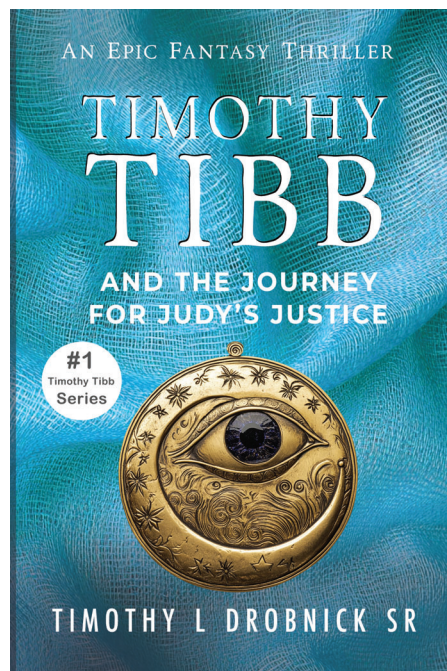


Timothy Tibb and the Journey for Judy's Justice

An Epic Fantasy Thriller

Timothy L Drobnick Sr



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Chapter 1

DAY 1 - TUESDAY

Judy's heart pounded as she raced down the dark, narrow alley. Rain fell in heavy, relentless sheets, turning the night into a misty world of wet shadows. The alley, flanked by tall brick buildings, echoed with the sound of her footsteps. The bricks underfoot were slick.

Her breath came in heavy, ragged gasps, fogging up in the chilly air. Water dripped from her hair, running down her neck and soaking her clothes. In the darkness, her vision extended only a few feet. Every shadow seemed to move. Fear gripped her, urging her legs to move faster, even as they felt like lead.

The rain obstructed her vision, and the howling wind warned of doom. The storm swallowed Judy's scream for help. She needed shelter from the rain.

As she ran, her mind raced. Who was that man? Why was he after her? She stumbled over a loose brick, catching herself before she fell. Fear surged through her, lending her

tired legs a burst of energy. She refused to be captured. She had to keep moving.

As she rounded a corner, her heart stopped. A man, wearing a yellow robe, stood at the alley's end. In his hands, he held something that glinted in the dim light—a shotgun pointed right at her.

Judy's breath caught in her throat, her feet skidding to a halt on the wet bricks. She stared at him, unable to move, unable to think. She froze.

Judy's scream tore through the night, piercing the sound of the rain. Panic surged through her veins as she whirled, desperate to escape. However, another yellow-robed man blocked her on the opposite side of the alley. He, too, held a shotgun.

Trapped between the two men, Judy felt a sense of despair wash over her. The rain continued to pour down, dripping from her hair and nose. Despite the frosty night air, fear drove her mind to race for an exit.

Her eyes darted around, seeking an escape, a hiding spot, anything. Then she saw it—an awning in front of a storefront, offering a brief respite from the relentless downpour. Without a second thought, Judy sprinted, her shoes splashing through puddles, her breath coming out in sharp gasps.

Reaching the awning, she ducked under it, the sudden absence of rain on her head providing momentary relief. She pressed her back against the cold, wet wall of the store, her chest heaving. The men approached her from opposite ends of the alley.

Judy's mind raced. There was no escape. She felt helpless, cornered. And then Judy rose, using her magic. Her feet were no longer touching the ground. Light as a feather, she floated up into the air, levitating. She rose higher until the fabric of the awning brushed against her fingertips. Out of the rain, she hovered.

Casting her eyes downward, she saw the men. "You can't hurt me when I'm not touching the ground. Go away!"

One man moved towards her, reached up, and grabbed her leg. Judy kicked and hit, struggling to free herself, but the man was too strong.

With a forceful yank, he pulled her down. Judy's body hit the wet bricks of the street with a painful thud, knocking the breath out of her. The man pinned her down with his foot, pressing against her chest.

"Your magic can't help you now," the man said.

Lying on her back, Judy looked up at the night sky, blurred by rain. Then, the second man approached with heavy steps. He stood over her, pointing the barrel of the

shotgun right at her face. Judy's heart raced and her eyes widened.

As she trembled, her heart beating hard and fast, she felt the cold muzzle of the shotgun. She screamed and hoped someone could hear her.

Her screaming ended as the shotgun roared. Blood mixed with rain and turned pink on the cobblestones. Fragments of bone, stark white against the muted backdrop, lay scattered. Flecks of flesh, torn in the violent encounter, clung to the wet bricks, painting a grim scene.

After completing the assassination, the men retreated, leaving the rain's rhythmic lament.

Chapter 2

DAY 2 - WEDNESDAY

A 24-year-old woman approached the decrepit mansion's rear entrance. With a loud creak, the door swung open. Stepping inside the silent mansion, its dark and cool interior greeted her. She wore black leather boots with thick soles, perfect for walking in tough places. Her outfit included a dark fabric trench coat that flowed around her as she moved. She had pulled her long hair back into a neat braid, and there was a sword hanging on her belt, giving her a look of adventure.

Sunlight streaked through dusty windows, creating beams of light in the darkness, but it was still hard to see. She moved as if she owned the place. She walked through the first floor, her boots making soft sounds on the old tile.

As she climbed the stairs to the second floor, she heard a sound that made her pause—rats. They scurried around in the shadows, their little feet scratching on the wood. With a loud noise, the woman stomped her thick-soled leather

boots on the stairs. The dust puffed up around her feet, clouding the air for a moment. The rats, startled by the noise, ran off, disappearing into their hiding places.

Feeling a bit more confident, she continued up to the next floor. When she reached the third floor, she stopped and looked around. Dust and shadows covered what was once elegant. She shook her head, witnessing the hidden beauty under the neglect.

A picture on the wall captivated her. She had seen it many times before. It was untouched by the dust and decay that engulfed everything else. The sunlight streaming through the window highlighted it.

She stepped closer, her boots echoing on the wooden floor. The picture showed a joyful moment of a young boy with his parents. It was set in this very mansion, but the contrast was striking. In the photo, the mansion was alive with splendor and festivity. The servants had decorated it for a Christmas party, with sparkling lights, shimmering tinsel, and a grand Christmas tree that touched the ceiling.

The boy in the picture was smiling, nestled between his parents. His eyes sparkled with happiness, a stark contrast to the somber, empty halls that surrounded her now. The parents, elegantly dressed, radiated warmth and pride as they stood in their beautifully adorned home, surrounded

by guests. Laughter and joy seemed to emanate from the photo, a reminder of better times.

The picture evoked sadness in the woman, which captured the lost soul of the neglected mansion. Once filled with life, the grand halls now lie abandoned, their echoes of music, laughter, and clinking glasses a distant memory.

She remembered that she and the boy ran through those halls, their laughter mingling with the music, the warmth of the celebration keeping the cold winter at bay. With a sigh, she tore her gaze away from the picture.

She headed for the rooftop patio door. As she stepped out, the woman's eyes fell upon a Zenith 1950s AM/FM Tube Radio Model G730 sitting on a table next to a man engrossed in his work. The radio, a relic from a bygone era, was playing classic rock and roll music, the tunes floating through the air and mingling with the sounds of the birds.

The radio itself was a piece of history, its wooden cabinet polished to a shine, reflecting years of care and attention. Despite being worn, the dials still functioned. A local station played hits from the 50s and 60s, creating a nostalgic ambiance. The warm, rich sound that only tube radios can produce enveloped the rooftop, creating a stark contrast with the modern world below.

A small boy posed with his parents in a picture next to the radio.

The woman's gaze shifted from the radio to the man, observing his appearance. With short, tousled brown hair, his most striking feature was undoubtedly his eyes. One was a warm hazel brown, reminiscent of the earthy tones of the mansion's aged woodwork. The second eye, a rare hazel blue, resembled a clear sky on a sunny day.

His jeans and T-shirt, marked with water stains, showed he had been at his task for some time. He focused on his work, cleaning each golf ball with a focused, almost meditative approach.

After a minute, he looked up. His eyes widened as he smiled.

"Oh, hello Jade."

"Hello Timothy." She stood, her legs spread apart and her hands on her hips, framed by the sunlight.

Timothy Tibb had one corner of his mouth raised as if he was half smiling, half not. He chuckled at her stance. "You've been practicing that pose since you were in kindergarten. I think you've got it down."

Jade laughed as she stepped onto the rooftop patio. "Happy birthday, Timothy."

Timothy smiled, a smudge of dirt on his cheek. "Happy birthday to you, too."

She pulled up an old wooden chair beside him, the paint peeling but still sturdy. "How many do you have left?" Jade asked.

Timothy pointed at the half-full five-gallon bucket sitting next to him. "About that much" He wiped his hands on a rag.

Jade leaned back, letting the gentle breeze toss her hair. "How about I buy us a birthday hamburger once you're done? My treat."

Timothy's smile widened. "That'd be nice, thanks. I got a birthday present for you. He nodded toward a wooden box leaning against the stone wall."

Jade stood and walked over, picking up the box. It was well-crafted, with smooth edges and a small entrance hole. "What is this?"

"It's a nesting box for barn owls." Timothy stood and brushed off his jeans. "To help get rid of the rats."

Her eyes widened. "I love barn owls."

"Yes, I know," Timothy chuckled.

"And I hate rats." She wrinkled her nose.

He nodded. "Yes, I know."

She examined the box. "Where will you hang it?"

"On the wall near the peak of the roof." Timothy pointed to a spot where the stonework met the shingles. "They like high places."

Jade nodded. "Thank you, Timothy. This is a magnificent gift." She paused for a moment. "Do you still want to have a birthday party together?"

Timothy leaned back. "I spent all my extra money on your present. It'd have to be a cheap party."

She waved. "We can finish up season one of our show at my apartment, have some popcorn. I'll buy a cake and put twenty-six candles on it."

"That'd be perfect."

She tapped her chin. "We should invite Dennis, too."

Timothy's smile faded. "I'm still upset with him. He always thinks he's smarter than me."

Jade rolled her eyes. "Jerk, he is smarter than you. Always has been."

He crossed his arms. "I doubt he'd come after our last argument."

"Calling him a bonehead wasn't nice, that's for sure," she said. "Can I invite him?"

Timothy sighed, kicking at a loose pebble on the rooftop. "Sure, but I won't talk to him. Probably."

She shook her head, a small smile tugging at the corners of her mouth. "You two are impossible. We've been best friends since third grade. You need to remember that."

She then placed her hands on her hips. "I'm going to practice with my kenjutsu while you finish up." She adjusted the sword strapped to her belt.

"Don't fall off the edge."

Jade laughed, moving to an open area of the rooftop. "Aren't you the comedian today?"

Timothy watched as Jade walked to the other side of the patio. She began her routine, her movements fluid and precise, each step and swing of the sword showing her skill and focus. Her dedication and strength impressed Timothy. He resumed cleaning the golf balls.