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What Counts as Love

Marian Crotty. Univ. of Iowa, \$17 trade paper (134p) ISBN 978-1-60938-516-3

Crotty's impressive debut collection is somehow both varied and cohesive. She never writes the same story twice. Her protagonists are women, mostly young and mostly single, but distinct from one another. This distinction is achieved largely through the specificity of detail Crotty brings to these characters and the worlds they inhabit. The title story depicts the tangled allegiances and collateral effects of an abusive relationship. In "Crazy for You," the dynamics of a

teen friendship are undermined by the involvement of another, sexually active teenage girl. The heroine of “The Next Thing That Happens” is a highly intelligent but volatile high school student in a relationship with a mechanic named Jimmy. In “The Fourth Fattest Girl at Cutting Horse Ranch,” a famous European model named Jessa disrupts the delicate balance of the other patients when she checks into an eating disorder treatment facility. And in “A New Life,” a tempting job offer leads to a move to Abu Dhabi for new mother Rebecca and her partner, Nathan, but the cultural shift has a profound impact on their relationship. These 10 sublime stories are reminiscent of Bobbie Ann Mason and Ann Beattie, thoroughly surprising and memorable. *(Oct.)*
