

FUA 43 - The A Side

Static fades in and out.

HARLEY
Klein? Klein?!

Alarm sounds. Harley stands up in a panic.

He hurries to the door. He throws it open.

The alarm is louder in the hall.

HARLEY
What's happening?! What's going
on?!

Click.

Silence.

Harley's broadcast equipment clicks on.

HARLEY
Chaos, Overwatch Command. Chaos
once again.

Klein vanished, right in front of
me. Just... disappeared into thin
air. For a moment, I thought I
might be losing my mind. Like the
time had somehow slipped past me,
and I wound up in the moments
after she left. But then the alarm
sounded. Not the breach. The fire
alarm. Someone must have pulled it
in the hall.

Because it wasn't just Klein.

It was happening everywhere.

Click.

*Alarm sounds as Lancaster walks quickly
through the hall.*

LANCASTER
How many?! How many others?!

Walkie clicks.

He's barely intelligible through the static.

LANCASTER

I can't- Harley, I can't hear you-

Click.

Back in Harley's broadcast.

HARLEY

The Dash One, the big one in AG-2 that went off at the last minute. I thought we were safe. But Klein-Klein said she felt a difference in the air during those few minutes before it happened.

In an instant, dozens of people simply disappeared.

I spent a few moments parsing what information I could from the pandemonium outside, and I returned to my station. In the fifteen minutes between the reset, and whatever new horror had found us, Alves had again severed my access to the site comm. I waited for her voice to come through it instead. But it didn't. No one's did.

Click.

Lancaster's voice sounds from behind the door. He knocks quietly.

LANCASTER

...Harley?

HARLEY

It's open, get in here!

Lancaster opens the door and hurries inside.

HARLEY

Klein, she-

LANCASTER

I know. Chappel and Yeboah, too.

HARLEY

Where is everybody? Why hasn't anyone called for a headcount?

LANCASTER

I don't know. All I gathered on my way here is that people think Alves is gone, and Gravett too. And Raddagher's not responding when I call her walkie. I think- I have a really strong feeling something bad is about to happen.

HARLEY

I have a strong feeling that something bad has very much already happened!

LANCASTER

Between the rest of us here, I mean.

HARLEY

People were fighting before the Reset. And nobody's responding to walkies anymore. It's like everybody shut down at once.

LANCASTER

That's what I'm worried about.

HARLEY

What about Love?

LANCASTER

...I don't know.

Pause.

HARLEY

(bleak chuckle)

I thought since it went off right as the Reset happened that maybe we dodged the wild card effect this time...

LANCASTER

Why didn't Security take care of it?!

HARLEY

I think they're protesting. The way Haldi was talking to Alves, I

think they let it happen on purpose.

I never thought Haldi would let something like this happen just to prove a point.

LANCASTER

Haldi- Haldi probably didn't know this was going to happen.

Pause.

LANCASTER

Should we go get Love?

HARLEY

Uh- yeah, um... yeah.

Static fades in and out.

Harley's recording equipment hums.

HARLEY

(overlying dread)

Love is still here, Overwatch Command. Still in her bed, still comatose. In a strangely empty Medical wing.

Lancaster was right. The halls were empty. There's something brewing in the air. I found myself wishing for the chaos we've had in other cycles. I suspected that everyone else was doing something similar to what Lancaster and I were doing - hiding, planning. I can't help but see the result of our current individualist form of leadership in action. Every man for himself.

But Shao *did* call for a headcount. As their voice came over the site comm I felt every nerve in my body twist with dread. But the routine of the practice was comforting. We've done headcounts before. Maybe once everyone was back in AB, I could get some clarification. We could calm

whatever tensions were humming in
the air.

Lancaster was nervous.

Click.

*Silence in Love's empty infirmary room. Her
EKG beeps.*

LANCASTER

I don't- I don't know if it's-
smart for us to go up there.

HARLEY

If Shao is the next available
person in Upper Management I think
we can trust them.

LANCASTER

They've been neutral on all of
this, I wouldn't count on them
being pro-rule-breaking.

HARLEY

"Neutral?" Neutral to what? Are we
in a war?

LANCASTER

We might be now.

HARLEY

Well, I want to go up. I think at
the very least we should see who's
still... here.

LANCASTER

Harley, listen to me, I have a bad
feeling about this.

HARLEY

If anything goes wrong, we can
always leave, can't we?

LANCASTER

Maybe not.

HARLEY

Lanc, we know these people. A
little tension isn't going to-

LANCASTER

Are you sure? Are you sure you
really know them?

Pause.

HARLEY
Yes.

Pause.

LANCASTER
...Okay. We'll go. But I'm only
staying long enough to be counted.

HARLEY
Deal.

Click.

Return to Harley's broadcast.

HARLEY

I eventually convinced him it was
better to see who was still- who
was still here, than to go back to
my office and twiddle our thumbs,
waiting for something else to
happen.

We were already close to AB. I
thought we must have been some of
the first ones there. And then I
thought maybe more people shared
Lancaster's idea of ignoring Shao
and staying hidden.

I realized that small amount was
everyone who was left.

45 of us. Only 45, that was all of
us. Half the site, gone. Just
gone.

Alves is gone. Gravett is too,
like Lancaster suspected. Klein
and Raddagher are gone.

Haldi's still here. She did not
attend the headcount, opting to
call in to Shao before she and two
other Security guards went down to

the bottom of site to destroy the Dash One that caused this.

Whatever "this" is.

It's probably good that she wasn't there. It wasn't long before arguments began breaking out. Alves is gone. What's left of Research and Security adamantly advocated for throwing Foundation methods to the wind and trying to solve this our own way. But the rest of Containment, along with Records and most of Maintenance, are still clinging to the old rules. Things got heated. They got *personal*. Shao is adamant that they don't want to be in charge. And that leaves a power vacuum that the other remaining Department Heads are very aware of.

And then Lancaster left.

He turned on his heels and his two remaining junior psychologists followed him out the door. I followed as well. People started yelling behind me. I didn't care to turn around.

Click.

The hallway echoes.

LANCASTER

(calling)

Just a second, I'll meet you back at the office.

Two pairs of footsteps retreat down the hall.

LANCASTER

(quiet)

What?

HARLEY

What are you doing? Shouldn't we stay?

LANCASTER

You saw how it was getting in there. I'm not sticking around until people start throwing punches.

HARLEY

(nervous chuckling)

I doubt there would be a *fight*, I don't think anybody in Containment would-

LANCASTER

Would what? They're not in charge anymore. Alves is gone. Half of Containment is gone. And it's not like I'm going to be able to help with whatever this is, so- so I'm going back to my office and we're going to- we're going to get ready to deal with whatever is about to happen.

HARLEY

Nothing's "about to happen." It already happened.

LANCASTER

We have *barely* kept the infighting to a minimum the last few cycles, how long do you think it'll last before things really blow up?

HARLEY

Your job could be preventing things from blowing up.

LANCASTER

Maybe. But I'm not- I'm not feeling *charitable* to this place right now.

Pause.

LANCASTER

You're allies with Security. They know Raddagher likes you, they'll give you camera access again.

HARLEY

Right.

Click.

Harley's broadcast.

HARLEY

Overwatch Command, my view of our camera feeds is disorganized at best. I can only view one feed at a time, and that makes it easy to miss things. There are a lot of cameras. I don't know how Raddagher does... *did* it.

Security and Containment have calmed down enough to meet one another across a conference table. I still can't say I've ever seen Haldi angry, but now I can say I've seen her... relentlessly stubborn. They've been in there a long time. But at least they're not *physically* fighting.

I've been trying to keep tabs on the other departments, but most of them are all but scattered. It's difficult to track the goings on of everyone independently. The last two left in Botany are still in the greenhouse at least. Looks like the tall, quiet one is having a breakdown. Dr. Bakir is just pacing around muttering and periodically yelling to himself.

Door opens, Lancaster enters.

LANCASTER

Can you- does your setup see the shrine?

HARLEY

Uh-

Buttons click a few times.

HARLEY

It can, give me a moment- Here.

Click click. Pause.

HARLEY

So *that's* where Engineering is.

LANCASTER

They're trying to rebuild it.

HARLEY

Mm.

LANCASTER

It's... kind of nice. I didn't get to- to see it last time.

HARLEY

Are they... uh, are they adding new stuff? For... um...

LANCASTER

They're not adding things for people who disappeared.

HARLEY

You still think they're alive?

LANCASTER

I have a hunch.

HARLEY

Based on what?

LANCASTER

We didn't die when we disappeared. When the Shift happened.

Pause.

HARLEY

...Do you think they-

LANCASTER

Don't- don't jinx anything. I don't know yet.

HARLEY

Yeah. Not jinxing it.

LANCASTER

We can't- we can't find a solution if we don't know what happened. We need to know that first.

HARLEY

We're completely blind in here,
who knows how long it's going to
take for us to-

LANCASTER

That's great, uh- you have fun
with, uh, sitting in your office
and moping, I'm gonna go talk to
Engineering about making an
alliance with Medical.

HARLEY

You're going against Containment?

LANCASTER

You're not?

HARLEY

I... don't know.

LANCASTER

Nothing was working when Alves was
in charge.

HARLEY

She helped save Love, though. And
she got you out.

LANCASTER

No, Harley, I got me out.

Pause.

LANCASTER

I'm tired. I'm tired of this. I
got out of containment and out
here is- it's the same as in- DASH
ONE! Dash One!

HARLEY

Where?!

*Commotion as they get up and rush into the
hall.*

LANCASTER

Right outside your office, it's
right-

HARLEY

I've got something to sweep it up-

Sudden popping teleportation noise.

Dumptruck pats across the floor and sits.

Pause.

LANCASTER
...Dumptruck?

HARLEY
Hang on-

Harley sweeps up the dust. Dumptruck pats around.

HARLEY
Got it.

LANCASTER
Dumptruck is here now?

HARLEY
Seems like it.

LANCASTER
...How?

HARLEY
Uh... Do you remember the vine monster? The one that was-

LANCASTER
The one that was phasing through walls, right.

HARLEY
Yeah.

LANCASTER
Yeah?

HARLEY
Yeah!

LANCASTER
Oh.

HARLEY
Yeah.

LANCASTER

Huh.

HARLEY

He appeared in AB after the reset.
Helped break Love's fall. And we-
I think that's how he got into the
vents too.

LANCASTER

But I thought both the Twos
disappeared with the others.

HARLEY

They must not have found him.

LANCASTER

But he reappears in a closed room
when we reset.

HARLEY

Not if he can teleport.

*Harley picks Dumptruck up and closes the
office door.*

HARLEY

(to Dumptruck)

Come here.

LANCASTER

That could mean something,
couldn't it?

HARLEY

I'm looking him over. Continue.

Dumptruck makes various squishy noises.

LANCASTER

You saw Klein disappear, right?

HARLEY

(sigh)

Yes.

LANCASTER

You said she vanished in an
instant.

HARLEY

I did say that.

LANCASTER

Like Dumptruck just did.

Pause.

HARLEY

What are you getting at?

LANCASTER

Does Dumptruck breathe?

HARLEY

I don't know. I don't think we've ever checked.

Pause.

HARLEY

You're squinting.

LANCASTER

What if he can get out?

HARLEY

I thought we weren't jinxing it?

LANCASTER

But what if he can get out, Harley? What- what if his, uh, teleporting- isn't limited to the site?

What if *they* got out?

HARLEY

They might have! I don't know! It doesn't help us now, does it? We can't communicate with them, so we're just back to experimenting to try and replicate what happened. Only with half as many people.

LANCASTER

But it could be possible!

HARLEY

Unless that's not what happened, and they didn't get out. They could have been sent even deeper into whatever space this is.

LANCASTER

I- I dunno, I think they could survive that.

HARLEY

Lancaster, we know what happens to people who get stuck in in-between places.

LANCASTER

We're in an in-between place right now and we're doing just fine.

HARLEY

But we don't know that's where they are. We don't know if they're on the outside or farther in or if they all just got vaporized!

LANCASTER

We could find out.

HARLEY

How?

Dumptruck squishes.

HARLEY

He's not big enough to carry any of us.

LANCASTER

You're right. But does he stick to paper?

Pause.

Rummaging in drawer, Lancaster uncaps a marker and writes something.

LANCASTER

There.

Squishy stick noise as he attaches it to Dumptruck.

HARLEY

Now what?

LANCASTER

Now we wait to see if he does it again.

HARLEY

What if he doesn't do it again?

LANCASTER

What- you think he's just going to do it twice and then never again?

HARLEY

He never did *before*.

LANCASTER

He's growing. He's a growing boy.

HARLEY

(crosstalk)

He's not growing. He doesn't *look* like he's growing. He's the same size as he's always been. What if he makes it to the outside and they immediately contain him? They might terminate him out there, I don't know. Our *only* line of communication?! I'm not losing my job to a potato!

LANCASTER

(crosstalk)

He's growing spiritually and emotionally, Harley, give him some credit. Size isn't everything. If he gets to the outside they'll see our note! And- and he can just teleport out of containment anyway. They're not going to terminate him if he's our only line of communication. Oh, come on, you know what I meant.

Squishy pop as Dumptruck teleports away.

HARLEY

And there he goes.

LANCASTER

...Do we know if he's ever going to be back?

HARLEY

One second.

A few buttons click.

HARLEY

If he's in the site we *should* be able to catch him, there aren't that many blindspots and he doesn't move very quickly.

LANCASTER

Except when he's teleporting.

HARLEY

Yeah, yeah, I'm looking as fast as I can.

Pause. Harley clicks through the feeds.

HARLEY

I really am glad to have you back, you know.

LANCASTER

Yeah.

HARLEY

And I'm glad you didn't- uh- vanish.

LANCASTER

I'm happy you didn't, either.

Pause.

LANCASTER

It's hard not to be angry with everyone for leaving me in there for so long.

HARLEY

I know.

LANCASTER

But I think a lot of it was still my fault. At least- at least I know now.

HARLEY

Not to do it again?

LANCASTER

(chuckling)

Not to do it again. And at least we got a cure out of it.

HARLEY

Fire.

LANCASTER

Research is really confident that's what did it. They were going to try on D-1 this cycle, but they're- now they're not, I guess. Since he's- not here.

HARLEY

Hold that thought.

Harley opens a drawer and rummages inside.

LANCASTER

What?

HARLEY

I have an idea. Do you have any sand?

LANACSTER

...No, I do not have sand.

HARLEY

Fine, then I will use... this.

Harley moves a coffee mug. A small amount of liquid moves inside.

He pours it onto the floor.

LANCASTER

Whoa, what-

HARLEY

Just watch.

LANCASTER

Do you have anything to clean it up with in case it starts turning into a-

HARLEY

Turning into a Dash One?

LANCASTER

...You think he might come back to sit on it?

HARLEY

Bingo.

Pause. They wait. Water trickles faintly.

Squishy POP. Dumptruck appears.

LANCASTER

(gasp)

Grab him!

HARLEY

(grunt)

Dumptruck squeaks.

LANCASTER

Look look look, there's a note!
There's a note on him!

HARLEY

I know, I know, I'm getting it!
He's very sticky!

Harley peels the note off.

HARLEY

(reading)

"Harley turn on radio."

Pause.

Scrambling as Harley turns on his equipment.

HARLEY

(urgent, rapid)

This is Dr. Harley, please
respond, over.

Static comes through the radio.

LANCASTER

(half whispering)

I hear something-

HARLEY

SSSHHHH!

A little more static.

HARLEY

This is Dr. Harley at Site-107,
I'm getting a signal, do you copy?
Over.

More static.

*There's a muffled voice coming through
indistinguishably.*

HARLEY
(muttering to himself)
Okay here, let me-

Buttons click, a dial turns.

HARLEY
Come in, over.

Klein's voice comes through the static.

KLEIN
Dammit Harley!

HARLEY
KLEIN! You're alive!

*Klein's voice is staticky and a little
unclear.*

KLEIN
We've been hearing your Site-01
broadcasts all day!

HARLEY
Wait, I don't- where are you?!
What's going on?

KLEIN
...I'm in your office. Where are
you?

END EPISODE