

Podcast: What If World

[Episode: 122: What if worms wore pajamas and played with toys?](#)

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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.

[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 Leo.

Leo: Hi, my name is Leo and my favorite thing is going to Las Vegas and my question is what if worms wore pajamas and played with toys? Bye.

Mr. Eric: Las Vegas? That's a new one. And I also don't think we've had any good worm characters before. Let's get one more question from a patron named Winnie.

Winnie: Hi, my name Winnie. I like playing with board games and card games and my question is what if board games could play themselves? Bye!

Mr. Eric: Thank you so much, Winnie. She has sent in a lot of questions and this one really matches up well with Leo's question. So let's find out—

Alabaster Zero: Not so fast, Mr. Eric.

[Record scratch.]

Mr. Eric: Alabaster Zero?

Alabaster Zero: The very Sam.

Mr. Eric: Don't you mean, "same"?

Alabaster Zero: No, I mean the very Sam as in Sam who I'm shouting out.

Mr. Eric: Oh, well, good for you! And thank you, Sam.

Fred the Dog: Oh, that's really cool how you got a one shout out to give today.

Alabaster Zero: Thank you so much. It has been a while, I'll admit.

Fred the Dog: Yeah, I only got five to give today, so like, kind of a slow week for me.

Mr. Eric: Fred, what have I told you about gloating?

Fred the Dog: You said gloating is not nice. But then you forgot to tell me what gloating is. Anyway, I got so many shout outs to give to Connor and William—

Mr. Eric: That's kind of gloating, what you're doing right now.

Fred the Dog: They've listened to my Fred interview 56,000 times.

Mr. Eric: Are you sure about that?

Fred the Dog: And then a shout out to Hunter, he's almost eight years old.

Mr. Eric: Okay, Connor and William and Hunter, thank you.

Fred the Dog: And then a shout out to Ferran. That's F-E-R-R-A-N.

Mr. Eric: Ferran, okay. Thanks, Ferran. And last but not least?

Fred the Dog: That would be a big old barky woof woof shout out for Owens.

Mr. Eric: All the Owens?

Fred the Dog: Oh, well, one in particular. But if you're listening and your name's also Owen, then I guess that's a shout out you can say is kind of for you, too.

Alabaster Zero: Well, thank you, Owen, Ferran, Hunter, Connor, William, and Sam.

Mr. Eric: Now, let's find out what if board games could play themselves, and what if worms wore pajamas and played with toys?

[Rising harp scale.]

Mr. Eric: One thing you might not know about What If World is that different creatures have different ways of getting there. Now, you kids, of course, can just listen to this show, pretty easy. Me, I usually need to get into my studio before I can really see what's going on. And worms? Well, worms need a very particular patch of dirt. It happens to be very close to where you live. It's known as a wormhole and it's no bigger than a firstful of dirt. There's always a few worms wiggling around in there, so if you find one,

make sure to cover it gently back up with dirt and give those worms a chance to get home.

Speaking of which, there were two worms in particular that were just taking their very first trip to What If World. Their names are Winnie Winnie Worm Worm and Leo Wriggalo. You also might not know that worms are hermaphroditic. They're boys and girls all rolled into one. But when Leo got to What If World, he sort of felt like he was a boy worm, just the same as Winnie felt like she was a girl worm. It didn't matter what parts they had, that's just how they were.

Leo Wriggalo: Hey, Winnie?

Mr. Eric: Asked Leo.

Leo Wriggalo: You wanna play some action figures with me?

WWW Worm: Nothing would please me more than to play action figures with my new What If World friend.

Mr. Eric: Said Winnie. And the two whiled away the afternoon, playing with Leo's toys. Before they knew it, it was starting to get dark so Leo and Winnie squirmed into their pajamas.

WWW Worm: I have a great idea.

Mr. Eric: Said Winnie, who prided herself on her great ideas.

WWW Worm: Once we're in our pajamas, we should play some more. I have a tea set at my patch of dirt and I got that new board game, Sparkleopoly.

Leo Wriggalo: That sounds like so much fun.

Mr. Eric: Said Leo.

[Laughter]

Mr. Eric: Leo and Winnie hadn't noticed a crowd of worms. They were wearing pajamas of all different kinds: full length flannels and nightgowns, fitted robes, and silky matching sets. Honestly, if it weren't for their pajamas, you couldn't even tell these worms apart.

WWW Worm: What's so funny?

Mr. Eric: Asked Winnie.

Worm: A girl worm asking a boy worm to play girl games like tea and Sparkleopoly. [Worms laugh]

WWW Worm: But we already played dolls together.

Leo Wriggalo: Technically, those were action figures.

WWW Worm: But they look the exact same.

Leo Wriggalo: Well, no, mine are different colors.

WWW Worm: So a girl worm can play with action figures but a boy worm can't play with tea sets.

Worm: Now you get it. [Yawns] Time for bed, worms.

Mr. Eric: And all the other worms wiggled into the dirt, leaving Leo and Winnie alone again.

WWW Worm: That's a double standard. Besides, there doesn't need to be girl toys and boy toys at all.

Mr. Eric: Said Winnie, who, priding herself on her bright ideas, tended to get very upset when things didn't make sense.

Leo Wriggalo: Well, all these worms are new to What If World and it's hard to understand things, so they think of girls as one way and boys another way. And moms one way and dads another way. And old ladies one way and old men another way. It helps them understand the big wide world that can frankly be kind of scary for our tiny worm brains.

WWW Worm: Well, just because they can't understand us does not mean they get to make fun of us.

Leo Wriggalo: You're right, Winnie. It's not fair. If I had it my way, I'd play games all the time. But forget about it, Winnie. Let's just go to our bed of soil.

Mr. Eric: And Leo disappeared beneath the dirt.

WWW Worm: Not fair, not nice, and not acceptable.

Mr. Eric: Complained Winnie, until she had [ding!] her own bright idea. She took her Sparkleopoly game and her tea set down to her secret laboratory. All the smartest worms have them. And she set to work inventing who knows what. Well, you probably know I you listened to the What If question.

Sparkleopoly: Sparkle-arkle-opoly!

Mr. Eric: Shouted the bright, glittery board game as it came to life.

WWW Worm: Wonderful, now you're a board game that can play itself, so maybe Leo and I can watch you play without anyone laughing at us.

Sparkleopoly: What a sparkle-icious idea! I'm gonna start playing right now!

Mr. Eric: But the game was so bright and sparkly and mystifying that Winnie couldn't look away.

[Time skip noise.]

Sparkleopoly: It's three games to three! My happy side has won three times and my even happier side has won three times.

WWW Worm: Oh wow, I've been here for hours. Maybe I should invent something a little more cooperative.

Sparkleopoly: Suit yourself! I'm just gonna keep sparkle-ople-opoly-ing!

WWW Worm: Yeah, okay. I know, I'll invent a self-pouring, intelligent tea set, and I'll call it SPITS for Self Pouring Intelligent Tea Set.

SPITS: I'm done! You already invented me.

Mr. Eric: Said the pink tea set, spraying warm tea out its spout every time it spoke.

WWW Worm: Oh, excellent. Let's go find Leo.

SPITS: Sparkle-arkle-opoly, are you coming?

Sparkleopoly: I wouldn't miss this reunion for all the sparkly stars in the shiny-verse.

SPITS: A simple yes or no would suffice.

Mr. Eric: Winnie scooped up SPITS and Sparkleopoly and made her way to Leo's patch of dirt where all she found was a note.

Leo Wriggalo: Gone to Lost Waygus where boys can play all day and night.

SPITS: Well, shall we proceed to Lost Waygus?

WWW Worm: If that's where we'll find our friend.

Mr. Eric: And so, Winnie, still wearing her worm pajamas knotted herself around SPITS and Sparkleopoly and started burrowing all the way to Lost Waygus.

[Time skip noise.]

Mr. Eric: Lost Waygus was many worm lengths from Winnie's little patch of dirt and when she finally reached this brightly colored city, she was overwhelmed by all the sights and colors. Winnie, Sparkleopoly, and SPITS searched through buildings with giant glass shark tanks and oases with real palm trees, and walking tours and eating tours and magic shows and secret gardens. But they couldn't find Leo in any of the places kids could go.

Abacus: Balloon rides! Get your hot air balloon rides all across What If World!

Mr. Eric: Cried Abacus P. Grumbler.

WWW Worm: Abacus? I thought you were a teacher?

Abacus: Not on the weekends! On the weekends I sell hot air balloon rides across What If World. I also work for the government. You know, you'd think all of it put together, I'd be making more money.

SPITS: So true, so true. Could you give us a ride?

WWW Worm: Yes, we need to see all across Lost Waygus.

Sparkleopoly: Or else we might lose our friend forever!

Abacus: Your friend wouldn't happen to be a worm, would he?

WWW Worm: He is indeed a worm.

Abacus: Yes, there aren't very many in Lost Waygus. He wanted to get into some place call the cardsino, and I told him it was no place for children so he insisted I just make him an old worm instead.

WWW Worm: Abacus! How could you?

Mr. Eric: And Winnie Winnie Worm Worm took off, dragging her friends along under the hot sun all the way to the cardsino.

Mr. Business Excuse me, kids. Can't allow you in the cardsino. Business rules, you know.

Mr. Eric: It was Mr. Business in a snazzy suit, looking down with distaste at this worm and her dirty pajamas.

WWW Worm: Oh, well, I'm looking for an old worm in here. I think he's lost his ways.

Mr. Business: Yeah, it's called Lost Waygus.

WWW Worm: Ooh.

Sparkleopoly: This is terrible! Ooooooh.

Mr. Eric: And Sparkleopoly sparkled and she cried glitter all over the casino. The bright lights and jangly ringing coming from this little board game seemed to attract a lot of attention. People started looking away from their slots and their tables, toward this bright and noisy game.

Mr. Business: Wow, you know, we spend big bucks trying to make things that are this distracting.

Mr. Eric: And a crowd had formed around Sparkleopoly.

Sparkleopoly: Now my happy side, will play my even happier side, but also there's a third player—

SPITS: You're finally gonna let me play?

Sparkleopoly: No. The third player is my slightly less happy side.

Person: I bet 20 lffers on her slightly less happy side.

Person 2: I'll bet 50 on happy.

Mr. Eric: And people started holding out money, placing bets on who would win at Sparkleopoly.

Mr. Business: All right, all right.

Mr. Eric: Of course, Mr. Business stepped right in.

Mr. Business: All right, taking all bets. 10 lffers to one says the even happier side is not gonna win this round.

WWW Worm: You'd let my friend be unhappy just so your patrons can bet on her?

Mr. Business: What can I say? People love betting on things they don't quite understand.

SPITS: But that's horrible.

Mr. Business: And you know what people love even more than that is having something they can sit down and root for. And giant decks of cards flew out from all directions, building themselves into bleachers that all the grown-up gamblers could sit upon and watch Sparkleopoly play herself.

WWW Worm: Well, I've got to go find my friend. Will you let me into your cardsino now?

Mr. Business: Leave that shineopoly game—

SPITS: Sparkleopoly!

Mr. Business: Whatever. Keep my customers happy and you can go wherever you please.

WWW Worm: Okay.

Mr. Eric: Before Winnie left, she walked up to Sparkleopoly and whispered something in the middle of the board.

Mr. Business: Hey. You're not gonna make my customers unhappy are you? Because when they're unhappy, I'm very unhappy.

WWW Worm: Oh, your customers will be delighted. Now, let me go find my friend.

Mr. Eric: And Mr. Business waved her on, warily. She found Leo Wrigalo playing at a mostly abandoned table. Mr. Mouser was dealing out cards to Leo, Marshall Mallow, and Dracomax.

Leo Wrigalo: What are you doing here? I finally found a game it's okay for boys to play as much as they want.

Dracomax: Excuse me, we cannot play as much as we want. We have to play in moderation.

Marshall Mallow: [Says something in marshmallow]

Mr. Mouser: That's right. We also have to be inclusive when we play.

WWW Worm: Well, I don't care what you have to say. Leo and I are going to play toys together.

Mr. Eric: And Winnie brought out her tea set and set SPITS up on the felt table.

SPITS: Let's get some tea going.



Mr. Eric: And despite the fact that SPITS had some difficulty speaking, he poured a perfect tea ceremony for everyone at the table, handing out cream and sugar with perfect care, sliding saucers across the felt table as if by will alone.

SPITS: Okay, so drink up already.

WWW Worm: Well, look at this. I bet the lot of you never thought you'd be allowed to play tea with a girl.

Marshall Mallow: [Something in marshmallow]

Dracomax: Oh, I have seen you play tea with Marsha Mallow.

Mr. Mouser: And I play tea with my sister, Ms. Mouser all the time.

Dracomax: I am not often invited to tea because I'm so big and I eat all the crumpets and also sometimes the house, by accident.

SPITS: See, when people get smart, they know that everybody can play games together.

WWW Worm: And it isn't just boy games and girl games, it's everybody games.

Leo Wriggalo: Wow, I guess those pajama worms just have a lot of growing up to go.

Mr. Eric: And SPITS topped off the tea for all five of them and they enjoyed some very fancy, fun tea time together.

Sparkleopoly: Whee! Everybody wins! Aaaaah!

Mr. Eric: Sparkleopoly was ringing and jingling and sparkling and flashing in the distance. Mr. Business came running through the cheering crowd, his face red and his suit torn.

Mr. Business: Winnie, if everybody wins, the cardsino loses.

WWW Worm: Oh, I guess you were betting on something you didn't understand. Was that fun for you?

Mr. Business: No. I'm supposed to always win no matter what. That's how the cardsino works.

SPITS: Oh, but in Sparkleopoly, there's a way that everyone can win.

Marshall Mallow: [Speaks in Marshmallow]

Dracomax: I knew that, too.

Mr. Mouser: To be fair, we did all learn that over tea just now.

WWW Worm: Maybe you can join us for our next tea party.

Mr. Business: Get out! Get out of my cardsino!

Dracomax: I will just fly through this house of cards, then.

Mr. Business: Actually, that's not necessar—oh, no.

Mr. Eric: And as Dracomax burst through the oversized card walls, the cardsino gently collapsed in upon itself.

Mr. Business: Okay, I guess that one's on me.

Mr. Eric: Leo picked up Sparkleopoly and Winnie grabbed old SPITS and they started squirming their way back home.

Mr. Business: Anyone for a game of 52 Colossal Card Pick-up? I didn't think so...

Mr. Eric: The end.

[Falling harp scale.]

Mr. Eric: Well, Winnie and Leo, I hope you enjoyed your story. I'd like to thank Karen O'Keeffe, my co-creator, Craig Martinson for our theme song, Charles Kim, my old boss at the Little Gym of Brooklyn Heights, still the best boss I've ever had. And all you kids at home who know there's no need to have boy games and girl games, boy toys and girl toys. The more we play with different kinds of people, the more we grow! And the more they do, too.

Until we meet again, keep wondering.

[What If World theme plays.]