

TIME ECHOES

*To Josiah – Thank you for helping me
unlock another door to the beyond.*

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TIME ECHOES

BOOK 1 OF
THE TIME ECHOES TRILOGY

BY BRYAN DAVIS

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CHAPTER ONE

AN ASSASSIN LURKED outside. At least Clara, my tutor, thought so. After surviving many harrowing escapes, I was used to being followed by shadowy figures. The latest, a guy who sat in a Mustang in the parking lot, was no big deal. Clara, on the other hand, imagined a blood-thirsty terrorist hiding around every corner.

Trying to ignore the potential danger, I sat on my motel-room bed tapping on my laptop computer, while Clara peered out the window. The Mustang driver had really spooked her. “Chill, Clara. He doesn’t know which room we’re in. That’s why he’s just sitting out there.”

“I suppose you’re right, but we’ll have to deal with him when we leave.” She closed the curtains, casting a blanket of darkness across the room. When she turned on a corner table lamp, its pale light seemed to deepen the wrinkles on her face and hands, though her dressy gown made her look younger than her sixty-something years. “How much more time do you need on that spreadsheet?”

“Just a couple of minutes.” I winked. “Dad’s abacus must be broken. It took almost an hour to balance his books.”

“No excuses, Nathan. I saw you playing one of those shooting games a little while ago.” Clara returned to

her window vigil, a hand clutching the curtain. “He looks like one of the henchmen for that Colombian drug lord your father took down last year.”

I pushed the laptop to the side, slid off the bed, and looked over Clara’s shoulder. The black Mustang sat parked under a tree, the driver watching the motel’s front door. An intermittent shower of leaves, blown around by Chicago’s never-ending breezes, danced about on the convertible’s ragtop. “He’s not Colombian, Clara. He’s Middle Eastern.”

“Is that supposed to settle my nerves?” A pallor passed across her face. “My intuition says we should leave as soon as possible.”

I shrugged. “Okay. I’ll pack up.”

“Make sure your father’s mirror is protected.”

“I’ll double wrap it.” I walked over both beds and bounced to the floor in front of a shallow closet. From the top of my open suitcase, I picked up the square, six-by-six-inch mirror, bordered by an ornate silver frame. Dad had called it a Quattro viewer when talking about his latest assignment — retrieving stolen data for a company that used reflective technology. I was supposed to keep the mirror safe while he was gone.

I gazed at my reflection, the familiar portrait I expected, but something bright pulsed in my eyes, like the flash of a camera. A second later, Clara’s face appeared just above my dark cowlick.

I spun toward her. Strange. She was still near the window. When I turned back to the mirror, her image was gone.

As she walked up behind me, her face reappeared in the glass. I glanced back and forth between the mirror and Clara. The quick-changing images were just too weird.

The opening notes of Beethoven's Fifth chimed from my computer — an email alert. After wrapping the mirror in two shirts, I leaped back to my bed and pulled up the message, a note from Dad.

We enjoyed our anniversary getaway. I hope you and Clara had fun sightseeing. Your mother is rehearsing with Nikolai. After her first piece for the shareholders, she'll call you to the stage to play your duet. Nikolai repaired your violin. He says it's as good as new and ready to sizzle. Since it's the Vivaldi piece, you shouldn't have any problem, even with no practice the last three days. Just don't mention your performance to Dr. Simon. Trust me. It will all work out.

Clara flung a wadded pair of black socks. They bounced off my chin and landed next to my motorcycle helmet on the night table. "Put your tux on. I'll finish packing."

I trudged back to my suitcase and set the laptop inside. "We'll look amazing riding the Harleys through town, you in that fancy dress and me in a tux."

"Not through town. Just to our storage unit where we can park the bikes. Mike's picking us up there in the limo. No sense arriving at the concert looking like windblown scarecrows."

"Good enough. Maybe we can get Mike to take a picture of us so Mom and Dad can see how cool we look." I walked into the bathroom where my tux hung on the shower rod. After dressing in a rush, I reentered the main room while fastening the bowtie with barely a glance.

Attending way too many formal dinners had given me plenty of practice.

Two small suitcases and my backpack sat next to the door. Clara stood at the window, peering around the curtain once more. "He saw me, Nathan. He's getting out."

"Here we go again." I threw the backpack on and grabbed our suitcases. "We'll take the hallway exit."

She slid my helmet over my head and put hers on. "Let's go."

We rushed out of the room and jogged toward the exit at the end of the corridor. I looked back. The Mustang driver appeared from around a corner, a gun in hand.

He fired. A bullet zipped past and clanked into the exit's metal door.

I shoved it open, pulled Clara through, and slammed it as I shouted, "Run!"

While she took off in a trot, I set the suitcases down and waited a step or two in front of the door. Seconds later, it eased open a few inches. The moment the gun and a forearm appeared in the gap, I slammed the door. The arm crunched, the man yelped, and the gun dropped to the ground.

I threw the door open. The man staggered back into the hall and grasped his arm, his face twisting in pain. Using a head butt, I crashed my helmet against his nose. In a spray of blood, he toppled and collapsed.

After pocketing the gun and grabbing the suitcases, I ran to the motel's front parking lot. Clara had already straddled and started her Harley, her dress pulled up to her thighs.

While she revved the engine, I strapped the suitcases to the backs of the bikes and jumped onto my

Harley. I started the engine, swung the bike around, and scooted out of the lot, Clara close behind.

Once on the road, she accelerated to my side and called, "What happened?"

"I gave him a nose job. Tell you more later."

"You have blood on your helmet." She looked me over. "None on your tux, though. I assume the blood's all his."

"It is." I glanced back. No sign of the Mustang. Whoever that guy was, he meant business. He wanted us dead.

Inhaling deeply, I refocused forward. My hands trembled, the same hands that would soon have to flawlessly manipulate a bow and strings. Playing next to Mom was nerve-racking enough, but now with a murderer on my tail, I had to watch my back or my next appearance might be in a coffin.