

Podcast: What If World

[Episode: 172: What if the "What If" was a secret?](#)

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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 finishing off a story that started last week and was using ideas from Grayson and Olive, Jacob and Ronan, as well as Nico C. So we're gonna hear Jacob's question after the story, and I'll finally read Nico C.'s question to you, as well. After the story.
- Sprite Alright: All right, we'll get to your story. But first I wanted to give a spritely shout out to Nick, who likes playing guitar.
- Dracomax: And I, Dracomax am here along with my friend J.F. Kat for siblings Oliver, Simon, and young Amrut. They live in Littleton, Colorado. Oliver likes soccer and Legos, and is nine years old.
- JF Kitty: Simon is age six and likes soccer, video games, and Legos.
- But I've got another shout out for Hattie, who turns five on September 29th. Her sister's name is Edie. They live in Auckland, New Zealand. Hattie loves rainbows, unicorns, crafting, scootering, and dancing.
- Patty Pan: Last but not least, Patty Pan's zipping in for one last woof woof for Grayson, who is nine years old.
- Mr. Eric: Well, thank you Grayson, Edie, Hattie, Amrut, Simon, Oliver, and Nick. Now, let's find out whatever happened to Recap? And don't forget to tune in at the end of the story to hear our surprise questions.
- Recap: Last week on What If World—
- Mr. Eric: Well, yeah, but it took place a thousand years ago, Recap, so.

Recap: A thousand years ago, last week, in What If World, a young Abacus P. Grumbler got his shoelaces tangled in the vacuum cleaner and his mother asked him not to play with the machine. Then, Abacus imagined me into existence, his imaginary baby brother, Recap, and we got into all kinds of trouble. Later, we went to our father's house and Arithmometer sent us to our rooms! How rude! But I had one more trick up my imaginary diaper and made Abacus's bed come to life and eat some magic pickles, soaking the mattress with fragrant pickle juice.

Now it's morning and Arith is frowning at us for some reason. He must be trying to decide what kind of ice cream to feed us for breakfast. My vote: pickle ice cream. Please, and thank you.

[Rising harp scale.]

Mr. Eric: Arithmometer was standing in his son's bedroom looking at Abacus and his soaked mattress.

Arithmometer: Oh, Abacus.

Mr. Eric: Said Abacus's father.

Arithmometer: Did you have an accident?

Abacus: No.

Mr. Eric: Complained young Abacus.

Abacus: It was baby Recap, I swear it.

Arithmometer: Oh, of course it was. Why don't you get baby Recap dressed while I banish this mattress to another dimension.

Recap: Wonderful. I've never been dressed before.

Abacus: For the record, I've been imagining you in a sparkly purple onesie with stars on it.

Recap: And can I wear shoes like you?

Abacus: Fine.

Mr. Eric: And Abacus showed his imaginary brother how to tie his imaginary shoes before they went out to the living room.

Recap: Ooh, what's through there?

Mr. Eric: Asked Recap, pointing to a door that had been left slightly ajar.

Abacus: Oh, that's the door to Father's study. We are not supposed to go in there.

Mr. Eric: But now that baby Recap had shoes, he was clumsily stomping towards the study, faster than Abacus could keep up.

Abacus: Oh, wait wait wait!

Mr. Eric: Baby Recap reached for a gnarled old wand of flakey white birch wood.

Abacus: No, not that one!

Mr. Eric: He and Recap grabbed the wand at the same time.

Arithmometer: Abacus Pythagoras Grumbler!

Mr. Eric: Shouted Arithmometer.

Arithmometer: You're having accidents at night. You're playing in my study. Your mother cannot even count on you to empty out the vacuum!

Mr. Eric: And then he said those words no kid ever wants to hear.

Arithmometer: What is wrong with you?

Abacus: I was trying to stop baby Recap. He keeps getting me into trouble.

Arithmometer: Well, why don't you and baby Recap step into the living room and let me think about what I should do.

Mr. Eric: Abacus sat sullen on the couch while Recap sat on the floor, playing with his imaginary shoelaces.

Recap: He's really mad, isn't he?

Abacus: Yes. And it's your fault.

Recap: My fault? I was just doing what you wanted me to do. I'm imaginary.

Abacus: Well, a good imaginary friend wouldn't get me into trouble.

Mr. Eric: Abacus turned away from the make-believe baby to see a vacuum cleaner standing in the corner.

Recap: You're probably wondering how there were ever two vacuum cleaners in existence a thousand years ago. Well, you see, it was a fabulous

invention by Pascaline, powered by the magic of Arithmometer. But you still had to empty it out all time.

Abacus: Recap, who are you talking to?

Recap: I'm narrating.

Abacus: Why?

Recap: It just felt right.

Mr. Eric: Abacus shook his head, ignoring his imaginary brother. And as he walked closer to the vacuum cleaner, he could hear his father talking on the stonephone.

Arithmometer: I lost my temper with him, Pas. He's just so stubborn. What do you do when he's like this.

Mr. Eric: Abacus scowled, feeling something clench up inside of him and he walked over to the vacuum reaching for the start button.

Recap: Abacus, I don't know how I know this, but that is a technomagical invention which can be dangerous if used irresponsibly.

Abacus: I'll show them I can be good and help clean up the house and then they'll get back together and I'll have a real little brother or sister, not some imaginary friend who doesn't even listen.

Recap: That hurts my feelings, which I didn't even know I had until now.

Mr. Eric: Abacus pulled out the flakey birchwood wand. He'd snuck it out of his father's study.

Recap: Abacus, siblings need to listen to each other. I know that now. And I think you're about to do something dangerous.

Abacus: I'm just going to enchant this vacuum cleaner so that you never, ever have to empty it.

Mr. Eric: Abacus pointed his father's wand at the vacuum cleaner. He felt that thing clenching inside himself again. It was like a hole but it hurt, too. And using his imagination and the powerful magic from his father's wand, he pulled that black hole out of his tummy and stuck it inside the vacuum. He hadn't even pushed the on switch but the vacuum was already sucking up the carpet underneath their feet.

Abacus: It's working!

Mr. Eric: And then the couch started getting sucked into the vacuum.

Abacus: Oh, it's really working...

Recap: Abacus, I think we ought to get out of here!

Abacus: I'm not listening to you, imaginary baby.

Mr. Eric: Books started flying off their case on the wall and swirling around the vacuum before getting sucked in. One of them—

Abacus: Ow!

Mr. Eric: Bonked Abacus on the head and he found himself on his back, scrambling away from the vacuum. Abacus's imaginary baby brother was pulling on the young wizard's hand as the two of them backed up together. Now paintings were getting sucked off the wall and the bookcase tipped over, too, headed straight for Abacus and Recap.

Recap: Hmm, deja vu.

Abacus: What do you mean, deja vu? You're only one day old.

Mr. Eric: Said Abacus flicking up the one spell his father had taught him in case of emergencies. A tiny protective bubble appeared, barely big enough to fit Abacus and Recap and the bookcase landed on top of it before it, too, was sucked into the vacuum. Arithmometer suddenly burst out of the study.

Arithmometer: Now what are you up to... [Record scratch.]

Abacus!

Mr. Eric: Arithmometer saw his wand in his son's hand and grabbed a half-broken wand off his desk.

Arithmometer: Abra-cadabracus, protect my Abac—

Mr. Eric: A crystal ball from behind him was being sucked towards the vacuum cleaner and it knocked Arithmometer out cold before he could finish his spell. And as soon as Arithmometer passed out, his wizard cap lit up like a beacon and a bright red protective bubble appeared around him. Abacus's own spell was weakening and one tip of Recap's shoelaces started wriggling out of the magic bubble toward the vacuum cleaner.

Abacus: That's it, baby Recap. Shoelaces.

Recap: Of course! No vacuum cleaner can stand up to shoelaces! I'll just let it suck me up and my shoelaces will tangle the—

Abacus: No, your shoelaces are imaginary.

Recap: Exactly. So I can imagine them being as long as they need to be.

Mr. Eric: And Recap's shoelace shot out of the bubble, getting wrapped around the brush of the vacuum cleaner over and over and over and over and over—

But the shoes themselves stayed on Recap's feet and he started getting slowly pulled out of the bubble.

Abacus: Recap, don't go!

Recap: Don't worry. We'll meet again, I'm sure of it.

Abacus: But where will you go until then?

Recap: I don't know. But wherever I go, there'll be a lot of furniture there.

Mr. Eric: Said Recap, as dressers and beds and lamps all got sucked into the vacuum.

Recap: Go get behind your magic proof door. I'll stop this vacuum.

Abacus: But I can't...

Recap: This is an emergency. You've got to get yourself to safety first or you'll be no help to anyone.

Mr. Eric: And Recap suddenly had Arithmometer's spare wand in his hand and he took a steady step out of the bubble, his imaginary baby hair was now long and fluttering in the breeze, and was he wearing a cape or something?

Abacus: Wow, you look really cool all of a sudden.

Recap: That's just your imagination. Now go.

Mr. Eric: And Abacus ran toward the magic-proof room as fast as his little legs could carry him before feeling himself get scooped up by his father. The last thing Abacus saw was that imaginary baby dueling against the vacuum, his wand flaring with unimaginable power and his shoelaces

long and dancing. And then... Arithmometer closed the door behind them.

Abacus: Dad, I'm sorry. I shouldn't have played with your wand.

Arithmometer: Oh, Abacus, no. This is my fault entirely. Mark my words, Abacus. I may have been a grouchy father but I will teach you all I know of magic so you shall never have a magical mishap again.

Abacus: That sounds nice, Papa.

[Magical chimes.]

Recap: And that was the day I disappeared from What If World only to appear in Alternia, a thousand years later.

Mr. Eric: Said Recap. He and old Abacus were sitting in front of a crystal ball in the Observatorium talking to Pascaline and Arithmometer who were both a lot older, too.

Arithmometer: So an imaginary baby went to another dimension.

Pascaline: And came back after a thousand years as a real baby?

Abacus: Yes, and the best part is he and I had a sort of collective amnesia about the whole thing that was conveniently dispelled when a velociraptor told us we were brothers.

Mr. Eric: Fred the Dog was sitting in the study beside them.

Fred the Dog: Oh, amnesia. That totally explains everything.

Recap: I thought so, too. And having never read any other stories, I think it's a remarkably original idea.

Abacus: Oh yes, yes. Very original. Mm-hmm. [Crickets.]

Arithmometer: Well, good luck with your baby brother.

Mr. Eric: Said Arithmometer, his face disappearing from the crystal ball.

Pascaline: My son is finally a daddy. I could not be more proud.

Mr. Eric: And Pascaline disappeared from the crystal ball as well.

Abacus: Are we brothers or am I your dad?

Fred the Dog: Yeah, this is pretty weird even for What If World.

Abacus: What if we just give the whole audience amnesia until you're all grown up.

Fred the Dog: I think you only get like one amnesia per season, Abacus.

Abacus: Oh, drat.

Recap: Give me a hug, Papa-brother.

Abacus: Come here, Recap. How I've missed you, even though I'd forgotten about you until this very moment. Anyway, give me a hug.

Mr. Eric: The end.

[Falling harp scale.]

All right Ronan, Jacob, Olive, and Grayson, I hope you liked your story. We're gonna play Jacob's question for you real quick right now.

Jacob: What if there was black hole inside a vacuum cleaner?

Mr. Eric: Thank you again, Jacob. And now you also know the secret of Nico C.'s question from episode 167. I didn't tell it to you then because it would have spoiled the surprise. But he asked, what if Recap was from What If World but was teleported to Alternia when he was a baby and he was Abacus P. Grumbler's brother? Oh, brother. We've answered a lot of questions today. And thank you all for sending in your ideas, even if they aren't a part of this story, they are a part of our imaginary world.

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 we grown ups have a lot to learn about communicating. Have you ever asked an adult about their feelings? I bet you'll really catch them by surprise when you do.

And until we meet again, keep wondering.

[What If World theme plays.]