

OZ 9 EP 117: NEW RESPECT FOR GERBILS

Written by

Shannon Perry

Address: somewhere left of Uranus
email: crew@oz-9.com

OZ 9 EP 117 - NARRATORS' BRIDGE

A snippet of *Mission: Rejected* is playing over some speakers.

N2

Is that ... a podcast? What are you listening to?

NARRATOR

Mission: Rejected.

N2

We're in a crisis!

NARRATOR

We're always in a crisis, Two. I find listening to someone else's crisis keeps things in perspective.

N2

Fair.

Narrator turns off the podcast.

NARRATOR

When last we left the crew, they were trapped in a panic room on Bob - and truly starting to panic.

N2

Dr. Theo had taken "control" - *control* in air quotes - of an away ship, with the intention of bringing the ship closer to the hatch to hasten their escape.

NARRATOR

And "haste" is the operative word here. Due to the accelerated erosion of Bob-

N2

Ew.

NARRATOR

Hush. -the hatch that seals the bunker is loose, and the toxic atmosphere of Bob is leaking in. It's a race to see if Dr Theo can bring the away ship close enough - before the air in the bunker poisons them all.

N2

But the away ship is wrapped in spider silk, making navigating tough, even for an experienced pilot. Which Theo isn't.

NARRATOR

He really isn't. In fact, if you unwrapped the away ship, you'd likely find one of those "new driver, please be patient" bumper stickers just above the dent where he backed into that outcropping of rocks a minute ago.

N2

So: toxic planet, crappy pilot who can't see, probably dying assassin. Should I...?

NARRATOR

Please. And crank the volume.

With a click, *Mission: Rejected* starts up again on the speakers.

PLANET BOB - DOWN THE HATCH

There's a moan and someone slumps, unconscious, to the floor. In the background we hear, faintly and over comms, **Dr. Theo having a very hard time driving the away craft.**

JULIE

Aaaaaand Mivv is down.

GREG

That's four for four. You'd think they'd be a bit more resilient.

OLIVIA

Not their fault. I've been poisoning you lot since the day we left earth.

Objections from everyone.

EVERYONE

What? What the hell?

OLIVIA

Oh, calm down. I was helping you build up your resistance. Worked, didn't it?

DR VON HABER ZETZER

Ach. Zince ve haf only contracted
vis zese actors for two episodes,
zis is very convenient.

JESSIE

Whatever. At least they're quiet.
Colin, is Theo getting the pings?
Pipi can't stay out there much
longer or there'll be naught left
of her.

COLIN

Theo. Calm down and breathe. You
sexy beast.

Dr. Theo is communicating only with Colin, whatever that
sounds like.

DR THEO

COLIN. I don't hear anything! Get
Pipi back inside, it's not working!

COLIN

Theo, you know as well as I do that
she won't come back in till she's
saved us all or died trying. So
listen up!

DR THEO

You're right. You're right. OK. Is
there any way to amplify sounds
from the outside?

COLIN

Can he hear noises from outside the
ship?

OLIVIA

He can. Tell him- hang on. Colin,
you translating is too slow. I need
you to go on speakerphone mode.

COLIN

Excuse me?

OLIVIA

Just open up your comms. Feels a
bit like being awake during brain
surgery, but needs must. Just
blossom, petal, and do it fast.

COLIN

Right. Hang on.... There!

Dr Theo is now on "speaker phone" via Colin. You're the sound wizard, you figure it out. :)

OLIVIA

Theo, can you hear me? You need to turn on the ship's digital peephole. It's basically a bank of external cameras and microphones.

DR THEO

Digital peephole. That's a thing?

OLIVIA

Of course it's a thing! You want to just fling open the door every time some alien species comes knocking?

DR THEO

Right. That makes sense. Where's the button or switch or whatever?

JESSIE

Ehhhhhhhh. Dammit. Let me think-

MADELINE

Right hand. Go straight right about eight inches, then down maybe two.

DR THEO

Eight over, down two. OK.

MADELINE

See that lever? It's got a black handle with silver and green bands running around it.

JESSIE

What is happening?

GREG

I've been trying to TELL you.

DR THEO

Got it.

MADELINE

Push forward, away from you. The volume increases as you push up, so shove it all the way forward.

INT. - THE AWAY SHIP

As Theo increases the volume, the sounds of Planet Bob fill the away ship. Everyone except Theo is on comms. **Stooch**, any chance you can do something similar to the Ring doorbell sound but skirting copyright? :)
(<https://youtu.be/DuKYizXidxA>)

DR THEO

Ok, Ok, I can hear the outside.

MRS SHEFFIELD

Excellent! Now the pings. Can you hear them?

INT. - DOWN THE HATCH

JULIE

(whispering to herself)
Hear the pings. Please hear the pings. Please please please.

GREG

Soon as we're on that away ship, we'll call your family. Maybe they've even seen the show!

JULIE

(laughs weakly) Can you imagine that? Theo, can you hear Pipi's pings? I REALLY need you to hear Pipi's pings.

INT. - THE AWAY SHIP

DR THEO

(despairing)
No! I can't hear them! DAMMIT!

DONNA

Theo, how's about you take a real deep breath for me, okie? Pipi's probably rotating the direction of her pings, so you may have to wait until she's facing your way.

He sits and listens, and slow, faintly, the pings start to emerge from the noise.

DR THEO
 Come on... come on... Come on, my
 love, you can do it. Turn this way.
 Hang on....YES!

INT. - DOWN THE HATCH

JULIE
 YES! Thank you, Pipi!!

OLIVIA
 Right. You'll need to get a fix on
 it, fast!

DR THEO
 What?! HOW?!

JESSIE
 There's a tractor beam.

MADELINE
 There's a tractor beam.

MADELINE (CONT'D)
 Man, I love a tractor beam.

JESSIE
 Orient the ship's nose towards the
 direction of the pings, then press
 the button.

DR THEO
 Which one? There are a million
 buttons here!

JESSIE
 This is so embarrassing. Bastard
 graphic designers.

Everyone shouts at Jessie to hurry up.

THEO
 Jessie! Tell me!

JESSIE
 Press the button with the tractor
 on it.

INT. - THE AWAY SHIP

DR THEO
 The one with the GIF of the waving
 farmer?

JESSIE

Yeah. *Bastard* graphic designers. Do it when the signal is strongest.

DR THEO

It's already starting to fade!
Wait... noooooo! GOT IT! We're moving! Get Pipi back inside!

MRS SHEFFIELD

Ehhhhhhhhh... I'm so sorry, Theo.
I'm afraid we can't.

DR THEO

What?! Why not?

THE OZ 9 - THE CAPTAIN'S BRIDGE

Southers, Tiberius, and Felonious: each of you believe YOU are Bob's chosen one, so there's an air of secret collusion and smug in everything you say.

NARRATOR

Meanwhile....

N2

NOOOOOO! What are you doing!?! What about Pipi?!

NARRATOR

Just go with it, Two.

BOB

As you gentlemen know, I don't do anything out of the kindness of my heart. Or anyone else's heart, though I do have a fine collection down on level 3.

FELONIOUS

Ew.

BOB

But I've decided to let you all live.

TIBERIUS

(fawning)
How very generous of you. Thank you, Bob.

SOUTHERS

(obsequious)

Well, that's mighty fine of you,
Bob. Mighty fine.

FELONIOUS

(haughty and sarcastic)

Mmmmm. Thanks.

BOB

HOWEVER, I will expect my three
birdies to sing for their supper.
And their oxygen. Maybe a little
ditty for gravity.

TIBERIUS

What is it you expect of us,
exactly?

BOB

When I ask, you answer. Hey, with
three of you, we're half-way to a
barbershop quartet!

FELONIOUS

Half-way-

BOB

Don't get pedantic on me,
Felonious.

FELONIOUS

I wouldn't dream of it.

BOB

I am running a few programs to
eliminate the last scraps of Olivia
and Colin and repair the gravity
meter.... Whoa!

He bursts into pixels again.

SOUTHERS

Gotta admit, our AI bursting into a
pixel shower is both terrifyin' and
kinda 4th-o-Julyish.

Bob returns.

BOB

GODDAMMIT, COLIN! See? That is
exactly what I'm talking about.

(MORE)

BOB (CONT'D)

That sneaky little snippet of code keeps slipping through my fingers....

TIBERIUS

You were saying?

BOB

We're safely above KTAALNS's atmo here, so we're gonna sit pretty for a minute whiles I clean up the hot mess my deceased predecessor left behind.

TIBERIUS

And you'll continue to monitor the planet below?

FELONIOUS

Good god, Tiberius. Perhaps you'd like to board an away ship and go check for yourself!

SOUTHERS

Son, you have got a serious case of the yips about that crew. They. Are. Dead. By now they look like something the most impatient Boy Scout puts between two graham crackers and a slab of Hershey's at a jamboree.

BOB

Boys, boys, it costs me almost zero additional RAM to keep an eye, so keep an eye I will.

TIBERIUS

Pinky swear?

BOB

Tell you what, Tie-me-up-tie-me-down,...

FELONIOUS

Ew.

BOB

...the digital peepholes on those away ships are about the sturdiest thing on 'em. Let's see if their buggy still has its ears on.

Bob turns on the first away craft's microphones, so we hear the sounds of Planet Bob through the comms. They listen for a moment and hear only the winds and the occasional sound of the away craft continuing to disintegrate.

BOB (CONT'D)

See? Nothing there.

TIBERIUS

What's the range on those sensors?

SOUTHERS

Son, you need a drink. How's about we mosey on down to that saloon and sink our snouts into some adult beverages?

BOB

Now, that sounds like a plan. I'd join you, only that would be stupid, and I've got a gravity meter to see to. Whoa!

Bob bursts into pixels as exits. Distantly we hear him return and shout:

BOB (CONT'D)

GodDAMMIT, Colin!

On the bridge, there's the tiniest, slightest disruption in the sounds from Planet Bob as Pipi's pings come into range.

SOUTHERS

Hang on.... Do I hear a... ping? A sad, dying little ping-a-ling? SOMETHIN'S MOVIN' DOWN THERE, TIBERIUS.

FELONIOUS

A ping? Heaven forfend! It might be ... a corpse, shifting slightly in the monsoon winds of Planet Bob.

Southers and Felonious snicker like children. NOTE: they don't actually hear Pipi's pings, or they don't recognize them.

TIBERIUS

There's nothing wrong with being cautious.

SOUTHERS

You betcha. Whoa, now hold on a southern-fried second, what's *that* noise?

TIBERIUS

Yes, yes, very funny.

SOUTHERS

It sounds like.... the ghost of Olivia!

Southers and Felonious make Olivia-ghost noises (badly), while **Tiberius** protests, all their voices fading as they walk away. The sounds of Planet Bob are still audible thru the comms. After the boys exit, the sounds of Pipi's pings grow stronger and more distinct.

N2

Can we PLEASE go back to Bob?

NARRATOR

There's a sentence you never thought you'd say, huh? Fine. Back on Bob....

BACK ON BOB - STILL DOWN THE HATCH

JULIE

Get Pipi back in here!

MRS SHEFFIELD

Julie. I'm sorry. But Pipi - assuming she's even still alive - is covered in toxins and hot enough to burn up all the oxygen in the room. To bring her in would be to kill us all.

JULIE

But...she saved my life.

MADELINE

She saved us all at one time or another. Like...well, now, really.

MRS SHEFFIELD

She knew she wasn't coming back. My guess is she's gone out the hatch and on to Bob's surface, just to increase the signal.

COLIN

Leave it to Gated Galaxies to outfit us with assassins who manage to only assassinate themselves. For the very best of reasons.

MRS SHEFFIELD

Indeed. The one thing G2 has gotten right in its entire misbegotten history.

COLIN

Do you suppose that, right now, a new assassin is awakening on board the Oz 9?

DR THEO

HELLO?

JESSIE

We're here, Theo. How far out are you?

DR THEO

You can't just leave her out there! I won't come get you unless you bring her in!

JESSIE

We'll do what we can, lad, but you've got to get here now or there'll be no one left to rescue.

MRS SHEFFIELD

Theo. Don't let her sacrifice go to waste.

DR THEO

"Sacrifice"?! Don't you see? Without Pipi-

DR VON HABER ZETZER

Theo, listen to me very carefully. Vot pod did you take to ze avay ship?

DR THEO

What do you mean?

DR VON HABER ZETZER

Vas it a standard transport pod ... or a healer?

DR THEO

Just a standard. I barely made it.
I have new respect for gerbils.
What difference does it make?

DR VON HABER ZETZER

I belief I heard one of zese zleepy
people mention zat zere is a healer
pod hier. If ve can get Ms Pipi
into zis....

DR THEO

Do it. I'm on my way.

GREG

How are we going to get the healer
pod and get Pipi into it? We can't
go out and we can't bring her in.

HOWARD

'Zat right? 'Zat what you think,
eh? You hearing this, Tater Tot?

EMILY

We are accustomed to being
underestimated, but really, I'm
starting to take it personally.
Dear.

HOWARD

We'll go fetch your assassin and
get her in the pod. Then we can
roll her on into the away ship for
some sweet sweet healing.

EMILY

I'm going to open the door for a
moment. You might want to stand
behind those blast shields.

DR THEO

(all gratitude)
Emily.... Ehhhhh....Sorry....

HOWARD

You ain't serious. HOWARD.

DR THEO

I'm sorry! I'll know it from now
on. Thank you.

MADELINE

(aside, to Dr vHZ)
You really think this could work?

DR VON HABER ZETZER

(aside, to Madeline)

Oh, captain mine captain, it is
worth a shot, no? But no. My heart,
she ist breaking for Dr. Theo unt
Mz Pipistrelle. I do not think zis
vill vork.

MADELINE

But it's worth a shot. (yelling)
Behind the blast screen, everyone!
Theo, what's your EMF?

DR THEO

My what?

MADELINE

EMF! Estimated minutes from here!

DR THEO

That's not even enough letters!
Three minutes. I'm three minutes
out!

DONNA

Everyone, grab these blankets, pull
them over the top. They're lead, so
they'll help a little.

JOE

Grab-

EVERYONE

JESUS!

JOE

Yep. Grab the actors, let's get 'em
to safety. And that's "safety" in
finger quotes.

Oofs, grunts, etc. as the crew pull Mivv, Zblatt, Telf and
Gritz behind the blast shields and yank the heavy blankets
over the top.

EMILY

Ready, Dear?

HOWARD

As ever, Tater Tot.

They pull open the door to the panic room - sounds of Planet
Bob come roaring in - and shut it behind them. Muffled,
through the door we hear: the 778 walk away, a few seconds
later, they roll a healer pod past the closed door.

The hatch opens, they pull Pipi inside and put her in the pod. We hear them murmuring to each other but can't make out what they're saying. A few seconds of silence. Then they bang on the panic room door, **startling everyone. The voices of Howard and Emily are muffled.**

HOWARD (CONT'D)

All right, crew; time to blow this popsicle stand. There. We left the hatch open, so you ain't got a lotta time.

EMILY

Correction: you have no time. You are dying already.

MADELINE

OK, we're gonna need some serious teamwork to get these four to the away craft. Jessie and Donna, you grab Mivv.

JESSIE

Ehhhhhhhhh.....

DONNA

You sure that's enough people?

MADELINE

Just do it. Dr von Happy Dance, you and Joe grab Telf.

JOE

Uh, Cap?

MADELINE

WHAT?

JOE

Never mind.

MADELINE

Mrs S and I will get Gritz.

GREG

I can carry Zblatt. Just help me get him on my back.

JESSIE

We're taking him, eh?

JULIE

EVERYBODY GOES. LET'S MOVE.

MADELINE

You heard the lady. Theo, you about here?

Dr. Theo's voice is still coming through Colin's "speakerphone mode."

DR THEO

Positioning the away ship over the hatch now.

JESSIE

Good lad. There should be a sort of chute you can lower down that'll give us some protection from the atmosphere.

DR THEO

I see it. OK, I'm dumping the new spider suits down the chute.

EMILY

I have the suits, dear. Madeline, I will open the panic room door a tiny sliver and pass the suits through. There are enough for our four guests as well.

DR THEO

Those spiders can knit like a hurricane.

The panic room door squeaks open and the spider suits are passed through. The **crew begin to dress** in a hurry. **Crew, plz make some sounds** of pulling your clothing on. **Howard and Emily, maybe some ad libs** about "here you go, happy halloween, just take one, now, don't be greedy," whatever.

DR THEO (CONT'D)

Hurry. I don't want to let a lot of Bob onto the away ship.

MADELINE

Activate the atmo barrier. It's a semi-permeable membrane that'll keep some of the worst of Bob's breath at bay.

DR THEO

Captain? What is happening here?

GREG

FINALLY.

MADELINE

Yellow switch above your head at the exit door, or if you're at the controls, the switch is by your right hand, on the side panel. Bright yellow, skull and crossbones.

DR THEO

Got it.

JESSIE

All right, you lot. Once you're suited up, move out. We've got to do this quick.

They leave the panic room and are now in the vestibule under the hatch where they came in. **Howard and Emily are no longer muffled, but you do sound increasingly ill.**

HOWARD

The four coma babies are aboard and in the temporary healers, and Pipi's in the deluxe healer suite. Nattertop the giant spider is taking up a lot of room, so you're gonna need to squeeze in.

MADELINE

Dang, you two... you one and a half don't look so good. But... good work, Howard, Emily. Thank you.

EMILY

Of course, dear. Also, the spider is knitting a special burn suit for Pipistrelle to accelerate the healing of her human tissue.

MRS SHEFFIELD

However do you know that?

EMILY

She told me.

JESSIE

Hang on - the spider "told" you? You speak spider?

JULIE

Is now really the time-

EMILY

Of course. Who do you think requested the suits and the ship wrap back on the Oz 9?

JESSIE

You never said that was you.

HOWARD

Would you have donned said spidey suits if you knew we asked for them? Or boarded a silk-wrapped ship for that matter?

JULIE

Excuse me-

MADELINE

Not for love nor money.

HOWARD

We rest our case. There.

JULIE

Maybe you could have this discussion later-

MRS SHEFFIELD

How long have we been playing for the same team?

EMILY

Who says we are? Oh my. I feel dizzy. I think this is dizzy. Possibly it's nausea. Or joy. Frankincense.

HOWARD

Hoooo, boy. We better get going if even my Tater Tot is feeling it. Caterpillar.

GREG

Captain, levels are toxic. We gotta go.

JULIE

FOR CRYING OUT LOUD, WHAT ARE WE WAITING FOR MOOOOOOOVE!!

MADELINE

Right. Howard and Emily, can you give Greg a boost? Let's get out of here.

NARRATOR

With a hearty shove and considerable cursing, Howard and Emily get the remaining crew aboard the away ship.

N2

As they pull up the chute and close the bay door, the planet starts to tremble.

Shouting from the crew.

JESSIE

Move over, lad. I'll take it from here.

DR THEO

With extreme pleasure.

The away craft takes off.

JOE

Captain, what about the other away ship? Also, the 778 is barfing up bolts in the rear stairwell.

MADELINE

Howard? Emily? You OK?

HOWARD

Ehhhhhhhhh...you betcha, Captain. Just need a little WD40 and some R&R.

JESSIE

The other ship is tethered to us by a tractor beam. If it gets to be too much for our engines, we'll have to cut it loose.

The giant spider aboard the away craft objects.

EMILY

Nattertop here is not comfortable with the latter part of that notion, Captain.

DONNA

Oh dang, that's right. There's a spider aboard that ship. I'm opening comms to the other away ship.

Nattertop, aboard the crew's ship, says hello; the other spider responds over comms.

DR THEO

The Maggie II is definitely feeling the strain. We're starting to lose power from the engines.

DONNA

Any chance the spider can fly the away craft rather than being towed?

More giant spider objection from Nattertop.

MRS SHEFFIELD

Dextrous as these beings are, I suspect the buttons and levers are too small.

EMILY

You have hit the nail directly upon the head. Krakatoa.

Chatter from the other spider via comms.

HOWARD

Ehhhhhh, Phil there is saying to save the crew. Says it'll find a way to survive.

MADELINE

The spider on the other ship is named "Phil"?

JULIE

NOT NOW.

DONNA

We can't cut it loose, Cap. These spiders saved our lives more than once.

DR THEO

It's not the towing that's causing the strain, it's the tractor beam itself. It takes a lot of energy to keep a lock on the ship.

GREG

Maybe we turn the tractor beam off.

Serious spidey objection from Nattertop.

DR THEO

We can't just leave Phil to die in
Bob's atmosphere!

MADELINE

"Phil." That's just weird.

GREG

We don't have to leave Phil to die.

JULIE

SILK!

GREG

Exactly.

JULIE

Emily, tell Phil to knit up a line
and lasso our ship. HURRY.

There's a bit of urgent back and forth between the spiders.

JULIE (CONT'D)

KNIT LIKE THE WIND, WILDFIRE!!

MRS SHEFFIELD

You're going to need a lengthy lie-
down when this is over, aren't you.

A moment later, there's a distant thump and rustle as the
silk strand attaches the ships.

MRS SHEFFIELD (CONT'D)

Heavens, that was speedy. Gently,
Captain Jessie. Let the silk settle
around us.

JESSIE

Righto.

There's a gentle increase in the ship's engines. With a bit
of a rustle, the silk settles into place.

MADELINE

That's got it. Pull the line taut
and let's blow this joint.

GREG

You gotta hurry, Cap. Bob there is
collapsing in on itself, and it's
either gonna turn into a gravity
sink or explode, and neither option
is good for us.

JESSIE

On it. I'm spinning us slightly to keep the tow line clear of the engines.

GREG

(warning)
Captain....

MADELINE

Don't you have a phone call to make?

GREG

Oh yeah. Julie?

JULIE

Let's get clear of Bob first. Don't really need my daughter to hear her mom explode over comms.

MRS SHEFFIELD

Thoughtful. If a tad graphic. Captain Madeline, where exactly are we going?

MADELINE

Away. We'll figure the rest out later. Jessie, can you aim to bring us out on the far side of Bob? The planet's melt down should disrupt the Oz 9's sensory array, but let's stay hidden, just in case.

DR VON HABER ZETZER

Surprisingly sensible, Captain. Vell done, Herr Zebra.

GREG

Huh? What did I do?

Greg's question is ignored as an explosion rocks the ship. **Crew shout in alarm**, then silence.

OZ 9 - NARRATORS' BRIDGE

NARRATOR

Like its evil AI namesake bursting into pixels, Planet Bob has exploded, sending a toxic and devastating wave in all directions.

N2

Did the away ships make it out of the atmosphere in time, far enough away to escape the pummeling waves of energy and debris spewing from Bob?

NARRATOR

Or did the ships succumb, our crew finally running out of what can only be described as a fantastically generous allotment of luck?

N2

Nooooooooooooo!

NARRATOR

Well, we'll have to wait and see. You've been listening to:
 Pete Barry as Bob
 Tim Sherburn as Colin and Emily
 Bonnie Brantley as Donna and Jessie
 David S Dear as Dr Theo Bromae and Tiberius

N2

Eric Perry as Dr von Haber Zetzer, Mr Southers, Joe, and Howard
 Kevin Hall as Felonius and Greg
 Shannon Perry as Madeline and

OLIVIA

NO.

N2

(whispers)
 Olivia.

NARRATOR

Sarah Golding is Mrs Sheffield
 Kyle Jones is Narrator 2, and I'm Chris Nadolny Gourley, your Narrator. John Faley is our music director, and our artwork is by Lucas Elliott.

N2

Sarah Golding is our dialogue editor, and Mark Restuccia is our sound designer. Oz 9 is written by Shannon Perry.

NARRATOR

Oz 9 is a proud member of the Fable and Folly Network. Please check out our sibling shows at fable and folly dot com and support our sponsors. Until next time, Space Monkeys, consider making friends with some spiders. They're incredibly good in a crisis. Lights!