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INTERFINITY

BOOK 2 OF
THE TIME ECHOES TRILOGY

BY BRYAN DAVIS



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CHAPTER ONE

MY GYM SHOES squeaked on the hospital hallway's sanitized tiles as I strode toward the sixth floor's waiting area. Anxiety tensed every muscle. I had to find my parents. Once mutilated and dead inside matching coffins, now they were alive. I had touched Dad's chain-bound arms through the cross-world mirror and felt his loving strength. I had heard Mom's voice and once again bathed in the majesty of her matchless violin.

Yet, the beautiful duet we had played at the funeral had once again become a solo. The portal collapsed, and there was no word from Earth Blue as to where my parents might be. After they disappeared from the bedroom where they had sought a way to return to Earth Red, no trace of them remained.

Mystery abounded. Who was that girl in red who kept appearing in the mirror to provide help in seemingly magical ways? Was she alive? I had only a photo showing Mictar carrying her limp body in a dark chamber. Patar had said she was in danger and that he'd try to help her, but that wasn't much to go on. Earlier in the evening, I had mentioned her to Dr. Gordon, but he had no clue about her identity.

When I reached the waiting area, I sat on a coffee-stained sofa and stared into the hall. I had to shake off these haunting thoughts. I mentally reentered Kelly's room and saw her lying on the bed, beaten and bruised from our ordeal, her shoulder lacerated and her eyes half blind. The words I said to her just moments ago returned. *We'll search for them together.* But how could she help? With all the dangers ahead, how could a blind, wounded girl help me find my parents?

A sharp, matronly voice cut in. "Ah, there you are."

I shot to my feet. Clara marched toward me, her heels clacking as she pushed back her windblown gray hair. Walking stride for stride next to her, Dr. Gordon stared at a phone, his face as grim as ever.

As they entered the waiting area, I nodded toward the hallway. "Tony's still with Kelly. Thought I'd let them have some daddy-daughter time."

While Dr. Gordon texted on his phone, Clara lowered her voice. "Dr. Gordon received a cryptic message from Simon Blue. Apparently something very unusual is happening on Earth Blue, and we're trying to get details."

"So that's our next destination."

"Yes. We have already alerted my counterpart on Earth Blue. She and Daryl Blue will be ready to pick you up at the observatory and take you to Kelly Blue's house."

"Good. That's the logical place to start looking for Mom and Dad."

"Are you going to break the news to Kelly?" Clara asked.

"I guess I'll have to, but convincing her she's in no shape to come won't be easy."

Dr. Gordon slid his phone into a pocket and spoke in his usual formal tone. "There are no further details available. We should get some rest and proceed to the observatory at dawn." He looked at his wristwatch. "Which is about six and a half hours from now."

"Okay," I said. "Let me talk to Kelly. I'll be right back."

As I walked down the hall, Jack came to mind. He had disappeared into the mirror riding on Mictar's back. What happened to him? Even if he escaped, he would be lost in a world not his own. Since Earth Yellow lagged behind Earth Red by about thirty years, he would feel like a time-traveling visitor from the past.

A man in scrubs caught up with and passed me, pushing a lab tray covered with glass bottles and tubes. With lanky pale arms protruding from short green sleeves, he kept his head down. He slowed in front of Kelly's door, but when it opened, he resumed his pace and turned into a side corridor, his head still low.

I could barely breathe. Was he Mictar? Why would he be so persistent in trying to get to Kelly? What value was she to him?

As I neared the room, Tony walked out. Bending his tall frame, he released the latch slowly and walked away on tiptoes. When he saw me, he jerked up and smiled, his booming voice contradicting his earlier attempts to be quiet. "Hey, what brings you back so soon?"

I kept my gaze on the side hallway. No sign of the technician. "Some news for Kelly. I have to head back to the scene of the crime."

Tony shook his head. "Better not go in right now. She fell asleep in mid-bite. And if she's too tired for pizza, she's too tired for company."

"No surprise. She's been going nonstop." I glanced between the door and the other hallway. "Okay if I sneak in and leave her a note?"

"Sure. Just don't wake her up."

"I'll be quiet." I reached for the knob and nodded toward the other hallway. "Mind checking something out for me? I saw someone suspicious head that way. A guy with pale arms wearing scrubs. It looked like he was going into Kelly's room, but when you opened the door to come out, he took off."

"Sounds suspicious." Tony crept toward the other hall, pointing. "That way?"

"Yeah. Just a few seconds ago."

"I'm on it." When he reached the corridor, he looked back, his muscular arms flexing. "Time to take out the trash."

I opened Kelly's door a crack, eased inside, and closed it. Walking slowly as my eyes adjusted to the dim room, lit only by city lights coming through the window on the far wall, I drew the bed's privacy curtain to the side and focused on Kelly resting on a pillow, her shoulder-length blonde hair splashed across the white linen. I stopped at her bedside, unable to draw my stare away from her wounded face.

Black scorch marks on her brow and cheeks and a thick bandage on her shoulder bore witness to her recent battle with Mictar. Her closed lids concealed injured eyes, maybe the worst of all her injuries, the result of Mictar's efforts to burn through to her brain and steal her life. Still,

even in such a battle-torn condition, she was beautiful to behold, a true warrior wrapped in the sleeping shell of a petite, athletic young woman.

I searched her side table for a pen and paper. A portable radio next to a flower vase played soft music, a piano concerto—elegant, but unfamiliar. I spotted a pen and pad and pushed the radio out of the way, but it knocked against the vase, making a clinking noise. I cringed and swiveled toward Kelly.

Her chest heaved, and her hands clenched the side rails. She scanned the room with glassy eyes, panting as she cried out, “Who’s there?”

I grasped her wrist. “It’s just me. Nathan.”

Her eyes locked on mine, wide and terrified.

“Mictar is here!”

Making a shushing sound, I lowered the bed rail and pried her fingers loose. “You were just dreaming.”

“No.” She wagged her head hard. “I saw him. In the hospital.”

“Do you know where?”

She turned her head slowly toward the door. As a shaft of light split the darkness, her voice lowered to a whisper. “He’s here.”

A shadowy form stretched into the room, its movement painstakingly deliberate. The intruder obviously didn’t want anyone to hear him.

I grabbed the vase and dumped the flowers. Wielding it like a club, I crept toward the door, glancing between Kelly and the emerging figure. She yanked out her IV tube, swung her bare legs to the side of the bed, and dropped to the floor, blood dripping behind her.

The shadow, now fully in the room, halted. Kelly scooted to my side while tying her hospital gown in the back.

As the door swung shut, darkening the room, a low voice emanated from the black figure. "If it is a fight you seek, son of Solomon, I am more than capable of delivering it. In my current form, a glass vase will be a pitifully inadequate weapon. I suggest you give me what I want, and I will leave you in peace."

I tightened my grip on the vase. "Just get out, Mictar. It's two against one. It only took a violin upside your head to beat you before, and you couldn't even defeat Jack at the funeral."

"Alas! Poor Jack. He was a formidable foe. May he rest in peace." Mictar's tone lowered to a growl. "You can't take me by surprise this time. Your base use of that instrument proves that you have no respect for its power. And now you have neither a violin nor a Quattro mirror to provide a coward's escape."

I peered at Mictar's glowing eyes. The scarlet beacons seemed powerful and filled with malice. Yet, if he had as much power as he boasted, why hadn't he attacked? I set my feet and lifted the vase higher. "Why are you here?"

"To finish my meal. I have enough energy left to fight for what I want, but I would prefer not to expend it. If you turn the girl over to me freely, I will consume what I merely tasted at the funeral and be on my way. In exchange, I will leave you with two precious gifts. I will tell you how to find your parents, and I will relieve you of that handicapped little harlot."

I flinched. Kelly backed away a step.

“Ah, yes,” Mictar continued as his dark shape slowly expanded. “That word is profane in your ears, yet I wager that it rings true in your mind. Kelly Clark is not the paragon of virtue your parents would want for your bride. She clings to you like a leech, because she is soiled by—”

“Shut up!” I shouted. “You don’t know what you’re talking about!”

The humanlike shadow swelled to twice its original size. “Oh, yes, I do. You want to know every lurid detail. She is your dark shadow, and you will never find your parents while you entertain a harlot at your side.”

“No!” I slung the vase at Mictar. When it came within inches of his dark head, it stopped in midair. I tried to reach for Kelly, but my arm locked in place. My head wouldn’t even swivel. Everything in the room had frozen, except for Mictar.

As his shadow continued to grow, his dark hands drew closer and closer. “I saved the last bit of my energy to perform one of my brother’s favorite tricks, motor suspension of everything within my sight. Now I will take yours and the harlot’s eyes, and I will need no more to fill Lucifer’s engine.”

My jaw locked, and my tongue cleaved to the roof of my mouth. A dark hand wrapped around my neck and clamped down, throttling my windpipe. Another hand draped my face. Sparks shot into my eyes, stinging them.

A knock sounded. The door opened, revealing Tony and a nurse.

Light flashed around Mictar’s hand, but I still couldn’t budge. Pain jolted my senses. My legs shook as if I had been lifted off the floor and rattled like a baby’s toy.

The darkness flew away. Mictar's body, a black human form with no face or clothes, zoomed past the nurse and crashed against a wall. "Stay right there," Tony shouted, "or I'll introduce your face to another wall."

Like a streaking shadow, Mictar pounced on Tony, wrenched his arm behind him until it snapped, and slung him against the wall. Tony staggered, then slumped to the floor, dazed.

Mictar grabbed the nurse from behind. As she kicked and screamed, he laid a fingerless hand over her eyes and pressed down. Sparks flew. Mictar's body lightened to dark gray. Details traced across his pale face and bony hands. White hair materialized, slick and tied back in a ponytail.

I tried to lunge at him, but my feet wouldn't obey. I slid one ahead, then the other, too slow to do any good. Kelly hobbled toward the melee and helped Tony to his feet. While she cradled his broken arm, Mictar's body continued to clarify. The nurse sagged in his clutches, but he held on, light still pouring into his body from hers.

My muscles finally loosened. I stumbled ahead and rammed into Mictar, but, as if repelled by a force field, I bounced back and slammed against the floor. New jolts sizzled across my skin, painful, but short-lived. I looked up at his pulsing form, now complete and radiant.

Mictar dropped the nurse into a heap of limp arms and legs and kicked her body to the side. Tony picked up an IV stand and drew it back, ready to strike.

Tilting his head up, Mictar began singing. His voice, a brilliant tenor, grew in volume, crooning a single note that seemed to thicken the air.

Tony dropped the IV stand and fell to his knees. Kelly stumbled back and pressed her body against the wall. A vase exploded, sending sharp bits of glass flying. A long crack etched its way from one corner of the window to another.

Fighting the piercing agony, I rolled up to my knees and climbed to my feet, but the new shock stiffened my legs again, and the noise seemed to be cracking my bones in half. I could barely move.

Mictar took a breath and sang again. This time, he belted out what seemed to be a tune, but it carried no melody, just a hodgepodge of unrelated notes that further thickened the air. Red mist formed along the floor, an inch deep and swirling. As he sang on, the mist rose to my shins and churned like a cauldron of blood. With the door partially open, the dense mist poured out but not fast enough to keep the flood from rising.

A security guard shoved the door fully open. With a pistol drawn, he waded into the knee-high wall of red. Dr. Gordon and Clara followed, but when the sonic waves blasted across their bodies, the guard dropped his gun, and all three covered their ears.

The window shattered. Mist crawled up the wall and streamed through the jagged opening. Cracking sounds ripped through the air. The entire room seemed to spin in a slow rotation, like the beginning of a carousel ride.

“Nathan,” Dr. Gordon shouted. “He’s creating some kind of space-fabric vortex. The results could be disastrous.”

The spin accelerated and drew me toward the window. “What can we do? I can’t touch him.”

Dr. Gordon staggered toward me, fighting the force, but he managed only two steps. "Neutralize his song!"

I leaned toward the center of the room but kept sliding away. "I don't have my violin!"

The outer wall collapsed. Fog rolled out and tumbled into the expanse six stories above the ground. The floor buckled and pitched, knocking us to our backs. While I fought to keep from being spun out of the room, the nurse's body slid across the tile and plunged over the edge with the river of red mist.

I grabbed the privacy curtain and held on. Mictar took a quick breath and continued singing. The bed's side table bumped against me. The pen fell, bounced off my shoulder, and disappeared in the fog. Holding the curtain with one hand, I looked up at the wobbling table where the radio still sat. With my free hand, I shook the supporting leg. When the radio fell, I caught it and turned the volume to maximum.

Now playing a Beethoven symphony, the radio blasted measure after measure of deep cellos and kettle drums. Trumpets blared. Cymbals crashed. Violins joined in and created a tsunami of music that swept through the room.

The mist swirled around Mictar. His song weakened. He coughed and gasped but managed to spew a string of obscenities before shouting, "You haven't seen the last of me, son of Solomon!"

The mist covered his head and continued to coil around him until he looked like a tightly wound scarlet cocoon. The room's spin slowed, and the cocoon seemed

to absorb the momentum. Mictar transformed into a red tornado and shrank as if slurped into an invisible void.

Seconds later, he vanished, and the shaking ceased.

I turned off the radio and crawled up the sloping floor to where everyone else crouched. Dr. Gordon latched on to my wrist and hoisted me the rest of the way. His voice stayed calm and low. "Well done, Nathan."

Kelly threw her arms around me from one side, and Clara did the same from the other. "Don't ever leave me alone again," Kelly said, "not for a single minute."

Sirens wailed. An amplified voice barked from somewhere below, but I paid no attention to the words. I just pulled my friends closer. "Are you all right?"

Clara nodded. "My ears are ringing. Nothing painful."

"I'm fine," Kelly said. "But that poor nurse!"

Tony, sitting on his haunches in front of me, clenched a fist. "Now that's what I call taking out the trash!"