



A Certain Hunger

Chelsea G. Summers

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In a culture that fetishizes male power, the heroine of *A Certain Hunger* is a rapacious, bloodthirsty monster—a perversion of every male fear.

Dorothy is a food critic. She has exquisite taste and she hungers for new sensations. So she transgresses on behalf of those governed by social contracts—and for women in particular. She becomes a ball of sensate wickedness and a delightful anti-heroine who, driven by her appetites, is a sexual terror, a gustatory snob, and an irrepressible misandrist.

Dorothy revels in her power, which derives from her resistance to male dominance and her willingness to assume the same role. She lives in a state of erotic suspension, trailing from lover to lover, and restaurant to restaurant, in Manhattan and Italy. No man is left unscathed: Dorothy eats her boyfriends' organs, and soon she is addicted to the thrill of cannibalism and on the run from its consequences.

Leaning on the overwrought, hyperluxurious language of professional gourmands to describe dishes like duck liver toast—"unctuous as a Vegas emcee, salty as a vaudeville comedian"—and steak and kidney pie—"tender as a love song, rich as Warren G. Harding"—the book is sometimes overwhelming. Its layered descriptions distract from its plot: with so many images on the table, characters are lost. Throughout, Dorothy asserts her superiority to the men whom she murders, but her psychopathy is terminal. In proving that she is better than her prey, she becomes what she hates, but she's not self-aware enough to dispatch her ego along with her dinner.

A Certain Hunger is a hearty novel that, despite its graphic themes of murder, flesh eating, sex, and the dessert menu, is also quite funny. With direct jabs at toxic masculinity and razor-sharp awareness of feminist tropes, Chelsea G. Summers's novel is a slasher-sexy, rich satire.

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