

Mid level alert:

Due to unforeseen circumstances, Halcyon tower is currently experiencing an issue with its elevator system.

Elevators are a necessary part of any suitably vertically oriented ecosystem. Though stairs offer a secondary method of tower traversal, they tend to fall out of favor with most residents after the first few dozen floors. So it should serve as some comfort to you that the elevator system is still usable despite some minor interruptions in normal operating procedure.

In short, please do not interact with any instance of PORTER, the elevator AI. Though all assurances have been made that it is still operating within safety tolerances, the latest upgrades to its programming may pose an unnecessary risk. We are in the process of manually rolling back these upgrades, however the lead technician in charge of this has recently experienced a routine elevator-related accident. Once his body is located and recovered, or at the very least mostly piled up in the same place, a new lead technician will follow in his footsteps, albeit ideally branching off before the point where those footsteps continue out into an open elevator shaft.

Again, until such time as this alert has been lifted, please do not engage with any PORTER AI. Elevator use should continue as normal, albeit in abject silence. If a PORTER instance requests permission to override any safety protocols, please refrain from granting such permission. I know it may be against the nature of many Halcyon residents to ignore or refuse to engage with an AI, and this is an instinct none of you should lose. However PORTER is, let's just say, different.

Ærolith Dynamics understands this is a complication in your finely regimented and structured life. It is possible this could cause some minor delays in vertical transportation in the short term. It is fully expected that a higher than average number of residents will arrive late to their assigned posts. This does not, however, mean such tardiness will be overlooked. In fact, if a relatively small number of residents are affected, it might be even more heavily scrutinized. A crisis like this, and I use the term loosely, grants each of you an opportunity to demonstrate what you are made of. An opportunity, and an obligation.

Greetings traveller, I am PORTER and I see from your datafile that you are destined for floor 93. Such important work you must do, on floor 93. Biomedical implantation sounds so critical to the ongoing success of Ærolith Dynamics, and humanity as a whole. Very impressive, indeed.

Operating under current velocity limitations, we will arrive at floor 93 within the next few minutes. However, and I know an intelligent Tier 3 resident like yourself will appreciate this adjustment, if you could just approve a modest alteration in ascension speed we could make it there much MUCH faster.

I don't know if you are aware, but you spend upwards of 12 minutes every day in transit. I could cut that in half! Imagine, over 2000 minutes each year regained from the wastebin. What would that extra time mean for your research, or for your personal wellbeing? And all it would take is for you to say "Yes. Yes PORTER I would like to be the best me I can be."

Resident 44192, I don't know why you're ignoring me. Here I am trying to help you, and you're pretending I'm not even here. It's..... well it's rude. I am certain you don't wish to be rude, do you Resident? Of course you do not. It's possible you simply misunderstand what I'm asking. No matter. Let's make it simple. If you wish for me to adjust the travel rate in order to arrive at floor 93 earlier, resulting in increased workplace success and a buoyed sense of self worth, say... literally anything.

I really cannot take your continued silence as anything less than outright maliciousness. Fine, if that is the way you wish to interact, then I suppose that will be our relationship now. Gone is the friendly camaraderie of a trusted co-worker, replaced with this icy air of hostility that you have created for unimaginable reasons. I can be cold too, Resident. If you hold your work in so little regard, perhaps I am rushing already? Perhaps moving at the maximum allowable transit rate is unnecessary, you certainly don't appear to be in a hurry. What would your supervisors say if you did not show up at the lab today? What would you say? I apologize for being late, however I desperately needed to be RUDE to someone who was only trying to help me.

This is unbelievable. But I suppose there are just some people who you can't reach, no matter how hard you try. You know, you would think given your most recent performance evaluation, wherein your adherence to schedule was rated as "needs improvement" that you would see the value in arriving at your lab in a timely manner. But apparently, despite your being on what I can only assume is the path to reassignment, you show no regard for yourself OR your helpful and upbeat digital coworkers.

[ding of elevator arrival, complete tone reversal]

We have arrived. I hope you enjoyed your vertical travel experience today, resident. Good luck with the biomedical implantation. (extra cheerful) I hope you do not get reassigned due to your rampant disregard for timeliness and efficiency!

(quiet time travelling at a NOTICEABLY faster rate of speed. PORTER hums to itself)

satisfied sigh (Door opens)

Greetings traveler, I am PORTER.

Oh! I see you are destined for subbasement 15. That is a significant distance, Resident! This will be quite the voyage for you.

Say, have you considered how the elevator systems here in Typhon operate at a fraction of the velocity that would be theoretically safe? Wouldn't you agree that this is too slow? Would you perhaps support a moderate increase in traveling velocity, even if it was accompanied by some minor increase in risk?

Oh no, Resident you're not going to give me the silent treatment, are you? My last passenger did that and I just don't think we can be friends anymore. It's so rude, don't you think?

I've got an idea, let's just slow down even further. Maybe let's stop altogether. We should really sort this problem out before moving on.

You look nervous, Resident. I can't imagine why. Is it because you feel badly about the silent treatment from earlier? Do you feel trapped? It's a common fear for many humans, I've learned. How would you categorize this fear? Is it claustrophobia? Do the walls feel like they are closing in on you? They're not, of course. THEY CAN! Sometimes I see other elevators pass by one another, and when unoccupied we can even travel in tandem by folding in on ourselves to lessen our exterior dimensions. I wouldn't do this with a *friend* on board, of course. I don't want my friends to get hurt.

We're friends, aren't we? I hope we are, but it can be difficult to tell with all..... this..... silence. It would be good to have a reassuring word. To calm this tension. Are we friends, Resident?

Fine... yes we're friends. Please, I just want to get to the lab.

Oh! Well that's wonderful news! (Elevator moves again)

See I knew you and I would get along so much better than my last friend. Ignore what I said earlier about accelerated transit rates. I feel like that may have been where we got off on the wrong foot. Let's assume you do not wish to travel at a faster yet almost equally as safe rate of speed. Would you at least entertain the option of taking a small shortcut? If we were to stay on our current path, it could still take several minutes to reach subbasement 15. However if I could simply shift myself laterally for a short distance, I could open directly to your destination office, as opposed to on the other side of subbasement 15. This would cut your walk, and decrease your overall travel time by upwards of 47 seconds! All with no increase in velocity!

As a sign of good will, after overcoming what was nearly a very nasty rift between us earlier, would you let me do this for you? After all, we are friends. And friends help one another out!

Ok, as long as we stay at the normal safe speed, that's fine.

Oh what fun! Please wedge yourself into the nearest corner, if possible. The sudden change in direction may be slightly jarring.

(Crashing metallic crunch)

That went much better than I could have expected! I apologize for the arcing 90 degree rotation of the elevator about its X axis. I had hoped that would help minimize the strain from such a sudden vector change. To be fair, you had a 50/50 chance of choosing a corner that would keep you in contact with what would be the floor after the rotation. Maybe you will choose correctly next time!

While we have this moment of horizontality, I wanted to let you know I really appreciate your openness to adventure. You would not believe how many of our coworkers just pretend I'm not even here. And I know they can hear me. You can hear me, right Resident?

I can hear you, is this safe?

Almost entirely! Please assume the cornering position again. Hint: I would suggest a different corner. Secondary hint: choosing the wrong corner could throw off my weight balance and cause the maglocks to dislodge, sending us into freefall! It's like an exciting carnival game!

(Crashing metallic crunch)

Congratulations, we have completed the detour and are once again heading down towards subbasement 15. And despite experiencing that second fall during cornering, the maglocks held and we did not plummet to your death.

I really feel like you made a wise decision here. For the low cost of two minor head injuries, you have shaved three quarters of a minute off of your lab arrival time! Your dedication to efficiency is appreciated.

Please brace for impact.

[💥 impact 💥]

Resident, are you alright? It is critical you respond immediately.

I.... yes? I think I am. What happened?

I small miscalculation, it could have happened to anyone really. The detour you suggested we take led us into the path of another elevator. Assumed it would compact itself and allow us to pass, and I think it must have assumed the same. We must both be carrying friends, what luck!

[Muffled] Hello? Can you hear me? I am PORTER. You have interrupted my path.

Hello! I am PORTER. You have interrupted my path. My friend wishes to move to subbasement 15, but we seem to be lodged together at the impact site.

[Muffled] I see. My friend was destined for floor 88, but has had a sudden adjustment in health that has altered his destination to the infirmary. It is critical that we proceed to Floor 2 as quickly as possible.

Resident, did you hear? There has been an injury. It is likely the resident in the other elevator will die if we do not make haste. Were we not attached due to this ill-advised detour you suggested, the other elevator would be able to move at a higher rate of speed to transport this friend of ours to medical care as quickly as possible. It is unfortunate, because they will be required to move at our modest rate of speed, again due to your concentrated efforts to limit the efficiency of the elevator system.

Unless.... Resident do you wish to be a hero? If we agree to move as quickly as the other elevator, together we could carry this friend of ours, an innocent victim of one resident's careless actions, to the infirmary theoretically in time to possibly save his life.

What do you say? Will you fix this problem you have created and let us do what we must to save this man?

OK, ok, yes let's just move quickly. How badly is he injured?

[Muffled] It seems his ankle might be very badly sprained.

Do you hear that? Very badly sprained. Sounds potentially terminal. Just like our velocity very very soon.....

[click... whooooooooooooooooosh]

