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CLARION REVIEW ★★☆☆☆ AUTOBIOGRAPHY & MEMOIR

Isaiah 6:8: I HEARD THE VOICE OF THE Lord saying, "Whom shall I send and who will go for us?" Then I said, "Here am I Lord, send me."

Carol Hughes
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Carol Hughes begins her inspirational story by admitting that she's not a writer but invites readers to envision sitting across her kitchen table as she relates the life-changing events in her life.

Widowed with five children at age twenty-nine, the Alaskan waitress had an uncertain future. She entered into a marriage of convenience, literally a business deal, with Jim Hughes, who rented a room at the lodge where she worked and wanted purchase the lodge. The owners did not want to sell to anyone who wasn't married.

The unconventional deal gave her only brief security. As fate would have it, an electrical fire destroyed the inn and firefighters forced her out before she could retrieve the business receipts.

Penniless, and without a secure marriage bond, the future looked even bleaker. Her husband considered striking out on his own, but Hughes decided the entire family would go to Anchorage together. When her drinking grew to be problematic she realized she was an alcoholic. Her inability to deal with her problems led to suicidal thoughts, and finally, a miraculous intervention by the Lord, thanks to an acquaintance who repeatedly invited her to attend church. Hughes admits that her efforts to share her newfound faith with her husband were unsuccessful, but eventually prayer and divine intervention reached his heart.

The marriage became strong as the couple's commitment to the Lord and their church took hold in their lives. That's when the scripture from Isaiah, which is also referenced in the book's title, became their guiding light. The verse reads: "I heard the voice of the Lord saying, 'Who shall I send and who will go for us?' Then I said, 'Here am I Lord, send me.'"

The Hughes' stepped out in faith to overcome ongoing economic woes (unemployment, health issues, loss of dwelling after dwelling) and moved hundreds of miles away to Fairbanks, Alaska, to start a new church. Hughes continued to respond to God's requests of her, such as teaching herself to play the organ because the church needed an organist.

Adversity continued to stalk the couple when the author suffered a series of debilitating strokes over the course of a couple of years, which undoubtedly made it difficult for her to write her story.

Although the author has a compelling story to tell, sharing it, even figuratively over a cup of coffee at a kitchen table, is no substitution for a finished book. The stumbling blocks for readers are many, and could have been eliminated by careful proofreading and editing. For example, God, Lord, Anchorage and other terms that should be capitalized are not. There are stray letters floating in the text. Punctuation is missing or inappropriate. Words run together and some homonyms are confused (piece-peace, are-our). Chapter eight's title is missing.

Nonetheless, the book may lead some readers to trust when they hear "the voice of the Lord" calling them. As the author shares after a healing, "The Lord's unfailing love for me is so overwhelming words cannot describe."
LINDA SALISBURY (August 1, 2011)

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