

FIND US ALIVE EPISODE 22: DEPARTMENTS

[Static begins, then fades out]

HARLEY

(quietly)

Good morning, Overwatch Command.
It is currently... 6:15am, and I am
about to start a very long series
of consultation meetings. I
thought it would be smart to knock
out as many of them in one day as
I possibly could.

I may live to regret that
decision, however.

There are eleven Departments in
this building. Twelve, if you
count the Rogue Faction. They
certainly count themselves. But I
will not be meeting with Upper
Management, Communications or the
field agents, so that brings my
number down to nine. Nine
departments. I am currently
praying that I can get them all
done before 6pm. It'll be a
marathon. I've never been great at
running.

And at the end of that race comes
blessed sleep. Blessed, mildly
uncomfortable, post-back-tattoo
sleep. I haven't been getting much
of it. Maybe I should bring that
up with Psychology. I am going to
see them today, after all.

Time to get moving. Wish me luck!

[Click]

[Other people speak indistinctly in the background]

HARLEY

Just finished my first meeting! Maintenance. Our chefs, janitors and repair-people. Those who keep our site functioning in the day-to-day. They're impeccable at what they do... and they are very good at making me personally feel totally incompetent.

Not because they're rude or unkind or anything! They're just... very effective. I went in expecting an ordinary meeting with a group of people; crosstalk, disagreements, distractions. But there weren't any. They were all on the same page with one another. The whole time. It was like they were communicating telepathically or something. They agreed on everything. They all know what they want. And they all want the same thing. How do they do that?

They're keeping inventory on a lot of stuff. They're largely responsible for feeding the lot of us, so plenty of their use of the code revolves around tracking what food we have at the start of a given Reset. Maintenance has some information on the Reality Anchor as well.

It went very smoothly. If the other departments go like this, I'll be done before 2.

[Click]

[Broad, echoing ambience. Machinery hums]

HARLEY

I take back everything. I will not be done before 2.

Psychology was second on the roster. I almost knocked over their card tower when I walked into their office. It was nearly five feet tall, and when I asked how long it took to build, they all gave me a weird array of vague, nervous answers. But they were happy to explain to me that it had something to do with "un-harshing the mellow." They also talked very fast. All of them. Er, not ALL of them. Lancaster was in session with somebody, so he wasn't there.

I expected that due to how quickly they talk, it would wrap up just as fast. But it took us a very long time to get on topic. And to stay on topic. And for me to hear what they were saying with all of them talking over each other. They have quite the well of energy in there. And maybe one of the most decorated office spaces in the building. The most decorated. Not necessarily the best decorated.

Two down, seven to go.

[Click]

[Chair squeaks as Harley sits down, he heaves a long sigh]

HARLEY

Hold on, give me a moment.

[Chair squeaks again]

[Harley sighs again]

My apologies, Overwatch Command. I just got out of my meeting with Containment and I spent the whole fifty minutes with every muscle in my entire body totally rigid. I now feel like I am made out of some kind of soft rubber.

I don't know if any of you were problem children as kids. I was, to some extent. A little too curious for my own good sometimes. Drove my mothers up a wall. But that feeling, when you're sitting in a chair too big for you and you're being asked questions by the assistant principal who you've only seen once or twice because her office door is always closed? That's what meeting with Alves feels like.

We met in the good conference room in A-1. They said they didn't want to meet in the downstairs break room, because they share it with Security. I don't know what about it they didn't deem acceptable, but I suppose I'm going to find out later.

Very well dressed and very strong, the Containment personnel. One of them was carrying around a briefcase that must have weighed twenty pounds. They said it had papers in it. I think they might have been lying.

[Click]

[Harley's voice echoes]

HARLEY

So the original plan with Research was to meet them in their office down in BH-9. That did not happen, however. I intercepted the whitecoats just outside the containment chamber, where they

were conducting an "experiment."
To me, it looked like an office
chair race, but I don't know much
about their scientific process.
Masterson said something about the
rift's effect on our physics,
specifically "extreme speed." I
watched Dr. Todorov crash one of
the chairs into the wall. The
other researchers cheered.
Masterson's birds, who were also
there, cheered as well. I suppose
they may have witnessed similar
"experiments" before.

Research is obviously noting down
their direct findings on the main
rift. Their system has specific
subjects spread out between them,
so one has most of the information
on Dash Ones, one has things on
the environmental effects that
happen when they go off, et
cetera. One of them asked if they
could get them in color. I told
them probably not.

That lot is very excited about
their upcoming plan to use a
controlled detonation on the rift.
They are all awfully fond of
blowing things up, as scientists
often are.

[Click]

[Harley takes a drink of something]

HARLEY

I'm sorry. I'm so sorry. It's just
one, I swear, but
UUUUUUUGGGHHHHHH

(exaggerated)

Why are they like that? The second
I walk in they're all like-

(mocking)

"Hi, Harley, are you here for the
meeting? You having a good
afternoon?"

I WAS having a good afternoon,
what of it? I don't need to tell
you anything about my life. Who do
you think you are? The Harley's
Life Police Department?

Anyway, I gave them some
recommendations and they showed me
their progress on putting info on
plant leaves, which I think will
work out fine. Then the leader
said the plant strategy might be
worth shopping around to other
departments in case they need more
space, and then the mean short one
said that I shouldn't try that
myself though or else it'll die
and I'll lose my progress, and the
tall one said "don't be mean," but
I KNOW they were all thinking it.
They just act nice to gain your
trust. But I know. I know the
truth.

Anyway, Botany went well.

[Click, Surveillance equipment hums]

[Pause]

RADDAGHER

So what are we doing here?

HARLEY

Got any Body Code questions?

RADDAGHER

No.

[Another pause]

HARLEY

Alright!

RADDAGHER

Don't you have work today?

HARLEY

I'm supposed to meet with
Surveillance.

RADDAGHER

I'm Surveillance.

HARLEY

I know. And since we're done meeting, I think I'll take a break for a minute.

RADDAGHER

Okay.

[Long pause, awkward pause]

HARLEY

Alright! Back to work! Wanna be done before 6.

RADDAGHER

...Good luck.

[Click]

HARLEY

The Engineering office looks like a spaceship.

The Engineers have decorated it to look like a spaceship. It's also very dark. They took the bulbs out of most of the lights. I'm not sure why. None of them would tell me.

I... don't think I understand what Engineering does. I know it's something with computers, the less mechanical stuff that Maintenance doesn't work with. But when I asked them what they intended to record with the code, it sounded like they were just making stuff up. I... I really think they were just making some of it up. Also, every so often one of them would say something that sounded totally ordinary, but all the others would laugh at it. Different Departments have different inside jokes, I suppose.

At one point, they asked me if I wanted anything in my office to light up rainbow. I told them that

didn't sound like something I needed, and they said they could get it done while I was asleep, and I told them I didn't want to give out my card to anybody. And that's how I learned that Engineering is the only Department besides Upper Management where every member has a master key to every floor in the building. They all have one. Not just the Department Head. I asked why. They said they didn't know. But they allegedly know how to get into the "secret floor."

Further investigation by me into the existence of a "secret floor" revealed it to be a crawlspace underneath the floor in the AB breakroom, where the Engineers are keeping a 15 inch TV and a Gamecube.

[Click]

HARLEY

I don't know what I was expecting from Security's break room, after hearing the way Containment spoke about it. Messy, maybe? A stubborn light that won't stop flickering? Maybe it smelled weird?

It was none of those things. It was the volume.

It's no secret that Security personnel are... enthusiastic. And noisy. It's a fairly common experience to be awoken in the wee hours of the morning by a pair of guards talking to each other in their foghorn voices.

(amused)

But a lot of them in one room is another experience entirely! My ears are still ringing.

They really are some of the nicest people onsite. The moment I walked in, they all started cheering.

Officer Haldi, currently Head of Security, is an enormous woman who could break me in half, and has the widest grin to ever grace Site-107. And like being in a ball pit full of Siberian huskies, I couldn't help but get sucked into their energy. I had to soundly lose a couple wrestling matches before we could get down to brass tacks.

The whole group is tighter knit than any other Department, it seems. They must wear all that body armor for how soft they are underneath. Haldi said she's glad I'm taking care of Raddagher. Apparently they're all a little worried about that one.

[A beat. Harley's tone becomes much more somber]

They took the heaviest losses in the Shift. They're mostly using the code to memorialize their fallen friends.

[Click]

HARLEY

You know, I pride myself as a nice guy. Maybe not the best guy in the whole world, but I think I'm pretty amiable. I definitely had my doubts, hearing everybody say he's the worst, but I anticipated that were I ever to meet him, Simmons wouldn't be so bad.

I stand corrected. Simmons is the worst. What's that guy's deal?

Records informed me that they will be using the code as little as possible, as this is an opportunity for them to practice their rote memorization. I didn't see very many of them, considering they mostly spoke to me from

behind shelves and piles of file boxes before they disappeared back into the stacks again.

Because let me tell you, Overwatch Command, it is a mess down there. A horrible, dusty, disorganized mess. I don't know how long it's been like that. It was a maze. Literally. It took a good ten minutes for me to find a table to sit at. I'm not even sure how many Records employees there ARE. I talked to four or five, but there must have been at least... a HUNDRED more, skittering around back there. There are so many files. Cabinets, boxes, stacks of loose paper. I think they've written down everything we've ever done.

One of them definitely sniffed me while I was walking out.

I'm nearly done. Almost! There's only one more department I'm scheduled to meet with. Just one. And I can't lie, um... I've been avoiding it.

But I want that nap. So I'm going to go straight up there, I'm going to talk to them, and I'm going to be totally fine. It'll be over before I know it. Here we go.

[Click]

[Echoing hallway ambience. Harley takes a shuddering inhale]

[Footsteps as Harley walks]

HARLEY

Wing AD-1 looks like any other. But you can feel the change in the air as soon as you enter. The gravity increases. At least, it does on your heart. There's a sinking feeling of muted fear in that place, like standing under the gaze of a long-dead god's

empty eye sockets. Hollowing. The sharp smell of the antiseptic won't come out of your clothes for too long after you leave.

The Medical wing. Site-107 has a pretty well-equipped one. Supposedly, we were supposed to expand into a much larger site over the next few decades. But I guess that plan has fallen through, for obvious reasons. But enough of our Medical staff, including the famously terrifying Dr. Gravett, have stayed down here with us.

It's a hallowed place, the Medical wing. It spends the first couple weeks of every cycle filled with its returning patients, those who are crushed in the rubble every time we reset. But the system is well-established by now. The Doctors and Nurses, by Gravett's order have taken to teaching themselves new practices to accommodate these injuries and their prolonged effects. And every thirty two days, their congregation again returns to the altar of their operating tables.

Dr. Gravett reports that she is now confident in her ability to perform certain procedures on the human brain, as well as excise tumors. I believe her. I don't know where else in the world the Foundation has stationed that monolith of a woman, but the look in her eyes leads me to believe she's seen horrors I can only imagine.

[Harley's footsteps stop]

I don't think I will imagine them, though.

[A door opens farther away]

KLEIN

Harley!

HARLEY

Hm? Oh! Hi, Klein.

KLEIN

I have something I'd like to go over with you.

HARLEY

Now?

KLEIN

If you're up for it.

HARLEY

...Is it something nice?

KLEIN

Uh, it's something I think you'll like.

HARLEY

Great! Um, okay! What's up?

[Click]

[Chair squeaks, Harley sighs.]

[Bottle opens, pours]

HARLEY

And here I am. Done with everything on my list. Soon, I'll add more things to that list. But for now, I have nothing to do. For now, I am once again alone in my booth, with you, Overwatch Command.

My department isn't a department. It's just me, in here by myself. Nobody to report to, no one reporting to me. I can do everything my way. This is a fairly lax situation, our arrangement in here. There's very little I'm not allowed to do.

(vaguely disappointed)

They're going to let me into the
Department Head meetings.

[Pause]

HARLEY

Nobody likes being told what to
do. It's exhausting to have people
making choices for you, people who
are often thousands of miles away.
Who have never seen your face.
It's difficult to leave your life
in the hands of people who don't
know you, or know anything about
you. It's a bit crushing, if you
think too hard about it. Before
the Shift, I came to work, I did
my job, and I went home dreaming
about what I would do if they
would let me off my bureaucratic
leash.

The Shift certainly broke that
leash, alright.

I've gotten to do something I've
always wanted. I wrote a code! And
people liked it! And people are
using it, and they're asking me
how to better use it. I went to
school for this, I never thought
I'd be actually doing it! I'm
useful! I'm- integral. I'm an
important part of the system,
finally, indispensable. They're
letting me come to the Department
Head meetings!

[Pause]

And I'm happy, I am, I couldn't
ask for a more favorable outcome
for myself,

But...

It doesn't feel like I thought it
would.

[Pause]

(forced)

Man, that was the whole plan! I never thought I'd get here, I'm not sure what I should do now. This was kind of it.

Kind of a strange feeling in your chest, isn't it?

I'm sure I'll think of something.

And until then, Overwatch Command, I'll be in here talking to the air. Telling you all about the crazy people I work with. Live with. And if you still care to, if you care about any of us, find us alive.

END EPISODE