



When First I Met My King

Harper Fox

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Once upon a time, there was a winter that wouldn't end. And all that's standing between the people of White Meadows and starvation is a young man called Lance.

He's sixteen years old, and for all his courage and hunting skills, he's running out of fight. His family has been wiped out in a border raid, and he's drowning in loneliness. When strangers arrive at White Meadows, all Lance can think of is using his last strength to drive them away.

But these men have come in peace, not to burn and destroy. Among them is a hot-headed, utterly charming prince-in-training named Arthur.

For Lance, Arthur's arrival is like the return of the sun. The prince has everything – learning, battle skills, a splendid destiny. But as the days unfold in the remote northern settlement in the shadow of Hadrian's Wall, it soon becomes clear that Arthur needs Lance, too.

When First I Met My King Details

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From Reader Review When First I Met My King for online ebook

Steven says

I'm at fault. I don't have think I have the ability to properly praise Harper Fox and this retelling of the Arthurian legend. This is a novella length first of a three part series and the wait for the second part will be interminable.

The author weaves color and light and shadows masterfully while infusing new energy into a centuries old tale. The words chime and ring. They paint glorious vistas. They spark and sizzle and dance.

This legend in the hands of Harper Fox is elevated to myth linking all the magic an epic scope that goes with it.

5 stars.

K.J. Charles says

A lovely novella, or rather a Part One of the story, introducing Lancelot and Arthur. This retelling places the story in ancient British history while keeping the magic; it has a lovely folkloric feel and is grounded very deeply in the land. Blissful. A short but incredibly welcome diversion from now.

Liz Jacobs says

This was really, really lovely. I wasn't sure what to make of it at first and had a bit of a difficulty getting into it, but after a certain point it drew me in as Fox's books always do. It's so lovely and evocative and warm and filled with love and light. That's the best way I can describe it right now. Just really lovely. I can't wait for the next one.

?? Michaele ♡?? says

4.5 Stars

It's probably no surprise that I am a huge fan of almost everything Harper Fox writes...and once again, she's penned a story that had me completely enthralled from the first chapter.

From The Sword in the Stone to Merlin, King Arthur, The Once & Future King, Connecticut Yankee, Camelot, Spamalot & The Mists of Avalon (even Black Knight and almost all of those last two seasons of Stargate: SG1!!)...well, there's very little I haven't watched, read or listened to when it comes to this timeless myth. And no matter how poorly received or rated, I have loved *something*, some small detail or adaptation, in each and every one of them - mainly because I am fascinated with what the artist(s) - whether the writers, directors or actors - will do to make it uniquely their own. (I haven't read The Student Prince yet, but it's up soon!)

So much of the tale always centers on Arthur and that HF chose to start the series with a book that delves into Lance's background was, honestly, quite refreshing. Yes, there are works out there that have our heroic knight as the protagonist, but I can't think of anything that had such an imaginative re-telling. It's done so well that I can almost see this as what the true story might be based upon (if there even is such a historically accurate saga, which, *sigh* I had a whole class on how it might be just an amalgamation of many stories woven into a myth that transcends time at this point). Little details like where the idea for the table came from & how Arthur "earned" Excalibur were just delightfully original.

I can't wait for HF to write/publish the next one in this series...because it will be an auto buy, for certain. And if she doesn't give us a follow up? Honestly, the way it ends it might not *need* more. (Even though I desperately want it.)

Highly recommend for fans of Historicals, Harper Fox, MM Romance and the legend(s) of King Arthur & his Knights of the Round Table.

Lisa The Novel Approach says

I'll be the first to admit I'm far from an expert on Arthurian legend. What I know could fit on the head of a pin and might be mostly gleaned from Monty Python and the Holy Grail. Or, at least some Hollywood-izations of King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table. Which, to say, is unreliable at best and inaccurate at worst. While I can't declare with authority that author Harper Fox is following the legends to any degree of faithfulness, I can say that the introduction to Arthur and Lance in this short novel is a thing of true beauty.

Fox is one of the most consistent and reliable authors I've ever had the pleasure to read, and she just sort of keeps quietly releasing brilliant book after brilliant book. It's not only her voice but also her facility for turning just the right phrase that lend themselves so beautifully to this story, and the language, the imagery, the tone, and the ethereal quality of the opening scenes becomes like a fever dream during Lance's introduction.

"...in the wake of slaughter and grief, he was king."

On the brink of starvation, we meet a desperate young prince who'd inherited his father's kingdom following a Pictish invasion which resulted in the end of his family, and left his village in a smoking ruin. Lance tumbles down the figurative rabbit hole while, as literary beauty would have it, chasing a hare, and, it's here that magic unfolds. The wizened crone, as the purveyor of wisdom and prophecy, enhances the fantasy aspect of the story, and I loved the ambiguity of this character's corporeality. Was she present, or was she mere illusion? She's part of the fever dream aspect that I mentioned earlier, and Lance's encounter with her was revealing and then led nicely to him meeting young Arthur. We don't get but a glimpse of what Lance will become in this introduction to the series—his heroism and the skills with sword and spear that earned him his name. We do, however, get to see what he is and will become to Arthur.

Lance and Arthur, as well as a certain sword called Excalibur, have a destiny to fulfill that begins on the pages of *When First I Met My King*. They are mere teens when they meet, and while they do consummate their burgeoning relationship, Fox is sensitive to their ages too. She's created those scenes of intimacy in a beautiful way, just as the rest of the story is crafted, and allows that their duty to their lands and people means they can't be together yet.

Arthur's yearning for Lance is poignant and yet tempered by his realization that his yearning may be as much as he can have. His duty, after all, includes an heir to the throne. His fate is set in stone, as it were,

which means this journey will be measured in years rather than in days. In other words, don't expect anything to be neatly resolved at the end of book one. Do, however, expect to find all the hallmarks of Fox's storytelling—compelling and charming characters, evocative settings, and a romanticism that befits the legend its heroes will reveal.

Knowing how some readers feel about endings, series, and continuing sagas, I'll say again that this book is only the beginning of something that promises to be, and no doubt will be, gorgeous and spectacular. If you're familiar with Harper Fox's work, then you know why I say that with confidence. If you haven't had the chance to read Fox's work, then all I can ask is, "Why?" When First I Met My King is yet another title to add to my ever-growing list of lovely reads by this author, and the next in the trilogy can't get here soon enough for me.

Reviewed by Lisa for The Novel Approach

Bev says

4.25 stars from me, for this the first in Harper's own take on the Arthurian legends of Arthur, Lancelot, Merlin and all that goes with it. This particular story is from Lance's [or Tertius, meaning third son] POV, and describes the magical meeting with Artorius [Arthur], Ector and Gaius in the wilds of Vindolanda, after a particularly brutal winter. As usual, her descriptive powers are outstanding and you can almost feel the magic swirling in the air.

For anyone who wants to totally immerse themselves in Arthurian legend, I can do no more than highly recommend the series that got me hooked on it a long, long time ago The Crystal Cave by Mary Stewart. This set of stories are from Merlin's POV, and are just brilliant!!

Drianne says

Nice book. Could've been longer, but it's a good start to a series.

Alas, the Latin was wrong -- there's a strict formula to how you write letters in Latin, which the author appeared not to know (it's one of those cases of not knowing what you don't know): you don't start "dear whoever" like you do in English (*carissime Tertie*, which is indeed the vocative, so yes, that's right as far as it goes, but you don't start your letter in the vocative like an English speaker would), but instead you put the sender's name in the nominative, the recipient's in the dative and an abbreviated "says a greeting." And *quamquam semper Lance meum* -- *meum* should be *meus* -- is wrong too. And then *plus quam frater* -- you would not use 'more than a brother' in Latin to mean a boyfriend, because, whoops, *frater* actually had that meaning already.

FWIW, we also didn't name boys with Primus, Secundus, Tertius, either. That's girls, not boys.

I know, picky picky, but that sort of thing ruins books for me. Just write it in English and let me imagine some correct Latin.

Oh, and why, *why* is the cover image a line drawing of Brian from Velvet Goldmine in his "Sebastian" performance?...

CrabbyPatty says

Once upon a time there was a king. Once upon a time there was a king, and his kingdom was an abandoned fort and twenty bare acres of moorland, far and away in the north of Britannia, shadowed by Hadrian's great Wall. Vindolanda, the Romans had called it. The fair meadows.

Harper Fox has birthed an exquisite reimagining of the Arthurian legend. We first meet young Lance, the young king of Vindolanda, who inherited the title the night his entire family was killed in a Pict raid. Lance's mother Elena used to tell him of the legend of the dragon whose spine formed the hills and vales of Vindolanda. But now the land is in an unnatural winter with its people starving and Lance leaves on a mission to get food and instead meet Viviana (his own Merlin in a sense) and through her finds a sword in a lough (lake).

And when young (both boys are roughly 16 years old) Arthur arrives, the spawn of the dragon king (Uther Pendragon), Lance finds himself:

No longer lost, but chosen. Found and chosen by the one soul in the world whose choosing could matter to him, by whom he would allow it. It had taken Lance very little time to understand that he would follow Arthur into battle, death and beyond, but that quiet certainty had belonged only to himself, and he had stilled his mouth and his heart from its expression.

Fox uses all the elements of the Arthurian story, but presents them in a fresh way and interpretation. As Viviana tells Lance:

"Nothing's forever, boy. Remember these words, if you find yourself at his side again. His people will call him Arthur of the Britons. He'll come to think of himself that way, and so will generation after cascading generation of fools—some romantic, some vicious beyond understanding—who believe that there's one purebred race in this land, or ever could or ever will be."

5+ stars for "When First I Met My King."

Em says

An enjoyable introduction into the lives of 16 year old Lancelot and Arthur and how they first met. Looking forward to the next instalment which I believe is due December.

Tori Thompson says

5 heart review for Love Bytes Reviews! Review to follow soon...

A copy of this book was provided in exchange for an honest review. This review was originally posted at Love Bytes Reviews, please visit www.lovebytesreviews.com to see this and many more reviews,

interviews, and giveaways!

Ok. So I have to start this by saying I am the proud owner of over 100 books about King Arthur... I have gotten past my obsession and haven't been reading much for the last few years, but I am a big fan of anything Arthurian. When I saw Harper Fox was releasing a book about King Arthur I about lost my freaking mind. If there is anyone that can do this legend justice, it is Harper Fox. I have complete and utter faith that this will be an amazing trilogy. Especially since the first book was AMAZING!!!

It is a big challenge to use an existing legend that is so well-known as a backdrop for a story. I've seen it done well, and not so well. Do you stick with the legend as it exists? Do you create new characters? New stories? A little of both?

Harper uses Arthur and Lance as her main characters (BIG risk!).⁰ But changes them subtly. Lance is the son of Ban, king of a small tribe near Hadrian's wall (Lancelot is usually French and is a later addition to the Arthurian legend). Lance becomes king after a raid wipes out his family. He is only a teen at the time.

Arthur is also a teen, but from a very different life. He's been left with Ectorius by the Merlin as an infant, the son of Uther and Ygraine. Ector has been raising him with his son Gaius (All pretty traditional). Arthur and crew are traveling to gain support in advance of Arthur's taking of his father's throne, and encounter a strange young man near a lake...

Lance is just finishing a very odd evening night and day involving Vivianna, and a sword he receives from a hand in the lake, when he encounters Arthur and his supporters. Their initial interaction doesn't go well, but once they both realize they could be friends, things improve rapidly. Lance offers the men a place to stay while they visit, and the two boys so close in age quickly bond.

Lots of little things happen from here, some we see and some we are told from the past; Arthur's ancestry and potential ascendance to the throne. Ector and Gaius. Lance and his whole history. The two versions of how Arthur received Excalibur (that was seriously perfect!). The name of Excalibur. The sword fight between Arthur and Lance. Vivianna and the hare. Medraut and how he came about. Camelot. The Merlin. the round table (also very clever!) All of the traditional bits are there, but just slightly changed. Then we have the naturally occurring physical relationship between Arthur and Lance. It just happens between them, no fuss no muss. They aren't open, but it doesn't seem to be a big secret either. There is the mention of a quest. There is some magic, and some pagan traditions, but also some Christian elements as well. All of the parts are here, and I loved it.

Loved it! Seriously loved it. This is a retelling of a traditional legend, with two young men sharing a physical bond. I have no doubt that will turn in to love, but I can't figure out where Harper will take this! She's kept close enough to the traditional story, that I don't know how this will go! I know how it's supposed to go, but with the two men being the lead characters, I am so very curious.

This book has phenomenal writing, it is a creative retelling of a tale that has been told a thousand times and more. Harper walks the fine line of keeping it the same and changing it up. She gives us perfect characters, an interesting plot, with some excitement and drama. The sex is hinted at, but subtly, which worked very well.

I HIGHLY recommend this book! This is how you write an Arthurian story. You change enough to make it fit your narrative, but keep it traditional. I am so happy, I just can't stand it! Where is the rest of the story?? I have to wait until December? Sigh...

Abi Walton says

I wanted to read this novella because I was hoping it was going to be as enchanting and captivating as J. R. R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit* which tells the tale of Robin Hood and his relationship with Gamelyn over five books. And although Fox writes well, it didn't captivate me as much as I hoped and I think this was because of its length and the time span. With a story like this, I believe when re-imagining a legend as integral as King Arthur you need to take time over the legend, the characters and the relationship to see it develop and grow through struggle and love. But Fox's version felt slightly like insta love between Arthur and Lance.

Anyway, this didn't stop me from devouring it in an evening, I just wish there had been more for us to see of the Pagan world that Lance's mother came from, the legend that is King Arthur, and of course relationship between Arthur and Lancelot. I hope more depth comes from book two and three.

Overall I suspend judgement until I have read all three novels

Ulysses Dietz says

When First I Met My King (Book 1 of the Arthur Trilogy)

By Harper Fox

Published by the Author, 2017

Five stars

A new Harper Fox book is a great event in my life. So, if you're looking for disinterested opinion, forget it. With this launch of her new trilogy, re-casting the legend of King Arthur and Sir Lancelot, Fox tackles a hoary tale as deeply entrenched in English culture as the legend of Robin Hood. I mention that, because that story has been wonderfully treated by J. R. R. Tolkien as an epic five-part series in which Robin and his lifelong love are both men.

How I love authors who can do this and triumph.

Fox's series will clearly be less epic in scale, given the size of the first installment, but no less profound in its emotional punch. Imagine a teenager, surviving crushing loss and privation on the northern edge of Roman Britain, after the Roman empire has collapsed and lost its ability to protect its outer borders. Into this boy's wilderness rides a boy his own age. This is no desperate third son of a shepherd king, but a golden princeling, supposed heir to a Roman fiefdom, named Artorius. Delivered into the hands of a Roman soldier by a raving old man who claimed to be a wizard, Arthur has grown up bemused and puzzled by the prophetic myths surrounding his birth. Only when he meets Tertius, known to his community as Lance because of his skill with a spear, does Arthur's world begin to make sense.

Nobody in the world of gay romance writes like Harper Fox. Few people in the English literary world can top her beautiful language and unmatched elegance of prose. She brings us into the fantastical heart of ancient English myth, and renders it with a gritty realism that is both harrowing and poetic. This is the world of pagans just at the beginning of the long, harsh shadow of Christianity. This is a world of social and political turmoil in the wake of a dying empire. It is the world that spawned the legend of Arthur.

I'm embarrassed to admit that I have never actually read any full version of the tale of King Arthur. I've never even seen "Camelot." All I've seen, 50 years ago, is the Disney animated film, "Sword in the Stone." So, I approached this series with a vague, pop-culture awareness of the bare details. It looks as if Harper Fox's Arthur will become the definitive one for me. There is no question that Fox has imbued this tale with her own sensibilities, her own pagan spirit, her own very modern love of justice and honor.

And that's just fine. There are aspects to Arthur that already worry me. I suspect there will be things that make me unhappy. But that's fine. Once more, Fox has transported her readers into a place they never expected to find themselves. It's not always a comfortable journey. But well worth the trouble.

Mark says

Christmas arrived early for me this year when I heard Harper Fox was releasing an M/M version of the Arthur saga. I must admit I first squealed with delight. One of my favourite authors, one of my all time favourite stories, what more could a boy from Cornwall who has grown up with all the magic and mystery of the Pendragon Tale wish for? I must admit that I have probably read almost all retellings of this story and seen all the various film versions, of which there are many. Some good, some not so good. One of my favourites is Bernard Cornwell's The Warlord Chronicles trilogy, absolutely wonderful. So I have many comparisons and in that lies the danger of disappointment due to the fact of whether the next retelling will live up to expectations or not. You know what you want from the story, so will it be delivered? What angle will be portrayed with this version? From which view point will it be told? Will it still be fresh? How will Harper manage to keep the magic of one of the oldest and most told stories alive with another version? A very tall order indeed and a very brave undertaking by Harper when you think about the countless versions out there. So I opened the first page and dove in headlong trying not to let all the other versions in my head colour my judgement.

Well? I LOVED it! Why? Harper's writing and descriptive narrative lends itself beautifully to this tale which is full of magic and mystery. It needs to be brought alive and this she does wonderfully. While reading, it felt like being sat around a campfire listening intensely to an old bard telling a tale of yesteryear and long ago. I was a child again being fascinated by a master story teller, listening to tales of magic swords, dragons, knights and ancient Celtic folklore mixed with the "new religion" in its infancy, old gods and the new God, religious traditions old and new mingling together, all breathing new vitality into an old story and giving the Arthur story a new lease of life.

After the Romans left Britain was plunged into the Dark Ages. A period of history that even today comparatively little is still known. We know more about ancient Egypt than Britain in the Dark Ages. A time where maybe the vestiges of Rome were left but Britain was struggling to establish itself and get back on its feet. It is in this haunting time where the Roman history is fading and a new age is dawning that we meet Lance who lives in the north of England near Hadrian's wall. It's a tough life and winter has been harsh with famine and death but he still cares for his people who he sees as his responsibility since his father has left. This is when he meets Arthur, a young man travelling with his adopted father trying to recruit and unite the indigenous folk against the Saxon invaders.

I just loved how Harper has started this series, two young boys who meet for the first time. One destined to become King and the other who has been bowled over by his charm. A young, sweet and innocent love currently due to their age. A time of sexual and emotional exploration but where feelings are none the less intense due to their youth. Harper's writing captures this mood wonderfully and maybe we will see it flourish into a strong and mature love. Arthur is charismatic and charming if not a little brash at times due to his youthfulness but this is kept in check by his adopted father and brother who was given Arthur by the Merlin to look after. Lance has fallen hard for Arthur and adores him but feels trapped by the responsibilities of looking after his people. It is a time where the more accepting and older Celtic religion is at logger heads with the new and more puritanical religion of Christianity. Both of these philosophies are causing an emotional tug-o-war for Lance and Arthur as they are the generation trying to bridge the divide between the old and the new.

This trilogy for me has got off to a damn fine start and left me hoping that there could be a happy ending as the original saga does not have one to speak of. How Harper will deal with this will be interesting. How will the story develop? What role will Gwynevere play if she appears at all? Of course, thinking about it why not a romance between Lance (Lancelot) and Arthur who even in the original story were so close to each other one could have suspected a romance there from the start. That Arthur and Lance were the two in love from the beginning. So yes, I approve fully of this take on the story to turn it into an M/M romance. Can't wait now for book two to see how Lance and Arthur go from their youthful love to being a loving adult couple. Do they even make it? Will there be a HEA rather than the tragic ending of the original? What outside influences will be put upon them that will try and test their love for each other? So for Arthur fans all the elements are there, Excalibur, the Lady of the Lake, The Round Table, Merlin, Arthur, magic, folklore and religion, all set in a time that is as full of mystery as it ever was. I for one will be looking forward to where the journey takes me and what Harper has in store.

Karen says

Harper Fox is a wonderful storyteller, bringing to life ancient or modern times with poetry woven from her words. I've read a number of versions/interpretations of Arthurian legend over the years. Harper's latest version focuses on Arthur and Lance, and deftly mixes an historically plausible story with magic. Their early days are bittersweet, young love shadowed by the weight prophecy places on the two boy-men. (I'm also quite fond of her short contemporary story, Winter Knights.) Looking forward to the next two books in this trilogy.

Eugenia says

I was sucked in!

Harper Fox is a master at describing place and setting. When I read her book, I feel like I am there, that I can see, smell, taste and feel all that her characters can.

On this take on the legend of Arthur, we see the world through Lance's eyes. He finds himself and his village in dire straights after nearly starving to death over the winter and no spring on the horizon.

Arthur is riding through the land, acquiring supporters for his campaign to unify the land of Briton. He wants Lance at his side, but Lance will not abandon his obligations now that he is their leader.

I truly joyed reading this novella for the sense of place it evokes in me. I can't wait to read the next one!
