



The Shifter

Jean Johnson

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Years have passed since there was any sighting of Family Mongrel. Yet traces remain in the Correda Mountains. Kenyen Sin Siin tracks down these hints from the past to make sure the curs have not survived. As the trail becomes more tangled he's trapped in a valley where not everything is as it seems...including the beautiful and mysterious Migela Laun Far.

The Shifter Details

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From Reader Review The Shifter for online ebook

Darcy says

This one was fun and creepy. The creepy part being that the people took their natural talent of being a shifter and corrupted it. The Shifterai take their talent to shift into animals as sacred, only shifting to other people when they are kids, after a certain age it is looked down upon. However these bad people they have banished use their talent to shift into other people, influential ones, so that they can steal their lives and the wealth and power they have. The talk of how they manipulate their features creeped me out, just the thought is so wrong.

I thought that Kenyen did a great job with the situation he was thrown into. It was good that he was able to speak to Traver a little bit first. I was very glad that Kenyen came clean with Solyn early on as I wouldn't have been ok with him lying to her the whole time. I really liked how each of them was able to share their culture and how the little things meant a lot to them.

I think the best part of the book was the big confrontation at the end. Kenyen did a great job of pretending to be the bad guy in front of his new family. When things really went to hell it was great to see Solyn stand up for him.

All in all this was a great addition to the world that this author has created with her Sons of Destiny series and this Shifting Plains one.

Isis says

An entertaining story, filled with many twists and turns throughout. This book contains all the elements for a good story - a strong protagonist, a strong feminine role model / heroine, and several antagonists of varying degrees, intrigue, drama, danger, and of course, romance.

What begins as an innocent enough exploration into some disturbing rumors about some shiftless rogues rapidly spirals out of control for our hero, forcing him to do some quick thinking on his feet - a skill he doesn't feel is one of his strongest. And often times that is proven true. He's not stupid by any means, but doesn't have the knack for planning on the fly.

The story was a bit inconsistently paced, starting slowly, then a major revolution, slows again, then the main story begins in earnest, and the rest reads in fits and starts. But as that is often the way of real life, it didn't detract from the story too noticeably. On the positive side I was very pleasantly surprised to discover that the emphasis was not about appearances nearly as much as it was about personality. And that was true in more than just the romantic aspect, throughout personality was more important than appearance, something you rarely encounter these days - in real life or a story, especially if a romance is involved.

Not surprisingly, the ending was a tad sitcomish, with almost everyone heartily laughing at an earlier inside joke - but since the joke was entertaining it worked well enough. All in all, a decent escape into a fantasy that was well grounded in reality. And at only 275 pages it is a nice, hour+ read.

Dark Faerie Tales says

Review Courtesy of Dark Faerie Tales

Quick & Dirty: An interesting read, but not as engaging as I would have liked.

Opening Sentence: “Married?” Traver hissed, leaning close as he reached over Solyn’s shoulder to hang yet another sprig of greenery on the drying lines strung in her mother’s herb-room.

The Review:

So in the world of Jean Johnson, before the invention of electricity and motors and the internet, *shudder* live regular mortals, some magical some not and a race of shapechangers, who unfortunately cannot only become animals, but can also imitate other people. Like they can shift their bones and muscles, skin etc. and literally take on someone else’s face, their identity, their lives. *double shudder* Once they reach adulthood, however, the face replication becomes a big no-no and the shapes of the animals are the only ones they are allowed to change into. And unlike most shifting races you hear about, these crazy cats can learn to take the forms of multiple animals, the most proficient being able to take on more than ten. And they have this ability to only do it half way, or maybe become a snake with a rat tail or something. Serious business! Oh, and practicing magic is a norm for some as well, with healers and craftsmen, governing bodies and rule keepers. So, in other words, this isn’t Kansas anymore Dorothy.

Our story features a shifter by the name of Kenyen Sin Siin, a fairly well to do member of his clan, whose strengths make him valuable as a member of these groups that travel from place to place keeping the peace, as it were. This particular party has been assembled to suss out the location of a band of bad guys, members of their race banished for various crimes, who now are joined together in a tribe called the Family Mongrel. On a scouting mission, he finds a body that leads him to a valley in the mountains, where some things just aren’t right. In this valley, Kenyen runs into a man named Traver, who is on his way to the capital to tell a vicious tale, though he is caught before he makes it. When the two are attacked by a banished shifter, Kenyen realizes he has found this Family Mongrel and they are doing something fairly hideous. They are killing innocent citizens of the valley and imitating their form so that they may take over their lives, their properties, their women. Kenyen decides to go undercover in this clan and is persuaded to take on the form of Traver, for he has a unique position that they need to take advantage of. For Traver’s fiancé holds the key to the secret the Mongrels have been searching for and they want Kenyen to find it out for them.

Solyn Ys Rei is the fiancé of Traver, well pretend fiancé after having created the engagement to keep one of the other single males from perusing her further. Solyn and Traver have been watching the goings on around town for a while now, and they have figured out what is being done to their neighbors and the reason why. When Traver returns from his trip with wounds and apparent amnesia, Solyn is concerned for her friend. After spending some time with Traver after his “accident,” she begins to notice more and more things that are different about him. When she finally gets up the nerve to confront him, she finds out that indeed he is being impersonated by a shifter, but this one is a good guy. Now that she knows, she agrees to help Kenyen rid her valley of this evil, for the secret she carries could cause the death of her family and other ramifications that could affect the rest of the world. And it all has to do with a bit of moldy cheese.

What neither of them expected, or actually went looking for, was a friendship with the other, or later, the blooming affection. But, Kenyen was raised to treat his women with more respect and care than to take her to the nearest cheese cavern for a romp. But, on the night of a terrible storm, the two find themselves trapped in

one of those very caves, and discover they cannot resist this any longer. Solyn basically talks him into it, because really, who can resist “waxing the cheese” with a man whose tongue can be in two places at once *ahem*. Kenyen is still unsure, but he agrees to share mutual pleasure, and then stops before they get to the really good part.

It has been what feels like an eternity since I read the Sons of Destiny series by this author, so I’m not sure if there is supposed to be things connecting this to those stories that I am just forgetting, or if they just don’t connect at all. I do remember the part where each region, or country, had its own deity or deities, because I remember some big confab with all of them in one of the later books. Other than that, I apologize because my mind is just pulling one huge blank.

That being said, I’m not sure I liked this story as much as I seem to remember liking her other ones. I went through all those books pretty quickly according to my records, which usually indicates reading pleasure, for me anyway. And from the bits and pieces that keep coming to me, I’m pretty sure I would’ve rated them higher. I guess this story was just missing something. There wasn’t as much romance in this one I guess, maybe because the hero was pretending to be someone else the whole time? It’s one of those things that are hard to put your finger on. That’s not to say that the book is not good, just that my enjoyment level wasn’t as high as with some others.

Notable Scene:

“Now, since you seem bent on ruining my secret, what are you looking for? And make it quick. I haven’t had breakfast yet, and it’s been a very long time since I had someone to chew on.”

Tunric narrowed his dark eyes at the order. He did move, though, turning to face Reina. The Healer was glaring stoically at him, unmoved by the blade at her throat. “Greensteel,” he growled. “The antithesis of that accursed bluesteel, which marks us all. The one thing which can un-scar our bodies, and allow us to completely blend in wherever we want to go. And this bitch and her cur-pup know how to make it!”

Reina frowned at the first insult, but Ysander only blinked in confusion at his. Kenyen decided to enlighten them as to the slander. “He means you’re not only the lowest of the low, being a cur, you’re at the bottom of all hierarchies, following along in the wake of a woman, of all things.”

The news only received another bemused blink.

The man holding the blacksmith snorted. “Too stupid to know when he’s been insulted. Can I cut ‘im, now?”

A muffled wail interrupted any answer their leader might have made. Luelyn sobbed against the hand smothering her mouth, fresh tears trickling onto her cheeks. Caught in her husband’s fake stranglehold, Solyn quickly started humming. It was the same tune she had used the other night, with the same soothing energies pouring out of her. This time, she didn’t just touch one distraught female, her sister, but extended it to the Mongrel shifters in the room.

It was all Kenyen could do to prevent a sneeze, at that. He even reshaped the interior of his nostrils, trying to quell the damnable itch her magics stirred. Half a dozen tries, plus some thick-scaled skin, cut off both his sense of smell and the itch, save for its after-effects. Eyes watering, he watched some of Tunric’s belligerent tension ease. Some, but not all.

Thankfully, none of the other four shifters looked inclined to sneeze. That did, however, make him think of

an alternate plan to distract the Mongrels in their quest. Now to find the right moment to tell them.

“No. Not yet,” Tunric muttered. “We still need something that’ll remove our permanent scars—and will you shut her up?” he added, turning to scowl at Kenyen. His gaze strayed briefly to the humming woman. “She’s beginning to annoy me.”

“Why?” Kenyen countered. “She’s keeping the brat quiet.”

“It’s annoying me, that’s why!” Tunric snapped. “Either you shut her up, you damn pup, or I’ll slit her throat! She doesn’t know the secret to making it!”

Solyn jumped at that threat, losing the thread of her hastily cobbled spell. She recovered fast, though. A quick, hard look at her sister, and Luelyn widened her eyes. A heartbeat later, the little girl wailed again, this time even louder and more frenetically.

“Oh, for sodomizing a Netherdemon—shut up, you little brat, or I’ll tear out your throat myself!” Tunric ordered the young girl. She shrieked at that thought and sobbed wildly.

“You do that, you Netherdemon spawn, and I will pull your body to pieces with my powers!” Reina snarled, losing her calm at the threat to her child. She grabbed wildly at the arms holding her prisoner, forcing the shifter actually to actually struggle to contain her. “By Cora, I swear I will!”

The World of the Sons of Destiny Series:

1. The Shifter

FTC Advisory: Penguin/Berkley provided me with a copy of The Shifter. No goody bags, sponsorships, “material connections,” or bribes were exchanged for my review.

Nibrock says

A fun shape-shifter romance. Kenyen comes across Traver being chased. Kenyen then has to make the chasers believe that he is evil like them. When Kenyen takes on Travers likeness Solyn (Traver's finacee) doesn't readily believe that it is the original Travers. Mystery about what the evil shifters are looking for, romance between Kenyen & Solyn ensue. Mistakes, mistrust, betrayals, double crosses and friends and allies arriving just-in-time.

Tarran says

We return to the Shifter world in this second book in the Shifter series. This time we follow Kenyen Sin Siin, brother of Akodon, who has gone looking for the bands of Banished shifters mentioned by his sister-in-law. The Banished Shifters have been kidnapping members of various villages and stealing their faces by shifting to look like them. They are looking for something in a village that Kenyen is traveling to and when he helps save a young boy's life, he takes his place to go undercover. I only started this yesterday and finished it this morning, I really enjoyed reading about this world and its magics. Highly recommend reading all of Jean

Johnson's books. I can't wait to read what comes next in this series.

gremlin says

I enjoyed this fantasy romance. Though part of the Shifting Plains series, none of it took place on the Plains.

Kenyen Sin Siin is part of a mission to find out if Family Mongrel, those who abused his new sister-in-law's mother, is still out there, and if they're causing problems for others.

Solyn Ys Rei is the Healer's daughter/apprentice in her valley home, and she and her best friend Traver have discovered that some of the men in the village have been replaced by shifters wearing their faces, acting much more cruel than the original men.

Traver tries to get help, and he runs into Kenyen and starts to explain the situation, but the Mongrels catch up quickly and Kenyen goes undercover as one of them by replacing Traver with his full cooperation but they can't really talk any more.

Kenyen and Solyn have to work together, and discover what a good match they are for each other, as well as each other's talents.

TinaMarie says

Hunting the Family Mongrel, Kenyen finds himself in interesting circumstances

Melliane says

3,5/5

Mon avis en Français

Mon avis en Anglais

I didn't know Jean Johnson before and I am always curious to discover new authors. I admit that I had a little trouble to get into the story as I initially didn't understand at all what was happening, but as we progress in the story we understand the world the author has created.

Kenyen and a few of his own discover, one day, a body at the bottom of a cave. Learning that this man was killed so that another could take his place when taking his face, our hero decides to go and look for the murderer among a group of banished shifters who live illegally in the mountains among the humans. Captured pretty fast, He will eventually infiltrate the group and take the place of the person he hopes to save. However things get complicated when the man he becomes is about to marry with the daughter of a famous family in the mountains. He thought he could fool her but things get even more complicated when she realizes that he is not the man she thought and when she is about to succumb for him.

The Jean Johnson's world is very original like in a fantasy story, which was nice to discover. It was a pleasure to discover the characters, to see Kenyen changing, fighting against his wishes and culture. He wants to save the world, to remain master of himself, but it is always easier said than done. Solyn is really innocent and determined in her choice. She understands very quickly what is wrong but is not afraid to confront Kenyen to know the truth. This is a character I enjoyed, she is natural and true throughout the story, a feeling I rarely have when I read a book.

I wondered throughout the novel what the exiled were seeking for from the family of the young woman and I must say that I was completely surprised. I expected something extraordinary and I admit even if it is more basic I did not expect that at all. However, it's very simple and important to them.

I enjoyed this second book and I'm curious to see what will happen to our protagonists thereafter if we have the opportunity to see them again of course. I would also like to read the first book since the author often mentions some details about it.

Michelle Leah Olson says

Our Review, by LITERAL ADDICTION's Pack Alpha - Michelle L. Olson:

The SONS OF DESTINY series is one of my favorites, so it stands to reason that the spin-off, SHIFTING PLAINS, would be high on the anticipated list...

Jean Johnson has not disappointed, and book #2 was even better than book #1 in my humble opinion.

This series is a complex fantasy world full of robust characters and intricate plots. The Shifter focuses on a native of the Shifting Plains visiting a neighboring land to uncover a nefarious plot that some rogues have set in motion.

The hero of the story is complex and wonderful, having to play 2 parts, and his relationship with the heroine is sweet and rich.

The heroine is spunky and fun, if a bit naive. She's smart though, and they make a wonderful leading pair.

The antagonists of the story are despicable and the kind that you love to hate. Jean writes them perfectly and they were the perfect black to the good guys' white.

All in all, LITERAL ADDICTION gives The Shifter 4 stars and would recommend it to all Jean Johnson fans and fantasy lovers.

Robin Priddy says

Solyn Ys Rei and best friend, Traver Ys Ten, know that something is very wrong with some of the most powerful men of their village. It seems like overnight they have changed, they were kind, loving, and trustful

men who are now mean and dishonest. Solyn and Traver make plans to go for help. When Traver leaves to travel with the tea caravan he plans to take off in the middle of the night to ride for help. Solyn is not just a healer but also a mage. She has kept this a secret from the village. She helps her mother, who is the village healer, when needed with the healing and also in making cheese that they sell. She wants to go to the city to get training in order to use her mage skills to help with healing people. She knows she cannot leave her home until the problem with the shifters is solved and life is back to normal.

Kenuen Sin Sim, along with friends, is trying to locate the Family Mongrel. They are a bunch of men who have been banished for their crimes. They have banded together and call themselves Family Mongrel. It has been years since any member of the family has been seen but rumors are spreading about sightings. The group decide to split up and travel in different directions so that they can cover more ground. Kenuen run into Traver and he tells Kenuen about what is happening with some of the men in his village. Kenuen impersonates Traver and returns to the village to find out what the family is up to and what they are looking for. But there is one thing he did not count on, and that is his reaction to Solyn.

This is Ms Johnson's third installment from the world of Sons of Destiny series. If you are looking for something different to read then Ms Johnson's books are the way to go. The character and the world they live in is different from any other story out there. Can't wait for more.

Ellie says

The Shifter by Jean Johnson

Grade: DNF

I read almost one hundred pages of The Shifter by Jean Johnson and I still am not sure what was going on. Mrs. Johnson has created a fantasy world but doesn't explain the world or the people in it at all. I'm not sure if she explains it in the previous book but it's been awhile since I spent this much time going "huh?". The writing is very different from most books and that also threw me for a loop and made it difficult to want to continue. I am a huge fan of fantasy but this book was too far out there for even me unfortunately.

Deanna Roberts says

I must say that this review is not specifically about this book, but about the author.

Jean Johnson is an amazingly creative and diverse author. I love her Shifting Plains and Sons of Destiny series (more please.) While I have not read her "Theirs Not to Reason Why" series as it doesn't appeal to me, my husband has read it and he really enjoys that series.

It is a wonderful thing to be able to appeal to more than one genre. I applaud you, Ms. Johnson. Please, please keep up the good works!

Tina says

Traver has just been asked to marry Solyn, his best friend. He turns her down because he doesn't love her as he should but he understands why she asked. She doesn't want to be with the man who has been chosen to be

her match. He does agree to make it appear like they will be married so no one else will be chosen to be her match. Solyn wears a magical silver ring, and so does Traver. This is so she knows who Traver is; there are men out there who can change from man to animal and into other men. They take the lives of their victims and this insures she will know if one does that to Traver.

Kenyen Sin Siin is a shifter; he can change from animal to man form. He has teamed up with a group of shifters who wish to destroy the evil shifters that are taking over. It is hard to get close and know who the evil ones are when they can look like anyone or any animal. Traver meets up with Kenyen and his group by accident; he has gone out to find allies. Solyn and Traver want to fight the evil shifters and they need reinforcements. Kenyen agrees to help; he is going to go back to Traver's village to meet up with Solyn, but he is going to do it as Traver. He is even wearing Traver's silver ring when Solyn meets him. But she knows something is wrong. He doesn't act like her best friend, and how did he get taller? Once she finds out who he is and why she is suddenly attracted to her best friend, can they defeat the evil that has been trying to take over before it is too late?

Jean Johnson has an amazing second story in the *Shifting Plains* series with *The Shifter*. I like the idea of the new shifters who can be anyone or any animal. That would be really hard to figure out who is who. The ring twist sometimes is funny as well as helpful, especially when you find out where Traver is keeping his ring.

Solyn is a strong lady who is very brave and seemingly ahead of her time. She really seems modern in this new fantasy world. Kenyen has many layers to explore. From being a really good person to the alpha male inside him, he kept me guessing and wanting more. I do suggest reading this series in order. It is complicated and very detailed. But when you have the time to sink into an amazing fantasy story, this series is the one you should pick up.

Lorie says

Nice conclusion

I like this story. It was full of deception, mystery, Adventure, love, and a wee bit of fighting and a whole bunch of trickery. I continue to enjoy this world and hope to see more stories along the same lines.

Lady Lioness says

This is a sequel of sorta to *Shifting Plains*, but I almost think it works better as a standalone if you've already read the *Sons of Destiny* series, especially *The Cat*. A lot of the book is devoted to world-building, about half of which devoted Johnson fans probably already knew. Since I preferred *Shifting Plains*, this was a solid 3.5-4 star book for me, but again, if you loved Elizabeth Vaughn's *War* series, I really recommend you check these two out.

Now I really gotta read *A Soldier's Duty*. I've had it in my TBR since it came out.
