

DogPods

by
Scott Zakarin

Digital Sky Episode

(C) Zoit Media SPI, LLC

INT. BACHELOR APT - DAY

ANNA

Picture in your mind, a typical bachelor apartment, with typical bachelor pad trappings: dishes in the sink, last night's dinner on the coffee table and some clothes scattered about. This is the home of brilliant 33-year-old college Professor Jack Carpenter and his midsize 4-year-old rescue mutt, Bella.

(beat)

When Jack is having a tough time with life's challenges, he has no more loyal friend than his girl Bella. They watch TV together, dance to hip-hop together and play indoor fetch together.

(beat)

When Jack is having a particularly hard time, he cuddles up with Bella and shares his deepest feelings.

SOUND: Light synchronized snoring between Jack and Bella, ALARM CLOCK: Jack starts to wake up. Wrestles with the blankets.

JACK

You think this is your bed and you just get to sleep in it, don't you, Bella!? I don't know how a dog your size manages to take up so much space.

SOUND: Bella dog yawns while stretching. She moves over to Jack.

JACK (CONT'D)

What do you dream about Bells? Last night you were ling on your side running in your sleep.

(beat)

Were those nightmares? Are you being chased by something... or chasing after something?

SOUND: Bella jumps off the bed, scrambles out of the room. Comes back into the room.

JACK (CONT'D)

Ohh... thank you for the tennis ball, Bells.

(MORE)

JACK (CONT'D)
 Unfortunately, we don't have time play
 this morning. Gotta walk you and then
 head out to the university.

SOUND: Bella is pushing the tennis ball into Jacks face.

JACK (CONT'D)
 (giggling)
 Stop Bella. We'll play when I get home.

The tennis ball falls off the bed and bounces on the hard
 wood floor.

JACK (CONT'D)
 Come on Bells! You're smarter than that,
 You know you can't fit under the bed.

SOUND: Jack gets off the bed.

JACK (CONT'D)
 (sigh)
 I'll get it out for you.

ANNA
 Jack gets off the bed and starts searching
 for the ball.

JACK
 Echh, I probably should vacuum more
 often.

ANNA
 As Jack is looking for the tennis ball, he
 feels something small and pulls it out.

JACK
 Ahhh that's where it was.
 (beat)
 Hey Bella, remember that AirPods I
 accused you of eating? We'll mystery
 solved. Do you forgive me for doubting
 you? No? Yes?
 (beat)
 I wish I knew what you're thinking. Are
 you mad at me? Do you have any idea what
 I'm even talking about?

SOUND: The collar tags jangle as Bella gives Jack wet
 kisses.

JACK (CONT'D)
 Okay. Okay. You accept my apology.

MUSIC: Powerful moment builds as Jack's incredible mind works over time.

ANNA

Jack looks at the AirPods in his hand and stares at it. His curiosity fuels the analytical side of his brain.

JACK

(in the zone)

Bella, wouldn't it be awesome if someone could figure out how to tune this little AirPods to pickup a dog's mental frequencies and...

(laughs)

If only we knew of a neuroscientist who works with advanced analytic tools and has access to a massive data base of medical research all about the mind.

(scientist fast talk)

What if I could somehow invent a headset that would enter the cerebral cortex and tune it to interpret brain waves between a dog and a human. Create a... a thought processor so that you and I could communicate. I know it sounds crazy, but every new invention seems crazy before it becomes a reality, right?

(suddenly urgent)

Wait... Bella, we've got to get out of here and go for our walk, or we'll miss her!

SOUND: Leash being snapped on. Jack and rushes downstairs and leaves the apartment.

BELLA

Look at her Bells... amazing right?

ANNA

Picture 28 year old Maggie walking her Cairn Terrier, Bixby. She has an easy smile that would disarm anyone. When Jack sees her, his mind sees her surrounded by a golden radiance.

SOUND: Magical golden music and efx.

JACK

Okay Bella, It's time to pull my confidence together... Let's just calmly walk by and you go in for the butt sniff. Got it?

SOUND: Bella pants.

SOUNDS: Steps and jangling of collars and tags, paws. And sniffing.

JACK (CONT'D)

Sorry about that, Bells can get a little personal very quickly.

MAGGIE

(laughs)

Bixby seems just fine with it.

JACK

You live around hear?

JACK (CONT'D)

Couple of block south. You?

MAGGIE

Couple of blocks North?

(beat)

He's so cute?

JACK

Thanks, but Bella's a she. Most people think she's s boy at first. But she such a pretty girl to me.

SOUND: Maggie kneels to Bella who gives her kisses.

MAGGIE

Oh my god, she's sooo sweet.

JACK

Oops leashes are all tied up. Let me just move this over and...

MAGGIE

You have to excuse Bixby. He get's excited when he sees a pretty girl.

JACK

Men can be such dogs.

They laugh together.

MAGGIE

Hopefully we see you again.

(to Bixby)

Come on Bixby.

JACK
Yeah, probably will. I usually take Bella
for her walk around this time.

Maggie walks away.

JACK (CONT'D)
Ow. That made my heart hurt. What do you
think Bella?

SOUND: Bella pees.

JACK (CONT'D)
Good girl. Have your morning oui oui.

JACK'S APT - NIGHT

SOUND: Jack opens the door. Bella runs over to him and
attacks him like he was never going to see him again.

JACK (CONT'D)
Hey little girl. How's my puppy! Yes. I
love you too!
(beat)
I have a present I made for you at work
today. Come sit on the couch with me!

SOUND: Jack walks over sits on couch. Bella jump on next
to him.

SOUND: Jack is taking a smaller bag out of his backpack.
A large set of headphones is taken out.

JACK (CONT'D)
Something I knocked together from a bunch
stuff at work.

ANNA
Jack takes out from his bag a pair of
over the ear headphones.

JACK
Sit still for a minute, Bella. It's okay,
you can trust me.

SOUND: Jack struggles with Bella for several seconds
trying to get her to keep the headphones on.

ANNA
Once the headphones are in place. Jack
puts his AirPods into his own ears. He
takes out his phone and uses a
rudimentary looking app to tune in to
various frequencies...

(MORE)

ANNA (CONT'D)
radio frequencies, cellular data
frequencies, and others more
mysterious. And then, the amazing,
appears to happen.

SOUND: Frequencies and sound

JACK
(like talking to a person)
Bella. Bella...

ANNA
Jack looked deep into Bella's eyes. His
head cocked in that inquisitive way.
Bella's tongue sticks out just outside
her adorable doggie lips... they don't
move. But Jack hears.

BELLA
I love you Jack.

JACK`
(surprised, but not shocked)
Whahhh...
(beat)

JACK
And I love you, Bella.

BELLA
You're my pack, you're my family.

JACK
You're my family too, Bella. We are a
pack.
(beat)
I may be going crazy, but I think we are
actually having a conversation.

BELLA
Are you okay?

JACK
I'm just...

BELLA
Yeah, me too.

JACK
This is incredible, way beyond my
expectations. This should actually be...
impossible.

BELLA

Pretty weird for me too.

JACK

I don't know what to ask you first.

(beat)

Are you happy!? You seem happy most of the time.

BELLA

Well, yeah. Of course, just like every dog, I have good times and I have bad times. What about you?

JACK

I can't complain. Well sometimes I do. I confide in you, when I'm most overwhelmed by life.

BELLA

I can tell. I give you lots of love. Especially when I can see your having nightmares.

BELLA (CONT'D)

You're a good owner, Jack.

JACK

You're my dog. I don't understand how can anyone mistreat their animals.

BELLA

What does "mistreat" mean?

JACK

Huh, you don't know that?

BELLA

Do you mean be mean to their dogs?

JACK

Yeah. Forget to take care of them, or worse... hit them!?

BELLA

What?? I've never seen anything like that on TV. I've seen people yell at their dogs when we have our walks. But they actually hit them?

JACK

Usually not, I don't think. But yeah there are some dogs that get abused.

BELLA

That's really messed up, Jack.

JACK

You've seen dog's fight with each other.?

BELLA

I mean, yeah. I even had to fight to protect you.

(beat)

But usually we're just playing.

BELLA (CONT'D)

Jack, do you know what happens when dog's get really, really old and go away?

JACK

What do you mean?

BELLA

I've heard they go away to a nice farm somewhere - Where we could run and play! But I don't believe that.

JACK

What do you think happens?

BELLA

It's just, it would make me really sad to not be with you... it would freak me out.

JACK

No. I would never send you away. We have a long time to be together. You're only five years old

BELLA

That makes me happy.

JACK

Hey, what's it about fetch that you guys like so much?

BELLA

It's very satisfying, When we play, I get to please you. Reward you for a good job.

JACK

Reward me?

BELLA

Yeah. I bring the ball back to you, so that you get to throw it again.

JACK

But you bring it back to whoever throws it for you.

BELLA

Yeah. I'm rewarding them too.

PAUSE

BELLA (CONT'D)

But it's not the same as playing fetch with you.

JACK

I guess that makes sense. I'm a dog person, more than I am a people person. But you're different. I can't imagine there being a better dog than you in the world. When people say they think their dog is the best, I know they're wrong.

BELLA

Same. Me about you.

JACK

Ahh, Bella. This may be one of the biggest understatements ever, buy I wish I could stay and talk all day! But, I need to go to work.

BELLA

Are you ever coming back?

JACK

Of course, Bella. We'll talk more when I get back home.

BELLA

Okay, good.

ANNA

Jack gathers his things. He is about to exit his apartment when...

JACK

Wait!?! What are you going to do while I'm gone?

BELLA

Same thing I do every day you're away: Look out the patio windows to make sure no one tries to get into our territory.

(MORE)

BELLA (CONT'D)

Lay around in different favorite parts of the house. Then nap. Wake up. Walk around bark at some dogs outside. As long as everything seems safe I may take another nap.

JACK

Is that boring for you?

BELLA

It's okay. But when we do all the fun stuff on the weekends it makes all that hard work worth it.

JACK

We'll do something special this weekend. Whatever you want.

SOUND: Bella make a happy dog sound.

SOUND: The front door shuts. Bella's paws tap around on the hard wood floor. She goes over to her food bowl. Eating crunchy dog food. Then lapping up some water.

LATER

Jack reenters the apartment. Bella meets him at the door, Jumping on the door. He puts Bella's headphones over her head.

JACK (CONT'D)

There you go girl.

BELLA

Hey. You came back. I was worried.

JACK

We got to go Bella. Umm... Do you still need a leash?

BELLA

Of course I do! If someone comes over to us who's smell I don't recognize, I won't know if I'm supposed to attack or sniff.

(beat)

Wait, you smell that?

JACK

Of course not. I have like 26 million less olfactory receptors than you.

BELLA

Maggie is outside walking Bixby. Let's accidentally run into them. Snap the leash on me and let's get you a lady.

CUT TO:

OUTSIDE THE APARTMENT IN THE DAY

JACK

Hi. Maggie and Bixby, right?

MAGGIE

Oh yeah, Hi! Hey Bella. Such a pretty girl.

JACK

And... there they go. The sniffing thing.

MAGGIE

I'm sorry, can you remind me of your name?

JACK

Jack.

MAGGIE

Yes. Nice to see you again, Jack.

(to her dog)

Okay, Bixby. Time to go potty, mommy's got to go to work.

JACK

Hey look at that. He listens to you.

MAGGIE

Yeah. He knows he gets a treat if he listens to mommy.

(beat to notice)

And there's Bixby making his contribution to the land.

SOUND: Bixby does his business on the grass.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

Awww dang it! I'm out of bags. You don't suppose I can bum one from you?

JACK

Sure, but I want it back next time I see you.

MAGGIE

From this day forward I vow to have an extra poop bag with me at all times. Good boy Bixby.

JACK

Why the name Bixby?

MAGGIE

(laughs)

My niece named him after her favorite YouTuber. But I grew to like it. He's such a "Bixby"

JACK

What would you have named him?

MAGGIE

What do you think? He's a Cairn Terrier and I love movies.

JACK

Toto, huh. I've seen "Wizard of Oz" so many times I can recite it.

(Jack Hayley voice)

The Tinsman who made me forgot to give me a heart.

MAGGIE

(Dorothy or Scarecrow)

"No heart??"

They share knowing giggle.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

Why did you name her Bella?

JACK

Came with the dog.

(beat)

She's a rescue, and I didn't want to change her name.

MAGGIE

Oh. You're one of those good people in the world, huh?

JACK

Depends on who you ask, but I try.

JACK (CONT'D)

Maybe we can take them for a walk together sometime...

PAUSE

MAGGIE

We walk along the bluff's in the
Palisades Saturday morning at 9am.

JACK

That works perfect for us. Right, Bells?
Bella barks affirmatively.

MAGGIE

Wow. She responds on cue. She's smart,
huh?

JACK

...you have no idea.

MAGGIE

Okay, time for me to get back and get
ready for work. Type in my number on
your phone 310- 728

SOUND: Jack fumbles, suddenly flustered.

JACK

Was that 7... 28?

SOUND: Maggie, taking the phone, types in the digits.

MAGGIE

Give me your phone. I'll type it in.
See you on Saturday.

SOUND: Maggie walks away.

JACK

We look forward to it. By Bixby!

INT. JACK'S APT

JACK (CONT'D)

Here that Bells? We got a double date.
Oh, let me get your headphones.

SOUND: Putting on Bella's headphones.

JACK (CONT'D)

Hmmm... looks kind of silly. A dog
wearing headphones.

BELLA

Oh, yeah? It looks pretty silly when an animal is wearing clothes.

JACK

(laughs) I guess it does.

(thinking)

I think I can do something about making you an AirPods device that can safely stay in your ears. This way you can understand me when I'm talking to Maggie.

BELLA

That would be nice. These things are not made for floppy ears!

EXT. BLUFFS

ANNA

Jack and bella walk toward the bluffs for their walking date with Maggie and Bixby.

JACK

So what is the whole appeal about the sniffing butt thing.

BELLA

I was waiting till you got around to asking me about that.

JACK

Humans barely shake hands anymore without disinfectant wipes involved, but canines...

BELLA

Jack, can't you find this in one of your phone buttons?

JACK

Of course, I know it's a biological thing, but what goes through your mind?

BELLA

Hmmm...

(beat)

All sorts of interesting things happen to the senses. Mostly it's just a quick way to get to know some dog. Like saying, "sup".

JACK

Look at that, Bells. They showed and are waiting for us.

BELLA

You mean she showed. Bixby didn't actually have a choice.

JACK

Good point.

SOUND: Jack and Maggie walking over to Maggie and Bixby.

MAGGIE

Hey Jack. You made it.

JACK

Of course.

MAGGIE

I brought an extra water just in case you did.

JACK

That was very considerate of you. But where's my poop bag?

MAGGIE

I also brought extra treats for Bella.

SOUND: Bella barks.

JACK

That's Bella saying thank you.

MAGGIE

You're welcome, Beautiful Bella.

SOUND: Maggie scratches Bella. Bixby wants attention too and jumps on Maggie like a lunatic.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

Easy Bixby! Calm down boy. Mommy loves you the most.

(back to Jack)

We should probably get walking. Bixby has a lot of puppy energy to burn off.

JACK

Lead the way Bixby.

Two sets of feet and two sets of paws walk along while they talk.

SOUND: Music transitions to show the passage of time.

JACK (CONT'D)

So, what's your story, Maggie?

MAGGIE

You mean historically? I did just do one of those DNA tests. I'm pretty much a Mutt.

JACK

Same as Bella.

MAGGIE

We're Mutt sisters, Bella.

JACK

How about your life a little more in this century?

MAGGIE

I'm a wanna-be singer, currently waiting tables at the Lazy Daisy in Brentwood.

JACK

I know that place. Haven't been there in years.

MAGGIE

I'm leaving, though. Just had a bad breakup with my manager.

JACK

(hiding his pleasure)

Uh... workplace relationships are tough.

MAGGIE

He's a great guy. He's just looking for something I can't give him.

(changing tone)

I don't want to talk about all my nonsense. Tell me about you.

JACK

I recently moved out from New York, where I was teaching at NYU. I'm a neuroscientist.

MAGGIE

Wow.

(beat)

What's a neuroscientist?

JACK
(laughs)
I study the brain and behavior.

MAGGIE
Some light reading... I can't imagine.

JACK
And I can't imagine being able to
sing.

MAGGIE
So why Los Angeles?

JACK
I had a chance to teach at UCLA and
needed a change.
(beat)
I was in a relationship with a grad
school student... it got a little too
public.

MAGGIE
Oooohhh. That's no good.

JACK
Hard to grade a mediocre student when
you're dating them.

MAGGIE
I bet you gave her an "A".

JACK
A minus.

MAGGIE
Good move, prof. How did she take it?

JACK
She switched majors and found a new
professor to go with it.

SOUND: Maggie laughs. They walk for several more yards,
and then...

MAGGIE
Well, looks like Bixby and I got to get
going.
(laughs)
It was really nice walking with you guys.
I have a yoga class to get to.

JACK

Oh um...

MAGGIE

Same time, same place tomorrow?

JACK

Uh yeah, Bella and I will definitely be here.

SOUND: Hugs good-by.

INT. JACK'S APT - NIGHT

SOUND: Jack is cooking and "Singing a Song"

JACK

So, what do you think about Bixby?

BELLA

He's okay for a puppy. Always wants to play. It can be annoying, but he's a good boy.

BELLA (CONT'D)

So, what are we having for dinner?

JACK

I'm having salmon... I guess you'll...

BELLA

I like salmon.

JACK

I bet you do.

BELLA

But I don't like dog food too much.

JACK

Then why do you eat it in one minute without taking a breath.

BELLA

I like food. I can't control myself enough to savor it. The snacks are decent, especially the chewy ones. Why don't you just give more of those.

JACK

Your meals are meant to be good for you. Too many of those treats always gives you diarrhea.

BELLA

Ahhh, is that why you sometimes look around to see if anyone is watching, and we sneak away so you don't have to pick it up.

JACK

What I'm saying is that I have to make sure you have a healthy diet.

BELLA

Is salmon healthy?

JACK

Uh... yeah.

BELLA

What about hamburger or chicken?

JACK

Well it's complicated, but yeah...

BELLA

So....

SOUND: Jack SIGHS. Picks up the dog bowl and pours the food into the trash. - Pulls out more food from the refrigerator and adds it to the tinfoil.

JACK

Salmon for two, then. Do you want me to put it into your dog bowl, or will you be sitting at the table?

BELLA

Unless you can invent me a pair of paws with thumbs, I'm good with the bowl.

SOUND: Text alert. Jack picks up the phone.

JACK

It's from Maggie, she wants to know if I can talk.

BELLA

Ohh yeahh you can!

SOUND: Jack picks up the cell phone and hits call. Cell Phone ring from the other side.

JACK

Tin man here.

MAGGIE

(slightly nervous)

Hi Jack... How are you?

JACK

Good. Everything okay?

BELLA

Um... I'm a... not going to be able to meet you at the bluffs tomorrow.

JACK

(slightly nervous)

Okay... that's fine. I have a pretty flexible schedule if you want to make it another time.

MAGGIE

(beat)

I really enjoy walking with you... but... I'm getting back together with my boyfriend and... well, I probably can't...

JACK

I get it. If I had a girlfriend like you I doubt I'd be comfortable with you walking alone with another guy.

MAGGIE

But we will see each other around during Bixby and Bella's walks. Right?

JACK

Yeah... definitely.

(beat)

Okay well, I have to finish dinner for me and Bells.

MAGGIE

Tell her "hi".

JACK

I definitely will.

SOUNDS: Jack ends the call and puts his phone down.

BELLA

Awww... Jack. I'm really sorry.

JACK

Maggie said "hi"

BELLA

I know what she said... "dog ears,"
remember.

(beat)

She doesn't know what she's missing.

SOUND: Jack falls backwards onto the couch. He's tries
to cry. Doesn't work.

JACK

The most amazing woman I ever met gets
away, and I can't even cry. It's a proven
fact. I'm a machine with no heart.

SOUND: Bella jumps on the couch and licks Jack's face.

MAGGIE

What are you talking about, Jack!? You
have a great big heart. That's the best
part about you.

JACK

You've lived with me for 4 years. Have
you ever seen me cry?

BELLA

I've seen you sad.

(beat)

And I've seen you happy!

(growls playfully)

I've heard you yell in frustration.

(beat)

I hear you being a loving son to your
parents.

Jack becomes choked up.

BELLA (CONT'D)

Jack, how sensitive you are is the thing
I love most about you.

JACK

You're my dog. You have to say things
like that about me.

BELLA

You know better than that, Jack.

JACK

I do?

BELLA

You do.

JACK

Maybe I do... See you're the only one who really understands me, Bella.

BELLA

I think we probably have the best human and dog relationship of all time.

PAUSE

BELLA (CONT'D)

But Jack, there is something I need to tell you.

PAUSE

JACK

What?

(beat)

What? That you are getting back together with your old owner?

BELLA

No. Of course not. I will never leave you.

(careful)

But Jack, the DogPods... don't really... work.

JACK

...what?

BELLA

You're a neuroscientist, Jack. You have to know that we aren't actually reading each other's thoughts...

JACK

I do..? Then how are we doing this?

BELLA

We are reading each other's feelings. We're very sensitive to each other. That's why we are a great pack... and I love you so much.

JACK

And I love you so much, Bella.

BELLA

You let yourself believe your invention worked! Then you processed the rest, and heard my voice, through a genius brain and a great big heart.

JACK

Oh yeah, so why didn't Maggie ghost her boyfriend after she met me!?

Bella doesn't answer.

JACK (CONT'D)

Who knows, maybe meeting me IS the reason she decided to go back to her boyfriend.

SOUND: Jack laughs at his own self-effacing humor.

JACK (CONT'D)

Huh, Bells?

Bells... tell me what you're thinking now.

SOUND: Bella barks.

JACK (CONT'D)

Bella...

SOUND: Bella licks Jack's face all over.

JACK (CONT'D)

(while Bella attacks with dog kisses)

Easy girl.

ANNA

Jack looks deeply into Bella's eyes.
Bella looks back into Jack's eyes.

JACK

We can't hear each other anymore, huh, Bells?

ANNA

Bella rolls over into Jack's lap.

JACK

But I can still understand you. You want a belly rub, don't you?

SOUND: Jack scratches Bella's belly.

JACK (CONT'D)

Yeah... that's a good girl.

(new thought)

Wait... do I still have to serve you
people food?

SOUND: The oven timer goes off.

ANNA

We may never know what our pets are
thinking, but if we listen, we can tell
how they're feeling.

ANNA AND SCOTT

Message about adopting dogs and cats and
where.