

Podcast: What If World

[Episode: 163: What if Pixicato went on a secret mission to find Fred the Dog?](#)

File Length: 00:15:58

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 a patron named Ava.

Ava: Hi, my name is Ava and I like sharing and my what if question is what if Pixicato went on a secret mission to find Fred the Dog?

Ava's Parent: Ooh, good question? And how old are you?

Ava: I'm five.

Ava's Parent: No, how old are you? Today's your birthday.

Ava: I'm six!

Ava's Parent: Thank you, Mr. Eric.

Ava: Thank you, Mr. Eric. I like your podcast.

Mr. Eric: Ooh, very cool. Well, I found a Fred question to add on, but I don't think I'm gonna play it for you just now. I will tell you that it's from a listener named Mason B., who writes that he is 13 years old and still loves the podcast as well as writing his new chapter book and having a good laugh.

Well, thank you for still loving the show and don't worry: there are fans of the show who are older than you and me combined. I try to make it a little fun for everybody. So we're gonna read the rest of Mason's question after the story so as not to spoil it.

Fred the Dog: Yeah, but first, I got a few shout-outs to give.

Mr. Eric: Fred! Oh, thank goodness. I thought you'd gone missing.

Fred the Dog: Oh, well, you know that What Is World Fred and What If World Fred is like not the same thing.

Mr. Eric: Oh, oh... that's good.

Fred the Dog: Yeah, yeah. It's real simple.

Mr. Eric: And which Fred am I talking to?

Fred the Dog: Well, that part's less simple. But don't confuse me, Mr. Eric. I gotta get a shout out to Serafina. She just turned six. She loves cuddling her kitty, Mr. Jasper Jubilee.

Then I have a shout out for Anita who's a sister of Sam Z., another patron, plus her cousin Vera K. from Brooklyn. Her favorite thing is building cities.

And finally, to siblings Delia, who's seven.

JF Kitty: As well as Elsa, who is nine.

Mr. Eric: Oh, hiya, J.F. Kat.

JF Kitty: Purr, I've got one more shout out to Scarlet, who's age six, loves unicorns, her baby brother and writing fiction stories.

Mr. Eric: Well, thank you very much Scarlet, Elsa, Delia, Vera K., Anita, and Serafina. Now, let's find out what if Pixicato went on a secret mission to find Fred the Dog and one more mystery question we'll read after the show.

[Rising harp scale.]

Mr. Eric: Pixicato was busy as ever practicing her magic. She'd been cooped up at home lately and was feeling really frustrated with her lessons.

Pixicato: Oh, I cannot master Mother's protective magic, or Mom's space-time magic.

Mr. Eric: Complained Pixicato while looking at her wand with consternation.

Fair Elise: Well, the truth is...

Mr. Eric: Said her mother, Fair Elise.

Fair Elise: That there are not very many fairy-sprite children in this world. We really don't know how your magic is going to work.

Sprite Alright: Oh, that's okay, we'll figure it out.

Mr. Eric: Said Sprite Alright as she appeared suddenly in the middle of their thimble living room.

Sprite Alright: But listen, Fred's addressing all of What If World. I don't know what about.

Mr. Eric: Pixicato tried to turn on the television with her magic but ended up walking over and pushing the power button.

Pixicato: [Heavy sigh]

Fred the Dog: Okay, everybody.

Mr. Eric: It was Fred the Dog sitting on top of a podium in front of a little microphone with Whendiana Joan on one side and the Learninator on the other.

Fred the Dog: Listen, I know everybody's been a little worried lately. Can they hear me all right, Whendiana?

Whendiana: Yeah, you don't need to yell.

Fred the Dog: Okay, well, I went into the future of What If World, like a few episodes ago, and anyway, everybody was zombies for some reason.

[Record scratch.]

Whaaaaa???? I'm assuming you all made a noise like that upon discovering that startling fact.

And upon seeing everybody's zombies, I said, what? That's no good. Someone should do something. Then I remembered, hey, wait, I'm someone! So I'm gonna do something. Learninator, Dr. Joan?

Mr. Eric: And Whendiana swiveled the mic over to her.

Whendiana: What Fred saw was just one potential future. The danger of time travel is that every time you see the future, your knowledge of that future could change it irrevocably.

Fred the Dog: Very macaroni, yes, I understand, Dr. Joan. Now, how do we un-macaroni the future?

Mr. Eric: And in the living room of their little thimble house, Sprite Alright shouted.

Sprite Alright: Oh, someone please tell him you can't un-macaroni the future!

Mr. Eric: But back on the TV, Learninator was already talking.

Learninator: It's simple. Using techno-cyber-ology, we travel forward into a timeline where What Is World has solved all their biggest problems, thus saving the future.

Sprite Alright: No, no, no!

Mr. Eric: Cried Sprite Alright.

Fred the Dog: Oh, yeah, that sounds super easy. Let's do that.

Mr. Eric: But Dr. Joan chimed in.

Whendiana: Well, it's only a theory, Mr. Fredsident. It would require a very subtle manipulation of the space-time continuum.

Sprite Alright: Fair, I gotta go!

Mr. Eric: Said Sprite Alright, talking over the TV.

Sprite Alright: Listen, Fair, I want you to put the strongest shield spell you can over you and Pixi, and don't come out of it until I'm back. Do you hear me?

Mr. Eric: Fair Elise raised the shield in an instant.

Fair Elise: Done. Now tell me what's going on.

Mr. Eric: But Sprite Alright was already gone. Well, not exactly gone. There she was, on the TV screen.

Fred the Dog: Okay, What Ificans, Learninator's just gonna crack open a little window in space-time so we can look around for a better future.

Sprite Alright: Hold it right there, Mr. Fredsident!

Fred the Dog: Oh, hey, Sprite Alright. We found a way to fix everything super easy. Isn't that great?

Whendiana: Excuse me, but we have found no such thing. This is just an exploratory mission.

Sprite Alright: And the future doesn't work that way, Fred! We can't just snap our fingers n—

Fred the Dog: I know that, Sprite Alright! I don't have fingers. And it's really hard to snap my tongue, I've tried. It sounds like this. It's a little snappy, but it's not the same.

Learninator: The S-T-C is online.

Fred the Dog: STC?

Learninator: Space-Time Crack, or Stick for short.

Mr. Eric: And indeed, a little crack in all of space-time had appeared. It looked like a crooked little stick of multi-colored light hanging in the air.

Fred the Dog: Stick?

Mr. Eric: Said Fred, regarding the STC with awe... and drool.

Sprite Alright: Fred, stop! We've got to work through the present to make the future that we want. Nothing else is gonna last.

Fred the Dog: [Extending tongue sounds]

Learninator: Mr. Dog President. Please do not lick space-time.

Whendiana: That would be profoundly inadvisable.

Fred the Dog: Of course I'm pro-funding volleyball.

Whendiana: What?

Fred the Dog: In the future, we'll all have volley balls, and magic rainbow sticks floating in the sky.

Mr. Eric: Fred's tongue continued stretching towards the STC. Sprite Alright tried to teleport into his way again and again. Fred's tongue bent one last time...

Fred the Dog: Stiiiiick...

Mr. Eric: And finally reached the Space-Time Crack. As he licked the STC, Pixicato felt a shudder throughout her little thimble house in the clouds.

Pxicato: Mom, what is happening?

Fair Elise: I don't know, Little Heart. Just stay in the bubble.

Mr. Eric: Then the TV showing Fred licking the STC suddenly disappeared following by their thimble house, which winked out of existence and then the cloud they lived on top of was gone, too... which meant... Pixicato was falling through the sky, the shimmering shield of magic still surrounded her as she went down, down, down toward an old strip of highway reaching through the weathered tundra of What If World.

Pixicato: Will the bubble hold, Mother?

Mr. Eric: Asked Pixicato, but Fair Elise was nowhere in sight. Sprite Alright appeared outside of the protective bubble of magic. She was diving beside her daughter, multi-colored light streaming from her wings as they seemed to fade into the wind.

Pixicato: Mom, what is happening?

Sprite Alright: We're all being shuffled into whatever future Fred has just created. My spritely space-time magic is resistant, but not for long.

Pixicato: Where is Mother?

Sprite Alright: Oh, she's out there somewhere, and soon I will be, too. But you've got her protective fairy magic and my space-time spritely magic. You can remember.

Mr. Eric: The shimmering sphere around Pixicato was beginning to fade as she and her mother continued to plummet toward the bare ground below.

Pixicato: Remember? What am I supposed to remember?

Sprite Alright: Remember now. This moment in the world. Every fraught detail and every while of wonder. Hold onto it and find that Fred the Dog.

Pixicato: I'm scared.

Sprite Alright: Me too, Little Heart. It's not fair to ask so much of one so young, but you won't be alone. Not if you help others see what you see.

Mr. Eric: With that, the last thin traces of magic around Pixicato faded. The ground seemed to be rising up towards her quickly, and she flapped her wings frantically. But no, it wasn't the ground... it was a forest of tall trees that suddenly came hurtling towards her.

Pixicato: What in the...?

Mr. Eric: She slowed herself just enough to tumble through snapping branches and rustling leaves as she half-flew, half-fell her way down to the ground.

Pixicato: Where did these trees come from?

Mr. Eric: She sprung up, dusting off her clothes, and straightening out her wings.

Pixicato: Okay, find Fred. Then what do I do?

Mr. Eric: She looked around for Sprite Alright, then looked up to see a trace of rainbow light floating away on the breeze, just like Sprite Alright left behind when she teleported.

Pixicato: I know you're out there, Mom, and I can do this.

Mr. Eric: Pixicato tried to fly above the trees but her wings were too sore from the fall. So instead, she trudged toward the highway she'd seen on the way down. This highway that had once been surrounded by nothing was now crowded with big, shady trees, and a silvery, black, something seemed to speed towards her from down the road.

Pixicato didn't have much magic, but there was one spell she always knew how to use in an emergency.

She raised her wand, and... sent up a deep, red flare into the sky. And that silvery, black something, that vehicle, that turtle truck? Finally slowed down as it reached Pixicato.

Abacus: You look lost, little one.

Mr. Eric: Said a familiar face, leaning out the driver's side door of his turtle truck.

Pixicato: Professor Grumbler, thank goodness. I am on a secret mission to find Fred the Dog, and I need your magic.

Abacus: Oh, slow down. First off, the mission's not a secret because now I know about it. Secondly, I've never heard of a Professor Grumbler. The name's Abacus T. Rucker. And if you're lost, you can ride little Rucker Junior all the way to Know What City.

Pixicato: New What City? That would be grand!

Abacus: New What City? What kind of preposterous, poppy-cock name is that? KNOW What City. Know. They know a lot, there. The police officers can help you find your parents and maybe someone will even know this Fred fellow.

Pixicato: Oh, no, I'm sorry, I cannot accept a ride from you. I know you in my world, but you could be someone different in this world.

Abacus: Ah.

Mr. Eric: Abacus T. Rucker lifted his baseball cap to scratch his balding head.

Abacus: That's mighty intelligent of you, little one. Well, listen. You can ride on Rucker Junior's head.

Mr. Eric: He gave the truck a little kick and a big, shiny turtle head popped out of the front. The robo-turtle blinked slowly at Pixicato and then lowered its head.

Abacus: Rucker Junior won't let me anywhere near his head ever since I gave him that haircut. And we'll have you to Know What City in a flash.

Mr. Eric: She hesitantly climbed on top of the robo turtle's head, which contoured itself into a nice, warm, seat.

Pixicato: Um, thank you, Rucker Junior.

Mr. Eric: Abacus closed the door to the separate turtle shell where he piloted the creature and took off toward Know What City. Pixicato kept her wand at the ready, not knowing what to expect from this new world.

Pixicato: Abacus?

Mr. Eric: She yelled up to the driver.

Pixicato: Is anything crazy or dangerous happening in this world? Like a catastrophe that's about to destroy it or something?

Abacus: Goodness, no! Alternia is the safest world you'll ever find.

Pixicato: Alternia?

Abacus: Yes, indeed. No world has ever had such a bright future, or present, for that world.

Pixicato: That sounds too good to be true!

Abacus: But it is! That's the wonderful thing. Even as all the other worlds and stars slowly wink out of the sky for some inexplicable reason, Alternia has been safe and prosperous.

Pixicato: What was that about worlds and stars winking out of existence?



Abacus: I'm sorry you're out of incense but I think we should focus on finding your family, first.

Pixicato: No, I said... ugh, this secret mission is going to be a lot harder than I expected.

Abacus: Maybe stop talking about the secret mission.

Pixicato: How did you hear that but not the last thing?

Abacus: Now, don't go blasting me!

Pixicato: We should just stop talking until we hit the city.

Abacus: Thank you, I am pretty. But we should stop talking until we reach the city.

Mr. Eric: The end.

Abacus: Did you say something?

Pixicato: No.

Abacus: Oh, you did, now. No, is something.

Pixicato: Yes, I get it.

Abacus: Okay. I'm going to keep driving.

[Falling harp scale.]

Mr. Eric: Whoa, Alternia. I wonder if we'll meet other new versions of old characters as Pixicato tries to find Fred the Dog. So, Eva and Mason, I hope you enjoyed the first part of this story. Mason's question was, What if Fred the Dog broke the space-time continuum. So now maybe the rest of that story makes more sense. Or less. We'll figure it out in a few weeks.

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 it's okay to be hopeful and still see the problems around you. And it's even more okay to talk to your friends and grown-ups when you have big feelings about all of it.

Until we meet again, keep wondering.

[What If World theme plays.]

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