

A
HARRY HOLE
THRILLER

THE
DEVIL'S STAR
JONESBO

OVER 28 MILLION BOOKS SOLD WORLDWIDE

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Read on for an extract from *The Redeemer*
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About the Book

A young woman is murdered. One finger has been severed from her left hand, and behind her eyelid is secreted a tiny red diamond in the shape of a five-pointed star - a pentagram, the devil's star.

Detective Harry Hole is assigned to the case with his long-time adversary Tom Waaler and initially wants no part in it. But Harry is already on notice to quit the force and is left with little alternative but to drag himself out of his alcoholic stupor and get to work. With a wave of similar murders, it soon becomes apparent that Oslo has a serial killer on its hands...

About the Author

Jo Nesbo is a musician, songwriter, economist and author. His first crime novel featuring Harry Hole was published in Norway in 1997 and was an instant hit, winning the Glass Key Award for best Nordic crime novel (an accolade shared with Peter Høeg, Henning Mankell and Karin Fossum). *The Devil's Star* is the first of Nesbo's novels to be translated into English. Check out www.jonesbo.co.uk for more information.

Don Bartlett lives in Norfolk and works as a freelance translator of Scandinavian literature. He has translated, or co-translated Norwegian novels by Lars Saaybe Christensen, Roy Jacobsen, Ingvar Ambjørnsen, Khell Ola Dahl and Pernille Rygg.

ALSO BY JO NESBO

The Redbreast

A report of a rare and unusual gun being fired sparks Detective Harry Hole's interest. Then a former soldier is found with his throat cut. Next, Harry's former partner is murdered. Why had she been trying to reach Harry on the night she was killed?

Nemesis

A man is caught on CCTV, shooting dead a cashier at a bank. Harry begins his investigation but after a dinner with an old flame, wakes up with no memory of the last 12 hours. Then the girl is found dead and he begins to receive threatening emails: is someone trying to frame him for her death?

The Redeemer

On a freezing December night, one of the singers at a Christmas concert is shot dead. Harry and his team are called in to investigate but have little to work with – there is no immediate suspect, no weapon and no motive. But when the assassin discovers he's shot the wrong man, Harry finds his troubles have only just begun.

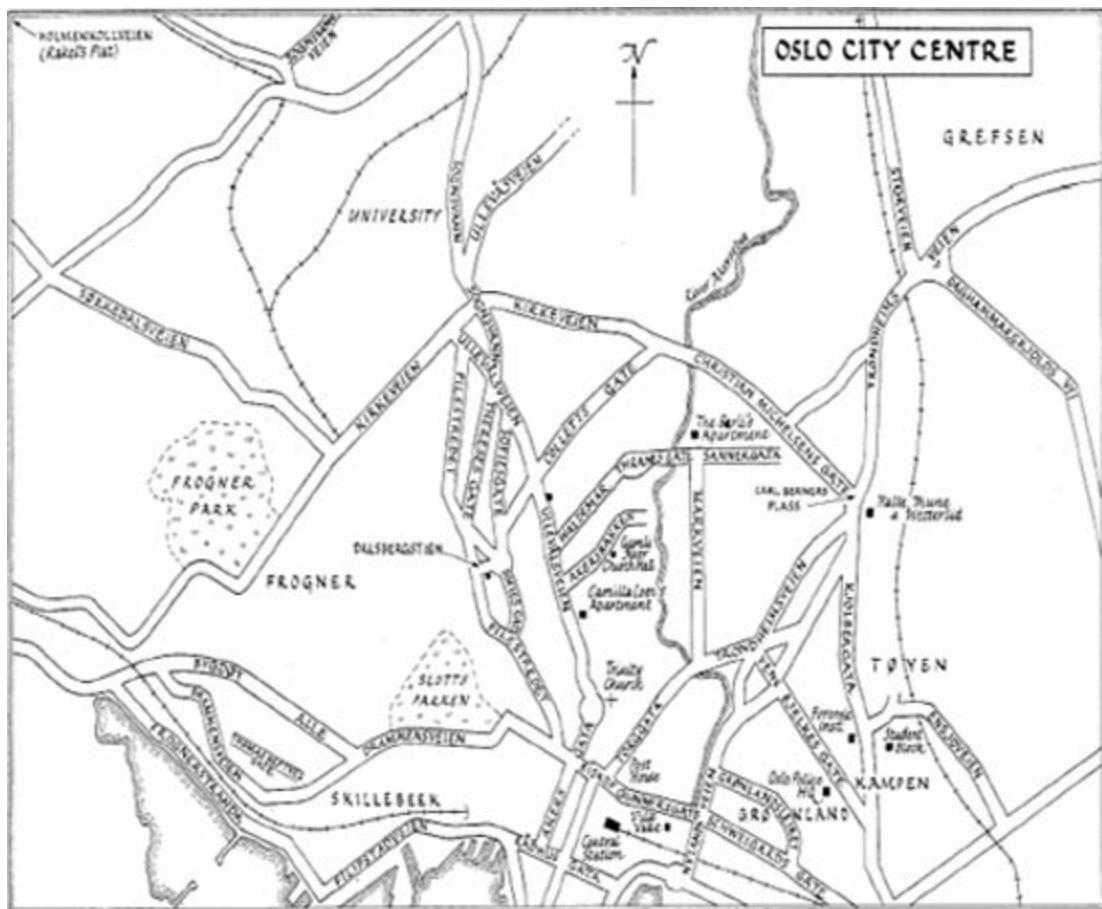
The Snowman

On the night the first snow falls, a young mother vanishes from her home. Is there a link between her disappearance and a menacing letter Harry was sent

some months before? When a second woman disappears it seems that Harry's worst suspicions are confirmed: for the first time in his career, Harry is confronted with a serial killer who will drive him to the brink of madness.

The Leopard

Two women are found dead, both drowned in their own blood. Harry initially wants nothing to do with the case but his instincts take over when a prominent MP is brutally murdered. The victims appear completely unconnected to one another, but it's not long before he makes a discovery: the women all spent the night in an isolated mountain hostel. And someone is picking off the guests one by one ...



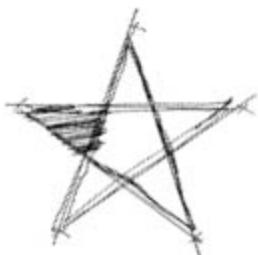
JO NESBO

The Devil's Star

TRANSLATED FROM THE NORWEGIAN BY
Don Bartlett

VINTAGE BOOKS
London

Part One



1

Friday. Egg.

THE HOUSE WAS built in 1898 on a clay base that had since sunk a tiny bit on the west-facing side, causing water to cross the wooden threshold where the door was hung. It ran across the bedroom floor and left a wet streak over the oak parquet, moving west. The flow rested for a second in a dip before more water nudged it from behind and it scurried like a nervous rat towards the skirting board. There the water went in both directions; it searched and somehow sneaked under the skirting until it found a gap between the end of the wooden flooring and the wall. In the gap lay a five-kroner coin bearing a profile of King Olav's head and the date: 1987, the year before it had fallen out of the carpenter's pocket. But these were the boom years; a great many attic flats had needed to be built at the drop of a hat and the carpenter had not bothered to look for it.

It did not take the water much time to find a way through the floor under the parquet. Apart from when there was a leak in 1968 - the same year a new roof was built on the house - the wooden floorboards had lain there undisturbed, drying and contracting so that the crack between the two innermost pine floorboards was now almost half a centimetre. The water dripped onto the beam beneath the crack and continued westwards and into the exterior wall. There it seeped into the plaster and the mortar that had been mixed one hundred years before, also

in midsummer, by Jacob Andersen, a master bricklayer and father of five. Andersen, like all bricklayers in Oslo at that time, mixed his own mortar and wall plaster. Not only did he have his own unique blend of lime, sand and water, he also had his own special ingredients: horsehair and pig's blood. Jacob Andersen was of the opinion that the hair and the blood held the plaster together and gave it extra strength. It was not his idea, he told his head-shaking colleagues at the time, his Scottish father and grandfather had used the same ingredients from sheep. Even though he had renounced his Scottish surname and taken on a trade name he saw no reason to turn his back on six hundred years of heritage. Some of the bricklayers considered it immoral, some thought he was in league with the Devil, but most just laughed at him. Perhaps it was one of the latter who spread the story that was to take hold in the burgeoning town of Kristania.

A coachman from Grünerløkka had married his cousin from Värmland and together they moved into a one-room flat plus kitchen in one of the apartment blocks in Seilduksgata that Andersen had helped to build. The couple's first child was unlucky enough to be born with dark, curly hair and brown eyes, and since the couple were blond with blue eyes - and the man was jealous by nature as well - late one night he tied his wife's hands behind her, took her down to the cellar and bricked her in. Her screams were effectively muffled by the thick walls where she stood bound and squeezed between the two brick surfaces. The husband had perhaps thought that she would suffocate from lack of oxygen, but bricklayers do allow for ventilation. In the end, the poor woman attacked the wall with her bare teeth. And that might well have worked because as the Scottish bricklayer used blood and hair, thinking that he could save on the expensive lime in the cement mix, the result was a porous wall that crumbled under the attack from strong Värmland teeth. However, her

hunger for life sadly led to her taking excessively large mouthfuls of mortar and brick. Ultimately she was unable to chew, swallow or spit and the sand, pebbles and chunks of clay blocked her windpipe. Her face turned blue, her heartbeat slowed and then she stopped breathing.

She was what most people would call dead.

According to the myth, however, the taste of pig's blood had the effect of making the unfortunate woman believe she was still alive. And with that she immediately broke free of the ropes that bound her, passed through the wall and began to walk again. A few old people from Grünerløkka still remember the story from their childhood, about the woman with the pig's head, walking around with a knife to cut off the heads of small children who were out late. She had to have the taste of blood in her mouth so that she didn't vanish into thin air. At the time very few people knew the name of the bricklayer and Andersen worked tirelessly at making his special blend of mortar. Three years later, while working on the building where the water was now leaking he fell from the scaffolding - leaving only two hundred kroner and a guitar - and so it was to be another hundred years before bricklayers began to use artificial hair-like fibres in their cement mixes and before technicians at a laboratory in Milan discovered that the walls of Jericho had been strengthened with blood and camel hair.

Most of the water, however, did not run into the wall, but down it, because water, like cowardice and lust, always finds the lowest level. At first the water was absorbed by the lumpy, granular insulation between the joists, but more followed and soon the insulation was saturated. The water went right through it and soaked up a newspaper dated July 11, 1898, in which it said the building industry's boom time had probably reached its peak and the unscrupulous property speculators were sure to have harder times ahead. On page three it said that the police still had no leads

regarding the murder of a young nurse who had been found dead from stab wounds in a bathroom the previous week. In May, a girl mutilated and killed in a similar way was found near the River Akerselva, but the police would not say whether the two cases could be connected.

The water ran off the newspaper, between the wooden boards underneath and along the inside of the painted ceiling fabric of the room below. Since this had been damaged during the repair of the leak in 1968, the water seeped through the holes, forming drops that hung on until they became heavy enough for gravity to defy the surface tension; they let go and fell three metres and eight centimetres. There the water landed and terminated its trajectory. Into water.

Vibeke Knutsen sucked hard on her cigarette and blew smoke out of the open window on the fourth floor of the apartment building. It was a warm afternoon and the air rose from the sun-baked asphalt in the back yard, taking the smoke up the light blue house front until it dispersed. On the other side of the roof you could hear the sound of a car in the usually busy Ullevålsveien. But now everyone was on holiday and the town was almost deserted. A fly lay on its back on the windowsill with its six feet in the air. It hadn't had the sense to get out of the heat. It was cooler at the other end of the flat facing Ullevålsveien, but Vibeke didn't like the view from there. Our Saviour's Cemetery. Crowded with famous people. Famous dead people. On the ground floor there was a shop selling 'monuments', as the sign said, in other words, headstones. What one might call 'staying close to the market'.

Vibeke rested her forehead against the cool glass of the window.

She had been happy when the warm weather came, but her happiness had soon worn off. Even now she was longing for cooler nights and people in the streets. Today

there had been five customers in the gallery before lunch and three after. She had smoked one and a half packets of cigarettes out of sheer boredom. Her heart was pounding and she had a sore throat; in fact, she could hardly speak when the boss rang and asked how things were going. All the same, no sooner had she arrived home and put the potatoes on than she felt the craving in the pit of her stomach again.

Vibeke had stopped smoking when she met Anders two years before. He hadn't asked her to. Quite the contrary. When they met on Gran Canaria he had even bummed a cigarette off her. Just for a laugh. When they moved in together, just one month after getting back to Oslo, one of the first things he had said was that their relationship would probably be able to stand a little passive smoking, and that cancer researchers were undoubtedly exaggerating. With a little time he would probably get used to the smell of cigarettes on their clothes. The next morning she made up her mind. When, some days later, he mentioned over lunch that it was a long time since he had seen her with a cigarette in her hand, she answered that she had never really been much of a smoker. Anders smiled, leaned over the table and stroked her cheek.

'Do you know what, Vibeke? That's what I always thought.'

She could hear the pan bubbling behind her and looked at the cigarette. Three more drags. She took the first. It didn't taste of anything.

She could barely remember when it was that she had started smoking again. Perhaps it was last year, around the time he had started staying away for long periods on business trips. Or was it over New Year when she had begun working overtime almost every evening? Was that because she was unhappy? Was she unhappy? They never rowed. They almost never made love either, but that was because Anders worked so hard, he had said, putting an

end to any discussion. Not that she missed it particularly. When, once in a blue moon, they did make a half-hearted attempt at love-making it was as if he wasn't really there. So she realised she didn't really need to be there, either.

But they didn't actually row. Anders didn't like raised voices.

Vibeke looked at the clock: 5.15. What had happened to him? Generally he told her if he was going to be late. She stubbed out the cigarette, dropped it into the back yard and turned towards the stove to check the potatoes. She put a fork into the biggest one. Almost done. Some small black lumps bobbed up and down on the surface of the boiling water. Funny. Were they from the potatoes or the pan?

She was just trying to remember what she had last used the pan for when she heard the front door being opened. From the corridor she could hear someone gasping for breath and shoes being kicked off. Anders came into the kitchen and opened the fridge.

'Well?' he asked.

'Rissoles.'

'OK ...?' His intonation rose at the end and formed a question mark. She knew roughly what it meant. Meat again? Shouldn't we eat fish a little more often?

'Fine,' he said with flat intonation, leaning over the pan.

'What have you been doing? You're absolutely soaked with sweat.'

'I didn't do any training this evening, so I cycled up to Sognsvann and back again. What are the lumps in the water?'

'I don't know,' Vibeke said. 'I just noticed them.'

'You don't know? Didn't you work as a sort of cook once upon a time?'

In one deft movement he took one of the lumps between his index finger and his thumb and put it in his mouth. She stared at the back of his head. At his thin brown hair that

she had once thought was so attractive. Well groomed and just the right length. With a side parting. He had looked so smart. Like a man with a future. Enough future for two.

‘What does it taste of?’ she asked.

‘Nothing,’ he said, still bent over the cooker. ‘Egg.’

‘Egg? But I washed the pan ...’

She suddenly paused.

He turned round. ‘What’s the matter?’

‘There’s ... a drip.’ She pointed to his head.

He frowned and touched the back of his head. Then, in one movement, they both leaned backwards and stared up at the ceiling. There were two droplets hanging from the white ceiling fabric. Vibeke, who was a little short-sighted, wouldn’t have seen the drops if they had glistened. But they did not.

‘Looks like Camilla’s got a flood,’ Anders said. ‘If you go up and ring her bell, I’ll get hold of the caretaker.’

Vibeke peered up at the ceiling. And down at the lumps in the pan.

‘My God,’ she whispered and could feel her heart pounding again.

‘What’s the matter now?’ Anders asked.

‘Go and get the caretaker. Then go with him and ring Camilla’s doorbell. I’ll call the police.’

2

Friday. Staff Leave.

OSLO POLICE HEADQUARTERS in Grønland was situated at the top of the ridge between Grønland and Tøyen, and looked over the eastern part of the city centre. It was constructed of glass and steel and had been completed in 1978. There were no sloping surfaces; it stood in perfect symmetry and the architects Telje, Torp & Aasen had received an award for it. The electrician who installed the cables in the two long office wings on the seventh and ninth floors received social benefits and a good bollocking from his father when he fell from the scaffolding and broke his back.

‘For seven generations we were bricklayers, balancing between heaven and earth, before gravity brought us down. My grandfather tried to flee from the curse, but it followed him right across the North Sea. So the day you were born I swore to myself that you would not have to suffer the same fate. And I thought I had succeeded. An electrician ... What the hell is an electrician doing six metres off the ground?’

The signal from the central control room ran through the copper in the exact same cables the son had laid, through the partition between the floors moulded with a factory-made cement mix, up to Crime Squad Chief Inspector Bjarne Møller’s office on the sixth floor. At this moment Møller was sitting and wondering whether he was looking forward to or dreading his impending family holiday in a mountain cabin in Os, outside Bergen. In all

probability, Os in July meant dire weather. Now, Bjarne Møller had nothing against exchanging the heatwave that had been forecast for Oslo with a little drizzle, but to keep two highly energetic young boys busy with no resources other than a pack of cards minus its jack of hearts would be a challenge.

Bjarne Møller stretched his long legs and scratched behind his ear as he listened to the message.

‘How did they discover it?’ he asked.

‘There was a leak down to the flat below,’ the voice from the control room answered. ‘The caretaker and the man from downstairs rang the bell but no-one answered. The door wasn’t locked, so they went in.’

‘OK. I’ll send two of our people up.’

Møller put down the receiver, sighed and ran his finger down the plasticated duty roster which was on his desk. Half the division was on leave. That was the way it was at this time every year. Not that it meant that the population of Oslo was in any particular danger since the villains in the town also seemed to appreciate a little holiday in July. It was definitely low season as far as the law-breaking that fell to the Crime Squad was concerned.

Møller’s finger stopped by the name of Beate Lønn. He dialled the number for *Krimteknisk*, the forensics department in Kjølberggata. No answer. He waited for his call to go through the central switchboard.

‘Beate Lønn is in the lab,’ a bright voice said.

‘It’s Møller, Crime Squad. Could you get hold of her?’

He waited. It was Karl Weber, the recently retired head of *Krimteknisk*, who had recruited Beate Lønn from the Crime Squad. Møller saw this as further proof of the neo-Darwinist theory that man’s sole drive was to perpetuate his own genes. Weber clearly thought that Beate Lønn shared quite a few genes with him. At first sight, Karl Weber and Beate Lønn would probably have seemed quite different. Weber was grumpy and irascible; Lønn was a

small, quiet grey mouse, who, after graduating from Police College, would blush every time you talked to her. But their police genes were identical. They were the passionate type who, when they smelled their prey, had the ability to exclude everything else and simply concentrate on a forensic lead, circumstantial evidence, a video recording, a vague description, until ultimately it began to make some kind of sense. Malicious tongues wagged that Weber and Lønn belonged in the laboratory and not in the community where an investigator's knowledge of human behaviour was still more important than a footprint or a loose thread from a jacket.

Weber and Lønn would agree with what they said about the laboratory, but not about the footprints or the loose threads.

‘Lønn speaking.’

‘Hello, Beate. Bjarne Møller here. Am I disturbing you?’

‘Of course. What’s up?’

Møller explained briefly and gave her the address.

‘I’ll send a couple of my lads up with you,’ he said.

‘Which ones?’

‘I’ll have to have a look to see who I can find. Summer break, you know.’

Møller put down the phone and ran his finger further down the list.

It stopped at Tom Waaler.

The box for holiday dates was blank. That did not surprise Bjarne Møller. Now and then he wondered whether Inspector Tom Waaler took off any time at all or if he even had time to sleep. As a detective he was one of the department’s two star players. Always there, always on the ball and nearly always successful. In contrast with the other top-notch detective, Tom Waaler was reliable, had, an unblemished record and was respected by everyone. In short, a dream subordinate. With the indisputable leadership skills that Tom had, it was on the cards that he

would take over Møller's job as Chief Inspector when the time came.

Møller's call crackled through the flimsy partitions.

'Waaler here,' a sonorous voice replied.

'Møller. We -'

'Just a moment, Bjarne. I'm on another call.'

Bjarne Møller drummed on the table while he was waiting. Tom Waaler could become the youngest ever Chief Inspector in the Crime Squad. Was it his age that made Bjarne Møller occasionally feel somewhat uneasy at the thought that he would be handing over his responsibilities to Tom? Or perhaps it was the two shooting incidents? The inspector had drawn his gun twice during arrests and, as one of the best marksmen in the police corps, he had hit the target both times with lethal results. Paradoxically enough, Møller also knew that one of the two episodes could ultimately push the appointment of the new Chief in Waaler's favour. SEFO, the independent police investigation authority, had not uncovered anything to suggest that Tom had not fired in self-defence. In fact, it had concluded that in both cases he had shown good judgment and quick reactions in a tight situation. What better credentials could a candidate for the Chief's job have?

'Sorry, Bjarne. Call on the mobile. How can I help you?'

'We've got a job.'

'At last.'

The conversation was over in ten seconds. Now he just needed one more person.

Møller had thought of Halvorsen, but according to the list he was taking his leave at home in Steinkjer. His finger continued down the column. Leave, leave, sick leave. The Chief Inspector sighed when his finger stopped against the name he had been hoping to avoid.

Harry Hole.

The lone wolf, the drunk, the department's enfant terrible and, apart from Tom Waaler, the best detective on

the sixth floor. But for that and the fact that Bjarne Møller had over the years developed a sort of perverse penchant for putting his head on the block for this policeman with the serious drinking problem, Harry Hole would have been out years ago. Ordinarily Harry was the first person he would have rung and given the assignment to, but things were not ordinary.

Or to put it another way: they were more extraordinary than usual.

It had all come to a head the month before, after Hole had spent the winter reworking an old case, the murder of his closest colleague, Ellen Gjelten, who was killed close to the River Akerselva. During that time he lost all interest in any other cases. The Ellen Gjelten case had been cleared up a long time ago, but Harry had become more and more obsessed and quite frankly Møller was beginning to worry about his mental state. The crunch came when Harry appeared in his office four weeks ago and presented his hair-raising conspiracy theories. Basically, without any proof he was making fanciful charges against Tom Waaler.

Then Harry simply disappeared. Some days later Møller rang Restaurant Schrøder and learned what he had feared: that Harry had gone on another drinking binge. To cover his absence, Møller put Harry down as on leave. Once again. Harry generally put in an appearance after a week, but now four weeks had passed. His leave was over.

Møller eyed the receiver, stood up and went to the window. It was 5.30 and yet the park in front of the police station was almost deserted. There was just the odd sun worshipper braving the heat. In Grønlandsleiret a couple of shop owners were sitting under an awning next to their vegetables. Even the cars – despite zilch rush-hour traffic – were moving more slowly. Møller brushed back his hair with his hands, a lifetime's habit which his wife said he should give a rest now as people might suspect him of trying to cover his bald patch. Was there really no-one else

except Harry? Møller watched a drunk staggering down Grønlandsleiret. He guessed he was heading for the Raven, but he wouldn't get a drink there. He'd probably end up at the Boxer. The place where the Ellen Gjelten case was emphatically brought to a close. Perhaps Harry Hole's career in the police force, too. Møller was being put under pressure; he would soon have to make up his mind what to do about the Harry problem. But that was long term; what was important now was this case.

Møller lifted the receiver and considered for a moment what he was about to do: put Harry Hole and Tom Waaler on the same case. These holiday periods were such a pain. The electrical impulse started on its journey from Telje, Torp & Aasen's monument to an ordered society and began to ring in a place where chaos reigned, a flat in Sofies gate.

3

Friday. The Awakening.

SHE SCREAMED AGAIN and Harry Hole opened his eyes.

The sun gleamed through the idly shifting curtains as the grating sound of the tram slowing down in Pilestredet faded away. Harry tried to find his bearings. He lay on the floor of his own sitting room. Dressed, though not well dressed. In the land of the living, though not really alive.

Sweat lay like a clammy film of make-up on his face, and his heart felt light, but stressed, like a ping-pong ball on a concrete floor. His head felt worse.

Harry hesitated for a moment before making up his mind to continue breathing. The ceiling and the walls were spinning around, and there was not a picture or a ceiling light in the flat his gaze could cling to. Whirling on the periphery of his vision was an IKEA bookcase, the back of a chair and a green coffee table from Elevator. At least he had escaped any more dreams.

It had been the same old nightmare. Rooted to the spot, unable to move, in vain he had tried closing his eyes to avoid seeing her mouth, distorted and opened in a silent scream. The large, blankly staring eyes with the mute accusation. When he was young, it had been his little sister, Sis. Now it was Ellen Gjelten. At first the screams had been silent, now they sounded like squealing steel brakes. He didn't know which was worse.

Harry lay there quite still, staring out between the curtains, up at the shimmering sun over the streets and back yards of Bislett. Only the tram broke the summer stillness. He didn't even blink. He stared at the sun until it became a leaping golden heart, beating against a thin, milky-blue membrane and pumping out heat. When he was young, his mother told him that if children looked straight into the sun it would burn away their eyesight and that they would have sunlight inside their heads all day long and for all their lives. Sunlight in their heads consuming everything else. Like the image of Ellen's smashed skull in the snow by the Akerselva with the shadow hanging over it. For three years he had tried to catch that shadow. But he hadn't managed it.

Rakel ...

Harry raised his head cautiously and gazed at the lifeless, black eye of the telephone answer machine. There had been no life in it for however many weeks had passed since his meeting with the head of *Kripos*, the Norwegian CID, at the Boxer. Presumably burned up by the sun as well.

Shit, it was hot in here!

Rakel ...

He remembered now. At one point in the dream the face had changed and it became Rakel's. Sis, Ellen, Mum, Rakel. Women's faces. As if in one constantly pumping, pulsating movement they could change and merge again.

Harry groaned and let his head sink back down on the floor. He caught a glimpse of the bottle balancing on the edge of the table above him. Jim Beam from Clermont, Kentucky. The contents were gone. Evaporated, vaporised. Rakel. He closed his eyes. There was nothing left.

He had no idea what the time was, he just knew that it was late. Or early. Whatever it was, it was the wrong moment to wake up. Or to be precise, to be asleep. You should do something else at this time of day. Such as drink.

Harry got up onto his knees.

There was something vibrating in his trousers. That, he now realised, was what had woken him. A moth trapped and desperately flapping its wings. He shoved his hand into his pocket and pulled out his mobile phone.

Harry walked slowly towards St Hanshaugen. His headache throbbed behind his eyeballs. The address Møller had given him was within walking distance. He had splashed a little water over his face, found a drop of whisky in the cupboard under the sink and set off hoping that a walk would clear his head. Harry passed Underwater: 4 p.m. till 3 a.m., 4 p.m. till 1 a.m. on Mondays, closed Sundays. This was not one of his more frequent watering holes since his local, Schrøder, was in the parallel street, but like most serious drinkers Harry always had a place in his brain where the opening hours of taprooms were stored automatically.

He smiled at his reflection in the grimy windows. Another time.

At the corner he turned right, down Ullevålsveien. Harry didn't like walking in Ullevålsveien. It was a street for cars, not for pedestrians. The best thing he could say about Ullevålsveien was that the pavement on the right afforded some shade on days like this.

Harry stopped in front of the house bearing the number he had been given. He gave it a quick once-over.

On the ground floor was a launderette with red washing machines. The note on the window gave the opening times as 8.00 till 21.00 every day and offered a 20-minute dry for the reduced price of 30 kroner. A dark-skinned woman in a shawl sat beside a rotating drum, staring out into the air. Next to the launderette was a shop window with headstones in, and further down, a green neon sign displaying KEBAB HOUSE above a snack-bar-cum-grocer's. Harry's eyes wandered over the filthy house front. The paint on the old window frames had cracked, but the

dormer windows on the roof suggested there were new attic conversions on top of the original four floors. A camera was placed over the newly installed intercom system by the rusty iron gate. Money from Oslo's West End was flowing slowly but surely into the East End. He rang the top bell next to the name of Camilla Loen.

'Yes,' the loudspeaker replied.

Møller had warned him, but nevertheless he was taken aback when he heard Tom Waaler's voice.

Harry tried to answer, but could not force a sound from his vocal cords. He coughed and made a fresh attempt.

'Hole. Open up.'

There was a buzzing sound and he grasped the cold, rough door handle of black iron.

'Hi.'

Harry turned round.

'Hi, Beate.'

Beate Lønn was just under average height, with dark blonde hair and blue eyes, neither good-looking nor unattractive. In short, there was nothing particularly striking about Beate Lønn, apart from her clothes. She was wearing a white boiler suit that looked a bit like an astronaut's outfit.

Harry held open the gate while she carried in two large metal containers.

'Have you just arrived?'

He tried not to breathe on her as she passed.

'No. I had to come back down to the car for the rest of my stuff. We've been here for half an hour. Hit yourself?'

Harry ran a finger over the scab on his nose.

'Apparently.'

He followed her through the next door leading into the stairwell.

'What's it like up there?'

Beate put the boxes in front of a green lift door, still looking up at him.

'I thought it was one of your principles to look first and ask questions later,' she said, pressing the lift button.

Harry nodded. Beate Lønn belonged to that section of the human race who remembered everything. She could recite details from criminal cases he had long forgotten and from before she began Police College. In addition, she had an unusually well-developed fusiform gyrus - the part of the brain that remembers faces. She had had it tested and the psychologists were amazed. Just his luck that she remembered the little he had managed to teach her when they worked together on the spate of bank robberies that swept Oslo the previous year.

'I like to be as open as possible to my impressions the first time I am at the scene of a crime, yes,' Harry said and gave a start when the lift sprang into action. He began to go through his pockets looking for cigarettes. 'But I doubt that I'm going to be working on this particular case.'

'Why not?'

Harry didn't answer. He pulled out a crumpled pack of Camels from his left-hand trouser pocket and extracted a crushed cigarette.

'Oh yes, now I remember,' Beate smiled. 'You said this spring that you were going to go on holiday. To Normandy, wasn't it? You lucky thing ...'

Harry put the cigarette between his lips. It tasted dreadful. And it would hardly do anything for his headache, either. There was only one thing that helped. He took a look at his watch. Mondays, 4 p.m. to 1 a.m.

'There won't be any Normandy,' he said.

'Oh?'

'No, so that's not the reason. It's because *he*'s running this case.'

Harry took a long drag on his cigarette and nodded upwards.

She gave him a long, hard look. 'Watch out that he doesn't become an obsession. Move on.'

‘Move on?’ Harry blew out smoke. ‘He hurts people, Beate. You should know that.’

She blushed. ‘Tom and I had a brief fling, that’s all, Harry.’

‘Wasn’t that the time you were going round with a bruised neck?’

‘Harry! Tom never ...’

Beate stopped when she realised that she was raising her voice. The echo resounded upwards in the stairwell, but was drowned out by the lift coming to a halt in front of them with a brief dull thud.

‘You don’t like him,’ she said. ‘So you imagine things. In fact, Tom has a number of good sides you know nothing about.’

‘Mm.’

Harry stubbed his cigarette out on the wall while Beate pulled open the door to the lift and went in.

‘Aren’t you coming up?’ she asked, looking at Harry who was still outside intently staring at something. The lift. There was a sliding gate inside the door, a simple iron grille that you push open and close behind you so that the lift can operate. There was the scream again. The soundless scream. He could feel sweat breaking out all over his body. The nip of whisky had not been enough. Nowhere near enough.

‘Something the matter?’ Beate asked.

‘Not at all,’ Harry answered in a thick voice. ‘I just don’t like these old-fashioned lifts. I’ll take the stairs.’

4

Friday. Statistics

THE HOUSE DID have attic flats, two of them. The door to one stood open, but some orange police tape placed it off-limits. Harry stooped to get his full height of 192 centimetres under the tape and quickly took another step to steady his balance when he emerged on the other side. He was standing in the middle of a room with an oak parquet floor, a slanting ceiling and dormer windows. It was warm, much like a bathroom. The flat was small and furnished in a minimalist style, as his own was, but that was where the similarity ended. This flat had the latest sofa from Hilmers Hus, a coffee table from r.o.o.m. and a small 15-inch Philips TV in ice-blue translucent plastic to match the stereo system. Harry looked through doorways to a kitchen and a bedroom. That was all there was. And it was strangely still. A policeman in uniform with his arms folded was standing by the kitchen door rocking on his heels. He was sweating and watching Harry from under raised eyebrows. He shook his head and smirked when Harry went to show his ID card.

Everyone knows the monkey, Harry thought. The monkey doesn't know anyone. He wiped his face with his hand.

'Where is the Crime Scene Unit?'

'In the bathroom,' the police officer said, nodding towards the bedroom. 'Lønn and Weber.'