

ADVANCE
Review

To: Erica
Marcus

BOOKLIST
4/15/90

MAB:31KRAFT.sp2

Kraft, Eric. *Reservations Recommended*. May 1990.
288p. Crown, \$18.95 (0-517-57233-8). Galley.

[OCLC] 89-29845

Kraft's last novel, *Herb 'n' Lora* [BKL Mr 15 88], garnered rave reviews, and his latest should fare just as well, although it's a darker work. Matthew Barber is an executive in a toy company by day and a restaurant reviewer by night. Writing for the trendy set in Boston under the pseudonym B. W. Beath, he smugly assesses the dining scene, briefly escaping the problems of the real-life Matthew. Each chapter centers on a restaurant meal at which Matthew struggles with his self-consciousness while making mental notes for his review and eavesdropping on other tables. These dining scenes are hilarious, perceived through Matthew's inner skirmish between his insecurity and B. W.'s sophistication. Matthew, we observe, is hurt by his wife's departure after 14 years of marriage and is trying to remake himself, with little success. His reviews become more and more personal; they're about what happens between him and his guests rather than about the restaurant. The war between his two personalities intensifies until Matthew loses control and finally gives way to his repressed anger. A shrewd, adroit, and spirited novel. —*Donna Seaman*