



EXCERPT 1:  
*Starlight Rainbow*

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Published by Quicycle Books, a division of the Quantum  
Bicycle Society, [www.Quicycle.com](http://www.Quicycle.com).  
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*Excerpt from...*  
CHAPTER 08:  
*Violet*

Rymer resumes her business tone. “Ok. We’re going to push on ahead now. That means engaging photonic propulsion. For those of you who are new to the experience, it’s pretty damn cool. You can strap in if you want, but you don’t have to. We’ll be in zero-G the whole time and you won’t feel any acceleration whatsoever, which is going to feel really weird. If you look out of the front window as we go, you’ll see something really beautiful. I’m not going to tell you about it. It’s better if you just experience it for yourselves.”

Rudiger cannot contain his interest, “How does it work?”

Bhalla is excited to begin explaining. “First, we—“

Rymer interrupts. “Talk after. Just enjoy now.”

“Ok.” Bhalla down-shifts his enthusiasm back into neutral.

“Aksel...” Rymer gestures for Bolt to take her chair up front beside Ohr so he can get the best view of the jump to photonic speed.

Bolt floats over with a smile and a “Thanks, Amma.”

The rest of the *Centaurian I* crew move closer to the cockpit and Bhalla and Kihumba move back to give the newcomers preferential view. Rudiger positions himself right behind Ohr’s chair so he can watch not only the view but also his operating of the controls. Rymer nods to Ohr.

Ohr begins the process, manipulating the controls and placing his hand on the joystick.

“Ok, brace for thrusters. I’m going to use the port thrusters just to get us back onto our original vector. We will be parallel and not too far from your previous course, so it won’t affect our arrival coordinates in a way that makes any difference. We’ll do any minor course corrections on thrusters when we get there before orbital acquisition. Ok, in three, two, one...”

He fires the thrusters lightly and the ship eases to the starboard side. The crew recoil slightly in response as the ship achieves a course perfectly parallel to the shadowing *Centaurian I*, now too far off the starboard side to see against the darkness of space.

Ohr continues, "Course correction complete."

Johnny Bang asks, "You sure we don't have to strap in?"

Bhalla tries to allay his fears, "No. If the field doesn't reach coherence, we don't go anywhere. When it snaps into coherence, we are in an inertial bubble and traveling at 99.88% C. There is no in-between. It's quantized," he smiles. "Quantum one, travel at one speed; quantum two, travel at the other speed."

Rudiger looks at Bhalla, "I think you and I are gonna be having a conversation about the conservation of energy and momentum."

Bhalla smiles, "My pleasure."

Ohr resumes, "Ok, people. Here we go."

He touches an icon on his monitor and it illustrates that a field is forming around a diagram of the ship. The field is growing in intensity and a counter shows its progress as a percentage: 10%, 20%, 30%... There is a slight humming sound that can now be heard, growing gradually in pitch as the counter passes 50%. Yarrow has a big grin on her face, excited by what is about to happen, and Rymer finds herself enjoying the fact that she knows and has done what Yarrow has yet to know and do.

The pitch of the sound gets slowly softer and higher as the counter passes 75%, then 80%, and then 90%. Rymer looks forward. She has seen it before, but this sight is not going to get old in a hurry. They are a second or two away now.

"Watch this..." she whispers.

The counter reaches 100%. Harmonic resonance. Field coherence is achieved, and the ship snaps into photonic transit.

The view from the cockpit is nothing short of breathtaking. Up to now, the stars ahead of them, most prominently the Alpha Centauris, had been bright and with a distinct blue hue. Now, their brightness is turned up as if by a volume knob. Simultaneously, their color morphs up the rainbow of frequencies, from an intense blue into a brilliant indigo, and then into a deep and rich violet

color the likes of which they have never seen before. The Centauri stars appear to have a halo of violet-colored lens-flare, and because they are aiming for its center, it gives the illusion that the ship is in a round laser tunnel with a star at the end, a tunnel not much wider than the ship, its walls delicate veils of soft purple light.

Chen gasps. Elias gives a barely audible “Beautiful...” Yarrow feels a tear forming in the corner of her eye. She is at the same time awed by the experience and a little annoyed that the tear is affecting her eye’s ability to focus on the spectacle before it.

Bolt turns his head slowly, taking in the rest of the panorama. As he gazes further away from the forward direction, the stars in the background become less violet and more indigo, then blue, and then even white-green as he cranes his neck to look further back, but the ship is obstructing his view. He touches the display in front of him and pulls up a camera view of the exterior. He pans the view around so that he can continue his visual survey. As the camera moves from side view to back view, the stars appear to change from white-green, through yellow, getting fainter as they move through orange, and becoming a dimmer dark red in the direction of home. The Sun, for his entire life the most dominant star in his experience, is now becoming a tiny, deep-red blood star. It still shines rather brightly, but Bolt knows that the further they go, the dimmer and smaller it will become. He returns his gaze to the front of the ship. He feels like he will remember every detail of this moment for as long as he lives.

“It’s magnificent,” he marvels. And it truly is. They have come from red; they are heading into violet, and they are flying past orange, yellow, green, blue, and indigo. This is a sight that he knows only a small portion of humanity will ever get to see in person. They are a privileged few — explorers far from home, and they are flying through a starlight rainbow.