



## False Colors

*Alex Beecroft*

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1762, The Georgian Age of Sail: For his first command, John Cavendish is given a ship—the HMS *Meteor*—and a crew, both in need of repair and discipline. He's determined to make a success of their first mission, and hopes the well-liked lieutenant Aelfstan Donwell will stand by his side as he leads his new crew into battle: stopping the slave trade off the coast of Algiers.

Alfie knows their mission is futile, and that their superiors back in England will use the demise of this crew as impetus for war with the Ottoman Empire. But the darker secret he keeps is his growing attraction for his commanding officer—a secret punishable by death.

With the arrival of his former captain—and lover—on the scene of the disastrous mission, Alfie is torn between the security of his past and the uncertain promise of a future with the straight-laced John.

Against a backdrop of war, intrigue, and personal betrayal, the high seas will carry these men through dangerous waters from England to Africa to the West Indies in search of a safe harbor.

## False Colors Details

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## From Reader Review False Colors for online ebook

### Julio Genao says

**harlequin blue.**

*a him and her book review special.*

her: how is your little beecroft book, then?

him: horseshit

her: ha!

him: bunch of historical detail on a harlequin coat hanger

her: do not belittle the harlequin. those things got me through grade nine.

him: the heaving bosoms. the trembling hands. i want to kill myself

her: men have bosoms.

him: well, they're all over the place in this one. haven't seen so much "heaving bosom" since a perdue chicken truck overturned on the cross bronx expressway

her: \*snort\*

him: trembling and shuddering every 4 pages. when they're not being blown clean off by cannons to starboard. and don't get me started on the quivering legs and the near-fainting and the sighing and the stabbing of palms with one's own fingernails, because OMG THE FEELINGS

her: they wouldn't dare.

him: they would. in this universe, photons are sentient enough to ooze obsequiously into a man's palm, and desire haz a flavor. it tastes like copper. obviously.

her: that sounds like horseshit.

him: OMG THAT'S WHAT \*I\* SAID

her: two minds; one bosom.

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### Jennifer Wardrip says

I'm not a man. I'm not homosexual. I don't like reading historical fiction.

But I really enjoyed this book! :)

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### **Matimate says**

Age-of-sail historical fiction is specific genre of literature and when woman write if for other women it is something, which I missed long time ago as huge fan of this genre. The action is there no sex dears, yes there is some but it would go easily without it and that big it is after lot of tension and finding each other feelings and the way how to make it out and be safe. Yes, there is nearly one man hanging because of some accusation. Naval action is so thick and steamy with lot of swashbuckling and cannon firing. The torturing of main characters seemed to be great hobby of the author, however all was somehow fitting in the plot. 1760s was not happy time for gay men in navy. Alfie was handsome and utterly in to the men with broken heart who found man of his heart yet again, but the huge obstacle was there like man of his heart was shocked to the death when he found out about Alfie. Bad move. However John Cavendish soon found out that his so called moral purity and lack of interest in women was somehow intention and Alfie Donwell was chance of his life. The chance was almost tortured to the death, fucked by former superior to the mattress, nearly hanged for sodomy, nearly froze to the death. Love is not simple. However the main is an adventure and romance is spice of it.

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### **Jason Bradley says**

This was an amazing read and could be listed as classic literature as easily as it is a m/m romance.

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### **Becky Black says**

I enjoyed this a lot. The storyline was exactly the kind of thing I like, set in the military, forbidden love, a long slow build-up to them actually managing to get together. Sometimes getting close to it, and yet something stops them taking the next step, whether that something is from inside or outside.

I found the central characters both interesting and sympathetic, and the supporting characters were interesting too. There's no obvious single black-hearted villain in the piece. Even those who are antagonistic to the heroes aren't moustache twirling bad guys, they've all got shades of grey and complex motivations. That's good as I think the central conflict is of the "man against society" type. John and Alfie can't be together because of the culture they live in. They risk disgrace, even death if exposed. And the story doesn't shy away from showing us the consequences of that, for them and others.

The feel for the times is very good. There's obviously a lot of research behind it, giving the story a denseness and rich texture. And it doesn't pull any punches in depicting the more grim and gruesome aspects of the era, especially for men in military service. In that aspect it reminds me of Bernard Cornwell's Sharpe series where the background has the same texture and authenticity.

A dramatic, sometimes dark and always engrossing story.

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## **Jamie Fessenden says**

This is one of the best gay romances I've ever read. I couldn't put the book down!

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## **Kazza says**

This is my second Alex Beecroft book, the first being Blessed Isle. Both books are historical maritime/nautical or Age of Sail. I had not heard of that as a genre before Alex Beecroft. No matter what the label, False Colors is a wonderful book.

The writing is -

Beautiful

Brutal

Historic and factual - I want realistic writing. Not creative licence taken so that it would be akin to some contemporary gay romp on the Georgian high seas. I don't want BS instead of real LGBT period writing. Thank you to Ms Beecroft for being honest in her writing

It is -

Action packed

Well researched

Gut-wrenchingly sad at times

Romantic

Frustratingly real, these are men of their times. Yes, there was a lack of communication for multiple reason, including who was involved and what the consequences could be; hanging is none to pleasant to face. Who do you trust implicitly? They were actually out in small ships doing amazing things, fighting for honour, country and for the love of the sea and their career. The main protagonists suffered torture and abuse, unbelievable elements and politics. They also had to deal with what today would be PTSD

Multi-layered. Even the title is amazing in this regard - for the tactic and for the heart

In depth review at **On Top Down Under Book Reviews** -  
<http://bookreviewsandtherapy.blogspot...>

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## Shannon says

First off, I have to say that I've never read anything in this genre before. And by "this" genre I mean age-of-sail historical fiction. It's possible that this title isn't something that a novitiate to the genre should read, however, it's where I started.

**Just to get the facts straight though, this isn't romance.** There are romantic elements throughout the story but if you're looking for some hot sexy men getting it on, then look elsewhere. Tacking on "An M/M Romance" to the front cover is pure marketing at its best.

**I have to say that the first half of this book made my brain numb with all the nautical terms.** I don't think I'm completely ignorant of these things, but there were full sentences where I had no idea what the words meant. You'd think you'd at least be able to figure out what's going on from the context, but no, I was stumped most of the time, and I had to just read on and hope that I'd understand eventually. I suppose I could have looked up the words but I just didn't care enough. **You're basically thrown into the seafaring world headfirst and the author assumes you'll understand, and this was frustrating.**

In the middle of the book the two main characters tried to find just about every possible horrible situation they could get into that would keep them away from each other. Whether it was one being captured and tortured, the other getting gravely wounded, then the other one being captured and tortured, both men finding sexual gratification with *other* men, the court martial of one of them for being gay, or when they somehow ended up on the Titanic. That last bit is a joke, but only marginally so.

(view spoiler)

**Finally, another thing that I had a problem with were all the gruesome bits.** I wasn't expecting people being strung up with their arms behind their back so their shoulders "ground out of their sockets," or how the people being burned alive were trying to escape their cages and had their fingers chopped off. The part that really made me upset was the 9 year old boy that drowned when he went back to save his pet bird when the ship hit an iceberg and the lower quarters filled with water. And of course we had to have descriptions of how all the livestock had drowned. And then the part when they were visiting the people with the plague in the hospital (yellow fever, I think) and the officers kept getting puked on. It would be interesting to count how many times human excrement, urine, and other bodily fluids are mentioned, because I'm sure the results are staggering.

And then there was the sexual encounter with the man with the rotting tooth ... ::shudders::

**So I have to say that I didn't enjoy this book all that much. If I could, I'd give it 1-1/2 stars because it wasn't the absolute worst thing I've ever read. Maybe it was too "real" for me and it didn't have enough fluff in it, but if a book has the word romance on the cover, I'm expecting at least *some***

**romance before I get to the last chapter.**

I can't say that I'd never read something from this author again, but I'll definitely think twice.

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### **Julz says**

Loved this story! What an exciting trip! Don't approach this book thinking it's just some man-lurve erotica. Not even close. It was actually quite the nautical adventure that realistically depicted life of navy officers during wartime in the 1700s, with the added spice of a forbidden and dangerous developing love affair.

The romance was an uber slow burn with a lot of glitches, which includes one of the hero's Quaker upbringing and his struggle with his beliefs and what he feels. Done very respectfully and not preachy--some of my favorite parts of the story. There was the added tension of man-on-man relations being punishable by death during the time (that's always a mood killer) with some good ol' OM competition thrown in for good measure.

But like in all good adventures, there were vicious bad guys, unspeakable horrors, some heartbreakingly sad moments and scenes that just split your face smiling.

I love when I finish a book and still feel the whoosh from the ride. Everything was just right on. Definitely a keeper.

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### **Josephine Myles says**

As my first foray into gay historical romance I wasn't entirely sure what to expect, but was not disappointed by *False Colours*. The novel is beautifully written and well researched, with a wealth of authentic historical detail that just leaps off the page. At times this is very gritty and downright disturbing (think kissing someone with a mouthful of rotten teeth!), but it really adds to the texture of the novel.

The two main characters are both flawed but lovable, and I was rooting for them right from the beginning. It's a long and difficult journey for them, though, so if you're expecting a novel riddled with explicit erotic encounters you'll be sorely disappointed. That's not to say that the sex, when it appears, isn't beautifully written, but it's very much there to serve the plot rather than the plot having been thrown together around a bunch of sex scenes (which seems to be the case with some m/m romances).

In short, I read this book in two days, finding it really hard to put down; and at the same time as enjoying a well crafted romance, I also learned a lot about the age of sail. Highly recommended for the more discerning m/m romance reader!

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### **Martin says**

Even though I read this three years ago, it's still my favorite in the Age of Sail genre.

Great life-like characters struggling with their feelings and identity in a world where a same-sex relation was

punished by death.

I totally recommend this one!

And since I am having troubles recalling the details of the plot, I think I need to re-read this at some point ;-)

5 stars!

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### **Karla says**

My first gay historical romance! Are they always this good? Probably not, darn it. While this is indeed a romance in part, there's also lots of adventure and a fine cast of characters that surround the story's couple. There are gritty period details aplenty, along with a gloomy and deadly pall that hangs over men who dared to love the wrong gender.

John Cavendish is the son of a carousing dad and a strict Quaker woman. Because he senses he's not "normal," he shuns all sexuality and devotes himself to his naval career. He's stalwart and dependable, traits which give him a mission from the Admiralty to be sitting ducks against the Corsairs in order to provide martyrs and the moral high ground to retaliate. However, his lieutenant, Alfie Donwell, gets captured by the Corsairs and John's feelings for him cause Cavendish to go all out to get him back. (It's only what any responsible captain would do for his officers, John tells himself.) The result - Corsair ass gets kicked but **good** - is quite against the Admiralty's expectations, and Cavendish finds himself a tolerated embarrassment within the Navy. He goes about restoring his standing in the priggish and upright way he only knows, but with the added irritation of the impulsive and handsome Alfie under his skin.

The two men are separated for quite a bit of the book, but are rarely out of each others' thoughts, whether out of anger or longing. Alfie has prodded into the light impulses within John that he has striven for years to smother, and John seemed like "the one" to Alfie, who is tired of settling for demeaning substitutes for the love he longs for. John's revulsion and Alfie's anger at John (and himself for wanting what society will not allow him to have) provide the tension throughout the story until the end when they get a hopeful, but by no means certain, HEA. In an era when sodomy would get you hanged, these two naval officers have no guarantee of a permanent HEA and there is no indication that either of them wishes to leave their careers behind, because the sea is as much a part of them as their love for each other.

**I LOVED** this book. The author assails the reader with nautical terminology, but I didn't find it all that onerous to read through. I don't know the difference between a topgallant and a staysail, but I didn't care. The action rips along at a good clip, the danger comes at all sides from pirates, Corsairs, the French, and the Arctic elements, and the drama aboard ship and on land more than compensates for the daze of terminology.

There is no real "villain" of the piece. The back of the book implies that it's a man from Alfie's past, but he is a very sympathetic character in his own way. His defiant and exhibitionist conduct, combined with self-hatred and selfishness, is what propels Alfie through the still and stormy waters of his relationship with Cavendish. This trio of characters display all the murky, damaged and, quite frankly, heartbreakingly contorted gay men went through. Options are limited, so they go through a struggle to settle for what you can get at the cost of your honor and wellbeing, or aspire for the perfect. The villain of the story is really Homophobia and the Code of Conduct in His Majesty's Fleet (or whatever it was called). With such a monolith as an enemy, it would have been easy for the tone to get super-preachy. Amazingly, it didn't.

It's not a "pretty" book by any means. It's not a fluffy, feel-good read where our heroes defy all of society's laws and do it in the open and convert haters into supporters. The scene in the "Molly club" where John decides to give in to his lust with a rotten-toothed roughneck made me cringe, but only because I'd already come to care for the guy and hated to see him head down that path. John and Alfie were characters I could get behind and root for, and every agony they went through made that final scene all the more sweet. They hurt each other with their attraction, with spite and regret, as they try to hammer out what it is they want, expect, and need. Apart from emotional agony, they both go through some excruciating physical tortures! Yikes. Reminder to self: don't ever get captured by Corsairs or pirates. Because there's going to be lots of blood and mangling.

Normally I can't abide Big Misunderstandings and the last half of this book hinges on them. While it irritated me at first, I had to remind myself that the relationship in this story wasn't the usual hetero one where society put no restraints on men and women acknowledging such feelings for one another. This was a whole different setup, with men acting out of pride, honor, and fear over a very dangerous matter. The lack of communication, exacerbated by separations, seemed right in the end.

If you're willing to try a different kind of romance, and love period detail, then I highly recommend this one.

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### **Errolyn says**

False Colors: An M/M Romance Barnes and Noble did a feature on their internal newsletter about a new publishing house that will be putting out m/m romance novels. Of course, I could not resist reading one.

Now obviously, with this cover, this book is only for the brave to read in public. But then that is a hazard of most romance novels: they advertise what they are about fully on the cover. But minus all of that...I enjoyed this book a lot. It is a typical romance plot. Boy meets boy. Boy is confused, intrigued by boy, boy and boy fight because they are both pigheaded and dumb and don't know how to communicate. Then they spend the entire book, loving and hating each other at the time time..until the end when..finally! They kiss and do a bit more. So it may be two men...but the basics of romance books stay the same. One thing that was different was the struggle both men had with the sexuality and what it meant in the time they grew up in. In this period of time, being homosexual meant death...literally. So the writer did not shy away from the self--hated, denial and conflict these men grappled with. This was viewed as a sickness, a disease to be cured and gay people the worst kind of people. So the love these two men shared was the ultimate of forbidden love. I felt like these issues were dealt with carefully and honestly and it added depth to this romance. I liked both characters...even when they were being dumb and frustrating me. My only complaint would be that while the ending was satisfying and open-ending given what they would have to deal with from then one...I found it a bit rushed. I would have liked to linger about it some more. But all in all a good read...that made you think.

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### **Courtney Milan says**

I picked up a copy of Alex Beecroft's False Colors last night at my local Barnes and Noble, just so I could buy it in that crucial first week—even though I didn't plan to read it until I had a little more time on my hands. This book got a straight A from Dear Author (and if you read them, you know how stingy they are with the A grades).

I glanced at the first page. . . . Gosh. And then the second, and the third. Before I knew it, I had stayed up to finish the whole thing. It was that good. It was truly brilliant.

This is a book set in the Age of Sail. The writing is exquisite; the romance is lovely; the research is meticulous; and the action is nonstop. It breaks your heart and then keeps going on. This book does not shy from any of the harsh realities of life at sea in 1762—nor does it dance around the heart of the problem that the protagonists have: In 1762, their love is forbidden, because both characters are male.

I have not read much m/m romance (and this is romance, not erotica or even erotic romance, and can I say how much I hate that "gay" gets conflated with "erotica"?—the sex scenes are tasteful and far less explicit than you'd find in a corresponding historical, including mine), but it turns out, I really do read romances just to see characters fall in love. I absolutely adored this book. This is one of the best books that I read in 2009.

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### **Em says**

What a fantastic book this was. *False Colors* is an historical nautical wartime adventure set during the 1700's with a forbidden romance/love story. It was sometimes brutal, there was torture and a fair bit of gore as you would expect of the times, but it was also heartbreakingly romantic. John and Alfie feared to show their emotions for one another due to the dire consequences if they were caught. There isn't a lot of MM sex, it's more of a slow burner, but well worth a read if you like an epic adventure. I would have given it 5 stars but felt the ending was a bit rushed, I could have done with a little bit more!

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