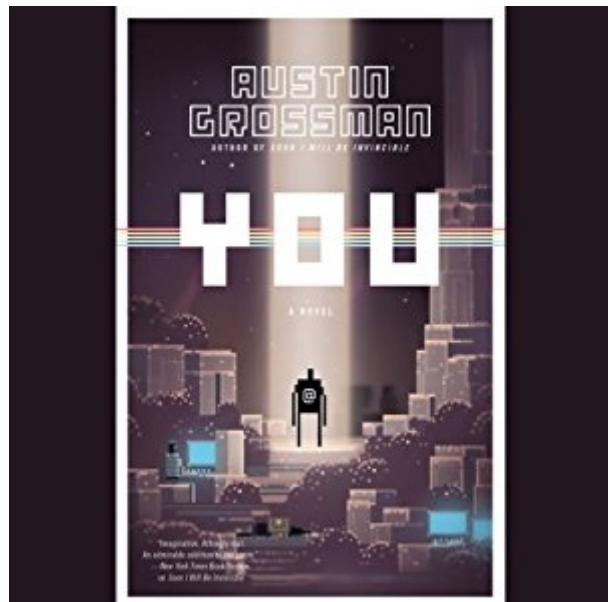


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## Synopsis

A novel of mystery, videogames, and the people who create them, by the best-selling author of *Soon I Will Be Invincible*. When Russell joins Black Arts games, brainchild of two visionary designers who were once his closest friends, he reunites with an eccentric crew of nerds hacking the frontiers of both technology and entertainment. In part, he's finally given up chasing the conventional path that has always seemed just out of reach. But mostly, he needs to know what happened to Simon, the strangest and most gifted friend he ever lost, who died under mysterious circumstances soon after Black Arts' breakout hit. Then Black Arts' revolutionary next-gen game is threatened by a mysterious software glitch, and Russell finds himself in a race to save his job, Black Arts' legacy, and the people he has grown to care about. The bug is the first clue in a mystery leading back 20 years, through real and virtual worlds, corporate boardrooms and high school computer camp, to a secret that changed a friendship and the history of gaming. The deeper Russell digs, the more dangerous the glitch appears - and soon, Russell comes to realize that much more is at stake than just one software company's bottom line. Austin Grossman's debut novel *Soon I Will Be Invincible* announced the arrival of a singular, genre-defying talent "sure to please fans of Lethem and Chabon" (*Playboy*). *With You*, Grossman offers his most daring and most personal novel yet - a thrilling, hilarious, authentic portrait of the world of professional game makers; and the story of how learning to play can save your life.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I've read plenty of novels about young men and women discovering that they have an writerly calling. (Though I didn't know until recently that it's called a *kuntzlerroman*!) As a passionate reader, these novels are always a bit strange for me. Although I'm glad people feel the calling to write, I don't dream of being a writer. I want other people to write wonderful things for me to read! So when I read about people becoming fully themselves by becoming writers, I feel both curious and alienated at the same time. You, though, is my *kuntzlerroman*. A young man learns to understand himself through games. He learns to make sense of the world through design. He learns to build relationships through play. If the main character were a woman, you could be talking about me. What's most impressive about the novel is that it makes the romance of games come to life, without falling into the trap of romanticizing gamerliness. Yes, Grossman writes about the game industry with an insider's insight, but he uses it to scathe rather than soothe. (For example, I cackled wildly over *Pro Skater Endoria*.) Our hero, Russell, is not a "gamer," nor does he become one over the course of the novel. Rather, he uses games in the way that other *kuntzlerroman* protagonists use books, or art, or music. Games become a tool for confrontation with the self and reconciliation with the world. This is not a novel that will pander to you. It's a smart and sophisticated book, and Grossman doesn't hold your hand. The story jumps between past and present, between hard-edged realism and lyrical fantasy; it explores some of the great game design debates of the past thirty years; the protagonist works through his own history alongside the history of games in a psychologically astute way.

**REVIEW SUMMARY:** Provides an interesting look behind the scenes of video game development, not such a strong story.  
**MY RATING:** 2 stars  
**SYNOPSIS:** After years of drifting through post-college life Russell joins Black Arts, a video game developer founded by friends of his from high school. He is unexpectedly thrust into a leadership role and forced to solve the mystery behind a bug that could ruin the new game and have more far-reaching consequences besides...  
**PROS:** Written by someone with experience in the field, gives a sense of appreciation for things largely taken for granted in video games.  
**CONS:** Nostalgia is expected to carry much of the book, very little conflict, uninteresting and shallow characters, confusing format and perspective shifts.  
**BOTTOM LINE:** There is probably enough decent material here to fill a movie, definitely not enough to float a 400 page novel. There's too much nostalgia and not enough substance. You get a package in the mail from SF Signal. You rip it open, it's Christmas in May! Inside is a hardbound copy of Austin Grossman's latest novel, a fictional look inside the world of professional game makers. You're excited to begin reading it. You haven't read Austin's *Soon I Will Be Invincible* but it sits on your

overflowing shelf. You've seen some great review for Austin's latest, comparing it to Ernest Cline's Ready Player One and Chuck Palahniuk's Fight Club. You have read (and loved) The Magicians and The Magician King, books written by Austin's brother Lev Grossman. You are anxious to begin and so you curl up on the hideous burnt orange couch in the living room and start reading. From early on you develop a personal connection with the book.

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