

Another Day in the Frontal Lobe: A Brain Surgeon Exposes Life on the Inside

Katrina Firlik

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"Brisk, funny, incisive . . . You'll be riveted."

—*O: The Oprah Magazine*

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Katrina Firlik : Another Day in the Frontal Lobe: A Brain Surgeon Exposes Life on the Inside before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Another Day in the Frontal Lobe: A Brain Surgeon Exposes Life on the Inside:

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Loved it!By Lynn Kirk HunterThis was a great read. It was just the

right mix of information and anecdotes/cases. It was both professional and personal, and both serious and humorous. As a woman who also broke through a few glass ceilings, I could identify with those aspects of her climb to success. I particularly loved her comments about the painting in the office of her pediatrician when she (author) was a child. I recommend highly. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. I wish it was longer. By Sara Kesler I stopped reading before the end because I didn't want it to end. 3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. *Balancing a Brain with a Knife* By Paul J. Friday, PhD Dr. Firlik's description of the womb-to-tomb process of becoming a neurosurgeon was a delight to explore. Just like with the three bears, it wasn't too hard and wasn't too soft --- it is a just-right-read for anybody wanting to know the behind-the-scenes requirements on what it takes to become a brain surgeon. Dr. Firlik shows that, "...recalibrating patients' thinking ..." is as much an art as it is a technical science. Well done. Paul J. Friday, PhD Chief, Clinical Psychology University of Pittsburgh Medical Center - Shadyside Author: *Friday's Laws: How to Become Normal When You're Not and How to Stay Normal When you Are*

Katrina Firlik is a neurosurgeon, one of only two hundred or so women among the alpha males who dominate this high-pressure, high-prestige medical specialty. She is also a superbly gifted writer—witty, insightful, at once deeply humane and refreshingly wry. In *Another Day in the Frontal Lobe*, Dr. Firlik draws on this rare combination to create a neurosurgeon's "Kitchen Confidential"—a unique insider's memoir of a fascinating profession. Neurosurgeons are renowned for their big egos and aggressive self-confidence, and Dr. Firlik confirms that timidity is indeed rare in the field. "They're the kids who never lost at musical chairs," she writes. A brain surgeon is not only a highly trained scientist and clinician but also a mechanic who of necessity develops an intimate, hands-on familiarity with the gray matter inside our skulls. It's the balance between cutting-edge medical technology and manual dexterity, between instinct and expertise, that Firlik finds so appealing—and so difficult to master. Firlik recounts how her background as a surgeon's daughter with a strong stomach and a keen interest in the brain led her to this rarefied specialty, and she describes her challenging, atypical trek from medical student to fully qualified surgeon. Among Firlik's more memorable cases: a young roofer who walked into the hospital with a three-inch-long barbed nail driven into his forehead, the result of an accident with his partner's nail gun, and a sweet little seven-year-old boy whose untreated earache had become a raging, potentially fatal infection of the brain lining. From OR theatrics to thorny ethical questions, from the surprisingly primitive tools in a neurosurgeon's kit to glimpses of future techniques like the "brain lift," Firlik cracks open medicine's most prestigious and secretive specialty. Candid, smart, clear-eyed, and unfailingly engaging, *Another Day in the Frontal Lobe* is a mesmerizing behind-the-scenes glimpse into a world of incredible competition and incalculable rewards. From the Hardcover edition.

From *Publishers Weekly* "The brain is my business," says Connecticut neurosurgeon Firlik. "Many of the brains I encounter have been pushed around by tumors, blood clots, infections, or strokes that have swollen out of control. Some have been invaded by bullets, nails, or even maggots." In these pages, a carpenter with a nail in his left frontal lobe goes home within a day of surgery; a boy develops a raging bacterial meningitis because his New Age mother gave him herbs instead of antibiotics for a routine ear infection; and an infant with hydranencephaly looks cute despite the absence of brain matter in his skull. Along the way, Firlik muses that a healthy brain has the consistency of soft tofu, and she flies solo in the OR for the first time as she saves an 18-year-old victim of a car accident who didn't buckle up. A woman in a male-dominated specialty, Firlik doesn't get worked up over minor things that can be construed as sexist; she finds that handling a patient's anxiety can be more complicated than the surgery itself, and she expects to be sued someday for malpractice. This witty and lucid first book demythologizes a complex medical specialty for those of us who aren't brain surgeons. (On sale May 2) Copyright copy; Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. From *Bookmarks Magazine* Katrina Firlik shatters the myth most of us hold of brain surgeons as superheroes: they're merely masters of the trade. Critics agreed that her engaging, witty insight into the profession, her layperson's explanation of complex medical terms and routine surgeries, and her compelling stories more than overshadowed the blood-and-gore factor. A few critics expressed disappointment that Firlik only touched on her challenges as a woman in the field, particularly as the first woman admitted to University of Pittsburgh Medical Center's neurosurgery residency program. Others noted some self-indulgent tangents, though she amply covers her personal inspirations. Overall, *Another Day* provides a fascinating look into the oh-so-routine practices brain surgeons face daily. Copyright copy; 2004 Phillips Nelson Media, Inc. From *Booklist* It doesn't take a brain surgeon to wonder what it's like to poke around beneath somebody's cranium. It does take a brain surgeon, however, to explain what makes a person want to drill into another person's skull. At that Firlik excels in her sometimes grisly, sometimes amusing (in a dark-humorous way), always informative, personal (father was a surgeon), and professional ("part scientist, part mechanic") story of becoming a neurosurgeon. In many ways she is what you might expect, but in others she is the rarest of the rare. There are a mere 4,500 neurosurgeons in the U.S., and a scant 5 percent of them are women. While Firlik has had some of the predictable and standard hassles and worries (what to wear to a job interview?), she has never had to storm out of a room because of male chauvinism. From a day-in-the-

life sketch of a neurosurgery residency to an astonishing report on a performance-enhancing procedure to improve brain function, Firlík maintains a highly personal and engaging style. Donna Chavez Copyright copy; American Library Association. All rights reserved