



White House Nannies

Kline, Barbara (Author)

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Jeremy P. Tarcher

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As a working mother struggling to find good childcare, Kline turned her problem into a treasure trove, first by founding a small business, White House Nannies, Inc., that solves childcare problems for the nation's elite, and now by writing about their desperate, amusing cases. While the meandering pace of her book requires some getting used to-it takes 44 pages and several interruptions to find the first candidate, a nanny suitable for a prominent TV personality-readers will eventually appreciate that Kline is using this first narrative as a thread around which the rest of the stories are woven. And some of the stories are amusing. "A young nanny from California first realized she'd moved in with an unusual family when she heard the biotech executive mother put her children to bed via intercom: 'Lizzie and Carter, get into your jammies.'" D.C. cognoscenti will recognize many of the families Kline describes, but even readers outside the beltway will know at least one of the clients: political duo Mary Matalin and James Carville, who require help when their beloved nanny, Ella, dies while they're on vacation. But the book provides a lot more than just the gossipy pleasure of peering into famous nurseries. Kline offers trenchant insights about the callous way many parents view their nannies (i.e., "somewhere between a pet and an invisible life form"), the reluctance to pay properly for the work itself and the difficulties dual-career couples have while trying to juggle their ambitions and their loved ones. She also offers lots of wonderful, if indirect, advice about how to get along with your nanny and how to deal tactfully with outrageously demanding customers. Of interest to anyone who's ever hired a babysitter, Kline's will also intrigue aspiring nannies and small business owners.
