FOREWORD REVIEWS THE INDIE WE LOVE.

Historical

**Baby Jesus Pawn Shop**
Lucia Orth
The Permanent Press
978-1-57962-170-4
(October 31, 2008)

Like Isabel Allende, who has written about Chileans trying to survive the Pinochet dictatorship, Lucia Orth writes about ordinary Filipinos trying to survive under Ferdinand Marcos's martial law. Orth, who lived in Philippines for five years and, like her heroine, worked for a non-profit organization, opens her story with a night of torture and murder. Doming is not at home that night; he later escapes to Manila, where he buys a new name that has no history and eleven years later finds work as the driver for Trace Caldwell, an American counter-insurgency specialist, and his wife, Rue. In the 1980s, with the cold war still hot, the Reagan administration supported dictators like Marcos; they were villains, it was explained, but at least they were "our villains." Doming becomes part of the insurgency and slips cables he copies from Trace's briefcase to the New People's Army. He is reluctant, however, to take part in assassi-nation: "Doming wasn't sure if in his hesitation he was a coward, afraid of doing what they asked, or a good man, tempted, or simply made of anger, clay baked and hardened to stone. And God? God must be blind, what had He noticed on this dead star…"

Set against this background is the love story of Doming, the reluctant Filipino insurgent, and Rue, the American wife. The plot is enormously complicated, as Orth describes in heartbreaking detail the terror and poverty that fill Manila, and the love that cannot be extracted from the politics. One of Doming's best friends is wounded and dies, another other is arrested and tortured, an American journalist is killed, and these events lead Doming to become more active in the resistance. He drives Trace and another American operative to a fortune-teller favored by Imelda Marcos. The fortune-teller persuades Doming to write an oracle for Imelda that will lead to the death of Benigno Aquino upon his return to his homeland. This is one death that will lead to the downfall of the Marcos regime.

Love, poverty, mercy, terror, revenge, the corruption of a dictator's regime, the complicity of a U.S. government, revenge, terror, mercy, poverty, love…in today's world, has

anything in this circle changed?

*Barbara Ardinger*