



Trail of Crumbs: Hunger, Love, and the Search for Home

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Already hailed as "brave, emotional, and gorgeously written" by Frances Mayes and "like a piece of dark chocolate--bittersweet, satisfying, and finished all too soon" by Laura Fraser, author of *An Italian Affair*, this is a unique memoir about the search for identity through love, hunger, and food.

Jim Harrison says, "TRAIL OF CRUMBS reminds me of what heavily costumed and concealed waifs we all are. Kim Sunée tells us so much about the French that I never learned in 25 trips to Paris, but mostly about the terrors and pleasure of that infinite octopus, love. A fine book."

When Kim Sunée was three years old, her mother took her to a marketplace, deposited her on a bench with a fistful of food, and promised she'd be right back. Three days later a policeman took the little girl, clutching what was now only a fistful of crumbs, to a police station and told her that she'd been abandoned by her mother.

Fast-forward almost 20 years and Kim's life is unrecognizable. Adopted by a young New Orleans couple, she spends her youth as one of only two Asian children in her entire community. At the age of 21, she becomes involved with a famous French businessman and suddenly finds herself living in France, mistress over his houses in Provence and Paris, and stepmother to his eight year-old daughter.

Kim takes readers on a lyrical journey from Korea to New Orleans to Paris and Provence, along the way serving forth her favorite recipes. A love story at heart, this memoir is about the search for identity and a book that will appeal to anyone who is passionate about love, food, travel, and the ultimate search for self.

Trail of Crumbs: Hunger, Love, and the Search for Home Details

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From Reader Review Trail of Crumbs: Hunger, Love, and the Search for Home for online ebook

Renee says

Sadness and loss is the underlying feeling of Trail Crumbs. At first it's difficult not to envy the young woman swimming laps in the pool overlooking the orchard of her French millionaire boyfriend's vast compound in the High Alps of Provence, but below the surface of this portrait is a turbulent quest for the writer's identity. Abandoned at age three in a Korean marketplace, Sunee is adopted by an American couple who raise her in New Orleans. In the 1990s she settles, after a fashion, in France with Olivier Baussan, a multimillionaire of epicurean tastes and—at least in her depiction—controlling disposition. She struggles to create a home for herself in the kitchen, cooking gargantuan meals for their large circle of friends, until her restive nature and Baussan's impatience with her literary ambitions compel her to move on. I ordered this book from the library, but ordered it on line after I finished, just to have access to the many mouth-watering recipes I read about. (some excerpts from publisher weekly).

Crystal says

I really liked this book. It took me a bit to get into it, but then I just loved the language, the honesty of it. The author writes about love and hunger, and belonging and finding yourself...and it amazes me that she is still so very young. She has done more and seen more of this planet in twenty-some-odd years than many people do in a lifetime. It makes me pine for Provence, for fresh figs and shelled walnuts.

Kim Miller-Davis says

Gorgeously-written memoir containing lush, ethereal language. Sunee's descriptions of traveling, food, and love are so sensually evocative that her narrative takes on a poem-like quality. Even at her saddest, most heart-breaking moments, she immerses readers into the beauty of fully experiencing life.

Astrid Natasastra says

I don't know whether to give this book a one or two star.. Overall it was an okay book, but the problem is.. I didn't like it..

The author too focus on herself and her problem is just simple.. she doesn't know how to feel grateful with her life..

Sure she has gone through some hard times being abandoned by her mother, but a lovely family adopted her and given her a new chance. Just because she had some racist problem at school as an Asian, doesn't mean she has to brag about it all along. Until adult too.

Esp when it comes to the part of Olivier.. like the old saying "you don't know what you've got till it's gone". She rarely seems grateful to Olivier's existence in her life, she doesn't even sound happy in her writing about him.. Yet when she's about to lose him, she wants him back. But I'm glad the story ended accordingly. That's the only good thing about the book. She often reminiscent about her childhood memory of cooking, but

funny on the contrary she often sees the memory as unpleasant, something she doesn't want to remember or re-encounter. Doesn't it confuse you then?

Sarah says

There are so many memoirs of indeterminate purpose these days, particularly with recipes. As with many others in the genre, I never really figured out the *raison d'être* of this one, but it stands out as much more lushly written than the rest. Intricate meals, global travel, beautiful French clothing, sumptuous bath products (Sunee was involved with the founder of L'Occitane for several years) - all very atmospheric. Even the recipes sound more decadent than your average foodie-turned-memoirist's (almond saffron cake, figs roasted in red wine with cream and honey). Sunee spares no emotional details either, but as we're no longer discussing chicken thighs with cinnamon and dates, the effect is totally TMI. There are fights, meltdowns, affairs, divorces, vulnerable children, inappropriate kite makers, battered women, and an awkward number of details about sex and therapy considering we can Google a lot of these people. It's a shameless hot mess and I can't say I didn't enjoy it, but I left feeling like I'd seen more than my sense of decorum permits. 2.5 stars.

Andi says

I felt committed to read this for an upcoming book club so I gave it 150 pages before I had to call it quits. Otherwise, I would've been done in under 50 pages. It was like reading a travelog of the author's jaunts throughout Europe. Mouth-watering food, fantastic boyfriends, and a lot of characters that never came to life for me. I am sympathetic to the author of her longing to find a place of belonging, but this memoir seemed incredibly self-indulgent.

Sam says

Although I would certainly agree that this book is "gorgeously written," - Ms. Sunee has a true gift with language and descriptions - as a whole I can't rate it that highly. I generally can empathize or at least sympathize with most people. And to a certain extent I am able to do so with Ms. Sunee - she overcame some very difficult circumstances in her life that could only have been incredibly distressing and heartbreaking. But it is only to a certain extent, and this review is only three stars, because for the last half of the book or so all I could think as I was reading was, "my god, quit whining and complaining so much! You have lived and are living the most incredible of lives." She was able to do things, experience things, visit places, meet people, drink wines, eat foods, etc. that 99% of the people in this world are only able to dream about and instead of enjoying it and appreciating the spectacular event her life was, all she could do was bitch about how her relationship wasn't what she wanted. And then when she finally ended that relationship, it was nothing but complaining about how much she missed the (apparently pretty amazing and by all accounts fabulously wealthy) guy she had left.

All that said, and to end on a positive note, her descriptions and prose are lovely. The recipes are great. Her intertwining of the relationship between certain food and events in her life is pretty amazing. If you read it, just try to focus on those things and ignore what an unappreciative malcontent she comes off as being.

Melody says

Oh I just hate to write this review. I have so many friends who know and work with this writer and were so excited about the book, and my sister is waiting for me to send the book to her, and I'm having the friends who gave me the book to dinner next week. But Trail of Crumbs was just so bland. I mean the recipes sound scrumptious - but the story just made me shake my head. Well for one thing, I just wanted to slap her. She was so sure that everyone in Korea and China thought she was a whore and I wanted to say - well if you'd just stop acting like one! She just kept making the same stupid mistakes over and over again. Not that I've never made stupid mistakes over and over again, but I'm not going to subject the reading world to my memoir telling them how I'm just so lost and then telling them about getting involved with married men that, surprise, surprise, won't leave their wives I'm not saying it was terrible; a two star rating means that it was OK and not completely without merit. But I'm just saying it does not live up to its hype. But I will probably make the Midnight Pasta #3, yum, yum!

Quiltgranny says

I am sorry to write this review, but this has to be listed as one of the WORST books I've ever read. I was so disappointed in it after I had heard Kim Sunee on NPR and then found the book recommended in my Bookmarks recommendations.

Ms. Sunne, while having a horrible start in life (left on a bench in Korea with crumbs in her hand), managed to have fantastical relationships with men in Sweden, France and the U.S. She does nothing to elaborate on her beginnings except to whine about her adoptive family, continue to whine about her relationships, and ends the book very unsatisfyingly with more of the same.

I kept wanting her to "wise up" like so many adopted children and investigate her origins - not necessarily to find her birth mother, but to find out more about her culture and perhaps the reasons why she was abandoned. There's little hints here and there that she drops that maybe she's not even Korean, but she does nothing to elaborate on her own life. Instead, she allows the men in her life to direct her, and then even complains about that.

The life she leads (as young as she was in her 20's) almost sounds too fantastical to have occurred. I have to wonder if she was not so beautiful (from the picture on the jacket cover), would she have been the partner of the wealthy founder of L'Occitane? Or the mistress of a poet? For someone who cries about being abandoned, she abandons many people in her own life. There's innuendos about the treatment by her adopted parents, but nothing is made clear there. Somehow she skips over that (except to whine about her mother wanting her to come back to the States and have a stable life), and develops a close relationship with grandparents. In the end, she even abandons them.

This must be one of those stories that you either love or hate. It's the latter for me.

Rebecca says

This book was a memoir but read more like a novel. Kim Sunee has had an amazing journey for a woman less than 40. She was found by the Korean police after her mother took her to a crowded marketplace and left her on a bench with only a fistful of food. The police found her three days and nights later, still clutching what was then a handful of crumbs. She was then adopted by a family in New Orleans. Her memoir explores her search for home and love as she moves from New Orleans and then to Paris, becoming the mistress of a famous French businessman. The book centers around Korean, Cajun, and French food, and there are recipes at the end of almost every chapter. I really appreciated Sunee's spiritual journey and search for self that she explores throughout the book, especially how she discovers that home isn't necessarily a physical place, but is created by love and food and cooking for and surrounded by people she loves.

Laura says

I heard the author interviewed on Leonard Lopate's NPR show and was intrigued. I truly wanted to love this book...but found myself struggling to read beyond the first-half. Having been abandoned at the age of three and grappling with identity issues after being adopted and raised in New Orleans, the author tells a tale of searching for herself through love, food, friendship, and travel. In the end it felt like a premature work - under 40 herself and seemingly still very confused and lost on many levels, I believe that Kim Sunee could travel and explore for the next 15-20 years and ultimately write of an amazing journey sharing not only her discoveries of food and travel, but also reveal more of her personal transformation. In it's current state I fear this book comes across as being in a state of working through her own relationship with herself and her ability to be there for others. This does not read as eloquent or participatory - rather self-involved. Parts of "Trail of Crumbs" even come across as intentionally blaming and catty. Ultimately, for 350 plus pages a great deal of it is repetitive wrangling over the end of a relationship. Focusing on the food, travel and teaching English in foreign lands is where she shines, and should have placed more attention there.

Blanca says

I was unsure how I would like this memoir, because I had already aligned it with Gilbert's food memoir, *Eat, Pray, Love* and had been incredibly turned off by it.

Kim is a lovely writer, and I appreciated her talent for pairing certain foods to certain moods. Much like her mouth-watering descriptions in easy-to-read recipes, I found her story deeply interesting, but ultimately, I wish she would have used her personal experience to write something fictionalized.

My complaint with the over-saturated memoir market recently is that it is so easy to publish a memoir. The standard now seems to be providing an interesting, engaging story instead of a relevant one.

While I find the author a compelling character, an interesting person and a person I might even want to get to know, she is not relevant, not even for being involved with a high profile business man, whose relevance is also minimal outside of the lives of his circle of friends and captains of industry.

I truly hope that Kim's future endeavors allow her to be remembered for projects that make her relevant in her own right.

Lisa Ahronian says

I did not like this book. If you don't want to read my spoiler alerts, then just close it out here and move on.

Written as a memoir, the main character is a girl named Kim Sunee, who is abandoned by her mother in Korea and found 3 days later by a policeman. She is then adopted by an American couple and is raised in New Orleans. She then spends the next 25 years running away from anything meaningful in her life and feeling sorry for herself. And there is where my dislike for her stems from. While I can understand her feeling uncomfortable (to a certain degree) about being Korean in a caucasian family and society (after all, she gets picked on at school for being different from the other kids), here's an idea - how about taking a little bit of an attitude of gratitude? Millions of abandoned kids NEVER get adopted! How about being thankful that she was adopted into a loving family?!? Are her parents perfect? Of course not. But every family has their issues. And this ridiculous sense of "I don't belong" plagues her until her late 20's.

All I could think of was, Oh, poor you...you have a loving family. Poor you...you have a gazillionaire boyfriend who adores you and gives you everything you could possibly dream of - a life that most people would love to have but are never lucky enough to experience. Boo hoo - poor you, you have to travel the world and never really have to work. I got so sick of her "poor me" attitude that in the end, when she finally shows glimmers of hope that she's getting her act together and seeing all the good things she had in her life, I just wanted to slap her senseless and tell her it was about damn time.

Corinne Edwards says

On a park bench in a Korean marketplace, three year old Kim Sunee was told by her mother to "wait right here." Kim did, and her mother never came back. After being adopted by an American family from New Orleans, she learns to love to cook and eventually makes her way to and around Europe, trying her hand at writing and attempting to figure out where her place is in a world that abandoned her at such a young age.

Ack, this book was a disappointment. Kim felt like an emotionally unstable and unreliable narrator. I felt so frustrated with what seemed to be such a biased picture of her life. I recognize that a certain amount of bias comes with the territory when you're reading a memoir, and yet, Kim gives such a self-absorbed portrait that I couldn't help but wonder what she wasn't telling me.

She hates her mother, feels completely rejected by her, and yet tells us virtually nothing of how it came to be that way. It's almost as though Kim feels like her adoptive family is somehow responsible for her abandonment, all the pain is rolled up together. She falls "in love" with many different men (one relationship is much more lasting than the others) and over and over Kim seems to justify and blame her past for her inability to cope with the present.

Her time in Europe felt, on the one hand full of flavors and life. She really does have a powerful writing voice and she uses a vast palate of words (both English and French) to describe her experiences and culinary creations (All the French might drive some readers crazy, though). Despite the beauty of the food and the landscape, so many Europeans she encountered were petty and flighty - their relationships came and went, marriages meant nothing. It all just rather...depressed me, I think. And I know that I am not a particularly

adventurous cook, but not one single recipe in this book appealed to me. If you love exotic and haute cuisine, this might be right up your alley, though.

Her "Korean-ness" is a theme throughout the book - what does it mean? Is it just a way to look? Is there something inside her that she can find that will make her feel more like the way she looks? Readers who have been adopted from foreign countries might find familiar feelings in this memoir, especially those who can relate to her constant feelings of loss - that ever-present desire to search for the happiness that eludes her. For me, it just wasn't a good fit.

Yoonmee says

While there's no doubt Kim Sunee is a good writer, I can't give this book more than two stars. I'd give it a 1.5 if I could; two might be generous. Call me a hater, but it's hard to feel much empathy for Sunee as she whines about her life while wearing a designer bikini lying next to the pool at her sugar daddy's mansion in Provence, France. I kept waiting/hoping Sunee would show some emotional maturity towards the end of the memoir, but she ended with her leaving France w/o much growth. Sure, she left Olivier, but she just found herself in more destructive relationships with controlling men who took her to exotic destinations. She complains about her adoptive family, especially her mother, but it doesn't seem like her mother is all that terrible. It seems perfectly normal for a mother to get upset with her teenage daughter for staying out late and partying too much. It also seems perfectly normal for a mother to worry about her adult daughter who lives in another country, has no job, and lives with her much older sugar daddy. I wanted to grab Sunee by the shoulders and say, "Stop whining! That's what a mother does! Mothers worry about you. Mothers question our actions because they want the best for us!" Sunee never seemed to learn to find her own voice, stop running from things/people. She never seemed to learn that we can go all over the world in search of ourselves, but in the end we've been with ourselves the entire time. You can't run away from yourself, Kim Sunee.

A lot of people have made comparisons to this book and Elizabeth Gilbert's *Eat Pray Love* and I can see why -- both are written by privileged, whiny, self-absorbed writers who travel around the world in an attempt at finding themselves. If you liked *Eat Pray Love*, you'll probably enjoy this book, too. Me, I had trouble feeling empathy for the author and spent most of the book wanting to shake some sense into her.

Other reviewers have done a great job reviewing the book (namely Quiltygranny, Laura, and Cameron). Definitely worth reading their reviews as well.
