



A Spark Unseen

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When Katharine Tulman wakes in the middle of the night and accidentally foils a kidnapping attempt on her uncle, she realizes Stranwyne Keep is no longer safe for Uncle Tully and his genius inventions. She flees to Paris, where she hopes to remain undetected and also find the mysterious and handsome Lane, who is suspected to be dead.

But the search for Lane is not easy, and Katharine soon finds herself embroiled in a labyrinth of political intrigue. And with unexpected enemies and allies at every turn, Katharine will have to figure out whom she can trust--if anyone--to protect her uncle from danger once and for all.

A Spark Unseen Details

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From Reader Review A Spark Unseen for online ebook

Sarah says

It's been two years since *The Dark Unwinding* left off. Katharine Tulman has been managing her ancestral estate, Stranwyne Keep, avoiding the malicious London-based circle of her spiteful Aunt Alice, and taking care of her "mad" Uncle Frederick, called Tully.

Uncle Tully isn't a bit mad, but Victorian language lacks a word to describe him. He has the all-mastering, simple emotions of a small child, yet a mathematical and mechanical genius that goes far beyond anyone alive in his day.

(view spoiler)

Here they will stumble on family secrets and royal intrigues, and run afoul of two governments.

Content Advisory:

Violence: A house is violently raided; a servant deals a fatal blow to an invader's head in self-defense. A girl finds a man creeping about in her yard after dark and clobbers him with a brick. A man is found murdered, but we do not witness the event and are never even told how he was killed. Two people get electrocuted. A special-needs man is frequently menaced by those who see him only as a tool.

Sex: Lane and Katharine exchange a few chaste kisses. Henri flirts mildly with Katharine. While sneaking around the palace corridors, Katharine bumps into a disheveled Emperor and hears a woman giggling nearby. A young woman is pregnant, (view spoiler)

Language: One or two uses of "bloody" and "damn."

Substance Abuse: Light wine-drinking at parties.

Anything Else: Uncle Tully is put in constant danger, has no comprehension of what's happening to him, and is treated as a freak by those who wish to use his genius for evil.

My only gripe with this book is that the ending feels rushed, and there's enough unexplored ideas left over that Cameron could easily write a final volume to tie the whole thing up. (view spoiler)

Overall, though, *A Spark Unseen* is a sleek, clean, historical thriller. Warmly recommended for teens and up. I sincerely hope that Cameron eventually returns to these characters.

Beth says

Katharine Tulman's uncle is a genius, a mechanical mastermind and considered quite the lunatic (of course in modern day we'd call him autistic). When government factions attempt to take her uncle away for their own self serving uses, Katharine fakes Uncle Tully's death and secrets him away to Paris. She hopes to find Lane, the man she loves, but the odds are against her since he's been listed as deceased.

Katharine's trip to Paris and search for Lane quickly leads her from the proverbial frying pan and into the fire of political mechanizations. Not knowing who to trust and with danger all around, Katharine must rely on her own cunning and wits to get them all out alive.

Katharine was a brilliant every day girl who shows what it means to be a true heroin. She faces all the challenges placed before her without a complaint or wavering in her character. Although her character is stuck with social restrictions, she does not let it hold her back from her true path. The relationship between Uncle Tully and Katharine is sweet and endearing. Even though Katharine is faced with Uncle Tully's special needs every day she accommodates him as if it was second nature and without objection. To put it plainly, Katharine is a character I'd like to share with my teen daughters.

A Spark Unseen was a non-stop, heart pounding, steampunk adventure. This story contains numerous plot twist and turns that kept me glued to the pages. A new book to add to my favorite shelf, *A Spark Unseen* is an absolutely magnificent story...a must read for any steampunk, young adult fan.

I received this ARC copy of *A Spark Unseen* from Scholastic Press in exchange for a honest review. This book is set for publication September 24, 2013.

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Sharon Cameron

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To Catch A Falling Star says

I am NOT ready to say goodbye yet. Where is that Epilogue?!
A weekend well spent, indeed.

RTC

I salute you, Sharon Cameron!

Janet says

The sequel to *The Dark Unwinding* flounders to and through Paris too haphazardly for me. The lightly steampunk gothic YA romance will make readers giggle with its tribute gothic girliness, from deliberate hand-on-throat posing to quavery wide-eyed hesitation and shock at the perfidy of men. At the same time heroine Katherine Tullman has enough strength of conviction and moments of action to satisfy modern girls. But for me, the tight focus on Katherine's interactions with hunky boy-men and a range of endearing, embarrassing, and forbidding adults made the historical background fade too far to grey. The story barely felt in France. Also, Katherine's lack of personal growth strained my affection for her. Especially considering how compassionate and intelligent she had learned to be with the mentally unusual, starting with her uncle and including others, I found her repetitive stupidity at other times hard to take. It was especially hard to believe how easily she trusted new-met men, with so many known enemies and with raw, recent experience in trusting the wrong men destroying her happiness. Her flailing after a lost love felt cringingly, blindly selfish in the face of the danger to her uncle. Altogether, though, Katherine's blend of weaknesses and willfulness make her a believable, if not entirely likeable, teen.

Christina (A Reader of Fictions) says

3.5 stars.

The Dark Unwinding enchanted and delighted me, so, upon the news that there would in fact be a sequel, I was thrilled, even though such surprise sequels generally result in angry Twitter rants. Of course, sequels to books that were closed enough that you didn't know there would be one can be a tricky business. Though I didn't enjoy *A Spark Unseen* as much as its predecessor, I'm still happy to have read it and would, if a third pops up, read that one too without a doubt.

In *The Dark Unwinding*, I fell in love with the characters that call Stranwyne Keep home, and they are just as wonderful in *A Spark Unseen*. Katherine Tulman very much takes center stage this time, because Lane's missing and Uncle Tully is incapacitated because reasons for much of the book. Though I did miss them, Katherine is a magnificent heroine. She's incredibly strong emotionally and intellectually, and I completely love her for the way she stands up to people. Also, she may be the inheritor of an estate, but she doesn't think herself better than anyone else because of an accident of birth and fortune. At one point, her maid, Mary, rings a bell for her to come and she does, shocking a visitor, but that's the sort of person Katherine is.

One of the highlights of *A Spark Unseen* turns out to be Mrs. Hardcastle. Initially, she's this nosy, untrustworthy busybody. Over the course of the book, though, she begins showing hidden depths. I mention this fairly minor character to highlight an aspect of Cameron's characterization that I love: people are not dismissed as stereotypes. Uncle Tully could have been dismissed, as he is by many, as a nutcase, but he's respected and loved by the people of Stranwyne Keep. He's brilliant if you stand by to see that, and I like the way Cameron gives depth even to more minor characters.

Now, I do warn that a very minor spoiler is ahead, so you can duck out now if you wish. One of the big plot points is that Lane, Katherine's love interest, has been gone for a year and a half, and is now presumed dead. Katherine heads to Paris to search for him, and, inevitably finds him. A heroine finding her love interest alive in this sort of book is to me not a spoiler, but whatever. Anyway, my very favorite part of the book is when Katherine takes Lane to task for not contacting her and for trying to push her away for her own good. She monologues at him for a couple of pages, and it is a thing of beauty. More heroines need to act this way when their boys start making decisions for them. You tell him, girl!

However, much as I love the characters, I did struggle a bit with A Spark Unseen. I feel like the plot of The Dark Unwinding was more character-focused with an almost magical realism feel to Uncle Tully's toys. A Spark Unseen goes much more heavy on the historical and the political. Sadly, I'm not as interested in the political machinations as I am in the interactions of the colorful cast. For readers who are more plot-focused, I'm sure A Spark Unseen will be your favorite of the two novels. There are also some intriguing twists for those who like those best.

Though not my favorite of the series, A Spark Unseen does contain the magic that made The Dark Unwinding a favorite. As ever, I eagerly anticipate whatever Sharon Cameron writes next.

Karine Darnessy says

Bon, cette suite aura mis un peu de temps à arriver dans mes mains, mais je l'ai enfin lu. Je ne reviendrais pas sur la traduction du nom du domaine de Katharine qui me sort toujours autant par les yeux. Autre point qui m'a un peu dérouté, est-ce fait exprès par l'auteur ou dû à la substance ingérée par l'impératrice Eugénie dans l'histoire, mais aux dernières nouvelles, que ce soit sur les photos ou illustrations que j'ai du couple impériale, Eugénie est brune. Donc, j'ai été perturbé par "les boucles blondes" de l'impératrice.

C'est avec plaisir que j'ai retrouvé Katharine pour ce dernier tome. Cette fois-ci son oncle est encore plus en danger qu'il y a deux ans. Des hommes ont pénétrés dans l'immense bâtisse qu'est Stranwyne (nom réel de "Darkwind"). Par chance, le pire a été évité, mais notre héroïne décide de partir en France sur les conseils de l'avocat Maître Babcock.

Ce récit se passe pratiquement deux ans après le premier tome. La vie au domaine se poursuit tranquillement. Sauf que Lane n'est plus là. J'ai aimé le changement d'environnement pour cette suite, on part au Paris du 19^{eme}. J'ai été surprise par l'attitude de certains personnages qui m'avait donné une mauvaise impression au premier tome. Je ne me suis pas ennuyé, Mr Tulman est toujours fidèle à lui-même entre inventeur fou et petit enfant avec ses tocs.

Grâce a ce deuxième tome, on a une vraie fin qui clôture parfaitement, cette petite série. On a droit a un vrai dénouement. Je ne regrette absolument pas ma lecture.

Toglietemi tutto, ma non i miei libri says

Un libro folle, bizzarro, entusiasmante! Ironico, rocambolesco, enigmatico!

Ho adorato questo seguito, molto più del primo.

Inoltre ho scoperto che il pesce inventato da zio Tully esiste veramente e che realmente era stato usato come arma.

In questo libro, poi, i personaggi sorprendono fino alla fine, ognuno nasconde un segreto, al lettore il compito di svelarli!

Zio Tully si aggiudica sicuramente il ruolo di miglior personaggio! In questo volume dà proprio il meglio e il peggio di sé!

Riassumendo in breve il mio giudizio, posso dire che questa è una lettura fantastica!

Nastassja says

Actual rating: 3.4

As some of you know, my friends, I was (still am, maybe) in a middle of a reading slump or was it the weather (-30C) or all at once, but anyways it didn't help that this book was slooow. If you read my review on *The Dark Unwinding*, you know that it was slow paced too but it was absolutely suiting to the mood and action. In the case of *A spark unseen*, no such luck - **the books was not just slow but boring too**. I was struggling to read the first half, conquering 10% a day (!) - trust me, it is a very slow pace for me, usually I am more like this:

And *a priory* **this book had to be more agile** (read the annotation); it starts after almost two years from the events of the first book, and our heroine *Katharine* is thrown into a rather baffling circumstances and have to act quick; **add lots of *le espionnage* to it, and the result should at least keep we awake and sober**. Again, that didn't happen. And I should've been glad when action at last took place in the story, but it was so theatrically ridiculous at times, **I just felt like watching a B-class spy movie**. No. No. No. The first book was a historical fiction and was perfect for it's genre, **this one tried to cram history, spies, comedy, romance and drama together and in the end mostly failed**.

But not everything is lost, and I didn't suffer through 10% per day to be disappointed in the end (I am not a patient person and in that case I'd just DNFed the book). No, this book **has a redeemable qualities** and they are the French men of this book. **I love how *Sharon Cameron* creates her male characters**, they are so... dreamy, they burn bright (and hopefully will not burn down) and this book was alight like a spark unseen, when they appeared in the scene (um, it rhymes). *Lane Moreau* you already know from the previous book: he is a moody, dark pal with hot temper. Unfortunately, he was absent most of the book and appeared only in the last 15%. But what a bright 15% that were (aside all the ridiculous espionage)! But while Lane was absent, *Henry Marchand* didn't let us bore to death with his witty comments and devil-may-care attitude. I don't even want to choose between these two and just will take both of them with me on a desert island. And when boys appear in the same scene, whoops!

“It is easy to be fooled by a magician, chérie. Do not forget that I like tricks of all sorts.”

“Call her that again and I will hit you twice,” Lane said, matter-of-fact. We all believed him.

Henri smiled as he straightened his sleeves. “What an amusing time we shall have.”

I recommend this book if only for Henry and Lane. And worry not, there's **no love triangle, just lots of flirt**.

Coming back to serious issues, I had other troubles with some aspects of this book, or rather how it portrayed some of the people, but against the background of all the things that bothered me in the story, this particular notion doesn't carry much weight and is easily lost in a more pressing matters which I described above. I think it is **a necessary matter to read the sequel if you read the first book and liked it** and want to know how ultimately things settled. *A spark unseen* **wasn't bad nor very good: it was different form it's predecessor**. It also was my first read in 2016 and not a bad one. Ultimately I would like to read more adventures of *Katharine and Lane* if the author would write another book. And **a separate book for Henry would make me beyond happy**.

Mara says

My ARC of *A Spark Unseen* was provided for me by the publisher. I was not obligated to write a positive review. This is my full and honest opinion.

Cover Blurb: Yes or No? I don't like it quite as much as the cover for *The Dark Unwinding*, simply because you can see the character impersonator's face. However, she works pretty well for Katherine, so she doesn't bother me as much as most character impersonators. I still love the mechanical gears, and that dress is gorgeous.

Characters: Katherine Tulman is still a great protagonist. Intelligent, practical, and brave, she's the sort of girl I love as a protagonist. Some Readers might not like how very confident and decisive Katherine is, and every once in a while I can see how her decisiveness might come across as snobbishness. But I *loved* how firm of mind Katherine was. There are so few female protagonists who are like that. Katherine's main flaw is her temper. When her plans are derailed, she doesn't handle it very well, but she at least never flies off the handle much. Her anger comes out cold and quiet, which works. I got a little frustrated with her inability to blend in. Katherine is trying to behave normal; to do nothing to bring suspicion down on her house, and quite honestly, she does the exact opposite. Running out on dinners, exploring someone's house unbidden, lurking outside at night. Could you be a little *less* obvious, Katherine? I still liked her, though; she's just not very good at handling stress. Henri Marchand, I must admit, I adored. He is the type of cad that I really enjoy in a book. It helped that he never became a love interest for Katherine - that, in fact, made all the difference. I didn't trust him, but I still loved him. He was ridiculous and flirtatious, but he was actually a very decent fellow in the end, and was only teasing. He's the sort of fellow that I might want to smack most of the time, but I couldn't dislike him. Lane isn't in *A Spark Unseen* much, but my good opinion of him has not wavered. He has a bad habit of blaming himself for things that are not his fault, and he is a bit more overprotective than might be desirable, but he's a good man and Katherine knows how to handle him. And his flaws make him a realistic character. *A Spark Unseen* also made me appreciate a character that I didn't take much notice of in *The Dark Unwinding*: Katherine's solicitor, Mr. Babcock. He was a man we don't learn much about, but get a very strong sense that he has quite the past. He's always in the background, pulling strings that you wouldn't think he could pull, and his personality never shines out from all of the much more prominent ones. But once one does notice him, one realizes just how awesome of a character he really is. Uncle Tully is still a very likable eccentric. I half expected him to get a little annoying in this installment - eccentrics can only be fun for so long, - but I found it to be quite the opposite. Among all of these characters are several wonderful society busybodies that added that Austenian feel that I adore in novels like this one. Mrs. Harcastle was a riot. And as for the villain? Well, I'm no big fan of returning villains. If they die, they should be dead. "I'll be back" rarely works well. It did in this, though. Remarkably. And I would almost say that Ben was a much better villain in this one than in *The Dark Unwinding*.

The Romance: I was worried that Henri might become a love interest for Katherine, in the absence of Lane. He was handsome and devilish. Katherine is sensible, but it is the fad for sensible females to be carried away by rogues. Thankfully, this never happened, though Henri certainly flirted horribly with her. I'm still very much in support of the romance between Katherine and Lane. They are both characters I love, and their attachment feels real and deep.

Plot: It's been two years since Stranwyne was flooded; when Ben Aldridge tried to steal one of Uncle Tully's genius inventions to sell to the French as a military weapon. Two years since Katherine's love Lane left England to try and track Ben Aldridge down. Things have quieted down, but then Katherine interrupts a kidnapping attempt on her uncle one night. When the English government demands that Uncle Tully move to London to build weapons for them, Katherine realizes that Uncle Tully simply isn't safe at Stranwyne anymore. So she does the most unlikely thing: she takes Uncle Tully to Paris, right in the heart of a country

that also wants to use his genius for wartime. But keeping Uncle Tully isn't Katherine's only reason for coming to Paris. Only weeks before, she was informed of Lane's death. Refusing to believe that he is dead, Katherine is determined to find his whereabouts - and discover why he hasn't contacted her in all this time. But trying to balance keeping Uncle Tully secret, rebuilding her reputation in good society, and dodging spies and murderers is more than one girl can take. *A Spark Unseen* is different from *The Dark Unwinding*. Book One offered a Gothic-like mystery in an isolated setting with steampunk flairs. Book Two is more of a military espionage story. There is a bit of a mystery, but it isn't like Book One. That said, it is still just as good, *because* it is different. I enjoy espionage stories as much as mysteries, and I just loved all of the characters, the era, and the plot. This is an Author who isn't afraid to kill off characters, so I was certainly surprised several times reading this. And like with *The Dark Unwinding*, you spend a lot of time wondering how things will connect. And yes, it is all explained.

Believability: I have nothing of which to complain. There is one moment where Katherine comes face-to-face with Emperor Napoleon III, and usually scenes like that can feel totally improbable. But the Author manages to pull it off; the circumstances allow it.

Writing Style: First person, past tense. I *really* like the Author's style. It's classy, it fits the era, and it's got a nice feel to it. It, of course, has some modern-isms to it; that's *very* hard to get rid of when writing nowadays. But it's barely there, and overall has a Victorian ambiance to it.

Content: None.

Conclusion: Some might say that the Author crams far too many revelations in a short amount of space. Normally I would agree, and even now I half do. There are a lot of revelations in a short span of time. They come in one after another, and there's an equal amount of characters popping in and out of scenes. Usually this doesn't work. Usually it feels like a train wreck. And if there had been just one more revelation, it would have been one. But it wasn't. Surprisingly, it really wasn't. Some of the revelations the Reader will have already figured out, and they will be pleased with themselves. Other revelations the Reader will not have figured out, and will be pleased with the explanation. And still others are totally unexpected. You will briefly wonder if maybe that last revelation was just a bit too much. But in the end, you'll shake your head and say, "I still liked it anyway." The final showdown between Katherine and Ben manages to not melt into a cliché moment, despite the fact the Ben monologues a fair bit. He's one of those rare villains who can actually get by with monologuing and still be intimidating. And best of all - this may in fact be a two-book series! No trilogy! What a novel idea! I was a little worried that *A Spark Unseen* would be a disappointment after *The Dark Unwinding*, which was such a wonderful mystery. But as soon as I started reading it, I knew I would love it just as much as the first book - and I do. It ran the risk of being too much at times, but it pulled it off. Amazing!

Recommended Audience: Girl-read, any age, great for historical fiction, mystery, and espionage story fans!

Keertana says

I read this entire duology over the course of a weekend - on my iPhone, that too! Needless to say, it was impossible to put down and I loved every moment spent in this world. *A Spark Unseen*, the highly anticipated follow-up to *A Dark Unwinding*, is both stronger and weaker than its predecessor. On one hand, it manages to hit very high notes in certain areas; on the other hand, it fell flat for me in places where its predecessor did not. Yet, on the whole, both these books are identical in their level of reading pleasure, aesthetic appearance, and historical accuracy. While I never expected to see it, Cameron has, well and truly, written a spectacular historical fiction duology.

A Spark Unseen begins nearly two years after *A Dark Unwinding* has ended. In the opening scene itself, a kidnapping attempt on Uncle Tully is foiled, leaving Katharine with no choice but to leave her beloved estate. Uncle Tully, as established in the first book, is a genius, though an autistic one. It is his strict need for structure and moments of troubled interaction that allow others to believe he is insane, when, in fact, he is not. Now, caught up in the midst of an emerging battle between England and France, with both countries vying for the better weapons, Uncle Tully's inventions have come under the eye of politicians and others who wish to exploit him. Faced with no other option, Katharine whisks her uncle away to safety in Paris; both to keep him away from others and to find Lane Moreau. It is a tumultuous time that Katharine vastly underestimates, however, and in her quest to protect those dear to her, she finds both unlikely allies...and enemies.

With such an enticing opening, *A Spark Unseen* grabs readers from the first page and keeps them hooked...for awhile. Where this novel lagged, for me, was in its change of scenery. Although I recognize the necessity of this to keep the plot moving forward, I cannot claim that Paris held nearly as much atmosphere as Stranwyne Keep. Instead, the setting of this novel felt very much a backdrop to the plot instead of an entity all on its own and the absence of many beloved secondary characters was strongly felt. *A Spark Unseen* has its own cast of new introductions, from the charming Henri to the nosy Mrs. Hardcastle, but with the exception of these two, the rest failed to make much of an impression.

Nevertheless, that is where the flaws inherent in this novel vanish. *A Spark Unseen* has a fascinating plot, filled with mysterious disappearances, unforeseen deaths, and novel innovations. One of my favorite aspects of this novel, aside from the political intrigue, was the fact that Katharine truly had to come into her own. Even with Lane gone, she had the help of Mrs. Jeffries and trusted employers to help her cope, but in Paris, she is truly alone. When stripped of all those she holds on to for support, Katharine discovers that she is more than capable of rising to her burdens herself. Cameron, once again, proves to be an adept writer, weaving together Katharine's emotional troubles with little clues that slowly tie together the mystery at hand.

Unfortunately, Lane Moreau - our resident swoon factor - is absent for much of this novel, but his presence is still strongly felt. Once Lane does, however, make an appearance, the pace of the plot quickens considerably, resulting in detailed - but tense - action sequences. Old enemies return, new ones show their faces, and unexpected help is given too. Add to this a scene of politics, complete with sneaky housekeepers and stalkers under lampposts, and you've got yourself another scintillating tale. Another strong point to this novel, though, is the romance. Although it is very much understated and pushed under the rug in favor of the plot and character development, I enjoyed the realistic direction it took and especially the fact that Katharine never backed away from conversation - or confrontation, really - when needed. It's always annoying to have secrets fester, so the manner in which Cameron dealt with this plot line, while simultaneously empowering Katharine to seek the answers she wanted, was - hands-down - my favorite part of the entire series.

A Spark Unseen is a brilliant conclusion to this duology. Both *A Dark Unwinding* and this novel can be read as stand-alones - what a relief the lack of a cliffhanger is! - but they both also leave room for just a little bit more. I don't believe there are plans of a sequel to this novel, but if there are, I would welcome it gladly. It's so hard to say goodbye to characters who have grown dear to your heart, or relationships that have only blossomed and taken hold, so I am - against all odds - hoping for just another glimpse into this world. Either way, I cannot wait to see what Cameron comes up with next. If this duology is anything to go by, then it's bound to be fantastic.

You can read this review and more on my blog, Ivy Book Bindings.

rachel says

The very first audiobook I ever 'read' was *The Dark Unwinding* and it was the perfect introduction to the format. Since then, I've listened to a couple of others audiobooks but no one has been able to narrate to the same standard as Fiona Hardington. She has this incredible way with her voice! She nails every accent - mainly British and French, in this story - and even speaks in French perfectly. Well, it sounds perfect to me. I'm not exactly an expert. But what is the most beautiful thing about her voice is how she a) captures all of the character's voice perfectly and makes them so distinct and recognisable, and b) how she differentiates the protagonist's dialogue and monologue flawlessly. I would honestly pick up any book she ever narrated and would 100% recommend her.

But the actual book is pretty darn good too. I adore the characters and plotline of the first book, and the finale didn't disappoint. I adore Katharine. She has such a gentle but rigid determination - it is such a realistic and admirable quality. I was always rooting for her, and I loved that she never sits still in the face of adversity. She powers on. She does what she thinks is right, damn the consequences. She is just such a fantastic female role model and I just... I totally admire and adore her. I did miss Lane and the Stranwyne crew but the new cast is interesting - to say the least - and brings a new dynamic to the story that's interesting and fresh. Uncle Tully still makes my little heart ache and I'll always admire Cameron for his characterisation. It's pretty flawless, IMO.

I think what makes this book not quite up to the standard of the first book is the plotline. It is certainly imaginative and ties everything up in a satisfying manner, but there is something missing from it? Maybe it is my fault since it took me *forever* to finish it. It is 12+ hours long in my defence.... But I don't know, there is just something missing that lets me give this a five shining stars.

Overall? The gorgeous writing style in combination with Hardington's narration made this such an enjoyable read. Or well, listen, I guess. Katharine is one of my favourite protagonist of all time. Her determination is such an admirable quality. I did miss Lane, understandably, but the new cast of characters was still interesting to learn about. The plot was tied up well and I don't think anyone will be dissatisfied.

Giselle says

With the same atmosphere and wonderfully charismatic characters as the first book, *A Spark Unseen* is a good sequel to *The Dark Unwinding*, but I felt somewhat bored while reading it. Even though the pacing in the first book was unhurried, I still found myself entertained by the characters in such a way that I hardly noticed. *A Spark Unseen*, on the other hand, while it did have the same fun personalities, much of its time is spent expanding the now thicker political layer. Not being a big fan of strong political plots - especially in historical fiction - I had difficulty staying focused during this one.

I can't say that there is any lack in character atmosphere in this sequel. We have our good old Katharine who delights us with her take charge attitude and dependence. I really love how this girl was given such a likeable personality. She's not perfect by any means, she makes decisions that are a little unwise at times, if a bit risky, but she's been developed into this confident, unpretentious young woman who doesn't let herself be dismissed, nor does she let the irritability of others stop her from being kind. Everyone ends up liking her - and for good reason! Mary is another favorite character of mine, making me glad to see her largely present again in this sequel. Same for Mr. Tully who is now experiencing with electricity and what I'm assuming is radio waves - or maybe magic? - either way it was fun to see the new trinkets he came up with. And of course these ended up being of great help in this novel. We do meet a few new faces as well and, good or

bad, I found them all so lively. I especially loved the housemaid and her family. She was irritable at first but I was kept highly intrigued by her. The characters are truly the hit in the series, there is no question there, I love how every single one is a powerful face in this story with meaning and a lustrous personality. However, this sequel is slightly less character driven to give room for a more complex plot.

The first book is centered at Stranwyne, a village employed by her uncle, now we get to branch out into a larger terrain that is well worth Cameron's beautifully descriptive writing. A Spark Unseen, filled with ruthless politicians, historical intrigue, mystery, murder, treachery, is set in beautiful Paris. This setting is superb; the city, the streets, Katharine's house, the underground tunnels, I could see it all come alive. It was easily my favorite part of this novel.

With that said, the plot's focus is where I became less enthused. I'm not big on politically infused books. I get bored easily with political dealings, especially in historical setting where I find myself often getting lost in the intricacies of it all or uncaring of the conspiracies between governments. Even though it wasn't especially complicated compared to other historicals I've read, I still found my attention was quick to wander despite the rest.

Historical fiction fans definitely need to get themselves introduced to this series. Like its predecessor, A Spark Unseen combines incredible personalities and an excellent ambience into a plot that is at once gothic, at once political, and largely suspenseful.

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An advance copy was provided by the publisher for review.

For more of my reviews, visit my blog at [Xpresso Reads](#)

Hazel West says

Thoughts on the Overall Book: Like the first book, this was an intriguing, fast paced story set in the early Victorian period and now that I knew what to expect from the author, I was a little worried this one wouldn't be as good as the first, but I was pleasantly surprised to find that it really was, if not different.

Cover--Yea or Nay: Yes I do like it. I don't even really mind that you can see her face. I love the color of the picture just like I did the first one, and it looks more like a thriller (which it is) than the first one which was more of a mystery.

Characters: I liked Katherine even more in this book than I did in the first one. She has grown in a very capable and smart young woman. There was never a moment I became exasperated with her, because she never did anything stupid, and when she did overstep the mark a little, I honestly couldn't blame her. I was thrilled with the fact that she never really trusted anyone, she never actually told anyone anything and that made me like her all the more. Female characters can sometime be way too trusting and it makes them look weak and silly, but Katherine kept the sensibility that I liked in her from the first one, with a bit of added steel. She's a real no-nonsense kind of girl. I liked the addition in this book of Mrs. Hardcastle and the other busy body ladies and the parts they play in the story, which I will not mention for fear of spoiling. And Mrs DuPont, her Paris housekeeper was one of those snobby servants that are so annoying, but you can't help but like them too. I'm still not really sure how I felt about Henri Marchand. I usually am rather fond of the flirty characters like him as long as I know they mean no harm, but he is definitely not my favorite of those kinds of characters. There was just something missing to make him lovable, and while I didn't dislike him, he wasn't a favorite character. I think I rather shared Katharine's feelings for him. Since she came to Paris looking for Lane, he's obviously not in the book much, which made me a little sad since he was one of my

favorite characters from the first book, but I continue to really like him. (view spoiler)

The Romance: There is a potential for there to be a love triangle between Katherine Lane and Henri, but thankfully (apart from a few teasing) this never happens, so don't worry. In fact, Katherine doesn't, in my opinion, have any feelings for Henri at all. She is far too busy to be chasing after all the young men, after all.

Writing Style: As with the first one, the writing style is very well done to the period, and is descriptive and flows well. There were a couple parts I had a little trouble picturing things, but I did eventually figure everything out that I needed to. I like Katherine's narration, which is good, because I hate being trapped in the head of an annoying female character, but as I said before Katherine is very sensible and I enjoy her narration.

Accuracy/ Believability: The author did a lot of research for this book, and it shows. I enjoy reading about books with awesome inventions that are actually accurate, and I learned some things reading this that I hadn't known before. I know only a little about the Crimean War, so leaning a little more of the backstory and what could have been going on behind the scenes during it was very intriguing and made for a really awesome espionage thriller. (which I always love). I didn't have any complaints on accuracy, and the Author's Note goes into the details of the historical aspect. I think she did a very good job portraying Napoleon III as well, I know how hard it can be to pull of major historical figures in fiction, especially if they only have token appearances, but I think she did very well with him.

Problems/What bothered me: No problems.

Conclusion: 5 stars. Just as good as the first book, maybe even a little more fast paced. The ending was very satisfying, and I am glad for the fact that I don't think the author will be continuing this particular story. I am excited to see what she comes up with for her next book, however.

Recommended Audience: girl read 15 and up. Readers of the first one definitely, and girls who enjoy a girl read with a smart heroine and more thriller aspects and espionage than romance.

La Biblioteca di Eliza says

Sono 4 stelle e mezzo!

<https://labibliotecadieliza.blogspot...>

Ho aspettato un po' a leggere il seguito de La Fabbrica delle meraviglie, vuoi per il tempo, vuoi per le mille letture che si accalcano per essere la prossima, vuoi per quel pizzico di timore che mi rimane sempre dopo aver letto un bellissimo primo libro. Potrà il seguito avvicinarsi? O sarà una bieca delusione? Ebbene la Cameron mi ha conquistato anche con questo secondo libro, anche se siamo davanti a qualcosa di diverso. Nel primo libro era forte la componente mystery e quasi Steampunk (anche se non rientrava in quel genere). In questo secondo capitolo invece pur rimanendo il mistero, la parte velatamente fantasy si perde un po', lasciando però spazio ad uno sfondo storico veramente ben fatto e pensato.

Protagonista è sempre Katherine che ritroviamo dove avevamo lasciato, a Stranwyne Keep, ad occuparsi della tenuta e dello zio Tulman, geniale inventore, perso nel suo mondo tutto speciale. Il libro inizia col botto: qualcuno si è intrufolato nella tenuta per rapire lo zio. Saranno i francesi che vogliono la sua invenzione principale, il Pesce, o gli inglesi che voglio evitare che finisca in mano nemiche oltremarica? Katherine a malincuore attiva un piano pazzesco che la porterà niente meno che nel cuore del territorio

nemico, a Parigi, dove spera peraltro di ritrovare Lane. Naturalmente anche qui ogni sua mossa è controllata e riferita tanto alle spie di sua maestà la regina Vittoria quanto al più vicino e temuto Napoleone III. E proprio davanti all'imperatore francese Katherine si ritroverà per salvare la sua famiglia e il suo futuro.

Ecco un bel libro per ragazzi, che non scivola nel banale o nel noioso e che può tranquillamente essere letto anche da chi è più grandicello. Spesso quando mi ritrovo a leggere romanzi per ragazzi ho quella sensazione strana, da "è ovvio che non sta parlando a me questo libro", mi sento quasi un'intrusa in una letteratura dedicata ai più piccoli. Sì, lo avete capito: sono libri che mi fanno sentire nostalgica e pensare in continuazione "se lo avessi letto da piccola lo avrei adorato" mentre ora, no carino, divertente, ma poco più. Tutto questo non è capitato con i romanzi della Cameron, e soprattutto con questo secondo libro. C'è l'avventura, ma senza i soliti cliché, c'è il mistero ma senza cadere nel banale. Le avventure di Katherine ti trascinano nella lettura e in questa Parigi oscura e sporca. A farla da padrone è l'ambientazione storica che dà la spinta e il motivo di tutto ciò che capita. Siamo infatti nel momento in cui Francia e Inghilterra devono gioco forza allearsi contro la Russia nella guerra di Crimea, ma lo scontro tra i due imperi è sempre lì lì per tornare a scoppiare. E qui entra in gioco zio Tully, geniale inventore che riesce a creare macchinari quasi magici, che si muovono da soli o che, come il famigerato Pesce, possono muoversi per ore sott'acqua. Un gioco per lui, una potente arma per i governi in gioco. Ma zio Tully di tutto ciò non si rende conto, per lui c'è solo la sua routine, i suoi orologi da caricare. Zio Tully è la costante dei due romanzi, è un personaggio strano, bizzarro, geniale, che può creare cose all'epoca meravigliose ma molto pericolose, eppure è l'anima bianca di tutto il racconto, un uomo nel corpo, un bambino nella mente e nei comportamenti, docile e dolce un momento, in piena crisi nell'altro. Non ci si può non affezionare a lui e sperare che per lui vada tutto per il bene, soprattutto in quei passaggi in cui è confuso e smarrito, in cui non riconosce i luoghi che lo circondano. E' proprio tenero lo zio di Katherine e anche lei, nei momenti di maggior pericolo o prostrazione, non demorde perché deve poterlo difendere da tutto e da tutti.

Passiamo a lei, Katherine, che, se ricordate bene, all'inizio del primo libri mica era tanto simpatica, anzi. Qui invece mi è proprio piaciuta, fin dall'inizio. E' poco più che una bambina lei stessa eppure si fa carico di una pesante missione, salvare lo zio, salvare Stranwyne Keep e ritrovare Lane. Katherine è una tosta, che non si perde nelle frivolezze appropriate a una giovane fanciulla, non si fa problemi ad indossare un paio di pantaloni per una missione speciale. Ha il suo bel caratterizzo e lo tira fuori tutto, soprattutto con Harri.

Lo avete capito, mi è piaciuto molto, anzi entrambi mi sono piaciuti moltissimo, e ve li consiglio con tutto il cuore. Anzi, fatevi furbetti, regalateli ai più piccoli ma dateci una sbirciatina anche voi.... :)

Alyssa says

Review posted on The Eater of Books! blog

A Spark Unseen by Sharon Cameron
Book Two of The Dark Unwinding series
Publisher: Scholastic
Publication Date: September 24, 2013
Rating: 4 stars
Source: ARC sent by the publisher

Summary (from Goodreads):

When Katharine Tulman wakes in the middle of the night and accidentally foils a kidnapping attempt on her uncle, she realizes Stranwyne Keep is no longer safe for Uncle Tully and his genius inventions. She flees to

Paris, where she hopes to remain undetected and also find the mysterious and handsome Lane, who is suspected to be dead.

But the search for Lane is not easy, and Katharine soon finds herself embroiled in a labyrinth of political intrigue. And with unexpected enemies and allies at every turn, Katharine will have to figure out whom she can trust--if anyone--to protect her uncle from danger once and for all.

What I Liked:

What a sequel! I seriously didn't know if the first book would have a sequel. I skim-read the first book, and then when I saw that the first book had a sequel, I decided to go back and read the first book for real. I love the first book, and I love the second book even more! Possible spoilers for book ONE ahead!

Lane has been gone for eighteen months, and Katharine has never stopped thinking of him. For eighteen months, she has been living with Uncle Tully and Mary and Stranwyne in fear. At the very beginning of the book, the action starts. Someone breaks into Katharine's home - more than one person. Mary whacks someone over the head - she is fierce! But anyway. After that encounter, Katharine decides to pack up Uncle Tully and her life at Stranwyne, and leave for Paris.

Keep in mind who left for France as well.

Anyway, in Paris, Katharine meets her aunt Alice's nosy friend, all of the nosy friend's friends, and the mysterious Henri Marchand. All the while, Katharine is subtly looking for Lane, who is looking for Ben Aldridge, who has a different name and identity is France. Henri Marchand totally catches onto what Katharine is doing (looking for someone), and he seems to be wherever she is...

I really like how this book is set up. Two thirds of the book, we meet new characters and a new setting and a slightly different Katharine from the first book. Lane doesn't show up until the last one third of the book, and then things unravel, with his appearance. The action, mystery, and intrigue is present throughout the entire book, and it keeps the book very interesting.

You all know how much I LOVE historical fiction. I think this book was very authentic, especially the setting and dialogue. Cameron keeps the language historical accurate, but in a way that readers aren't confused or bored by the dry tone of Old English. And it is very clear to me that Cameron knows her history, and her setting, because everything seemed to come alive in this book. As was the case in this first book, but historical Paris sounds very beautiful.

So it may sound like there is a love triangle, especially since the first book left off with Lane leaving Katharine and Stranwyne, and the entrance of the lovely Henri Marchand, but it's not the case in this book. I LOVE Henri's role in this book, especially when he and Lane (and Katharine) come into the same room. Funny times, people, funny times.

The climax of this book is spectacular! I didn't know what to expect for the climax, but I really like how Cameron incorporated historical events into a fictitious story, and made Katharine and Lane a part of the bigger picture.

Katharine, in this book, is amazing. She's slightly anachronistic, because she's very strong-willed for a historical woman, but I love her spirit. The way she manhandles Lane at the end is so, so funny. And Lane... while we didn't see a lot of him in this book, I love the interactions between him and Katharine. Also, the interactions between Lane and Henri are hilarious!

All in all, I really liked this book. Actually, I LOVED this book. And the ending is so great!

What I Did Not Like:

I guess I wanted to see more of Lane. By default, I wanted to see more of Lane and Katharine. They don't meet until the last third of the book, and then when they do, the interactions are a tiny bit brief. I love all of the interactions, but I wanted more!

Also, this is the last book in the series (it is a duology). That makes me sad because I want to read more about Lane and Katharine! I mean, the ending wraps up really nicely, but still.

Would I Recommend It:

TOTALLY! I would recommend it to people who have read the first book (whether you liked it or not), and those who haven't read the first book, but is interested in the first book. Trust me, you can't go wrong with this historical fiction series! It's definitely one of my favorite YA historical fiction series.

Rating:

4.5 stars -> rounded down to 4 stars. I hope I've convinced someone to pick up this series or this book! The series didn't start well for me (I skim-read the first book, stupidly, before actually reading the entire thing), but I love how everything passed, and concluded!
