

INVISIBLE BY DAY

**A Novel by
Teri Fink**

“Every chapter leaves you
hungry for the next.”

Cathie E. West, Author

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**INVISIBLE BY DAY**  
**Second Expanded Edition**  
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ISBN (EPUB Version): 1622530810
ISBN-13 (EPUB Version): 978-1-62253-081-6

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## What Others Are Saying

"Teri Fink's suspense driven novel offers readers captivating characters, involved in powerful relationships, within a dramatic historical setting. Every chapter leaves you hungry for the next." ~ Cathie E. West, Author of *"The Educator's Guide to Writing a Book: Practical Advice for Teachers and Leaders"*

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"If you loved Downton Abbey, you'll devour *Invisible by Day*. Teri Fink recreates World War I era England with vivid details, but while she paints the era with love, she doesn't sentimentalize it. Instead, she captures much of the brutality, sexism and class warfare that defined the times. A detailed, sweeping novel that explores three of the most compelling facets of human life: love, war, and redemption. Readers will be marking their calendars for Teri Fink's next release." ~ A.C. Fuller, Author of the *"Alex Vane Media Thriller" Series*

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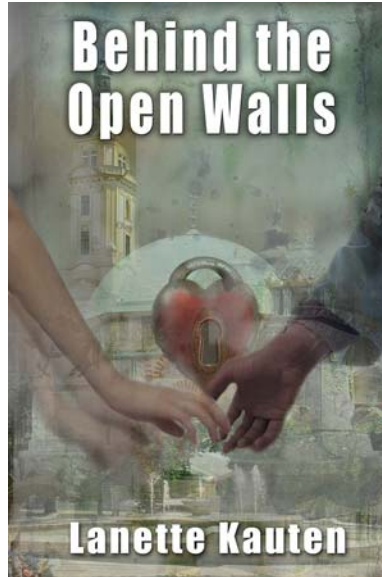
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## **BONUS CONTENT**

We're excited to offer a Special Sneak Preview at the end of this book: the First 3 Chapters of *BEHIND THE OPEN WALLS* by Lanette Kauten, a literary/historical adventure.

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## **Dedication**

*For Don Fink*

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[\*\*SPECIAL SNEAK PREVIEW: \*Behind the Open Walls\* by Lanette Kauten\*\*](#)

## Epigraph

For age is opportunity no less  
Than youth itself, though in another dress,  
And as the evening twilight fades away  
The sky is filled with stars, invisible by day.  
~ *Henry Wadsworth Longfellow*



## Chapter 1 - London, April 1917

Kate started up the steep, narrow staircase, feet throbbing in her black lace-up boots. Her linen jacket and skirt hung limp on her willow frame. When she reached the fifth floor and the door to her flat, she inserted the key into the lock and turned it, but the door wouldn't budge. She turned it the other way, and the lock clicked open.

Odd, but she was too tired to give it much thought.

She stepped inside, closed the door behind her, and walked slowly through the pitch black toward the kitchen. With her hand outstretched, she groped for the cord to switch on the single light bulb that hung overhead. Wartime blackout required all windows be covered at night.

She touched the edge of the kitchen table, orienting herself, reached up and pulled the cord. The light clicked on.

A man was sitting at the table, close enough to touch her.

She jumped backwards, and went weak-kneed with fear as his face came into focus.

He stared up at her, his suit rumpled, hair out of place. Two items sat before him on the table: a red purse and a plate.

Her vision widened to take in the flat. Drawers and cupboards yawned open, spilling out their contents. Clothes lay strewn across the bed and floor.

The man indicated the chair across the table with a gloved hand. "Please, sit down. You must be exhausted after your long day."

Kate wavered, then collapsed onto the chair.

He studied her for a long moment.

Wide-eyed, she stared back at him, struggling to keep her fear at bay.

He sat forward. "I believe you have something of mine. I want it back. *Now.*"

Kate answered, her voice sounding surprisingly casual, conversational even. "Whatever could I possibly have of yours?"

He exhaled, a brief, sarcastic hiss of air, and picked up the red purse, reached inside, and pulled out a small brown bottle. Removing the cork, he held the bottle over the plate, tipped it, and with one finger, tapped out cream-colored powder into a little hill.

With one gloved finger, he pushed the plate across the table until it sat directly in front of Kate. "For you."

She tried to look nonchalant, knowing the contents of those bottles all too well.

His lips twitched on one side. "I know you like it. It would be a shame to waste. In fact, I think you'll take all of it – tonight."

She knew how a modest portion of the powders affected her. The entire amount on the plate would put her into a sleep from which she would never awaken. "I don't think I can drink that much."

"Why don't you sniff it?" He inhaled noisily through his nose. "It's quicker to work, and far more potent that way."

They both knew it was enough to kill her regardless of how she took it.

Self-pity swept over her, and her lower lip trembled. To have gone through so much and have it end like this. Unthinkable.

"Will you answer a question first?" she asked, desperate to stall for time.

His eyebrows rose, gaze never leaving hers, and he nodded slightly.

She took a deep breath, and asked the question only he could answer. "Why did you kill him?"

No need to say the name; they both knew who she meant.

“Tell me,” she persisted, trying to hold herself together. “What happened the night he died? I need to know. At least leave me with that.”

He paused, shrugged. “If you wish.”

## Chapter 2 - London, September 1910

James Casey hurried along in the wet dark, coat collar pulled up against the lashing rain. He had worked late at the shipping office, past seven, and relished the thought of a hot cup of tea. He reached his apartment building and hurried up three flights of steps to his flat, his blond hair dripping as he unlocked the door and stepped inside. He shrugged out of his coat, shook off the raindrops, and hung it carefully on a spindly rack near the door. A narrow, neatly made bed, a wardrobe, and a kitchen table were all that furnished the room.

The small flat, the tired neighborhood – none of it discouraged him.

Things had worked out even better than he'd anticipated in London. He'd started his new job as office clerk and accountant at Lyman & Stonebeck, where the owner, Mark St. John, had hired him after a single interview, thanks in part to a letter of recommendation from the company he'd worked for in Glasgow. This new company, at triple the size of his old one, marked a step up. James worked directly under the office manager, Myron Bridger, a portly man who stood a full head below James. With caterpillar eyebrows and salt-and-pepper hair that frizzed into a halo, Mr. Bridger feigned a gruffness that didn't hold up to scrutiny.

The teakettle had worked itself up to a whistle when a knock sounded at the door. James lifted the kettle from the stove and pulled out his pocket watch: nearly 8:00.

*Who on Earth could be knocking at this time of night?*

He opened the door.

"Telegram." A rain-soaked delivery boy handed him an envelope and looked up expectantly.

"Oh, yes." James rummaged in his pocket for a coin and pressed it into the boy's hand.

He stepped back into his room, tore open the envelope, and scanned the contents. He experienced a mixture of emotions, sadness followed by a touch of excitement.

*Inappropriate excitement*, he scolded himself.

He stared at the message from Katie MacLaren.

*Can you come home? My mum has died, and I need your help.*

He hesitated, stuffed the letter into his pocket, and began to pack his clothes for the trip back to Kirken, the village where he'd grown up. He would have to take a few days off – problematic this early in the new job – and would soon find out if Mr. Bridger truly possessed kindness.

He had no choice but to ask. For Katie MacLaren, it was worth the risk.

### Chapter 3

James almost didn't recognize her when she opened the front door to the small stone cottage. She looked thin and tired. Her skin, usually a creamy white, appeared nearly translucent.

"Katie." He took off his hat, squeezing it in his hand. "I'm so sorry."

"Thank you for coming, James. Please, come in." She led him inside.

The place smelled damp and musty.

Katie walked over and sat in front of the fireplace, holding her hands out to the sputtering flames. "She never was vital, you know," she said quietly. "Never had the bloom of spring in her cheeks, not since I can remember. She's had a bad cough for years, but it seems like when the weather turned cold this year, she got worse. She would sit for hours in front of this fire, coughing and complaining about the cold. Friday last week...."

She looked over her shoulder at James. "She simply didn't wake up."

He shifted uneasily on his feet.

Katie turned back to the fire. "Some of the women came and we laid her out right here in this room. They took her to the churchyard and buried her yesterday." She stood and turned away from him. "And the landlord said he didn't mean to be cruel or unkind, but with the rent long past due, I couldn't live here anymore."

"I'm sorry," he said.

"I thought," she struggled on, "that maybe you could help me find an employer in London. I've had enough of this village." She turned from the fire, staring at him full in the face. "Will you help me find work in London? Please, James?"

"Certainly, I'll help you."

She let out her breath, stepped past him to the kitchen, and picked up a battered suitcase. "Good, let's go to London."

"Now?" he asked, incredulous.

"Now."

"But... but there's still a fire in the fireplace."

"Yes, and I hope the whole place burns down. What would the landlord think of that?" She walked out the door, never giving a last look at the only home she'd ever known.

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Their train pulled into London after dark. Windows, streetlights, and automobile headlights glowed through the rain, and Katie's heart pounded with excitement. More people crowded into the train station even at this hour than populated the whole of Kirken.

Here she could be anonymous. No one would know.

"We need to find a suitable place for you to spend the night," James said, carrying Katie's solitary bag as they made their way through the station.

"Don't you have a place?" Katie couldn't keep the surprise from her voice.

"I do, but that wouldn't be proper. I don't know many people here yet, and the only person I can think of who might be able to help is Mister Bridger, my supervisor at the company. The Bridger's youngest daughter recently married, so they may have a room until we can find someplace suitable."

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When James had asked for time off, Mr. Bridger had begrudgingly given him three days, without pay, after hearing that a young woman from his village had just lost her mum and needed his help.

They walked miles to get to the Bridger's place, a tiny house on a street lined with identical houses packed tightly together. James stood on the Bridgers' doorstep, soaked by rain, and knocked, nervous and unsure of what to expect.

The door opened. "I'm sorry to bother you so late," James began as Mr. Bridger, shirt untucked and stocking-footed, stood gaping. "This is the young woman I told you about, Katie MacLaren."

"Kate, not Katie," she said as she stepped forward and extended a hand. "I'm not a child anymore." She glanced sidelong at James. "I'll be called Kate, now."

"Is this the girl?" A woman peeked around Mr. Bridger's shoulder.

"My wife," Mr. Bridger said. He had found his voice. "Edith."

Mrs. Bridger, a plump woman with scarlet cheeks and white hair, stepped around her husband. "The both of you, come in the house this minute. You'll catch your death out in this weather. Kate, you must be exhausted. A spot of tea and a biscuit should put some color back in your cheeks."

Over tea, Mrs. Bridger insisted that she stay with them indefinitely.

"Our daughters' bedroom just sits empty," she said, turning to James. "Don't you worry about your girl, Mister Casey. You go on home. She's in good hands."

Mrs. Bridger proved to be a gracious guardian, if a bit overwhelming. After a few days, a routine began to take shape. Kate helped with housekeeping and meals, but as a member of the household, not as a domestic servant.

James came by every night after work, often arriving with fresh meat from the butcher or bread from the baker, and he always stayed for dinner.

Filled with an intense curiosity to see and learn everything about the glorious city, Kate had asked James to take her exploring whenever he could make time. Propriety dictated that either Mr. or Mrs. Bridger or both accompany them, so this ill-matched foursome could often be found strolling through Kensington Gardens, or sightseeing in the city. One evening, they even attended a play at the Lyceum in the West End.

London bustled, thriving with more people than Kate had ever imagined could live in one place. She loved to walk along Piccadilly or The Mall, lost in the curious throng of people. During the day, she often coerced Mrs. Bridger to stroll along the Strand, where they watched all the ladies in luxurious satins and furs rushing off to who knows where – luncheons perhaps, or maybe long-overdue visits for tea with an elderly aunt.

She peered in the display windows at Harrods, astonished at the enormity of the place, let alone the array of clothing one could purchase on a whim. She dragged Mrs. Bridger into the store at least once a fortnight, where they wandered, Kate examining the latest fashions and committing them to memory. She hatched a plan to sew her own dresses to look just like them.

James, always attentive and full of shy fun, filled her evenings and every Sunday, his one day off. She'd wait impatiently for his arrival, if for nothing else than to talk with someone besides Mrs. Bridger for a while. Like an old shoe, being with James felt increasingly more comfortable.

Her new life in London suited her well, but Kate wanted more. She couldn't live with the Bridgers forever, and she began to plan how she might make an independent life for herself.

## Chapter 4

Mark St. John turned his Mercedes Double Phaeton motorcar out of the bustling docks and drove away from the heart of London, until the road curved up a slight hill and businesses gave way to homes, and farther on a marble-and-stone mansion. He pulled into the drive and climbed out of the Mercedes, stopping to admire the gold trim and red leather interior of the open-topped automobile.

In his mid-thirties, he held the title 'Earl of Tunbridge'. Not usually one for extravagant purchases, automobiles were his one luxury. He wiped off a bit of imaginary dirt from the hood, and sighed.

*Might as well get this over with.*

The massive door opened before he reached the top step. "Hello, Bronson," he said to the white-haired, slender, and slightly stooped butler.

"Sir."

"You look as healthy as a horse."

"Thank you, sir. Lord McGregor is expecting you."

Mark followed Bronson through the foyer, footsteps echoing off marble floors, and into the library. Cherry-wood bookshelves lined one wall from floor to ceiling, filled with leather-bound books—all for show, Mark thought, doubting anyone had ever read any of them. A fire crackled in the fireplace.

Mark and Des had known each other all their lives, and had played together as children. Des had been a dark-haired rascal of a boy, slightly shorter in stature, and Mark, the taller, fair-haired thinker. They followed their fathers' footsteps to Trinity College, where Mark had excelled in business and languages—French and German. Des had studied literature, graduating by the skin of his teeth.

Their fathers, Rory McGregor and Elliot St. John, both gone now, had been inseparable friends throughout their lifetimes. They'd both attended Trinity College, Cambridge, where they rowed as members of the boat club and played cricket. They'd each married shortly after university, Rory to Phoebe Lyman and Elliot to Winifred Stonebeck, women from excellent families, titled, and of significant means. Together, Rory and Elliot purchased prime property along the Thames and founded a shipping firm, naming it Lyman & Stonebeck, their wives' maiden names, a gesture that endeared them to both spouses. Elliot also built a lavish country house in Royal Tunbridge Wells for his wife, naming it Stonebeck Hall. Rory and Elliot passed a great deal of their free time hunting fox, boar, and pheasant on the thousand-plus acres of the estate. The men had also spent a significant amount of time in London running their business, and where, Mark suspected, their love of the hunt encompassed more than woodland creatures.

"Mark, old man. Good to see you." Des walked into the library.

"Des." Mark nodded. "I've brought your copy of the quarterly reports."

"First things first. How about a drink? A brandy perhaps?"

"Nothing for me."

"I'm ready for one, myself." Des poured himself a drink and sat behind a huge mahogany desk.

Mark pulled a sheath of papers from his jacket. "Business is good," he began, handing the papers one at a time to Des, who glanced at each summarily.

"Splendid," Des remarked. "Excellent quarter."

"The man I hired in the autumn is working out quite well. James Casey is his name, and he's living up to my expectations and then some."

"Oh, yes," Des remarked, distracted. "The one from..."

"The University at Glasgow," Mark finished for him.

"Yes, that one." Des smiled.

"He's come up with some great ideas that have saved us a lot of time and money."

"And how does your Mister Bridger feel about that?" Des asked.

"Oh, he took the credit, but actually the two are getting along just fine."

Des took a long drink, eyeing Mark. "It's quite unseemly, you working at the business, you know. People talk. We're above all that, you and me. I know your mother is quite upset that you spend so much time there, like a common working man."

"I'm not above paying my debts, and keeping Stonebeck Hall up and running is a challenge these days."

"Debts aside, don't you get bored with all of that?"

"Not at all. I find it all quite fascinating. As a matter of fact, I know you have no interest in the business. I came here not only to bring you the report, but to make you a business offer."

Des stretched his legs out before him. "Let's not go through this again."

"I'd like to buy you out, Des. Name your price."

Des smiled. "I would love to take your money, old boy, but I simply can't afford to. Lyman & Stonebeck is far too lucrative a business. You know me – pay me one lump sum and it would be spent in six months. Besides that, I enjoy our business meetings. It's a good idea to stay in touch with old friends – you never know when you might need one."

"I'll keep that in mind," Mark said, disappointed but not surprised. "Now, if you'll excuse me, I have a full afternoon."

Des drained his brandy, stood, and the men shook hands.

"It's a standing offer," Mark said on his way out, "if you should ever change your mind."

Des gave a half bow, his gray eyes reflecting the flames of the fire.

## Chapter 5

Kate awoke with a start Saturday morning, excited. Sun filtered through the lacy curtains she'd recently crafted and hung in the window of her small bedroom. The evening before, she'd convinced Mrs. Bridger that the change in weather – an entire week so far of rare, sunny spring days – simply begged for a picnic.

Before noon, the two of them had packed up a lunch and set off to the shipyard.

James and Mr. Bridger didn't need any convincing to take a long lunch break, and the foursome walked to nearby Battersea Park on the Thames. They spread their blankets on a grassy slope and set out steak-and-kidney pie, pickled yams, freshly baked bread, cheese, and apples the Bridgers had kept in the cellar over winter.

"You two made all this?" James cut an apple to share.

"This little missy has some fancy recipes up her sleeve," said Mrs. Bridger while chewing a generous forkful of pie.

"Missus Bridger is an excellent cook," said her husband. "But Kate has brought some new ideas into the kitchen."

Kate smiled.

"She should," James beamed. "She prepared the finest food in an important household for years."

Kate's smile collapsed and she picked at her meal.

James frowned. "Did I say something wrong?"

"No." Kate forced a smile. "Those days are gone, and best forgotten, that's all."

"That was thoughtless of me."

"No apology necessary, James. It's fine."

After eating, James and Kate took a rare walk by themselves. They strolled along the grassy slope that bordered the river. The green water sparkled in the afternoon sun.

"How are things at the business?" Kate asked. She envied his career, and was growing increasingly weary of Mrs. Bridger's constant prattle and talk among "us girls."

"Very well." He stopped abruptly, turned to face her and, grasping both her hands in his, studied her face with such intensity that she had to laugh.

"What is it?" she teased. "Am I wearing a portion of lunch on my nose?"

James smiled self-consciously, but gripped her hands a little tighter. "Kate, I know I have no right to hope or to expect you to...." The color rose in his face.

"Expect me to what?"

"Expect you to say yes. I was just hoping that... that maybe you would...."

"What are you talking about? That I would what?"

"Marry me," he whispered. "That maybe you would consent to marry me."

Kate looked at his tousled blond hair, his aquiline nose, and clear blue eyes. He wore sincerity and innocence like a simple garment, but he only *thought* he knew her. He held an illusion of her.

Her past had taught her to keep a secret.

With one hand, she reached up to smooth his hair. She had no choice, really, and although she had never admitted it to herself, she had known since her mother died that she would end up marrying James, or someone very much like him. What else could she do? She had tried to dream up a life where she could support herself, but the prospects were unlikely.

She touched her hand to his cheek, and took a deep breath. "I would be honored to be your wife."



❦

Kate met the owner of the shipping company on a Sunday morning, three weeks before the wedding. Or rather, one of the owners: she had no idea which one. His name wasn't Lyman or Stonebeck, but St. John. Mark St. John, and he'd invited James and Kate to accompany him on an outing.

Mark picked them up at the Bridgers' house, and her first impression of him was a handsome man who seemed unaware of it. He exuded the self-confidence and ease of someone brought up in a life of plenty. She had been around his type before.

After introductions, he led them to his automobile parked out front. A few of the neighborhood boys had gathered around it, peering in at the leather seats and touching the shiny exterior of the Mercedes. James shooed the boys away and climbed into the back while Mark helped Kate step up to the passenger seat in front.

She was embarrassed to be trembling with excitement at her first automobile ride.

Then they were off. Driving through the streets felt like flying. Wind blew through her hair and houses blurred past as people stopped to stare.

Mark drove straight to Chelsea, a stylish area in central London, where he pulled up in front of a two-story brick house. The house formed the shape of a shallow U, with the front entrance sunk back at the base, and the two side wings jutting to the front on either side, framed by tall windows at the front.

Mark turned in his seat. "I live not too far from here, close enough to the business to be convenient. This is my uncle's home."

"Oh." Kate smoothed her windblown hair. "Are we to meet your uncle?"

"I'm afraid not." He gave an apologetic smile. "He died a few months ago."

"I'm so sorry," she said.

"As am I," said James.

Mark nodded. "Thank you. He was elderly and died peacefully in bed. What more can any of us ask? He had a very good life. Now let's have a look, shall we?"

He stepped out of the auto in one smooth motion, and moved around to open Kate's door, offering a hand. He then led them to the entrance, unlocked the door, and ushered them inside. They stood in a broad tiled foyer with oversized wood doors on either side. Directly ahead, a staircase climbed out of sight.

"Since my uncle is gone, the house sits empty," Mark said. "I inherited it, and I'm not interested in selling it, so why don't you two live here?"

Kate gasped.

James looked astonished, but recovered and quickly said, "We can't afford it."

"Nonsense," Mark argued. "I'll charge a reasonable rent, and you'll be doing me a favor. Can't just have the thing sitting here with no one living in it. It comes fully furnished, as you can see."

They followed him into a sitting room with gleaming wood floors and a brick fireplace, furnished with a divan, matching chairs, and tables.

"There are bedrooms upstairs, servants' quarters in the basement, and the kitchen is on this floor. Nothing fancy. My uncle enjoyed simplicity and practicality, and he traveled a great deal. He had a particular fondness for Egypt."

They followed him down a hall to a dining room with a table large enough to seat a dozen people, and through a door into a voluminous kitchen. Gleaming copper pots and pans hung over a butcher-block island, and the stove across from it was enormous.

Kate felt breathless. She ran her hand along the long countertop and turned to face both

men. She walked to James and took his hand in hers, looking up at him, her mood earnest. "It's a grand house, James Casey, a house such as I never dreamed I would live in. And if we do live here, it will be because of you, because of your college education and your hard work. But if you decide that you can't accept Lord St. John's offer, so be it. We'll find a flat. We'll make do. It's your decision."

A slow blush crept up James's neck to his cheeks as he gazed down at his fiancée. At last, he sighed. "Well, I guess you'll be needing a house, now, won't you, when you're Missus Casey?"

Kate's breath caught in her throat, and she stood on her tiptoes and kissed his cheek.

"Quite right," Mark said, looking pleased. "By the way, a cook and a housekeeper come with the house. All of the others have found employment elsewhere. The cook's name is Lucy — she was the assistant to my uncle's cook. She's young and shows promise. Missus Ames is the housekeeper. She can be a bit stern, but she has a kind heart."

James began to protest, but Mark held up a hand. "It's a favor, really," he insisted. "I can't just let them go."

Kate smiled, squeezed James's hand, and turned to Mark. "Yes, help around the house is most welcome. Thank you. Now, if you gentlemen will excuse me, I would love to have a good look at this new home of ours."

The men watched her go, and Mark smiled. "I'm afraid you have no choice. She likes it."

"This is too generous of you."

Mark waved his hand, dismissing the notion. "Nonsense. By the by, you won't see me in the office for a week. I'm sailing to Nordenham to have a chat with the fellows at Norddeutscher Lloyd."

"I've heard of the company," James said. "It runs both freight and passenger ships."

"Right. It's an economically sound company. I want to look over their docks and facilities and learn from their success. Good chance to practice my German, too, which is getting rusty from lack of use. I'm relying on you and Mister Bridger to keep things running smoothly."

"You can count on me," James said.

---END OF SPECIAL SNEAK PREVIEW---

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---THANK YOU. ---

