

Podcast: What If World

[Episode: 174: What if a pirate and a detective went on an adventure together?](#)

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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've got a question from Samuel E.

Samuel: Hello Mr. Eric and all of What If World. I'm Samuel and I'm almost 11 in Chicago, Illinois. I like karate and ducks and my what if question is what if Alabaster Zero and Petey the Pirate were forced to go on a mission together? Thanks, bye!

Mr. Eric: Oh man. I can't believe I've never paired up Alabaster and Petey. Now, we've also got a patron question from Zoey, and it is about Alabaster Zero, but I'll tell you about it at the end.

JF Kitty: But first, I'll tell you about Evie.

Mr. Eric: Thanks, J.F. Kat.

JF Kitty: Evie's got two sisters: Elsie and Ada. She loves playing with her friends, Lego, coloring, and going for drives to listen to What If World.

Mr. Eric: Very cool.

JF Kitty: I'm also meowing out Stuart, age eight, and his brother Malcolm. They love their three crazy cats, Nori, Agate, and Whiplash.

Pikasnow: Pikasnow..

Mr. Eric: Oh, hi, Pikasnow. You've never done a shout out before.

Pikasnow: Pi-snow. Pikapisnow snow.

Mr. Eric: Oh, yes. I'll translate.

Pikasnow: Pi-pika snoow.

Mr. Eric: Pikasnow is shouting out Alice Jones Lynn, from Cork, Ireland, and her friend Pipis, which means squeaky, because he meows a lot.

Abacus: Let's not forget Caleb, age seven and his sister Linnea.

Fair Elise: Or my friend Dylan. She asked for me, specifically to give her a shout out.

Mr. Eric: Well thank you Dylan, Linnea, Caleb, Alice Jones, Malcolm, Stuart, Ada, Elsie, and Evie.

Now, let's find out what if Alabaster Zero and Petey the Pirate were forced to go on a mission together? Plus, our patron question from Zoey that we'll hear about later.

[Rising harp scale.]

Mr. Eric: Alabaster Zero was so excited to be walking down the dock that led him to Petrina the Pirate's ship. If you didn't know, knitting is one of Alabaster's favorite pastimes and Petrina is his teacher as well as his friend.

Alabaster stood at the base of the plank that would lead him onto Petrina's ship. He cupped his hands over his mouth and shouted in a very authoritarian voice.

Alabaster Zero: Petrina the Pirate: put down your knitting and come out with your hands up so I can measure you for a sweater. Heheh.

Mr. Eric: But who should appear at the other end of the gangplank? Well, you know. It was Petey the Pirate.

Petey the Pirate: Y'arr, sorry Detective Zero. I think we must have gotten our calendars crossed.

Alabaster Zero: Oh, that's okay, Mr. the Pirate. Is your grandma home?

Petey the Pirate: Hey, she's not my grandma. I mean, she's practically raised me so if anything she's more of a maternal figure.

Petrina: Oh, sorry, Petey. Sorry, Alabaster. I'm afraid this is all my fault.

Mr. Eric: Petrina walked up to the deck of her ship with a twinkle in her eye.

Petrina: It seems I agreed to fix up Petey's ship today and totally forgot that you and I had plans to knit, Alabaster.

Alabaster Zero: Aw, but it's Knit Tuesday.

Petrina: Ol' Petti made a mess of things, eh?

Petey the Pirate: Y'arr, well, sorry Alabaster, but I was here first and my ship really does need a fixing.

Petrina: Oh, that's true and it'll take me all day so I just had a totally spontaneous idea.

Mr. Eric: Said Petrina, slyly.

Petrina: Why don't you two boys spend the day together.

Alabaster Zero: Totally spontaneous, Petrina? You've never mixed up a date in your life.

Petrina: Oh, ho ho ho, well, there's a first time for everything, no? And listen, I absolutely love being your friend/mother/grandmother figures, but don't you two think it'd be nice to have a friend your own age?

Alabaster Zero: I have plenty of friends, and just because Fair Elise is a few hundred years old and Tabby Tallulah's only two...

Petey the Pirate: Oh, and I'm friends with Potty the Pirate, if I recall.

Petrina: But when was the last time you and Potty hung out?

Petey the Pirate: That was uh... 174 episodes ago, give or take.

Petrina: Oh, clearly you two have all the friends you need. You know, it's too bad.

Mr. Eric: Said Petrina, reaching for the inside pocket of her long coat with just the hint of a smile.

Petrina: I had a very important mission to send you two on, but I guess I'll just have to find another pirate and detective I can trust.

Alabaster Zero: Whoa whoa whoa, there's no detective more trustworthy than me!

Petey the Pirate: And you're the only other pirate for miles around!

Petrina: Oh, well, if you two wouldn't mind.

Alabaster Zero: I demand you give us this mission.

Petey the Pirate: I'm insulted you'd even think to give it to another pirate and detective.

Petrina: Okay, if you two insist...

Mr. Eric: And Petrina pulled out an envelope of thick, tea colored paper.

Petrina: The contents of this letter are very special and I need you two to find some place safe to keep it. Some place far from here. Maybe even as far as, oh, say, Alabaster Zero's house.

Petey the Pirate: Y'arr, I don't want to leave my ship behind!

Alabaster Zero: I think she's onto something, Petey. There's no place safer than my fortress of detectivetude.

Petey the Pirate: That is definitely not a word, Alabaster.

Alabaster Zero: Detectitude Alabaster to you.

[Time skip noise.]

Mr. Eric: Alabaster and Petey were walking down a long and winding path that would lead them back to the detective's house.

Alabaster Zero: Well, Petrina's a pretty smart pirate. If she put us on this mission together, she must think we've got at least something in common.

Petey the Pirate: Well, we both insisted on holding this envelope.

Mr. Eric: And indeed, the two of them were walking side-by-side, each with a hand on a different end of the envelope.

Alabaster Zero: I'm not sure that counts.

Petey the Pirate: Well, we must both like pirating.

Alabaster Zero: I like the idea of pirates but I think stealing is bad, so...

Petey the Pirate: Y'arr, not all pirates still.

Alabaster Zero: I mean, that's kind what the verb actually means, so.

Petey the Pirate: Well, do all detectives detect?

Alabaster Zero: Yes, we do.

Petey the Pirate: Y'arr, y'arr, y'would, wouldn't ye. Well, I'm also very interested in real estate.

Alabaster Zero: Real estate?

Petey the Pirate: Y'arr. Me other nickname is Peter the Realtor.

Alabaster Zero: Well, I'm more interested in cats than real estate.

[Record scratch.]

Petey the Pirate: Cats? Surely you mean d'y'arrgs.

Alabaster Zero: I get enough dogs working around the Fur Force.

Mr. Eric: They rounded a bend feeling a little crestfallen, wondering if this whole day was going to be a big mistake.

Petey the Pirate: Okay, okay, okay. After pirating, and detecting, real estate and cats... let's each say what our next favorite thing is.

Alabaster Zero: Sure, I guess, but it's really two things and I kind of like them both equally.

Petey the Pirate: Fine. Let's say our next two favorite things on the count of three.

Alabaster Zero: So do we say it right when we say the word three, or is there like a beat.

Petey the Pirate: I thought maybe the three would be silent and implied and we'd say it then.

Alabaster Zero: But then we're only counting to two.

Petey the Pirate: You're right. You're right. Let's count to three out loud and then instead of saying four, we'll say our two favorite things.

Alabaster Zero: If we were meant to be friends, this wouldn't be so hard.

Petey the Pirate: Well, there's something we agree on.

Together: One, two, three...

Petey the Pirate: Karate and ducks.

Alabaster Zero: Ducks and karate. What did you say?

Petey the Pirate: What was that?

Alabaster Zero: Karate...

Petey the Pirate: Ducks and karate?

Alabaster Zero: And ducks? No way.

Petey the Pirate: No way!

Alabaster Zero: Yeah, I'm so good at karate. I can like... cut paper in half but from the thin side, you know, so you end up with like two skinnier sheets of paper.

Petey the Pirate: N'arr I don't believe it.

Alabaster Zero: Well, you should believe it. I did it once with toilet paper. I chopped it right out of the air. And then there was a whole other piece of TP, only half as thick.

Petey the Pirate: Y'arr you're talking about two ply.

Alabaster Zero: Nuh-uh.

Petey the Pirate: Well, then, prove it. Make this envelope into two envelopes.

Mr. Eric: Said Petey the Pirate, pulling Petrina's envelope away and tossing it into the air.

Alabaster Zero: Easy.

Mr. Eric: Alabaster quickly shifted into a guarding stance and struck the falling envelope with a swift chop. It seemed to burst open and something green flew out and starting floating away on the wind.

Petey the Pirate: Ooh... grab it! Grab it!

Mr. Eric: Alabaster and Petey ran after the floating green thing, snatching, grabbing, kicking, pulling, falling over each other trying to get it.

Alabaster Zero: Yeah! Got ya!

Mr. Eric: Said Alabaster. He inspected the green paper that had fallen out of the envelope.

Alabaster Zero: Petey, you're not going to believe this.

Petey the Pirate: Why wouldn't I believe it? I'm looking at it right now.

Alabaster Zero: It's a hundred dollar bill.

Petey the Pirate: Y'arr, I know, I saw it while we were trying to grab it out of the air.

Alabaster Zero: And it's all mine.

Petey the Pirate: Nuh-arr, we but found it.

Alabaster Zero: But I chopped the envelope open.

Petey the Pirate: But I dared ye to.

Alabaster Zero: But I want it.

Petey the Pirate: Well, when you think about it, it's actually Petrina's remember?

Alabaster Zero: Oh... right.

Petey the Pirate: Y'arr, y'arr, it's Petrina's. Our mission was to protect it. Oooh... we failed our mission.

Alabaster Zero: Or did we?

Mr. Eric: And Alabaster carefully slipped the hundred dollar bill into the inside pocket of his dungaree jacket.

Alabaster Zero: The contents of the envelope are still safe. That was our mission.

Petey the Pirate: Ye're right, Alabaster. And I know just how to keep that hundred dollar bill safe. Pirate style.

[Time skip noise.]

Mr. Eric: Petey the Pirate was merrily burying the hundred dollar bill in Alabaster Zero's back yard.

Alabaster Zero: Petey, shouldn't we like, deposit in the bank for her. Then it'd be safe and collecting interest.

Petey the Pirate: Oh, silly landlubber. Buried money collects interest faster than any other kind of money.

Mr. Eric: And he patted down the last shovel-ful of dirt. See? Aren't you interested more already.

Alabaster Zero: So, you sell people houses but you have no idea how money works, huh?

Mr. Eric: Just then a little green shoot sprouted out from where they'd just buried the money.

Alabaster Zero: What was that?

Petey the Pirate: Y'arr... iunno.

Mr. Eric: The little green shoot sprouted and grew and branched out.

Alabaster Zero: Um, Petey, is this what normally happens when you bury things?

Petey the Pirate: No, I don't know... this is my first time burying real treasure.

Alabaster Zero: You've got to be kidding me.

Mr. Eric: And suddenly a mighty tree was growing up right beneath their feet. Its trunk was so thick and its branches were so wide that it caught up Petey and Alabaster, who found themselves clinging for dear life.

Petey the Pirate: I never earned my burying badge. [Crying] I was just trying to impress you.

Alabaster Zero: Oh, well, I'm so impressed now that I'm stuck in a tree a hundred feet off the ground.

Petey the Pirate: Oh, thank goodness, because frankly, I'm terrified.

Alabaster Zero: [Sighs] All right, listen. I'm gonna use my karate on this tree trunk to chop it in half. And then after the top half falls, we'll slide down it to safety.

Petey the Pirate: Oh, I don't know, Alabaster. This grew from what was in the envelope, so I think we've got to keep this tree safe.

Alabaster Zero: Worthless tree.

Mr. Eric: And Alabaster gave the tree a little thump with the bottom of his fist... and a bunch of leaves fell down on the two of them. But they didn't feel quite like normal leaves.

Petey the Pirate: Y'arrgh! Alabaster! Are you seeing what I'm seeing?

Mr. Eric: Alabaster held up one of the rectangular leaves. It had a lot of symbols on it and a number as well. 100.

Alabaster Zero: I think this is...

Petey the Pirate: Alabaster, I think this is a money tree.

Alabaster Zero: Money tree!

Petey the Pirate: Ooh ho ho ho!

Alabaster Zero: We're the richest people in the world!

Petey the Pirate: Well, thank you for including me this time.

Alabaster Zero: I mean, that bill should have been compost. This is absolutely impossible.

Petey the Pirate: Not necesselery.

Alabaster Zero: Did you say necesselery?

Petey the Pirate: Y'arr. I'm actually getting a little hungry.

Alabaster Zero: Yeah, me too. Do you have any snacks on you?

Petey the Pirate: Well, I have plenty of snacks in my pack which I left right on the ground. Oh, when I pulled the shovel out of it.

Alabaster Zero: Um, are we stuck in this tree.

Farfalle: Um, hi, you two are stuck up here, huh?

Mr. Eric: Said a little brown duck, landing lightly on the branch beside them.

Alabaster Zero: You're quite the detective.

Mr. Eric: Responded Alabaster.

Farfalle: You're too big. I can't really get you down.

Petey the Pirate: Could you fly me up a couple of tuna fish sandwiches from me pack?

Farfalle: Uh, tuna fish? Sure.

Mr. Eric: And the duck dove down toward the ground far below. They were gone for a little while and Alabaster's stomach grumbled.

Alabaster Zero: That duck's not coming back. This whole mission's been a disaster.

Petey the Pirate: Y'arr, what good's all the money in the world if you can't spend it.

Alabaster Zero: I don't even know why people care about money so much. My two dads had plenty of money but I still had it pretty rough.

Petey the Pirate: Oh, really? Try sleeping on the deck of a ship for your whole childhood, eating barnacle sandwiches with hardtack bread.

Alabaster Zero: Uh, sorry. I never knew.

Petey the Pirate: Everyone in our crew worked day and night trying to make ends meet. Oh what we would have done for a money tree.

Alabaster Zero: Oh, I'm sorry. I guess I thought people shouldn't worry about money because I've never had to.

Petey the Pirate: Well, I accept your apology.

[Stomachs grumble.]

And that duck's gonna owe us an apology, too, if he's not back with our tuna sandwiches soon.

Mr. Eric: And there was the duck, right on cue, if not on schedule.

Farfalle: You know, I looked all through that pack and I only found six tuna fish sandwiches.

Petey the Pirate: Y'arr, I made six for the road, just like Petrina taught me.

Farfalle: Well, she should have taught you to make seven.

Alabaster Zero: What are you saying, duck?

Farfalle: Hey, my name's Farfalle because I wear this bowtie and because I like diving.

Petey the Pirate: Farfalle, would you mind falling far and going and snatching up some of those sandwiches.

Farfalle: I already did!

Alabaster Zero: Then where are they?

Farfalle: I ate them. I'm very full, by the way. Thank you very much.

Petey the Pirate: Oh, Farfalle, I will pay you any amount of money for just one bite of sandwich.

Farfalle: That's so generous of you. Okay. [Gagging noises]

Alabaster Zero: Oh, whoa whoa whoa, um, actually you know what. I think we're gonna change our mind on that.

Petey the Pirate: Oh, never mind my friend Alabaster. His dads were so rich that he never had to eat a half-digested tuna fish sandwich coughed up from a duck's belly.

Farfalle: Well, la-de-da, he must have had it made.

Alabaster Zero: It wasn't like that! I mean sure, one of my dads was a doctor, but... heh. The other was a detective.

Farfalle: [Gags] There. That's about five of the six sandwiches. Should be plenty for you two.

Petey the Pirate: Farfalle, you've given me an idea.

Farfalle: Oh, good.

Petey the Pirate: I want you to go gather all of the ducks you've ever known.

Farfalle: Okay.

Mr. Eric: And Farfalle flew off again.

Alabaster Zero: Petey, I don't think we should be putting our trust in this duck.

Petey the Pirate: N'arr, n'arr, but the one thing you can always trust a duck to do is follow their belly.

Mr. Eric: And with that, Petey picked up the pile of partially puked up sandwiches and spread them around the nearby branches.

[Duck noises.]

Mr. Eric: Soon a whole flock of ducks had gathered in the tree around them.

Petey the Pirate: See, Alabaster. I told you the ducks would come.

Alabaster Zero: They're eating all the sandwiches. I just can't...

Petey the Pirate: Fellow ducks. You're all very much like pirates in that you let nothing go to waste. And that you're willing to go to great lengths to keep your family fed.

[Ducks quack.]

Well, I want you take all the loose leaves from this money tree and fly them off to the four corners of What If World.

[Ducks grumble.]

Farfalle: Um, why would we do that?

Mr. Eric: Alabaster was wondering that, too. But then he had an idea.

Alabaster Zero: Farfalle, when you know we had this tuna up in this tree, which ducks did you tell about it?

Farfalle: Well, I started by telling the hungriest ones.

Alabaster Zero: Exactly. We help each other out. That's what kind people do.

Petey the Pirate: And now you ducks can fly money to anyone in the world who needs it.

Farfalle: And also get to keep some money for ourselves?

Alabaster Zero: Of course. You need to eat and take care of yourself, too.

Mr. Eric: The ducks all quacked among themselves for a minute. [Ducks quacking.] And Farfalle finally spoke up.

Farfalle: They want me to remind you that you are still stuck in the tree.

Alabaster Zero: I don't think our mission was to get out of this tree.

Petey the Pirate: Y'arr. I think our mission was to help these ducks.

Farfalle: Now these ducks will take your bucks and go help other people.

Alabaster Zero: And maybe those people will help other people.

Petey the Pirate: And so on and so forth until someone helps us out of this tree.

[Record scratch.]

Alabaster Zero: Oh, wonderful. So we're gonna wait until some theoretical person who's been helped by these buck ducks and their duck bucks decides to go looking for two people that they don't know are stuck in a tree?

Petey the Pirate: Oh, you are quite the detective, Alabaster.

Alabaster Zero: I, okay. I love the buck ducks, don't get me wrong. But I'm gonna just help us out a little bit with the last part of this plan.

Mr. Eric: And Alabaster pulled out his detective pen and pad, wrote a note, and handed it to Farfalle with a whisper.

Farfalle: Okay, see ya.

Mr. Eric: Said the duck and flew off toward the horizon.

Petey the Pirate: So, Alabaster. I figure we'll need to have a few sleepovers in this tree before someone comes and saves us.

Alabaster Zero: Uh... okay.

Petey the Pirate: And seeing as our tuna fish sandwiches are all gone, we'll have to survive off the fancy syrup that we sap out of this money tree.

Alabaster Zero: That sounds kind of yummy, but I don't think that's gonna happen, Petey.

Petey the Pirate: N'arr n'arr n'arr n'arr... I get it, I get it. We've just been trapped in a tree together. It doesn't make us friends or anything.

Alabaster Zero: No, I mean it's not gonna happen because I sent a note to Petrina the Pirate.

Mr. Eric: And there she flew, captaining Petey's pirate ship now that she'd finished fixing it up.

Petey the Pirate: Y'arr, Petrina! You saved us.

Petrina: Oh dear. You two didn't happen to open that envelope, did you?

Alabaster Zero: Well, it's a long story.

Petey the Pirate: Y'arr, involving karate.

Alabaster Zero: And ducks.

Petey the Pirate: And regurgitated tuna fish sandwiches.

Mr. Eric: Petrina the pirate extended a rope from the flying rocket pirate ship house and Petey and Alabaster took turns climbing up it.

Petrina: Sounds like you two had quite the day.

Alabaster Zero: You got that right, Petrina. And I think we're even gonna have a sleepover, soon.

Petey the Pirate: Oh! You mean it, Alabaster?

Alabaster Zero: Of course I do, buddy. We've got to make sure we share out this money equitably.

Petey the Pirate: Oh, of course. Otherwise we'll ruin What If World with crippling inflation.

Alabaster Zero: So you don't understand banks but you do understand the many varied causes and effects of inflation?

Petrina: Oh, you two learned more than I'd bargained for. [Laughs]

Alabaster Zero: [Also laughs.]

Petey the Pirate: Y'arr, I don't get it.

Mr. Eric: The end.

[Falling harp scale.]

Zoey and Samuel E., I hope you enjoyed your story. Zoey's question, if you hadn't guessed, was what if Alabaster Zero found \$100 and buried it and grew a money tree?

I'd like to thank Karen O'Keeffe, my co-creator, Craig Martinson for our theme song, Ana Stretcu for all our new artwork, and all you kids at home who know that while money can't buy everything, it's still important that everyone has enough so they can stay healthy and safe.

And until we meet again, keep wondering.

[What If World theme plays.]