

Podcast: What If World

[Episode 239: What if coffee made you tired instead of awake?](#)

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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 Elly.

Elly: My name is Elly and I like [eating acorns?] and my what if question is what if all grass is bamboo? Bye!

Mr. Eric: Ooh, ow! Sounds like I'm gonna need some better shoes. And we've got a write-in question from a patron named Juliette. Juliette is eight years old and she asks what if coffee made you tired instead of awake? We grown-ups would be in big trouble.

And finally, we have a question from Surya, age ten, in Ontario, Canada and their younger sister, Lekka. Surya asks: what if a panda became as smart as Einstein?

Well, this is a lot of question and a lot of story to get through, so let's find out what if a panda became as smart as Einstein, what if coffee made you tired instead of awake, and what if all grass is bamboo?

[Rising harp scale.]

Mr. Eric: Professor Zhao is a very powerful panda wizard and a former classmate of Abacus P. Grumbler. And our story starts in the dining hall of the Observatorium where Abacus P. Grumbler is welcoming his old friend.

Abacus: Ah, Professor Zhao. So wonderful to have you here. I've gathered some of What If World's most powerful wizards to learn from your genius mind.

Mr. Eric: Said Professor Abacus P. Grumbler. He was a powerful wizard in his own rights, but he made a lot of mistakes, and that was part of the reason why he'd invited his old friend here to teach.

Fair Elise: Oh, hello, Professor Zhao. I am honored to meet you.

Mr. Eric: Said President Fair Elise.

Fair Elise: I end up undoing a lot of mistake magic in What If World and I hear you are truly an expert.

Sprite Alright: Well, then where's she been for the last 200 stories?

Mr. Eric: Butted in Fair Elise's partner, Sprite Alright!

Abacus: Sprite Alright, you're embarrassing me in front of the professor.

Professor Zhao: It is quite alright, Abacus.

Mr. Eric: Said Professor Zhao.

Professor Zhao: You might even say that it is Sprite Alright.

Sprite Alright: Oh ho! That's a good one.

Fair Elise: Oh, yes.

Abacus: I don't get it.

Professor Zhao: Just like the effects of one reckless action may reverberate throughout a world, the effects of one reckless spell can reverberate through many worlds.

Abacus: So you've been off saving the universe, nay, the multiverse, from all the magical mistakes ever made?

Professor Zhao: Mostly yours, which is why I'm interested in teaching this class. It should make less work for me in the long run.

Abacus: Oh yes. The old proverb. Teach a wizard to fish and he'll stop summoning countless fish from another dimension thereby upsetting the balance of the universe.

Professor Zhao: Exactly.

Mr. Eric: They would be dealing in more dangerous magics than usual, so it was only adult wizards and spellcasters who had been invited to this rare workshop.

Professor Zhao: We only have three hours to learn tonight so we should get straight to it.

Mr. Eric: Said Professor Zhao, pulling out a long, slender wand, carved from a shoot of aged bamboo and scrolled over with intricate characters.

Professor Zhao: [Clears throat] Let us begin.

Abacus: Right after this special feast I've made to welcome you back to What If World! [Record scratch.]

Mr. Eric: With a flick of his wand, platters and piles of food appeared atop the long dining hall tables, enough to feed all these spellcasters ten times over!

Professor Zhao: We should really get to the lesson.

Abacus: No, it's all right. I've slowed time so you'll be able to enjoy your meal and still teach the full class.

Professor Zhao: I don't like to eat too much before a magic class, but maybe a few bamboo stems and shoots will be all right.

Abacus: Bamboo, you say. Hmm... I've bagels? Broccoli? Bananas? Bouillon cubes... Baked banana bread baguettes with butter!

Professor Zhao: No thank you.

Abacus: Oh, you don't want any of the food I stayed up all night making?

Fair Elise: Abacus, you should have slept instead of making all this food.

Abacus: Oh, don't worry, I have a plan for that, too. Just eat, everyone, please, a little bit. I know I'm starving.

Mr. Eric: And despite her better judgment, Professor Zhao did nibble on all of this food even though it was a bit strange to her panda belly.

Professor Zhao: Now I am feeling a little tired. I think I ate too much.

Abacus: Don't worry! I have just the thing! A carafe of Cthunkle's acclaimed Cthopposite Day Cthoffee!

Professor Zhao: Do you have any water?

Abacus: I have... more coffee.

Fair Elise: Oh, this has been all the rage.

Sprite Alright: Yeah, it's been sold out all week.

Abacus: That's because of me! I wanted to make sure we had enough for tonight.

Fair Elise: But there's only four of us.

Sprite Alright: Plus these other wizards and witches who aren't saying anything.

Others: Well, actually...

Abacus: Actually, you're just here for the free cthoffee? I know. You see, Professor Zhao, everyone wants it. You should try some. I worked really hard to get it here for tonight.

Professor Zhao: I am awfully parched. Perhaps just a sip won't hurt.

Mr. Eric: Professor Zhao took a big gulp of Cthunkle's acclaimed Cthopposite Day Cthoffee and ...

Professor Zhao: Ughh... [thud] [snoring]

Abacus: What's the matter with her?

Fair Elise: Oh, hi, I'm sorry, I didn't hear you over the sound of my drooping eyelids.

Abacus: I was assured this coffee would [yawns]...

Sprite Alright: Uh-oh, all the other spellcasters in the whole dining hall are asleep!

Abacus: See, I told you they were just here for the cthoffee.

Fair Elise: Abacus, did you know this coffee would make us sleepy.

Abacus: Of course I did. I slowed down time so we'd all be able to take a nice, luxurious nap, and then learn together.

Mr. Eric: But all this while, Professor Zhao had been tossing and turning, making pained facial expressions behind closed eyes as her head rested atop the dining hall table.

Sprite Alright: Oh, I think she's having a really bad dream. Maybe I should also fall asleep and save her.

Mr. Eric: Bright lightning crashed and a loud crack of thunder woke Sprite Alright, Fair Elise, and Abacus P. Grumbler before they could fully fall asleep.

Fair Elise: Such unusual weather we're having, hm.

Mr. Eric: The lightning outside seemed to move more slowly than usual and the thunder rolled longer and deeper.

Fair Elise: Abacus, you're toying with time. Watching a storm in slow motion would usually be quite beautiful, but...

Mr. Eric: As Fair Elise watched outside, rain fell atop the grass, turning each stalk into a tiny shoot of bamboo. But all those tiny shoots started to grow rapidly.

Sprite Alright: You've created some kind of time warp, making some things go slow and some things go fast.

Abacus: That does sound like something I'd do.

Mr. Eric: Before they knew it, the outside of the Observatorium was completely walled in by an impenetrably thick field of bamboo.

Sprite Alright: This is not alright...

Mr. Eric: Said Sprite Alright. Stems and leaves from the bamboo were scraping up against the glass of the Observatorium as the slow rainfall continued.

Fair Elise: Abacus, remember when Professor Zhao was mentioning bamboo.

Abacus: Of course I remember! I don't forget things people just said!

Fair Elise: Although, come to think of it, she did specifically request a bamboo dinner after the workshop.

Sprite Alright: Even in her sleep, she must be trying to undo the magic by getting healthy food and drink for herself.

Abacus: Huh! Show-off.

Fair Elise: This is no time to be competitive, Abacus! I can already feel the adrenaline boost from the thunder wearing off. And we can't fall asleep.

Abacus: We need something other than coffee, but what... could possibly be... good for our bodies?

Sprite Alright: Water! We need rainwater!

Abacus: But that's all the way outside...

Mr. Eric: The tired wizard and the two sleepy fairies slowly crawled towards the window, trying to get it to open just a crack.

Abacus: Maybe if I use my wand as a... pillow... [snores].

Fair Elise: Sprite, you've got to tele... por... t...

Mr. Eric: Fair Elise and Abacus were asleep but the thunderstorm still raged outside and the bamboo still grew! If Sprite Alright didn't act soon, all of What If World could be overgrown with bamboo by the time they finished their nap.

Sprite Alright: All right... all righ...

Mr. Eric: And as the Sprite's eyes closed...

Sprite Alright: All right!

Mr. Eric: She teleported herself into the midst of the storm. Cold rain soaked her and claps of thunder shook her, and she was finally able to shake off the effects of Cthunkle's acclaimed Cthopposite Day Cthoffee. She used her wand to cut away some of the thinner bits of bamboo and let each shoot fill with a little sip's worth of water before teleporting back to the sleeping panda, Professor Zhao.

Sprite Alright: I hope this works!

Mr. Eric: She started pouring the bamboo out of the shoots into the panda's mouth.

Professor Zhao: [Coughs and sputters].

Mr. Eric: And as soon as the sleepy panda's mouth started to open just a little, Sprite Alright shoved some bamboo leaves in there.

Sprite Alright: All right, let's chew 'em up good.

Mr. Eric: Worked the panda's mouth up and down.

Sprite Alright: Good thing no kids were invited to this class, because it is definitely not safe to feed a panda by hand.

Mr. Eric: Said Sprite Alright, continuing to feed the panda by hand.

Sprite Alright: So don't tell Pixicato about this, Mr. Eric.

Mr. Eric: I won't, but you know that this is a show that a few kids happen to listen to...

Sprite Alright: Okay, kids, don't shove your hand into a panda's mouth like I'm repeatedly doing, and especially don't tell my daughter that I did it.

Professor Zhao: Om nom nom...

Mr. Eric: Finally, Professor Zhao started to chew the bamboo all on her own. Sprite Alright quickly pulled her hands away and the panda swallowed down a mouthful as her eyes shot open.

Professor Zhao quickly looked around, assessing the room.

Professor Zhao: How bad is it?

Mr. Eric: She asked Sprite Alright.

Sprite Alright: Oh, we're about one nap away from the end of the world, maybe a nap and a half.

Professor Zhao: So, basically a Wednesday.

Mr. Eric: And Professor Zhao pulled out her wand and moved it so quickly through the air that she seemed to be writing something.

Professor Zhao: Pouring from the sky, drop on drop on drop, make it all be dry, I order rain to stop.

Mr. Eric: And just like that, the rainfall stopped and the thunder silenced, though they were still pretty well encased in bamboo.

Sprite Alright: Should I wake everybody else up and they can help with the final spell?

Professor Zhao: I guess they might as well learn something.

Mr. Eric: And Sprite Alright teleported back and forth, bringing in puddles of rainwater and splashing them down on the sleeping spellcasters.

Abacus: Ugh, ham sandwich!

Fair Elise: How dare you splash my fedora... huh?

Others: And all we other spellcasters are awake now.

Abacus: Professor Zhao, let us help you undo my magic!

Mr. Eric: The panda appeared to be writing in the air again, but this time, shoots and leaves of bamboo trailed behind her wand, spelling out characters that all the magicians found they could read. Professor Zhao let the three wizards handle this incantation on their own.

Sprite, Elise, A: Growing up high, so none can pass, bamboo you must fly and return the grass.

Mr. Eric: And all the many, thick shoots of bamboo suddenly shot up into the sky, leaving fresh, green grass behind.

Professor Zhao: Oh, that took a lot out of me. Perhaps that is enough for one day.

Mr. Eric: Abacus led his old friend to her room while Fair Elise and Sprite Alright stayed behind to make sure everyone else got home safely. Abacus felt embarrassed and had a lot to say, but he could tell his friend was too tired to talk and so he waited for morning.

[Scene break.]

Professor Zhao: [Groans]

Mr. Eric: Professor Zhao stretched out in her wide, warm, comfortable guest bed as thin rays of sunlight warmed her panda fur.

[Knocking]

Abacus: Hello, Professor Zhao! My wake-up alarm spell told me that you were awake! I have some things I want to say to you.

Mr. Eric: When Zhao answered the door, Abacus was holding a wide, heavy, silver platter with two hands, although its contents were hidden by a gleaming silvery top.

Abacus: I am so sorry about yesterday.

Professor Zhao: No, I am sorry. I should not have eaten those other foods, but I just wanted to fit in.

Abacus: Oh, I shouldn't have offered you those other foods. I know you like bamboo and water, I just was trying to show you some of the things I really like and I was being a terrible host.

Professor Zhao: And I was not standing up for myself. Even as an old panda, that is a lesson I need to be reminded of.



Abacus: Well, not to worry.

Mr. Eric: Said Abacus, putting the platter down with a clatter.

Abacus: For today I brought you breakfast in bed.

Professor Zhao: But I'm already up.

Abacus: Well, then you can take it back to bed if you want. Or just eat it at the table...

Professor Zhao: How about I eat it with an old friend.

Abacus: Oh, sounds lovely.

Mr. Eric: Said Abacus, revealing a tray full of bamboo stems, shoots, and leaves, poached, boiled, steamed, or in a salad, with carafes of hot, cold, and room temperature water standing beside it.

Abacus: I'll just try one of these steamed bamboo shoots. [Crunch] [Whimpers] Oh, they're delicious.

Professor Zhao: You don't have to eat the bamboo.

Abacus: Oh, it's not hurting my teeth at all.

Professor Zhao: Please stop, Abacus.

Abacus: Oh, thank goodness.

Professor Zhao: But you should really try it poached.

Abacus: Oh... wonderful. [Crunch] Okay, no, no, I'm done.

Professor Zhao: [Laughs] Got you.

Mr. Eric: The end.

[Falling harp scale.]

Mr. Eric: Well, Juliette, Surya, and Elly, thank you for your questions and I hope you all enjoyed your story.

Cthunkle: It is I, Cthunkle, here to shout out Dylan Anderson, age ten. He and his little brother, Noah, age eight, both love our show.

JF Kitty: But Noah's favorite character is me, J.F. Kat! Thanks, Noah.

Fred the Dog: And finally, there's Silas Billings from Seattle, Washington. He loves me, Fred the Dog, and also J.F. Kat.

JF Kitty: And he also loves Minecraft and Roblox, and playing outside with his dog/brother, Philly! I have a dog brother, too. Sometimes he really bugs me.

Fred the Dog: I'm right here, J. F. Kat.

JF Kitty: No, I meant a different dog brother. Mr. Eric, end the episode!

Mr. Eric: And I'd like to thank Karen O'Keeffe, my co-creator, Craig Martinson for our theme song, my producer, Miss Lynn, and all you kids at home for respecting what others need to eat and drink and being up front about your needs, as well.

Until we meet again, keep wondering.

[What If World theme plays.]