ForeWord Reviews
Clarion Review

GENERAL

Claire Walker
Marlene Baird
978-1-4259-3902-1
Four Stars (out of Five)

Claire Walker didn't have problems: it was her husband who pushed her away and sent her to an alcohol recovery center against her will. At least she didn't believe she had problems. If only Brad would look her in the eyes caress her and tell her he would help.

In the novel *Claire Walker* by Marlene Baird Claire is in denial that she is an alcoholic and even after her first clinic stay she is convinced that her husband is trying to ruin her life. Her first visit opens Claire to the reality that she may indeed need some help.

> *The narrow yellow room where Brad had deposited me evolved from prison cell to sanctuary. There no one interrupted my endless crying jags or responded to my moaning into pillows. When I hurled those plush towels at the sunflowered wallpaper they slid silently and secretively to the floor.*

Claire is a wife and mother a 32-year-old with nothing to occupy her time aside from her six-year-old daughter Susan. Whether feeling trapped by her domestic life or caught in old negative patterns Claire's husband comes home to find her drunk on the couch again. Protesting like a child who refuses dinner Claire does not believe she needs to go to a treatment center but in the back of her mind she knows she has a problem and she fears for her daughter's safety.

Marlene Baird does an excellent job of building the characters in *Claire Walker.* She leads the reader in and out of Claire's denials sufferings recovery and constant inner battles. Claire fights herself throughout the story wanting to feel the soft smooth liquor in her mouth and in her body. Claire faces multiple challenges because of her addiction from losing her husband and kids to trying to lead a new life with a job new boyfriend and limited visits with the kids.

Mostly Claire aches to be part of her children's lives: "Thanks to Ziggy's decorating help my home expressed more of her than of me. I tried to see it in the children's eyes and realized it was too perfect. When we had met at neutral places they had no concrete idea of how

I lived my life."

Baird brings compassion to Claire's life. She offers glimpses of a real woman trying to recover from a serious addiction and disease. She knows her characters well and her writing offers Claire that second chance amid Claire's own self-doubt. Baird an accomplished novelist and member of the Arizona Authors Association delves deeply into the psyche of her characters. Author of *Murder Times Two The Filigree Cross: The Salvation of Larry Broadfellow* and *Minnie and the Manatees* Baird's latest book captures readers and sinks them deeply into the lives of this fictionalized family.

Claire Walker is a perfect read for those in search of a realistic story about love relationships and inner battles. If anything it is about the strength of perseverance and the strong will people have to recover from life's challenges.