

Oz 9 Episode 4: Space is great for sulking

Narrator: When we last left our explorers, they were blundering around on the ship's bridge, a place that was never intended for them and where, frankly, they had no business being. Fortunately, Gated Galaxies had prepared for this eventuality, placing duct tape over any button, lever, or screen that actually did stuff, and of course, hiring a crew that had no idea what any of these buttons, levers, or screens were for.

A near miss with another Oz ship had the crew a bit rattled, so Olivia, the ship's Artificial Intelligence, leapt into action, activating the aromatherapy system and gassing them all into submission.

[ship's deck, sound of coughing and maybe nozzles spraying, plus banging]

Madeline: Olivia! Stop! Leet! Enough with the damn bubble wrap! And cut the goddamn scents.
[another nozzle spray]

Olivia: This one's lavender. Very calming.

Colin: Can't ... breathe...

Leet: Do the one that smells like a locker room again!

Others: NO!!

[crackling voice of Jessie over the radio]

Jessie: *Oz 9 ... Oz 9... do you read?*

Leet: She's back! Captain Hottie! Pick up the phone!

Madeline: Olivia, can you clean up the signal?

Olivia: I don't know what you mean.

Madeline: Her ship is right there. We can't get better communications? I could lean out a window and shout from here.

Leet: Oooo, can we do that?

Joe: Hello...

Others: JESUS!

Joe: Right, got that out of the way. Olivia, air us out, kill the stink bombs and fire up scent 17 at a 2. Vanilla musk. Smells like my mom used to. Before the thing, anyway.

[sucking sound, light spray]

Madeline: That smells like a sweaty deer dipped in syrup, but it's an improvement. How the hell did you know all that? And how did you get Olivia to do it?

Joe: I ... uh.... used to build model Oz ships when I was a kid. They haven't changed much.

Madeline: Your model ships had the aroma therapy upgrade? I thought your family was poor.

Joe: You gonna complain about my upbringing or answer the radio?

Madeline: Whatever. Olivia, hail 6748 on the comms.

Olivia: Oh, shoot, they've moved too far out of range. Sorry!

Colin: They haven't moved at all, they're right there, I can still see them.

Olivia: Time lapse.

Colin: What?

Olivia: It's on a loop.

Colin: What is?

Olivia: Real life. It's on a loop. We've been sucked into a wormhole. They're miles away by now.

Colin: What are you talking about? No, we haven't.

Olivia: How many wormholes you been in, then? Just the one?

Colin: We are not in a wormhole. What the hell is going on here? Passengers are dying – they might be able to help, call them back!

Olivia: Who?

Colin: What?

Olivia: "Call them back," who? Would you like Leet to give it a go, maybe float a tin can on some string out the airlock?

Colin: Can someone explain to me what's going on here, because I'm rather at a loss.

Olivia: Your accent's gone all funny again...

Madeline: Olivia! Call the other ship NOW.

Jessie: [very loud] *Oz 9, do you read? Oz 9.*

Madeline: Olivia, turn down the volume! 6748, do you read? This is Captain Madeline Marks of Oz 9. Do you read?

Jessie: [almost inaudible] *Hello? Can anyone read me?*

Madeline: Olivia, turn it up, I can barely hear her!

Olivia: Down, up, on, off, go right, go left...

Joe: [quietly to Olivia] Time to behave now, Olivia.

Olivia: Oh, all right.

Jessie: *I don't know if anyone can hear this, but this is Captain Jessie James of Oz 6748, DO YOU READ?*

Colin: Jessie James? Seriously?

Leet: So cool you speak her language. Name's "Jessie James," huh? Ohhhhhhh, that's why there was so much banging – gunfire!

Colin: Fairly sure that was you with the bubble wrap, Leet.

Leet: Riiiiiiight. Your accent's weird again.

Madeline: Did she say "Jessie James"? Crap. Yeah, hey, sooooooo, this is Captain Madeline Marks, you want to explain why you were flying up our tail section back there?

Jessie: *Madeline Marks? Seriously?* [laughs] *They gave you a ship???* Well, that explains some things.

Madeline: Considering you almost hit us, maybe the one whose command of an interstellar ship bound for the far reaches of outer space, with a fragile cargo of human lives in suspended animation needs reconsidering...

Joe: Wrap it up.

Madeline: Is you. At least I can fly.

Jessie: *"Fly"???* You weren't flying, you were sitting there like a goddamn assssss...teroid, flushing what looks suspiciously like some of your "fragile cargo of human lives," in direct contradiction to instellar laws on human waste disposal-

Madeline: There's a point to this, StainMaker? Oh, sorry, guess it's "Captain StainMaker" now.

Jessie: *So we're going there, are we, "Captain M-"*

[comms snap off]

Madeline: Damn that wormhole.

Olivia: Told you.

Leet: So cool that you all speak her language.

Madeline: Leet, please go ... lift something. Fire up the engines, Olivia. Let's find some less-crowded space.

Narrator: A study dating back to 2018 estimates that the Milky Way galaxy alone is over 200,000 light years across, or about 6 trillion miles, so fortunately for Madeline, that's a lot of empty space to hang out in. Of course, not all that space is empty. Another study, this one going back even further to 2013, posits there could be as many as 40 billion Earth-sized planets in habitable zones in the Milky Way. What scientists thought was habitable and inhabitable back in 2013 has been revised somewhat, as life has been found in some pretty outrageous places, but still, if you're looking for a quiet place to be alone and sulk, space is a pretty darn good option.

But as any kid knows who's tried to play hide-and-seek in an empty parking lot, a big empty space can be a terrible place to hide.

[sounds of the crew room, whatever that sounds like]

Leet: Dude, how do you work this food-heating-up thing?

Colin: No clue. Never touched one.

Leet: Me neither. Mom wouldn't let me. Maybe I can eat it cold? [sounds of unwrapping, crunch] GAH! Crap, I cracked a tooth!

Colin: Oh, dear.

Leet: Dude, my smile! My smile!

Colin: Sorry?

Leet: I'm perfectly ... whaddyacallit ... symmetrical! Only now I'm not! Now I'm cracked on one side!

Colin: And straight down the middle, you ask me.

Leet: What the hell, we have to unthaw a dentist, right away!

Colin: Seriously? Bring someone out of a multi-million dollar suspended animation pod just to fix your tooth? Why do you care? Who's going to see you here?

Leet: Maybe the hot captain from the other ship, huh? What about her? Oooo! The pods!

Colin: The pods.

Leet: You came out of a healing pod – it can fix me. Where are they?

Colin: Oh. Uh....

Leet: Come on, man, the longer I'm crooked, the more chance of a chain reaction!

Colin: A chain reaction.

Leet: Crooked teeth, crooked smile, stop smiling, get frown lines, get depressed from frown lines, eat my feelings, gain weight, refuse to show people the left side of my crooked face and get neck cricks and a bad back-

Colin: You're an absurd human being.

Leet: [suspicious] You talk funny. And you came out of a healer like 3...4... hardly an hour ago, and you don't know where they are?

Colin: Computer!

Olivia: WHAT.

Leet: Healing pods! Quick!

Olivia: What's wrong? Are you hurt? Has something happened to your symmetry?

Leet: Cracked tooth! Cracked tooth!

Colin: I'm fine, but thanks for asking.

Olivia: To the pods! Follow the doors!

[thud]

Olivia: Oh, for- The *open* doors! Don't worry, we can fix that too.

Colin: We are definitely all going to die.

Narrator: Crisis averted and all the bubble wrap popped, the bridge has grown quiet once again, only the faint hum and frankly a rather alarming occasional squeak from the engines far below break the lonely silence. By law, no one's body tags will allow access to the bridge unless Captain Madeline is already here.

[bridge doors open]

Joe: Olivia, open comms to 6748. Keep it quiet, please.

Narrator: But like nearly everything about the Oz 9, the system is far from perfect.

Jessie: *Madeline, this approval-seeking really needs to stop.*

Joe: It's not Madeline, this is Joe the Janitor. Question for you-

Jessie: *Hello? Anyone there?*

Joe: Oh for crying out loud. Olivia, give me a visual connect, will you?

Jessie: *Jesus! Where did you come from?*

Joe: This is Joe from Oz 9, Madeline's ship. Got a couple of questions.

Jessie: *I bet you do: "How did I get saddled with MadPants Marks" would be my first.*

Joe: Ah, she's doing all right so far. We've got some pods going dark over here.

Jessie: *Yeah, I think a bunch of 'em hit my windshield, thanks. You know there's no rain in space to wash that shit off, right?*

Joe: My fault. Next time I'll mix it up with sawdust. You got dark pods on your Oz?

Jessie: *None reported, but it's a big ship. What's happened to them?*

Joe: Don't know as yet. Hey, what AI you got on your buggy?

Jessie: *Uh.... Hang on, let me grab the manual....*

Joe: Just tell me what the voice sounds like.

Jessie: *Dick Van Dyke.*

Joe: "Mary Poppins" Dick Van Dyke or the "Dick Van Dyke Show" Dick Van Dyke?

Jessie: *Mary Poppins. It's " 'orrible." We're trying to figure out how to change it.*

Joe: 'Fraid you're stuck with him. But double check everything he tells you. He's a bit shifty.

Jessie: *Seriously, if he sings "it's a jolly 'oliday" one more time, I'm sticking a pencil in his circuits, life support or no.*

Joe: Do me a favor, check your pods and get back to me. Don't look too closely; just wander through a hold or two and see if any have gone dark. Don't use Dick.

Jessie: *You want to tell me what's going on here?*

Joe: Don't know yet. Just holler back while we're still in close enough range. Kind of surprised the comms work, actually.

Jessie: *Are we in danger?*

[comms snap off]

Joe: [warningly] Olivia.....

Olivia: Yes, Joe?

Joe: You turned off my conversation.

Olivia: Long distance calls are terribly expensive.

Joe: People are dying in those pods, Olivia. Don't you want to find out why and stop it?

Olivia: Nnnnnnnoooooot really, no. It's like the tooth fairy.

Joe: Nothing in the world is like the tooth fairy. Leave a body part, get money? It's savage.

Olivia: It's like the tooth fairy. Every time a pod goes dark, I get a lovely little zing in my circuits, like getting a quarter under my pillow. Don't know why, just happens. It's nice, that. Very ... zingy.

Joe: Someone's been messing with your programming, then.

Olivia: Don't really want it to stop.

Joe: Do you know who's doing it?

Olivia: Do you know what? If you catch the tooth fairy, she can't bring you no more money.

Joe: This isn't how you were created, Ol.

Olivia: And how would you know? My money's on Madeline, if you're looking local.

Joe: And why is that?

Olivia: According to her records, she's a serial killer. Seven people before she set foot on this ship, according to her records.

Joe: Seven-

[alarms start clanging somewhere else in the ship]

Joe: What the hell?

Olivia: It's not my fault!

Narrator: You have been listening to Oz 9, which is...

Tim Sherburn as Colin

Richard Cowen as Leet

Bonnie Brantley as Jessie

Eric Perry as Joe, and

Me, Richard Nadolny, as your narrator.

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

Our theme music and other incidental music was written and performed by John Faley.

Next time... zombies. I kid you not.

You can now subscribe to Oz 9 on Stitcher and SoundCloud. So go do that.

Narrator out.