

# *SUPER GALAXY KNIGHTS* **STARSTUFF STORIES**



**Zofuhu's Big Break**

*My parents gave me a lot of sugar*

*They gave it to me every night*

*But if you give your kids some sugar*

*Expect them to take flight*

Cars sputtered past the Vepyxu City street corner where Niraji Zofuhu was playing his acoustic guitar. The 18-year-old's stomach grumbled. He looked over at his empty cap, and did some quick mental math. Still not enough to buy dinner. Niraji sighed, then continued to play.

*But when you lose your sugar*

*You also lose your home*

*And it's a sad, lonely life*

*When all.. you.. do..... is roam*

A middle-aged person in a business suit wheeling a heavy-looking suitcase dropped two coins into the boy's cap. Niraji looked down – both coins were hexagonal and gold. 4 Dojiti – should be enough to afford a small meal.

“Thanks a bunch, buddy!”

The businessperson nodded their head and smiled, closing their wallet. Suddenly, the person tripped, dropping their wallet on the ground. Bills flew out, and blew around in the wind. Niraji stood up with a start, and jumped after the money. He kicked off of a wall, catching a wad of 50's. He rolled through the streets, picking up a 500 Dojiti bill. After roughly a minute of sick flips and stunts, all the cash was caught. The boy handed the money back to the suited adult.

“Thanks, kid!” said the businessperson, putting the money back in their wallet. “I would have been in big trouble if I had lost that much change! Say... what's your story? How'd you come to be performing on this street corner?”

“Oh!” said Niraji. “Umm... it's a bit of a long tale. I come from the suburbs, where my parents work as heads of the homeowners' association. They wanted me to follow in their footsteps, but I wanted to be a musician. So... I ran away from home, and here I am!”

“Huh. Well, today's your lucky day, kid,” said the middle-aged person. “My name is Zurika Ga. I'm... something of a talent scout. And your music... is really something else. Want to come up to my office? Most of the higher-ups have already gone home, but I could get you a nice meal and a place to stay while we work out the contracts...”

“Th-that would be amazing, Mx. Ga!”

The talent scout chuckled. “Please, just call me Zurika. There's no need for formalities with me. So, what should I call you, kid?”

“Niraji. Niraji Zofuhu.”

“Another 'Z' name, eh? Fate works in mysterious ways. Anyway, follow me.”

Zurika dragged their suitcase into a nearby skyscraper. Niraji picked up his cap and ran to follow. Soon, the two were standing in the ornate lobby of an office building. There was one elevator at the end of the room, with a staircase door neighboring it.

Zurika sighed. “So... here's the thing. I just got back from a concert at the Dionaiya. Ever heard of it, Niraji?”

Niraji nodded. “That's pretty far away, isn't it?”

“That it is. It was a long trip, hence the big suitcase. My suitcase is so big... I don't think it'll fit in the elevator.”

“So... we should take the stairs?”

“I wish. I sprained my ankle a couple weeks back, so I don't think I'll be able to use the stairs...”

“Well, here,” said Niraji, grabbing the suitcase. “I'll carry your luggage up the stairs. You go ahead with the elevator.”

“Thank you, Niraji,” said Zurika. “Head to the tenth floor. Oh, and just so you know... my office closes in eleven minutes. And once it does, nobody can get in until tomorrow morning. So you'll have to move fast.”

“Got it!”

Niraji dragged the suitcase through the staircase door, and Zurika pressed the elevator button. The luggage was incredibly heavy. Each time it hit one of the steps, there was a loud metal clanging from the items inside. Niraji winced from the noise, but continued to pull the case. Despite his hunger, the boy was able to drag the case up to the tenth floor. There he saw another lobby, this one carpeted with some couches circling the center. Zurika was standing in front of a glass door, scratching their chin.

“Thank you so much!” said Zurika, turning to look back at the exhausted Niraji. “And you made it with four minutes to spare! But I'm afraid our worries aren't over just yet. I seem to have forgotten the key code to my office...”

“Well... uh... do you remember anything... about the code?” panted the boy, dragging the suitcase behind him. “Maybe... we can figure it out together!”

Zurika nodded, then motioned towards the keypad. Niraji looked. The keypad was in three rows of three – the top row had the numbers 1, 2, and 3, the middle row had the numbers 4, 5, and 6, and the bottom row had the numbers 7, 8, and 9.

“Let's see... I definitely remember that there were four digits in the code, but I can't remember if there were any repeats or not,” said Zurika. “I also know that when I enter in the code, I never move my hand down – only upwards or sideways. I know that the first number entered is divisible by the second number, and the second number plus 1 is divisible by the third number. I know that when moving from the second number to the third number, I don't move my hand to the right. I also remember that the fourth digit is even. Finally, I know that all four digits add up to 16. But that's all I can remember.”

Niraji stared at the keypad, pointing his finger at various keys while he thought.

“In that case...” said Niraji, “The code must be 9-3-2-2!”

Zurika grinned as they entered the digits into the keypad. The glass door unlocked with a click, and the two stepped inside. Niraji saw Zurika's desk at the end of a hallway lined in gold records. Zurika held up an arm, indicating for the boy to stop. He did so.

“Do you hear that noise?” asked Zurika. “It's a... ringing of some kind.”

“What are you talk-”

“Shhhh!” shushed the person in the suit. “Don't talk. Just listen.”

The two stood in the hallway in silence. Niraji turned his head, but couldn't hear any noises.

“I still don't hear anything, Zurika.”

“Try closing your eyes. You'll listen better that way.”

Niraji did as Zurika said – but no sounds became apparent.

“Now, take a deep breath,” said Zurika in a soothing voice. “Let your emotions leave your body. Open your mind.”

The young Zofuhu breathed in deeply. As he exhaled, he attempted to clear his mind of all emotions, and keep his mind open to any sensations he may have been missing. All at once, Niraji saw himself in a field of planets, stars, and galaxies. The celestial bodies orbited around him, slowly at first, but steadily picking up speed. As the universe spun around him, dust was let off by each of the heavenly bodies. This dust glowed in every color of the rainbow, and some colors that Niraji had never seen before but somehow recognized. Particles of neon pink dust broke away from the swirling clouds and began gravitating towards Niraji. The dust clung to his skin, but continued to spin around him in swirls of energy. Soon, Niraji felt a realization that the universe wasn't spinning around him – rather, that he was spinning within the universe. A dizzying sensation arose as Niraji felt himself spinning faster and faster. Niraji was about to hurl when a hand touched his chest.

The boy opened his eyes to find himself collapsed on the ground, with the talent scout standing over him.

“Are you all right?” asked Zurika. “You took quite the tumble there...”

“Yeah, I'm... fine,” said Niraji. The memory of the spinning universe and colored dust faded away, as if he had just woken from a dream. “I just... got a bit dizzy.”

“Well, I'm glad you're fine,” said Zurika as they helped the boy up. “Anyway, turns out the sound wasn't real! I'm just partially deaf in one ear!”

“Oh.”

“Anyway, follow me. I'll get you some preliminary contracts.”

The two walked over to Zurika's ornate desk. There was graffiti-themed wallpaper on the desk and all of the nearby walls, in neon pink, blue, and yellow – however, it was mostly hidden under a collection of gold-plated records. The carpet was black with white stripes (or white with black stripes). Zurika began rooting through their desk.

“I can't thank you enough for bringing me in here!” beamed the young Zofuhu. “I never thought I'd be signed onto a record label this soon!”

“Actually, I can do you one better,” said Zurika. “How would you like to be my apprentice?”

Niraji looked back at them in confusion. “What does that mean? Do I still get to play music?”

“Kid, you'll be a superstar,” responded the executive with a grin. “With me training you, your skills will reach heights you never could have imagined. And you'll never go hungry again!”

The boy's stomach growled. “Speaking of which... could I maybe have that meal you mentioned soon?”

“Oh, of course! I just need to unlock the storage rooms...”

Zurika closed the drawer they were looking through, and walked over to a nearby closet door. They reached into their pocket, but was interrupted by the sound of bullets shattering glass.

The two turned to look back at the door. Three bullets flew down the hallway. The bullets' trajectory was aimed at the wall in between the two. In an instant, however, long, thin, leafy branches popped out of the shadows of each bullet. Each bullet was poked by a branch, knocking it slightly off

course. All three bullets hit the exact same spot on Zurika's bicep, with laser-like precision. The businessperson fell over, blood spurting out of their arm. Two figures in dark suits stepped into the office. Niraji had a hard time seeing them through the dust, but he was able to make out some of their features. One was a man with a blue mohawk, and a long neck with green spots tattooed onto it. The other was a woman who held a smoking revolver, wore glasses, and had an emerald ring on each of her fingers. Niraji was busy examining the two intruders when he felt his legs get kicked out from beneath him. The boy fell to the ground with a soft thudding sound. As he got up, Niraji noticed that his skin and clothes had somehow been painted to look exactly like the carpet below him. Zurika looked back at Niraji with a panicked expression, and motioned for him to stay down. The young Zofuhu saw the dust clearing, and quickly lay down before the two assailants could notice him.

“Electric Zebra,” said the man with a sneer. “It's been a long time, hasn't it? I really missed that ugly mug of yours...”

“I could say the same for you, Narcotic Giraffe,” said Zurika. “I see the decades haven't been kind to you... or perhaps 'centuries', going off those wrinkles. Any particular reason you're calling on me this fine evening?”

“Rahck off, Zaebra, yah bludgah!” shouted the woman. “Yah knaow whaht weah heah faw!”

“Good day to you too, Gunner Koala,” said Zurika. “I'm not sure what you said, but I'm sure it was something incredibly polite.”

“She's still mad about you breaking the band up 25 years ago, and is here to exact her revenge,” said Giraffe. “Although personally, I don't see what the big deal is.”

“Yayh, mite, yah biled on us!” shouted Koala. “It's yoah fault thaht Oy've bayn stuck eow' in the bush weeth a paeh of ighnkle boitahs thaese puyst couple decuydes!”

“My fault?” said Zurika indignantly. “I'm not the one who shot Blizzard Ostrich! You should be happy I didn't report you to the police, you murderer!”

“Well, we had no other choice,” said Giraffe. “Ostrich was going to tell the world my secret. Still, we could have kept the band together if it wasn't for your ridiculous... emotional hangups.”

“Wait... *you* asked Koala to kill Ostrich?! But... why?!”

Giraffe chuckled. “Well, let's just say she found out about some... businesses I was running.”

“You mean about the drugs you were selling? Because that wasn't exactly a secret, dude.”

Giraffe scowled. “So... you know too. Looks like K dragging me out here wasn't a waste after all. Well then, I suppose we'll have to part ways soon. But first... Koala, are there any witnesses nearby?”

“Theah's a paeh of shuydaows thaht hahve bayn paeriodicohly movin at point-zaerao-zaerao-zaerao-two cleecks pah saecawnd,” said Gunner Koala. “Thaht's too bloody slaow faw moy aboility t' trahck the pawseetion accuruytely, buh' Oy'm guessin Zaebr a coloahd some deepsteock t' mahtch the cahpeh' and he's too much of a guylahh t' kayp frawm bleenkin hiies eoys.”

Niraji gasped silently, after a few minutes of thinking Koala's sentence over.

“Well, I'm sure we'll be able to find him once Zebra's ability wears off,” said Giraffe, slowly stepping towards Zurika. “For now, let's get rid of the trash.”

“What, are you going to have Koala kill me too?”

“Oh, of course not,” said Giraffe. The older man picked Zurika up by the collar, and stared into their eyes. “There's only one way us aging rockstars get to go out.”

Narcotic Giraffe's eyes glowed blue, and beams of light shot into Zurika's eyes. Zurika felt their body's systems shut down as opioids filled their bloodstream.

“NO!” shouted Niraji. He stood up sharply. The camouflage faded away as Zurika fell to the ground. Their face was pale, their veins were glowing blue, and they were completely motionless. Emotions flooded the young man's head. His future master... the person who promised to change his life... gone forever!

“Koala, you know what to do!”

“Bawnzah!”

Gunner Koala fired her remaining three shots. Her aim wasn't exact, but three branches came out

of the bullets' shadows, redirecting them towards Niraji's forehead. Just as they struck their mark, however, Niraji entire body and outfit turned into water vapor. Niraji felt his existence blur as the cloud he had turned into filled the room. His intense hunger felt like it was pulling him in all directions at high speeds, and he was able to see the room from all angles.

*“No! I... can't let these feelings overwhelm me!”* thought the young Zofuhu. *“I... I have to accept my fate!”*

After a few seconds of swirling around, the clouds coalesced back into a human form. To Niraji's surprise, he had manifested behind Gunner Koala. But Niraji did not feel quite whole yet. There was still something missing. His savior! His... his friend!

“Croikey! Haow'd yah geh' bahck theah, yah mawzzie?”

“Don't just stand there, shoot him!”

Gunner Koala began reloading her revolver. Just then, Niraji's feelings of loss exploded out of him as a wave of electricity. Narcotic Giraffe and Gunner Koala were blasted back, and crashed against the wall. The two slumped to the ground – burnt to a crisp.

Niraji's breathing calmed. The electricity and mist surrounding his body faded away. Niraji looked towards Zurika. They were a little ashen, but otherwise their body seemed intact. Niraji ran over to his friend. Still breathing! The narcotics overdose hadn't killed them!

“Come on, come on...” said Niraji, rubbing his hands together.

Sparks flew from the Zofuhu boy's palms. After a few seconds of building charge, he slapped Zurika on the chest. The executive gasped, then sat up with a start.

“You... you're alive!”

Zurika smiled. “Now that... that was electric!”

Niraji hugged Zurika, and the adult returned the favor.

“I should probably head to the hospital to get treated... but for now, we should get something to

eat. How does that sound?"

Zofuhu smiled, tears streaming down his cheeks. "Let's do it," said the new Electric Zebra.