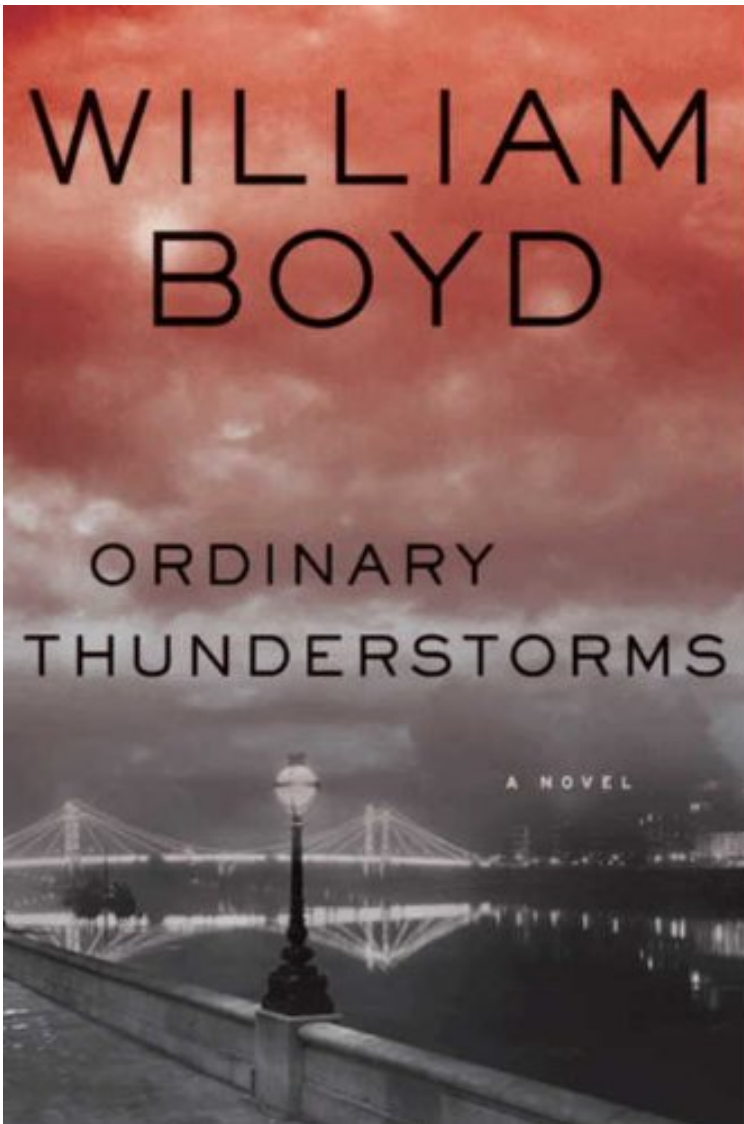


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Ordinary Thunderstorms: A Novel



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Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurWilliam Boyd seems singularly blessed with both an innate love of storytelling and the talent to render those stories in swift, confident prose. The New York Times From William Boyd, award-winning author of *Brazzaville Beach* and *Restless*, comes a stunning literary mystery about crime and punishment: *Ordinary Thunderstorms*. One of the most accomplished writers of our time, Boyd has written a profound and gripping novel about the fragility of social identity, the corruption at the heart of big business, and the secrets that lie hidden in the filthy underbelly of every city. Extrait1Let us start with the river all things begin with the river and we shall probably end there, no doubt but lets wait and see how we go. Soon, in a minute or two, a young man will come and stand by the rivers edge, here at Chelsea Bridge, in London. There he is look stepping hesitantly down from a taxi, paying the driver, gazing around him,

unthinkingly, glancing over at the bright water (its a flood tide and the river is unusually high). Hes a tall, pale-faced young man, early thirties, even-featured with tired eyes, his short dark hair neatly cut and edged as if fresh from the barber. He is new to the city, a stranger, and his name is Adam Kindred. He has just been interviewed for a job and feels like seeing the river (the interview having been the usual tense encounter, with a lot at stake), answering a vague desire to get some air. The recent interview explains why, beneath his expensive trenchcoat, he is wearing a charcoal-grey suit, a maroon tie with a new white shirt and why hes carrying a glossy solid-looking black briefcase with heavy brass locks and corner trim. He crosses the road, having no idea how his life is about to change in the next few hours massively, irrevocably no idea at all. Adam walked over to the high stone balustrade that curved the roadway into Chelsea Bridge and, leaning on it, looked down at the Thames. The tide was high and still coming in, he saw, the normal flow of water reversed, flotsam moving surprisingly quickly upstream, heading inland, as if the sea were dumping its rubbish in the river rather than the usual, other way round. Adam strolled up the bridges wide walkway heading for midstream, his gaze sweeping from the four chimneys of Battersea Power Station (one blurred with a cross-hatching of scaffolding) to the west, past the gold finial of the Peace Pagoda towards the two chimneys of Lots Road Power Station. The plane trees in Battersea Park, on the far bank, were still some way from full leaf only the horse chestnuts were precociously, densely green. Early May in London . . . He turned and looked back at the Chelsea shore: more trees hed forgotten how leafy some parts of London were, how positively bosky. The roofs of the grand, red brick, riverine Victorian mansion blocks rose above the level of the Embankments avenue of planes. How high? Sixty feet? Eighty? Apart from the susurrus of ceaseless traffic, the occasional klaxon and whooping siren, he didnt feel as if he were in the middle of a huge city at all: the trees, the quiet force of the surging, tidal river beneath his feet, that special luminescence that a body of water throws off, made him grow calmer hed been right to come to the river odd how these instincts mysteriously drive you, he thought. He walked back, his eye held by a clearly defined, attenuated triangle of waste ground to the west side of Chelsea Bridge, formed by the bridge itself, the waters edge and the four lanes of the Embankment. It was bulked out with vegetation, dense with long grass and thick unpruned bushes and trees. He thought, idly, that such a patch of land must be worth a tidy fortune in this location, even a thin long triangle of waste ground, and he built, in his minds eye, a three-storey wedge of a dozen bijou, balconied apartments. Then he saw that in order to achieve this hed have to cut down a huge fig tree, close to the bridge decades old, he reckoned, drawing nearer to it, its big shiny leaves still growing, stiffly fresh. A venerable fig tree by the Thames, he thought: strange how had it been planted there and what happened to the fruit? he conjured up a vision of a plate of Parma ham and halved fresh figs. Where had he eaten that? On his honeymoon in Portofino with Alexa? Or earlier? On one of his student holidays, perhaps . . . It was a mistake to think of Alexa, he realised, his new mood of calm replaced at once by one of sadness and anger, so he concentrated instead on the small surges of hunger he was experiencing, and felt, thinking of the figs and parma ham, a sudden need for Italian food: Italian food of a simple, honest, basic sort insalata tricolore, pasta alle vongole, scallopine al limone, torta di nonna. That would do nicely. He wandered into Chelsea and almost immediately in the quiet streets behind the Royal hospital found, to his considerable astonishment, an Italian restaurant as if he were in a fairy tale. There it was, tucked under yellow awnings badged with a Venetian lion, in a narrow street of white stucco and beige-brick terraced houses it seemed an anomaly, a fantasy. No shops, no pub, no other restaurant in sight how had it managed to establish itself here amongst the residents? Adam looked at his watch 6.20 a bit early to eat but he was genuinely hungry now and he could see there were already a few other customers inside. Then a smiling, tanned man came to the door and held it open for him, urging, Come in, sir, come in, yes, we are open, come in, come in. This man took his coat from him, hung it on a peg and ushered him past the small bar through to the light L-shaped room, shouting genial instructions and rebukes at the other waiters, as if Adam were his most cherished regular and was being inconvenienced by their inefficiency in some way. He sat Adam down at a table for two with his back to the street outside. He offered to look after Adams briefcase but Adam decided it would stay with him as he took the proffered menu and glanced around. Eight tourists four men, four women sat at a large round table, eating silently, all dressed in blue with identical blue tote bags at their feet, and there was another solitary man sitting two tables away along from him, who had taken his spectacles off and was dabbing his face with a tissue. He looked agitated, ill at ease in some way, and he glanced over as he replaced his spectacles. As their eyes met the man gave that inclination of the head, the small smile of acknowledgement the solidarity of the solitary diner that says I am not sad or lonely, this is something that I have happily chosen to do, just like you. He had a couple of folders and other papers spread on the table in

front of him. Adam smiled back. Adam ate the house salad spinach, bacon, shaved parmesan and a creamy dressing and was halfway through his scallopine al vitello (green beans, roast potatoes on the side) when the other solitary diner leant over and asked him if he knew the exact time. His accent was American, his English flawless. Adam told him 6.52 the man carefully adjusted his watch and they inevitably began to talk. The man introduced himself as Dr Philip Wang. Adam reciprocated and supplied the information that this was his first trip to London since he had been a child. Dr Wang confirmed that he too knew very little of the city. He lived and worked in Oxford paying only short, infrequent visits to London, a day or two at a time, when he had to see patients taking part in a research project he was running. Adam said he'd come to London from America, was applying for a job here, wanting to relocate, to come back home, as it were. A job? Dr Wang asked, looking at his smart suit. Are you in finance? His speculation seemed to carry with it a tone of disapproval. No, a university job a research fellowship at Imperial College, Adam added, wondering if he might now be vindicated. I just came from the interview. Good school, Wang said, distantly, then, Yeah . . . as if his mind was on something else, then, collecting himself, asked politely, how did it go? Adam shrugged and said he could never predict these things. The three people who had interviewed him two men and a woman with a near-shaven head had given nothing away, being almost absurdly polite and formal, so unlike his former American colleagues, Adam had thought at the time. Imperial College. So, you're a scientist, Wang said. So am I. What's your field? Climatology, Adam said. What about you? Wang thought for a second as if he wasn't sure of the answer. Immunology, I guess, yeah . . . Or you could say I was an allergist, He said, then glancing at his newly adjusted watch said he'd better go, had work to do, calls to make. He paid his bill, in cash, and clumsily gathered up his papers, spilling sheaves on the floor, stooping to pick them up, muttering to himself suddenly he seemed more than a little distracted again, as if, now the meal had come to an end, his real life had recommenced with its many pressures and anxieties. Finally he stood and shook Adams hand, wishing him luck, hoping he had got the job. I have a good feeling about it, Wang added, illogically, a real good feeling. Adam was halfway through his tiramisu when he noticed that Wang had left something behind: a transparent plastic zippable folder under the seat between their tables, half obscured by the hanging flap of the tablecloth. He reached for it and saw that on the front was a small pocket that contained Wang's business card. Adam extracted it and read: DR PHILIP Y. WANG MD, PhD (Yale), FBSI, MAAI, and under that head of Research Development CALENTURE-DEUTZ plc. On the reverse there were two addresses with phone numbers, one in the Cherwell Business park, Oxford (unit 10) and the other in London Anne Boleyn house, Sloane Avenue, SW3. As he paid his bill, pleased to remember his new pin code, tapping it w... Revue de presse NATIONAL BESTSELLER A New York Times Book Editors Choice A Daily Beast Best Book It is the expansiveness of vision that raises Ordinary Thunderstorms above the run of the mill. Boyd has created a novel dripping with ideas and impressive in its scope. one cannot help but be swept along by the thundering narrative tide. The Observer A top-drawer thriller with gripping social concerns. Edmonton Journal Ordinary Thunderstorms . . . is written with Boyds characteristic energetic elegance and imminent-danger focused writing as well as his experienced screenwriting skills. . . . I love reading Boyd. The Globe and Mail Whip-crack smart, with a pace to match, Boyd ramps up the paranoia in this novel of identity and reinvention Marie Claire (UK) Eminently readable. The Guardian An elegant, gripping thriller. The Daily Beast