



# Canes and Scales

*S.A. Garcia*

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**\*\*\*OUT OF PRINT EDITION\*\*\***

Prince Linden of Ardaul struggles daily to pull his country into the modern age by encouraging education and tolerance. But his brother Edward, the malicious King of Ardaul, delights in thwarting his efforts, and long years of fighting wars and solving conflicts have taken a toll on Linden's body and mind.

Wearied to his very soul, Linden vacations at his cousin's manor in an attempt to rest and recuperate. There he meets an alluring young half-Elven bedslave named Alasdaire, and his numb heart responds to the exotic Halfling's loving personality. But all too soon their tempestuous romance is shattered by betrayal and death. Can their newborn love overcome separation and pain?

## Canes and Scales Details

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Author : S.A. Garcia

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Genre : Fantasy, Romance, M M Romance, Magic, Science Fiction, Steampunk, Paranormal

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# From Reader Review Canes and Scales for online ebook

## Snowtulip says

3.5

This was a beautiful, loving story. The story just skimmed the surface of what this relationship could be, I was craving more. Good read!

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## Tsubaki says

I received a free copy of this book in exchange for an honest review.

-

I'm going to do this a bit differently because the book was kind of trippy. Objectively, this is a well written and fairly interesting book. Subjectively, I found this to be strange, a little surreal, and honestly, kind of disturbing. The whole story was like an exercise in contradiction. And so is this review because I still have no idea what to make of it... plus, it depends.

This story's setting is a strange melding of fantasy and modernity. I loved the language and wording used in the structure of the story. The book has a very distinctive voice to it that matches well with the depicted subject. The world building is good, but the plot was slow to start. I found Part 1 kind of boring after the first 50 pages or so, but the second half of the book, when the plot starts to expand outside of just Linden, Alasdaire, and Ardaul, was much more readable. Sadly, I didn't really connect with either of the main characters or enjoy the romance between them. They came off as very simplistic and one-dimensional (or potentially the exact opposite depending on how you choose to interpret certain things).

I liked Linden in the beginning, but it didn't really last. On one hand, he's supposed to be this heroic and compassionate prince fighting bravely for his kingdom and leading his people to a better and brighter future. On the other hand, he seems to insistently ignore the troubles and general unease plaguing his kingdom in favour of lazing/frolicking around with Alasdaire. I know he's supposed to be on vacation to unwind and all that, but the stark contrast between how he is portrayed and how he acts really detracts from the character.

Conversely, Alasdaire started as enigmatic and manipulative, and by all means, should've been the more interesting of the two. But he ends up flittering between being deeply disturbed and weirdly guileless. Within days of meeting and attempting to use Linden, he ends up falling for the prince's kindness and charm. It's actually kind of surreal and I really can't stress the sugary sweetness and idealistic nature of this story enough. (Granted, that's not taking Alasdaire's magic and mental state into consideration, more on that later.)

Moving on, the story structure and alternating first person narrative was well done. We're offered the perfect amount of insight into their heads without it being rambling and too revealing. The only downside to the narrative is that at certain times, it appears as though the characters are breaking the fourth wall. Here's an example:

"The idea of a coup still danced in my mind. Remember, the military answered to me."

That was a piece of Linden's inner monologue. As in, he's thinking that to himself, who is he addressing with

the "remember" part...? That just really bothers me. I don't like fourth wall breaking even as a literary device, but it's even worse here since it appears to be unintentional and just plain awkward.

And now I'm going to break a personal rule and venture a little into subjective analysis territory to talk more about Alasdaire. Just because this review would've been very skewed and not made any sense otherwise.

(view spoiler)

Unfortunately though, I really don't think any of that was intended. (view spoiler) I don't know, I spent the whole time switching back and forth between taking things at face value and replaying the events again with that theory in effect. Which was actually immensely entertaining in of itself.

So in conclusion, going with option one would make this a sweet fairy tale romance (very simple and kind of cliched, 2 stars) and option two would make it an intensely dark and disturbing read (a lot more depth and mystique, 4 stars). Take your pick.

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## **Paul says**

I was given a free copy of this book for an honest review.

Canes and Scales by S. A. Garcia is a well crafted book that mixes fantasy, magic, palace intrigue and steampunk into a wonderful romance thriller.

The title of the book is taken from the two protagonists Alasdaire (canes)and Prince Linden (scales). Alasdaire is a half breed elf of royal blood and thus decorated with canes along his skin. Prince Linden is of the ruling Serpent family and has scales that adorn his body.

The book is divided into three parts. The first introduces Prince Linden to Alasdaire, who is a slave at Lord Keith's (Linden's cousin) manor. Linden goes to his cousin's manor for a vacation from conducting various wars started by his brother the King Edward. During this time, the two begin to fall in love despite what some other nobles think.

Part two takes place in the royal city after an assassination attempt on Linden. Having freed Alasdaire from his slavery and recognizing Alasdaire's noble birth, Linden brings him to the place as his consort. The newly crowned King Linden must deal with reaction to bringing Alasdaire to court and his duplicitous brother Edward.

Part three deals with the intrigue surrounding Linden and Alasdaire. Having both survived assassination attempts, the plots against them are revealed and those involved facing justice.

Along the journey, both men must face their heritage. The Serpent Kings have subjugated the elves for a number of years. Linden wants to be a more noble ruler than his ancestors have been in the past. Alasdaire must deal with his family and his sense of not belonging to the ruling elven class.

Bringing in the steampunk element to a story of elves was also unique. Alasdaire and Linden try to balance their ideals of progress (steam plants, dirigibles, and carriages) with elven ideals of living as one with nature.

I thoroughly enjoyed this book and recommend it.

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### **Ashley♥Alexis says**

4.5-stars

this book was beautiful. I really wish we were given more information about their time apart from each other but other than that i loved this story.

When it started the internal monologues of Linden was pretty dull but once he meets Alasdaire the story really picks up and its amazing!! It was over far too soon.

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### **Penumbra says**

[

I'm having a difficult time deciding how to write this review. I guess I should say I'm speechless and not in a good way. I don't think I'll cover the plot of the book since others have written about

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### **Nancy says**

**Cross-posted at Outlaw Reviews and at Shelf Inflicted**

**Lovely!**

*Canes and Scales* was the perfect story for me to read while on my way to New Jersey for a friend's wedding. This is a quietly absorbing, gentle, and magical tale of two very different men, their devoted love, and the hardships they endure – prejudice, betrayal, and treachery. It was extremely easy for me to get lost in this story in spite of traffic jams and bumpy roads.

*(If you want to know why it was essential for me to get lost in a story while driving to New Jersey, then read my review of *The Pines*).*

Told from alternating viewpoints, we first meet Linden, the battle-weary Serpent Prince of Ardaul, who is on his way to his cousin Keith's country home for a much-needed vacation from wars and his crazy, power-hungry brother, King Edward, who despises the Prince's progressive politics. Keith has provided his cousin respite from his duties in the form of Alasdaire, a 20-year-old half-elven pleasure slave.

Life is difficult for Alasdaire, who is lonely since his mother's death and unwelcome in either the human or elven communities. Despite his noble status, he has been banished from his family home after committing a vengeful act against his father and is sold to Lord Keith. To ensure Alasdaire serves his sentence, he is forced to wear a Torvine Catch around his neck which will release poison needles if Alasdaire ventures outside the estate's boundaries.

We learn more about Alasdaire's and Linden's past, and watch their relationship develop from one based on sex to something much deeper. There are formal dinners, noble visits and other activities to keep the men busy. Linden also keeps abreast of news in the city and palace affairs, and answers communications when necessary. There are 20 years between the men and I appreciated that their age difference is quite evident throughout the story.

There is treachery, separation, violence, healing Elven magic and Serpent power. While the sex scenes are delicate and understated, I found Alasdaire's reading of erotic poetry while he is being pleased by Linden extremely sexy. There are flowery declarations of love and minimal conflicts, but there is enough mystery, magic and deception to keep this reader flipping pages.

If you crave intense drama, relationship conflicts, and graphic sex, this is not the story for you. This is a beautifully written, highly descriptive fantasy story with steampunk elements that would be suitable for those readers who like a lot of sweetness amidst all the hardships and treachery the characters face.

I was thoroughly enchanted by Alasdaire and Linden and hope their story isn't over.

*\*Book provided by author in exchange for an honest review.*

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## **Veronica of V's Reads says**

I received a review copy of this book via Goodreads' Don't Buy My Love program in exchange for an honest review.

3.5/4 stars for this M/M steampunk fantasy.

I'm a bit torn as to my rating because the book was eloquently written, but I struggled with (slow) pacing. As delivered, this is three novellas packed together--and I kinda wanted the story to move...faster.

Alasdaire is a bastard half-human/half-elf. He is the eldest grandchild to the ailing ruler of the Elven nation in this world. Due to his tainted bloodline, Alasdaire has never been to the Elven lands. In fact, after attempting to murder his derelict father (A Serpent Nation noble) he has been condemned to wear a lethal collar restraint and serve as a sex slave on the estate of the Serpent King's cousin.

Prince Linden, brother to King Edward, is world weary. He's been battling to protect the fringes of Edward's realm, though he believes Edward to be insane--and over-interested in hastening Linden's mortality. Linden seeks respite and comfort in his cousin Keith's country estate--and he finds both in Alasdaire.

Elves are detested throughout the Serpent Kingdom--reduced to slavery and unable to perform their magic due to Edward's decrees--but Linden finds Alasdaire entrancing. They strike up a companionship that is respectful and intimate. Over a period of weeks they become more than master/slave, and Alasdaire is distraught when Linden is summoned to settle a new conflict afraid for Linden's life. With good reason.

There are some soft twists, that mainly involve magic, Alasdaire's illegal practice of magic, and Linden's survival as a result of magic--Also, Linden's ascendance to the throne. Can their fledgling love survive the court intrigues and prejudice surrounding Elves? Also, Alasdaire's family rejects his love of a Serpent-Man--Linden. At first.

I liked the world. The steampunk elements were interesting and handled with humor--ie "Farting" steam carriages that were so detested. Alasdaire was rather sympathetic, having been orphaned and abandoned--then later attacked by his deranged dad. Linden is a compassionate prince/king devoted to improving his lands with technology and egalitarian goals which is admirable. While the language is fun and flirty and in keeping with the "steampunk" milieu, I simply struggled with how ga-ga in-love Linden and Alasdaire were. The whole "Our Love Conquers All" theme kinda felt over-the-top for me, considering the characters in question were a battle-hardened, warrior-general prince, and a tormented sex toy. Also, despite all the assassination attempts, there seemed so little actual conflict--considering the length of the book.

The sex was understated, and mostly negligible...sadly. I did enjoy that a M/M romance was accepted as the King's union. Even for fantasy, their relationship was open and unchallenged--with a plan to establish a distant cousin as Linden's eventual heir. This was refreshing.

Unfortunately, I felt the story bogged too often and left me turning pages wondering "Um, when are we going to get somewhere, here?" which explains the lower rating.

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## **Reflection says**

**\*\* 3.5 magical stars \*\***

I enjoyed this romance and the dark undertones of the novel. Canes and Scales had a really magical quality that is much heavier on romance than I initially anticipated.

Told in the first person and from alternating viewpoints of the protagonists, Canes and Scales is a story of prejudice, treachery, betrayal and love.

Prince Linden comes to his cousin's estate to recuperate. Linden is the battle-weary Serpent Prince of Ardaul, his cousin Keith, keen to provide both respite and hospitality gifts him Alasdaire, a 20-year-old half-elven pleasure slave for the duration of his stay.

Alasdaire immediately attempts to spell Linden in the hope of being rescued from slavery and the cruel Torvine Catch which keeps him bound to the estate.

Linden has enough strong magic to rebuff Alasdair's attempt; but gradually the two men begin to fall in love. Eventually Linden must leave, summoned by his brother King Edward (who views Linden as a threat because of his leadership qualities, a preference for peace and more liberal approach).

Alasdair and Linden face separation, violence, treachery and healing via ancient Elven magic and magical Serpent power. This is a much gentler book than I anticipated, although some of the themes are dark they are handled with a light touch. It was very much a romantic fairy tale that deals with themes of prejudice and acceptance.

A much sweeter book than I anticipated filled with magic and mystery.

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## **Bookwatcher says**

*He who delights in solitude is either a wild beast or a god.*

**Sir Francis Bacon**

In a two narrator voices S.A. Garcia will show you how two lonely souls can find each other, and fight for this love.

Alasdair is a mixed breed, part human and part elf, but full blood noble by the two parents.

His life is slavery after his mother's death, and even if there is no abuse description in this book you will understand he is a poor and lost soul. Very lonely.

Prince Linden is the prince and second in the throne succession.

His only brother, the king, is a mad man. Linden must fight, travel, do everything his brother should do... only because he has a gentle soul, and can't deny his responsibilities with the kingdom. So he is tired, trusting almost no one, and so lonely... very very lonely.

No tragedy can separate such strong two men, but there are stronger forces that would never let a prince and a half elf be together.

It's a sweet fairy tale, and are you curious if they will ride to a peaceful land, and finally be able to surrender to their love?

Sorry, can't tell... read it to know.

**5 stars** to this amazing fairy tale... I believe in love at first sight, and you?



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## **blub says**

**I received this book in exchange for an honest review.**

### **2.5~3 stars**

The story is told in three parts and the POV switches between Linden and Alasdaire. In part two new characters are introduced and once in a while readers will get see the story unfold from the Duke (Alasdaire's grandfather).

Part one mainly focuses on Linden and Alasdaire meeting. Linden is a Serpent Prince and has decided to take a break from his tyrantical power hungry brother and his taxing responsibilities to his kingdom. Alasdaire is a half-elf noble who is sold into slavery by his father. Once arriving at his cousin's manor, Linden is introduced to Alasdaire, whom has been assigned to be Linden's (pleasure) slave for the duration of his stay. Finding this an ample opportunity to win his freedom, Alasdaire begins his plan to seduce the Serpent prince. However, the plan goes a bit awry when Alasdaire figures out he can't spell Linden and he's slowly starting to fall for the prince, as the prince is for him. In part two readers meet Alasdaire's grandfather and evil cousin. The evil cousin used a dark spell in hopes to kill his grandfather the duke but has only succeeded in making him bedridden. Barely able to speak or move the Duke somehow manages to get words out about finding his half-elf grandson, Alasdaire. Meanwhile Alasdaire and Linden are trying to assimilate to their new life at the palace. Their happy time together is however short lived when they find out that they may have enemies at court. Part three focuses on the Alasdaire and Linden trying to figure out where the danger is coming from and from whom and why.

A major problem I had with the story was the slow pace. It was difficult to finish the book because of this and I found myself getting sleepy every 40-60 pages. It was quite painful considering my Nook kept hitting me in the face and it's not a small device. In part three the story does pick up but I found that that was also a problem. I didn't like the way in which the events kept on unraveling one after another in succession. Don't get me wrong the author did an amazing job with her story building and descriptiveness of how the monarchy worked and the discord among nobles. It's just political intrigue isn't my cup of tea and I found it just dragged on.

I love the display of devotion Linden and Alasdaire showed each other. The flowery words they exchanged between each other was too much for me but still it was nice to see. I did have moments where I didn't like how Linden treated Alasdaire (mainly when he lost his temper). His behavior was a bit cruel and it made me doubt his love for Alasdaire.

The thought process of the characters and their actions sometimes made me question whether or not these were people capable of ruling over a large class of people. Linden and Alasdaire were careless individuals. They kind of disregarded their own safety and in Linden case made very stupid moves (yes, I'm talking about the poison crown of roses and serpent skin). It just made me shake my head a few times at what they were thinking when they went about and did what they did.

The story itself was well written and had a interesting concept going. As I said the only really big issue was the pacing of the story.

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## Ayanna says

10/3/2014

I feel I should mention that I no longer seem to have any distaste towards the name Alastor, or any variations thereof. -ank names, though. Ugh. (Frank, Hank...they all just sound so dank)

8/5/14

The thing is, though, Linden's kind of a royal asshole, but he's a jovial royal asshole. That makes it okay, that he's jocular.

Alasdaire certainly is the dramatic creature Keith described him as, and normally that would be shitty, but for the fact that he and Linden are perfect for each other. Absolutely perfect.

Alasdaire is melodramatic, but does so with that twinkle in his eye and tongue in cheek, at least with Linden.

Linden is magnanimous and good-natured enough that we're okay he's such a royal.

And here I am, going around in circles.

It's true, though, that these two are almost perfectly matched.

They both have a flair for melodramatic vengefulness.

The thing is, though, if you take a mental step back and look at things from their "enemies" POVs, then it's actually not so outrageous to think that they acted the way they did. Hell, I'm fairly postmodern, so I understand the whole "perspective is everything" thing, so Idk, if I pause and think too much on it, everyone seems in the wrong :/

In a sense, perhaps Linden is the one blind to Leo's suffering. Eh. I dunno. I'm getting maudlin in my not-old age.

4/23/13

My first thoughts

(1) I really don't like the name Alaster and any derivatives/variations thereof

(2) I really want the Elf dude to top.

(3) The title sounds really kinky

post-read EtA:

Weirdly, Alasdaire seems like a kind of ingenue character. I actually rather liked it. It's all written in a high prose sort of style, very mystical. It makes me think of bards' tales and the such.

I really liked the characters. There wasn't a great sense of urgency, but as I said, it was a bard's tale.

I liked it.

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## **Katherine says**

*I received this book in exchange for an honest review*

If you love fantasy and LOTS of world building, you will love this book. I happen to love the fantasy genre, especially elves. I liked the the half elf and the serpent prince were solid in their relationship almost from the beginning. Before they meet, Ala(elf) has been abused and is a slave. Linden (serpent) has been fighting his insane brother, the king, to help the people of his kingdom. There is too much political intrigue to go into. Basically, no one can be trusted and everyone is trying to kill them. Through magic and conventional means. I found this hard to put down. I had to know the traitors were. I loved when the MC'S were discovering how their magic worked together and how their love could save them. My only complaint is the steam punk aspect. I was thrown off by steam contraptions in what felt like a medieval(or older) era. So a solid 4 stars for world building and storytelling. I would definitely read another book set in this world.

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## **Roger - president of NBR United - says**

I got this book in exchange for an honest review through the DBML program of the M/M Romance group at Goodreads.

This was a great book that had fantasy a long and well thought out story. interesting magic and technology mix. Love espionage danger and more redeeming love. I found the back history we learn of the kingdom as fascinating as the actual story. I want to read more of Alisdair and Linden and their friends. With a story this long still wanting to know more and return to this setting make me very inclined to recommend it to just about everyone. the love and sex were as interesting as the story that filled the setting with fantas of this nature usually one or the other is lacking in a sustaining passion for more.

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## **Breann says**

Intrigue, traitorous plots, high fantasy, romance and even some steampunk elements. These are the makings of a fantastic story.

When Linden was first given Alasdair as a bed slave, I was in heaven. This is one of my favorite M/M tropes. Royalty falling for the bratty and defiant slave boy? GIMME!

Linden and Alasdair's relationship started as just a sexual one since Linden was Alasdair's master. Although, I'm not sure Alasdair was ever really a 'slave'. It wasn't a position he ever wanted nor did he ever fully succumb to the title. He's half elf, therefore he's not welcome in the elf community or the human one. He's an outcast on both sides. Linden was immediately attracted to Alasdair and knew there was more to him than just being a slave.

Their relationship moved rather quickly given they were physical right away and they spent quite a bit of time together. But it was well done and I was sucked into their love story. I loved how they were equals to each other regardless of how the rest of the world viewed them.

Aside from the romance, both heroes have murderous plots against them. The two storylines were a little bit drawn out and made the story feel long and slow. Of course, it is a long book, but it should never feel that way to a reader and by the mid-point, I was feeling the length.

I'm very torn with my rating. On one hand, I loved the world-building and the clear writing style. With high fantasy it's very easy to get confused with the new vocabulary. But I was never lost or had to go back and reread. The writing and the romance were great. I so want to go with 4 stars, but I was too bored too many times.

There were all the makings of a fantastic story, and at times, it really was. Regardless of the slow moments, *Canes and Scales* is recommended to any fan of high fantasy romance.

*A copy was provided in exchange for an honest review via The Romance Reviews.*

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## **S.A. says**

Canes and Scales: the Novel is a completely different animal than the novella. It's re-written, re-edited and is 350 pages long.

I'm not sure why Goodreads is not listing the 2nd edition. Hopefully this will be sorted out!

The release date of the novel is tomorrow, July 11th.

Thanks for caring!

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