

THE JOY OF MURDER

A DAIYU WU MYSTERY

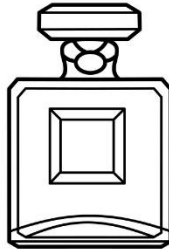


GLORIA
OLIVER



THE JOY OF MURDER

A Daiyu Wu Mystery



Gloria Oliver



GLORIA OLIVER



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The JOY of Murder

A Daiyu Wu Mystery - Book 2

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this book to Carole Nelson Douglas. Miss Huxleigh and Midnight Louie will always be near and dear to my heart. You were taken from us too soon. ghn

ALSO BY GLORIA OLIVER

Standalone Novels

Alien Redemption (SF)
Cross-eyed Dragon Troubles (YA Fantasy)
In the Service of Samurai (YA Fantasy))
Inner Demons (Urban Fantasy)
Jewel of the Gods (Fantasy)
The Price of Mercy (Fantasy)
Vassal of El (Fantasy)
Willing Sacrifice (YA Fantasy)

Daiyu Wu Mystery Series

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Jacques - Prequel Short Story
The JOY of Murder (Book 2)
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Charity and Sacrifice

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A Lone Star in the Sky
Ladies of Trade Town
A Time To ... Volume 2
Ripple Effect
The Four Bubbas of the Apocalypse
Houston: We've Got Bubbas
The Best of the Bubbas of the Apocalypse
Flush Fiction

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A big thanks to my newsletter subscribers for their help in choosing the cover concept. You guys are the best! 😊

Uber kudos to my awesome editor, Elayne Morgan, who went way above and beyond when she didn't have to. You rock!

WHAT'S GONE ON BEFORE

1930 Dallas, TX—Daiyu Wu is the only child of Tye and Lien Wu. She is Chinese and blind—not a good combination during what the press has dubbed the menace of 'the Yellow Terror.' Laying low is a matter of survival. Yet when Dai realizes someone has dumped an old-fashioned green dress at the family laundry in an attempt to hide or destroy evidence, she feels it is her duty to investigate, especially when she discovers the police aren't even aware a murder has taken place.

During the investigation, Dai meets Truman Pierce, a wealthy Dallasite playboy. Jacques Haskin, Dai's constant companion, takes an instant dislike to the man, especially when Pierce lavished his attention on Dai and started calling her 'China Doll' as a term of endearment. She also becomes acquainted with Dr. Aiden Campbell, a pathologist working with the Justice of the Peace in the city of Dallas. Opposites in appearance, the two women's similarities—high intelligence and inquisitive natures—make them fast friends.

With the help, of Aiden, Truman, and Jacques, Dai uncovers Laura Cooper's killer and brings them to justice. Prince Razor, Dai's canine bodyguard and furry ladykiller, even enters the fray when the murderer turns violent after being exposed. Jacques is thrilled when the case is over, and hopes they never again endanger the family by involving themselves in such serious business. Unfortunately for Jacques' nerves, fate has other plans.

CHAPTER 1



"Jacques, do give Mrs. Lark my heartfelt thanks next time you see her, won't you? She's a veritable treasure." Dai, my sister in all but blood, sat curled up on the living room's curved, deep green couch, the morning sunshine glinting off her straight, black, shoulder-length hair. Her fingertips moved rapidly across the pages of a *Reader's Digest* magazine published in Braille.

"I'll do that." I couldn't help but smile. Dai had picked up the skill of scanning Braille a while back, but the amount of printed matter in that format was lacking, especially for adults. Mrs. Lark, the head librarian at the Dallas Library, had learned of the American Publishing House's efforts with Reader's Digest. Since 1928, they'd worked to get their publications reissued in Braille, so those blinded during the Great War would have something to stimulate their minds on their own terms. The library had started collecting the publication for their patrons and made sure to let me know.

Dai being able to 'read' alone, rather than requiring her

parents or me to recite the contents aloud for her benefit, gave her a new type of independence. I was happy for her, even as somewhere deep inside, I mourned the lessening of my duties. It was absurd, of course, but the feeling was there all the same.

"What are you reading?" I asked her.

"An article called 'Aladdins of the Test Tubes' by William Pickett Helm. It's a bit fanciful, but it's nice to see chemists getting some attention. I just wish he'd actually mentioned some formulae in the piece." She shrugged. "Oh well. Something is better than nothing."

Her satisfied smile belied her words.

Dozing beside her, Prince Razor, our Scottish terrier and Pomeranian mix companion, suddenly sat up, both ears lifting. Dai's heart-shaped face also tilted slightly. "Jacques, an automobile just parked on the street in front of our house. I think we're about to have a visitor."

Dai might be blind, but without visual distractions, her hearing was quite keen. Still, visitors to the Wu household were rare, especially at this time of day. Luckily, life had pretty much returned to normal after the Laura Cooper incident had been closed, for the most part anyway—so there should be nothing to worry about.

Dai's friendship with Dr. Aiden Campbell had blossomed since then, which enriched both their lives, even if, at times, the technical science banter left me scratching my head. Unfortunately, 'he who wasn't worth talking about' had *not* disappeared from our lives as I'd hoped. But, pressure from his family and self-appointed girlfriend had kept meetings between him and Dai to a minimum—and the dreaded dinner delayed—much to Dai's father's relief as well as mine. Truman Pierce was trouble—Trouble with a capital T.

Setting down my dog-eared copy of *Gulliver's Travels*, I rose and prepared to answer the door if indeed we were about to receive a visitor. The sound of the doorbell was quickly followed by a loud rapping—which seemed rather desperate or rude. My initial guess that the caller might be a salesman was shunted aside, as one would never call on a prospective

customer with such impudence.

My quick opening of the door caught our unexpected visitor off-guard, but I was even more shocked to see who was there. The popinjay was back.

"Oh, thank goodness!" Pierce said, relief flushing over his rich-bad-boy features. "I wasn't sure you'd be home. Is Dai available?"

I gave him my most displeased frown. "You should have *called*. You can't just show up at a young lady's house whenever you please."

"There wasn't time, Jacques. This is *important*."

My usual retort of "It's Jacques, not Jackie" rose in my throat, but I clamped my mouth shut before it could escape. This might very well have been the first time the upstart used my *actual* name, and I was so startled I didn't even resist as he wiggled his way inside.

"I'm in the living room, Truman." Dai's voice hooked him like a fish, and he headed straight there, leaving his fedora on the table in the foyer as he went.

I quickly closed the front door and followed behind him, wondering what in the world could have brought him to our entrance in such a rush.

"China Doll, I need your help." Truman kneeled before her, looking much like a vassal, asking his liege for a boon. His gray summer jacket added to the knight's illusion. "I know it's a lot to ask, but without you, I fear a huge miscarriage of justice is about to be committed."

Dai's brows rose, her head tilting to the side. "I take it something unexpected has occurred?"

I moved to Dai's side, not having the faintest idea what this could be about. If the popinjay were trying to pull some sort of trick, I'd make sure he regretted it.

Pierce bowed his head. "There's been a murder. An object found at the scene pointed the police to a suspect."

"So why the theatrics?" I demanded. "It sounds like law enforcement has things well in hand."

Keeping his face hidden, Pierce hesitated a moment before

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answering. "They've arrested my mother for the crime."

CHAPTER 2



To say I was flabbergasted by the popinjay's pronouncement would be an understatement. Mrs. Pierce hadn't left a good impression the one time we had crossed paths, but to believe she would commit murder...? Pierce's urgency now made perfect sense, but why drag Dai into this? What in the world did he think she could do about it?

"I'm so sorry to hear that, Truman," Dai said. "What can I do to help?"

Pierce finally raised his head. His face looked haggard, but his blue eyes shone with hope. "I know it's a lot to ask, but would you speak to her? Would you look into this, see if you can find clues leading to the real perpetrator?"

"Hold on a minute, *you*." I shoved my arm between him and Dai, not liking where this was going. "Why the heck are you trying to drag Dai into this? Don't you have fancy lawyers and inquiry agents to help? Surely all your money will get you anything you need, no matter how lavish."

Pierce looked away, not meeting my gaze. "It's... complicated."

Dai uncurled from her place on the couch to put her feet on the floor, smoothing her red pleated skirt as she did so. Partially dislodged, Prince hopped down, tongue lolling to the side while he kept a close eye on our unexpected visitor.

"I'm sorry, Truman," Dai said. "But if you want my help"—Prince let out a soft half-bark—"our help, you'll need to explain. The more information we have, the better we can deal with the situation."

Pierce gave a long sigh, then rose off the floor to sit on the living room's second couch. "It's my father." He sighed again. "The timing couldn't have been worse." Red splotches dotted his cheeks, destroying his rich, handsome-boy image, a true sign of his distress.

I glanced at Dai, growing more confused by the moment. Her expression was serene and exuded calm, like the black jade she was named after. "Anything you say here will be kept in the strictest confidence. We're quite adept at keeping secrets."

A trace of a grin came and went on the Pierce's face. I knew how much he loved flashing his perfect smile around, so this was yet another indication of the depths of his misery. I was less and less inclined to get involved in this. I hadn't thought much of his mother, and from Pierce's hesitation, I had a feeling I wouldn't like the father much either.

"He's in the middle of some sensitive land-deal negotiations out in East Texas," Pierce said. "Now that the second oil boom at Spindletop is over, he and some colleagues have been searching for new areas to purchase, trying to take advantage of the growing economic downturn."

I frowned. It sounded like they were out there profiting from others' bad luck during the current recession. Agricultural prices had plummeted since last year, and many families struggled to survive with less than before. People thus afflicted could become 'marks' to less scrupulous businessmen.

And from the way Pierce kept his gaze focused on the carpet, I was positive he knew it, too.

"Until the deals are complete," he said, "my father can't afford any adverse publicity."

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I didn't remember seeing a murder mentioned in the *Dallas Morning News* that morning, but perhaps the arrest had happened too late to be included in the early edition. Still, it was sure to be splattered all over the front page when the news got out—or was it? I recalled that Linda Carmichael's father was involved with at least one Dallas newspaper. As Pierce's self-appointed girlfriend, she'd tried to take a photograph of Dai at Pierce's shindig at the Dallas Country Club, intending to plaster her likeness amidst allegations of the Yellow Terror trying to sway Pierce into all manner of imagined evil deeds. If she'd gotten away with it, it could have proved disastrous for the Wus. Did Pierce's father have sufficient influence with the Carmichaels to get the story suppressed?

Dai frowned. "Keeping it out of the papers wouldn't be enough, though," she said. "The arrest will be a matter of public record."

Pierce sighed again. "It was recorded under her maiden name—Crawford."

I wasn't sure whether to be incensed or appalled. Did his father wield that much influence in the city? And what about his poor wife? "Was it listed as a homicide or a murder?"

Pierce frowned. "What's the difference?" he asked. "Aren't they the same thing?"

"Not under the eyes of the law, they're not," I said. Mrs. Lark had found a copy of the 1928 Texas Statutes at Dai's request, and learned more about the law than I would have cared to ever know.

"If the death is considered to be excusable, negligent, or justified it won't be deemed a capital felony, and she can be released on bail while awaiting trial. But if the homicide is judged to be a murder, it then becomes a capital crime, and posting bail won't be an option." Then I had an even more sobering thought. "If your father is keeping his name out of it by not using his lawyers, who will defend her? Does she have money of her own to hire an attorney?"

With each question, the popinjay seemed to shrink where he sat. It gave me no comfort whatsoever.

"I'm working on that," he said. "I just need to be circumspect about it." He looked at me imploringly, not something I would have ever thought possible.

"We cannot help you. We just *can't*," I said. Dai needed to stay as far away from this as humanly possible. I felt terrible about Pierce's mother, but I had my own people to protect. The way his family was going about this left a sour taste in my mouth, and if I was honest about it, a dash of dread as well.

"Jacques! It's too soon to say that." Dai sounded annoyed.

Better that she be angry with me than have the family exposed unnecessarily. I would have been more adamant about keeping away from Pierce if I'd had an inkling of the power his father appeared to possess.

"No. I'm sorry, Dai, but it *isn't*," I retorted, springing to my feet. "What if Mr. Pierce gets annoyed at us for sticking our noses where they don't belong? If he can manipulate data on public records and control what news is shown in the papers, what might he do to you—to the family—if he turns on us?"

To my surprise, Pierce laughed. The sound was devoid of humor. "If it doesn't interfere directly with his goals, he won't deign to notice anything we do."

The flat tone and blank expression did more to stall my objections than anything else the popinjay might have said. Dai reached out for my sleeve and tugged on it until I sat back down. Reading between the lines, Pierce's words opened up all manner of questions. It definitely seemed to indicate the Pierce home was more than likely *not* a wealthy paradise.

"Please—all I ask is that you speak to her to get her side of things so we... so *I* can figure out what to do next." Pierce's misery covered his face, tears glinting in his eyes. The fact that he willingly let us see this told of the depths of his despair. "I don't want her to think she's been abandoned."

It made me ashamed to have thought of withholding our aid, but it didn't make the potential dangers any less frightening.

"Truman, you were there for me when I needed your help," Dai said softly. "Laura Cooper's murderer would not have been

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caught without you. So visiting your mother is the least I can do. Where is she?"

Pierce's relief was palpable. "They took her to the Dallas County Criminal Courts Building." The top five stories of the structure housed the county jail.

I gritted my teeth and held my tongue, knowing that what Dai said was true. But after this 'favor' was over, I vowed, so too would be our involvement. Sadly, fate had something else in mind.

CHAPTER 3



"China Doll—Dai, I will be forever grateful for this." Pierce rose and kneeled before her again. "You have no idea how much this means to me. I know my mother didn't make the best impression when you first met, yet you're still willing to help me despite that. I am in your debt."

That was a total understatement. First, the woman had tried to imply Dai's blindness and country of origin made her less than desirable and completely beneath the Pierce family line. She then added insult to injury by suggesting that Dai's mother's charity work was motivated by guilt rather than altruism. Lien's inner dragon promptly put her back in her place and educated her on several of her misconceptions.

A dimpled smile came and went on Dai's face; clearly she also recalled the encounter. "Perhaps this will lead to a 'mending of the fences,' as they say." She half-turned in my direction. "Jacques, do get Truman the information for contacting the Thompson and Knight Law Firm."

I made an acknowledging sound, not trusting myself to speak civilly.

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Dai turned back toward the popinjay. "They've been quite discreet with our financial dealings and other law-related matters, so they might be an excellent source of assistance. I believe they have extensive experience with criminal law."

"*Thank you,*" Pierce said, his relief at Dai's willingness to visit his mother and try to help obvious as he bounced back to his usual carefree self. "Father normally deals with Jackson Walker, so using a different law firm sounds ideal. Even *I've* heard of Thompson and Knight's good reputation."

"Approaching them via a proxy might be your best option," Dai added. "That way, they won't connect you with the client."

That seemed a bit extreme to me, but better safe than sorry.

To my surprise, Pierce appeared taken aback by the suggestion. After a long moment of silence, during which he appeared to take some form of internal inventory, he asked, "Might this, too, be something you would undertake on my behalf?"

Now it was my turn to be shocked. Why ask us? Was there no one in his own circles he could trust? Surely, there had to be *someone*.

"Jacques sometimes drops papers off there for Father," Dai said. "He should be able to retain a lawyer for you."

"Dai!"

She turned once more in my direction, brow raised high. "Is there a problem with that, Jacques? Do you not agree this would be the simplest solution? Once counsel is retained, whoever is assigned to the case could come with us to the jail and be present when we speak to Mrs. Pierce."

Laying at her feet, Prince put his paws over his face. I would get no help from that quarter. "Don't we then run the risk of *our* family being associated with the problem?"

Dai grinned. "But I'll only be there to support you as you visit a friend in trouble. So there shouldn't be an issue, don't you agree?"

Pierce barked a laugh, then clamped a hand over his mouth to hold back any further hilarity at my expense. As well he should, since this was *his fault*, and I'd have enjoyed nothing

better at that moment than belting him one. Every time this man entered our lives, it was like letting loose a tornado. "If you say so, Dai."

She pursed her lips at me but made no comment about my reply. "Truman, if you can gather the retainer, then we'll move forward. I'm not acquainted with their fees, so erring on the side of caution would probably be best. Bring cash, so the involved parties are harder to trace."

"You are *devilishly* devious, China Doll," Pierce said. "As if I needed more reasons to like you." The annoying, full-toothed, bright smile was out in force. "I've got some dough on me, but I'll get more from the bank. I should be back in an hour."

He took Dai's hand and kissed it before rising to his feet. "Thank you for helping me."

She shook her head. "It's what friends do." Dai stood up as well. "By the time you return, we'll have booked an appointment at Thompson and Knight, and we will proceed from there. A couple of other telephone calls might also be in order."

Much more chipper than when he had first come in, Pierce swept into the foyer to retrieve his hat and left.

My mood had dived in the opposite direction, and I doubted it would get better anytime soon. Taking a long, deep breath, I turned toward my companion. "This isn't wise, Dai."

"So you'd have me turn my back on a person in need? Desert a friend in trouble?"

I held back a moan of despair. She'd neatly pushed me into a corner, and I could see no way around it. If I said she shouldn't help, I would be implying she'd made a mistake when she first reached out to me when *I* had needed assistance all those years ago. "This is not the same."

"Isn't it?" Dai tilted her head to the side. "You worry too much, Jacques."

"Sometimes I don't think you worry *enough*, Dai."

"That's because I have you to do it for me." She flashed me a smile. "Besides, until we know what we're truly dealing with, we can't begin to calculate whether or not there will be

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anything to fret about. Don't you agree?"

It sounded reasonable, but I knew better. The last time I'd heard that excited spark in her voice, she'd clamped onto the challenge and hadn't let go, regardless of the possible consequences. The popinjay had thrown us into another 'adventure.' I just hoped we wouldn't come to regret it more than I already did.

will stay at the laundry tonight, just in case."

"Did something happen last year, *Fùqin*?" Dai turned her heart-shaped face in Mr. Wu's direction, her calculated expression one of ignorant innocence. Despite her parents' efforts to protect their blind daughter from the realities of the world, at twenty-one years old, there was little Dai wasn't aware of. Having lived on the streets as a child and being Dai's 'eyes,' I also knew more about the harsh truths out there than people might suspect.

Mr. and Mrs. Wu traded glances. "No, nothing serious. Just soap on the laundry's windows."

What her father left out were the obscenities the hoodlums had written on them afterward. Also, the fact that a block away, they'd thrown bricks through the glass of a storefront, costing the shop owner a pretty penny to get the windows replaced. Thousands of people had gathered downtown and caused all manner of mischief and property damage. Luckily, youths in suburbs like Oak Cliff got a lot less rambunctious on Samhain, but one never knew. I just didn't understand why anyone would enjoy causing wanton destruction this one night each year.

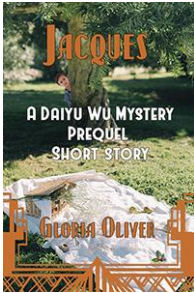
Dai's mother, Lien, glanced at me with a gloomy expression. "Jacques, please make sure all the doors and windows are locked before you turn in, won't you?" It appeared she was thinking similar thoughts to my own. Best to secure the house against possible shenanigans.

"Of course." Yet, as we'd soon discover, such precautions couldn't keep everyone in our suburb safe during All Hallows Eve.

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Cozy Historical



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OTHER WORKS BY GLORIA OLIVER

COZY HISTORICAL MYSTERIES



Black Jade - A Daiyu Wu Mystery - Book 1

Could an old-fashioned ballgown be used to commit murder?

Daiyu Wu is aware that fear of the Yellow Terror has made her nationality a rare breed in the Lone Star State. Being Chinese and blind makes her doubly unique in 1930 Dallas. Despite these impediments, anyone who dismisses her for either fact does so at their peril.

One day, at her family-owned laundry business, Dai detects the scent of burned garlic. With the help of her companion, Jacques, the source is soon discovered. It is a green ballgown. The gown has money pinned inside it to pay for the cleaning, but oddly, it came with no address label to identify its owner. Her extensive knowledge leads Dai to believe someone has committed murder using arsenic. The perpetrator is trying to use White Laundry to hide the evidence. But no mention of foul play turns up in the newspapers, and there's not enough proof to convince the police there's been a crime.

Her curiosity and intellect stimulated like never before; Dai ignores the possible consequences and sets out to solve the mystery with the help of her canine companion, Prince Razor, and her confidant, Jacques Haskins. It's either that or let the killer get away with it — assuming a spoiled popinjay, his jealous self-appointed girlfriend, and Dai's overprotective

parents don't get in her way.



Jacques - A Daiyu Wu Mystery Prequel Short Story

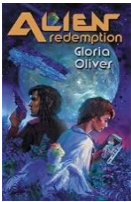
How many times can a boy lose his home?

When Jacques is transferred to the Buckners Orphans' Home in 1916 at the age of six, he hopes that he's finally found a place to belong. Unfortunately, he couldn't be more wrong.

Jacques' only choice is to run away to Dallas and live on the streets. He has no future, no guarantee he will even survive.

Then he stumbles on a once-in-a-lifetime chance to change everything—if he *dares* to take it.

SCIENCE FICTION



Alien Redemption

What if the savior was the one who needed saving?

All Claudia wanted to do was escape the mistakes of the past and start over. But when she answers an ad for a medical

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officer on a merchant ship in the Fringes, the captain recognizes her and blackmails her into taking the job.

The Holiday's Captain Bennet is amoral and has a short fuse. Claudia steers clear of him as much as possible while trying to care for the crew he lashes out on. Then the rumors start that their latest mission is to a location Bennet won't even share with the pilot.

The secret coordinates take the ship and crew to an uncharted system in the Fringes. To a planet that holds intelligent life, and despite the odds, also a humanoid one.

Bennet plans to use these aliens to climb up the power ladder at the borders of the Dominion. Even if it means placing the Avians into brutal servitude for the rest of their lives.

Can Claudia stop the impending exploitation of this newly discovered sentient species all on her own? Or is there a worse fate than blackmail waiting for her if she tries?

FANTASY



Inner Demons

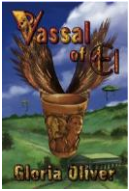
It took everything from her, except revenge!

One moment I am sitting down to a cup of tea; the next, I'm on a dark street with a set of headlights coming right at me.

Not only am I not where I'm supposed to be, but I have three months of missing time. In that period, I ruined my best friend's wedding, blackmailed my boss, turned my back on my family and heritage, and worse.

I'm sure I've lost my mind until I meet Jensen White, an ex-priest who proves to me I am not insane. He shows me I was possessed by a demon—one who used and discarded me like so much garbage.

Plus, it appears it did so with a purpose. So I'm tracking the thing to find out how and why it did this to me. Then I'll make the ones responsible pay!



Vassal of El

Torn between two worlds, will he be able to save either of them?

Torren wanted nothing more than to forget his past and endure the life it had forced upon him. One small, begrudging act of kindness, however, embarks him on a path that will bring him face to face with everything he has so heartily attempted to avoid.

In so doing, events that seemed to have no bearing on his old life now appear to be tangled with it and his present.

Caught between the world of his birth and the one he currently lives in, will Torren be able to set aside his hate and guilt long enough to keep both from utter destruction?



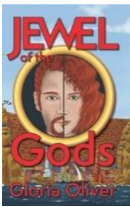
The Price of Mercy

Which is worse...the monster within or without?

Wooing a new patron at the emperor's ball had been Jarrin Lestrave's only hope after being discarded by the Baroness. He finds the perfect subject, but in the end, he doesn't follow through on his plans. Yet the next day he discovers he's been marked a traitor to the realm-for defiling the emperor's daughter. Something which he did not do.

The Twelve, the emperor's secret guard, are sent after him. And when they catch him, they do not kill him. A worse fate has been set aside for him. He is to lose his humanity and become enslaved to the empire for eternity.

Then he meets his accuser-Princess Yolandra. As he battles with his rising hatred and the invisible chains thrust upon him, he begins to see that all is not as it seems-his fate tied to the possible return of the madness which once before decimated the world around them.



Jewel of the Gods

Long Live the King! But will he?

When fate sends Red and his crewmates to the coveted port of Syrras, it is an opportunity he plans to take full advantage of. Unfortunately, his search for a little adventure hands him a lot more than he ever bargained for.

Changed by unknown magics into something other than himself, he's told a terrible secret. One he must now help protect, even as he is tasked to find those responsible. Failure will cost him his body, his way of life, everything that makes him who he is.

YOUNG ADULT



In the Service of Samurai

The choice: Serve the undead or become one of them.

Toshi never expected the strange visitor who one evening stepped foot inside his master's shop – a samurai smelling of the sea, with water dripping on the ground, and algae strung from his armor. For the first time in his life, Toshi discovers that monsters do roam the earth. And this one has been specifically looking for him.

Dragged from his home and all he has ever known, Toshi has no choice but to help the creatures who've taken him. Yet at every turn there are problems. And there are some who seek to terminate his life, for they've no wish to see his new master succeed in his assigned task.

But when they do find it, Toshi discovers his master's enemies have prepared for their eventual arrival, leaving him

the only one capable of recovering what has been lost. Can he do what even the undead cannot? Or will he fail and be forced to wander the world for eternity as one of them?



Cross-eyed Dragon Troubles

Talia didn't want to be apprenticed, not even to the prestigious Dragon Knight's Guild.

She's taken to the school by a cross-eyed dragon and his partner, Kel. A dizzying, madcap ride which leaves her less than eager to be a knight, but soon she finds out the guild needs many types of people. Running into the dragon and squire again and again, she comes to realize the unlikely pair are outsiders in their own school. They were participants in the dragon-human pairing ritual, but it didn't work quite as intended. They are also stubborn loners, determined to overcome the obstacles in their path and make a proper pair. Or are they?

As Talia's first year at the guild evolves, she must deal with the Administrator's quirks, her lessons, the growing mystery of Clarence and Kel, and somewhere in there, possibly decide what it is she wants for her future.



Willing Sacrifice

To save the world, she must die! Or must she?

For as long as she can remember, La'tiera has known her purpose, her destiny. As the Bearer of the Eye, she will wait until the appointed time then sacrifice herself to the demons so the lands will be safe.

Yet as the time approaches, she is snatched from her home by strangers and is told it is for her protection. These strangers tell her she is not to be a sacrifice but must fight to live in order for the world to be saved.

La'tiera will not be swayed, however, her duty clear. Despite their clever lies, she will follow through on her destiny and do what is required. Her every effort will be put to freeing herself from her kidnappers and meeting her fate as planned.

HORROR/ALTERNATE HISTORY



Charity and Sacrifice (Novelette)

Trapped in a loveless marriage, will Elizabeth's sacrifice to regain

THE JOY OF MURDER

Robert's attention be in vain?

All Elizabeth hoped to do was to rekindle the love in her marriage. Yet despite ignoring her social obligations and immersing herself in her husband's important work, somehow this only made things worse.

Her last hope is her unborn child — a source of unrequited love to fill the void inside her. But that too is taken from her. How? Why?

Her doctor avoids her. Her husband berates her. And there are whispers — whispers telling of things that cannot be.

Yet the more Elizabeth ignores the rumors, the more they press on her to seek the truth, so she concocts a plan to find it. To find it and hopefully exonerate both Robert and herself. To discover the reason she's lost all that's dear to her. And she will do it, even if she must venture into Whitechapel to do it.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Gloria Oliver lives in Texas making sure to stay away from rolling tumbleweeds while bowing to the never-ending wishes of her feline and canine masters.

“The JOY of Murder” is Gloria’s second cozy historical mystery novel and part of the Daiyu Wu Mystery series. This is also her tenth book to see publication. Her previous works have been fantasy, urban fantasy, science fiction, and young adult fantasy novels. Several contain romantic and mystery elements. Her short stories of speculative fiction can be found in all manner of anthologies, covering things from the fantastic and strange to a Bubba Apocalypse.

Gloria is a member in good standing of BroadUniverse though she has yet to make the list for Cat Slaves R Us.

For some free reads, sample chapters, appearance schedules and more information, please drop by and visit her at www.gloriaoliver.com

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