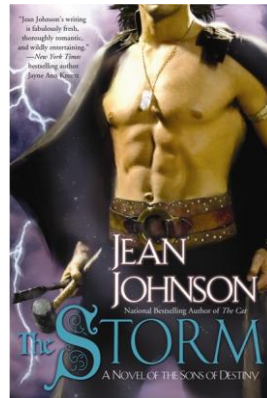


Review by: Heather

Pros: Enjoyable fantasy world building; fascinating plot; empathetic characters; very visual story

Cons: Overused italics during arguments

Rating: 5 out of 5



Series Note: I started reading Jean Johnson's *Sons of Destiny* series with book five, [The Cat](#). I read it without reading the first four books and enjoyed it quite a bit, with only mild confusion—the author goes to some lengths to ensure that you can start out with any book in the series. That said, it's an incredibly good series and I highly recommend starting from the beginning. As soon as I realized that I had the next book, *The Storm*, in my review stack, I just had to find out what happened next!

The eight brothers were born in four sets of non-identical twins. An age-old prophecy foretells the arrival of their Destined brides in order from the eldest brother's to the youngest, and it's now the turn of the sixth-born son, Rydan.

Rydan has not only adapted to his family's exile, he's preferred it. The presence of other people irritates him in ways that cause physical pain, often provoking his magical power to a level where he causes storms. While hiding away in the underground tunnels he discovered, he became Guardian of Nightfall Island's magical Fountain of power. His part of the curse—or destiny—foretells that he'll lose his 'reign' when he meets his Destined bride, and knowing how important his Guardianship of the Fountain is, he

dreads the possibilities as well as the repercussions. He'd much rather she never came along, thanks very much.

Rora arrived at the island with her proud, prickly shape-shifter sister, Mara. While Mara was meeting Rydan's twin, Trevan, Rora accidentally slipped through Rydan's wards and into his chambers. It won't be that easy for her to slip past his more personal defenses.

Rora has her own secret, however. She hosts an incredible source of magical power within her body—a living Fountain, the reason why she and her sister had to flee to Nightfall in the first place. This is the first home she's found where mages don't covet her for the power they could steal. That power allows her to See what's wrong with Rydan, but seeing isn't the same as fixing, and first she'll have to get him to trust her...

One of the amazing things about *The Storm* is that it's the flip side to the story in *The Cat*: both stories take place simultaneously, with a few overlapping pieces. The characters sometimes see things differently, or focus on different parts of a scene, so the technique is fascinating rather than boring if you've read the previous book (and if you haven't, the book stands beautifully on its own).

I have yet to read the first four books in the series, but in the previous book it was difficult to like what little bits of Rydan I saw. The wonderful part is that Ms. Johnson made him entirely sympathetic in this book while keeping his characterization entirely consistent with that previous depiction. Rora's empathy for him and her ability to understand him despite their apparent differences is made entirely believable. If anything, these two characters are so deeply empathetic and sympathetic that it's hard not to fall in love with the pair of them. They're also incredibly different from Trevan and Amara in the previous book, allowing this book to be its own, unique beast.

The plot and milieu are fascinating. The look into Rydan's underground world is wonderful, and we get to see more details of the emerging island nation, although there's less focus on that than in the previous book. Instead, the mages who'd been chasing Rora and Mara put in an appearance, threatening the very safety and stability of Rydan's Fountain and Nightfall itself.

The interplay between and exploration of Rora and Rydan is absolutely wonderful. It's somewhat low-key compared to the prickly interactions between Trevan and Amara in *The Cat*, but no less dramatic and captivating. The shift in focus from world-building to magical threat helps to keep the series fresh—while some romance series repeat their formulas so tightly from book to book that you sometimes feel you're reading a variation on the same story each time, this series definitely has more to it than that! The *Sons of Destiny* series is one of my top finds of the year so far, and I highly recommend it to fantasy/romance fans.

Usual adult material warning: the explicit sex is restricted to a couple of scenes, but is present (and quite endearingly passionate!).