

# **Author Interview With Jean Gill by Itsy Bitsy Book Bits**

## How Did You Get Into Writing?

- I wrote my first novel at 11. Whenever I finished the set work in school, I carried on with 'Jill's Stables', a masterpiece in 10 chapters :)

## What's Your Favorite Genre to Write?

- Whichever one I'm currently writing. At the moment I'd have to say fantasy but tomorrow it might be historical fiction.

## Is there a genre you've always wanted to write in that you haven't yet?

- I've written in so many genres I lose track! This is my first fantasy novel and my world has so much potential for all kinds of genres within the big category of 'fantasy'. Adventure, thriller, murder mystery, romance can all be fantasy so I'm hoping to stay with this world and this series for a while.

## Who are some of your inspirations?

- Colette, Dorothy Dunnett, Philip Pullman, Guy Gavriel Kay and all the writers I've ever met 'for real' ... so many!

## Do any of your stories have personal experiences in them?

- Yes :) My husband always says he knows 'where the bodies are buried'. :) Like Mielitta in 'Queen of the Warrior Bees', I HAVE been attacked by bees but unfortunately I'm waiting for my superpowers to arrive.

## Who are some of your favorite authors to read?

- Robin Hobb, Sheri Tepper... so many!

## What's your writing process look like? (Outline or go with the flow of your character)

- Messy! I really tried to do all the world-building that seems normal for fantasy writers before launching into this novel but I blanked. I had to write some of the story to find out what Mielitta's world was like. I do have a brief story outline but it changes as the characters interact. At 3am I'm wondering WHY a certain character said or did that and if I don't know - then it's not what happened. I feel like the 'real' story exists and I'm turning it into words.

What are some of your hobbies?

- I'm a photographer as well as a writer. My hobbies are beekeeping, walking Sherlock and Watson (my dogs), gardening, cooking, reading and knitting

Have you attended any signings? If so, what was your favorite thing about it?

- Cake. Bookshops have given me lovely home-made cake as a thank-you.

When reading reviews, what is something you love to see written?

- This is one of my favourite books. I loved it.

If you could spend the day with one of your characters, who would it be and what would you do?

- Sirius, the Great Pyrenees, who narrates 'Someone To Look Up To'. I would go swimming with him. Then, when we were both home again and dry, he'd lie on the rug and I'd sit beside him, stroking him and talking to him.

What are you currently working on?

- I'm watching what my characters are up to, so I can get a rough idea of the story for Book 2 of Natural Forces.

What's your writing routine?

- I'm a morning person when at home, so I write about 1,000 words per day, either at my desk or sitting outside in the garden. If I travel alone, I write on my ipad, anywhere! I was so annoyed when the plane arrived at Athens Airport as I was in the middle of an action scene.

Do you have any superstitions when it comes to writing? If so, what?

- No

What is the best writing advice you've ever received?

- Don't get it right, get it written.

Where do you find the names for your characters?

- I spend a lot of time choosing names, for their associations. Mielitta's name contains 'miel' the word for 'honey' in Romance languages like French. It also looks a bit like melittin, which is the poison in a bee sting that causes such pain. I like the 'sweet with a sting' idea. I considered 'Melitta' but it's a brand name and I didn't want that association at all!

What is your favorite book made into a movie/tv show?

- 'Game of Thrones' has been addictive. I'd read three of the books but dropped out of the series because there was never any resolution and always new characters. For a favourite book and film, 'Doctor Zhivago' made a big impression on me.

Anything else you want your readers to know about you?

- At forty-seven, I left my career in education, in rainy Wales, to live in sunny Provence. I loved teaching but I never had the time to write as much as I wanted. The French talk about 'following your star' and sixteen years later, I'm so glad I did!

If you won the lottery what would you do with the money?

- Invest in big environmental projects to combat climate change. I don't mean 'invest' in the sense of hoping for money in return; the return would be in the existence and protection of endangered creatures and their habitat.

In your everyday life how do you give back to the world?

- Five years ago we bought a little plot of land by our house and I took a practical beekeeping course in French, my second language. I had no experience of beekeeping and it was difficult so I'm very proud of sticking at it! At the moment, I have three beehives; Endeavour, Diligence and Resolution. Looking after them is my way of doing a little bit for the environment. Nothing tastes as good as honey made by your own bees on your own land! And the land also gets visited by wild boar, deer, hares, woodpeckers, jays... So, I guess that's not really giving back to the world as I get so much from it!
- 
- I'd also put a plug in for Kiva, a micro-loan organisation that lends start-up money for small enterprises all around the world. As I always get back the small sums I lend via Kiva (\$25 is the minimum) that's not really giving either! But it enables people to work for their communities' benefit.

If you could give your younger self one piece of writing advice, what would it be?

- You are not a failure as a writer just because big publishers turn your work down. One day, you will get emails from readers who tell you that your words matter to them. You will also know what emails are so don't worry about that now. Just keep writing.