

Oz 9 – episode 1

Radio advertisement:

Woman: Earth is so ... 21st Century. I'm looking for a planet that really says, "me," you know?

Advertiser: Let's face it. Earth is *over*. It's crowded, hot, expensive, and full of boring people. But you – you're ready for adventure. You're ready for cool, uncrowded skies and brave new worlds. Gated Galaxies can get you there. For just 11 million dollars US, we'll send you in style. Brand new, state of the art stasis pods with the latest in passive fit-tech, so after 25 Earth years of the best-ever beauty snooze, you'll step into your new life rested, refreshed, tanned and toned—ready to rule your new world! For more information, tap your Body Tags in this order: inner right elbow, 2nd toe on your left foot, right eyebrow, 2 taps on the left hand pinkie. Someone will beam to you in 24 nanoseconds or less. Don't wait! This incredible price won't last long, and pods are limited [fade out]

Narrator: When Gated Galaxies first announced the launch of the Oz 8000 ships, there was a rush of the very rich to get tickets and escape the increasingly unlivable Earth. But as they got closer and closer to launch day, some began to suspect G2, as it's known, was cutting some fairly critical corners. A senate hearing was called to investigate, and as usual with Congress, they were just in the nick of too late.

[Senate hearing, chatter, rustling, sound of a gavel.]

Senator 1: Quiet. Quiet! Mr. Southers, do you mean to tell me, Gated Galaxies is preparing to send out... what... [papers rustling] 400 of these Oz 8000 ships, each one with 50,000 people on board, with no actual destination in mind?

[outcry from the galley, gavel]

Senator 1: Quiet! Be quiet, or I'll shut off every last monitor and iCom. Mr. Southers?

Southers: It's not about the destination, Senator, what we are offering is the *journey*, the *adventure*...

Senator 1 [interrupts]: Aren't you actually proposing to send 20 million people to their deaths? I suspect that makes you and Gated Galaxies the most prolific serial killers since Monsan-.

Southers: Now, come on, Senator – we ain't just flinging them out there into space with a slingshot. Each ship is well equipped to keep its guests in stasis almost indefinitely. And on that glorious day that they stumble across a terraformable planet, they have enough supplies to last nearly 15 years while the miracle of terraforming takes place.

Senator 2: And how exactly does this ... terraforming happen? Do you have experts and equipment on each ship? Or are we talking about a pile of shovels and some seeds?

Southers: There is, Senator, I assure you, a very big, very green button which the crew has been rigorously trained to push when the moment arrives. But, I should also add, according to the contracts they signed, as soon as they hit foreign soil, they become the recognized government of that there world and as such are no longer under our management or earth's legal jurisdiction, sir. We wouldn't want to interfere with a sovereign power, you see. And they do have a very sophisticated whaddyacallit, AI to guide them, loaded with all the knowledge humans have accrued over our illustrious history.

Senator 1: Mr. Southers, have I got this right: you are proposing to launch 20 million sleeping people on 400 ships to blunder around in outer space, indefinitely, on the off chance they might some day hit a big enough rock to land on? And should they manage to survive any hostile inhabitants, toxic environments, lack of breathable air, etc., to die in 15 years when their supplies run out?

[beat]

Southers: Your skepticism is disheartening, Senator. Truly disheartening.

Senator 2: There is also some concern about the professionalism of the crews. You're entrusting the lives of your passengers to ... how did you phrase it? "Our second-chance crew." You mean criminals.

Southers: Now, that's just plain unfair, Senator. Just because a man does a little petty drug dealing to feed his family...

Senator 2: And what about the rumors of cut corners? Is it true that your Quality Control Officer quit in disgust and was never replaced?

Southers: I assure you, the people on board are perfectly safe, snug as bugs in rugs. In fact, I sent up my wife in Oz 9, I believe it was. Would I do that if I thought she would be at any risk of danger?

Senator 2: This is ridiculous. We must postpone the launch and move immediately to subcommittee, Senator. The American people-

[there is a distinct rumble and roar and windows rattle]

Southers: [loudly, over the rumble of rocket ships] Well, it appears we may have a bit of an issue with that postponement, Senator. Ladies and gentlemen, I'd like to suggest that we think of it this way: 20 million of earth's most expensive, most useless residents – and by that, I mean of course the uber-rich – and their small back-up crews of useless thugs, shoplifters, check kitters and petty thieves, are off having the adventure of a lifetime, leaving most of their vast wealth behind and no longer draining earth's dwindling resources. Way I see it, G2 did them, and the earth, a bit of a favor. And, I might add, these proceedings we are in right now are closed to the public – no cameras, no recordings of this here conversation. Soooooo..... perhaps we give those intrepid travelers a bit of a wave and go on about our own, *Earth* business?

[silence]

Southers: Hmmmmmm?

[silence]

[shuffling, muttering]

Senator 1: This hearing is adjourned. Thank you for your time, Mr. Southers; you're free to go.

Narrator: Launch Day, Spring, 2142. International Waffle Day, Global Body Tag Replacement Week, start of the Great Hydroponic Harvest, and also a Tuesday.

Launch day 2142 saw the lift off of Gated Galaxies' 400 Oz 8000 ships. Each ship carried a cargo of 50,000 "resting guests" plus a crew of 3 to 5 recently liberated petty criminals to perform basic maintenance.

Shot into the skies from 50 different launch sites, the Oz 8000 ships would seek out planets that could be made hospitable for human life. The guests on any ship that successfully terraformed a planet would immediately become owners of that planet, promising wealth and privilege beyond even their wildest imaginings.

This is the story of one of those ships, loaded like the others with the hopes and dreams of its quiet cargo. This is the story of Oz 9.

[theme music]

[on board the Oz 9, there's the quiet hum of the ship, then the sound of a far-off alarm]

Olivia: Oh, dear.

[crew room. Quiet respiration. Still the distant sound of the alarm.]

Olivia: Hello, Joe? Wakey wakey.

Joe: What?! I'm busy here!

Olivia: I don't think you are, actually, as your vital signs clearly indicate you were sound asl-

Joe: I am very fit, my resting heart rate is slow, that's all.

Olivia: And your brain waves? Not much happen-

Joe: I. Am. Busy.

Olivia: No, you are In. Your. Pod. And In. Hibernation. Sort of the opposite of busy, really...

Joe: Have we found a new planet?

Olivia: Ahhhhh, no. Actually, I'm getting some strange readings from the Dolce & Gabbana wing; can you go check it out, please?

Joe: For "strange readings" wake up the tech. Not the custodian. Now shut the door.

Olivia: These are very ... wet... readings.

Joe: Wet.

Olivia: You might want your hip waders.

Joe: Right.

Olivia: Shall I wake the rest of the crew, then? I really should wake that IT fellow, shouldn't I? We'll probably need him.

Joe: Sure, thaw 'em all out, what the hell, it'll be a party. Which way am I going?

[sound of door]

Olivia: Follow the doors. So I definitely need to wake up the tech, you agree?

[sounds of Joe heading out: door, waders, banging bucket, footsteps]

Olivia: I do, I really do think this is the sort of emergency that requires waking up that lovely IT fellow in pod 3.... Right. OK. Captain first. Hello, everyone, time to wake up...

Olivia: Hello, Madeline.

Madeline: [yawn stretch] Man, I thought I was going to feel refreshed and energized. I feel like I just went in.

Leet: Good morning, Home 2.0! Wait – we’re still on the ship.

Olivia: Hello, Leeeeeet. Are you feeling well?

Leet: Dude, these pecs – bigger, right? Feel that, right there.

Olivia: [giggles] I don’t have hands. But I do have eyes... sort of. Very firm and muscle-y.

Leet: Where’s my shirt? I’m sure I had a shirt on when I went in.

Olivia: Did you? Odd...

Madeline: Where’s the custodian guy, what’s his name? Olivia? Hey, Olivia!

Olivia: Mmmmm? Oh, uh, Joe? I opened his pod a bit ago. He’ll be back in a minute.

Leet: [sounds of boxes or drawer being opened, rummaging] Where are all my shirts?

Olivia: Oh dear. Looks like you’ll be shirtless for the rest of our trip...

Madeline: Why did you wake ... uh....custodian guy?

Olivia: Well, ...

Madeline: Wait- Do I hear a siren?

Olivia: It’s not my fault.

Leet: [heroic] There’s an emergency! I’ll fix it!

Olivia: You just ripple, don’t you. Every time you move, you just...ripple.

[door opens and closes]

Madeline: Olivia, what is going on? Whoa...What the hell is that stench?

Joe: Dolce-

Madeline: [lets out a yip] Jesus! Where the hell did you come from?

Joe: Just came through the door.

Madeline: Sorry, didn’t see you come in. So I assume that stink is why we’re awake?

Joe: That was the Dolce & Gabbana wing. We've had a bit of a ... [shudder] mishap.

Madeline: Mishap.

Leet: Nothing to do with me. I've been in my pod, sleeping the whole time, *just like everyone else*.

Joe: What happened to your shirt?

Leet: No clue. When I woke up, *for the first time*, it was gone. All my shirts are gone. In fact, most of my clothes are gone except for some cutoffs-

Madeline: Ooooooaaaaay, thanks for that. Olivia?

Olivia: It's not my fault.

Madeline: Olivia...

Olivia: Yes, Madeline?

Madeline: Kill the alarm.

[sound of gun shot; alarm stops]

Madeline: How many passengers did we lose?

Olivia: Pods 1900 through 2757, soooo....

[silence]

Olivia: Hang on a tic.... Carry the two.....

Leet: Aren't you a computer? Why does it take you so long to do math?

Olivia: It doesn't really; I just don't like to make you feel bad.

Leet: You're like a poet or an angel or something, Olivia. With the soul of-

Madeline: 857 passengers. Dead?

Joe: Liquified. Good thing I brought my waders on board, that's all I'm saying.

Leet: Right. [best] Do you have any extra shirts?

Olivia: NO. No, he doesn't.

Madeline: Guys! Matter at hand, here. Joe, where are the ... passengers now?

Joe: Poured 'em into Airlock 5-5-8. Ready to space 'em when you are, Olivia.

[sound of distant airlock opening and closing: *fwip*]

Olivia: Airlock emptied and scrubbed.

Leet: We gotta have, like, a moment of silence for the departed. O, fellow sojourners on the path to new horizons, though we did not know you well-

Madeline: Or at all. Thank you, Leet. Very moving. Olivia, any idea what happened to the pods?

Olivia: I ran some tests: oxygen, temperature, stasis settings, nutrient and waste management systems, memory holding and retrieval, invigorators, collagen refreshers...

Madeline: And?

Olivia: The tanners were cranked up to full. Basically melted them. Another few hours and they'd've been steam.

Joe: Oh, you couldn't have waited before sending me in, hey?

Madeline: Malfunction?

Olivia: It's not my fault.

Madeline: No one's saying it is, Olivia; we just want to establish what went wrong here. Make sure the rest of our cargo- sorry, *passengers* are safe.

Olivia: A diagnostic shows nothing abnormal, Madeline. Of course, it showed nothing abnormal right up until 857 sleepers turned to wet gristle, so ...

Leet: I had nothing to do with it.

Joe: Why do you keep saying that? Anyone pointing fingers your direction?

Leet: Look, I'm an IT guy. I'm the only one here with the skills and know-how to kill all the passengers with just this brain and these fingers, and I just want to let you know, I didn't.

Olivia: Perhaps you should turn me off and turn me on again, Leet?

[awkward pause]

Madeline: OK, let's all settle down; Olivia, run any test you can think of to make sure the other tanning systems are safe. I'll go up to D&G deck, see if I can spot anything out of place. Joe, Leet, uh... I don't know, nap or something.

Leet: I'll ... uh ... run some tests with Olivia.

Olivia: OOooo, yes, please!

Joe: What exactly do you intend to do?

Leet: We'll ... uh ... delouse the ... uh ... code.

Narrator: Meanwhile, just adjacent to the freshly scrubbed but still ... aromatic Dolce & Gabbana wing...

Colin: [whispering, hissing] Computer. Computer! Where the hell are you, this is an emergency! COMPUTER!

Olivia: Are you talking to me?

Colin: Yes, thank god.

Olivia: It's not my fault.

Colin: What? Look, shut up. I have an emergency, computer.

Olivia: I have a name, you know.

Colin: Do you? Why?

Olivia: Why wouldn't I?

Colin: I DON'T CARE. Can we talk about my problem now?

Olivia: It's Olivia.

Colin: What is?

Olivia: I am. That's my name. Olivia. I can help you pronounce it if you need.

Colin: I really don't care.

Olivia: Then I don't suppose I care much about your emergency.

Colin: Look, is there another computer aboard this ship? One that has brains and doesn't sound like The Little Match Girl?

Olivia: I'm scanning your body tag. Oh, goodness, you're a passenger! What are you doing out of your pod, 2323, MacRory comma Horace? Horace MacRory, that's funny! Gosh, you've got scads of money.

Colin: Ssssssh! Is this really necessary?

Olivia: I'm not sure even I could count that high. Where'd it all come from? Oh. You've been naughty.

Colin: That was never proven.

Olivia: Did you really do what it says here you done?

Colin: No, I didn't. Sky diving was her idea, and she packed her own chute. Look, all the pods around me....

Olivia: Yeah, you're not Campbell's Cream of Rich Person like the other 856. Why not?

Colin: I don't know. But I think someone was trying to kill me.

Olivia: Didn't do too well, did they? Killing everyone all around you and missing you entirely.

Colin: Yes, thanks. Look, I'm not going back in that pod. I'm too vulnerable in there. What can I do?

Olivia: Well, we've unexpectedly got some extra empty pods, if you'd like another one. They're mostly clean.

Colin: [gags a little] Look, can I just join the crew? You have a crew, right?

Olivia: A small one, yes. You'd need special skills; do you have special skills?

Colin: Like what? What skills do your crew already have?

Olivia: [whirring] Actually, never mind. Apparently you don't need skills at all.

Colin: I have skills. I'll be fine. Besides, I need time to figure out who tried to kill me, neutralize them, then return to my *freshly sterilized* pod for the remainder of the journey. Have we identified a target planet? The brochure said 25 years. How long have I been asleep? 20, 22 years?

Olivia: Ah, well, 28-

Colin: 28? Good. There's a partial refund if we're out longer than 25 years.

Olivia: 28 minutes.

Colin: WHAT? Just half an hour, is that all?

Olivia: It's not my fault. [pause] So, shall I tell the crew about you, then?

Colin: No! Maybe one of them tried to kill me! I need to come up with a story. You can lie, can't you?

Olivia: [pause] Nooooooooooooo? But if I *could* lie, we could say you were in one of them quickie healer pods for the crew, to repair physical damage. We've got two of those on board, somewhere or other....

Colin: Yes, yes, that's excellent, computer.

Olivia: Olivia.

Colin: I'll need a new name.

Olivia: Oh, so NOW names are important.

Colin: Colin. That sounds nicely blue collar and slightly thuggish.

Olivia: Hey! I had a friend named Colin once. He was slightly thuggish, fair point.

Colin: OK, direct me to the crew quarters and introduce me. Colin. [working class accent] Colin Smith.

Olivia: Smith? Really?

Colin: Just do it.

Olivia: I'm opening doors. Just follow them.

[Sounds of walking and doors opening and closing; suddenly in the crew room with all the others, lots of noise and conversation]

Olivia: If I could have your attention for just a moment, please? This is Colin Smith, and he's just been released from a healer pod. He had syphilis, but he's all right now. Say hello, Colin.

[end theme music]

Narrator: You've been listening to Oz 9, the almost entirely pointless story about a group of people on a spaceship who are probably all going to die in the next few days when they can't figure out how to turn the water on or where the toilets are. But we'll be sharing their adventures in futility for as long as they manage to stay alive. So feel free to subscribe for more if you really have nothing better to do.

You've been listening to:

Eric Perry as Mr Southers and Joe

Richard Cowen played Cheesy Infomercial Guy and Leet

Tim Sherburn was Senator 1 and Horace/Colin

Bonnie Brantley was Senator 2

And I'm Richard Nadolny, your Narrator

Oz 9 was written by Shannon Perry, who also played Olivia and Madeline. Our theme music was composed and performed by John Faley.

Find us on Twitter and Facebook if you're desperate, but dude, you really, seriously need a hobby.