

Ninja POWER

TIFFINY HALL TELLS **JENNY TABAKOFF** KIDS NEED A HEALTHY FAMILY CULTURE

TIFFINY Hall is not your typical children's author. Hall, one-time *Gladiator* and a weight-loss guru on *The Biggest Loser*, has just published *White Ninja*, a children's book about a 13-year-old loser called Roxy Ran who is transformed when she discovers she is a ninja.

It's hard to imagine Hall, with her amazonian good looks (though she is a petite 164cm tall), ever had anything in common with bullied, self-conscious Roxy.

"No," Hall admits. "But Roxy deals with bullying and she deals with not fitting in and I think that every child can relate to being a bit different.

"I went to school with ballerinas and gymnasts and girls who were into netball... and I was into contact sports. I was always a bit different.

"My parents would pick me up from school in their taekwondo uniforms.

"Both my parents were martial artists, and they saw nothing wrong with that, but I was mortified."

Hall, 28, was educated at Melbourne's Lowther Hall Anglican Grammar School, where she was taught English by John Marsden, author of bestselling books such as *Tomorrow When The War Began*. Now Marsden calls his former pupil "THE new voice in children's fiction".

Hall says Marsden was an "amazing

teacher who inspired her to become a writer by the way he taught her to be curious and experiment with language: "It was mind-blowing having that freedom and that encouragement."

She always wanted to write fiction but says "it's taken a long time and a lot of odd jobs to support myself to get to this stage".

Those odd jobs have included stunts as a martial arts teacher, as "Angel" in the Seven Network's revival of *Gladiators*, as Chrissie Swan's weight-loss coach on Network Ten's *The Circle*, and as a mentor on *The Biggest Loser*. For this last job, Hall had to spend a week eating what her charges ate—a difficult detox for a Fifth Dan taekwondo black belt whose previous books are called *Weightloss Warrior* and *Fatloss For Good*.

In late 2010, shortly before she began work on *The Biggest Loser*, Hall signed a four-book fiction contract with HarperCollins. She squeezed in writing around weigh-ins and filming.

White Ninja, the first book in a trilogy, is informed by Hall's belief that health and fitness are closely linked to self-esteem.

"All the contestants on *The Biggest Loser* lacked that confidence," she says. Hall wants to "empower kids to be confident" and loves discussing her book's themes with children.

"It's really important, I think, having a strong female heroine who kicks butt and discovers confidence. I think there are some really strong messages in the book and the kids are really responding to it."

The kids she meets are "awesome", she says, but parents need to do their bit to develop a "family culture" of healthy living.

She tells children "they only get one body and one chance".

Hall's own regimen is "all about balance", but she says her boyfriend, radio and TV personality Ed Kavelee, is "much more disciplined" than her.

"I don't believe in any food fads or trends. I just eat healthy... and exercise hard. I'm not a vegetarian. I don't drink soft drink... that's one rule. I just keep balanced."

Apart from the rest of the Roxy Ran trilogy, Hall has another book waiting in the wings—a young adult novel she describes as a "paranormal romance... about a girl who falls in love with her guardian angel".

The book is due out in 2014.

White Ninja, by Tiffany Hall, is published by HarperCollins RRP \$12.99

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