

## The Techni-Crusader #2 - "Starstruck"

Written by Steven Bland

At the Tombs Prison, a guard escorted an unrepentant serial killer named James Lanza to his cell. Lanza was clad in a bright orange prison suit, had tattoos covering his body, and had spiked red hair. Soon, the guard and Lanza arrived at the cell, which was reserved for the latter.

"It's been a *long time* coming, Lanza, but you've *finally* been caught," the guard told Lanza. "You're wanted for murder in *three states*!"

"Yeah, I got caught all right," Lanza exclaimed. "Thanks to that crummy D.A.! When I get outta this dump, and I *will*, I'm gonna *find* him - - and *kill* him!"

"You're not going *anywhere*, Lanza," the guard told the criminal. "We beefed up our security here just for you. You're gonna be here for a *very long time* to come, so you might as well make yourself at home."

Soon, the guard removed Lanza's handcuffs.

"I don't *think* so," Lanza snarled as he immediately attacked the guard who had uncuffed him.

"UNNHH," moaned the guard as he fell to the floor unconscious. A second guard, who was also present, saw what had happened.

"MURPHY," the second guard cried out. Then, Lanza took the unconscious guard's rifle.

"*FREEZE*, LANZA," the second guard shouted. "OR *SO HELP ME*, I'LL - -"

"YOU'LL DO *NOTHING*," Lanza exclaimed as he socked the second guard.

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"I'm gettin' outta here," Lanza exclaimed before running off, heading for the exit. The guards got out their walkie talkies.

"LANZA'S *ESCAPING*," one of the guards exclaimed. "*STOP HIM!*"

Soon, Lanza reached the exit, but two guards suddenly arrived to block his path.

"End of the line, Lanza," one guard said.

"Give up and go *back* to your cell! *NOW*," the other guard told Lanza.

"*FAT CHANCE*," Lanza snarled. He reversed the grip on the rifle he had taken and quickly clubbed the two guards with it, knocking them unconscious.

Soon, Lanza was through the exit and out of the building.

"*FREE! FREE AT LAST*," Lanza crowed.

Soon, Lanza saw a car approaching and went in front of it, blocking its way. Startled, the car's driver screeched to a halt. Then, the criminal ran toward the driver's side of the car and, upon reaching it, quickly opened the door.

"*GET OUTTA THERE*," Lanza shouted as he grabbed the driver and tossed him aside to the curb.

"*I'M DRIVIN*!" Lanza exclaimed as he got in the driver's seat. Once he was inside, Lanza closed the door behind him and sped off.

Soon, however, Lanza had police cars on his tail. An officer in one of the police cars peered out of his car window with a bullhorn.

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"JAMES LANZA, THIS IS THE POLICE," the police officer said through the bullhorn.

"PULL OVER, *NOW!*"

I *gotta* lose those cops, Lanza thought as he continued speeding. And I know *just how* to do it.

Lanza drove through a maze of streets for a few hours until the police were finally off his trail.

I *did* it. I *lost* them. Now, I just gotta *lay low* until the heat's off me, Lanza thought. And I know *just where* to go.

Inside a personal laboratory at his house, Colin Broome, a young skinny man with short brown hair and horn-rimmed glasses, who was clad in khakis, dress shoes, and a white short sleeved buttoned-down shirt, was wearing and testing his latest invention, a high-tech energy harness which allowed the wearer to fly and could channel an unknown form of stellar radiation which the wearer was able to manipulate.

"IT *WORKS*," the scientist exclaimed gleefully as he flew around his lab and discharged a stellar energy blast from his right hand. "MY ENERGY HARNESS *REALLY* WORKS!! It channels an unknown form of energy from the stars *themselves!*"

"*Energy* that I can *manipulate* to produce light," an overjoyed Colin said as he projected a beam of stellar heat at a sheet of three-inch steel. It melted in seconds. "Or *heat!*"

"Or to create simple energy constructs that I can shape into *anything*," Colin crowed as he created a model of a car and reshaped it into a statue of a human being.

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"Or to *levitate* anything," Colin gushed as he levitated a cup of coffee from a counter that was a few feet away from him. The cup of coffee flew to his hand. Once the cup was in his hand, Colin took a sip from it and then set it down.

"Or *anyone*, like myself," Colin said as he used his harness's power to levitate himself. Soon, he was flying around the room.

"THIS IS THE *SCIENTIFIC BREAKTHROUGH OF THE 21ST CENTURY*," Colin exclaimed as he continued flying for a few minutes.

Soon, the scientist alighted on the floor. Once he landed, he took off the high-tech harness and brought it to his lab table, which had blueprints for the high-tech harness lying on it. Once he was at his lab table, the scientist set down the harness and then, took out some tools.

"Once I've *perfected* this energy harness," the overjoyed scientist said as he prepared to work on the harness. "It could be used as a tool for *peace*."

Suddenly, Lanza burst in, startling Broome.

"COLIN," Lanza called out to the scientist.

"JAMES," Colin exclaimed. "WHAT ARE YOU *DOING* HERE?"

"*Hide* me, Colin," Lanza ordered. "The cops will be here *any minute!*"

"*Why* should I help *you*?" Colin asked. "You're a *wanted man!*"

"*Why?!*" Lanza asked incredulously. "Because we're *family*, *that's why!*"

"*NO*," Colin answered defiantly. "I don't care if we *are* cousins! I *won't do it!*"

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"You always *were* a straight arrow, Colin" Lanza told the scientist. "That *always* got on my nerves!"

"But, *not* tonight! Not *anymore*," Lanza said as he took out the rifle he had appropriated from the prison guard.

"James, *where* did you get that gun?" A fearful Colin asked.

"I *lifted* it from one of the guards when I escaped prison," Lanza answered as he aimed his gun at his scientist cousin.

"Good night, Colin! FOREVER," Lanza exclaimed as he shot his cousin. Colin fell to the floor dead.

The energy harness that Colin was about to improve on and the blueprints for the harness soon caught Lanza's eye.

"Well, *well*," Lanza said with an evil smile. "*What* have we here?"

The criminal perused the blueprints and was impressed by what he beheld.

"A high-tech energy harness that enables the person wearing it to fly and to channel and manipulate stellar energy? Oh, Colin, you *magnificent fool*," Lanza muttered with a cruel smile.

Lanza turned his attention to the door as he heard police officers pounding on it.

"*OPEN UP, LANZA*," one of the cops from outside said. "*WE KNOW YOU'RE IN THERE!!*"

"This baby's my ticket *outta* here! Thanks, Colin," Lanza said as he grabbed the harness and quickly put it on. Then, he activated it.

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Soon, the cops burst in.

"You're going *back* to your *prison cell*, Lanza," one of the cops told him..

"I don't *think* so," Lanza snarled as he fired a stellar energy blast at the cops.

"TAKE COVER!" One of the cops exclaimed as they all took cover.

"I'M *OUTTA HERE*," Lanza exclaimed as he fired an energy blast at the roof, creating a huge hole in it. Then, he flew out through it.

*Now*, I'm gonna get my *revenge* on the man who sent me away, Lanza thought as he streaked off through the sky.

Meanwhile, at a house in Rego Park, Queens, Kevin Chase ate dinner with his father, Carter and mother, Laura. Carter and Laura both had black hair and brown eyes. Carter wore a long sleeve buttoned-down shirt with navy blue slacks and black dress shoes. Laura wore a yellowish blouse with a beige skirt and slip-on shoes. Kevin wore blue jeans, a red T-shirt, and sneakers. Dinner consisted of chicken curry, curried potatoes, green beans sauteed with garlic, ginger, onions, and spices.

"So, Carter, how was your day today?" Laura asked.

"Well, it took months of gathering evidence, but I finally put James Lanza in jail, today," Carter replied. "He won't be on the streets for *many years* to come."

"That's wonderful," Laura said. "It's *about time* that monster finally *pays* for all the lives he's ruined."

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"So, champ, how was school today?" Carter asked his son.

"Great," Kevin replied. "I got an 'A' on my science test, today."

"That's great, son," Carter told Kevin.

"Yes, it is, Kevin," Laura said. "We are so *proud* of you."

Suddenly, a hole is blown through one of the walls in the dining room.

"GET DOWN," Carter told Laura and Kevin. They immediately ducked for cover.

"Yoo hoo," Lanza said with a cruel lilt as he flew inside through the hole. Once he was inside, he hovered a few feet over the floor.

"District Attorney Chase, are you home?" Lanza asked.

That *voice*, Carter thought. He soon turned his attention to Lanza.

"James Lanza," Carter said as he got up.

"Dad, you *know* this guy?" Kevin asked as he and Laura got up as well.

"Yeah, kid, he *knows* me all right," Lanza replied with a snarl. "*He's* the creep who sent me to *prison!*"

"That's because you *murdered* countless people in three states for *no reason!*" Carter angrily told Lanza.

Kevin and Laura watched as Lanza pointed his hands at Carter.

"And *now*," Lanza said as he caused his hands to glow with stellar energy. "I'm gonna kill *you!*"

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"DON'T *BET* ON IT," Kevin exclaimed. Responding to his mental commands, the Zeotronix on his right wrist, covered Kevin head to toe with a powered suit of green and silver bio armor before the startled eyes of his parents and Lanza himself.

I don't care about the consequences of armoring up in front of Lanza and my folks! Keeping the Zeotronix a secret isn't worth Mom and Dad losing their lives right now, the Techni-Crusader thought as he took advantage of Lanza's confusion and fired a pulse bolt at him, blasting the criminal through the big hole he left in the wall.

"DAD, *RUN*," the armored superhero told his father before going after Lanza. "*I'll* deal with Lanza."

Carter listened to his son and ran out of the house.

However, once he was outside, Carter stopped running to see Lanza firing a beam of stellar heat energy at the Techni-Crusader, who blocked it with his photonic energy shield.

"Ooohhh, solid light shield," an impressed Lanza remarked. "*Very impressive.*"

"But, this'll *really* floor you," Lanza exclaimed as he formed an energy construct in the shape of a fist and used it to deliver a powerful punch to the armored superhero before Carter's horrified eyes.

"OOOFF," Techni-Crusader exclaimed as the punch knocked him out.

Kevin, my son, a concerned Carter thought. He soon saw Lanza, whose back was turned to the former, walking toward Techni-Crusader and standing over him. Lanza, with his hands generating powerful stellar energy, prepared to fire a powerful energy blast at the armored superhero.

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"TIME TO *DIE*, NOW," Lanza exclaimed to the Techni-Crusader as the former was about to release his deadly bolt.

I know Kevin *told me* to run before Lanza could get *another chance* to kill me, Carter thought. But, I *can't* abandon my *own son*. I just *can't*!

"*GET AWAY FROM MY SON, YOU CREEP!*" Carter exclaimed as he charged toward and tackled Lanza, taking him by surprise. The action bought the armored superhero time to slowly regain consciousness.

Wow, Lanza's energy fist really packed quite a wallop, the Techni-Crusader thought. Then, he turned his attention to his father fighting Lanza. During their struggle, Lanza killed Carter with an energy blast before Kevin's eyes.

"DAD!! NOOOO," screamed the armored superhero, who ran to his father's side.

"Dad, why? Why didn't you *leave* when you had the *chance*?" An anguished Techni-Crusader asked.

"I *couldn't* leave you. You're my son. You're *more important* to me than anything," a dying Carter said, before he passed away.

"Dad! Dad," the sobbing superhero cried as he cradled his father's corpse.

"How *touching*. He died trying to save you!"

The Techni-Crusader felt Lanza's presence behind him. Turning his attention toward the criminal, the angry superhero slowly got up on his feet to face him.

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"But, don't worry, you'll be joining him, *real soon*," Lanza said cruelly before he fired a stellar energy blast at the armored superhero.

"I DON'T THINK SO, MURDERER," the Techni-Crusader exclaimed as he blocked Lanza's energy blast with his energy shield. "YOUR DAYS OF KILLING PEOPLE - - "

"- - ARE *OVER!*" the armored superhero exclaimed as he fired a barrage of pulse bolts on Lanza, but the murderer put up a defensive force field.

The stalemate lasted a few minutes until Lanza's harness experienced a glitch.

"NO," Lanza exclaimed. "WHAT'S HAPPENING?!"

"I don't know, and quite frankly, I don't *care*," an angry Techni-Crusader responded as he charged toward Lanza and ripped the high-tech harness off of him.

"Right now, the *only thing* that matters," the armored superhero said as he pushed Lanza down.

"Is that I will *make sure* you won't kill anyone *ever again*," the Techni-Crusader said as he aimed the palm of his right hand, which was pulsing with energy, at a profusely sweating Lanza, who was cowering in fear.

"NOOOO," screamed Lanza. The Techni-Crusader moved his right hand only a few inches away from the criminal and fired at the ground near him instead. Lanza's heart was pounding like a jackhammer.

"I *could have taken* from you what you took from *my father* just now," the armored superhero said as he picked a trembling Lanza up off the ground. "But, *lucky* for you, I chose *not to!*"

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"Death is *too good* for you! You're going to spend the *rest of your miserable life* behind bars *thinking* about all the things you did for *no reason*," the Techni-Crusader said as he took off with Lanza.

Soon, the Techni-Crusader flew Lanza to the Tombs Prison. Upon arriving at his destination, the armored superhero, finding two guards there, landed and brought Lanza inside with him. The guards were in awe of the armored figure before them.

"Special delivery, guys," the Techni-Crusader said as he handed Lanza to the first guard.

"Lanza's ready for his cell, now. And, I have a feeling that *this time*, he *won't* try to escape!"

"Will you?" the armored superhero asked as he gave Lanza an intimidating look.

"N-N-NO," Lanza replied fearfully. Then, the criminal turned his attention to the first guard.

"Take me to my cell, *please*," Lanza begged the first guard. "I *promise* I won't resist. Just - - just *keep him away* from me!"

"With *pleasure*," said the first guard before he escorted Lanza to his cell.

"That was mighty fine work you did, son," the second guard told the Techni-Crusader. "What's your name?"

"I'm the Techni-Crusader," the armored superhero replied.

"I hope we'll see you again soon, 'Techni-Crusader'," the second guard said.

"You will," the armored superhero said as he hovered a few feet off the ground.

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"Keep up the good work," he said with a salute, before taking off.

The next morning, the funeral for Carter Chase occurred at the Flushing Cemetery. In attendance were Kevin Chase, his mother, Laura, and their other family members. They were standing with the reverend around the coffin that contained Carter's corpse.

"You may well ask why Carter Chase was taken from us in such an unfortunate and untimely manner," the priest told everyone in attendance. "I can't answer that question. Only *God himself* knows the reasons for the hardships that plague us. Carter Chase was a good man. He loved his wife and son unconditionally and they, in turn, loved him, as did many of his friends and other members of his family. I mourn with you, my friends, but, you and I can take comfort that God has gathered him up to Heaven. Ashes to ashes, dust to dust."

Soon, the coffin was lowered into the ground. Once the coffin was completely six feet under, it was buried. After the burial, Kevin and his mother went to talk in private.

"I'm really going to miss Dad," Kevin said.

"Me too," Laura said. "It wasn't fair that that monster James Lanza took him from us."

"I wanted to *kill* Lanza. I really did," Kevin confessed to his mother. "But I *couldn't do it*. Dad wouldn't have approved. Lanza's back in prison *for good*. He won't be breaking out again *any time soon*. I *personally* saw to that."

"That thing on your wrist, this - -?" Laura asked.

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"Zeotronix," Kevin answered.

"Yes," Laura said. "How did you get it? Where did it come from?"

"I was sitting on the bleachers at high school watching the girls soccer team, hoping to see Amy Taylor, the team's star forward," Kevin answered. "I was thinking of going up to her to ask her out, when I heard a crash behind the bleachers. I went to investigate it and found a rocket containing a gauntlet-like alien device called the Zeotronix, which attached itself to my wrist and wouldn't come off."

"Then, this big hulking alien guy named Caliguax showed up," Kevin continued. "He wanted the Zeotronix that was on my wrist. When I couldn't give it to him, he threatened to destroy Amy."

"Somehow, the Zeotronix responded to my desire to be like the Knights of the Round Table I read so much about," he added. "It covered me in a suit of green and silver powered bio-armor which increased my strength and reflexes and gave me some really cool weapons. The armor allowed me to defeat Caliguax and save Amy."

"Unfortunately, Amy was so traumatized by the experience, that she decided to transfer to another school," a chagrined Kevin continued. "All I wanted was to be a knight in shining armor myself."

"But, you *are* a knight in shining armor," Laura said with a smile. "My knight in shining armor."

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"Thanks, Mom," Kevin said. "I really needed that."

Kevin and his mother hugged each other.

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