



A Little Familiar

R. Cooper

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A powerful witch, Piotr Russell has resigned himself to loneliness, because ordinary humans can't know what he is, and other witches are intimidated by his abilities. Generations of Russells have lived and died with only their familiars at their side. The presence of a friendly familiar is enough to keep even the loneliest witch sane, and yet Piotr deliberately hasn't chosen one. He forces himself to keep busy instead, but the emptiness of his house haunts him even more the spirit of Great-Great-Aunt Elysia in the parlor. With Samhain and Halloween approaching, he'll have much to do, and knowing that, his concerned coven seizes the chance to intervene and sends help to his door in the form of Bartleby Dorchester.

The rarest of rare jewels, Bartleby is a human familiar: a witch with no magic of his own, and a desire to find a strong witch to help and serve. In particular, he desires to help and serve Piotr, and everything in Piotr wants to let him. Bartleby was meant to be his familiar; Piotr knows it as surely as he knows when it will rain or when the apples in his garden will ripen. But what Piotr wants from Bartleby, all he's ever wanted, is for Bartleby to love him, something he thinks is impossible.

Russells live and die unloved, and he won't allow Bartleby to feel obligated to spend his life with him as his familiar if he could be happy in love with someone else. But Samhain is a time for change, when walls come down and borders grow thin, and Bartleby isn't going to waste what might be his last chance to convince Piotr that they were meant to be. He might have no magic, but love is a power all its own.

A Little Familiar Details

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Relly says

Was ok

3 ??

This author has a formula that revolves around miscommunications, at times when I'm in the mood for it, it works. But I need to pick my moments or else it I can't handle it. This one was no exception. Piotr did my head in, and there were times I really wanted to slap him across the back of his head. Once Bartleby opened the lines of communication and talked around to what he wanted they finally moved forward. I'll still give the next one a go too.

MLE says

Really sweet. Review to come.

Bkwyrn says

Short and sweet

Aside from some grammatical errors and a few spelling mistakes, a lovely gem of a Halloween story. Piotr is a powerful witch from a powerful family, isolated and believes himself entirely self-sufficient, alone in his ancestral house. He never attends his coven's Samhain revels, preferring to stay home and give out candy to kids. He's known Bartleby his whole life, a man born to a witch family, but with a different power - he's a human familiar, a focus and companion for a witch. The most powerful witches need familiars, and Piotr doesn't have one. He doesn't think he needs one.

Sweet story about not seeing what's in front of you, about loneliness and fear and refusing to admit what you want because you think you can't have it.

Sakuko says

I had a slow start into this book.

I know there was some reason Piotr is dead set against being with Bartleby, but I just did not get it. They were so good together, Piotr obviously adoring, Bartleby dropping hints like cement bags, but neither of them seemed to get the other. I just couldn't follow Piotr's motivation and because of that I couldn't relate to him much.

I should like this grumpy but caring bear attitude, it's my usual type, but in this book, it did not work for me. Maybe because he felt more lonely/depressed than really grumpy- "I like it better alone"

I did like the very subtle use of magic and witchcraft, the gardening and cooking and homemaking. I thought that was a nice take on it, though I'd have liked a few more details, a little more explanation given.

The end did get better, when they finally manage to figure it out, and it is a nice, little Halloween themed book, but it just did not grab me the same way Hotty Scotty & Mr. Porter did. I just got the characters better in that one. They stay to distant here, I guess, to foreign to my thinking to get into them.

Xan West says

4.5 stars

I adored this. It hit me hard in the feels. I was basically holding my breath through the last third or so of the book.

I do want to say that there is a non-binary love interest in this, who I read (and the text alludes to this) as genderfluid. I liked the representation; it worked for me.

More coherent review later on.

Jessie Potts says

I really like this Beings world, I only noticed that the misunderstandings formula is present in all of them.

Antonella says

Nice and sweet, utterly delightful.

Alison says

This is a delightful story about witches and Halloween. I really enjoy how Cooper writes romantic awkwardness and nervous tension, and both are in abundance in this lovely story. Great secondary characters include a raven and a ghost. I love this author's writing style and the slow reveal of the history between the two main characters. R. Cooper's one of my favourites, and I was not disappointed.

Alexa says

khfksdjgkjg

the only word I can use to describe this is *magical*. the whole reading experience was so real I could almost taste the pumpkin and apples. the soft pining was great, and ghosts and familiars, and Bartleby is literally exactly my kind of person, and the DESCRIPTIONS in this novella were so good! I mean, just look at this: *although his rage was the gentlest rage imaginable, the briefest, quietest maelstrom in a teacup.*

or this: *His anger was fierce and soft, stinging like kitten's claws.*

OR THIS: *He was a giant holding a rose petal. He was a bear permitted to cup a kitten in his paw, when he deserved no such prize.*

I have to admit the pining sometimes got frustrating because it went on for so many years and it /didn't have to/ if only Piotr knew how to communicate, but at the same time I loved it. I would fall in love with Bartleby too. so soft and pure.

*He wasn't genderfluid, at least, not how Piotr understood the term, but then again perhaps he was. Bartleby was... Bartleby. He wore what he chose to wear and acted how he chose to act. He'd never requested to be addressed by another pronoun or name, he simply was, **like a trickster deity of old, although one not interested in deception.***

Ann says

More like 3.5 Stars.

Well, 3 stars for some, 4 stars for others, 5 stars for a couple of really great lines and 2 stars for the book cock blocking at the end.

So yeah, 3.5 stars overall.

I liked this quiet and charming story. The characters were very appealing and they really needed to be together for so many reasons. I really wish I would have read it around Halloween, it's got the perfect moody feel to it that I'll have to check out during a reread next Halloween.

I don't need to have graphic boning in my books, not that I don't tend to lean in that direction however. This one could have gotten away with no boning at all. But, there was a brief, fade-to-blackish sex scene and talk of impending fucking so when then time came and I got book cock blocked at the end I was bummed. Sweet jeebus, the outfit that Bartleby showed up in at the end deserved the full fledged bone job. The language and the buildup of UST between the two teased me into thinking I would get the goods on page.

But, I did love Piotr and Bartleby together and was charmed by their language and dedication to their culture. The quiet nights at Piotr's house were homey and just plain lovely. What seemed like opposites attract was more like opposites being balanced and I wanted to sit Piotr down over some of his homemade cider so we could have a little chat about awareness. He's a gentle bear with no clue. Then there is Bartleby with a penchant for eyeliner, fashion and a heart made to care for Piotr. How can I NOT love them?

I would have just loved them more if the promised boning had happened, on page, just sayin'.

Barbara Cerda says

Book Review

Impressions

My first introduction to R Cooper's work was the 900-page collection of his Beings in Love. His characterizations are what made me a fan of his work. Their personalities stick to you long after completing the read. The sex descriptive is good although at times, it may not be for the squeamish...but the storytelling is superb. I'm guessing this is the biggest reason R has a compelling fan base. But I digress.

There's always simplicity in the rhyme of R Cooper's storytelling, the absent-minded sensual tug of the bottom lip. There's always the emotional lure at war that spice the tale.

The powerful and lonely male witch Piotr Russel needs to claim his childhood friend Bartleby and this begins a wonderful dance of the hearts. This overriding theme of emotional conflict centered in R Cooper's work keeps his readers coming back for more. He is very good at this.

"So I take it your work for the evening is on hold?" Bartleby remarked, staring up at Piotr in a daze. His attention kept drifting down and then up. He pulled his naked lower lip between his teeth. ~ A Little Familiar

The big take away in this love story about a powerful witch and his human familiar is the slow build of trust and acknowledgement of love. This recurring theme is a marvelous sharing of how we may all fail to recognize our truest worth and value to those who love us.

My favorite character in this tale is Bartleby. He is a marvelous mixture of honesty and bigger than life patience. He waited all his life to become the familiar to the most powerful witch in their coven. A rare and powerful human familiar in his own right – he knows and the universe knows that there can be only one pairing for him. Piotr –the grouchy bear of a man with a heart like a Tootsie Roll pop.

Storyline/plot/conflict

Bartleby is the "genderfluid" (I love this term) character that steels the heart. At once, he's a quirky beauty who's that rare occurrence in magic...a human familiar. Engagingly funny, he possesses the appearance of cluelessness. But his path is set on winning the love and affections of the great male witch Piotr Russell, it's an unspoken love held secret since childhood.

Piotr is alone. Living in an old house haunted by his loving grandma, he has given up on ever being loved. Attempts at seeking love with human companions fails. There seems no safe place for his heart and the sharing of a life dedicated to the craft of witches.

But time moves on and Bartleby decides to make a last ditch effort to persuade Piotr to become his witch and lover. He knows, as a human familiar, that he is the perfect match for the powerful weaver of spells.

Main Characterizations

Bartleby Dorchester is the quintessential man-child and rare human familiar that have a great need for the big dark "hunk of a witch" name Piotr.

Piotr Russell is the powerful male witch that weaves spells and bakes wonderful foods. The thing is that he loves his lifestyle gardening, baking and the might of his magic craft but hates his life of loneliness.

Critique

R Cooper's writings have become my needful desert minus the calories.

Genre:

M/M Contemporary Romance

Kasia Bacon says

That was lovely. *Almost* enough to melt my obsidian heart.

Gillian says

4 stars

A little different, but I really liked this one. It's the kind of book you need when you just want to read about nice people getting an HEA (even if was already preordained but one person needed to get out of their own way in order to see what was right in front of them, and the other person needed to use actual words to let the first person know they've been there all along, just patiently waiting).

Recommend

Meep says

2.5 Rounding up because even though I'm unlikely to re-read this there were parts I liked, sadly lost somewhat in the overwhelming sense of longing and UST. While I normally enjoy Cooper's writing it didn't pull me in this time, there was too heavy a feel despite the light homeliness of the story. The UST dripped from the page where I needed some brightness.

At least the first 8% was info dump, tediously setting out the world and explaining how the characters are destined to be together, clearly in love, but denying it Because.. Standard fare for the 'familiar' verse; long standing misunderstandings and lack of communication - this time around with two characters who have grown up together, in the same world, in the same coven! Everyone appears to know but the characters, but at least in this story due to length they're off-page and we don't meet them.

The characters were interesting as were witches, familiars, the haunted house and providing from the soil. A few great lines, including the splendidly simple and true portent:

The clock ticked because that was what clocks did

Disappointing, because it could have made a lovely story if the relentless strong emotions eased up in places allowing some joy through. Poor Bartleby did his best, he even dressed up pretty, which went shockingly under-appreciated.

Adrian Fridge says

I love Piotr for being a burly bear who channels his alphaness into gardening and homemaking and taking care of others. And then there's Bartleby, who's brown and genderqueer and taking care of Piotr by allowing Piotr to take care of him.

This has all the makings for five stars from me: a gruff loner is worn down by a magnetic interloper who winds up being everything the loner refuses to allow himself. Buuuut technicalities.

For starters, this could have used a copy-editor because there's one too many oversights like missing words or words in the wrong place. It's bad enough that I stopped trusting word combinations. Like, there's the line "I'm this me, today" and I swore it was an error until it dawned on me -- hours later -- that it's playing on "I'm this way, today."

And secondly, the character-building is shaky. Bartleby is supposed to be the same age as Piotr, who's in his thirties, but he reads as being in his twenties. And the fact that Piotr's been pining for Bartleby since forever is revealed way late in the story, like I know it's written in the blurb but I skimmed the blurb before deciding to pick this up (which just shows how much the premise hooked me). So the only thing holding Piotr back is his stubbornness to embrace Bartleby, who's doing everything in his power to express that he wants Piotr back. That killed the tension for me because if Piotr's already in love, then I'm dealing with an emotionally constipated loner instead of an intimacy challenged one. Totally different expectations. This isn't even me judging a book based on what I wanted it to be; unless I'm obtuse and missed it, I had no in-story clue that Piotr has always known Bartleby is meant for him until, like, 50% into the story when they explicitly start talking about fortune telling.

But, I mean, the story is still very sweet and I loved Piotr and Bartleby's chemistry. Except there's also too much teasing for a potential sex scene that never happens on-page. I'm not one to demand a sex scene, but jeez, that felt like a cliffhanger.

Apparently I'm in a whiny mood. Take with a massive bucket of salt.
