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WHAT THE NANNY SAW
By Fiona Neill

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Fiona Neill. Riverhead, $26.95 (464p) ISBN 978-1-59448-716-3

Filthy-rich Bryony and Nick Skinner wanted a modern-day Mary Poppins, but what they needed was a superwoman who could "tread on the map of family life without leaving a big imprint." Twenty-one-year-old Ali Sparrow was perfect: eager to raise money to finish school, get away from a going-nowhere affair, and escape her own troubled family. London columnist and bestselling author Neill (*The Secret Life of a Slummy Mummy*) concocts a darkly fascinating portrait of the stupid-rich, and the morally superior immigrant maids they press into service. In Ali's case, it soon becomes clear that her real job isn't just plugging domestic gaps in the lives of a banker and his wife, but rather "actually running the show," a tricky task involving needy five-year-old twins Hector and Alfie; insecure, anorexic 14-year-old Izzy; and moody, cynical 17-year-old Jake. But her hardest job by far will be keeping mum about the financial scandal that threatens to bring down the Skinners. And keeping her passionate affair with Jake, their son, in the dark will prove an even greater challenge. In this fast-paced, dishy morality tale, Neill also delivers a thoughtful dissection of how greed and hubris helped bring the banking industry to its knees in 2008. *Agent: United Agents. (Aug.)*