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Clarion Review

Unknown Book

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Four Stars (out of Five)

In this humorous, light-hearted memoir, Roger Friedman provides readers with a down-to-earth account of his first year of fatherhood. From the horrors of manual breast pumps and blistering diaper rashes to the joys of a first smile, Friedman's first book is an honest and illuminating look at parenthood from the perspective of a well-meaning but frazzled father.

Friedman chronicles the last five weeks of his wife's pregnancy through to the first birthday of their new baby, keeping a record of his hopes, fears, realizations, and the on-the-go lessons he gleans from daily interactions with his wife and new child. This real time chronicling of events creates an upbeat energy that mimics that hectic first year of parenthood—the wait for an overdue baby, the agonizing schlep through a workday fogged over from lack of sleep, the not-so-magical process of breastfeeding—the reader navigates alongside Friedman and his wife, the intimate style and voice creating a partnership between the audience and the page.

Editor of *The Motley Fool* and a journalist, Friedman's memoir is reflective of his experience writing accessible, amusing content. This book is not your run-of-the-mill gush-fest over a firstborn, nor does it follow the overly confessional tendencies of popular parenting blogs—Friedman is honest, refreshingly optimistic, and incredibly funny. The content is up-to-date and relevant, reflecting the realities of first time parenting. He does not gloss over the thorny bits of adjusting to a newborn—dealing with a spouse who seems permanently crabby and tired, facing the frantic helplessness of calming an inconsolable baby, and ultimately navigating this new and terrifying territory of responsibility.

At times the narrative drifts into unrelated gossipy candor—snippets that delve into the bedroom business of friends with less than stellar husbands. Although these sections dose the narrative with sprinklings of sensational chitchat, they ultimately cause the narrative to drift and lose focus, the high energy and movement of the prose petering out.

In addition, Friedman has a penchant for complex, overly detailed analogies that are sometimes difficult to follow. Understandably, Star Trek and baseball analogies do help certain readers, namely, male readers, relate and make important connections, but Friedman's tendency to overanalyze and dwell too long on details can also alienate readers. However, the meandering

nature of these analogies suit the voice and style of the book: very personal, like chatting with a friend. In the same vein, Friedman ends each chapter with “Baby Steps,” simple, humorous, but ultimately practical tips—the type of advice one friend would share with another—to ease the journey of other fathers-to-be.

The self-referential nature of the book—in his trademark tongue-in-cheek style, Friedman notes his aspirations for the success of the book—gestures to its need for further fine-tuning. Though chatty and personal, a thorough edit will streamline the text resulting in a valuable piece of work. New parents will find this clearly written, accessible book a welcome addition to their shelves.

Shoilee Khan