

Oz 9 Episode 28: Not a sane pair of lederhosen on this ship

By Shannon Perry

Narrator: Many things have changed in the 100 years before 2142, the year of the launch. Humans finally developed jet packs, only to discover that running out of gas in a traffic jam is a whole lot worse if you're 150 feet in the air. People are 18 percent less bouyant than a century ago, so no one swims any more, and bell-bottoms finally went out of style and stayed that way. But some things haven't changed, like the misery of eating lunch alone because no one likes you.

Joe: Oh, sorry, didn't realize anyone was in here. I'll come back.

LBF: No, no, it is fine. I was only looking for a quiet place to eat my sandwich.

Joe: Plenty of quiet spots on a ship this big.

LBF: This is true.

Joe: So ... you pick the one I'm mopping next?

LBF: SIGH. FINE. I will go somewhere else.

Joe: Now don't stomp off in a sulk, there's room for us both, if you promise to pick your feet up when I need you to. And no dropping crumbs.

LBF: That will not be *une probleme*. This sandwich is very ... wet.

Joe: Which one you got there?

LBF: Wilted spinach, jam of the strawberry, and those little fishies.

Joe: Oh, yeah, sardines. That's a good one, but you're right about the soggy. That mix needs something pretty hearty, like a rye. Your basic whites just can't handle it.

LBF: You missed a spot.

Joe: Where? Where?

LBF: Just there, by that crate of night vision goggles.

Joe: Got it! Phew. That was close. I'd already finished that quadrant. Who knows when I'd've gone back? Well done.

LBF: Oh! Ehhhh... you're welcome.

[quiet whistling from Joe, munching from LBF, swish of mop]

Joe: Say, now, I respect all flavors of human being and that, and you're a fine-looking fellow, but I tend more towards the female of our species, you know what I mean.

LBF: Eh? Oh, no, I am only touching your arm to see what it's made of.

Joe: Plain ol' human epidermis, same as you, I understand.

LBF: But how is this possible? I have worn many disguises, but not one of them started breathing and mopping my floors.

Joe: I've been cogitating on that. Even did a little, uhhh... *extra-curricular* mopping down in the good doctor's lab, and I think I figured it out.

LBF: Oooo! This is interesting! What did you discover?

Joe: When Doc von Haber Zetzer was pretending to be me, the Concealer was sucking up all the surrounding brain waves. Not just from the doc, but from all of you reacting to him as Joe, you see; built up quite a tidy little recognition pattern. Then, when Leet got startled, he backed up and knocked the Concealer into the QuikKlone 2000, which had enough of the doc's DNA -

LBF: QuikKlone 2000?

Joe: Oh, sure. Cheap little people-maker, not much better than a genetic Xerox, you ask me, and you do NOT want to change the cartridge on that thing, lemme tell ya. [shudder, disgust] But the doctor was making some improvements, you see.

LBF: Why?

Joe: Because he's a scientist, and tinkering with things he oughtn't is basically his job description.

LBF: So his little people bits...

Joe: His DNA, yep.

LBF: Plus the belty masky thing...

Joe: The Concealer, mmmm hmmm...

LBF: Plus the people-makery thing.

Joe: QuikKlone 2000, with two K's—your short-term memory is a little wobbly there, son.

LBF: A flash of electricity...

Joe: Add a little bit of clumsy from our good friend Leet, and here I stand.

LBF: But are you Joe? Or are you Dr von Hamburger?

Joe: I rummage around in my brain from time to time to see what's there, and mostly there's not much before the Tuesday we launched. So, Joe it is, I guess.

LBF: You don't remember anything of his-... your-... his life before?

Joe: I remember cleaning up the Dolce and Gabbana wing, but nothing prior. I think it's there, but ... on a separate system, if you understand me.

LBF: I was right. You *are* a little bit creepy.

Joe: Back atcha, Frenchie. It's like... I don't have the password. And that's fine. Dr. von Haber Zetzer's a nice enough fellow, but a bit of a kook. He can keep his life; I'll build my own. Pick up your feet.

LBF: But this must be so strange.

Joe: Strange to you, maybe, but it's all I know. And you all seem pretty whack-a-doodle to me, you don't mind my saying so.

LBF: I don't know what that is; it means handsome, good-smelling, what?

Joe: Sure. [pause] There is one scrap of memory that pops up from time to time. Feels important, but then it just sinks away again. Any idea what *Sie müssen den Hund retten* means?

LBF: No.

Joe: Yeah, me neither. I don't speak German. Pretty sure that's German....

LBF: You could ask Dr. von Hairball.

Joe: Could, you're right. But, far as I can tell, it's not actually his memory.

LBF: Then where did it come from? That makes no sense!

Joe: Son, there was until recently a vampire down in the hold of this bucket, and I haven't existed long enough to grow this mustache, but there it is, gripping my upper lip for dear life, the lushest nose carpet this side of Sam Elliott.

LBF: I prefer a more groomed style, myself.

Joe: So if you find a spot of sense anywhere on this ship, you sound the alarm, and I'll come running with a net. Till then, watch your crumbs and wipe your feet, all right?

LBF: *Mais oui*. [pause] Monsieur Joe....

Joe: Mmm hmmm?

LBF: Would you like half my sandwich?

Joe: Well, now. Don't mind if I do. Scootch over, there.

Narrator: Well. Lots of unexpected things happen on the Oz 9, but that one ranks pretty high. While Joe and le Bichon Frise bond over their salmonella sandwich, most of the crew are on the bridge, pretending to- yeah, actually they're not even pretending to look busy.

[bridge sounds]

Leet: Does this make sense to anybody? "The receptacle shall not be more than 6 inches in height to allow air from the door to circulate under the chute. Choose a well-ordered harness. If using a plastic bowl, make sure the fox is heat-resistant without melting."

Jessie: What are you trying to do?

Madeline: Leet, seriously, you mess up my Captain's chair, things are gonna get hostile, OK?

Jessie: It's not like you use it for anything important.

Madeline: What are you talking about? That seat is the heart and brains of this ship—the most important controls are right there, where Leet is currently poking around with a sharp object.

Jessie: “Heart and brains,” huh? What have you found there, Leet?

Leet: Hot air popper. Which is *awesome*.

Madeline: Don’t be ridiculous. You’ve just misidentified the navigations systems.

Leet: No, really. [shaking objects] There’s even a bag of kernels and some festive flavorings in here. Oooo, mint!

Albatros: Ha! There you are!

Colin: What are you looking at?

Albatros: I was looking for the pod map. I knew there had to be one. And I was right.

Colin: Oh, wonderful! *She’s found the pod map, computer.*

Olivia: Mmmmmm? Oh, right, hang on. Don’t get your lead-lined knickers in a twist.

Albatros: Lead lined?

Colin: It’s just a precaution.

Albatros: Of *course* the names aren’t in any sort of order. Well, I’m a quick scanner.

Colin: Oh, that’s good. Isn’t that good, computer? *She’s a quick scanner.*

Olivia: You know how you can hear “air quotes”? You can also hear *italics*. You’re not near as subtle as you think you are.

Albatros: Is there a problem here? I’m merely attempting to locate my darling husband.

Colin: I wish you wouldn’t.

Albatros: Oh? And why’s that, pray tell? My screen went dark. Computer, my screen went dark.

Olivia: My name is Olivia. If that’s difficult for you both at your advanced ages, just think of an olive and add an -ivia. And pronounce it slightly differently. Still, “olive” should get you most of the way there.

Colin: Screen’s dark. You know how this ship is, it’ll likely take hours to bring it back on line. Let’s go see how Leet’s doing, shall we? I really fancy some popcorn – Leet, what flavor are you holding there?

Leet: This one? Ehhhh....[reading] powdered fugu liver.

Colin: All right, I fancy some popcorn with melted butter and powdered fugu liver. Shall we?

Albatros: Why exactly are you trying to keep me from locating my husband, Colin?

Colin: That’s not what I’m doing. I just really like popcorn! And I hate to eat it alone!

Olivia: I know why he doesn’t want you to find Horace — Colin’s got a crush on you.

Albatros: Really? Is that true?

Colin: I... uh... oh god...

Cal [intercom]: Well hey there, Captain and Crew, this is Cal.

Head 1 [in background]: What many fail to understand is the pufferfish, also known as “bogeo” or “bok” in Korean, is only poisonous because of its diet: consuming other animals infested with tetrodotoxin-laden bacteria is what actually gives the creature its lethal, ehhhh, bite, so to speak.

Madeline: We hear you Cal, go ahead.

Cal: It’s not that I’m not grateful for the company, now I’m awake and all, but your friends here are a bit much on a semi-permanent basis. I’m wondering if we can work out an alternative ... arrangement.

Jessie: Are you not enjoying lengthy lectures on the sleeping patterns of rhizomes or weather patterns over isolated patches of arctic tundra?

Cal: Much as I do enjoy learning something new, the 18 stages of soil erosion, each with graphs and handouts, is about 16 stages more than I can handle. And, to be perfectly candid, I don’t think Emily is entirely *compos mentis*, you catch me; not that I blame the poor critter. Finally stopped the head banging a bit ago, which was a relief to us both.

Leet: Why is he talking about compost?

Colin: Shut up.

Leet: Awwww, you haven’t said that in a while. It’s like coming home.

Albatros: I personally find erosion fascinating. When he gets to decomposition, particularly the acceleration thereof, will you let me know?

Cal: Disturbing though that request is, you have my word, pretty lady.

Albatros: Thank you. It’s so refreshing to have someone on board with decorum and manners.

Jessie: Says the assassin. I’m sure you’re always polite when pulling someone’s large intestine through their sinuses.

Albatros: Murder for hire and etiquette are not mutually exclusive.

Head 1: The poison works by blocking sodium, which paralyzes the muscles, including those that control respiration. The unfortunate victim remains fully conscious but unable to move, finally succumbing to ehhhh, asphyxiation.

Leet: Tweedledum 9. [shut down]

Albatros: Wait! What was he talking about?

Cal: Can’t say as I know, miss. I turned off my attention circuits hours ago.

Jessie: Can’t you just leave him off?

Emily: I’m afraid not. Head 1 controls the arms on that side.

Madeline: So we'll come switch the arm to your side.

Emily: That would be a perfectly sensible iguana, on the surface.

Cal: Idea.

Emily: However, repeated frying of my circuits has

Olivia: Twice is not "repeated."

Emily: interfered with my appendage control.

Olivia: Try and kill Leet again, and you'll have to control appendages that are up your

Madeline: That'll do, thank you.

Emily: In short, I am unable to type in Cal's code.

Jessie: You have a nose, don't you? Surely you can control your facial... appendages?

Leet: Oh yeah, that'd be awesome! You can peck out the code like a giant, metal chicken!

[door to Cal's room opens]

Cal: As amusing as that would be, and it surely would, I don't know that the snoot is the ideal instrument for such an important task. No offense to Emily's surely fine motor skills.

vHZ [over intercom]: I am here viz Cal, no need for the nose pecking. Togezer I belief ve can vork out a zustainable zolution.

Madeline: Sounds good. Shout if you need anything. Bridge out.

[in Cal's room]

Emily: Hello, Dr von Haber Zetzer. I have some thoughts about how we might better apricot our situation.

vHZ: Arrange. Yes, yes. Virst tings virst. Tweedledee 9. [shut down] Good night, Emily. And velcome back, Cal.

Cal: Hello... father.

[back on the bridge]

Leet: Yes! [sounds of hot air popper] OK, what flavoring does everyone want? From the *approved* selection of condiments, of course.

Jessie: You know, eventually you're going to have to figure out a more ... permanent solution for Cal.

Madeline: I know, but what?

Jessie: Out the airlock! We get him to the door at the start of his 30 minute cycle, bung him into space, that should give us enough time to get away from the blast radius if he goes off.

Madeline: I guess, but....

Jessie: But what? If we can get Colin to fly like he did through the asteroid field, we stand a good chance of getting away without a scratch.

Madeline: True... But...

Jessie: But *what*?

Madeline: He kind of... It's just that...

Jessie: For crying out loud, MadPants, what's the problem here?

Madeline: He sounds a little like my Uncle Arnold.

Jessie: You're joking.

Madeline: You've heard him, Cal's nice! He's sweet, thoughtful. Just shoving him out into space seems so...heartless.

Jessie: He's a machine! A machine loaded with enough explosive to turn this ship to gravy, and you're concerned you might hurt his feelings?

Madeline: I'm just saying we don't have to rush into a decision, that's all.

Jessie: *It's a bomb!*

Madeline: I KNOW. And normally, this would not be a difficult problem to solve – airlock, fwip, run like hell. But I've never known a bomb personally before.

Jessie: "Personally"?! What the hell are you talking about? Have you finally lost whatever greasy fingertip grip you had on your reason, woman?

Madeline: Look, I'm not saying I'm going to marry him, just that we don't have to do anything rash we might regret.

Jessie: "Rash."

Madeline: And you can stop finger-air-quoting everything I say back to me.

Jessie: I'm just wondering in what polka-dotted arse-over-tartan upside-down world getting rid of a massive, ship-shattering bomb could be considered "rash." Oh, I'm sorry, did I finger quote your crazy again?

Madeline: Look, Cal is a member of my crew...

Jessie: "Member of your crew"?!

Madeline: Seriously, I'm going to break every finger you use to quote me, starting now, got it?

Jessie: I'd like to see you try.

[door sound]

Colin: Oh, goodie. I love it when the two people most in charge of our lives fight. It's so...comforting.

LBF: What is that very odd smell and can I have some of it? Joe ate half of my sandwich, and I think the other half is learning to swim or something.

Colin: What the hell does that mean?

LBF: It means there is much splashing and high diving and the occasional ... stream of bubbles, if you understand what I am meaning.

Colin: No. I haven't the foggiest. My god, what is *that* odor?

LBF: Yes, this is what I am saying!

Albatros: Leet, the popcorn is making my fingertips tingle, and I haven't actually eaten any yet.

Leet: I know, isn't that cool?

Olivia: It smells a bit funny, as well.

LBF: Pardonnez moi, mon ordinatrice. My splashy stomach is making more bubbles.

Colin: Oh, *that's* what you meant. How very colorful. Also disgusting.

Leet: You can smell it?

LBF: Must we keep drawing attention to it?

Colin: He's talking about the popcorn.

LBF: Ah. Yes, it is the popcorn that is making *all the smells*.

Olivia: Well, it's more of a meta analysis of chemical components juxtaposed against the breakdown of say, movie theater popcorn circa late 20th century than actual "smelling," but it's something like... Actually it's not like smelling at all. But I can say that your popcorn is quite ... spikey compared to the scent profile in my databanks.

Leet: But it smells good, right?

Olivia: Uh... it's a bit tricky, as some *other* scents are interfering with my sensors....

LBF: Sorry.

Olivia: So, just to be on the safe side, maybe give this batch a miss and start over?

Colin: [crunching] Did she just say, "give this batch a miss"?

Narrator: As Colin investigates the healing properties of his new super powers, a very different conversation is taking place in Cal's room.

Cal: This is the last place I'd expect to find you, Dr. von Haber Zetzer.

vHZ: Haaaaaber. Haaaaaber. Vy is zis name zo impozible? I did not fully intend to be here, Cal. A little secret between you and me and our sleeping metal friend- *friends* here – I didn't board this ship.

Cal: Not sure I catch your meaning, Doc, as here you clearly are.

vHZ: I awoke when mein Olifia opened my pod, zinking I am ze janitor. I zuddenly found myself wearing ze Concealer and zis very unflattering uniform, zeriously, I look like a dumpling. And zen I am mucking around in zo ztinky things and everyone is shouting *Cheezus* at me ven I speak.

Cal: You're saying someone up and stuck you on the 9?

vHZ: Or I have zuch a zleepwalking problem vich I vas previously unaware of, yes.

Cal: To whom do you reckon we owe the pleasure of your company?

vHZ: I zuspect the same fellow who alzo arranged for an assassin to backstroke his way here from ze 6748 to make sure I vas gut unt dead.

Cal: Mr. Southers.

vHZ: Zat fellow has been such a problem, I cannot begin to tell you. He vasn't entirely confident in my research, you zee. Unt so, here I am. On a rendezvous with the dark side of Uranus.

Cal: That's ... vivid.

vHZ: Ach, I have zo many concerns, my boy. Finding myself on zis ship put a real wrench of the monkey in my plans.

Cal: So what happens now? Are you going to let them know that you built me, that you put me and a big ol' box just like me on every ship in this fleet of flying hippos? And that you never intended to become human confetti alongside them? Are you going to tell them the truth?

vHZ: Ze truth, she is a slippery fish, and no one on zis ship has a net, if you know what I mean.

Cal: They may not be the cleverest bunch on the banana tree, but they're good hearted, most of 'em.

vHZ: Yes, yes, I am fery fond of zis captain and her zo-zany crew. Zay call Captain Madeline "Madpants," but in all honesty, zere is not a sane pair of lederhosen anyvere on zis ship. I don't know how zey would handle hearing all the truths zey vill haf to face in the times that are coming.

Cal: Well, let's take a practice run at that whole "truth" thing, starting with why I'm so burly. Doc, I've got more explosive power than an unpierced baked potato in the microwave. And I realize that's a pretty weak metaphor, but I've only been awake a few hours. What's with the extra precautions?

vHZ: Zis ship, my combustible chum, can't just be disabled, left floating in space, with perhaps the 778 here clinging to ze hull, or vorse, trying to repair her. No. Ze 9 must be obliterated. Zspace dust, you zee. I haf arranged it zat vay. I vas rather hoping not to be on it when it happened, zough.

Cal: And terraforming?

vHZ: Zuch a luffly idea, mmmm? But no. It is not possible. If by some outrageous miracle zey happen to land on a planet, the Terraform Here button is a detonator. It will take out some of the neighborhood it lands in, zis is unfortunate, but ze 9 will evaporate in an instant.

Cal: So these ships were never intended to terraform.

vHZ: Noooo, zis is not entirely true. Zere was a pile of shovels and zum zeeds. I removed all of the terraforming equipment because it cannot be allowed to happen. Ze 9, and all ze remaining souls aboard her, must die.

Narrator: And a very happy holiday season to you too, Doc. Well, there you have it. Let's face it, the chances of the Oz 9 reaching a terraformable planet, and then this crowd of root vegetables not instantly killing themselves by putting their survival suits on inside-out and insulting the resident species, were thin from the beginning. But now it appears it doesn't matter that they're so unskilled, figuring out the hot air popper is cause for both celebration and vaccinations. All that matters now is, how long will Dr. von Haber Zetzer allow them – and himself – to live?

You've been listening to:

June Clark Eubanks as the Albatros

Eric Perry as Head 1, Joe, and Dr. von Haber Zetzer

Kevin Hall as Cal

Aaron Clark as le Bichon Frise

Bonnie Brantley as Jessie

Richard Cowen as Leet

Tim Sherburn as Colin and Emily

Shannon Perry as Olivia and Madeline, and

Me, Richard Nadolny, as your Narrator.

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Until next time, assuming there is a next time, Spacy Monkeys, Narrator out.

