

## Timothy's Demon

**Michael B. Duff**

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*An ancestor's bargain with a demon has implications for a disaffected young man in the exciting fantasy novel Timothy's Demon.*

A young man blends technology with magic to fight creatures from hell and reclaim his mortal soul in Michael B. Duff's urban fantasy novel and series starter *Timothy's Demon*.

In 2058, Boston is overrun by magic. Corporations influenced by demons have replaced the American government, and the city is filled with unstable magical energy from a supernatural attack years ago. Timothy lives on the edge of the affected zone, struggling to make a living after losing his IT job. He's an aimless college dropout in an unforgiving city—until the evening of his twenty-fifth birthday, when he discovers an ancient family secret that flips his world, and his self-image, upside down.

Timothy's ancestor sold his soul, and the souls of his descendants, to a demon prince in exchange for an ancient spell book with unmitigated power. Timothy studies the spell book at the request of a succubus, Lydia, whose master owns the family's souls. Lydia's seductive power makes her difficult to trust, and Timothy is conflicted: she was devoted to his ancestors and may have even loved them, but Timothy thinks he'd be a fool to trust her. Lydia's true intentions are hidden until the novel's end, making her a fascinating and mysterious character.

Other mysteries haunt Timothy throughout the book too. He wonders about the connection between hell and his late parents, his ancestors' victories and mistakes, and the contract his ancestor signed. Timothy also puzzles out logistical problems and spends time binding the spell book to his computer so that he can run training programs and summon spells. This befuddles Lydia, who isn't used to modern technology. The demon's weakness allows Timothy to keep secrets from her, too.

Written from Timothy's rearward-gazing perspective after he's been trapped in purgatory, *Timothy's Demon* combines heaven-versus-hell fantasy dynamics with near-future settings in an intoxicating manner. The zone and other settings are brought to life with sensory descriptions, as of the copper-and-ozone scent of hell that lingers on its demons. This strong sense of place adds a layer of realism to the heightened fight scenes, in which Timothy is often a hairsbreadth away from death. But the novel's reigning excitement is interrupted during its long training sequences, which cause the middle of the book to drag. And while the conclusion is satisfying, not all of the book's mysteries are resolved in it; the coming sequel is as much a necessity as it is its own draw.

A young mage trains using a spell book, a succubus, and sheer force of will in *Timothy's Demon*, a futuristic fantasy novel about souls sold in advance.

LEAH BLOCK (September 16, 2024)

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