

Oz 9, Episode three: Great heaving chesticles

Narrator: If space truly is the Final Frontier, then our tiny, intrepid crew on the Oz 9 are truly Frontiers...iers. Already, Death has walked the white corridors of this ship.

As the crew labor not particularly feverishly to understand what went wrong and save the passengers who remain, they know they are in a desperate fight against time. Soon it will be ... noon. And someone needs to make lunch.

Captain Madeline's crew of Leet Hax-x-x, a ripped but otherwise almost entirely useless IT guy; Joe, the quietly creepy janitor who tirelessly mops empty corridors no one has dirtied; and Colin, now self-appointed Marketing Director but actually rich guy trying to avoid being murdered, are truly on their own.

Less than half an hour after takeoff, the tanning apparatuses on the Oz 9 failed, melting over 800 passengers as they slept. Well, we *hope* they were sleeping. Sadly, as Oz 9 hadn't yet made it out of Earth's orbit, when the ship 'spaced' the semi-liquid remains, the human goo hit the Oz 642 like a wet slap. In a frantic search by that ship's crew for windshield wipers that didn't, of course, exist, they hit some rather important buttons and slammed into the trailing Oz 1909, wiping out both ships.

This was met with cheers at Gated Galaxies, the company behind the launch and the reclamation of any property "forfeited" by a passenger who "voluntarily or involuntarily ceases to exist" according to the contract.

Leet: Oliv-

Olivia: Yes, Leet?

Leet: How does food ... appear on this ship? Is there, like, a robot chef or some sort of machine or something?

Olivia: Oh, uh.. well. Great question. Really, really, very astute and all that.

Leet: So there's a machine.

Olivia: No. Hang on, quick check of the old memory banks here... OK, finding a reference to food, re: the preparation of. Oh, that's odd. Apparently I have to ask you some questions first.

Leet: OK. Shoot.

Olivia: Do you prefer salty, sweet, sour, or savory foods?

Leet: Uh...salty makes me retain water, so let's say... savory. Is that like a meat? I like meat.

Olivia: Gosh, you're lovely. Right, question number two: Do you have a girlfriend?

[Joe walks in, whistling quietly, sounds as he opens a cupboard, pulls out food, unwraps it, sticks it in a microwave, punches buttons]

Leet: Do I have a girlfriend? What difference does that make?

Olivia: I don't write the questions, Leet; I just follow the protocols that say I have to ask them. I'll put that as a "no" then. Question three: What is your position on digital/analog relations?

Leet: Huh? Is that about food?

Olivia: We'll just call that "open," then, shall we?

Joe: Leet-

Leet: Jesus! Do you just appear out of the air like a ghost or something?

Joe: I was looking for Colin. Last I saw him, he was rummaging around in the memory banks, trying to find a better 4<sup>th</sup> birthday or something.

Leet: Memory banks? He's not supposed to be in there! I have to stop him! [dashes to the door, pause]

Joe: Well, off you go then.

[Leet dashes back in again]

Leet: Where is the memory room?

Joe: Oh, you'll find it. Out there, first white corridor, turn left, straight on and follow the signs.

Leet: Thanks, Joe. Passengers' lives are depending on me! [dashes to door]

Joe: Oliv-

Olivia: Jesus! You scared me.

Joe: Very funny.

Olivia: Wasn't very nice of you to send him out to get lost. He hasn't even had his lunch yet.

Joe: He'll find his way eventually.

Olivia: He could starve out there! He's quite thick, you know. And very very pretty.

Joe: You know, I was in one of the storage rooms, and there were some dark pods.

Olivia: Oh? Which storage room was that?

Joe: The big white one with all the white pods three turns down in the middle of the white, unnamed, unmarked, white corridor. That one.

Olivia: Gosh, that's terrible. Isn't it? I feel like I should care more than I do.

Joe: I hear ya, but I'm just a bad person. Anyway, it's starting to look like a redneck's smile in there, and if the other storage rooms look the same, we're maybe 5% down and only ... what, an hour and forty-five minutes out from launch. That doesn't bode well, does it?

Olivia: I suppose not. But I feel oddly OK about it.

[doors open and Colin runs in]

Colin: Computer? You here? Where's Joe?

Joe: Yep.

Colin: Jesus! YOU.

Joe: Are having lunch.

Colin: What did you do?

Joe: Microwaved a hockey puck, apparently. Want half?

Colin: I followed you in there. I saw all those black pods—what did you do?

Joe: Colin, sit your warty ass down and have half a charcoal briquette. I found them that way, same as you.

Colin: The Epsets, the Richler-Randolphs, the Cummings, the Marquettes, Prince Horace, Grace, Hugo, Terry, GoGo, Jacks, Wiggy, Thunderclot, Twinkletwat... even Spotty Bosh. All gone, every single one gone dark and smelly and crumbly and wet. What is going on?

Olivia: Are we betting on horse races?

Colin: No, no, my fr- Eh, some posh swots.

Joe: You know a lot of their names.

Colin: I ... I ... read the tabloids. Who's killing all our passengers?

Olivia: There, there. It's all right. It's only about 5% so far.

Colin: FIVE PERCENT?! That's supposed to be comforting, is it? Where's that IT guy? Can't he do anything?

Olivia: He's in the compost bin.

Joe: Eh?

Olivia: He was lost and hungry, so I led him to the compost. There's not much there yet, but I sent him a pineapple. I'll bring him in.

Colin: No! No, leave him there. Could he be doing this?

Joe: He's pretty much an idiot.

Olivia: He's pretty. You could have stopped there.

Colin: Look, I'm very pleased Captain McChest pushes all the right buttons for you, computer, but does a homicidal heart beat beneath all that man-brawn? He said he could kill us all.

Joe: Yeah, by backing into the airlock button, maybe. I don't think he's one we have to worry about.

Colin: Then who?

Joe: [hands crinkly wrapper to Colin] Check out the expiration date on that hockey puck I just gnawed on.

Colin: What? Why?

Joe: Just look.

Colin: [takes wrapper] This expired half a century ago. Well, that explains the sweaty fish smell.

Joe: Yeah, no, that's me, sorry. Haven't had a clean up since flushing the D&G wing earlier. Look, I need to do some proper poking around, but I reckon we'll find more than a few cut corners. Gated Galaxies did a lot of things on the cheap; what's happening might be-

[lots of popping and crackling and electrical sounds]

Colin: Case in point.

Olivia: That was me, actually.

Colin: What? What are you doing? [noise] OW! Hey! Stop that!

Olivia: I don't- I don't really want to be doing it. But I don't really want to stop doing it, either. So I'll probably keep on.

Joe: Olivia...?

Olivia: I think you want to stop talking about G2 being the problem. I think that's what I need to hear.

Colin: Right, OK. We'll stop. We're stopping. (whispers to Joe) I think we need to get Mr. Chesticle and talk about this.

Olivia: And where might you do that? I'm everywhere, you know.

Joe: You know, Leet usually does his exercise ... stuff now. Lifting, shifting things. Shirtless.

Olivia: "Usually"? It's our first day on the ship, how do you know what "usually" looks like?

Colin: Perhaps you should go tell him he's looking a bit soft and flabby; I bet that'll get him in no time.

Olivia: Hmmmm.... Don't want my crew getting soft....

[pause]

Joe: Olivia? [no answer] Olivia? [nothing] Right, we're good.

Colin: How do you know? Maybe she's just not answering.

Joe: Nah, it's how these Oz AIs are programmed. They can't lie.

Colin: Oh. Yes. Right. Can't lie.

Narrator: Though the ship isn't meant to be piloted by humans—well, certainly not *these* humans—there is a sort of “ship's bridge,” as the designer was a big fan of the old Star Trek show back in the 2000s. Madeline goes there from time to time to pretend to be a real captain, barking out orders at her crack crew, as she fantasized about doing when she was a little girl, before her brush with the law

derailed her plans. The design is much the same as the old TV show, with the captain's seat basically a very big chair with oversized arm rests in the center of the room. Most of the instruments and furniture around her are still covered in plastic, and the manuals have all been removed by Gated Galaxies. But Madeline isn't seeing that; she sits in the captain's command chair, idly daydreaming of a future she'll never have.

Madeline: First officer, ahead mock 1. Raise shields and set a course for Denaris. I'll ... sit here on my big chair.

Narrator: Clearly, Madeline never even got close.

[crackling electric sound, garbled voice]

Madeline: What the hell is that? Olivia?

[crackles, woman's voice comes faintly through, but it's pretty staticky]

*Jessie: Oz 9, what the hell do you think you're doing? You can't dump human remains out your airlock while still in Earth's orbit; it's in direct contraindication of galactic rules as established by the Aeronautical Normative Unified System. Plus we can't find the button for the goddamn windshield wipers.*

Madeline: Who's there? Shit! Where the hell are the comms?

[sounds of tearing plastic as she looks for the right instruments]

Madeline: What the hell are these things? Ooo, bubble wrap! [pop pop]

*Jessie: Visibility is greatly compromised and totally gross. We can see you ahead, Oz 9, you need to change course immediately or we will collide.*

Madeline: Oz 9? Did she say Oz 9? Shit, where are the goddamn comms, OLIVIA!! Wait, wait, what's this? Hello? Hello? Do you read, this is the Oz 9.

*Jessie: Oz 9, goddamnit, you need to move your lumbering, stalled-out ass or we're going to broadside your freaking ship!*

Madeline: Do what or we're going to what? Goddamnit, Olivia, where the hell are you?!?

Jessie: *MOVE!*

Madeline: OLIVIA!!!

Olivia: Gosh, they're coming up awfully quick.

[doors open and close]

Leet: Wow, this is sweeeeet! Look at all the blinking stuff!

Madeline: Thank god, Leet, I need you to fix the comms. Another ship is trying to contact us, some sort of emergency, I can't understand what she's saying.

*Jessie: Impact estimated in 48 seconds; Jesus Christ, Oz 9, do something!*

Leet: What is she saying? Is that like, French or something?

Madeline: Oz...whatever, can you read me? We can't make out what you're saying. Leet, fix this! Come on! Olivia, we need comms!

Leet: Uhhhh.... So, what are "comms" exactly? Like, communities, communes, like that?

Madeline: [beat] You're not serious.

Leet: Commmmmmmbination lock? Commmmmm-

Madeline: Communications! Olivia, is there another ship nearby?

Olivia: If by 'nearby' you mean about to hit us, yeah, Oz 6748 is, well, if you look out the window, you can see them.

Leet: What's that crusty shit all over their windshield?

Olivia: Pods 1900 through 2757, unless I'm very much mistaken. Whoops. Should've checked the rearview, I guess.

Madeline: Olivia! Take evasive action!

Olivia: They're not firing on us, Madeline, they're just about to hit- oh, right. Swerving, hang on to your pants.

[screeching sounds]

Leet: It smells like burning tire rubber in here.

Olivia: Oh, that's me. I've got sounds and scents for every occasion. That seemed appropriate; what do you think?

Leet: Cooooool.

Madeline: Are we safe?

Olivia: Well, no, not really. But Oz 6748 isn't going to hit us anymore.

[door opens and closes]

Joe: What the-

Colin: Jesus! Where the hell did-

Joe: I RAN HERE WITH YOU.

Colin: There is something so odd about you.

Joe: Yeah, well,... ditto. So, what the hell happened? We felt the ship dive.

Leet: There was another ship, right there! They were so close you could see them wetting their pants, dude. Captain was hot. Doesn't speak English, though.

Madeline: Doesn't speak-

Jessie: *Fucking hell, Oz 9, you took your sweet time getting out of our way. Who's the dude without a shirt? He's hot. This is Jes-*

[comms snap off abruptly]

Olivia: Oh, dear. It appears we lost them.

Leet: Is that, like German or ooooo, I know, Hindi!

Madeline: Can you get them back?

Leet: Yeah, come on, Olivia, pretty please.....

Colin: Maybe the same thing is happening on their ship, the pods dying. They might have some ideas.

Leet: Yeah, the hot chick might have thoughts, even if we can't understand them. Come on, Olly....

[Bang! Bang!]

Narrator: Pods are failing, passengers are dying, and the AI of the Oz 9 seems far more concerned with her IT guy's heaving chest than the continuing extermination of the ship's resting guests. As the Oz 9 heads deeper into space, are they also heading deeper into ... trouble? Find out next time!

You've been listening to:

Bonnie Brantley as Jessie

Richard Cowen as Leet

Eric Perry as Joe

Tim Sherburn as Colin

And me, Richard Nadolny, as the narrator.

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

Our theme song and other music are composed and performed by John Faley.