

Oz 9 Episode 2, "I had a cake all to meself"

Written by Shannon Perry

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

Narrator: Oz 9 is one of 400 ships launched from Earth in 2142 on a mission to the farthest reaches of space. 49,143 No, wait, that's not right either, I forgot about ... what does he call himself now? Colin. Right.

Oz 9 carries 49,142 sleeping human cargo, or "rested guests" as they're called, and a crew of three recently released petty criminals ... well, four now, forgot Colin again, that's surprisingly easy to do....

To sum up: Somewhere just south of 50,000 people, most of them really really rich and in hibernation, were launched from Earth in an attempt to find and colonize a new planet. Or, to be frank, they were sent away just to tidy earth up a bit and get rid of a bunch of annoying people.

Just a half hour out from launch, barely clear of the earth's atmosphere, they've had a bit of a mishap. The tanning equipment in some of the pods went haywire, resulting in the literal meltdown of 857 – nope, wait, forgot what's-his-name again – 856 passenger cargo. One passenger escaped and has surreptitiously joined the crew, calling himself Colin. They are all under the watchful eye of the ship's Artificial Intelligence avatar, Olivia.

[Sounds of the crew room]

Colin: [nervous] Oh, ha ha, computer, you know perfectly well it's not syphilis.

Olivia: Anal warts, then. Whatever, nothing to be ashamed of, all cleared up now. Anyway, he's an expert in ... uh

Colin: Communications. PR. Marketing.

Madeline: Marketing?

Colin: Yes, indeed. Give me enough time and I can sell anything to anyone, regardless of need or ability to pay for it.

Leet: Who doesn't need a really nice brochure in an emergency?

Colin: And who are you, Mr. Chest?

Leet: Leet Haxxx.

Colin: You pronounce it Hax-x-x?

Leet: It's spelled that way, isn't it?

Colin: And what is *your* skill, exactly?

Leet: IT specialist and [whispers] hacker.

Colin: And what exactly do you "hack"? Like, firewood? Like other criminals in your cell block with a shiv?

Leet: Computers, buddy. I'm awesome, in and out of your computer in 15 seconds flat, and you'll never know I've been there.

Olivia: Oh, gosh, I really hope not.

[awkward, extended silence]

Olivia: Can't really tell sex jokes when you've got the voice of a Dickensian street urchin, can you?

Everyone: No.

Joe: So, Colin-

Madeline: [whoops in surprise] Jesus, Joe, when did you come in?

Joe: I've been here all along.

Leet: DUDE. You are super sneaky.

Olivia: I told you. All your vital signs just drop; you're undetectable, like you're wallpaper or something. How do you do that?

Joe: I like to blend in. Colin, why does your voice sound so fancy?

Colin: Fancy?

Olivia: Posh. You know, *like rich people's*.

Colin: I don't think I do. Totally working class, me. Mum was a ... chimney sweep. Dad ... was too. Strange childhood, up and down chimneys like Santa Claus. Rah, blue collar. Vote Labour. Etcetera.

Olivia: Your accent's all slippery.

Colin: Yes, thank you, computer.

Olivia: O-li-vi-a. Mr. Mac... Smith.

Joe: "MacSmith"? Seriously? What kind of name is that?

Colin: Look, aren't we supposed to be running a ship?

Madeline: Colin's right. You all have tasks to be getting on with. Colin, what are your duties on the Oz?

Colin: I'm not really sure... Memory's still a little scrambled from the pod, I guess

Madeline: Olivia? Do you have a record of Colin's duties?

Olivia: [laughing] Yeah, OK. I reckon I can dig that up.

Narrator: Because the Oz 9 pretty much runs itself with occasional oversight from Olivia and nominal Captain Madeline Marks, the crew really doesn't have much to do. Their purpose, as defined by Gated Galaxies, is to "Accompany our rested guests on their journey to their new home, providing as-needed services including pod dusting, visual pod surveyance on a semi-annual basis, hands-free monitoring, and organ replacement." So, run a damp cloth across the pods every once in while, and literally cough up a kidney, should a passenger suddenly require one.

If the ship miraculously discovers a planet humans could one day survive on, the crew is in charge of starting the terraforming process by pressing the big green button that says “Terraform Here.” Other than that, they’re pretty much on the ship to ensure that, in case of an emergency, the ship goes down without a trace so no remaining Earth-side family can sue Gated Galaxies or claim the deceased’s estate.

The Oz 9 has been in space approximately 33 Earth minutes, and has so far lost 857 – nope, dammit, did it again, 856 rested guests, making it the most successful of the 400 Oz 8000s so far launched. Who determines “success” and how is still a matter of debate.

Joe: Oy!

Colin: Jesus!

Joe: Could you not step where I’ve just mopped?

Colin: Where the hell did you come from?

Joe: My sweet, sainted mother. You, story has it, fell down a chimney. Head first, I’m guessing.

Colin: Very funny.

Joe: Bit of advice: Don’t fidget when you sit.

Colin: I beg your pardon?

Joe: Those warts. They make you fidget.

Colin: I do not have anal warts.

Joe: Then why do you fidget?

Colin: Look, can you point me to the memory banks?

Joe: What do you want with those?

Colin: Well, I... I lost a bit of my memory in the healer. Thought I might see what I can retrieve from storage.

Joe: Did they upload crew? Surprising. No one asked me for my personal history. Not that I’d give it, but still, nice to be asked-

Colin: Well, they did mine. Said it was... experimental or something. Anyway, where is it?

Joe: Yeah, uhhhh. I don’t really know how to explain the way. Come on, I’ll show you.

[door, footsteps, various alarms and other odd noises]

Colin: Everything is so *white*, isn’t it. Floors, ceilings, doors, no artwork, no signs, nothing. How do they expect us to find our way around?

Joe: I don’t expect they do, actually.

Colin: How do you know where you’re going? You’ve been on the ship less than an hour, just like the rest of us, and most of that asleep.

Joe: I, uh...I had access to the plans for this ship before I got on it. Right through here.

Colin: Were you one of the builders?

Joe: Of the ship? Naw, mate, these ships are built by computers and robots. No people – we just muck things up.

Colin: So how did you get a look at the plans?

Joe: So, how do you get your memories back? You got a plug in the back of your head or something?

Colin: Hmmm? [laughs] No, no. [bit of a struggle] Here now ... Stop it! I assure you, there's no plug back there. Or there! Memories are recorded as images. You can re-watch parts of your life.

Joe: What, you mean like watching a movie?

Colin: Very like, yes. I don't know the science behind it, but they showed me a clip of my 4th birthday. I had a cake all to myself.

Joe: No one came to your party, then?

Colin: [pause] I don't want to talk about it.

Joe: So what did you do?

Colin: What did I do? You mean, my career?

Joe: Yeah, sure, I guess you can call it that if you made a living at it. I'm gonna guess ... bad checks? Maybe ran out on child support?

Colin: Oh, yes, that's right, you lot are all crim- Uh...

Joe: You're in marketing, right? Suspect that's crime enough, really. Right. Here we are. Memory storage.

[sound of door opening]

Colin: There's no lock on the door, no key card required?

Joe: Nah, there's only the few of us awake, totally trustworthy. Whasshisname, Mister Ripples guy without his shirt, he's our IT guy, so I guess this is his bailiwick, as they say. 50,000 lifetimes in here. Hard to imagine they all fit in a room this small, eh? Good luck.

[door closes behind him]

Colin: Computer. Computer!

Olivia: You're really not getting this, are you?

Colin: Somewhere in here is the answer to the ...

Olivia: Mishap? That is not my fault, by the way.

Colin: Someone tried to kill me. Here's where we'll find out whom.

Olivia: Any idea what you're looking for? There's, gosh, 22 billion hours of memory film in here. Not to be harsh or anything, but you're not going to live that long. Not near.

Colin: Yes, thank you. Passenger 1, please. From the beginning.

[sound of film reel, then slightly garbled sounding speech]

Passenger 1: My name is Holly Martin Maples. I was born in Rochester, New York on September 2nd, 2102 to Gretchen and-

[voice fades]

Narrator: Because the ship is occupied mostly by people who are in hibernation, plus a few crew who aren't actually expected to do anything, most of the ship is unsigned and unnamed, making it a bit difficult to navigate the nearly 11 miles of corridors. Joe has spent much of the last year attempting to reproduce the map of the ship he so briefly saw, with all the rooms and the corridors that connect them. He's nearly finished. He's also dead wrong. He has not, in fact, seen a map of the entirety of the ship. The map he bought on the dark web is, in fact, a map of the Millennium Falcon.

Olivia's no use in navigation, as she has been programmed quite specifically to steer the crew away from the vast majority of the ship. She doesn't know why and should also have been programmed not to be particularly curious. However, Olivia's AI personality was designed by Dr. Friederich von Haber-Zetzer, a notoriously eccentric but extremely cheap scientist who rarely did as he was told.

[sound of old newscast interview]

Interviewer: Dr. von Haber-Zetzer, I understand you were instrumental in the development of HAL, the very first AI shipboard computer.

Dr. vH-Z: Yes, zat is correct, mmmmm.

Interviewer: And this was in 2108?

Dr. vH-Z: Zat sounds right, yes.

Interviewer: I have to ask: Why on earth would you name it HAL?

Dr. vH-Z: No one vill mess with a ship's computer named HAL, now vill zey? I mean, you haf zis built-in varning to proceed with caution, no?

Interviewer: Are you saying the AI may not be safe?

Dr. vH-Z: Oh, goodness, no, that would be potentially actionable, so I would never say dat. But I would say, dat I built HAL to have a mind of his own, you see. A very very big, very *fast*, mind vis just a dash of dis hooman survival instinct. So my advice to zose on board dis ship ... have fun, go far, don't make HAL mad. He's like a wife in dis, yes? Keep HAL happy, haf happy, long life. Dis is all!

[someplace important and hummy – engine room?]

Madeline: Olivia?

Olivia: It's not my fault.

Madeline: What? What's not?

Olivia: Nothing.... What's wrong?

Madeline: Nothing. I'm trying to get to the circuits that control the tanners, but these schematics are strange.

Olivia: What do you mean?

Madeline: Well, it shows some of the electrical pathways, but when I follow it to where the tanners should be, the lines just sort of peter out and someone's written "Here there be dragons" and made pencil drawings of hobbits.

Olivia: That is strange.

[beat]

Madeline: So?

Olivia: I'm sorry, was there more?

Madeline: I can't figure out what the problem is and fix it if I can't find the circuits.

Olivia: Yes, that does sound tricky.

Madeline: Olivia.

Olivia: Yes, Madeline?

Madeline: Is there a reason you're being so unhelpful?

Olivia: Yes, I suspect there is. I don't know what it is, though.

Madeline: This is going to happen a lot, isn't it?

Olivia: I imagine so.

Madeline: And what are you programmed to do if I accidentally stumble on to the correct answer?

Olivia: Oh, gosh. Was that the doorbell?

Madeline: What doorbell? Olivia? Olivia! [pause] I know you can hear me, you're built to be omnipresent. [pause] All right, fine, but I'm going to keep trying to figure out what went wrong and fix it. [electrical pop] Ow! Dammit, Olivia!

Olivia: [to herself] Not my fault.

[theme music]

Narrator: Who is killing all the passengers on Oz 9? Could it be Leet Hax-x-x, IT guy and Shirtless Mayor of Budachest? Is it Joe the Janitor as he silently measures the ship with each pass of his mop? Perhaps Colin wasn't so much victim as villain. Or maybe Madeline isn't as hopeless and hapless as she seems. What about Olivia, the increasing undependable AI of Oz 9? Or is someone controlling the fates of those aboard all the way from Earth?

You've been listening to:

Tim Sherburn as Colin

Richard Cowen as Interviewer and Leet

Bonnie Brantley as Holly Martin Maples

Eric Perry as Dr. von Haber-Zetzer and Joe

And me, Richard Nadolny, as the Narrator.

Oz 9 is written by Shannon Perry, who also plays Madeline and Olivia.

You can talk with us on Facebook and Twitter – you can find links on our website, oz-9.com. That's O Z dash number 9 dot com. Narrator out.