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## SHORT TAKES



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By Amanda Heller

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### **RESERVATIONS RECOMMENDED**

*By Eric Kraft. Crown. 277 pp.*

*\$18.95.*

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Matthew Barber is having his midlife crisis in comfort, sulking over goat cheese pizza at the trendy Alley View Grill, seducing a Lolita among the chilled salad forks at super-posh Cafe Zurich, watching his life, and his ex-wife, pass before his eyes while downing a surprising bouillabaisse stir-fry at the chaotic bistro Two-Two-Two. For Matthew is the restaurant critic for the impossibly arch Boston Biweekly, and no matter how deflating his love life, how drab his image in the mirror, the show must go on. But as Matthew's behavior becomes increasingly odd, and his reviews increasingly Proustian, we begin to catch on that he may be suffering from worse than the middle-age blues.

Eric Kraft is a satirist with style and sting. By looking askance at the downside of modern maturity, he sees it with more truth and clarity than the maudlin army of novelists who meet it grimly head on.

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