

MAX EVERDRIVE

"The Truth"

Episode #6

Written By

Rob Welch

hello@robwel.ch
robwel.ch

COLD OPEN

INT. DOG'S ROOM

Dog is lying in bed. Merrick, Zoltran and a few others are gathered around him.

MERRICK

Okay, since we don't have a doctor on hand, this will have to do.

He opens a plastic jewel case marked 'Doctor Sbaitso' and inserts the CD into Zoltran. Zoltran's screen changes to show the image of a stereotypical doctor with stethoscope and head mirror.

ZOLTRAN

HELLO. I AM DOCTOR SBAITSO!

MERRICK

Hi, Doctor. We think that Dog here needs to stop being passed out right now because we're all very worried about him.

ZOLTRAN

THAT IS... VERY INTERESTING. PLEASE WAIT, I WILL COMPUTE THE OPTIMAL MEDICAL PROCEDURE.

Everybody stands around awkwardly for a while, or shuffles, or coughs. Sbaitso just sits there.

For a good 20 seconds. Maybe more.

He just sits there.

MERRICK

Are-

ZOLTRAN

(interrupting)

PLEASE ALLOW DOCTOR SBAITSO TO COMPUTE.

Doctor Sbaitso keeps computing.

ZOLTRAN (CONT'D)

I HAVE COMPUTED THE OPTIMAL MEDICAL PROCEDURE. IT IS: EUTHANASIA.

Zoltran produces a syringe full of suspicious liquid somewhere and begins to prepare it. Merrick grabs him and ejects the Sbaitso disc, then throws it away. He also takes the syringe.

MERRICK
(holding syringe)
Where did you get this?

ZOLTRAN
Get off my case.

DOG
Merrick? Zoltran? I thought you
were dead!

They look over at Dog. He's awake.

ZOLTRAN
Dead? I keep regular backups of
myself. They put me in another JXY-
series case. I'm 031 now!

MERRICK
Somebody scooped me into a big
bucket.

DOG
Oh, thank god. I was having this
horrible dream about how everybody
was dead. Well, I mean, 'dead
dead'.

MERRICK
I don't know what you mean.

DOG
Merrick. The spore man - it spoke
to me. In the voice of my human. I
think she's still down there,
somehow.

MERRICK
I don't mean to be a Deborah downer
but that's impossible, Dog.
Everyone's dead.

Dog sighs and gets up.

DOG
I swear, it was her. I swear it.
I'm a Dog, dogs know these things.
Is there any way for me to get down
to the surface?

END OF COLD OPEN

ACT ONE

INT. DOCKING BAY

Dog, Merrick, and Zoltran are standing the hub of the hangar bay. One of the hexagonal corridors, off to the side, is pulsing with bright orange, magenta and blue lights.

MERRICK

I gotta warn you, the ride will be greasy. You will not like it.

He hands Dog a couple of plastic jars with hand-written labels on them.

MERRICK (CONT'D)

This jar will make it go down, and this jar will make it go up. I'm not really a spaceship guy, I don't know how they work.

DOG

Thanks, Merrick.

MERRICK

Dog, I have a favour to ask.

DOG

What?

MERRICK

(voice cracking)
Don't go. Please.

DOG

I'm sorry. As a dog, I am loyal to my human above all else.

ZOLTRAN

Dogs are weird.

Dog turns and begins to walk down the corridor toward the landing pod. He turns and looks back at Merrick and Zoltran.

ZOLTRAN (CONT'D)

Don't die!

He turns, keeps walking, and proceeds through the airlock and into the landing pod. The inside is lit dimly, looks part-mechanical and part biological, and is covered by a thick layer of grease. Alongside the controls is an obvious receptacle to deposit the contents of Dog's jar. He does.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

EXT. EARTH ORBIT

The tiny landing pod detaches from the docking bay of the Channel 6 TV satellite, expelling a small but fast-moving stream of black gunk, further tarnishing the paint job of the outer hull. A few small adjustments and it begins to float downwards, accelerating slightly, toward the monochromatic surface of earth. After a few seconds, it disappears from view.

EXT. CITY STREETS - DAY

It's gray, overcast and a little foggy. Everything is dead. What was once a bustling high street is eerily still. Some of the shop windows are boarded up, some of the cars are smashed and burnt. Everything is gray. There is no colour.

The landing pod gently eases down in the middle of the street, leaving a trail of dark splotches on the ground. A door opens on the side, and Dog, a little disorientated, exists.

He takes a few minutes to look around. Earth resembles more the surface of an alien planet than it does his home.

He makes a path through the streets with some caution, but seeing no-one. The roads become narrower and leafier. As Dog rounds a corner, he fails to spot a figure standing motionless in the middle distance. He continues in the opposite direction, eventually coming to a semi-detached house. There are two cars parked in the driveway. Trying the front door, he finds it open. He walks inside, closing the door behind him.

INT. HOUSE

The inside of the house is dark and the air is thick with tiny particles.

Slowly ascending the stairs, he notices veins of colour running along the walls, ceiling and floor. They have a mycelial appearance, and connected together like blood vessels, branching off into ever-smaller fibrils. They seem to converge on a bedroom at the far end of the hallway, its door ajar, which Dog walks towards.

INT. HOUSE (FLASHBACK)

Dog is in the same position as before, but the house is now colourful and clean, with brightly coloured wallpaper and decorations; family photos hanging on the walls. Dog approaches the end bedroom with trepidation. He can hear human voices downstairs, they sound as though they are in pain. There is laboured breathing coming from the room at the end of the hall. As Dog gets closer to the door, he can hear a rushing in his ears and the quickened beating of his heart. As he puts his head around the doorframe, he sees the colourful veins covering a headboard and adjacent wall, and catches a brief glimpse of something in the bed, gently writhing, almost human, with a burned-out impression of a face.

INT. HOUSE

There's nothing in the bed. The veins nearby seem inert, dead. Dog enters the room, but sees it is empty. He sighs, walks over to the bedside table, and picks up a framed photograph. Staring into the frame, he tries not to cry.

He's interrupted by the unmistakable sound of the front door opening. He panics, dropping the photograph. The glass smashes. He scans the room, then goes to the window and tries to unlatch it. He can hear the interloper beginning to walk up the stairs. The window won't open! It's at the top of the stairs now, he can hear it coming down the hallway. Success! The window opens. It had a little button you needed to press. Dog takes one look and jumps, landing on the conservatory roof, then jumping again onto the ground in the back garden. He bolts, back toward the street, not looking back.

EXT. CITY STREETS

Tired and out-of-breath, Dog comes to a halt a few streets away. He ducks into an alleyway and checks to see if anyone's following. He sees nobody. Across the street is a church, a tall, narrow, red-brick building, its façade covered in crosses. Strangely, the lights are on inside. In fact, there's a neon sign on the outside that's working just fine. It says 'God is Here'.

Dog checks again to see if he's being followed, but no-one's there. He crosses the road and tries the church door - it opens.

INT. CHURCH

Dog stands in a small anteroom, coats hanging to his left, a bucket of umbrellas to his right. It's hot and damp in here. He can sense something moving in the next room.

With some trepidation, he opens the double doors ahead of him. Inside, there is flesh. Hundreds, perhaps thousands of bodies, fused together with mould, intermingled. A wriggling mass of body parts and fungus, at once familiar and unrecognizable. The mass spills out from the chancel and fills almost half of the room. As dog enters, eyes from all across the room swivel to get a good look at him.

Then, from near the front of the wall of flesh, a hand appears. It beckons him to come closer, and he obliges. The smell is ungodly. He can hear a breathing, a gurgling, and the beating of a hundred hearts in synchrony.

The hand presents itself. He hesitates for a moment, then grasps it. Everything goes dark.

INT. VOID

When Dog comes to, he is floating in an infinitely large void, filled with a kaleidoscopic view of every possible colour and every possible shape. Plus a few that didn't previously exist, for good measure. He can hear a million voices, some whispering, some talking, some yelling, in every language. As Dog moves, everything shimmers, warps and distorts.

DOG

Hello?

Dog's voice echoes in infinity. For a moment, the other voices recede, and then they echo his words.

VOICES

(many)

Hello? Hello? Hello? Hello? Hello?

Suddenly, he's everywhere and everyone at once. A world-class barista at an espresso pulling competition. A mechanic living in rural China. A bigfoot enthusiast poring over a thousand blurry photographs. A single mother calling out for a lost child. Then, in a single moment, everything equilibrates.

INT. SUBURBAN HOME

Dog blinks. He's not a dog anymore. He's a 43-year-old man with male pattern baldness, sitting in the kitchen of a perfect, 50s-style suburban house. Across from him, at the breakfast table. Standing at the kitchen behind him is his perfect 50s-style suburban wife. Warm sunlight billows in through the kitchen window.

DOG

I'm so glad I live here. In suburbia, the final stage of human evolution. With my adoring wife, and my one and a half children.

His children are sitting across from him at the table. One of them is literally split down the middle - half a child.

DOG (CONT'D)

I'm so happy, I'm so lucky, I'm so lucky that it all turned out like this. Things all worked out, in the end. It's a rush of endorphins that never stops. The brain chemicals that keep me happy are telling me that I should stay here, in paradise, forever.

He finishes his breakfast, dons a suit jacket and prepares to head out. His 50s-style-wife gives him an affectionate peck on the cheek.

DOG (CONT'D)

Goodbye, honey. I'm going to give up a tiny piece of my soul, in return for the basic necessities of life.

He strolls outside, warm, impossibly orange sunlight blanketing the manicured lawn and picket fence, towards a 50s-style automobile. Then, as if seized by some horrible, invisible force, he stops.

DOG (CONT'D)

Wait a minute. How did I get here?

He looks around. Birds sing. A sprinkler wastes water. Everything is unnaturally still.

DOG (CONT'D)

This is not my beautiful house.
This is not my beautiful wife.

Running back towards the house, opening the door in a hurry, he finds it dark, dilapidated, and full of mould. Where his wife stood is a wooden hat rack with a 50s-style wig.

DOG (CONT'D)

Oh no. Oh no no... I've been here.
I'm still here, aren't I?

HAT RACK WIFE

We've all been here. We've always
been here. You never left.

With sudden urgency, he jogs toward the door of the child's bedroom, a trail of mould leading up to it, forming ribbons along the walls and floor. The air becomes thick and soupy. He grabs the handle and flings it open, and sunlight spills in again.

EXT. RIVER

He's standing at the banks of a fast-flowing river, a dog once more. The hat rack is standing next to him.

DOG

I'm here as well, aren't I?

HAT RACK WIFE

Let the river take you, Dog. Lose
yourself in it. Return to it. The
great continuum that flows through
everything.

DOG

I was going to. I had a plan. I was
going to walk into the river.

HAT RACK WIFE

But?

DOG

I don't know. I hesitated. This
thought came into my head... that I
would regret it.

HAT RACK WIFE

You were so lonely. And so afraid.

The hat rack pauses.

HAT RACK WIFE (CONT'D)

I want you to know something. You
were never alone. And there is no
need to be afraid.

Dog turns to the hat rack.

DOG

If that's really true, let me talk to her.

HAT RACK WIFE

That's not possible. She's not separable. No one is.

DOG

I swear to god, hat rack wife. If you don't let me talk to her I will throw you into this river!

HAT RACK WIFE

The river is a metaphor, dog. You can't throw me into a metaphor.

Currents swirl in the murky water of the metaphor.

DOG

Please. I'm begging you. Just for a moment.

The hat rack genuinely seems to consider this.

HAT RACK WIFE

Anything, if it'll make you happy.

The river swells, and before he can react, Dog is swept away by a huge current. Sucked beneath the water's surface, he feels like he is drowning, like he's dying, but as he opens his eyes, all is calm, and he's surrounded by a warm glow.

INT. VOID

In the distance, the gentle murmur of voices, the sound of water. A wooshing. The dark closes in. The infinite becomes claustrophobic. Space loses meaning.

Then, in perfect clarity, a lone voice rings out.

HUMAN

Dog? Is that you?

DOG

It's me! Are you there?

HUMAN

I'm kind of everywhere right now. It's hard to explain.

DOG

Are you... you?

HUMAN

I'm trying hard to be me. There's pieces of me everywhere. But I'm trying to do good.

DOG

I'm sorry. I'm sorry I ran away. I really messed up. Will you forgive me?

HUMAN

Dog, the truth is... I'm just glad you're okay.

At that moment, it's as if a huge weight is lifted from Dog's shoulders. He sighs. Then, the colours and shapes begin to close in again, becoming louder and faster and closer, almost suffocating, until...

INT. CHURCH

Dog is being pulled out of the flesh pile. The fungus, which was slowly enveloping him, pulls away, and the grasping hand lets go. He falls on the floor, breathing heavily, confused, like he's just woken up from a long nap.

ANTHONY T. BARKER

Hi doggie? What are you doing in there?

DOG

(woozily)

Ugh. What time is it?

ANTHONY T. BARKER

Holy shit, a talking dog!

DOG

You know, you're the first person to actually be surprised by that.

ANTHONY T. BARKER

Uh, can you walk? It's not safe here.

Dog gets up, still a little unsteady, and follows Barker out of the church. The arm waves him goodbye.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

INT. BARKER'S LAB

Dog and Barker enter through a door with three locks and about 12 latches. The lab, unlike ones Dog has seen in movies, is brightly-lit and neatly organized. It's full of equipment - biosafety cabinets, cryostats, x-ray machines - but most of them look more like ascended printers than anything else. Just big, beige boxes.

ANTHONY T. BARKER

Sorry about all the mess.

Dog sits down near what looks to be Barker's desk. Barker begins latching up the door.

ANTHONY T. BARKER (CONT'D)

Do you mind if I do some blood tests and brain scans on you? I've never seen anyone go into the mass like that, let alone come out of it. I've never seen a talking Dog, either.

DOG

Hey, knock yourself out.

ANTHONY T. BARKER

Thanks.

Barker sits down, uncorks a bottle of champagne, and pours half it into an enormous mug that says 'world's greatest scientist' on the side. He drinks, before offering the bottle to Dog.

ANTHONY T. BARKER (CONT'D)

Champagne?

DOG

What's the occasion?

ANTHONY T. BARKER

It's 2PM.

DOG

Sure.

Barker hands the bottle to do, who looks around, noticing the floor is strewn with champagne bottles. There's an enormous crate of champagne in one corner of the lab. He takes a sip.

ANTHONY T. BARKER

Did you... see anything? When you were in there?

DOG

Yeah. I saw a lot of colours and shapes, and I heard voices. I saw a fabricated world. And I saw my human.

ANTHONY T. BARKER

You saw, and talked to, a singular person? You're certain?

DOG

Yeah. Definitely a singular person. And it was definitely them.

Barker starts writing all of this down.

ANTHONY T. BARKER

That's... incredible. I had no idea that that the collective might be able to preserve an individual like that. I had assumed that once you were subsumed... you were lost. Maybe I've been thinking about this all wrong.

DOG

About what?

Barker thinks for a moment.

ANTHONY T. BARKER

Do you know about the procedure of corpus callostomy?

DOG

I'm a Dog. I can just about count to five.

ANTHONY T. BARKER

It is, uh, was, a technique used to treat patients with epilepsy. The corpus callosum - hold on-

Barker rummages around in his desk and pulls out a brain from a jar, takes it out of the jar and plops it on the desk.

ANTHONY T. BARKER (CONT'D)

The white matter connecting the two hemispheres of the brain, is removed.

Anthony demonstrates, slicing through the brain with a sharp knife.

ANTHONY T. BARKER (CONT'D)

This does solve the issue, although it has some very strange side effects. For example, if you ask a split-brain patient to indicate their favourite colour using their hands, their left hand may pick a different colour to their right hand. The two halves of the brain, unlinked, develop different preferences and can react to stimuli in different ways. Now, imagine this procedure, but in reverse-

Anthony begins to chop up the brain on the desk.

ANTHONY T. BARKER (CONT'D)

Thousands, millions of brains, all welded together. All unique, all with their own thoughts, likes and dislikes, all believing that they, uniquely, are in control, that they are themselves. I thought their intelligence was centralized, but what if it isn't? What if it's... distributed? Like a supercomputer? It's exactly what Adrian was talking about. The noosphere.

DOG

You coulda just drawn a picture, you know. You didn't need to waste an actual brain for that.

ANTHONY T. BARKER

Oh, don't worry, there's plenty more where that came from.

In a single motion, Anthony flings the brain behind him, toward a bin with a basketball hoop affixed to it. It misses and lands on the floor next to several other brains.

DOG

I was wrong too. I always thought they were all dead down here. Or at least, as good as. But they're not dead, not at all. They're just... different.

ANTHONY T. BARKER

It's all semantic if you ask me. A caterpillar turns into a beautiful butterfly, a human turns into a cadaver, a local record store turns into a Starbucks.

DOG

Two of the three things you listed were overwhelmingly negative.

ANTHONY T. BARKER

Sorry, it wasn't meant that way. I've been down here so long, on my own, I think I've been going a bit spare. I keep finding messages in my alphabet soup.

DOG

Such as?

Anthony produces a small paper notebook.

ANTHONY T. BARKER

Funmcpmcjw.

DOG

So you're not okay.

ANTHONY T. BARKER

No. I feel like there isn't a future anymore. It's just gone. I can't concentrate on my work. I keep having these horrible intrusive thoughts. I can't sleep. Nothing seems to make me happy. Some days, I'm okay, then I fall back in the hole again.

DOG

I have that too. Good days and bad days.

ANTHONY T. BARKER

Mostly bad days.

DOG

People say it gets better. But it doesn't. It gets easier. That's not the same thing.

ANTHONY T. BARKER

I suppose not.

A beat.

DOG

Today was a good day.

ANTHONY T. BARKER

You're right. It was.

DOG

Doc, why not come with me? Get out of here, go into space? Meet aliens?

ANTHONY T. BARKER

I have a responsibility to be down here. I... helped to create this mess. I don't think I can undo it, but it's the least I can do to try.

DOG

I knew I recognized you! You're him! You're the guy on the news! You're the guy who created the fungus! You're Anthony T. Barker!

Anthony looks ashamed. A long pause follows.

ANTHONY T. BARKER

Yes.

Another pause.

ANTHONY T. BARKER (CONT'D)

I'm sorry, Dog. I'm so, so sorry. Words cannot express just how sorry I am. Some days I wish the fungus would swarm in here and swallow me up. But as long as I live, I have to stay down here. I have to continue my research. Even if there's no possible way to undo the damage I've done.

DOG

It's not your fault.

ANTHONY T. BARKER

Oh? And why is that? It certainly feels like my fault.

DOG

All the preppers and apocalypse cults could only conceive of the end of the world as some big, sudden thing that happens. But the truth is, it's not. The end of the world is something that happens so slowly you don't even realize it's going on. Spending time with aliens has made me realize how awful everything was down here, even before the incident.

Anthony stops, thinks for a moment.

ANTHONY T. BARKER

I know what you mean. For years, I had this horrible feeling, like everything was sliding toward disaster, like there was nothing I or anyone could do to stop it. When the disaster finally came, it was almost...

DOG

...a relief.

ANTHONY T. BARKER

Something that was unknown became known. That's why I became a scientist.

Anthony hesitates, and glances back at the lab behind him.

ANTHONY T. BARKER (CONT'D)

Would you like a brain to take back with you?

EXT. CITY STREETS - DAY

As Dog walks back through the city streets, the clouds above begin to part, and the evening sun streams in.

The landing pod is just where he left it. He approaches, alone, and enters, stopping to take one last look at the surface of the earth. It's oddly serene.

Then, the door of the pod shuts, and it begins to eject a huge amount of grease into the street, forcing the pod upward.

INT. DOCKING BAY

Merrick and Zoltran are, once again, standing in the docking bay. Zoltran is wearing a party hat, and Merrick has a post-it note taped to his head jar that says 'Welcome Dog'. He's also holding a party horn.

MERRICK

How do I use this party device?

ZOLTRAN

I have no idea.

Merrick tries to blow the party horn, but ends up just soundlessly ejecting a stream of thick grease.

MERRICK

This is far too complicated.
Dammit! I knew I should have stuck
with the party crown.

The bay doors begin to open. Dog emerges.

ZOLTRAN

Yo!

Dog runs up to them and gives them both a hug.

MERRICK

Did you find what you were looking
for?

DOG

Yeah. I did.

MERRICK

Good news, dude! Me and Zoltran and
maybe the cleaning robot were gonna
play a game that you earthlings
call 'cards'. You want in?

DOG

That sounds great. But can it wait?
I just, I need a moment.

INT. DOG'S KITCHEN

Dog enters the kitchen, pushes the door button, and leans against the door, breathing a sigh of relief. He puts the kettle on. His eye is caught by a blinking notification on his computer screen. He sits down, clicks it, and begins to read.

DOG (V.O.)

Dear Mr. Disaster D.D. Dog: thank you for your application. We regret to inform you that your request for off-world relocation on Tau Ceti has been rejected. We sincerely wish you the best of luck in your search.

He closes the email and sits there for a short while, staring out of the window. Then he gets up, pulls the pin out of the picture of Tau Ceti on his bulletin board, and throws the picture in the garbage. He rummages around in his desk, before bringing out a picture from the grand opening of the Museum of Earth Culture, and pins that instead. Then, he goes back to preparing tea.

Outside the window, the earth looks as dismal and grey as ever. But the universe is bright and full of lights.

END OF SHOW