

Time Clocks

By Yoav Avni



Chapter 1 – translated from Hebrew by Yoav Avni

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From the fibers, three arise

It wasn't a live broadcast—the show being taped now would air only on Saturday night—and Boaz watched the unfolding scene on the small screen mounted on the wall of the room where he waited.

Soon, he would be called to the glittering stage. There, he wished he could turn back time to just one moment. Not to buy a winning lottery ticket or to stop the fateful meeting of a historical tyrant's parents. No. Boaz Grand would return to this Thursday afternoon, to this very moment, and inform the production team of *Easy Does It* that, regretfully, he could not participate. Any excuse would suffice—just to avoid sinking into that plush, sense-numbing armchair and making the mental misstep of revealing what he had unwittingly shared there.

The audience fell silent as the host dramatically recited the cryptic words in his booming voice:

"From the fibers, three arise!"

A pause for effect, then he added, "We'll take a short commercial break. When we return, we'll move on to the segment we've all been waiting for, featuring a surprising and important guest on our panel. And no—it's not another family member, I promise. After all, A mother is one of a kind, especially one like mine."

Amid the laughter, he waved goodbye and assured everyone, "Two minutes, and we'll be back!"

A company car-Electric company-A retail chain-A lingerie brand, and a single bank ad later, the studio was once again bathed in golden and crimson hues.

It was just another talk show—a genre that had seen little innovation for

decades: audience, lighting, stage, host's desk, and guest armchairs. And, of course, the familiar refrain: "*We're back!*" But *Easy Does It* was considered a television miracle, remaining relevant both to family living rooms on Saturday nights and to office watercooler chatter on Monday mornings. Its strength lay in blending lightheartedness with gravitas, helmed by a host with dazzling teeth, a perfectly coiffed head of hair, and an untarnished reputation. Above all, the show's staying power rested on its exclusive weekly feature, the segment Boaz was about to join—without which the program would have been zapped into the trash heap of broadcast history.

The production assistant cracked the door and stuck his head in. "He's about to call the regulars, and then you. When he says your name, I'll take you to the studio," he updated, then disappeared as quickly as he had arrived.

"*We're back!*" The host beamed his well-practiced smile as applause erupted. "Now, I'm pleased to welcome the members of our panel, who will analyze this week's prophecy limerick, composed by none other than the one and only..." He turned his gaze upward to the massive studio screen, which flickered and stabilized to reveal a platinum-haired figure with prominent cheekbones. "How are you?" he asked his virtual counterpart.

"Wonderful," she replied, basking in the applause. Her voice, so familiar to Boaz, was a blend of electric citrus blossoms—effortlessly artificial yet strangely captivating.

"Before we bring out the others, can you share the latest prophecy? Earlier, before the break, I teased one line: '*From the fibers, three arise.*' Fantastic and intriguing as always. But let's hear the whole thing, shall we?"

"Of course," she agreed. After a perfectly timed clearing of her synthetic throat, she recited:

*"The plane of time is not so plain,
Its hues defy both black and white's domain.
From the fibers, three arise,
Guard their souls, the sage implies—*

A task awaits beyond time's chain."

"Thank you, *IsraAi!*" the host said, bowing slightly toward the state-of-the-art AI system, known colloquially as "The nation's AI."

"Wealth is contentment with your lot!" the system quipped as the applause swelled.

Boaz had already seen the limerick earlier in the week at the office.

Anticipating his turn, he stretched and began pacing the length of the waiting room.

"And now, I'm honored to introduce our panel: legendary sports broadcaster Eli Achituv, esteemed director Dalia Eshet, sharp parliamentary advisor Dor Alron, and, of course, my one and only mom!" As usual, the four panelists took their seats in the semicircular arrangement of crimson armchairs facing the host.

But this time, there was one more empty chair—a surprise the host quickly revealed: "Boaz Grand!"

As promised, the waiting room door swung open, and Boaz tried to focus on what lay ahead, ignoring the unsettling resemblance between the hallway leading to the studio and a long, narrow tunnel culminating in a blinding white light.