your wand and hold on tight.

Mr. Eric: Zack was riding behind his big sister. He handed over his training wand and held onto her waist.

Zizi: I really hope this works.

Mr. Eric: Zizi stuck the base of her wand and the base of Zack's wand right next to Stacy's unicorn horn.

Stacy: Ow!

Zizi: Sorry! We just need to give you a little more magic. Triplify!

Mr. Eric: And suddenly both of their wands turned into unicorn horns! Stacy was barreling straight toward the force field, but then she used her three horns to make one focused beam of bright orange light! It hit the force field just moments before they were going to gallop into it and... [Crashing, crackling noise] The shimmering shield shattered into a million pieces, raining down harmlessly over the field below.

Stacy: Kids! We did it! We did... oh.

Mr. Eric: But Stacy still hadn't really learned how to stop galloping and now all three of her horns were caught in the side of the house.

Stacy: Okay. Zack and Zizi, just go get the fox and throw him in my mouth. You know, now that I'm a horse, I don't really want to eat the fox, but I'll chew him up real good.

Mr. Eric: Stacy had gotten stuck right next to a window and Zizi pulled it open before carefully sliding her brother, and herself, through.

Zack: Are we really going to feed the fox to the unicorn?

Zizi: I think that's a little too grim for this fairy tale.

Zack: Foxy tale.

Zizi: Whatever.

Mr. Eric: They snuck out of their bedroom, but there was Two-tail waiting for them. Only, now she had nine tails.

Cecelia Tailia: You just couldn't leave well enough alone, could you?

Zack: Who's Well Enough?

Cecelia Tailia: Well, you two sure ain't now that I've played enough tricks to get all nine of my tails back there's no way two little kids without magic wands can—

Poppa Loo: Hey, who let this fox in the house?

Mamma Jamma: Oh! It's a cute little fox, let me squeeze it.

Cecelia Tailia: Excuse me, I was just doing a villainous monologue here, just give me one minute.

Mr. Eric: But Poppa Loo had already rolled up his newspaper and was swinging it at the fox.

Poppa Loo: Shoo! Get out of here, you old fox, you!

Mamma Jamma: Oh, Poppa Loo! Be nice.

Mr. Eric: Said Mamma Jamma, scooping up the nine-tailed fox in a big hug.

Mamma Jamma: Oh, these extra tails make him so cuddly, oh!

Cecelia Tailia: Well, I'm not a cuddly cute fox, I'm a tricky mean fox!

Zack: Hey, Mom! Can we keep her?

Zizi: Yeah, Mom. Then you can cuddle her and squeeze her and give her smooches on her face all the time.

Mr. Eric: Two-tail was trying to wiggle free to use her magic but Mamma Jamma just kept squeezing her and nuzzling her.

Poppa Loo: Well, I don't know... have you two kids ever taken care of a pet before?

Zack: No.

Zizi: No.

Mr. Eric: Well, they had. So many times.

Cecelia Tailia: And now, uh, you know, I think I'm just gonna pass. Go ahead and just toss me out the window, I'll be fine.

Mamma Jamma: Oh, what a squirmy little girl! Zizi got the same way as soon as she turned nine.

Stacy: If you're going to throw her out the window, mind aiming her towards my mouth?

Poppa Loo: Well, if it isn't a three-horned orange fox-eating unicorn. You gonna check that one off your list, Zizi?

Zizi: I think I'm gonna have to start a new list.

Mr. Eric: So Poppa Loo gently steered the house back down to the ground while Mamma Jamma chased Two-tail all over the house for more cuddles. The fox kept missing her with magic spells and each time she did, another tail disappeared until she was back down to two.

Cecelia Tailia: Oh, lovely.

Stacy: Ah ha! A two-tailed fox is no match for a three-horned uni—wait, what am I, now?

Mr. Eric: The kids' wands had already turned back to norman and now the unicorn was a cat again, albeit with a big orange horn.

Stacy: Okay, whatever, I can work with this.

Mr. Eric: But the real unicorn horn was starting to unstick, too.

Stacy: Oh, no no no no no!

Mr. Eric: And as it fell off, Stacy's stripes started coming back and her white fur, too, and her normal, non-orange cat eyes.

Cecelia Tailia: It looks like we're pretty evenly matched again.

Stacy: We'll see about that, old Two-tail.

Mr. Eric: Said Stacy, giving the fox a wink.

Zizi: Hang on, do you two actually enjoy this?

Cecelia Tailia: Well, some tigers just can't change their stripes.

Stacy: And some foxes can't help being tricky.

Mr. Eric: Two-tail sprang off towards the woods and Stacy the tiger loped along after her.

Poppa Loo: Poor things. They're just creatures of habit. Can't help themselves.

Mr. Eric: Said Poppa Loo, unfolding his newspaper and taking a seat.

Mamma Jamma: Oh, that fox got me all dirty. I'm gonna go take a bath.

Zack: Oh, good thing we're not creatures of habit.

Zizi: You got that right, Zack. Hey, want to go try and find some more mythic creatures?

Zack: Oh, yeah yeah! Maybe one will be our pet!

Mr. Eric: And Zack and Zizi dashed off toward the woods.

The end.

[Falling harp scale.]

Mr. Eric: All right Stacy and Cece, I hope you enjoyed your story. I'd like to thank Karen O'Keeffe, my co-creator, Craig Martinson for our theme song, my mom, Donna, for being as fierce as a tiger and as kind as a Mamma Jamma, and all you kids at home who can play tricks and have a laugh but never lose sight of safety, unlike a certain two-tailed fox.

Until we meet again, keep wondering.

[What If World theme plays.]

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