

BOOKS

Writer's Kraft



	Last week	No. weeks
5.99	3	9
3.99	2	9
4.99	4	9
3.99	5	10
4.99	1	6
5.99	6	2
4.99	10	17
4.99	7	13
5.99	9	7
7.50	0	1



£5.99	1	3
£5.99	2	3
£5.99	3	7
£5.99	0	1
£5.99	0	1
£5.99	5	7
£4.99	4	3
£4.99	0	1
£4.99	8	5
£5.99	6	2



£5.99
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ANYONE looking for some light but meaningful, funny but untrivial, nostalgic but unsyrupy summer reading will find it in this book. *Little Follies* — three novellas about growing up in 1950s America — is a triumph. The stories in it are so good, so comic, so beautifully put together that, after a while, you stop envying Kraft his perfect touch and timing and start sharing in his own enjoyment of what he is doing.

Yet Kraft does not over-indulge his talent with trickery. The stories are, if anything, underwritten and lightly told. Kraft writes a lot about clams and, to use one of his many seafood analogies, the comic delights of the clams are seasoned and enhanced by many other ingredients and themes: the seriousness and insight of children, the silliness and immaturity of adults, the way that childhood fantasies can contain deeper truths than adult facts, the cosiness and deceptions of extended families and small-town community life. Kraft has mastered the prime skill of good storytelling — saying more in what he leaves out than what is actually printed on the page.

It is surely this depiction of

■ LITTLE FOLLIES

By Eric Kraft

(Black Swan, £5.99)

an eccentric but trouble-free community that has made Kraft's stories such a cult hit in America. The reader knows that nothing really bad can happen to Kraft's narrator, the nine-year-old Peter Leroy, who is now writing as a grown up. Leroy's rites of passage may be embarrassing, and mildly dangerous, but he remains inured to any real harm, at the centre of a web of shared values and loving relationships. From that safe place, he is free to invent a vivid vision of a childhood for which many contemporary Americans must yearn.

In creating Leroy's vision, Kraft manages both to mock gently and pay homage to writers as diverse as Mark Twain, Marcel Proust and those anonymous hacks who supply cliché-ridden pornographic copy to magazines. That is quite a feat of writing, but then Kraft is quite a writer — and anyway, you will be laughing too hard and musing too much to notice how he does it.

ROBERT CRAMPTON