ForeWord Reviews
Clarion Review

FAMILY & RELATIONSHIPS

Murphy Lives Here
Merryl J. Polak
Merryl Polak
978-0-615-55563-8
Four Stars (out of Five)

Schoolteacher Merryl J. Polak and her dedicated husband are an admirable couple. In *Murphy Lives Here*, Merryl Polak recounts their heartbreaking but ultimately triumphant story of love and determination as they fight a very long battle to have a baby and become the parents they know they are meant to be. Polak's harrowing tale of infertility treatments, miscarriages, and attempted adoption is not for the squeamish but should be required reading for anyone in similar circumstances. Emotional and faultlessly candid, the author sugarcoats nothing. She offers a sometimes shocking, but always honest, first-person account of the journey, providing details that reveal how "the system" works and reinforcing how much stamina and resolve are required to successfully tackle the issues of infertility.

To paraphrase Murphy's Law, "If anything can go wrong, it will." That same Murphy haunts the lives of the couple, referred to here by the pseudonyms Emma and William. Settled, successful, and ready to start a family, the two are thwarted at every turn. After months of trying to conceive, they innocently but optimistically embark upon the path of infertility treatment, entering a world that neither realized would be so complicated and potentially damaging.

Polak's account of Emma's devastating physical and emotional experiences is heartrending. Had her husband been less supportive and involved than William, she surely would have admitted defeat. The stresses and physical consequences alone might well overwhelm another couple, and Emma freely admits that their relationship itself is what keeps the process on track and makes them keep trying. Crushed time and again, but still determined, they often stumble but manage to gather the strength to continue their pursuit of parenthood.

Polak is often angry. She rants and she rages, and others either going through or having been through what she experiences will surely empathize. Murphy seems to hover over her, and her disappointments hit cleanly in the gut, truly worthy of the many tears she sheds. Some readers will not agree with her rampages on fairness, fate, and privilege, but she offers so much heartfelt passion and such convincing evidence for her diatribes that few will be unmoved.

The flaws in Polak's book are strictly grammatical. Unbalanced, non-parallel sentences and phrases abound and will leave grammarians cringing, but the general public may well not notice. Sentences like, "She had blond hair, blue eyes and was intelligent" violate the most basic rules of parallel structure. Issues with verb tense are rampant, and awkward phrasing begs rewording. The author's intent is clear in sentences like, "How is it that I am in a woman's delivery room, someone I have only known for about four months … viewing parts of her body that I have never viewed of another woman's?" and "would that mentality be mutual with our child?," but the sentences falter, clumsy in their construction. These are editing issues that preclude the five-star rating Polak's book otherwise deserves.

Murphy Lives Here is engrossing and informative, sincere and often heartbreaking. Those struggling with infertility will thank the author for her candor; hers is a rare, honest account of real options and choices and their consequences. The Polaks' unwavering determination is an inspiration, and the story of their journey is one that readers are not likely to forget.

Cheryl Hibbard