

52 Men

Metafiction by Louise
Wareham Leonard
ISBN 978-1-59709-996-7
Binding: Tradepaper
Size: 6 x 9; Pages: 120
Price: US \$15.95
Pub Date: August 15, 2015



Louise Wareham Leonard



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METAFICTION

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An intense “micro-novel” told in compact, rich sketches capturing the emotional and physical possibilities of encounters between 52 men and one woman in the Manhattan of the late twentieth century.

In contemporary literary miniatures from a few lines to a few pages, Manhattan-raised Elise McKnight describes the men in her life who gradually reveal her: high-profile cultural leaders, writers and celebrities, as well as the down-to-earth waiter, student, and police officer. Fifty-two strange, romantic, and sexual interludes and relationships spark to life and disappear in the wind, leaving us to wonder: What is Elise’s power? What does she want and will she ever get it? Does she have a secret, and if so, what is it?

With surprising, sometimes shocking and moving cameos by figures from tabloids and the news: Jay Carney, Jonathan Franzen, Lou Reed, Michael Stipe; and encounters with artists, financiers, and a boxer who reads Neruda at the Turkish baths.

Praise for *52 Men*

“*52 Men* is a haunting and haunted book about the world of women and men. It is mainly composed of elegant and brief portraits of our often deeply inelegant humanity. It is harsh and sweet and very funny, in spots as hard to read as it is hard to put down.”

—Will Eno

“I’m not sure I’ve ever read a story of a life that’s both so moving and told with such breathtaking economy and precision. *52 Men* gave me goose bumps again and again.”

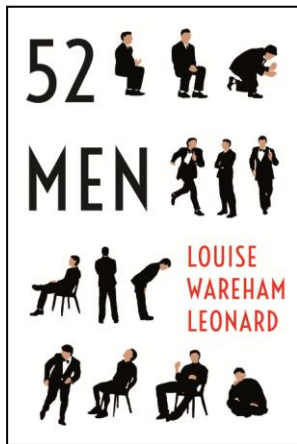
—Kurt Andersen

“Neither fish nor fowl, these short pieces of ‘autobiographical fiction’ detail the author’s romantic conquests. . . . She’s showered with expensive gifts, tortured letters, and declarations of love. As ‘the world’s most famous North American novelist’ says, ‘the best thing about this city is you.’”

—*Kirkus Reviews*

Biographical Note

Louise Wareham Leonard is the author of *Since You Ask* (Akashic Books, 2004), awarded the James Jones Literary Society First Novel Award, and *Miss Me A Lot Of* (Victoria University Press, 2007). Born in New Zealand, Louise moved to Manhattan at age twelve and attended Columbia College. She currently lives in upstate New York.



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From *52 Men*

16.

Judson is a blind date. Should I dress up or down? Should I go conservative or a little indie? I have no idea what he would like. In the end, I play it in the middle: white blouse with a circular neckline, black skirt to the knees, flat shoes. What the clothes lack I can make up for with personality. He arrives in crumpled khakis and a ripped sweater. He is rich, I have been told. Yet he is also against the rich. He wants nothing to do with the world he is from. We go to an expensive restaurant in Soho. I am boring, he thinks. Where I work is boring. I want to tell him that before this, I travelled the world. I had an affair with a married man, and spent four months in a psychiatric hospital with Vitus Gerulaitis. But I am boring. I can't even choose my own clothes. When Judson hears my step-brother is a writer, he says, "Well that's interesting. Let's go see him." We sit in silence then. I feel kind of sick. "What's he written?" Judson finally asks. Then he goes slightly mad, the way I hoped he wouldn't. "Leafscar? No kidding. That's your brother? Wow," he says, "Wow. At least you have that."

Judson himself was going to join Greenpeace, he says, but then realized, "Why work for Greenpeace making a pittance, when I can make a whole lot of money and give it to Greenpeace?" That's why he is getting an MBA. I don't believe he will give his money to Greenpeace. I believe he is fooling himself.

"Tell your brother to call me," he says, slamming the door of my cab. I feel so bad; it is as if I've been stabbed. Twenty years later, I see him pictured in a tuxedo at the Annual Palm Beach Dinner Dance. I see him at the Frick Autumn Ball. He runs an investment fund for the assets of his family. He is an advisor at Earth Watch.