

One day my husband gave me a challenge. He handed me an outline of a character, a female wizard spying for the Allies during WWII, and asked me what I could do with her--apparently a lot, since *The Tower's Alchemist* was born.

I consider myself a life-long student, and I remember enjoying my old high school teacher's stories from when he served in the war. Believe me, they were far more interesting than trying to balance out my chemistry equations!

The 1940s is also known as an iconic era, with everything from glamorous fashion down to the gritty black-and-white noir movies. It was an interesting time period, but also a very dangerous one, where the world hung on a delicate balance.

*What if* Hitler's obsession with the occult led him to make a pact with warlocks? And *what if* the Allies employed wizards to spy, sabotage, and do everything they could to stand in the enemy's way?

The next thing I asked was, "What was spying like back then? Were there female spies during the war?"

This led me on one of the most satisfying parts of this journey, learning about the women of the Special Operations Executive (SOE). These amazing women came from diverse backgrounds and circumstances, and they were all skilled each in their own way. Noor Inayat Khan, for example, was an Indian princess who at first lived as a pacifist--but then decided she needed to get involved. She aided the French Resistance through her radio broadcasts, and when she was finally captured by the Nazis, they say she fought so fiercely that they grew afraid of her. Nancy Wake could throw on some powder and a little lipstick, and with her sharp mind and fiery attitude, easily walk through a checkpoint.

Hopefully you'll notice the bits and pieces that inspired me shine through in *The Tower's Alchemist*, and even through my protagonist, Isabella George, who's a wizard trained by the Gray Tower and works for SOE as a spy.

The story introduces you to her when she's at her peak, but also when she's losing friends. She's cynical and tired. She agrees to embark on one final mission, however this turns out to be her most dangerous: someone's betrayed her and leaked her identity, a vampiric warlock is stalking her in order to steal her powers, and the very people who trained her hold deadly secrets about her past.