



Now that's what I call a crowd.

SUNGAZING GATHERING • 1ST AVENUE • LEVEL 50 • 1334 SST



First, let me apologize for the display by the MFC that we all endured earlier. Hope it didn't spoil your enjoyment of the meteoroid burst.

And wasn't that something? Biggest we've had in a while.

But right here, at the start of a new year for Midway City, let me promise you: a lot of things are going to get bigger, and better, than before.

My job is to ensure that happens; to leave Midway City better than when I found it. I know I'm a new boy, a Resident for just nine years...

...But I came to the Fuse with nothing but fifty bucks and a scholarship to Midway U. This city took me in, and made me the man I am today.

He means a

hahaha!

Dude, quit laughing, this is serious...!

ahem

Yeah, hi. I need to speak to the Duty Sergeant.



That program, and others like it that benefit all of Midway, needs funding. And as we stand here today to gaze at the source of all life, we should remember that other sources are important, too.

Sources of money that would be cut off at the knees, if the MFC had their way!



I'm not saying we should tug our forelock at earth. We're a proud city, and we won't be bullied. But the truth is --

-- Excuse me one second, here.



Are you [redacted] me?

This had better be extra-[redacted]-special.



Erin Eickmann.

Oh, hey, Joe. You want me to do some more vox pop, or --?



Did -- did you just say "bomb"?



All right, the basics: name, origin, occupation.

Afua Williams, American-Fusion. I'm a Financial admin at Orbital Supplies, on 19th.

PERIHELION CARNIVAL • CENTRAL PARK • LEVEL ZERO • 1336 SST



Are you sure you did not see the man who did this?

I don't even know for sure it was a guy, it was so crowded... I just felt a jab, like plucking an eyebrow, you know?

Why would someone do that?



We're still trying to figure that out, but right now I'm concerned about your safety.

Why? What's going on?



Do you know any of these women?

Siobhan Brennan, Candy Hopkins, Agnetha Svensson.



No, but -- holy **███**, are they all dead?



What the [redacted], Mariene? Get that thing out of her face!



Look, I'm sorry. I don't want you to panic, because this could just be a coincidence.

But there's a weirdo going around cutting off women's hair. You might be in danger.



You mean like a pervert? What, am I marked now, or something?



Think, Ms Williams, has anyone been following you lately? Any strange phone calls, or emails? A mad ex-boyfriend, perhaps?



Why would anyone stalk me? I'm just a junior accountant, for God's sake.

And no, none of my exes would do this, mainly because they're all women.



But you don't know those other three women at all.

Never heard of them.

[redacted]



So can I go home, now?

I dunno... how many people know your door pad code?

Just a couple of my exes. And like I said, they're not pervy guys.



That's good. But still, is there anywhere else you could stay? Any family up here?

All back on earth. Look, if it's all the same to you, I just want to go home and lock myself in.



All right, you do that. And be damn careful who you open the door to, OK?

Hopefully this is just a coincidence, and when Perihellon's finished I'll call round and check on you. Meantime, I'll pull some strings, get the city to change your door pad. Just in case.



You ever pull a stunt like that again, I'll clean your clock.

At least I told her the truth. If this is a "coincidence", I am an FGL.



Yeah, I know. We got it the wrong way round. He doesn't kill women, then take their hair...

...He takes hair to mark the ones he wants to kill.