

Podcast: What If World

[Episode: 168: What if hats talked to ants?](#)

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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.

JF Kitty: Purr, uh, they already know that part. But what they don't know is I've got a meow-out for Zion from Seattle, who likes Zelda, Pokemon, Mario and Minecraft.

Dracomax: And I would like to roar the praises of Archer and Hugo from Australia. Hugo is six and loves dragons and dumplings. Archer is four and loves speaking foreign accents and languages.

Abacus: I've got a mystical shout out for Eshel, who's nine, and her brother Ilhan, who's six. They enjoy swinging outside while coming up with a zillion what if questions, hmm.

Fred the Dog: And finally, I've got two shout outs. One to Marlo, who likes reading and playing outside, and the other's for Leo, who likes dinosaurs and lives in Chicago.

Mr. Eric: So, thank you Leo, Marlo, Ilhan, Eshel, Hugo, Archer, and Zion. I'm Mr. Eric, your host, and today I'm so excited to be joined by a fellow storyteller and actor. She does such great work, and I can't wait for you to check out her podcast, Stoopkid Stories. And here is the host, Melly Victor!

Melly: Hey! Yo yo yo!

Mr. Eric: Hey, Melly. Thank you so much for coming on the show, I'm really excited.

Melly: Thanks for having me, I'm so excited to be here in What If World.

Mr. Eric: I was thinking we'll introduce our question right now.

Melly: Sure!

Mr. Eric: So, this is from a kid named Jason. And, you know, this is actually... I actually just realized that your name is Melissa, and this kid's name is Jason, and that's the name of my brother and sister. That's just... seeing it on my notes right now, it was like, that's really strange. Uh. So, I feel very at home right now.

Melly: Well, we will dedicate this episode to your brother and sister.

Mr. Eric: Aww! That sounds really nice, thank you, Melly.

So Jason asks, what if hats talked to ants?

Melly: Oh, okay! Okay!

Mr. Eric: Okay! I think we can do something with that.

Melly: We can do that.

Mr. Eric: We are actually just gonna jump right into our story and then after, we're gonna talk about Stoopkid Stories, which is a show that you all need to listen to. So let's find out, what if hats talked to ants?

Melly: Cool.

Mr. Eric: Right after a quick break.

[Rising harp scale.]

[Classical string music.] Once upon a time there was a princess named... wait, you know what? I'm sorry. [Record scratch.] I'm telling a story about a Stoopkid and she lives in your world, Melly. So, could you actually introduce us to our main character?

Melly: Sure! Once upon a time in a kingdom not so far away lived a beautiful princess named Tia. Now, this wasn't your ordinary kingdom that you hear about in fairy tales. No, no, no, no, no! Instead of a big castle on top of a hill surrounded by trees and grass, Tia's royal castle was a three story row home in the heart of the city surrounded by shiny gray concrete, marble steps, and cars zipping up and down the street.

Mr. Eric: Tia was a really, really, lucky young lady because she was getting a present today from her mother.

Tia's Mom: Tia! I have a surprise for you!

Princess Tia: What is it, Mom?

Tia's Mom: I went to your favorite store and I bought you this beautiful hat!

Princess Tia: [Gasps] Mommy! This is so lit! I cannot wait to wear this hat to school.

Mr. Eric: And you should have seen this hat. It was beautiful. Tia was so excited to get it because she'd been doing a really, really good job of being a nice kid and looking out for her mother lately. And really helping around the house.

Princess Tia really wanted to try out her new hat and in order to do so, she wanted to get her hair looking great, too.

Melly: So Tia went up to her room and laid out all her stuffed animals and said,

Princess Tia: My royal subjects! Today, I'm gonna teach you how to slay your hair, the same way you would slay a dragon and the same way you would slay a hater, you can slay your hair. And I'm gonna use my beautiful curl elixir to make my curls poppin' and to lay my edges down.

Mr. Eric: And so she went about working on her hair and making it so beautiful. All of the stuffed animals in the room were watching, enraptured, and when she laid that hat upon her head.

Hat: Madam, I have dire news for you.

Mr. Eric: Said the hat.

Princess Tia: What? Who? Hello? Who said that?

Hat: It's me, the hat.

Princess Tia: Wait, I know hats can't talk.

Hat: Well, most hats cannot. And some hats can only talk a little. And some hats can talk to people, and some hats can talk to both people and ants. And I am one such hat.

Melly: And Princess Tia took the hat off her head and noticed that it had a face and it was talking to her!

Princess Tia: [Gasps!]

Hat: Mm-hmm.

Princess Tia: Why are you talking to me?

Hat: I was trying to tell you, there is dire news. As you were working upon your hair, I noticed a sneaky ant over in the corner watching you very closely.

Princess Tia: Watching me? For what? I'm just trying to do my hair in peace.

Hat: Oh, I don't know. If you like, I will keep an eye out for that ant. Just make sure to point me towards the wall.

Princess Tia: Thanks, Mr. Hat.

Hat: That is my name, yes. Mr. Hat. I can't believe you guessed it.

Princess Tia: I just figured that's what it'd be called. But thank you for letting me know.

Mr. Eric: As Tia got ready for bed and took off her hat and put it down facing the wall and finally drifted off to sleep.

Princess Tia: [Sleepy yawn.]

Hat: Oh, your room is very comfortable. I'm feeling rather sleepy. [Snores].

Princess Tia: Good night, Mr. Hat.

Hat: Oh, good night Princess Tia.

Mr. Eric: And then, a moment later.

Hat: Oh! Oh dear! Oh, no! Such devastation!

Princess Tia: What? What is it?

Hat: The ants! They came while I was asleep. I let down my guard for just a moment, and they stole your magical elixir.

Princess Tia: They did what!? Where did they take it?

Hat: They climbed out the window and I saw them walking across the street!

Princess Tia: So we have to go find them because I need my curl elixir! What are we gonna do?

Hat: Well, you'll need me, so put me upon your head and let us be off!

Princess Tia: Okay!

Melly: And Princess Tia grabbed the hat and put it on her head.

Mr. Eric: And they ran out after the ants, finding a very small anthill.

Hat: Ooh! I know! I shall help you talk to the ants.

Princess Tia: You can talk to ants, and you can help me talk to ants?

Hat: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm. I'm an excellent translator. And yes, of course, I could give you the ability to talk with ants, but then I'd have to shrink you down and—

Princess Tia: Shrink me down? Wait, I think I may need to talk to the ants myself. Can you shrink me down, too?

Hat: Yes, of course. [Shrinking noises]

Mr. Eric: She was suddenly barely taller than an ant, herself.

Princess Tia: Wow, everything is so big, now.

Hat: Okay, let's go!

Mr. Eric: And they bravely climbed into the ant hole and down, down, down.

Princess Tia: Ooh, it's really dark in here. I can barely see!

Mr. Eric: Until they met...

Grant: Hello? You are a very strange looking ant.

Princess Tia: And who are you?

Grant: Ooh, my name is Grant.

Princess Tia: Okay, I'm just here to get my curl elixir back that your ants took from my room.

Grant: Well, yes, we did take your magical elixir, but I assure you we did it for a very, very, good, good, good, good reason.

Princess Tia: So... what was the reason?

Grant: Ooh, I'm not supposed to speak ill of the queen but the queen is ill! And I must speak!

Princess Tia: Oh, no! What's wrong with her?

Grant: We don't know, but she's been staying in her bed all day long and she's barely eating. She's not enjoying any of her usual fun activities like, uh... being the queen of the ants.

Princess Tia: So what did you think my curl elixir was gonna do?

Grant: It's a magic elixir, we... I heard you talking about it and how it could slay things and I thought maybe it would slay her illness, and—

Princess Tia: Yeah, I don't think that's how my curl elixir works. It slays edges, not slays sickness.

Grant: Hmm...

Princess Tia: But what I can do is if you give me my curl elixir back maybe then I'll help you fix your queen.

Grant: Ooh... oh, all right.

Mr. Eric: And so, a big group of ants dragged back a tube that they'd squeezed down the anthole that was so big it was taking up almost the entire tunnel.

Grant: Uh, here... here you go.

Princess Tia: Um, it's missing my top.

Grant: Oh, you know what? An advance guard brought the top to the queen's lair, but you're gonna help us fix the queen so you could just come along with us and we'll—

Princess Tia: Fine. Take me to the queen!

Mr. Eric: And off they went to the queen, who was sitting in darkness and seeming very somber and sick and sleepy. Not really paying much attention to anyone.

Queen: Woe is me! Woe is me! I don't feel like doing anything today. Or tomorrow. Or the next day.

Grant: This is what we're dealing with here, Tia. It's day in and day out. Maybe we should check with some of other bugs. You know, see if they have other, uh, elixirs or magical treatments.

Princess Tia: Hold up. Let me talk to her. I remember when my mom, the queen of our castle, was down, and I just talked to her and she told me what was wrong. So maybe I can talk to her and see what's wrong.

Hat: If you want, I can help translate. I speak... oh wait, you can already speak Ant.

Princess Tia: Hehe, yeah.

Hat: Then, you know what? I'll just stay on your head, then.

Princess Tia: Great. Is it okay if I walk up to her now?

Grant: Yeah, I would say so. Just, you know, maybe steer, like a few feet clear of the mandibles. Just in case.

Princess Tia: Got it.

Melly: And Tia walked up to the queen, slowly.

Princess Tia: Um, your highness?

Queen: Yeeees? Who is it?

Princess Tia: Um, hi. My name is Princess Tia and I come from a land far away and I've come to help you.

Queen: Help me? I don't need any help.

Princess Tia: Well, the ants told me that you weren't feeling your best and I just wanna know what's wrong.

Queen: Oh, it's just gotten so hard to rule over the kingdom by myself and I have no one to help meeee.

Grant: You see? I'm pretty sure what she needs is medicine or like a shot or to go to the doctor.

Princess Tia: Or maybe she just needs you guys to help her.

Grant: Huh?

[Record scratch.]

We've been helping, what?

Princess Tia: Let me ask. Mrs. Queen, what exactly do you need help with?

Queen: I would love if someone would help me sand down the anthole and sweep up the dirt and you know, just keep this place looking spic and span. I want it to shine like the top of the Chrysler building. Like that one woman used to say.

Princess Tia: See! She just wants you guys to help her clean up. Is that so hard?

Grant: Well, she coulda said that. Okay, I guess she did say that a couple of times.

Princess Tia: Mm-hmm.

Grant: You know, I guess she has been saying that for... a...

Princess Tia: Mm-hmm.

Grant: A couple of hundred of times or so.

Mr. Eric: And all the ants suddenly looked very ashamed.

Princess Tia: I have an idea. Go get a drop of my curl elixir and we're gonna use that to clean up this place. And if you have some of that slimy, sticky, snail stew, we can use that to shine the place up. Ready?

Grant: Oh, let's go, let's go, let's go.

Hat: I can speak fluent Snail, would that come in handy, Princess Tia?

Princess Tia: Yes, Mr. Hat. We're definitely going to need you to translate this because I surely cannot speak Snail.

Mr. Eric: As the ants went off to get a capfull of magic elixir, Tia and Mr. Hat went off to visit the snail.

Snail: Eeee?

Princess Tia: Oh, he doesn't seem happy.

Snail: Oui! I am very happy. This is just the pace I speak.

Princess Tia: Um, we're just here to get some of your snail stew.

Snail: Eh, do you want it slimy?



Princess Tia: Yes, please! That'd be great.

Snail: Or extra slimy...

Princess Tia: What about extra, extra slimy.

Snail: Mon dieu!

Princess Tia: One capful of your extra, extra slimy snail stew, please.

Snail: Do you happen to have, uh, payment, perhaps something shiny?

Princess Tia: Uh, I have my shiny gold bobby pin from my hair.

Snail: Oh, it is beautiful. Could you just stick it every so lightly on top of my sticky head.

Mr. Eric: And Princess Tia took the bobby pin out of her hair and stuck it onto the top of the snail.

Snail: Ooooh I feel beautiful.

Princess Tia: You look really, really great. Super fly.

Hat: That took much, much, much longer than I anticipated.

Princess Tia: Sorry.

Hat: You should have let me do the talking. I told you I speak fluent Snail. Just like so. Let's goooooo oooooo...

Princess Tia: Come on, now. [Record scratch.] We gotta hurry back!

Mr. Eric: And zip! They went right back to the queen's lair where a group full of ants, including Grant, was waiting with a big capfull of the elixir.

Princess Tia: So, first thing's first. I need you to take the elixir and use it to polish the floors.

Ants: Yes, Tia!

Mr. Eric: And off they scattered, polishing up the floors. And even though there was only a little bit of starlight getting into this lair, it started to shine brighter and brighter, reflecting this way and that, all across the room.

Princess Tia: Now, Queen? I got some extra, extra slimy snail stew. What would you like to use it for?

Queen: Oh, that's my favorite thing. It makes my skin glow so brightly. I just wish someone could rub it on my back because I can't really reach. Oooh...

Grant: Uh, you know, that's normally. Would you mind, Tia?

Princess Tia: Sure. I can do that.

Melly: And Tia walked over and took some of the extra, extra, sticky goopy slime stew and rubbed it all over the queen's back.

Queen: Awww! A little higher, to the right. Ooh, and a little over to the left. Ooh, don't miss a spot. Ah.

Hat: This is not how I saw our night going.

Princess Tia: Is that better, Mrs. Queen?

Queen: Oh, that's perfect. Ah, I feel better, already!

Grant: You know, we feel better, too. This place has been a complete hole. Now it looks like a proper palace.

Princess Tia: Yeah, you guys did clean up nicely.

Hat: I think our work here is done.

Princess Tia: I guess so, too. I guess it's time to go.

Grant: But what are we supposed to do? The queen was so unhappy before you got here.

Princess Tia: Well, she seems to be fine now. Look at that big old smile on her face. And look at all the ants working to shine this place up. I have an idea! What if I left some of my curl elixir with them?

Grant: Would you? Could you?

Princess Tia: Sure! I'll squeeze some out for you.

Grant: Oh, this will last us half a lifetime. Thank you so much.

Princess Tia: You're so welcome!

Mr. Eric: Princess Tia and Mr. Hat went back to her kingdom and lay down upon her pillow.

Princess Tia: Wow, what a night. I haven't had an adventure like that in a long time.

Grant: Uh, Princess Tia. It's me, Grant. Can you open the window.

Princess Tia: Uh, yeah.

Mr. Eric: And a whole horde of ants came in carrying a pair of slippers on their back.

Princess Tia: These are cute! Are these for me?

Grant: We wanted to say thank you and these are the nicest things we've ever owned and now they're yours.

Princess Tia: And they're just my size, too!

Grant: Mm-hmm.

Princess Tia: Thank you so much!

Mr. Eric: And off the ants went, closing the window behind them.

Hat: Princess Tia, I'd be wary of those slippers. I think they are magical.

Princess Tia: Magical, and what can they do?

Hat: I don't know, let's find out.

Princess Tia: Oh, I guess I could put them on now.

Mr. Eric: And as soon as she slid those beautiful slippers on her feet.

Pigeon: Ooh, hey. It's us, the pigeons. Hey!

Princess Tia: What is happening?

Pigeons: Oh yeah, it's a real disaster. Our uncle. Oh, he's not quite fat enough so we need you to get us all your crackers and your bread and whatnot and bring them over here. You know, lickety-split.

Princess Tia: Oh, not again!

Mr. Eric: The end.

[Falling harp scale.]

Melly: I love it!

Mr. Eric: That was so fun.

Melly: Yes. The queen got a massage. They cleaned up the place.

Mr. Eric: Do you want to tell the kids a little bit about Stoopkid Stories?

Melly: Sure. So Stoopkid Stories is a group of stories and they introduce different characters and they all go on adventures and they deal with issues like friendships and bullying and things in their community, and things with their family, and they're all told through the eyes of young African-American characters.

Mr. Eric: Are they inspired ever by true stories or people you know, or things you've been through or anything like that?

Melly: Oh yeah. So Peach, which is episode two and three is actually inspired by my sister. Her nickname is Peaches.

Mr. Eric: That's the spelling bee, right?

Melly: Yeah. And she's really, really good at math and she's really, really good at writing so I wanted to write a story about a girl being good at both things. And Nathaniel is the name of my mom's brother, my uncle. So I just pulled from different experiences and just tell the story.

Mr. Eric: Are there some that take place in slightly different timelines, too? Getting, like, a history lesson at the same time as this great story. Is there anything else you want to tell us, anybody you want to shout out?

Melly: I want to shout out my sister because I really based my story Peach off of her. So shout out to Shanika, aka Peaches for being my inspiration for one of my stories.

Mr. Eric: And Melly, just, thank you again for coming on the show.

Melly: Thank you, Eric. This was so, so much fun and I am a big big fan of What If World. Like, a super fan.

Mr. Eric: Oh, thank you, thank you very much. We'll see you next time.

Melly: Yeah! Bye!

Mr. Eric: Bye!

Jason, I hope you liked your story.

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 even grown-ups

need help sometimes and we really, really appreciate it when it comes from you kids.

And until we meet again, keep wondering.

[What If World theme plays.]

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