

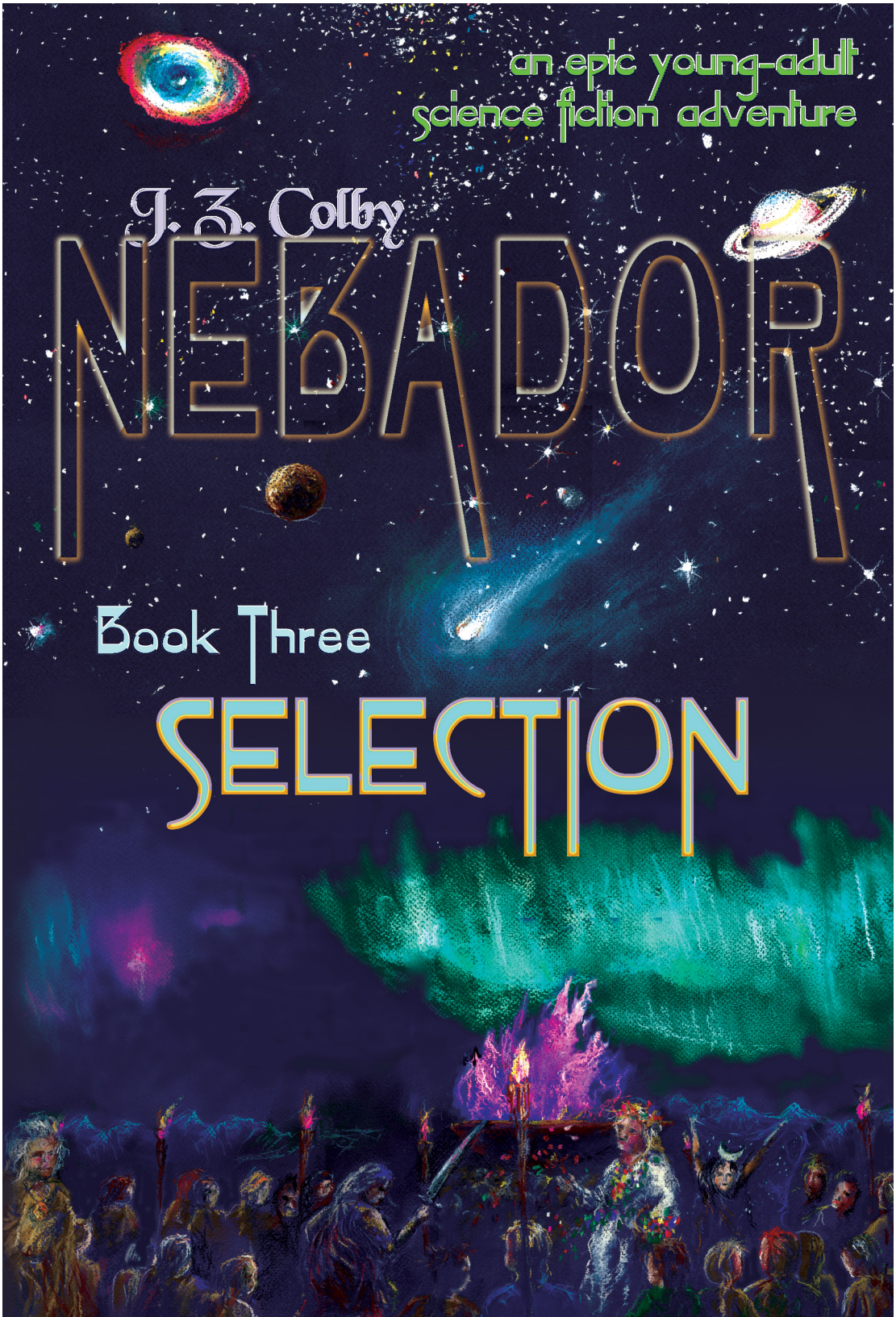
an epic young-adult  
science fiction adventure

J. Z. Colby

# NEBADOR

Book Three

# SELECTION



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**Book Two: Journey**

**Book Three: Selection**

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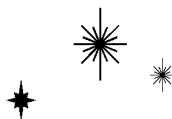
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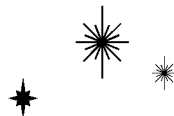


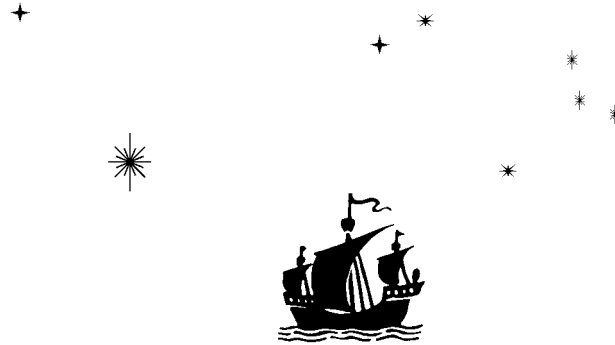


**NEBADOR**  
Book Three  
**SELECTION**

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

**by  
J. Z. Colby**





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

In *NEBADOR Book One: The Test*, Ilika of Satamia in Nebador arrived in a medieval kingdom with the purpose of finding a crew for his ship. He selected ten students, nine spirited young slaves and one innkeeper's daughter. One of the students did not understand that teamwork requires trust, and quickly landed back in slavery. Ilika did not, at first, understand how many of the taboos of that society he was breaking, and he and his remaining students were forced to use dark and dangerous ways to escape the walled city.

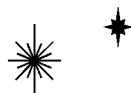
In *NEBADOR Book Two: Journey*, their bodies, hearts, and minds were tested by nature, personal demons, and human relationships. They came to the first mountain pass transformed, hardly recognizing the people they once were.

Although the journey is not yet over, the travelers have been sorely tested. Strengths and weakness have emerged, some not even known, before the journey, to those who own them. Ilika is getting a pretty good idea of who will make good crew members — and who will not. The students, also, are seeing who will stand at their sides through thick and thin, and who will run away scared.

By the end of *Book Two*, it is a rare young reader who is not seeing part of themselves in one of the students. They might be relating to the strength growing in Sata as she discovers that the universe can be deadly and friendly at the same time. They might be admiring Boro's down-to-earth wisdom and understanding of all things physical, like chemistry and geology. Or they might be trembling a bit, along with Miko, as he wonders what makes a good leader, and why the skill eludes him. Or they might be walking in Buna's shoes as she struggles to learn math and logic.

Although the journey of life can be challenging, we all get through it, one way or another, whether it is short or long. Other tests and challenges, however, are designed by the mysterious powers of the universe so that we cannot all pass. No matter how much we might want to be on the team, we cannot all make the selection.

**J. Z. Colby**  
**2010**





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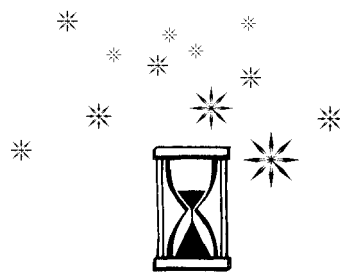
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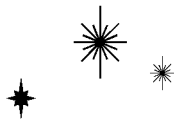


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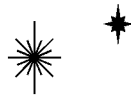
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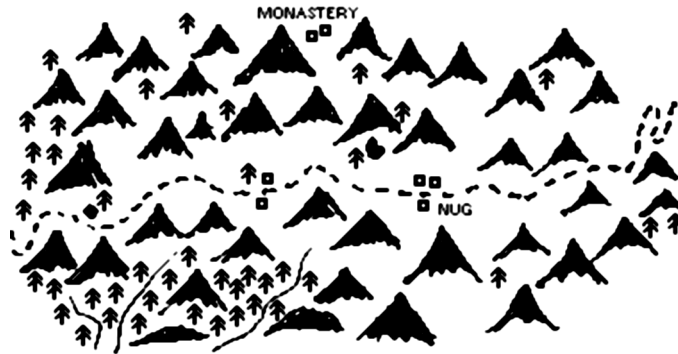




“I come from a place where everyone has great power, by your standards, and they steadfastly refuse to use it for self-aggrandizement . . . anywhere . . . ever.”

— Ilika, concerning Buna’s plan at Cattle Town





## Chapter 1: A World Apart

After getting out of the bitter wind on the eastern side of the pass, Ilika and his ten companions rubbed their eyes and gazed at the alpine valley ahead. Four mountain peaks soared thousands of feet above, with slopes of bare gray rock and brilliant white snow. About a mile ahead and a thousand feet below nestled a perfect little blue-green lake. Thin, white-barked trees ringed the shore and lined the outlet stream as it wound its way south into a rocky gorge.

From their vantage point near the pass, the students could see a narrow finger of land that jutted into the lake on the far side, and they all pointed to it, anxious to make it their next camping place.

As they descended the trail, the shadow of the mountain to the southwest reached out and covered the lake, turning the water a deep blue. The western slopes of the other three peaks still blazed with golden afternoon sunlight.



As soon as the line of eleven walkers arrived at the lake, strange wiry bushes greeted them, offering countless little red berries. After gathering a few, they all cautiously chewed, ready to spit them out. To their delight, the berries were edible, if not as delicious as the large purple ones in the lowlands.

The main trail skirted the southern edge of the lake, and a campsite with fire ring and sitting logs showed long use. Only faint animal tracks weaved through the trees to the far side of the lake.

A thin neck of land, only about a yard wide, guarded their new home.

Level places for bedrolls were scarce, but Neti and Miko managed to find a space for two, and Kibi and Ilika had only a small tree between them. Mati placed hers on the edge of a grassy slope that Tera claimed for grazing, Sata was not far away in case her friend needed her, and Boro was among some boulders just uphill. Misa and Buna found places together, and Toli was near, but he and Buna weren't yet ready to resume snuggling. Rini found a niche by himself between some fallen trees where he could look up at the stars.

They saved the open space in the middle of the peninsula for a campfire circle. Boro and Ilika soon brought logs from the forest for sitting, while Miko found rocks for the fire ring and others gathered wood. Mati gave her precious donkey a good brushing as the stillness of a summer evening descended upon the lake.



Both the priests' horses sweated and trembled as they staggered down the trail from the pass. The younger priest tried to say comforting things to his mount, but was silenced by the elder.

Not far above the lake, the priest in the lead halted. His horse coughed several times and started shaking, but the man didn't seem to notice as he pulled out a spyglass. He carefully scanned the entire valley, but when his gaze came to the peninsula jutting into the lake, a sudden flash of green light blinded him. He lowered the spyglass and rubbed his eye, then tried again. The same thing happened.

"You see something?" the younger priest asked from behind.

"No, just a reflection from the water. I want to get to that sorry excuse for a town — Nug, I think it's called — by tonight. That's the best place to catch up with the filthy criminals."

"But the horses . . ."

The elder priest turned and glared, and the younger man lowered his eyes and mumbled words of obedience. A moment later, they both set spurs to their horses' flanks.



For six days, the lake and its woods were home to Ilika and his companions. Several parties passed by on the trail, but most only stopped briefly to drink at the stream, and never knew anyone else was around.

Those six days were a time of healing for the students who left painful memories behind in the lowlands. Misa helped with chores and even began to pay attention during some lessons. Buna felt she was just about over her math block. Toli believed his fears were a thing of the past, and Miko vowed to never again do anything without careful consideration.

Ilika used those days to review previous lessons and fill in a few missing bits. The students mastered negative numbers, and could quickly spot if they were valid, or if only positive numbers should be used. With Toli and Boro in the lead, they added to their knowledge of chemical compounds and deepened their understanding of ions, always ready to jump into chemical bonds and make new compounds. Neti especially liked ions.

Reading further in *The Adventures of Godi and Tima*, some of the experiences of the young warrior and the elf maiden began to sound familiar. The students wrote compositions about their own recent adventures from both their points of view, and through the eyes of an all-seeing storyteller. Ilika was rapidly running out of paper.

Also during those days at the lake, each student spent time alone with Ilika, talking about anything they wanted to discuss. Buna had more questions about his bracelet and knowledge processor, to which he said, “I don’t know,” or “I can’t tell you,” but always with a smile. Mati was suddenly very confident she would be on his crew, and he could guess why. He had to dance around her questions about how a handicapped girl could work on a ship.

Sata’s questions focused on the forces of the universe that could be dangerous if not understood and handled carefully. Ilika had trouble limiting his answers to the dangers present in their kingdom.

As they sat around the campfire during the evenings, people slowly started talking about the fire that had destroyed Lumber Town, and their experiences in the days that followed. *Kibi and the Green Light* was told for the first time, to the amazement of Miko and Neti, who knew nothing of the glowing guide.

Misa just listened for several evenings, but was eventually able to haltingly tell *Misa and the Big Fire*, from smelling the first whiff of smoke, to being found by Ilika in shock and grief.

While Sata grinned, Boro told the story of *Boro and Josa* with great

embarrassment. Mati was still silent about events that had recently troubled her heart.

On the group's fifth day at the lake, a family stopped for the night at the campsite on the main trail. After they settled in, Kibi approached, made friends, and brought her companions over to share a meal and stories. The family had lost their home and work in the fire at Lumber Town, and had relatives at one of the few settlements in the mountains. Misa's eyes glistened and her lips pouted as she listened to their story.



On their last full day at the lake, the group walked up to one of the snowfields several hundred feet above the lake. Ilika and Toli helped Mati, and Boro carried Misa.

On a patch of gravel beside a snowfield, made warm by the still air and bright sun, Ilika talked about the chemistry of living things.

"Water is the universal solvent in biology, just as it is in most inorganic chemistry. We have now experienced all three states of water . . ."

"Ice is solid!" Buna declared, reaching back and pounding on the hard crust of the snowfield behind her.

Sata's hand shot up. "The oceans, lakes, and rivers are liquid!"

"Steam is gaseous!" Miko announced.

"How do you know, Miko?" Toli asked with a huge smirk on his face as everyone else started laughing.

Miko grinned and held up the hand he had burned, pointing to it with his other hand. "This is how!"



### Deep Learning Notes

A small map shows the mountains, as depicted on Ilika's map of the kingdom.

Alpine lakes, near or above timberline, are unique, simple ecosystems that are starkly beautiful. Often surrounded by bare mountain peaks, they are usually so quiet that a tiny rock-fall on a mountainside can be clearly heard. The little red berries are currants, and are about the only thing edible to humans, and

then only in summertime.

The treatment of other people or animals under someone's control tells a great deal about the person's values. One of the priests' horses was getting sick after the hard ride up to the first mountain pass. It might have recovered if cared for immediately. Instead, the priest in charge planned another hard ride across the mountains to the next town. The Reaper, of course, galloped close behind.

Healing and learning from difficult life experiences is best done by getting away from them for a while. We call it a "holiday" or "vacation." The alpine lake was completely separate from all the challenges the student had faced in the lowlands: slavery, guards, steam vents, high tide, wolves, and (as far as they knew) priests.

Boro was most comfortable dealing with physical reality. Some people who have this type of personality are limited to physical reality they can see and touch. Boro's sharper mind allowed him to extend that interest to the unseen levels of sub-atomic matter and energy, and so he excelled at chemistry, even though weak at math.

After getting to know water, steam, and ice, the students were familiar with the three states of matter that normally occur on the surface of a planet like ours. Water is the only common substance on our planet that we find in all three states. Rock will (at some very high temperature) melt, even boil away. Air will (at some very low temperature) become liquid, then solid. Luckily, those temperatures are rare or non-existent on our world. In what situation does one of those extreme temperatures occur on Earth?

## Chapter 2: Mountain Paths

Another clear summer day dawned early, but they knew the sun wouldn't get to the lake until mid-morning. Neti used the last of Farmer Koto's oats to make a thin porridge. Comments around the breakfast fire told Ilika they were ready to tear themselves away from the beautiful lake and head for the nearest settlement for supplies.

Tera pretended not to hear until Mati used the do-or-die tone of voice that was occasionally necessary with her donkey. She pulled one more mouthful of tender grass and walked over to be saddled.



By the time the sunshine found the lake, the students and their teacher were half-way up the slope to the next pass. At the top, just a gentle ridge between two peaks with a cool breeze blowing, Ilika announced they were seven thousand three hundred feet above sea level.

"Did you figure that out with trigonometry?" Sata asked.

"No. My bracelet has an altimeter function."

Buna came and stood by Ilika. "What's an al . . . timeter?"

"Altitude meter. It can tell about how high we are above the ocean. I'll do a lesson on it this evening."

"Okay, thanks!" Buna said, grinning with delight at discovering yet another of the bracelet's magical powers.

While Ilika was answering Buna's question, he was also contemplating the scene before them. They could see into two small mountain valleys, to the

northeast and the southeast. Both contained small lakes, but neither hosted any kind of settlement.

Ilika's brow furrowed. The trail forked, just a few yards in front of them, with one branch going into each valley. He sat down on the rocky trail and pulled out their map. Everyone gathered around to help him consider the situation.

"The trail on the map looks like it goes sort of northeast about here," Neti observed.

"Yes. That gives weight to the left branch. But sometimes mapmakers aren't careful, and just draw a wiggly line when they know the way is wiggly, without being careful to match the wiggles they draw with the real wiggles."

"That sucks," Boro said with a frown.

"Yes. I'd like some scouts to go down both trails a little way to see if one or the other is more heavily used."

"Me!"

"Me!"

"Me!"

"Me too!"

"All of you, go ahead — the more opinions the better. You too, please, Rini."

Sata, Miko, Neti, and Buna headed down to the right. Rini stood thinking for a moment, then set his feet on the trail to the left.

Kibi sat down close beside Ilika.

"Any idea which way we should go?" he asked her.

Kibi was silent for a long moment. "Which way the settlement is, or which way we should go?"

He flashed her a grin. "There's a reason we're in these mountains. I just can't see it yet."

The group of scouts returned and headed down the left trail.

"What if we get lost?" Toli suddenly asked in a loud voice.

Ilika looked at Kibi. His glance pleaded with her to deal with Toli on this occasion.

"Then we'll just have to find ourselves," she said over her shoulder.

"Thanks," Ilika whispered.

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