

Friends?

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Warnings/Spoilers: explicit sexual situation, no specific spoilers

Summary: Arthur has been pondering the mystery that is Merlin and starts to ask questions for which Merlin is not prepared, which lead to interesting things.

Author's Notes: Thanks to Soph for the beta and my friends for dragging me into this fandom kicking and screaming :). The pretty boys are irresistible ;). This is my first Merlin fic, but with the number of bunnies crawling through my brain I have no doubt there will be more - lol.

Word Count: ~3,250

In Merlin's considered opinion, Arthur was drunk, and on this point he had a lot of experience. Getting drunk seemed to be one of the favourite noble pastimes in between beating the crap out of each other. Arthur wasn't falling down drunk, just happy drunk and Merlin didn't have to help his prince up the stairs, which was a good thing, because he, himself wasn't feeling completely steady either. It was the mid winter festival and Merlin had had a couple of large goblets of wine to celebrate as well, although he was of the definite opinion that getting really drunk would be, for him, an incredibly bad idea. Waking up with a hangover and discovering he had outed himself as a sorcerer would just be so not fun.

So he was less drunk than Arthur, but more drunk than usual, which was probably why he failed to notice that Arthur was eyeing him strangely until they reached Arthur's rooms.

"What?" he asked, doing his best to sound completely sober.

"Just wondering," Arthur said with a grin and then failed to mention what the wondering had been about.

When Arthur turned and walked over to the fire, Merlin rolled his eyes and followed. He decided that sobering Arthur up a bit before he made sure his liege made it to bed safely might be a good idea so that neither of them had to suffer the hangover in the morning. Arthur tended to be less than pleasant when in possession of a sore head.

"Wondering what?" Merlin asked as he filled a beaker from the pitcher of water he had left on the table earlier and offered it to Arthur.

"Why you're here and not off with some girl," Arthur said, but accepted the beaker and its contents. "It is traditional for the servants to leave early at this festival."

Merlin just smiled at that; girls, of course it had to be about girls.

"I know," he said, helping himself to some water as well, "you told me, but then who would have made sure you didn't fall down the stairs and lose Camelot one heir?"

He had been one of the few servants still at the feast when Arthur chose to leave, but he hadn't really felt like being anywhere else. Mid winter was a time for magic and since Arthur could find trouble just by breathing, Merlin had felt much happier where he could see his "destiny", as the dragon liked to put it.

"I'm not that drunk," Arthur replied, but grinning none-the-less, "and you're the one more likely to fall down stairs than me."

Merlin just shrugged, after all, Arthur was right and it wasn't as if he could come out and say, "well I just wanted to be there in case anything magical happened so I could save your arse again." It was then he realised that Arthur was looking at him oddly again; it was a little unnerving. To cover the sudden awkward feeling in his chest he picked up a log from the basket and put it on the fire, trying to act as a good servant should for once.

"Merlin," Arthur finally spoke again.

He didn't look up, just continued to poke the fire aimlessly and work out why he suddenly felt as if something wasn't quite normal.

"Do you like men?"

That did make him look up, since the question confused him somewhat.

"Huh?" was the most sensible thing that came to mind.

He had absolutely not idea what Arthur was on about.

"Men, Merlin, do you like men?" Arthur rolled his eyes as he spoke. "Have you been with a man, I mean I know you look at pretty girls and I'm almost sure I nearly caught you and Gwen kissing once, but you don't seem overly interested so I was wondering, is it because you like men?"

Merlin's brain caught up with what he was being asked and he couldn't stop the heat rising in his face. He was familiar with the concept of men being with men, but it wasn't something that had really crossed his mind. Actually sex didn't cross his mind overly much, not since an incident in early puberty where his excitement had caused a barn fire. He had decided at that point it was better if he didn't indulge too often. He was only human, so he did every now and then, and there hadn't been another incident, but he'd kind of trained himself out of being overly horny by the time he had realised that.

"Um," he tried to think of what to say as he got up and went back to the table.

Since he had to lie about such a vital part of his life all the time, he did his very best to not lie to Arthur about anything else, so he thought about it.

"I ..." he really wasn't sure; he honestly had never thought about it.

"Didn't think it was that difficult a question," Arthur said, clearly amused by his reaction.

"I don't know," Merlin decided to be absolutely honest, since he had had just enough wine to not really care.

That made Arthur laugh out loud, but Merlin really couldn't see what was so funny.

"How do you not know?" Arthur asked, seemingly genuinely curious.

"It's never crossed my mind," was all Merlin could think to reply; these types of conversations were not best had after strong wine.

"Never?" Arthur asked.

Merlin just shrugged.

"You seemed to go a little gooey-eyed over Lancelot," Arthur added, as if it had just occurred to him.

That was a step too far for Merlin, however.

"I do not go gooey-eyed," he protested; he was definitely not a girl.

Once again Arthur snorted with laughter at his reaction and he considered just leaving and letting Arthur find his own way to bed. For once Arthur seemed to be paying proper attention to his mood, because his companion sobered a little at his reaction.

"I wasn't trying to make fun of you," Arthur said, smiling slightly, but not longer laughing at him; "I was just curious. You're a mystery, Merlin, and that is so rare in Camelot."

That caused him to look down; there were some mysteries he did not want to be solved.

"I'm not a mystery," he said, doing his best not to think traitorous thoughts.

When he looked up again, Arthur seemed a little closer and, as the firelight caught on the side of Arthur's face and hair, Merlin suddenly had a glimpse that maybe Arthur had him pegged. He smothered the thought very quickly; that would be a very dangerous path, but it was there long enough for him to recognise it.

"Why aren't you with Gwen, Merlin?" Arthur did not seem to want to let the subject drop. "She'd have you I'm sure."

"I don't want Gwen," he said, much to his own surprise as he realised it was true. "We're much better friends than we'd ever be anything else."

"Some friends come with benefits," Arthur said and wiggled his eyebrows in such a way that meant either he had lice and his head was itching or he was trying to be suggestive.

Merlin couldn't help smiling, even though the conversation was confusing him somewhat.

"Well I'm sure you'd know," he replied and drank some more of his water.

Arthur didn't deny it.

"But you might have a point," Arthur did concede; "girls can get clingy, best to only sleep with the ones you're never going to see again."

Merlin knew for a fact that Arthur had bedded more than one of the servant girls in the castle, but then he was also pretty sure they didn't really count in Arthur's world, so he just accepted Arthur's logic. The fact that Gwen was a servant, but still did seem to count was kind of nice, but a little confusing at the same time. Arthur was a mess of contradictions sometimes and from the talk he'd heard around the castle it seemed to have started around the time he had arrived. He hoped it was a good sign.

"Frankly," he said, looking into his beaker and wondering if there were pictures in the reflections, "I think avoiding the whole thing is far easier."

It was a couple of seconds before he realised that Arthur had not replied, so he looked up to see Arthur staring at him.

"What?" he found himself asking for the second time that evening.

"You have a dick, right?" Arthur asked as if he was no longer sure.

Merlin rolled his eyes again.

"Yes," he replied with a shake of his head, "and last I checked fully functioning too."

"Then how can you say that?" Arthur asked and really seemed to be amazed. "Sex is ... well sex is the most fun you can have without a horse or a sword. Once you've had it I don't know how anyone..."

Arthur trailed off and Merlin had a nasty suspicion that something had just occurred to his companion. It had to be something that Arthur found odd or hard to believe because it took the prince a while to voice it.

"You have had sex?" Arthur finally spoke.

It was abundantly clear that Arthur thought the answer to the question had to be a yes and Merlin just stood there, trying to think of a smart answer. His silence, of course, spoke volumes. Clearly this caused Arthur to have to rethink the situation.

"You haven't had sex," and this time it wasn't a question.

The conversation was going places that were making Merlin uncomfortable and he shifted uneasily.

"I've been otherwise occupied," he said, with less conviction than he had hoped for.

It wasn't exactly his fault he spent all of his time trying to make sure Arthur didn't die; that was all the dragon's doing. He did his very best to make it back to the not caring stage, but he'd sobered up enough that he was just hideously embarrassed and took to staring at the floor. When he dared to look his companion in the eye again, the way Arthur was looking at him worried him even more, especially when Arthur sort of smiled. The way Arthur kind of shrugged out of his surcoat and threw it casually over the nearest chair had Merlin swallowing hard and thinking that maybe Arthur knew exactly how the firelight made his hair

shimmer. He did his very best to squash the improper thoughts that ran through his mind yet again, but it was rather difficult when Arthur stepped up to him.

"There's no need to look so nervous," Arthur said in a voice that was suddenly so deep, Merlin thought he could feel it rather than hear it, "we're friends aren't we?"

That statement kind of derailed Merlin's thought processes even more than what Arthur appeared to be doing, because Merlin had been thinking that for a while, but neither of them had mentioned it out loud. In fact he was so distracted by those four words that it took him a while to catch up with the fact that Arthur's hand was trailing down his chest.

"What are you doing?" he managed to say, even if the last bit did come out as a less than dignified squeak as Arthur's hand travelled past his belt.

Arthur didn't seem to have any intention of stopping and Merlin found himself grabbing the side of the table behind him to stop his legs from failing him. He couldn't quite stop the small moan that made it out of his throat though. It was totally unavoidable as Arthur fondled him through his clothes and sent the most wonderful sensations stabbing through his groin. Now this was a totally new situation; he could honestly say he'd never been in a position like this before, in fact he'd never even considered it.

"Nothing you won't like," Arthur said, making him moan again with a little more pressure.

Merlin's brain did consider asking Arthur to stop, but was succinctly overruled by his cock beginning to swell and all sensible thought being circumvented by the things Arthur's clever fingers were doing. How Arthur managed to get his breeches unlaced and those aforementioned fingers underneath he had no idea, but Merlin couldn't say he was about to complain. When skin met skin he began to see Arthur's point about sex being something worth investigating.

Arthur was watching his face and he knew it, but after a few seconds he gave up trying to keep eye contact and just let himself sink into the wicked things Arthur was doing to him. Just as he was quite happy to bow to Arthur's superior knowledge in battle, so he decided very quickly he was happy to do the same then, since it was utterly plain, even to an idiot, that Arthur knew exactly what he was doing.

"I think we may have found something we will agree on," Arthur said, amusement underlain with something deep and dangerous in his voice.

That deserved some sort of comeback, but Merlin thought that his brain might be melting out of his ears and he was completely incapable of coming up with anything.

"Maybe ... should ... have ... tried ... sooner," was about the best he could do, which at least made Arthur chuckle and push against him.

He didn't remember becoming so hard, so quickly before and his body responded to Arthur like he was made for just that. Arthur had his whole attention, nothing was left for anything else and at that moment he didn't want there to be. What happened next was up there with things that Merlin had never expected to see, like Uther walking up to a sorcerer and passing pleasantries: Arthur slid to his knees. The crown prince kneeling before him like a knight before the king was

about as out there as well, Arthur trying to seduce him in the first place. He was totally out of his depth and he had no idea where this was leading, but he really couldn't bring himself to try and stop it.

"Say 'please', Merlin," Arthur said, looking up at him through long lashes.

"Please," he just about managed to stutter, not sure what he was asking for, but very sure he didn't want Arthur to stop touching him.

When Arthur pulled him free of his breeches and then swallowed him whole, he just about died. The table creaked dangerously as it took virtually his whole weight at a very odd angle and about all he could do was prevent himself sliding to the floor. The feeling of wet warmth was almost enough to set him off there and then, but he had a little pride, even if his thoughts were a mess of nothing, and he clawed onto control for a little longer. Arthur's tongue was doing things to him he had never imagined a tongue doing and the tight suction that Arthur applied between bouts of licking and swirling just about drove him out of his mind.

Nothing had prepared him for the closest he had ever made it to real sex, nothing ever. His own fumbings in the dark were completely irrelevant in comparison and, as mad ideas skittered through his head, like maybe seeing if Arthur would let him try this later and utterly foolish things like that, he decided that, for once, Arthur was totally right about something. He was going to have to write it down somewhere since it happened so rarely, which was a thought that kind of made him want to laugh, which seemed highly inappropriate, so he moaned very loudly instead.

His whole body was beginning to hum with the wonderful sensations running through him. His skin was tingling and his breath was coming in short bursts and most of his brain power seemed to have moved to his cock. The way his balls felt heavy and tight told him he was close, so very, very close and he tried to say something to warn Arthur, but things rather got away from him. It was like one second he could feel his orgasm building and the next it just hit with the force of a charging steed.

It blew his mind, almost literally, and there was nothing he could do to stop the burst of magic that went with it. He shuddered and gasped, moaning in a stuttering chorus and so did the castle. The stones actually shook and Merlin finally lost his perch against the table. Luckily for him, Arthur caught him and they ended up in a heap on the floor.

Merlin was terrified and sated all at the same time, which was an amazing feat even for him.

"I've heard of the earth moving," Arthur said, as Merlin tried to put his brain together and come up with some sort of explanation, "but that was a little literal."

Just as Merlin opened his mouth to say something there was an almighty bellow that sounded through the entire castle. It reverberated through every corridor and Arthur was suddenly looking out of the window instead of at him.

"The Great Dragon," Arthur said as if that explained everything and then looked back at him; "talk about timing."

"Always impeccable," Merlin replied with a small grin and then slumped where he was sprawled.

That made Arthur laugh and Merlin couldn't help thinking that being sprawled on the floor with the crown prince would not be considered exactly proper, but then they weren't engaged in proper things. He laughed as well, since he really didn't know what else to do. He'd just had his first sexual experience with another person, his magic had almost given him away and he thought he deserved a little while to recover his brain.

"Did you mean it," he finally asked as they just sat there in companionable silence, "about us being friends?"

Arthur looked at him again then; that look that had first made him nervous.

"God help me," Arthur said eventually with a wry grin, "but yes I meant it. Just don't tell my father, okay?"

Merlin laughed again; that was one thing he never intended to do.

"Why? I like it so much in the stocks and I'm sure you enjoy your father's lectures more than anything else in the world," he responded, pleased that he seemed to be getting his sarcasm back if nothing else.

"Oh yes," Arthur replied with mock seriousness, "I crave them."

Looking into the fire, Merlin chose to just enjoy the moment. It was difficult to know what the evening's activities might mean or if they would just fade along with the festivities. In fact he wasn't sure what he wanted; he was more than a little confused. For a while Arthur seemed happy to just remain there as well, but eventually it had to end and Merlin sat up as Arthur moved. What he didn't expect was Arthur to take his hand and drag him to his feet.

"I believe," Arthur said, sparkle back in his eyes; "I have a great deal more to add to your education."

Merlin was going to protest, but, as he opened his mouth, he felt his lips being covered by Arthur's and Arthur tasted of wine and something that the back of Merlin's mind whispered was him and common sense deserted him again. As he was all but dragged towards the bedroom, he wondered how many times the dragon could cover for him before Arthur actually caught on.

The End