

Preschooled

Anna Lefler

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Preschooled is a fun-house mirror of bizarre human behavior, and a commentary on just how far people, especially the rich, will go for their children.

Anna Lefler's *Preschooled* follows three different characters as they struggle to find some peace of mind among wealthy parents in a bizarre competition involving their kids.

Despite living in lavish California, with plenty of money to spare, the parents sending their children to Garden of Happiness, an expensive and exclusive private preschool, can still find things to complain about. Justine has managed to secure her daughter a place among their students, but that doesn't mean her troubles are over. She still has to deal with the overprivileged parents and teachers whose commitment to the Garden of Happiness has become something of a full-time job. To make matters worse, her ex's child is in her daughter's class.

Each character is treated with a degree of sympathy and humanity, from Margaret, the woman who runs the preschool and is struggling to keep it, to Ruben, a stay-at-home dad attempting to join the nearly all-female school committees. The book acts as a commentary on what it means to be so overprivileged that a parent can fret over the most trivial of things, including one's choice of preschools, fake allergies, and what college their four-year-old will eventually be attending. An especially funny moment is when Justine must be assigned what's called her "Garden Gnome," a couple more familiar with the day care to show her the ropes. It becomes clear this is more than just a preschool, this is a way of life.

Preschooled might be a humorous commentary on wealthy California residents, but the heart of the story lies with Justine and Margaret, who do genuinely want to do right by these people who never seem to be satisfied. It is easy to feel for Margaret, trying to run a school in spite of her ex-husband's attempts to take the preschool away from her.

Preschooled is a witty, fun-house mirror of bizarre human behavior, and a commentary on just how far people, especially the rich, will go for their children. It's about relationships, breakups, loss, and the overall competitive gambit that comes with life.

SONYA LOVY (Winter 2016)

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