

PARANORMAFIA

CHAPTER



THE SPACE WALL (PART 2)



The red glow of Gino's Pub pulsed against the metallic corridors like a heartbeat. The sign – bold, cursive, and cracked at the edges – flashed unevenly above a pair of reinforced saloon-style doors.

From within, waves of sound spilled into the street – thudding boots, drunken laughter, and the rhythmic chant of a hundred voices fused in unison.

“Fight! Fight! Fight! Fight!”

The air inside was thick with heat and breath. Red light bathed everything – walls, faces, fists – tinting the metal panels in a molten hue. There were no windows, only steel, sweat, and the pulse of a hundred credits at stake.

The crowd had packed itself into two rows, forming a narrow pit down the center of the pub.

Tables and benches were pushed tight against the walls beneath a blinding white stripe of light that cut the room in half, marking the ring like a wound in the metal.

At one end, Slim Dim sat hunched on a bar stool, jittering with nerves – his wiry frame trembling beneath the red glare. Blue buzzcut hair shimmered faintly under the lights, a stitched scar marking his cheek like a warning.

Across from him, Fat Pat loomed like a wall of meat and confidence – shirtless, his prison uniform tied at the waist, red hair spiked into flails that bounced when he flexed his arms.

The crowd roared their names, dividing down the middle of the ring.

In the center of it all stood Gino – bald, broad, brown skin, his orange bartender's uniform pulled tight over a frame that could break men.

A thick scar cut across his forehead, gleaming in the light.

He held a digital scanner in one hand, his voice rolling through the pub like thunder.

“Alright everyone, last chance to place your bets!” He pointed to the crowd with his free hand, eyes cutting through the red haze. “Two credits minimum, no freeloaders!”

Beside him, Ben leaned against a metal pillar, smirking – his red hair spiked forward, eyes sharp and playful as he scanned the faces around him.

“They didn’t do you no favors, huh?” he said, elbowing Jinki, who stood nearby with a black eye and that same reckless grin that never learned its lesson. “You still got credits to bet on the fight, at least?”

“Nope,” Jinki muttered. “Can’t even buy me a beer at this point.”

Ben laughed loud enough to make the nearest inmates turn their heads. “Hahaha! They really did you dirty this time. I’ll tell you what – I’ll give you two credits if you bring me three back by the end of the week.”

Jinki grinned. “Ah yeah? Where do I sign?”

“Right here,” Gino barked, holding up the scanner.

Jinki lifted his link – a thin digital watch wrapped around his wrist, its surface flickering with

faint blue light. “Got two running on Fat Pat,” he said.

Gino tapped the scanner against it.

The scanner blinked green. Transaction approved.

“That’s what I’m talking about!” Gino turned, lifting his arm high. “Anyone else? One time! Two times! … Three times?”

Silence, followed by a wave of cheers. “Well then, sounds like the fight’s ready to go!”

He turned toward the fighters. “Fat Pat, you ready?”

Pat flexed, rolling his shoulders. “Hell yeah! I’m gonna fuck him up, buy me some meat with the prize, and use him as a toothpick!”

The crowd howled.

“That’s the spirit, Pat!” “Kick his ass!”

Gino turned to the other side. “What about you, Slim Dim? You ready?”

Dim hesitated, swallowing hard. “I… I think so.”



Laughter and shouts rose from the back.
“You shouldn’t’ve accepted the fight, moron!”
“You’re gonna get your ass handed to ya!”
“Don’t listen to your girlfriend, Dim! You got this!”

Gino raised his hands, grinning wide.
“Everything’s clear, boys; so scrap the fuck on!”
The crowd erupted.
Fat Pat bellowed as he charged forward, boots pounding the metal floor. “I’ll crush you!”
Slim Dim stumbled into a weak guard stance, trembling under Pat’s shadow.
“Go for the legs, Dim! You got this!” someone yelled.

Too late. Pat leapt, his fist swinging like a hammer.

The blow connected with a sickening crack.
Dim’s head snapped back, and he hit the ground hard.

Before he could move, Pat was on him; fists slamming down, one after another, until the sound of knuckles meeting flesh blurred into the crowd’s roar.

Dim’s teeth scattered across the floor like small, white stones.

His body twitched once, then went still.
“Alright, that’s it!” Gino’s voice boomed over the noise. “We have a winner! Everyone, give it up for Fat Pat!”

Pat rose with a triumphant roar, flexing both arms. “Yaaaaah!” The room exploded around him.
“Way to go, Pat!” “You suck, Dim!”

Ben laughed, slapping Jinki's shoulder. "Guess you can give me my three credits back now."

Jinki grinned. "Hey, a deal's a deal. You'll get it later. Now let's get drunk."

Gino wiped the sweat off his brow, laughter booming through the haze.

The crowd pressed back towards the bar, music rising again – the sound of fists and fury fading into the red hum of Level Zero's night.

Gino's Pub – 3 am

The heartbeat of Gino's Pub shook the walls – heavy bass rattling through the iron panels, red-tinted light painting the packed room in pulses of heat and shadow.

Laughter, curses, and the clink of mugs crashed together beneath the neon sign's steady glow.

Jinki sat at the counter with a fresh bruise still darkening under one eye.

He lifted his beer, drained half of it in one pull, then sighed and set it down, the glass sliding an inch on the slick surface.

Beside him sat Ben, another inmate – his prison jacket was open at the chest, sleeves rolled high, and his Link shimmered faintly around his wrist, cycling faint blue as he tracked his remaining credits.

Jinki squinted at his drink. "Hey, Ben. You know my brother, right?"

Ben chuckled. “What, Mr. Workaholic?”

“Yeah.” Jinki’s tone softened – a mix of irritation and respect. “Invited him to watch the funniest damn fight of the year, but he had to pull another late shift. Guess saving the world doesn’t leave much room for living in it.”

Ben smirked. “Tch. You sound like a heartbroken chick right now, man. Snap out of it.”

Jinki gave a lazy half-grin. “Maybe. Just saying; guy’s gotta live a little.”

Ben jerked his thumb toward the back of the room. “If you’re that bored, maybe try your luck with her. Blond one, sitting alone. Been checking you out since you walked in.”

Jinki straightened a little. “What girl? She hot?”

“Heck yeah, she’s hot,” Ben said. “Long hair, big smile, slim waist, bigger everything else. Don’t miss your shot. She’s solo.”

Jinki narrowed his eyes.

“You’re not screwing with me, are ya?”

Ben laughed. “When have I ever steered you wrong?”

“All the time,” Jinki said flatly.

“Ha! True. But not this time. Go make me proud.”

Jinki smirked, stood up, and handed him his beer. “Alright then. Fuck it. Hold this.”

He turned, weaving through the tables – the crowd still buzzing from Fat Pat’s victory.

The air was thick with sweat, metal, and cheap alcohol.

Red light spilled across faces that looked alive for the first time all week.

At a corner table near the glowing pink bathroom sign sat Milany – long blonde hair cascading down her back, slim figure crossed elegantly at the knee, her fingers tracing the rim of her glass.

She didn't notice Jinki until his shadow fell across her table.

“So,” he said, leaning a forearm against the metal edge, “what's a beautiful girl like you doing in a dump like this, all by yourself?”

Milany looked up with a small smile.

“Maybe I was hoping you'd come protect me.”

Jinki grinned.

“Well, I'm not tryna catch another black eye. But I charge five for a quickie in the bathroom, twenty for oral if you want.”

Milany blinked, laughing and blushing at once. “What?!”

He raised both hands, smirking. “Kidding. I'm Jinki.”

She smiled, still pink.

“That's an interesting way to introduce yourself, Jinki.”

“You liked it,” he teased. “Your face got pinker than your lips when I said that.”

Milany tilted her head, amused.

“Maybe. So... do you want the five credits now or after?”

Jinki froze. “What?”

She stood, catching his hand. “Come on. Follow me.”

The pink glow from the restroom sign flickered as she pulled him along, the beat of the music thumping beneath their footsteps.

Then the sound died.

The music cut mid-beat, leaving only the hum of power through the walls.

“Hey!” Gino’s voice thundered from behind the counter. “Don’t touch that!”

A tall inmate near the console turned and flipped him off. “Zip it, Gino. Everyone shut up and listen!”

“Put the music back on!” someone yelled.

“Nobody wants your crap, man!” another shouted.

“Quiet!” the first man barked, panic trembling in his voice. “I think the mayor’s outside.”

The room fell dead still.

A girl whispered, “The... the mayor?”

“Shhh,” her neighbor hissed, eyes wide.

Outside, muffled through the metal walls – “Please, Mayor! I swear I didn’t mean to!”

Then three sharp gunshots cracked the night.

Silence.

Outside, a calm voice followed:

“Get the enforcers to clean this up, Crine.”

And a reply – measured, cold.

“Yes, sir.”

Inside the pub, a whisper rippled through the huddled crowd.

“You think he’s coming?” “I hope not...”

The saloon doors slammed open.
Two armored sector guards stepped inside,
visors glowing red.
Between them crawled a naked, bloodied man
on all fours – his back a torn map of scars and fresh
cuts.
Seated casually on the man's spine, holding a
leash of chains, was the mayor.
His tight black suit gleamed under the red
light, the long red cape wrapping across his chest like
a regal scarf.
White gloves, white boots, and spiked
shoulder plates gleamed with almost divine polish.
A black Kingsland crown crowned his brown
curls, inlaid with red and blue jewels pulsing faintly.
His sharp purple eyes glowed with a predator's
delight, a wart shadowing his smirk.
Behind him stood a familiar figure – Crine –
the enforcer who killed Pluto, silent and imposing,
his crimson and light-gray varsity suit gleaming
beneath the bar's glow.

His X-shaped bangs half-veiled his gaze as he watched the room.



Milany gasped, tugging Jinki down.

“It’s the Mayor! Get down!”

Every inmate dropped instantly, bowing their heads, foreheads pressed to the red floor.

The chained man groaned under the mayor’s weight, his trembling limbs barely holding.

The mayor smiled faintly, scanning the crowd.

“You see that, Crine?” he murmured. “Now that’s how I like to be greeted.”

He turned his head toward the counter.

“Bartender,” he said smoothly, “get me a drink. Something sweet.”

Gino, trembling, tried to nod and failed halfway through it. “R-right away, mayor.”

The mayor rested one white-gloved hand atop his human seat’s skull, his grin cutting deep.

“Good,” he said softly. “Let’s make this a pleasant evening.”

Jinki crouched low beside Milany, the pink glow of the bathroom sign faint in the distance – a good ten meters away.

The space between them and that door was open, the floor’s metallic surface reflecting slivers of light from the overhead stripe.

The rest of the pub was frozen in silence.

Every inmate around them was bowed, faces lowered to the floor, shoulders rigid with fear.

The air felt heavy, like it might shatter at the slightest sound.

Jinki leaned close, lowering his voice to a thread.

“Psst,” he whispered, their faces almost level. “The bathroom’s right there. We can reach it if we crawl.”

Milany’s eyes darted toward the counter where the mayor sat.

“Are you crazy?! What if he sees us?” she breathed, her whisper barely audible in the still air.

“He’s focused on getting his drink right now,” Jinki murmured, gaze fixed on the mayor’s movements. “We’ll be fine. Trust me.”

Behind the counter Gino placed a glass on the bar and stepped forward, nervous muscle in his jaw working as he presented it with both hands.

“This is my finest sweet drink sir. I hope you like it,” Gino said, voice steady where his hands were not.

The mayor lounged on the chained man’s back, one boot hooked near the counter. “Are you not going to drink anything?” he asked idly.

“I’m not too fond of alcohol sir,” Crine replied.

“Then have a glass of water. I won’t charge you for it.”

“If you insist.” Crine’s tone was polite, flat.

“Glass of water coming right up!” Gino answered, retreating with the tray.

Jinki crawled the last few feet with Milany beside him, the pink sign looming above. He whispered again, proud and careful.

“You see, I told you we’d make it. Now we just have to open that door without catching their attention.”

“We might be better off waiting for him to leave, no?” she breathed, trembling.

“You’re really scared, huh?” he said softly.

“Yeah...”

“Damn, I hope I don’t get blue balls for this,” he joked, half-grinning as she leaned in.

She slipped her lips to his ear and whispered, warm and audacious, “Good things are always better when you have to wait for them, right?”

Jinki’s corner of the mouth tugged; he felt the color rise. “Oh, hell yeah!” he whispered back. The mayor’s attention shifted.

“Have you had any luck with the ladies lately?”

“Nothing special, sir,” Crine answered, surface-calm.

“Oh, that won’t do! You see, I learned to treat my personal guards the way I like to be treated. So as long as you work under me, you can have any woman you like. Look around. I’m sure there’s at least one to your liking here.”

“I work with you, sir. Not under you. Be careful with your words,” Crine said.

“With you, under you, it’s all the same. Come on, pick a girl.”

“I’ll pass,” Crine replied.

“Hah! Well suit yourself. More for me then.”

The mayor turned and began to stroll among the bowed bodies, eyes like a predator cataloguing prey. His voice ran over the room. “Now let’s see what we got.”

He stopped before a young woman with brown hair who startled up at his demand.

“You. Look up, let me see your face.”

She obeyed timidly; the mayor recoiled theatrically.

“Ewwww! Put it away! I should toss you in the hole for insulting my eyes with your ugliness.”

He moved on, judging like a gaudy, cruel auctioneer.

“This one's too fat, this one looks like a guy, this one's not bad, but there might be better. This one's plain ugly.”

He paused, head cocked as if someone else's reflection had just reached him.

“You might've made the right decision by passing on my offer, Crine. There doesn't seem to be any girl that's particularly...”

He leaned forward, voice dropping to a whisper that the whole room heard anyway.

“Beautiful.”

Then he pointed, slow and certain.

“Blond haired lady in the back! What's your name?”

Milany's voice cracked out, small and stupid-sounding. “Who me?!”

“Precisely!” he said.

She stammered, “Well... I'm Citizen #47256?”

“Give me your name, not your id. number.”

She swallowed, cheeks flushing. “It's Milany.”

The mayor crouched in front of her in a disgusting little parody of intimacy – arms bent like a predatory T. Rex.

“Does your hair smell good, Milany?”

“Why? i-i don't know.” she stammered.

He buried his face in her hair, inhaling loudly.

“Sniiiiiiiiiiiiif, haaaaaaaaah. It's even better than I imagined,” he declared, smiling like a man who had found treasure.

“Are you a virgin?” he demanded.

“Wh-Why do you need to know that?” she muttered, frozen.

“I'm asking the questions here, sweetheart.”

He reached and, without ceremony, grabbed her by the hair and pulled her so his gloved hand could shockingly squeeze at her breast.

“Who would've thought I'd find such quality material in a dump like this.” The words were casual; the action was not.

Milany flinched and cried out, “Please stop. You're hurting me.”

“Turn around for me. I wish to see what you look like from behind,” the mayor ordered.

“I'm not comfortable with this,” she whispered, voice small and breaking.

“I could toss you in the hole for talking back to me, you know? Lucky for you, I love my ladies with a little bit of fight in them. Now turn around.” His smile widened like a happy vein.

Jinki, still bowed at the mayor's command but filled with panic and fury, tried an audacious gambit.

“She's actually a guy, mayor. If that's what you go for then do your thing, but you'd be better off leaving with an actual girl if you ask me.”

The mayor's face darkened.

“What?! Hey, who gave you permission to speak?”

“Sorry mayor, I’m just trying to lookout for you,” Jinki blurted, voice cracking.

“Milany, is it true?” the mayor demanded.

“Y-Yes?” she squeaked.

The mayor scoffed, and then – brutal, fast – kicked Jinki in the face.

He hit the floor with an ugly thud.

The mayor’s snarl was a blade.

“She’d have an Adam’s apple if she was a guy! Open up that filthy mouth of yours again, and you’ll regret it!”

He yanked Milany up by her hair. She screamed, “Aoooow!”

“Nice try Milany, but you’re not getting out of this. I’m going to have the time of my life with you tonight!” he said, as if arranging entertainment.

Milany was dragged on her knees, tears carving tracks down her face as she looked back once at Jinki. “No! Please!”

In Jinki’s skull a white-hot calculation chased the panic.

Come on Jinki, think! he thought. The gay card didn't work. So, what now?!

His eyes flicked the room, counting – three guards, the mayor’s monstrous presence, the bowed compliance of everyone else.

He saw a man bowing but suddenly defiant, lip curling with hatred, mouthing “scumbag” under his breath.

Everyone else in here hates him, and there's only three guards... If I make the first move, it should be enough to get

everyone riled up with me, he told himself, teeth clenched.



The mayor, satisfied, turned. “We can head back now, Crine. I got what I came for.”

“Mayor, be careful!” Crine warned, a note of something like caution threading his voice.

“Huh? What for?” the mayor asked, amusement in his tone.

Jinki’s legs launched off the metallic floor, bar chair raised above his head, his orange eyes blazing.

“Hey Karly! Let go of my girl, you shithead!” he yelled, aiming for the mayor.

The mayor twisted at the sound, startled; but before the chair could land, Crine blurred forward.

His kick slammed into Jinki’s ribs like a steel piston.

Jinki crashed against the metal wall with a thunderous clang. He slid down, coughing blood, the chair clattering beside him.

“Great job, Crine,” the mayor said, pleased.

“What should we do with him?” Crine asked, standing between them.

Jinki wheezed, spitting red onto the floor. What the fuck...? He doesn’t even have enforcer gear. How did he do that?

“Watch the girl and hold him down,” the mayor ordered.

A golden-yellow Soul Sphere bloomed into existence behind Crine’s shoulder; its surface carved with jagged, black scratch marks forming the number 25.

The air seemed to tighten.

His golden-brown aura flared violently, wavy patterns rippling outward from his figure.

A gravitational pulse burst outward from his palm; Dominator’s Echo.

The invisible weight smashed Jinki against the metallic floor, pinning him on his back, limbs spread like a star.

No... don’t tell me that guy’s—

“Guys!” Jinki shouted hoarsely. “Help me out! If we stick together, we can overthrow this bullshit! We don’t have to put up with this!”

No one moved. No one even dared to look up.

Ben’s whisper came soft and low. “Sorry, Jinki...”

The mayor stooped, picked up the fallen chair, and held it over Jinki.

“You wanted to hit me with this, didn’t you?”

The chair came down with a brutal crack, splitting skin and filling the room with the sound of steel on bone.

Jinki’s blood spread across the floor like ink.

Then came the kicks; vicious, repetitive, the sharp impact of a polished boot slamming against his face.

“Know your place!” The mayor’s voice rose with each blow. Thud.

“You pathetic!” Thud.

“Level Zero!” Thud.

“Bottom; feeding; scum!” Thud.

Jinki’s head snapped side to side, blood pooling beneath him. The sound of the strikes echoed through the silent pub like iron on iron.

Then the mayor finally stopped. His breathing was steady, almost satisfied.

He pressed his boot down on Jinki’s face, grinding it against the cold metal floor, pinning him there like something beneath his heel.

Jinki spat blood, grinned up through the pressure, and rasped, “Hey, Karly... your feet smell like shit.”

A vein twitched at the mayor’s temple, his grin twisting into something cold and cruel.

“Crine,” he said. “Take him in. We’ll make an example out of this insolent fool.”

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