

Podcast: What If World

[Episode: 167: What if unicorns turn invisible when they get mad?](#)

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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 patron named Scarlet.

Scarlet: Hi, Mr. Eric. I'm Scarlet, age six. I love my brother, unicorns, and writing fiction stories. I just turned my new one today and it's called The Puppies... okay, forget that. My what if question is what if unicorns turn invisible when they are mad?

Scarlet's Parent: Say, "Bye."

Scarlet: Bye!

Mr. Eric: I love that question, Scarlet, and I've been wanting to answer it since the moment I heard it. Now, we are adding along a question from Nico C. It was a write-in question and it's just such a good and secret idea that I just can't tell you what it is. It has to do with Recap, who you will hear in this story and it's kind of like a mystery that we'll have to solve as we go along, and—

Fred the Dog: Is it a mystery of who Fred the Dog's going to shout out today?

Mr. Eric: No, it's a mystery about Recap.

Fred the Dog: Oh, sorry. I just thought that might make a fluid transition.

Mr. Eric: It really didn't.

Fred the Dog: Into me shouting out Cora, who's seven years old and likes animals. Also, Stella, who's from Bristol in the UK, loves dancing, and is turning eight on June 18th. Happy almost birthday! Or after birthday, depending on when you listen.

And then there's Roe. Roe and her friends all sit and listen to What If World when they have play dates.

Mr. Eric: That's awesome!

JF Kitty: Purr, I've got a meow-out for Ely, almost seven years old, lives in Montreal, Canada, and loves listening to What If World.

Fair Elise: And our final shout out is for Harriet, from Minneapolis. She loves fairies and unicorns.

Mr. Eric: Oh, then I think she'll like today's story. So, thank you, Harriet, Ely, Roe, Stella, and Cora.

Now, let's find out what if unicorns turn invisible when they get mad? Plus a secret write-in question that we'll get to the bottom of in a future story.

Recap: Cthunder, having gobbled up every empty planet in the solar system, was bigger and angrier than ever. Now the squid-o-pus of pure lightning was on his way back to Alternia.

Meanwhile, Pixicato, Albatross Zero, and Ellie Trick were flying toward Fred the Dog, known on this world as The Franken. Will they reach the volcano dog in time and get back to What If World? Or will Cthunder destroy all of Alternia in this thunderous grip? Find out in the exciting conclusion of Tales of Alternia!

Mr. Eric: Recap, I think we're getting ahead of ourselves a bit.

[Record scratch.]

Recap: That's impossible. I don't even have a head. I'm just an echoing voice... voice... voice...

Mr. Eric: No, I mean, we haven't told them about the unicorns. That's who this story's really about.

Recap: Well, let's make it quick. Pixicato and Cthunder will be at the volcano any minute!

Mr. Eric: I have a feeling we'll all meet them there.

Recap: A feeling? I want a feeling.

Mr. Eric: You just had one, buddy.

Recap: I did? That's exciting. Ooh. Excitement! Another feeling. I can't wait for the next feeling.

Mr. Eric: While Recap is practicing his feelings—

Recap: There it is! Anticipation! What a roller coaster.

Mr. Eric: I've got to tell you a story about a unicorn. It's really a story about all unicorns but we're mostly going to focus on the one. You see, when Kammy and Cthunder arrived in Alternia many ages ago, there were already a few creatures who knew how to talk and invent and work together. They were the birds, the trees, the rat-bots and the fairies. And of course, the unicorns.

But Kammy and Cthunder claimed the world as if no one else lived there. None of the creatures thought this was very fair, but they all feared the colossal, cosmic squid-o-puses. All of them, that is, except the unicorn. You see, unicorns in Alternia had learned to turn invisible long ago in order to avoid dinosaurs and dragons and all the common predators of that age. But if you ask a unicorn, they'll tell you that the power is hardly magic at all. They just understand how people see things and how they pay attention. They knew they were no more invisible than Kammy and Cthunder were colossal. It was just a trick of the eye.

Petrichor: People of Alternia!

Mr. Eric: Shouted Petrichor. She was a young unicorn, her deep maroon fur dappled with yellow spots.

Petrichor: You do not need to fear Kammy and Cthunder. They may appear to be colossal squid-o-puses but look closer. They are nothing more than a pair of—

Cthunder: How can you listen to something that turns invisible?

Mr. Eric: Cthunder, feeling threatened, did something he'd never tried before. He lied.

Cthunder: Haven't you ever wondered why bad things happen to you? Probably because of an invisible unicorn.

Mr. Eric: As Cthunder lied, he seemed to get bigger and brighter and his voice boomed like thunder until he was all anyone could see. His words echoed through Alternia and the people gave pause. What he said made them feel afraid and somehow that made it sound even more true.

Petrichor: You cannot believe him. We have shared this world peacefully for ages.

Bird: Oh, but what about that time I stubbed my toe?

Mr. Eric: Said a fluffy bird.

Bird: I must have tripped over a unicorn, mm-hmm.

Fairy: And that time my cat got out.

Mr. Eric: Complained a fairy.

Fairy: A unicorn must have left the door open, yep.

Rat-bot: And that time I slowly went bald over ten years.

Mr. Eric: A rat-bot chimed in.

Rat-bot: Unicorns must have been plucking my hairs out.

Cthunder: Yes. Of course.

Mr. Eric: Cried Cthunder.

Cthunder: All that is true, and more.

Kammy: But how do you know, Brother?

Mr. Eric: Asked Kammy, Cthunder's sister. She had never heard a lie before, let alone one so big.

Cthunder: It is true, Kammy, because I say it. And because they believe it.

Kammy: Is that what truth is?

Petrichor: Of course not!

Mr. Eric: Petrichor objected.

Petrichor: Truth is what actually happens and the unicorns only use our invisibility for protection.

Mr. Eric: But something was happening to her and all the other unicorns. They'd never heard such lies before and they'd never felt so unfairly treated. They felt like they were being attacked so their invisibility reflex was kicking in.

Cthunder: Look now.

Mr. Eric: Boomed Cthunder, pointing at the disappearing unicorns with a tendril of his crackling light. Now that he had the people feeling afraid, it got even easier to trick them.

Cthunder: The unicorns disappear. They know you're onto them, so they're running away! Probably to make more mischief.

Petrichor: No, it's not true.

Mr. Eric: But Petrichor knew that when a unicorn couldn't be seen, they couldn't be heard, either. Cthunder was victorious, but the unicorns could see his secret, which made him afraid. So the squid-o-pus flew off to meddle with some other worlds as the people of Alternia turned on their former friends.

Tree: I always thought those unicorns were too small.

Mr. Eric: Said the trees.

Bird: Well, we think they're too big.

Mr. Eric: Said the birds.

Fairy: And they don't have enough magic.

Mr. Eric: Said the fairies.

Rat-bot: No, they've got too much magic.

Mr. Eric: Said the rat-bots. And so it went for a long time. Countless stories passed for the unicorns between then and now. Stories so similar to those of the birds and the trees and the rat-bots and the fairies, except for the one big difference, that most people forgot a unicorn's story the moment after hearing it. That was the way of being invisible.

Recap: But today could be different! This age could be a new one. But time is running out. Cthunder closes on Alternia, filling the sky with light and thunder. He wants to eat the planet to get back at his sister. Meanwhile, Petrichor and her people fly to the lair of the Franken, demanding to be

heard. And Pixicato speeds toward the same volcano, hoping Fred the Dog can help her get back to What If World before it's too late.

Mr. Eric: Recap, I thought you were more of a beginning of the story person?

Recap: I can't help it. I'm rooting for the unicorns and Pixicato. I want to help.

Mr. Eric: I know, but this is their story. We're just here to tell it.

Recap: Aw, boysenberries.

[Time skip noise.]

Mr. Eric: Back in the present of Alternia, we see Pixicato and Ellie Trick hanging on tight as Albatross Zero speeds toward the massive volcano rising from the equator of Alternia, when—

Pixicato: Look out!

Mr. Eric: Pixicato saw a winged creature rise through the clouds, nearly colliding with Albatross.

Albatross Zero: Eugh!

Mr. Eric: The bird detective winged and wheeled, narrowly avoiding the mass of fur and feathers by banking into a patch of clouds.

Albatross Zero: What is it, Pixi? I don't see a thing.

Mr. Eric: But as the great bird broke through the wet clouds, Pixicato saw that they were flying in the midst of a whole miracle of unicorns. That's what you call a group of unicorns. The sky up here was so bright that she had to blink and hood her eyes.

Pixicato: I didn't know you had unicorns.

Mr. Eric: Said Pixicato, who couldn't help but stare at the beautiful creatures.

Ellie Trick: Uni...coins?

Mr. Eric: Asked Ellie Trick, darting her eyes about. This part tree, part fairy friend couldn't see the unicorns at all.

Pixicato: No, unicorns. Why can you not see them?

Albatross Zero: I can hardly see anything.

Ellie Trick: Except something that's coming, Pixi. Something big.

Mr. Eric: But Ellie Trick wasn't talking about the unicorns. She and Albatross Zero could only see the sun, the clouds, and the rapidly approaching form of Cthunder as he got closer and brighter and louder.

Cthunder: I am the true ruler of Alternia, and I'm coming to gobble you up.

Pixicato: Oh, that sounds just like Cthunkle. He cannot conquer an anthill.

Mr. Eric: Said Pixicato.

Albatross Zero: Maybe in your universe, kid.

Mr. Eric: Replied Albatross.

Albatross Zero: But in ours, Cthunder has eaten most of the universe and it looks like we're next.

Pixicato: Then we've got to stop him.

Ellie Trick: That's the plan, Kid. We get to the volcano, Kammy uses her magic to get you and Fred back to your reality, all of us turn back to our What If versions and the world doesn't get eaten. It's simple quantum transdimensional theory.

Pixicato: Of course. We all know how quantum transdimensional theory works. My question is, what is up with all the unicorns?

Mr. Eric: Said Pixicato, pointing at the nearest one.

Petrichor: Don't waste your time, child. Unicorns are invisible to grown-ups.

Mr. Eric: It was Petrichor, older, now, her maroon mane streaked with gray.

Pixicato: That is terrible.

Albatross Zero: What? What's terrible?

Mr. Eric: And Albatross Zero banked sharply, nearly crashing into a small cluster of unicorns who quickly flashed invisible and reappeared a few feet away in a huff.

Unicorns: [Grumbly neighing.]

Mr. Eric: Or a neigh, I suppose.

Petrichor: That's why we're flying to find Kammy.

Pixicato: Who is Kammy?

Recap: Empress Kammy was the very first ruler of Alternia. She stepped down when she thought the people could lead themselves.

Pixicato: Did you hear that?

Mr. Eric: Recap, we don't talk to the characters in the middle of the—

Recap: I was just trying to help.

Mr. Eric: I know, it's just, oh... we're missing the story.

Recap: Oh, you know how this part goes. They introduce themselves, Petrichor tells Pixi how the unicorns became invisible, etc, etc.

Pixicato: What a remarkable story, Petrichor. I especially loved the song you just sang about all the amazing contributions unicorns have made to the world.

Petrichor: Oh, I know. I really outdid myself. It's such a shame nobody heard it.

Mr. Eric: Oh, man.

Recap: Whoopsie. Maybe if we hit rewind.

[Rewinding noises.]

Mr. Eric: No! No, no. No more interruptions!

Recap: Ah, flapjacks!

Mr. Eric: As Albatross and the invisible unicorns landed at the mouth of the volcano, Cthunder's voice shook the sky again.

Cthunder: You cannot resist me, but if you line up nicely at the volcano, I'll only eat half of you.

Mr. Eric: Pixicato whispered to Petrichor as she climbed down from Alabaster Zero.

Pixicato: Do not worry, Petrichor. I can see you so I can help.

Petrichor: It is true, the children of Alternia can sometimes see us. But soon you'll only see the world as you fit in it. Your wonders and your fears will

become so loud that you'll forget about our problems and we'll disappear from your mind.

Pixicato: I will not, I promise. I will make sure Kammy makes everything right.

Ellie Trick: Yes, of course.

Mr. Eric: Said Ellie Trick, still not hearing the unicorns. Kammy'll get you back to your world and out of my leaves.

Petrichor: Oh, little one.

Mr. Eric: Said Petrichor, slowly clopping past them into the cave.

Petrichor: No single person can make everything right. Maybe if Kammy listens to the truth then others will follow and it will be a start. Or maybe she'll just feed us to the Franken.

Pixicato: Who, Fred? No, he only likes to eat sticks.

Fred the Dog: Nuh-uh!

[Record scratch.]

I've been on an all blueberry diet since the dawn of this civilization, and I'm sick of it.

Pixicato: Fred!

Fred the Dog: Pixicato!

Mr. Eric: Fred came bounding toward them, a colossal rock-skinned dog whose tongue was a river of lava.

Fred the Dog: How did you?

Pixicato: How did you?

Fred the Dog: And how are you?

Pixicato: And how are you?

Fred the Dog: Oh, it's so good to see you.

Pixicato: It's so good to see you!

Mr. Eric: And the rock monster hugged the little pixie, careful to maneuver his lava tongue well out of the way.

Petrichor: You know the Fraken?

Mr. Eric: Asked Petrichor. But Pixicato was squeezing the volcano dog too tightly to think about anything other than the nice warm hug of a friend.

Ellie Trick: Touching reunion, Kid. But you know that something that was coming? Well, it's here.

Mr. Eric: Ellie Trick pointed outside of the cave where they all gathered. IT seemed impossibly bright out there and a tendril of crackling light reached toward them.

Cthunder: Have you all come to be eaten? Though I hoped there'd be more of you.

Mr. Eric: And Albatross Zero suddenly perked up.

Albatross Zero: Cool. I've never seen a lightning octopus!

Cthunder: I am a thunder squid-o-pus!

Mr. Eric: Cthunder grumbled, shrinking down until he was just small enough to fit inside the cavern.

Cthunder: Now, where is my sister? I wanted to give her the chance to surrender the world peacefully.

Mr. Eric: His voice as so loud and his lightning was so bright that Pixicato began to feel overwhelmed by her fear.

Pixicato: No, please!

Mr. Eric: Shouted Pixicato.

Pixicato: I only just found Fred. We did not have time to fix anything.

Cthunder: Oh, you are just a child. You cannot change the world or its fate. [Laughs].

Petrichor: Oh, phooey. [Record scratch.]

Mr. Eric: Cried the old unicorn.

Petrichor: Ignore that overgrown laser light show. People like him are the reason we walk this world unseen.

Mr. Eric: Cthunder didn't seem to hear the unicorns at all. He just grew louder.

Cthunder: Tell me where my sister is and perhaps I shall spare you.

Fred the Dog: Oh, this is awkward. See, she... she kind of sort of, she gone.

Cthunder: Gone?

Pixicato: Gone?

Ellie Trick: Gone?

Fred the Dog: You are all here to see Kammy? Woof. That's even more awkward. Um... yeah, she left. Bye-bye.

Cthunder: Um, did she leave a note or anything?

Fred the Dog: Oh, of course! It's right over here on this piece of paper. Let me just grab it with my lava tongue for all of you.

Cthunder: Nononono!

Pixicato: Oh, no, Fred.

Petrichor: Oh, no...
[Flames!]

Fred the Dog: Uh-oh. My lava tongue turned the note to ash from like ten feet away. That's on me, guys.

Pixicato: So, there is no one to send me home?

Cthunder: There is no one for me to battle?

Petrichor: There is no one to hear us.

Mr. Eric: Cthunder shook with rage and the very walls of the volcano seemed to start crumbling around them. Albatross flew to grab Pixicato while Ellie Trick zapped a falling rock out of the sky. But the unicorns simply stood unmoving. They'd seen flash and thunder like this before.

Cthunder: Then I will gobble up this whole planet and now there is no one to stop me!

Mr. Eric: Everyone was afraid and zooming around. Pixicato felt her fear building and everything Cthunder said sounded more horrible and true. And then

Albatross Zero grabbed her with his talons. She found herself being flown away and she looked back briefly to see that her new friends the horses... were disappearing...

Recap: You mean the unicorns.

Mr. Eric: The what? The... huh?

Recap: The unicorns, Mr. Eric. Pixicato's forgetting them.

Mr. Eric: Re-Recap, I told you, no more interruptions. Okay? This story doesn't even have uni... um... un...uniwhatsis.

Recap: Oh, not you, too, Eric!

Mr. Eric: Will you just let me finish the story?

Pixicato and Albatross fled from the cave, Ellie Trick's green lightning covering their escape.

Cthunder: At least my story can have a happy ending as I eat all of you!

Mr. Eric: Said Cthunder, growing larger and larger as he crawled out of the cave.

Pixicato: No, Cthunder.

Mr. Eric: Answered Pixicato, suddenly turning around despite her fear.

Pixicato: This is not your story and it is not mine. It is theirs.

Cthunder: Whose?

Albatross Zero: Um, yeah, I'm confused. There's no one else here.

Pixicato: They are still inside and they are in danger.

Ellie Trick: What are you talking about, Pixi?

Recap: Come on, Pixicato! Remember!

Pixicato: They need to be seen. They need to be heard.

Child: I see you, I hear you!

Recap: And suddenly they saw the flicker of a maroon mane streaked with gray.

Mr. Eric: Whoa, Recap. I saw that, too. What's going on?

Cthunder: Oh, ignore that. It's um, just a child's makebelieve.

Child: I see you, I hear you.

Mr. Eric: What was that?

Cthunder: What was that?

Recap: Oh, that? It's just the listeners.

Mr. Eric: We went over this last time, Recap. The listeners can hear us but we can't hear them.

Children: I see you! I hear you!

Mr. Eric: This is weird...

Recap: Relax, Mr. Eric. Me and the listeners have got this.

Children: I see you, I hear you.
I hear you, I see you.

Recap: That's a great start, but it's gonna take a lot more. Come on, kids! You know what to say!

Children: I see you and I hear you.
I see you. I hear you.
I see you, I hear you.

Pixicato: There she is!

Mr. Eric: Cried Pixicato. It was Petrichor. Petrichor! How did I forget about her?

Children: I see you, I hear you!
I see you, I hear you!
I see you. I hear you.

Cthunder: No. No, she's just an illusion. Remember? Those unicorns are liars.

Albatross Zero: Uh, Cthunder, which is it? Is she an illusion or an actual person?

Children: I see you.

I see you.

I hear you.

I hear you!

Ellie Trick: That's Petrichor. I used to hear her songs in the forest.

Children: I see you.

I see you, I hear you.

I hear you.

I see you, I hear you.

Cthunder: Don't listen to them. Listen to your fear. They are playing tricks with your memory.

Mr. Eric: But as he said the word, "they."

Children: I see you, I hear you.

Mr. Eric: Dozens more unicorns began appearing.

Children: I see you, I hear you!

Albatross Zero: Tabby Tallulahcorn? You were my next door neighbor.

Cthunder: Lies! Lies!

Mr. Eric: Cried Cthunder, who seemed to be withering beneath the glare of a hundred unicorns.

Child: I see you, I hear you. [Children continue to say "I see you, I hear you" in the background.]

Petrichor: You are the liar.

Mr. Eric: Said Petrichor, striding toward Cthunder.

Petrichor: You would rather control the world through fear than lead it with love.

Mr. Eric: Petrichor had lived a long life full of love and loss and learning and she was aglow with power that the rest of Alternia could finally see. And Cthunder cowered before her.

Petrichor: I am seen. I am heard.

Cthunder: Bah. Things will go back to the way they were soon enough. You know this to be true.

Petrichor: It is only true if we let it be.

Cthunder: It will not enoouuuugh!

Mr. Eric: Cthunder thundered, but it came out as barely a squeak.

Petrichor: That is not for you to decide.

Mr. Eric: Pronounced Petrichor. The unicorn nodded at Pixicato, who'd been sneaking up behind the shrinking Cthunder. The pixie lunged, slapping a tiny bottle over the once great thunder squid-o-pus.

Cthunder: Aaaaaah!

Mr. Eric: And covered the bottle with a crystal stopper before Cthunder could escape.

Pixicato: He was just a glorified laser light show.

Mr. Eric: She marveled, looking up at the night sky. All of Cthunder's brightness has faded and they could see the sky.

Albatross Zero: The sky... it's full of stars...

Mr. Eric: Said Albatross.

Ellie Trick: It's all still here!

Mr. Eric: Cried Ellie Trick.

Petrichor: Just a trick of the light.

Mr. Eric: Said Petrichor, flickering out of sight for a moment and then back.

Petrichor: We've been trying to tell you.

Albatross Zero: Ooh, ooh! Tabby Tallulahcorn, remember that game we used to play, you know with all the hiding and the seeking.

Tabby: You mean hide and seek?

Mr. Eric: Asked Tabby.

Albatross Zero: Yeah! Can you remind me how to play it.

Tabby: Okay, Albatross. Follow me.

Albatross Zero: Ellie, you've got to come play with us. It's so cool. Everyone hides, right? And then... wait. If everyone's hiding, who does the seeking.

Ellie Trick: Oh, I could cast a heat seeking lightning bolt.

Albatross Zero: Great idea. This is gonna be so fun.

Mr. Eric: And Ellie, Albatross, Tallulahcorn, and a few others went off to play hide and seek.

Fred the Dog: Oh, count me in!

Mr. Eric: And Fred, too. Leaving Petrichor and Pixicato standing at the mouth of the volcano.

Petrichor: Don't you want to go play with your friends?

Pixicato: But we have still got so much work to do to fix this world and I still do not know how to get home!

Petrichor: Brave little one. Have some fun and get some rest. I feel like I could sleep for a week. We'll all still have plenty of work to do tomorrow.

Pixicato: Okay... I'll go play. I really should, anyway, because I think Ellie Trick is about to zap every—

Everyone: OW!

Mr. Eric: The end.

[Falling harp scale.]

Wow! Scarlet and Nico, I hope you enjoyed your story. I know we didn't get everyone off of Alternia, yet, but—

Recap: Oh, don't worry! I sent them all back to What If World.

Mr. Eric: Wait, what? Recap, some of them weren't even from What If World. Also, when did you do that? Also how did you do that?

Recap: I have no idea. I'm only a few weeks old, you know.

Mr. Eric: Um, I guess we'll have to find out how Recap's doing all this impossible stuff—

Recap: Next time, on, Tales of Alternia: What If World Edition.

Mr. Eric: I'd like to thank the following listeners who lent their voices to this episode: Solomon, Camden and Lennox. Eli, Lily, Sina, Ava, and Rocko. Jordan and Jackson, Suzanna and June, Gabe, Catherine, Noah, Joseph, Kayley, Wesley, Eva, Ender, Zoey, Sebastian, Leo, Harvey, Abby and Alice, Katie, Owen, Nirajah, and finally, Garrett.

I'd also like to thank Karen O'Keeffe, my co-creator, Craig Martinson for our theme song, and all you kids at home who listen with your hearts and your heads.

And until we meet again, keep wondering.

[What If World theme plays.]

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