

Podcast: What If World

[Episode: 160: What if Story Pirates came into What If World?](#)

File Length: 00:20:20

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—
- Dracomax: And I am Dracomax, here to shout out Sam Z., from Berkeley, Michigan. He loves dragons and wrote a joke. Why didn't Fred eat the stick? Because he already ate it. [Rimshot.]
- Fred the Dog: That's a very funny joke, thank you Sam Z. And I have a shout out for Elliott. He has got a dog named Panda Bubba.
- JF Kitty: Purr, I'm here with a meow out for Garrett and Reed. Garrett is eight, Reed is 12, and sometimes they pretend to play with me, J.F. Kat.
- Mr. Eric: That's really cool.
- JF Kitty: Last time they did, they stepped on my imaginary tail so tell them to watch out!
- Mr. Eric: Okay... well, thanks Garrett and Reed and...
- Fred the Dog: Wait, I got one more shout out for Sky. Sky has a cockatoo named Bailey who goes "Meow meow meow" and they sometimes sing along to the What If World theme and make up their own words.
- Mr. Eric: Thank you, Sky, and thanks Bailey, for listening, too.
- Robot Llama: [Singing] I have one more shout out to give.
- Mr. Eric: Oh, hi, Robot Llama.

Robot Llama: [Singing] I am going to shout out Micah who loves our show with ten exclamation points!

Mr. Eric: Wow, ten exclamation points? Thank you.

But now it's time to introduce our special guest, and today I am nervously excited because I am here with a fellow storyteller of great renown. He is the cofounder and artistic director for the Story Pirates and the producer and co-host of the Story Pirates podcast. Ladies and gentlemen, Lee Overtree!

Lee: Hey, what's up! I'm so glad to be here. Thank you for having me.

Mr. Eric: Thank you. Oh, man. The person we have to thank for this happening is a patron named Oliver P. Oliver has sent us a bajillion questions and he's got great, great ideas. But we're gonna read his what if question right now.

Lee: Okay.

Mr. Eric: It goes what if Story Pirates came into What If World because Cthunkle dragged them into his lair?

And Max also wrote in with a wonderful question: what if books were enchanted and you could jump inside them?

Wow. We have a lot to work with, Lee, already.

Lee: Excellent questions, plenty to work with. I think we can do this.

Mr. Eric: Cool. We'll talk a lot about Story Pirates at the end. Can you briefly tell listeners who may not know what Story Pirates is?

Lee: Oh yeah. Well, if you don't already know what Story Pirates is, we take stories written by kids, like real kids from all around the world, and we turn those stories into podcasts and books and theater and music and so many other things. It's basically all about how kids are creative geniuses.

Mr. Eric: It's such an inspiration and I hope you go enjoy Story Pirates after you listen to this story.

Lee: Yes, stay here. Listen to this one, first.

Mr. Eric: So let's find out what if Story Pirates came into What If World because Cthunkle dragged them into his lair, and what if books were enchanted and you could jump inside them?

[Rising harp scale.]

Once upon a time in What Is World, Lee Overtree was taking a quiet walk down Smith Street in Brooklyn. Lee stopped in front of his favorite bookstore, Books Are Magic, and he was having a lot of feelings just then.

Lee: Doot de doot de doo... oh, what a beautiful day here on Smith Street. I can see all the things here on Smith Street that I normally see on Smith Street. Such as dogs and babies in strollers. Dogs in strollers and babies pushing strollers full of dogs and dog babies. But also! Ah! My favorite bookstore! Books Are Magic! I love this place. Mostly because the title is a good title and it's also a true fact. Books are magic. Although, you know, not the kind of magic you normally see, like a real supernatural crazy awesome magic.

Cthunkle: You mean magic like this?

Lee: Uh... that's not exactly what I meant, but I guess it's true! Aaah! Who are you?

Mr. Eric: And one of the books inside the bookstore opened up and out of it reached a bunch of big, slimy, tentacles. Yes, children, you know who it is!

Cthunkle: I am Cthunkle, and you, Story Pirate, are now my prisoner!

Lee: Ugh! What is this, a Lovecraft novel? What's happening? Aaah! The tentacles! They've got me! They're pulling me into the boooooook! Aaah!

Where am I? What's happening?

Cthunkle: You are under Squid Lake and breathing surprisingly well. Is that a Story Pirate ability?

Lee: Under a lake? I didn't realize that I had gills. But maybe I do? I'm highly evolved. I can do all sorts of things that many humans can't so maybe breathing underwater's one of them.

Cthunkle: It must be. Now that you are my prisoner, I was hoping that you could just go ahead and tell me stories like, forever.

Lee: Uh, you want me to tell you stories forever. Is that what you're saying?

Cthunkle: Well, let's start with for today and then continue into next week. And then after that, yes, forever, mm-hmm.

Lee: Okay, so I think lots of people have different understandings of what forever means because time, you know, it's fluid and it changes and expands and contracts. How do you understand time, Cthunkle?

Cthunkle: As an extra-dimensional beast of unimaginable horror, a squid-o-pus, if you will—

Lee: Yeah, I will.

Cthunkle: I understand time both backwards, forwards, and upside-down.

Lee: Got it. So it's an unending pit of despair from which I will never escape?

Cthunkle: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

Lee: I think that is the kind—wait a second! Unceasing pit of despair I'll never escape, no!

[Record scratch.]

I don't want to be here forever. I do not want to be telling you—I love telling stories, but I like to do it with my own, you know, creature comforts around. Not under a lake with some crazy Lovecraftian monster like you.

Cthunkle: The problem is I have all of these books but reading, it takes so much focus and I can't read the words fast enough sometimes. So I just like other people to tell me the stories.

Lee: Okay, I think I see where you're headed, now. See, reading stories is actually sometimes way more fun than being told stories. I like being told stories, too, but when you can really get good at reading, it's like diving right into a book. So, like, you have all these books around you, why don't you just keep reading and read these and get better at reading, and then you'll really enjoy it, I promise.

Cthunkle: I think I need a demonstration.

Lee: All right, okay, fine. I can help you. I will tell you a story, maybe I'll get used to it. Maybe forever won't be so bad. Um. I'll give it a try, what do you say?

Cthunkle: Wonderful.

Mr. Eric: Cthunkle reached out into his Squid Lake lair and pulled over a book, one of his favorites.

Cthunkle: Maybe you can tell me this story, if you like. It's got a character in it who sort of reminds me of myself.

Lee: Ah, okay, okay. Do you want to try to read this together? Like we could read the words at the same time?

Cthunkle: Yes, let's do it.

Lee: Okay.

Together: Once... upon... a... time... there... was... a... pi...pirate—

Cthunkle: Oh yes, a pirate.

Lee: See, you are very good at reading. There's no way you could have read that without having been a good reader.

Cthunkle: And as I was reading it, I felt I was being sucked into this book. Uh oh... oh, actually, that's happening. Oh, it's happening.

Lee: You're getting sucked into the book? Whoa-whoa-watch out, Cthunkle!

Cthunkle: Lee, come get me! Aaah!

Lee: Oh, okay!

Both: [Screaming, screams echo off extra-dimensional space and time.]

Lee: Now where are we?

Mr. Eric: And there they were, inside the book, on top of a ship sailing the seven seas across from a young Petrina the Pirate.

Petrina: Aha! Avast, me hearties. Are you here to help me slay the wicked beast?

Lee: Yes! Yes, you're Petrina the Pirate. I know you! You're a brazen young adventurer. You sail the seven seas through tremendous storms, through all sorts of stuff and wow, you're here? We're inside a book about you?

Petrina: [Laughs] Isn't that what happens when you read and read and suddenly the words, they disappear, and then you are in the story, just like this.

Lee: Cthunkle, are you hearing this?

Cthunkle: I'm sorry, I was busy looking over the boat. See, this is my favorite part about to happen. [Chuckles]

Lee: Uh-oh, what's that in the water? Do you see that? There's like a sort of... there's a bubble and a spray and a swirl... something's under there! What is that?

Mr. Eric: And up from the depths unfurled the great horror with tentacles even bigger and knobbier and hookier than Cthunkle's own!

Lee: Wow, Cthunkle, that's impressive. What do you think about this guy.

Cthunkle: I mean, it's basically my role model. It's the kraken. It's like the OG squid-o-pus.

Lee: Well, I mean, that's something to aspire to. I bet it's neat to read books about sea monsters just like yourself.

Cthunkle: I do, I do! That's why 99% of my books are about sea monsters and I've read them all.

Lee: Oh, I think I'm understanding, now. You've read only books about sea monsters so you're getting a little bored with them.

Cthunkle: Yes, how did you know?

Lee: Okay, let's jump out of this book. What do you say... let's go find some books that aren't about sea monsters for you.

Petrina: You know, I could actually still use a little... okay, no, you're leaving. I'll just fight the beast on my own.

Lee: You got this, Petrina! You've got this!

Petrina: Bye...

Lee: [Echoing screams as he's sucked out of the book.]

Okay, we're back—

Cthunkle: That's disorienting.

Lee: You know, I wish I could say it's nice to be back, but it's very damp in this cave, and—

Cthunkle: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

Lee: I don't like damp places. I prefer my home to be dry and soft. Like, with like a soft cushion.

Cthunkle: I have a very absorbent sponge here that you could rest on if you'd like.

Lee: [Squelching] I've got to say, like, a sponge is like a wet cushion, you're right. Okay, I can get into this.

Cthunkle: So, good, good, good. I think there's one book over here that I've actually never read because it doesn't have a squid-o-pus, and I thought, why would I read a book like that?

Lee: Well, let me tell you why you'd read a book like that. Because it's interesting to learn about people and things and creatures that aren't like yourself, Cthunkle! Here, I'll just walk over and get that book. Okay, hey is it this one?

Cthunkle: Yes, the one with the plastic still wrapped around it, mm-hmm.

Lee: Okay, yeah, yeah, yeah. Shrink wrap, okay, here we go. Got it, okay, all right. Okay, I got the book for you and whoa. Look at this. This looks like a cool sci-fi book.

Cthunkle: Ooh.

Lee: Do you read a lot of sci-fi ever?

Cthunkle: I'm not sure what that means.

Lee: I think you mostly read fi-fi.

Cthunkle: Fi-fi, that sounds good, yes.

Lee: Yes, sci-fi is like science fiction. It's like has to do with cool concepts like time travel, but maybe they're not stuff that we know how to do yet or that even, like, exists. It's like a cool genre.

Cthunkle: Wow.

Lee: This is called *The Learninator*.

Cthunkle: Ooh, ooh! I love the Learninator!

Lee: Okay, let's just open it up right here and... wait are we getting sucked into this one, too.

Cthunkle: Uh, yeah, actually. Okay, but it's robot arms this time, that's at least something new.

[Record scratch.]

Lee: Eagh! A robot arm just stuck out of the book! It's got me! It's got me! It's pulling me in. Cthunkle, come with me!

Cthunkle: Eaugh! Okay.

Lee: Whoa. Oh my gosh. Look where we are now, it's a dystopian future full of robots.

Cthunkle: And chrome.

Lee: Wow.

Cthunkle: Everything's so shiny.

Lee: I wonder how the world got this way. Learninator, can you tell us what's going on here in this land? In this distant future land?

Learninator: I will tell you what has happened here is that everyone stopped learning new things and trying new things and so everything stopped being new and different and all was just chrome and silver shiny things everywhere.

Lee: Uh, sound familiar, Cthunk?

Cthunkle: [Gasps]

Lee: Yeah. I called you Cthunk. That's short for Cthunkle.

Cthunkle: That's a cool nickname.

Lee: Well, maybe you should listen to the Learninator because there's a lesson here to be had. The future is gonna turn into chrome unless we keep learning new things, which means reading new books, Cthunkle!

Learninator: Yes, in the future we only have the one book and it is called Book 101.

Lee: Ugh, that sounds terrible. They'd never just only carry one book at Books Are Magic, my favorite bookstore.

Learninator: That sounds like a magical bookstore, indeed, but I am just stuck in the future reading Book 101. I will start reading it right now.

Lee: Okay, go ahead.

Learninator: One... oh... one... oh... one...[continues]

Lee: Oh, I get it now. It's just binary code. Ugh. Coding is much more interesting than this!

Learninator: One...

Lee: Learninator!

Learninator: You are right. I am made of binary, but when you see it on the page, yes, it just doesn't really jump out at you in that way.

Lee: It doesn't translate, it's not the right medium for you.

Learninator: Yeah, I shouldn't be doing coding on the podcast.

Lee: Yeah, it's like a very good book that gets turned into a movie. You're like, should have stayed a book. You know what I mean?

Cthunkle: Yes. Or like a squid-o-pus without any tentacles.

Lee: Yeah, that would be weird. A squid-o-pus without tentacles would be like, a blob-o-pus. I don't know what it would be.

Cthunkle: Oh, that sounds fun, though.

Lee: Yeah, it does sound kind of fun.

Cthunkle: Now I see that it is fun to learn and read new things even if they're not about people exactly like you.

Lee: Cthunkle! You learned the exact message super quickly in a very articulate fashion. Congratulations.

Learninator: That is what happens when you have a good teacher like me.

Lee: All right, Learninator. We get it. You're from the future, you're a great teacher, good work. Pat on the robot back to you.

Learninator: Okay, I am going to throw you back into a portal through time and space.

Lee: Okay, do you really have to throw—all right, oh, here we go! Aaah!

Learninator: Duck your head!

Lee: Eaugh!

Cthunkle: [Panting]

Lee: Wow.

Cthunkle: Well, that was fun.

Lee: Honestly, I'm exhausted.

Cthunkle: But now I'm all out of books.

Lee: Well, that's when you have to go to a bookstore or a library or borrow a book from a friend. There are so many books everywhere. Also, you could just make up your own brand new story. And here's a brilliant idea I just had, just this second.

Cthunkle: What?

Lee: Why don't you be an honorary Story Pirate and make up a brand new story by yourself.

Cthunkle: Oh, I am blushing.

Lee: I can tell. Yeah, somehow you're turning grayer.

Cthunkle: Mm-hmm.

Lee: Is that the color I'm seeing.

Cthunkle: Yes, gray combined with a few colors outside of the visible spectrum that if you could see them, would drive you insane.

Lee: It would drive me insane, yeah.

Cthunkle: Mm-hmm.

Lee: I've been there.

Cthunkle: I want to try this storytelling like a Story Pirate.

Lee: Yeah, go ahead. Go ahead and make up a story.

Cthunkle: Okay. Once upon a time, there was story. Pirate.

Lee: Okay.

Cthunkle: Named... uh...

Lee: Keep going.

Cthunkle: Lee.

Lee: All right, heard of him.

Cthunkle: Leon. Named Leon!

Lee: That is a brand new Story Pirate. Congrats, Cthunkle.

Cthunkle: Wow, this is really easy. Do people actually make money doing this?

Lee: No. No one makes money doing this.

Cthunkle: Oh...

Lee: Sorry, Cthunkle.

Cthunkle: But it's still really fun, isn't it.

Lee: Yeah, it's fun. Another way to think about how to spend your time is to just have fun. It's not always about a great paycheck. Making up stories is awesome and it helps you learn things and learn about people and it makes you a better person.

Cthunkle: Thank you so much for all that you have taught me. Now you can just stay here and we can tell stories together forever or until I eat you.

Lee: Ooh. Uh, yeah. Or you could keep practicing and I could come back and visit you again soon.

Cthunkle: Oh, that would be tremendous.

Lee: So, Cthunkle, how about this. Next time you need a visit under the lake to help you tell stories. Why not just send me an evite instead of pulling me into a book from the bookstore. What do you say?

Cthunkle: Oh! Even better. I will give you one of the books about me and if you're ever missing me or your home isn't feeling dank and dreary and deadly enough, you can crack it open and be sucked back to the bottom of my lair.

Lee: Um, that is super generous of you to provide an interdimensional portal like that. Thank you, Cthunkle. I will definitely use this book when I'm feeling not dreary enough.

Cthunkle: It also drips acid slime if you're ever running low.

Lee: Okay. Do you have a ziploc bag I could put this in, then?

Cthunkle: Oh, yes, of course. What do you think I am, a bad host?

Lee: Yeah, like one of those big freezer bags.

Cthunkle: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

Lee: Okay, let's just put the book in there. All right, and close it up. All right. Thanks, Cthunkle. Have a great day!

Cthunkle: You're welcome! Thank you.

Lee: [Screams in an interdimensional portal]

Mr. Eric: The end.
[Falling harp scale.]

Lee: Hooray!

Mr. Eric: Oh, we did it!

Lee: How was that? Was that what you were hoping for?

Mr. Eric: That was more than I could have hoped for. It's so fun telling a story with an improviser like you. I could just go on and on about how much of an honor this has been but I want the kids at home to learn more about what Story Pirates is doing right now.

Lee: Sure! So Story Pirates right now, obviously, we have our podcast, which is a big deal for us. But the biggest thing we've been working on in the last several weeks is the Story Pirates creator club where we've been creating all sorts of videos, activities, livestream classes, story prompts and more for kids and families who are at home and looking for stuff to do.

Mr. Eric: My nephew's eight and he's really actually just starting to get into writing.

Lee: Amazing.

Mr. Eric: So it's a perfect age.

Lee: Yeah, we're psyched about it. We've been working hard and you know, a lot of the curriculum that we bring into classrooms we're now putting on camera and putting into downloadable activities and we're super excited for people to get to see it.

Mr. Eric: Is there anything else you want to tell the folks at home, or anyone you want to give a shout out to?

Lee: I just want to give a shout out to the entire kids podcast community. There's so many amazing people making this stuff for kids and families

right now and I just know this is a time when kids podcasts are really necessary and families are really finding them in new ways every day and I think it's such a cool community of folks that are using their creativity to bring this to families.

Mr. Eric: Thank you so much. This is my 160th story and I've never been more nervous.

Lee: Oh, wow.

Mr. Eric: But you, like, really made me feel at ease, just it was very fun.

Lee: Oh, good.

Mr. Eric: Thank you and have a great day.

Lee: Thanks. Bye!

Mr. Eric: Bye!

I'd like to thank Karen O'Keeffe, my co-creator, Craig Martinson for our theme song, and all you kids at home who know that reading is not a competition. So take your time. Be kind to yourself and enjoy!

Until we meet again, keep wondering.

[What If World theme plays.]