

Oz 9 Episode 65

Are You Sure You Should Be In Charge?

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EPISODE 65 - OUTDOORS ON THE TARMAC OF AREA 54

NARRATOR

1 Good evening. Welcome to this edition
of Hard Hitting News, where we give
you the headlines others rip from.

NARRATOR 2

2 [urgent whisper] What are you doing
here?

NARRATOR

3 Get out of my shot! Could someone
retrieve their intern? Is it Take Your
Village Idiot to Work Day again?

NARRATOR 2

4 How did you get away from the
kidnappers?

NARRATOR

5 Kidnap- What are you talking about?
Never mind, who cares. Get out!

NARRATOR 2

6 Wait - has that not happened to you
yet? Is this another flashback? Crap.
Sorry. Uhhhh, forget all that.

NARRATOR

7 I plan to.

Angry voice from offstage.

NARRATOR

8 Sorry! I'm ready now. Sorry. [listens]
No idea. Probably some wanna-be trying
to get his big break. Ready for take
2? [listens] This is... live? CRAP.
[resumes narrative journalist voice]
In just a few months, these spaceships
you see behind me will be lifting off,
headed for destinations unknown. But
are they ready? Today, we look into
Gated Galaxies' biggest, most
audacious project yet. This is Owning
the Universe, and I'm your host. Stay
tuned. How was that? Good? Hmmm? We're
still live? Oh. Sorry. Crap!

INTERVIEWER 1

9 Mr Southers, Interviewer 1, Lead
Anchor, Fraught News. Despite the
name, Gated Galaxies has never really
been in the space business, so where
did these ships come from?

SOUTHERS

10 Well, I'll tell ya. I was ... let's
just say I was dropping off a package
in the Arizona desert, and happened to
find 400 beautiful Oz 8000 long-haul
ships just sitting out there, going to
rack and ruin. The original builder
had overcommitted, gone bankrupt, so I
stepped in and saved them from
destruction.

INTERVIEWER 1

11 "Long-haul"?

SOUTHERS

12 Try not to interrupt; it ruins the
flow. The builder was going to sell
'em off for parts. It was a crying
shame to see them sentenced to the
scrap-heap when they'd never even got
off the ground. So I bought the lot.

INTERVIEWER 1

13 Now, you call them "long-haul," but
according to my notes-

SOUTHERS

14 Uh huh, beautiful, ain't they? So...
aerodynamic.

INTERVIEWER 1

15 Those? They look like hedgehogs.

SOUTHERS

16 You wouldn't be bad-mouthing my ships
when I agreed to sit for this here jaw
session, would you?

INTERVIEWER 1

17 Not at all. I just don't think
"aerodynamic" is the first word that
would leap to most people's minds.

SOUTHERS

18 I don't know what you're looking at.
These elegant ships are nothing short
of technological marvels, sweet as a
bear that tipped over the honey pot.

INTERVIEWER 1

19 I guess. Bears don't fly, of course.

SOUTHERS

20 I hear mouthy journalists do, though.
Briefly. Don't land too good, though.

INTERVIEWER 1

21 AHM. So. What exactly makes them
"marvels"?

SOUTHERS

22 Don't think I didn't hear them air
quotes. Just look at 'em! My ships are
huge! And shiny!

INTERVIEWER 1

23 They are both of those, for sure. Mr
Southers, there's been quite a lot of
concern about the safety of your
ships. Word is, the quality control
officer walked off the job and hasn't
been seen since. I believe Congress is
even assembling a special sub-
committee to look into the retrofit
process. Any idea what they'll find?

SOUTHERS

24 It's been a real pleasure sitting down
with you, but I'm afraid I'm gonna
have to do like my ships will be doing
soon, and successfully launch myself
right outta this chair. If you'll
excuse me....

INTERVIEWER 1

25 But Mr Southers! Mr Southers! Can he
just walk off like that?

NARRATOR

26 The ships themselves aren't the only
cause for concern. The captains and
their crews also seem to have emerged
from nowhere...

INTERVIEWER 2

27 Good morning, Ma'am. Interviewer two
from Military News. I understand you
were recently promoted to captaining
your own Oz ship, is that correct?

MADELINE

28 Yeah, woot! Dang, you people are fast.
I just got the letter in the mail this
morning. I'm still coming down off a
high!

INTERVIEWER 2

29 All the excitement, huh?

MADELINE

30 [laughs] Sure, that too.

INTERVIEWER 2

31 Oh. OK.... Our public is fascinated by
this story. 20 million of earth's
richest citizens are set to head off
into the skies to find new planets.
Aren't you afraid of a brain drain
here at home?

MADELINE

32 Have you met my crew?

INTERVIEWER 2

33 I'm sorry?

MADELINE

34 Bad joke. Look, I don't know much
about business and commerce and all. I
kind of have my eyes on the journey
ahead. Keeping the carg- eh...
passengers safe, making sure the crew
is trained and ready, overseeing the
updating of the Oz 8000s, that kind of
stuff.

INTERVIEWER 2

35 I was under the impression that the
crews were intentionally being kept
away from the ships, to ... uh...
[shuffles notes] "not spoil the
surprise."

MADELINE

36 [laughs] Well, the crew room

appliances aren't going to choose themselves! They have these ones that talk to you, like, "your toast is ready." Super cool! And there are, what, 22 crew rooms to outfit? Soooooooooo, I'm keeping busy.

INTERVIEWER 2

37 I see. Once the ship launches, you're pretty much on autopilot, under the watchful eye of your Artificial Intelligence. What is there for you to do? Won't you be asleep in your pod most of the way?

MADELINE

38 That's sort of a myth, really; I mean, I'm the captain. Can't just sleep through the trip, if you get me.

INTERVIEWER 2

39 So what will you do?

MADELINE

40 Captain stuff.

INTERVIEWER 2

41 Such as?

MADELINE

42 That's why they send us to flight school, honey; to learn captain stuff.

INTERVIEWER 2

43 Speaking of flight school, I wanted to take a look at your record-

MADELINE

44 Oh, uhhhhhh... I can explain that whole biodome thing. It was supposed to be a joke-

INTERVIEWER 2

45 Your scores are off the charts. Top of your class in navigation, communications, emergency measures...

MADELINE

46 Really? I mean, yeah, I figured I was, you know, in the top 10....

INTERVIEWER 2
47 You keep rubbing your ankle. Is everything OK?

MADELINE
48 Oh, sure. I recently had uh... some jewelry removed.

INTERVIEWER 2
49 With scores like these, you could apply to virtually any space program. Why Gated Galaxies? Why the Oz Project?

MADELINE
50 They asked.

INTERVIEWER 2
51 I see. You come from a family of, shall we say, "modest means," correct?

MADELINE
52 I guess that depends on what "modest means" ... means. Is that right? Means means?

INTERVIEWER 2
53 Flight school is very expensive.

MADELINE
54 I.... guess? I don't know. I went on a scholarship.

INTERVIEWER 2
55 No offense, but I've looked at your high school grades - you didn't get into flight school on a "scholarship." According to the school, you had a very wealthy, secret benefactor.

MADELINE
56 Well, you saw my astronaut scores; someone obviously saw my potential.

INTERVIEWER 2
57 Any idea who might have paid?

MADELINE
58 Uhhh, pretty sure that's "whom might have paid," there, microphone guy.

INTERVIEWER 2

59 It's not.

MADELINE

60 I've been sort of fated for space from birth. Every year on my birthday, I'd get a space ship toy or a helmet or a jug of orange Tang from some mystery person. Never figured out who sent it.

INTERVIEWER 2

61 Captain Madeline, tell me your hopes and fears. The day the AI awakens you and you've found your new home; the day you realize you're not coming back. What happens on that day? How do you feel?

MADELINE

62 Well, that's the question, isn't it? People keep asking me what it's like to know I'm going away forever, to know I'll wake up after everyone I ever knew is long dead-

INTERVIEWER 2

63 "Everyone"? Surely 25 years from now, not everyone you know will be dead-

MADELINE

64 Truth is, there's not much here for me now, much less a half century from now.

INTERVIEWER 2

65 "Half"?

MADELINE

66 Astronauting is a lonely business. It's just me and the stars out there, floating endlessly in the inky black void.

INTERVIEWER 2

67 Hang on, "endlessly"-?

MADELINE

68 If I'm lucky, we'll never land.

INTERVIEWER 2

69 Wow. Are you sure you should be in

charge?

MADELINE

70 Huh? Oh, don't worry. I've got this.
You watch. The 9 will be the one that
makes it.

INTERVIEWER 2

71 Isn't the goal that they ALL make it?
I have to say, this is the most
alarming interview I've ever had.

MADELINE

72 Space is scary. It's not for everyone.
You stay here, nice and safe with your
feet on the ground, and let us space
cadets embrace the Big Empty.

INTERVIEWER 2

73 Right. [deep breath] One last
question: what about your family? What
are they saying to you as you head off
into the unknown?

MADELINE

74 Mostly, "see you for Sunday lunch."
We're not taking off for ages.

INTERVIEWER 2

75 How heartfelt. [spinning it] For
now, for these brave explorers, it's
still "see you for Sunday lunch." But
what happens when that seat at the
table is empty ever after? When Sunday
lunch is eaten out of a foil bag with
a spork? When that next Sunday lunch
with fresh peas and potatoes is
potentially decades away, if it comes
at all?

MADELINE

76 Dang, you're a downer. Where's this
music coming from?

INTERVIEWER 2

77 Stay tuned as we talk with some very
VERY brave passengers and the families
of our intrepid crews. [calling
offstage] Seriously, can I get someone
with a brain next time?

MADELINE

78 OY!

NARRATOR

79 When we spoke with passengers who have
already claimed their pods aboard the
Oz ships, they seemed as in-the-dark
about some crucial questions as we
are.

INTERVIEWER 3 (NARRATOR 2)

80 Hang on, I don't remember this! How
can this be a flashback if it never
happened?

COLIN

81 I beg your pardon?

INTERVIEWER 3

82 What the hell is going on here?

COLIN

83 I believe you're interviewing me about
my decision to fly off into space,
never to return.

INTERVIEWER 3

84 I already know that: your wife
parachuted to her death, you're grief-
stricken, a shadow of doubt about what
really happened to her hangs over you,
and you have nothing here to stay for.

COLIN

85 How do you know all that?!

INTERVIEWER 3

86 Oh, man, the time streams are gonna be
a mess after this. Just make sure you
get aboard the 9 and not the 13! Gotta
go!

COLIN

87 Hey..... Where are you going? You
haven't interviewed me yet!

INTERVIEWER 2

88 MINE!! MINE!! I got this!! Sorry about
that, Mr... uh... MacRory. Not sure
what's going on with that guy. So, did
you pack her chute? Or should I say,

her sandwiches?

COLIN
89 Seriously?! I thought we were here to
talk about me flying on an Oz ship.

INTERVIEWER 2
90 You're right. My apologies.

COLIN
91 Thank you.

INTERVIEWER 2
92 So, flying on an Oz ship - is this
just an attempt to escape justice
after killing your wife?

COLIN
93 WHAT???

INTERVIEWER 2
94 Unwilling to answer our questions,
Horace MacRory fled for the exit and
the security of his chauffeured
limosine.

NARRATOR
95 Can it, 2; I do the transitions.
Speaking of security, we recently
tried to get access to the hangars
where the massive Oz 8000s are being
fitted for their new mission, but a
platoon of heavily armed guards
wouldn't allow us entry. We couldn't
even get close enough to take
pictures. What is G2 hiding?

INTERVIEWER 4
96 My understanding is, you've been
training for a mission like this,
basically your entire life.

JESSIE
97 Since I was just a wee lassie, aye.

INTERVIEWER 4
98 And yet, despite quite high scores
from flight training, you're a first
mate, not a captain. Why is that?

JESSIE
99 "Why is that" indeed. [through gritted
teeth] It's an honor just to be
selected-

INTERVIEWER 4
100 Could it have anything to do with the
cloud of suspicion that seems to hang
around your sister?

JESSIE
101 I like to think I'm being judged on my
own merits. My sister and I have
little in common and even less to do
with each other these days.

INTERVIEWER 4
102 After disappearing for several weeks,
your sister Glenda has been spotted
back in the country.

JESSIE
103 Has she now?

INTERVIEWER 4
104 Any idea what she's doing here?

JESSIE
105 Why would I know? Dinnae just say we
have nought to do with one another?

INTERVIEWER 4
106 Right. Sorry. [pause] But do you think
she's actually a highly paid assassin?

JESSIE
107 Are we here to talk about me? Or my
sister?

INTERVIEWER 4
108 You! You, of course. So, what was it
like, growing up with her for a
sister?

JESSIE
109 Is Interviewer 5 any better than you?

INTERVIEWER 4
110 The public have a right to know if a
dangerous killer walks among us!

JESSIE
 111 Why don't you ask her yourself? She's
 right over there.

INTERVIEWER 4
 112 What??!

Sound of lavalier mic being hastily torn off, I4 legs it for
 the exit.

JESSIE
 113 The best gift my sister ever gave me -
 the ability to clear a room. I'll just
 see meself out, then, shall I?

Removes lavalier and walks out.

NARRATOR
 114 What is G2 truly up to? Are they, as
 CEO Southers claims, pushing humanity
 to the next level, even potentially
 preserving human life in the universe?
 Or is there something more nefarious
 going on?

INTERVIEWER 5
 115 My turn! Finally! [mic check]
 Interviewer 5, check check, this is
 Interviewer 5. Check check check, 1,
 2, 3. [vocal warmups] Right. Well,
 welcome to "Owning the Universe"! And
 you are...?

Silence

INTERVIEWER 5
 116 Sorry, what are you doing? [...] Is
 that a high five? Do you want to high
 five me? No.... you're in a box? Oh
 for crying out loud, you want me to
 interview a goddamn MIME???

Offstage mumbling

INTERVIEWER 5
 117 You have GOT to be kidding. [...] Right. Fine. Earning my stripes. I'm
 earning my stripes. [deep breath] So
 tell me, whoever you are, why did you
 book passage aboard an Oz ship? [...] You're pulling a rope. Still pulling.

Oh, a hilariously disgusting substance is on the rope, very amusing... still pulling. That's a really long rope. Pulling. Oh, and now we're imitating the camera man. I quit. [grumbling as they exit] Nope, I'm outta here. You wait HOURS in the little interviewers' room for your shot, and when it finally comes, it's a frickin' MIME! You have GOT to be kidding me!

NARRATOR

118 The more questions we ask, the more we have. These ships aren't meant for long journeys; will the updating and retrofitting be enough? The crews and their captains seem entirely unfit for the jobs ahead of them. Well, after eight days in the rain, waiting to talk with basically anyone who would talk to us, it's time to finally get some answers.

Leet approaches, whistling.

NARRATOR

119 Could you tell us your name, please?

LEET

120 Oh, hi! I'm Leet!

NARRATOR

121 What are you doing here, Leet?

LEET

122 Oh, we're on work release to help load up these big ships.

NARRATOR

123 Well, Leet, my crew and I have been standing outside these hangars for the last eight days and the only things we've seen hauled in were Fit Tech Pods and bags of Miracle-Gro, which the workers said were intended for terraforming.

LEET

124 Sounds about right. And some fugu.

125 NARRATOR
What do you think about this whole
operation? Would you go up?

126 LEET
Sure! I like space and stars and that.
I don't get to see much of it from my
cell- Ooops. Hotel. Hoteeeeeelll room.
That's what I'm supposed to say.

127 NARRATOR
I see. Do you think these ships are
truly ready for a 25-year journey into
space?

128 LEET
Aw, yeah. They have a bunch of really
thick manuals and the bridges have
these cool screens that light up and
beep and stuff. Pretty much everything
is covered in bubble wrap, so you know
it's super expensive.

129 NARRATOR
And you're here helping outfit the
ships, is that right?

130 LEET
Sort of? I'm mostly hauling in
sandwich machines like this one.

131 NARRATOR
That's a sandwich machine? Oh, and
it's full.

132 LEET
Yeah. We're sort of scattering them
around the ship. Weird, right? Like,
who's gonna eat them if everyone's
asleep? I mean, I do get hungry in the
middle of the night sometimes, so
maybe it's not *that* crazy. RonH
[ronhuh] Forever, right? Only with a
number 4 instead of f-o-r-e?

133 NARRATOR
Excuse me?

134 LEET
That's your password. Capital R-o-n-
capital H number 4, e-v-a-r. E-r? I

can never remember how to spell it.

NARRATOR

135 NO, THAT IS NOT MY PASSWORD.

LEET

136 Oh, right! [fake] OF COURSE IT'S NOT.
[aside] It is, though, right? Who is
"Ron-huh"?

NARRATOR

137 Leet, what's really going on in there?
I mean, come on! We should be hearing
drilling and hammering and
construction noises, but instead it
sounds like a bachelor party.

LEET

138 So, yeah, there's a lot of partying
going on, but there's also a lot of
people doing really hard work. Like
the bottom eleven decks are full of
Miracle-Gro.

NARRATOR

139 Bags and bags of it, huh?

LEET

140 Not exactly. I dunno if the bags
leaked or something, but it's all over
the floor and pretty deep. Maybe
they're going to plant a garden down
there. I think they're using old
omelettes for compost or something
because it stinks like rotten eggs.

NARRATOR

141 Eleven floors of dirt? That seems odd.

LEET

142 It's totally odd. Like, who's going to
take care of the cucumbers for 25
years if everyone's asleep? They're
gonna wake up to a mess. I feel bad
for the janitor.

NARRATOR

143 Janitor?

LEET

144 Yeah, I saw him curled up in his pod

in one of the crew rooms, holding on to his mop. Some people really like their work.

NARRATOR

145 They podded someone already? This far out from launch?

LEET

146 I guess. Or it might have been one of the cleaners taking a nap. People do that, 'cause the pods are pretty comfy. They usually don't shut the lid, though.

INTERVIEWER 4

147 Hey, food order's here.

NARRATOR

148 FINALLY. I'm the Italian salad with the vinaigrette dressing.

LEET

149 Oh, man, don't let any of the guys in the orange jackets see you with that. They'll take it.

NARRATOR

150 My salad?

LEET

151 Yeah. No one's allowed to eat lettuce or have olive oil near the ships.

NARRATOR

152 Oh, does someone have allergies?

LEET

153 I do.

NARRATOR

154 To olive oil? Or lettuce?

LEET

155 No. Penicillin. By the way, you've got a real nice voice. You should do those documentary things.

NARRATOR

156 [snark suddenly starting to shine through] What a good idea. Thank you.

LEET
157 Sure!

NARRATOR
158 As G2 continues to prepare its 400 Oz
8000 ships for their mission, we're
... absolutely no closer to answers
than we were 8 days ago, so that's
time well spent.

LEET
159 You know about the Miracle Gro now.

NARRATOR
160 Yes, thank you.

LEET
161 And the omelettes.

NARRATOR
162 Hey, Leet, do you mind? I'm summing.

LEET
163 Like, a mountain?

NARRATOR
164 No, summing. It's- never mind. Just
shush, OK?

LEET
165 You know what else is weird? Every
time I get on that ship over there...
the 9, that one. Every time, the heat
just shoots up. It's weird. I end up
having to take my shirt off, it's so
hot.

NARRATOR
166 Yes, that's very interesting, thank
you, Leet.

LEET
167 Welp, I gotta go. Glad I could help.

NARRATOR
168 [to himself] Did you, though?

LEET
169 Oh, and don't forget the olive oil. No
olive oil. These guys get real
hostile.

NARRATOR

170 [full-on snark] Got it. Thank you.
 Well, I encouraged the folks at Hard
 Hitting News to take a chance on this
 story, and on me, and I think in a few
 more days, they'll discover we were
 both worth the enormous expense and
 multiple threats of a lawsuit by G2.
 We've clearly blown the roof off the
 whole "olive oil" controversy. This is
 Hard Hitting News with our first and
 probably final episode of "Owning the
 Universe." Stay safe out there, and
 ... good night.

NARRATOR 2

171 Wow. I don't think he's even a
 Narrator yet at this point in his
 timeline. Which leaves me to do the
 outro. Right. OK. You've been
 listening to:
 Lee Shackleford as Interviewer 1
 Sarah Golding as Interviewer 2
 Kyle Jones as Interviewer 3
 Kevin Hall as Interviewer 4
 June Clark Eubanks as Interviewer 5
 Tim Sherburn as Colin
 Richard Cowen as Leet
 Bonnie Brantley as Jessie
 Shannon Perry as Madeline
 Eric Perry as Mr Southers
 Richard Nadolny as your Narrator...
 ish, and
 me, Kyle Jones, as Narrator 2.
 Our music is by John Faley; our
 artwork is by Lucas Elliott. Visit us
 at Oz dash 9 dot com for more
 information about the show and links
 to our merchandise and Patreon.
 Thanks for joining us, Space Monkeys,
 and we'll be back next time!