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BURRILLES

DAILY BOOKS

Story of midlife crisis will bring smiles

Reservations Recommended.

By Eric Kraft. Crown. 288 pages.
\$18.95.

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By Mark Graham

This is the first novel Eric Kraft has published away from the Nabington, Long Island world of Peter Leroy and *Herb 'n' Lorna*. His earlier regional works were delightfully humorous, and Kraft proved that he had equal facility in describing the peccadillos of growing up and growing old.

Here the author moves to Boston, and his protagonist is 43-year-old Matthew Barber. By day Bar-

ber is vice president of new development for Manning & Ratter Toy Company and tries to introduce toys to woo kids from Saturday morning cartoon offshoots. At night, he is B.W. Beath, pseudonymous restaurant reviewer for *Boston Bizarre*ly magazine.

Barber is on the bare edge of schizophrenia, and through the book, he has conversations with himself, so we have the outgiving *bon vivant* Beath advising the less workily Barber in matters of business and of the heart.

Barber is recently divorced from a woman he still loves, and to fight his insecurity, he has started an affair with her best friend. And

eventually, when he learns of his new paramour's infidelity, he has thoughts of seducing her teen-age daughter, which leads to some pretty embarrassing moments at a luxurious restaurant.

While not as quick moving as *The Personal History, Adventures, Experiences & Observations of Peter Ley*, nor quite as funny or touching as his recent critical success, *Herb n' Lorna, Reservations Recommended* is recommended. Matthew Barber's mid-life crisis will provide smiles and empathy, because it is a unique look at common problems.

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