

Podcast: What If World

[Episode 236: What if Cthunkle teamed up with a psychic cobra?](#)

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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 Asher.

Asher: My name is Asher and my what if question is what river snakes were as the Mass Pike Highway, bye!

Mr. Eric: Ooh, now I'm from Massachusetts, and for those of you who don't know, the Mass Pike is a really long stretch of highway that goes all the way across Massachusetts.

Now, let's hear our second question from a listener named Kayler.

Kayler: My name is Kayler and I'm eight years old. I'm wondering what if Cthunkle teamed up with a psychic cobra to take over the world?

Mr. Eric: Oh, psychic cobra. That has such a nice ring. And in the spirit of all things snakey, we're also going to include one review question from Finley S., who writes: what if Fred the Dog convinced Cthunkle to retire from evil and they had to defeat an evil snake dragon with a questionable hairstyle?

Wow. We have so much snake stuff to get to, so let's jump right into our story and find out, what if Fred and Cthunkle had to defeat an evil snake with a questionable hairstyle? What if Cthunkle teamed up with a psychic cobra, and what if river snakes were as big as the Mass Pike?

[Rising harp scale.]

Mr. Eric: Cthunkle the Colossal Squid-o-pus, was closing up the Cthoffee Shop a little early today when he suddenly remembered why he was closing up the Cthoffee Shop early today.

Cthunkle: Oh dear. [Record scratch.] It's Ain't Bad Tricks Day, What If World's most popular gift-giving holiday and I haven't gotten anything for my nephew Scully the Squid.

Mr. Eric: Said Cthunkle out loud, quite expositively.

Psychic Cobra: But you missed one thing in your description, Cthunkle. The snake in your store.

Mr. Eric: Hissed a large cobra who had just poked their head out of an even larger Cthoffee mug.

Cthunkle: Get out of my filthy mug, you snake.

Psychic Cobra: I think you mean get out of that mug, you filthy snake.

Cthunkle: No, your scales are going to rub my filthy mug clean! You'll ruin my triple F health rating.

Psychic Cobra: Aren't you the least bit curious why I'm here?

Cthunkle: You must have misread your calendar. We only serve snake cider on Sundays.

Psychic Cobra: No, Cthunkle. I'm here to solve all your problems. You see, I'm a bit psychic.

Cthunkle: Then you must know what I do to trespassers!

Psychic Cobra: Threaten to do horrible things but never actually follow through?

Cthunkle: Okay, yes.

Psychic Cobra: Well, those days are over, Cthunkle, because with my help, you can finally take over the world.

Cthunkle: Oh, I've put that all behind me.

Psychic Cobra: But this would be a perfect present for your nephew Scully.

Cthunkle: How do you know about my nephew Scully?

Psychic Cobra: Well, I'm a bit psychic, like I said. Also, you were just talking about him out loud even though you thought the cafe was empty. 'Twas a bit strange.

Cthunkle: Well, I've always said I wanted to give Scully the world.

Psychic Cobra: Aye, and there's a fringe benefit for you as well.

Mr. Eric: The large cobra slithered out of the mug and all the way up to what would pass for a shoulder on a giant many-tentacled squid-octopus monster and whispered into what would pass for an ear.

Psychic Cobra: You see, when you give a gift that extravagant, the gift-getter has no choice but to get you an even better gift next year.

Cthunkle: Yes... because gift-giving is transactional!

Psychic Cobra: That is how you think of gift-giving, yes.

Cthunkle: So if I give Scully the world, then he'll have to give me the universe! Hahahaha!

Psychic Cobra: [Hiss-laughing]

Cthunkle: Or at least a galaxy or two.

Psychic Cobra: Then it's settled, This Ain't Bad Tricks Day, we're taking over the world.

Mr. Eric: Meanwhile, in a far-off forest, Fred the Dog was sniffing around for a stick as his extra-long tongue dragged along the ground, collecting little bits of dirt and grass as always.

Fred the Dog: I'm so happy I've got a new friend, Princess Stinky.

Mr. Eric: Said Fred the Dog, though he, too, appeared to be entirely alone.

Fred the Dog: And what better gift to give to a royal skunk on Ain't Bad Tricks Day, than the perfect stick.

Mr. Eric: Said Fred, looking directly at us, somehow, and completely breaking the fourth wall.

Fred the Dog: But what is Ain't Bad Tricks Day, you might ask.

Mr. Eric: Fred said, continuing to stare at us.

Fred the Dog: Well, it all dates back to some time in some book that I haven't read, but here's something you don't know because I don't know it either.

Mr. Eric: Well, thanks, Fred, for catching us up. But maybe you should look behind you to investigate that really big sound?

Fred the Dog: Huh? You know, I'm getting pretty old, Mr. Eric. I don't hear so well anymore.

[Loud rumbling!]

Fred the Dog: Okay, I think I heard that one.

Mr. Eric: And Fred turned around to see a tall green wall that had just appeared behind him, stretching as far as the eye could see.

Fred the Dog: Wow, maybe this is some kind of special new stick, like from a big tree that got all grown over with moss and warts and also a family of smelly bears lives in there. I mean, Princess Stinky would really appreciate a stick like that.

Mr. Eric: And Fred started trying to dig out the wall when suddenly... it shifted.

Fred the Dog: Oh, must be one of those ticklish sticks. Okay, big stick? I'm gonna dig under you again, but if you feel ticklish, please don't roll on top of me.

[Loud rumbling!]

Mr. Eric: And the wall, or stick, or whatever it was, started lifting up off the ground and coiling again and again around itself.

Fred the Dog: Hey! You're not a big green stick at all!

Esta: Indeed, I am not. My name's StockbridgeToBoston, pronouns she/her, but you can call me Esta.

Fred the Dog: Ester?

Esta: No, Esta.

Fred the Dog: Essterr...

Esta: No, like how you'd say Worcester.

Fred the Dog: Worcester.

Esta: No, that's more like how you would say Dorchester.

Fred the Dog: Duhster?

Esta: That's exactly wrong.

Fred the Dog: Oh, Esta! Now I understand.

Esta: Good, because I am completely lost.

Fred the Dog: Well, I'm Fred the Dog, pronouns he/him, and I know all about this world, especially it's holidays, so just ask me anything.

Mr. Eric: Esta bent down to get a closer look at Fred, her giant snake head was topped with a swoop of hair in the shape of an inverted pink Cadillac convertible.

Fred the Dog: Whoa, why do you have a car for hair?

Esta: I used to be a toll road known as the Massachusetts Turnpike, but then, suddenly, I appeared here. I shook all the other cars off me, but seeing as this beauty belongs in a museum, I stuck it up on top of my head.

Fred the Dog: Like a hair museum! Wow.

Esta: You have a unique outlook on the world, which I appreciate.

Fred the Dog: And you remind me of a giant stick, which I appreciate.

Esta: So, you think you could help me? Because I don't know what's going on.

Fred the Dog: Well, first of all, I don't know what's going on with your accent, because my Mr. Eric's from Boston and no one sounds quite like that.

Esta: Well, I'm 65 years old and nobody ever taught me to talk, what do you expect?

Fred the Dog: So you've got a lot to learn and I need a big stick, so I think that we could help each other, Esta.

Mr. Eric: And Fred the Dog started whispering furtively into Esta's ear opening.

Esta: I don't know why you're whispering, we're the only two here.

Fred the Dog: It's so that Mr. Eric can cut away to a different scene while still leaving some surprises for later.

Esta: Who is Mr. Eric? Where am I?

Fred the Dog: Whisper whisper, narrator, whisper whisper, What If World.

Esta: Stop saying whisper!

Mr. Eric: Meanwhile, back at the Cthoffee shop, Cthunkle and the psychic cobra were working on a plan to take over What If World.

Cthunkle: And once we've stolen every second sock, we knit them into an incredibly large circus tent. Then we just have to send invitations.

Psychic Cobra: I have no idea where your plan's going. [Record scratch.] But I'm afraid me psychic powers have sensed another magic snake in What If World, even more powerful than I.

Cthunkle: Hopefully they have a more consistent accent.

Psychic Cobra: I'm afraid not. You see, all our accents are entirely made up and poorly executed. If we sound like an actual person, that's probably an accident.

Cthunkle: Okay, so, we just find this super snake and join up with them.

Psychic Cobra: Oh no, there's a third snake, now! A slimy, pink, long one, and it's right outside our door.

Mr. Eric: The psychic cobra flared their hood and hissed menacingly.

Cthunkle: What do we do?

Psychic Cobra: How am I supposed to know?

Cthunkle: I thought you were psychic.

Psychic Cobra: Aye, but it's a third snake! I didn't see this coming. Well, not until about five psychic seconds ago, but that's a long time for me.

[Thudding]

Mr. Eric: Cthunkle tucked his massive body into the far corner of the Cthoffee Shop and reached across timidly with one tentacle to open the door.

[Bell rings, door creaks open.]

Fred's Tongue: Well, eeh eeh?

Cthunkle: That's no pink snake, it's Fred the Dog's tongue.

Psychic Cobra: What's it doing, Cthunkle? I'm scared.

Cthunkle: I think it's trying to use sign language. Fred, it's like you're trying to sign but you only have one finger.

Fred the Dog: [Grumbling and trying to talk with just the tip of his tongue.]

Cthunkle: Why don't we just wait until your body catches up with your tongue.

Fred the Dog: [More grumbling noises.]

Psychic Cobra: Oh, it's changing itself into a shape.

Cthunkle: Ah, stretchy tongue charades, now we're talking. Ah, you've shaped your tongue into a little Cthunkle. Very cute. And what's that you've shaped next to it?

Psychic Cobra: Looks like a snake who's even bigger than you.

Cthunkle: Much bigger. Oh, dear.

Psychic Cobra: Oh, and is that an inverted pink Cadillac that the snake has for hair.

Cthunkle: That's a nice touch, Fred.

Psychic Cobra: Well, don't worry your slimy pink tongue. We were just about to go and team up with this colossal snake.

Fred the Dog: [Louder and kind of frantic grumbling.]

Cthunkle: Now he's forming his tongue into a perfect replica of the Observatorium.

Psychic Cobra: And there's the snake, even bigger than the Observatorium, wrapping itself around it.

Cthunkle: Oh, no no no, this is not good. There's very few actual landmarks in What If World. If they conquer the Observatorium, they've pretty much taken over.

Psychic Cobra: My psychic powers tell me we don't have much time.

Fred the Dog: Well, duh! That's why I sent my tongue ahead to warn you.

Psychic Cobra: Aye, but how could you hear us or see us with your tongue, when your body was so far behind?

Fred the Dog: Oh, you're going to laugh when I tell you because it's so simple.

Cthunkle: All right, I'll inflate my laughter sac. [Wheezing inhale.]

Fred the Dog: Oh, no. I, well, there's no time to tell you now because we've got to get going to the thing.

Cthunkle: No, I'll just make an interdimensional portal after you finish explaining how your tongue can both see and hear.

Fred the Dog: Uh, sure thing, yeah. I'll get right on that. [Cough-talking] Scene dash, Mr. Eric. Scene dash.

Psychic Cobra: What'd you say there?

[Scene break.]

Mr. Eric: And a few moments later, they arrived in front of the Observatorium via an extra-dimensional portal that Cthunkle had created.

Fred the Dog: Say the rest, Mr. Eric.

Mr. Eric: Said Fred, looking right at me again from within What If World.

Fred the Dog: Say it.

Mr. Eric: And Cthunkle and the Psychic Cobra were perfectly satisfied by Fred's excellent explanation of how his tongue can see and hear, but apparently not talk or do sign language.

Fred the Dog: Nice.

[Thud]

Mr. Eric: Esta had enveloped the entire Observatorium with her massive green body and she was banging her Cadillac hair against the door.

Esta: Tell me how to go home! Or at least where the nearest Dunks is!

Mr. Eric: And there, poking his head out of a window at the top of the tallest tower, was Abacus P. Grumbler.

Abacus: We don't know what Dunks are. Please just leave us alone.

Fred the Dog: See, about halfway to the Observatorium, she started getting really cranky and saying that she needs Dunks right now and there was no reasoning with her.

Esta: I'm gonna squeeze this world into a slightly tinier ball if I don't get some Dunks right now.



Cthunkle: Oh dear, it's the middle of the school day. Scully, my nephew, he may still be in there.

Psychic Cobra: I'm using my psychic powers and it seems like everyone got out.

Fred the Dog: Oh, thank goodness.

Psychic Cobra: Except for one wizard.

Cthunkle: Obviously.

Psychic Cobra: And one other student.

Fred the Dog: Well, which student?

Cthunkle: If it's one of the ones I don't like, we can tell the snake that they're one of these Dunks, you know? It's a brilliant plan, really.

Psychic Cobra: It's not like I can see them, I don't have psychic stretchy tongue powers, now do I?

Fred the Dog: Hey, I never said my tongue was psychic, I only implied it.

Psychic Cobra: I know, but I'm a new character. That's just sort of my only thing.

Cthunkle: Quiet, you two. This goes against my every instinct, but we cannot feed that child to a snake.

Fred the Dog: That goes against your every instinct?

Psychic Cobra: Cthunkle, have you ever considered psychic therapy? It's one of me other powers, Fred.

Fred the Dog: Well, good for you.

Cthunkle: All right, Fred. I'm going to shrink myself down and you shall fling me through that open window with your tongue.

Psychic Cobra: Then I'll use me psychic powers to guide you towards the child.

Cthunkle: So you can see where the child is, not who the child is?

Psychic Cobra: Oh, suddenly everyone's an expert on psychic cobras! Do you want me help, or not?

Cthunkle: Oh, okay, yeah, fine.

Mr. Eric: And Cthunkle shrunk down to the size of a basketball.

Cthunkle: A basketball of horrors!

Mr. Eric: Sure. And then Fred flung him through the window.

Abacus: Ow! Did I just get struck by a basketball of horrors?

Cthunkle: Yes.

Abacus: Well, good. I need your help! I've been trying to distract the snake, but there's a student here who I haven't been able to get out!

Cthunkle: Is it one of the ones I don't like?

Abacus: What? Why does that matter?

Cthunkle: Never mind. I'm here, I might as well save them.

Abacus: But beware, Cthunkle, for I used the last of my magic to conceal the child. They are hidden so deeply that even I cannot divine where they are. You may never find them. Unless of course you have the help of some kind of psychic reptile, but...

Cthunkle: Have you checked this closet?

Abacus: Which closet?

Cthunkle: The one that's shaking as if someone's stuck inside.

Mr. Eric: Cthunkle opened the door and out tumbled...

Cthunkle: Zizi?

Abacus: Zizi?

Zizi: I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I'm sorry, this is all my fault!

Cthunkle: Very well, then we feed you to the snake and all is forgiven.

Abacus: That snake won't be eating anybody! ...Until my magic fails and it eats all of us.

Zizi: Oh, I just couldn't figure out what to get for Zach for Ain't Bad Tricks Day.

Abacus: Ah, Ain't Bad Tricks Day. Such an appropriately named gift-giving holiday.

Cthunkle: Really? I always thought the name rather absurd, almost as if it was trying to sound like something else.

Zizi: No, Cthunkle, it makes perfect sense. Rather than playing bad tricks, we show love and forgiveness through thoughtful gift giving.

Cthunkle: And you wanted to give your brother the end of the world? Seems more like a bad trick, really.

Zizi: I just remember him saying he likes snakes, but I couldn't find any in What If World.

Abacus: Did you try episode 33, What if snakes had feathers and birds had scales?

Zizi: That was over 200 episodes ago! How is anyone supposed to remember that.

Cthunkle: So then you snuck into Abacus's office and used forbidden magic to bring snakes over from What Is World...

Abacus: Oh, and you fumbled the spell, giving them all super powers. Of course. Why didn't I see it sooner?

Mr. Eric: Cracks were appearing in the walls around them as Esta continued to squeeze through the magic protecting the Observatorium.

Cthunkle: Well, Zizi, you're in luck. If I can't give Scully the world, then I can at least give him an un-squished friend.

Mr. Eric: And Cthunkle opened a portal from within the Observatorium.

Zizi: Thank you, Cthunkle! You have no idea how— aah!

Mr. Eric: And pushed Zizi through.

Cthunkle: Just watch out for the fourth dimension. Seeing through time can be rather disorienting.

Abacus: Uh, Cthunkle, would you consider saving me as well?

Cthunkle: You? You're not even Scully's favorite teacher.

Abacus: I'm like the only teacher.

Cthunkle: That depends on the story, but fine.

Abacus: You won't regret i—aah!

Mr. Eric: But before Cthunkle could step through his own portal...

Cthunkle: I immediately regret this.

Mr. Eric: The roof and walls caved in around him. He lost his focus and the portal disappeared, leaving the small, wounded, squid-o-pus alone in the rubble.

Esta: Ooh, ouch, that looks like it hurt. Everyone okay in there?

Mr. Eric: And Esta started sifting through the rubble with her gigantic snake snout.

Cthunkle: You may have defeated me, but you will never take over What If World. At least not for more than an episode.

Esta: Take over What If—I don't even know where this place is! I just want to go back to being the Mass Pike and maybe have a really large regular coffee.

Cthunkle: Oh, really?

Esta: Yes! The dog told me I'd find the answers at this place, but if anything, I'm more confused.

Cthunkle: Well, I'm an interdimensional being who happens to own a coffee shop. So, maybe you are in the right place.

Esta: Hey, no way! My only problem is I don't have any money.

Cthunkle: It'll be my Ain't Bad Tricks gift to you.

Mr. Eric: And Esta helped Cthunkle out of the rubble, and they all traveled back to the Cthoffee Shop together to enjoy a nice large hot regular coff—

Esta: You call this a regular coffee? This coffee is still brown!

Cthunkle: Cthoffee technically—

Esta: Regular means you add about 16 barrels of milk and enough sugar to fill a truck.

Cthunkle: I don't have that much.

Esta: Fine. Just get me a jokeaccino.

Cthunkle: A what?

Abacus: Oh, I've heard of that. It's a potion made of coffee and hot chocolate. It comes out searingly hot, burns your throat on the way down, and once it hits your stomach, oh...

Cthunkle: Sounds delightful.

Esta: Yeah, I mean, they're delicious, what can I say.

Zizi: Well, I should say to everyone that I'm sorry.

Mr. Eric: Said Zizi, who was waiting for her parents to pick her up. Now I've got nothing to give to Zach...

Cthunkle: But I'm going to disappoint Scully.

Fred the Dog: Oh, I forgot I was gonna get something for my... I mean, Princess Stinky.

Psychic Cobra: It doesn't take a psychic cobra to see that Ain't Bad Tricks Day isn't about giving a gift for yourself, Fred.

Fred the Dog: Aw.

Psychic Cobra: Or only giving a gift so you'll get one better, yourself!

Cthunkle: But wasn't that your idea, Psychic Cobra...

Psychic Cobra: Or giving your brother another dangerous magical pet, Zizi.

Zizi: What? He only has a werewolf, a unicorn, a rocketship house...

Cthunkle: I think we've all learned a lesson—

Zizi: That thing under his bed...

Cthunkle: Of giving gifts that come from our blood-pumping sack.

Zizi: Skeleton in his closet...

Fred the Dog: Yeah, I learned a very similar lesson a couple stories ago, but I just forgot.

Zizi: Hmm... the tiny goblins in his sock drawer...

Esta: Is someone gonna send me home already?

Zizi: His rock collection? Actually a stone transformer.

Cthunkle: Oh yes, sorry.

Zizi: Oh, Fred the Dog was our pet for a little while... and J.F. Kat.

Cthunkle: You know, you will go back to being a highway.

Esta: Yeah, I know.

Zizi: Talking chocolate...

Esta: It's like getting massaged by cars all day.

Zizi: And a laser puppy.

Esta: You should try it.

Zizi: And a fairy that traps us in stories.

Cthunkle: Sounds nice.

Zizi: His pillow is actually a small town full of hamsters, don't tell my parents.

Esta: Come visit any time.

Cthunkle: Oh, I will...

Zizi: He's got a cerberus in the attic, a time traveling train set—oh, but it is out of batteries.

Psychic Cobra: And Happy Ain't Bad Tricks Day to all!

Zizi: And now, a psychic cobra.

Psychic Cobra: Oh, what's that now?

Mr. Eric: The end.

[Falling harp scale.]

Mr. Eric: Well, Finley, Kayler, and Asher, thank you for your question. I hope you all enjoyed your story.

Fred the Dog: Fred the Dog here to shout out Sagan. She is six years old, her favorite character is me, good choice. And she listens to What If World every night. Well, good night, Sagan.

Mr. Eric:

I'd like to thank Karen O'Keeffe, my co-creator, Craig Martinson for our theme song, my associate producer, Miss Lynn, who helped put this story together, and all you kids at home who know that giving can really be better than receiving. You may just think it's a thing grown-ups say, but it's true.

And until we meet again, keep wondering.

[What If World theme plays.]

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