

THE BOLD JENNIFER BELLE

By Dorri Olds

Author, Jennifer Belle's fourth book, *The Seven Year Bitch*, (other three are *Little Stalker*, *High Maintenance* and *Going Down*), is a novel whose main character, Izzy, is married and a mother rapidly approaching 40 who feels trapped in her not-so-happily-ever-after world. A divorced pal explains to Izzy that marriage and motherhood do not create a seven year itch, but turn women into a seven year bitch.

When asked what she wants people to know about her, Belle said, "What kind of a crazy question is that? I want them to know I'm a size six, even though I'm not." That aptly summed up Belle's quirky, spunky, comic personality.

Belle openly admits *Seven Year* is highly autobiographical but said, "I'm not really a bitch. I really do have a happy marriage. Sort of."

Belle, who also teaches writing workshops, fleshes out stories by first creating scenes. "With *The Seven Year Bitch*, I began writing a third-person account of an overly-obsessed mother thinking it would be my least autobiographical, but it became by far my most. The truth is this book is very much about my marriage, for better and worse, mostly worse unfortunately. Many readers think my husband comes off as a 'total putz.' That's how one reviewer put it. But he's also a loving, supportive husband."

When asked about her honesty and courage she said, "It would be a marriage-ender if a writer's spouse didn't let them write everything they wanted to."

She writes every day. "When I started, I had a full-time job, I wrote on Wednesdays. But thought about my book all the time, and lived in the world of it. My first three books each took four years to write and another year for the publication process. The fact that this took less than two shows I'm a little more confident now, or braver, or maybe just crazier."

Her first book, *Going Down*, is about the relationship with Belle's father. "When I published it I thought, 'Okay, this is it, my father will never speak to me again.' But that wasn't what happened. My father, who had always been disappointed in me, was very proud of the book. I had finally finished something. My aunt, on the other hand, who didn't even read the book, got it into her head that I'd said bad things about my grandmother. I didn't even mention my grandmother in the book. My point is you might as well write what you want because you never know how someone will react."

Her third novel, *Little Stalker*, was dedicated to Belle's father. That novel came about from an actual incident. "I ran into my father on the street in Greenwich Village while we were talking on our cell phones. He was saying he was in the Bronx." That book Belle dedicated to her father.

"Ironically he didn't read it. He said it would be too painful for him, even though the father/daughter relationship in that book is very loving. It always surprises me that people worry about what their parents will think, instead of their kids. I have a five year old and a two year old and I'm more worried how they'll feel!"

The Seven Year Bitch will be available May 13th and Jennifer Belle's book signing is at Barnes & Noble in Tribeca, 97 Warren Street, at 7pm on Tuesday, May 18th.

Dorri Olds (DorriOlds.com) is a web designer, social media consultant and Internet marketer. Her writing has appeared in newspapers, magazines and book anthologies.

