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Smoke and Mirrors: Echoes From An Iron Lung

Christopher M. Clarke

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Smoke and Mirrors: Echoes From an Iron Lung
is a biography of Lorraine Reynolds Woodruff Clarke (1920-1965), along with several collections of her poetry. Lorraine--or Rainie as she was known by her friends--was stricken with polio as a young mother, spent two years in hospitals and rehabilitation facilities (including six months in an iron lung and six months at Roosevelt's Warm Springs, GA facility for polio patients), and died at the early age of 44. In addition, she had been essentially abandoned at five years old when her mother was institutionalized and her father was unable to care for her. She was raised by foster parents. Despite these many challenges, upon her return home from Warm Springs almost completely disabled and bed-ridden, she retained a remarkably sunny disposition, worked full time, wrote volumes of poetry, wrote drafts of novels and plays, carried on an active social life, and raised three children (then aged about 5, 7, and 9). In short, her story, related here by her son, is both remarkable and inspirational (as well as frequently funny).?Lavishly illustrated, much of her story is told in her own words, thanks to a draft, unfinished autobiography she left behind. Her poetry displays the wide range of her interests, emotions, and education, ranging from the whimsical to the deeply emotional.

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