

Podcast: What If World

[Episode: 119: What if kids love chores?](#)

File Length: 00:17:10

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 two write-in questions, one from an email and one from a review.

I'll start with Rose whose message was entitled, "#LovePodcast" followed by every emoji plus a unicorn and an owl. Rose's what if question is what if kids love chores? And that's with four Os, so she means it.

Zizi: Oh, wow! I love chores!

Mr. Eric: Really, Zizi?

Zizi: Well, sometimes! If there's a good song on or when I get to be in a nice, clean room afterwards.

Mr. Eric: Zizi, what are you doing here anyway? You aren't even in this story.

Zizi: I came to give a shout out to Layla and her little baby sister who might be born any moment now.

Mr. Eric: Well, if not already, depends on when she's listening.

Wowser: You're right, Mr. Eric.

Mr. Eric: Hey, Wowser. I do have one more question to get to.

Wowser: But I wanted to thank Vaughn first.

Mr. Eric: Okay, Wowser.

Wowser: Wowser, Vaughn! I'm glad you're such a fan of the show and of me.

Mr. Eric: Okay, now I really want to get to Maya's question.

Fred the Dog: Oh, but I do have a quick shout out to give to Grant.

Mr. Eric: Okay, Fred. Thank you, Grant. Man, all of you are so impatient, today!

Petey the Pirate: Well, Lila has patiently waited for her shout out.

Mr. Eric: You're right, Petey. Lila, thank you for waiting, and thanks for believing in the show.

Fred the Dog: And thank you, too, Grant.

Zizi: And thanks to you, Layla.

Wowser: And Vaughn!

Mr. Eric: All right, I'm going to read Maya's question and remind you of Rose's and then go right into the story. Maya likes Abacus and JF Kat and her question is, what if Alabaster Zero went back in time and saw himself stealing something and arrested himself? And let's also find out what if kids loved chores?

[Rising harp scale.]

Mr. Eric: Alabaster Zero considered himself to be a good boy. Everybody told him he was a good boy, sometimes for no reason at all. Well, he didn't really know what a good boy was, but he assumed it was him.

Alabaster Kid: Hey, Dad. Can you lend me \$5 for being a good boy?

Mr. Eric: His dad, Dr. Zero, was bent over his lab coat as he ironed it.

Dr. Zero: A good boy does his chores before he gets his allowance, Alabaster.

Mr. Eric: Said Dr. Zero, pushing his glasses up his long nose to settle at the bridge.

Alabaster Kid: Okay, Daddy. I'll do all my chores and then some.

Mr. Eric: Said the young Alabaster, sprinting off to the chalkboard where the daily chores were written. The first chore read...

Alabaster Kid: Do the dishes. What am I supposed to do to them, though?

Mr. Eric: He walked to the sink.

Alabaster Kid: Hey, dishes, what do I do to you?

Dishes: You set us free, bub.  
I'm sick of people putting hot food on me all the time.

Alabaster Kid: Okay, easy.

Mr. Eric: Alabaster opened the window and flung the dishes out of there like frisbees!

Dishes: Ow, my face!  
You don't have a face, Jimmy!  
Oh yeah.

Mr. Eric: The second chore read...

Alabaster Kid: Change the litter. Hmm.

Mr. Eric: He walked over to their cat's litter box. It was a little stinky.

Alabaster Kid: No wonder kitty wants a change.

Mr. Eric: Young Alabaster picked up the litter box, spilling sand and other stuff every which way and dumping what was left of the litter right out the window!

Alabaster Kid: I know what kitty would like better... Daddy's old jacket.

Mr. Eric: Alabaster ran to his dad's room and pulled the dusty old box out from under the bed. Inside was a shiny badge and an old leather jacket.

Alabaster Kid: Well, this is a lot nicer than that stinky sand.

Mr. Eric: Said Alabaster, shoving the old leather jacket into the litter box.

Alabaster Kid: All right, next chore.

Mr. Eric: And the last chore read...

Alabaster Kid: Have a moment of quiet self-reflection? Daddy, I don't understand the last chore.

Dr. Zero: You've got to reflect upon your life for a minute and see how you feel.

Alabaster Kid: Uh, okay.

Mr. Eric: And Alabaster ran to the bathroom mirror.

Alabaster Kid: Hey, Alabaster, how do you feel?  
I don't know, why are you asking me?

Mr. Eric: Said his reflection.

Alabaster Kid: Because I'm trying to have a moment of quiet self-reflection.  
Well, then should you really be talking?  
I don't know, I've never done this before. Just tell me how you're feeling.  
I'm feeling a little stressed out by your tone.  
I'm feeling like this chore is kind of a bust.  
And I'm feeling like you're not giving it a chance.  
Okay. Okay. Nice work.  
What?

Mr. Eric: And Alabaster zoomed to the kitchen just as Dr. Zero was grabbing his lunch and keys.

Alabaster Kid: I did it, I did all my chores!

Dr. Zero: Oh, I don't know, Alabaster. Have you done your secret mission?

Alabaster Kid: A secret chore? I didn't see a secret chore!

Dr. Zero: Well, of course not! Then it wouldn't be a secret.

Alabaster Kid: [Laughs]

Dr. Zero: Your secret mission is to do something nice without being asked.

Alabaster Kid: But didn't you just ask me to do something nice.

Dr. Zero: Well, you don't have to do a nice thing for me. You can do it for anybody, and really the point is to think of something that might be nice for that person because sometimes people they don't even know what they want.

Alabaster Kid: That's an awfully philosophical chore for a grade-schooler.

Dr. Zero: Just do something simple and nice and you'll keep brightening the world, my boy.

Mr. Eric: On their way out the door, Dr. Zero saw the leather jacket in the litter box.

Dr. Zero: Oh, this was changing the litter, then?

Alabaster Kid: Yeah! Daddy's old jacket always makes me feel better when I miss him. I thought kitty would like it, too.

Mr. Eric: And Dr. Zero took out the coat and gently shook it, then poured some fresh litter in the box.

Dr. Zero: Okay, Alabaster. And I miss Daddy, too. But, um, let's try not to put cherished memories in the litter box, okay?

Alabaster Kid: Memories? But Dad's gonna escape from the evil pirate robot ninja dragon fortress, right?

Dr. Zero: Oh, well, let's hope so. But he's been gone a long time.

Mr. Eric: A short drive later, they pulled up to the corner across from Alabaster's school.

Alabaster Kid: Oh, can I get half of my allowance in advance? I might need it to finish the secret mission.

Dr. Zero: Oh, I guess it's only fair. Be good, my boy.

Mr. Eric: Dr. Zero let out his son and drove off to work. But Alabaster didn't walk toward the school. Instead, as soon as his father was out of sight, he walked into the corner store and came face-to-face with a tall giraffe who was craning his neck down to talk awfully close to Alabaster.

Giraffe: Welcome to Bodjo's Bod'ega and Espionage Equipment.

Alabaster Kid: I think it's pronounced bodega.

Giraffe: That is what I said. Bodjo's Bodega and Espionage Equipment. What harmless mac or deadly spy equipment would you like to purchase today?

Alabaster Kid: Well, I've been eyeing that evil fortress spy gear kit.

Giraffe: You have exquisite taste. It is on sale today, only one allowance.

Alabaster Kid: Oh, um... what can I get for half an allowance?

Giraffe: For measly half allowance, I will sell you key to janitor closet. We do not know which janitor closet, that will be for you to find out.

Alabaster Kid: I really don't want that.

Giraffe: Nobody does.

Alabaster Kid: Uh, okay.

Mr. Eric: And Alabaster just started walking around the corner store aimlessly, trying to think if there was any way he could get that evil fortress spy gear kit. Can you guess why he wanted to buy it?

Alabaster Kid: Okay, well... I have half of my allowance and then once I break my dad free, we'll all get the other half of the allowance, so I'll just...

Mr. Eric: And Alabaster very quietly slid his half an allowance onto the counter, picked up the spy gear kit, and walked it out the door.

Alabaster Zero: Not so fast, punk.

Mr. Eric: It was Alabaster Zero, but a full grown one! But he was wearing Alabaster Negative One's old leather jacket.

Alabaster Kid: Dad? I didn't think this would free you so fast.

Mr. Eric: Said the young Alabaster.

Alabaster Zero: Dad? I'm not your dad. What would make you think that?

Alabaster Kid: Well, you look like him and you talk like him and you're wearing his jacket.

Alabaster Zero: Wow, I was really thick back in the day. I mean, obviously, I'm just you from the future dressed like your dad sent back from the future to moments after you set off a mission to free your dad.

Alabaster Kid: Oh, it's so simple!

Alabaster Zero: Don't worry, Kid. You'll be a detective someday.

Alabaster Kid: Well, are you here to help me, you, us, break Dad out of the evil pirate robot ninja dragon fortress?

Alabaster Zero: The EPRNDF? No.

Alabaster Kid: Then why bother traveling back in time.

Alabaster Zero: I'm here to arrest you for stealing.

Alabaster Kid: Stealing? I would never steal! I was just borrowing the gear kit. I'm gonna return it with the other half of my allowance. Really, I'm just renting it.

Alabaster Zero: Sorry, Alabaster. You stole. You're goin' to jail.

Alabaster Kid: But if I stole, then you stole, so shouldn't you be arresting yourself?

Alabaster Zero: That's exactly what I'm doing.

Alabaster Kid: Oh yeah...

Mr. Eric: Grown up Alabaster clasped handcuffs on his young self and started marching them down the street where they passed by a young, dirty, black and white cat.

JF Kitty: Spay a purr-a-pet?

Alabaster Kid: Of course we can pet you for just a-

Alabaster Zero: Oh, don't worry about him, he'll be president one day. We've got to get you to jail!

JF Kitty: I'm not purr-esident meow!

Mr. Eric: But big Alabaster was already dragging his little self away.

[Time skip noise.]

Alabaster Zero: All right, here we are, the jail you'll be spending the rest of my life in.

Mr. Eric: They were standing in front of the evil pirate robot ninja-

Alabaster Zero: It's the EPRNDF kid, get used to it.

Alabaster Kid: Look, I made a mistake. I'm not proud of it and I wish I could take it back. But now you're here. We have a chance to break our dad out for real.

Alabaster Zero: That's not how it works, kid. We never break him out. We never finish our chore. It's what makes us a bad boy.

Mr. Eric: A colossal evil pirate robot ninja dragon stepped out of the fortress.

CEPRND: Name your crime.

Alabaster Kid: Renting a pair of tools without permission.

CEPRND: You have selected stealing.

Alabaster Kid: No, that's not what I did!

Alabaster Zero: I'm sorry, kid. You did the crime. You gotta do the time.

CEPRND: The sentence for stealing is one unit of crimetime.

Alabaster Kid: That doesn't sound so bad.

Mr. Eric: The colossal evil pirate robot ninja dragon leaned over to show its big, sharp, teeth.

CEPRND: Spent in my belly.

Alabaster Kid: Oh, man.

CEPRND: [Eating noise]

Alabaster Kid: Well, he committed the same crime.

[Record scratch.]

Alabaster Zero: Hey! Oh, I guess you're right.

Mr. Eric: And the CEPRND swallowed them both whole! They plunked into its oily belly, standing side-by-side in the dark until big Alabaster pulled out of a flash light.

Alabaster Kid: So, how long is one unit of crimetime, anyway?

Mr. Eric: Asked young Alabaster.

Alabaster Zero: Uh, about a hundred thousand years, give or take a century.

Alabaster Kid: Oh. Um, well, don't you want to try to escape? I bet this gear kit has a tickle tool or something.

Alabaster Zero: I'm sorry, kid. You can't do it.

Alabaster Kid: But why not?

Alabaster Zero: There comes a time in every Alabaster's life where he tries to break the Alabaster before him out of prison and then gets imprisoned himself,



and I don't want that to happen to my kid some day, so I'm breaking the cycle once and for all.

Alabaster Kid: So you were about to try again?

Alabaster Zero: I know it's wrong. Alabaster Negative One's only in there because he couldn't afford the spy gear kit to break out Alabaster Negative Two.

Mr. Eric: Suddenly the oil in the dragon's belly seemed to be heating up.

Alabaster Kid: I hate to interrupt your confusing time travel talk but this oil's getting really hot.

Alabaster Zero: Well, that's impossible. Unless of course he's trying to breathe fire on someone, but a dragon would never do that. It's too evil.

Alabaster Kid: Are you forgetting the E in CERPN...um...

Alabaster Zero: Uh-oh. We've got to get out of here!

Mr. Eric: Young Alabaster sprung open the spy gear kit in a panic. But all that was inside was a little paper note.

Alabaster Kid: You owe me one half an allowance. Ah, man!

Alabaster Zero: It's okay, Kid. Climb up on my shoulders and hop out his mouth.

Alabaster Kid: But I can't leave you!

Alabaster Zero: Don't worry, you'll have a pretty good life until you're eaten by a dragon today. But that won't be for a long time.

Mr. Eric: The little You Owe Me note was already singeing at the corners as a fire began to light deep in the dragon's belly.

Alabaster Zero: Go! Get out of here!

Mr. Eric: Alabaster threw his young self up towards the dragon's throat.

Alabaster Kid: No!

Mr. Eric: And the little boy spread his arms and legs wide inside the dragon's esophagus.

CEPNRD: [Erghk!]

Mr. Eric: The fire suddenly died down as the dragon was struggling for breath.

Alabaster Kid: Dragon, I don't know much about law, but I think incinerating us might be a bit harsh.

CEPRND: Very well. [Hurk]

Mr. Eric: And the dragon coughed up the oily Alabasters.

CEPRND: I apologize. I was just protecting myself from hiiiiim.

Mr. Eric: The Colossal... We're going to call it CEPRND.

Alabaster Kid: What could CEPRND possibly be scared of?

CEPRND: Why, Dr. Zero, of course.

Mr. Eric: And there was Alabaster's unassuming old father, his glasses askew, his hair disheveled. But the look in his eye meant business.

Dr. Zero: Now, Bodjo the Giraffe has said he won't file charges as long as Alabaster does community service.

CEPRND: Okay, I will not eat the boy again.

Dr. Zero: Or my partner.

Alabaster Zero: Sorry, Dad. I'm not Alabaster Negative One.

Dr. Zero: Oh, I should have realized you were just Alabaster Zero traveling back from the future to try to prevent Alabaster Zero from committing the crime that would end Alabaster Zero in prison for all time.

Alabaster Zero: Well, that was the plan, but uh, Professor Grumbler kind of got the timeline a little wrong.

Abacus: Now hold on a minute! I will not have my magic be besmirched by a time-traveling ninny who's actively interfering with his own future. You are not supposed to change your past! You are simply supposed to learn from it, boy.

Alabaster Zero: Who you calling boy?

Alabaster Kid: I think he's talking to me.

Abacus: I'm talking to both of you. We don't need to fix every mistake, but we do need to learn from them.

Dr. Zero: I thought he would have figured that out with all the self-reflection.

Abacus: No, he spends most of that self-reflection time picking his nose.

Alabaster Zero: I told you that in strict confidence.

CEPRND & Kid: [Laugh]

Mr. Eric: And just like that, big Alabaster and Professor Grumbler were gone.

Dr. Zero: Uh, CEPRND, I don't suppose you'd be willing to free Alabaster Negative One.

CEPRND: He already escaped!

Alabaster Kid: Yes!

CEPRND: But was immediately captured by the even eviler pirate robot ninja dragons.

Dr. Zero: Oh, that's what we get for messing with the timeline.

Alabaster Kid: I'm sorry, Daddy. I wanted my secret chore to be freeing Dad from the fortress because I know you miss him.

Dr. Zero: That's very sweet, but losing you would be far worse than any good that could come of it. Do you understand?

Alabaster Kid: Yeah, you just want me to stay safe.

Dr. Zero: But I also want you cleaning up Bodjo the Giraffe's store after school every day for a month.

Alabaster Kid: Oh, I was hoping you'd forgotten.

JF Kitty: You're in purr-trouble! Hehehehe.

Mr. Eric: Giggled the dirty black and white kitten.

Alabaster Kid: Why I oughta... I oughta pet you and love you and use my allowance to buy you a can of cat food every day.

JF Kitty: If you insist [purrs].

Mr. Eric: And JF Kat followed Alabaster and Dr. Zero all the way back to the corner store so Alabaster could start cleaning.

Alabaster Kid: Oh, that starts today?

JF Kitty: [Laughs]

Dr. Zero: Oh, absolutely, yes it does.

Mr. Eric: The end.

[Falling harp scale.]

Mr. Eric: All right Maya and Rose, I hope you enjoyed your story. I'd like to thank Karen O'Keeffe, my co-creator, Craig Martinson for our theme song, Mr. Cunningham, my speech and debate coach in high school, and all you kids at home who are learning to be better than your mistakes. It's scary to admit to them, I know. But it's worth it.

Until we meet again, keep wondering.

[What If World theme song plays.]

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