

© Liesbeth Kuipers



# Marian Boyer

## *A Little Storm*

Original title: *Een kleine storm*

### STORIES

**Quasi-unremarkable life stories set around a square in a small, unnamed town**

**Boyer places a magnifying glass on the unremarked and occasionally disturbing aspects of 'normal' lives**

World Rights  
Publishing House De Geus  
Contact: Esther Bruls  
P.O. Box 1878  
4801 BW Breda  
The Netherlands  
Phone: (31) 76 522 8151  
Fax: (31) 76 522 2599  
Email: [e,bruls@degeus.nl](mailto:e,bruls@degeus.nl)

**DE GEUS** [www.degeus.nl](http://www.degeus.nl)

### About the author

Marian Boyer (Amsterdam, 1954) has worked as an actress, (The Independent Theatre and Discordia), director and playwright. Her debut novel 'The transport of angels' (*Het engelentransport*) appeared in 2001. While working on what was to have been her second novel, Boyer was diagnosed with cancer. A new novel emerged from the process of healing: 'Fantastic body' (*Een fantastisch lichaam*).

'A Little Storm' (*Een kleine storm*) is her third book.

[www.marian-boyer.nl](http://www.marian-boyer.nl)



### About the book

A broken fountain in a square on a winter's day. In the square we find a kiosk, a cafeteria and a Greek restaurant. On Tuesdays there is always a stall where two Africans sell wood carvings. Every day, an old woman sits on a bench.

On closer inspection, some lives appear to be connected via the square. Ostensibly unremarkable lives, but there is the suggestion that more is going on than you might suspect at first. Each individual in this collection is on the verge to be changed. Together, the stories are an ode to small communities in which, on the surface, nothing happens.

Boyer's work is characterised by a considerable stylistic refinement, through which a wry, and consequently playful element shines through. Characters are ostensibly quite ordinary people, perhaps even in appearance, but often turn out to display a rebellious trait.

[Marian Boyer, \*Een kleine storm\*](#)

[ISBN 978 90 445 1385 1](#)

[Hardback, 320 p.](#)

[Date of publication: 28 April 2009](#)

## The author explains

‘The central location, the square, could be in a Belgian town. That’s where the inspiration for this collection came from, when, on my travels, I spent an afternoon in just such a square. The unremarkable lives – in a town that had little claim to fame other than its square with some shops and dry fountain as its centre – intrigued me. On closer study, some lives appeared to be connected through that square; people walked into the kiosk or the cafeteria, delivering things or buying goods, speaking to acquaintances or avoiding them. What was intriguing was the ordinariness of all these lives, and at the same time there was the suggestion of a community in which much more was going on than you would suspect at first glance. In such anonymous places, my imagination is immediately engaged. I remember very small details and they can inspire a story. To me, unremarkable lives often conceal big secrets; big questions lurk in small things.

Each story in this collection focuses on one of the members of such a small community, and this focus reveals surprises.

Every one of them could stand as an example of the many unremarked lives in these days of over-exposure of the ‘celebrated’ individual, as though everyone is at his best as a showman. The members of the family who each weigh two hundred kilos and who take part in a slimming race, the wannabes who put themselves into painful situations in the hope of becoming famous – nothing is done casually; being anonymous means being a loser. *A little Storm* places a magnifying glass on the unremarkable and sometimes disturbing aspects of “ordinary” lives.’

## Bibliography

*Het engelentransport* (‘The Transport of Angels’) (2001, novel)

*Verzameld toneel* (‘Collected Plays’) (it & fb, 2004)

*Een fantastisch lichaam* (‘Fantastic Body’) (2005, novel)

*Een kleine storm* (‘A Little Storm’) (2009, short stories)

## Prizes and awards

‘The Transport of Angels’ was nominated in 2001 for the Geert Jan Lubberhuizen prize and the *Vrouw & Cultuur* [Woman & Culture] prize.

For her theatrical work:

Mr. J.H. van der Vies prize from the Vereniging voor Letterkundigen [Dutch Writers Guild]  
Proposed for Theatre Festival ’92

Nominated for Toneelschrijf [Playwright] Prize, honourable mention

**The press about ‘The Transport of Angels’:**

‘This debut novel goes well beyond “promising” in every way.’ – *HP/De Tijd*

‘With her novel, she creates a boys’ world in strong, emotional scenes and unpolished, raw language, showing how childish fears can go hand in hand with adult aggression.’ – *De Telegraaf*

‘A remarkable contribution to the literary theme of hardcore, criminal adolescent girls.’ – *Gerrit Jan Zwier in Leeuwarder Courant*

‘The consistency with which Aleid is created as a hard, extreme personality deserves all praise.’ – *Trouw*

‘An outstanding book in which the loneliness of people in their environment is described with great accuracy.’ – *Surplus*

‘Boyer raises the bizarre story of a psychopathic girl into a sophisticated novel about the relationship between the individual and society.’ – *de Volkskrant*

‘Clever, but hard.’ – *Het Belang van Limburg*

‘It is quite a feat by Boyer, the way she brings Lei to life: very slowly, very subtly, it becomes clear how strange the girl is, how she is immersed in her fantasy, how she slowly walks into the abyss, unable to see any alternative.’ – *Sp!ts*

‘Boyer manages to sustain a claustrophobic atmosphere and to make her main character a credible “bad girrrl”.’ – *Garp*

**About ‘Fantastic Body’:**

‘An unexpectedly witty and sensitive novel.’ – *Sp!ts*

‘A tender novel about a hard reality.’ – *LINDA*

‘With unsettling little dialogues, idiotic thought processes and a bizarre plot, Marian Boyer succeeds in creating an entirely natural environment for the characters.’ – *recensieweb.nl*

‘Short sentences, fast pace.’ – *NRC Handelsblad*

‘Touching novel about getting ill and getting better.’ – *Nederlandse Bibliotheekdienst*

‘Go and read it, and read it again and again. This penetrating book with its masterly phrases deserves no less.’ – *Vrouw & Cultuur*

‘A book of beauty, illness and love.’ – *Gazet van Antwerpen*

### About 'A Little Storm':

'For language lovers and those who love the deeper story behind "ordinary" people, this book is a feast.' – *Esta*

'Life is tough. But Boyer can write about it beautifully.' – *Eindhovens Dagblad*

'The stories are characterized by a charged atmosphere and a thrilling plot. (...) In a highly expressive style, Boyer reveals how people are often governed by evil.' – *Nederlands Dagblad*

### Fragment from the title story of 'A Little Storm':

They order tea with rum at the bar from an ash-blonde, chain-smoking woman. In between actions, she walks to a smouldering cigarette in the ashtray. Absently, but without missing a thing, the girl follows the movements, as though trying to understand something.

Ben still doesn't know her name, although he introduced himself at the door of the kiosk. She appears to be absorbed in more important thoughts; it didn't strike her to make the expected reciprocal gesture. That's what you get, Ben thinks, every generation has its own way. He immediately felt like an old duffer. When did that happen?

Their soles clumping across the wooden planks, they carry their drinks to a seat behind the glass windbreak. From here they look over the horizon. A misty-grey sea throws up muddy brown whirls in the tide. Seagulls shriek above the surf and the hard east wind. For the first time today, the rain has stopped, and really it's too cold to sit outside. But it's what the girl wants to do. She's said that she doesn't like beach cafes in the winter, 'with that stale soup smell, and stuff'.

They sip their tea, blowing short breaths against the steam. It reminds Ben of long ago. They sit there like children, looking at the sea. The girl is taking her time to work something out, although Ben has no idea what.

Nineteen, Jesus Christ, he thinks.

The rum makes its burning path down his throat. He normally never drinks in the daytime. He sometimes used to, during holidays with Lauren. You don't drink during the day, certainly not rum, unless you've missed the boat. *Or unless you're in love.* The shock of the thought went through his warmed body. He felt his prick starting to throb and pulled his legs close to him. He knows this is not right. That he should go home. Would Lauren agree with him? The girl's attitude isn't suggesting the same thing. With the brown hood over her head, so far over her eyes that he could barely see her; with her spiky ponytail, sagging trousers and vague look, she looks more like an excommunicated nun.

'My name's Clarissa, by the way,' in her hoarse, uncultivated voice.

Ben doesn't know what to say.

'Pleased to meet you, you're supposed to say,' she adds.

'Sorry. Pleased to meet you,' says Ben.

'I always forget, too. I usually remember when it's too late. Late learner, maybe that's why.' He might have known. He's seen enough of it in his kiosk to recognise it. How could he have missed it? Is there such a thing as the purest victim? Someone who barely shows any signs of

the neglect, the numbness? Her silence, the absence of shyness she radiates. He used to hate that girly carry on. Runny makeup, collapsed bodies on his bed, tears, words that arrived just in time to rouse his soft-heartedness. He likes a certain truculence. An aggression. Like Lauren had. Like a couple of other women he'd known had. This Clarissa reminds him of something else, with her name like cracked glass. She reminds him of something his body recognises.

'It's because,' she says, 'my parents drove into a tree when I was six. In a camper van, they're flimsy things, those, anyway. They tested them on that motor programme on the telly. Hung it on a crane and let it drop. Round the bends at a hundred and ten miles, that kind of thing.

Crushed like a matchbox. The people who sell them are criminals. The ones who design them are worse. And the bloody things are expensive as well. So after that I was on my own, with all kinds of messing. Institutions, foster families. A mad guardian. I've got rid now.'

So he had guessed her age right. But he had almost confused her with the contrived misery of the fashion magazines on his shelves, out of which the models stared bored and stupidly, as if all they wanted was lollypops and diamonds. Clarissa's emaciation was in her bones. She endures, Ben thinks. He knows that, in some unfortunate way, he loves her.