



The Only True Genius in the Family

Jennie Nash

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From the author of *The Last Beach Bungalow* a portrait of a family-in all its heartbreakng complexity.

Though she lives in the shadow of her legendary landscape photographer father, and is the mother of a painter whose career is about to take off, Claire has carved out a practical existence as a commercial photographer. Her pictures may not be the stuff of genius, but they've paid for a good life.

But when her father dies, Claire loses faith in the work she has devoted her life to-and worse, begins to feel jealous of her daughter's success. Then, as she helps prepare a retrospective of her famous father's photographs, Claire uncovers revelations about him that change everything she believes about herself as a mother, a daughter, and an artist...

The Only True Genius in the Family Details

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From Reader Review The Only True Genius in the Family for online ebook

Frances Kehlbeck Civello says

This is a great summer read, especially if you're a photographer with some insecurity issues, as I am. Nice character development and plot, and I ended the book wanting more. I'd normally give this one four stars, but there were a few editorial glitches that bothered me (spelling and product ID) enough to take a star off.

Anna says

I could not wait to get back to this book each time I set it down. Jennie Nash's writing is seamless, her craft delightfully invisible, leaving only story and characters for our enjoyment.

I was particularly fascinated by the theme of genius - where it comes from and the amount of work/process (if any) that defines it - as well as co-existing peacefully with it, if possible.

A delightful, satisfying read.

Melissa says

Need to get

Mary says

I've often wondered what it would be like to have a famous parent and live in their shadow. Claire, the lead character in this novel, is trying to deal with that after her father's suicide. She also lives with a daughter who seems to have the same genius with art as her father. I was drawn to Claire and the path she took to discover just what made her who she was and her father, who he was. I did have a hard time with her daughter's attitude towards her in some situations but other than that, I enjoyed this book immensely.

Samantha says

Lushly descriptive and at times heartbreakingly as you see deeper and deeper into the connections between the characters.

The main character has just lost her father, a famed nature photographer, in a skiing accident. Her daughter is finishing up work on her MFA paintings and was very close to her grandfather so she struggles to complete her work without his loving guidance.

As the main character explores her grief and the history of her relationship with her father, she finds that she struggles with the vision she relies on in her own work: that of photographing food for commercial use.

I love the author's writing style and how with the subjects she chooses readers learn so much about worlds they might not have put much thought to before (i.e. food photography). The beginning was a little slow for my tastes, but the middle was so well done I could've happily stayed there for quite some time. The ending wasn't what I was expecting, but it ties everything up fairly well.

Recommended for readers who enjoy art.

Sandra says

I did like this book very much, but quite frankly, I thought the daughter (the painter) was a spoiled brat.

SPOILER ALERT

I don't have kids, but I'll tell you this much: If my daughter were living MY house, with her BOYFRIEND, eating MY food, etc., and she treated me the way this girl treats her mother (threatening her with a lawsuit, of all things!), she'd be out on her booty faster than she could say "Jackson Pollock."

Maybe the mother is wrong in what she did, altering the painting and taking a photo of the girl's boyfriend. But hey, you don't sh*t where you eat. I'm just sayin'.

Yianna Yiannacou says

I received this book as a loan from one of my coworkers. She is an older woman and thought that I would like it. But, I just couldn't relate to the book, at all. It was well written and I enjoyed reading it, but there was no connection.

It begins with the passing of Claire's father. He was a very well-known photographer. Claire thought that she could get into photography as well so she tried when she was younger and failed, but picked it up later in life and became a food photographer for cook books and the such. Her only daughter, Bailey, is a painter. She has been and always will be a painter. She is the best at what she does and Claire knows it. You could live through Bailey's paintings. Bailey and Claire's father had a bond that two artists shared. Claire lived her life with divorced parents and a feeling of separation with her father. After he passed she needed some closure. She gets herself into trouble with her daughter but it works out well in the end.

I don't really know what else to say about this book. Like I said before, I couldn't connect with the loss of a parent since that never happened to me and I couldn't connect with the mother daughter bond since I don't have any kids. Overall it was well written and I would recommend for the older generation who have gone through those scenarios.

Lisa says

Claire's father was a world famous photographer, known for his beautiful, spontaneous shots of the scenic western wonderland he loved so much. As a child, Claire didn't see much of her father once he became renowned for his craft and divorced her mother to relocate to Utah. While visiting her father during summer vacation when she was fifteen, he gave her a 35mm camera to take her own pictures. He offered no instruction or encouragement, just sent her on her way. After that day of shooting film, on the walk back to the truck, Claire slipped on a rock and the camera went flying out of her hands, hitting the ground, lens shattered. When she asked her father if the film would be okay, he angrily replied, 'Nope,' and that was the end of her picture taking for several years. She didn't pick up a camera again until she was twenty-three years old when a college friend asked her to take photos of her wedding. Reluctantly, Claire agreed.

Now in her mid fifties, Claire is a successful commercial food photographer, doing work for Bon Appetit, O Magazine and other high profile media. She isn't the genius her father has been labeled, but she's happy with her work and feels comfortable with the niche she has carved out for herself. She's married to Harrison, a hard working, supportive and loving husband who helps her with her business. She has a daughter, Bailey, an artist who is graduating from college and starting a promising career of her own.

When Claire gets a call that her father has died in a skiing accident, she is forced to re-arrange her schedule, which includes some clients that Harrison has worked very hard to get, and fly to her father's home in Driggs, Idaho to meet with the lawyers about his estate. It is there that she learns that her father left Bailey not only a huge trust, he also gave her sole rights to reprint images from all his negatives, which means she is the only one to decide what gets reproduced and by whom.

The closeness that Bailey shared with her grandfather was obvious. They seemed to speak the same language of art, light and color, making Claire feel like an outsider. She never had that connection with her dad, and though she was happy that Bailey did, she couldn't help but be a little envious - or was it jealousy?

While helping to put together a retrospective of her father's work, Claire begins to question her own career; every decision, every photo she takes. Ultimately, things start to unravel. She does things she knows she shouldn't do, but she just can't seem to stop herself. It doesn't help Claire's confidence that Bailey's young career is starting to shine or that it all seems to come so naturally to her. Claire begins to wonder if the genius that her father had in him is in Bailey, but absent in her own genes. Is that even possible?

Jennie Nash's **THE ONLY TRUE GENIUS IN THE FAMILY** is a great book for so many reasons. Not only is it a story of a daughter who longed for her father's attention and approval, it's also a story about the different types of connections you can have with those closest to you. That as a family, we may not all relate in the same way, but that doesn't make us outsiders to each other. There are also revelations that surface that show the loyalty in this family to someone who may not have seemed to show loyalty to them. This book also brings up the subject of what constitutes the natural ability of an artist.

Once I started reading this book, I flew through it. I think I even read half of it in the first sitting. I liked the premise of the story, learning a little about photography, painting and the different approaches to each. It was all very interesting to me. But, surprisingly, most of the time, I didn't care for the main character, Claire. I hated some of the things she did and I felt she could've treated her husband better. She often came across as selfish to me, thinking of herself more than others. Don't get me wrong, I did feel for her with some of the things she went through. Claire was always second guessing herself, over thinking everything, most times to a point of self destruction. But that's OK. Maybe that's what helped make the story so believeable to me.

People aren't perfect. Families have flaws and in showing Claire's flaws, it brought a realistic feel to the story. I wondered while reading, if that's how the author wanted Claire to be perceived, or was it just me?

The fact that I didn't love the main character, doesn't mean I didn't love the story. I really did. Without giving anything away, I just want to say, I loved the very end. I felt satisfied and the fact that I had some problems with Claire, were diminished in the final pages. To me, that's the work of a great author.

Christine Zibas says

There's a temptation to pass this book off as merely superior chick lit, and in some senses, it does contain similar characteristics. There's a woman and mother at the center of the story, there's family relationships, and a coming to terms with the death of a family member at the core of the novel.

Ah, but then, author Jennie Nash raises the stakes by introducing two very unusual subjects so rarely probed in such detail that bring her writing game to an entirely literary level. The first is just how parents injure their children, and how all of us carry the scars of childhood with us throughout our lives, reliving those same behaviors within our own family.

The second, perhaps more interesting is the study of creativity. Does it emanate from genius, or is it a seed that we all carry within us that some people are simply more free to express? In *The Only True Genius in the Family*, the central character Claire is a food photographer with a successful career. Unless you compare it with her father's, of course. Her father is a true American icon, a landscape photographer in the tradition of Ansel Adams or Edward Weston.

Adding to this feeling of self doubt comes Claire's daughter, Bailey, who not only has a special relationship with Claire's impossibly difficult father, but is an outstanding artist in her own right. Bailey is just on the cusp of greatness as she puts on her graduate show for her MFA. A mother shouldn't feel jealous, right? In fact, she is happy for her daughter's success, but there's this unhappy voice within Claire that keeps muttering that both her father and daughter "just had it so easy." Everything they touch turns to gold, and in Claire's case, genius seems to have skipped a generation (or so her father painfully notes).

With this rich material, author Nash never gets maudlin, but instead takes us into Claire's world, and allows us to feel her pain, as she literally begins to lose her own creative vision with the death of her father. It's a gripping story that will have you thinking about the characters long after you reach the last page. It's a great read, even for chicks.

Catherine says

Eh.

I couldn't sympathize with the whiny, self-absorbed narrator. "I have a loving husband, talented daughter, amazing home in Manhattan Beach, and a successful freelance photography business working for Oprah & Martha Stewart. But my daddy never loved me and I'm jealous of my daughter." Wah. Cry me a freaking river.

Karrie says

This was one of those books that I felt like I became the character. So much of her life and her feelings about herself were reflective of my own life. Especially her journey of personal discovery that she really was a "genius" and good at things no matter what anyone else may say, and that her dad didn't mean to damage her through poor parenting, he just didn't know how to do a better job. Great book!

Christine Zibas says

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Karin says

Simple, easy to read. Made me laugh and cry but did not stick with me for more than 24 hours. Enjoyed reading it in one day. Nothing too surprising but good story about a woman questioning her present and future career choices, her relationships within her family and dealing with the death of her father.

Heather says

I absolutely adored this book! It was so interesting to see the family dynamics of three generations of artists and how the daughter and granddaughter dealt with the aftermath of the death of a loved one. So many good quotes too!

"The moment when she had created something that inspired people to stop and take a moment out of their busy lives to feel what it was like to be alive." - Jennie Nash, *The Only True Genius in the Family*

bookczuk says

I think that we damage more deeply than we realize or intend, but as long as we practice the twin arts of tolerance and forgiveness we just might survive. I've certainly made my mistakes, and also bear scars of my own.

This story of a photographer of good, but not stellar craft, who is the daughter of a renowned photographer and the mother of a rising star artist, is an interesting study of it all.
