



You're Not the Boss of Me: Adventures of a Modern Mom

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Candid and largely unapologetic, Los Angeles writer and mother of two Schickel indulges herself first, her kids next and arbiters of proper motherhood never in this frequently funny, entirely irreverent and occasionally inappropriate essay collection. Though she starts with an amusing pregnancy chronology ("Week 36-Your Baby is Now the Size of a Barcalounger"), Schickel makes her real subject apparent in the very next essay, concerned wholly with trying to fit into a cool dress for a Patti Smith concert. More often than not, Schickel uses her rarified concerns to make cutting cultural observations; guilt over her inability to keep up with hip, feminist "Alterna-Moms" segues into a takedown of "Life-Stylers" in general: "Whether the theme is Urban Cowboy, Church Lady, or Sex-Positive Swinger ... they seem to come with wardrobe, ideology, and upholstery swatches so you don't have to make any difficult choices." Occasionally she missteps with some you-had-to-be-there stories, like her night out with a girlfriend at a West L.A. strip club, but even there she manages some incisive last-minute commentary on the nature of desire-her own and her daughter's. But amid crass language and off-color topics-including her pre- and post-natal marijuana habit (now ceased)-Schickel turns the parenting experience into a child-like search for sense among the rules we follow, make and break. Though both author and subject are prone to selfishness and immaturity, this bold, addictive collection deals honestly with the messy, confusing, scary human condition and comes out laughing.

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