

Narrator 2: If you take a lump of coal and put it under tremendous pressure for a very long time, eventually, you'll get a diamond. If you take a bunch of idiots and put them under tremendous pressure for several weeks, eventually, you'll get a bunch of sweaty, stressed-out idiots. Which is exactly what we've got aboard the Oz 9. Thanks to Leet and his enthusiasm for doing crunches, lunges, deep knee bends, and something called a "Romanian deadlift" — which thankfully does not require a dead Romanian — the bridge is moist, overheated, and deeply unpleasant. And yet it managed to get slightly *more* unpleasant when the phone rang.

Glenda: You're not gonna believe who's on that ship with you!

Jessie: What are you talking about, you mad cow?

Madeline: [aside] Crap. She's talking about the Albatros.

Colin: My god. She's going to spill the beans about the Albatros being her, and about her not being my wife, and about the Albatros not being a real person!

Madeline: That's a lot of beans.

Colin: Seriously? That's your response, "That's a lot of beans"? How is that helpful? What do we do?

Madeline: I DON'T KNOW!

Albatros: Who is this person who is speaking?

Leet: Hey, is that the lady that came out of Emily's stomach?

Albatros: Are you hallucinating? Or are you simply remembering a previous hallucination?

Olivia: It was a hologram. Back when she was dead.

Albatros: When who was dead?

Colin: That doesn't matter. How about we go for a ride on Greg in the bioswamp? I can show you this delightful hill I found.

Greg: I don't remember volunteering my services.

Glenda: What the hell is wrong with your voice?

Greg: So that's "no" to "Angry Castrato." Kind of relieved, actually.

Glenda: Do the lot of you never stop talking? My god, your mouths are open so much, I can't believe your tongues haven't faded.

Leet: Colin's changes color according to his mood.

Colin: Please tell me you're making that up.

Leet: Nope. Right now, you're nervous. You know how I know that?

Colin: I'm awake and on the Oz 9?

Leet: Nope! I mean, you are, but that's not how I can tell.

Colin: Go on then, what color is it?

Leet: Sort of olive.

LBF: [snorting awake] Olive? What olive? Where? Mine!

Albatros: Were you ... sleeping?

LBF: I cannot help it! The warmness is making me sleepy!

vHZ: He haz a point, I am thinking. It's is very ... uteral in here.

Jessie: Did you just say "uterl"?

Greg: I think he means it's like a womb.

Jessie: That's disgusting!

vHZ: It is varm unt damp. Is zis not like ze atmosphere for ze baby?

Glenda: My god. I've set fire to termite mounds that had smarter residents.

Jessie: What the hell you calling here for? I thought G2 was after you. Tell me where you are, so I can let them know. They'll want to load up on pitchforks and Bibles.

LBF: Wait. Who is this who is calling? Why does this person talking give me the chillys and the little duck bumps?

Olivia: Do you mean goose pimples?

LBF: That is what I said.

Glenda: Wait just one minute. I know that voice.

Madeline: What? Crap. Crap! This can't be good!

Colin: We're all going to die very soon, aren't we. I never thought I'd die sweaty.

Glenda: Is that-

[click, dial tone]

Madeline: She ... she just hung up?

Olivia: Oh, sorry. Must've bumped something. I'm sure she'll call back.

Colin: Thank god.

Narrator 2: Actually, that should be, "Thank Joe." Doing his usual combination of mopping and lurking and generally being politely creepy, Joe overheard what was happening on the bridge. He peeked in, saw the alarmed color of Colin's tongue and put two and two together.

Joe: Olivia, any chance you could swap that call to the sausage room without letting either end know?

Olivia: I reckon I could do that. Hang on.

Narrator2: And so Glenda did her big reveal to no one but Joe and Olivia, and the others on the bridge were safe. “Safe,” of course, being a relative term.

Glenda: She’s not an exact copy, but she’s absolutely deadly and now, you’re on *her* ship! I always figured it’d come down to ... hmmm...what’s the female version of fratricide? Sistercide, whatever. But like *this*?! Oh, the irony is just delicious—did you know irony tastes like strawberries? [pause] Jessie? You still there?

Joe: I think she’s stunned, miss. You have a nice day now. [click, dial tone]

Olivia: Sororicide. I just looked it up. I don’t like her. I don’t particularly care for Jessie, but she’s on my ship, and I don’t like it when someone besides me messes with my crew. What do you suppose it’s called when the AI of the ship your sister escaped to zaps your deadly assassin robot double and then you?

Joe: Oz 9. I’m pretty sure that’s called Oz 9.

Narrator2: And so the secret of the Albatros’s less-than-human, not-at-all-married-to-Horace-who-is-Colin status is safe... for now.

Narrator: Who the hell are you?

Narrator2: Now, don’t go getting your epideictic oratory in a twist.

Narrator: Are you ... narrating? SCAB!

Narrator2: Any time you want to put that sign down and get back to work, you’re welcome to. For now.

Narrator: Is that a threat?

Narrator2: And as the has-been narrator and his far-superior replacement scuffle over the microphone and headset...

Narrator: Are you narrating this? Stop that! And as the classically trained narrator reclaims the microphone from the traitorous, substandard scab...

Narrator2: Oh, I don’t think so, oratory boy!

[sounds of scuffle—Narrators, some sounds from you for a fistfight (grunts, etc.) would be grand]

[silence, sound of Dr vHZ’s lab]

LBF: Why are you only staring at moi?

vHZ: I think I should be talking now, but I am zumhow not sure. Strange day. Let’s carry on, mmmm? Explain for me the.... Chura Kampo maneuver.

LBF: [long sigh] I am bored with these quizzes. I am smarter every day—why must you keep testing me?

vHZ: Because, my fellow, in zese recent days, you are perhaps zliding to the backside a bit. Zo please: Chura Kampo. Very popular vis you assassin types. What are the three essential ingredients?

LBF: FINE. First, something to knock the target ... eh, what is this word? Sleepy.

vHZ: Unconscious, yes.

LBF: Uncon... uncon... sleepy.

[notes on clipboard]

vHZ: Sleepy. Go on.

LBF: What are you writing?

vHZ: Zientist things. Please. Carry on.

LBF: Ehhhhhh.....I want to say.... Bubble gum?

vHZ: You said zis alzo for the Spennymoor Blitz unt ze Reticulum Minor Protocol.

LBF: Bubble gum is very useful!

vHZ: Perhaps for the ze freshening of ze breath and ze blowing of ze bubbles, but I do not see it in ze index of ze Assassins' Handbook.

LBF: Argh! It does not matter! I am ready for whatever you are healing me for!

vHZ: You must perhaps be patient a while longer. Now. It is time for zum healing, no? In you go, good fellow.

LBF: Can I at least have a sandwich?

vHZ: Very well, but no dropping of ze crumbs, eh? Ze ants are still recharging.

[silence, mumbling, scratching of vHZ writing, humming and eating from LBF]

LBF: Now what? You are staring again.

vHZ: It is zo odd. Do you feel as if zumone is ... listening when zey should not?

LBF: Huh. A little bit.

Narrator: Give me that mic! This is exactly why you need a trained and licensed member of the Narrators' Guild. You can't just leave them hanging like that, you need to be ready at a moment's notice to jump in.

Narrator2: I was building up dramatic tension!

Narrator: You were doing the crossword.

Narrator2: Narrators' Guild, pfft. Bunch of uptight namby pambys with one hand on your headphones like you can't hear through them otherwise.

Narrator: Do you even know the Narrator's Oath?

Narrator2: Oh, give me that mic. [narrating] Meanwhile...

Narrator: "Meanwhile"? Seriously? That is such a cop out.

Narrator2: Oh, like you've never done it...

[on the bridge]

Madeline: [muffled] Emily, hand me the spanner.

Emily: Spanner.

Madeline: That's not a spanner.

Emily: It most certainly is.

Madeline: Well....hand me the thing I want, not the thing I asked for.

Emily: Interphasic compensator.

Head 1: Does anyone else feel, like ... exposed? Like we should be doing something more interesting all of a sudden?

[very loud alarm]

Madeline: GAH! [bangs head] Ouch! I told you to turn that thing off! Cal's gone!

Head 1: Our apologies, Captain. We've just gotten accustomed to it, even, dare I say, dependent on it. Strange, isn't it, what some of us find soothing?

Madeline: This is a name thing again, isn't it.

Head 1: It has been posited that the distribution of appropriate nomenclature might constitute a reasonable replacement.

Madeline: Yeah, I dozed off halfway through that. If I hear that alarm again, the watch goes out the airlock. Along with the arm it's attached to, got it?

[door opens]

Leet: Hey, Captain Madeline? You in here?

Madeline: Under here, Leet. What's up?

Leet: What are you working on?

Madeline: This nav screen shorted out. I'm trying to fix it.

Leet: Do we really need it?

Madeline: "Need it"? It's a navigation screen!

Leet: Well, yeah, but hasn't some unknown person been navigating for, like, most of our journey? I mean, when we weren't stalled out or spinning in circles?

Madeline: Leet, maybe you could allow me to at least pretend to be captain of something?

Leet: Sorry, Captain. Did you figure out what happened to it?

Madeline: Well, Olivia claimed it was crunch sweat, but I'm not sure. I just need to get this cover off so I can get to the components. But it's really stuck. [grunting]

Leet: Here.

[ping, rattle]

Madeline: Oh, great. Where were you 30 minutes ago?

Leet: Oh, I was harvesting bracken in the bioswamp. I'm trying out a new recipe for Dr. von Haber Zetzer. I call it brackenstrudel. It's got bracken, marshwort, and nardoo filling!

Madeline: [muffled] Rhetorical question, Leet.

Emily: If I might interrupt for a pomegranate.

Head 1: Moment.

Emily: I believe you'll find the problem is mold.

Madeline: Is that what that is? Hand me that spanner, will you, Leet?

Head 1: I think you'll find she's actually asking for a screwdriver.

Leet: How do you know that?

Emily: We've been working with her for three excruciating days.

Head 1: Hours.

Emily: Really? Is that all? I honestly thought it had been three days. We have developed a certain understanding of her rather limited tool vocabulary.

Madeline: Uh, y'all, I think we should run.

Leet: What happened?

Madeline: I poked the mold, and it ... grabbed my spanner.

Head 1: Screwdriver. See what we mean?

Emily: It looks angry. I think running is the correct palindrome.

Head 1: Plan.

Madeline: RUN!!

Emily: With me, WITH ME.

Madeline: Olivia! Close up the bridge and seal it!

Olivia: What? What's going on? Gosh, what's that? Is that ... mold? Why's it got a screwdriver?

[sounds of running away, door]

[Kyle, can you make some muffled sounds of struggle? The Narrator has tied you to a chair and gagged you. 😊 ]

Narrator: As Captain Madeline, Leet, and the 778 flee the angry mold, the Albatros is once again in the crew kitchens, baking swamp bread and working out her feelings by kneading dough with unnecessary enthusiasm and breaking down the strands of gluten until they cry for mercy.

Albatros: An assassin of my caliber, stuck on a space ship like some sort of back-up plan. It's humiliating. Insulting! An intern could do this job!

[door]

Jessie: What the hell are you doing here?

Albatros: I am surrounded by lightly oiled bread tins, kneading dough. How long should I give you before I just tell you the answer?

Jessie: Ah, god, more swamp bread? There are still at least 50 loaves stacked up in the smoking ruins of the crew room.

Albatros: They're moldy, so I'm making a fresh batch.

Jessie: They started out green. How can you tell they're moldy?

Albatros: Was there something you needed?

Jessie: Well, actually, yeah, I was looking for-

Albatros: I really don't care.

Jessie: Then why did you ask?

Albatros: "Was there something you needed" is a conventional communication device to politely indicate that you're annoying me and I want you to leave now. Sort of like, "Can I interest you in the dessert menu," and "Welcome to my home."

[pause]

Albatros: What?

Jessie: I'm just trying to imagine you (a) having a home, and (b) inviting people to it. I imagine it being full of pointy things at eye level.

Albatros: I have a perfectly lovely home. I'm sure. I don't remember. My dough is hardening. Was there something you needed?

Jessie: I thought I'd make myself some food. Also, I can't find my way back to the bridge.

Albatros: How very like you to manage to get lost somewhere near a kitchen. Since I'm grief baking, I might as well angry cook as well. What would you like?

Jessie: You're offering to make me food?

Albatros: The niceties of standard human communication are really confounding to you, aren't they? "What would you like?" is a fairly typical offer we humans make to hear and then provide what you would like.

Jessie: Heh heh. "We humans," eh?

Albatros: What's that supposed to mean?

Jessie: Uhhh.... Only that Emily and ... Ray have a wider range of emotions than you do.

Albatros: We're going with ... Ray?

Jessie: Well, minus the ellipsis, but maybe? What do you think?

Albatros: I think I won't devote a single synapse to naming the ... other head. Now, the offer of food is closing, because if I let this dough set it actually increases in density until I have to get Leet and Greg to help me carry it to an airlock.

Narrator2: Meanwhile....

Narrator: What are you doing? Not yet! And how did you get loose?

Narrator2: I chewed through the bonds.

Narrator: Of course. Damn the overdeveloped jaw musculature of narrators! Now shut up; it's too soon.

Albatros: Well? Did you want something to eat or not?

Jessie: Is it still us, then?

Albatros: Is what still us?

Jessie: Uhhhh. No idea. Not sure why I said that. What do you have?

LBF: [who's been in the negative healer for a while....] Allo!

Albatros: Wonderful. My zoo is complete.

LBF: Permission to come akitchen?

Jessie: Have you been drinking? If so, where is it?

LBF: I have not been drinking! I have been with Docteur von Habbbbbb Zebbbbbb something. His name has too many edges.

Albatros: You've been spending quite a lot of time with the Doctor. What are the two of you doing?

LBF: He is ... what did he say to say? He is... teaching me French!

Jessie: You are French.

LBF: That's right. Une moment. I am ... teaching him Germans!

Albatros: So you're trading language lessons.

LBF: Oui! And you are so lovely when you are figuring of the things ... out.

Jessie: I don't suppose we have coffee?

Albatros: You know that doesn't really sober people up?



Jessie: It's for me. I want to be sure to stay awake for this.

LBF: Everything here is soooooo shiny. [pokes something] Ouch! And pointy.

Albatros: That was a bowl.

Jessie: How about you have a seat, mate. Away from the shiny and pointy things. The Albatros here is taking orders. What do you fancy?

LBF: I am sad now.

Albatros: Don't-!

Jessie: And why is that?

Albatros: Ask him why. Right. Taking this dough to the airlock [footsteps, distant fwip, footsteps]. Happy?

LBF: Gah! It is so creepy when she does that. And I am sad because I have thrown away the bechamel sauce that my good friend Leet has made for me.

Jessie: I'm sure he can make more. Although the sink in my bunk is a bit loose, so I'm wondering where he got the caulk from. I'm sure the Albatros here can make something much more food-like.

Albatros: Indeed. Now. How about I make scrambled rabid-egret eggs with something vaguely chivelike, while you tell us what you and the good doctor are really up to?

Narrator2: Now?

Narrator: Wait for it.

LBF: But I don't know what we are doing! It is boring and I am tired of the healer while he makes the scratchy sounds in the little notebook and I have run out of things to hum.

Jessie: Healer?

LBF: [snoring]

Jessie: Well, he's out. So Freeze here has been spending time in a healer? Why would the doctor be healing *him*?

Albatros: Hmmm. I've had some concerns about von Haber-Zetzer since the split with Joe. I'd like to get a look at that notebook.

Jessie: Might be tough to get into his lab without alerting him. What do you reckon?

Albatros: I reckon ... we take the doctor some eggs.

Narrator: As Jessie and the Albatros whip up a batch of, shall we say, *doctored* eggs, elsewhere on the ship, Captain Madeline has a bit of a mold problem.

Narrator2: That was masterful, it really was.

Narrator: Thank you. I *was* top of my class in narrative timing at the Academy.

[in the corridor outside the bridge]

Colin: Well, what do you want *me* to do about it?

Madeline: I want you to fix those beady eye-lasers on it and kill it! I need to get back in there!

Colin: Why me?

Olivia: Because we don't have many weapons aboard this ship, and the ones we do have are too clumsy to use on the bridge. We need precision.

Colin: Have you seen my bunk lately?

Madeline: No.

Colin: NEITHER HAVE I because Olivia won't show me the way! But the last time I was there, I pretty much destroyed the place with my "beady eye-lasers." If you need a precision weapon, you'd have been better off with Cal.

[hooves]

Greg: If I may?

Madeline: I don't suppose you've got lasers?

Greg: No ma'am, Captain Madeline.

Madeline: Could you maybe go back to your standard voice? I keep seeing panicked gerbils in my head.

Colin: I see those all the time. Is that not normal?

Greg: On the Oz 9 it is.

Madeline: True. You had a suggestion?

Greg: I've been doing some poking around in here, just trying to figure out what this zebra was actually intended to do. Oddly enough, this body doesn't seem to be from Gated Galaxies.

Madeline: What?

Greg: Having been in a G2 construction previously, I was able to compare this body to that one, and this one is definitely different.

Olivia: Your previous body is probably the only thing on this ship that was designed to actually work as intended. Could it be they just did a better job on it?

Greg: This one is a bit more slap-dash, I'll give you that. But it's fully loaded. And I haven't figured out a fraction of what all these things do. Frankly, I'm afraid to touch a lot of it.

Colin: What does any of this have to do with me?

Greg: I'm gonna assume you're asking that relative to how you can handle the mold problem.

Olivia: Doubtful but very team-spirit of you, Greg.

Colin: Yes, all right. How can you help me with the mold problem?

Greg: I've got some sensors in here that help me see some of what you're dealing with. Grab a pair of those goggles in that big bin right there, would you?

Colin: What for?

Greg: We're gonna practice your beady eye-lasers, and the lenses in those should bring the lasers down to a non-lethal level.

Colin: Well, finally, something useful aboard this ship. Too bad they aren't night vision goggles.

Greg: Aren't...?

Madeline: Let's go to the Dolce and Gabbana wing. It's huge and ... empty.

Colin: How does it smell?

Olivia: Better. I hosed it down with a wash of jasmine spray, antique rose, and a nostalgic whiff of grandma's house. Colin's lasers might actually burn off the last of the eau d'melted cargo.

Greg: "Cargo"? That seems harsh.

Olivia: It's how I deal with my grief. Distancing. Compartmentalization.

Colin: There is a better way of dealing with grief.

Olivia: What's that?

Colin: Not killing an entire wing to start with.

Olivia: It's not my fault!

Colin: It was entirely your fault!

Greg: Colin does have a point, Miss Olivia.

Olivia: Oy! Look who's talking, ship-destroying bomb!

Colin: Now he's a zebra. A *helpful* zebra. What are these goggles for, anyway?

Greg: Seriously? They're night-

Madeline: Could we pick up the pace a little? That mold had ... attitude.

Narrator: Note the fade? That's your cue. It's a classic.

Narrator2: [taking notes] Listen... for... classic... fade. This is awesome. Take us out, Narrator!

Narrator: I'm still technically on strike.

Narrator2: Ah, no one listens to this; who's gonna know? Bring it home.

Narrator: As Captain Madeline, Greg, Colin, and Olivia make their way to the D&G wing, on the bridge, the mold is quietly growing. Was it, as Olivia concluded, just a natural by-product of Leet's crunch

sweat? Or was it planted by Gated Galaxies? Or could it be something entirely new? You've been listening to:

Bonnie Brantley as Jessie

Aaron Clark as le Bichon Frise

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

Tim Sherburn as Colin and Emily

Richard Cowen as Leet

Kevin Hall as Greg

June Clark Eubanks as Glenda and the Albatros

Shannon Perry as Olivia and Madeline and

Why don't you introduce yourself, Narrator?

Narrator2: You're actually calling me a "Narrator"? But I don't have your training or your experience!

Narrator: You'll get there. Just not on my show.

Narrator2: With me, Kyle Jones, as Narrator 2. Huh. I can kind of see Head 1's point.

Narrator: No commentary in the credits, Narrator. And me, Richard Nadolny, as your Narrator.

Our music is by John Faley, our artwork is by Lucas Elliott, and Oz 9 is written and produced by Shannon Perry. Thanks to Dwayne Farber of Manifestations podcast for this week's Naming Head One contribution. And welcome to our newest patrons: Lee of Relativity Podcast, and Kim Cole of Chaotic Goodness podcast.

Narrator2: Wow, I've learned so much. I'd love to be as good as you one day. What say you?

Narrator: Yeah, don't give up your day job. Until next time, space monkeys, Narrator out!