

THE PROFESSOR GIDEON OLIVER SERIES

BY AARON ELKINS

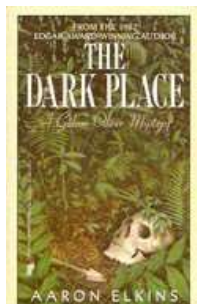


Fellowship of Fear [1982]

When anthropology professor Gideon Oliver is offered a teaching fellowship at US military bases in Germany, Sicily, Spain, and Holland, he wastes no time accepting. Stimulating courses to teach, a decent stipend, all expenses paid, plenty of interesting European travel . . . What's not to like?

It does not take him long to find out. On his first night, he is forced to fend off two desperate, black-clad men who have invaded his Heidelberg hotel room with intent to kill. And then there are a few trivial details that the recruiting agency forgot to mention—such as the fact that the two previous holders of the fellowship both met with mysterious ends.

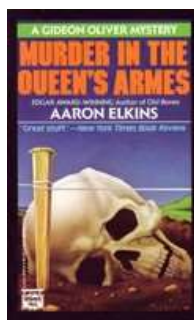
From there, it is all downhill. Gideon finds himself the target in an unfamiliar game for which no one has bothered to give him the rules. What he does have is his own considerable intellect and his remarkable forensic skills. He will need them, for he is playing for some fairly high stakes: the security of Western Europe.



The Dark Place [1983]

Deep in the primeval rainforest of Washington State's Olympic Peninsula, the skeletal remains of a murdered man are discovered. And a strange, unsettling tale begins to unfold, for forensic anthropologist Gideon Oliver determines that the murder weapon was a primitive bone spear of a type not seen for the last ten thousand years. And whoever—or whatever—hurled it did so with seemingly superhuman force. Bigfoot "sightings" immediately crop up, but Gideon is not buying them.

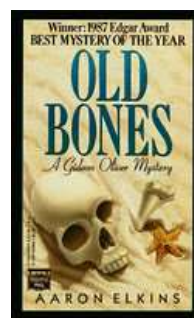
But something is continuing to kill people, and Gideon, helped by forest ranger Julie Tandler and FBI special agent John Lau, plunges into the dark heart of an unexplored wilderness to uncover the bizarre, astonishing explanation.



Murder in the Queen's Armes [1985]

Anthropology professor Gideon Oliver would prefer to keep his mind on his beautiful new bride Julie during their English honeymoon, but one intrusive question won't stop nagging at him:

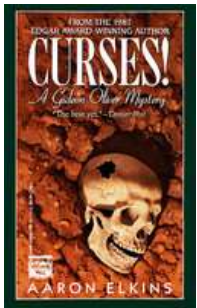
Who would want to steal a thirty-thousand-year-old parietal-occipital calvareal fragment? Yet someone has lifted this chunk of prehistoric human skull from a musty museum in Dorchester. Then, thirty miles away, an archaeology student is murdered, increasing tensions and suspicion at a dig that had already seethed with suspicion, rivalry, and mistrust. Could there be a connection between a hot bone and a cold-blooded murder?



Old Bones [1987]

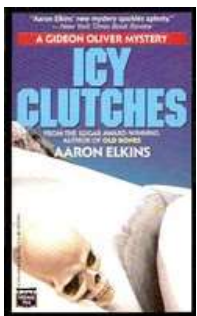
With the roar of thunder and the speed of a galloping horse comes the tide to Mont St. Michel goes the old nursery song. So when the aged patriarch of the du Rocher family falls victim to the perilous tide, even the old man's family accepts the verdict of accidental drowning. But too quickly, this "accident" is followed by a bizarre discovery in the ancient du Rocher chateau: a human skeleton, wrapped in butcher paper, beneath the old stone flooring. Professor Gideon Oliver, lecturing on forensic anthropology at nearby St. Malo, is asked to examine the bones. He quickly demonstrates why he is known as the "Skeleton Detective," providing the police with forensic details that lead them to conclude that these are the

remains of a Nazi officer believed to have been murdered in the area during the Occupation. Or are they? Gideon himself has his doubts. Then, when another of the current du Rochers dies—this time via cyanide poisoning—his doubts solidify into a single certainty: someone wants old secrets to stay buried . . . and is perfectly willing to eradicate the meddlesome American to make that happen.



Curses! [1989]

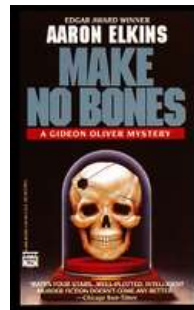
Mayan ruins in the Yucatán...a secret room in a tomb...age-old skeletons. To anthropologist Gideon Oliver, the renowned Skeleton Detective, the invitation to join the archaeological excavation of Tlaloc promises two months of paradise on earth. That is, until an ancient series of Mayan curses against desecrators of the site is unearthed. When the first one comes to pass ("The bloodsucking kinkajou will come freely among them"), it's taken by all as a practical joke. But by the time the fourth one is apparently consummated ("The one called Xecotcavach will pierce their skulls so that their brains spill onto the earth"), nerves have begun to fray and suspicions and discord to mount. The steamy jungles weigh down upon the band of eccentric anthropologists as one by one the curses continue to materialize. It takes Gideon's special talents for deduction—along with the enigmatic insights of Mexico's one and only Mayan-Indian inspector of the state judicial police—to resolve an ancient riddle and a modern, murderous mystery.



Icy Clutches [1990]

Gideon Oliver expects to be amicably bored when he takes on the role of “accompanying spouse” at a lodge in the magnificent wild country of Glacier Bay, Alaska, where his forest ranger wife Julie is attending a conference. But it turns out to be exactly his cup of tea. There is another group at the lodge: six scientists on a memorial journey to the site of a thirty-year-old glacial avalanche that killed three of their colleagues. Their leader is TV’s most popular science personality, the unctuous M. Audley Tremaine,

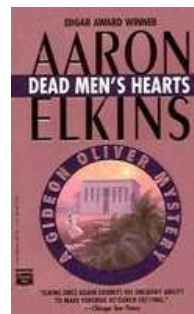
who is the sole survivor of the fatal avalanche. But he doesn’t survive long, and is soon found hanged in his room. If that isn’t upsetting enough, shocked hikers discover human bones emerging from the foot of the glacier—are they the shattered remains of the three who died, finally seeing daylight after their two-mile, three-decade journey within the glacial flow? When the FBI seeks expert help, everyone agrees how fortunate it is that Dr. Oliver, the famed Skeleton Detective, is on the scene. Everybody, that is, but the person who wants ancient history to stay that way—and who believes that murder is the surest way to keep the past buried...



Make No Bones [1991]

There is not much left of the irascible Albert Evan Jasper, "dean of American forensic anthropologists" after his demise in a fiery car crash. But in accord with his wishes, his remains—a few charred bits of bone—are installed in an Oregon museum to create a fascinating if macabre exhibit. All agree that it is a fitting end for a great forensic scientist—until what is left of him disappears in the midst of the biannual meeting (a.k.a., the "bone bash and weenie roast") of the august WFAA—the Western Association of Forensic Anthropologists—in nearby Bend, Oregon. Like his fellow attendees, Gideon Oliver—the Skeleton Detective—is baffled. Only the WFAA attendees could possibly have made off with the remains, but who in the world would steal something like that? And why? All had an opportunity, but who had a motive? Soon enough, the discovery of another body in a nearby shallow grave will bring to the fore a deeper, more urgent mystery, and when one of the current attendees is found dead in his cabin, all hell breaks loose. Gideon Oliver is now faced with the most difficult challenge of his career—unmasking a dangerous, brilliant killer who knows every

bit as much about forensic science as he does. Or almost.

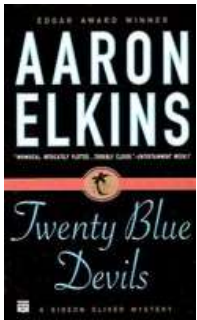


Dead Men’s Hearts [1994]

An ancient skeleton tossed in a garbage dump is the first conundrum to rattle Gideon Oliver when he arrives in Egypt.

There to appear in a documentary film, he expects an undemanding week of movie star treatment and a luxurious cruise up the Nile with his wife, Julie. But when Gideon discovers a tantalizing secret in the discarded bones—and violence claims a famous Egyptologist's life—he is thrust into a spotlight of a different kind. Plying his calipers as the world's foremost forensic anthropologist, Gideon's investigation of the goings-on leads him through the back alleys and bazaars of Cairo and deep into the millennia-old tombs of the Valley of the Kings.

As the puzzle is painstakingly pieced together, Gideon will find that the identifying traits of a cunning killer are the same now as they were in the time of the pyramids: greed without guilt, lies without conscience . . . and murder without remorse.



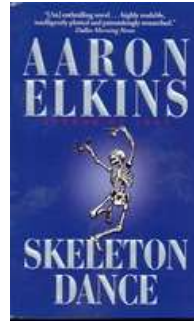
Twenty Blue Devils [1997]

The dead man is the manager of Tahiti's Paradise Coffee Plantation, producer of the most expensive coffee bean in the world, the winey, luscious Blue Devil. Nothing tangible points to foul play behind his fall from a cliff, but FBI agent

John Lau, a relative of the coffee-growing family, has his suspicions. What he needs is evidence, and who better to provide it than his friend, anthropologist Gideon Oliver, the Skeleton Detective? Gideon is willing to help, but surprisingly—and suspiciously—both the police and the other family members refuse to okay an exhumation order. As a result, Gideon, to his surprise and against his better judgment, finds himself sneaking into a graveyard under cover of night with John, a flashlight, and a shovel—not exactly up to the professional standards of the world's most famous forensic anthropologist, but necessary under the circumstances.

Gideon prefers his bones ancient, dry, and dusty, but the body he must examine had lain in the tropical sun for a week before it was found and then buried native-style—shallow, with no casket—so it is not exactly his . . . well, cup of tea. But it is not the state of the remains that bothers him the most, it is the deeper human ugliness that his examination uncovers: subtle clues that do indeed point to foul play, to mistaken identity, and to a

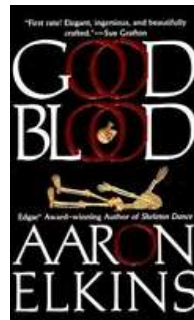
murderous conspiracy that may have percolated through the family for decades—and brewed a taste for murder.



Skeleton Dance [2000]

Les Eyzies-de-Tayac is known for three things: pate de foie gras, truffles, and ancient bones. This small French village is home to the largest concentration of prehistoric fossils in Europe and headquarters of the prestigious Institut

de Prehistoire, which studies them. So when the local police inspector, Lucien Anatole Joly, finds reason to suspect foul play, he places a call to his old friend Gideon Oliver, the famed "Skeleton Detective," hailed by Publishers Weekly as "shrewd, witty, and self-deprecating," and by the Chicago Tribune as a "likeable, down-to-earth, cerebral sleuth." "Once Gideon arrives, murder piles on murder, puzzle on puzzle, and electrifying surprise on surprise, in a series of unexpected events that threaten to tear the once sober, dignified institute apart. It takes a bizarre and startling forensic breakthrough by Gideon to bring an end to a trail of deception almost forty thousand years in the making.



Good Blood [2004]

What was supposed to be an Italian vacation for forensic anthropologist Gideon Oliver and his wife turns into a busman's holiday when their hosts' only child goes missing—and nearby construction workers unearth human

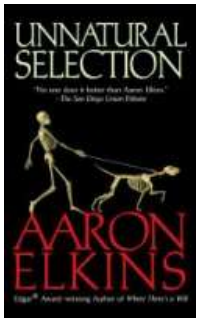
bones. The family awaits Oliver's conclusions with both dread and cautious hope. But along the way, he'll expose some extraordinary deceptions that lay bare the long-hidden secrets at the dark heart of a highborn family.



Where There's a Will [2005]

Alex Torkelsson has just gotten word: after going missing ten years ago, Alex's late uncle Magnus's plane has been found south of Hawaii's Big Island. So too have Magnus's few

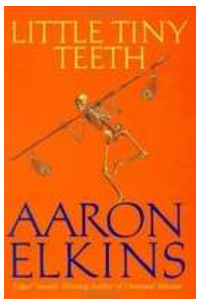
skeletal remains, now handed over to the only man who can fit together the pieces of this mystery. But what forensic detective Gideon Oliver discovers could shake the Torkelsson family tree.



Unnatural Selection [2006]

Forensics professor Gideon Oliver accompanies his wife to the Isles of Scilly, which dot the sea like an emerald necklace thirty miles off the Cornwall coast. Julie's been invited here by Russian expatriate Vasily Kozlov, scientist, millionaire, and eccentric. At his home, Star Castle, he regularly hosts a consortium of guests with differing opinions-which makes for some very heated arguments.

While Julie's stuck indoors, Gideon looks forward to puttering around the Neolithic sites nearby. But before day one is through, a newer bone turns up-this tibia is only a few years old-and all signs point to murder. And just as Gideon and the local law puzzle over the bone's origin, another murder happens at Star Castle. Could it just be bad luck, two murders within a couple of years? Or do Kozlov's lively debates have a way of turning deadly?

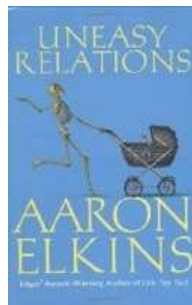


Little Tiny Teeth [2007]

When forensics professor Gideon Oliver joins an Amazon riverboat expedition with a group of research botanists, he expects a nice vacation. What he gets is heat, corrupt officials, dangerous insects and animals-and worse.

As they travel upriver, one of the botanists is killed by a deranged passenger who leaps overboard and flees into the darkness. No one can explain why. Theories begin to simmer, and stories of long-past, half-forgotten grudges-and new ones as well-boil to the surface.

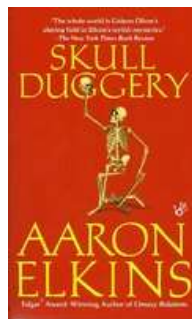
Only when a fresh skeleton turns up in the river, scoured to the bone by voracious piranhas, does Gideon realize that in this jungle full of predators, humans may be the deadliest of all



Uneasy Relations [2008]

Around 25,000 years ago, did the Neanderthal live peacefully with his smarter, handsomer cousin, the Homo sapiens? The answer, recently found in the Rock of Gibraltar, left everyone speechless...

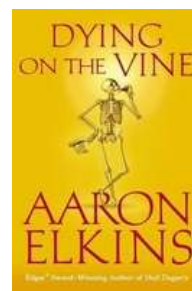
Buried ceremoniously, high in a cave, lies the skeleton of a human woman, clutching the skeleton of a part-human, part-Neanderthal child. Fascinated, Professor Oliver jumps at the chance to attend a conference near there. But two deaths, possibly murders, have rocked Gibraltar. As Oliver tries to piece things together, he's about to fall for some deadly tricks. After all, unlike the Gibraltar Boy, he's only human...



Skull Duggery [2009]

Gideon and his wife are on vacation in Mexico when a local police chief requests his assistance on a case. A mummified corpse was discovered in the desert and the coroner believed the victim was shot. But Gideon's examination reveals the victim was stabbed with a Phillips-head screwdriver. Then Gideon is asked to examine the skeleton of a murder victim found a year earlier - only to discover another error. The coroner misidentified the remains as belonging to a twelve to fifteen-year-old girl, when in fact the remains were that of a young woman of twenty.

Gideon knows these two 'mistakenly' identified bodies aren't a coincidence. But finding the connection between them will prove more dangerous than he could possibly imagine - and place him into the crosshairs of the killer he's hunting.



Dying on the Vine [2012]

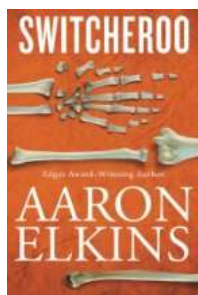
It was the unwavering custom of Pietro Cubbidu, patriarch of Tuscany's Villa

Antica wine empire, to take a solitary month-long sabbatical at the end of the early grape harvest, leaving the winery in the trusted hands of his three sons. His wife, Nola, would drive him to an isolated mountain cabin in the Apennines and return for him a month later, bringing him back to his family and business.

So it went for almost a decade - until the year came when neither of them returned. Months later, a hiker in the Apennines stumbles on their skeletal remains. The carabinieri investigate and release their findings: they are dealing with a murder-suicide. The evidence makes it clear that Pietro Cubbidu shot and killed his wife and then himself. The likely motive: his discovery that Nola had been having an affair.

Not long afterwards, Gideon Oliver and his wife, Julie, are in Tuscany visiting their friends, the Cubbidu offspring. The renowned Skeleton Detective is asked to reexamine the bones. When he does, he reluctantly concludes that the carabinieri, competent though they may be, have gotten almost everything wrong. Whatever it was that happened in the mountains, a murder-suicide it was not.

Soon Gideon finds himself in a morass of family antipathies, conflicts, and mistrust, to say nothing of the local carabinieri's resentment. And when yet another Cubbidu relation meets an unlikely end, it becomes bone-chillingly clear that the killer is far from finished...



Switcheroo [2016]

The Skeleton Detective is back.

A cold case dating from the 1960s draws forensic anthropologist Gideon Oliver to the Channel Islands decades later to shine a light on the mysterious connection between two men who died there on the same night.

Swapped as young boys by their fathers during the Nazi occupation, wealthy Roddy Carlisle and middle-class George Skinner had some readjusting to do after the war ended - but their lives remained linked through work, trouble with the law, and finally, it would seem, through murder.

Nobody expects that Gideon's modern-day investigation will turn up fresh bodies. But old bones tell many tales, and the Skeleton Detective has to be at his sharpest to piece together the truth before the body count mounts still higher.



The **Gideon Oliver Mysteries** was part of the revived ABC Mystery Movies (along with *Columbo*, *B.L. Stryker* and *Kojak*), during the 1988-1989 television season. Louis Gossett Jr. played Gideon Oliver, a Columbia University Anthropology professor, whose knowledge of past cultures allowed him to assist in solving crimes. He was frequently assisted by his adult daughter Zina, played by Shari Headley.

The series was created and produced by Dick Wolf, perhaps best known for creating *Law & Order* in its many incarnations. Five two-hour *Gideon Oliver* tv-movies were produced and aired between February and May 1989.

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