

Guest Blog
Peeking Between the Pages
By Jennie Nash

One of the strange things about writing a novel is that you do it mostly alone in a room. I sit here day after day in my pumpkin-colored office, typing away on my keyboard. (I just realized the other day that the print on the “L” key and the “M” key are starting to fade away, and this keyboard isn’t that old!) No one peers over my shoulder, and I create in the calm and the quiet, trying to get the scenes right and the dialogue right and the whole thing between the mother and daughter right. When the book is published, however, not many people ask about the dialogue or the scenes. They ask what the story *means*; they want me to talk *about* my story – which makes perfect sense. It’s the same thing I have spent my life as a reader doing – enjoying a story, immersing myself in it, and then coming up for air and thinking, *so what’s the point? What does it all mean?*

One of the questions I’m being asked about most often with *The Only True Genius in the Family* is what I believe true genius to be. A perfectly fair question, right? But a really hard one to answer! Philosophers and great thinkers have been pondering that question, or questions like it, for thousands of years. In coming up with what to say, I thought about my main character, Claire, a woman who is plagued by doubt about her ability to make art. She is caught between her famous photographer father and her painting prodigy daughter, and she is convinced that genius skipped a generation in their family. Claire could have bowed out of the family business. She could have said, “I think I’ll become an accountant, instead, or a marathon runner or a CEO of a multinational corporation.” But she didn’t. She felt called to make art, and she fought for the right to do it—a right that she had to grant to herself.

What Claire finds, in the end, is her own creative voice. Instead of worrying about her dad or her daughter or what anyone thinks, she just *makes* something because it feels right and good. That’s what I think true genius is: figuring out what you are meant to do, daring to do it, and feeling wholly alive in the process.