



Cravings

Garnett Kilberg Cohen

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In Garnett Kilberg Cohen's expansive short story collection, some form of craving—either literal or metaphysical—factors into every person's tale.

A woman who craved olives as a child is forever cursed to flashback through the trauma of losing her father when she eats one. Elsewhere, a man craves all that he thinks a marriage stands for, though the demands of caring for a mortally sick child test his marriage beyond ethical bounds. And in "Feast," a woman who's fond of biblical verses runs a pig farm in a conservative midwestern town; she befriends her cool new neighbor from New York and becomes privy to shocking secrets. Herein, cravings can be one's own undoing, causing people to lose that which they desire most.

These are slow-savor stories whose multivalent meanings reveal themselves best through multiple readings. Twist endings abound; people's backstories are rich and immersive; and many of the entries have the heft of novels. The collection's women are at once complicated, larger than life, and everywomen: they crave love, freedom, and what they are owed in relationships. They are often the more sacrificial parties in their connections. In "Her Life in Parties," a woman watches her ex-boyfriend live the fulfilled author life she wanted; she "walks out of the party a different person than when she walked in." In "Breaking News," a woman yearns for the daughter whom she could have had with an ex, if not for a misunderstanding that led to a tragic decision.

Deep and humane, the short stories collected in *Cravings* focus on rare moments of vibrant, uncensored selfhood.

ELAINE CHIEW (November / December 2023)

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