

Podcast: What If World

[Episode 240: What if a robot, a tree, and an opera singer started a band? / What if there was 54 JFKats?](#)

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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 Seth.

Seth: My name is Seth and I am seven and my question is what if there was 54 JFKats?

Seth's parent: What if there was 54 J.F. Kats? Who's your favorite character?

Seth: J.F. Kat.

Mr. Eric: 54 J.F. Kats? That's like a whole playing card deck plus the two jokers... but all cats.

Now, we've also got two more email questions to add into this story and they are related so I wanted to kind of smoosh them all together and make an awesome tale for you all.

The first is from siblings Josh and Hannah, who asked, what if Robot Llama, Harrigo, and some of the others, made a band?

And similarly, Sam D. asks: what if Howverati and Robot Llama started a band?

Okay, so let's find out what if Robot Llama, Harrigo, and Howverati started a band. Plus, 54 J.F. Kats.

[Rising harp scale.]

Mr. Eric: It all started one sunny afternoon when Robot Llama was clip-clopping on his little metal robot hooves through the forest. That's when they heard it, a distant song whistled through the woods as if all the forest were singing in perfect harmony, though one voice seemed to carry above them all.

Harrigo: [Singing] Hello friends, I'm Harrigo the tree. I like to eat treats all chocolatey. And though I'm stuck in just one place, I love to swing and sway with grace. If you're passing by this singing tree, I hope you'll stop and sing with me.

Robot Llama: That's some rockin' tunes, oh yeah.

Mr. Eric: Said Robot Llama.

Robot Llama: Well, not quite rocking. Maybe it just needs some saxophone.

Mr. Eric: So Robot Llama followed the sound of the music until they caught up with Harrigo the tree.

Harrigo: Oh! A robot lost in my woods! Do you need my help?

Robot Llama: No, I'm just coming to join this band. You need a little oomph, if you understand.

Harrigo: A little oomph? Haha, I'm a big old tree with all the wisdom of the forest. I think I've got oomph enough. But you can sing with me as you like.

Robot Llama: Also my neck and head turn into a saxophone if that'd be useful. [Saxophone noises].

Harrigo: Well, I was just sort of singing to the tune of the woods right now. Why don't you just join in.

Robot Llama: Oh, sure. Fine. I can work with this.

Mr. Eric: And the robot llama started in with Harrigo, starting their own verse.

Robot Llama: I was simply walking through the wood and I thought you sounded pretty good. I play saxophone, it is true, but for now I will just sing with you. Robot Llama.

Harrigo: And Harrigo.

Robot Llama: I'll sing high.

Harrigo: And I'll sing low.

Mr. Eric: Robot Llama's robot neck and head turned into a saxophone and started blowing out a crazy sax solo.

Harrigo: That's not exactly the music of the forest, Robot Llama. Probably can't hear me over your own saxophone tooting!

Robot Llama: Hahaha, tooting.

Harrigo: You probably get that joke all the time.

Mr. Eric: Just then, who should run up but Howverati, one of What If World's most famous opera singers.

Howverati: I have heard what you call music and I am not impressed but let me join along in song, oh but how are you all dressed?

Mr. Eric: Howverati was wearing fine silks with a poofy collar and poofy wrists and poofy pants and shoes with shiny buckles, whereas Robot Llama and Harrigo, well, how do I put this...

Robot Llama: We are naked! [Record scratch.]

Harrigo: Trees don't wear clothes and neither do llamas!

Robot Llama: Most robots don't either.

Howverati: Well, you are very much in luck, for in these silk I have been stuck, so clothe yourselves and then you'll see how we can sing most handsomely.

Mr. Eric: Harrigo and Robot Llama shrugged and decided to put on the fancy clothes.

Harrigo: This isn't exactly forest chic, but it'll do.

Mr. Eric: Said Harrigo, an extra, extra, extra long scarf slung around his neck.

Robot Llama: Could someone help me with the buttons on this llama coat.

JF Kitty: I'm great with buttons.

Mr. Eric: Announced J.F. Kat, pouncing into the clearing.

JF Kitty: What I'm not great with is the three of you keeping me up during my mid-afternoon nap. If I don't finish my fifth nap of the day, I'm awfully cranky before my sixth nap!

Howverati: Well.

Mr. Eric: Said Howverati.

Howverati: The sooner we finish our rehearsal, the sooner we're out of your hair.

JF Kitty: Fur.

Robot Llama: So just help me with these five buttons, oh, that's just my mirror, don't stare.

Mr. Eric: But as J.F. Kat ducked under Robot Llama to button the coat over their chest and belly...

JF Kitty: Wow... your belly's like all the mirrors in the world.

Robot Llama: 54 mirrors to be exact.

JF Kitty: It's like there's 54 J.F. Kats...

Harrigo: Jojo, it's not really polite to stare.

Mr. Eric: Said Harrigo, gently nudging the cat with a branch. But Jojo Fluffy Kat didn't move an inch!

JF Kitty: Imagine what I could do with 54 J.F. Kats.

Howverati: I'd rather not. Can we please carry on, I'm quite anxious to sing a song.

Mr. Eric: Said Howverati, tapping his foot impatiently.

Robot Llama: Well, what if our first song was about 54 J.F. Kats?

JF Kitty: Meow I could listen to that!

Mr. Eric: And as Robot Llama started their song, the warm light of the afternoon sun bounced off their mirror-like belly, reflecting the 54 J.F. Kats off of every surface in the forest, and each of them was holding a different musical instrument, helping Robot Llama play their big band song.

Robot Llama: I'd like to see 54 cats, it's better than 53. One time I saw 52 rats, they lived in my robo-chassis.

Harrigo: I am not fond of this music, it's not woodland friendly.

Howverati: Your music makes me feel too sick, it's not for Howverati!

Mr. Eric: The 54 J.F. Kat reflections stopped playing their instruments and Robot Llama looked a little discouraged by their friends' reaction to the song.

Harrigo: Maybe we need to think more about our band before playing any more songs.

Mr. Eric: Said Harrigo.

Howverati: Well, it's true that every band needs a name. We could be the Howverati Three.

Harrigo: I was thinking, The Tree Tenors.

Robot Llama: Just leave the naming to me. Uh, how about Llama Meroar, spelled like Meroar, not mirror. So it's like me roaring. Do you get it.

Harrigo: I think I understand what you mean, but not why you're saying it.

Howverati: At least we're in agreement, Harrigo.

JF Kitty: Meow, all your bickering is boring. Let's go wear down our claws, boys!

Mr. Eric: And the 54 J.F. Kats started scratching up every surface in the forest.

Harrigo: Go knock yourselves out, what harm can a bunch of mirror cats do?

Robot Llama: Actually, magic mirror cats have perfect two-dimensional claws, capable of shredding anything in the 3D universe.

Howverati: Oh my! We should sing a soothing song that J.F. Kat closes his eyes and these mirror kitties fall asleep and fade away.

Harrigo: Good idea. I have just the tune for the job. Just follow along, you two, and try to keep up! Hahaha! Kitties, if you could stop shredding the forest for an instant and pick up your musical instruments again... that's right. A soothing song, just like this. Ah yes.

Robot Llama: So what should we do?

Howverati: I'm a little confused as well.

Mr. Eric: But Harrigo just jumped into his song without answering.

Harrigo: I was born from a tiny seed but I grew so strong and gracefully. Now I tower over every other tree, I'm the greatest, I'm the greatest tree you can see.

Robot Llama: What are we doing? Why are we singing? This song's self-serving, who cares about your upbringing?

Harrigo: I think it's very interesting! Who wouldn't want to hear about a tree.

Robot Llama: But we're trying to put them to sleep, not just brag on and on.

Howverati: I am Howverati. This song's not operaty enough. But I'll still sing along for you to hear my beautiful voice. You're welcome. You're welcome. Falsetto.

Robot Llama: Please stop holding your notes so long. It's not really your strong suit.

Howverati: How dare you.

Harrigo: No, no, no, he is right, you know.

JF Kitties: Meow they're all fighting.

Maybe we 54 cats should fight, too.

I've had enough of your purretty face!

I've had enough of your handsome face!

I've had enough of my face!

Me, too!

Mr. Eric: And all 54 J.F. Kat reflections started swiping at each other. But, being two-dimensional, they were really only damaging the forest further.

Robot Llama: We should probably put on our rockinest outfits and use ten pounds of glitter to shine so bright it scares the cats away.

Harrigo: Glitter? Ugh! [Record scratch.] That's a microplastic. It's terrible for small creatures and everything that lives in the water!

Howverati: Fair enough, but we're getting off track. Meanwhile, we're still under cat attack.

Robot Llama: You think I wouldn't bring biodegradable, eco-friendly glitter to the forest? What kind of monster do you think I am?

Harrigo: Well, you know what's not eco-friendly? Robots! What kind of fuel do you run on?

Robot Llama: I'll have you know I'm solar powered.

Harrigo: Then, prove it. Stand under my shady boughs until you fall asleep.

Robot Llama: You'd like that, wouldn't you?

Mr. Eric: And while Harrigo, Robot Llama, and 54 mirror J.F. Kats all fought and bickered, Howverati handed out a few wind and string instruments, brought out his tiny conductor's wand and started off his own song. Well, really Tchaikovsky's.

Howverati: Everyone is fighting except me, I think this whole band thing is history. Stop with all the shouting, can't you see I'm pouting, this band's not as fun as I thought it would be!

Robot Llama: I thought each of us could take a turn but we can't agree, it's causing me concern.

Harrigo: Oh, what were we thinking? This whole day is stinking, why are we hoodwinking ourselves, this will never ever ever ever [others join in] ever ever ever ever work.

What was that?

[Loud purring]

Robot Llama: You two sang together.

Howverati: The cats seemed to like it.

Harrigo: Oh, these cats are scratching up my wood, we must sing together stopping them for good.

Robot Llama: 54 reflections powered by objections.

Howverati: Not to mention our attention to our own pretension.

Harrigo: Now that we're together, they're enthralled.

Robot Llama: Doesn't matter what we wear or what we're called.

Howverati: We can start as buddies, no one's understudies.

Together: Now, cats, please sleep!

Mr. Eric: And as the three of them finally sang together in an imperfect harmony, but they were trying really hard and that's what mattered, the 54 cat

reflections suddenly dropped their instruments to the ground and curled up in 54 little furry balls, just like the real J.F. Kat, who was purring gently in the forest bed, fast asleep.

- Harrigo: Wow, that was really fun.
- Robot Llama: Can we do it with a jazzy sax song?
- Harrigo: Or a soothing nature song?
- Howverati: Or some classical music.
- Harrigo: I would like to try out that biodegradable glitter.
- Robot Llama: I'm picturing a glittery tree vest and rockin' shiny leaves everywhere.
- Howverati: Oh, can I please sparkle, too, just like you?
- Robot Llama: Of course. And let's make sure we try out some soothing forest music, too!
- Harrigo: Oh, ho ho. I would really like that.
- Mr. Eric: And so this band of friends without a particular name or a particular style started to plan out their next song. This time they all talked together excitedly, building on each other's great ideas. And just when they were about to start playing their next big hit?
- JF Kitty: Meow! Quiet, you! It's almost time for my late afternoon nap.
- Harrigo: Oh, sorry!
- Howverati: Let's pick this up tomorrow.
- Robot Llama: It's only a day away.
- Harrigo: Oh, that's a goodly riff, we should use that.
- Mr. Eric: The end.
- [Falling harp scale.]
- Mr. Eric: Hannah, Josh, Sam and Seth, thank you for your questions and I hope you all enjoyed your story.



Ginger: I am Ginger the Loyal and I am here to shout out Ori. Ori is age nine, plays the violin, loves drawing and writing, and even though Ginger the Dog isn't in many stories, I am still Ori's favorite character.

Fred the Dog: Fred the Dog here to shout out Theo, age six and a half. Theo wants to be an inventor when he grows up. He loves science and reading with the lights out and likes sharing lots of what if questions with us.

Abacus: And there are siblings Eva and Noah, ages eleven and nine from Chicago, Illinois. They love me, Abacus P. Grumbler, and of course you, Fred the Dog.

JF Kitty: Finally, there's Logan Moffat. He's seven years old and will be eight soon. He has an older brother named Oliver and he loves his two cats, Indy and Camilla.

Mr. Eric: And I'd like to thank Karen O'Keeffe, my co-creator, Craig Martinson for our theme song, my producer Miss Lynn, who helped inspire this story, too. And all you kids at home who know how rewarding group activities can be, especially when everyone takes a turn being a great listener.

Until we meet again, keep wondering.

[What If World theme plays.]