



## Point of Knives

*Melissa Scott*

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## **Point of Knives** Melissa Scott

A welcome return to the vividly realized city of Asteiant with its intricate magics and deadly politics. Point of Knives takes place in the interval between the widely praised earlier novels Point of Hopes and Point of Dreams. A fantastical mystery and a rousing adventure, Point of Knives also reveals for the first time the beginning of the romance between Adjunct Point Nicolas Rathe and ex-soldier Philip Eslingen.

The events of Midsummer have hardly been forgotten by the Fall Balance, and Nicolas Rathe can hardly complain that they've done any harm to his reputation, or to the reputation of the Points in general. However, it has meant that he's more in demand as an investigator, and the increased recognition and workload has made it hard to pursue friendship, or anything more, with Philip Eslingen, his comrade in the rescue of the stolen children. Eslingen is still Hanselin Caiazzo's bodyguard and Caiazzo is involved in any number of questionably legal ventures, and it does neither of them any good to be seen too often in each other's company. When a father and son who are both rumored to have been pirates are murdered on the same night, and Rathe finds Eslingen standing over the son's body, Eslingen proves his innocence easily enough, though he refuses to say exactly what errand he's running for Caiazzo at that hour of the morning. But when the old man's grandson and the son's self-proclaimed wife quarrel over the son's meager belongings, and Caiazzo dispatches Eslingen to represent his interests in the investigation, Rathe begins to wonder if their friendship is going to survive. Or whether they'll survive at all.

## **Point of Knives Details**

Date : Published July 1st 2012 by Lethe Press

ISBN : 9781590213810

Author : Melissa Scott

Format : Paperback 122 pages

Genre : Fantasy, Mystery, Romance, M M Romance, Lgbt, Fiction

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## From Reader Review Point of Knives for online ebook

### Isis says

Yay more Astreiant! Slightly more emotional content (yay!) than the novels, but still, there are so many holes in the relationship aspect (and a whole lot of fade-to-black) that I desperately want fanfic for it. I suppose this was deliberate on Scott's part. It works, damn her.

Scott's writing style has improved a bit, but she still uses way too many epithets. I am really sick of 'the Leaguer', is what I mean. But oh, the world is so nifty, and the details so clever and interesting, and the actual casefic aspect is well enough done, although nothing special.

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### D says

I keep on giving these books three stars, and I keep on coming back to edit them. /o\

A novella set between Hopes and Dreams, where I first expected Ms Scott to talk about how Rathe and Eslingen got together, but which didn't (they were mostly together at this time. Ms Scott describes Knives as 'a courtship interrupted by murder' which I think is very apt). BUT FEAR NOT MY FRIEND. Ms Scott has written such a story, which you can find [here](#).

This one has more police procedural than the others (they actually have more scenes at the morgue than the Dreams novel). And some activities of grey legality at work. Funny, political, and sexy.

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### Aoife says

A quick fun read with much better pacing than the first one (but it's also "just" a novella so there wasn't as much space for extensive descriptions of everything). The mystery was again intriguing and the characters charming. I don't think I'll wait quite as long to read the next one as I did after the first.

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### Susan says

Oh this won me over to Astreiant! Hooray!

I found the first book wonderful in its worldbuilding, characters, plot.... Until all those elements worked against it and the middle was completely bogged, even with the fantastic ending. But this novella was great fun, a concise and engaging little mystery with action and sexual tension and mutual pining aw yeah.

It sold me on Nico and Phillip as a couple, I like their lowkey romance, the dynamic of 'we immediately got along, we get along so damn well, coming together like this was inevitable', with a lil ~sexy undertone and ~forbidden romance.

I know the next book is still apparently very 90s-publisher-oppressing-the-queers but I want to read on with hope for the last two books. It's a very fun, very comfortable and immersive queer fantasy that's just so damn easy to read.

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### **Stephanie says**

"Ok so I know we're secretly dating but now my boss WANTS us to secretly date, while solving murders."

"Perfect."

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### **K.J. Charles says**

The novella we all wanted, as Nico and Philip find a way to establish a relationship in the teeth of their competing professions (policeman vs bodyguard to a notorious criminal). As with all this series, elegantly written, wonderfully built world, lovely understated romance along with a nice intriguing plot.

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### **Hilcia says**

Set in an alternate pseudo-Renaissance world full of magics, pointsmen, wizards, necromancers and deadly political games, Point of Knives by Melissa Scott is a brand new novella that links the classic original fantasy Astreiant duology -- Point of Hopes and Point of Dreams -- by closing the gaps between the two books.

In Point of Knives, Scott's main characters Adjunct Point Nicolas Rathe and ex-soldier Philip Eslingen, now Caiazzo's knife or bodyguard, are thrown together again by unusual circumstances surrounding the double murders of father and son Grandad Steen and Old Steen, both rumored to have been pirates.

Circumstances are further complicated when Old Steen's son, Young Steen, claims his personal effects and an until-then-unknown wife shows up making the same claim. Seeking compensation for moneys owed, Caiazzo also lays claim to the man's possessions and dispatches Eslingen to represent his interests and to help Rathe with the investigation.

Nico and Philip can't help but be glad to be close again after last summer's affair, and although they know that neither can afford too close a relationship, both hope that the circumstances don't affect their friendship or their feelings for each other. Rathe is known for his excellent insight and trusts Philip even as he knows that as Caiazzo's knife, thug or blade for hire, Philip owes him loyalty. However, his feelings are deeply involved.

[...] he would only sound besotted. And I'm not, he thought. Not besotted. Fond of him, friendly with him --- gods, it was easy to slip into the habit of the summer, too easy to treat him as comrade and friend --- and if he was honest with himself, yes, he could become besotted. Could

even --- He refused to utter the betraying verb, even in his own mind.

Nico and Philip agree that during the investigation they will take advantage of their time together as winter-lovers with a promise not to ask more from each other when that time ends. But will they? The murder investigation takes them from Point of Hopes' narrow streets into the dangerous neighborhood that is Point of Knives, and slowly becomes a coil that involves a deadly political game, gold, magists, alchemists, necromancers, and that when unraveled might prove deadly to Nico and Philip.

Point of Knives picks up on events a few months right after Point of Hopes ends and expands on the already established relationship between Nico and Philip. I was taken with the complexity of the world building in this fantasy, as well as with the excellent characterization. The police-procedural aspect of the novel is intricate and complete, with a gruesome beginning, excellent investigative work and a surprising, satisfying resolution. More importantly, it is through this key aspect of the story that Scott cleverly incorporates fantasy, adds details to her world, and develops a lovely romance.

The characters that populate this fantasy are regular folk that somehow stand out in this world where magics and alternate history intertwine so seamlessly and are so well crafted, that after a while all of it seems possible.

Points of Knives is a gorgeous addition to the Astreiant series. Melissa Scott takes this fantasy, fills it with memorable characters, and gives the reader more by incorporating a fully developed romance and a police procedural with enough twists and turns to satisfy the most finicky of readers. Highly recommended.

Originally reviewed @ Impressions of a Reader

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## **heidi says**

This is a lovely bridge novella between the two existing novels of Astreiant. It is very much a story of transitions -- Phillip is moving from one employer to another, Rathe is being moved from one posting to another, and they are moving emotionally closer to each other.

The mystery in this one is a little less compelling than the other two, but the characterization is lovely and bittersweet. I think it is especially thought-provoking to realize Scott wrote this after the death of her long-time partner, and to read this (a little) as a tribute to falling in love.

I laughed at the obligatory stakeout scene, when Rathe, man of action, is incredibly twitchy and impatient. It reminded me of buddy-cop movies in the best way.

Read if: You have enjoyed the other books of Astreiant, or if you are looking for a standalone introduction to the world.

Skip if: You will not enjoy the world-and-relationship building of an alternate matriarchal fantasy world.

Also read: Point of Hopes

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## **Marc | Rainbow Gold Reviews says**

An interesting mystery, the start of the romance we have all been waiting for, more on the mysterious Point of Knives. More of the characters I've come to love and care for. What more could I wish for? ;)

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## **Tara says**

As a devoted fan of the first two books in the Points series, I was absolutely delighted to learn that Melissa Scott would be writing a novella to fill in the blanks between book one (Point of Hopes) and book two (Point of Dreams). This book definitely didn't disappoint.

I could go on endlessly about how much I love the setting of this series (the Renaissance Europe-esque world; the incorporation of astronomy, ghosts, and magic as almost mundane aspects of daily life; the female-centric social structure; etc.) but for me, it's the characters that make the difference between merely "liking" a series to "loving" it, and this novella gives so many fascinating insights into the two main characters and their relationship.

Probably my one disappointment when reading Point of Dreams (book 2) was that it leapt forward from the end of book one, which barely hinted at the possibility of a romantic relationship between Nico and Philip, to a point where the two are considering "Iemanry." Point of Knives gives us a glimpse of that time in between, and in my opinion, not only gives added depth to the characters and their relationship in this novella, but also makes their emotional struggles in book 2 all the more real.

Nico and Philip are both such fundamentally pragmatic, practical, sensible people -- with real jobs, responsibilities, and duties that they take very seriously -- that it's all the more endearing to read along as they recognize the danger of liking each other too much and yet are helpless to resist that pull.

Of course, as with all books in the series, it's the mystery that drives the plot... and while this wasn't as much of a "whodunnit" as the other two books, I still very much enjoyed the story of the characters trying to piece together the villain's plan so that they could put it to a stop.

All in all, a wonderful addition to a wonderful series, and I can't wait for the next book! (which I believe may be coming in 2013?)

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## **Hannah says**

I LOVE FANTASY RENAISSANCE CSI. now with added romo!

this series continues to be EVERYTHING. i know that this novella was written after the first two books but takes place between them, so that's the order i chose to read it in, and i'm so happy it was written! rathe and eslingen are charming together - they have easy, natural chemistry, and they're so much fun to read about. their understated but obvious affection for each other is just lovely. the mystery in this one was super fun - nothing very complex, but it was a novella after all, and i enjoyed it! and it (however briefly) had pirates!!!! it felt too short, not because the story suffered from the length, but because i liked it so much that i just

wanted more. delightful.

random side-note: i really, really want a map of astreiant, and i'm not even normally a huge fan of maps in fantasy novels! but astreiant is such a large and interesting and well-realized city that i would love to have one. @ melissa scott hook a girl up please!!!!

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### **Amy Mills says**

The writing for this was sooo much better than for Point of Hopes. Point of Hopes was still quite good, with a few things that needed worked out. Those have all been worked out here. Unfortunately, this one was written after #2 and #3 in the series, so the writing will probably backslide a bit from my POV when I move on.

I find it a bit odd that this was billed as showing the initial formation of the romantic relationship between Rathe and Eslington, but actually that happened offscreen between Hopes and Knives. Yes, they'd called it off due to conflict of interest issues, but, still, this was not the very beginning. In the other series I've read by this Melissa Scott (Death by Silver, Death at the Dionysus Club), the protags also start off already involved, so I wonder if she's just not comfortable with writing the very beginnings of such things.

Still, it's quite enjoyable for what it is, with a fascinating world that revolves around astrological magic.

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### **Q says**

The story is still engaging but it's lacking the level of detail that previous books had. It reads like a draft and I started disliking the word "russet" by the end.

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### **Alison says**

I really enjoyed this long, lovely novella. It is set in the time between the first (Point of Hopes) and second (Point of Dreams) books and adds a lot of depth to Nico's and Philip's respective characters. The mystery is engaging and we learn more about the fascinating world of Astreiant. The world-building, like in the rest of these books, is magnificent and so thorough. Also like the other books, this story is not a romance, it's an engrossing police procedural where the two main characters fancy each other a whole lot while solving crime (and also trying to convince themselves that they don't actually fancy the other very much at all, but mostly, it's the crime-solving). Watching the small glimpses of them quietly dancing around their feelings is quite delightful. While these books could maybe stand alone, for comprehension's sake and to fully understand this complex world and its characters, starting at the beginning is definitely recommended.

A side note concerning the romance: The blurb is a little misleading, as Nico and Philip's relationship starts before this story begins, though it's still very early days. The author has written a charming little extra scene showing the actual beginning of their affair (which happens not long after the finish of the first book), which you can read here.

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## Sineala says

I am so happy that we are finally, finally getting more stories in the Points world, and I really loved this. Set between *Hopes* and *Dreams*, this novella explores Rathe and Eslingen's relationship, how exactly Rathe ends up transferred to Point of Dreams, and of course a murder or two to solve, with some magic.

My only real complaint is that I wish we had seen Rathe and Eslingen first becoming romantically involved, which this book still doesn't provide; the beginning establishes that they had gotten together after the events of *Hopes* but then broken up again because it was generally not a good idea for a pointsman and Caiazzo's knife to be together. I would have liked to have seen that, but on the other hand, I did enjoy all the angsty developing feelings they seemed to be having for one another while trying to keep their relationship short-term.

The plot is, as always, solid, all the characters are excellent, even the minor ones -- I find myself liking Monteia more and more -- I actually like the matriarchy stuff, and plus we got Nico and Philip skulking around Astreiant and being devious, which is, frankly, awesome. Basically, if you like the series, you should be reading this. If you've never read the series, though, start with the first book. And then read this. Because, really, you need more queer fantasy police procedural mystery in your life. No, really, you do.

Now I'm off to reread the second book and wait impatiently for more! :)

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