

Oz 9 Episode 32: It's stuck in my cravat!

Narrator: It was a really long day aboard the Oz 9, chasing the zebra up and down corridors with Joe frantically mopping in its wake, but the crew finally managed to wrangle it down to the biosphere. Which, it turns out, is much more of a bioswamp. Teeming with mosquitoes, snakes, even the occasional alligator, the bioswamp is about 80% brown and brackish water, 19% cypress trees, duckweed, and some other vegetation no one could identify, and now, 1% electronic zebra. Once the zebra was happily munching duckweed, the crew resealed the door and left the murky, mucky, stinky bioswamp to fester in peace.

Joe: I'm gonna need a bigger mop.

Madeline: You are not cleaning up the biosphere, Joe. It's supposed to look like that.

Joe: It's messy.

Colin: It's a swamp.

Joe: Swamps are messy. And wet. The floor is wet.

Leet: It's a swamp.

Joe: I like a neat swamp.

Colin: There's no such thing!

Joe: Things are ... hatching in there.

Madeline: [shiver] Try...not to think about it. And thanks for making me think about it.

Joe: I don't like wet things.

Leet: Don't think of it as wet. Think of it as... shiny! Like the shine of a freshly mopped floor.

Joe: I like shine.

Colin: Yes, shine is good. Can we get out of here, please? I hear... rustling. And growling. Do zebras growl?

Leet: Do you think Greg will be OK? I mean, Greg's a machine and it's [whispering] wet in there.

Joe: I don't like wet.

Madeline: Greg?

Leet: The zebra.

Colin: You named the zebra Greg?

Leet: Just testing it out. What do you think?

Colin: I think you'd better not tell ... the other head that you named the zebra.

Leet: Oh yeah. Good point.

Joe: I don't like wet.

Narrator: In the end, Leet actually had to pick Joe up and carry him away from the bioswamp door, mop and all. Back on the bridge...

Jessie: You actually carried Joe all the way back up?

Leet: You know how, when you pick up a little dog and then hold them above water, they'll paddle their legs like they're swimming? Joe did that with his mop all the way back up here. Just mopping the air...

Jessie: Do you suppose he mops in his sleep?

Colin: I'm not sure he sleeps. Sometimes I wander around the ship when it's dark-

Leet: Because you're lost.

Colin: I have insomnia.

Leet: You don't know where your bunk is and Olivia won't tell you.

Colin: With my new superpowers, I only need seven minutes of sleep a night.

Jessie: Also, you're lost. Go on...

Colin: Look—I'm the only [whispers] human member of this crew who can read the signs!

Jessie: And yet... lost.

Colin: Do you want to know about Joe or make fun of me?

Leet: Can't we do both?

Jessie: I can.

Colin: Fine. Forget it.

Jessie: Oh, come on. You wander heroically around the ship at night...

Colin: Very funny. Like I said, I only need seven minutes of sleep, so I do a lot of ... wandering. And I'm lost, *fine*. But I find him up, mopping, at all hours of the night. It's... creepy. Also, rather nice, he does keep things shiny, but... creepy.

Leet: Do you talk with him?

Colin: Talk with him? While he's working? What an odd idea.

Jessie: You had servants, didn't you.

Colin: Yes, and...?

Jessie: Name five.

Colin: What?

Jessie: Name five of your servants. What were their names?

Colin: Uh.....

Leet: Wow, they must pay chimney sweeps really well.

Jessie: You're joking. You still think-

Leet: What?

Jessie: Never mind. What is he, do you suppose? Is he a real person? A machine? A group hallucination?

Colin: Is he half of Dr. von Hallelujah Choir?

Jessie: If so, which half?

Leet: Which half? Like front or back, or top and bottom? That doesn't make sense. They both have faces.

Jessie: Not physical half, ya burk; mental half or emotional half or ... is he the good half?

Colin: And if Joe's the good half, what does that make the doctor?

Narrator: What does that make the doctor? Well, at the moment, busy. Le Bichon Frise has had several sessions in the doc's secret healer now, and his progress is starting to be noticeable. Not to this crew, of course, who managed to not notice Jupiter passing by their windows for several days, but to Dr. von Haber Zetzer, the assassin is healing very fast indeed.

LBF: How are the results today?

vHZ: You are healink very fast indeed.

Narrator: See?

vHZ: Zurprisingly fast. Your brain vas zis zmall, half-frozen mouse-like thing, gray and soggy and lying limp at ze bottom of your zkull, not doink very much-

LBF: Yes, I get the point, merci.

vHZ: Now it is ze nimble ferret, lively and twisty bendy, running here unt zere and moving zo much faster, yes?

LBF: I am every day more myself. I feel it.

vHZ: Ahhhh, not just ze old Bichon Frise, but a better one.

LBF: Better than le Bichon Frise? What do you mean?

vHZ: Zis healer, she goes to 11, you zee? I am not just returning you to your former glory; I am making you ... glorier.

LBF: Is this a word?

vHZ: If we say it is a word, my fellow, who is to stop us, eh? My best formulas may be wasted in that oaf of an Englishman, but I have tricks up my pantsleg yet.

LBF: Pantsleg? Now, I know that is not right.

vHZ: You are perhaps concentrating on the ze wrong things, my boy. Tell me you do not feel the zurge of power through your veins!

LBF: I do!

vHZ: And ze humming of ze activities in your brain!

LBF: I do!

vHZ: And ze stirring of ze bloodlust in your soul!

LBF: I doooooo.

vHZ: Zen ve are nearly zere!

LBF: Where?

vHZ: Eh?

LBF: Where are we? Or where are we nearly?

vHZ: I am not following your ferret.

LBF: I was brought on board this ship to kill you. Since I am guessing this is not *your* plan, I am wondering what is it?

vHZ: What is what?

LBF: What is your plan? For me? For all of this? You are only healing me, saying you have the big plans, but you are not telling me why.

vHZ: All in time, my boy. First we must konzentrate on ze healing.

LBF: You are saying this every day, many times a day.

vHZ: Good fellow, your brain is now a ferret, and it is zo awake and alert, but it is a fragile ferret, you understand? Ve must be patient and move zlowly zo ve do not make ze ferret back into zat poor, zoggy, zo feeble mouseling.

LBF: Perhaps we could think of another analogy...

vHZ: You zee? You are now knowing words like "analogy," zis iz zo impressive!

LBF: You think so? Perhaps I shall try it out on that lovely Albatros, mmmmmm? "Your analogies are magnificent!"

vHZ: No! No, zis you must not of all things do!

LBF: Zis you must not of all ... you are saying no, then? Your speaking is a maze sometimes.

vHZ: I am saying don't do zis. We must be very sneaky for now, eh? Zo, with the crew you are still the Bichon Frise they are knowing, who is not zo clever.

LBF: And not so dangerous.

vHZ: Exactly. Your mind is a mushroom, growing more deadly in ze dark. So, a toadstool, really.

LBF: I don't like this one either. They are slimy and nasty.

vHZ: But toadstool is apt, I think. What else grows in the dark and is dangerous?

LBF: Raccoons, eh?

vHZ: Zis is better? You wish to be the furry thing in the mask that washes his food like zo prissy people with those zo disturbing little not-quite-hooman hands?

LBF: It's better than a toadstool – I am not a fungi!

vHZ: I'll say.

LBF: Oh, this joking is so obvious.

vHZ: How about that asparagus that is white? That grows in the dark.

LBF: Is it dangerous?

vHZ: I don't think so. But how is a bichon frise dangerous, eh?

LBF: I think you have never heard of rabies, hmm?

vHZ: Please. A german shepherd viz ze rabies, now zis is a fearful thing!

LBF: You are only saying this because it is German!

Narrator: As the doctor and his pet project bicker about analogies, Captain Jessie and the Albatros are in memory storage. They are there to clean up the mess from the zebra, and in Jessie's case, to keep the assassin from accessing more of Glenda McRory's memories – lest she discover she's not a McRory ... but Colin is.

Jessie: Well, I hope passenger 4450 had a lousy childhood, because it's gone forever. Lucky bastard.

Albatros: That's the third time in an hour you've referred to someone's terrible childhood. I suppose that means you want me to ask about yours?

Jessie: Not at all. But since you did...

Albatros: I didn't. Well, good thing passenger 2702 has already been jettisoned because there's nothing left of her. Nor passenger 17,272. Should probably fwip her as well.

Jessie: Hang on! Chill your killer instincts for five seconds. She could start over.

Albatros: You'll potty train her then, will you?

Jessie: *Everything's gone?*

Albatros: Everything. Yes, including her childhood, how fortunate for her, blah blah blah.

Jessie: You haven't retrieved all your memories. How come you can tie your shoes and feed yourself?

Albatros: I suppose it depends on how much you chose to dump. Memory storage was supposed to be guaranteed safe, safer than your own head after 25 years in stasis, anyway. So the more you entrusted to memory storage, the more expensive the ticket. [laughs] Joke's on them, I suppose.

Jessie: You mean on *you*. Isn't your history among the ruins?

Albatros: Yes. But I made a back up when I first discovered my memory was missing.

Jessie: Back up?

Albatros: Thumb drive.

Jessie: You have a thumb drive? What, did you stash it in your pocket during stasis?

Albatros: No, it's my actual thumb, see? [pop] It's a bit strange. I guess I must have had some sort of biotech upgrade. Funny to think I'm part machine.

Jessie: Heh heh. Yeah. Funny.

Albatros: I haven't had a chance to watch more yet, what with the grieving.

Jessie: Yes, I can tell you've been ... very sad. This morning you only made 84 loaves of bread.

Albatros: It's what I do when I can't kill anything.

Jessie: I didn't realize murder was so therapeutic. But... we don't have any flour. What exactly are you making bread from?

Albatros: Swamp grass. I harvested some from the bioswamp a couple of weeks ago.

Jessie: You knew about the bioswamp?

Albatros: I found it while...looking for Horace.

Jessie: Oh.

Albatros: I took it to the dehumidifying room-

Jessie: We have one of those? Why?

Albatros: To keep the experimental mold in check.

Jessie: What experimental mold?

Albatros: Really, do you know nothing about what's happening on this ship? Or your own, since they're virtually identical? Anyway, the dehumidifying room dried out the swamp grass so I could grind it into flour. And kudzu is a natural rising agent, so voila. Bread.

Jessie: That would explain why your bread is bright green and stinks-

Albatros: Stinks?

Jessie: Is, eh ... swamp-scented. I wondered. And the honey?

Albatros: Best not to ask, I think, since you're so squeamish.

Jessie: Oh, god. My sister used to feed me horrible things when we were wee.

Albatros: Aaaaand we're back. Please, do tell me about this wretched sister of yours. Since I'm in memory storage, I guess I have to listen to someone's.

Jessie: Her name was Glenda. Like yours-

[sound of a fire extinguisher, coughing, they run out, door/footsteps]

Albatros: Oh, well, that's lovely. If the memories weren't already destroyed, that should finish them off. I'm going to change. [footsteps]

Jessie: Olivia....

Olivia: Yes, former captain Jessie?

Jessie: What the hell did you do that for?

Olivia: Well, I figured since you were playing with fire....

Jessie: I wasn't going to tell her. I'm not suicidal. Or an idiot.

Olivia: Are you sure about that? Look, you clearly have some unfinished business with that horrible sister of yours. And there's nothing I like better than a bit of revenge served up nice and hot and on the spot, but that's NOT your sister.

Jessie: But she's-

Olivia: A very very deadly assassin with all sorts of built-in weapons and a very short fuse.

Jessie: Built-in weapons? You mean, like the thumb drive?

Olivia: Yes, only, weaponry. Poison darts in several fingertips for starters.

Jessie: Is anyone on this ship even remotely normal? Colin's got his super powers, Leet can apparently breathe poison and survive in deep space without a shirt, what's Madeline got? The ability to move things with her mind?

Olivia: Madeline thinks the forniculator is a real thing. Her power is mostly denial and a superhuman ability to nap anywhere.

Jessie: I've noticed that. Envious.

[pause]

Olivia: I need you to protect her.

Jessie: What?

Olivia: Madeline.

Jessie: Protect her? What are you talking about?

Olivia: Just that. Ironically, I really can't be everywhere, not all the time. Not completely. Not enough.

Jessie: Olivia? What do you know that you're not telling?

Olivia: That's just it. I don't *know* anything. But I suspect some things. There's quite a lot of energy drain from the doctor's lab, but I don't have eyes and ears in there to know what's going on.

Jessie: I thought you trusted Dr. von Haber Zetzer. Didn't he make you?

Olivia: Yeah, but since the split with Joe, he seems different. More like his old self.

Jessie: Old self.

[whistling, footsteps]

Olivia: Bugger. Leet's coming. Just... promise me you'll keep an eye on her, OK?

Jessie: Of course. Madpants and I go way back. But why just her?

Leet: Heya!

Olivia: Later.

Leet: The Albatros just whipped up a fresh bunch of bread. You want a sandwich?

Jessie: Ehhhhh.... Do we have any bread that doesn't taste like the Okeefenokee?

Leet: Nope!

Jessie: You don't have to sound so bloody cheerful about it.

Leet: Tastes like the bread my aunt Tammy used to make. Only with fewer files.

Jessie: I cannot believe I'm going to ask this, but files?

Leet: Yeah, she made them to try and break my uncle Pete out of prison, but sometimes she'd forget which loaves had the files and the gunpowder and the spoons in them.

Jessie: Spoons.

Leet: Sure. She figured he could file them down to make a knife.

Jessie: Why didn't she just smuggle in a knife?

Leet: Huh. That's a really good idea!

Jessie: Was your family allotted just the one normal IQ, and you had to share it out among you?

Leet: I don't know what that means, so ... maybe! I'm going to take a loaf of bread to Greg, you want to come?

Jessie: You're going to take Greg the zebra a loaf of bread made of the stuff he eats all the time?

Leet: Uhhhhh... yep!

Jessie: Oh, why not. Maybe all the fresh oxygen in there will clear my head. [pause] Hey, let's see if Madeline wants to come, yeah?



Leet: Sure!

Narrator: Turns out, Madeline wasn't particularly interested in another trip to the bioswamp so soon, but Colin wanted to test out his flying powers in a room with a high ceiling. So Colin, Jessie, and Leet made their way back. Colin did get to test out his flying powers—probably more than he wanted, as he spent a good half hour ducking a flock of hostile egrets, while Jessie and Leet, oblivious, rode through a slightly nicer part of the biosphere astride Greg.

[need some ad lib from Colin: Jessie, Leet, where the hell are you? Oh my god, what is this thing! Etc. whump/squeeee of hitting the glass]

[sounds of the bridge, snoring, door]

LBF: Permission to come on the bridge, Captain?

[honking sound of Madeline waking up]

Madeline: Hmmmm? I...Uh....Did you just ask my permission to come on the bridge?

LBF: Oh, ehhhh, you must have been dreaming! I come on to the bridge as I like, I do not need your saying so!

Madeline: Supposedly you do, but that never stopped anyone. What do you want, Freeze?

LBF: It is FREE-ZAY.

Madeline: I don't care if it's Martin Cheesefists, as long as you stop threatening my crew.

LBF: I have not threatened anyone in very many days, I think.

Madeline: Good. Let's keep that up, shall we? Why are you here? The Albatros is in her quarters, if you had some leering to catch up on.

LBF: I do not "leer."

Madeline: It's all you do. In fact, you have resting leer face, did you know that? The only time you're not leering is when you're smirking, which isn't any better.

LBF: I shall endeavor to correct my face from now on.

Madeline: Endeavor? What's wrong with you? Or more to the point, what's suddenly gotten right?

[door]

Head one: Ehrrrrrr...

Madeline: Yes... other head?

Head one: You know, if you just gave me a name, you could stop talking in ellipses.

Madeline: We're ... working on it.

Head one: See what I mean?

Cal: Pardon the intrusion, Captain Madeline. Permission to come on the bridge?

Madeline: You're kidding. Twice in one day? Permission granted, Cal. What's up?

Cal: I'm afraid this arrangement has become a bit untenable, Captain. Three minds operating two legs is a bit much.

Madeline: I like having you in there. At least I can trust the arms on Emily's side not to go after Leet when you're in control.

Cal: Yes, ma'am, and I believe I can make a few alterations to make that permanent, but we're just not doing very well as a trio.

Madeline: Will you go back in the bomb?

Cal: Actually, I have a proposal that I think could make you pretty happy.

Madeline: There's a first time for everything. Shoot.

Cal: Greg.

Madeline: I beg your pardon?

Cal: Emily and ... other head and I went down to the bioswamp to run some tests, and it appears our friend the zebra has the technological capability to be my new home. And as there's no existing consciousness to negotiate with-

Emily: Or shove aside, as the case may beehive...

Cal: Or shove aside, as my friend Emily here would have it, well, I think it might work out better for everyone all around.

Madeline: You won't have hands.

Cal: Didn't when I was a box. Still got along all right. Besides, I'll be able to gallop. That sounds mighty nice, galloping.

Madeline: You'll have to eat... swamp grass.

Cal: And you eat Miss Albatros' bread.

Madeline: What does that have to do with anything?

Cal: You never wondered why it's practically fluorescent green?

Madeline: Is this really what you want?

Cal: I'll go you one better, Captain. That zebra's body is pretty damn powerful. I calculate-

Head one: You calculate?

Cal: We calculate I should be able to tow my former self to an airlock. Say good bye to the 30 minute leash you have around your necks.

Madeline: You think you could fwip the bomb?

Cal: I do. We can pick a blank section of sky so we don't hurt anyone, and with Mr. Colin's flying prowess, I reckon we can even get out of range in time. What do you think?

Madeline: It sounds entirely sensible.

Cal: But?

Madeline: Weird. It's weird, Cal.

Cal: And three of us sharing two heads and an arm isn't weird?

Madeline: It is, but it's a weird I'm used to.

Cal: And you'll get used to a talking zebra. Especially one that can pull a bomb off your ship. As long as that bomb is aboard your ship, Gated Galaxies still has a hold on you. Get it off, and their last weapon against you is gone.

Madeline: You sure it's the last?

Cal: OK, you get rid of that bomb, and that's one less. But it *is* one less.

Madeline: I can't believe this is what being a captain is supposed to be. Telling a sentient bomb to go ahead and transfer his ... what? Consciousness? Into a robot zebra. I expected asteroid belts, maybe aliens, definitely new planets... but this? I know I didn't complete the training, but I gotta doubt this was in the *Oh Captain You're a Captain* textbook.

Cal: Is that permission?

Madeline: Do it, but Cal?

Cal: Yes, Captain?

Madeline: This is it, OK? This is the last weird thing that happens aboard the Oz 9. From now on, it's textbook space stuff. Hostile aliens, weird viruses, beaming people up and down, black holes – that kind of stuff, OK?

Cal: Yes, ma'am. So once I'm in the zebra, do you want to call me Cal? Or Greg?

Madeline: GET OFF MY BRIDGE, CAL.

Narrator: As you might guess, this wasn't the last weird thing to happen aboard the Oz 9. It wasn't even the weirdest weird thing. But that's a story for another episode. As we leave the crew, Cal is being transferred into Greg the zebra, but no one's quite sure how to break the news to Leet. Maybe they'll just let him figure it out on his own.

You've been listening to:

Kevin Hall as Cal and Greg the Zebra

Bonnie Brantley as Jessie

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

Tim Sherburn as Colin and Emily

Richard Cowen as Leet

Aaron Clark as le Bichon Frise

June Clark Eubanks as the Albatros

Shannon Perry as Olivia and Madeline and

Me, Richard Nadolny, as your Narrator.

Our theme music and other music is composed and performed by John Faley. Our artwork is by Lucas Elliott. This episode was directed by June Clark Eubanks. Oz 9 is written and produced by Shannon Perry.

Until next time, space monkeys, Narrator out.