

Olivia Plymouth Buys a House

Olivia Plymouth Series

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Dedication

To my late wife Raquel Miranda German. Editor of the original Olivia story and the first two books. She also translated the story into Portuguese with her own unique style. Finally, she was the one that suggested writing this book. Without her previously unacknowledged selfless efforts, there would be no Olivia Plymouth series. Thank you, Raquel.

Chapter 0: Preface

After finishing the fourth and latest book to date in the Olivia Plymouth Series (*Encounter at Tokaido Road*), I thought that would be nearly the end of it. You see, I had plans to write a prequel of sorts. In it, Olivia's mother tells her daughter's stories from her own unique and humorous perspective. No sequel was ever planned. But one day, I heard Olivia's voice in my head asking gently, "Why don't you tell my readers the story how I purchased my last house?" How could I say no to such a charming subject? And so, this story began. Over three thousand words were written during July 2017 on a train trip to and around Washington D.C. This book is more of a slice of life genre since there is no mystery to solve or international travel involved. It has references to the other books (particularly *The Year Fashion Changed* and *Encounter at Tokaido Road*). Yet it is solidly and most certainly an Olivia Plymouth type story from start to finish!

On completion, I realized that the book was too short. So, on another train trip to and around Washington D.C. in September 2018, four brand new Olivia stories came into the world. Which was amazing having started with no ideas in mind while holding a pen and staring at a blank page!

I end with a meditation offering from the earlier Olivia books. May it apply to all the readers of this series.

“Gratitude to the universe.”
“Gratitude in every breath.”
“Peace to All.”

H.G. December 2018

Chapter 1: Prophetic Vision?

Malaysia

Without a doubt, there are many especially breathtaking natural spots in Malaysia filled with great beauty and mystery. Some of these are in the local mountains that are incredibly hard to reach. No doubt this is due to the dense undergrowth, treacherous paths, and various uninviting creatures both large and small. Facing the threats of injury, sickness, and death, only the most adventurous are undeterred in this seemingly impossible journey to reach the summit of one of these daunting peaks.

But such difficult hardship means nothing to a young woman now in her early twenties. She is training other females to become a *Bomoh* (sorcerer or healer) in a completely remote mountain location. Because of dwelling in the higher elevations, her powers are amplified greatly. Her name is Saerah. During her own apprenticeship, she had been taught very powerful metaphysical techniques. Some locals claim that she can change the weather at a moment's notice, peer into the future, bilocate easily to another location at will, and even “talk” at length inside people's heads. No wonder she is both revered and feared by those that know about her.

In what seemed to be a short time ago, Saerah had ‘appeared’ before a young American woman. It was crucial to warn her about rapidly changing and very dangerous circumstances. And now again, she had powerful vision about this same person.

These ‘words’ formed instantly surrounding her and giving insight. This is what they said.

Olivia Plymouth. I am immersed in the flowing rivers of time sharing its secrets. Your present home will soon be nothing but ashes. Fond memories will remain forever. A most difficult search for a suitable replacement begins. Looking so hard for that perfect home here and there. At times it seems almost within your grasp and at other moments, so very difficult to find. Always you are thinking, “Will I ever find my dream home?” And then one day all hope seems gone. It will be then that your new home will appear seemingly out of nowhere. It will more than meet your needs. All will be far better than it ever was before.”

And just like that, the ‘words’ vanished. Saerah now had to make a choice that was never easy to make. Would she tell Olivia about what will soon come to pass? Or just keep it to herself? After a momentary reflection, she decided not to share this information. Not everyone likes hearing about their future. Besides there was no real danger involved here. Just someone

going through the ordinary frustrations of a quest for the ideal house. Far better to focus on her instruction to her students. But from time to time, she would check in on this Olivia Plymouth.

Bahamas

Sometime back, a local shaman met a young fashion consultant. She was exhausted completely after running her first and incredibly demanding fashion show for young women between twelve and seventeen years of age. The shaman had given a brief reading about her future. And now, the metaphysical ‘skies’ had revealed other insights.

Soon, you will be in sore need of a new home. There will never be any doubt for you on what that house will look like both on the inside and out. Others will view your requirements as impossible to fulfill. Do not EVER lose hope Olivia Plymouth! The housing opportunity just right only for you will reveal itself at the proper time.

But these words would not be conveyed to the person in question. Because she was resting peacefully on a flight returning home to Seattle. Under the front seat was an oversized handbag filled with all sorts of practical things. Above her was a red carry-on suitcase with noisy wheels. This was all part of her “joyous travel” philosophy of “suitcase intimidation.” This very same luggage had a large gold tag with blazing letters “OLIVIA PLYMOUTH, INTERNATIONAL TRAVELER and FASHION CONSULTANT, SEATTLE, WASHINGTON U.S.A.”

So, who is this Olivia Plymouth anyway? Let’s find about her in the next chapter, shall we?

Chapter 2: My Story So Far: From Childhood Days to Seattle.

My life has always been concerned with some aspect of fashion. As early as I can remember, it had been solidly part of my being. It runs through my blood and is my undying passion. From birth onwards, I was brought into a world of astounding colors, incredible fabrics, and dynamic clothing/accessories.

I am not sure what other young girls of my same age were doing. But I progressed rapidly from sorting my blocks by color to creating my own clothes and accessories for my dolls (always fashionable). Everything went so well together. Each color and material were dear friends and as a child, I made up exciting stories about them. During a pre-school art lesson, I learned that you could *actually mix colors*. And my life was never the same again. I just kept experimenting to discover the right attractive combinations. I did the same thing when working with fabrics. I just *adored* the various textures and properties of each *precious* material.

Early on, I *knew* throughout my core that I was going to get involved in the fashion industry in some capacity. This was *the place* where I felt the most at home. It was never about being only a job or a career. Fashion was a *calling* to improve the world by one piece of clothing or accessory at a time. I immersed myself in this exciting cosmos. My activities included reading fashion magazines, volunteering at local dress shops, and participating in various fashion shows. I sought out eagerly fashion designers, photographers, models, advertisers, modeling/booking agencies, buyers, fashion forecasters, event coordinators, and anyone else relevant to the field

that I could find. I gathered a local reputation as the young girl on the rise in the fashion world. I approached everything in the field with great self-confidence and infectious joy.

My mother, Esmeralda was incredibly supportive about my life direction. As a children's magazine editor, she well understood the strong need for the female adolescent to follow their inner vision. My younger sister, Rose just grinned and said assuredly, "Do something that you truly enjoy. Your eyes light up every time that you speak *even in a whisper* about fashion. This is the right choice for you." And I gave her a warm hug in appreciation.

But with my father, it was a much different story. He is an archaeologist that travels throughout the world trying to find evidence supporting controversial and offbeat scientific theories. "It is a cutthroat industry that produces little and exploits factory workers. How can you support and work in such an unethical field?" I love my dad dearly. However, I was NOT going to let his words go unchallenged, I was so ready to counter this as we had battled on other topics a couple thousand times before. But my mother looked him and simply said, "Hon, you do not have to be like your parents. Remember how it felt when they didn't support *your* career choice? You felt that you were swimming upstream alone. Do you really want that for your daughters? I think not my dear husband." Embarrassed, he relented reluctantly, but would no doubt be bringing up his old arguments for many years to come.

By fourteen, I was a seasoned fashion veteran. At that time, I was overseeing the registration area at local shows and many other areas of responsibility. All my hard work paid off just a year later, when I was accepted in the Mount San Real fashion consultant program.

I just *loved* being there. It was awesome being in a community of kindred spirits living and breathing fashion day in and day out. I was inspired to do better than my best. And worked long hours to get top grades. There were so many fun and useful courses such as trends in the fashion industry, running a successful small business, operating a fashion show, and fashion marketing. And all the instructors were very supportive.

The one class that always I had trouble with was public speaking. But not due to any fear. On the contrary! It was because I would like to get everyone involved through a skit or some other engagement mechanism. It would always end by me singing some song and people joining in. Some said afterwards that it was thoroughly contagious. Apparently, this effort startled some instructors. But once that they understood what I was trying to do, they were more than accommodating.

My honors thesis was on the political science of colors. It was all about a cosmos where some colors were momentarily dominant, each one along with a myriad of variations had their own moment to shine. And when together, they blended into a harmonious whole, bringing about various feelings including contentment. However, I didn't stop there. I talked about how political candidates used colors and fashion to influence and win over voters. And why this subtle factor was often overlooked in winning elections. My thesis committee were enchanted and called it a highly original work seen through the lens of a poetic soul. I graduated summa cum laude, with highest honors, at the age of sixteen.

You would think that with my good grades and life experience, a disarming smile, and sizable personalized handbag that I would be a shoo-in for a quick hire. But it was not meant to be. Sure, there was initial employment interest when reviewing my career experience sight unseen. But the interest died immediately after seeing me, without even getting in one word. Done. Dismissed. I was disappointed but not angry with them. If I was in their shoes, would I have done the same thing? After all, who wants to hire an apparently still green teenage fashion consultant? From one look, they immediately judged me to be too young and inexperienced.

After my umpteenth unsuccessful interview, I was sitting in the school's alumni career assistance office pondering my next move. It is far too early to think about switching to another career. Perhaps I would try anew in Northern Europe, Southeast Asia or even on a remote Pacific Island. At this point, I was wide open to employment possibilities. As long as I could do something meaningful.

"Olivia Plymouth?" I looked up to see the speaker behind the words. It was a woman not quite middle-aged dressed sharply and had eyes that reflected a hungry spirit.

"Hello. I stopped by to see my good friend Professor McDale. Somehow, we got on to the topic of this year's graduates. She mentioned you and how you were having trouble getting hired just because of your youth. Your story intrigued me so I asked her to tell me more and let me look over your résumé. I really liked what I read and was hearing about you. Especially about your passion and ingenuity. So, I wanted to talk to you and see if you are a good fit for my company."

For the first time since the early days of my career search, I smiled and started to breathe a little easier. At last, someone was interested in me. The real me. This person seemed nice and a little unusual. I then asked, "What would you want to ask me?"

After fifteen minutes, I was hired! And I would start in a few days. I raced back to pack my bags and begin looking for a place to live in Toronto. For I would be working for my interviewer, Sarah Pride who ran Pride Consulting. Sarah was a very driven and unconventional being. It was important for her to overcome the various challenges that came on the journey to growing a business. Her parents wanted her to become a lawyer like the rest of the family and disowned Sarah after announcing her intentions. She then got jobs wherever she could. Sarah practically raised herself and paid her way through fashion consulting college. Her attention to detail and flexibility to take on projects of any size won her a steady stream of customers. Her specialty was consulting for junior model fashion events, which meant that her models consisted of 12 to 17-year olds, and between 5'6" to 5'8" tall. Many companies did not want to deal with the temperamental stars of the junior runway.

She had a small staff that was increasingly relied on and I became important part of the team. It gave me a healthy dose of important fashion consulting experience. Sarah mentored me to help fulfill my potential. Four years later at age twenty, I struck out on my own. I left on good terms with Sarah. It had taken some time to research untapped markets. I settled on the Seattle/Vancouver area. And after I moved, I started my first and only business enterprise -- Better Colors Fashion Consulting. And then I bought a house next door to avoid that dreadful

and inevitable morning commute. Perhaps unconsciously I wanted to be as far as possible from the Boston area where I grew up. But I also liked being near the Pacific Ocean and snowcapped mountains.

Anyways, I soon hired two employees to take care of things. And began traveling around the world assisting all my precious and important clients.

Oh, I see that there is another client needing my attention. Talk again in a bit.

Chapter 3: My Story So Far: Lost on a Mountain

[See Chapter 18 for the original version written from Richard's perspective. (Olivia's boyfriend and later husband.)]

My sister Rose once told me that to grow up and live a full life, one had to occasionally stretch far past their comfort zone. So, one day, I tried out something that I would never do typically. All too quickly, I ended up way over my head (which is my usual *modus operandi*).

In a moment of weakness, I signed up for a hiking/climbing tour trip up part of Mount Rainer. My goal was never to climb up to the summit. Just go high enough to get a taste of real "mountaineering." Whatever elevation that I reached was more than enough.

The tour had recommendations of "beginner's climbing gear." Some additional "advanced gear" suggestions were also made. I went to the rental store, and like a naive dupe, I accepted their COMPLETE list without hesitation. Even today, I can't forget the exorbitant rental and the other excessive fees if you failed to return their equipment. Their markup must had been extraordinary! Woe to the poor or unknowing soul that lost any piece of rented gear. I am only mentioning this because these penalties and costs play an important role in this story.

The day of the climb finally arrived. Three male guides around my age greeted the very apparently inexperienced group of twenty. Then we set off. Early on, I realized that the load of my backpack was incredibly HEAVY. Clearly, far too much of a load for me to bear. But I could not leave it behind. I could not afford that month paying any of the steep rental return penalty fees (which were almost as high as renting!) So, I kept trudging on. Step by step, I was perspiring beyond all belief. With all of energy and focus, I kept moving albeit very slowly. Every muscle was being employed to move forward. But. I must say that I did look *so amazing* with my stylish snowsuit along with matching goggles, snow hat, scarf, and clothes. They kept me very warm as well. Which aggravated the situation while already being overheated.

I was so wrapped up with my walking activity and lost in so many other thoughts, that it was far too late that I realized that I was walking all alone. No group or guides in sight! How could I have been so thoughtless? I kept moving forward in a direction that I thought was still ascending. But I had no idea as to where I was really going. Someone should eventually realize that I was missing and turn back. Right? RIGHT? Else my already successful career will have an untimely termination.

I never hesitated to keep striving forward. Against all odds and with all my strength. Even if it was in the wrong direction. Because that is what Plymouths do.

Unknown to me, I was being watched carefully by one of the guides that had returned. Apparently, they were distracted by some temporary threat and lost track of everyone. Or at least me. They seemed like a pretty responsible group of guides. Later when he knew me better, this guide told me how he marveled at the foolhardy and heroic spectacle of me trying to move forward when clearly out of energy and outmatched by my backpack.

Soon he caught up and greeted me. His name was Richard. He had come back to help and saw that I was struggling. Fortunately, just ahead was a way station. I dropped off the unessential gear (which I could pick up on the way back with Richard's kind assistance. We then worked on catching up to the group. We talked along the way there. It was nice and comfortable being with this man. I've felt that we have known each other for a long period of time. In time, we rejoined my traveling companions. The views and sights from the remainder of the trip were simply astounding. I couldn't believe later on when Richard told me that he was getting bored being a guide. I could never be tired of that scenery! After returning my gear safely and getting my rental deposit back completely, Richard asked me out on a date for the following weekend. Things took off from there.

Chapter 16: Story: Fashion Show in a Box

Better Colors Fashion Consulting was having an expected quiet period. I always welcome how this happened at the end of each year. Most of the staff had taken off. It was just Sally Lennox, Tommy Loomis, and myself -- just like in the old days.

Seattle was having a rare snowy day with expected heavy accumulations late evening. Because of that and the time of year, I was not expecting much business that day. So, I dived into planning out next year. Are there some new activities that we should be doing? Are there some other untapped markets to explore?

I was pulled back from my thoughts and planning by a knock at the front door. Sally opened it, only to encounter a young girl somewhere between ten to twelve years old. She rushed in looking frantic and with eyes pleading said the following.

"Please Miss can you help me? I'm stuck and don't know what to do. You see I have a school project that I need to turn in next week. It is supposed to be on what we would like to do when we grow up. However, I don't really know that yet. But I do like choosing and wearing clothes. How they make me feel good. So, I want my project to be something along the lines of 'fashion show in a box.' But I have no idea on how to create that."

Well this was a most unusual topic and subject. Now, normally I would be stretched too thin with work to help on such a task. However, I was taken in by the young woman's earnestness. I very much wanted to make this little project into a roaring success.

So, I started to think about this. How can you capture a fashion show in a box? And like it had happened so many times before, a brainstorm came to me.

Natalia was the name of our young visitor. I blindfolded her and asked her to describe the various materials that I had her touch, guess what colors they were, and reveal how she would feel wearing them. When we were done, she rapidly pulled off the blindfold. And found herself in for a surprise. For she learned that touch did not give her the full picture. For true immersion with fashion involves all of our senses and our brain.

Natalia was so excited with this lesson. And thanked Tommy, Sally, and me profusely. She left walking in the snow making sounds of utter satisfaction. Another happy customer.

Afterwards, I was so busy with my work that I didn't think any further of it. The months rapidly sped by. Then one day a woman came in that looked somewhat familiar. But I couldn't exactly place her. She introduced herself as Melody, the caring mother of Natalia.

Like her daughter, she expressed visibly her emotions.

“Oh, I cannot thank you enough for the time that you spent with Natalia. She left the house that day so discouraged. She can get discouraged so easily. I don't know what you said to her that day when she visited here. But it was some sort of a charm. I have never seen her so delighted when she returned. And she worked very hard on her school project. She wouldn't let me see it. Then the day came and she gave her presentation. She captured her teacher's and peers' imaginations. She made fashion come alive with her creative fashion show in a box. She got an excellent grade and was feeling so thrilled afterwards. Natalia said that when she becomes old enough, she wants to become a consultant here. I have never seen her so decisive before. Thank you!”

I didn't expect that my brief time with Natalia had such profound rewards. I remember what I was like back then and how there were not many opportunities to get real world fashion experience. So, I made an unusual offer.

“Why can't she come in on Saturdays every couple of weeks? We can always use another hand. And the staff and I would welcome the chance to teach her a thing or two!” Melody nodded in assent wearing a broad grin. Her look made me feel so warm inside.

And that's how Natalia become the first of a long line of teenage interns. And we all made them do the “fashion show in a box” exercise. I am still amazed that it all came from a snowy day when a nervous but earnest young woman wanted to have a good grade on a school project.

I am glad to say that she now works here after graduating with high marks from fashion school. We were her only choice. And after watching her grow up, Natalia was our choice as well. We let her interview all our prospective interns and new employees. If she likes them more than not, they usually turn out to be an excellent selection.

I wonder what would you do if you were assigned the “fashion show in a box” exercise?
Good luck and happy fashions!

About the Author

Hallett German is a fiction and technical subject author on various aspects of IT and business. His works of fiction cross multiple genres including children, young adult, dysfunctional corporate mysteries/fantasies, historical fiction, and steampunk. His books offer a unique and original ride into other worlds and lives. He is the author of series (Olivia Plymouth Amazi Chronicles, In Small Doses, and Corporate Intent) and single books (Combustible Networks, Ghosts vs. Robots, Saving Eddie, Killing Thoreau, Missed Landing, Her Time, and Command and Control).

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