ARE YOUR CHARACTERS REAL?

I could protest for hours about how my characters are not based on real people, yet readers will still walk away convinced that my protagonists are thinly veiled versions of myself. As if. I'm not in my thirties. I've never run a cheese shop or a cookbook shop. I don't live in a small town. And I'm definitely not courageous (or curious enough) to figure out whodunit in a local murder. Do I care about friends and family? Yes. Do I cook? Yep. Do I like pets? Certainly. So, in that regard, I guess I'm very much like my protagonists!

Now as for my killers and victims or the other people that populate my fictional towns, um…*yes*, there might be a few I've based on people I know, but I would bet no one could figure it out. Why? Because I take pieces of a person—perhaps the look or the attitude or maybe a phrase, style of speaking, or a rhythm of speech. I was told once that if I simply switched the sex of a character of the person I knew in real life, I could create the person verbatim and the person would never suspect!

Yes, I have started reading friends' books to find out whether I'm the basis for a character. Is there a Type A perfectionist in the bunch? Someone who is rough on herself when she doesn't get things right? An overachiever who doesn't know how to say "no"? That might be me. Do I (uh-oh) die? Perhaps I'd better work harder at being a good friend. ☺

By the way, major reveal: In one of my short stories, I kill off a nemesis that used to ride me back in the days when I worked a nine-to-five job. She doesn't have a clue. I promise you. She wouldn't deign to read my work. I only changed her name and her career.

Have you ever tried to tell a story about someone and changed basic facts to protect the identity of the guilty…*ahem*, I mean, innocent?