

Another Regular Shopping Experience in 2546

The good news? The shopping centre hasn't been blown up... yet. The bad news? It probably will, and I'm locked inside.

I missed the lockdown announcement because some genius thought it was the perfect time to try to sell me a raffle ticket. And thanks to him, I'm all alone, trapped in a shopping centre targeted by Caspian supersonic spaceships.

I'm Xaylar, by the way, and the year is 2546. World War IV rages. Arvemica tried to invade New Manchuria, but Caspia didn't want them to control a neighbouring country, so they assisted New Manchuria in fighting back, and used Moloka'i - where I live - as a battlefield.

I would've taken the emergency exit, but it's blocked by rubble from last month's attack on the carpark, and all the other exits are locked. I've been looking for weapons, but the best I've found is a broken keyboard. Like that's gonna fend off supersonic spaceships.

Luckily, we haven't been hi-

BOOOOOM!!!!

Sorry, I meant, luckily, we've only been hit once-

BOOOOOOOOOOOOOM!!!!

Sorry, twice.

Once the dust and heat in the corridor starts to settle... I can see a massive hole!! I can esca-

Suddenly, another dust cloud explodes ahead as part of the building collapses. Hmm, maybe not that way...

As I'm rummaging a shop looking for actual weapons, I spot something on the floor. It's a keycard.

Some staff member must've dropped it! I realise, as another explosion rocks in the background. I pick it up, and suddenly a great idea comes to mind. I rush to a *staff only* door and scan the card.

Insert PIN.

Dang it. I forgot that the government mandated PINs in the last security update.

I always found the new security annoying. But of course, the war meant—

Oh.

The PIN is written on the card. Talk about top-notch security, but it's a lifesaver in this situation.

I punch in the PIN and the door opens, revealing a lounge room. An emergency M-56X plasma gun hangs on the wall. My eyes dart to a door labelled *Exit*.

I grab the M-56X, just in case, and run through the door only to realise that the floor is... gone!! I've run right out into an area destroyed by the blasts and I plummet downwards into a pile of rubble.

Explosions continue to rock my surroundings. I look up to see that Pete's Pets has been obliterated!! I think of all the pets that probably just died, and suddenly I'm really mad. My emotions control me as I rapidly fire the M-56X at the spaceship.

Pewpewpewpew KABOOOOOOOM!!!

The ship falls to the ground, and to my surprise, a police tank comes rolling towards me. An officer steps out, his face showing both astonishment and admiration.

"Xaylar!! That was insane!!" he exclaims. "You've freed the whole town from that ship. Let me drive our hero home!!"

And then I realise; finally, I can go home... Although next time I'm sticking with online shopping.