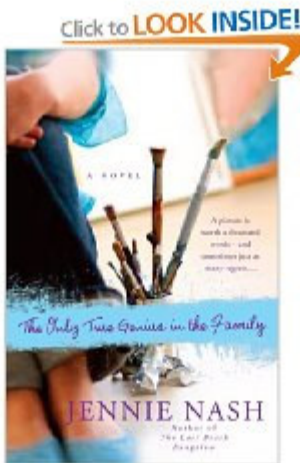


[Social Mom by Donna Schwartz Mills](#)

Be It Ever So Messy, There's No Place Like Home

February 24, 2009

Blog Book Tour: "The Only True Genius in the Family"



There's a new meme going around: a list of 100 essential books compiled by the BBC. You are supposed to check off and count how many you've read.

The BBC claims that the average person will only read six of the 100 books on the list. I am embarrassed to admit that I've only read 19... and most of those before I turned 20.

I might have done better if all the books in the Harry Potter series didn't count as one... as well as the COMPLETE works of William Shakespeare (however, several Dickens titles are there by themselves. Then again, those are LONG books!)

At any rate, it's a reminder that I don't read that much any longer -- at least, not fiction. (I actually spend most of my day reading news, email, blog posts, magazines, etc. When I'm not trying to keep up on my own writing). And it's a shame, because curling up and getting lost in a good book used to be one of my favorite pastimes.

That is one of the reasons why I agreed to review Jennie Nash's new novel, "[The Only True Genius in the Family](#)." That, and the fact that the author contacted me herself to ask if I wanted to participate in a blog book tour. I love the way the Internet makes old barriers fuzzy. I especially loved that Jennie is bypassing the usual publicists and set up the blog tour herself. It was an offer I could not refuse -- especially since she gave me a whopping THREE MONTHS to read her book and write a post about it.

But as much as I liked the idea of participating in this blog book tour, I had trouble making the time to get out the book and READ it... so, in typical fashion, I waited until the VERY LAST MINUTE.

Yeah. I read it yesterday.

I should probably tell you that when I DO take the time to sit down and read a good book, I tend to stay with it until the end. I read each of the Harry Potter books in one day (and

some of them were over 500 pages long) -- so I don't think I shortchanged Jennie by going through it one swoop... especially since I kind of couldn't help myself. Once I got into it, I was INTO it.

You see, the protagonist - Claire - is a woman who is a lot like me: early 50's, creative... with unresolved issues with her parents. Claire is a successful commercial photographer with a life that most people would envy: a good marriage, good income, a beautiful house on the beach, and a beautiful daughter on the verge of becoming a success in her own right.

But Claire can't enjoy all those good things - especially her own professional success, because her father is also a photographer; a famous one. While Claire earns a good living making food look beautiful for Bon Appetit and Martha Stewart, her dad's work hangs in museums around the world. Claire discounts her success because it isn't ART... and she suspects her father doesn't approve. These feelings become even more intense when her dad dies; a death that turned out to be carefully planned.

This is a book about relationships: between fathers and daughters, mothers and daughters, husbands and wives... but most importantly, about the relationship between the creative urge and self-esteem. Jennie Nash wrote non-fiction before she published her first novel - she writes knowingly about art and artists, but covers issues that are universal to the creative spirit.

I found myself nodding sympathetically as Claire fumbles her way into problems of her own making. I understand how one can find success in the world, yet feel like a failure. Like Claire, I have a tendency to discount a dozen positive reviews -- but remember one negative comment forever.

In the end, Claire learns the truth about herself, her family and her troubled relationship with her dad, and she finds some peace -- at least, as much as a creative person can (because, let's face it: conflict is the fuel that keeps an artist's fire burning -- I don't see her feeling tranquil for long).

And I think I learned a little too, from being in Claire's world.