**Clarion Review**

Biography

**Hillary's Story: A Story of Selflessness, Commitment, and Unconditional Love**
Christine Harrod Walker
CreateSpace
978-1-4751-0234-5
Four Stars (out of Five)

Just starting out in college, eighteen-year-old Hillary was a seeker, looking for faith and love. Not realizing how quickly her life was about to change, she answered a message from a stranger asking her, “Can I tell you a story?” She agreed, and as Brandon Thornley shared the tale of his childhood struggle with muscular dystrophy, and his adult confinement to a wheelchair, Hillary began to fall in love with him. *Hillary’s Story* is a look back at their whirlwind courtship, the challenges they faced as a young married couple, and the faith that has kept them together.

Though written by Christine Walker, who became fascinated by the love story when she heard it from Hillary’s sister, the tale is told in Hillary’s voice. The optimistic, caring personality Walker assigns to Hillary was developed after a series of lunchtime talks with Hillary’s sister. As such, the veracity of her take on Hillary’s point of view remains an open question.

In a concise retelling, Walker hits the high points of Hillary’s young-adult life: taking college classes, becoming a Mormon, and marrying a man with a serious disability, all before turning twenty. Walker summarizes the big moments with scant elaboration. Readers learn how Hillary and Brandon first meet, but aren’t privy to their thoughts and are offered little dialogue. Readers know it is difficult for Hillary to learn to handle Brandon’s care because the text says it is difficult, not because the author shows what that day-to-day care looks like.

The most vibrant images come when Walker shares specific details from Hillary's life, like her first apartment, decorated in "avocado green." Other details evoke the time period, like the couple's initial contact over their college's intranet boards in the pre-Internet era. Hillary's affection for Brandon comes through most vividly in the memories that are shared, such as how impressed she was on their first date that Brandon—whose fine motor skills are affected by his disease—bravely ordered spaghetti at dinner.

Pictures of the couple adorn the front and back cover, confirming the fondness revealed in small stories like these. Hillary and Brandon smile happily, and the wheelchair seems more of an afterthought than an issue as they wrap their arms around each other.

Hillary and Brandon were married in 1998, and there is undoubtedly more to their story than Walker has covered in this slim volume. One wonders how their decisions about careers, family, and living arrangements have worked out over the years. While readers don't know where Hillary's story ultimately takes her, Walker leaves them with the image of faithful and committed partners who plan to be together eternally.

*Sheila M. Trask*