



## There Is No End to This Slope

**Richard Fulco**

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*Death of a Salesman* meets *Alice in Wonderland* in Richard Fulco's debut novel, *There is No End to This Slope*, a dark, voyeuristic glimpse into the life of a man passively watching his world deteriorate around him. Fulco's prose is filled with cultural references that vary from Greek hero Odysseus to pop singer Madonna.

John Lenza is a compulsively unlikable protagonist, a lecherous, narcissistic textbook salesman who's drunk more than he's sober and pops pills a handful at a time. Tempering this is the sheer patheticness of his life. Constantly picking women who are exactly wrong for him, Lenza is unable to let go of any of them. He's haunted by his dead best friend, Stephanie, whose death he firmly believes is his fault. Emma and Dawn, his alcoholic ex-wife and manipulative lover, respectively, pull him down further.

It is Fulco's vivid and often humorous prose that carries the novel. Nuggets of insight into the human condition abound, from thoughts on relationships: "my generation, with the fast food we eat, the text messages we send and the trendy electronics we purchase and discard for a newer model, abide by a hollow, disposable ideology" to observations on writing: "I was more devoted to the idea of being a writer than to actually being a writer ... [Hemingway] actually sat his ass down at his desk and bled." He also has a beautiful knack for sketching a complete character in only a few sentences.

Fulco's first-person narration grows more and more unstable, most noticeably in Lenza's conversations with others, as he mixes up fact and fantasy, past and present: "John, are you okay? Do you know who I am?" This compelling and fascinating trip down the rabbit hole is well worth the ride.

ALLYCE AMIDON (Summer 2014)

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