



Book One
Lyceum Quest
J. Z. Colby



The LYCEUM series:

Book One: Lyceum Quest

Book Two: Lyceum Challenge

Book Three: Lyceum Diplomacy

The NEBADOR series:

Book One: The Test

Book Two: Journey

Book Three: Selection

Book Four: Flight Training

Book Five: Back to the Stars

Book Six: Star Station

Book Seven: The Local Universe

Book Eight: Witness

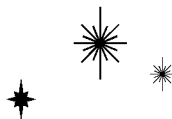
Book Nine: A Cry for Help

Book Ten: Stories from Sonmatia

Also by J. Z. Colby:

Ariel's Grove

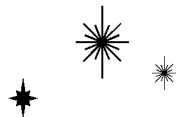
**Standing on Your Own Two Feet:
Young Adults Surviving 2012 and Beyond**

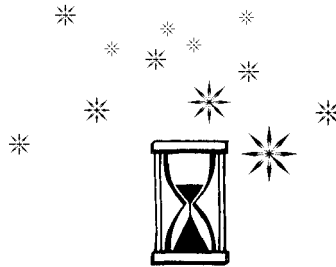


Lyceum Quest

Book One of J. Z. Colby's original Lyceum story

**by
J. Z. Colby**





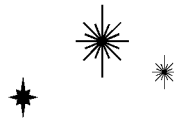
Copyright © 1995 by J. Z. Colby

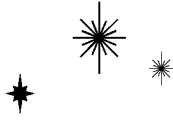
ⓘ Ⓢ Ⓢ All rights reserved, but freely distributable as this PDF file with attribution, without charge, in its entirety

Cover art by J. Z. Colby

LYCEUM1EA23: Adobe Portable Document Format (PDF),
8.25" x 11" (printable on letter or A4 paper),
489 total pages, medium print (12-point Georgia type)

This special PDF edition has no ISBN.



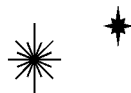


**For “Liberty”
who loved horses almost as much as boys.**

**For “Ashley”
whose landings were as light as a feather,
but who never found the training she wanted.**

**For “Shawn”
who was born in the wrong century,
and whose love for Sarah was never known.**

**For “Sarah”
who took refuge in her music
for as long as she could.**

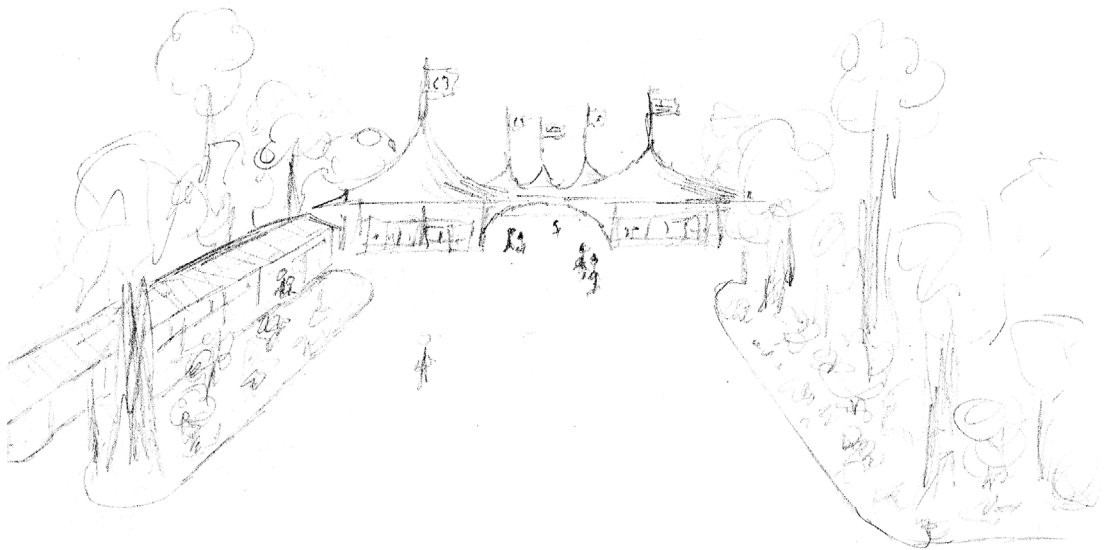


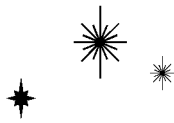


Contents

1	A Twist of Fate	1
2	A Dream Come True	20
3	Against a Brick Wall	34
4	Fragile Contact.....	38
5	The Beat of a Distant Drummer	42
6	A Glimmer of Hope.....	56
7	Many Questions	66
8	Perseverance Rewarded	68
9	A Taste of Bitter Realities	76
10	Thoughtful Questions	81
11	The Large Blue Envelope.....	84
12	Serious Questions	90
13	A Journey of Discovery	91
14	A Foot in the Door	103
15	But What Would I Do?	123
16	Getting a Little Too Comfortable	134
17	Crossed Fingers and a Catalog	143
18	A Winter Wonderland	149
19	The Double-Edged Sword	156
20	Breakthrough.....	168
21	More Answers, More Questions	171
22	The Stars Teach Me to Play	175
23	A Growing Understanding.....	183
24	A Springtime Full of Hope.....	186
25	Special Olympics, Special Feelings	197
26	The Lucky One	216
27	Behind the Scenes.....	228
28	Coffee and Cinnamon Rolls.....	238
29	Regrets and Strawberries	253

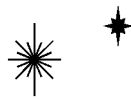
30 Time for a Change.....	266
31 An Assignment and a Problem.....	281
32 Unexpected Successes	291
33 A Badly Needed Lift.....	304
34 Welcome Interlude	313
35 The Big Apple.....	324
36 A New Language	346
37 New Words, New Insights	357
38 Burning the Candle at Both Ends.....	370
39 A Second Chance	394
40 Dwindling Numbers, Growing Understandings	415
41 Values Clarification	439
42 The End of the Process	459
43 The Long-Awaited Decision	473





“The crystal grows slowly, deep inside the Earth, adding to its substance molecule by molecule. Our gifts and skills slowly grow inside us, experience by experience, decision by decision.”

— Brother Timoteo



Chapter 1: A Twist of Fate

Shawn combed the youthful locks of blond hair out of his face with his fingers. Hoping to see something, anything, of where they were, he rubbed at the foggy glass by his side with a fist. At first all he saw were the constant drops of rain meandering down the outside of the car windows.

After a few moments he ignored the droplets and focused on the dark evergreen trees that loomed suddenly as the headlights caught them, and just as quickly returned to the darkness, only to be reborn for an instant in the eerie glow of the tail lights.

Shawn remembered something he had just learned in school: if the trees were a pure spectral green, and the tail lights a pure red, the trees wouldn't show up at all. But he knew from experience that he was free to have such thoughts, only as long as he kept them inside the sanctuary of his own mind.

At the same time another part of his attention was searching for something familiar, something safe, something to reassure him that they were still on planet Earth. Again he rubbed away the condensation and strained to see a house or a motel, even a sign telling him how far it was to something.

"Now I'm sure we're lost," came the shaky voice of his mother from the front passenger seat. She had been going through a similar search, straining to see something familiar and reassuring. Rain constantly pelted the windshield in front of her, to be repeatedly removed by the wipers, as the family journeyed on into the darkness. "We've been going down this road for thirty-five minutes now and no sign of the Interstate. The navigation screen is still

dead. What are we going to do, Tom?"

"Look, it's a good back road, and roads this well maintained go somewhere," the voice of the Reverend Tommy Mitchell reassured his family as he smoothly guided the new model Cadillac around the curves in the road with his large hands resting solidly on the steering wheel. "Ever since we went over that pass up there, we've been heading in the general direction of Portland. Won't be too long before we find a nice little motel or something."

"What about the mobile phone, Dad?" Shawn asked from the back seat.

"I've tried it. The hills must still be blocking our reception."

"Some vacation," muttered Shawn.

"That's enough, Son," corrected his father in a firm voice.

Shawn decided to keep his next few thoughts to himself.



Ten more minutes of driving through the darkness at twenty to thirty miles per hour brought what seemed like millions of additional fir trees, and an occasional spruce or maple, into and out of view, but no signs of civilization. Shawn was looking ahead now, his face wedged between the front bucket seats. The digital clock on the dash changed slowly from 10:50 to 11:00. All three searchers simultaneously spotted a large cabin, but an examination in the high beams showed it to be completely dark and shuttered, with no vehicles to be seen, and a padlock on the front gate. Their briefly rejuvenated spirits settled back into a silent brooding.

No more than a minute later Shawn's mother could stand it no longer. "Pull over, Tom. I think we're going the wrong way. I think we're on that other road I saw on the map. Stop so I can find out." She began frantically digging in the glove box.

"We're not, but I'll stop at the next pull-off if it will make you happy," said the reverend, knowing this was one of those times to placate, instead of counter, his wife's wishes. He began looking for a wide place on the side of the road as his wife half opened, half tore the road map.

It wasn't long before he thought he could see a pull-off, but it was difficult to tell how large it was because of the darkness, the sheeting rain, and the torn map rattling in his face. He guided the car slowly off the road, heard gravel under its tires, and brought it to a gentle stop.

“Look, Tom,” his wife said while jabbing at the map. “If we are on *this* road, then we’re *not* going toward Portland at all, but back toward that God-forsaken wooden bridge over that river that’s about to overflow and maybe has by now!” she said, venting her frustrations and breathing fast.

“But honey, we were on this state highway here, and we turned *left*. So we can’t be on that road. We’re either on this one, or *maybe* this one.”

“Let’s just drive,” Shawn interjected.

“Please be SILENT, Son,” his father commanded.

Shawn slumped into the back seat.

“I just hate this not knowing where we’re going, Tom,” Shawn’s mother said in a pleading tone.

“Okay, Honey, here’s what we’re doing,” the reverend began in a firm voice.

Shawn couldn’t tell if his father had sensed his mother’s need for someone else to make a final decision after she had vented her feelings, or if it was just how he always did things when others were afraid and indecisive.

“We’re going to continue on down this road, slow and steady, and if we find your bridge again, we’ll know you were right, and we can take this county road here toward Salem,” the reverend said, pointing at the map. There was a finality in his statement that neither wife nor son dared contradict. “If we happen to come to this small town, or this one, then in either case we’ll know where we are, and we can continue toward Portland.” He gently but firmly took the map from his wife, folded it as best he could, and handed it back to her.

Shawn realized that handing the map back to his mother, instead of just putting it away himself, made her feel part of the decision.

The Reverend Mitchell put the transmission into forward, and the car began to move, but suddenly there was a spinning sound and the back end of the Cadillac swung quickly to the right and downward.

“Tom!” his wife screamed.

“Whoa!” Shawn said, rolling melodramatically sideways on the back seat.

The reverend jammed on the brakes, and after slipping a few more feet, the car finally came to a stop. “Everybody stay still and be calm!” he commanded, pulling on the emergency brake and shoving the transmission

into park.

Shawn had no intention of arguing, and stayed lying on his side.

“Honey, hand me the flashlight in the glove box, please,” the reverend said. As soon as she had done so, he rolled down the right rear window with the controls on his door.

The teenager shrank away from the opening. “Hey, it’s cold and wet out there!”

“You’ll live,” his father said, shining the light out the window. “Good,” he said, rolling the window up. “It’s just a little low spot. We’re in no danger.” He released the brake and moved the transmission lever again. This time the car didn’t slide any further, but the right rear tire could be heard spinning.

“Shit!” exclaimed Shawn, and then instantly realized his mistake. “Oops, sorry Dad.”

“You had better be, young man. I’m going outside to look at the situation. You two stay dry in here,” the reverend said, putting up the collar of his coat.

“Tom, take an umbrella!” his wife said.

“I need my hands free,” he said, opening the door with some effort due to the angle of the car, slipping out, and letting it close behind him.



For the next few minutes, those inside the vehicle could occasionally hear something brushing or scraping against the side of the car, but could not tell much about what the Reverend Tommy Mitchell was doing. The engine idled softly and the clock on the dash moved from 11:13 to 11:27. With nothing else to occupy his mind, Shawn thought back to his 16th birthday, remembered a girl named Nancy who had kissed him on the cheek at the party his father had arranged at their church, and wondered what his 17th birthday would bring.

Suddenly the driver’s door opened and the reverend dropped into his seat, shivering, his wet hair plastered to his head. “I managed to get some sticks and branches around the wheels,” was all he said before putting the car in gear and stepping on the throttle. Again the rear wheel spun wildly and sank deeper into the mud. He pressed harder on the throttle, the tire whined, the car continued to tilt.

Finally his wife screamed, “Stop, Tom!”

His foot came off the throttle.

After a few moments of complete silence, his head lowered onto his arms on the steering wheel and he softly began to sob. No one else in the car made a sound.

Several minutes later he had collected his emotions, and the other two heard him whisper, "Jesus, please give me strength."

His wife was deeply touched by this admission of weakness, the likes of which she had not seen in her husband in many years. Soon she too was crying as she put her arms around her husband as best she could in the slanted vehicle.

"I'll go for help!" Shawn enthusiastically burst out, reaching for the door handle.

"No!" his father said, turning to look at his son. Then he continued more softly, "That's what I should be doing."

Their eyes met, perhaps for the first time in a situation that was demanding humility in the elder, maturity in the younger.

"We'll both go, Dad."

The reverend couldn't think of anything to say to his son. He was beginning to feel more pride in the young man than he had felt in a long time.

"You two certainly aren't leaving me here to sink slowly into the mud," Shawn's mother asserted. "We're all going."

"But, Honey..." the reverend started to protest.

"I said we're all going, and we're taking umbrellas," she said. "Our son is practically a man, and I've got more life left in me than you give me credit for, Thomas Mitchell. You're just shivering because you got your head soaking wet. Got your umbrella, Shawn?"

"Sure do!"

The reverend could think of nothing further to say, and besides, he was now feeling proud of his faithful wife as well. He had over-reached his limits, she had seen his weakness, and was still beside him. With a sigh he shut off the engine, and the three of them were soon outside opening their umbrellas in a cold, dark, January rain somewhere in the Pacific Northwest. They trudged the few muddy yards to the firm asphalt surface of the two-lane road, Mrs. Mitchell carrying their small flashlight.

"Well," said the reverend after a moment of thought and reflection, "we

know what's to the left for a *long* ways."

Shawn chuckled as his mother said, "That, Honey, is one of the greatest understatements you've ever made."

"So, are we all in agreement on the necessity of going to the right?"

"All in agreement, Dad," Shawn said.

They began their trek walking single file on the left side of the road, as good pedestrians should. But after about a quarter of an hour, the little flashlight began to dim out to a weak glow. Shawn's mother gave a moan of disappointment, switched it off and slipped it into her coat pocket.

No one said anything. They already knew they could keep going, as enough light was coming through the dense clouds from the hidden stars and moon to let them vaguely see the center line and edge lines of the road. They were relying on, Shawn realized, the highly light-sensitive but color-blind rod cells in the retina of the eyes, those involved primarily in peripheral vision.

So they continued onward, grouped loosely side by side around the center line of the road.

As they walked, Shawn pondered the events back at their car, where he had seen his father weak and ill-prepared for the first time that he could remember. He was almost surprised to realize that the pride he usually felt in his father had not been tarnished when he had then seen his father frustrated and in tears. His father, Thomas Mitchell, in addition to being his father and a well-known television preacher, was human. That was okay.

After about another quarter hour of walking they had found nothing, save for a lone speed limit sign. They stood gazing up at it for a long minute, as if hoping that this symbol of civilization could somehow invoke its makers. By that time the rain had penetrated every layer of their clothing, and all three of their heads were wet, as gusts of wind were repeatedly yanking their umbrellas almost out of their hands. They trudged on, hoping the activity of walking would help keep them from freezing.

When they rounded the next curve they could barely, because of the sheeting rain, see the straight stretch of lighted road, the left and right turn lanes, and the illuminated sign. They were at first too cold and numb, too intent on their walking, to remember that they had been looking for something. The reverend seemed to come to his senses first. He stopped,

looked ahead at the sign, and lowered his useless umbrella to his side.

“What is it?” he muttered, shivering from the cold.

His wife and son peered at the sign with him.

“Ly...ceum,” Shawn read, knowing he had heard the word somewhere, but unsure of its meaning.

After a moment of silence, Shawn’s mother said, “Well, whatever it is, I’m sure they’ve got a phone, don’t you think, Honey?”

“I certainly hope so,” her husband said. The others could not hear the tone of doubt in his voice over the constant sound of the rain on the pavement. He led the way, his family close behind.

As they approached the lighted sign, Shawn found it unusual that it contained only the one word, and nothing like Private Drive, AAA Approved, MasterCard Accepted, Keep Out, RV’s Welcome, Beware of Dog, or any of the other annotations he was used to seeing. Just *Lyceum*. Strange.

As no one could think of anything else to do or say, they all turned into the entrance road and kept walking. Its paved surface wound through the trees, and small lamps along the sides cast a comforting glow, even at that late hour in a miserable, drenching, freezing rain.



They had only gone about a hundred yards when they came to an intersection with illuminated signs pointing out destinations in three different directions. Shawn read them to himself. Those to the left all seemed to be private places, like Residence Halls, Maintenance, and things like that. To the right were parking lots for all kinds of places, too numerous to remember. But straight ahead was a Welcome Center and Passenger Loading/Unloading. That sounded like the way to go.

His father had been reading the signs also. “I don’t like it. How could all these places be out here in the woods, on that deserted stretch of back road, and we can’t see hide nor hair of any of them, and nothing tells us what this place is all about, and there’s not a soul around anywhere? I just don’t like it. There’s not even a car to be seen!”

“It is the middle of the night, Dear,” his wife reminded him in a trembling voice.

“Main Parking Lot is to the right, Dad. Why don’t we look in there?”

Shawn suggested.

“Let us do just that!” the reverend said in a defiant tone, as if he doubted they would find one, and led them off in that direction.

They came to it quickly, strode right in, and a moment later could see the huge lighted lot that could probably hold a thousand or more vehicles, but currently only contained about twenty cars and one large tour bus, all grouped fairly near one corner where a covered walkway led through the trees away from the lot. Shawn noticed that his father seemed to relax a little.

“This is looking more promising,” the reverend said.

“I bet that walkway goes to the Welcome Center,” Shawn said, hoping his father would take the hint.

Mrs. Mitchell shivered violently. “Please, Tom, let’s find some place warm.”

They hurried to the covered path, and just getting under a roof was a great relief to all of them. Shawn was the only one whose fingers weren’t too cold to collapse the umbrellas.

“The so-called Welcome Center is probably open nine a.m. to five p.m., May through September,” the reverend warned, based on his experience with off-season, out-of-the-way tourist attractions.

“We’ve got to give it a try, Dad,” Shawn said as they headed along the lighted path away from the parking lot. “Mom’s *really* cold.”

“Or maybe we can find someone at those Residence Halls,” his father said as a contingency plan.

A minute later they were standing beside a loop of road and looking at a modern, almost futuristic building that identified itself as the Lyceum Welcome Center. It had one long roof, but two separate buildings underneath with a walk-through arcade between them. The section on the right was almost completely walled with glass, and inside could be seen comfortable benches and chairs, potted plants, displays and information racks.

“Probably locked tight as a drum,” the reverend predicted.

“Then why are all the lights on?” challenged his son. “I’ll try the door.” And hardly before he had finished speaking, it opened to his pull. “It’s warm inside! Come on!”

The reverend urged his shivering wife in, but looked around warily, as if

expecting some new problem to descend upon them. “Now maybe we can figure this place out,” he said, as he let the door close behind them.



Inside they quickly peeled their outer clothing with shaking hands and hung the dripping wet garments on a coat rack. The reverend found a table with an urn of hot water, an assortment of hot drink packets, and a basket of cookies and crackers. He made his wife a cup of hot cider and tore open several packages of cookies for her, and then he and Shawn began to scan the display boards, maps, and racks of brochures, hot drinks in hand.

“It’s a religious place, Dad!” Shawn said excitedly.

“It also has something to do with the United Nations, and you know what we believe about *that* evil institution. I don’t like this one bit.”

“Here’s a phone that connects directly to the Main Office, which is open all night.”

“Yes, I saw it, and I don’t want you to use it without my permission. We don’t yet know what this place costs.”

Shawn continued his reading, but began to keep his findings to himself. He knew they could afford whatever the place might cost, and that his father was obviously engaged in some matter of pride, to which Shawn didn’t relate, especially under the circumstances. He finished one cup of hot chocolate and started on another. His mother kept drinking hot beverages and eating cookies, but most of her clothes were still wet and she could not stop shivering.

“Tom, we can’t stay *here* all night, can we?” she pleaded.

“If you don’t want to use the phone, Dad, there’s a covered walkway that goes all the way to the Main Lobby,” Shawn explained, looking at a large map on a display board. “You can see it from here, across that big open plaza out there,” he said, pointing through the glass walls.

“Yes. We need to get your mother warm,” the reverend agreed, not sure what else to do.

“Hey Dad, do you have any change?” Shawn asked. “There’s a donation can on the snack table.”

The reverend dug in his pockets and a worried look crossed his face. He went to the coat rack and dug in his coat pockets. Nothing. “Looks like I

Thank You for previewing this eBook

You can read the full version of this eBook in different formats:

- HTML (Free /Available to everyone)
- PDF / TXT (Available to V.I.P. members. Free Standard members can access up to 5 PDF/TXT eBooks per month each month)
- Epub & Mobipocket (Exclusive to V.I.P. members)

To download this full book, simply select the format you desire below

