



Hillary's Turn: Inside Her Improbable, Victorious Senate Campaign

Michael Tomasky

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It was without precedent. In July 1999 Hillary Rodham Clinton hit the campaign trail -- the only sitting first lady in the history of the United States ever to seek public office. In her quest to become a New York senator, the nation's most polarizing woman would have to hold her own in the hurly-burly world of New York politics. In this irreverent, probing, and keenly insightful book, political columnist Michael Tomasky exposes the fascinating inner workings of that race. Hillary, he reveals, was neither a gladiatorial tigress nor the unreconstructed flower child conservatives so deeply feared. Constitutionally unable to embrace what Tomasky calls "the politics of personal narrative" and to bare her soul before the voters, she instead presented herself in a tradition of nineteenth-century women reformers religiously bent on problem solving. But would that play in a media capital that savored scandal and demanded that politicians parade their personalities? For Hillary, disaster would always be one step away. Reporters turned out in record numbers to record her every misstep -- from the time she forgot to leave a tip for a waitress at a New York diner to her kissing Suha Arafat. And those were the sympathetic ones. The "New York Post," a Murdoch property known for trumpeting its conservative sympathies, did its best to inflame the leagues of Hillary-haters nationwide. Primed for a duel of titans with the irascible Rudy Giuliani, Hillary watched the mayor withdraw from the race amid a flurry of tabloid revelations, to be replaced by hyperambitious young congressman Rick Lazio. And all the while a devastating series of polls and focus groups revealed that many women -- from disenfranchised Baby Boomers to suburbanites -- loathed her. (Asked what she would do if she were Hillary Clinton, one test subject said she'd "put a bullet to my head or start drinking.") Here then is the witty, barbed month-by-month chronicle of how Hillary made the transition from "cosseted first lady to flesh-and-blood candidate": the surreal crises; the angry rifts among advisers over her image; the hovering presence of a scandal-plagued husband and president. And finally, here is a brilliant and lasting analysis of the vast and thorny world of statewide politics, with portraits of New York politicians of all stripes -- from Al Sharpton to George Pataki -- who sought to reshape the race for their own purposes. Filled with trenchant observations about liberalism and its antagonists, this is a rollicking tale of hardball politics in the nation's fiercest arena. It is also an illuminating portrait of that most guarded of candidates, now New York's first woman senator, Hillary Rodham Clinton.

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