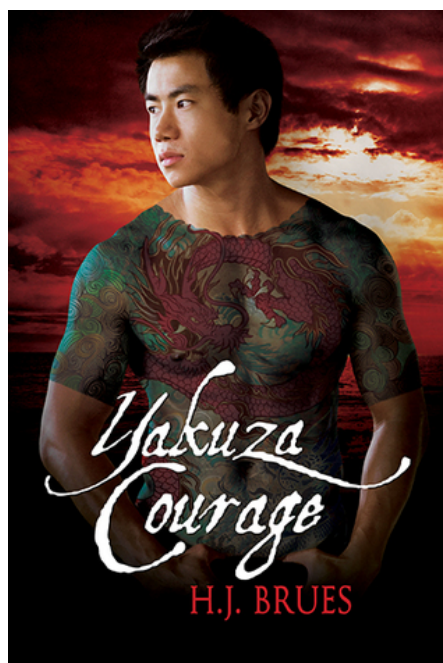




Yakuza Courage

H.J. Brues

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Ex-Navy SEAL Brendan O'Farrihy enrolls in kendo classes to investigate a Honolulu dojo acting as a front for a yakuza syndicate. Or at least that's what Brendan's client, Senator Harris, believes. Through his kendo instructor, the cocky, short-fused, gorgeous Kinosuke Yonekawa, Brendan learns the criminals who are supposedly using the senator's son, Kenneth, to expand their activities into the US, seem to have severed any yakuza connections. The jaded, soul-scarred former soldier is captivated by the loyalty these gangsters show each other and the way they protect Ken like a tight military unit. Brendan wonders why the senator lied to him, and what the yakuza are shielding Ken from.

When Ken disappears, Brendan suspects foul play and decides to help the man he is falling for, Kinosuke, and his friends, find Ken. But when Kinosuke discovers Brendan has been on the senator's payroll, all bets are off.

Yakuza Courage Details

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From Reader Review Yakuza Courage for online ebook

ConM says

I enjoyed this book for the most part. I loved the two main characters and liked their story. I liked the location.

Two things stopped it from 5 stars.

1. Too many POVSS, I just wanted Brendan and Kinosuke; and too many random characters.
2. A significant portion of the second half was taken up with a rescue mission, this could have been considerably cut.

Both of these issues meant less time was spent with the MCs, there were some issues I felt were eluded to, that were not fully explored.

R * A Reader Obsessed * says

2.5 Stars

Kenshin, Matsugura and company have peacefully been ensconced in Hawaii carving out a new existence and trying to fit in. But adapting to a new lifestyle and country isn't so easy. Though Ken's powerful Senator father is still looming in the background, the last thing they expect is for him to make such a blatant move on quieting his son's existence to keep scandal at bay.

Brendan is hired to gather intel on the guys, so to insinuate himself into his target's lives, he signs up for kendo lessons. What he doesn't expect is to find himself insanely attracted to his younger teacher Kinosuke. An explosive connection happens as they verbally and physically spar. Each find in the other what they feel is missing in their lives. Brendan finally feels worthy; Kinosuke finally feels respected.

The truth is revealed when beloved Kenshin mysteriously disappears and it soon points to his diabolical senator father as the culprit. Desperate to make things right, Brendan enlists his former ex-military crew to rescue Ken and they all must work together to save him and ensure everyone's future safety.

This sequel definitely wasn't as hearts and romance, nor scary life threatening craziness as the first (which I'm ok with because I barely survived Ken's 1st abduction). There's so much hostility and reluctant attraction (albeit hot reluctant attraction) between the two MC's that marks it as starkly different from Yakuza Pride. Plenty of obstacles stand between these two - culture clash, miscommunication, wrong assumptions, personal baggage and doubts - with plenty of frustrating male posturing. When they do get together and when they do let their guard down, that's when this book shines.

So basically this felt like a military romance instead of the grand flowery romance the first book was. Because of that difference, I'm not surprised that many didn't like the sequel. On it's own I thought it was a decent story with a satisfying conclusion, where the bad guys are thwarted and the good guys come out on top to get their HEA. But overall this did not have the emotional impact as the first and that left me wanting just a bit....

Thanks so much Sofia for reading with me!!

Elizabetta says

2.5 stars; to round up or down... a dilemma...

(Note: If you have not read Book 1, this review will contain spoilers)

I was so anticipating *Yakuza Courage*. I remember really enjoying the first book, *Yakuza Pride*. It got five stars from me two years ago when I read it. I guess time does make a difference because I'm not feeling the love so much with this sequel. And it takes a long-ass review to work out why.

I really liked the set-up, yes I did...

The author, once again, shapes the story with an interesting look at island culture, this time Hawaii. Book one ended with Shigure Matsunaga (leader of the powerful yakuza family, the Shinagawa-gumi), walking off into the sunset with his gaijin lover, Ken Harris, and followed by his loyal clan members: Kinosuke, Shinya, Tachibana, and teenager, Kotaro. The Shinagawa gang left Japan and yakuza life behind for a new start in the US.

Now they live together in a converted warehouse where they also operate a dojo, teaching kendo and aikido. One of them, Tachibana, has even married an island girl. So we get some martial arts training and the challenges of fitting in this strange new paradise. And Ken getting used to his role as bankroller for this new life. That certainly causes some tension between him and Shigure.

Enter the bigger conflict. Ken's evil father, Senator Harris, continues his interference in Ken's life and sends an ex-Navy SEAL, Brendan O'Farrihy, to gather intel on Ken and Shigure. Things get murky when Brendan begins to empathize with his marks. He was the CO of his own close group of SEAL operatives so he understands the tough training and loyalty of Shigure's men. In fact, when Brendan calls on his SEAL friends for help (another boatload of characters to keep track of), it's interesting to see how the two groups interact.

To complicate things, Brendan quickly becomes smitten with the beautiful Kinosuke. His attention wavers in that direction, and Kinosuke returns the same attraction. So the romantic aspect shifts from Ken and Shigure to this new couple thus setting up for even more confusion and mixed signals.

Things come to a head when the cute Kotaro gets into some teenaged shenanigans and makes some trouble for the group. I have to add that I like Kotaro-- when we get his POV, full of sulky insecurity, we get a feel not only for his being the youngest, most inexperienced one in the group, and how that chafes, but also for some issues with fitting into a new culture.

So, what didn't work...

The writing just doesn't do it for me. All the good stuff mentioned is delivered with so much telling, so much interminable sketching out and explaining of actions and feelings that the story gets seriously bogged down with it. It lumbers along. Even when the shit hits the fan and the Senator moves in to interfere, once more, with Ken and his ex-yakuza, the action and the tension is diluted by too much freaking blather.

Another issue has to do with the three alternating POVs; we mostly see things through Brendan, Kinosuke and Kotaro's eyes. The problem is that Kinosuke and Kotaro's voices are so similar, both full of sulky, sullen sarcasm, which works for the teenaged Kotaro but not so much for the older, more experienced Kinosuke. I found this very distracting. More distinction between them, and an older, more fitting voice for Kinosuke would have helped me take him more seriously.

It's been some years since I read book one; I don't remember having the same issues there. I know that I really connected with the sheer joy of reading about a culture not often delved into in MM romance, and I dug that fiery passion between Ken and Shigure. But here, they are relegated to the sidelines. This is really supposed to be Brendan and Kinosuke's story. Yet their romance is mostly about longing looks, misunderstandings and huffy spats that keep them apart for big chunks of the story as they become embroiled in thwarting the Senator's evil tricks.

So, there's some stuff to like but it's thwarted by the delivery. There are a boatload of characters to keep track of (I didn't even mention Brendan's SEAL pals). Even Brendan and Kinosuke's romance seems two-dimensional and limp. Not what you'd want in a M/M romance.

Bah, I was hoping for so much more.

For this and other great reviews, author interviews, and general fabulousness, visit **Love Bytes**:

A copy of this book was provided by the publisher/author in exchange for an honest review.

Simsala says

Around 60 % I lost track and patience. Too detailed, too confusing...so skipping was it. Totally lacked the nail-biting suspense and e-reader-melting hotness of book one.

Josh Evans says

Didn't like this one as much as book 1. Some parts were a little too long and got a little boring.

Sofia says

Things I liked and things I didn't in this one. But in the end I had a smile on my face so it was a good experience.

The scene jumping and scenes being recounted instead of shown were not my favorite. There were scenes

which I would have definitely liked to have seen, whilst other scenes could have been more compact. Moreover the two main characters were a bit side lined by the story itself. I could have stood more time with them as I continue to like how Brues writes characters, their thinking and their point of view. It is her forte in these books in my opinion. She even introduced new characters who I would like to know more of. Thumbs up for Otter and Burka.

2.5 stars

BR with RA link here. Thanks RA, great company.

? BookAddict 🗡️ La Crimson Femme says

A must read follow up book to Yakuza Pride. Ms. Brues stuns the reader again with a masterful story.

In this second book, it's a flip of cultural clash. This is not a standalone book and must be read after the first one. Shigure moves his entire Yakuza group with him to Hawaii. This is to protect Kenneth from his own father. Hawaii is a place filled with Asian Pacific Islanders. This should be an easy place for the Kenneth and Shigure to settle in. Not so.

Ms. Brues does another excellent job is showing the differences between two cultures. Japanese and American culture are so far apart it is hard to find mutual ground. This is abundantly clear as Shigure's adopted Yakuza family fails to integrate into Hawaiian society. For those who have not grown up in a world where respect and "face" is integral to a person's self-worth, this story will be hard to understand. For someone who grew up in this culture, this story will hurt to read. The growing pains Kinosuke Yonekawa suffers is painfully accurate. Kinosuke is one of Shigure's trusted lieutenants. Now without the Yakuza name, he is back to nothing. For those whom power and respect comes through fear, this downfall is hard to swallow.

The relationship complications in this story are worse because of so many missteps between the two main characters. Brendan is a former Navy SEAL who is so white bread he probably only knows two food groups- meat and potatoes. Falling for Kinosuke, a person he is investigating for Kenneth's father, the Senator, is the last thing he ever expected. Unlike Kenneth who understood the Japanese culture, Brendan is stumbling into it completely blind. His manners and actions show him to be a heavy handed thug crashing through delicately strong Japanese etiquette. It makes me wince because Brendan isn't doing it out of ill will. He just doesn't know any better. Unfortunately, Kinosuke, who may be an excellent martial arts teacher, sucks as a cultural attaché.

This story is less dark than the first yet it still carries the underlying tone of inhumanity. Kenneth's family is a despicable example of what most people hate about politicians. Ms. Brues creates characters who are flawed yet redeemable. Yet for Kenneth's family, there is nothing but flaws. They are evil to the core with the word villain stamped on their forehead. It's rather interesting how badly she paints them.

What I enjoyed most about this story is once again the relationships. The growth from both Kinosuke and Brendan is reassuring. It is because it shows how two different people who judge each other unfairly can come to a middle ground and see each other's point of view. In addition, it shows the bonds of family does not need to be just blood ones. Brotherhood through a chosen family can be just as strong, if not stronger than blood families. The parallels and contrasts between Brendan's former SEAL team mates and Kinosuke's

Yakuza members is fascinating.

This story is highly recommended to m/m readers who want to read about cultural clashes which bring forth acceptance.

Alisa says

I really wanted to love this book. I loved book one so much. This book however did not live up to my expectations. The first 30% was pretty good but then it was all down hill from there. By 70% I couldn't stand it anymore and just started skimming. There was a ridiculous amount of detail on their mission and very little romance or relationship stuff after 30%. As I looked back I realized even that had been minimal. We only saw the two MC's in a few scenes together. Much of their time together took place off page. By the end I was not feeling their connection at all & I didn't understand their time apart. Overall this was REALLY disappointing for me.

Lilli *slowest reader ever* says

First things first. Let's just be honest: Shigure and Kenshin aren't easily bet. They are one of a kind. As is their story.

My feelings about this story are a mess. It was disappointing and frustrating but also really good in a way that got me hooked anyway. I loved it and I hated it. And I want more.

It was nothing like the first book. There wasn't the high tension between the MCs right from the beginning with regular clashes of wills (and bodies). There was nothing of the trademark kinky hotness that was Shigure/Kenshin. And the action wasn't as engaging.

One very obvious reason for this probably is the fact that despite this being a long book the MCs – Kinosuke and Brendan - didn't actually have much page time together. It felt like ages before they even met, then their time together made for some great reading, but it was way too short and then some outdrawn and way too detailed scheming/action thing started and completely took over their story. They were still in there, mind you, and sometimes even interacting a little bit and thinking about each other. But that was barely enough to satisfy any reader looking for a love story. Worst thing was that the happy end fell short because it was rushed and inconsistent.

So...

Having the bad things out of the way, I want to mention the things I liked very much. These things were the smooth and engaging writing that I came to love in the first book, the author's ability to create compelling and complex characters, a good dose of humour that worked well for me, and the strong sense of family and friendship as overall theme of the book. Add to that some intrigue and mission planning spiced up with a bit of the "Maneki Neko. Exfiltrating now. Move it. Out." kind of action and I was still a happy camper despite my frustrations.

Quite honestly, I didn't want this story to end. I wanted to read on about all the characters in the book. I loved how two different set of characters came to form a solid unit with special ties to each other. I loved the

side stories although they took away from the love story, too. I loved Kinosuke and Brendan. Both adorable in their own way, with issues I dearly wished had been explored (more). Brendan was my favourite of the two although in the beginning I didn't expect me to like him. The author managed to make me love him, though.

Damn! Why giving me such great characters to love and cheer for and then letting me down and throwing only a few morsels of romance my way?!

There you have it. My frustration and anger about this story is so strong because I loved the characters and the general set-up of the story so fricking much. It could have been so awesome if the love story weren't such a let-down.

deep breath

Whatever. I'm so not sure how to rate this book. I wanted to read a love story with a punch and I got anything but. Then again, I enjoyed the story much more than many a full-blown romance badly written that you can find at any corner these days.

So I settle with a 3.5 stars for now, rounding up to 4 stars doesn't feel right, though.

Heller says

It kills me to say this didn't really work for me. Too many characters and storylines happening and I ended up skimming huge chunks of it. I read Yakuza Pride right before it and it suffered in comparison. Although I finished this one it was a near miss, I'll try again in a few weeks and come at it from a fresh angle.

***Danielle* says**

? Brendan O'Farrihy
? Kinosuke Yonekawa

Read 20 Aug 2014

Well, that was a bit of a disappointment. I really liked the first book, but this was a bit of a let down. It was quite long and the middle of the book was a bit boring ~ ★★

SheReadsALot says

What an excellent early birthday gift!!!

Love Bytes Reviews says

4.5 Heart Review by Jenna

Yakuza Courage is the second installment in “The Way of the Yakuza” series. In addition to being a beautiful and erotic romance, this book was packed with action and intrigue. The story begins shortly after Ken, Shigure, and their yakuza crew set up in Hawaii where they begin their new lives working as martial arts instructors. Though the yakuza crew gave up their ties to all illegal activities when they left Japan, their arrival in the U.S. gets the attention of a government entity. An Ex-SEAL, Brendon, possess as a martial arts student in order to investigate the crew, but on his first day undercover, he falls for his Japanese instructor, Kinosuke. Despite their cultural differences and Kinosuke’s issues with anger and shame, their relationship moves quickly. However, nothing is easy for the two. When Brendon’s seemingly routine investigation is twisted into a political plot, their relationship becomes mangled to the point that it appears they will never be able to repair it.

As the plot thickens, the Ex-military crew and the yakuza are drawn into political conspiracies, dodging bullets along the way until they ultimately turn the tables on those conspiring against them. Since Yakuza Courage focuses mostly on Kinosuke and Brendon, I really missed seeing Ken and Shigure. However, there were enough glimpses of them to make me feel nostalgia for Yakuza Pride. Even though I wasn’t initially sold on Kinosuke, the relationship between him and Brendon was very hot and by the end, I was dying for them to come back together. In addition to the romance, the culture shock aspect was very real and believable. In the first book Ken was looked down on for being a foreigner. So I loved seeing how the Japanese characters strove to find a place in their new home in the U.S. This aspect was especially interesting since the yakuza were now the foreigners and had to come to terms with the shame of their perceived drop in status.

Overall, this book was very awesome and I look forward to reading book three. I highly recommend Yakuza Courage to anyone who loves M/M romance mixed with action and adventure.

This book was provided free in exchange for a fair and honest review for Love Bytes. Go there to check out other reviews, author interviews, and all those awesome giveaways. Click below.

Nikyta *Miss Forgetful* says

This review can be found at The Blogger Girls review site.

4.5 stars

Three years ago, I discovered this book called Yakuza Pride. I say a lot that I love this and that but when I say that I love the yakuza, I mean that they are one of my favorite things to read about. The culture is so rich and they’re so intense with their honor and loyalty that I’m always drawn to those type of stories. So when I read Yakuza Pride, it instantly became a favorite. In fact, I’ve read it at least a dozen times since then AND bought the paperback. I BEGGED the author to write a sequel because Kinosuke deserved his own story. Imagine my surprised AND DELIGHT when I got an email from the author saying my wish came true! I was ECSTATIC and soooooo happy! And determined to read that baby as soon as possible because I just KNEW I’d love it. And, what do you know? I was right ;)

Yakuza Courage is Kinosuke's story about how he's coping with the move from Japan to Hawaii. His whole life has been uplifted and now he's finding it hard to find his place in the foreign country, even if he is working with his yakuza family at the dojo. Add to that, his "little brother", Kotaro, is acting up and he has no idea what to do or how to handle the little brat. When Brendan comes to the dojo under the disguise of wanting lessons, he gets under Kinosuke's skin so much that Kinosuke's attitude and actions start hurting others. But when he accepts his feelings for Brendan, Kinosuke thinks he's finally found something that's "his"... until he realizes that Brendan being around is no coincidence and the betrayal bites deep. But when Ken goes missing, Kinosuke must decide whether contacting the very person who hurt him could be the key to finding the man he owes his life to.

My recap is a little different than the blurb because I wanted to give a little more foundation for what the story is about. It's taken from three POVs – Kinosuke's, Brendan's and Kotaro's. It follows along as these three navigate their lives. While Kotaro is younger and dealing with issues like school, bullying and fitting in, Kinosuke is have those same issues but more adult-related. He just can't find his place and it's driving him nuts. Neither of them have a 'purpose' anymore, like they did when they were in Japan and that throws them for a loop and causes them to act vastly different than they normally would. Brendan, actually, has a similar issue in that since he's been out of the military, he's found it hard to find a home, a job that he enjoys and a partner to spend it with. They all have their quirks and the three POVs merged very well together by being able to cover all the areas of the mystery, suspense and their lives.

As characters, I adored them just as much as I did in Yakuza Pride. Kotaro is still the bratty little brother who just wants to please, although now he has a hint of defiance in him. Kinosuke is still the smart-mouthed, stubborn and short-tempered man he was, except now he's also a mix of cocky and insecure. Brendan is different. He's a hardened soldier who's pretty cold but he's also smug and cocky. At the same time, Kinosuke and Brendan connect on the same level. They understand each other and there's a chemistry between them. I loved that Kinosuke struggled with his feelings for Brendan and couldn't really understand Brendan. I also loved that once he accepted it, he jumped in with both feet. However, these men are both stubborn and sometimes they just don't know how to express their emotions, which would put Kinosuke in a situation where he doubted or questioned Brendan's words and actions. It was sad but I felt like it fit the story and ultimately the characters and made me just want to squeeze them both!

I LOVED this book but I did have two minors issues. One, I was very confused when it came to the point where the yakuza and SEALs were working together to find Ken and what exactly they were doing. It took me a while to connect the dots and figure out why they were posing as businessman, which leaves me to my second issue. There were a few instances where gaps in time were skipped over between one chapter and the next. Unfortunately, I felt like these lapses were important for the story and so when the new chapter picked up, it always took me a while to figure out how much time had gone by, what had transpired during that time and what exactly is happening now. Three specifics situations stand out in my mind (right after Kinosuke insults Ken (for the second time) in front of the boss, when Brendan decides to get his team involved and when Brendan goes back to the mainland).

Even with those issues, though, I ADORED this story. It's been years since I read Yakuza Pride and I can honestly say, that I am completely satisfied with the sequel. Sure, there wasn't as much romance between Kinosuke and Brendan but I felt like their love was more real because they weren't basing their emotions just off lust. They had time to learn each other, see each other in action, etc. Then there was the fact that this one has a whole HOST of characters (sometimes a bit too much and my advice is to not try hard to remember all the names) but they were still amusing, especially Brendan's team (loved Otter!).

This is a story that has a bit of everything in it and really had me engrossed while reading. HOWEVER, I really hope the author decides to write more in this series because I honestly think there's more potential especially because now Kotaro and Bobcat need a story! Not to mention that little teaser about Shinya at the end so now he needs a story! LOL

Riayl says

Decent read, but just didn't grab me as much as the first book did. Still, it was great to see all the characters again.
