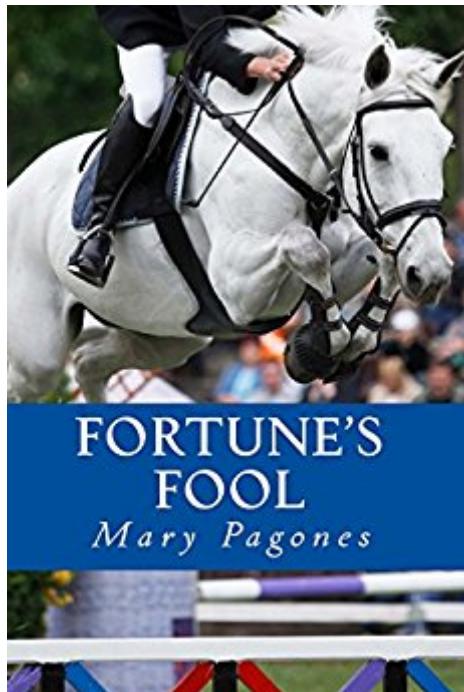


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Fortune's Fool



Synopsis

"Ma, I just kind of accidentally bought a horse so I'll need the trailer." No one wanted the rejected gelding. Even Simon's mother told her son he was crazy to buy the horse. But Simon never listened to other people, otherwise he wouldn't have decided to forgo going to college to become a working student at an eventing barn in the first place. Simon has always struggled--with fitting in, with being a poor boy in a rich man's sport, and also with being a gay man. To be a rider, after all, is to be...Fortune's Fool.

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Customer Reviews

First the fact that the protagonist was male was refreshing. I don't recall a male main character in a horse series since Kit Ehrman's Steve Cline. Simon's "voice" rang true, not only about his riding and relationship with horses, but navigating the late teen years of a boy who knows he is different in so many ways. Being a working student for a trainer is a lot of drudge work and with a less capable writer the story could easily have become bogged down in the minutiae of daily chores. Yet the year rolled right along with lessons learned about horses, people, relationships and life. The twist at the end was the only piece of fiction that felt a bit deus ex machina but hey it could happen. Over all I

enjoyed Fortune's Fool very much and read it pretty much straight through, which doesn't happen often enough with the books I've read lately.

Very well written, extremely well-researched. It does a good job of nicely combining tons of information about riding and equestrian competitions with an engaging plot with complex, well-developed, interesting characters. Ms. Pagones does a particularly good job of evoking the landscape and environment in which her story is set. It is a sequel to "The Horse Is Never Wrong," which was also extremely well done - but the two books can easily stand on their own. While labelled as "young adult," it is also mature enough to satisfy an adult reader. To the commentors who noted - some negatively - that the lead is a young gay man, his sexual orientation is simply another facet of his personality and handled beautifully. (Parents, there are some make-out scenes and implicit, not explicit, sexual content. As a mother of a 12 year old, nothing that I would feel uncomfortable having a young teenager read). It's nicely set up for a sequel or more in a series. Ms. Pagones has created a vivid set of characters and I look forward to hearing about all of their future adventures.

Finally a horse novel where the talented, just-scraping-by working student doesn't dream of making it to the Olympics! In fact, Simon states in the beginning of the book that he'll just be happy if he can carve out a decent life for himself that involves working with horses. Even though he's clearly very intelligent, he's never been focused in school and forgoes college to work for an old school eventing trainer. This book is refreshingly not full of many of the cliches that seem to go hand-in-hand with horse books. Simon doesn't win everything there is to win, he actually has to work hard, and he also has to grapple with the fact that he's gay. While it may be easier to be gay in the horse world than in other industries, Simon still has a lot to figure out regarding his sexual identity, especially when he finds himself falling in love with an older vet. Their relationship is a big part of the book. I'll admit I hadn't ever read a book focused on a gay relationship and I found it interesting. Pagones does a good job sharing details and getting at emotions but keeping things at a level that won't alienate heterosexual readers. Simon's voice is authentic and strong--one of the highlights of the book. The characters are all realistic, not cardboard cut-outs. If you're looking for something a little different than the usual, give it a read.

This is a good horse story for adults and older teens, and it's unusual in that the central character is a gay man, Simon. He chooses to skip college and take a working student gig with a famous

eventing trainer. While getting ready for that, he happens to find a rogue gray gelding that calls to his soul, and he knows that this horse has a bad future if he doesn't buy it. He's always liked challenging horses and has no fear of them, so this unstoppable freight train that can jump anything he's pointed toward catches his eye. Acceptance of people as they are is a key point of the book, and there are hints of problems like cutting that afflict one young woman, but it's never named. If you haven't heard of this affliction, the description of it goes right by you, and you lose a chance for understanding of why that person is the way she is, or how she's chosen to deal with stresses in the past. Some light editing needs to be done. It's Carnegie-Mellon, not Carnegie-Melon. There's another mistaken use of you're for your, and another couple of grammar errors caught my eye as well.

I love horses so much that I'll read pretty much any book with a horse at the center. I'll read it and enjoy it even if it's a bad book. Lucky for me, this isn't a bad book. At the center is a complicated young man named Simon. He's a whiz at math and could easily go to college and go into a career in math/science. Instead, he wants to make a life for himself in 3-day eventing, one of my favorite sports. I hate that the televised Olympics never show much beyond a few snippets of this event. Simon has the opportunity to buy a difficult horse that has great jumping skills. Unfortunately, he's bad-tempered, rank, and crappy at dressage. If he weren't so flawed, Simon would never have been able to buy him. Simon is just out of high school, working for rides and lessons. He and Fortune's Fool both grow and learn throughout this book. I really liked it. Obviously the writer has done her research, and my favorite scenes are when Simon is schooling his own horse, doing the drudge work around the stable, and teaching the other riders how to be better. It has an open ending, with Simon moving up a notch in the rankings and a bright future ahead of him.

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