

Podcast: What If World

[Episode: 142: What if numbers were made out of tangerines?](#)

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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're starting off with a question from a listener named Erin.

Erin: Hi, my name is Erin and how old I am is five and a half and I have three what if questions and something I really like is ice cream. And my three what if questions is: what if pineapples threw frisbees? What if traffic lights turned red to protect themselves and also what was... and also what if numbers were made out of tangerines? Thank you.

Mr. Eric: Whoa, three questions. Normally I just answer one per child, so we might not delve deeply into all aspects of your question today, but we've still got to get an add-on from a patron. And this one's a really simple write-in from a patron named Augie. Augie asks, what if Dracomax had a friend named Draco?

Well, I would be happy to introduce that character for you today.

JF Kitty: And I would be happy to introduce our shout-outs.

Mr. Eric: Hey, J.F. Kat. Thanks.

JF Kitty: We've got shout-outs to siblings from Chicago, today.

Fred the Dog: First, we shout out Eddie, who likes Pokemon and Star Wars.

JF Kitty: And next we shout out his big sister Evie who likes cats and The Descendants.

Fred the Dog: Oh, and Mr. Eric, don't forget your late shout out to Corben and Elly.

Mr. Eric: Oh, my gosh, Fred, you are so right. Corben and Elly, thank you so much for being patient.

Fred the Dog: Yeah, Mr. Eric been a little scatterbrained lately. He barely even pay attention to me with a baby on the way and now the baby's here and I get even less attention.

Mr. Eric: But that's no excuse for forgetting Corben and Elly's shout out. So, please accept my apology.

Fred the Dog: Okay, so big thank you to Eddie and Evie and Elly and Corben.

Mr. Eric: Now, let's find out what if Dracomax had a friend named Draco, and what if pineapples threw frisbees, traffic lights turned red to protect themselves, and numbers were made out of tangerines. Maybe not in that exact order.

[Rising harp scale.]

Mr. Eric: Draco had it pretty tough being a young dragon. All the other dragons told her she had to grow up to be big and fierce and mean. Even her friend, Dracomax said as much.

Dracomax: Oh yes. Being mean is what dragons are all about.

Draco: But I don't know if I want to be mean.

Dracomax: Oh, being mean is very fun. For example, if someone asks me to breathe an ice cream sundae dragon breath so they can eat ice cream sundae forever—

Draco: Oh, that sounds nice.

Dracomax: Then I breathe it all over their house so they have no place to live.

Draco: That sounds mean.

Dracomax: It's just how we dragons are. Draco, you're too young to even have your dragon surname so you haven't figured out what kind of mean you'll be, yet.

Draco: So you're Dracomax because you are maximum mean?

Dracomax: Yes. Also, I'm big. Come, fly with me. I will show you how everyone is happier when they become just what they are told to become.

Draco: Oh! Meeting new people sounds fun. Let's go, Dracomax.

Mr. Eric: And Dracomax took off with young Draco, setting off all the way across What If World.

[Beeping and honking]

Traffic: Hey, can't you see I'm flying here?

Dracomax: Oh, flying traffic already?

Draco: Well, what do you expect? Everyone in What If World wants to fly.

Mr. Eric: And Dracomax, being the biggest flying creature in the sky, shouldered and winged his way right up to the front of the traffic jam.

Traffic Light: Oh, traffic on traffic on traffic. I don't like all this traffic, oh no!

Mr. Eric: It was an eight-sided traffic light floating in the sky directing the flying creatures who were flying up or down, left or right, forwards or backwards. Except all of the lights were red.

Dracomax: Excuse me, Mr. Traffic Light. Don't you need to let some of us go at some point?

Traffic Light: Oh, I know... I know. But I don't like all these things flying at me.

Dracomax: I understand. You are little. But you are a traffic light. It's what you're meant to do.

Draco: Dracomax, you're being very nice to this traffic light.

Dracomax: Oh, you're right. I mean, move, traffic light! Stop being so scared.

Traffic Light: Oh, I can't help it. If only I could be a buoy in the sea where things didn't fly so fast at me.

Draco: Well, if you want to be a buoy, why not just train someone new to be a traffic light. Then you can fly down to the sea and be who you want to be.

Traffic Light: What a wonderful idea. I'll start handing out applications to everyone who flies by me today. One for you.

Traffic: Eh, it took you long enough.

Traffic Light: And one for you...

Traffic: This is gonna take forever.

Traffic Light: And one for you...
[Beeping]

Dracomax: [Heavy sigh]

Mr. Eric: And ever so slowly, traffic started crawling by and Dracomax and Draco were on their way.

Dracomax: See, little Draco. If that traffic light had just been what it was supposed to be, we would have never been stuck in that traffic.
[THUNK]
OW!

Mr. Eric: A frisbee had just soared up into the sky and whacked Draco right in his scaly neck.

Pineapple: Hey, little help up there, big dragon?

Mr. Eric: Called up a little pineapple from the ground. It was a field of pineapple plants with their long, wide, waxy green leaves stretching out from where the big spiky fruit stood in the middle.

Dracomax: Oh, fine, here is your frisbee.

Mr. Eric: Said Dracomax, using his big claws to gently fling the tiny frisbee back.

Dracomax: But you know, pineapples are not supposed to throw frisbees.

Pineapple: Yeah, I know that. But the way I figure it, why does a pineapple just gotta be a pineapple, sitting here growing all day just so I can get, like, eaten. I think I'd rather throw frisbees.

Draco: But you don't have arms, little pineapples. It's basically impossible for you to throw a frisbee.

Pineapple: Impossible, imschmossible. Watch me.
[Fwipping sounds]

Dracomax: Wow, how did you throw that frisbee without arms? Or hands or fingers?

Pineapple: Practice, man. It wasn't easy to learn but it beats sitting here waiting to get eaten.

Dracomax: That is incredible. Now, may I eat you? I'm getting hungry.

Pineapple: No.

Dracomax: Oh, fine. I will just squeeze you on top of some ice cream, and then I will eat pineapple-y ice cream.

Pineapple: No thanks. I'm gonna go all across What If World learning how to throw frisbees from all the armless frisbee throwing masters. Shoeless Joe's shoe, Serena Williams' wristwatch, and even Danica Patrick's sunglasses.

Draco: Sounds exciting. Good luck with that.

Mr. Eric: Said Draco, and the little pineapple fruit uprooted itself and started sliding away on top of its frisbee.

Dracomax: Now it's using the frisbee like a skateboard.

Draco: That does seem especially impossible.

Dracomax: You see, if that pineapple would have just stayed a regular fruit, we wouldn't be hungry and slightly confused.

Draco: But the pineapple did not want to be our food!

Dracomax: Does not matter. We are what we are. Light's a light. Fruit's a fruit. That's three examples already. Numbers don't lie.

Number 4: 'E's right, you know. I'm a number four and I'm proud of it.

Mr. Eric: Now they were flying over a grove of tangerine trees, except not one of the little orange fruit was spherical. Though, the zeroes came close.

Draco: Is it me or are those tangerines growing like numbers?

Dracomax: No, no, no. You've got it all wrong. Numbers are tangerines, just as they're supposed to be in What If World.

Number 4: That's right, numbers are always tangerines, but tangerines aren't necessarily numbers, 'cept in this grove, of course.

Mr. Eric: Draco flew closer to see which of these tangerines was talking, and it was one shaped exactly like a number seven.

Draco: I thought you just said you were a four, but you're clearly a seven.

Number 4: Says you, maybe. But numbers don't lie, and I'm a 12.

Dracomax: I may not be the smartest dragon because dragons are not supposed to be good at math, but I think you are neither a four nor a 12.

Draco: Does this mean that numbers can lie?

Number 4: Right, you got me, you got me. I'm really a number negative 631.

Dracomax: How can you be a negative number?

Number 4: How can you be a negative dragon? I thought dragons were supposed to be nice.

Dracomax: No, dragons are supposed to be mean.

Draco: And bad at math, apparently. I'm just learning this one.

Number 4: Sheesh. Sounds exhausting. I grew up my whole life being told I was a seven. Always called 7th, counted 7th. 7th place.

Dracomax: But at least you know what you are.

Number 4: Do I? Some people say seven's lucky, but I never felt very lucky. Sometimes I'm too low. Sometimes I'm too high. Sometimes I'm just too seven. Maybe when I grow up I wanna be a different number. Just because you're a dragon, does that mean you've got to be one specific type of dragon?

Dracomax: Uh, yes. The bigger I am, the meaner I'm supposed to be.

Draco: But you haven't been all that mean today. You've been flying me around. You were polite to the traffic light. You even threw the frisbee back to the pineapple.

Dracomax: Oh, you're right. I have been forgetting to be mean. I am a bad dragon. Quick, quick, we must breathe fire on this tangerine so we can be good and mean. [Huffs and grumbles]

Number 4: Oh, please don't breathe fire on me. That'd be a terrible thing to do to a person.

Mr. Eric: But Dracomax kept breathing in, filling his lungs and chest with dragon fire. So much so that the smoke was billowing out of his nostrils.

Draco: Dracomax, all day you have shown me people told to be one thing and wanting to be another. You don't have to breathe fire just because you're a dragon.

Dracomax: [Struggling against lungs full of fire] Uh, yes, I do.

Mr. Eric: Said Dracomax, lifting his head high and still holding the fire inside.

Number 4: Oh, that's silly. Doesn't being mean make you feel bad?

Dracomax: But feeling bad is good when you're a dragon.

Mr. Eric: Said Dracomax, nearly bursting with smoke and fire.

Draco: Why don't you just let the fire out high in the sky where no one will get hurt?

Number 4: You'll probably feel a lot better afterwards.

Mr. Eric: And Dracomax, his cheeks puffing, the smoke coming out of his nose and his ears, finally craned his neck up high into the sky, and...

Dracomax: [Coughs out all the fire] I am so tired of being mean. I just want to be me.

Number 4: Same here. Let's keep it simple, first, huh? I'm TangErin, what's your name?

Dracomax: Dracomax.

Draco: And I am Draco. I don't have my dragon surname, yet.

Number 4: Well, Draco and Dracomax, would you like to play a counting game with me?

Dracomax: I do really like numbers. Even though dragons are not supposed to me.

Mr. Eric: And TangErin, Draco, and Dracomax flew and rolled around the grove playing number games with all the other tangerines.

Dracomax: Wait, wait, little Draco. I failed you. I learned the lesson, but you still haven't figured out your true dragon name.

Draco: Actually, meeting all of these fun people while flying around has given me an idea.

Mr. Eric: And little Draco took off into the sky, flying back to where their adventure this day had begun.

Traffic Light: Okay, has everyone filled out their applications? I really don't want to be an air traffic light anymore.

Draco: Then how about you give the job to me, Traffigon, obliterator of sky congestion!

Mr. Eric: Said little Draco. And all the flying creatures stuck in this traffic jam watched as she grew and sprouted two extra heads, one green, one red. And you guessed it, one yellow.

Traffic Light: Whoa, that's incredible. Now I just need to teach you everything I know about air traffic control. It should only take a couple of weeks, so hang tight everybody out there.

Traffic: Oh, for crying out loud.
It's the big sky dig all over again.
So much traffic.

Dracomax: Uh, Traffigon, could just give me a little green light fire so I can go home?

Draco: That would be breaking the traffic rules possibly. I don't know yet. So just stick around a little while. I'm sure I will figure it out.

Traffic Light: That's the spirit. So, yellow light means slow down.

Draco: Not speed up?

Traffic Light: Common misconception.

Dracomax: Oh, this is going to take forever.

Traffic: I've been stuck up in this traffic since I was a baby. Me an' my grandkids, still trying to go out for ice cream.

Dracomax: Oh, I can help with that. [HUAAAAH]

Mr. Eric: And as Traffigon learned the rules of the road... or the sky... everyone enjoyed some ice cream rain courtesy of their new friend, Dracomax.

Traffic: Hey, this is pretty good.
Mine's pineapple flavored.
So that's what ice cream tastes like... hmm.

Mr. Eric: The end.

[Falling harp scale.]

Mr. Eric: All right, Erin, and Augie, I hope you enjoyed your story. I'd like to thank Karen O'Keeffe, my co-creator, Craig Martinson for our theme song, every family out there who's ever told someone else about What If World, and all you kids at home who know that part of being young is figuring out who we want to be, even if it's not who everyone tells you to be.

Until we meet again, keep wondering.

[What If World theme plays.]

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