

# Booklist

Advanced Review – Uncorrected Proof

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## **What the Nanny Saw.**

Neill, Fiona (Author)

Aug 2012. 464 p. Riverhead, hardcover, \$26.95. (9781594487163).

In this ripped-from-the-headlines novel, Neill (*Slummy Mummy*, 2007), a former journalist, uses the recent economic meltdown as fodder for skewering Britain's privileged financial class. Ali Sparrow, a college student taking a break from her studies, enters this unfamiliar echelon as a nanny for the Skinner family. The adults, Nick and Bryony, are typically career-obsessed and high strung; the four children suffer from a toxic mix of parental inattention and lofty expectations. Circling around the edges is Bryony's politically incorrect father, Foy, who dominates every scene he inhabits through sheer force of personality and his outlandish proclamations. They're all highly entertaining in a "they did *not* just say that" train-wreck kind of way. Ali, who begins her tenure as an arched-eyebrow observer, gradually grows to care for the Skinners, whose hubris masks untold insecurities. When their downfall comes, as a result of Nick's shady financial dealings, it feels vaguely bittersweet. Readers expecting a salacious, lighthearted romp, as anything with the word "nanny" in the title might suggest, will find that Neill has something more substantive and biting in mind.

— *Patty Wetli*