

Dearest reader,

I have always loved doors.

I used to go looking for them, not in all the ordinary places—set into walls, leading in and out of houses—but in the woods, or at the top of a rocky hill, searching for keyholes tucked in tree trunks or sunk into the cracks between stones. I wanted to discover secret places, to find ways into other worlds and out of my own. When I was a teenager, I saw a door sitting upright in an empty lot, and the sight of it, alone in the midst of the weedy, overgrown yard, felt like a taste of magic. I didn't venture in, didn't turn the handle, because I couldn't bear the thought of opening the door and finding nothing on the other side.

But I never forgot.

Every one of my books is about doors. The doors in the Archived books lead into the library of the dead. The blood-made doors of *Shades of Magic* lead from one London to another. Some thresholds are more amorphous, like the two-way doors of life and death in *Vicious* and the *City of Ghosts* series, but every story has a kind of doorway in it, one that must be opened and entered.

There is a door in *Gallant*, too. An iron gate set into a garden wall. A threshold between one world and another. Between here and there. The kind of door you're not supposed to open, which is, of course, my favorite kind.

Being a reader means being a fan of doorways. After all, every time you pick up a book, you are holding a door. You are turning a key. You are walking through into the unknown, the promise of mystery and adventure.

Do you want to know what waits beyond this door?

Turn the page.

Step through.

And see.

Fondly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Victoria Schwab', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Victoria Schwab