

Podcast: What If World

[Episode: 209: What if Cthunkle opened a coffee shop? \(Cthoffee Shop Plot Part 1\)](#)

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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 starting off with a question from a patron named Callen.

Callen: Hello, my name's Callen and I like Star Wars and my what if question is what if Cthunkle owned a coffee shop.

Callen's Parent: Okay, bye, we love your podcast!

Mr. Eric: Callen, I love that idea. I cannot wait to tell a Cthunkle-inspired story. Now, I found another question from a listener named Emmy Chung. I think you're all gonna love it but I want to read it after the story so it's still a bit of a surprise.

So let's find out what if Cthunkle opened a coffee shop? Plus, a secret question from Emmy that you'll find out after the story.

[Rising harp scale.]

Today was a very special day for Cthunkle. It was the grand opening of his shop. Cthoffee. His coffee shop was built right at the edge of Squid Lake so that every parent and caregiver would pass by it on their way to the Observatorium. It was an amphibious-style shop, meaning it catered to those who breathed air and water, alike, with a basement floor that was completely underwater, whether or not that was practical for coffee service.

Cthunkle: Come one, come all! Tremble at our exposed brick facade, musty, vintage furniture, and paintings by local artists hanging from the wall. Also, we sell coffee.

Mr. Eric: Said Cthunkle, seeming a little nervous. Now, Cthunkle is sometimes referred to as a squid-o-pus, but he's really more of an... it's hard to describe.

Cthunkle: An unimaginable horror from beyond the cosmos, and now a small business owner.

Mr. Eric: Well, yeah. Customers came in one by one. A charming little bell rang every time a customer entered or left and two of Cthunkle's tentacles were running the drive thru at the same time.

Tentacle 1: Welcome to Cthoffee! This is Cthunkle's talking tentacle. May I take your order.

Alabaster Zero: I'm not sure.

Mr. Eric: Said a voice over the drive thru speaker.

Alabaster Zero: Is justice on the menu?

Tentacle 1: True justice is difficult to define and requires constant vigilance and re-evaluation with the every changing circumstances of our complex world.

Alabaster Zero: Uh... can I just get a black coffee, then?

Tentacle 1: Sure thing, drive on up.

Alabaster Zero: Actually I walked here. I just wanted to talk into the drive thru window, I thought it would be more dramatic.

Tentacle 1: Oh, I should cancel the coffee.

Alabaster Zero: Yeah, I think I'll just come in.

Mr. Eric: And into the busy coffee shop stepped Detective Alabaster Zero, pulling up the collar of his dungaree jacket and inspecting every inch of the coffee shop with a wary eye.

Cthunkle: Greetings, Alabaster.

Alabaster Zero: Oh, hi, there, Cthunkle.

Cthunkle: I thought we agreed not to appear in the same stories...

Alabaster Zero: Because our voices are both so low and rumbly.

Cthunkle: Well, my voice is obviously lower and more rumbly, but yes.

Alabaster Zero: Well, if your voice is rumblier than mine then you should have no problem with us being in the same story.

Cthunkle: Ugh. What do you want, Alabaster Zero? This is a perfectly legal business endeavor.

Alabaster Zero: Is it, Cthunkle? Or is it New What City all over again. Flashback!

Cthunkle: Didn't you read the sign? [Record scratch.]

Alabaster Zero: What?

Mr. Eric: And one of Cthunkle's many tentacles tapped a tinny sign.

Alabaster Zero: No flashbacks!?! C'mon!

Cthunkle: Take it outside, Detective.

Alabaster Zero: But then I'm just gonna be reminiscing by myself and we already started makin the bedubeduduh flashback sound.

Mr. Eric: But Cthunkle tapped the sign again, insisently.

Alabaster Zero: Fine.

Mr. Eric: And as Alabaster walked out of the shop and that little bell rang, in Cthunkle's memory, the chime turned into the thunderous booming toll of an iron bell that once hung from a tall tower in the middle of New What City.

Alabaster Zero: Hey, are you having a flashback in there?

Cthunkle: It's my business, I can do what I want.

Alabaster Zero: No fair!

Mr. Eric: It was about a decade ago, and one of Cthunkle's more calculated... and convoluted plots to take over What If World was very nearly complete.

Cthunkle: General Squidarella.

Mr. Eric: Boomed Cthunkle while clinging to his strange throne at the center of this tall tower from which this bell rang.

Cthunkle: That bell is only supposed to ring when it is time for us to finally finish our evil plot.

Squidarella: Plus every hour on the hour.

Cthunkle: Oh yes, so no one can sleep very well and they're always cranky.

Squidarella: Just a little side-plot.

Mr. Eric: Squidarella was young as giant squid generals go, but she had served Cthunkle well as he slowly unfolded a plot to take over New What City.

Cthunkle: But Squidarella, it is only 15 minutes past the hour and 15 days until we launch our plan to take over this city and by extension, the world.

Squidarella: I apologize, but it appears nature cares naught for your plans.

Mr. Eric: Said Squidarella, gesturing toward the window with a tentacle of her own.

Cthunkle: Why did I tint these windows with my own ink?

Squidarella: So that no one could see through them, even other interdimensional beings.

Cthunkle: But I am an interdimensional being so now I can't see through my own window. It's your job to talk me out of these things, Squidarella.

Squidarella: Apolo-geez Louise...

Cthunkle: Apologies Louise accepted.

Mr. Eric: Cthunkle scuttled over to open the window and New What City was being assaulted by an incredible hurricane.

Cthunkle: Squidarella, couldn't you have just told me about the hurricane before I opened the window?

Squidarella: I mentioned it this morning in your daily briefing.

Cthunkle: Ugh, you know I don't pay attention to those. I'm an evil mastermind. I'm too busy for such things.

Mr. Eric: Cthunkle struggled to close the window against the wind and rain, and then strangely, he heard something.

Cthunkle: What in the If World is that?

Mr. Eric: Asked Cthunkle.

Squidarella: Sounds like the cry of a baby squid?

Cthunkle: I see. It must be a hopeful minion angling for your job with their go-get-'em attitude by climbing to the top of my tower.

Squidarella: Or they need our help.

Cthunkle: What kind of self-respecting squid needs help? Huh!

Mr. Eric: Cthunkle poked his mantle out of the great big window and looked up toward the sound of that squalling squid. It clung to the top of the bell with its tiny tentacles as the strong winds shook the bell back and forth.

Bell: Dong! Dong!

Cthunkle: Little squid, please do not ring the bell. It is only to be used to annoy others, but right now, it's annoying me.

Mr. Eric: Cthunkle steadied the bell with one tentacle and reached up with another for the little baby squid. But it wouldn't take hold.

Cthunkle: Ugh, you're not proving yourself to be a loyal minion, baby squid!

Mr. Eric: And Cthunkle climbed fully out of his tower to look the little creature square in the eye.

Cthunkle: Now, you listen to me.

Mr. Eric: Again, the giant squid-o-pus, but despite Cthunkle's stern gaze, the little baby squid seemed comforted and flung itself onto Cthunkle's head, suctioning on for dear life.

Cthunkle: I appreciate your tenacity, but isn't it a little soon to try to overthrow me, little one.

Mr. Eric: Said Cthunkle, quickly climbing his way off the bell, down the tower, back through his open window before slamming it shut behind him.

Cthunkle: Protect me, my general! This baby squid is staging a coup.

Squidarella: They're not staging a coup, Cthunkle, they are scared.

Cthunkle: Oh, good. I feed on fear. I think I will call it Scullen, since it likes to cling to my skull.

Squidarella: Squids don't have skulls, Cthunkle.

Cthunkle: Well, good thing I'm not a squid. I'm a terror beyond imagining and I can have a skull whenever I want.

Squidarella: Okay, so what are you gonna do with little Scully?

Cthunkle: Scullen is going to help me take over New What City and by extension, the world. End flashback.

Squidarella: Uh, what?

Cthunkle: Sorry, I'm a timeless being and at some point I imagine I'm going to be thinking back upon this moment and there's just not much more useful information to be learned right now.

Squidarella: Oh. But what if I talk about my cool backstory and how I rose to become the youngest squid general in What If World history?

Cthunkle: Uh, fine. Do that.

Squidarella: It all started deep beneath the water—

Cthunkle: Uh-huh.

Squidarella: Of your local aquarium! Twist!

[Flashback ending sound.]

Mr. Eric: Back in the present, Alabaster Zero was still snooping around Cthoffee Shop, snapping pictures from the outside and scrutinizing everyone that came and went.

Cthunkle: Alabaster...

Mr. Eric: Groaned Cthunkle, sticking his head over the coffee shop.

Cthunkle: You're scaring away my customers.

Alabaster Zero: Oh, oh? Is it me? The detective with the awesome dungaree jacket scaring your customers? Or maybe it's the 700 ton squid-o-pus giving them mind control coffee or something like that.

Cthunkle: We have a variety of energizing coffees and relaxing herbal teas. But that is as close to mind control as we get.

Alabaster Zero: Then prove it!

Mr. Eric: Said Alabaster Zero, lowering his camera.

Cthunkle: I have already proven it to the health inspector, the Better Business Bureau and all of these customers you see before you.

Alabaster Zero: Yeah, but they don't know you like I do. There's a scheme somewhere here, Cthunkle. Nobody just breaks good overnight.

Cthunkle: That's true. But I was sentenced to three eternities in time out for my various evil plots.

Alabaster Zero: Then how are you free?

Cthunkle: As a timeless being, I can spend as many eternities as I want in my time vortex. Don't worry. It's very inhospitable. Doesn't even have internet.

Alabaster Zero: My goodness, Cthunkle! That's the worst punishment I can possibly imagine. How did you watch cat videos?

Cthunkle: I had to ask Talking Tentacle to pretend to be a cat.

Tentacle 2: And I really don't do a very convincing cat voice. Purr purr rarr meow scratch, etc. You see. It was a rough three eternities.

Mr. Eric: It had started gently raining outside and Alabaster put the lens over his camera.

Alabaster Zero: Well, I suppose if you've served your time and are an upstanding citizen then you wouldn't mind a detective sitting around for three hours sipping a single cup of coffee.

Cthunkle: That is what half of my customers do, yes, while they work on their screenplays.

Alabaster Zero: Oh, this rain's really starting to pick up, Cthunkle. Maybe I'll take you up on that free coffee.

Cthunkle: No, our coffee is very expensive. But that's not technically evil.

Alabaster Zero: A-ha! There's your plot!

Cthunkle: To give my talking tentacle a fair wage and good health care?

Alabaster Zero: Oh, for crying out loud. Can I come in.

Cthunkle: After you, Alabaster.

Mr. Eric: Said Cthunkle, holding the door open for the detective. And as a few fat drops of rain landed on his bulbous mantle, he thought back to when little Scully used to love riding right on top of his head.

[Flashback sound]

A ten year younger Cthunkle slid around his throne room with a little—

Cthunkle: Ten years and three eternities.

Mr. Eric: What?

Cthunkle: You forgot about my three eternities in time out.

Mr. Eric: Oh, you really did that?

Cthunkle: Of course! And I learned a lot in my solitude.

Mr. Eric: Oh, like what?

Cthunkle: How to juggle.

Mr. Eric: And... did you learn anything else?

Cthunkle: Have you ever tried to juggle using an ever changing number of tentacles from within a swirling time vortex?

Mr. Eric: If I say yes, can we get back to the story?

Cthunkle: No.

Mr. Eric: Cthunkle, who was ten years and three eternities younger.

Cthunkle: Thank you.

Mr. Eric: Slid around his throne room, Scully the squid clinging to his massive squid-o-pus head and giggling madly.

Cthunkle: Oh, the sound of your squiddy laughter fills me with joy. Or... evil joy, that is.

Squidarella: Cthunkle, the storm's intensifying. We need to move on with our plan.



Mr. Eric: Said Squidarella, and Cthunkle stopped, gently removing Scully the Squid from his mantle.

Scully: [Crying]

Cthunkle: Oh, no, baby is unhappy.

Squidarella: Probably because he needs food and a nap.

Cthunkle: Foodandanap? What kind of ancient ritual is this?

Squidarella: Food. And a nap. You can't just play with babies all day.

Cthunkle: Play? I was training him to one day rule New What City after we move on to taking over the rest of the world.

Squidarella: Well, first he's gonna need to learn to scuttle and talk and read...

Cthunkle: Ugh, sounds boring.

Squidarella: And all of that will come after you feed him.

Mr. Eric: And Squidarella handed Cthunkle a baby bottle full of plankton.

Cthunkle: Ew. No, I'm not going to do that.

Squidarella: But Cthunkle...

Cthunkle: You said, yourself. The storm grows. We must launch into our evil plan and give Scullen a little on the job training.

Mr. Eric: Cthunkle flung open the wide windows of his throne room again. At that moment, their tower happened to be right in the eye of the hurricane and they looked out upon a New What City getting a sky full of rain dropped on it, with heavy winds whipping and thunder and lightning crashing in the distance.

Cthunkle: You see, young Scullen.

Mr. Eric: Said Cthunkle, gesturing out over the city as the little baby squid climbed up to his head again.

Cthunkle: I have towers like this all over the city. We call them Squidbucks and we sell my ink as coffee.

Scully: [Babbles squid-ish-ly.]

Cthunkle: I'll have you know my ink is delicious. It's wonderfully hot and bitter just how coffee's supposed to be.

Scully: [Babbles squid-ish-ly.]

Cthunkle: Oh, yes, well, you could also add lots of cream and sugar.

Scully: [Babbles squid-ish-ly.]

Cthunkle: Or plankton.

Scully: Scully: [Babbles squid-ish-ly.]

Cthunkle: Anyway, one of the many benefits of my ink is that it slowly turns you into a squid-o-pus.

Scully: [Babbles squid-ish-ly.]

Cthunkle: No, no, no, you're perfect just the way you are, but everyone else will be much happier to control... I mean, easier to minion... I mean, mind control. I'll control their minds once I submerge all of New What City in inky water.

Squidarella: But boss, the hurricane came early. If with dump all the ink towers now, people will take longer to transform.

Cthunkle: Wonderful. Then Scullen and I can sit atop my tall tower and watch as all of New What City slowly falls into our dominion.

Squidarella: Well, yeah, but...

Cthunkle: Okay, just give me the plankton bottle, I'll feed him.

Mr. Eric: Cthunkle climbed up into the eye of the storm and perched at the very top of his tower. Then, reaching out with one increasingly long tentacle, he tipped over one ink tower after another after another until New What City was half flooded by ink and hurricane water.

Scully: [Babbles squid-ish-ly.]

Mr. Eric: But Scully the Squid wasn't watching the show. He had finished his bottle of plankton and was drifting off to sleep.

Cthunkle: Scullen, you're missing it! How can you expect to be a good tyrannical ruler if you've never seen tyranny in action?

Bell: [GONG GONG GONG...]

Mr. Eric: The hurricane was moving. They were no longer in the eye of the storm and the wind and rain started to pick up again.

Squidarella: Cthunkle, you should get in here.

Cthunkle: Nonsense. There's nothing like a brisk superstorm to invigorate an ancient squid-o-pus.

Mr. Eric: And Cthunkle stretched out, closing his eyes and enjoying the storm until...

Scully: [Cries loudly and fades off into the distance.]

Cthunkle: Scullen? Scullen???

Mr. Eric: To be continued.

[Falling harp scale.]

Alabaster Zero: You can't stop a story in the middle of a flashback!

Mr. Eric: Alabaster, we'll finish it next week.

Alabaster Zero: But I don't know if Scully's okay?

Cthunkle: Scullen is a tween-age squid-o-pus and a recurring character in What If World.

Alabaster Zero: Yeah, I know who Scullen is.

Mr. Eric: And this story takes place in his past.

Alabaster Zero: And he just kerplunked into an inky flood!

Mr. Eric: And we'll find out what happens next week!

Alabaster Zero: I don't wanna wait that long!

Cthunkle: But I thought you didn't enjoy my flashbacks.

Alabaster Zero: I didn't say that! I just wanted to have my own flashbacks like about the time I met my cat, Tabby Tallulah. It was several years ago—

Mr. Eric: Alabaster, we already told that story.

Alabaster Zero: Fine.

Mr. Eric: Well, Emmy and Callen, I hope you enjoyed the first half of your story. And since our story isn't quite over, we'll wait until next week to tell you Emmy's question.

Candy the Kid: Candy the Kid here to shout out Barnabus. He's ten root-beer-tootin' years old. He likes codes and ciphers, the game Zeus the Mighty, and pesto pizza.

JF Kitty: I've got a belated birthday shout out for Leo who just turned 11.

Abacus: And I've got a pre-birthday shout out for Mabel, who is about to turn nine. Unless of course she's listening to this episode in the future and is already older than nine. Ooooh!

Harrigo: I'm Harrigo and I've got a shout out for Alexander from Melbourne, Australia. He loves video games, foxes, and his sister, Amelia, and finally, his dog, Bailey!

Mr. Eric: And I'd like to thank Karen O'Keeffe, my co creator, Craig Martinson for our theme song, my helper, Miss Lynn, Dessiree McFarland for her sound design, and all you kids at home who know that your story is happening at the same time as someone else's story! And someone else's story! And sometimes it's okay to just sit back and enjoy all the stories happening around you.

Until we meet again, keep wondering.