

Municipal Bondage



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From Publishers Weekly Freelance writer Alford here gathers a mixed bag of his humor pieces--some of them original, others reprinted from *Mademoiselle*, the *New York Observer* and other publications--in which he places himself in a variety of everyman situations. As a job applicant at Macy's or a vendor at a street fair, he reports what develops, although not every situation turns out to be funny. Some of the best include "Drive, He Said," a tale about Alford as the "VIP driver" for Governor Romer of Colorado during the 1992 Democratic National Convention in Manhattan, and "Dread and Breakfast," a diary he kept as a guest at various New York City "Bed and Breakfast" apartments. But there are also "In Search of... Nubbins," a tedious tract on the creation and marketing of Nubbins, a snack of chocolate encased in French bread, and "You'll Never Groom Dogs in This Town Again!," about jobs few would

think to apply for. There are 33 ponderings entitled "What If" (i.e., "What If the Pope Were a Dog") which are uniformly unfunny. Alford is a humorist with punch who would have benefited from a more careful selection of his material. Author tour. Copyright 1994 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Booklist A renegade journalist whose "preferred mode of inquiry" is idle speculation, Alford nevertheless rouses himself to conduct "comic investigations" so that he can amass all the facts about such crucial matters as what exactly a clutter consultant can do for you; whether singles can register for gifts at department stores (after all, they like presents as much as couples); or what exactly a "nubbins" looks like. Alford will subject himself to extreme humiliation and endure any number of potentially disastrous absurdities to get his story. Other escapades include the hiring of two nude housecleaners to see if they do windows; volunteering as a driver for the 1992 Democratic National Convention in spite of never having driven in New York City traffic (he was assigned to the crusty governor of Colorado who tolerated his callowness and encouraged him to eat desserts); and going on a test-taking spree for various occupations that culminated in the spectacular failings of both human and dog-grooming exams. Amusing as these goofy inquiries are, it's Alford's dry-martini humor and unfailing wit that get you: he is simply devastatingly deadpan, tears-to-your-eyes funny. Donna Seaman See all Editorial Reviews

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