

Podcast: [What If World](#)

Episode: 222: What if we were school buses' breakfast? (Petey the Pumpkin Part 1)

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Lyrics: [Spooky background sounds play during the theme song.] 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.

Petey: Ahoy, me hearties! And welcome back to What If World, the show where your questions and I-fears inspire—

Mamma Jamma: Excuse me, Petey. Don't you mean questions and ideas?

Petey: Not this week, Mamma Jamma.

Zach: And why are you welcoming us? You're in our house!

Petey: Well, you see, Zach, we're all imaginary—[record scratch]

Zach: What?

Petey: So I'm addressening our listeners in What Is World, where we don't exist. [Soundtrack sting]

Zach: I don't exist?

Mamma Jamma: Petey the Pumpkin! What did I say when I brought you home from the pumpkin patch?

Petey: Don't break your kids' brains.

Mamma Jamma: Don't break my kids' brains!

Zach: Mamma Jamma? What is existence?

Mamma Jamma: Zach, listen to me. You are every bit as real as me and this talking pumpkin that used to be our realtor.

Zach: Okay, phew.

Zizi: Yeah, but I'm a little curious why Petey's a pumpkin now?

Poppa Loo: Well, Zizi, I bet our first What If question will answer that for you.

Petey: Y'arr, indeed, Poppa Loo. Patron Tobin S. from Rochester, New York, writes, "What if Petey the Pirate turned into a pumpkin?"

Mamma Jamma: He also painted a beautiful pumpkin pirate, just like you.

Petey: Well, I'm more of a what-o'lantern. You know with the cut out teeth and a candle for brains.

Poppa Loo: That explains a lot. Hahaha... [crickets]. Because brains are usually organic matter.

Zach: Poppa Loo, never make a dad joke at the expense of a what-o'lantern.

Poppa Loo: Oh, why not?

Zizi: Because they can make our fears come to life every Halloween.

Petey: Or sometimes other days, depending on when you're listening.

Zach: When who's listening? What are you talking about?

Mamma Jamma: Nothing, honey. Now be my good helper and get ready for the school bus.

Zach: But Mom and Dad, I don't like the school bus.

Poppa Loo: And why not, son?

Petey: Oh, that'll be because of this week's question from Berkeley.

Berkeley: Hi.

Berkeley's Parent: What's your name?

Berkeley: My name is Berkeley.

Berkeley's Parent: What do you like?

Berkeley: I like unicorns.

Berkeley's Parent: What's your question?

Berkeley: What if whales were actually school buses [unclear].

Berkeley's Parent: Say, have a great day!

Berkeley: Have a great day!

Petey: A spooktacular question. Now witness as me pumpkin powers make Berkeley's questions and Zach's I-fears come to life. What if we are school buses' breakfast? [Spooky, echoing, pirate pumpkin laughter.]

[Rising harp scale]

Zach: I shouldn't have complained about the bus. I knew what Poppa Loo was gonna say.

Poppa Loo: Wha-What's happening? You've got a faraway look in your eyes, Zach, but you're not saying anything. Are you narrating in your head again?

Zach: He was always confused when I narrated in my head rather than responding to him. But he'd never give up a chance to lecture me about school buses.

Poppa Loo: You know, Zach-y, having a bus that takes you to school is a privilege.

Zach: And on he went. I should have interrupted but I was too busy having this inner monologue.

Poppa Loo: Many studies have shown school buses are the safest vehicles on the road.

Zizi: Ah, but Dad? Remember the what if question? This school bus is gonna eat us.

Zach: That's my big sister, Zizi. She's always sticking up for me, even when I don't want her to.

Poppa Loo: No "But, Dad," Zizi.

[Zach and Zizi giggle.]

Poppa Loo: Kids are up to 70 times as likely to get to school safely when riding the bus.

Mamma Jamma: And there's nothing more important to us than your safety. So go get eaten by your school bus, honeys.

Bunicorn: Boopboooooop.

Zach: And there she was, the school bus, waiting right outside our door, which is another thing buses usually do outside of stories so don't be late for yours.

Bunicorn: It's me Bunicorn, the bus unicorn. Please conclude your narration by climbing into my mouth.

Zach: And that's just what I did. Sure it was weird walking into the stomach of a half-bus, half-unicorn, but that was the least of my worries.

Scully: Hey, Zach. Sit up front with me! It'll take us longest to be digested that way.

Zach: It was Scully the Squid, always the practical one, but I was playing the long game so I walked right by him with a cool nod.

Scully: Wow, cool nod, Zach. See you later, heh heh... assuming you survive.

Zach: I waded through sparkling rainbow juices toward the rear of the Bunicorn. Some kids looked up at me and shook their heads. They knew what I was in for.

Zizi: Uh, Zach, don't you want to sit up front with your friend, Scully? We're just going to be making rude jokes back here and sometimes hurting each other's feelings by pretending we're too cool to care.

Zach: Zizi was at it again, trying to keep me safe and underestimating me at the same time. All the big kids were looking at me, now. It was my chance. I'd planned out everything perfectly. I just needed to finally say—

Bunicorn: Sit down, Zach. You know I have eyes in the back of my, well, caboose.

[Kids laugh.]

Zach: All the kids laughed. This wasn't part of my plan. They were supposed to be laughing because of me, not because of me. I slumped into one of the high-backed, closely-spaced, well-padded, energy-absorbing seats the Bunicorn had swallowed.

Bully 1: Heh, look at him. He's probably sitting there thinking about bus safety.

Bully 2: Yeah, like how the engineering of these seats is one of the main reasons school buses is so safe even without seatbelts.

Bully 1: Exactly. When he should be thinking about the looming stress of bullying in this often under-supervised environment.

Bully 2: Truly, it's an age-old concern that requires an often unsustainable level of support, training, and communication between schools, communities, and bus drivers themselves.

Bully 1: Or self-driving buses, in our case.

Bully 2: Naturally.

Zach: It was the WIMPs, the Well-Informed Mean People. I just had to hope they'd forget about me. Or that the bus would finish eating them before—

Bully 1: But if my acute emotional intelligence is correct, then he is hoping that we will only talk about him behind his back, within earshot.

Bully 2: So instead, we should use our empathy as a weapon and force a confrontation post haste.

Bully 1: It is the code of the WIMPs. Deeply flawed, but obeyed without question by us, who invented the code.

Zach: They turned their attention on me, but this time, I was ready. I looked them both right in the eye, and I pointed toward the rear of the bus and said, "Ha, Bunicorn. More like, poo-nicorn." [Crickets.]

I was met by a stunned silence.

Bully 1: I am stunned into silence by this unexpected potty joke.

Bully 2: Perhaps we have unfairly underestimated him.

Bully 1: You are right. But by the code of the WIMP, we must still persecute him unless he publicly betrays a friend or sibling in favor of our toxic ways.

Bully 2: Oh yeah. Did he do that?

Zach: I did. I made fun of the bus driver!

Bully 1: It's true. They are often undervalued and expected to do the impossible.

Bully 2: Manage our behavior while operating a large vehicle.

Bully 1: In this case, operating herself.

Bully 2: Naturally.

Zach: So am I in? Am I cool? Will you stop making fun of me now?

Bully 2: Oh, sorry, kid, but you'll always be seven months younger than me.

Bully 1: And 13 months younger than me.

Bully 2: And thus, by the code of the WIMPs—

Zizi: That is it!

Zach: Oh, Zizi. I should have stopped her, but it felt good to have someone sticking up for me.

Zizi: You two are the real wimps, and I don't mean the acronym.

Bully 1: Of course, by acronym, she means how W-I-M-P stands for Well-Informed Mean Person.

Zizi: My brother shouldn't have to be brave to sit back here. He should get to sit wherever he wants without getting picked on.

Bully 2: Wow, no one we respect has ever spoken to us this way.

Bully 1: But of course, we do not respect many people.

Zizi: You don't respect me, you're just afraid of me.

Bully 2: Oh, she got us pegged. Now I fear-slash-respect her even more.

Bully 1: And thus, we will find another target for our misguided behavior.

Zach: No! I shouted. I don't want you to just pick on someone else.

Bully 2: Oh, yeah, but without positive reinforcement from multiple sources—

Bully 1: We are likely to fall back on these WIMP-y—

Bunicorn: We're here! Time for me to finish eating you! [Glarg glarg glarg]

Zach: The sparkling rainbow juice that had been splashing around the belly of the bunicorn suddenly swelled up like a wave, crashing over the two WIMPs and then rolling toward the rest of us.

Bully 2: Ooh! Woah!

Bully 1: Why were we not more worried about this eventuality?

Bully 2: Truly, we've lived a life of glib detachment. It is only now in my final moments that I regret—

[Grrgle SPLASH]

Zach: And under they went. The rest of us were racing toward the mouth of the bunicorn.

[Children scream.]

Bunicorn: Sorry, that's not how this works, wa-haha oh-hohoho! [Gulp!]

Zach: And then we all went under the wave of glittery rainbow juice.

[Ker-splonkers!] [Crashing noises.]

Zach: And got shot out of the bunicorn's horn as if it were a magic blowhole, landing us safely in our seats at the Observatorium.

Bully 1: I am wet and sparkly, but unharmed.

Bully 2: Still, we got some comeuppance we will not soon forget.

Bully 1: Indeed, fellow WIMP. Indeed.

Zach: The end.

[Rising harp scale]

Poppa Loo: Well, wait, did they learn their lesson? Are you going to be okay riding the bus?

Zach: I'm here telling the tale, aren't I?

Zizi: Hey, yeah, wait. How did that happen? We were just in school, and then—

Petey: Y'arr, it's simple, you see. The Jamma-Loo house, here, is a framing device for our spooky Halloween stories.

Zach: Huh?

Mamma Jamma: What?

Petey: Once the story ended, we were instantly transported back to the living room, and now someone else will get a turn to narrate.

Zach: So, magic?

Petey: No, no, no, more like lazy editing by Mr. Eric.

Mamma Jamma: Petey the Pumpkin...

Petey: Oh, uh, sorry. Magic, yes. I mean magic. And now it's someone else's turn to tell a story.

Poppa Loo: Oh, I've got such a great one.

Zizi: I call next!

Petey: Go ahead, Zizi.

Poppa Loo: Aw, shucks. Is it too early for me to call next next?

Zach: There's no next next, Poppa Loo.

Mamma Jamma: I'm sorry, he's right. I will, however, remind Petey that I'm the one that saved him from the pumpkin patch full of hungry piglets.

Petey: And next nexties go to Mamma Jamma.

Mamma Jamma: Yes!

Poppa Loo: No!

Zizi: Well, it's my turn, first. And, oh, I'm a little embarrassed to admit, but I'm kind of afraid of the dark.

Petey: Y'arr, I hear ye. Fortunately, Sierra and Weston asked the perfect question to help us out.

Sierra: My name is Sierra and—

Weston: My name is Weston and our what if question is—

Sierra: What if it was always night time. Thanks, bye!

Weston: Thanks, bye!

Zizi: How is that supposed to help me?

Petey: Who knows! Maybe it won't!

Zizi: But I thought you were some kind of magic what-o'lantern that would—

Petey: Well, what's find out what if it was always night time.

[Rising harp scale]



Zizi: I can't believe that useless pumpkin. He doesn't even know what he's doing.

Petey: Hey, I'm right here. You haven't even left the living room.

Zizi: I'm aware of that.

Petey: Oh.

Mamma Jamma: Zizi, that's harsh. You know, some kids are gonna go trick or treating this year. Maybe that'd be a good chance for you to face your fears?

Zizi: Oh, with a bunch of make believe monsters running around?

Zach: Don't forget the actual monsters, of which there are many in What If World.

Zizi: No, thank you. I'm not ready! You know I've been brave enough to save Zach from certain doom a half a dozen time.

Zach: Those dooms were probable, at best.

Zizi: So why do I have to be brave again, right now? It's not fair.

Poppa Loo: Zizi, I've seen you face your fears more times than I can count. But it's a big, wide, wonderful world out there, and it's also dark about half the time.

Zizi: But instead of listening to my father, I had come up with an idea.

Poppa Loo: Is she listening to me or just narrating in her head?

Mamma Jamma: I can never tell with kids these days.

Zizi: If I could find the right spell, I could make it daytime all the time. So I turned to my brother, Zach.

Zach: Whoa, whoa, whoa, Zizi. I've seen that look in your eyes. You've been narrating, and you want to cast some powerful spell and we're only beginning wizards. It wouldn't be safe!

Petey: Y'arr, you're more likely to make it night time all the time if you try to cast a spell like that.

Zizi: Why do you say that, Petey the Pumpkin?

Petey: Because of the what if question, of course.

Zach: Are you saying we don't have agency in our own lives?

Petey: Of course you don't.

Mamma Jamma: Petey...

Petey: I mean, of course! You, donut. Donut's something I call people who have agency in their own lives, although sometimes it doesn't feel that way.

Mamma Jamma: Petey!

Petey: Sorry! That's a common existential crisis, Mamma Jamma.

Abacus: Did someone say magic?

Poppa Loo: No.

Zizi: No.

Zach: Uh-uh.

Mamma Jamma: Not me.

Petey: Not even close, really, Abacus.

Abacus: Oh. Then I've wasted a fortune on these bat ear spells.

Zizi: Professor Grumbler, what impossibly perfect timing. I was just about to call you and ask for your advice on a spell.

Abacus: And I was just making the rounds to tell everyone that it's going to be night time forever now.

Zizi: What?

Abacus: Oh, the vampires and the zombies have been on my case for ages.

Mamma Jamma: Why the zombies?

Abacus: It seems they look better in certain lights. Dim ones, for instance.

Poppa Loo: Sounds like these zombies need a little more self-confidence.

Abacus: Probably, but this was easier. Well, good night!

Zizi: But it's eight in the morning!

Abacus: I can't hear you over it being dark, bye!

Zach: That's not how darkness works.

Zizi: I didn't know what to do. Why don't fears ever just wait for you to get everything together and finally have that perfect feeling of—

[Someone knocking on the door.]

Cackula: Ding dong. Ah ha ha ha ha. It's funny because you don't have a doorbell. Ah hahaha!

Zizi: That had to be Cackula. I don't know why we were getting so many house calls all of a sudden. It's as if this story needed to be shorter than usual.

Cackula: And, long story short, I need your children to be stage managers of my one man show. Cackula: Dead and Laughing It. Ah hahaha! Like Leslie Nielsen movie, only funny this time. Mwah. Take that, 1995. End of title of comedy play.

Mamma Jamma: So, everyone in the play quit for some mysterious reason?

Cackula: Crushed under the weight of the marquee. Admittedly, the title was a bit long. Fortunately, they're undead, so, you know, they're just complaining and now I can only employ the living.

Mamma Jamma: So unfair.

Zach: Mom, Dad, you're not really going to make us—

Poppa Loo: I'm sure our kids'll be happy to help you, mister... Kula.

Cackula: Delightful. Just have them bring all of their body parts and blood to my creepy castle tonight. Ah hahaa!

Zizi: Mom!

Mamma Jamma: But Cackula, it's night time right now.

Cackula: Perfect. Let's get going.

Zizi: It wasn't really that I was afraid of the dark, you know. I could see darkness and not feel scared. It's just that when I was alone with my thoughts sometimes I'd start imagining spooky things. And then I couldn't stop imagining those things and having a nice bright light would let me know those things weren't really there.

Cackula: And here we are.

[Squeaking noise, and wind noises.]

Cackula: I turned you children into smoke, and we all drifted here together. You probably do not remember because your living brains could not process the impossible things happening to you.

Zach: Is that why my eyebrows leapt off my face and are dancing together.

Cackula: What, that is not a thing your eyebrows usually do?

Zach: I don't remember.

Cackula: Then, you're probably fine.

Zizi: Cackula's theater was massive and dark. And some of the seats didn't appear to be seats at all.

Cackula: Ah, yes. Those seats are reserved for people who have turned into seats. They do not like it when you sit on them.

Zizi: I wanted to face my fears, but they just kept growing. Having Zach nearby helped a little. Sometimes when I looked after him, I'd feel less afraid.

Zach, I asked him. Wouldn't you feel a little safer if we turned some lights on in here?

Zach: Zizi, are you doing that thing where you try to take care of me because you need an excuse to be brave?

Zizi: Maybe.

Zach: Good, because this place is freaking me out. A spider just told me I'm an impostor and he's the real Zach from the future.

Cackula: Have you finished cleaning out the cogwebs. Just be careful not to touch the cog part or you could create a time doppelganger.

Spider: No, he's my doppelganger.

Zizi: Said a strange clockwork spider.

Zach: Okay, I love monsters, but this place is too weird, even for me.

Zizi: So we both agree, I said to Zach. We just need a little time to get this place fixed up and get ready to face our fears. We'll start by strapping a

couple of flashlights to some helmets and we'll put on reflective vests and hang this whole place with twinkle lights and light all those torches.

[BOOM BOOM BOOM]

- Zizi: A clanging echoed from the castle doors so I turned to Cackula and asked, Hey Cackula? What time is your show supposed to start?
- Cackula: Doors open promptly at sunset, why do you ask?
- Zizi: Because it's always night now so people think your show's about to start.
- Cackula: Oh no. I have not done my vocal warm-ups. Voo invests vervailing vulves are vorn in the vast voodlands. Ven ve vent valking, ve vere vatching vindow vashers vash vindows vith varming vashing vater. Which vitch vines vHITE veasel vull vell. Well, well.
- Zizi: A horde of monsters were clamoring at the doors and all I had time to do was grab one flashlight. I turned to my little brother, Zach, and handed it to him.
- Zach: Zizi, I wish we had more time to get ready, but sometimes our fears don't wait for us. And sometimes—
- Cackula: And sometimes you're never ready. So why not face your fears now when you have an all-powerful vampire looking out for you, making sure you're safe.
- Zizi: All powerful? You just tell jokes.
- Cackula: Exactly. Because laughter is one of the most powerful forces in the world.
- Zach: Then you should tell better jokes.
- Cackula: Ah ha ha ha. I'm putting that in the act and taking credit for it.
- Zach: Okay.
- Zizi: And so, ready or not, Zach and I shared our one flashlight and brought monster after monster—
- Monster: Thank you, young child.
- Zizi: To their seats.

Zombie: [Loud hiss.]

Zizi: Hissed a zombie when I flashed the light on their face. You know, zombie, I'm just as afraid of the dark as you are of the light so why don't we get you to your seat together.

Zombie: Rawr, brains, brainsbrainsbrainsbrains.

Zizi: My Zombie's a little rusty but brainsbrains brains.

Zombie: Braaaains.

Zizi: And I could tell that she understood me. She saw me seeing her and we felt each other's fear and held each other's hands and walked into the theater together.

Zach: Zizi! You're supposed to face your fears by helping me.

Zizi: Said Zach, wrapped up tightly in a time spider's cogweb.

Spider: Now I will be the one true Zach.

Cackula: Ah ha ha. Well, I'm afraid you're out of time, doppelganger. Because our show's about to start! Aah!

Zach: Wait, is someone going to get me out of here?

Zombie: Brains. Brainsbrainsbrainsbrains.

Spider: [Growling] Cackula...

Cackula: The end!

Zach: No, seriously, if someone could please get me out.

[Rising harp scale]

Petey: Well, didn't we learn so many lessons today?

Zach: How am I back in our living room? I was just trapped by a time doppelganger. What's going on?

Mamma Jamma: Okay, you're a little excited. Let's just take a break and we'll tell a couple more stories next week.

Zach: Oh, I want answers!

Abacus: Don't worry about it, it's all magic, Zach. You should understand magic, you're one of my students.

Zach: Yeah, and I have been for five years. Why haven't I gotten any better at magic?

Abacus: Uh, I've got to go!

Petey: Well, Tobin, Berkeley, Sierra, and Weston, I hope you enjoyed your stories. And everyone else, I hope you enjoyed the first half of our two part Halloween special.

Fair Elise: I, Fair Elise, have a shout-out for Julie H. who is five years old, from Austin, Texas. And her older sister is Kate.

Abacus: And I am here to shout out Wailin, who likes Star Wars, playing games, and kittens. Wailin is seven years old, from Salt Lake City.

JF Kat: Then there's Cole and Arthur, ten year old twins from Sydney, Australia! They love listening to What If World when they go to bed and while they love me, JF Kat, their mom thinks Fred is cute and funny. They have a cat named Cumble and a fish named Electron.

Fair Elise: Then there is Tegan, who loves the show, and wants to thank us for doing such a nice job with it. She also loves wearing her What If World t-shirt. Well, thank you, Tegan.

Zach: And finally, it is I, Zachimedes, here to shout out Robby. He's a big fan of Guilds & Goblins, specifically me! Oh, so I get it, so Zachimedes is imaginary because he's my Guilds & Goblins character. But me, Zach, I'm real, right?

Petey: You're as real as what if, Zach. What If World is created by Eric O'Keeffe with help from Karen O'Keeffe. Craig Martinson wrote their theme song. Miss Lynn is their helper, and we'd all like to thank all you kids at home who have ever faced your fears and found they were just a little less fearsome on the other side.

Until we meet again, stay spooky!

Mamma Jamma: Petey...

Petey: Okay, keep wondering.

[What If World theme song plays with spooky sounds added.]