

PARANORMAFIA

PROLOGUE



Snow swirled in thick drifts along Frostica's streets, piling nearly two feet high in the alleys and avenues.

It was deep night. The kind where the sky hung heavy and metallic, lit only by the pale shimmer of streetlamps buried in frost and the ghostly glow of the space wall looming beyond the skyline.

Heat vents embedded into the streets, sidewalks, and rooftops hissed and steamed in timed bursts every thirty minutes, melting narrow paths just enough for movement while the rest of the city remained frozen in icy white. Wisps of warm vapor twisted into the air, mixing with falling snowflakes before dissipating.

Pluto sprinted across the rooftops, leaping from building to building with explosive movements. In one arm, he held a child – Nina – close to his side, her small frame pressed securely against him, tucked in her pink coat, like a precious package against his chest.

His blue hair spiked from beneath a black beanie, and a flaming blue aura with wavy, flickering patterns radiated outward enveloping his dark-grey track suit, making the snowflakes around him shimmer.

Above his shoulder, a glowing spirit orb – his soul sphere – floated, pulsing with his energy as it mirrored his every move.

Ahead of them, the city opened toward the massive space wall that rose at the horizon – an impossible, sky-towering barrier that spread as wide

as the cityscape itself, blotting out the faint stars beyond. They were heading straight for it.

“Don’t go too fast, Pluto... I’m scared,” Nina whispered, clutching his side tightly.

“Hold on tight, Nina. We’re almost there. Once we get past the Space Wall, everything will be better. Remember the animals from the book I used to read to you?”

“Like the Monquerls?”

“Exactly,” he said, glancing down with a reassuring smile. “Once we’re there, you’ll see plenty of them, I promise.”

Her eyes squeezed shut as she held onto him, trusting completely.

A flicker of alertness sparked in his blue eyes. *Damn, someone’s following me... Better change course*, he thought.

Pluto twisted midair, landing on a nearby rooftop and immediately sprinting toward the next building. Steam hissed from vents along the rooftops, masking their movement as he altered their trajectory.

“Why’d you turn? The wall’s not that way,” Nina asked, peeking over his side.

“Oh, I just thought it’d be cool to check out this part of the capital. Have you ever seen that ice structure before?”

“Wow... it looks like a lamparian!”

“Right? Lucky we came down to see it,” he said, eyes scanning ahead, aura flaring slightly.

He’s fast... I won’t be able to lose him, he thought, muscles coiled and ready.

They ducked into a narrow alley beside a dumpster. Snow drifted in thick piles, curling around the corners.

“Alright, Nina, we’re gonna take a quick break here,” he said, voice calm but deliberate.

“But we’re almost there!” she protested.

“Yeah, I know, but I need you to hide for a moment while I check something out. That cool?”

“In the dumpster?!”

He chuckled, brushing snow from his sleeve. “Yeah, it’s almost empty. Just hold your nose, okay? I’ll be back fast.”

She hesitated, then curled up inside, scarf wrapped tightly.

“You’re awesome,” Pluto said, patting her head.

A faint electric glow traced along his hand, and her eyelids drooped as she fell asleep.

Pluto exhaled and stepped forward, the soul sphere behind his shoulder fading along with his aura. Every movement was precise, controlled, anticipating the enemy before he even appeared.

A hooded enforcer landed on the roof of a small building across from the alley. The crimson-and-light-grey varsity jacket-suit caught the soft glow of vented steam, the golden Kingsland emblem gleaming on his back. Messy brown hair fell in two

X-shaped strands across his face, and two black stripes under each of his golden eyes gave him a dangerous, calculating look.



Pluto lowered himself into a ready stance, muscles coiled.

Here we go, he thought, eyes narrowing as snow swirled around them.

The enforcer's voice cut through the snow like a blade.

"Identify yourself."

Pluto looked up, squinting through the snowfall. "Citizen number sixty-nine four sixty-three, sir. Is there a problem?"

"What are you doing outside? It's three hours past curfew."

He forced a small grin. "Couldn't sleep. Went for a run to clear my head. The system already deducted the credits."

“You seem awfully rushed for someone out on a night jog.”

“Hey, gotta stay active, right?”

A beat of silence followed, then the voice turned colder. “You think you’re smarter than me?”

Pluto frowned. “What? I never said that, sir.”

The Enforcer dropped from the rooftop, landing hard enough that the snow hissed and vaporized beneath him.

“I’ve received a report,” he said, stepping closer, “that an unauthorized Echo user abducted a minor slave in this sector. You match the description exactly. Except the slave’s missing. Tell me where she is, and maybe I won’t kill you.”

Pluto’s expression stayed still, though his aura flickered faintly – blue fire breathing under his skin.

“What? I don’t know what you’re talking about, sir. You’ve got the wrong guy. You can scan me if you want. I’m a registered citizen, like I said.”

“Don’t you dare attempt to fool me.”

A red beam burst from the Enforcer’s scanner, washing over Pluto. His body shimmered, breaking into pixels before reforming as the beam cut off.

“Citizen status #69463: approved.”

The Enforcer blinked at the result, his jaw tightening. “Could I have been mistaken... your status is clear. You’re free to go.”

“Thanks,” Pluto said evenly. “I’ll just stay here to catch my breath, if you don’t mind.”

The man didn’t answer. His golden eyes glinted under the snowlight, and a faint yellow-brown aura began to rise from him, like dust catching fire.

“So,” he said quietly, “you really do think you’re smarter than me after all.”

Pluto’s gaze narrowed. *What’s going on?* he thought. *Is he sensing her Echo? No, she barely has any. Enforcers aren’t supposed to pick up resonance this clearly.*

A low hum rippled through the air. Behind the Enforcer, a soul sphere shimmered into view – a hovering ghostly orb of golden light, its surface smooth and translucent. In its center, the number 38 was carved deep in black, scratched-like symbols, as though clawed there by something ancient.

Pluto’s own orb flickered to life behind him, deep blue with faint wavelike patterns coursing through it. The number 30, etched in the same black raw script, gleamed like ink trapped under glass.

Thirty Echoes, he thought. *I’ll have to get crafty if I want to win this.*

Energy rippled through his body; his blue aura surged brighter, the number behind him now showing 20.

Across from him, the Enforcer’s sphere pulsed harder as his own energy rose, his number now 28.



“You don’t think you’re stronger than me too, do you?” the Enforcer said, his tone somewhere between amusement and threat.

Pluto’s eyes sharpened, his pupils thinning to molten slits. Blue flame rippled off his shoulders, bending the snowflakes around him. “We’ll just have to find out,” he said.

Pluto teleported in mid-air in front of the Enforcer, his fist glowing with a fierce blue aura, ready to strike.

The Enforcer tilted his head, a small smirk crossing his face, and at the last instant, he vanished, reappearing behind Pluto with his arms crossed.

Before Pluto could react, the Enforcer twisted mid-air, swinging a horizontal kick charged with aura.

It struck Pluto squarely, hurling him into the wall of the building in front of him. The impact cracked the metallic surface, leaving a crater and sending fragments of wall floating like shards.

Pluto spat blood, wincing at the searing pain, his face pressed against the cold wall.

Clenching his teeth, Pluto spun and struck the wall again with the side of his aura-charged fist, shattering it further, stones and debris scattering into the air.

He grabbed a large pebble, charging it with concentrated aura, and shot it at the Enforcer.

The projectile smashed into the Enforcer’s shoulder with a grisly explosion. Bone pierced

through torn flesh, jagged and raw, sinew and blood spraying in irregular arcs.

His left arm hung uselessly, the exposed joint twitching grotesquely as dark blood dripped down and sizzled on the snow below.

The Enforcer flinched slightly, assessing the damage, but his golden eyes never left Pluto.

Pluto surged his entire body with energy, blasting forward like a jet.

He aimed a kick at the Enforcer, who twisted in the air, narrowly avoiding the strike by kicking at the space beside him.

Pluto reacted instantly, seizing the Enforcer's leg mid-motion, and used his momentum to hurl him down the alley.

The Enforcer tumbled violently, leaving a trench carved into the snow and concrete, until he finally collapsed against a building, shattering the nearest windows.

Pluto's mind raced: *I'm at 22, he's at 32. He still has the Echo advantage. But I broke his shoulder; that arm is useless unless he spends fifteen echoes to heal.*

He noted the Enforcer's remaining surge: *Two Echoes left. In fifteen seconds, it'll vanish. He'll have to take the five Echoes penalty if he wants to keep fighting.*

The blue aura around Pluto flared brighter as his soul sphere revealed the number dropping from 22 to 10. He clenched his jaw, eyes sharp: *I can't give him time to recover!*

Teleporting with precision, Pluto reappeared in the air before the Enforcer, preparing an overhead punch.

The Enforcer's fist flared with energy, aiming to strike upward at him.

Pluto's mind tensed: *He's going for it...*

Their fists collided, shockwaves rippling through the snowy alley, pushing both back slightly.

The Enforcer spun with the momentum, delivering a flaming, aura-charged horizontal heel kick to Pluto's face, narrowly avoided as Pluto teleported to the ground.

He should be out now... Pluto thought.

Swiftly, he swept the Enforcer's knee, bursting it in a horrifying spray of flesh, blood, and shards of bone as his aura-charged kick connected. *He let me break it...?*

Charging for the finishing blow, Pluto's aura-charged fist slammed forward, but – it collided with a wall of surging energy. *The hell is this!?*

The Enforcer balanced on one leg, severed limb bleeding onto the snow, sclera burning black alongside a third eye splitting open horizontally across his forehead. Energy flared from his grinning mouth. “Nice try...”

A massive surge of aura exploded outward, flinging Pluto into a parked truck with a violent crash. Metal bent and glass shattered as the vehicle toppled, snow kicked up around him. Blood dripped down his face.

“What the hell was that!?”, Pluto said, angry and startled

A ghostly golden mask erupted onto the Enforcer's face, fanged and spectral, glowing through

the smoke and dust of the trench he had carved through the alley.

That guy... Don't tell me he's a... Pluto thought, eyes widening.

The Enforcer now stood fully transformed, his leg and shoulder regenerated with a strong flaming aura licking around him. His soul sphere revealed the number one hundred in bold, black, scratched-like symbols, radiating menace.

“Let’s try this again,” the Enforcer growled, each word heavy with power. “And this time, don’t try to be clever. Where’s the slave?”

Pluto landed in the snow, chest heaving, mind racing. *I’m dead...*

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