

Gabrielle Zevin was born in 1977. She grew up as an only child in Boca Raton, FL. In an interview, Zevin said Boca Raton was a Jewish enclave and she didn't realize that being Jewish meant she was part of a minority until she went to college. Zevin described herself as 'culturally Jewish,' with a Jewish father from Eastern Europe and a Catholic mother from Korea. Both of her parents worked for IBM.

Zevin began her writing career, at age fourteen, as a music critic for the Fort Lauderdale Sun-Sentinel after impressing the editor by writing a rebuttal to a Guns N' Roses concert review. Zevin attended Harvard, where she said in a Harvard Magazine article, she was somewhat undistinguished until she took off her senior year to collaborate on a film. The film is *Alma Mater*, described as a low-budget story about a gay, tenured Harvard professor who had been the college roommate of President John F. Kennedy. Zevin's father, one of the funders of this film, called this period 'Gabrielle's graduate school'. After finishing her final year of college, Zevin moved to NYC where she worked on screenplays, theater productions, short films, and other writing projects. Zevin lived in NYC for over a decade. She currently lives in LA.

Zevin has published ten novels, which have been translated into 40 languages. She has also written children's books and written criticism for

the New York Times Book Review and NPR's *All Things Considered*. Her work has gotten some notice, but it was not until writing *Tomorrow* that Zevin experienced the level of popularity that landed her on the Jimmy Fallon show and CBS Morning.

Zevin's 9th novel, *The Storied Life of A.J. Fikry* was a New York Times Best Seller, as well as winning other multiple honors. In a review of the book the Washington Post stated, "Zevin has done something old-fashioned and fairly rare these days. She has written an entertaining novel, modest in its scope, engaging and funny without being cloying or sentimental. On top of all that, it is marvelously optimistic about the future of books and bookstores and the people who love both." *A.J. Fikry* is now a feature film with a screenplay written by Zevin.

Zevin's 2010 book, *The Hole We're In* is about consumerism and the drive to transcend it. Zevin was quoted as saying that she was interested in "Americans and debt, and how by oppressing people financially, you get to control them politically." A prior 2017 novel, *Young Jane Young*, was loosely based on the experiences of Monica Lewinsky. Library Journal wrote that the novel is "a sharp send-up of our culture's obsession with scandal and blame, this novel pulls at the seams of misogyny from all angles."

Zevin's 10th novel, and the Novel Club's current discussion book, *Tomorrow, and Tomorrow, and Tomorrow* was a New York Times Best Seller, Amazon.com's #1 Book of the Year, Time Magazine's #1 Book of the Year, and the winner of the Goodreads Choice Award for Fiction. The film rights to *Tomorrow* were acquired by Temple Hill and Paramount Studios.

When talking about the book, Zevin said that there are many issues she brought up around race, feminism, Judaism, as well as wider themes of living in an imperfect world while seeking to create a perfect world. She said the novel could be summed up as a coming of age story of the characters as well as the gaming industry.

Zevin stated that when she was an early writer, she tended to avoid anything she felt was autobiographical. Zevin does not do so now; Sam's ethnicity is based on her ethnicity and the locations of the novel are all places Zevin has lived and she said she feels comfortable writing about. Zevin also said that she identified with Sadie, being a woman working in the Arts. Zevin feels she has had to be perhaps more ambitious and exhibit greater talent than do male authors. "Every artist, she adds, confronts a semblance of the question: "Am I going to be an elephant or a baby chick today?" The public-facing elephant deals with networking, fans,

and marketing. “But the baby chick is the one writing the books; it’s this, like tiny and powerful, seemingly vulnerable thing.”

The character, Sadie, also expresses Zevin’s views and personal choices regarding marriage. In 2017 Zevin wrote a piece in the New York Times titled *The Secret to Marriage Is Never Getting Married*. Zevin wrote that she met her partner of 21 years the second week of college. When asked why they have never married, Zevin wrote, “The answer is: many reasons. Because I was 18 when I met him and didn’t know how long the relationship would last. Because it was a lot of money [for a wedding] and I was embarrassed to ask my parents for help. Because neither of us had regular jobs and we both wanted to be artists more than we wanted to be married people. Because one of us needed good credit in order to rent apartments and charge groceries. Because by the time we had the means to make honest people of ourselves, we felt as if we had been together too long to bother.” Zevin further wrote, “When I say I don’t believe in marriage, what I mean to say is: I understand the financial and legal benefits, but I don’t believe the government or a church or a department store registry can change the way I already feel and behave. Or maybe it would. Because when the law doesn’t bind you as a couple, you have to choose each other every day. And maybe the act of choosing changes a

relationship for the better. But successfully married people must know this already.”

When Zevin was asked by an interviewer about the title, *Tomorrow, and Tomorrow, and Tomorrow*, Zevin said that she needs to decide on the title of a book early in her writing process and to have some idea of the ending. When writing the current book, Zevin did not know the title until well into it, which she says was unsettling to her writing process. Zevin stated that, although the title *Tomorrow* is taken from a dark monologue in *Macbeth*, she feels it represents the hope of new beginnings. Zevin stated that “each day that we live is a chance for a new and better beginning.” Zevin also said the title’s meaning is a perfect metaphor for gaming.

Although the novel starts in the late 1990s and ends in early 2000s, there are some social issues that Zevin brought up in the storyline, such as gender neutral pronouns, same-sex marriage, and the idea of cultural appropriation. Zevin could be described as a culturally political writer, but she stated that she feels that when one’s story is set in a particular time period it should reflect the mores of that time period and not try to supplant modern sensitivities.

When speaking of her writing process, Zevin shared that she knew that one of the characters would end up dying in the book, but she didn’t

know it was Marx until the story was more developed. Zevin's working plan was to have Sam be the character who died, but she felt that the natural development of the story was to have Marx pass.

In terms of her habits as a writer, Zevin said she used to write from midnight to 6 a.m, but she "now likes the freshness of mornings." She also used to sleep, eat, and write on a couch in a cramped New York apartment, but she now has an "orderly home office...[with] white walls, a comfy sofa, bookshelves, and framed art..."

Zevin has never taken a creative writing course, but she believes that "the way you studied writing was by reading, and that the sort of 'technique aspects' you would pick up are by the doing of it." Zevin said she is the kind of writer who feels she can't stop revising until the manuscript is "wrenched from her hands." As she has gotten older and she has become a more experienced writer, Zevin has come to feel that her art is defined by the process of her work and not just how it is received by critics and the public. That is a characteristic Zevin had her character, Sadie, work to develop.

Zevin shared that she almost abandoned the *Tomorrow* book, worried that the subject wouldn't resonate with a wide audience. The novel first gained popularity through informal channels like word of mouth, indie

bookstores, and social media before being acknowledged by traditional outlets. Oprah Daily mistakenly called the novel “one of the year’s most ingenious debuts.” Despite not getting that initial acclaim and Zevin’s personal doubts, there was a bidding war with 10 publishers and the winning publisher paid a seven-figure advance. The screen rights drew 25 bidders and sold for \$2 million. Zevin seems to have a balanced attitude about her career, stating that “she felt fortunate that she was able to carve such an eclectic path, without confining herself to a particular niche. “I’ve had enough successes,” she said, “to balance out the failures over the years.”

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