

Podcast: What If World

[Episode 233: What if Fred the Dog fell in love?](#)

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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 listener named Sanaya.

Sonaya: Hi Mr. Eric, my name's Sanaya, I'm 12 years old and me and my sister listen to What If World every night. And our what if question is what if Fred the Dog fell in love?

Mr. Eric: Now, that pairs beautifully with a question from a patron named Addison who asked, what if Fred met a beautiful husky and fell in love?

Then we have another pair of questions that really tied in together, too. The first is from a patron named Keelan, who asked, what if skunk spray smelled good. And the second is from a review question, and our reviewer asked to add a skunk named Princess Stinkybottom to a story.

So, let's find out what if Fred the Dog fell in love, and what if there was a skunk named Princess Stinkybottom.

[Rising harp scale.]

Mr. Eric: It was a warm, sunny day in What If World, and Fred the Dog was hunting through a meadow for the perfect stick. He'd been searching all morning but all he'd managed to find were a few delicious, old, dirty roots.

Fred the Dog: Well, yeah, Mr. Eric. You made me search in a meadow! Why am I not in the forest?

Mr. Eric: Well, because here, in this meadow, sits a beautiful gray and white husky atop a hill.

Fred the Dog: Beautiful? Ha! We all know I'm the most beautiful dog in the world because I got an extra long tongue and I'm very old and I'm missing several teeth. That only adds to my character.

And oh... my goodness. Look at her!

Mr. Eric: Fred started jogging up the hill, tripping over his tongue, quite literally, along the way.

Fred the Dog: Oh, hey, sorry, my name's Fred the Dog. I'm just coming to say hello and see if you've seen any sticks in this meadow...

Husky: I am not looking for sticks. I am looking for calm.

Fred the Dog: Oh, I'm sorry. Calm is more of a concept than an actual, physical thing like a stick, so I'm not sure I can help you find that. But I don't know if I introduced myself, yet. I'm Fred the Dog. I'm kind of a big deal around here.

Husky: I know who you are.

Mr. Eric: Her husky eyes were a striking crystal blue, and her muzzle had the coarse, gray fur of an older dog. She sat upright on the hill, turned slightly away from Fred, and closed her eyes against the warm sun.

Fred the Dog: Oh yeah, sure, I see you're busy, so you don't have to find me a stick... I'll go look for some calm for you, then. Hey, what's your name, by the way?

Husky: My name is Sani, pronoun she/her. And I do not need your help, but I hope you have a nice day, Fred the Dog. Goodbye.

Fred the Dog: Oh, okay. Good bye. See you later. Or not.

Mr. Eric: But Sani, the husky, didn't seem to hear him at all. Fred slinked away from Sani's hilltop and wandered for a while, all the way out of the meadow and beyond. Before long, he found himself sitting on the beach staring at a crystal blue stone.

Fred the Dog: Whoa... how'd I get here so fast?

Fair Elise: I'm sorry, are you talking to us?

Mr. Eric: Asked Fair Elise. She was enjoying a beach day with her partner Sprite Alright and their daughter Pixicato.

Fred the Dog: Oh, hey, President Elise. Do you know how to find calm?

Sprite Alright: Well, we were coming to the beach to look for some calm until you got here.

Mr. Eric: Said Sprite Alright, before teleporting herself into the water for a swim.

Fair Elise: [Sighs] Sometimes I wish I could do that.

Fred the Dog: Yeah, totally, me too, Fair Elise. Anyway, I met this person named Sani, and she had eyes that looked just like this stone. But she said she was looking for calm. But looking at this stone makes me feel calm, so maybe I should give it to her, like, in a dog collar.

Fair Elise: Well, Fred. Some people believe that certain stones and crystals do have a magic all their own.

Mr. Eric: [Quickly] [Pop] It is not the opinion of What If World that crystals contain magical powers. Your results may vary. [Pop]

Fred the Dog: What was that?

Fair Elise: Sounded a lot like a disclaimer.

Fred the Dog: Disks aren't lame, they're great for chewing on.

Fair Elise: No, a disclaimer. Like a denial of responsibility.

Fred the Dog: So I shouldn't give her the magic crystal?

Fair Elise: Well, you should follow your heart, I suppose.

Fred the Dog: Okay, but maybe you could like, make it into a dog collar for her. Then when she carries it around, she'll always be thinking of me.

Mr. Eric: Suddenly, Pixicato got involved in the conversation.

Pixicato: Excuse me, Fred, but it sounds like you just met this Sani. I'm not sure you should be giving her jewelry.

Fred the Dog: Well, listen, she's an old dog. I'm an old dog. It's perfect!

Sprite Alright: Is that Fred still here?

Fair Elise: Yes. He wants me to make him a dog collar so he can go–

Sprite Alright: Then just do it, Fair Elise! This is our first family trip in a month!

Mr. Eric: And with a quick wave of Fair Elise’s wand, and an even quicker teleportation by Sprite Alright...

Fred the Dog: Whoa, hey... I’m back in the meadow. It’s so cool to have magic friends, don’t you think, Sani?

Mr. Eric: But Sani had walked a few hills away to sit beneath a shady tree with an open book in front of her, occasionally turning the page with her nose.

Fred the Dog: Oh, good find, Sani! That’s an awesome tree! I bet there are a lot of sticks over there, I’ll be right there.

Mr. Eric: When Fred the Dog breathlessly ran up her hill, Sani only spared him a quick glance of her crystal blue eyes before turning back to her book.

Fred the Dog: Anyway, I found this, oh, this collar, that I thought maybe you might like. I mean, Fair Elise, she said you might like it. You know she’s my friend, she’s the president, and so was I. So I just teleported back here with help from Sprite Alright, she’s got teleport powers, it’s pretty cool. So anyway, here it is. [Blegh.] Sorry, I was holding it with my tongue.

Mr. Eric: Sani regarded the collar for a brief moment, then nosed her book closed, put it in her picnic basket, and stuck her head through the handle of the basket to carry it home.

Fred the Dog: Oh, Sani, so you forgot the collar, um, you know maybe it’s not your style, so... Fair Elise, I don’t know what she was thinking...

Sani: It is getting late, Fred. I’m going home. Maybe someone else will appreciate that collar, but it is not for me.

Mr. Eric: And Sani the Husky jogged away lightly as the sun began to set.

Fred the Dog: What is up with her?

Mr. Eric: Said Fred, feeling disappointed, until, of course.

Fred the Dog: Whoa... a pretty big stick fell off of this tree. It’s gonna take me all night to chew it. [Chewing] I bet Sani will be so impressed by my stick-chewing skills. [Snoring]

Mr. Eric: After a long, restful night of sleep-chewing in the meadow, Fred woke up to an amazing new smell.

Fred the Dog: Ooh, what a good night of sleep that was. Ooh, what is that?

Mr. Eric: Fred followed his nose down the hill to find a train of skunks with four muscle-bound skunks in the front standing on two legs and holding up a palanquin within which sat...

P. Stinkybottom: 'Tis I, Princess Stinkybottom of Stinkland.

Mr. Eric: She wore a jade tiara and a furry, rainbow robe, trimmed in black, and she smelled like nothing Fred had ever experienced before.

Fred the Dog: Wow. Princess Stinkybottom, your delightful smell makes me feel at one with the universe.

P. Stinkybottom: I have been told my musk is enchanting, yes.

Fred the Dog: But is it calming?

P. Stinkybottom: I am always calm, except, perhaps, when I am set upon by former presidents.

Fred the Dog: Oh, hey, I'm sorry to take up your time. It's just I have a new friend... well, she's not my friend yet, but I want her to be my friend, but she just wants calm and I don't know how to give that to her.

P. Stinkybottom: Not everyone wants gifts.

Mr. Eric: Said Princess Stinkybottom, polishing her jade tiara with a paw.

P. Stinkybottom: Like me, for example. I am one of the wealthiest creatures in What If World, so I much prefer when people do nice things for me rather than piling atop my already superfluously large pile of treasure.

Fred the Dog: Your treasure's got superfleas? Yeah, I wouldn't want to pile on that, either.

P. Stinkybottom: Superfluous.

Fred the Dog: Superflee-us.

P. Stinkybottom: As in too much of a—

Fred the Dog: Like, run away?

P. Stinkybottom: You know what? Forget it.

Fred the Dog: Well, maybe if you all could just take, like, a quick detour for me, we could make the meadow smell so nice. And in doing such a thoughtful thing for her, Sani will finally like me.

P. Stinkybottom: Oh, you are lucky that we skunks are among the most romantic creatures in the world.

Mr. Eric: [Pop] This statement has no basis in science. Do not seek out skunks for romantic advice. [Pop]

Fred the Dog: Whoa, what was that?

P. Stinkybottom: Just a disclaimer, ignore it.

Mr. Eric: And as the sun rose in this meadow, Fred saw Sani the Husky moving through a flowing exercise atop the same hill he'd first met her on. She was deeply focused as she moved paws and tail and head and neck, stretching and swaying, in a kind of meditative dance. And as she did, Princess Stinkybottom, and her royal retinue slowly encircled the hill, spreading out into a heart-shape with their bodies.

Fred the Dog: Well, then that's not really encircling, is it?

Mr. Eric: And—

Fred the Dog: More like enheartening.

Mr. Eric: And once the skunks were finished enheartening the hilltop, they all at once raised their tails and—

[Hissing]

Fred the Dog: We are making a beautiful scent to help you find calm! You're welcome, Sani!

Mr. Eric: Sani's eyes popped open as she stopped dead in her tracks.

Sani: What... is... that?

Fred the Dog: That is the smell of calm! Right?

Sani: No? [Coughs and hacks]

Mr. Eric: Sani's crystal blue eyes teared up as she raced down the hill, gracelessly shaking her shaggy husky fur, trying to get the skunk scent off of her, before disappearing into the tall meadow grass.

Fred the Dog: What? Wait a second? That's the best stink I ever stunked in my whole life? How could she not like it?

P. Stinkybottom: Well, not everyone likes the same things. To us, stink means interesting, intriguing, amazing... and to others it just means stinky. Maybe she wants something more along the lines of a flower.

Fred the Dog: A flower? That's like, the opposite of stinky. Aw...

P. Stinkybottom: Good luck to you, Fred the Dog. You should visit Stinkland someday. I think you'd be very happy.

Fred the Dog: Yeah, thank you, Princess Stinkybottom. You've been very kind.

Mr. Eric: And Fred wandered off again, lost in thought.

Flowers?: [Moaning and groaning]

Fred had wandered his way into a field of strange-smelling flowers where J.F. Kat and Cleocatra seemed to be involved in an argument.

JF Kitty: Back off, Cleocatra! I found it first!

Cleocatra: As if that gives you more claim. I am an empress.

JF Kitty: Former empress!

Cleocatra: That's better than a former president.

JF Kitty: Meow you've done it! Fred, tell Cleocatra about finder's keepers!

Cleocatra: No, Fred. Tell J.F. Kat that this land was once part of the Whygyptian empire.

Fred the Dog: It was? Oh, well, that's actually a much stronger claim, but I thought Whygypt was on the other side of What If World.

JF Kitty: Ha! I win!

Cleocatra: I am going to get an atlas!

JF Kitty: What did you call me?

Cleocatra: It is a collection of maps.

JF Kitty: You're a collection of maps!

Mr. Eric: Cleocatra and J.F. Kat suddenly lunged at each other, and without thinking, Fred—

Fred the Dog: [Tongue noises]

Mr. Eric: Wrapped them both up together in his tongue.

Fred the Dog: No fighting, you two! I know you're angry, and I know you're cats, but it's when we're the angriest that we need to take space for our feelings and make sure we don't hurt anyone.

JF Kitty: Why would I want to do that, Fred? I love everybody.

Cleocatra: It is true. Wriggling within your slimy tongue has reminded me that we are all connected and that only through the labors of love—

JF Kitty: Can we achieve true happiness and justice for all. Oh, Cleocatra, I'm so sorry. I love you.

Cleocatra: No, it is I who am sorry and who loves you.

Fred the Dog: Oh yeah, I love you both but this is getting weird so I'm gonna spit you out now.

JF Kitty: Well, that was weird.

Cleocatra: Indeed.

JF Kitty: It's like when I was in your tongue, I suddenly felt connected and loved and only wished to give love in return.

Cleocatra: Ditto.

Fred the Dog: Oh, my gosh! My tongue has magic love powers! This is perfect!

JF Kitty: I don't know... I'd be careful how you use those powers, Fred.

Fred the Dog: Oh, no, it's not like that. You see, I just keep kind of bothering this person by accident even though I want her to be my friend, so now all I have to do is hug her with my tongue and then she'll like me.

Cleocatra: That is not how relationships work, Fred.



JF Kitty: Yeah, I only like cuddles on very rare occasions. The rest of the time I prefer people to just tell me how great I am.

Cleocatra: Whereas I enjoy sharing activities with my friends and do not need to talk so much as this one.

JF Kitty: Probably why we aren't friends.

Cleocatra: I do not need you to be—

Fred the Dog: But you two just loved each other a minute ago!

Cleocatra: Just because I love my fellow cat—

JF Kitty: Doesn't mean I want to spend time with them.

Fred the Dog: Oh, okay. It must be different with dogs because everybody loves me and wants to spend time with me, so I'm just gonna go give Sani a big hug.

Cleocatra: Do not do that, Fred.

JF Kitty: Yeah, that's a really bad idea!

Fred the Dog: I know, it is a rad idea, J.F. Kat. I agree. And also I can't hear so well anymore because I'm an old dog.

Mr. Eric: J.F. Kat and Cleocatra tried to warn Fred, but he was already running back into the meadow.

As the sun was starting to set again on a beautiful day, Fred found Sani grooming her fur next to a little pond.

Fred the Dog: Wow! You're really into grooming your fur and meditating and reading and other things that I'm not very interested in, but you seem to be really good at them.

Sani: What are you doing, Fred?

Fred the Dog: Saying nice things about you?

Sani: Well, you can stop. You have been nothing but a challenge to my calm since the moment you stumbled your way into my meadow.

Mr. Eric: [Pop] Ownership of the meadow is still unknown. May have once belonged to the Ancient Whygyptian Empire. [Pop]

Sani: What was that?

Fred the Dog: It's a disclaimer, Sani. I know all about them because I'm really smart.

Sani: Apparently not smart enough to take a hint. Please leave me alone.

Fred the Dog: Okay... but how about a hug, maybe?

Mr. Eric: And Fred began to stretch out his tongue.

Sani: No.

Mr. Eric: And as Fred started to unstretch his tongue, many wet clumps of strange smelling flowers fell out of the folds of his tongue onto the hillside around them.

Sani: [Sniffing] This, Fred, is enchanted catnip.

Fred the Dog: Super catnip? How do you know that?

Sani: I'm a horticulturalist.

Fred the Dog: Oh... I must have scooped up those catnip flowers with my tongue when I was trying to pick up J.F. Kat and Cleocatra. That must be why J.F. Kat and Cleocatra were fighting over it and also why they liked being wrapped up in my tongue. I guess I don't have magic love powers.

Sani: That is not how love works, Fred.

Fred the Dog: I'm sorry. I just never felt this way before. I got all confused and mixed up.

Sani: Perhaps there is a world in which we could be friends, if you enjoyed meditation—

Fred the Dog: Oh, uh, no thanks.

Sani: Horticulture.

Fred the Dog: Does chewing dead sticks count?

Sani: Or reading?

Fred the Dog: I'm more of a nap dog than a read dog.

Sani: Then you must accept that we are two dogs with our own lives and our own friends. We both have qualities that make us amazing, but that does not mean—

Fred the Dog: But that does not mean we would be amazing together.

Sani: Right.

Fred the Dog: I'm sorry about bothering you.

Sani: And getting me sprayed by dozens of skunks.

Fred the Dog: Yeah, but I still don't get that you didn't like that.

Sani: I accept your apology. You can make it up to me.

Fred the Dog: Oh, maybe by getting my dragon buddy to dig out this meadow and lift it up into the sky so no one will ever bother you again—

Sani: By leaving.

Fred the Dog: Okay, yeah, that's probably a good idea.

Mr. Eric: And Fred started to slink away as Sani had finished cleaning her fur and finally pulled out a book again to enjoy some reading.

Fred the Dog: Hey, Sani? You said we both have qualities that make us amazing?

Sani: I did.

Fred the Dog: Well, can you remind me of any of them? Because I don't feel so amazing right now.

Sani: Good bye, Fred. Maybe you should try meditating on it.

Mr. Eric: And Fred wandered out of the meadow as the sun fell, his long tongue flapping in the breeze behind him. And out of that tongue fell a dog collar with a crystal blue stone set in the middle of it. Fred stared at that stone, lost in something other than thought. He saw, in the stone's reflection, his big round eyes, his craggy old face, his wrinkly pink tongue, and stars twinkling behind him. He'd spent so much of the last two days worried about how someone else felt about him that he hadn't take the time to think about he thought of himself.

Fred the Dog: Hey, reflection.

Fredlection: I prefer to be called Fredlection.

Fred the Dog: Well, I'm sorry I ignored you a lot, recently, Fredlection.

Fredlection: It's okay, Fred. But I had lots of fun wandering around with you.

Fred the Dog: Me, too.

Fredlection: Me, too.

Fred the Dog: Thanks, Fredlection. You always know just how I'm feeling.

Fredlection: And you always know just how I'm looking. That's a mirror joke.

Fred the Dog: Oh, ho ho ho. I get it.

Mr. Eric: He buried the collar there and enjoyed a quiet walk with himself.

Fredlection: Wait? You're just gonna leave me here, buried in the dirt?

Mr. Eric: Said Fred's reflection, Fredlection.

Fred the Dog: I don't think that's how reflections work, Fredlection.

Fredlection: Oh yeah. Well, see you later.

Fred the Dog: Not if I see you first! Eh? That was a mirror joke.

Fredlection: I get it, ha ha ha ha. See you, something, haaa...

Mr. Eric: The end.

[Falling harp scale.]

Mr. Eric: Well, Sonaya, Keelan, Addison, and our reviewer, I hope you enjoyed your story. We also had one secret add-on question from a patron named Asha, who asked, "What if Fred the Dog could wrap his tongue around two people so hard that it made them fall in love, such as J.F. Kat and Cleocatra?"

Thank you for that inspirational question, and thank all of you for listening and submitting your own questions.

Fred the Dog: Fred the Dog here to shout out Ayley, age seven. Her birthday's in March and she loves me and J.F. Kat as well as her little sister Maeve, who's almost five. They're sisters who live in New Zealand!

Fair Elise: Then there is Zoey, of course, who loves video games, especially Minecraft.

Dracomax: And Nicholas's grandmother asked for me to give him a shout out. Nicholas listens to our stories every night. He has a baby brother named

Julian and I wish them both many happy days of not getting stuck in things.

JF Kitty: Finally, there's Lyric, from Newark, New Jersey, age seven. Lyric's favorite What If World character is me, J.F. Kat. Now you know she has perfect taste.

Mr. Eric: And I'd like to thank Karen O'Keeffe, my co-creator, my producer Lynn Hickernell, who helped develop this story, Craig Martinson for our theme song, and all you kids at home who take time to listen to yourself, both your thoughts and your feelings.

And until we meet again, keep wondering.

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