

An impressive novel, painfully beautiful

Margriet de Moor

Drowned



MARGRIET DE MOOR has proved in her novels and short stories that she can say all she wants with very little. Her sensitive, perceptive, delicate writing and her careful construction carry the reader away slowly but surely and this is more true than ever in her new novel *Drowned*.

In Margriet de Moor's universe, living is tantamount to feeling your way, managing, and being preoccupied by things that leave no trace. Shocking events only serve to underline how inevitably an action or lack of action shapes people's lives, and can, invisibly to others, also unravel them. In face of death, the drowning woman has no thoughts deeper than her regret at no longer being able to try out a recipe for ginger pancakes.

In *Drowned*, the shock that changes many human lives forever is meteorological: a disastrous flood that the writer bases with documentary precision on the floods that hit the province of Zeeland in 1953. But before the meteorological shock there is a matter of petty human action with great consequences, a dirty trick of fate that causes Lidy to be on the scene of the disaster, instead of her sister Amanda.

Coolly and accurately, De Moor lets fate take its turn, lets the land be flooded, cattle drown, and drowning people in an attic witness a birth. People still converse, but without being able to hear one another over the roar of the wind. De Moor saves the ultimate conversation, the one between the two sisters at the gate to the hereafter, for the end. One sister always wanted to lead her sibling's life, the other heads agonizingly slowly toward the bottom, surrounded by staring fish. The reader remains behind, trembling.



photo Vincent Mentzel

Margriet de Moor (b. 1941) debuted in 1988 with her collection of stories *Op de rug gezien* ("Seen From Behind") which immediately attracted attention as the work of a mature talent. Short-story collections and novels followed with regularity, among them *Eerst grijs dan wit dan blauw* (*First grey, then white, then blue*, 1991) which became a bestseller, much praised and translated. This spring the translation of De Moor's *Kreutzer sonate* (*The Kreutzer Sonata*) was reviewed favourably in the *New York Times* by Kathryn Harrison who succinctly wrote: 'De Moor works on the periphery of realism, satisfying both narrative and aesthetic agendas.'

A technically perfect novel, informative and compelling, exciting and contemplative. DE STANDAARD

Margriet de Moor knows how to portray magnificently the brute force of nature as well as human resistance to death.

TROUW

Every story is in good hands with De Moor.

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SELECTED TRANSLATED TITLES

First gray, then white, then blue (Eerst grijs dan wit dan blauw). London: Picador 1994. / Woodstock; New York: The Overlook Press 2001. Also in French (Robert Laffont, 1993), in German (Hanser, 1993 / DTV, 1996, 1999) and in many other languages.
The Kreutzer sonata (Kreutzer sonate). New York: Arcade 2005 / Duckworth (in prep.) Also in German (Hanser, 2002 / DTV, 2004), in French (Seuil, in prep.) and in many other languages.
Duke of Egypt (Hertog van Egypte). London: Picador 2001, 2002 / New York: Arcade 2002. Also in French (Édition du Seuil 1999), in German (Hanser, 1997) and in many other languages.

An interview with Margriet de Moor

Margriet de Moor's travel notes

by Arjan Peters

(De Volkskrant, 30-06-2005)

translated by George Hall

On their travels, almost all artists use notebooks to record thoughts and impressions, make sketches, to ensure that that one brilliant idea doesn't get lost. In the Notities (Notes) summer series, *De Volkskrant* took a peek into these notebooks, which occasionally betray the germ of an oeuvre. The first instalment covers the author Margriet de Moor (1941).

The articles are lying ready for inspection on the table in the studio in Bussum. Margriet de Moor had gathered them together the day before: agendas and loose notes, material that is not directly connected to her work as an author, but can nonetheless be counted among the necessary tools. What does an author write when he or she is not writing?

The agendas contain the travel appointments, and she makes notes during her travels, which she usually undertakes if a translation of one of her books is being published somewhere or other. Her novels, novellas, and short stories – the most famous of these being *Eerst grijs dan wit dan blauw* (First Grey, Then White, Then Blue, 1990), *De virtuoos* (The Virtuoso, 1993), and *Kreutzer-sonate* (The Kreutzer Sonata, 2001) – have been published in twenty languages. Her latest and already very successful novel *De verdrinkene* (Drowned) is currently only available in Dutch, but will be published in German in January 2006. Her fame and following are larger in Germany than in the Netherlands, and this will mean a promotion tour.

She picks up *De virtuoos*, her historical novel about a castrato. 'I filled this up with all kinds of bric-a-brac. The strange thing is that when I begin a new book and am thinking about it the whole day long, the previous novel is published somewhere abroad. On my way there, I prepare by making notes about that previous book, and to practice, I do that in the language of the country to which I am going. Then you have a grip of the sounds. Here, for example, I have a review

of *De Virtuoso* from the New York Times, in which I have underlined all kinds of sentences. Quite bizarre actually: for the sake of convenience, to find out what my own book was about I took the review as the starting point. Here: notes from the Pelham Hotel in London, again about that novel.’ Another sheet of paper, printed with the logo of the Hotel Konigshof in Cologne, glides out of *De virtuoso*. ‘And an essay that my German publisher translated for me: I can assure you, I study these kinds of things while I am on my way. *Auf deutsch*. It is chaos, OK, but ordered chaos. The scribbles are legible.’

‘Authors display two kinds of behaviour while travelling. Some of them need the journey in order to set their work in motion; and others, including myself, are completely different. They are never busy on a book, that book is at home in the studio. When I am travelling, I try not to become distracted. I never go deeply into experiences, in order to keep close to that emergent book. The consequence is that I am rather scatterbrained when travelling, disoriented. For that reason, it is almost essential to drum it into myself: I am going to that hotel in that place, and I am concerned with that book.’

‘Look, what have I got here? “Après avoir termine *Le virtuose* j’avais l’ambition d’écrire un livre sérieux... sévère.” That was when I was off to France, and I was practising in the plane. An idea for a speech in French: “le thème de ce livre est la virtuosité. On dira qu’il s’agit d’une histoire d’un amour simple...” and then: “le thème de l’excellence... de musique... de la lucidité...” and certainly also of “la speculation”: let’s imagine that the leading light in the eighteenth century had not been France but Italy. Just imagine! That is what *De Virtuoso* is about: that the Baroque had won instead of the Enlightenment.’

‘And what’s this? “Niederlaender haben wenig Interesse für die eigene vaterländische Geschichte.” (laughs). Apparently I was going to outline that point of view.’ A letter is found between the pages of *Eerst grijs dan wit dan blauw*: “You will be third in the first panel of the ‘revue parlée’, after Adriaan van Dis and before Hella Haasse.” ‘And you see my scribbling around this?: “true facts differ from literary facts”.’

‘I make diary-like notes in my agendas.’ She picks up her agenda for 2002, reads a written sheet inserted there, and mumbles: ‘This is gross, I hardly dare recount it. I was at a literary festival in Solothurn, Switzerland at the time. I had read out the first chapter of *Kreutzersonate*, in German: “Good atmosphere, thirty minutes, journalists, photographers, beer. Disgusting food later, went to a reading by a colleague, what else can you do?” Fortunately I don’t mention who it was. “Feel wretched. What am I doing here?” That sentence recurs in all my notes. “Not the least interest in my colleagues and the whole shooting match.” This is no reflection on them, it means that I’m thinking about other things. “No more of this kind of thing. Settle down at an empty table in restaurant Kreuz, alone. A man comes asking, I point to the place opposite. Get talking. He is Belgian, been living in Solothurn a long time, studied philosophy in Zurich, is writing a book, I suppose he’s mad. Get talking about Nietzsche, Pythagoras, Heidegger, Croatia, Bosnia, whatever.” His view was that we are now entering the era of the philosophers. “What interests me,” I write here, “Heidegger and Sein und Zeit”.’ I just happened to be reading the Heidegger biography by Ruediger Safranski at that time, in connection with *De verdrunkene*. The Belgian started on about life as an anticipation of death. Yes, and that was also my theme, in connection with water and drowning, the great flood of 1953 that is dealt with in *De verdrunkene*! It was almost macabre. It was as if my foreign travels were pushing me toward my theme. Meeting a ghost-like figure that immersed in the topic I was feverishly thinking about.’

‘That disorientation, the feeling that I wonder what I am doing, is reinforced by the absurd situations that you occasionally get into. Like that time in Oslo, about six years ago, when I performed with Hugo Claus in a bookshop for a public consisting of one person. There were eleven chairs that were occupied... by the publisher, the Dutch ambassador, a professor of Dutch who held an introduction in Swedish for half an hour, several officials, the bookshop owner and his wife. Plus the one visitor, who probably came in because it was pouring rain outside. Two years ago I spent a week in Wiesbaden, where I was the hostess

for a manifestation with writers, musicians, and visual artists whom I could invite personally. Because I was there for a reasonably long period, I could concentrate on the 19th-century atmosphere that still abounds there. Dostoevsky and Multatuli went to the local casino. I went there too, and I lost money, you don't really have to try hard to do so. Crystal chandeliers, servants in tails. The casino only opens at 12. I was one of the first guests. And then you see all the regulars, men sitting at small table, making serious calculations. Thinking up gambling systems.'

'When I was there, I felt that it was something special. That casino is just like it was in Dostoevsky's time. And I don't only mean the entourage, but also the men and their calculations. No affected bohemians, everybody very grave. Gambling is a serious business.

'I made notes there and also wrote down two storylines. About two buildings in Wiesbaden, a Russian church and a mausoleum that an inconsolable prince had had built for his love who had died young. At such moments I know I will return some day to Wiesbaden for a novella set there.'

'The moment at which I start on that kind of theme depends on my mood. *De verdronkene* is a book with a serious theme. The title says it all: it is hopeless. It is largely written from the point of view of someone who didn't make it. That was the difficult part of writing it.'

'For the past week I've been busy with something new that has to be more light-hearted, mischievous. Lark around a bit.'

She picks up a box and mentions how surprised she was when she opened it yesterday after quite some time, and found an almost-forgotten idea for a story.

'In February 1994 I travelled to a literary festival in Adelaide, and I kept a detailed diary of the visit. My sister Maria accompanied me and we had made an appointment to meet Josephine, one of my other sisters there. She emigrated to New Zealand a long time ago. Let's see what's written here: "We are transported by imposing women in big cars, they wear red and not that hopeless black that seems to have been prescribed for European women, regardless of their being fat

or thin, for years... traffic inverted... no bicycles. Nicholas Shakespeare, the young Shakespeare, in the bus. Tells me about his grandfather, who was also a writer, died young... A phenomenon that you increasingly see at those festivals: the writer as cabaret artist... Breakfast with Maria outside the hotel. She won't walk quickly." I did all those obligatory numbers there, appearing in colossal white tents on lawns. After that, my sister and I went on a trip by camel. The third sister joined us in Sydney. Then the three of us went to the Blue Mountains, there you have a certain mountain called The Three Sisters. We had to go there! Yes, I'll certainly do something with those notes. After all, the symbolism is already present. It was purely a family outing, but when went to that mountain I had the feeling that it would also become work.'

Work again. 'But it's pleasant work! With these data I can manipulate everything.'

Margriet de Moor looks as if she is going to begin tomorrow.

Sample translation from

Drowned by Margriet de Moor
(Amsterdam: Contact, 2005)

Translated by David Colmer

pp. 140-151

IN THE VILLAGE

This is sleep with a vengeance.

Splashing through the puddles of an anonymous street in an anonymous village at four thirty in the morning, she was alone with the storm for the first time. There were low houses to her left and right, no lights on anywhere. Simon Cau had sent her and the café owner's two daughters off in different directions to wake up the villagers.

"We wake them up," she asked quickly, "and then?" They had climbed out of the car at the church just as the sky was dumping a load of enormous hailstones. Simon Cau wanted to sound the alarm immediately and the church doors were open, but after continuing by the light of a match they found the bell tower locked. Back outside in the moonlight that still managed to shine through, Lidy caught a glimpse of Simon Cau's face and saw that he had no faith in his own orders. He was simply unable to think of anything else.

"Wake them up!"

She did as she was told. It wasn't easy. No one here was keen to have their sleep interrupted. At a loss, she stood between the doors and windows that remained closed to her pounding. The world behind them was filled with perfect calm and security, she felt that. Curled up under blankets, men, women and children lay sleeping, their heart rates slowed. They inhaled each other's warm breath, trusted to the strength of their lack of imagination and left her to blunder on in the storm, which blasted down the narrow street, howling through it as if it were a chimney laid on its side.

She looked around. Nothing but a tremendous racket. Suddenly she realized: *not a living soul knows I'm here*. With a new kind of uneasiness, she crossed the road, chose the door of a shop and brought the palm of her hand down on the top

panel. *Surreal village!* she thought with the shock of someone who has been forgotten, ignored by God and all mankind. *If no one knows where you are or has any way of imagining it, do you actually exist?* Her eyes glided over the carefully painted, white italic letters on the frosted glass above the shop door: “Biscuit Bakery”.

Someone had woken up inside. In her sleep a sprightly old woman had heard a few sounds that her ears couldn’t associate with what they were used to from foul weather. She felt her way through the room in her slippers. The light didn’t work so she lit a candle. She was about to answer the drumming on the front door when she realized that a quiet rushing inside the house was more urgent. A moment later she was standing astonished in the toilet cubicle, looking at the water spouting up out of the toilet bowl like a fountain. She turned around, hurried through the shop and opened the door.

“I’ve never seen anything like it,” she said and Lidy followed her in.

It was the kind of privy that had been built up against the back wall from planks and sheet metal and impregnated forever with the foul odours of years of use. Now it was fitted out with a white porcelain bowl and a varnished metal cistern with a flush chain. The elderly woman, who had lived most of her life without electricity and had had this beautiful lavatory installed just four years ago, was still delighted with it every day; she and Lidy and looked away from the water that was spraying up and exchanged glances.

Their reaction was almost simultaneous.

“The lights have gone off as well.”

“The water’s coming over the top of the sea dike. I saw it.”

The elderly woman in the white nightgown turned around. Someone was walking down the hall with a lamp. Unable to see who it was, she assumed it was a neighbour and grumbled, “Everything’s stopped working,” in a loud, but long-suffering voice.

She was closer to the truth than she could have imagined. Elsewhere on the island the first telephone poles were just starting to topple. Complete isolation

had begun. A few switchboard operators were at their posts in a few of the sleep-plunged villages, alert postal employees who had gone in to work in the conviction that, on a night like this, putting through an alarm call to the provincial or even the national government was well in the line of duty. But none of them received an answer. What did happen several times, when the switchboard was an old-fashioned, hand-operated one with a generator providing its own electricity supply, was that the operator, intent on sending out his mayday as the flood streamed into the building, got hit by an enormous blast of electricity the moment the water level rose to the seat of his chair and reached the device full of worn but indestructible components on the stool beside him. This island was a lost island. It would be devastated with indescribable violence without the outside world reaching so much as a hand out to help it. The outside world would not even notice. Because chance would have it that the conjunction of the phase of the moon and the unrelenting wind came on a weekend.

There was one, miraculous, exception.

One post office employee kept trying until early in the morning. At the last moment, just before the mechanism failed and the lamps on the switchboard went off, he succeeded in dialling the number of a relatively high authority, who answered in person.

“Yes?”

The chief engineer of the Ministry of Waterways and Public Works was still half asleep. The operator had to explain a second time, rephrasing the words. “I’m calling you in desperation, because something needs to be done about it.”

“Yes, but what can I...,” the chief engineer began, before saying, “Fine. I’ll do what needs to be done.”

The chief engineer hung up, looked at the clock, yawned, shook his head – the pale-green hands showed ten past four – and crept back into bed. But he remembered his promise. At seven o’clock, when he finally dared to pick up the telephone to disturb the Royal Commissioner’s Sunday morning slumber, the

splintered beams were already pounding against the house fronts and bodies were floating through the operator's village.

Death is the forgivable fear of every human being and in a region like this people have a natural tendency to fear drowning in particular. More than eighteen hours had now passed since Lidy left home and she was on the street discussing the water level with a group of villagers. The storm was building up to force 12, hurricane force. People were wearing coats over their nightwear and sticking close to the sheltering houses, two or three were holding torches. Surrounded by darkness. From the look of their faces none of them were terribly worried, the main question on their minds was what the others made of all this fuss and bother.

Evil weather. And water coming over the dike was a bad sign. Everyone knew that the level at the Laurens Lock hadn't fallen an inch at ebb. And since the ebb hadn't been an ebb, they had assumed that the flood wouldn't be a flood either – that was a line of reasoning that had stood them by their whole life. A young man who had been to the harbour to check on things related that a quarter of an hour ago he had seen the farmer at the start of the village hurriedly hitching his horses to his cart – with his best cows behind it – so that he could move his goods and chattels, his wife, children and furniture closer to the middle of the island.

The people's eyes glided to the left of the silhouette of the church steeple, peering into the darkness, inland, to the area they thought of as away from the sea.

People who live in a dangerous place cannot help but become deaf and blind to the expressions of that danger. Everyone on the street, without exception, even Lidy, knew that this village, although undoubtedly a village, was, above all, a pinprick on a landscape subject to moon, sea and wind. People here knew that water was the least accommodating of all elements. The inhabitants of this place had known for generations that the sea responds to protracted wind by rising on one side to balance the pressure.

Oceanographers may have calculated that the height of this slope was inversely proportional to the depth of the sea, the people here had known this and understood it for centuries. Everyone here on the street had been raised on stories of monstrous watery tentacles reaching up out of the arms of the North Sea, the bottom of which rose up to this coast like an enormous slide.

Lidy turned her head. The old woman had nudged her.

“I think maybe I’d better move some stuff upstairs.”

“Absolutely,” Lidy replied, thinking, *I’ll help the old dear.*

They weren’t the only ones to exchange nods of understanding. The group on the street dispersed. They had already closed the shutters and skylights in the afternoon. Nothing had been left unsecured in any of the yards. Now they lifted children out of bed, blankets and all, to lay them down again in attics, also carrying up buckets of water, paraffin stoves, food, matches and, perhaps, just to be on the safe side, the most valuable item in the house, the heavy cast-iron treadle sewing machine.

Staying, if you don’t mind, and not giving it another thought. Another way of stating their refusal to bow to nature’s impossible character. It was true that most of the houses in this street were worker’s cottages whose walls were cemented with a poor mixture of sand and plaster. They were still their homes, the places they wanted to feel safe in. For now, between sleep and sleep, they wanted to maintain the order of their daily lives.

Lidy walked back into the shop. The elderly woman led her purposefully through the darkness. Behind an inside door the candle was still burning.

A few seconds later, “You take this one.”

She had two large biscuit tins in her arms.

“Here.”

A moneybox.

Filled with the dreamlike familiarity she had felt a few hours before at the family dinner, Lidy climbed a ladder to an attic where she couldn’t stand upright.

In the illuminated circle of a night-light she saw her feet stepping around in muddy shoes. The idea that each person must have two or three people inside them passed through her mind as she leant into the well hole to accept a pillow, the sections of a kapok mattress, a pot, one blanket, and another.

“Got it?”

“Yes.”

She arranged the things on the floor, sliding junk out of the way with her foot. Even in this creaking shack, the black night outside and the sea she had seen at the top of the dike seemed less overwhelming. When the other woman, who was now wearing a hairy brown coat, had hoisted herself up the ladder as well, Lidy studied her shrivelled face by the light of the candle on the floor – Is that enough? Is everything all right now? – and imagined herself and the old woman making coffee in the kitchen behind the shop after having lugged it all back down again in a few hours’ time after it had got light.

“Shhhh!”

The old woman turned her head toward the racket a hand’s breadth above them. Then Lidy heard it too – with difficulty, in bursts – but above the wind there was no mistaking the tolling of a bell.

So he managed it after all, she thought.

Immediately afterwards she felt, more than saw, the other woman’s eyes upon her, big and black with comprehension and fear.

“Fire!”

Simon Cau hadn’t got hold of the key to the bell tower. Being able to go straight to the home of the sexton, a good carpenter and chief of the local fire brigade, hadn’t helped. Neither the doorbell, nor rapping a window with a stick had woken the man, who nowadays only listened out for the telephone while asleep. Eventually a smith emerged from an adjoining house. After that, it wasn’t long before the hinges of the tower door had succumbed to the blows of his sledgehammer and Cau and the smith were climbing the stairs by the light of a

paraffin lamp. At first they were hardly able to raise any noise from the bell at all. The failed electric mechanism seemed to counteract their efforts with the rope. Then Cau ran downstairs to get the hammer.

Lidy and one of the café owner's daughters tried to attract the men's attention soon after, but that proved difficult. The pair had arrived together at the door of the church: Lidy dispatched by the elderly woman to see what was happening and the café owner's daughter to tell them some reassuring news.

"The water's already going down again," she had told Lidy.

Delivering the good news to the men at the top of the tower was no simple matter. Lidy and the café owner's daughter stood at the top of the stairs with their fingers in their ears watching the two of them going at it like demons in the flickering yellowish light. By hanging on the rope with all his weight the smith had succeeded in getting the bell to swing at the right rhythm while Simon Cau, who clearly found the deep booming insufficient, pounded the edge with the sledgehammer, adding an extra, howling tone. Finally, they noticed the two young women.

"It can't have!" was Cau's first retort after the bell stopped ringing. "Ruddy impossible!" Without straightening his back, he stood there panting with the sledgehammer in his hands.

But the girl was convinced. She told him the names of two ship's captains she had bumped into in the village on their way back from the harbour.

"They told me that it went very quick. In a few minutes they saw the water drop six foot or more."

Without a word Cau handed the hammer to the smith. He wrapped his scarf around his neck and, looking annoyed, picked up the lamp, which was smoking in the downdraft from the belfry window.

Coming out of the church, they found more people gathered on the street. The café owner's other daughter was there as well. People had heard that the water level wasn't so bad and were discussing what had happened. The alarm and the unusual hour had put them in a strange mood. Relieved, of course. And it was

only natural that, from the reality that was gathering around them without their realising it, they only took the elements they were familiar with – the night, the wind, the damp salty air – and drew their own conclusions.

That's it, back to bed!

Soon the car was jolting down the road with the overflowing potholes, back out of the village, where calm had returned and only a few dogs were left barking.

Did he, Cau, think they were playing a joke on him?

What *did* he think?

It wasn't necessary for him to go past the harbour again and the three young women saw it as an annoying delay. They still got out of the car, all four of them, walked to the floodgate in the dike and talked for a moment. The issue at stake was, in short, that Cau refused to believe his own eyes and the other three wanted to get home to bed.

“They held up nicely after all, these planks!”

“For now...”

“God, I'm so tired!”

“This... this is impossible!”

“Maybe, but the water's still dropped six foot!”

“It can't drop!”

“Shall we get going?”

“It can't drop, it's not high tide for another hour!”

“Shall we just get going?”

Cau couldn't get the car started straight away, so Lidy tried it her way. After messing around for a while, she managed, whereupon she followed the curve without hesitating, as if she now knew the darkness here like the back of her hand. Five minutes later they were approaching the T-junction of dikes, and the café and shed loomed up. Vague figures, a vague light in the misty windows. The café owner's daughters jumped out of the car. Lidy watched them stumble up the steps to their parental home, beeped a goodbye, and finally began the remainder

of the detour to Izak Hocke's farmyard, where presumably they were still expecting her.

Cau didn't say another word. Lidy was wide-awake and, strangely perhaps, still felt nothing resembling fear. Her instincts were in no way attuned to the events that were racing towards her. Where was the perception, no matter how minimal, of the moments preceding the reality, moments that were, themselves, part of that reality?

While the dikes in the southwestern polders were subsiding and the one sea was already joining up with the other, Lidy struggled to keep the car on the narrow road in the gusts of wind. In one very dark place she slowed down and bent toward her companion. Should she take the muddy track on the left or the muddy track on the right? Cau growled. Which she scarcely noticed in her joy at finally approaching the destination of her winter's journey. Close by, a half a mile to the northeast, on the bay of Lake Grevelingen, the body of water had already breached the sea dike in three places, flooding into the polders behind it so quickly that the level in the harbours dropped rapidly and significantly, sometimes six foot. But Lidy changed down a gear, thinking, *Ah, there are the two farms, diagonally opposite each other. I can see a light burning upstairs at both.*

Anyway. She parks the car in the yard in front of Hocke's farmhouse. She and Cau get out. They walk to the front door to see whether it has been left open for them. It has got even colder. Lidy looks up for a moment at the fairly high stepped gable. The shutters of the adjoining barn have been closed and secured with cross-laths. She feels the endless expanse of fields to her left and right. There is a little moonlight, but on the horizon, to the south, it is as though the night-time fields are slightly lit by a glow coming from the soil itself. Okay, the front door is open. Just as she is about to say goodnight to Cau before he crosses the road to his own house, Lidy notices that he has frozen and is listening to something. She catches a glimpse of his face, realises that he is frightened and then hears it herself. The sound is abstract at first. A kind of rustling, growing.

For a moment she thinks of a plague of locusts, then a thousand-man army stamping towards her at great speed from the other side of the island. It doesn't give her time to be frightened. The entire view disappears. A monstrous steamroller of pitch-black water rises up out of nothing and sweeps forward.