FOREWORD REVIEWS THE INDIE WE LOVE.

Two Marriages
Phillip Lopate
Other Press
978-1-59051-298-2
(August 31, 2008)

Novelist and poet Phillip Lopate sets these two novellas in Brooklyn, which becomes an almost magical, tragical-comical borough as readers learn how a stoic easily deceives himself and how a husband and wife keep secrets even as they speak together.

The Stoic's Marriage takes the form of occasional journal entries written by a middle-aged man who lived with his mother until his marriage. When his mother becomes ill, he hires nurses, one of whom is Rita. "Her Philippine background," he tells us, "offers a fascinating blend, for me, of the familiar and the exotic. Since both my parents were born in Spain (…where my father was a professor of law…), even though I grew up in Brooklyn, I find that we have much in common." What they have in common, basically, is sex. He needs it. She gives it. Mother dies, they get married, and the stoic enters paradise. But there's always an intruder in paradise. The intruder in the stoic's marital paradise is a "friend" of his bride. The friend's arrival from the Philippines and the fact that he can't—or won't—get a job sets events in motion that prove that our stoic isn't very stoical at all. None of the characters in this novella are pleasant, but the writing is so good that readers will keep reading just to see how the false stoic will react to the next turn of the plotting of his life.

The second novella, *Eleanor, or, The Second Marriage*, is about hedonists. "It was the second marriage for both of them," the story begins. "Eleanor and Frank were determined not to repeat the mistakes of the last one. They were both, for the first time, making good money." Frank is chief sound engineer at a recording studio, Eleanor the publicist for a book company; the novella shows us imperfect communication. Frank's son and his girlfriend arrive at the perfect home Eleanor and Frank have made together. They get out the marijuana and start talking. At the dinner party the next night, there's an interesting mixture of guests and more conversation—not all of it to be believed—and the reader begins to wonder…How will this second marriage survive?

Barbara Ardinger