

Podcast: What If World

[Episode: 195: What if scientists bring back dinosaurs? \(w/ Kennen Hutchison\)](#)

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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. Today I'm so happy to be joined by a scientist, a virologist, a microbiologist, Kennen Hutchison.

Kennen: Hey, that's me!

Mr. Eric: Hey, Kennen! I'm so, so happy to hear from you and to have you on the show. You're also part of a group of scientists, aren't you?

Kennen: Yeah, yeah! I just got picked up by the King of Random who are a huge group of science-loving explorers.

Mr. Eric: Oh, it's so cool. They have this great YouTube channel. We're gonna talk about it a lot more at the end, and even some of the awesome science that Kennen is doing right now. You have this really cool virology video out right now, too, right?

Kennen: Yeah, I do a little bit of science communication around, you know, viruses and especially this pandemic that's affecting everyone.

Mr. Eric: Yeah, and I was really excited to get you on the show because you talked to me in a way that I found really calming and informative. I think kids and parents will like it, too. We're gonna talk about that and the Kings of Random right after the show.

But first we're gonna get to our first question, from a patron named Oliver.

Oliver: Hi, my name is Oliver and I like [creepers]? And what if scientists bring back dinosaurs?

Mr. Eric: Nice, Oliver.

Kennen: That is a very exciting and terrifying question. Dinosaurs in real life?

Mr. Eric: We also have a surprise add-on question from a listener named Wolfgang. We'll find that one out after. But I'll tell you at least that it involves chicken eggs. Now, let's find out what if scientists bring back dinosaurs.

[Rising harp scale.]

Kennen is happily experimenting in his laboratory when suddenly... a portal opens beside him and out step, who other, than the Learninator and Whendiana Joan!

Kennen: Whoa! Where did you guys come from?

Learninator: It is more a question of when and also if. And how. And space time stuff, you know.

Kennen: That sounds very science-y. Your story checking out, so far.

Whendiana Joan: Kennen, I am so sorry to interrupt your experimenting, but dinosaurs have gone extinct in What If World's future and we need your help to bring them back.

Kennen: But, you...

Whendiana Joan: From the present to the future. It's confusing.

Kennen: But you know that dinosaurs are extinct now, too. How am I supposed to help?

Whendiana Joan: We figured that with your background in microbiology and virology, as well as the fact that there's a lot of magical science stuff happening in What If World all the time that if you came over to What If World, we could make it happen together.

Kennen: All right, hold on a second. Let me check my calculations here to see if this is even possible. [Clicks] Hmm....

Learninator: Don't forget to carry the one.

Kennen: Thanks, I always forget that one. All right, I think it just might be possible. I think we can do this, guys.

Learninator: Let's go!

Mr. Eric: And like that... they were in What If World.

Learninator: I'm sorry about the... I mean, laboratory.

Chickens: [Chicken noises!]

Kennen: You call this a lab? Have you heard of sanitation.

Whendiana Joan: This was the quickest lab we could get access to. It's got plenty of chickens, which we may need for our experiment, and well, they just usually leave their keys in the door. Just think of it like a science barn, a labarnatory.

Kennen: Well, lucky for you, I grew up on a farm so I think I can make do with all of this, but uh, I'm glad that you have chickens. I have a feeling these might come in handy for our experiments.

Mr. Eric: The doors to the barn swung open as Abacus P. Grumbler, wizard and professor of the Observatorium strode in!

[Record scratch.]

Abacus: What are you all doing in my labarnatory?

Kennen: I thought we had permission to be in here!

Whendiana Joan: No, not exactly. He leaves the keys in the door.

Learninator: Sorry, Abacus, we are doing a science experiment with Kennen and also the chickens and the eggs.

Abacus: Oh, what do chickens and eggs have anything to do with science?

Kennen: Ah! Now this is a question that I can answer with a lot of excitement. Did you know that chickens and modern day birds are actually closely related to dinosaurs. They're the closest ancestors that we have.

Abacus: So that little chicken right there could be Q-Rex's great, great, grand-daughter?

Kennen: More like great great great great great greatgreatgreatgreat GREAT granddaughter. But, yes.

Learninator: That was a lot of greats.

Abacus: Very well, you've convinced me. You have my wand to assist you.

Whendiana Joan: I'm not sure this is actually a good thing. We should just get this experiment under way. You know, I did manage to get some dinosaur DNA from pteradactyl earlier today. So here it is in this very scientific-y syringe for you, so you can go ahead by your experiment.

Kennen: Let me get started with this. The first thing is I'm glad we have this magic wand because our closest relative to the chicken is actually going to be the T-Rex, so we're gonna need to magically change this pterodactyl DNA to T-Rex DNA.

Abacus: Oh, I can definitely do that. Okay. Everyone hold very still. Don't shuffle any of the eggs, just in case. Abra-ca-[explosion!]. Abra-ca-boom?

Kennen: Whoa! Oof! That was some powerful magic. Was that supposed to happen?

[Record scratch.]

Abacus: No, that wasn't me...

Learninator: I'm sorry, I had a robot burrito for lunch.

Whendiana Joan: That wasn't you, either, Learninator. It came from outside. It was an explosion.

Learninator: Excuse me anyway.

Kennen: Oh, it smells like oil and old grease.

Learninator: Yes. You need lots of old grease in a proper robot burrito.

Abacus: I'm sorry, I have to explain. A recent What If Question brought some booming boxes to my laboratory. They tend to explode willy-nilly. Standard What If World stuff, really, but it'll probably destroy us if we don't manage to finish this experiment quickly.

Kennen: Oh, you could have mentioned that before I came to this barn. I guess that puts a little time crunch on us because explosions, believe it or not, are not good things to have in a laboratory, barn or otherwise.

Abacus: Don't worry... my magic was must have been probably very controlled slightly.

Kennen: Uh, I hadn't even started with this yet, I just put the experiment together and why are the eggs already hatching?

Whendiana Joan: I hope you did some good science preparing because it seems your syringe has burst open due to Abacus's magic and spread all over the place.

Kennen: Well, I mean, we had the things to start making a good dinosaur. Some feathers, some scales, sharp teeth... but I don't know if it was completely prepared.

Abacus: The explosion must have just added a little firepower to it.

Kennen: Why do you say that?

Abacus: Because there's a dragon popping out of that egg right now!

Kennen: What? Oh my gosh!

Dragon: RARR!

Kennen: I'm a scientist, I'm not prepared to take on a dragon. I'm looking for suggestions from you guys.

Whendiana Joan: If you're not comfortable with dragons, I understand. Just go wrangle that dinosaur who just cracked out of that egg and suddenly grew to 30 feet tall in a matter of moments.

Kennen: There there, Steve, there there. Uh, this is a giant triceratops. I guess. Does anybody have some lettuce or cabbage?

Steve: Or a robot burrito, that sounded good.

Learninator: No, I only have half of one left and you're not getting it.

Kennen: Give him the burrito before he eats us!

Abacus: Maybe we should take all these dragons and dinosaurs into the future since the experiment has been some kind of sciency success, right?

Kennen: Yeah, this science totally checks out even with the magical dragons. I guess that happens. Anything's possible in What If World. But yeah, we need to get these out of this barn ASAP, especially before they get agitated by those exploding boxes.

Learninator: I do not have the power to get all of these dinosaurs and dragons and people to the future right now. I need a big boost. More than will come from just the other half of this burrito.

Steve: [Chomp] Thank you!

Learninator: Now I have no power boost.

Kennen: Oh my goodness, we need to come up with a way to get power.

Abacus: I could use my magic wand on him. I'm sure there'd be no negative replicachuns from that.

Kennen: No, no, that's enough magic from you, I think, for the day. I have an idea. Let me try out a quick hypothesis. Hmm. Let's see. If I put this energy together, put this energy together.

Whendiana Joan: You might want to speed up that hypothesis just a little bit. My mechanical leg is currently inside a velociraptor.

Kennen: You can't rush the science, but I guess we're just gonna have to give it a shot. Maybe if I can use this booming box. This world is imaginary. I shouldn't explode if I go out there, right?

Learninator: That's a good hypothesis. We should put it to the test.

Kennen: All right, let's go for it. I'm making a run for it.

Mr. Eric: Kennen ran out, grabbed one of the booming boxes, ran it back inside.

Learninator: Quick, put it in my energy chassis!

Mr. Eric: Learninator opened up a door in his chest.

Kennen: Here you go!

Mr. Eric: Kennen shoved the booming box in and closed the door just in time for—

Kennen: Hit the deck! [BOOM!]

Learninator: Uh, serious indigestion. I need to think about my diet.

Kennen: We've got medicines for that where I come from.

Mr. Eric: And... a portal big enough for all of them to fit through suddenly opened.

Kennen: I don't think we have much of a chance, I feel like I'm being pulled into this portal. Make sure you grab every last dragon before we go into there.

Abacus: Okay, I'll grab the little cute one. You grab the really big oooooone.

Kennen: Aaaah!

Steve 2: I love hugs!

Kennen: There, there, Steve.

Steve 2: Yes, I'm also Steve!

Kennen: And Sarah.

Mr. Eric: And just like that, they were all in the future. And a shiny, wide-open future, with zipping metal planes and drones flying above them, which the dragons flew up after.

Learninator: That's probably going to be fine, don't worry about it.

Whendiana Joan: Yes, the important thing is we got dragons—I mean, dinosaurs back to the future. That's what this was all about, right?

Kennen: Yeah, why did we want dinosaurs in this future with all of these flying things, again? I should have put more questioning into the science before I just blindly agreed to this. It just seemed like so much fun.

Abacus: That's the thing about science. Sometimes you just do it for the fun of it and then you realize that you've got to be a little more responsible next time.

Kennen: Uh, yes. I can see that as that triceratops is over there toppling over garbage trucks looking for food.

Steve: My name's also Steve!

Kennen: Oh, baby Steve. I kind of want to bring him back to the real world with me. Is that a possible thing, here?

Learninator: You know, it's a good thing you didn't explode after all, Kennen. I guess your hypothesis was correct.

Kennen: Yeah, but if this was really good science I should probably try it again. You know, reiterate and repeat the experiment. Make sure it's reproducible.

Abacus: You mean more explosions? Ooh hoho!

Kennen: Hand me that box right over there. Here you go! Trial two! [Explosion]

Mr. Eric: The end.
[Falling harp scale.]

Mr. Eric: Kennen, we did it!

Kennen: Woo! Okay!

Mr. Eric: That was so fun and so easy.

Kennen: Before the pandemic, they used to have storytelling events here in Chicago, which are great, and I have so much respect for what you do. Your creativity is off the chains, man.

Mr. Eric: Oh, thank you. I have so much respect for what you do. I am not a scientist, but I like to get advice from scientists and hear from them. I love what you're doing. I can't wait to see more of you on King of Random. Tell us about it.

Kennen: Yeah, I've filmed a few shows with them. Right now we're doing a lot of things remotely because of the pandemic. We're trying to be as safe and as smart as possible. But we've talked about things from masks to one of my favorite experiments that I've done with them was, we did a whole extracting DNA from strawberries. So just in line with this podcast of how could you do dino DNA. We looked at how you can pull DNA out from anything that's living around you.

Mr. Eric: And you actually managed to do it? Get the DNA out of the?

Kennen: Yeah, we bought 24 pounds worth of strawberries and pulled the DNA out of it. It's all gooey and mucousy but you can do some cool stuff. Maybe make some strawberry dinos someday.

Mr. Eric: That sounds delicious. Or dangerous? Dangerlicious? We'll say?

Kennen: I love that, yes.

Mr. Eric: Kennen, you're right now in a PhD program for virology, right?

Kennen: Yep, yep. I'm in my fourth year studying viruses.

Mr. Eric: For the kids at home, what's something they might not know or might be fun to learn about viruses?

Kennen: So my favorite viral fun fact is actually viruses have been around for as long as living things have been around and they've helped us and shaped the way that we've grown as a species. So, in fact, 8% of all of your DNA comes from viruses. You're 8% virus DNA inside of you.

Mr. Eric: What?

Kennen: Yeah, yeah.

Mr. Eric: Oh, wow.

Kennen: Yeah, it's pretty crazy. So over the entire history of humans developing into what we are, we've been infected with viruses because they're important, as all of life, and parts of their DNA have stuck around in us. So we can actually look at that and see when we picked up that DNA, which is pretty cool.

Mr. Eric: Now we have scientists like you who are helping to keep us safe and learn more about these viruses. It's kind of amazing.

Kennen: Yeah, I mean, I study viruses because clearly I'm biased. There's only a small fraction of them that actually make humans sick. But that's also why we have scientists who study these things to make the vaccines that are coming out, because once you understand how they work then you can start to fight them off and you don't have to be so afraid of them, which is what I love about my job.

Mr. Eric: Yeah. You can be safe and smart. And one thing I'll say about King of Random, you always talk about safety.

Kennen: Oh, definitely. In What If World you can throw a hypothesis together pretty quick but on the King of Random we like to test things out and make sure that nobody's gonna lose a finger or a hand before we make something go boom.

Mr. Eric: Honestly, this was a true pleasure. You're welcome back any time.

Kennen: Thank you so much for having me on here and don't tempt me, because I will be back in a heartbeat to go on more stories in What If World.

Mr. Eric: All right, all right! Thank you again, Kennen, and have a good one.

Kennen: All right. Thank you, Mr. Eric!

Mr. Eric: So our secret question, you might have guessed, was what if chickens laid dragon eggs? Thank you, Wolfgang, for that question. And thank

you Oliver for yours. I'm gonna link to the King of Random and a virology video from Kennen if you want to check them out.

JF Kitty: I want to give a quick meow out to Ayla, age six, from Seattle. She has two cats, Momo and Marigold, and an older brother named Cy.

Cleocatra: Cleocatra here to meow out Bronwyn. She likes drums although she does not have a set just yet and she loves her sister, Cordelia.

Fred the Dog: And a big woof woof here for William, age eight. He lives in Cheney, Washington and loves WWII trivia.

JF Kitty: And one final meow out for Ryan, age seven.

Mr. Eric: And I'd like to thank Karen O'Keeffe, my co-creator, Craig Martinson for our theme song, Dessiree McFarland for her sound design and editing, and all you kids at home who know that scientists ask a lot more questions than they ever get answers, and that's just part of the fun.

So, until we meet again, keep wondering.

[What If World theme plays.]