

## What I Found Out About Her: Stories of Dreaming Americans

**Peter LaSalle**

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Winner of the 2014 Richard Sullivan Prize in Short Fiction, this book, by the Susan Taylor McDaniel Regents Professor of Creative Writing at the University of Texas-Austin, adds to Peter LaSalle's merited reputation as a writer of powerful and innovative short fiction. LaSalle is a master—his writing is so intelligent and thoughtful, so smooth and fluent, its current so strong, and his characters so easy to care about, even to love, that one forgets to look for the stylistic sleights of hand so admired by academics and instead gets caught up in the lives of people who could easily be one's best friend, lover, aunt—or oneself.

Questioning how deeply we can ever really know another person, the opening story, which gives its title to the volume, tells of the brief but intense relationship between the narrator and a beautiful young copy editor who later commits suicide, leaving him stunned at how little he had actually known her. While focused on love, loss, and dreams—both the sleeping and waking kind—LaSalle's tales don't degenerate into the dreary navel gazing that so often passes for storytelling; instead, he deftly engages us in the things that unite us with his characters: honest emotions evoked by believable events that, over time, may come to feel like a haunting dream. Perhaps, as one of his protagonists says, "The dead are dreaming about us ... That's what being alive is, that's the easiest way to understand it."

KRISTINE MORRIS (Winter 2015)

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