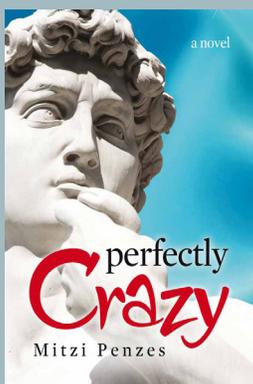


This Q&A provides background on *Perfectly Crazy* and its author, Mitzi Penzes. Feel free to quote these answers in your coverage.

Review copies are available for qualified media. Contact Dave Morris of New Year Publishing at publisher@newyearpublishing.com or (925) 348-0481.



### **Where did the idea for *Perfectly Crazy* come from?**

I had this idea for a character, who I named Nell, who would be like my mom in a lot of ways. My mother's marriage started out very unexpectedly and it turned out to be very fulfilling and happy. She had been married before, but was never so happy as with my dad.

My character has a similar situation: her family life seems very pleasant, even "charmed." But something must be missing, because a kiss with an old friend makes her realize that her "perfect man" is not her husband. Should they break up their long-standing, stable relationships to be together? This dilemma was my starting point and the story stemmed from this choice they had to make.

In this situation, my mom chose the new relationship and she was right to do so, but each person is different. It might be the right choice for one person and wrong for another. Maybe some readers won't think Nell makes the right choice, maybe others will. I hope to bring up these types of questions and make readers think about them. What is love? Is it always convenient? How healing or how destructive is love? Who suffers the most and who enjoys it the most? I wanted to make people think about a series of issues.

### **How much of *Perfectly Crazy* is influenced by your own life experiences?**

My mom and I were both older moms, and this experience is a major theme in *Perfectly Crazy*, along with other medical questions I faced when I practiced as a neurologist. The dilemma of having a life cut short in a very abrupt manner or in a long, slow and painful way is explored. I have experienced both scenarios with loved ones and even though *Perfectly Crazy* is mostly an optimistic love story, I wanted to have the readers to reflect upon this, even if only briefly.

### **How is the main character, Nell, like you? How is she different?**

I was a late bloomer in every way. I had my son in my mid-forties, and I had to face serious medical problems in my forties. Emigrating from Hungary after finishing my specialty exam in neurology and spending time in California changed me in many ways. This is not Nell's history, but there are elements of my past in her personality.

Becoming a businesswoman was a new experience for me, as it is for Nell. Though our careers are in very different fields—I manage a lab, Nell runs a fashion boutique—I do love fashion and I think that shows in the book. Nell loves to dress and select shoes, and she loves her boutique. I could not leave out my love of sports cars either; my beloved Mustang is on the pages taking Nell to her destinations. So my character is a little bit of me in this way.

## **Would you have made the same choices Nell makes in the book?**

I believe Nell's choices would be mine as well. While she's deciding what to do about her marriage, an even harder situation arises that her whole family has to face together. She is a smart, modern woman who has to go through some rough times but has to handle it with strength and dignity.

With *Perfectly Crazy*, I wanted to show how life can throw things at you. In a second, your life can take a completely new turn and all of your important values and your history become meaningless, with other considerations taking their places. I, for one, love that about life and have to say that some of these unexpected turns not only changed my life, they surprised the hell out of me. For example, motherhood isn't even close to what I expected. It's so much more, and despite the hurdles it is absolutely the most rewarding experience of my life. Yet if someone had suggested before I had the experience that I would feel this way, I would have told them they didn't know me at all.

So I am all for changes and turns and embracing new ways, but there are lots of people who would find that a bad choice for themselves. It all depends on what's "perfect" for you.

## **Speaking of "perfect," why is David, the object of Nell's attraction, the perfect man?**

Who hasn't fantasized about the perfect man? Mine is the person I've portrayed here: sexy, successful, loving, social. He is determined and nothing makes him stop going after the woman of his dreams.

The character was also a bit based on my dad, who during my childhood seemed like the perfect husband. He cooked, he liked to vacuum (!!), he went shopping with us and loved people. My parents always had friends over, they laughed a lot and had a very fun life. My dad was also accomplished—coming from a very poor farming family, he put himself through university, became a geography professor, and gave lectures students loved to listen to. He never forgot a birthday or any other occasion, my mom always had flowers or gifts. I realize this seems like a very idealized picture, but to me it felt real. They are still together after 58 years and as far as I can tell they've had the best marriage I've ever seen.

As for how the perfect man would look, I had to choose the "David" we all wish would come alive, Michelangelo's. If he's not perfect, nobody is. (Too bad we can't have him!) For me, he is the perfect man when it comes to form, that's why I chose him for the novel's cover.



***Perfectly Crazy* takes place in several romantic cities. Have you been to all of these places?**

I love the locales that are portrayed in *Perfectly Crazy*, the European feel of these cities. I lived in some of them and visited most of the others. San Diego is one of my favorite cities as is London; Paris and Venice are places I loved to visit. Italy is a very special, beautiful country. Readers will probably feel how much I'm drawn to these gorgeous locales. I hope they'll decide they want to visit some of the places I wrote about, to see if it feels the same for them as it felt for me.



One place Nell and David don't visit that has a special place in my heart is Hungary, where I grew up. Maybe in my next book there will be a scene in Budapest.

**This is your first novel. What did you learn while you were working on it?**

The surprising thing for me was how my character was the driving force of my story. When I sat down to start a new chapter, I wasn't sure what would happen next until I speculated and decided what Nell would decide. I didn't tell anyone I was doing it, just wrote the chapters in my spare time waiting to see if, upon finishing, a publisher might like the story. This is another of life's unexpected turns. I didn't know I wanted to do it and now all I think about is how many more stories I can write...

**Even though *Perfectly Crazy* deals with serious life issues, it's ultimately a very optimistic story. Why did you write it this way?**

I think because I am that way myself. I believe that everything has a positive aspect if we search for it long enough or wait until it shows up in our future life. I feel if you are compelled to do something, then you should do it regardless the consequences. If your inner compass says it is the right thing to do, then it is and you should do it. Maybe it is not easy, it is not conventional, but maybe that will make you happy. That makes all the difference!

**What do you hope readers will take away from *Perfectly Crazy*?**

First and foremost, I hope they'll enjoy reading it as much as I enjoyed writing it! Maybe *Perfectly Crazy* will make people realize that there's always more than one way, and the usual answer is not always the right one. And maybe they'll agree with me that love is a force few people can fight—it's biologically built in that we answer this calling. It is our nature and despite our conventions, our teachings, and our morals, sometimes you just have to decide as an individual if you'll follow the route society wrote for you or you'll deviate and go your own way. Like I always tell my son, it's okay to be different, as long as it's in a good way.