



By Familiar Means

Delia James

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In the latest from the author of *A Familiar Tail*, a witch and her familiar find trouble brewing at a coffee house.

After discovering her mystical heritage—and being adopted by furry feline familiar Alistair—artist Annabelle Britton has decided to make picturesque Portsmouth, New Hampshire, her new home. Now, she can take the time to figure out her new abilities and welcome her grandmother, who is visiting Portsmouth, and her old coven, for the first time in thirty years.

But being a witch doesn't magically put money in the bank. When she's hired to paint the murals for a new coffee house, it seems like a wish come true. But then a series of spooky sounds and strange happenings convince the owners that their new shop is haunted. They want Anna and her coven to evict the restless spirit before the grand opening.

Annabelle is certain the haunted happenings at the shop are just hocus pocus. But when her search reveals hidden smugglers' tunnels beneath the shop—and a dead body—Annabelle, Alastair, and the coven suddenly find themselves in a cat and mouse game with a killer...

By Familiar Means Details

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From Reader Review By Familiar Means for online ebook

Brooklyn Tayla says

I definitely enjoyed this more than book 1! Having met all the wonderful characters in this series, I was excited to start this second installment: and it was as fun a read as I hoped: it was mysterious, albeit I feel like the mystery was lost midway through, yet my gosh that ending: I did not see that coming, I tell you! I really loved the interaction between Annabelle and her grandmother, she was a great character - I'm hoping she'll be in book 3! Alistair, Anna's familiar, was my favourite part of the book, I love how Delia James wrote him! She characterises cats perfectly ;)

Jeanne Adamek says

A wonderful engrossing story that enchanted me throughout my reading of this book. I am always really surprised when the second book in a series is so good, especially when I loved the first book. Usually I feel a bit let down, but this wasn't the case here.

I really loved Grandma B.B. and hope she remains in the story in the coming books. Her interaction with Annabelle was great!

Melodie says

I like these characters and their "witchy" ways. Especially like Alistair, Annabelle's familiar. The setting in NH is a good one, too. In this one Annabelle finds a body in a forgotten tunnel while helping out some friends who have hired her to paint murals in their new coffee shop. Really liked Annabelle's visiting Grandma! Recommend!

Peggy R says

This is the second book in the Witch's Cat Mystery and was just as enjoyable as the first. The author has created a story set in a charming historic New England small town and combines it with magic, mystery and a start of a romance for an enchanting read. In my opinion, the author has also assembled a wonderful cast of diverse characters that are strong with depth and dimension. The addition of Anna's grandmother, Grandma B.B., is most welcome. I liked that we were able to see some growth in Anna as she comes to terms with her magic and learning how to use it properly. Also, with Grandma B.B. back in town it provides the reader with a bit of the history and early friendship of the coven members as well as a glimpse into why there was a split among the old families in town. The mystery is well done. There are plenty of twists, turns, suspects, and red herrings that kept this reader guessing the identity of the killer until the very end.

I think this is a very promising new series that will capture the readers' attention with its charming location, realistic and likable characters, magic, romance and mystery. I am hoping for many more installments as this series is becoming one that is an automatic buy for me.

Lisa Ks Book Reviews says

The witch is back in this second installment in the Witch's Cat Mysteries!

Having enjoyed book one in this series, A FAMILIAR TAIL, I was more than happy to get my hands on book two, BY FAMILIAR MEANS. It was worth the wait!

Being back in Portsmouth, New Hampshire with Annabelle Britton and her kitty familiar, Alistair, was a welcome visit for me. I once again spent time with the delightfully memorable characters of this series sharing in their lives. This magical tale was even more fun and enchanting thanks to Annabelle's Grandma B. B. paying a visit. That lady was a whirlwind!

In BY FAMILIAR MEANS, author Delia James gives readers everything we could wish for in a para-cozy . . . mystery, murder, and magic. If that isn't enough for you, how about old smuggler's tunnels, and ghostly happenings? I thought that would get your attention. ;-)

Wonderfully written, with a superbly tricky plot, author James pulled me in with chapter one as though under a spell. That enchantment held me until the last magically penned page.

Add BY FAMILIAR MEANS to your TBR and prepare to enjoy the magic!

Doward Wilson says

Annabelle Britton is training to be a witch by her coven friends and her cat familiar, Alistair. When her grandmother announces that she is coming to visit Annabelle and her old coven members, Annabelle knows that trouble is lurking somewhere. When she gets a commission to paint murals in an old building that is being renovated into a new location for an established coffee shop business, she gets into trouble with the local police. Ghostly happenings are going on at the construction site and Annabelle starts exploring. She ends up discovering hidden rooms, smuggler's tunnels and a dead body. With the help of the coven and her grandmother, Annabelle knows they will discover the truth and the real murderer.

This paranormal cozy mystery series is even better in this second book. The characters are growing and the background is expanding. A fun adventure for any cozy fan. Don't let the paranormal aspect keep from checking it out.

Betty says

In the second book of this series, Annabelle Britton continues to learn about her witches' heritage. She is helping her friends at their new store when strange noises are heard. Checking out the building they find a tunnel leading to a door that is locked and appears to go nowhere. Trying to open it Annabelle stumbles upon a body. The investigation into the death leads to an old secret. The story is enlivened by the arrival of

Annabelle's Grandmother, Alistair and Leo and Max add much to the adventure. The Coven continues to be involved and lends their assistance. An excellent paranormal story. I am ready for the next book.

Karen says

By Familiar Means by Delia James is a book I really enjoyed. Book one A Familiar Tail was really good and I was so looking forward to this one that I ordered it months ago. I still have it on order and got the Shipping notice that is on it's way from The Book Depository. I loved book number two. As a fan of witchcraft mysteries this one is fast becoming one of my go to witchy series! Main Character Annabelle Britton is trying to start her life over in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, new home, new friends not to mention she recently found out she is a hereditary witch! Filled with questions and angst in book two her Grandma BB arrives to help her learn about herself, her abilities and get mixed up in another mystery. Great story, strong characters, lovely setting, fun familiars as well as a great mystery and a ghost or two....I hope you will love this one as much as I did!

OpenBookSociety.com says

<http://openbooksociety.com/article/by...>

By Familiar Means

A Witch's Cat Mystery, Book #2

By Delia James

ISBN#9780451476586

Author's website: <http://www.deliajamesmysteries.com/>

Brought to you by OBS Reviewer Daniele

Synopsis:

After discovering her mystical heritage—and being adopted by furry feline familiar Alistair—artist Annabelle Britton has decided to make picturesque Portsmouth, New Hampshire, her new home. Now, she can take the time to figure out her new abilities and welcome her grandmother, who is visiting Portsmouth, and her old coven, for the first time in thirty years.

But being a witch doesn't magically put money in the bank. When she's hired to paint the murals for a new coffee house, it seems like a wish come true. But then a series of spooky sounds and strange happenings convince the owners that their new shop is haunted. They want Anna and her coven to evict the restless spirit before the grand opening.

Annabelle is certain the haunted happenings at the shop are just hocus pocus. But when her search reveals hidden smugglers' tunnels beneath the shop—and a dead body—Annabelle, Alastair, and the coven suddenly find themselves in a cat and mouse game with a killer.

Review:

By Familiar Means is the well written second book in the Witch's Cat Mystery series, and readers will surely find themselves under its spell.

Anna decides to stay in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, and is exploring her newly found witchy heritage. Though she has joined the local coven and established some other friendships (and potential romantic relationships), she worries that her "free" living arrangements will come to an end at any moment. Being a witch is all well and good, but she needs paying artist jobs to pay the bill for rent that she is sure is coming. Luckily, local hippies and coffee shop proprietors Jake and Miranda are moving locations to expand their business and hire Anna to paint murals in the new space. However, they think the old building is haunted and want Anna to rid it of its ghosts. This is not exactly her area of expertise, but she agrees to give it a shot. Instead of finding the lingering deceased, she discovers old smugglers' tunnels beneath the building and a not so old dead body. Jake and Miranda (and Anna) immediately become the prime suspects in the local hotel's sous chef Jimmy Upton's death. Obviously, it is in Anna's best interest to investigate and find the real killer. Meanwhile, Anna's Grandma B.B. returns to town after a decades' long feud with the other guardian witches of Portsmouth seeking to mend some fences and help her granddaughter learn about her family legacy.

I really like the concept of the Witch's Cat Mystery series, and Delia James gets it all right with By Familiar Means. The coastal town with a long history of witches, a curious and slightly awkward protagonist, a great cat familiar, nonthreatening magic, a glimpse of the town's smuggling past, potential romance, and, of course, a murder. I am so glad that James brought Grandma B.B. to town. She is quirky and provides an interesting perspective of the coven and Portsmouth's past. Plus, she is simply easy to like. The supporting characters are well developed and appealing, all providing layers of personalities and lots of plot potential. I would be remiss if I failed to mention Anna's cat familiar Alistair. He always appears when needed to help save the day. The only thing that would make him even better is if he could talk.

There is actually quite a bit going on in this book. Aside from the murder, there are threads concerning conservation and preservation vs. development and independent businesses threatened by big business. These all contribute to make the murder mystery sufficiently complex. I would have liked for the Prohibition era smuggling tunnels thread to have been further flushed out. I think it would make for fascinating reading. Perhaps, James will revisit them in a future installment. There are a plethora of possible suspects and scenarios that could lead to Jimmy's death, and, though the end did not come as a complete surprise, the revelation provides a satisfactory conclusion.

I greatly enjoy my time with Anna, Alistair, and Grandma B.B. and hope to have many more adventures with them. I recommend By Familiar Means to fans of paranormal cozies that are pretty lighthearted about the magic.

OBS would like to thank the publisher for supplying a free copy of this title in exchange for an honest review

Lisa Morin says

Exciting story

This was an excellent story filled with murder, mystery and magic. A secret tunnel, chef gone wild and so much more in this great installation by Delia James.

Daniele says

BY FAMILIAR MEANS is a nice followup to A FAMILIAR TALE. I like the Portsmouth atmosphere. Anna is finding her way through her abilities, Alistair the cat is great, and I love the addition of Anna's grandmother. The murder mystery is solid and well developed. The paranormal aspects are balanced well with the real world.

*I received a copy of this book from the publisher in exchange for an honest review. This did not influence my opinions expressed here.**

LilyElement says

By Familiar Means is book 2 in the Witch's Cat Mystery series. While I haven't read the first book in the series, I knew I had to try this out because it's a mystery plus paranormal! I wound up really enjoying it and will have to backtrack to book 1 now. If you're a fan of paranormal + mystery grab this series asap!

Annabelle Britton (aka Anna) is an aspiring artist and also a witch that is still learning the ropes on how to control her powers. She's moved to Portsmouth, New Hampshire has some awesome friends, a coven and now her grandmother that is also a witch has reentered the picture. We start off with Anna going to check out the new location for the coffee house that she's been hired to paint murals for. After some spooky ghostly activity, she and the owners get a strong vibe that they have to check out the basement which leads to the discovery of a smugglers tunnel. It winds up leading to a dead body and the coffee shop owners and Anna are listed as suspects. Anna and her cat familiar, Alastair are determined to find the other end of the tunnel before the killer strikes again, and don't you know he/she will be coming after them next!

By Familiar Means was a magical mystery I didn't want to stop listening to. I really enjoyed the characters and the mystery element had me questioning who the killer was. I have to admit I loved that magic was added into this book, I need to try out more mysteries with paranormal elements! If you're a fan of mystery novels and/or witches you'll love this book.

The Narrator:

I thought that Elise Arsenault did a great job infusing the characters with personality. It was easy to figure out which character was which, each had their own distinct voice.

Gaele says

AudioBook Review:

Stars: Overall 4 Narration 4 Story 5

SO much going on in this story! Anna has decided to stay in Portsmouth, as she's made some friends, met some of the women from her grandmother's coven, discovered that she and Alistair the cat have rapport, and

finds the city to her liking. But, she's got to find a way to make some money, and an offer appears in the form of a series of murals for a new coffee shop location, if she'll also exorcise the ghosts from the building. Anna's kind of up for anything, even as she doesn't know how to remove ghosts, or even where to start, but needs must and her investigations at the building turn up Bootlegger's smuggling tunnels, and a newly dead body.

And then the fun really begins! Anna's Grandma BB arrives back in town after a falling out with her coven, and she's helping Anna understand her own abilities, sorting out her own issues with the coven, and dabbling in the mystery as it unfolds. Of course, Anna as the discoverer of the body is a suspect, as are the coffee shop owners who hired her, and the twists and turns are real. When you add in some very real concerns in terms of maintaining historic elements and small business in lieu of tried and true national big box stores, the history of smuggling and Portsmouth's proximity to open water, Anna's newly found 'skill' and Alistair the cat's multiple inputs into her life, the mystery and as general adorable-ness, the story is clever, twisty and the reveal is wonderful.

Picking up from A Familiar Tail, Elise Arsenault again narrates this installment, and her presentation of the different characters, and the continuity with Anna's portrayal is wonderfully skilled: each new character is imbued with the 'descriptive adjectives' that James introduced them with: the coffee house owners, a touch of hippie-dippy is clearly presented, Grandma BB sounds older, but also has her own quirks and reveals – each bringing about an easy understanding of who is speaking, what they are feeling and even adding to the visual image the listener has in their head. Easily followed out of order, I still think the best way here is to go in order – mostly to get the sense of place that newcomer Annabelle brings, and the charm that convinces her to stay in Portsmouth, as well as the clever mysteries to solve using some magic, some guesswork and lots of dead ends.

I received an AudioBook copy of the title from Tantor Audio for purpose of honest review. I was not compensated for this review: all conclusions are my own responsibility.

Review first appeared at I am, Indeed

Annie says

2.5 stars.

I'm sad because I know I enjoyed the first one much more. I can't decide whether I didn't give this the attention it deserved or it simply didn't grab my attention to hold in the first place. The premise is great, the oceanside town sounds quite idyllic, Alistair is a terrific cat, and the storyline was quite good, but it simply didn't capture me and it took me much longer than it should have to finish it.

I was entirely unconvinced by Anna as a character this time around (I don't even remember what she looks like), and don't remember the Seans McNally, never mind the fact that Young Sean is supposed to be the love interest. There was no spark between Anna & Sean to suggest a potential, explosive relationship (or even an interesting one), other than some smirking and comments from other characters. It's one of the flattest relationship potentials I've ever come across.

I'm still not entirely convinced that it was the story that didn't grab me, however, and will be keeping an eye

out for the third installment. I like the series enough to stick with it, so am hopeful that third time is, indeed, the charm.

Kim Reads (Read Your Writes Book Reviews) says

By Familiar Means finds Annabelle “Anna” Britton embracing her special witchy powers. She’s truly happy in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, renting the nice cozy house she lives in, and making more friends. When her grandmother, Annabelle Mercy Blessingsound Britton, affectionately known as Grandma B.B. comes for a visit to the town she left over 30 years previously, Anna is beyond happy. The only thing missing is her having a job to support herself. She’s offered the opportunity to paint a mural for the new Northeast Java coffee shop, by owners Jake and Miranda Luce. But things are too good to be true.

Jake and Miranda do want to renovate the building they purchased for their new location, but that’s not the only reason they want Anna. They’re sure the building is haunted and they want Anna to get rid of the ghost. First problem, Anna doesn’t believe in ghosts. Second problem, Anna isn’t that kind of witch. She can’t just cast a spell or use some hocus pocus to make a non-existent ghost disappear. Anna’s witchy power is being able to walk into a place and get a vibe from it. Anna believes in the Threefold law of: “Whatever you send out into the world comes back to you threefold.” She doesn’t want to make the Luces anymore scared or nervous, so she agrees to read the building. The biggest problem of all comes when Anna and the Luces start searching the basement and discover a dead body. Now, the police are listing Anna, Jake, and Miranda as suspects. It’s going to take Anna, her familiar, her coven, and her grandmother to get to the bottom of things.

Readers are treated to an in-depth look into exactly what Anna is capable of with her powers. It was fun to watch Anna, Alistar, her coven, and Grandma B.B. come together to help discover who killed the man found in the basement and what exactly happened to him. There are a couple of surprises in store. By Familiar Means will definitely have you smiling a time or two.

****Received a copy from Penguin Berkley Prime Crime and voluntarily reviewed the book.****
