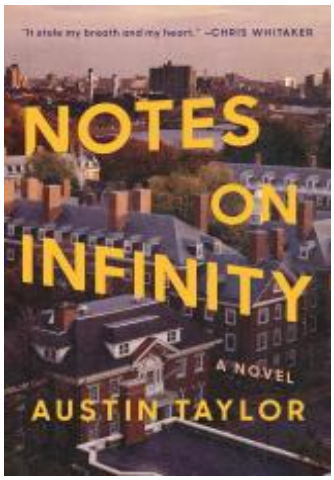
Notes on Infinity

by Austin Taylor



About the Book

A singular, extraordinary debut about Zoe and Jack, Harvard students who find themselves propelled into the intoxicating biotech startup world when they announce they?ve discovered the cure for aging. A different kind of love story where the thirst for achievement consumes and the stakes are forever.

Zoe, the daughter of an MIT professor who grew up in her brother?s shadow, can envision her future anew at Harvard. Jack, a boy in Zoe?s organic chemistry class with unruly hair and a gleam of competitiveness, matches her intellect and curiosity with every breath. When Jack refers Zoe for a position in a prestigious professor?s lab, the two become entwined as colleagues, staying up late to discuss scientific ideas. They find themselves on the cusp of a breakthrough: the promise of immortality through a novel anti-aging drug.

Zoe and Jack set off on their new project in secret. Finding encouraging results, they bring their work to an investor, drop out of Harvard and form a startup. But after the money, the magazine covers, and the national news stories detailing their success, Zoe and Jack receive a startling accusation that threatens to destroy both the company they built and their partnership.

A captivating novel about young love, the allure of immortality, and the recklessness that can come with early success, NOTES ON INFINITY asks: How far would you go to achieve your dreams?

Discussion Guide

1. Discuss the main characters. How did you relate to Zoe or Jack? In what ways were they each set up for success? Or for failure?

2. How did Zoe?s relationship with her family affect her path in life?

3. At what point should Jack have told Zoe that the experiments weren?t going as well as they had hoped?

4. Discuss the motivations behind Jack?s lies and secrets. Do you think any of his deception was justified? What emotions were behind his decisions?

5. What responsibilities did Carter have to Zoe as a partner in the company? Would it have made a difference if he had told her about the bad data? Would she have been receptive? Could the company have course-corrected?

6. Once Zoe found out about Jack?s secret, she had a big decision to make. Discuss the complexities of her choice. What would you have done? Did she do the right thing?

7. Was Zoe?s gender important to her trajectory? Discuss the themes that come up around women in STEM, women at Harvard, women in the tech start-up space, and how women entrepreneurs are depicted or criticized in the media.

8. Were the Manna whistleblowers fair in their public criticism, or were they just trying to have their own moment in the spotlight?

9. Have you seen stories in the news where entrepreneurs are idolized? Where they?ve fallen from grace? How does NOTES ON INFINITY differ from the stories you?ve heard?

10. Did Jack?s past come as a surprise? And does that past excuse his actions in the present? Does Jack deserve Zoe?s sympathy and love, even after his deception?

11. Why do you think the author chose to tell a section of the book from Jack?s point of view?

12. As you got closer to the end of the novel, how did you think it would conclude? Were you surprised by the ending?

13. Do you think we?ll ever get to a point where science can help us live for hundreds of years? What are the repercussions of inventing a drug that could extend human life, or even help people live forever? How do you think this would change the nature of humanity? If given the opportunity, would you want to take it?

14. Where do you see Zoe 10 years after the events of the book?

Author Bio

Austin Taylor graduated from Harvard University in 2021 with a joint degree in chemistry and English. NOTES ON INFINITY is inspired in part by her undergraduate studies, peers, and lab work in Harvard?s chemistry department. She has also worked as a public speaking coach and in science policy. Austin is a private pilot, a registered Maine guide, and a bassist. She grew up in central Maine, where she now lives and writes.

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