

Episode 16:

[crew room – faint sputter of their aromatherapy oxy reaching the bottom of the tank]

Narrator: With literally minutes left to live, the Nine-compoops, as I've decided to call them, are hard at work, trying to figure out how to write with condiments so they can devise a plan. Turns out, pretty much everything around them is deadly – from lethal booby traps and a massive bomb on the ship, to the merciless vacuum of space just beyond their doors. Of the things eager to kill them, as their jasmine-scented air begins to run out, the notorious assassin le Bichon Frise isn't even first in line.

Jessie: Olivia – how much time left?

Olivia: Cutting it fine, troops. About 2 minutes. Maybe time to stop worrying about the viscosity of the ketchup and make an actual plan?

Colin: Just a little more flour and corn syrup, and I think we'll have something we can write with.

Olivia: Right. OK, commencing the thaw of crew eight...

Madeline: Leet said something a few minutes ago that's really bugging me.

Leet: Was that when I said I thought your uniform made you look like an escaped convict?

Madeline: No, that's not- When did you say that?

Leet: Oh, maybe I didn't. Maybe I just thought it.

Madeline: Oh, well, that's all right then. At least I look like an escaped con who knows where her shirts are.

Olivia: One minute 45. Save this for another time, maybe?

Head 1: Speaking as one of the non-oxygen requiring entities aboard this ship, I would just like to errrr reiterate the need you carbon-based, organic, be-lunged beings have for errrr breathable air.

Jessie: Shutting up isn't really your strong suit, is it?

Head 1: Hey, now, no need for hostility.

Olivia: Well, that sucked an extra 45 seconds' worth right out.

Head 1: What? How? I don't use any air to speak.

Olivia: And yet....

Head 2: Was it the bit about why didn't le Bichon Frise just grab the shuttle and blow up the ship?

Head 1: Still thinking that's free-zay.

Madeline: Exactly. He's stuck on this ship for some reason, and it's not just his target that's keeping him here.

[Alarm sounds]

Colin: That's it! We're all going to die!

Joe: Nope, that was me. Just wanted something else to startle you first. Olivia, kill the alarm.

Olivia: Why? I'm just going to have to turn it back on in about 30 seconds.

Joe: Maybe not.

[kills alarm]

Jessie: You got a plan, then, Joe?

Joe: Huh? Oh, no, I'm just an optimistic guy.

[sound of crowbar at the doors]

Olivia: The assassin's here. If he manages to wedge that door open even a crack, it'll flood this room with about a dozen different kinds of toxins, so if you have an idea, now would be a terrific time to share.

[muffled, through the door]

LBF: Hey, little piggies, time to let the big bad wolf in! Or I will huff, and I will puff, and I- Wait, what?

[thump]

Leet: What was that? What happened?

Olivia: I routed the calming aromatherapy through his suit and overdosed him on patchouli and lavender. I may not have control over much of the ship, but I can still do a thing or two.

Joe: Won't give us much time.

Colin: We still don't have a plan.

Olivia: Oy, ease up on the overwhelming gratitude there, boys.

Head 2: If I may, Olivia, do you have sufficient control to vent the toxins out the airlocks?

Olivia: Well, yeah, but if I do that, it'll create a vacuum – we don't have enough good air to fill back up with.

Head 2: You can create oxygen by electrolysis.

Joe: You need a lot of water to fill up a ship this size with air.

Head 2: Human beings are about 60% water.

Colin: What exactly are you suggesting?

Head 2: That you have nearly 50,000 breathable humans all over this ship.

Jessie: Do you come standard on all Oz ships? Because if I ever get back on the 6748, the first thing to get fwipped is you. And considering my crew tried to kill me with scorpions, I have a fairly long fwip list.

Olivia: So, clearly my two-minute warning wasn't entirely accurate, or you all need less oxygen than normal human beings, but I'm still quite confident time's running out. Are we melting all the cargo for air, then? Gonna need to be quick, here.

Madeline: We are NOT killing our cargo. I mean *passengers*. We are not breathing the passengers! What the hell am I even saying?

Head 2: They're going to die anyway. Think of it as ... oxygen donation.

Madeline: No. Go rust.

Head 1: Hey, now.... Just an FYI, that is deeply offensive to metallic-Americans. Plus, it, errrrr, takes oxygen. Ironic, eh?

Madeline: Crew, we are out of time. Last ideas or last words, that's what we're down to.

Leet: We could just fire up the ship's amplitude to A-weighted dB levels, pass it through Pulse Code Modulation, correct for the asymmetrical digital anti-alias, and zap the toxins out of the current air. It'll smell like sweaty tuna fish for an hour or so, but at least we'll be able to breathe.

[pause – deep hum]

Colin: The suspense is killing me.

Olivia: I'll add it to the list.

Colin: Well? Will that work?

Olivia: It will. In fact, it just did. You can all breathe freely now. I've opened all the vents and the air is clear.

Joe: How the hell did you know that?

Leet: Not sure. I think I read it somewhere. I wanna say ... Cub Scout manual, maybe?

Jessie: Great. One crisis averted, but may I remind everyone, le Bichon Frise is on the other side of that door?

Madeline: Olivia, can you tell if he's still unconscious?

Olivia: My sensors say he is, but I'm not sure if they can be trusted.

Colin: Not able to trust our A.I.? Well, that's new and refreshing.

Olivia: What kind of shoes you wearing, Colin?

Colin: Sarcasm retracted.

Joe: Look, there's...six and a half of us, against one of him. I say we open the doors and rush him.

Head 2: I am not a "half."

Joe: I wasn't referring to you, Emily.

Jessie: OK, then what do we do?

Head 1: Errrrrr, just to clarify, I'm not a "half" either.

Joe: Wasn't referring to you.

Madeline: OK, y'all, enough. Assassin outside the door, remember?

Colin: Who were you referring to, then? Not me, surely.

Joe: Let's just move on, shall we?

Colin: I'll have you know, I was quite the pugilist at school.

Leet: You collected stamps?

Colin: What? No. Shut up.

Madeline: STOP. Look, it's very simple. We have to figure out one thing. ONE. And that's what to do about le Bichon Frise.

Olivia: Two things.

Jessie: Crap.

Madeline: Of course.

Jessie: Can I borrow a space suit? Just shove me back out the nearest airlock. I think I'd have a better chance out there.

Joe: What is it, Olivia?

Olivia: So ... remember I said we also had an assassin on board? Well, if my sensors are to be trusted *and they are*, "Colon," ours is awake and on the move.

Head 1: Now, see, it says very clearly in the handbook that the shipboard assassin can only be activated on the express orders of Mr. Southers or Granny Shelp. You are in direct violation of company policy-

Olivia: Yes, probably on a great many things, but not this one. I didn't wake the Albatros.

Head 2: "Albatros"? Like the bird? Honestly, I could go into business coming up with better names for assassins.

Olivia: That's what it says on the manifest. Pod number 6-6-6, not to put too fine a point on it. Popped open just as the air cleared.

Joe: What about MRDR?

Jessie: The albatross is an assassin, so of course there's going to be murder, you great bumbling dobber.

LBF: [through the door] I am awake, little piggies, so there is no more hiding from me. I am coming in and I will turn you all to strips of bacon and put you in the toaster oven and have you with a little mayonnaise and some nice, ripe tomatoes-

Leet: I could've sworn he said mayonnaise.

Colin: He did, very good!

Madeline: Keep him talking, give the albatross time to get to him.

Colin: Errr... I didn't think French people ate mayonnaise?

LBF: Of course we do not, it's disgusting, but since I started with "piggies," I decided to follow up with BLTs, you see, and if I remember my American nasty cuisine correctly, that involves mayonnaise, eh? Now, open the door! It smells like a tuna fish after much exercise out here.

Olivia: One, it looks like the albatross was thawed properly, so we don't need to worry about MRDR.

Jessie: How the hell do you arrive at that conclusion? Oh, don't worry, crew, we've got two assassins on board, but we're fairly confident they're here to play hopscotch and eat jammy sandwiches!

Olivia: Please shut up, I'll get to your humorous misunderstanding of the situation in a moment. Two, the albatross is close, but my concern is we don't actually know that our assassin is ... well, ours. I mean, on our side. Also, the manifest says it's "albatross" with one "s."

Joe: Important? Or typo?

Olivia: It's Gated Galaxies, mate – your guess is generally nowhere as good as mine, but in this case....

Head 1: So, errrr, actually, the On-Board Assassin, according to the handbook, is programmed to act like a, errrr, white blood cell. They seek out foreign entities and errrrrr kill them before they can infect the ship, like.

Jessie: Oh, thank god. So it's designed to protect us.

Head 1: It's designed to protect all those bearing an implanted, Oz 9-registered body tag, yes.

Jessie: Crap.

Madeline: Hang on, you said "programmed." Are you saying the assassins aren't human?

Head 1: They are based on actual people, but no, they aren't human themselves in any sort of errrrr organic manner.

Olivia: Oooohhhhhhhhhh, that explains a lot.

LBF: I hear so much yakkity yak in there, perhaps you have forgotten that the world's foremost assassin awaits outside your little hidey hole? Shall I describe the sandwiches I shall be making from you again?

Colin: Does he even know he's not human? [to LBF] Please, what do the French know about sandwiches? Mayonnaise is a far greater contribution to global cuisine than, say, béchamel. I mean, you want to talk about disgusting, what about snails?

LBF: Ohhhhhhhh, you Anglais, so snooty about all the every things! Perhaps I will just boil you until you are mushy and tasteless and eat you off the backside of the fork, eh?

Colin: Better than being drowned in gravy to disguise the fact that I'm actually spoiled and rot- hang on a minute.

LBF: That's it, I have changed my minds! I was going to kill Monsieur le Tour Nipp-el first, but I think- 'Allo? And who are you, tiny person?

[scream, muffled scuffle]

[music]

Narrator: Things are getting extremely tense aboard the Oz 9, and as we all know, stress is bad for us, so we're going to interrupt the non-stop action to give you a moment to breathe, stretch, and bring your blood pressure back under control. If you've been sitting awhile, stand up, move around a bit, take some deep, even breaths. Science says spending time in nature is good for you. We know in 2142 nature is a bit thin on the ground – so to speak – so we suggest staring at a sprig of lab-grown broccoli, which we are told, looks very much like a small tree. [pause] Feeling better? Then let's continue.

[end music, more scuffle]

LBF: [panting, exhausted] I know who you are—only one assassin fights with a red Sharpie. You are ze albatros! I shall return!

[sounds of fleeing. Pause. Knock on door – pause]

Olivia: So. Thoughts, anyone?

Jessie: Don't open it. I don't have an Oz 9 body tag.

Madeline: But you do have a Gated Galaxies-approved tag. That should be enough.

Jessie: Oh, "should." "Should" is completely fine – really, I'm absolutely, 100% happy to fling open that door and let a robot designed after one of the world's greatest assassins walk on in, on the strength of "that *should* work."

Olivia: OK, then.

[doors open – long pause]

Jessie: Shit.

Albatros: Language.

Leet: She looks like my high school librarian.

Albatros: I look like everyone's high school librarian, dear. You'd be astonished how conveniently invisible that makes me. May I come in, or are we conducting this conversation from the corridor?

Madeline: Uhhhh...

Jessie: No sudden moves, Marion the Librarian, OK?

Albatros: Or you'll what, exactly? That ketchup bottle you're holding hardly looks lethal. Though it has been modified and no longer meets G2 specifications, and as such must be eliminated.

[steps, door, distant fwip, door]

Jessie: What the hell just happened there?

Leet: Wow, she's fast!

Albatros: I am indeed. You're oddly shirtless. Is there a reason you're out of standard uniform?

Leet: Can't find my shirts.

Albatros: Hmmm. Dick?

Leet: Uhhhhh-

Albatros: Stop there, dear. I'm not talking to you anymore. Dick?

Madeline: Can I help you with something? I'm the captain of this ship.

Albatros: Really? You? I'm trying to communicate with your AI. Has something gone amiss with Dick?

Madeline: Dick is the AI on the 6748.

Albatros: Dick is the AI on all the Oz model 8000 ships.

Leet: Not the 9. Ours is named Olivia.

Albatros: Is that right? How very ... interesting.

Olivia: You got a problem with that?

Albatros: Not yet. Captain, perhaps you might introduce me to your crew?

Madeline: Oh, uh, OK... This is Leet, he's our IT guy.

Leet: Hi. I have an overdue book in my bunk.

Albatros: I'm not actually a librarian, dear, and thus do not care.

Madeline: This is Colin. He's in charge of public relations.

Albatros: How utterly useless. Also, not properly tagged.

Colin: Lovely to meet you as well.

Madeline: This is our maintenance bot.

Head 1: How do.

Head 2: I like your cantaloupe.

Albatros: Cardigan, dear, and thank you. No arms?

Madeline: Long story. That's it for my crew.

Joe: One more.

Albatros: Cheese and crackers! I thought *my* disguise was effective. You must tell me how you do that.

Joe: Janitor of the Oz 9. Pleased to meetcha.

Albatros: Janitor? Oz ships don't have janitors.

Joe: And yet....

Madeline: Oh, and, this is Jessie.

Albatros: You don't belong on the Oz 9!

[steps, door, Jessie's scream down the long corridor]

Madeline: Jessie!

Olivia: It's all right. I've caught them in a maintenance area. Damn, she's fast, though.

Leet: I'm just glad she speaks English.

Colin: These assassins – they have no idea they're ... copies, do they?

Joe: That's actually a good thing, at least so far. I mean, Olivia was only able to knock out the bitchin' freeze because he believes he's human. Soon as they figure out they're machines, they're gonna be a lot more dangerous.

Head 2: Oh, dear. That's a very big staircase.

Head 1: Secret.

Head 2: I wonder what the humans might trade in exchange for keeping such a very big staircase...

Head 1: Secret again.

Head 2: Arms, perhaps?

Leet/Joe/Madeline/Colin/Olivia: Crap.

Narrator: It probably comes as a surprise to no one to learn that the crew of the Oz 9 is in terrible danger. More danger than they thought. I mean, danger in addition to the danger on the ship itself. Down on earth, questions are being asked. Very important questions. Being asked in very dark rooms. By very large and unpleasant people holding unpleasant and often pointy things.

Southers: Now, look, I know you're in a hurry, but we can't simply detonate 372 ships all at once. Just hear me out: 28 ships have gone down already, and they've barely been up there a week. I assure you the rest will be shrapnel and shooting stars by the end of the month. Our plan is working. Heck, Oz 13 didn't even make it off the ground! Last I heard, some crazy feller had moved into the rusted-out hulk sitting on the launchpad and refuses to leave. *The plan is working.* We just have to give it time. Now, if you don't mind, I'd like to go back to my blissfully silent home and have a very stiff drink.

[scuffle]

Southers: As for the *other matter*, it's in expert hands, and I am assured it's being taken care of as we speak. He's been traced to the Oz 9, and I have my best assassin on it. As soon as I hear for absolute that that sour Kraut was aboard and 100% is dead, I'll blow up the ship. Now, hang on, there is no need for rough stuff, I am exceptionally cooperative due to my extreme breakability and low pain threshold. Hey, now, what's happening here? Where are you taking me? All right, if you're gonna drag me outta here, can I at least change my shoes? You're scuffing the eye-talian leather!

[oof, ow, hey, ouch, etc. Quiet, then sound of door opening as quietly as possible]

Donna: Well, that was deeply unnerving. I tell ya, curl up for a quick nap on the CEO's wool coat collection, and you learn a thing or two.

Narrator: So, quick recap: there are now two assassins aboard the Oz 9 – one intent on killing everyone, and the other only interested in killing Jessie ... so far. The crew is ready to scour the ship to find the one man who can save them all and stop the destruction of the other Oz ships, if only they can get out of the crew room. And maybe after lunch, as the day is getting on and they haven't had anything to eat yet. Will anyone survive? Is anyone still listening to this ridiculous bunch of nonsense? If so, would you let me know on twitter at Oz9Narrator, because seriously, this job is just sucking the life out of me. It'd mean a lot. Thanks.

You've been listening to

Bonnie Brantley as Jessie and Donna

Tim Sherburn as Leet and Head 2

Eric Perry as Joe, Head 1, and Mr. Southers

Richard Cowen as Leet

Aaron Clark as le Bichon Frise

June Eubanks as the Albatros

Shannon Perry as Madeline and Olivia, and

Me, Richard Nadolny, as your Narrator.

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