

Tomorrow, and Tomorrow, and Tomorrow

by Gabrielle Zevin · Language: EN

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Overview

Tomorrow, and Tomorrow, and Tomorrow by Gabrielle Zevin is a sweeping, character-driven novel that follows the lifelong creative and personal partnership of Sam Masur and Sadie Green, two friends who meet as children in a hospital and later reunite as young adults to create video games. The story begins in the 1980s and spans three decades, tracing their collaborations, fallouts, and reconciliations as they build a successful game studio, Ichigo, alongside their friend and business partner Marx Watanabe. The novel explores the nature of creativity, the complexities of love and friendship, and the ways in which art—specifically video games—can serve as a medium for connection, expression, and escape.

The book's central arc is not just about making games but about the messy, often unspoken dynamics between Sam and Sadie: their rivalry, their mutual dependence, their failures to communicate, and their shared history of pain and resilience. Zevin uses the structure of game design—levels, quests, and play—as a metaphor for life's choices and relationships. The narrative shifts between past and present, weaving in themes of identity, disability, race, and the ethics of creative ownership. The novel is celebrated for its rich, empathetic portrayal of flawed characters and its nuanced meditation on what it means to create something meaningful with another person. It matters because it redefines the literary novel's relationship to video games, treating them as serious art and as a profound lens through which to examine human connection, ambition, and the passage of time.

Key Takeaways

- Creative partnerships require constant negotiation of ego, trust, and communication, and they can survive even the deepest betrayals if both people are willing to keep showing up.
- Video games, like all art, are a collaborative medium that can express complex emotions and tell stories that resonate on a deeply personal level.
- Friendship can be as intense and transformative as romantic love, and it deserves its own kind of commitment and care.
- The past—especially childhood trauma and loss—shapes adult relationships, but it does not have to define them if you choose to move forward.
- Success in creative fields often comes with ethical compromises, and the question of who gets credit is never simple.

- Play is not trivial; it is a fundamental way humans process reality, build bonds, and find joy.
- Grief can be channeled into creation, but it also demands to be felt and acknowledged, not just buried in work.

Chapter Summaries

Part One: The Game

The novel opens with Sam Masur, a young boy with a foot injury, meeting Sadie Green in a hospital playroom. They bond over video games, and Sam teaches Sadie to play. Their friendship is interrupted when Sam is discharged, but they reconnect years later at Harvard, where Sadie is a student and Sam is attending. Sadie is working on a game she calls 'Solution,' and she asks Sam to help her. They create the game together, and it becomes a hit, launching their partnership and the formation of their company, Ichigo, with Marx as the business mind.

Part Two: The Studio

Sam and Sadie, now partners, navigate the early days of their game studio. They create a second game, 'Both Sides,' which is a critical success. Their relationship becomes strained as they struggle with creative differences and personal issues. Sam's disability and his complicated family history (he was raised by his grandparents after his mother's death) affect his worldview. Sadie's own family dynamics and her desire for independence create tension. Marx becomes a stabilizing force, and the trio's friendship deepens, but the pressures of success begin to take a toll.

Part Three: The Festival

The trio attends a game developers' conference where they present their new game, 'Map to the Stars.' The game is a departure from their previous work, more personal and experimental. At the festival, Sam and Sadie have a falling out over a misunderstanding involving a romantic interest. Sadie leaves the studio to work on her own, and the partnership dissolves. Sam and Marx continue the company, but Sam is lost without Sadie. The section explores the aftermath of their split and the loneliness of creative isolation.

Part Four: The Break

Years pass. Sadie has a successful solo career, but she is unhappy. Sam and Marx have moved on, but they all feel the absence of their original collaboration. A tragedy occurs: Marx is killed in a random act of violence. His death devastates Sam and Sadie, and they are forced to confront their unresolved feelings. They reunite at Marx's funeral and begin to rebuild their friendship, acknowledging the love they have for each other and the importance of their shared history.

Part Five: The Return

Sam and Sadie decide to work together again, creating a game that honors Marx's memory. The game, 'The Last Game,' is a deeply personal project that incorporates elements of their lives and their grief. They struggle with the creative process, but they find a new maturity in their partnership. The novel ends with them completing the game and looking toward the future, having learned to accept each other's flaws and to appreciate the gift of their enduring connection.

Themes

- Creative collaboration
- Friendship and love
- Grief and loss
- Identity and disability
- The art of video games
- Time and memory

Notable Quotes

- "What is a game? It's tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow. It's the possibility of infinite rebirth, infinite redemption. The idea that if you keep playing, you could win. Or lose. But you keep playing." — Sam reflects on the meaning of games and their connection to hope and redemption, early in the novel.
- "The past is never dead. It's not even past." — A line that Sam thinks about, referencing Faulkner, as he grapples with his childhood and its impact on his adult life.
- "You have to be careful about what you love. You have to be careful about what you give your heart to." — Sadie's mother warns her about the dangers of passion, a theme that echoes throughout Sadie's life.
- "We are all of us, in the end, just trying to be seen." — Sam's internal monologue about the desire for recognition and connection, central to his character.
- "The point of a game is to play. The point of a life is to live." — Marx's philosophy, which he shares with Sam and Sadie, reminding them to enjoy the process rather than just the outcome.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is Tomorrow, and Tomorrow, and Tomorrow about?

It's a novel about two friends, Sam and Sadie, who bond over video games as children and later become creative partners in game design. Their partnership spans decades, filled with successes, conflicts, and personal struggles. The book explores creativity, friendship, and the ways art can

connect people, using video games as a metaphor for life's choices and relationships.

Is *Tomorrow, and Tomorrow, and Tomorrow* worth reading?

Yes, for most readers. It's a critically acclaimed, emotionally rich novel that blends literary fiction with a deep appreciation for video games. The characters are complex and relatable, and the story is both heartwarming and heartbreaking. If you enjoy character-driven narratives about friendship, ambition, and creativity, you'll likely find it rewarding.

How does *Tomorrow, and Tomorrow, and Tomorrow* end?

Spoiler: After Marx's death, Sam and Sadie reunite and decide to create a game in his memory. They work through their grief and past conflicts, completing 'The Last Game' together. The novel ends with them looking toward the future, having reconciled and accepted their enduring bond, suggesting a hopeful continuation of their partnership.

Who should read *Tomorrow, and Tomorrow, and Tomorrow*?

Fans of literary fiction, especially those interested in stories about friendship, creativity, and the human condition. Gamers and those curious about video game culture will also appreciate the detailed, authentic portrayal of game design. It's also a great pick for book clubs, as it sparks discussion about art, collaboration, and grief.

How long does it take to read *Tomorrow, and Tomorrow, and Tomorrow*?

The book is about 400 pages. At an average reading speed of 250 words per minute, it would take roughly 8-10 hours. Most readers finish it in about a week if they read a few chapters a day, or in a couple of sittings if they're dedicated.