

# GRAB BAG

GLIMPSE // Q&amp;A

## BOOKMONGER

### What happens after child prodigies grow up?

Although she was born in Eugene, New York Times bestselling author Marie Bostwick has spent much of her life living elsewhere — in places like Colorado, Mexico and Connecticut, to name a few — and the settings for her stories have reflected diverse geographies, too.

But Bostwick recently settled back in Oregon, and her latest book, “The Promise Girls” is situated just up I-5 in Seattle. It’s great to have her spotlight the Pacific Northwest.

In this story, sisters Joanie, Meg and Avery Promise all were conceived as test tube babies. Their single mom, Minerva, reportedly had selected sperm donors with exceptional talents and high IQs. She then went on to raise her daughters combining enrichment with rigorously scientific methods in an attempt realize their utmost potential.

Sure enough, by the time she is 17, Joanie is a virtuoso pianist and Meg and Avery show precocious talent in painting and storytelling, respectively.

To raise money to pay for her daughters’ various private lessons — and to keep food on the table — Minerva writes a book about her endeavor to raise geniuses. When it comes out, mother and daughters embark on an intensive three-week publicity tour. It is an exhausting experience, but at the end of three weeks the ballyhoo hasn’t yet died down, so Minerva agrees to the publicist’s plan to continue booking events three months out.

Joanie sees what her mother refuses to acknowledge — that this frenetic pace is extremely detrimental, especially

**“The Promise Girls”**  
**Marie Bostwick**  
**Kensington**  
**346 pp - \$15**

to her younger sisters. So she sabotages the continuation of the tour on a nationally televised talk show by deliberately flubbing the piano piece she has performed impeccably at every previous event.

Understanding that this was intentional, Minerva lashes out — and the unsavory moment is caught on camera.

There is immediate fallout. The public recoils, the publisher pulls the book out of bookstores and Minerva loses custody of her daughters.

“The Promise Girls” picks up 20 years later. The sisters — still estranged from their mom — have come together to live near one another in Seattle. They’ve been leading modest lives far from the limelight until a documentary filmmaker comes sniffing around, wanting to do a follow-up on the sputtering life trajectories of these women who once were touted to be child prodigies.

In “The Promise Girls,” Bostwick has pieced together an ambitious and complex plot that involves secrets and unanticipated ties.

As with much women’s fiction, the romances feel a mite contrived, and while the author certainly raises the notion of nature versus nurture and other issues of childrearing, she might have plumbed that subject more deeply.

On the plus side, Bostwick’s character development is nuanced and the scenes are judiciously detailed. Her

depiction of what it’s like to participate in the 21st century creative economy captures the promise and the uncertainty of that way of life.

There’s an important message here about developing the will to forge one’s own uniquely suitable path — and we can be glad that Bostwick’s path has brought her back to the Pacific Northwest.

*The Bookmonger is Barbara Lloyd McMichael, who writes this weekly column focusing on the books, authors and publishers of the Pacific Northwest. Contact her at [bkmonger@nwlinc.com](mailto:bkmonger@nwlinc.com)*

**Tokeland**  
**Art Studio Tour**  
**April 15 & 16**  
**30+ artists along**  
**a 7-mile tour**



Sponsored by:  
 Tokeland-North Cove  
 Chamber of Commerce,  
 Shoalwater Bay Tribe,  
 Tokeland Hotel, Pacific  
 County LTAC grant, Nelson  
 Crab Company, Bayshore RV



# EASTER BRUNCH

**Sunday, April 16<sup>th</sup> • 11AM - 3PM**

**Lemon Pepper Salmon with Poached Prawns**

**Roasted Pork Loin with Mushroom Gravy**

**Honey Glazed Ham**

**Garlic Mashed Potatoes & Glazed Baby Carrots**

**Scrambled Eggs & Fried Potatoes**

**Bacon & Sausage Links**

**Waffles**

**Biscuits & Gravy**

**Assorted Salads & Rolls**

**Homemade Desserts**

**Adults \$25<sup>95</sup> • Seniors \$23<sup>95</sup>**  
**Children \$12<sup>95</sup> (Five & under: Free)**

**Milepost 18, Hwy 26, Elsie**  
**RESERVATIONS ACCEPTED**  
**503-755-1818 • 800-874-1810**  
**[www.camp18restaurant.com](http://www.camp18restaurant.com)**



Find us on Facebook

