

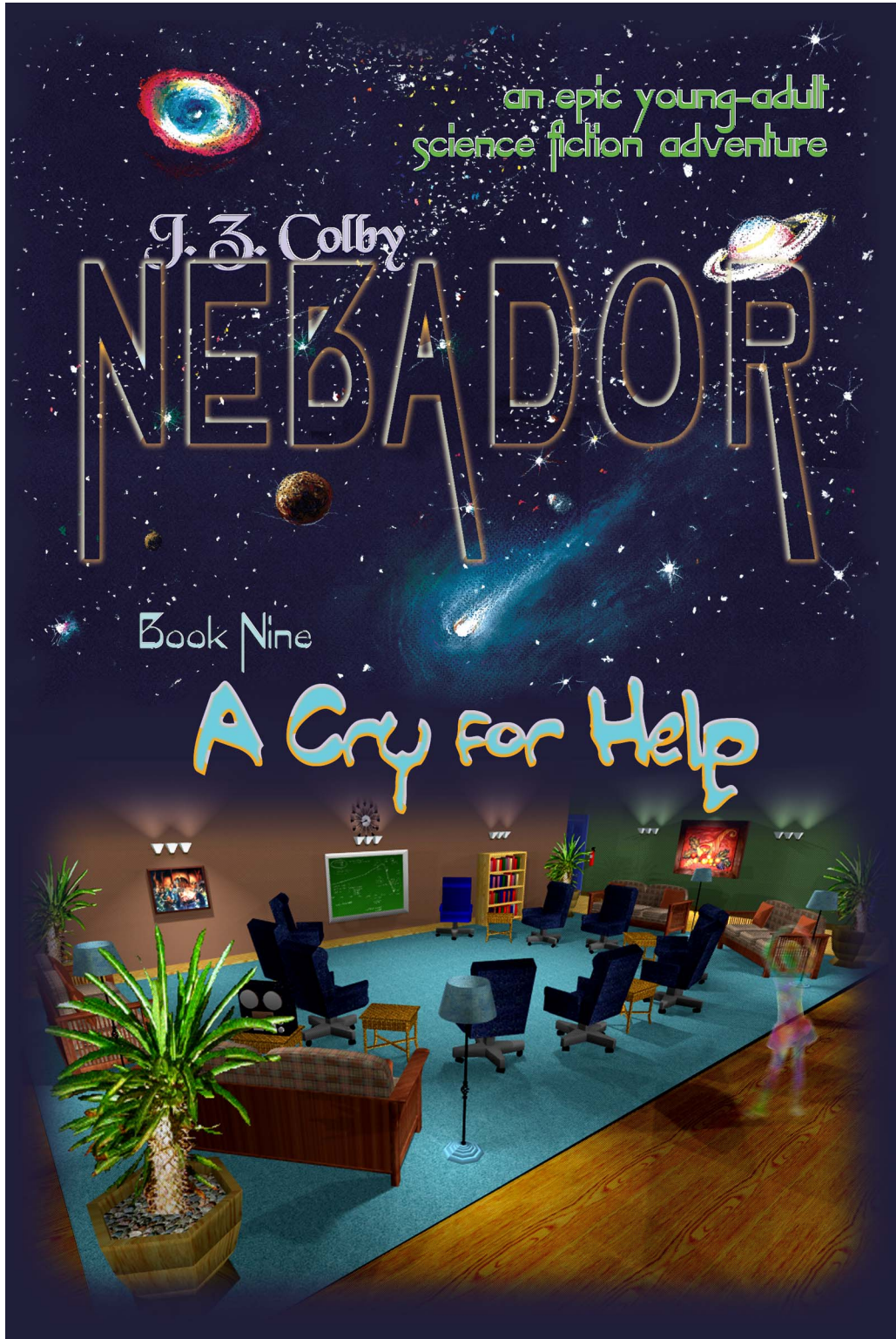
an epic young-adult  
science fiction adventure

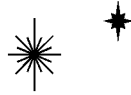
J. Z. Colby

# NEBADOR

Book Nine

## A Cry for Help





**The NEBADOR series:**

**Book One: The Test**

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**Book Five: Back to the Stars**

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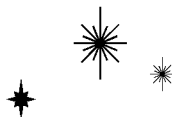
**Book Nine: A Cry for Help**


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**NEBADOR**

Book Nine

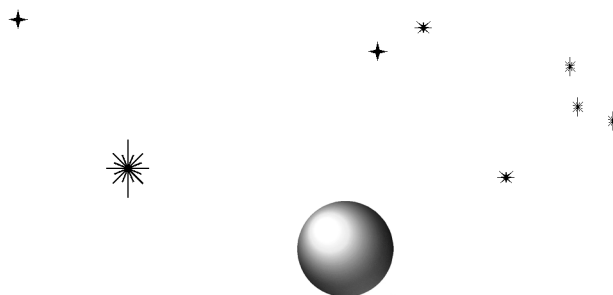
**A Cry for Help**

**an epic young-adult science fiction adventure**


**by  
J. Z. Colby**

**for Meghan**

**M**  
**Nebador Archives**



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The back cover image is the Pinwheel Galaxy, M101, courtesy of NASA.

The four main tactics of debunking, listed in chapter 37, are from the writings of Stanton Friedman, used with permission.

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

The Muses, or whatever you would like to call those mysterious sources of inspiration, don't always just inspire. Sometimes they issue orders.

For a long time, Calliope (epic poetry) was my main inspiration, as she probably is for most novelists. Thalia (comedy), Melpomene (tragedy), Erato (love), and Polyhymnia (sacred poetry) also had things to say, of course.

Then, as I was finishing *NEBADOR Book Six* and beginning *Book Seven*, another presence began to be felt, almost like a shadow lurking in the corners of my mind. It took a while, and many long walks and meditations, to figure out who it was.

Clio, the Muse of History, started speaking more and more clearly and . . . almost forcefully . . . as *Book Eight* passed and *Book Nine*, the epic conclusion of the NEBADOR saga, began to be drafted. But even as the other Muses stepped aside and Clio's voice became dominant, I became aware that writing and polishing *Book Nine* wasn't all she expected of me.

She also instructed me to GIVE *Book Nine* to anyone who is led to discover it by the mysterious workings of the universe. I don't expect anyone to understand this who lives their life solely by the rules of human society. Those of you who can understand, will understand.

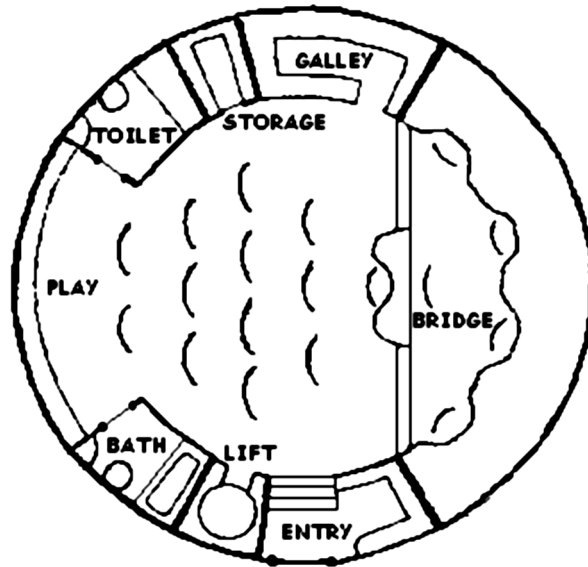
This story is for those who are young and would like the Earth to still be livable when you grow up. A few older people, with their eyes and ears open, might also enjoy it.

I'm sorry, but the ultimate fate of the planet in the story was not revealed to me, and I chose not to just "make something up." Perhaps that will encourage people to continue pondering the themes of the story long after reading it. That would be good, and very timely.

J. Z. Colby

2015





## Acknowledgements

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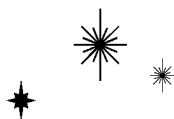
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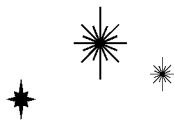
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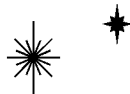
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“... the earth belongs to the living ... no man may, by natural right, oblige the land he owns or occupies to debts greater than those that may be paid during his own lifetime. If he could, then the world would belong to the dead, and not to the living ...”

— Thomas Jefferson, paraphrased



**Part 1: Ko-tera Three, 3662**

**Chapter 1: Misunderstanding**

The knock on the front door of the little house was assertive, almost commanding. The middle-aged woman, sitting at her dresser, quickly put down her hair brush and hurried to answer.

When she opened the door, two men and a stern woman in military uniforms faced her, causing her mind to go blank with respect and fear.

“Jan Ko-korna?” the man with the most stripes inquired, holding open his military I.D. for her to see.

“No . . . I’m Syble.”

“Did you, or did you not, write this letter and send it to the local air base?” He thrust out a photocopy of a hand-written letter.

The woman looked at it, but didn’t have time to read it before the man pulled it back. “That’s my daughter’s writing.”

“How old is your daughter?” he inquired forcefully.

“Seven.”

“Seven-year-olds can’t write cursive script!” the military woman, of much lesser rank, asserted.

“This one can,” Syble Ko-korna replied with a hint of pride.

“Where is she now?” the man demanded.

At that moment, the front door was pulled open wider to reveal a slender

seven-year-old girl, tall enough to be mistaken for eight or nine, with a bulging shoulder bag at her side. “I’m the one who wrote the letter and mailed it.”

The mother, with tears of worry gathering in her eyes, knelt down and caressed her daughter. “Why, Honey?”

“It’s time for me to start my work, Mother.”

“But you’re only seven . . .”

“It would have been better if I’d started when I was five, but I stayed to make sure you were okay after Dad died. Now look at you — finishing your diploma, two or three hobbies in your spare time, and you even have a boyfriend!”

“I don’t understand when you talk like this,” Syble said, crying openly now. “I’m supposed to be the one taking care of *you*.”

The military man was speaking. “. . . in possession of classified information, without proper clearance, is a federal crime . . .” Neither mother nor daughter were listening.

“Mother, you know better than anyone else that I don’t need any taking-care-of.”

“. . . so we’re going to have to take Jan Ko-korna into custody . . .”

The military woman stepped behind the seven-year-old and opened a pair of handcuffs.

“Don’t be mad at them, Mother,” Jan said, putting her hands behind her back to receive the handcuffs. “It’s a phase they have to go through. In a little while, a month or two I think, I’ll be doing my work and we’ll be able to visit, prowl the Open Air Market like always, look for goodies and stuff.”

The military woman, with a firm hand, guided young Jan Ko-korna out the door and toward a gray van parked in front of the house.

Her mother stood in the open doorway and cried.



A solid wall divided the front two seats of the van from the passenger area in back. Gray metal covered all the side and rear windows. The girl tried to strike up casual conversation with the military woman, but got no response as the woman buckled Jan’s seat belt, then her own.

One of the men slid the passenger door closed, and Jan heard the engine

start and felt the vehicle begin to move down the street, away from her childhood home.

*Good-bye, Mother. I'll see you again soon, I promise.*

Jan closed her eyes, let a slight smile appear on her face, and focused her mind on imagining a map of the city, and the van's location from minute to minute, during the long drive.



Jan Ko-korna knew when they arrived at the air base north of the city. She heard a motorized garage door open, then close behind them as the driver shut off the van's engine.

When the vehicle's side door was opened, the girl beheld hard benches, metal lockers, and equipment racks — everything necessary for receiving busloads of new recruits.

The stern military woman told Jan where to sit or stand at each point in the process, and watched her like a hawk as forms were filled out, her picture taken from all sides, and her shoulder bag searched.

The ugly gray corridor seemed to go on forever. As she walked alongside the stern woman, Jan glimpsed military people of all ranks going about their business, but taking a moment to stare at the little girl in handcuffs.

She remembered war movies she'd watched, and figured out each person's rank from the stripes on their shoulders. Her escort was a mere sergeant, but the man who had done the talking at her house was a colonel. She saw more of those, and most other ranks, but didn't notice any generals.

Without a word, they stopped in front of a gray metal door. The sergeant unlocked it, removed the handcuffs, and motioned for the girl to enter.

After the metal door was closed behind her, Jan felt relief that the first leg of her journey was complete. A sigh escaped her as she looked around. The room was as ugly as the corridor outside, but contained a small couch with a stack of sheets and blankets, a table and two chairs, and a bookshelf. A door on the back wall led to a little toilet room.

Then she spotted the large one-way mirror on the wall, and mentally frowned, but didn't let it show on her face.



Jan Ko-korna began her stay at the air base by making sure none of her

vinyl records had been scratched. Then she searched the room for a record player. Finding none, she shrugged, not really wanting to dance for the goons behind the mirror, anyway.

She made her bed on the little couch, washed up at the sink in the toilet room, and settled onto the floor to look over the books in the bookshelf. The trashy adult novels hardly received a glance, and she wasn't quite desperate enough for the automotive repair manuals. She had no idea how a book on philosophy had made its way into the air base, but picked it up and got comfortable on her make-shift bed.

Without appearing to look, she glimpsed figures in the control room behind the one-way mirror. Two or three were present at a time, and they would sometimes speak loudly enough for Jan to catch a few words. She soon gathered that the colonel from her house was in charge, and a psychologist was taking notes. The stern female sergeant came and went.

With no clock or window, the arrival of a meal tray, through the slot at the base of the door, was Jan's only clue that evening was at hand. The macaroni and cheese was way too salty, the broccoli had been cooked to death, and the carton of milk was slightly sour.

She picked at her food for several hours, read a page or two between bites, and eventually crawled into bed.

Half an hour later, someone in the control room was kind enough to switch off most of the observation room lights.



On Jan Ko-korna's second day at the air base, the colonel came in about mid-morning and sat down in one of the chairs at the table.

Jan seated herself across from him in the other chair.

The colonel glared at her for a moment, then said, "Being in possession of classified information about military assets, without proper clearance, is a federal crime."

Jan let a few seconds pass before speaking. "That's probably true in most cases. In my case, it is not, because I was the source of the information. It is a well-established legal principle that the source of any information is entitled to it. If any of *you* had known the rocket was going to blow up, you would have fixed it . . . I *hope*."

The colonel blinked and tried to hide his confusion and frustration, without complete success. After a long moment, he managed to collect himself. “So . . . what else do you know about . . . things that might blow up?”

“I can’t tell you, because I believe that information would be highly classified.”

“Why don’t you let me be the judge of that?” he responded with his anger barely hidden.

Jan took a slow breath. “Because, since I believe that, I would be breaking the law if I told you.”

“But I have top-secret clearance.”

“I believe the things I might tell you would be classified *higher* than top secret. And by the way, since I’ve told you that much, you also would be breaking the law if you continued to pressure me.”

Jan had seen pictures of erupting volcanoes that looked calmer than the colonel. She made herself breathe slowly and evenly as he struggled with himself, eventually rose, and finally left the room without saying another word.



She figured there would be a price to pay. It started that very afternoon. Whatever book she was reading would disappear while she was in the toilet room. She thought about keeping the next book with her, but decided to let them play their little game. She always took her shoulder bag, but resisted the temptation to form an attachment with anything else.

By late afternoon, she was quite bored. At the bookshelf, she looked back and forth between *Lady Ta-horna’s Secret Lover* and *Fuel Injection Diagnosis and Repair*, but couldn’t decide which book would have the most interesting plot or richest characters.

Macaroni and cheese, broccoli, and black tea filled her evening. Someone must have noticed that the milk was sour.

While in the toilet room to wash up before bed, the couch disappeared.

With tears close, Jan looked inside herself for the strength to continue down the path she had chosen. Somewhat to her surprise, she found it, made her bed on the concrete floor of the observation room, and curled up to sleep.



“What the HELL is going on?” Jan clearly heard an old but stern male voice demanding in the control room the next morning as she nibbled cold pancakes and sipped orange juice.

“But, Sir . . .”

“We were just . . .”

“I thought you meant . . .”

Jan smiled, guessing what was taking place.

The commotion moved to the corridor just outside the observation room. A key, held by nervous fingers, fumbled in the lock. The door swung open.

“Now get out of my sight, all of you!” the general ordered. “Find something useful to do for the rest of the day, if you can, and be in my office at zero-seven hundred tomorrow for re-assignment!”

“Zero-seven hundred?” the colonel questioned.

“No, make it zero-six hundred, and if I’m late, wait for me . . . AT ATTENTION!”

“Yes, Sir!” the colonel, the sergeant, and a couple of others Jan couldn’t see, all said as they saluted and scurried away.

The general, with steel eyes, watched them go for a moment, then softened his gaze as he turned and looked into the observation room.

Jan stood just inside the door with her bag on her shoulder and a smile on her face.

“I am so sorry,” the general said in a kindly tone. “I told them to *invite* you to the air base, and then *learn* everything they could *from* you. I didn’t tell them to *dissect* you!”

Jan chuckled for the first time in two days as she stepped into the corridor and walked with the general toward his office.

“I had to go to the capital,” he continued, “and explain to Congress why we received a letter telling us exactly what system on the rocket was going to fail, and yet we did nothing. As I’m sure you know, the system did fail, as you predicted, and the rocket did explode, as you predicted.”

“I saw it in the newspaper the morning they came to get me. That’s how I knew to be ready.”

They entered the general’s plush office and he gestured for Jan to take the comfortable chair across from his desk.



“I hope they didn’t treat you *too* badly. I’m not sure I want to know why the couch and most of the books were out in the hallway.”

Jan smiled while reading the name plate on the general’s desk. “I think they were trying to see what I was made of. It was kinda fun. I’d never been in handcuffs before, nor slept on a concrete floor.”

Two-star General Malcolm Ko-fenral huffed and frowned with anger again. “By God, there just *aren’t* enough toilets in the entire air base for that colonel to clean! Maybe I can find some weeds that need pulling.”

Jan laughed just as a young sergeant poked his head in the door. “Can I get you anything, Sir?”

The general took a deep breath to relax. “What would you like, Jan? After what we put you through, you name it, and it’s yours.”

“I know it’s a strange time of day for it, but I could use a salad, maybe a little blue cheese dressing . . .”

“Hey, that sounds good! Two of them, Sergeant, with olives, sunflower seeds, you know, and blue cheese on the side. Hot tea for me.”

“Fruit juice,” Jan requested.

The sergeant saluted and headed for the kitchen.

“I only still have my job,” General Ko-fenral explained, “because the rules that made it impossible for us to respond quickly to a tip from an outside source were *written* by Congress. Pointing that out, without making them angry, was the *trickiest* thing I’ve ever done, but I seem to have pulled it off.”

“Congratulations,” Jan said with a smile. “Actually, I was pretty sure that would be the case, and that’s why I used this opportunity to reveal myself, knowing the timeline would probably remain intact, even though the poor rocket is in pieces.”

The two-star general, sixty-something, stared at the seven-year-old girl. “I’m not going to pretend to understand what you just said, but I want to share with you what I realized on the flight back. We just do *not* have the right people here at the air base to work with you properly.”

With wide eyes, Jan nodded agreement.

The general smiled back at her. “Luckily, we have them not far away. A kindly old general, good friend of mine, runs the safe-house program for this area. He and his executive, a sweet lady, are very good with people, even

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