

**The Guardians of
St. Giles - Book 1**



**Olivia Stone
and the
Trouble with
Trixies**

by

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Part 1

Shadow

Chapter 1

Abomination

Abomination!”

The girls scatter. They flee the courtyard like pigeons from Mouser, the old priory cat. That is, everyone except Olivia. She turns to face Brother Westerman, fists planted on her hips and scowls right back up at the old priest.

“Aarrgggh,” he growls, his Adam’s apple bobbing madly under the loose flaps of turkey-like skin at his throat. Olivia thinks he looks like someone’s crossed a vulture and an emu to create the world’s tallest predatory bird.

Olivia’s heart pounds and she licks dry lips. “It’s been five years, Brother Westerman.” Her voice only cracks the tiniest bit. “There are girls at St. Giles now, so get over it.”

Most people, by the time they reach ninety-two, are bent over with the weight of all those years but Brother Westerman’s spine is long and broomstick-straight. At her words, he seems to grow even taller.

Olivia gulps as his dark hooded eyes glare down at her over an enormous beak-like nose.

I'm twelve years old now. I won't let him scare me!

He opens his mouth to bellow but no words come out. Brother Westerman gasps and steps back, making a sign of the cross with shaky fingers. He is staring at something on the ground in front of Olivia.

The coarse black material of his coat cracks like a whip as he turns and flees the courtyard.

What a strange old man.

Olivia's legs tremble but she holds her stern look until Brother Westerman disappears inside the school. Finally, she looks down to see what had upset him so badly.

Olivia's breath catches in her throat. A shadow stretches out before her. Large bat-like wings fan out from her shoulders and sharp, curved horns sprout from her head.

Reaching up, Olivia touches...only hair. She sighs with relief.

Squinting up, she sees bright sunlight blazing around the large demonic-looking gargoyle perched on the roof. She steps aside and the horns and wings separate from her own skinny shadow.

Olivia stifles a giggle...

Now, Brother Westerman will truly think I'm an abomination.



Lollie Duff and Darcy Steckel peek out from behind the wall to see if the cranky old priest has really gone.

“What did you do to old Westie?” Lollie asks.

“I have no idea.” Olivia glances at the gargoyle’s shadow with a secret smile. She doesn’t want to explain it to her friends. They’d just make a fuss and Darcy would spread the tale to the entire school by the end of the day.

“Looked like he saw a ghost.” Darcy adjusts her glasses.

“There’s no such thing,” Lollie protests, trying to hide a shiver.

“In fact,” Darcy starts counting off on her fingers, “there are at least three known ghosts who haunt St. Giles School. And that’s just the main building. Lots of people have seen dark figures roaming the grounds after dark—”

“Stop it.” Lollie looks down her nose at Darcy like only someone from the Heights can do. “My daddy says there’s no such thing as ghosts or goblins or any of those other things that go bump in the night.”

“Well, why are you shaking?” Darcy hides a smirk behind her hand.

“Am not.” The class bell rings and Lollie uses it to make her escape before Darcy can say another word.

“She was shaking,” Darcy says.

“You shouldn’t tease her like that,” Olivia says.

“I wasn’t teasing. There are strange things here.” Darcy sweeps her hand in a broad gesture around the school. “You and Lollie wouldn’t know. You’re never here after dark. Any of the boarders will tell you.”

Olivia shivers a little at the thought. At least the talk of ghosts has taken Darcy’s mind off her clash with Brother Westerman. Darcy is like a bulldog when she sniffs out a story.



In class, Olivia takes a seat next to Kellyanne Kazek, happy to have a break from Lollie and Darcy’s constant bickering. Olivia glances at Kellyanne to check what coloured ribbon she has braided into her wild boyish hair.

It’s iridescent purple.

Each day, Kellyanne wears a tiny coloured braid at her right temple—a small protest against the schools draconian uniform policy.

Kellyanne is the only person Olivia knows who can get away with using words like ‘draconian’ and ‘supercilious’.

Supercilious is what she calls Lollie when she is being more 'Lollieish' than usual.

Olivia's not brave enough to break the rules, even the small ones. But every day Kellyanne comes to school with a protest ribbon, it makes Olivia smile.

Chapter 2

Little Bait-fish

The child walking the dark, narrow streets of Old Haven looks no older than five or six. Her pale hair glows silver under the moonlight. She steals glances over her shoulder as she walks. The soles of her small, shiny black shoes click on the cobbles with every hesitant step.

Clatter Scrape. Stone claws skitter across brick.

The girl spins around. Large, forget-me-not-coloured eyes peer up into the night.

Mortar dust sifts down from high on the wall where the creature hugs the shadows. "Careful," the creature chides itself. Its small piggish tail flicking in frustration.

The girl turns and hurries on.

A face rises into a sliver of moonlight. It looks part Chinese dragon and part snuffling pug dog, but has none of the redeeming features of either. Slitted yellow eyes blink and corded muscles slide under rough grey, stony skin. It scuttles spider-like

across the wall, trailing after the child. Each time the girl glances back, the creature goes statue-still, becoming just another shadow.

When the child turns into the blind alley by Fat Jorge's Curio Shop a nasty fanged smile appears on the creature's ugly face. There is no way out for the child. No escape.

The creature pushes off the wall and stone wings snap open. The grotesque glides through a cone of dirty-yellow light to land. Claws crack into the cobblestone street, at the entrance to the alley.

Hisssss!

The child spins to face the noise, backing over the spider web like shadows until her spine touches the high stone wall at the alley's end. Slivers of moonlight streak her face, her Hello Kitty tee-shirt and skinny knees.

"I have you, trixie," Yip says, moving toward the child-thing.

The terror Yip expects to see in its eyes isn't there. Something's not right. If grotesques know anything, they know about shadows. And the shadows in the alley are all wrong. Yip looks up into the Trickster Imp's own fanged smile.

Yip's heart turns cold.

Its eyes change from powdery blue to glowing red as the glamour that hides its true nature is released. A second set of glowing eyes appear and then a third. Other trixies step into view.

Four, five, six... Yip snakes his head toward a noise behind him. Four more trixies block the entrance to the alley.

Ten trixies working together. Unheard of! Yip's mind races. Trixies are loners, nothing but nuisance pests. *This isn't right.*

All pretence of the child disguise is gone from the first trixie as it stalks forward. Its thin arms and legs are too long and don't work quite like the human child it was pretending to be. Slender fingers jitter in anticipation, like a bony spider stalking a trapped fly. The other trixies crowd in, tightening the circle around Yip.

"Oh, little guardian." Hello Kitty laughs and makes mocking 'tisk-tisk' sounds.

Another trixie claps, ravenously impatient like a child about to tear open a birthday present.

I'm no one's birthday gift. Yip flares his wings and launches skyward. Wings tangle in a web of the fine cables criss-crossing between the buildings above the alley. His laugh at escaping is cut short.

Yip hits the ground with a crunch of stone-on-stone. He rolls aside just as a metal bar slams into the space where his head had been an instant before. He jumps up, eyes widening at the sight of the split cobble stone.

"Stronger than we look," Hello Kitty says.

"Stronger than stone," a second trixie teases.

Yip lets out a high keening cry and leaps for a second floor window sill. He scrambles up the wall, trying to squeeze through the tangle of cables.

“Tricked you,” Hello Kitty says. “You have just set the trap.”

“Tricked.” Yip stops, just for a second, looking down.

A stone the size of a fist punches into his lower back. His talons spasm and he falls. Pain lances through him as his rump hits the ground with a splintering snap.

Yip looks up into a ring of trixie faces. Ten ghastly smiles. Nine fade back into the shadows.

“You are such a tiny prize, little bait-fish.” A shiny black child’s shoe slams into Yip’s head with more force than it has any right to. “Which one of your friends will come to your rescue?”

Yip’s mind reels dizzily. The Hello Kitty picture on the trixie’s shirt blurs and he blacks out to the sound of the trixies complaining about stone fish.

Poisonous...

you can't eat them...

should just...

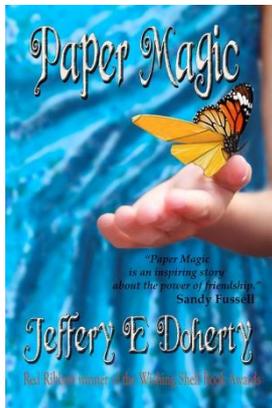
Darkness.

Dear Reader,

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Keep a lookout in 2017 for book two in the series, *Olivia Stone and the Dread of the Dreamers*.



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Kindest regards,

Jeffery E Doherty