



## Fortuna

*Michael R. Stevens*

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Longing for escape from his mundane existence as a Stanford computer science major, Jason Lind signs up to play Fortuna, an online role-playing game set in Renaissance Florence. From the first, fateful mouse click, Jason tumbles into the vibrant, lush, anonymous world of Fortuna. Swept up in this highly complex, highly addictive game of fame, fortune, and power, Jason quickly transitions from casual gamer to compulsive player. Soon tangled up in a steamy virtual love triangle, Jason becomes obsessed with breaking Fortuna's code of anonymity. But Fortuna is anything but fun and games, and when a sizable debt incurred in the game spills over into reality, Jason is forced to leverage the legacy of his father, a high-tech legend killed in a car accident years before, to pay off the debt. What started as a great escape may only leave Jason trapped, as the game that transported Jason deep into the past exposes a shocking, present-day reality. In the world of Fortuna, it's not how you play the game; it's if you survive.

## Fortuna Details

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Author : Michael R. Stevens

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## From Reader Review Fortuna for online ebook

### **Brian O'Leary says**

Cool idea, good characters and it actually has a good ending, but too slowly paced.

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### **Gary Butler says**

18th book read in 2011.

number 148 out of 222 on my all time book list

Follow the link below to see my video review:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c1Bt6e...>

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### **Janice says**

Jason Lund, a computer science graduate student at Stanford, is bored and starts playing a role-playing online computer game, Fortuna. He is impressed with the graphics of the game that takes place in Florence during the Renaissance. He has played these types of games before but this one is even more addicting and he is soon obsessed with the secretive nature of it, and its focus on power. His studies and his relationships start to suffer because he is spending so much time on this game. He also is spending money and he begins to think that the game is somehow closely tied to real life. His good friend Marco is concerned that Jason is missing too much school and his girlfriend, Paola is also in concerned.

In Fortuna Jason plays a priest, Father Allesandro who listens to confessions and then skims some of the money from the confessor's contributions. He desires to become a bishop and soon sees that his ambition comes with a financial cost that spills over into his real world. Because of this he realizes he needs to get some money and goes to his Uncle Frank who had been a business partner with his father to get a job. You find out that Jason comes from a wealthy father, Nick Fibonacci who was a huge contributor to Stanford and has a building named after him. His father died in a car accident about 9 years ago.

At this point in the book, the author takes us back 9 years to meet Jason's father, Nick Fibonacci. We learn about his relationship with business partner Frank Stocker. Jason got his computer savvy from his father who created a computer program that was siphoning money from the business.

The story then goes back and picks up with Jason again who is working for Stocker and discovers what his father has done. Will this solve Jason's own money problems? What really happened to his father? Who is the mysterious woman in Fortuna and is she actually someone he knows? Read this thriller to find the answers. Michael R. Stevens tells an interesting story weaving together Jason's real life and his life as Father Allesandro that you will not want to put down.

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### **Christine Zibas says**

Stanford graduate student Jason Lind finds himself lured into the world of online gaming when he stumbles on *Fortuna*, a virtual world that is set in Renaissance Florence in the novel of the same name, “*Fortuna*” by Michael R. Stevens. Letting himself coast in his computer science studies (despite prompting by friends and the Stanford professor for whom he is working), he is increasingly drawn into this elaborate counter-world of Italian politics and economics online.

The game itself (*Fortuna*) is based on extensive understanding and available records of historical events from the Renaissance period, and as author Michael Stevens draws his character into this alternate universe, so too, will readers be captivated. This is no doubt the strongest part of the book. The first half of the thriller is positively engrossing. Readers are made to feel the allure and excitement of the game, even as Jason moves deeper into the game and further and further away from reality. It’s practically impossible to put the book down in its early stages.

During the second half of the book (by the time Jason has decided to leave school and find a “real job” to pay for his online game playing at *Fortuna*), things remain interesting but much less driven. The pace slows as readers are taken into the history of the Jason’s family, his father’s success as a computer genius, and his death, which may have sinister implications. As the game and real life begin to overlap, things become increasingly dangerous for Jason and those around him. By working at his father’s former company, Jason has uncovered secrets that threaten his own life, as he naively tries to fix the mistakes of the past.

Eventually Jason must decide whether or not to believe the message he has received via *Fortuna*. This intersection of real life (RL to gamers) and the fantasy of Renaissance Florence is a creative commingling of the unresolved history within Jason’s own life and the turning point for his future.

What’s clear is that, like life, the game is a muddy world where there are no sure answers. Even as readers come to see the whole arc of the storyline, they soon realize that the happy ending remains elusive, there is only a continuing of the game in a different way. Readers may not be happy with this conclusion to the novel, but it does give hope that perhaps there will be more adventures set in *Fortuna* or other virtual worlds in future novels by author Michael Stevens.

What Stevens has done most successfully in “*Fortuna*” is shown the allure of living another life, but the impossibility of escaping one’s own.

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### **Sahar Sabati says**

Jason Lind is a well-known, well sought out, and very successful computer science major. Unfortunately, his brilliant mind is bored. He decides to seek refuge in an online role-playing game which sucks him into becoming a compulsive player. Soon, Jason becomes trapped in the world of *Fortuna*, as it starts taking over his reality.

Such online games are an economy in themselves, as author Michael Stevens explained in a recent interview with Oceanview publishing. The anonymity of these games allows for different sorts of friendships to

develop, which are not restricted by the same social conventions as in real life friendships. This causes gamers to take risks and behave in ways they otherwise wouldn't.

Michael Stevens's opinion of the gaming world is not only interesting, but gives the entire book a whole new perspective. He believes that we live in a lonely, angry society, and that people play these games to give them a chance to get what they feel they're missing out on in their lives – anonymously.

Online anonymity makes these games all the more potent and addictive and puts gamers in situations they otherwise would never have gotten themselves into, and, consequently, in situations they don't always know how to handle. Michael Stevens's character is put in such a situation, as the line between his fiction and reality become blurred when a debt Jason's character incurred in the game is being collected in real life. And of course, this debt is not your grandmother's debt; it's the kind only a compulsive player like Jason has become can get into.

One of the most intriguing things about this book, something that is at the same time incredibly interesting and yet weirdly awkward, is the fact that Jason is using high-tech twenty-first century technology to play a game set in Renaissance Florence. The differences between these sometimes very intimately related worlds clash wildly with one another. Kudos must be given to the author for making the clash blend in extremely well with the story, and for making it work. It could have easily become a set of cliché contrasting comments, moments and situations, but Michael Stevens makes it an experience of clashing emotions, feelings, and sensations – not an easy feat.

Being an avid X-Files fan, I couldn't help but be reminded of the season 7 episode "First Person Shooter"; and so the mental images that accompanied me throughout the books were quite vivid, and interestingly enough, a few bars of the theme to The X-Files would resound every now and then. This is not only an amusing anecdote (or disturbing look into my addled mind for some), but also a reflection of the ability of the author to create a vivid world, one that easily took a life of its own while I was working my way through Fortuna's over 300 pages).

A little wild and totally unbelievable at times, Fortuna remains a highly pleasurable read from beginning to end. I'm no computer expert, but the reality created by Michael Stevens in this book makes sometimes frightening sense, causing me wonder at times if, perhaps, technology could advance to make this work of fiction a reality.

(First published on Blogcritics and <http://saharsreviews.wordpress.com>)

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### **Sheila Beaumont says**

Good, exciting thriller in which a young man, a grad student at Stanford, becomes obsessed with a massively multiplayer online role-playing game set in Renaissance Italy that spills over into present-day reality. An enjoyable read for those who like suspense fiction about virtual reality impinging on the real world.

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### **Denise - No Longer on Goodreads says**

I was intrigued by the plot idea of "Fortuna," so I decided to give it a try. At first, I had a hard time getting in

to it, mostly because I was trying to take in the various details of the game (Fortuna) and its world (Renaissance Florence), but once those settled in, I found myself moving with relative ease through the book, enjoying the various plot twists and turns. I was a bit thrown when I reached part II, and I found myself wishing that the author had woven parts I and II together throughout the story, but it didn't detract from my ability to enjoy the book. I also found certain parts predictable, but this also didn't deter me. Overall, I really enjoyed it, and will definitely be checking out other books that Stevens has to offer!

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### **Kate says**

A perfectly adequate sci-fi thriller about an immersive MMORPG based on Renaissance Florence, and a Stanford comp-sci grad student who gets enmeshed in the game and its politics, only to discover real-world consequences to his online actions, and vice versa.

The concept behind the game and the ever-so-slightly fantastical sci-fi aspects of the setting (ubiquitous GPS tracking in phones, really mind-blowing graphical and avatar capabilities in the game) were quite engrossing, and the idea of having a meticulously researched, immersive online gaming environment with near-perfect anonymity and historical accuracy and beauty was a good twist on your usual MMORPG. Unfortunately, the plot twists were pretty darn predictable - I spent a large portion of the book cringing and going "Noooo, you idiot!" at the main character - though they were quick enough to keep my interest sustained. Some of the prose was clunky, but not distractingly so, and the in-game scenes were vividly rendered and quite interesting.

Unfortunately, I was really put off by the characterization of women in the novel. Where they appeared at all, they were merely objects, something for the main character to lust after and pursue or swoon over, and several passages near the end REALLY upset me, given that they retroactively stripped the women of almost all agency or purpose other than to pursue the main character, even when they might have been powerful or interesting in their own right. That right there downgraded the book from a solid, adequate three-star rating to two stars for me. Prosaic plotting and a serviceable action/thriller plot with sparks of interest in the form of vivid imagery and a neat MMORPG model are NOT improved by adding casual, unthinking sexism.

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### **Bluebird says**

3½ stars

I was immediately drawn into this story while reading the "look inside" preview online and ended up reading the book in one sitting. Jason, a computer science major at Stanford University, gets caught up in an obsessive online role-playing game that sets his personal life into a freefall. I was enchanted by the beautifully depicted world of Fortuna, set in Renaissance Italy, and was caught up in the events resulting from Jason's addiction to the game. I'm not a "gamer", so the book dragged a bit for me in the middle and during some of the more technical explanations of the game. However this did not draw me out of the story nor detract significantly from the flow of the book, as they were seamlessly blended into the story and were important to understanding the game of "Fortuna".

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## **Linda says**

One of the things I really liked about this book is the double role of the main character, Jason. In RL (real life) he's a graduate student and teaching assistant at Stanford. In cyber life, deeply embedded in the online game Fortuna, he's a priest in Renaissance Italy. He plays both roles well and in fact the lines between his RL and Ingame world become blurred as he becomes more and more addicted to the game. His life at Stanford is nicely plotted, realistic, and interesting. As can be expected, his obligations begin to suffer as the game overtakes his life. However, I really liked the make-believe world of Father Allesandro; the detailed descriptions of both Renaissance Italy and the rules of Fortuna make it captivating and hard to put down. These were dangerous times to live in and the game is historically accurate which adds suspense and intrigue. The book takes a surprising turn about midway, which although improbable is very enjoyable and builds to a really climatic ending.

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## **April says**

"Fortuna" by Michael R. Stevens, starts out as a cautionary tale about the effects getting overly involved in a virtual world can have on real life. By the end of part 2, the book shifts genres and goes from an after-school special to James Bond meets the Sopranos. Basically, what starts out as a timely and realistic story, becomes something fantastical and improbable. The story is still interesting and exciting; it just becomes disjointed and a bit contrived.

In an effort to add some excitement to his ordinary life, Jason Lind signs up for the virtual world of "Fortuna". An online role-playing game based on Renaissance Italy, Fortuna promises an escape that Jason can't refuse. As he becomes more immersed in the game, Jason turns his back on the real world and soon finds himself in debt, with no job and no idea how to get himself out of this distressing situation. It is at this point that the book changes gears. We learn the back story of the death of Jason's father and see what happens when real life and the virtual world intersect on a more personal and dangerous level.

Michael Stevens does an excellent job of painting the picture of Renaissance Italy and in particular, the city of Florence. His descriptions of the game and how it works are vivid and fascinating though sometimes a little technical for the novice computer user. Honestly, I didn't need to read about the underlying operation of the game but those who are into that sort of thing should really enjoy those parts of the story.

Overall, I would recommend this book for its imagery and timeliness as well as the unexpected turn of events that leads to an exciting climax.

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## **Kasey Cocoa says**

Simplistic ideas and easy to read but I found it lacking in so many ways. Flat characters and misinformation along with a rather poor representation of females didn't help. The idea behind it has potential, it just needs a lot of work. As is, there is a very narrow audience. Points go to the mmorpg Stevens created but it's not enough to make the book worthwhile.

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## **Andi says**

This was a fast-paced story, albeit with a bit of an improbability factor. It was a little over my head in certain places when discussing technical matters and tied up a little too neatly of my taste.

If you like adventure video games with historical elements, and you know something about programming, you will likely enjoy this one. I got it for free through Amazon's daily deals, but it's still a very reasonable \$1.99.

NOTE: Punctuation errors included missing periods at the end of a few sentences.

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## **Steven Mayfield says**

Fascinating concept that eventually works although the author is more comfortable fleshing out the formalized relationships of his virtual reality world than in the parallel "real" world. In particular, his male-female relationships in the latter are inauthentic. Nonetheless, the premise is unique enough to carry the day.

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## **Teri says**

Although it was pretty easy to figure out the ending somewhere around the middle, I still enjoyed reading this book. I liked Jason, although I kept wanting to yell at him about shirking his responsibilities in his real life when he was so caught up in the game. Seeing how his personality in RL contrasted with his ingame alter ego of Father Allessandro was interesting and I observed how RL Jason evolved over the course of the story, incorporating some of his Father Allessandro traits.

The descriptions of the game provided great imagery, but the technical explanations about Fortuna and Jason's programming were completely over my head, although I got the gist of it. The section of the book traveling back in time, was a great addition, giving backstory on Jason's father, Nick, and providing some explanations about Jason's past, but it also clued me in on the ending.

Something I caught, that I have to assume was an oversight on the author's part, was the use of Jason's real name by another character while ingame, although Fortuna is supposed to be anonymous. Since Jason was questioning if some people he knew in RL were playing the game, I assumed that the use of his name would confirm his suspicions, but it was never addressed in the book.

Although much of this story was improbable, it was very enjoyable and I'd recommend reading it if you're a fantasy fan, computer geek, or gamer - or even just want a quick thriller read.

This review is based on a digital copy from the publisher through NetGalley.

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