

Magenta Zephyr & The Universe Bender

*EXCERPT #2
From the Novel by Tim Storm*

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Commission General Jackson “Jake” Aarons leaned back in his chair and lit up his morning cigar. He was seriously hung-over and the smoke filled his mouth with a bitter paste, not the fragrant flavors he had anticipated. In fact, it made him a little nauseous. He quickly snuffed the cigar, stifled a sudden upheaval of bile, and waved the offensive cloud away from his face. He decided to forsake that part of his breakfast, but he couldn’t live without his coffee. He grabbed a steaming mug off his desktop, splashing a bit of brown sludge on a sealed brief that he had been using as a coaster. He noticed that the folder was marked with a high security seal, and he snorted with contempt.

“Worm snot!” he cursed loudly. His bloated jowls rumbled and his face skewed into a tightly wrinkled pucker. “I’m just a figurehead. I shouldn’t have to deal with this petty crap!” *How dare they actually give him a file to look at!*

He stuffed his face into his coffee mug, inhaled deeply, and slurped up some of the soothing potion. It seemed to alleviate his hangover, so he lingered in the warm, aromatic atmosphere, making obscene noises as he drank, staring warily over the rim of his cup at the package as if it were a coiled viper.

He eventually relinquished his morning nectar and picked up the folder. He had no choice. It would certainly require an official response and some personal involvement on his part. He might even have to make a decision . . . God, please let it be something he could pass on to an underling! He had successfully avoided accountability during his long career by passing responsibility for these operations on to subordinate officers who had command over capable teams of operatives. Now that he was so close to retirement, he most certainly didn’t want to become embroiled in an important assignment that might jeopardize his pension. He had played it so safe, been so untouchable . . .

He picked up the envelope and placed his thumb on the red security seal which signified that this was a high-priority directive, not to be put aside, as he was tempted to do. He began to read with a detached resentment that quickly turned to grudging fascination. The file began with a strict directive for General Jake. His long and exemplary record had proven him to be the right man to oversee this operation. He had, through the years, demonstrated his ability to oversee critical operations quickly and efficiently without failure. This pressing matter was being assigned to him directly by the Board of High Commissioners and their involvement indicated that this was a matter of serious concern to them.

The first few paragraphs of the report gave him the impression that it might be tinged with a hint of paranoia on the part of the intelligence analysts who had prepared it. Though as he read on, he came to fully understand the gravity of the situation.

The brief from the Commission Intelligence Agency outlined the life of Michael Zephyr, beginning in-depth with his first immature submission to the Commission and leading through every phase of his life to the present day. It was a thorough biography, compiled mostly through e-data, but it also included more intimate details learned through surveillance, discreet inquiries, and some outright rubbish-picking.

There was enough evidence to show that Michael Zephyr's knowledge of physics had evolved to an advanced level. He was developing technology, as indicated by his sister's stage show, which among countless other applications could most certainly be applied toward the development of warfare technology. Commission analysts conjectured that Michael Zephyr was able to manipulate light in ways never before achieved through conventional methods. They speculated that he was accomplishing his technological wizardry by generating powerful gravitational fields!

The file included details on Michael's association with the Committee to Have Things Much Thinner by Taking the Third Dimension and Turning It Sideways. As tenuous and apathetic as his membership had been, it showed a definite penchant for rebellion. There was also an accounting of the Zephyr family's financial assets. Aside from the sizable fortune that had been left to the Zephyr siblings by their parents, profits from the band's current interplanetary tour were being funneled into "untouchable" bank accounts in sovereign realms and free-trade zones. Magenta Zephyr was amassing such large amounts of credit that it was impossible for Commission operatives to be certain of the full accounting, and her brother was utilizing every means to shield the wealth from the greedy hands of the Commission Revenue Service. This made it clear to Jake that he would be facing a clever adversary who would have nearly unlimited resources at his disposal.

There was a possibility that Jake might be able to confiscate some of that considerable wealth after he crushed the poor unsuspecting little bastard. That was reason enough for him to take a keen interest in the case, yet as he read on he began to realize that this assignment would require his undivided attention if he were going to complete it successfully. There was no way that he would be able to dump this assignment on one of his subordinates. He had just opened Pandora's Box and all the Miseries had flown right up his nose.

Magenta Zephyr's widespread popularity as a performer would make this a delicate operation. Her unparalleled fame gave her considerable public influence and therefore a measure of political power throughout Earth, the colonies, and many of the unalloyed alien regions. There could be serious political repercussions if the Commission were to take overt action against Magenta Zephyr and her entourage.

"What a pile of elephant dung I just stepped in," he muttered under his breath, gaining back his resentment.

He snatched a therma-pen and a note tab from the desktop and began writing names in neat block letters. Jackson Aarons was a lazy man, and his first step in addressing this assignment would be to gather a team of strategists and ruthless operatives who would quickly and efficiently resolve the situation.

It was clear that this case was of great consequence to the Commission. As he read the summary and terms of the operation, a devious grin spread across his ruddy face. There were at least a few bright aspects to this assignment. He was to be given a huge budget to carry out the

mission, which would allow him the opportunity to funnel a sizable amount of credit into his personal account. On top of that, he was given consent to operate outside of lawful restrictions and to requisition security forces as necessary during the course of the investigation. He had suddenly become a very powerful man by virtue of his newly granted authority.

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Please visit
www.magentazephyr.com
to learn more about Magenta Zephyr and the full-length novel
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