

original walls, there are spots of interest everywhere, and visitors can get a sense of the history simply by walking its streets and putting their noses into places that interest them. I love modern London with its patchwork of past and present, and I love researching Tudor London, with its colorful characters and tumultuous events.

The question for me as an author is "What do

## London—Spies and Titles

by Gay Tolli Kinman (Alhambra, California)

**One January**, husband Bill and I were walking on a major London thoroughfare, each side lined with large office-type buildings. I looked over to my right to see a wide cobblestone courtyard surrounded by a building four stories high. There was a low stone wall in front that had a wide opening for cars, originally perhaps for horses and carriages. I took off my right glove to touch the stones. Cold as ice, and gritty, but looking like the stones in the courtyard.

It was *the building*. At that moment, "London Spy" came to life. I saw my hero's office, actually just the small window on the lower right side, near the entrance. This was my fictional American Embassy's adjunct quarters.

Fast forward. The rejection from a publisher on the submission of the book ms. was:

"I don't like spy stories," scrawled in the white margin of my query letter and returned in my SASE.

That gave me pause. It sounded like she rejected it on the title alone. Maybe she thought it was in the James Bond mode. It is about a spy—a CIA Agent stationed in London—espionage, and a thriller, but not James Bondish.

Maybe the title *London Spy* gave the wrong impression. And when the book was published, if it had that title, I didn't want spy aficionados to buy it and be disappointed because a James

I leave in, and what must be left for book number four?"

Peg Herring lives in beautiful northern Lower Michigan and writes both contemporary and historical mysteries. Her interests other than writing include travel, directing choral groups, and trying to keep deer, elk, and rabbits from harvesting her garden before she gets the chance.

Bond-type wasn't in it. That would be just as bad.

I had to change the title. Mmmmm. "How about...." I pondered and went through several titles, none feeling right. So I settled on one that described the story the best, *Death in Covent Garden* (Hilliard and Harris 2006), as that's where the book opens in December, 1985, and where the murder is committed. An American tourist, Ivy Sampson, finds the body in a red telephone kiosk. She and her husband are taken to the Covent Garden police station for their statements. Then they are whisked off to Burberry's so that Ivy can buy a new raincoat, as hers was stained with blood and is now evidence.

The time period of the book, December 1985, is significant because the story hinges on a true event, which triggered the idea for the story originally—and when a variety of red telephone kiosks were still around.

*Death in Covent Garden* features Tony Reynolds, a CIA Agent stationed in London. His boss is the 'Old Man,' as everyone calls him, but not to his face, the second in command in the CIA, a career officer, who has been around a long time.

The Old Man hand picks Tony for TDY (Temporary Duty) because of the sensitive nature of the assignment—to be a go-between. A KGB official high up in the Soviet hierarchy is plan-

ning to defect and is negotiating what he wants, such as a farm in Virginia and jobs for his two daughters in the US. He tells Tony all this while they are sitting in Kensington Gardens near the Kensington Road entrance.

They had encountered each other in Covent Garden, where the Russian saved Tony's life. A few other scenes are set there, as well as in Simpson's-on-the-Strand, where Tony is to meet Boris, an informant who knows what's going on in London's large Russian community. Other locations in the story include the British Museum, Bloomsbury, Hard Rock Cafe, the Sherlock Holmes pub, Regent Palace Hotel, Piccadilly Circus, an Elizabethan-style pub near the Tower of London, Heathrow, and, of course, there are several scenes in Tony's office in the building I saw.

Mixed in with this is a real incident and part of the Russian's offer. In reality, real reality, terrorists shoot Christmas travelers, including Americans, in the Rome and Vienna airports. My fictional story explains why no more incidents occur even though the terrorists say there are more planned.

The main setting is London, but there are scenes in Bath and Cheltenham, as well as on the Continent in Venice, East Berlin and Munich. I was lucky enough to visit all of the places I wrote about, each at least once, and London many times.

So that was the book. I still had a few stories swirling around about Tony in London, but not book length. I wrote two prequel short stories. Why prequel? Because at the end of the book, I reveal a twist that explains why Tony is on TDY.

I still wanted to use the title "London Spy"—voila!—that was the title of the first short story. "London Spy," set in July 1985, is about the stealing of American passports near the British Museum, a popular tourist attraction. Tony's assignment is to find out who is stealing them, why

only certain types of American passports, and then arrange to have the thieves arrested by the Metropolitan Police. Simple.

Tony discovers that an actress, Pippa, and her boyfriend Shug, deliver the stolen passports to a travel agency owned by a Russian crime ring, which then sells them for a large sum. The agency is located on the fringe of the West End, where the theatre district is, and where Pippa is in a play, and where she eventually hides out.

The boyfriend gets greedy and wants a bigger cut. Told from her POV, Pippa drives Shug in her Mini to meet the mob guys near the Thames. But she has to drive rapidly away to escape them. (I had to remember to have her drive on the left side of the road, and from the right side of the car!)

The second prequel short story is "The Duchess," set in October, 1985 (completed, not yet published). Along with my love of London, I am fascinated with Wallis Warfield Simpson and her relationship with David, the future King Edward VIII. The story is named after her, and mixes fact and fiction.

"The Duchess" is about old letters from the 1930s that were just found in a country estate when it was given to the National Trust. Before the letters can be auctioned off at Sotheby's by the heiress of the estate, they are stolen. They are to Wallis from various friends, giving her advice on how to handle a situation that is an historical fact.

There is a dispute about the ownership of the letters. Besides that friction, several factions are after them, including a band of terrorists, as the packet is worth a lot of money. Tony is assigned to get the letters back, as his boss still considers Wallis to be an American citizen and wants to protect her, as no one really knows for sure what is in the letters. Tony knows there's more to this than the Old Man told him. No matter, he has a job to do and attempts to do it, resulting in the

proposed exchange of the letters and the monetary 'consideration' for them occurring at midnight outside of Kensington Gardens, near the intersection of Kensington High Street and Kensington Road.

I'm working on the third prequel. Even though Tony is still stationed in London, he is sent off on TDY again in a story involving the Amber Room, titled "Death in Amsterdam."

Titles again. My second published book was *Death in a Small Town* (Hilliard and Harris, 2006) Mistake! People thought it was part of a

## To London with Love

by Clare Langley-Hawthorne (Melbourne, Aus.)

**My love affair** with London began as a child. I still remember my first visit to the British Museum when I was seven, gazing at the Egyptian mummies in total awe. I also remember the bookshops filled with my favorite Enid Blyton school stories and tea shops serving crumpets and honey—not to mention all the cakes and chocolates filling the stores (which has led to an unfortunate lifelong addiction to Turkish Delight, Bakewell Tarts and Battenburg cake). My husband often comments on the number of sweets my protagonist, Ursula Marlow, eats in my books. I just answer—why she's English, of course! Sadly, after meeting my family, he totally understands what I mean.

My parents have always encouraged my London habit—as they too love going to the theatre, mooching around art galleries and museums and walking the narrow lanes of London in search of a great pub. I grew up thousands of miles away in Australia but my parents still spoke of London in hushed, misty-eyed tones, especially when they mentioned that temple of commerce, Marks & Spencer (or Marks and Sparks as they called it).

I was very lucky when I first moved to Cali-

series, but it's not. "Which should I read first?" I was asked. I gave myself a belated slap on the forehead. That had always been the story's title in my mind, somehow I didn't make the connection.

*Death in a Small Town* is set in present-day Los Angeles and features my other series character, small town City Attorney Jo Peters—not even the same time period, location or sex!.

Ah, another misleading title!

A complete list of Gay Toltl Kinman's works can be found at [www.gaykinman.com/author](http://www.gaykinman.com/author).

fornia to be able to work for a UK consultancy based just outside London, so that at least once a quarter I got to have my 'London fix', even if it meant a ten-hour transcontinental flight. So I guess it came as no surprise to anyone in my family that my first novel, *Consequences of Sin* (Penguin, 2007), would be set at least partly in London. There is something about British history that never fails to excite me, and the thought of inhabiting, even only fictionally, Edwardian London was a lure too great for me to ignore.

Ursula Marlow, my protagonist in both *Consequences of Sin* and *The Serpent and The Scorpion* (Penguin, 2008), lives in upscale Belgravia. On one of my research trips to London, I walked the streets in search of 'her' house in Chester Square. As I meandered along, musing over how Ursula would feel about today's London, I was stopped by a policeman. In this age of terrorism, expensive neighborhoods such as this required vigilance. Once I explained, however, about my books (drawing out the ARC for *Consequences of Sin* as proof I wasn't up to no good, at least I was only up to no good in my novels!) the policeman suddenly became an animated tour

guide, pointing out all the famous personages that had lived, or continued to live, in Chester Square.

This brings me to another thing I love about London—almost everyone who lives there is in touch with its history, from the cabbies who tell you their family history of the Blitz, to the passerby who will point out some amazing trivia about the house you happen to be admiring. I believe history seeps through the consciousness of everyone who lives in London.

When I visit London now, it is usual to frequent my very favorite place of all, the British Library. It is hard to explain the level of excitement I feel when I arrive, ready to show my Reader's Pass and enter through the modern glass and brick entrance. The thought of the books and journals that await me is tantalizing. I never know what little fact will spark an idea for a new story or further research. My other favorite place is the Imperial War Museum, for the wealth of historical data that lies within its archives. When I was last there, researching policewomen during the First World War, I got to examine a woman's diary from 1917 and to see the wonderful photograph of her with her dog Ripper. Then, as I opened another envelope out fell 'Ripper's special pass to a munitions' factory and clippings complaining about Ripper's behavior! I am not sure there is anywhere else in the world that has the combination of humor, eccentricity and history that you get in London.

## Sweeping Mysterious London

by Amy Myers (Kent, England)

**London is a mystery** in itself. Perhaps Brutus, one of its several fabled founders, was born under the star sign Gemini because it's a twin-sided city, past and present, and East End and West End. They all add up to one glorious mysterious

whole of which Brutus would have been proud. In the 1860s, when my current crime series about the chimney sweep Tom Wasp is set, the West End stretched only to what is now Hyde Park Corner, where the Duke of Wellington's

Ursula may live in the rarefied atmosphere of Belgravia but she has a knack for associating with those who dwell in very different strata of London society—from blue-stockings to Bolsheviks, anarchists to armament dealers. I love exploring what I call 'hidden London', beyond the places most tourists ever see. London is rather like an eccentric relative whose amazing life story is slowly revealed visit after visit.

London also offers me a rich tapestry in which to thread my characters and plot. I know there are many other places that I would love to explore further and write about, but for me, there will never be anywhere quite like London. For some part of me, buried deep within the soul, London will always be home.

Clare Langley-Hawthorne is the author of *Consequences of Sin* and *The Serpent and The Scorpion*. She and her family now split their time between Australia and the US. Please visit her website at: [www.clarelangleyhawthorne.com](http://www.clarelangleyhawthorne.com) to learn more about the Ursula Marlow series.