

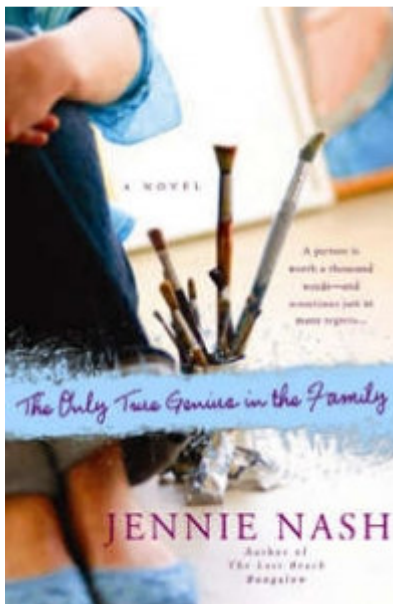


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For the love of language

The Only True Genius in the Family by **Jennie Nash**

April 28, 2009 in [books](#), [fiction](#), [reading](#), [review](#)



[The Only True Genius in the Family](#) by Jennie Nash (Berkley, a division of Penguin, February 3, 2009), 304 pages

Claire's father always said that genius skipped a generation — meaning that he had it and her daughter had it, but Claire herself was lacking. Claire's father made a name, and a life, for himself taking landscape photos. Claire's a rising star in the world of commercial photography. Claire's daughter? She's just finishing her MFA in studio art and looks to have a promising career ahead as a painter.

The Only True Genius in the Family explores a grown daughter's feelings of inadequacy and pain over a broken or nonexistent relationship with her father. As Claire is working through this,

she's also trying to navigate the mother-daughter relationship with poise, without letting jealousy of her daughter's gift or of her daughter's close relationship with her grandfather reign.

I loved this book. It's a look inside the mind and emotions of an artist. It touches on the [artist-as-genius mentality](#). It explores broken and painful family relationships. And as much as I keep saying this book was about pain, it was actually generally happy, hopeful, inspirational in tone.

Overall, I'd call this book restorative. It doesn't set out to answer all the questions or tie up every loose end. It does end in resolve, though.

One complaint: I did not care for the book's characterization of organized religion.

The Only True Genius in the Family includes a discussion guide.

[The author's website, where you can read an excerpt of *The Only True Genius in the Family*, blog](#), and [Twitter profile](#). Nash is also the author of *The Last Beach Bungalow*.