

Podcast: [What If World](#)

Episode: 188: What How World: Tell Your Own Story!

File Length: 16:07

Transcription by Keffy

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.

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, and today we've got a question from a Patron named Wells.

Wells:                   Hi, Mr. Eric! My name is Wells. I'm six years old and I live in Illinois. My what if—oh, I really like sushi and unicorns. My what if question is what if there was a What How World and Mr. Eric got teleported back and forth to What If World and What How World? Bye! Have a nice day!

Mr. Eric:                Wells, that's such a great question because I've had a lot of kids emailing me about how to tell their own stories. So, every once in a while, I like to have a sort of story activity that we can all practice together. I think taking a visit to What How World will be the perfect way to teach you all.

Alabaster:             Not so fast, Mr. Eric.

Mr. Eric:                Oh, hey, Alabaster. You're early. We're doing shout outs after the show nowadays.

Alabaster:             Oh, I'm not here for shout outs. I'm here because of Leo's question.

Mr. Eric:                We haven't even played her question yet.

John:                   Hi, Mr. Eric. This is John calling from Iowa. We gave a message yesterday about kittens turning into giants. I'm here with my daughter Leo, and we wanted to know how things were in—

Leo:                     Alabaster, Alabama.

John:                    And we hope you're having a great day, and we love your podcast.

Leo:                     Bye!

Alabaster:             Alabaster, Alabama? Explain yourself, Mr. Eric.

Mr. Eric: Oh my gosh. You have discovered a super secret What If World Easter egg. The number where you call in for questions, 205-605-WHAT, well, I chose that number because of its proximity to Alabaster, Alabama.

Alabaster: That's it, that's the whole mystery. I was going to do a Zero Hour episode about this.

Mr. Eric: Well, now that you're here, why don't you just join me for the activity.

Alabaster: I don't know. What are we going to do?

Mr. Eric: well, we're going to use some of our friends' ideas, and answer some questions, and help teach kids how to tell their own stories.

Alabaster: And... solve... a crime?

Mr. Eric: Maybe if there's time, Alabaster, but I think you need to take a break.

Alabaster: The only break I need is breaking this mystery wide open.

Mr. Eric: I truly have no idea what you're talking about. But let's actually take a little break right now and then we'll jump right into our activity and teach you kids how I make up stories when we visit What How World.

[Rising harp scale.]

Alabaster: And we're back with the Zero Hour. An hour long story podcast where I go through every little piece of evidence about every crime you can imagine.

Mr. Eric: We're not doing that, Alabaster. Remember? What How World?

Alabaster: I can't help it if What How World looks like an interrogation room?

Mr. Eric: Oh, oh oh! That's because you're imagining it that way.

Alabaster: What?

Mr. Eric: We're going to teach kids how to tell their own stories and you did the first thing that some improvisers like to do. You imagined where you were.

Alabaster: I don't know what to do now.

Mr. Eric: Well, you're in an interrogation room, so, just do whatever comes naturally given who you are and where we are.

Alabaster: All right, Mr. Eric, tell me where the secret thing that I need to know about what is it?

Mr. Eric: I keep telling you, Alabaster. I don't know the secret thing that you need to know about. If you could tell me what the thing is that you need to know about, then maybe I could help you find it.

Alabaster: That's not good enough. I'm going to throw the book at you.

Mr. Eric: Ow.

Alabaster: I'm sorry. I didn't actually mean to throw a book at you.

Mr. Eric: No, you didn't throw a book at me. It's imagination. We're making a story together. Right now.

Alabaster: Then why are we talking about the story that we're making.

Mr. Eric: Well, you sort of... um... fell out of character.

Alabaster: Oh, this is so hard. Is this how you tell stories every week?

Mr. Eric: Well, it's just one way to tell stories and it feels hard, maybe, because we don't have an idea to jump off of. Let's start over.

Alabaster: Oh, I messed up.

Mr. Eric: That's the greatest thing. There's no messing up! Mistakes can even make our story better. So, everyone, take a deep breath. [Breathes deeply]. Now, let's think about our question. Wells likes sushi and unicorns. Maybe there's a way we can tie those two together.

Alabaster: Uh, Mr. Eric. I just turned into a unicorn with a sushi roll for a horn. Is that normal? In What How World?

Mr. Eric: Everything's normal here. And nothing is normal here. Well, except being kind and encouraging. So, kids, how would you relate a unicorn to sushi? Maybe you'd tell a narwhal story. Or a story about a fish trying to live with unicorns. Or a unicorn trying to live with fish. Or a maniacal sushi chef who wanted to put unicorn on the menu! It's your story. And, your friend's story.

Alabaster: What?

Mr. Eric: Well, that brings us to the next part of our activity. We have a place, the interrogation room. We have a person or idea, our unicorn with a sushi

roll horn. Now we need to accept each other's ideas in order to make a story together.

Alabaster: Mr. Eric, you gotta help me. My unicorn horn is malfunctioning.

Mr. Eric: Yeah, I can see that. You keep shooting pieces off your sushi roll in my face. Ow!

Alabaster: But don't you see? That's my magic. Popping right off of my horn.

Mr. Eric: [Eating] So you're saying I shouldn't be eating the sushi? It's pretty good, though.

[Record scratch]

Alabaster: Stop eating my magic, Mr. Eric!

Mr. Eric: I'm sorry. You're the one shooting it in my face.

Alabaster: Give me those rolls. Let me just stick them back on my [gasps] Oh no! They keep dropping off.

Mr. Eric: Seems like we need the help of a professional. Fair Elise!

Alabaster: I don't know, she's pretty busy being President and everything. There's got to be at least one other magic person around.

[Magic noises]

Abacus: Did someone say, "around"?

Mr. Eric: Oh, yeah, Abacus. That's the last thing we said, but before that we said magic.

Abacus: Oh, popping up when people say magic is so predictable. Alabaster, you don't look so good.

Alabaster: Yeah, I'm obviously a unicorn whose horn turned into a sushi roll and he's slowly losing his magic.

Abacus: No, you're not wearing your dungaree jacket. It's like your whole image.

Alabaster: What? Of course I'm wearing my dungaree jacket.

Mr. Eric: Alabaster, he's right. Do you think that's why you're losing your magic?

Alabaster: There's no other logical explanation. We've got to get my jacket back. Jack.

Abacus: Did someone way, Jack? Oh, no, I'm already here, actually. Never mind.

Mr. Eric: Okay, let's take a break right there. A scene. Scene.

Alabaster: Wait, are you still Mr. Eric in the scene or out of the scene.

Mr. Eric: That's what people say sometimes when the scene's over.

Abacus: Seen! I prefer saw. Can we say saw instead of seen?

Alabaster: Or even better, seesaw.

Mr. Eric: This really isn't part of the lesson, folks. I just can't get these two to agree on anything.

Abacus: What are you talking about? We were just agreeing our way through that entire scene!

Mr. Eric: Well, that's true. And folks, I hope you noticed that. When you're imagining with a friend, try to treat their ideas as if they are real. We call that improv rule, "Yes, And?" So when we found out Alabaster wasn't wearing his dungaree jacket, it turned out that's why he was losing his magic. That's saying yes to an idea, and then even adding a little bit extra, right?

Now, Leo's question also had something about kittens turning into giants... so if you ever find yourself running out of ideas, just find a new word or ask a new question, or even just look at an object around you and see if it brings up a new idea. Then you and your improv buddy can start a whole new scene or maybe even continue your story with a fun new twist.

So quick review. We started our scene in a place, our interrogation room. Then we added sushi and unicorns, building on each other's ideas until we found out what was actually going on, right? Alabaster the unicorn was losing his magic because he'd lost his dungaree jacket.

Now, let's take kittens turning into giants. Where might that bring your story? Remember, no ideas are bad ideas. Mistakes are gifts that we can enjoy and use to grow our story and our world. Speaking of which, we're going to jump back into our story right now with a new scene.

Abacus: Alabaster, you've been leading us on a wild goose chase. It's like you don't have any idea where your dungaree jacket is.

Mr. Eric: Yeah, Alabaster. Where was the last place you remember seeing it?

Alabaster: If I could remember that, then I'd probably be able to find it.

Abacus: He raises a good point.

Mr. Eric: Even so, Alabaster, taking us to this deserted alley in the middle of New What City doesn't seem like it's gonna help.

Alabaster: Oh ye of little faith, Mr. Eric. We've come to find the Queen of Cats. She always knows the score.

Queen of Cats: Alabaster Zero, Professor Grumbler, and who is this little snack?

Mr. Eric: Oh, Cleocatra, please don't eat me.

Alabaster: Uh, no, she's talking to a piece of sushi that fell off of my horn.

Mr. Eric: What? Like, half the people in What If World have eaten me at one point or another and you don't want to?

Cleocatra: I would think you would be relieved that I only want to eat this delicious sushi. [Purrs]

Abacus: All right, Cleocatra. You've had your sushi. Now, use your city-wide network of spy kittens to help us track down Alabaster Zero's jacket.

Cleocatra: But of couuuuuursssse.

Alabaster: Uh, Cleocatra, did you mean to grow 30 feet tall?

Cleocatra: Excuse me?

Mr. Eric: And I'm curious why you're talking more slowly now that you're gigantic.

Abacus: I imagine gigantic people might find that offensive.

Cleocatra: You're right. It just felt like the right thing to do.

Alabaster: Well, now that you're gigantic and, oh, and your other kittens are eating sushi and okay, and they're growing really big now, too.

JF Kat: Er, I'm hungry for something bigger than sushi. Maybe I'll start with Mr. Eric.

Mr. Eric: Finally.

Cleocatra: Get them, my kitties. We will turn them into sushi rolls.

Alabaster: Quick! Hop on my back, let's ride out of here.

Abacus: You know, I could teleport us. We just need someone to say the magic word.

Mr. Eric: Oh, I just remembered that I don't like being eaten. What's the magic word, Abacus?

Abacus: Well, if I told you that, it'd be cheating.

Alabaster: Besides, doesn't someone other than us have to say the word and then we teleport there?

Abacus: Oh, that's a good point.

Mr. Eric: Oh, JF Kat just bit off all the unicorn fur on your fluffy tail.

JF Kat: Ack. Furball. Cleocatra save me.

Cleocatra: From a furball? I swear, you are the absolute worst minion.

Abacus: Did someone say minion?

Alabaster: No no no no no!

Mr. Eric: Oh no! Abacus!

Cleocatra: That is convenient. You teleported right into my mouth.

Mr. Eric: And you speak with surprisingly good diction for having three people in there.

Cleocatra: Elocution lessons. I recommend them.

Abacus: Alabaster, we're toast. Can't you call upon Fair Elise to help us?

Alabaster: No, I told you guys. I don't want to bug her.

Mr. Eric: Would you rather be eaten?

Alabaster: Uhh...

Cleocatra: [GULP] Too late.

Mr. Eric: And, scene.

Abacus: You mean, saw.

Alabaster: I thought it was gonna be seesaw.

Mr. Eric: Whatever, let's take a break!

Abacus: But that's just when the story was getting good.

Mr. Eric: And that's why we want the kids at home to take this activity and run with it.

Alabaster: Does that mean I'm stuck as a unicorn?

Mr. Eric: Only until we leave What How World.

Abacus: And how long before we're fully digested by Cleocatra?

Mr. Eric: Well, that's going to vary depending on the imagination of each individual listener.

Alabaster: You know some kid's imagining us coming out the other end right now.

Mr. Eric: Probably. That's fair. Oh, but that's the easy joke. Kids, I challenge you. Tell me your ending to this story. Maybe improvise a scene with a friend or family member.

Abacus: Or even a friendly family member!

Alabaster: All right. So you've got a unicorn and a wizard and a person trapped in the belly of a giant kitten.

Mr. Eric: How are they going to get out, or are they stuck in there for good?

Abacus: Will Alabaster get his magic back?

Mr. Eric: And where is his dungaree jacket. And you can make up one scene, or two, or ten as you finish telling the story. But for now, this is where our story ends.

[Falling harp scale.]

Alabaster: Whoa, so that's how you make up stories?

Mr. Eric: Well, sometimes I write things down, and sometimes, yeah. I just get an idea and let all you kooky characters run with it.

Abacus: Oh, but the lesson. Don't you always add a lesson?

Mr. Eric: I like to think of them more as demonstrations. Was Alabaster's stubbornness getting in his own way?

Alabaster: Huh?

Mr. Eric: Or is he just feeling lost without Fair Elise.

Alabaster: Hey, I'm doing just fine.

Abacus: Or maybe the lesson's about how using different magic words is very exciting.

Mr. Eric: It could be. Or it could just be a lesson about listening to your friends and imagining together. Speaking of friends, we've got a few shout-outs to give.

Fred: The first shout out's for Bay. He'll be six years old in January, and his favorite character is me. He's got a little sister named Marie who's almost two.

Cthunkle: Then, there's Adrian from Minneapolis. Adrian's six years old and likes his little brother, Ellie, and stuffed animals. And when he grows up, he wants to be a cryptozoologist.

Fred: Then there's Eric, age nine from Essexville, Michigan, but he was born in Poland. He enjoys playing with his friend Kiefer and his friend Pixel.

Fair Elise: As well as Vivian, age five, from Victoria, British Columbia, Canada, who likes science and her baby sister Grace.

Fred: And finally, Azrael. His hobbies include gaming, art, and building. He's eight years old, from California.

Mr. Eric: Well, thanks for your help with those shout outs. I'd like to thank Karen O'Keeffe, my co-creator, Craig Martinson for our theme song, Desiré McFarland for her help editing and all you kids at home, eager to try out your own improv scenes. Just remember to listen to each other's ideas, and when it starts to get a little too crazy, or dangerous, it might be time to try the next scene.

Until we meet again, keep wondering.

[What If World theme song plays.]

©2020, Eric O'Keeffe/What If World