

Episode 17

Narrator: If space were a sandwich, one slice of bread would be all the shouting Jessie is currently doing in Maintenance Area 15, the other slice of bread would be the shouting Mr. Southers and a collection of goons are doing in the storage areas deep below the offices of Gated Galaxies, and the roughly 245,000 miles between would be the pickled flounder tongue and egg salad salsa Joe just ate on a dare. All of which is to say, there's a whole lot of shouting going on. Recognizing Jessie as "not belonging to the Oz 9," the 9's resident assassin, the Albatros, has carried her off, intent on fwipping her out an airlock. Fortunately, Olivia was able to stop and hold them; unfortunately, Jessie is alone with an assassin intent on killing her. Since I'm not sure yet who's got Southers, let's start with Jessie, shall we?

Jessie: You just stay down there where you belong and leave me the hell alone!

Albatros: You might as well come down, dear; you can't stay up there all day.

Jessie: I'm game to give it a go. For a deadly assassin, you climb like a cow.

Albatros: "Deadly assassin" is redundant. I have to admit, that was an impressive Yurchenko Vault to get up there.

Jessie: Did you see that pirouette off the shelving? I'd even get 10 out of 10 from the South Korean judge on that one. I've still got it.

Albatros: You do indeed. And it'll buy you a few more minutes, if that brings you any comfort?

Jessie: I've been on this ship about, what, 22 hours? In that time, I have yet to draw one breath that someone wasn't trying to take from me. I'm still scraping scorpion guts off my boots and mime out of my hair. Granted, the mime wasn't trying to kill me that I know of, but he left a whacking great bruise on my shin, and did I mention we bumped into each other when I was out in the bloody bollocking heaving black airlessness of *space*? So, if you think I'm afraid of you, *librarian*... well, you're right, I'm bloody terrified, but I reckon I'm tougher than I thought I was yesterday.

[pause]

Albatros: You carry on talking this much, and you're going to have to start melting passengers to make more air. Who thought scorpions was a good idea?

Jessie: My bet's on Frank. He's our necrobiologist.

Albatros: What on earth do you need one of those for? Is that even a real thing?

Jessie: G2 told me he could help us understand what foods were safe to eat on our new planet.

Albatros: By force-feeding them to passengers and seeing who dropped dead, presumably.

Jessie: G2 is generally thin on the details. But you may be right – Frank spent the first day pointing at people and saying, "not dead," like the rest of us needed his help to figure it out. I thought it was weird but figured he just liked to keep busy.

Albatros: Who else was on your crew?

Jessie: Oh, it was a good bunch, really. Lots of scientists, good for when we finally reached a terraformable planet. We had a flavographer- [flav-OG-ra-fer]

Albatros: Someone who studies the movements of the color yellow?

Jessie: Really? I thought it had something to do with flavors...

Albatros: Exceptionally wrong. Carry on, please.

Jessie: Martin was a hendecagist- [hen-DECK-a-gist]

Albatros: Expert on the number 11.

Jessie: What? Why?

Albatros: What else?

Jessie: Oh, now Lyra was useful. She's nephopher [NEF-o-fer]. To do with kidneys, right?

Albatros: *Nephro* is to do with kidneys. I'm afraid what you had there was a specialist in clouds. Useful on earth; perhaps less so in alien weather systems?

Jessie: Plagiologer? [plag-ee-OL-o-ger]

Albatros: Studies obliques. Hard to see how that might come in handy.

Jessie: Ananya's the last one. She's a pycnomer. [PICK-no-mer]

Albatros: Pycnologist. [pick-NOL-o-gist] That might actually be quite useful.

Jessie: She studies, what, alien languages or diseases or something?

Albatros: She studies things that are thick. Are you ready to come down yet?

Jessie: Quite comfortable, thank you. Someone will be along to rescue me soon.

Albatros: Really? And who might that be? Leet, who's thick enough to keep your pycnologist busy for a century? Or perhaps Madeline, who is clearly *very* fond of you. Colin, perhaps, provided it doesn't risk him spilling his martini? Does he ever drink that, or just carry it around? Or perhaps your hero will be the janitor, what's his name? Joe, shuffling in with his mop and bucket?

Jessie: Or, maybe he's already here... You know, I think I'll have a quick kip. You might want to keep your ears open for oooooooooold Joooooooooooooooooooo.....

[switch to crew room]

Madeline: We need to do something. Jessie may not be going out the airlock, but she's still trapped with that assassin.

Colin: You saw how fast she is. Chances are, Jessie's already dead.

Olivia: Aaaaaaaand there's Colin, with his usual ray of sunshine. She's not dead, according to my sensors. I still get one human heat signature from Maintenance Area 15.

Colin: But the robot assassin is still with her?

Olivia: Appears that way. There's a small cloud of chill and pompousness in that room as well. Her signature's a bit like yours, Colin.

Colin: Very funny. Shut up.

Madeline: Is there anything we can do to help Jessie?

[dinging bell]

Leet: What's that bell?

Joe: Me.

Madeline/Leet/Colin: Jesus!

Joe: Yeah, I knew the bell thing wasn't going to work. Jessie will be fine as long as she goes up, gets to a high place. Those maintenance bays are good for that. Lots of racks and shelves and high ceilings.

Colin: What possible good can that do?

Olivia: Joe's right. Robots can't climb – everyone knows that.

Colin: That's ridiculous.

Olivia: Ever seen a Dalek at the bottom of a staircase?

Leet: Sure, lots.

Olivia: Ever seen one at the top?

Joe: It's a safety mechanism in case the assassins go rogue. Gives humans a chance to get away.

Leet: How do you know that?

Joe: I found the manual for the assassins. Someone used it to prop up one of the tables.

Madeline: Oh, uhhhhh....

Colin: Let me see that. How the hell did you read this? What language *is* this?

Joe: Low Saxon. I... speak a little German.

Leet: So, Captain Hottie is safe?

Madeline: She's not a captain anymore, Leet; just "Hottie." I mean "Jessie."

Joe: As long as she stays up high and stable, Jessie should be OK. All the bots on this ship are anti-ascend, according to that manual.

Head 2: Hang on a Minnesota. Are you saying *we* can't climb?

Head 1: That, errrr, would explain one or two things. Like why all the tools and shelves are way down low. I keep barking my shins on 'em. Might also explain our lack of fondness for apples and other tree fruits.

Head 2: Yes, absolutely, that and the fact that we're mezurkas.

Head 1: Machines. And yeah. There is that. But my point still holds.

Head 2: Can the anti-ascend be oatmeal?

[pause]

Head 1: Errrrr, sorry folks, not sure about that one.

Head 2: Peritonitis. Camouflage. Tweezers.

Joe: I'm going to go out on a limb here and say you're asking if it can be reversed?

Head 2: Yes.

Joe: Haven't got that far in the manual yet, but I'll let you know.

Leet: Are you drooling?

Head 1: Oh, man. Oh, no. That's 10w30. We gotta get him to a mechanic. Hang in there, Tator Tot, we'll get you fixed right up. Just stay with me, there. STAY WITH ME.

Leet: Olivia?

Olivia: Knight to King's 7... hmmm? Oh, hello, Leet. Can I help you?

Leet: Were you playing Monopoly?

Olivia: Ping pong, dear. What's happening?

Leet: Emily's sick.

Olivia: Oh. All right then.

Leet: What do we do?

Olivia: Oh, we're doing something, then, are we? Well, you can lay him on the floor, twist his head around 360 degrees, and bang three times really hard on his chest plate.

Joe: Will that help?

Olivia: No idea. I just don't like him.

Madeline: Olivia, come on. We're already down half our engines, we need him.

Head 2: The ligature was lost and so the deed could not be done.

Head 1: He's delirious!

Madeline: He's a machine. He's malfunctioning.

Colin: He's talking about typography. When two letters are so close together, they form a single new glyph called a ligature. We use it in creating logos sometimes.

Joe: We've got two assassins on board, and you think when he mentions a ligature, he's talking about corporate branding?

Madeline: He's just babbling. It probably doesn't mean anything.

Joe: Who lost the ligature, Emily?

Head 2: [coughs horribly]

Glenda: Oh, and one more thing...

Leet: Hey, the cinnamon roll lady is back!

Glenda: Oh, I forgot to mention someone tried to strangle me the other night. Clumsy idiot, came at me from the front, all grrrrr and scowly and wrapping his Gated Galaxies souvenir tie around his fists. Fortunately, I was wearing my 8-inch Christian Louboutins, and he went home with an extra piercing. So, watch yourself and wear sensible shoes. Idiot.

Head 2: [more coughing, *ping*] Oh. That's better. I think she was stuck in my thermometer.

Head 1: Throat. Thank Babbage. So, funny thing about ligatures. Did you know the modern ampersand is actually originally a ligature of the Latin characters for e and t, meaning "and"? Now the modern-day ampersand is actually what's called a "logogram," which is a written character used to represent a word or phrase, like your Chinese characters or indeed even some of the errrrr Egyptian hieroglyphs. Now in music, a ligature is a particular piece of an instrument that attaches the reed to the mouthpiece of some of your ehhhhh woodwinds, like your saxophone or your humble clarinet.

Narrator: Fascinating as this is, there are at least four definitions of the word "ligature," so I'm just going to go ahead and interrupt now before he's really in full swing. While the crew tries to figure out their most recent life-threatening crisis, elsewhere in the ship, the assassin le Bichon Frise has accelerated his search for his target, conscious that he is no longer the only – or the best – assassin aboard the Oz 9.

LBF: And who might you be, Monsieur? Oh, beg pardon, Madame. Au suivant! 'Allo, you have a very long and dull name, perhaps you would like to be relieved of the burden of such a very long name, eh? Oooooo, that's actually quite good, I shall write that down to use again on an awake person. [pencil on paper] You have .., very ... long... name... relieved... burden... ehhhh? How many aitches in ehhhhhh? Let's say six. Ehhhhhh... Yes. Six. However, you are much too young to be the fellow I am after, so I am very sorry, Monsieur LongNameFellow, you must drag that appellation around after you for a while yet. Au suivant! Ahhhhh... too old. Too short. Too tall. Too woman. I have no idea what is going on in this very fancy pod – is that a machine for the cotton candy? What about you, ehhhh? Middle-aged fellow, little round belly, little white beard, and what a very long name you have! Perhaps, Herr von BibbleBabble, it is time to wake you up in order to put you down? Oh, I am on FIRE today! I must write this one too! [pencil on paper] wake ... up... put down.

[over the intercom]

vHZ: Pressing zat button to do ze vakey vakey would not be such a good idea, I am thinking. So maybe ... don't.

LBF: And who is this who is speaking, eh? Are you sounding a little bit... German?

vHZ: Zat is possible, yes. But I haff no idea vat your accent is supposed to be.

LBF: I am French! I am ... le Bichon Frise!

vHZ: Ach, yes, I haff heard of you, the small fluffy dog vis ze lethal bite. It is pronounced "freeze," though, no?

LBF: *It is free-zay*. Perhaps you are not so very clever clogsy after all, eh?

vHZ: Vat are you doing aboard ze Oz 9?

LBF: I am, I think, looking for you. Are you perhaps a little German fellow with a stout little German belly full of sausages and a very long name that just wanders off on its own?

vHZ: Sooo, you were sent here for me. I suppose zis is not so surprising.

LBF: You are speaking over the loud-talking thing, so I am guessing I have to come find you.

vHZ: Vell, as I don't think you came to give me zum flowers and sing me a little tune, I vill perhaps keep my distance for now.

LBF: Just an IFY, I am going to assassin you shortly.

vHZ: FIY.

LBF: What?

vHZ: You said zis phrasing wrong. It is FIY.

LBF: No, it isn't, it's IFY.

vHZ: I sink you are mistaken. Vat does it stand for?

LBF: What do you mean, what does it stand for? It's a word, eyeeffwhy.

vHZ: I don't think so, actually. Oy, this English, so ridiculous.

LBF: I don't have any problems with the English speaking.

vHZ: Does Leet understand vat you say? I think if he understands you are saying English, zen your pronouncing is good. He is the Leet-mus test. HA! I even made a joke. So good.

LBF: Monsieur Beef Bourguignon? Pfffft. I have stuffed smarter things into cabbage rolls. [pause] Wait. Actually, I once assassinated a microneurorocketphysicistsomething and made him into tiny little pieces and stuffed him into cabbage rolls, so this is not the best example. I have worn smarter jackets- no, wait – not this either.

vHZ: Yes, you have made your point amply, you have killed many people and done unpleasant things vis them. I understand, thank you altogether.

LBF: Hiding from me is as pointless as... as... I don't understand. I was on such a roll a minute ago.

vHZ: Perhaps. Perhaps. But hiding buys me some time, you see? So, while I wait for my assassin to get to you, perhaps you tell me why you are hunting me like ze rabbit?

LBF: Because it will make me very very rich. I think so very rich, you will be my last assassanee.

vHZ: It's an honor. But you misunderstand my question: who is it who will give you so many riches for my head?

LBF: Ah ah ah.... I cannot tell you that!

vHZ: No faith in your skills, eh? Zis is sad, when we are old and concerned we can no longer perform.

LBF: About what are you talking! I am at the tippy top of my field!

vHZ: Zat is perhaps not quite right – not anymore, poor fading fellow.

LBF: I can assassin eight people before *le petit dejeuner* without shattering a sweat.

vHZ: I have a very good English idioms dictionary. I will borrow it to you, if zis is helping.

LBF: When I am done with you, zis ship and all of the little people in their little glass houses, with their moustaches and their silly shoes and cotton candy and very long names, they will all die together in the greatest assassining of all ze times!

vHZ: Vell, since you won't tell me who my real killer is, I must only think you are afraid I will escape you and tittle tattle.

LBF: No one escapes le Bichon Frise!

vHZ: Currently zere is an entire crew room full of not particularly clever people who have escaped le Bichon Freeze. Perhaps zis is why you are feeling not so fresh and confident, mmm?

LBF: FINE. I will tell you and it will be in your brain when you die – it was Mr. Southers!

vHZ: [laughs] Oh, oh, zat is very funny. Oh goodness, how ze world turns even ven you are no longer on it.

[click]

LBF: Allo? Allo? Are you there, funny little man? Allllloooooooo? Where have you gone, little German hare? HA! Hare like rabbit, Herr like German man. My clever is back! I must write this down!

[sound of pod creaking open. Then sound of several pods creaking open, shuffling feet and moans]

LBF: Merde.

Narrator: Soooooo..... The assassin was just attacked by a bunch of zombies. Seriously? Nope. Not even going to narrate this. [pause] I'm not kidding. This is ridiculous and I'm not narrating it. Bugger off.

[crew room music fires up from off]

Head 1: And finally, there's "ligature" in the sense of something used to tie or bind tightly. That can be a good thing, as in surgery, for tying off a blood vessel, for example, or less good, when used as a strangulation device, as the Gated Galaxies souvenir tie in the little lady's example, there. Ohhhhhh, now it makes sense.

Colin: I wonder what le Bichon Freeze's going rates are. And does it cost more or less to kill something that's inorganic to start with?

Madeline: I'll pitch in a 20. Maybe we can solder them to the outside of the ship until we need them?

Olivia: I rather fancy dragging them behind us like a string of tin cans on a newlyweds' car. Oy, that's strange.

Leet: I thought it was interesting. Who knew use of the word ligature peaked in the late 19th Century?

Colin: Shut up. A lot.

[sound of door opening]

Madeline: What's strange, Olivia? I mean, in addition to everything.

Olivia: Pod Bay 77. All the pods on the primary level just popped open. That's over 100 passengers, milling about.

Madeline: What ... condition are they in?

Olivia: I think the monitoring systems are still functional in that area; shall we take a look?

Colin: Oh, let's not.

Leet: Is there where Captain Hottie is?

Joe: Aaaaaaand Jesus!

Madeline/Colin/Leet: Jesus!

Joe: Jinx, you owe me a Coke. Jessie is in Maintenance Area 15. They're not far apart.

Narrator: They're quite a long way apart, actually. Nearly half a mile, as the zombie shuffles. And that's it. Really, I'm done. No more narration. Y'all can just fill in the blanks on your own.

Leet: We need to go get her.

Joe: We could use the Albatros on our side.

Madeline: Is there any way to convince her that Jessie isn't a threat?

[pounding on the door, muffled moaning and shuffling sounds]

LBF: Allo? Allo allo? Can you open ze door, please, my friends? Very tres rapide?

Madeline: What the hell? Olivia, you got a camera on the hallway?

Olivia: One second... there you are. Ooooo, that's unfortunate.

Madeline/Colin/Leet/Joe: [expressions of horror]

Colin: My god, what's going on out there? Who are all those people? And why are they all so very well dressed?

LBF: I know we did not perhaps start our relationship on the foot of choice, but perhaps you could open the door and we can discuss our options, ehhhh?

Leet: Open the door! He's in trouble!

Colin: He's an assassin sent to kill us, surrounded by zombies who want to kill *him*. What part of that says, "open the door" to you?

LBF: I am needing some assistance!

Madeline: I have absolutely no idea what to do right now.

Joe: Feels kind of like a "let nature take its course" situation to me.

Head 2: I'm seeing the wisdom of that.

Joe: Well, thank you for your support, Elizabeth.

Head 2: It's Emily, actually.

Leet: Come on, you can't just let him die out there.

LBF: I have informations! Big, important informations!

Olivia: We do have a lot of questions...

Madeline: Fine. Leet, Colin, Joe, grab one of those big tablecloths. Olivia, you open the door for only as long as it takes for le Bichon Freeze to get in, then shut it quick. Boys, get that tablecloth over him in a hurry, and wrap him up tight. It might at least buy us some time. Everybody ready?

Head 1: Ehhhh, just one thing, if I may?

Madeline: What.

Head 1: I'm just darn certain it's free-zay.

Madeline: I'm going to intentionally fly this ship past a magnetic planet and watch it suck you out through the hull, leaving a two-headed, no-armed hole in the side of my ship, and die smiling. Everybody ready?

Joe/Colin/Leet/Olivia: Ready!

Olivia: Hello, fox, welcome to the Hen House. Please mind your manners and don't eat your hosts.

[door opens, moaning gets much louder, sound of a scuffle]

Joe: Got him!

[doors close]

Leet: Squirmy fellow, ain't he.

LBF: GAH! I am not alone in here!

Madeline: You're an assassin, take care of it!

LBF: I'm pretty sure he's already dead! Hang on.

[weird noises, silence]

LBF: This is just so disgusting.

[more weird noises]

LBF: Hokay.

Madeline: Hang on, let me get a weapon. OK.

Head 1: Now, that's just insulting.

Madeline: It's the only thing that's handy. Shut up.

Head 1: "Handy" huh? Izzat a joke? You think you'd be laughing if someone took your arm for their own defensive purposes?

Madeline: Unwrap him. Slowly.

[pause]

Joe: What the hell?

Colin: You can't be serious.

Leet: He's gone!

Colin: Well, at least he left us a collection of dead zombie parts.

Olivia: Not quite dead. You might want to stamp on that arm before it goes under the sofa.

[stamping noises, expressions of disgust]

Olivia: Next time you capture someone in a tablecloth, you might not want to position him directly over a vent and then give him a whole lot of time to struggle with it and escape. Just a suggestion.

Colin: To recap: Jessie's still with one assassin. The other is *still* at large on the ship, and we're *still* in the crew room with basically no more information than we had an hour ago. So ... nothing has changed.

Leet: There are 100 zombies outside the door. That's different.

Head 1: Actually, there aren't.

Madeline: What?

Head 1: While you all were helping your assassin escape down the drain hole, the other assassin came in and cleaned up the hallway. I watched the whole thing on the monitor there. She is gratifyingly efficient.

Leet: Hey – did a good thing just happen? Was that, like, our very first Good Thing?

Colin: I have a strange and unfamiliar feeling right now.

Leet: Does it feel sort of tingly?

Colin: A bit....

Leet: I think that's what "good" feels like. It's been a while, so I don't really remember.

LBF: [on intercom] Thank you for your assistance, little rabbits. I will see you soon!

Colin: Aaaaaaaaaaaaaand it's back to terror. Yes, this feels much more familiar.

[sound of a phone ringing]

Madeline: Is there a phone in here?

Olivia: Oh, yes, there is, actually.

[phone keeps ringing]

Madeline: Any chance you might answer it?

Olivia: Any chance it's good news?

Madeline: Probably not, but could you answer it anyway?

Olivia: Righty ho. Hello?

Donna: Eh, hello. This is Donna. Any chance I could speak to a Hang on a second, it's a long one.... Dr. Von Haber Zetzer? I think someone down here may be trying to kill him.

Narrator: According to my agent, I'm contractually obligated to tell you that you've been listening to Oz 9. I am also required to list for you the people who are involved in the making of this podcast, so here they are:

Aaron Clark is le Bichon Frise

June Eubanks is the Albatros and Glenda

Bonnie Brantley is Jessie and Donna

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

Tim Sherburn is Colin and Emily

Richard Cowen is Leet

Shannon Perry is Olivia and Madeline and

I'm Richard Nadolny, your Narrator and unwilling participant in some of the most ridiculous nonsense I've ever heard.

The theme music was composed and performed by John Faley, and Oz 9 is written and produced by Shannon Perry. Assistance with French was provided by the Butler family.

The cast would like to thank our most recent new patrons, Melissa Hartman and Emily Swanson. You too can ensure the world is never free from this remorseless twaddle by becoming a patron at patreon dot com slash Oz 9 podcast. But please don't. Really. Until next time – because there's *always* a bloody next time – narrator out.