

## Alliance

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# **Alliance**

by [shadowglove88](#)

## Summary

When Arthur finds out his father is making an alliance with the magical barbarians in the forest, he refuses to marry any of the daughters of Lord Balinor Emrys. But somehow he can't stay away from Balinor's only son, the ethereal Merlin.



"I *refuse* to align myself with some *forest* dweller." Arthur sneered at the mere thought of it.

Things between Mercia and Camelot had always been tense, but there'd been rumors of war preparations on the Mercian side, and despite Uther's ego believing that Camelot could take on the Mercian's, he'd known that an alliance with the mysterious and solitary people of the forests could only help him and his cause. That was why Arthur had only been informed now, hours before their arrival, that Balinor, (the closest thing those weird, magical barbarians had to a king or ruler) would be arriving with an entourage of his *barbarians* and Uther expected Arthur to choose from Balinor's numerous children his future partner to consolidate the alliance between Camelot and the only people with magic in the whole of Albion. Despite being a small people, and only able to call the forest their home, Balinor's people had not only defeated the many different armies that'd invaded trying to claim the forest as theirs, but the magic users had *decimated* anyone who dared attack them. It'd gotten to the point where no one dared go into the forest anymore, no one wanted to claim it for their kingdom for fear of going up against Balinor's people and their magical, *brutal*, and *savage* warcraft.

"You will do this, Arthur, whether you like it or not." Uther glared at his son from his lofty, pompous throne. "You owe it to all of Camelot to marry one of Balinor's spawn and cement an alliance that promises protection for your people. When this marriage comes to pass, Balinor will send his best magic users to not only act as ambassadors, but as warriors, fighting for *Camelot*. No other kingdom has come *nearly* as close to cementing an alliances with the forest dwellers as we have, and I will *not* let *you* ruin this for the kingdom."

"I refuse to do this," Arthur hissed, defying his father for the first time in his young life.

"You *will*!" Uther snapped.

They were still at odds when, a couple of hours later, Balinor and his people arrived. They were dressed in browns and greens, colors that would have blended in with the trees and bushes, some had their faces painted as well. Their feet were bare, their clothes nothing more than dyed rags that barely covered them, quite indecent, quite barbaric.

Arthur sneered and didn't care that it was obvious.

Balinor walked to the throne. "King Uther."

Uther stood from his throne and met Balinor halfway, clasping his hand. "Chieftain Balinor, it is an honor for you to be here."

"It is... an honor... to be here as well," Balinor announced slowly, as if not sure that what he said was the truth. "My children." He motioned behind him. "Morgana, my eldest." A beautiful woman with eyes just as displeased as Arthur stepped forwards. She had a very regal air to her, but she also looked capable of slicing open a man's throat during his sleep, and if the look she sent Arthur had anything to say about the matter, she was quite prepared to do that to him.

He narrowed his eyes further.

"She has the gift of Sight, and can see things before they happened." Balinor beamed in pride. "It is why we were waiting for your messengers at the edge of the forest when they arrived, for she had Seen your proposition of an alliance, and that it was in everyone's interest for the alliance to be made."

"The ability to see things yet to happen?" Uther's eyes widened. "*Fascinating.*"

Balinor cleared his throat.

Morgana sent him a look before curtsying and walking to his side, her green dress willowy and swaying with her as she moved.

Another girl stepped forwards. She was pretty, with dark hair and eyes, her every movement shy and unsure, unable to look from the floor.

"Freya." Balinor smiled. "She has been given the gift of transformation."

"Transformation?" Uther echoed, eyes widening even further.

Balinor nodded, motioning to his daughter.

The girl in the plainer brown gown took in a deep breath and lowered herself so that she was crouching on the ground, and then there was a bright light and then before them stood a beast unlike anything Arthur had ever seen.

A monster.

His sneer grew.

And then, with another bright flash of light, the girl was on the ground was more, breathing in deeply and standing a little shakily.

Uther had had to sit down on the throne after that demonstration.

Arthur turned to his father, about to tell him he was *insane* if he thought he'd marry a woman who would rather kill him than wed him, or one that turned into a monster.

"Are you alright, Freya?" A fey-like, lithe body made its way through the *newcomers*. It was a young man, as white as a moonbeam, with the clearest blue eyes and hair as black as the darkest moonless night. Unlike the rest of the people, he wore blacks and reds, and his pale skin was covered in black markings placed there by some sort of paint.

Arthur felt his body freeze, unable to look away from the thin boy.

He was... beautiful.

The marking on his skin only added to that mysterious *something* that left Arthur dumbstruck and dry-throated.

"My son," Balinor finally spoke, the pride obvious on his face. "Merlin."

*Merlin.*

Merlin's eyes went to Uther and he nodded his head.

"And this is my son, heir to the throne of Camelot, Arthur." Uther motioned to his son. "I am sure that he and Merlin will grow to be close."

There was a pointed look in Arthur's direction.

Arthur didn't notice his father's subtle order for him to make friends with Balinor's only son, he was already descending the steps to stand in front of the willowy yet slightly taller boy. "Welcome to Camelot, I hope that you and your family will enjoy your stay."

Merlin eyed him silence, appearing to be confused, before he sent a quick look to his father and then back at Arthur, placing his hand in the one the prince offered. "I am sure we will, Prince Arthur."

His hand was soft, no callouses to be found on his fingertips.

As if he'd never done a day's work in his life.

But there was a determination in those eyes that no lazy sod would have ever been able to duplicate.

It was... intriguing.

Merlin slipped his hand from Arthur's and sent the prince another odd look before going to where his father stood.

Arthur knew that Balinor had brought his daughters out of the forest for the first time in their lives so that he could woo and marry one, but it was Balinor's *son* that intrigued the young prince. It was as if he'd been bewitched the moment he'd first laid eyes on the boy, and it

[illegible]

"Why would you think it funny?" Merlin asked, confusion on his face as they stood in the Queen's Garden, Morgana and Freya giggling amongst the flowers, feeling more at home amongst the plant life. "In the outside kingdoms, isn't it inappropriate for unmarried females to be unaccompanied in the presence of an unmarried man?"

For a moment Merlin only looked at him blankly, and then a small smile began to tilt his lips. "I see your point."

Morgana and Freya threw themselves onto the grass, sighing happily as they talked to each other.

Merlin's gaze went to his sisters thoughtfully. "Morgana's runes distinguish her as the heiress, the first born, and as a Seer. And Freya's proclaim her unity with the beasts and nature."

Merlin's gaze turned on Arthur in surprise, his hand going to the markings on his face. "My markings."

As if he really needed to tell the younger boy about them.

Merlin's hand remained on his face. "The markings on my face are merely decorative." And yet he wasn't looking at Arthur. "And the ones on my body, they are to show that I have passed my initiation and have been accepted by my people as an adult man."

"Initiation?" Arthur asked curiously, unable to look away from the kohl surrounding those bluest of blue eyes, and the markings under the eyes and over the bridge of that nose. "What does one have to do to be *initiated* in your people?"

"Several tasks," Merlin replied vaguely. "Upon the successful completion of said tasks your hair is cut, and these symbols of manhood and victory are placed on your body." He pulled up his sleeve slightly, betraying the symbols beneath the material. "And then, when a certain period had passed, they will fade and you will begin with the marking."

"Marking?" Arthur frowned, not sure he liked the sound of that.

It must have shown on his face because Merlin frowned back. "Each to their own customs."

He realized he'd offended Merlin somehow with just a facial expression.

Arthur opened his mouth to say *something*.

Merlin walked passed him and went to where his sisters were.

Arthur turned and watched him go, stomach churning.

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The scream echoed throughout the castle.

They'd all headed towards the sound, not sure if the castle was under attack, but then they'd found the eldest girl, Morgana, wearing her sleeping gown and wandering the hallway in a daze, eyes glazed over, mumbling things that made absolutely no sense. She was obviously insane, and Arthur hoped that this just went to show his father how much of a *spectacularly* bad idea it was for him to marry Balinor's eldest daughter. She was homicidal, and insane. And, kinda scary, and very annoying.

Yes.

Arthur would *not* be wedding Morgana Emrys.

*Ever.*

He'd slit his *own* throat before the wedding just to save her the time.

"Gana..." Merlin appeared from the shadows, surprising everyone, all the knights jumping.

No one had sensed him.

That both unnerved, annoyed, and impressed Arthur.

But he really didn't notice.

Merlin was wearing nothing but a short skirt looking thing, black like his other garments, and his body was on display. He was all long, graceful limbs, alabaster skin covered in markings that...

Arthur gulped.

Morgana turned unseeingly towards her younger brother's voice.

"Come here 'Gana, everything's okay," Merlin whispered, drawing his sister in his arms, listening as she spoke that mumbo gumbo. He nodded as he held her, as if he could actually understand what it was that she was saying. "Yes sister, I know. Worry not. I will take care of it."

She nodded, hands on his chest.

Merlin surprised everyone by picking up his sister in his arms bridal style.

The thin boy didn't look so strong to be able to do that so easily.

He whispered some words in the same meaningless mumblings she had, and then Morgana's eyes closed in sleep. Merlin's eyes flashed gold, and then his sister disappeared from his arms.

There were gasps, and someone dropped his sword.

Arthur just looked at Merlin in awe.

What had just *happened*?

And why were his eyes *gold* now?

Merlin ignored Arthur and turned to Sir Valiant, golden eyes flashing brightly. "*Where are the Mercians?*"

Valiant dropped his sword. "In the tunnels under the castle, My Liege. I gave them the layout of the secret entrance and they're marching in as we speak."

Arthur's eyes widened, as did everyone else's, as they turned to Sir Valiant.

"*What did King Bayard offer you to betray your comrades?*" Merlin's eyes never left Valiant's.

"Lordship, My Liege."

"*You will stay here and you will not move until I tell you to,*" Merlin snarled.

Valiant nodded. "As you wish, My Liege."



Merlin's eyes then went blue once more as he turned to Arthur. "You heard him, Prince Arthur. You're being invaded."

"*Merlin?*" Arthur asked, unable to believe what he'd just seen.

"Gather your men, I will gather mine." And with that, Merlin vanished into thin air.

Arthur shook off the many questions he had before turning to his men. "You heard him. We're under attack."

In the end, Arthur didn't know who were more surprised, the Mercians or those from Camelot, because while Merlin had warned them, and shown them a glimpse of his power, they hadn't been completely sure of the validity of Valiant's words until they'd come upon the Mercians invading through the underground tunnels. With the witchlights provided by Merlin's warriors that only the Camelot forces could see, they easily defeated the Mercian force, driving them out and back into a retreat.

And Valiant was executed for his treason.

He fell upon his own sword at Merlin's words.

It scared Arthur.

And yet he couldn't keep away.

"What...was that?" He walked up to Merlin after informing his father of what had happened.

"I can persuade enemies to do my bidding," Merlin replied where he was out on the balcony, looking up at the starry night, not having bothered washing off the blood from the battle.

No one had.

"I don't like to use the ability." Merlin was obviously uneasy. "But if I hadn't used it he wouldn't have told me the truth to what Morgana had Seen, and time was of the essence."

Arthur didn't speak, just leaned against the railing in the same manner Merlin was.

"I've hidden the entrance to those tunnels by magical means. The Mercians, neither my people, will be able to find them again. It is something only your people should know of."

Arthur turned to look at Merlin in surprise. "We are grateful."

"Allies look after each other." Merlin shrugged. "Or so I have read. We have never had allies before, prospective or otherwise."

Arthur wondered what it must have been for Merlin, growing up isolated in those forest, with only books to link him to the outside world.

It sounded... lonely.



about me."

"What do you think about Lord Balinor's daughters?" Igraine asked curiously.

Arthur shrugged in disinterest, gaze going towards the window when he heard familiar laughter.

They always liked being in the gardens, close to nature.

"What do you think about Lord Balinor's *son*?"

Arthur turned towards his mother's eyes wide at the suggestive tone.

Igraine watched her son with a tender smile. "Your father hasn't realized it yet, but since the moment you first saw him I wondered."

"Mother, I..." Arthur didn't know what to say.

"He's very powerful, and you know your father values power." Igraine leaned over and pressed a kiss to her son's forehead. "Uther has been speaking nonstop about when you marry, that you must find a way to keep young Merlin here as well. He is *fascinated* with him and his powers. I believe, that if it is your choice, he wouldn't mind *too much*."

Arthur gazed up at his mother in shock. "What about heirs?"

"We once believed we wouldn't be able to conceive, you were a miracle for us." Igraine smiled at her son tenderly. "We were either going to appoint one of Uther's nephews as heir, or adopt a child." That smile grew as she stood. "Why should it be any different with you?"

And with that Igraine left the room.

Arthur watched the door close behind her, unable to believe what he'd just heard.

A small smile touched his lips.

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There was a banquet to celebrate the first successful battle between the alliance which, despite no advances in the nonexistent relationships between Arthur or any of Balinor's daughters, everyone was already considering settled and concrete. Also, many of the knights of Camelot seemed to have become smitten with the women from Balinor's tribe, and the castle women probably would have been more jealous and resentful if they weren't busy giggling and gossiping over the *men* of Balinor's tribe. Balinor and Uther, despite wariness on Balinor's part at first, had become somewhat close hunting buddies, the heads of their people having *snuck out* of the castle once or twice (no one was exactly sure) to go hunting on their

own, one on one, without their guards with them. Igraine loved Freya and Morgana, and the girls seemed to adore her as well. Arthur would have been worried about their close relationship if it wasn't for the fact that with Balinor, Freya and Morgana occupied, it left him Merlin for himself, and he appreciated that.

"It is not funny." Merlin glared at Arthur as he tried not to fidget in his dress robes. "They are uncomfortable."

"No, you're just not used to them." Arthur smirked, unable to keep the amusement off of his face as he watched the boy. "Don't worry, you'll get used to them in time."

"No, I won't," Merlin mumbled, sending a glance to his shoes. "You should be proposing to Freya soon, and then we'll be returning home, and I won't have to worry about these clothes."

The smirk melted off of Arthur's lips as he cleared his throat and looked away, dangling a goblet between his fingers. "Are you anxious to return?"

Merlin paused, sending a look at Arthur before quickly looking at the dancers. "Your father wants me to stay, to study here, to be an Ambassador of sorts between our people."

That wasn't an answer. "Yes, well, I asked if *you* wanted to go home, or stay here, not what my *father* wanted."

Merlin returned his gaze to Arthur and then surprisingly he smiled. "You are always very blunt, are you not, Prince Arthur?"

"When I want something I don't find a reason not to state so," Arthur replied seriously, meeting that gaze.

The amusement faded into that slight confusion Merlin always seemed to wear on his face when around Arthur. "And do you know what it is you really want, Prince Arthur?"

Arthur nodded. "Yeah, I do." Then, without giving himself a moment to talk himself out of this, he reached over and clasped Merlin's hand in his, running his thumb over his skin.

Merlin's eyes widened in shock, a blush darkening against the pale of his skin as he looked away.

But he didn't pull his hand away.

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Merlin sat regally astride the horse and accompanied Arthur throughout the villages as the prince held court and listened to the quibbles of the towns people. The blonde was used to doing this, since his father never had much time for the common folk, but the people were used to Arthur's visits, and usually kept their arguments to themselves until he arrived and

brought them to him for judgment. Arthur had never thought himself very good at this, but his people needed balance, and he was willing to do his best to try and bring them it. Merlin had stood by Arthur's side, listening to the cases, and had surprisingly enough given Arthur very good advice during the trickier of cases. By the end of the day not only had Arthur been able to peacefully end each of the debates, the villagers content with the decisions of their prince, but he'd managed to get through more hearings than he usually could, mostly because of Merlin.

The younger boy was intriguingly sage.

He'd make a great counsellor.

Riding through the countryside towards the castle, Arthur watched Merlin as the boy spoke to the horse he rode without the need of a saddle.

The horse had been a vicious, aggressive creature to anyone else who tried to get near him, but with Merlin it was as passive as a kitten.

He wondered what Merlin would think of becoming his Grand Court Sorcerer, his Consort and Counsellor.

It'd be a great excuse to make sure he didn't leave his side.

Merlin looked up at the sky and took in a deep breath before turning to Arthur. "It is going to rain."

Arthur frowned, looking up at the sky.

There wasn't a cloud above.

And yet ten minutes later they were caught in one of the strongest downpours Arthur had seen in a couple of years.

The blonde had shaken his head in awe before urging the horses on forwards.

They took shelter in a small cave close to the castle, where a bear used to live and yet had died when Arthur was a child.

With one word of that language Arthur couldn't understand, Merlin's eyes flashed gold and the wet wood he'd brought it caught on fire.

Arthur watched in awe. "Why don't you just make it stop raining?"

Merlin looked up with his now golden eyes, surprise in those orbs. "It is raining because the earth thirsts, why would I hinder it from having what it needs?"

Arthur smirked.

Merlin and his people were so close to nature in ways that Arthur nor his people understood, a lot of the times, it was as if Merlin's people believed nature was a person, how they referred

to it.

Arthur went to sit down next to Merlin on the ground next to the blazing, warm fire.

"Your people love you," the younger boy surprised him by saying. "They trust you and your judgement. You will be a great king."

"Thank you." Arthur smiled, gaze going to the flames, leaning back with his hands down on the cave floor. "I can only hope that is true. My people deserve the best."

They were silent.

Merlin, eyes never leaving the fire, placed his hand upon Arthur's.

Arthur froze, before relaxing and smiling, sending a sideways glance towards Merlin, who had a blush climbing up the symbols on his neck.

Threading his fingers through Merlin's Arthur cleared his throat, gaze returning to the fire.

The rain fell hard against the roof of the cave.

Neither noticed.

[illegible]

Arthur pushed Merlin against the tree, mouths melding urgently against each others, hands in the other's hair.

Merlin whimpered, arching into Arthur and fighting with the blonde's clothes.

They'd been with the others enjoying a nice picnic in the countryside, but had somehow managed to wander off by themselves, as they were doing more and more often, and now, by the side of a lagoon, Arthur shirt was wrestled off of him, and Merlin was happily pinned to a tree. Ever since the day in the cave they'd found stolen moments to hold hands, had exchanged short, tentative kisses, and the kisses had grown longer, harder, more sure and needy. The kisses, the touches, had left both boys panting and hard and needing more, and yet up until this moment neither had had the courage to take the next step.

"*Arthur...*" Merlin whispered as Arthur nibbled on the hollow of his throat.

"*Mine*," Arthur snarled into the alabaster skin he planned on leaving covered in his marks of possession.

So caught up in each other, as Arthur nearly tore at the trousers Merlin wore, neither noticed Morgana and Freya exchanging utterly fascinated and mischievous glances from their hiding spot.

Freya grinned.

"Yes." Merlin must have heard something in his voice, because he opened his eyes and tilted his head up to gaze at Arthur's face. "What is it?"



"My family's name is Pendragon," Arthur replied, smirking. "It means Son of the Dragon."

"Son of the..." Merlin blinked, surprise morphing his features, before grinning. "Is *that* why you have so many banners with dragons around? We thought you knew of our family beast and were trying to make us feel welcomed."

Arthur chuckled. "You overestimated us and our methods of investigation."

"Apparently." Merlin grinned and closed his eyes, snuggling closer. "But this is good. It means you will have no problem getting the same tattoo."

Arthur blinked. "Tat...?"

Merlin grinned and hugged closer.

Arthur was unable to get any complaint out past his lips, and just grinned, settling back into bed and closed his eyes.

They could talk about tattoos later.

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