

From Bitter to Sweet: Parenting Moves Beyond Introducing Solid Foods

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Somebody's Always Hungry: Essays on Motherhood (Nell Books/Wyatt-MacKenzie, 978-1-932279-92-4) would be a great gift for a smart woman who suddenly finds that most of her conversations and activities revolve around providing food for ungrateful little people who make enormous messes. Juliet Myfanwy Johnson is clearly just such a woman, one who gave herself so totally to the experience of motherhood that her children and their impromptu needs and desires produce almost a second self—the fashionable, career-oriented, pre-motherhood woman—who is able to observe, often sardonically, the ridiculous packages of love, noise, and sheer silliness that are her offspring. In the chapter, “Dating the Preschool Parents,” Johnson writes, “I wanted Nathan to have friends. All the other preschool moms and dads looked so professional and relaxed. Then there’s me, at the mercy of my four-year-old. Whomever he likes, I must like, and Nathan would do anything to have Michael play with him. His version of trying to play with Michael is to stand next to me in the classroom and hold my leg. But I know how desperate he is. So if it’s Michael’s friendship he wants, here I go...I’m meshing. [Michael’s father is] out of the mesh.” It won’t take many pages for even the most exhausted, cow-like-feeling, grumpy, over-touched mom to relax into recognition and laughter. After all the hard work and dedication we devote to healing from our childhoods so we can do it better for our own kids, we deserve those two minutes of leisure reading and a quick laugh before dozing off with the lights still on.