



## **Under Shifting Glass**

*Nicky Singer*

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Jess has a secret: a mysterious glass flask she finds in an heirloom desk's hidden compartment. Its surface swirls with iridescent colors, like something's inside, something almost like a song, something with a soul. No one else sees anything under the shifting glass, but Jess is convinced there must be some kind of magic in there. And when her twin brothers are born critically ill, Jess begins to believe that the force within the flask just might hold the key to saving her brothers-and her family. In this emotionally rich novel, award-winning author Nicky Singer crafts a world of possibility that is steeped in hope and the power of love.

## **Under Shifting Glass Details**

Date : Published February 19th 2013 by Chronicle Books (first published February 19th 2012)

ISBN : 9781452109213

Author : Nicky Singer

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Genre : Young Adult, Fantasy, Fiction, European Literature, British Literature

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## From Reader Review Under Shifting Glass for online ebook

### Jillian (PidginPea's Book Nook) says

{ I received an ARC for free through Early Reviewers on LibraryThing. Review originally posted on my blog, PidginPea's Book Nook. }

Wow. This book was beautiful. I wasn't expecting it to really touch my heart like it did. I kind of thought it would be a book about Jess's family troubles with a paranormal twist in the form of the flask. But it was so, so much more than that. I really am just in shock with how fantastic this book was.

*Under Shifting Glass* does deal with Jess's family - her mother (pregnant with twins), her stepfather, and her grandmother. But it also deals with Jess's beloved Aunt Edie, who has recently passed away, and throughout the book we see Jess progress through her grief over her aunt's death towards acceptance and peace. As if this wasn't enough for a young girl to deal with, her father has also passed away, and she's struggling with her relationship with her stepfather now that he'll have children of his own when the twins are born. Her friendship with her closest friend Zoe seems to be falling apart, and Jess doesn't know how to fix it. And then her twin brothers are born conjoined, and the outlook is grim.

It's hard to classify this book. Is it realistic fiction? Fantasy? Magical realism? Even when you reach the end of the book, you're not quite sure (more on that in a bit). *Under Shifting Glass* is labeled as Young Adult on Goodreads and Barnes & Noble, but I can see where a Middle Grade label would fit too. Jess is 12 years old, and at times I felt like her thoughts and actions might appeal more to younger readers. But then again, she is facing some very grown-up problems as well, and she does show some incredible maturity which brings her story right back to the YA level. I finally had to force myself to stop trying to label the book and just *read*.

Singer has a stunning way with words. Jess is a sweet narrator who wraps you up in her world; I felt her pain over the loss of her Aunt Edie, her joy at seeing her brothers for the first time, her hopelessness when her problems seem to stack up endlessly. She is dealing with so much and she's handling it as best she can, but she's looking for a reason behind it all, or a way to fix it all. As she learns more about the flask, she realizes that perhaps the flask itself the solution. There is a beautiful mix of something mysterious, something supernatural, a bit of desperate superstition on Jess's part, and a touch of religion. After everything is resolved, Singer leaves it up to the reader to decide what really happened... Was it a miracle? Was it the flask? Was it nothing special at all - just the way of things? I thought this was wonderful, as each reader can take away whatever they wish from the story.

In the middle of the book, Jess and her friends learn about Buddhism for a class assignment. To be honest, as I was reading that part, I was wondering where Singer was going to go with it or why exactly she chose to include it in the story. But I thought the way Singer tied it in at the end was quite nice, with Jess's gift of eucalyptus to her Aunt Edie. The Buddhism aspect may be a little much for some readers ("much" being perhaps a little too heavy on the religious/spiritual side for those who prefer not to read about religion, or being perhaps a little too complicated for younger readers), but it hit me just right.

I can see where this book wouldn't appeal to everyone, but in the hands of some readers it will become a new favorite. It certainly became an instant favorite for me, and I'll be on the lookout for other books by Singer.

## **Pam Saunders says**

Quiet, understated, mystical.

Jess is suffering, her piano playing Aunt Eddie has died. Her mother is about to give birth to 'the twins', twins who are conjoined. Then she is given Aunt Eddie's ancient bureau not the piano. Jess is not impressed nor is her best friend Zoe, who declares it is hideous. Then Jess accidentally discovers the bureau also hides a beautiful bottle, a flask, an item that changes colour and seems to contain a spirit. What does it mean. And why is her friendship with Zoe also falling apart.

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## **M— says**

*/review to come*

adored. exquisite.

quotes.

nothing like I'd thought it was to be.

might not ever give up this ARC.

Reminded me of.

Chronicle also published.

Oh, this was exquisite. I had completely misunderstood

I just won an ARC off GoodReads, and it was extraordinary. Completely different than what I thought it would be (which had been along the lines of 'young girl falls in love with/saves vampire' except with a genie -- and this was not the plot. So not), and I fell in love with it utterly.

I thought, as I was reading it, about sending the ARC on to you; but then I got to the end and I don't think I can let this copy go quite yet.

An ARC of this book was provided to me by the publisher through the Goodreads Giveaway Program.

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## **Annmichelle Klingelhafer says**

This book, Under Shifting Glass, is so beautiful. It was a joy to read, and incredibly thought-provoking. It had me hanging from its every thread, aching to read more. First I was beginning the book, then I was on

chapter 23, then I was done. It's just that good! A young girl struggles as she must deal with the death of her aunt, the worry that comes with conjoined twins unborn in her mother's womb, and the stress of a changing friendship. She has a very strong connection to music, and so wishes to have her aunt's piano to keep when asked what she would like. Instead, she receives the bureau in which sh finds a mystifying glass flask. As I read along, I experienced her joy and perplexity in discovering that there is a join, a connection, in every aspect of life. Sometimes we must reach out, and sometimes we must look inside ourselves. Slowly, I learned with the young girl to listen in the quiet, to see what others cannot. Everything has a join. It may be difficult to see, or perhaps simple to find, but once it is found then we can begin to finally understand. Though a slightly easy read, the simplicity and delicacy of this book is a breath of fresh air. The book jacket intrigued me at first glance, and I was pulled in by the sweet innocence with which every chapter is narrated. A gentle balance between light and thoughtful, Under Shifting Glass is an amazing read.

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### **Miss Literati says**

Nicky Singer's **UNDER SHIFTING GLASS** is a deep, emotional story about a girl and a mysterious bottle.

Jessica Walton is struggling with the death of her beloved Great Aunt Edie. Upon Edie's death, Jess is given her aunt's old bureau and inside it she finds a strange bottle. That very same day, her twin brothers are born joined at the chest. Jess decides that the bottle and the twins are somehow linked. She becomes even more convinced when, during the night, the bottle turns black and starts to howl-around the same time that her brother Clem's health dips.

Jess starts to draw inside of herself, her only company being the bottle. She begins to have one-sided conversations with it, and is afraid to show it to others in fear they won't believe her. Her lack of communication begins to hurt her friendship with Zoe, her best friend since childhood. Instead, Zoe starts to hang around a cheerful boy named Piddy, who Jess cannot stand.

As the twins' condition gets more severe, more and more mysteries unravel. Jess finds a song that her aunt wrote that was dedicated to someone named Rob. When she mentions it to Gran, Gran refuses to give...[READ THE REST ON **MISS LITERATI**]

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### **Michelle says**

I have seen *The Flask* before but not really heard a lot about it, so when the opportunity came along to get it off netgalley via HarperCollins UK I picked it up.

Jess, still grieving over the loss of her Aunt, inherits a bureau and finds flask inside it with a strange glowing light. As Jess investigates the flask and the light she makes a connection between it and her twin brothers.

When something happens to the flask and her brothers at the same time she makes it her mission to ensure the safety of the flask and the glowing light, therefore ensuring her brothers stay safe. As the story progresses and Jess's obsession with the flask grows, her friendship with Zoe begins to form cracks and soon they are not longer speaking to each other.

While I liked idea behind the story and having this 'thing' in the flask, at times I found it hard to relate to the protagonist. I felt she became too obsessed with the flask and was quick to find faults in her friendships and

family, sometimes even acting like a spoilt brat. The reality that Jess has tried to create for herself seemed a bit childish for her age, and although the mystery behind the flask is eventually solved I did struggle to get there.

Don't get me wrong, I did like some of the characters in *The Flask*, and if I was younger may have been able to relate to them a bit better, I just could not get Jess's whiny voice out of my head enough to focus on what else was happening. Overall *The Flask* is an OK read but I doubt I will be adding a physical copy to my shelves.

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### **Elizabeth Hobson says**

I loved this quiet little book. Jess is dealing with the death of her grandmother at the same time her conjoined twin brothers are expected to arrive. As she struggles with her thoughts and emotions around these events, she finds a glass object hidden in a desk that might be connected to multiple people in her life. Just a tiny bit of magical realism graces this lovely book for middle schoolers. Perfect for a sensitive child.

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### **Suzanne Dix says**

Reviewed by a 6th grader: Jess's mother is remarried and is pregnant with Siamese twins, but Jess doesn't realize that another change is about to come. Her beloved Aunt Edie died and Jess inherits her desk. Jess soon discovers a mystical flask hidden in the desk that may or may not have a living being inside. When the twins are born, there is not a very good chance of survival, and Jess thinks that the 'thing' is the key to her brother's survival.

The book was written extremely well and had just the right amount of fantasy and reality.

Recommended.

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### **Maggie says**

Oddly, I liked almost everything about this book EXCEPT the central plot conceit of the glass bottle Jess finds that holds the secret to her conjoined twin brothers' survival. It isn't that I don't like books with mystical elements, or magical realism, because I certainly do. For some reason, this part of the book just didn't work for me. But I loved everything else. The characterizations are so strong, and the way Singer portrays relationships is amazing. What Singer focuses on are pairs and connections--love, possessiveness, and jealousy. How do we maintain a tie to one person, but remain an individual? How do we allow a person we need and love make attachments to other people, too? How do we handle the ultimate division--death? Singer deals with all of these very huge questions with grace. An ultimately uplifting book that I can see thoughtful, introspective kids really enjoying.

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### **Kayla says**

I was so excited to read this book! It's an incredible story about love and family and leads you to wonder what is and isn't real. Maybe there are people in the world who can see much more than everyone else can. Maybe there are forces out there beyond comprehension. These thoughts are explored in Under Shifting Glass as Jess is quite different from everyone else and sees things no one else does.

I loved our main character from the beginning. Jess is a little odd and most people seem to know that but she's also the most loyal person there is. She sticks up for her friends and family though of course she can't stand it if that loyalty isn't being returned. I like how nobody appears to be perfect in this book and that allows everyone to grow more by the end of the novel.

The writing in this book is beautiful. Even when nothing important was happening I was still captivated because of the way everything was written and blended together. Because of that I really hope to read more from this author in the future because I'm fairly certain that any kind of plot paired with this writing could be great!

I recommend this book for anyone who wants a short, interesting read that will leave you thinking.

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### **PopcornReads says**

**Book Review & Giveaway:** We're participating in the Lucky Leprechaun Giveaway Hop. Our giveaway for this hop is Under Shifting Glass by award-winning children's author Nicky Singer. This novel has been rated for grades six and up, and is really targeted toward middle school kids. It deals with the fragile nature of life and friendship, and how those issues affect people. It will make an excellent addition to any school or family library. And we're giving away an advance readers copy (ARC) to one lucky reader at <http://popcornreads.com/?p=5585>.

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### **Sharon says**

Very good teen book about beginnings and endings, friendships and family, children and parents, best friends and just friends. Lots of real life and a little bit of magic. Jess does a lot of growing and changing and at the same time staying who she really is inside. I liked this book very much and enjoyed how it was written to be easily digested in short little chapters that seemed to say a lot in a minimum of words. Recommend to anyone who enjoys a good story with a little magic thrown in, whether the magic is "real" or not I will leave up to the reader. Try it out and decide for yourself!!

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### **Lorena says**

I'm not normally the kind of person you can catch writing a book review. But here I am. That's the thing- sometimes you read a book that's so good that you can't simply go about your day knowing you didn't write a review.

First things first, I'll talk about Jess, as the book is mostly about her view of all of this change. Other comments talk about how Jess was being irrational and an annoying narrator and all. I don't necessarily agree. Her twin brothers, born conjoined, are a massive cause of worry for everyone involved. It wouldn't make sense for someone Jess' age to handle the news with poise and act like everything's still normal.

Because of course it's not. Nothing is the same from that point onward.

Everything is different with Clem and Richie finally here. So yeah, generally speaking, I'd say Jess is a likeable narrator. It is so easy to sympathize with her. Especially when she's going through her first fight with her best friend, Zoe, and the loss of her great-aunt. Everything about her characterization was so real. There was no doubt in my mind that somewhere there is a girl like Jess going through similar problems.

In addition to the believable narrator, the book also has a fairly decent plot revolving around the mysterious flask. Her fascination with the flask more often than not fascinated me too. I spent half the book trying to figure out the contents of the flask with her. I never saw the ending coming, and I usually see these things from a mile away.

Everything about this book was so wonderful. My hasty recap can't do it justice at all. If you even got this far, it's a yes from me.

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### **Cindy Hudson says**

Jess is exploring a bureau she received after her Aunt Edie died when she discovers a mysterious bottle that seems to hold a life force of some kind. She's mesmerized by the swirling colors and the way the bottle sometimes feels warm and glowing while other times it is dark and cold. When her twin brothers are born conjoined and struggling for life, she begins to sense that whatever is in the bottle may hold the key to their survival.

Under Shifting Glass by Nicky Singer is mystical, heartfelt, and a bit haunting. Along with Jess's worry over her brothers, she suffers from the loss of her Aunt Edie, her grandmother's sister, who taught her to make music. She's also worried that her best friend, Zoe, is growing away from her and that she can't share her fears with Zoe the way she always has. In her search for understanding, Jess turns to her Catholic church and a Buddhist temple for solace. In the end, a discovery about Edie helps her know what she has to do.

Jess's story is sure to resonate with readers in mother-daughter book clubs with girls aged 12 and up. Jess's family situation is complicated: her father died when she was young, she was raised by her stepfather, and the grandmother she sees regularly is her father's mother. She doesn't think it's right to call her new siblings half-brothers. She's not sure where she fits in with her stepfather's affections now that he has biological children of his own. Jess feels fiercely protective of her brothers, so she overreacts when Zoe and her other friends don't understand her fears.

Life is complicated for Jess, much the way it is for many young teens who are experiencing emotional and physical changes of their own. Her journey of self-discovery is thoughtful, and author Singer does an excellent job of keeping all the threads working together to knit a story that will linger with you long after you read the last page. I highly recommend Under Shifting Glass. It's a book that is sure to strike a chord with the moms as well as the daughters.

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**Jenn says**

This was a wonderful read! This book is perfect for a young girl that is going through changes in her life, due to loosing a loved one, a growing family, or just fights with friends. You become a part of Jess's life and watch her mature and grow in the book. There is such a spirit in Jess that you come to love and understand as things in life that only an innocent child can connect and how at times they take on the whole world on their shoulders and feel that something small that they do or didnt do can cause other things to happen when they really to adults seem to have no connection.

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