



A
HARRY HOLE
THRILLER

JO NESBO

POLICE

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About the Book

The police urgently need Harry Hole.

A killer is stalking Oslo's streets. Police officers are being slain at the scenes of crimes they once investigated, but failed to solve. The murders are brutal, the media reaction hysterical.

But this time, Harry can't help anyone.

For years, detective Harry Hole has been at the centre of every major criminal investigation in Oslo. His dedication to his job and his brilliant insights have saved the lives of countless people. But now, with those he loves most facing terrible danger, Harry can't protect anyone.

Least of all himself.

About the Author

Jo Nesbo is a musician, songwriter, economist and internationally acclaimed author. *The Leopard* - the eighth Harry Hole thriller - was a number 1 bestseller in hardback, with *Phantom* - the ninth book in the series - topping the paperback charts. *The Snowman* has been optioned by Working Title films and will be directed by Martin Scorsese, whilst the film adaptation of Jo's standalone thriller, *Headhunters* was nominated for a BAFTA.

Check out www.jonesbo.co.uk.

ALSO BY JO NESBO

The Bat
Cockroaches
The Redbreast
Nemesis
The Devil's Star
The Redeemer
The Snowman
The Leopard
Phantom

To Knut Nesbø,
football player, guitarist, pal, brother.

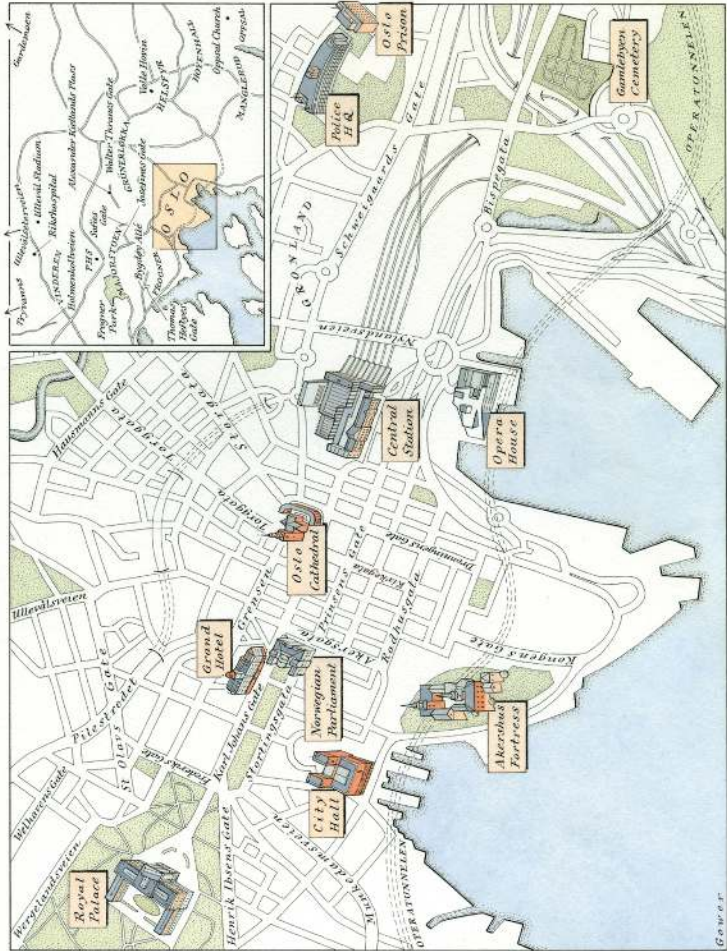
Police

Jo Nesbo

Translated from the Norwegian by Don
Bartlett



Harvill Secker
LONDON



It was asleep in there, behind the door.

The inside of the corner cupboard smelt of old wood, powder residue and gun oil. When the sun shone through the window into the room, a strip of light shaped like an hourglass travelled from the keyhole into the cupboard and, if the sun was at precisely the right angle, there would be a matt gleam to the gun lying on the middle of the shelf.

It was a Russian Odessa, a copy of the better-known Stechkin.

The ugly automatic pistol had had a peripatetic existence, travelling with the Cossacks in Lithuania to Siberia, moving between the various Urka headquarters in southern Siberia, becoming the property of an ataman, a Cossack leader, who had been killed, Odessa in hand, by the police, before ending up in the Nizhny Tagil home of an arms-collecting prison director. Finally, the weapon was brought to Norway by Rudolf Asayev, alias Dubai, who, before he disappeared, had monopolised the narcotics market in Oslo with the heroin-like opioid violin. Oslo, the very town where the gun now found itself, in Holmenkollveien, to be precise, in Rakel Fauke's house. The Odessa had a magazine that could hold twenty rounds of Makarov, 9x18mm calibre, and could fire single shots and salvos. There were twelve bullets left in the magazine.

Three of them had been fired at Kosovo Albanians, rival dope pushers. Only one of the bullets had bitten into flesh.

The next two had killed Gusto Hanssen, a young thief and drug dealer who had pocketed Asayev's money and dope.

The gun still smelt of the last three shots, which had hit the head and chest of the ex-police officer Harry Hole during his investigation into the above-mentioned murder of Gusto Hanssen. And the crime scene had been the same: Hausmanns gate 92.

The police still hadn't solved the Hanssen case, and the eighteen-year-old boy who had initially been arrested had been released. Mostly because they hadn't been able to

find, or link him to, any murder weapon. The boy's name was Oleg Fauke and he woke every night staring into the darkness and hearing the shots. Not those that had killed Gusto, but the others. The ones he had fired at the policeman who had been a father to him when he was growing up. Who he had once dreamt would marry his mother, Rakel. Harry Hole. Oleg's eyes burned into the night, and he thought of the gun in the distant corner cupboard, hoping that he would never see it again. That no one would see it again. That it would sleep until eternity.

He was asleep in there, behind the door.

The guarded hospital room smelt of medicine and paint. The monitor beside him registered his heartbeats.

Isabelle Skøyen, the Councillor for Social Affairs at Oslo City Hall, and Mikael Bellman, the newly appointed Chief of Police, hoped they would never see him again.

That no one would see him again.

That he would sleep until eternity.

PART ONE



1

IT HAD BEEN a long, warm September day. The light transformed Oslo Fjord into molten silver and made the low mountain ridges, which already bore the first tinges of autumn, glow. It was one of those days that make Oslo natives swear they will never, ever move. The sun was sinking behind Ullern Ridge and the last rays swept across the countryside, across the squat, sober blocks of flats, a testimony to Oslo's modest origins, across lavish penthouses with terraces that spoke of the oil adventure that had made the country one of the richest in the world, across the junkies at the top of Stensparken and into the well-organised little town where there were more overdoses than in European cities eight times larger. Across gardens where trampolines were surrounded by netting and no more than three children jumped at a time, as recommended by national guidelines. And across the ridges and the forest circling half of what is known as the Oslo Cauldron. The sun did not want to relinquish the town; it stretched out its fingers, like a prolonged farewell through a train window.

The day had begun with cold, clear air and sharp beams of light, like lamps in an operating theatre. Later the temperature had risen, the sky had gone a deeper blue and the air possessed that pleasant physical feel which made September the most wonderful month in the year. And as dusk came, tentative and gentle, the air in the residential quarter on the hills towards Lake Maridal smelt of apples and warm spruce trees.

Erlend Vennesla was approaching the top of the final hill. He could feel the lactic acid now but concentrated on

getting the correct vertical thrust on the click-in pedals, with his knees pointing slightly inwards. Because it was important to have the right technique. Especially when you were tired and your brain was telling you to change position so that the onus was on less tired, though less effective, muscles. He could feel how the rigid cycle frame absorbed and used every watt he pedalled into it, how he accelerated when he switched down a gear and stood up, trying to keep the same rhythm, about ninety revolutions a minute. He checked his heart rate monitor. One hundred and sixty-eight. He pointed his headlamp at the satnav he had attached to the handlebars. It had a detailed map of Oslo and its surrounds. The bike and the accessories had cost him more than, strictly speaking, a recently retired detective should spend. But it was important to stay in shape now that life offered different challenges.

Fewer challenges, if he was honest.

The lactic acid was burning in his thighs and calves now. Painful but also a wonderful promise of what was to come. An endorphin fest. Tender muscles. Good conscience. A beer with his wife on their balcony if the temperature didn't plummet after sunset.

And suddenly he was up. The road levelled out, and Lake Maridal was in front of him. He slowed down. He was out of the town. It was absurd, in fact, that after fifteen minutes' hard cycling from the centre of a European capital city you were surrounded by farms, fields and dense forest with paths disappearing into the dusk. The sweat was making his scalp itch beneath the charcoal-grey Bell helmet - which alone had cost the same as the bike he had bought as a sixth-birthday present for his granddaughter, Line Marie. But he kept the helmet on. Most deaths among cyclists were caused by head injuries.

He looked at his monitor. A hundred and seventy-five. A hundred and seventy-two. A welcome little gust of wind carried the sound of distant cheering up from the town. It

must have been from Ullevål Stadium - there was an important international match this evening. Slovakia or Slovenia. Erlend Vennesla imagined for a few seconds that they had been applauding for him. It was a while since anyone had done that. The last time would have been the farewell ceremony at Kripos up at Bryn. Layer cake, speech by the boss, Mikael Bellman, who since then had continued his steady rise to take the top police job. And Erlend had received the applause, met their eyes, thanked them and even felt his throat constrict as he was about to deliver his simple, brief speech. Simple, sticking to the facts, as was now the tradition at Kripos. He'd had his ups and downs as a detective, but he had avoided major blunders. At least as far as he knew. Of course you were never a hundred per cent sure you had the right answer. With the rapid advances made in DNA technology and a signal from the upper echelons that they would use it to examine isolated cold cases, there was a risk of precisely that. Answers. New answers. Conclusions. As long as they concentrated on unsolved cases, that was fine, but Erlend didn't understand why they would waste resources on investigations which had long been filed away.

The darkness had deepened and even in the light from the street lamps he almost cycled past the wooden sign pointing into the forest. But there it was. Exactly as he remembered. He turned off and rode on to the soft forest floor. He slowly followed the path without losing his balance. The cone of light from his headlamp shone ahead, and was halted by the thick wall of spruce trees on either side when he turned his head. Shadows flitted in front of him, startled and hurried, changed shape and dived under cover. It was how he had imagined it when he had put himself in her shoes. Running, fleeing with a torch in her hand, after being locked up and raped over three days.

And when Erlend Vennesla saw a light suddenly come on in front of him, for a moment he thought it was her torch,

and that she was running again, and he was on the motorbike that had gone after her and caught her up. The light ahead of Erlend flickered before it was flashed straight at him. He stopped and dismounted. Shone his headlamp on his heart rate monitor. Already below a hundred. Not bad.

He loosened the chin strap, took off his helmet and scratched his scalp. God, that was good. He switched off his headlamp, hung the helmet from the handlebars and pushed the bike towards the light. Felt the helmet banging against the frame.

He stopped by the torchlight. The powerful beam hurt his eyes. And, dazzled, he thought he could hear himself still breathing heavily. It was strange his pulse was so low. He detected a movement, something being lifted behind the large, quivering circle of light, heard a hushed whistle through the air and at that moment a thought struck him. He shouldn't have done that. He shouldn't have removed his helmet. Most deaths among cyclists . . .

It was as if the thought stammered, like a displacement in time, like an image being disconnected for a moment.

Erlend Vennesla stared ahead in astonishment and felt a hot bead of sweat run down his forehead. He spoke, but the words were incoherent, as though there were a fault in the connection between brain and mouth. Again he heard a soft whistle. Then sound went. All sound, he couldn't even hear his own breathing. And he discovered that he was on his knees and his bike was slowly tipping over into a ditch. Before him danced a yellow light, but it disappeared when the bead of sweat reached the ridge of his nose, ran into his eyes and blinded him.

The third blow felt like an icicle being driven into his head, neck and body. Everything froze.

I don't want to die, he thought, trying to raise a defensive arm above his head, but, unable to move a single limb, he knew he had been paralysed.

He didn't register the fourth blow, although from the aroma of wet earth he concluded he was now lying on the ground. He blinked several times and sight returned to one eye. By his face he saw a pair of large, dirty boots in the mud. The heels were raised and then the boots took off from the ground. They landed. The same was repeated: the heels were raised and the boots took off. As if the assailant were jumping. Jumping to get even more power behind the blows. And the last thought to go through his brain was that he had to remember what her name was, he mustn't forget her name.

2

OFFICER ANTON MITTET took the half-full plastic cup from the small, red Nespresso D290 machine, bent down and placed it on the floor. There was no furniture to put it on. Then he took out another coffee capsule, automatically checked that the aluminium foil lid wasn't perforated, that it was in fact unused, before inserting it in the coffee machine. Set an empty plastic cup under the spout and pressed one of the illuminated buttons.

He checked his watch while the machine began to sputter and groan. Soon be midnight. Shift change. She was waiting for him at home, but he thought he should teach the new girl the ropes first; after all she was only a police trainee. Silje, was that her name? Anton Mittet stared at the spout. Would he have offered to get coffee if it had been a male colleague? He wasn't sure, and it made no difference anyway, he had given up answering that kind of question. It was suddenly so quiet he could hear the final, almost transparent, drops dripping into the cup. There was no more colour or taste to be had from the capsule, but it was vital to catch every last droplet; it was going to be a long night shift for the young woman. Without any company, without any action, without anything to do, other than to stare at the inside of the Rikshospital's unpainted, bare concrete walls. Then he decided he would have a coffee with her before leaving. He took both cups with him and returned. His footsteps resounded against the walls. He passed closed, locked doors. Knowing there was nothing or no one behind them, only more bare walls. For once Norway had built for the future with the Rikshospital, realising that Norwegians

were becoming more numerous, aged, infirm and needy. They had taken a long-term approach, the way the Germans had with their autobahns and the Swedes with their airports. But had it felt like that for them, the few motorists crossing the German countryside in isolated majesty on the concrete leviathans in the thirties or the Swedish passengers hurrying through the oversized lounges in Arlanda during the sixties? Had they sensed that there were ghosts? That despite it being brand new and unspoilt, and despite no one having died in a car accident or a plane crash yet, there were ghosts. That at any moment car headlamps could pick out a family standing on the kerb, staring blankly into the light, bleeding, ashen, the father impaled, the mother's head the wrong way round, a child with limbs on one side only. That charred bodies could come through the plastic curtain on the baggage carousel in the arrivals hall at Arlanda, still glowing, burning the rubber, silent screams issuing from their open mouths, smoke coiling upwards. None of the doctors had been able to tell him what this wing would be used for eventually; all that was certain was that people would die behind these doors. It was already in the air; invisible bodies with restless souls had already been admitted.

Anton rounded a corner, and another corridor extended before him, sparsely lit, equally bare and so symmetrical that it created a curious *trompe d'oeil*: the uniformed woman sitting on the chair at the far end of the corridor looked like a little picture on a flat wall in front of him.

'I've got a cup of coffee for you,' he said, standing by her. Twenty? Bit more. Maybe twenty-two.

'Thanks, but I brought some with me,' she said, lifting a Thermos from the little rucksack she had placed beside her chair. There was a barely perceptible lilt to her intonation, the residue of a northern dialect perhaps.

'This is better,' he said, with his hand still outstretched.

She hesitated. Then took it.

‘And it’s free,’ Anton said, discreetly putting his hand behind his back and rubbing the burnt fingertips on the cold material of his jacket. ‘We’ve got a whole machine all to ourselves in fact. It’s in the corridor down by—’

‘I saw it when I came,’ she said. ‘But the regulations are that we mustn’t at any time move away from the patient’s door, so I brought some coffee from home.’

Anton Mittet took a sip from his cup. ‘Good thinking, but there’s only one corridor leading to this room. We’re on the third floor and all the other doors are locked between here and the coffee machine. It’s impossible to get past us even if we’re helping ourselves to coffee.’

‘That sounds reassuring, but I think I’ll stick to the rules.’ She sent him a fleeting smile. And then, perhaps as a counterbalance to the implicit reproof, she took a sip from the cup.

Anton felt a stab of irritation and was about to say something about the independent thinking that would come with experience, but he hadn’t managed to formulate it before his attention was caught by something further down the corridor. A white figure appeared to be floating towards them. He heard Silje get up. The figure took on firmer features. And became a plump blonde nurse in a loose hospital uniform. He knew she was on the night shift. And that tomorrow night she was free.

‘Evening,’ the nurse said with a mischievous smile, holding up two syringes in one hand, walking towards the door and placing the other on the handle.

‘Just a moment,’ Silje said, stepping up. ‘I’m afraid I have to examine your ID. Also, have you got today’s password?’

The nurse sent Anton a surprised look.

‘Unless my colleague here can vouch for you,’ Silje said.

Anton nodded. ‘Just go in, Mona.’

The nurse opened the door and Anton watched her enter. In the darkened room he could make out the machinery around the bed and toes sticking out from under the duvet.

The patient was so tall they'd had to requisition a longer bed. The door closed.

'Good,' Anton said with a smile to Silje, and could see she didn't like it. Could see she regarded him as a male chauvinist who had just assessed and graded a younger female colleague. But she was a student for Christ's sake, she was supposed to learn from experienced officers during her training year. He stood rocking back on his heels, unsure how to tackle the situation. She spoke up first.

'As I said, I've read the rules and regulations. And I suppose you have a family waiting for you.'

He lifted his coffee to his mouth. What did she know about his civil status? Was she insinuating something, about him and Mona, for example? That he had driven her home a couple of times after her shift and it hadn't stopped there?

'The teddy bear sticker on your bag,' she smiled.

He took a long swig from his cup. And cleared his throat. 'I've got time. As it's your first shift perhaps you ought to use the opportunity to ask any questions you may have. Not everything's in the rules and regulations, you know.' He shifted feet. Hoping she could hear and understand the subtext.

'As you wish,' she said with the irritating self-confidence you have to be under twenty-five to be so presumptuous as to possess. 'The patient in there, who is he?'

'I don't know. That's also in the rules. He's anonymous and has to stay that way.'

'But you know something.'

'Do I?'

'Mona. You can't be on first-name terms with people without having chatted first. What did she tell you?'

Anton Mittet weighed her up. She was attractive, that was true enough, but there was no warmth or charm about her. Bit too slim for his taste. Untidy hair and a top lip that looked as if it was held in place by an over-taut tendon, causing two uneven front teeth to appear. But youth was on

her side. Firm and fit underneath the black uniform, he would bet on it. So if he told her what he knew, would it be because he was subconsciously calculating that his obliging attitude would increase his chances of bedding her by 0.01 per cent? Or because girls like Silje would be inspectors or detectives within five years? They would be his bosses, while he would remain on the beat, an officer on the bottom rung of the ladder, because the Drammen case would always be there, a wall, a stain that could not be removed.

‘Case of attempted murder,’ Anton said. ‘Lost a lot of blood. They reckon he barely had a pulse when he came here. Been in a coma the whole time.’

‘Why the guard?’

Anton shrugged. ‘Potential witness. If he survives.’

‘What does he know?’

‘Drugs stuff. High level. If he wakes up he probably has the goods to bring down some important heroin dealers in Oslo. Plus he can tell us who was trying to kill him.’

‘So they think the murderer will return and finish off the job?’

‘If they find out he’s alive and where he is, yes. That’s why we’re here.’

She nodded. ‘And is he going to survive?’

Anton shook his head. ‘They reckon they can keep him alive for a few more months, but the odds of him pulling out of the coma are slim. Nevertheless . . .’ Anton shifted feet again; her probing stare was becoming uncomfortable. ‘Until then we have to keep an eye on him.’

Anton Mittet left her, feeling crushed, went down the stairs from reception and stepped into the autumn night. It was only when he was sitting in his parked car that he noticed his mobile was ringing.

The call came from the Ops Room.

‘Maridalen, murder,’ 01 said. ‘I know you’ve finished for the day, but they need help to secure the crime scene. And as you’re already in uniform . . .’

'How long for?'

'You'll be relieved after three hours, max.'

Anton was astonished. These days they did whatever they could to prevent people from working overtime. The combination of rigid rules and budgets didn't even allow deviations for reasons of practicality. He had an intuition there was something special about this murder. He hoped it wasn't a child.

'OK,' Anton Mittet said.

'I'll send you the coordinates.' This was new: satnav, a detailed map of Oslo and district and an active transmitter for Ops to track you down. That must have been why they rang him. He was closest.

'OK,' Anton Mittet said. 'Three hours.'

Laura would be in bed, but she liked knowing when he would be home from work, so he texted her before putting the car into gear and heading for Lake Maridal.

Anton didn't need to look at the satnav. At the entrance to Ullevålseterveien there were four patrol cars, and a bit further away orange-and-white tape showed the way.

Anton took the torch from the glove compartment and walked over to the officer outside the cordon. Through the trees he saw lights flashing, but also the forensics team's lamps, which always reminded him of film sets. Not so daft actually; nowadays they didn't just take stills, they used HD video cameras as well, which not only captured the victims but the whole crime scene so that at a later date they could go back, freeze and zoom in on details they hadn't appreciated were relevant at first.

'What's going on?' he asked the officer with crossed arms, who was shivering by the tape.

'Murder.' The officer's voice was thick, his eyes red-rimmed in an unnaturally pale face.

'So I heard. Who's the boss here?'

'Forensics. Lønn.'

Anton heard the buzz of voices from inside the trees. There were lots of them. 'No one from Kripos or Crime Squad yet?'

'There'll be even more officers here soon. The body has just been found. Are you taking over from me?'

Even more. And yet they had given him overtime. Anton examined the officer closer. He was wearing a thick coat, but the shivering had got worse. And it wasn't that cold.

'Were you the first on the scene?'

The officer nodded without speaking, looked down. Stamped his feet hard on the ground.

Bloody hell, thought Anton. A child. He swallowed.

'Well, Anton, did 01 send you?'

Anton looked up. He hadn't heard the two of them coming, although they emerged from dense thickets. He had seen it before, how forensics officers moved at crime scenes, like somewhat ungainly dancers, bending and twisting, positioning their feet, as though they were astronauts on the moon. Or perhaps it was the white overalls drawing that association.

'Yes, I had to take over from someone,' Anton said to the woman. He knew who she was, everyone did. Beate Lønn, the head of Krimteknisk, who had a reputation as a kind of Rain Woman because of her ability to recognise faces, which was often employed to identify bank robbers on grainy disjointed CCTV footage. They said she could recognise even well-disguised robbers if they were ex-cons and she had a database of several thousand mugshots stored in her fair-haired little head. So this murder had to be special, otherwise they wouldn't send out bosses in the middle of the night.

Beside the petite woman's pale, almost transparent face her colleague's appeared to be flushed. His freckled cheeks were adorned with two bright red mutton-chop sideburns. His eyes bulged slightly, as though there was too much pressure inside, which lent him a somewhat gawping

expression. But what attracted most attention was the hat which appeared when he removed his white hood: a big Rasta hat in Jamaican colours, green, yellow and black.

Beate Lønn patted the shoulder of the trembling officer. 'Off you go then, Simon. Don't tell anyone I said this, but I suggest a strong drink and then bed.'

The officer nodded, and three seconds later he was swallowed up by the darkness.

'Is it gruesome?' Anton asked.

'No coffee?' Rasta Hat asked, opening a Thermos. These two words told Anton he wasn't from Oslo. From the provinces, that was clear, but like most Norwegians from Østland Anton had no idea about, and no particular interest in, dialects.

'No,' Anton said.

'It's always a good idea to take your own coffee to a crime scene,' Rasta Hat said. 'You never know how long you'll have to stay.'

'Come on, Bjørn. He's worked on murder investigations before,' said Beate Lønn. 'Drammen, wasn't it?'

'Right,' Anton said, rocking on his heels. *Used to* work on murder investigations, more accurately. And unfortunately he had a suspicion as to why Beate Lønn could remember him. He breathed in. 'Who found the body?'

'He did,' said Beate Lønn, nodding in the direction of the police officer's car. They could hear the engine revving.

'I mean who tipped us off?'

'The wife rang when he didn't come back from a bike ride,' Rasta Hat said. 'Should have been away for an hour, and she was worried about his heart. He was using his satnav, which has a transmitter, so they found him quickly.'

Anton nodded slowly, picturing it all. Two policemen ringing the doorbell, a man and a woman. The officers coughing, looking at the wife with that grave expression which is meant to tell her what they will soon repeat in words, impossible words. The wife's face, resistant, not

wanting to hear, but then it seems to turn inside out, shows her inner emotions, shows everything.

The image of Laura, his wife, appeared.

An ambulance drew up, without a siren or a blue light.

It slowly dawned on Anton. The fast reaction to a missing-person message. The rapidly traced satnav signal. The big turnout. Overtime. The colleague who was so shaken he had to be sent home.

'It's a policeman,' he whispered.

'I'd guess the temperature here is one and a half degrees lower than in town,' Beate Lønn said, pulling up a number on her mobile phone.

'Agreed,' Rasta Hat said, swigging a mouthful from the Thermos cup. 'No skin discoloration yet. So somewhere between eight and ten?'

'A policeman,' Anton repeated. 'That's why they're all here, isn't it?'

'Katrine?' Beate said. 'Can you check something for me? It's about the Sandra Tveten case. Right.'

'Goddamn!' Rasta Hat exclaimed. 'I asked them to wait until the body bags had come.'

Anton turned and saw two men struggling through the forest with a stretcher between them. A pair of cycling shoes poked out from under the blanket.

'He knew him,' Anton said. 'That was why he was shaking like that, wasn't it?'

'He said they worked together in Økern before Vennesla started in Kripos,' Rasta Hat said.

'Have you got the date to hand?' Lønn said on the phone.

There was a scream.

'What the . . .?' Rasta Hat said.

Anton turned. One of the stretcher-bearers had slipped into the ditch beside the path. The beam from his torch swept over the stretcher. Over the blanket that had fallen off. Over . . . over what? Anton stared. Was that a head? The thing on top of what was indubitably the human body, had it

really been a head? In the years Anton had worked at Crime Squad, before the Great Mistake, he had seen a great many bodies, but nothing like this. The hourglass-shaped substance reminded Anton of the family's Sunday breakfast, of Laura's lightly boiled egg with the remains of the shell still hanging from it, cracked with the yellow yolk running out and drying on the outside of the stiff but still soft egg white. Could that really be a . . . *head*?

Anton stood blinking in the darkness as he watched the rear lights of the ambulance disappearing. And he realised that these were replays, he had seen all this before. The white figures, the Thermos, the feet protruding from under the blanket, he had just seen this at the Rikshospital. As though they all had been portents. The head . . .

'Thanks, Katrine,' Beate said.

'What was that about?' Rasta Hat asked.

'I worked with Erlend on this very spot,' Beate said.

'Here?' Rasta Hat queried.

'Right here. He was in charge of the investigation. Must have been ten years ago. Sandra Tveten. Raped and killed. Just a child.'

Anton swallowed. Child. Replays.

'I remember that case,' Rasta Hat said. 'Fate's a funny thing, dying at your own crime scene. Imagine. Wasn't the Sandra Tveten case also in the autumn?'

Beate nodded slowly.

Anton blinked, and kept blinking. He *had* seen a body like it.

'Goddamn!' Rasta Hat cursed under his breath. 'You don't mean to say that . . .?'

Beate Lønn took the cup of coffee from him. Took a sip. Passed it back. Nodded.

'Oh shit,' Rasta Hat said under his breath.

3

'DÉJÀ VU,' STÅLE Aune said, looking at the packed snowdrift across Sporveisgata where the December-morning gloom was receding to allow a short day. Then he turned back to the man in the chair on the opposite side of the desk. 'Déjà vu is the feeling we've seen something before. We don't know what it is.'

By 'we' he meant psychologists in general, not only therapists.

'Some psychologists believe that when we're tired, information sent to the conscious part of the brain is delayed, so that when it surfaces it's already been in the subconscious for a while. And that's why we experience it as recognition. The tiredness explains why déjà vu usually occurs at the end of a working week. But that's about all research has to contribute. Friday is déjà vu day.'

Ståle Aune had perhaps been hoping for a smile. Not because smiling meant anything at all in his professional efforts to get people to repair themselves, but because the room required it.

'I don't mean déjà vu in that sense,' the patient said. The client. The customer. The person who in roughly twenty minutes would be paying in reception and helping to cover the overheads of the five psychologists who each had their own practice in the featureless, yet old-fashioned four-storey building in Sporveisgata which ran through Oslo's medium-elegant West End district. Ståle Aune sneaked a glimpse of the clock on the wall behind the man's head. Eighteen minutes.

'It's more like a dream I have again and again.'

'Like a dream?' Ståle Aune's eyes scanned the newspaper he had lying open in a desk drawer so that it couldn't be seen by the patient. Most therapists nowadays sat on a chair opposite the patient, and when the massive desk had been manoeuvred into Ståle's office, grinning colleagues had confronted him with the modern therapy theory that it was best to have as few barriers as possible between themselves and the patient. Ståle's retort had been swift: 'Best for the patient maybe.'

'It's a dream. I dream.'

'It's common,' Aune said, passing his hand over his mouth to conceal a yawn. He reflected longingly on the dear old sofa that had been carried out of his office and now stood in the reception area, where with the weight racks alongside and a barbell above, it functioned as a psychotherapist's in-joke. Patients on the sofa had made the uninhibited reading of newspapers even easier.

'But it's a dream I don't want.' Thin, self-conscious smile. Thin, well-groomed hair.

Enter the dream exorcist, Aune thought, trying to respond with an equally thin smile. The patient was wearing a pinstriped suit, a red-and-grey tie, and black, polished shoes. Aune had a tweed jacket on, a cheery bow tie under his double chins and brown shoes that hadn't seen a brush for quite a while. 'Perhaps you might tell me what the dream was about?'

'That's what I've just done.'

'Exactly. But perhaps you could give me some more detail?'

'It starts, as I said, where *Dark Side of the Moon* finishes. "Eclipse" fades out with David Gilmour singing about everything being in tune . . .'

'And this is what you dream?'

'No! Yes. I mean, the record stops like that in reality too. Optimistic. After three-quarters of an hour about death and madness. So you think everything will end well. Everything