



Hell Is Other Parents: And Other Tales of Maternal Combustion

Deborah Copaken Kogan

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I read No Exit in my early twenties, and I remember thinking hell might very well be other people, okay, sure, but under what far-fetched conditions would anyone ever actually be trapped forever in the company of strangers with no sleep or means of escape? Then I became a parent. From Deborah Copaken Kogan, the acclaimed author of the national bestseller *Shutterbabe*, comes this edgy, insightful, and sidesplitting memoir about surviving in the trenches of modern parenting. Kogan writes situation comedy in the style of David Sedaris and Spalding Gray with a dash of Erma-Bombeck-on-a-Vespa: wry, acutely observed, and often hilarious true tales, in which the narrator is as culpable as any character. In these eleven linked pieces, Kogan and her husband are almost always broke while working full-time and raising three children in New York City, one of the most expensive and competitive cities in the world. In one episode, exhausted from a particularly difficult childbirth, Kogan finds herself sharing a hospital room with a foul-mouthed teen mother and her partying posse. In another, Kogan manages to crawl her way to her own emergency appendectomy, which inconveniently strikes the same week her infant's babysitter is away on vacation, her adolescents are off from school, her *New York Times* editor needs his edit, and the whole family catches the flu. And in the book's caper essay, she drives twelve hours, solo, with a screaming toddler in a rent-a-car in a futile effort to catch a glimpse of her eldest child in his summer camp play. Yes, *Shutterbabe* is all grown up and slightly worse for the wear, but her clear-eyed vision while under fire has remained intact: You've never read funnier war stories.

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