

Podcast: What If World
Episode: 178: Big Trouble for Little Freddy
File Length: 00:21:00
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 listener named Ward as well as a character from a patron named Bradley. All I can tell you is that the question involves Fred the dog getting into trouble. The rest you'll have to find out after the story.

Fred: Well, at least they know I'm going to be part of the story.

Mr. Eric: Hey, Fred.

Fred: But I'm also here to give a woof woof to Lorenzo, age seven.

As well as his brother, Frederick, age five.

They are from Bologna, Italy.

Abacus: And I would like to give a magical shout out to Anorah, who drew beautiful illustrations of many of her favorite characters, including me, Abacus P. Grumbler.

Mr. Eric: Well, thank you, Anorah, Frederick, and Lorenzo. Now, let's find out, what if Fred the dog got in big trouble, and we met a new What If World character.

[Rising harp scale.]

Mr. Eric: It was a bright and sunny day inside the Whathouse, and Fred the dog was just finishing up a stick.

Fred: Oh, that was yummy.

Mr. Eric: President Fred flipped a floorboard under which he had hidden a cache of sticks only to find it empty.

Fred: Hm... has someone stolen my sticks?

Mr. Eric: Then he checked his broom closet. [Door opens]

Fred: And all these broom handles have been chewed off, too! Secretary of Sticks, I need your help. And Mr. Mouser crawled out of a little hole in the wall of the Whathouse.

Mr. Mouser: I thought I was going to be your Secretary of State, or perhaps your Chief of Staff.

Mr. Eric: Said Mr. Mouser, straightening his glasses and looking a little cross.

Mr. Mouser: But instead I have been in charge of sticks for over two years.

Fred: Yeah, it's actually a more important job, Mr. Mouser. And you see, someone has stolen all my sticks and even eaten my broomsticks.

Mr. Mouser: No, Fred. That was you. You chewed all of the sticks in the Whathouse and every stick that has fallen in the forests. And the trees have written a strongly written letter asking that you stop chewing upon them.

Fred: So there's no sticks for Freddie?

Mr. Mouser: Of course, you could go out and buy some sticks.

Fred: Wait, you can buy sticks?

Mr. Mouser: Well, you can't because you spent all of your salary repairing the damages you've done to What If World since becoming president.

Fred: So money can buy sticks.

Mr. Mouser: Yes, of course, but maybe you should just give up sticks for a little—

Fred: Okay, everybody! This is a stick up.

Mr. Eric: Fred the dog was in the middle of a bank, his tongue waving about menacingly. A very thin, black mask, covered his eyes but it didn't really do much to hide his pug identity.

Fred: Okay bank people, give me all your sticks.

Bank Snail: I'm sorry, this isn't a stick bank. It's just a regular bank. We just have money here.

Mr. Eric: Said a slimy snail, quite calmly.

Fred: Oh, oh, that's right. Money. That's what I'm here for. I'm stealing all your money.

Bank Snail: That's a criminal act, Fred. Are you sure?

Fred: I didn't say I was Fred the dog! I'm wearing a mask.

Bank Snail: It's still very obvious.

Fred: Oh, forget you!

Mr. Eric: And Fred's tongue stretched behind the counter of the bank and grabbed a big sack with a dollar sign on it.

Fred: You know, you really shouldn't leave these lying around.

Mr. Eric: And then he ran off!

Alabaster Zero: All right Fair Elise,

Mr. Eric: Said Alabaster Zero.

Alabaster Zero: Fred the dog was seen walking into a nondescript building.

Fair Elise: And this is the least descript building I've ever seen. Why it just looks like a pile—

Alabaster Zero: [Makes exasperated noises] Don't describe it. Then it would be too descript for Fred to be inside.

Fair Elise: Sometimes I can't believe you were elected Detective General over me.

Alabaster Zero: I mean, it was a position I made up on the spot when Fred became president, but that's what makes it my duty to bring him in when he's gone rogue.

Mr. Eric: Fair Elise and Alabaster Zero slowly entered the nondescript building through an old creaky door with a strange marking. [Door creaks]

Alabaster Zero: [Makes exasperated noises] Mr. Eric, don't describe the door. Nondescript, remember.

Mr. Eric: Okay, fine. And then they walked down a long and winding hallway that smelled—

Alabaster Zero: [Makes exasperated noises]

Mr. Eric: And then they walked down a long and winding—

Alabaster Zero: [Exasperated noises]

Mr. Eric: And then they walked down a perfectly nondescript hallway.

Alabaster Zero: [sighs] Phew.

Fair Elise: Now, Alabaster. Remember, we are bringing him in but he is only the alleged robber so we must be careful and respectful.

Mr. Eric: And Alabaster kicked through a door so perfectly ordinary that it might as well have been a wall with a handle on it.

Alabaster Zero: That's some good nondescription, Mr. Eric.

Mr. Eric: And there was Fred the dog wearing a pair of suspiciously fancy pants.

Fair Elise: Now, Mr. Eric, why do you say suspiciously fancy? The narrator's not supposed to share his opinions.

Alabaster Zero: Those are some awfully fancy pants, Fred the dog.

Fred: Well, yeah, what about them?

Alabaster Zero: One might even call them, suspiciously fancy.

Fred: One might, but one might also not say that.

Alabaster Zero: Come on, Fred. The jig is up. You might as well confess.

Fred: You're right. I did it. I'm so ashamed but [crying]

Mr. Eric: And Fred left the corner of this perfectly featureless room and walked towards the detectives with his head hung low.

Fred: I did try to earn enough money to buy sticks.

Alabaster Zero: Well, that's not how you earn money, Fred.

Mr. Eric: Said Alabaster, slapping on a pair of paw-cuffs to the president of What If World.

Fred: You're right, you're right. Lock me up and throw away the key.
[Cries]

Alabaster Zero: Well, that's a job well done, right partner?

Fair Elise: Alabaster, there is no evidence of any kind in this entire room.

Alabaster Zero: We're gonna put you away for a long time, Fred. In the place puppies least like to go.

Fred: Oh no, you don't mean—

Alabaster Zero: That's right. The bedroom. Only there's no people in there.

Fred: Not the bedroom only there's no people in there! What's the point of being in the room when there's no people in there?

Alabaster Zero: Well, you're going to have a long time to work that one out, won't you.

Mr. Eric: And they took Fred back to the Whathouse and locked him up while they met with the rest of the Presidential Cabinet. Vice President Whendiana Joan.

Whendiana: It's been a long time.

Mr. Eric: Magister of Magic, Abacus P. Grumbler.

Abacus: Indubitably.

Mr. Eric: Emperor of Equality, Cthunkle.

Cthunkle: I'm just realizing now I really haven't done enough to earn that title.

Mr. Eric: And of course, Secretary of Sticks, Mr. Mouser.

Alabaster Zero: You forgot Detective General, and his partner.

Mr. Eric: But they already knew you were here.

Alabaster Zero: Yeah...

Whendiana: Oh, it looks like it's time for little old me to become president of What If World.

Mr. Mouser: Well, all right.

Mr. Eric: said Mr. Mouser, pulling out a presidential pin to stick on Whendiana's lapel.

Fair Elise: Now wait a minute everyone, this is a serious matter requiring serious investigation.

Alabaster Zero: But he confessed.

Abacus: Oh, he confessed, well then. I declare Whendiana to be our new president.

Cthunkle: It seems like the equal thing to do.

Fair Elise: What does that even mean, Cthunkle.

Alabaster Zero: Please excuse, Fair Elise. She wasn't one of the presidential nominees, so she's really not on this cabinet.

Fair Elise: And that does not invalidate my opinion.

Mr. Eric: But Mr. Mouser had already scrambled up Whendy's leg and given her the presidential pin.

Whendiana: Oh my goodness, how'd you get this off of Fred, anyway?

Fred: There was never anywhere to stick it on me in the first place.

Abacus: We should probably all move further down the hall so that Fred can't hear us.

Whendiana: Oh what does it matter, he's not president anymore. I am.

Mr. Mouser: That is true, and I'm very happy that we're going to have a more level-headed president who has proven herself time and again.

Mr. Eric: Said Mr. Mouser.

Whendiana: Oh, sure, sure, sure. But I think we should all have a big party, first!

[Record scratch]

Fair Elise: What?

Alabaster Zero: Oh, that sounds delightful.

Mr. Eric: And Whendiana threw a big party and everybody in What If World attended. And throughout the whole party, Whendiana went around making big promises to everyone she saw.

Whendiana: I agree, more people should be wearing top hats, JF Kat. It's just plain fancy.

JF Kat: Finally someone gets it.

Whendiana: And Cthunkle, things sure would be more equal if everyone had eight arms or legs.

Cthunkle: I have found a perfect curse to make that happen.

Whendiana: And Abacus, I do agree that school should be better funded.

Abacus: Oh, huzzah!

Whendiana: Let me just get out the What If World check book.

Dracomax: But Whendiana,

Mr. Eric: Said Dracomax.

Dracomax: You just promised all of What If World's gold to the dragons so that we could sleep upon it and never spend a coin.

Whendiana: Oh, that's right. Sorry, Abacus. Maybe next year.

Abacus: [Grumbles]

[Music slowly winds down]

Mr. Eric: The next morning, the whole Whathouse was trashed as was the forest around it.

Mr. Mouser: Oh, I will have to get in the clean-up crew.

Mr. Eric: Said Mr. Mouser, but then Whendiana woke up. Oh, I'm sorry. I gave the cleaning crew the rest of the year off.

Mr. Mouser: Oh, that's a strange decision, but—

Whendiana: Oh, I made all kinds of decisions like that. I wrote up a pile of them during the party. I'm sure my Secretary of Important Stuff can handle it.

Mr. Mouser: Oh, I forgot about my promotion. Thank you.

Mr. Eric: And Mr. Mouser cheerily went to work. But Abacus wasn't feeling too cheery. Nor was Fair Elise.

Abacus: Fair Elise, I know we don't normally team up, you know, because it would just be too much magic.

Fair Elise: Oh, um, yes, that is the reason.

Abacus: But I think something strange is going on.

Fair Elise: I agree. First this business with Fred. Now Whendiana's acting very strange.

Mr. Eric: Fair Elise sneakily flew out of the Whathouse to have a quiet conversation with the wizard in the woods.

Abacus: First off, Whendiana never sticks around this long. She's always traveling in time.

Cthunkle: And she would never give into my evil demands so easily.

Mr. Eric: Said Cthunkle. And Fair Elise and Abacus saw he'd been sleeping in the trees above them.

Cthunkle: I've got like 16 curses that are going to become worldwide law. She just kept saying yes. It wasn't even fun.

Fair Elise: I think we need to find the Learninator. He normally helps Whendiana travel through time.

[Whomwhomhomwhomwhomwhom]

Learninator: Did someone here want to learn something?

Abacus: The Learninator!

Cthunkle: The Learninator.

Fair Elise: Hello, Learninator. Can you take us back in time to when Fred the dog committed that crime?

Learninator: Uh, no, that's not how my time travel works.

Abacus: Really? We travel back in time all the time.

Learninator: But if we travel back to when Fred did the crime and then we come back forward in time, then we would have changed the time that he did the crime and so we wouldn't have asked these questions and you wouldn't have met me.

Cthunkle: I swear, the particulars of time travel have never been this confusing.

Fair Elise: It's fine, just take us back and I'll make us all invisible and we won't do or say anything, we'll just observe and learn.

Abacus: Oh, and you love learning, Learninator.

Learninator: For some reason, do not assume that I love learning and do not boss me around.

Mr. Eric: And the Learninator started storming off.

Abacus: What the wonder is going on?

Cthunkle: Well, we three are probably the most powerful creatures in What If World so we can certainly figure it out.

Fair Elise: Sorry Cthunkle, I never agreed to have you as part of this team.

Abacus: Oh, come on Fair Elise. He's trying to be more Emperor of Equality-y.

Fair Elise: Fine, just try not to do anything evil.

Cthunkle: Would it be enough if I tried to try not to do evil things?

Fair Elise: No.

Abacus: No.

Cthunkle: Okay. Okay. You win.

Mr. Eric: And the three of them went back to the Whathouse to confront Whendiana. Whendiana Joan was inside waiting for them, signing page after page of promises that she'd made the night before while Mr. Mouser kept cleaning up the mess from the party.

Abacus: Whendiana? Something funny is afoot.

Cthunkle: Yes, something quite squiddy.

Whendiana: Oh, you three. The Learninator told me all about it. Trying to use his time travel for some selfish little adventure.

Fair Elise: It is not selfish. We're trying to discover—

Whendiana: You're trying to upset the new president, and I won't hear of it. So just skedaddle and go clean up the woods. And maybe I'll think about forgiving you after.

Abacus: Oh but...

Alabaster Zero: [Exasperated noises] I'm sorry, Fair Elise, but I think you really need to go outside right now.

Fair Elise: Alabaster, we are partners. How could you?

Mr. Eric: And she saw the detective wink.

Alabaster Zero: How could you betray your president, now get.

Mr. Eric: And so Cthunkle, Fair Elise, and Abacus, left the Whathouse. And as Alabaster Zero went to close the door behind them, he gave a nod with his head, pointing off in the distance.

Alabaster Zero: Now go and learn your lesson. [Door slams shut]

Abacus: I've always known he wasn't much of a detective, but really.

Fair Elise: Actually, I think Alabaster might have been on to something.

Mr. Eric: And Fair Elise flew off into the woods where a strange crackling light seemed to shimmer and fade.

Cthunkle: What was that?

Mr. Eric: Asked Cthunkle. And he and the wizard hurried to catch up.

[Clattering]

They heard a clatter of, it must have been sticks, and they rushed into a clearing to find...

Whendiana: See Learninator? I told Fred that prehistoric sticks brought back to the present would still just be regular sticks.

Learninator: It is true, Whendiana. They are not fossilized or extra crunchy or anything.

Fair Elise: Whendiana? Learninator?

Mr. Eric: Asked Fair Elise.

Learninator: Those are our names. It would be impossible to wear them out because that's not how names work.

Whendiana: I'm sorry, he's working on some catch phrases, it's—

Abacus: Whendiana, how is it that you are her and also in the Whathouse?

Whendiana: What's that?

Cthunkle: Is it because of your two time-traveling sisters.

Whendiana: No, we all agreed not to cross timelines except on the holidays.

Mr. Eric: And Whendiana started marching toward the Whathouse.

Abacus: But couldn't the holidays be any day because you travel in time.

Cthunkle: Shh, Abacus, this is just the right amount of sense that we want time travel to make.

Fair Elise: I agree with Cthunkle. This sounds like the authentic Whendiana.

Mr. Eric: They burst into the Whathouse and Whendiana dropped her bundle of sticks when she saw President Whendiana standing across from her.

Whendiana: Oh, Whendiana, said the president. You're not supposed to be in this timeline.

Learninator: I think it is you who are stuck out of time or something even stranger.

Mr. Eric: And the Learninator held out his hand and a strange electronic grid mesh scanned down President Whendiana Joan.

Learninator: Learnination complete. You are not the real Whendiana. Duh nuh nuuuuuh. I thought that would get a collective gasp.

Abacus: We all sort of assumed that at this point.

Whendiana: The question is who are you?

Mr. Eric: And President Whendiana Joan melted away revealing a nondescript person who looked kind of like—

Alabaster Zero: [Exasperated noise]

Mr. Eric: Okay, they were just nondescript.

Shapefriender: I am a shapefriender.

Alabaster Zero: Shapefriender, I knew it.

Shapefriender: I become other people to make friends because it's tough being so nondescript all the time.

Mr. Mouser: Then I am afraid that you do not deserve the pin of the president. We should give it to the real Whendiana.

Mr. Eric: And Mr. Mouser crawled up the nondescript shapefriender's leg and took off the presidential pin.

Fair Elise: Not so fast, Mr. Mouser.

Mr. Eric: Said Fair Elise.

Fair Elise: I think Shapefriender needs to come clean about something else, am I right?

Shapefriender: You are not wrong. It was I who robbed the bank in order to frame Fred so that I could become president.

Whendiana: And I assume it was you who sent me and Learninator back in time on some fool's errand to get prehistoric sticks.

Shapefriender: No, that was the real Fred. It was just convenient and I assumed you'd be eaten by dinosaurs or something.

Fred: A lot of your plan hinged on them getting eaten.

Cthunkle: Yes, I must give this evil scheme a C+, tops, said Cthunkle, reaching out with a tentacle to let Fred out of the bedroom only there were no people in there.

Fred: Oh thank goodness. You guys, there was no people in the bedroom.

Abacus: We know.

Fair Elise: We know.

Cthunkle: We know.

Learninator: Yes, it seems all the mysteries have been solved.

Alabaster Zero: All except one. Fred's fancy pants.

Fred: No, no, I can't tell you.

Abacus: As we assume that you bought them with all of your ill-gotten goods.

Fred: No, it'll just be my secret shame for the rest of my life.

Learninator: I have found the answer on the interwhat, playing video now.

Person 1: Okay, Fred. You're in the fancy pants, now just shimmy and shake around like you're really having a good time.

Person 2: And don't forget to read your lines, Freddie.

Fred: Oh yeah, uh, oh, these pants are so fancy. I feel like a new dog. No, I'm sorry, I can't do it. Doggies don't wear pants.

Person 2: Doggies who want their 10 bucks do.

Fred: They're the fanciest pants and I love them even more than sticks. Oooh. [cries]

Person 1: Okay, maybe we could do one more take with a little less crying.

Fred: Fred the dog doesn't do retakes. [crying]

Mr. Eric: The video stopped playing and the Whathouse was silent.

Cthunkle: So, I think we can all agree.

Fair Elise: That we should never speak of this again?

Abacus: No, never. In fact, I'm going to erase my memory.

Fred: Okay, could someone help me out of these fancy pants, first?

Learninator: I do not feel comfortable with that.

Mr. Eric: The end.

Fred: Oh, come on, everybody. I don't have opposable thumbs!

[Falling harp scale.]

Mr. Eric: All right, Bradley and Ward, I hope you enjoyed your story. So we'll play Ward's question really quickly.

Ward: Hello, my name is Ward and my what if question was what if Fred the dog robbed the bank but he was really being framed by a shapeshifter who wanted to be the president. Thank you, bye.

Mr. Eric: And then we'll let Bradley describe Shapefriender to you all.

Bradley: My name is Bradley and I'm almost ten, and I like Fred the dog. I want to add a new character called Shapefriender. He is a robot that makes friends with everyone he meets. He can also reads minds and loves playing tricks. He can shapeshift into anyone alive. He can also sound like the person that he shapeshifts to. Bye! Love your podcast.

Mr. Eric: I'd like to thank Karen O'Keeffe, our co-creator. Craig Martinson for our theme song, and all you kids at home who know that you don't have to pretend to be someone else to make friends.

Until we meet again, keep wondering.

[What If World theme song plays.]

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