

(Printed with the demonstration version of Fade In)

EPISODE 206

NARRATOR

Let's begin.

Fish and October are aboard The Agatha, the lackluster paddle steamer and supposed premiere vessel of the Reddorblack Sea. But on the way to Sandlantis, disaster struck! Brody Body, the anti-social crew member, was lost to sea, under very suspicious circumstances. And now the equally suspicious October Jones is on the case.

HUMPHREY HUMMER

*[distant thunder]*

NARRATOR

There's no land in sight, just the boat chugging through the slowly darkening sea. Waves slap aggressively at the barnacle-covered hull. A storm is coming.

October and Fish climb the stairs from the upper deck to the pilothouse, the highest point of the ship. October draws herself up with intent on the landing outside the door and--

*[aggressive knocking]*

OCTOBER

Captain Hummer! We have a few questions for you.

NARRATOR

(beat) Humphrey Hummer opens the door and leans out with a welcoming but uneasy smile. He's not wearing his fancy peaked hat.

HUMPHREY HUMMER

Miss Jones, Miss With Legs... How can I help you? I hope this won't take long, it looks like bad weather on the horizon.

NARRATOR

He lets them through, closing the door after them. The room is small, crowded by consoles, with windows all around and a self-stirring cauldron in the middle. Must be the auto-pilot. Console? Like a desk you use to control something.

HUMPHREY HUMMER

What's brought you barging in here? Is there a problem with your room?

FISH WITH LEGS

Oh no, we slept great. The bed was super comfortable, October didn't even kick!

HUMPHREY HUMMER

I'm pleased to hear that--

FISH WITH LEGS

It gave me weird dreams though. Like about my loved ones drowning... and not being able to save them because my love isn't strong enough... I've never had a mattress do that before.

OCTOBER

You okay there, Fish with Legs?

FISH WITH LEGS

Yes. Absolutely. Everything is totally okay... Totally okay.

Oh, potion. Fun!

NARRATOR

Fish squishes over to the cauldron and stares at it, mesmerized by the self-stirring spoon. Grey clouds roll closer, consuming the sky.

HUMPHREY HUMMER

You had questions, you said?

OCTOBER

Well I wanted to ask you about the whole... Mr. Body situation.

FISH WITH LEGS

You mean his strange disappearance into the dark, unknowable waters of the deep...

HUMPHREY HUMMER

An unfortunate situation, to be sure.

OCTOBER

It's just that yesterday you disappeared so quickly that you didn't explain how you were handling the Mr. Body situation.

HUMPHREY HUMMER

Is that what you're worried about? You needn't concern yourselves, I was filling out the relevant paperwork when you knocked. Consider the matter resolved.

OCTOBER

What's the relevant paperwork?

NARRATOR

He lifts a solitary, mostly empty piece of paper off a console.

HUMPHREY HUMMER

A basic workplace incident report. A description of the accident and the parties involved... Or party in this case. Since Mr. Body was alone.

OCTOBER

Well are we sure about that?

HUMPHREY HUMMER

I believe so. I saw him fall overboard. Alone.

OCTOBER

I'm not so sure. Chirpy said she saw someone running away, and we heard two voices right before he fell. One was his, but I think we should investigate--

HUMPHREY HUMMER

My dear girl, there's no need to investigate. Accidents happen at sea all the time. I hardly think the situation, while unfortunate, merits this degree of inquiry. Inflating the issue may result in a formal Imperial investigation, which would tie us up at the Port and in court for weeks. And nobody wants that.

OCTOBER

But what if we should be inquiring?

HUMPHREY HUMMER

I assure you we shouldn't. It was a simple accident. One form and then it's all over. Trust me, I've been through this before.

OCTOBER

You've been through this before?

HUMPHREY HUMMER

Not this precise situation. But workplace accidents.

NARRATOR

October takes out her book and a pencil. Captain Hummer eyes it.

OCTOBER

How big is your crew? You mentioned that you were short-staffed...

*[scribble scribble]*

HUMPHREY HUMMER

Well, there's myself. Mandy Mandel, the native girl. Mr. Body. I suppose in total that brings it to three. Two, barring the unfortunate Mr. Body.

OCTOBER

What happened to the rest of your crew?

HUMPHREY HUMMER

You know seasonal workers, always coming and going. Being Herovian I don't expect you have much experience with magic, but it cuts down on necessary labour quite handily.

OCTOBER

Right... How was Mr. Body as an employee?

HUMPHREY HUMMER

He was adequate. Not gifted socially, which is why I kept him mostly below-decks. But reliable, since he always needed the money.

OCTOBER

What exactly was his job? Maintenance? I saw him dismantling a crane...

HUMPHREY HUMMER

Miss Jones. There's nothing to investigate. Mr. Body was alone when he fell. He was a reckless man who made regrettable decisions. This was simply the most reckless and regrettable thing he did.

*[feverish scribbling]*

OCTOBER

A reckless man... no money... And where were you when Mr. Body went overboard? Must've been nearby, since you say you saw him fall.

HUMPHREY HUMMER

Miss Jones, I don't appreciate being interrogated on my own boat.

OCTOBER

It's an easy question to answer, Captain Hummer, it only happened yesterday. "Where were you when Mr. Body fell?" I was at the back of the upper deck with Chirpy Singer. Fish, where were you?

FISH WITH LEGS

I was with Duchess Antingburg of Antcaster in the dining room, leading a seminar.

OCTOBER

See? Easy.

HUMPHREY HUMMER

(sighs) I spent most of the afternoon after we left port up here, overseeing our exodus from the marina. After we reached open sea, I left to look over the old girl. (coughs) The Agatha, I mean.

I went down below to check the cargo, kicked Brody upstairs to do his job, had a cuppa with the professor before he wandered off. Mandy was in and out. Then I headed back up to the main deck. I heard a fight, ran to the prow, and caught a glimpse of Mr. Body falling overboard, alone.

OCTOBER

Did you run up the right or the left to get to the front of the ship?

HUMPHREY HUMMER

I ran along the starboard side to get to the bow.

OCTOBER

So, the right. Great. We'll be talking with the others to confirm this.

HUMPHREY HUMMER

If you insist. But you will find there is nothing suspicious about Mr. Body's death.

OCTOBER

Whatever it takes to avoid an Imperial investigation, right?

HUMPHREY HUMMER

Don't rock the boat, Miss Jones. If his death is suspicious as you say, you find yourself in the unenviable position of being the only human aboard. I can't imagine Imperial investigators would look kindly upon you. Are your papers in order?

OCTOBER

Let's get out of here, Fish.

*[book close, she opens the door]*

NARRATOR

October stomps out to the landing. Fish waves at Captain Hummer.

FISH WITH LEGS

Seeya. Sorry about her, she's not great with people. But the bed was great!

(harrumph)  
HUMPHREY HUMMER

NARRATOR  
He sees her out, and our heroines head down to the upper deck.

DETECTIVE JONES

FISH WITH LEGS  
So, we're investigating! Exciting. Detective Jones the brains and Detective Fish with Legs the muscle... and the legs.

OCTOBER  
Yeah. Do you wanna talk?

FISH WITH LEGS  
What?

OCTOBER  
It seems like not saving Brody affected you... We can talk about that if you want. If you're feeling sad, I want to help you.

FISH WITH LEGS  
No. I'm totally fine.

NARRATOR  
October inspects Fish with Legs and then the brewing storm.

OCTOBER  
You sure?

FISH WITH LEGS  
Abso-tutely! Come on, October! It's detective time! How are you gonna solve this crime? With a plan, that's how. Knock knock. Who's there? Plan. Plan who? October's plan to solve this crime.

OCTOBER  
Okay, if you're--

FISH WITH LEGS  
You better answer the door October, it's for you.

OCTOBER  
Yeah, I get--

FISH WITH LEGS  
Oh? What's that you're saying, Plan? Your friend Opportunity is here? Okay. Yep. Got it. So, October... This plan is  
(MORE)

FISH WITH LEGS (cont'd)

interested in the opportunity to be the number one October plan of all time.

OCTOBER

Got it! We need to place everyone at the time of the incident and figure out who Chirpy saw running away.

FISH WITH LEGS

Great plan. But realistically it's like... Number 8.

OCTOBER

Well, it's no Windmill break-in.

FISH WITH LEGS

That was a good one.

OCTOBER

Yeah. Except for the last bit with the bees.

NARRATOR

Fish lingers behind as October starts down the stairs to the main deck.

FISH WITH LEGS

Before we go... There's something I want to ask you.

OCTOBER

Yeah. Of course. Anything you need, Fish.

FISH WITH LEGS

Can I be the bad cop? I know I sort of naturally fall into good cop and you fall into bad cop, but... It would mean a lot if I could be the bad cop.

OCTOBER

Um... Okay.

FISH WITH LEGS

Yes! Thank you!

NARRATOR

Fish with Legs skips ahead down the steps. October follows her, mildly concerned.

MANDY

OCTOBER

So I was thinking we'd--

NARRATOR

Fish stops abruptly.

Wait. FISH WITH LEGS

What? OCTOBER

MANDY MANDEL  
(muffled sniffing)

I hear sadness. FISH WITH LEGS

Um... OCTOBER

MANDY MANDEL  
(muffled sobbing)

I'm needed. FISH WITH LEGS

NARRATOR  
Fish with Legs plunges toward the maintenance locker in the front of the main cabin. She slams it open, startling Mandy Mandel, the mantis maid-slash-entire-crew, who is curled on the floor under the lee of the docking ramp, crying.

MANDY MANDEL  
(sobbing hiccup)

Oh no, poor sad friend... FISH WITH LEGS

I'm so sorry. Do you need something? MANDY MANDEL

NARRATOR  
She wipes at two of her eyes.

I need to hug you. FISH WITH LEGS

NARRATOR  
Fish with Legs throws herself into the hug, her tiny fins reaching halfway around Mandy's body. Mandy hooks her giant claws around Fish and clings.

Thank you... MANDY MANDEL  
(weepily)

NARRATOR  
October leans around the stairs' railing cautiously.



OCTOBER

What's going-- Oh. Hi, Mandy.

NARRATOR

Mandy lets go of Fish and mops the tears on her face with her apron. October slowly approaches.

FISH WITH LEGS

What's wrong, sad friend?

MANDY MANDEL

I'm just... a little overwhelmed at the moment.

OCTOBER

Well, yeah. You're the whole crew apparently.

MANDY MANDEL

And... Brody... (sobs)

FISH WITH LEGS

It's okay.

NARRATOR

She puts her fin on Mandy's back.

OCTOBER

You were close with Mr. Body?

MANDY MANDEL

Yes...

OCTOBER

Why don't you tell us a little about him? It might be therapeutic to talk about your emotions.

FISH WITH LEGS

Look at you becoming sensitive.

OCTOBER

Actually Fish, maybe you two can both discuss how you're affected by the--

FISH WITH LEGS

Go ahead, Mandy. Tell us your feelings.

OCTOBER

(sigh)

NARRATOR

Mandy crawls out from under the docking ramp and crosses all her legs. Fish continues to cuddle her. October leans against the wall, pencil at the ready.

MANDY MANDEL

Brody... was sweet. He was flawed, but deep down he had a kind heart. I first met him back in Casamanta. I was a nun in a convent for the Prayers of Mant.

FISH WITH LEGS

Ah yes, the Prayers of Mant.

MANDY MANDEL

You're familiar with us?

FISH WITH LEGS

I am not.

MANDY MANDEL

(laughs wetly) It's a religion in Sandlantis. The religion. Or it used to be. They teach Eternalism in the schools now, but... Most Sandlanteans still follow the old ways, at least at home.

OCTOBER

And now the nuns are heavily involved in protests against the occupation. Those Ants should have seen this coming, it's basic--

FISH WITH LEGS

Tell us more about Brody.

OCTOBER

Right. Sorry. I'll just... take notes. Pretend I'm not here.

NARRATOR

She swings the locker door over to block herself from their sight. Mandy cocks her antennae inquisitively.

MANDY MANDEL

Brody and Captain Hummer would make regular deliveries to my old convent. And then Brody would sit under the almond tree outside the wall until it was time to cast off again. He wasn't very friendly with people, I'm sure you noticed. Gruff. But he always looked so tired... So I started bringing him food. My sisters praised my piety, but really I was just curious. He fascinated me... Eventually he started inviting me to eat with him, even though I'm a mantis. And eventually, I accepted. He kept making deliveries. I kept feeding him. And... we fell in love.

FISH WITH LEGS

Oh. Love. True love...

MANDY MANDEL

The nuns disapproved, of course. He was a dangerous renegade sailor. They thought he'd corrupt me.

FISH WITH LEGS

Oh. Forbidden love.

MANDY MANDEL

So they made me choose. Nunhood or Brody. I chose him.

FISH WITH LEGS

Oh. It was true love! What a roller coaster.

MANDY MANDEL

I left the convent and Brody got me a job on The Agatha. We're saving up together, so we can return to Casamanta and get ourselves an apartment. Or... we were...

NARRATOR

She slumps more heavily into Fish's support.

OCTOBER

What was Captain Hummer bringing to the convent?

MANDY MANDEL

Um. I don't know. I never thought to ask.

OCTOBER

Too bad. What about yesterday? Where were you right before the... you-know?

MANDY MANDEL

I got the Duchess's tea from her cabin then went below-decks, to the kitchen. While her water was boiling, I took a moment to just... A moment to myself in my quarters before going back to work.

OCTOBER

Okay. Did Brody have any enemies? We think he may have been murder-- Sorry. May have been, uh...

MANDY MANDEL

It's fine. There are lots of people who don't like Brody. He has debts. He owed money to a lot of Giant Insects...

OCTOBER

Were any of them on this boat?

MANDY MANDEL

I don't think so. Unless...

DUCHESS ANTINGBURG

Servant girl! Servant girl! Where are you servant girl?

MANDY MANDEL

Oh no...

OCTOBER

Wait, unless what?

DUCHESS ANTINGBURG

There you are! What are you doing sitting on the filthy ground? Lollygagging? You have passengers to care for.

MANDY MANDEL

I'm sorry, your grace, I--

FISH WITH LEGS

She's emotionally distressed.

DUCHESS ANTINGBURG

Oh, Elemental Creature, you're here as well! Were you asking her for something? I'm sorry to interrupt you.

NARRATOR

October swings the door over, revealing herself.

OCTOBER

Excuse me, we--

DUCHESS ANTINGBURG

Eurgh, the human. Away with you, go do something useful, if you can with only four limbs. Fish with Legs, I don't know how you stand it! The odour alone. But since you have your unkempt servant here, I'm sure you wouldn't mind if I take possession of the other one.

FISH WITH LEGS

She's not my--

DUCHESS ANTINGBURG

Good. Servant girl, go fetch me some honey.

MANDY MANDEL

Of course, your grace.

DUCHESS ANTINGBURG

Bring it to my room. And knock. Don't open the door, knock and wait for me to open it.

MANDY MANDEL

Yes, your grace.

OCTOBER

Wait, Brody's enemies--

NARRATOR

Mandy stands.

Sorry, I--  
MANDY MANDEL

Now!  
DUCHESS ANTINGBURG

NARRATOR  
Mandy meekly retreats around the main cabin.

OCTOBER  
Ugh... (sigh)

NARRATOR  
The Duchess glares at October, then turns and walks around the cabin's other side. October and Fish pursue.

THE DUCHESS

OCTOBER  
Duchess Antingburg, do you think me and Fish with Legs could ask you a few questions?

NARRATOR  
The duchess ignores her. October gestures wildly at Fish.

FISH WITH LEGS  
Your grace, we've got questions that need some answers!

DUCHESS ANTINGBURG  
You have until we arrive at my room.

NARRATOR  
She does not slow her pace.

FISH WITH LEGS  
Me and Detective Jones are investigating the situation with Mr. Body--

DUCHESS ANTINGBURG  
Why? Captain Hummer said it was an accident.

OCTOBER  
We're not so sure it was.

DUCHESS ANTINGBURG  
And even if it wasn't, why should you care? He was a servant.

OCTOBER  
Lovely. We're still--

DUCHESS ANTINGBURG

But if you do think he was murdered... It could be anyone on this boat. That Professor O'Connell: his criminal reputation is well-earned, I'd guarantee it.

OCTOBER

I'll have to--

DUCHESS ANTINGBURG

Not to mention the Spottingham upstart. Proposing to his late brother's lover... and only a month after the funeral. Shameful!

OCTOBER

Sheldon's brother is dead?

DUCHESS ANTINGBURG

Or that gold digging cricket herself. Or the Sandlantean girl. You know those Sanlanteans, all thieves and murderers. But Captain Hummer is a lovely insect. I'm sure it wasn't him.

OCTOBER

Well Captain Hummer hasn't been--

DUCHESS ANTINGBURG

And we're here. Sorry, dear.

NARRATOR

Duchess Antingburg unlocks her cabin door.

FISH WITH LEGS

Okay, maybe we could come inside and keep talking--

DUCHESS ANTINGBURG

No!

NARRATOR

She plasters herself against the door.

DUCHESS ANTINGBURG

I will not have you in my room.

FISH WITH LEGS

Suspicious...

DUCHESS ANTINGBURG

I mean... you must understand, I have nothing to hide of course, but I simply would rather not--

FISH WITH LEGS

You think my partner and I could have a look in that room?

DUCHESS ANTINGBURG

Indeed not. As I've said, my privacy--

FISH WITH LEGS

Listen, lady. We can do this the easy way... Or the bad cop way.

DUCHESS ANTINGBURG

I am outraged at your--

FISH WITH LEGS

What's it gonna be, missy?

MANDY MANDEL

Here's your honey, your grace.

NARRATOR

Mandy! She offers a little pot to the Duchess. The Duchess takes it, two arms still clutching her door's handle.

FISH WITH LEGS

What's behind the door?

DUCHESS ANTINGBURG

I will not be threatened by you vertebrate goons!

NARRATOR

The Duchess slits her door open and tries to slip inside--

FISH WITH LEGS

Fish with Legs karate powers! Hya!

NARRATOR

She kicks the door open. The Duchess stumbles inside, yanked back by her death grip on the handle. Fish steps in with maverick authority, trailing her October.

FISH WITH LEGS

Ah ha!

DUCHESS ANTINGBURG

Oh, the public humiliation!

NARRATOR

The room is lavish. Forget fluxury, this is... ant luxury. Antxury...? Oh whatever. The point is: it's fancy. Way fancier than October and Fish's room.

OCTOBER

Um, what... What's the big reveal here?

FISH WITH LEGS

Well, Detective Jones, isn't it quite obvious?

OCTOBER

Is it?

FISH WITH LEGS

I don't know.

DUCHESS ANTINGBURG

You ruffians have caught me out. I'm broke. I gambled my vast ancestral fortune away at the tiger beetle races... Because of that accursed lame beetle, Vanilla Darcy, I must travel in this modest room aboard this sub-par ship filled with foreigners and murder to prevail upon my independently wealthy niece... for lodging. The shame.

OCTOBER

So this is your secret?

DUCHESS ANTINGBURG

Yes. Terrible, isn't it? I am reduced to consorting with you.

FISH WITH LEGS

(bad cop voice)

Enjoy your honey.

NARRATOR

October and Fish exit with panache.

OCTOBER

Well we can cross her off the list.

FISH WITH LEGS

Sounds good, boss.

OCTOBER

Good bad-cop-ing by the way.

FISH WITH LEGS

Thank you. I just remembered how all the Herovian Guards treated me and copied that.

OCTOBER

Well I think that's a little unfair--

MANDY MANDEL

Did you still have questions for me?

OCTOBER

(mousey noise)

Oh, Mandy.

MANDY MANDEL

Hey.



OCTOBER

Glad you're still around. What were you saying before, about Brody's enemies?

MANDY MANDEL

Not an enemy, exactly. A co-worker. But for him, there wasn't much difference.

Before every voyage the Captain shares his manifest, a list of all the passengers and cargo who book in advance. When he saw it, Brody got really nervous. He started acting strange again when we were boarding passengers. Usually he doesn't take the tickets, so I thought it was just that. But once we were underway, he said he knew one of the passengers... And they had a troubled past. Professor O'Connell and Brody used to work together.

NARRATOR

Well that elicited some big facial reactions from October and Fish. Exciting stuff. Great time to pause. Wanna do dinner now? Yes. I'm craving soup and if I recall you made some slug soup the other night. What? You finished it? (sigh) Do you-- Oh I could do griffin burgers. Yeah. Okay. We should really start eating before we catch up with October and Fish. Yeah, next time. Let's stop.