

**The NEBADOR series:**

**Book One: The Test**  
Spring 2010

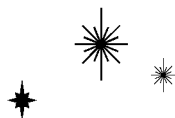
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**Book Six: Star Station**  
2012





# NEBADOR

Book One



## The Test

an epic young-adult science fiction adventure

by

J. Z. Colby



Nebador Archives



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## **Greetings, young people of planet Earth,**

Much adult science fiction is based on the assumption that the human race will be in charge, or at least high up on the pecking order, when we venture to the stars. Young adults have a somewhat clearer memory that when they graduated elementary school, they were not immediately movers and shakers of the world, but instead found themselves in middle school.

Young adults also remember well the training wheels on their first small bicycles. Will-power alone could not propel them to their destinations.

Nebador is about little steps the smallest of us can make from the playpen to the university, from the gutter to the stars.

As you know, your world is changing very rapidly. During times of change, those who are stuck in old, rigid ways of thinking and feeling often don't do well. Those who can see far and think clearly are best prepared to survive, prosper in some way, and find happiness.

Stories like these help by letting us walk in the shoes of those who have lived through similar times. They become our heroes, giving us strength when we face challenges, and whispering their inspiration to us when we must solve problems.

Someday, many years from now, your stories may also be told, and you will become heroes to younger people who are struggling to understand the universe. They will take comfort in your courage, and learn from the lessons you have already learned.

J. Z. Colby  
2010



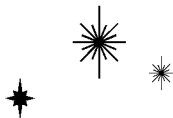
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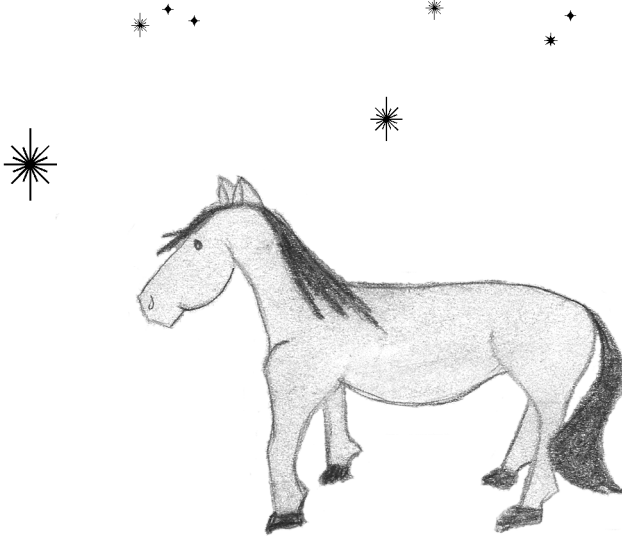
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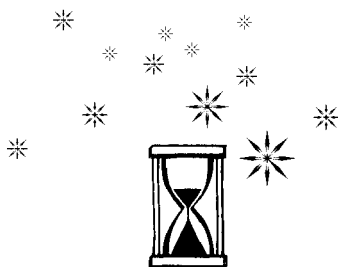
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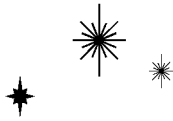


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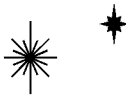
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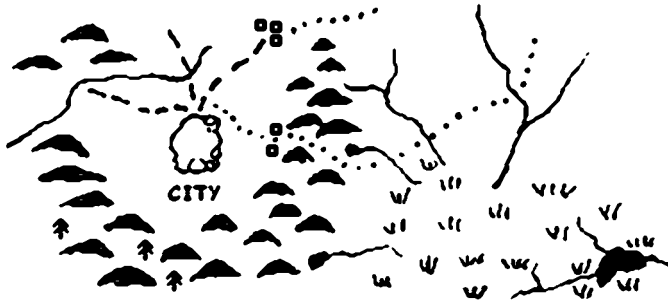




“Personal power is the ability to stand on your own two feet, with a smile on your face, in the middle of a universe that contains a million ways to crush you.”

— Nebador Transport Service saying





## Chapter 1: First Contact

The boot, of some strange, shiny material, made a sucking sound as it pulled free of the sticky mud. One step farther along, water spiders skipped away as the boot plunged back into the swamp.

After several more strides through the watery black ooze, the light-haired young man looked ahead. Bushes and willowy trees covered the higher ground, still many steps away. Green eyes sparkling with curiosity, his face revealed about two decades of life, perhaps a little more.

He teetered for a moment, regained his balance, and wiped the sweat from his brow with a sleeve. Glancing back to where his tracks began, he watched as the large bulge in the swamp sank lower and lower. Shivering, he groped for the wide, dark metal bracelet on his left arm. After fingering it thoughtfully for a moment, he relaxed, took a deep breath, and turned back to his path.

Finally, with only one muddy step remaining, he tossed his shoulder bag onto the grassy bank and reached for a small tree. As he pulled himself onto higher ground, the swamp sucked at his boots one last time, inviting him to join the many creatures whose bones rotted in its murky depths.



As soon as the young man stood up, three large four-legged animals grazing nearby raised their heads and made throaty sounds. After a moment of thought, he whispered, "Horse." They shifted positions and returned to grazing, all three female, one close to giving birth.

Suddenly a large, dark-brown stallion bolted from behind a bush, called a threatening high-pitched challenge, and began stomping the ground and moving forward.

The young man stood with his back to the swamp as the huge male animal approached and towered over him. The man's right hand moved toward his

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bracelet, but the stallion thrashed its head violently and sliced the air with powerful hooves.

The young man lowered his hands and focused on breathing evenly.

After more ear-piercing calls, the stallion began to relax, but did not retreat. Snorting, the horse took in the scent of the puny human it could easily butt right into the treacherous swamp.

The young man began to hum a simple melody while keeping his hands at his sides.

The stallion twitched its ears to catch the new sound, then suddenly opened its mouth and gripped the man's shoulder with powerful teeth. For several heartbeats the teeth lingered, threatening to crush muscle and bone while the young man hummed softly.

With a jerk of its head, the stallion released its grip and leapt away, knocking the man off his feet. The three mares bolted. The stallion paused a stone's throw away, looked back, and finally galloped after the mares into the grasslands that spread out northward, toward the snowcapped mountains on the horizon.



The young man swallowed, let out a long shaking sigh, and closed his eyes as he listened to his throbbing heart.

A minute later, he slowly stood up, and gradually a look of contentment appeared as he scanned his environment. The land everywhere was full of light green shoots and new leaves. From overhead came the cries of winged creatures. Looking up, he saw them circle, dark feathers stretched out to catch the rising air. With few clouds in a blue sky, the new spring day promised sunshine and gentle warmth.

The young man's eyes and ears told him he was otherwise alone. Touching and moving his shoulder carefully, he found it merely bruised and tender. He stood in silence for another moment, just looking around at the plants and listening to the birds and insects. Finally, after taking up his shoulder bag, he put one foot in front of the other toward the grassy hills in the west.



He had only been walking through the damp grass a few minutes when a path offered itself, and he gladly accepted its guidance. A little farther along, the trail skirted a small lake where he paused to rinse the mud from his boots.

As he sat on the grass at the edge of the still water, he noticed shy, careful movement among the rocks and plants nearby. He remained silent and waited, and soon a small furry creature came into view with hops of its hind legs between nibbles of greenery.

"Hello, little . . . rabbit," the young man said softly and haltingly in a language clearly not his own.

The rabbit twitched its nose and kept one bright eye on the newcomer, but continued eating.

“My name is Ilika, and I just arrived in your beautiful land from a place called Satamia, in the greater region of Nebador.”

The little creature’s long ears turned to the sound as it continued to demonstrate which plants were delicious, and which were not.

“You are my first contact in this land.”

The rabbit raised its head for a moment, then went back to eating.

“Well . . . I did meet someone earlier, but the situation was a bit emotional . . . and we didn’t get a chance to talk.”

Suddenly the piercing cry of a bird of prey filled the sky, and the rabbit vanished into the rocks with one leap.

“Be well, little one. I must continue my journey.”



Half an hour later, with deep breaths of the crisp air, the young man strode to the top of the highest hill. Standing tall, he looked west. In the small valley below nestled simple farms, little thatched cottages, and people beginning their work in gardens, fields, and animal pens.

Beyond the farms, on a gentle rise of open grass, stood the medieval walled city, its gray stonework glowing in the morning light.

