



Familiar

M.L. Rhodes

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Emrys Andrews lives in the quaint New England town of Salem, Massachusetts. In school he was never part of the popular “in” crowd, but he always had good friends and was generally known as a fun-loving, nice-guy geek. A label that followed him into adulthood. He just has one little problem. A secret he’s managed to keep from his friends and the world in general. You see, he’s descended from a long, esteemed line of honest-to-goodness, magick-wielding witches. Which wouldn’t be so bad, except, while the rest of his family members totally rock the witch power, Emrys...doesn’t. Any time he tries to do magick, anything that can go wrong, usually does. He’s left a trail of magickal disaster in his wake all his life, so now, for everyone’s safety, he tries to avoid his powers at all costs.

David Jennings is everything Emrys is not—gorgeous, sexy, popular, athletic, and a perfectly normal non-magick person. Despite the fact Emrys is sure David’s out of his league, and possibly straight, all it takes is one look into David’s soulful blue eyes and Emrys is a goner. He keeps his crush quiet for years, however, because his magick is usually at its worst when he’s emotional or when his adrenaline is pumping, and around David, he can’t control either.

When an unexpected encounter finally throws them together, Emrys discovers he’s not the only one who’s been fantasizing from afar. David’s been harboring feelings for Emrys for years, too. Unfortunately, David’s family also has secrets. The kind that can get anyone who knows too much...very much dead. With David’s life on the line and his past doing its best to tear them apart and keep them that way, and magick the only apparent solution, Emrys has to get control of his power once and for all if he wants to save the man who’s always been his destiny. But the tricky part is, he can’t do it without David’s help...

Familiar Details

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From Reader Review Familiar for online ebook

Paul says

2.5 STARS BUT.....

This was a little cheesy in parts but, I really enjoyed it. I especially loved the gay coming of age part at school because it reminded me of a very fond time in my miserable teen school age years.

I also quite like a bit of well written UF too, so that was fun having witchy poo stuff in the mix. The second half of the book turned into more of a thriller and I feel that M.L. Rhodes could have made this much better and made it a much longer novel. There was so much to work with and it just felt like I had the book slammed shut on me. I think another 100-150 pages OR possibly a direct follow on sequel would have been excellent but because it got the dreaded and I also think LAZY 5 page textbook, wrap up with a HEA it pissed me off.

I don't say this often because I'm not a huge fan of useless sequel's or extended novels that aren't warranted but because M.L. Rhodes had already laid the ground work with so many factors like great MC's, great plot and sub-plots, there was so much to work with and it was a shame to see all that great groundwork just get shut down formulae style and stopped what was blossoming into a great story. What a wasted opportunity, I would have given this book 4-4.5 stars if it was concluded properly.

The thriller side of the book kicks off at 65%, then the real drama kick off at 85% and is being tied up @ 97%, with so much lost ground work to play with just didn't work for me within 244 pages.

Kris says

A classic ML Rhodes tale and a lovely surprise for someone who hadn't known there was a new release coming from one of her fave m/m authors.

Now if only ML would ~~get off her fucking arse and write~~ pretty please to be writing the next book in The Draegan Lords series!

I'm not getting any younger, you know.

Cole Riann says

Review posted at The Armchair Reader.

3.75 stars

Wow, it was really nice reading a story from Ms. Rhodes again! It was such a happy surprise for me to see this book come out, and not only was I happy to see a new book, no matter which one it was (really!), I was even more excited that it was a witchy one. I don't know what it is, but I can't help but devour every male witch story in m/m that I can find. Maybe it's because I'm such a Potter lover? Not sure, but when I went into

a slump last week and couldn't figure out what to read, I opened this book.

Emrys is a witch and lives in Salem, Massachusetts. His family dates back to beginnings of the town and though most of the town is now non-magickal and makes light of their history, Emrys's family and a select few others know the truth and hide their secrets well. Emrys loves magick, he just can't do it very well. He's the runt of the family in that way -- all his siblings are rather adept, as well as his parents.

Emrys has to watch himself well, especially when he's drunk, or emotional in any way. He tends to just start tingling all over and then who knows what will happen? He's learned his the hard way over his childhood, but the lessons never seem to stop coming. Drunk at a football game with his friend, Emrys makes a mistake that will set his romantic life in forward motion. When he sees the new kid at the school, who swept in and took the quarterback's spot to lead their team to the first victory in a long time, making him the hero of their school -- he literally swoons. He's never felt such a powerful attraction. So when the gorgeous quarterback passes by him on the shoulders of his teammates, Emrys just wants to touch him (remember, he's drunk). And when the power of his attraction seems to draw the other boy's gaze and brings a smile to his face, his power lets loose, tripping the group and ultimately injuring the boy, David, and taking him out for the rest of the season.

Emrys's feelings don't change after that. It doesn't matter how sorry he is, how mortified he is... He ruined everyone's hopes and hurt David in the process. It's his secret how it happened though, known only to his sister Morgan who saw it and thankfully, didn't tell on him to his family. Years later, at their graduation, Emrys notices that David doesn't seem himself. Of course, he doesn't know David at all, not really, but he's watched him from afar their whole high school years and come to know him in a way. David is down, really down and something seems terribly wrong. He's the last person that Emrys expects to run into at a party that night (or down the street from one), while trying to fulfill a dare to enter the town's haunted house. The misuse, or misfiring, of his magic once again makes a scene, but David doesn't react the way Emrys expects, and their night of getting to know each other once and for all surprises him in more ways than he could ever expect.

He doesn't expect that David could ever have feelings for a geek like him, nor that David's life might not be the one of popularity and glory that he sees it as. But the revelations shared between them that night change their lives in unexpected ways.

First off, I'm going to get this out of the way before I even try to have a serious critique of this story -- GODDAMN that was hot! ML Rhodes is one of my top authors for writing the sexiest scenes and this didn't disappoint. Remember that scene in *True of Heart* in the cave? OMG! Yeah, she can really write the hot stuff. Emrys and David have an immediate connection, on purpose (more on that later), that really comes through sexually.

In many ways, this is just such a feel good read, and that's something that definitely draws readers. It's not fluffy, but it is light without sacrificing darker issues or scenes. Part of that comes from the connection between Emrys and David. Of course, we never expect a story to end in anything less than an HEA and we usually know beforehand if that's the case. So there's always a sense of security there for a happy ending. More than this, the "mating books" and the reason why I think readers find shifter books so popular is that there is an added layer of security there. We know when we're reading a classic shifter book that the characters won't consider hurting the other in any way because their feelings are almost magical in power. Of course some readers don't like that, but that's what makes that style and type of book more in line with a certain type of fluff, and we often find fluffy books about shifters. This story takes that "mating" type connection and plays with it a little. I won't describe why because much of the realization of their connection

comes to Emrys later in the book. Suffice it to say, the relationship is based on a type of security that the characters are meant for one another on a cosmic scale, and that comes across throughout the story and through their emotional and sexual connection.

I was really happy to see that Ms. Rhodes didn't rely on any typical format in structuring the story. It is a second chances type story, but their time apart bisects this book almost cleanly in half with a space of three years. That might throw some readers off as they're rounding the halfway-point, but I didn't mind. And really, besides the fact that this was ultimately just a cute, sweet, easy story to read, it was really nice to see another work published by this author. I know that readers have been waiting patiently (or some impatiently by now!) for more of the Draegon Lords, but I enjoy pretty much everything this author writes, and it was nice to see an addition of her's to the writing released in 2012.

Vivian (????)? says

If I had to describe this book with one or two words, I would probably say this was a 'feel-good' book. Which is exactly what it does. I think I spent the majority of the book just smiling widely and chuckling to myself (much to the dismay of the people around me, who edged away nervously). It is *totally* adorable and kind of bordering on sappy as well. The characters were cuties and the minor characters, though there wasn't really much of an appearance on their behalf, were really likeable. Yeah, the plot wasn't exactly realistic or of a nail biting degree, but hey, the sex was good (not that means much.....). Anyway, I wouldn't exactly urge you to go out and buy it *right now* with desperate, obsession-crazed eyes, but if you're in a bit of a pickle, or you're trying to ignore the life problems which are shoving themselves into your face, have a go and pick this up!

Lily says

3.1 stars. I have just read the new and improved edition. I am still not fond of the instant love theme, but the writing is smooth and helped me enjoy the story.

Initial thoughts - 2.5 stars. The story had potential and Emrys' voice was a promising driving force at first, without following through. Overall everything felt too rushed and the romance lacking in depth.

Yue says

Eh.. this was... OK. Just OK. Not bad, but forgettable.

I picked this up because a) that cover. Looks like a fun, light, cute book. With loads of magic. And b) the MC's name is Emrys. I love that name. When I started reading it, it was like reading a Merthur fanfic (here, a fan of Merthur).

Emrys (*Emrys*... cool name. Love it) is a geek witch who falls in love at first sight with David, the blond football player. Emrys steals a glance or two for 2 years, until the night of the prom, where accidentally he meets his love in an abandoned house. Turns out, David has been in love with Emrys since the moment he's seen him but couldn't tell him (he has his reasons). They spend the whole night together but for certain reason, David/Oliver has to leave town. They meet again 3 years later and it is like they have never been

apart.

Basically, that is the plot.

I was pretty much let down because the story does not fit the cover. First of all, it is not entirely light. Oliver has some serious business that keeps him apart from Emrys for 3 years. Secondly, it is not that magical. Since Emrys is a wimp in magic, except when he is touching Oliver. And hello, all throughout the book, they are like, 2 nights together. One on the night of the prom, which takes half of the book, and the other when Oliver comes back, which takes the other half (sex, sweet words, danger arises, magic happens, sweet words, a solution, and more sweet words). So yeah, Emrys is pretty useless and not the witch I was hoping. And last, it was much more steamy than I was hoping. That cover suggests a light, fluffy, cute romance. Instead, I got a smutty, overly sweet insta-love.

Besides, there are several inconsistencies. This book really needs a better editor. It is written in 1st person, from Emrys POV, but, sometimes it was like it was written in 3rd person:

[...]he pressed my fist to my chest. Should have been, I pressed my fist to my chest.

[...] pressing the phone that Emrys has still been holding out, should have been, that I was still [...]

Could have been better, less insta-love and more magic. Less smut and more plot-development.

Mandy*reads obsessively* says

Well the blurb is a good synopsis of the story, but it can't really tell you how totally sweet, sappy and cute this story is.

Emrys our narrator and unfortunately a total loser at witchiness is such a babbling sweetie.

He sums up his ability at magick like this: "My life was a history of mishaps and accidents with magick—there'd been episodes of exploding birthday cakes, holes blown in the backyard fence, toy fire engines gone mad, cats turned purple, and my sister Samantha waking up one morning with warts all over her face."

He is 18 and just graduated from high school when it seems the fates come together and give him a night with his secret crush David. He has been lusting after David for over a year and a half after seeing him play football and unwittingly causing a major mishap henceforth known as 'the pile-up'.

A dare from his friend gets Emrys to a very old and abandoned house, his wayward magick causes an accident yet again, but the results are actually pretty spectacular, at least as far as Emrys is concerned. He ends up literally falling on top of David and finds out that he hasn't been alone in feelings for the other boy. About half of the book is a short set up and this one night they spend together.

There is a lot of sex in this story and there is definitely the rush of two young men in the first throws of love. Emrys thoughts and feelings and babbling endeared him to me right away and of course being the most likely to cause a major disaster with his magick in a family of talented witches can't be easy, but he really is adorable. David isn't quite who Emrys always thought he was, his family life is far from ideal. I really wanted to give his mother a piece of my mind, since she was obviously lacking in the brains department. This being a story with witches I didn't have an issue with these young lovers knowing it was true love and they are meant for each other, the talk of soul mates and past lives fit the rest of the story as well as David's abilities that help Emrys. Accepting that helps gloss over the three years they were forced to be apart and

how seamlessly they pick up again. The last third picks up the pace and there is a showdown that adds some action and tension to the story.

I really liked this book, I am a fan of young love and I enjoy the sweetness this offers and I would love another story with these two and the rest of the family including Rocky.

Ro Dubose says

Emrys Andrews's magic creates a little havoc for the object of his desire, namely David Jennings, when their eyes first met. However, David is just as enchanted as Emrys. It takes years for the two young men to actually meet, yet that first felt enchantment was still there.

Familiar is a superb heartwarming romance blended with a touch of drama and a dash of humor. The characters are engaging. I wanted to hug Emrys, his family and David. I also had visions of slapping David's parents. Emrys comes from a loving family of witches. Being gay has never been an issue. Emrys has a compassionate personality; he never hesitates to help people and animals. Emrys only flaw is his lack of control mastering magic, so Emrys tries very hard to keep magic within him dormant.

Most of David's life has been manipulated because of his parents repeated mistakes. David seems to be the only one in his family who has common sense. Always on the move, Salem was the only place David wanted to call home. Even though he was forced to hide his attraction for Emrys, David still hoped he and Emrys could be together eventually. Finally destiny, along with strong desire, stepped in to join Emrys and David in a happy ever after relationship.

M. L. Rhodes has created an intriguing as well as very enjoyable saga.

Crissy Morris says

4.5 stars - rounded up

A Joyfully Jay Review

I feel like I should start with a content warning: Please be warned that reviewer has been known to fangurl to the extreme after reading this author's works. M.L. Rhodes is the first m/m author I ever read, and has remained by far one of my very favorite authors, with good reason. Every work that she puts out goes into my "must read" column. The characters are always lovable. The attraction between lovers sizzles. The reader/character connection is immediate and strong. The world building is new and imaginative. And the stories always flow so well.

It's been over a year since an M.L. Rhodes book has been released so I was beyond excited to delve into Emrys' world and another of Rhodes' magickal, inspired works. I wasn't disappointed...not that I had any

doubts.

“But sometimes really hard things that make us hurt, that make us struggle, that make us fight for what we want, are blessings in disguise. Sometimes we have to live through them in order to have a better appreciation of our lives and the good things that happen.” – Emrys Andrews

Emrys Andrews was not your average teenager. Salem, Massachusetts has a vast history of magick and mystery. Emrys and his family are part of that magick. As a member of a family of witches, Emrys has known and been around magick his whole life, but more on the outside of it. Emrys is a witch, but his powers are uncontrollable and unpredictable, so he learned at an early age to suppress his magick in order to keep others around him safe.

At sixteen, Emrys knew at first sight that he wanted to be part of star quarterback David Jennings' life. But after a disaster caused by his magick, Emrys was forced to pine for David from afar for the next year and a half – never wanting to accidentally cause any harm to David. It didn't matter anyway because David had never even noticed Emrys, and he was straight.

On a dare from his best friend at their graduation party, Emrys ends up at an old abandoned house on the harbor that's said to be haunted. He didn't expect to find David on the property. And it was the worst possible time for his magick to act up, but it did and injured David yet again.

A night that began in disaster proved to be just the opposite. Finding out that David has been hiding the same feelings for Emrys was a bit of a shock, but is not unwelcome. David's family life is not what it seems and Emrys finds out that David will be leaving the town of Salem and Emrys the next morning. Both boys share secrets that neither has ever told anyone else. A beautiful night of discovery and connection turns into the hardest goodbye Emrys has ever experienced. And he's not sure he'll ever be able to get over David when he leaves.

Three and a half years later, Emrys still remembers the night spent with David in vivid detail and holds out hope that one day they will find each other again. Then one cold and snowy night, David walks into the veterinary clinic where Emrys works afraid and tense. David is back and Emrys refuses to let him walk away again. Their relationship picks up as if they had never been apart, but danger follows David, and Emrys is determined to find a way to help him even if he has to use his temperamental magick to do so.

First off, if you've read the blurb for this story, you know it's extremely long, detailed, and a little overwhelming. It's almost like a short story of the actual story, but don't let that put you off. Familiar is a fabulous story of dreams and hope and love and, most of all, magick.

As I mentioned earlier, this author's characters are always lovable and most endearing. One of Rhodes' strengths is characterization. Emrys Andrews is no different. The lovable geek that never fit in to one group in school. Who stood up to bullies to protect weaker students, even if he didn't know them. Not a genius. Not a jock. Just an angsty teenage boy who grows into an even more likable man. A boy that lets love go in hopes that it will return. A boy who grows into a man who will fight for his true love. He's stronger than he believes himself to be. Emrys is a charming underdog that had me rooting for him from the beginning of the book to the very end.

The book is written in the first person POV of Emrys, which is not common for Rhodes' works, but is refreshing and flows so well. We only see David through Emrys' eyes, but what I saw, I adore. When he's younger, David is a victim of circumstance. For years, he suffers for his family's mistakes. But older David

is more determined to lead his own life and follow his own heart. His faith in Emrys and his powers makes Emrys have more faith in himself. Together they balance each other.

One of the best aspects of these characters is their believability. I can actually picture these two together – magick, mystery, and all. I can see the teenage boys full of doubt and fear, and the adult men, full of determination and love. Even the sex scenes are believable and so very hot, but that is a given for this author.

The story is as creative as it is captivating. I most enjoy the difference in teenage-Emrys and adult-Emrys. There's a definite change, a maturity, in the thought processes between the two and adds wonderful layers to his character and the story. The magick, the romance, the mystery, all follow Emrys and David through their teenage years into their reunion and wrap up in a nice bow at the end.

Emrys' world is new and imaginative. I would love to spend just one day in the mind of this author if only to know how the creative process plays out. The world in Familiar is one of reality and fantasy, one of humans and witches, one of mortal and magick. There are hints of the paranormal – werewolves, vampires, and ghosts. The play on the legend of witches of Salem adds a little history and myth to the mix. I also love that each of the Andrews' children is named after a witch from literature or television. And if you are a Merlin fan, such as I, you can appreciate the meaning of Emrys' name.

Over half of this book consists of Emrys' high school years and mostly the one night that Emrys and David spent together, and then the story picks up three and a half years later. If I had a complaint it would be that I wish that I could have seen more of what happened in the years that Emrys and David were apart and also I would have loved for the story after the reunion to continue on. I would have liked to see Emrys and David move into the old house. I also would have liked a glimpses into their past lives that readers were given hints of.

So, fangurl gushiness aside, Familiar is a magickal story in more than one sense. The characters, the story, and the world are all combined to bring readers a tale of hope and love that left me wanting more only for the simple fact that it was such a charming story that I didn't want it to end. I highly recommend Familiar by the very talented M.L. Rhodes. I look forward to seeing if Emrys' story continues somewhere down the road, and I anxiously await the next story from M.L. Rhodes.

Cover: I do like this cover by Trace Edward Zaber. It combines lovely images of Emrys and David that are such great depictions of the description within the book along with a little bit of magick.

Simsala says

Do me a favor, read Ami's review and enjoy the story!
Nothing wrong with it, it's sweet and sexy with likeable characters.

I started skimming after sexual tension turned to sex.

I think three/four years back I would have enjoyed this much more but after her last story was a DNF for me and now this - whistling the blues here - I can't read her anymore...

Brett says

I'm going to say, right from the bat, that if you're looking for something sweet, feel-good, and with a smallish amount of angst, then this is probably a good fit for you.

Now for the more in-depth review. I'm going to start with the niggles, the things that bugged me, which can be grouped into 3 areas.

Emrys is a witch with unpredictable powers, but also a geek who's not a geek. He considers himself a geek, I think partly because of his interest in geeky things and his magic issues, but he's also universally friendly and generally well-liked. What bothered me is not that he was a "nice" geek (I was one myself), it was that it was mentioned that he had some trouble in school, mainly due to defending the downtrodden, but it's mentioned by another David (the love interest), without any sort of mention or angst from the character who lived it. It seemed weird and out-of-place to mention, especially for a kid who must have been teased. Emrys has a weird family (own a witch store, and even in Salem, they seem a little different), he's gay, he's a geek...this would be a prime target for bullying in any school in America, sad though that is.

For David, the thing that bothered me most is his situation. She spends a lot of the book describing his family issues, and the reason he has to leave the day after they finally get together. When Rhodes first starts describing the real situation for David's family, it's kind of vague, and the whole setup of why his family moves around feels way too contrived and cliché. I know, it seems weird for me to be asking for more realism in a book with witchcraft, but that's sort of the book she's selling here. It's also really hard for me to believe that they get together *THE NIGHT BEFORE* he's leaving, supposedly for good. Rhodes explains it away as a mystical "the universe did it", but it came across as a little too trite, and a little *deus ex machina*.

All that aside, I did like the characters a lot. They both had issues, but they had interesting back stories (niggles above aside), and there was enough in the side characters to make me happy (I love side characters in any romance). I especially loved his mom; she was sweet and attentive, the kind of mom anyone would want and cherish...their little chat at midnight when Emrys is missing David really does sell his family's closeness, though I kind of wish we were able to have a scene with more of them. I kept forgetting Emrys had a dad, since he's barely mentioned and we never see him.

The relationship between the two crackles, and the sex scenes are really good. Some of the things that bugs me in the other books by Rhodes (the over-the-top angst, etc.) are missing or toned down here, so the story evens out to a rather intense love story, with a medium-sized action scene. They might be a tad heavy on the emoting and "I love yous", but these largely come across as sweet, if a bit saccharine.

All in all, I enjoyed the book, and would probably read it again. This one will fit in within the large library of things by ML Rhodes I've read and enjoyed, and she still is one of my "must-read" authors. :)

Deeze says

Sadly this one failed for me on most levels.

I felt no emotional connection between Emrys or Oliver. The beginning was too drawn out and boring, the sex was repetitive and bland, and the ending left me rolling my eyes at the simplistic way it all got neatly tied

up.

Paisley says

Dang I really wanted to love this book but it fell short for me. I am a HUGE fan of M.L. Rhodes. Hear me? HUGE FAN.

Overall I am glad I read it, but I was sad I paid 8 bucks for it. *Not eight dollar worthy.*

Why you ask? Well, it told a lot without saying much for the first 100 pages. Really, I started to skim because there was so much detail in the moment but the plot crawled until the last 40 pages.

On the upside I did like the characters a lot and there were some fun and interesting parts.

The sex was typical M.L. hotness between the sheets. She knows how to write beautiful and sensuous M/M smut. I always feel her characters love each other and their lovemaking is hot and sexy. I adore that about her books.

Ami says

All righty, the blurb for this one is quite overwhelming isn't it? *lol*. Well, to make it short, Emrys Andrews is a teenage witch. Although he's the runt in the family, meaning that his magick usually goes kaput. At graduation day, Emrys finally able to get it on with his high school crush, Oliver David Jennings. Unfortunately, Oliver must go the next day, because his family (and him by extension) is in danger. Three years later though, Oliver returns, bad guys still hunting him, and Emrys must find it in himself (and his magic) to save his beloved once and for all.

First thing first, since it needs to be said. M.L. Rhodes is one of my favorite authors. So, I tend to be biased when it comes to her stories. No matter how cheesy, corny, or sappy they end up to be (or whether it actually contains quite a number of sex scenes), I usually give more leeway than some other authors.

Having said that, this story is another winner for me. I find Emrys to be adorable. He has tendency to babble and he sort of a geeky teen and the part where his magick goes kablooeey is so funny! Oliver is the perfect guy for him; he helps stabilize Emrys's magic whenever they touch each other.

The part with Oliver's life being in danger ((view spoiler) adds intensity of the story -- which already starts in sweet, with the teenage love and sex scenes. Oh, yes, there are also numerous "I love you's" (see, sappy :p) after the two young men reunited, but again, I don't mind. It hits all the right spot for me, and I love the combination of romance, magick, and a little action in the end.

A quick entertaining read, and I cut down my sleeping time to gobble this one up. It makes me all happy ^^

Riina Y.T. says

♥`.,./ ♥ °?.,./~♥ Utterly Charming! ♥`.,./ ♥ °?.,./~♥

When I picked up Familiar I would have never expected to fall in love with it and its characters so **hard** and so fast.

Oh gods, I adore Emrys, and David is just as lovable.

I **love** the witchy-theme, the ultimate crush turning love, the first times—and all following smexy times— and the little bit of mystery and crime had me hold my breath over and over. I can't even put into words how much fun this story is, and how adorable both boys are!

Just, my kind of sweet romance with the most endearing and charming characters!!

LOVED EVERY DAMN WORD.

Definitely a **forever favorites** & re-read in the future!

I just wish the cover was cuter, since most of the story is YA-ish, and those dudes looks so *old* and well it simply gives me a vibe that screams "all wrong". :(
