



# The Lovers Set Down Their Spoons (Iowa Short Fiction Award)

*Heather A. Slomski*

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## **The Lovers Set Down Their Spoons (Iowa Short Fiction Award) Heather A. Slomski**

Winner of the 2014 Iowa Short Fiction Award, Heather A. Slomski's debut story collection takes loss as its primary subject and holds it up to the light. In prose spare and daring, poised yet startling, these stories take shape in reality, but reality, they sometimes show us, is not a separate realm from the fantastic or the surreal. Two couples meet for dinner to acknowledge an affair. A mannequin recalls a lover and the life she mysteriously lost. Two girls observe a young widow's grief through a café window. A man's hat is as discerning as Cinderella's shoe.

In the fifteen stories that comprise this collection—some short as breaths, two of them novelettes—Slomski writes with a keen eye about relationships. About the desires that pull us together and the betrayals that push us apart. About jealousy, obsession, loneliness and regret—the byproducts of loving someone that keep us awake at night.

The characters in these stories share meals, drink wine, buy furniture and art. They live domestic lives, so often wanting to love someone yet ending up alone. In one story, a woman's fiancé leaves her when she goes to post some mail. In another story, a man can't move past an affair his wife almost had. Another story describes a series of drawings to detail a couple's end. But while loss and heartache pervade these stories, there is also occasional hope. For, as the title story shows us, sometimes a breakup isn't an end at all, but the beginning of your life.

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