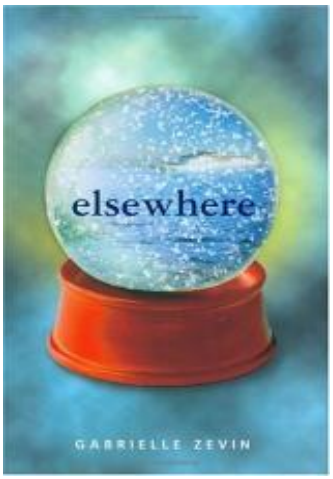
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Elsewhere

by Gabrielle Zevin



About the Book

Liz awakens in an unfamiliar bed in an unfamiliar room. Why is she on a ship in the middle of the ocean? Where is the ship heading? And who is this other girl named Thandi who is sharing her room? Liz finally comes to understand that she has been killed by a hitandrun driver and is bound for a place called Elsewhere.

Liz arrives in Elsewhere and is greeted by her grandmother Betty, a woman who died even before Liz was born. On the drive to her home, Betty explains how Elsewhere operates. Liz will live in Elsewhere and age in reverse. She is expected to decide on some sort of avocation (a job she loves) and to go on with her life until she becomes a baby. At that point, Liz will be "released" to return to Earth and given an entirely new life.

Liz resists the customs of Elsewhere. She is angered that instead of growing older and obtaining her driver's license and falling in love, she will get younger. She refuses to do more than sit each day at the Observation Deck and watch her family and friends back on Earth through the binoculars. Eventually, bored with doing nothing but viewing the events on Earth, Liz begins to accept her new life. She elects to help domestic pets become acclimated to life in Elsewhere and ends up adopting a dog named Sadie on the first day of her job. Later, Liz meets Owen Wells and falls in love.

Life, though, is no easier in Elsewhere than it was on Earth, and Liz has to learn how to deal with loss and change. In Owen's previous life on Earth, he was married. When his wife arrives in Elsewhere, Liz is displaced. She decides to take advantage of a special clause, known as the Sneaker Clause, and return to Earth now rather than wait for her inevitable infancy. At the last minute, Liz changes her mind. Owen rescues Liz from the water so she can return to life on Elsewhere. Liz continues to grow younger until, as the novel ends, she is released into the River to be born anew on Earth. ELSEWHERE explores how we all must cope with life and whatever is to come after our lives end.

Discussion Guide

1. Much of Liz?s initial anger at finding herself in Elsewhere is that her future plans are canceled and she will age in reverse. What future events are you most looking forward to? How would you feel about aging in reverse?

2. Water is a powerful image and symbol that runs throughout the book. Why does the author elect to use water as such an essential symbol? Discuss some of the other symbols, such as Liz?s stitches, the watch her father gave her, and the snow globe.

3. There are many characters who are part of the story of ELSEWHERE; all of them are critical to it. No characters, not even the canine ones, are minor to the story. Explore how the characters move the novel forward. How does each of them help Liz adjust to life on Elsewhere and come to understand that life on Elsewhere is something to be cherished?

4. If you were in Liz?s shoes, would you spend all you time on the Observation Deck or do you think you?d acclimate? Would you mourn the loss of your life on Earth? Would you view being on Elsewhere as a liberating change and fresh start?

5. Notice the allusions made to classic and contemporary literature throughout the novel. Liz recalls a line about antique lands. Aldous Ghent prompts Liz to read Shakespeare?s *A Midsummer Night?s Dream*. Liz reads *Charlotte?s Web* as she grows younger. Finally, Owen reads *Tuck Everlasting* to Liz when she is no longer able to read on her own. How does each address some facet of Liz?s life (on Earth and Elsewhere) and experiences?

6. How does the author use humor in the novel? What examples of wordplay are evident? Is the humor intended to defuse the emotion of a serious situation or scene? Is it a way to show how Liz is becoming acclimated to life on Elsewhere?

7. Liz and all the other arrivals in Elsewhere are encouraged to find an avocation to pursue during their time there. Ghent explains to Liz that an avocation is something that makes one?s soul complete (page 74). Some of the residents of Elsewhere work in avocations similar to the jobs they did on Earth; others have new ones. Marilyn Monroe becomes a psychiatrist. Curtis Jest decides to be a fisherman and comments that John Lennon is a gardener. How do the avocations of Monroe, Lennon, Owen, Betty, Curtis, and other characters reflect what they really want out of their new lives? What would you chose as an avocation?

8. This novel is divided into three separate parts and also employs a prologue and an epilogue. What purpose do the three parts serve? What important events occur in each of the three parts? Why did the author chose Liz?s dog, Lucy, to narrate the prologue? How does the epilogue bring the novel not to a close but to a resolution?

Author Bio

Gabrielle Zevin is a *New York Times* bestselling novelist whose books have been translated into 39 languages.

Her 10th novel, TOMORROW, AND TOMORROW, AND TOMORROW, was an instant *New York Times* bestseller, a *Sunday Times* bestseller, and a selection of the Fallon Book Club. TOMORROW was Amazon.com?s #1 Book of the Year, *Time Magazine*?s #1 Book of the Year, a *New York Times* Notable Book, and the winner of both the Goodreads Choice Award for Fiction and the Book of the Month Club?s Book of the Year. Following a 25-bidder auction, the feature film rights to TOMORROW were acquired by Temple Hill and Paramount Studios. Zevin is currently writing the screenplay.

THE STORIED LIFE OF A.J. FIKRY also spent many months on the *New York Times* bestseller List. A.J. FIKRY was honored with the Southern California Independent Booksellers Award for Fiction, the Japan Booksellers? Prize, and was longlisted for the International Dublin Literary Award, among other honors. A.J. FIKRY is now a feature film with a screenplay by Zevin. She has also written children?s books, including the award-winning ELSEWHERE.

She is the screenwriter of *Conversations with Other Women* (Helena Bonham Carter) for which she received an Independent Spirit Award Nomination for Best First Screenplay. She has occasionally written criticism for the *New York Times Book Review* and NPR?s *All Things Considered,* and she began her writing career, at age 14, as a music critic for the *Fort Lauderdale Sun-Sentinel.* Zevin is a graduate of Harvard University. She lives in Los Angeles.

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