



## Book of Lies

### Felice Picano

Alyson Books (September 2000)

Unknown \$14.95 (423pp)

978-1-55583-592-7

When Ross Ohrenstedt starts his researches for the dissertation on gay writers that should bring him his graduate degree, he is befriended by the wealthy, older gay writer Damon Von Slyke. As Ross begins his cataloging of Von Slyke's creations, he becomes acquainted with the Purple Circle, the fictional counterpart of the Violet Quill, a real life group of seven gay writers who met several times to mull over gay life and literature. A mystery is involved. A previously unknown but probably very influential person emerges. Ohrenstedt becomes a detective.

While he is amassing facts of lives and psychological insights into characters, the narrator, who is separating facts from imaginary factors, comes to realize that all fiction is lies, and when readers are beguiled by the art of fiction, they are buying into a compounded lie. But finally, Ohrenstedt sees gay writing as a means of lighting up aspects of modern living.

Picano, who came into contemporary writing with the best-selling novel, *Like People is History*, has a record of nineteen books. In addition to many works of fiction, he collaborated with Dr. Charles Silverstein on *The New Joy of Gay Sex*.

Picano begins this new novel quite straightforwardly as Ohrenstedt remembers: "It was late morning when I drove my newly rented Celica to Von Slyke's house..." Thus we are seduced into the complex lies of human deception and literary art that Picano has imagined for us.

MARTIN SHAW (November / December 1999)

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