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# FATAL CONVERGENCE

BOOK 3 OF  
THE TIME ECHOES TRILOGY

BY BRYAN DAVIS



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*Fatal Convergence* is a rewrite of *Nightmare's Edge*, published in 2009.

## CHAPTER ONE

CERULEAN AND I walked through Kelly's dream — a dark cemetery with tombstones protruding from the ground at odd angles. The air grew frigid, making me glad for the gray Iowa sweatshirt I had borrowed from Nathan of Earth Blue. Since he had suffered a tragic death, he no longer needed it.

With Cerulean holding a slender white candle to counter the dimness, we searched for any sign of Jack, the Earth Yellow plane crash survivor who suffered the loss of his eyes to Mictar's fiery hand. We couldn't risk calling for him. Mictar might be lurking somewhere within earshot.

Bones littered the weed-infested ground. Gnarled oak trees with hanging moss painted twisted shadows on the path that coursed through an abandoned yard. As we passed by a bent, leafless tree, draped with long, hanging vines, Cerulean whispered, "Beware of the spider trees. They are one of the few realities in a dreamscape. Stay away from them."

"Good to know."

A large raven perched atop one of the burial markers, staring at me as I passed.

"Read," it croaked, its red eyes shining. "Read. Read."

I stopped and leaned closer. "You mean the tombstone?"

"Read! Read!"

Cerulean grabbed my arm. "It is not wise to heed the words of the dream creatures."

"Just reading the tombstone won't hurt." I took the candle from him and walked to the side of the grave. The raven still leering at me, I held the flame close to the stone and read out loud, "Here lies Kelly Clark, murdered by Nathan Shepherd and unable to rest in the glare of her killer's light."

"What?" I leaned back. "How could a tombstone know I'm here?"

Cerulean stared at the raven. "Three possibilities. First, Kelly sees us in her dream, so she created the inscription even as you drew close. Second, a dream stalker is trying to intimidate you to keep you from proceeding. Third, and perhaps the most dangerous of all, maybe you are becoming part of the dreamscape."

"How is that possible?"

"Patar likely sent Jack here to keep him alive, knowing the poor man would soon become part of the dream world, a living phantom who wanders in people's nightmares. Jack would survive, but only Patar would know how to extract him without killing him. This melding with the dream world eventually happens to all unguarded humans, depending on their ability to resist the temptations they find within."

I pointed at myself. "Will I be able to leave safely? I'm not part of this place yet, am I?"

Fixing his gaze on me, Cerulean shook his head. "You appear solid, so one of the other two options is more likely. I suspect that a stalker is present."

"Who? Mictar?"



“He is powerful enough.” Cerulean took a quick step and grabbed the raven by the throat. It choked out a squawk and flailed its wings under the supplicant’s grip, vainly trying to claw his arm. “Where is your master?”

“Read!” it croaked again. “Read!”

Cerulean shook its body. “You have a voice. Tell me who sent you.”

“Read! Read!” The raven broke free. In a scattering of feathers, it flew into the darkness above.

Cerulean took the candle from me. “Come. We must hurry. The longer we stay, the greater the danger.”

“The raven wanted us to read the inscription again. Maybe there’s a new one.”

Cerulean held the flame high and grasped my arm. “It is of no consequence. If the message has been written by the stalker, it is likely a lie. If it is a product of Kelly’s nightmarish fears, it will heighten your own. If you are becoming part of this world, deep emotions will only hasten the process.”

“Not knowing will drive me crazy.” I squinted at the tombstone, but it was now too dark to read. “Taking a second or two won’t hurt.”

Cerulean held fast. “The risk is too high. Your unwarranted insistence demonstrates that the effect this place is having on you is escalating rapidly. You are losing your ability to reason.”

“But I have to know.” As I pulled against Cerulean’s grip, the supplicant’s blue hair grew fuzzy, like reeds waving under restless waters. “Let me go.”

“Nathan!”

The shout sounded like a thunderclap. Ahead on the path, a man stood with his fists set against his hips, his face bent into a deep scowl.

I blinked. “Is it Mictar?”

"No," Cerulean said, loosening his grip. "It is Patar."

Patar walked three steps closer before halting. The candlelight gleamed on a plastic bag in his hand. "I sense conflict. What is the trouble?"

I nodded toward the tombstone. "I have to know what it says. Kelly might be communicating with me."

"As you can see, Cerulean ..." Patar's voice grew distant, warped, as if he were speaking from the midst of a cave. "He is being absorbed." The stalker's slender form now seemed foggy as well, distorted, more like a dream than reality.

Cerulean nodded. "I can see that now. He is showing signs of fading."

"I'm fading?" I pointed at Cerulean, then at Patar. "You two are the ghostly looking ones."

"It's only going to get worse," Patar said. "His mental defenses are withering, and Kelly's nightmare is reaching a climax."

A sudden gust blew away a blanket of clouds. A full moon, at least five times its usual size, hovered in a purple sky. Its glow illuminated the cemetery, allowing a clearer view of the dozens of tombstones.

"Shall I take him out immediately?" Cerulean asked. "Or should I find Jack first?"

A low rumble sounded at my side. At the gravesite where the raven once perched, a hand pushed out of the earth, then a second hand and a head. Finally, an entire female body climbed up and shook dirt from her shoulder-length blonde hair. She looked straight ahead and called, "Nathan? Are you here?"

"Kelly?" I stared at her. "It really *is* you!"

Wearing a knee-length nightshirt, she brushed off the soil, revealing letters on the front that read "Sanity Is

Overrated." She staggered toward me, feeling for obstacles in her way. "Nathan? Where are you? I hear your voice."

As Kelly drew closer, her face clarified, revealing vacant sockets — dark holes instead of eyes. I stiffened. Could she be the Earth Blue Kelly, somehow resurrected? Or was she Kelly Red, a new victim of Mictar's cruel, electrified hand?

*No, I told myself, she's only part of a dream.* Yet, she looked so real.

Kelly stopped and touched my cheeks with icy fingers. "There you are. Why didn't you answer me?" She shivered and rubbed her arms. "I'm cold and scared. Will you get me out of here? I can't see a thing."

I reached for her hand, then jerked back. "You're just a mirage. I can't take you anywhere."

"You are correct." Cerulean lifted his candle higher. "Stay in the light, Nathan. Do not be deceived."

"This is no time for joking around," Kelly said as she bounced on the toes of her sock-covered feet. "You can't leave me in this horrible place. It's so cold, so terribly cold. Please take me home." She reached out for me. With missing eyes and a dirty face, she seemed like a pitiful waif as her voice broke into a lament. "Nathan ... please ... I'm scared."

"I'll get you out." I grabbed her hand. "Just hang on."

The chilled fingers of her other hand wrapped around my upper arm. She was solid, real, without a hint of fading.

"Oh, thank you." She leaned her head against my shoulder. "I told you never to leave me, not even for a minute. I felt so alone. So scared."

For a moment, dizziness flooded my mind, but I shook it off. "Just stay with me. Cerulean will get us out of here."

"Nathan," Cerulean said, "if you continue—"

"Let him go for a moment." Patar's voice faded even further. He poured the contents of his bag into Cerulean's hand. "When I wrestled with my brother, I recovered these from his energy reserves and was able to reconstitute them. You will find Jack approximately one hundred paces ahead. Restore these and get him and Nathan out of here with all speed."

In Cerulean's transparent palm lay two perfectly formed eyeballs with nerves and moist tissue attached.

"Have you found your new charge?" Patar asked.

Cerulean gave him a pensive look. "Not yet."

"Have you not been listening? She calls for help from this dream world. If I can hear her, surely you can."

"I have heard her song, but I was unsure of my responsibilities. Much has changed."

Patar laid a hand on Cerulean's shoulder. "You are still a supplicant to Earth Blue. You must continue your duties."

"Then my work with Nathan is finished," Cerulean said. "I will have to find this new gifted one."

"You will." Patar handed him the empty bag.

"Because Nathan broke the portal mirror and lost the camera, he will not be able to travel to my world to play the violin at Sarah's Womb, at least not at this time. You can, however, send him to Earth Yellow to find other options."

"Yes," Cerulean said. "Before we came here, Nathan's mother was playing Foundation's Key to see which mirror is the correct portal. With so many mirrors, it is a grueling task. While she rested, we decided to try

to find Jack. I was unsure of how the dreamscape would affect Nathan, so this was a test.”

“And he failed, just as he did when he allowed his desire for revenge against my brother to outweigh his wisdom. He had the power to escape with the mirror intact.”

“Nathan,” Kelly said, her fingers growing warmer on my skin. “Don’t let him talk about you like that. You did the best you could. You were under a lot of pressure.”

“You’re right.” I stared at Kelly. Even with dirt smeared across her cheeks, black holes where her blue eyes should be, and grungy, tangled hair, she seemed lovelier than ever. “And I really didn’t have much of a choice.”

“Then don’t listen. We’ll find our own way out.”

“Go now,” Patar said, “before that rotting cadaver becomes more real to him. He will soon bond with it beyond all hope of reason.” Patar faded out of sight.

Cerulean put the eyeballs into the bag and stuffed the top into his waistband. Lifting the candle, he pulled my elbow. “Jack is near. Let us retrieve him and flee this place.”

Leading Kelly by the arm, I followed Cerulean, now a blue ghost. “Did you hear that, Kelly? We’ll be out of here soon.”

“Thank you, Nathan.” She staggered along, her empty eye sockets still wide. “I knew you wouldn’t leave me here.”

With the moon shining brightly, the going became easier. It took only a few seconds to find Jack sitting on the ground, leaning against a tombstone. He seemed solid, though Cerulean was now as transparent as thinning fog.

Jack ran his fingers through his thick beard. “Who’s there?”

"He is losing his grip on reality as well." Cerulean crouched next to the tombstone. "I will have to work quickly."

"He looks fine. He's not fading at all." I turned to Kelly. I almost said, "Right, Kelly?" forgetting for a moment that she couldn't see anything.

"Take this." Cerulean handed me the candle. "Watch me through the flame."

"Okay." Feeling dizzy again, I held the flame close to my nose and peered through it. Cerulean pulled the eyeballs from the bag. Then, while singing unintelligible words at a high pitch, he laid his palm over Jack's empty sockets and pushed the eyeballs into place.

Blue light seeped around the edges of Cerulean's hand. He appeared to have an ability similar to Mictar's, a powerful light that flashed from his palm. With every second I peered through the candle's flame, Cerulean grew more solid while Jack stayed the same. I looked back at Kelly. Her face seemed fuzzier, distant.

She angled her head as if listening. "What's happening?"

"Everything's okay." As I spoke, her features clarified. "Cerulean is repairing Jack's eyes. We'll leave in a minute."

I turned back to Cerulean, lowering the candle to see him better. Ghostly blue once more, he helped Jack to his feet.

"Can you see?" Cerulean asked.

"Very well, thank you." Jack pulled a rumpled fedora from beneath his jacket and straightened it.

"Everything is clear, except for you."

"Your normal sight will be restored soon."

“Excellent! Excellent! The end of a nightmare at last!” He put his hat on and turned toward me, his restored eyes glistening. “Nathan, I’m so glad to see you.”

“Same here.” I gave the candle back to Cerulean and shook Jack’s hand, grimacing at the pressure on my wounds. “Now let’s all go to the real world. I have to figure out what happened to Kelly and get some eyes for her, too.”

“Nathan.” Cerulean pushed the candle closer. “You and Jack will come with me. You must leave Kelly behind.”

“What?” I shook my head hard. “I can’t leave her here.”

Kelly’s arm locked around mine. “Of course you can’t. I have to stay with you.”

Cerulean pulled Jack and me together and held the candle’s flame near our eyes. His voice mellowed to a soothing chant. “Stare at the flame. It is the light of reality. The images around you are mere phantoms. Bring what is real into focus, or you will not return to the ones you love.”

He blew a puff of sweet-smelling air into my face. “Think of your mother. She waits for you in the Earth Blue bedroom. You have to go back and search for your father. The real Kelly is there as well. We need to awaken her from this nightmare so you and she can go to Earth Yellow and save two world populations from disaster.”

The flame’s glow spread over Cerulean’s face, making his features clearer. He compressed my chin with his hand, forcing me to keep my stare locked on the flame. “You must let this Kelly go, Nathan. She is not real. Night is over and dawn is breaking.”

“No, Nathan!” Kelly’s voice spiked into a wail. “You promised to stay with me. This place is cold and dark, and I’m scared.”

Ever so gently, Cerulean pulled on my chin, drawing me forward, his voice hypnotizing. “Release her, Nathan. All will be well. You will see the real Kelly in mere moments. We will awaken her, and she will escape this torture.”

Heaving shallow breaths, I pried Kelly’s fingers loose and pulled away.

“Nathan! What are you doing?” Kelly, now ghostly and floating backwards, reached for me with open hands. “I’ll be alone again. All alone in this cold, dark place.”

“I ... I can’t leave her. She’s—”

Cerulean’s voice sharpened again. “She is not real!”

My mind now swimming, I repeated the words in a whisper. “She is not real.”

Cerulean blew out the candle. As the light faded, Kelly’s voice faded with it. “I’m so cold. So cold.”