

Magenta Zephyr & The Universe Bender

*EXCERPT #7
From the Novel by Tim Storm*

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“The only thing you get when you kiss someone’s ass is a bad taste in your mouth.”
- *The Great Cosmic Book* -

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Bracchus the Pig paced about his elegant throne room, alone in his musings. The heels of his exotic leather boots clicked across ornately inlaid tiles creating an echo in the vast room. His dark, chiseled features were furrowed in a thoughtful pout. He had a weathered, handsome face framed by neatly trimmed coal-black hair and slender sideburns that grew forward in fine lines to form an ornately sculpted beard and mustache. He was impeccably groomed, dressed in a flawlessly tailored black military uniform and an oversized formal jacket with large gold epaulets. He marched moodily around the room, even without an audience carrying himself with the regal grace of a monarch. The man hardly brought to mind the word *pig*, but for his people it was an endearing term of affection given to him through their eccentric tradition. Each previous version of Bracchus had been given distinctive titles of their own. For instance, there had been Bracchus the Stick, who eventually grew to weigh four-hundred and seventy-nine pounds; Bracchus the Impotent, who had fathered forty-seven children; and the second clone of the original Bracchus, Bracchus the Fool, whose vision had helped turn the planet into a prospering enterprise and with brilliant foresight had begun building the self-sufficient underground paradise beneath the surface of the blighted planet.

This current Bracchus was the tenth incarnation of the original rebel leader; a successive clone, carrying the memories and attributes of all his previous incarnations. He had experienced nearly ten lifetimes in which to mature, sharpen his keen intellect, and increase in wisdom. Yet, there had been a subtle degradation of his moral character with each successive cloning. Though cloning is but a crude simulation of true immortality, it can lead to arrogance and delusions of invincibility. He had grown to be a shrewd, calculating, and selfish man, but not without lingering traces of the compassion and stout courage that had earned the original Bracchus the trust and loyalty of the rebel tribes who had reclaimed their planet. For nearly seven-hundred years, consecutive incarnations of Bracchus had held the firm, unquestioning devotion of the people of Garbag’e.

He mused far beneath the uninhabitable surface of the planet, preoccupied with his schemes and dreams; for, after all these hundreds of years, he sensed that the time had come for him to rise from the core of this rotted fruit of a planet and soar to majestic heights like a glorious phoenix.

His knowledge of Michael Zephyr's technology and its importance to the Commission gave him a formidable tool in his struggle for prominence in the Union of Outer Worlds. He would become a vastly more powerful man if he were able to acquire the technology. Its exact function was still a mystery to him, but that was unimportant. He would be able to determine that once he had it in his possession, and it was at this very moment being drawn closer by his own hand.

It was more than mere good fortune that the captain of the *Zephyr* had chosen to pass through this sector on his way through the Outer Regions. Bracchus felt that it had been predestined. All of his aspirations seemed to be coming to fruition; his ambitions of power and respect for himself and his subjects, and even his most intimate longings for love and redemption. All the elements that might bring about the realization of his hopes were falling perfectly into place with such little effort.

He had learned of the existence of Michael Zephyr's mysterious machine through his association with The Committee to Have Things Much Thinner by Taking the Third Dimension and Turning it Sideways. The leaders of the committee had given him all the information available to them and requested that he coerce Michael Zephyr into cooperating with their mission to destabilize the Commission for Interplanetary Unity. They believed that, whatever it was, the Universe Bender must hold tremendous potential and they had asked Bracchus to act on their behalf to ensure that it did not fall into the Commission's hands.

It seemed much more than coincidence that his political and personal aspirations might all be fulfilled by a seemingly random sequence of events. Not only was the key to immense political power now being drawn into his own port, but the woman who had come to him in his dreams had now come to him in the flesh. Magenta Zephyr was aboard that very same ship!

Bracchus had been enamored with Magenta Zephyr since he had seen his first holo of her. He spent an inordinate amount of time watching her performances and rare interview footage; he had collected every single recording that existed, including bootlegs. He had imprinted on his memory every image of her, every subtle movement, every word she spoke, every aspect of her. He spent hours imagining what it would be like to spend intimate moments alone with her and she had eventually become the object of his deepest desires. When he slept she visited him in vivid visions that left him heartbroken by their stark emotion and intensity when he woke in the morning. Her voice and her music mesmerized him. Her strength, her pure magic, awed him. Her beauty and grace enchanted him. Bracchus the Pig had fallen hopelessly in love with a woman he had never met.

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It's a song of a merryman, moping mum
Whose soul was sad, and whose glance was glum
Who sipped no sup, and who craved no crumb
As he sighed for the love of a lady

- *Sir William Schwenck Gilbert, from The Yeoman of the Guard* -

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

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