



52  
serial  
shorts

HAROLD COBERT  
IRÈNE FRAIN  
CHRISTINE ORBAN  
DANIEL PICOULY  
YANN QUEFFÉLEC  
TATIANA DE ROSNAY  
DIDIER VAN CAUWELAERT

LE FRENCH BOOK 

## **Praise for 52 Serial Shorts**

“Fifty-two sharp-toothed stories with carnivorous intentions and limitless inspiration. You dive into them without ever losing the thread (of the suture). A delicious meal with the lions.”

–*Paris Match*

“Surprising, seductive stories of literary collaboration.”

–*Le Télégramme*

“Nose-thumbing at those who think French literature lacks fancy...a successful exercise. It’s very funny.”

–*France Info*

“Truly fun, dark humor guaranteed.”

–5-star Amazon.fr review

# 52 Serial Shorts

**Beware! Writers on the Loose!**

**Harold Cobert  
Irène Frain  
Christine Urban  
Daniel Picouly  
Yann Queffélec  
Tatiana de Rosnay  
Didier Van Cauwelaert**

Translated from French by Anne Trager

**LE FRENCH BOOK** 

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This is a work of fiction. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, is purely coincidental.

## Translator's Preface

Beware! Writers on the loose!

When I heard about this collection of stories, which the publisher Play Bac released in France in the form of a daily calendar, I was enchanted. I love the idea of writers getting together and playing with story creation. Here you have seven authors, all very established French writers, who contribute to each story. One starts, the second continues, and so forth. They lay traps for each other. They play. They have inside jokes. The result is this collection of wacky short stories: some are zany, some are clever, some are just plain weird, but all show the incredible creative skill of these seven very fine writers.

It is surrealistic, literally. This kind of collaborative writing—what could be more in line with the times?—dates back to a writing game invented by the French Surrealists in about 1925, called *cadavres exquis*. The direct translation is delightfully morbid: exquisite (or delicious, if you prefer) corpses. These corpses are not, in fact, decaying bodies, but entertaining seven-author stories that mix the styles, feelings and predilections of each author.

—Anne Trager

## Preface to the French edition

This clever and exceptional collection of short stories, brought to us by Play Bac, could have been called *Blank Page and the Seven Authors*. And not just any seven authors. Three women—Irène Frain, Christine Urban and Tatiana de Rosnay—and four men—Harold Cobert, Daniel Picouly, Yann Queffélec and Didier van Cauwelaert—agreed to write fifty-two short stories together. This collaborative adventure is a first for these slaves to solitary work. Each in turn imagined the first of seven episodes that make up each plot. The idea—a playful one inspired by the famous *cadavres exquis* writing game developed in the 1920s by the Surrealists—was for each of them to pick up a scenario that was not of his or her making and to prolong it in an unexpected way for the following author, creating these seven-author stories.

Day to day, you will discover these fifty-two mutant, unforeseeable, astonishing stories that mix the styles and worlds of each writer. I hope they will give you the same pleasure as those seven mercenaries of the imagination had in writing them.

—Bernard Lehut

***Start reading 52 Serial Shorts***

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