FOREWORD REVIEWS THE INDIE WE LOVE.

General

The Lucky Gourd Shop
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In this novel, Scott uses an unusual approach to solve a family dilemma. Faced with the voracious “need to know” of her teenage and adopted children, and the grinding frustration of noncooperative bureaucratic agencies, she finds a way to fill the void that is her children’s memory. In an evocative and flowing narrative she writes their life, incorporating a body of legend and mythology that is specific to Korea, but rendered in a manner similar to that of many newly arrived immigrant societies. This gripping tale takes hold like a long forgotten, but often told, family fable. For anyone who has ever wondered about their ancestry, wanted names and stories to go with half-dreamed memories, will feel kindred to the characters in this story.

The narrative gathers considerable strength once Scott leaves the certainty of her American kitchen table and launches into the unknown. She deals with the indelible and debilitating effects of chronic hunger and cold, the impossible choices of an unprepared mother in the face of economic and political chaos, and the impossible choices of a chain of family members. It is unique in its unfamiliarity. This is not the more often told accounts of China, Japan, nor even the Philippines. This novel full of extremes and contrasts takes the reader into less charted waters to travel the snowy and gritty streets of Inch’on and of Seoul, South Korea, where, when it is not a struggle to locate heating fuel for the compact house with a paper-covered floor, it is a scramble to find change for “just one mosquito coil” during the steamy days of summer. The hard-pressed grandmother who revels in a new kimchee pot to bury in the garden among her gourd vines, later despairs over the slow starvation of her family.

At the novel’s end the overwhelming feeling is of continuation, the sure knowledge that the story has not ended, that these Korean/American children persist in this, their new country. One wonders greatly how they, Dae Young, Li Na, and Tae Hee received this history fabricated from scraps of fact and bolts of fiction, and what stories they themselves continue to weave.

Gabrielle Shaw