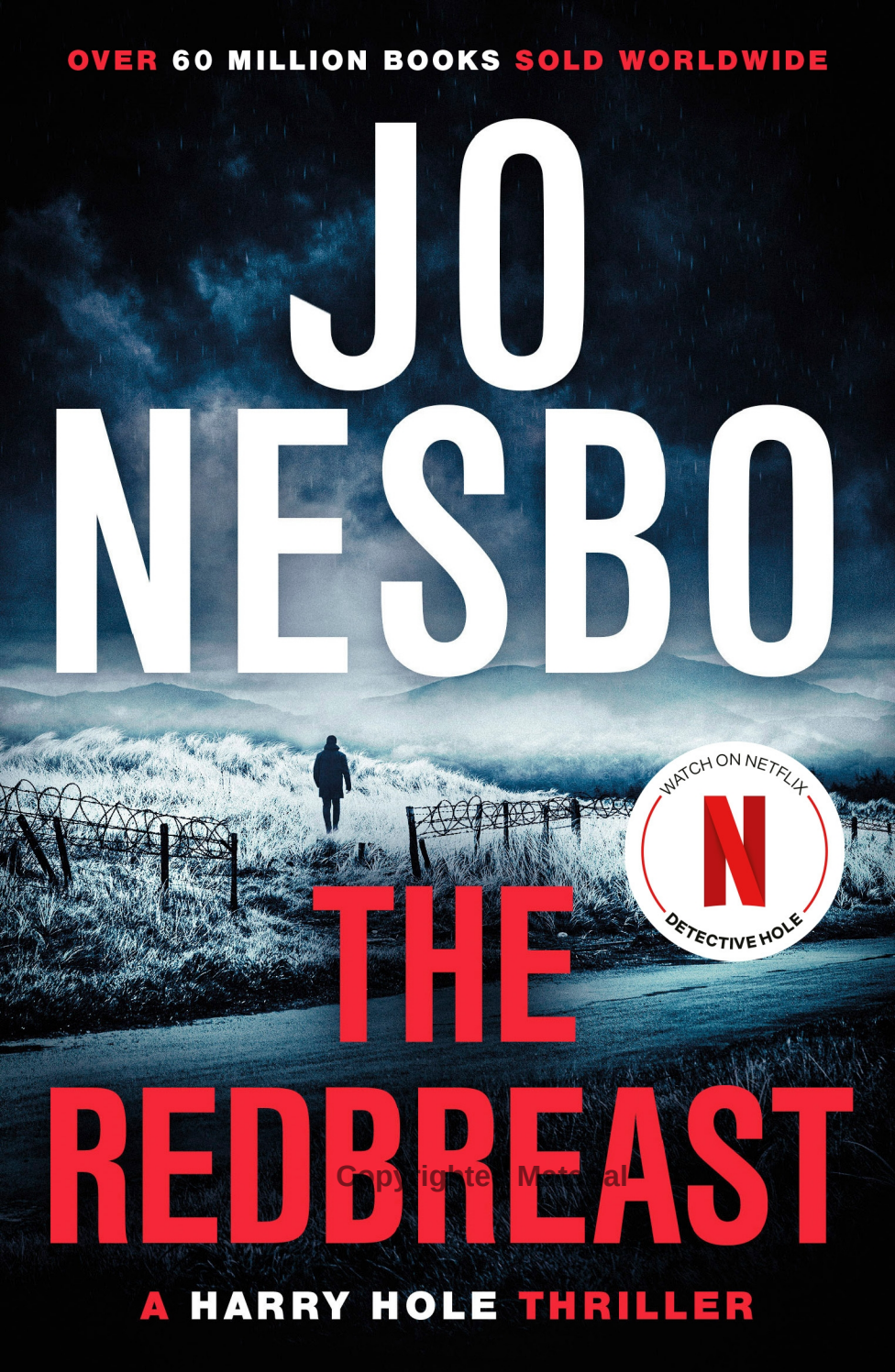
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THE REDBREAST

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The Redbreast

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But little by little he gained courage, flew close to him, and drew with his little bill a thorn that had become embedded in the brow of the Crucified One. And as he did this there fell on his breast a drop of blood from the face of the Crucified One – it spread quickly and floated out and coloured all the little fine breast feathers.

Then the Crucified One opened his lips and whispered to the bird: 'Because of thy compassion, thou hast won all that thy kind have been striving after, ever since the world was created.'

Selma Lagerlöf, Robin Redbreast,
Christ Legends

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Part One

EARTH TO EARTH

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1

Toll Barrier at Alnabru. 1 November 1999.

A grey bird glided in and out of Harry's field of vision. He drummed his fingers on the steering wheel. Slow time. Somebody had been talking about 'slow time' on TV yesterday. This was slow time. Like on Christmas Eve before Father Christmas came. Or sitting in the electric chair before the current was turned on.

He drummed harder.

They were parked in the open area behind the ticket booths at the toll gate. Ellen turned up the radio a notch. The commentator spoke with reverence and solemnity.

'The plane landed fifty minutes ago, and at exactly 6.38 a.m. the President set foot on Norwegian soil. He was welcomed by the Mayor of Ullensaker. It is a wonderful autumn day here in Oslo: a splendid Norwegian backdrop to this summit meeting. Let us hear again what the President said at the press conference half an hour ago.'

It was the third time. Again Harry saw the screaming press corps thronging against the barrier. The men in grey suits on the other side, who made only a half-hearted attempt not to look like Secret Service agents, hunched their shoulders and then relaxed them as they

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scanned the crowd, checked for the twelfth time that their earpieces were correctly positioned, scanned the crowd, dwelled for a few seconds on a photographer whose telephoto lens was a little too long, continued scanning, checked for the thirteenth time that their earpieces were in position. Someone welcomed the President in English, everything went quiet. Then a scratching noise in a microphone.

'First, let me say I'm delighted to be here . . .' the President said for the fourth time in husky, broad American-English.

'I read that a well-known American psychologist thinks the President has an MPD,' Ellen said.

'MPD?'

'Multiple Personality Disorder. Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde. The psychologist thought his normal personality was not aware that the other one, the sex beast, was having relations with all these women. And that was why a Court of Impeachment couldn't accuse him of having lied under oath about it.'

'Jesus,' Harry said, looking up at the helicopter hovering high above them.

On the radio, someone speaking with a Norwegian accent asked, 'Mr President, this is the fourth visit to Norway by a sitting US President. How does it feel?'

Pause.

'It's really nice to be back here. And I see it as even more important that the leaders of the state of Israel and of the Palestinian people can meet here. The key to –'

'Can you remember anything from your previous visit to Norway, Mr President?'

'Yes, of course. In today's talks I hope that we can –'

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'What significance have Oslo and Norway had for world peace, Mr President?'

'Norway has played an important role.'

A voice without a Norwegian accent: 'What concrete results does the President consider to be realistic?'

The recording was cut and someone from the studio took over.

'We heard there the President saying that Norway has had a crucial role in . . . er, the Middle Eastern peace process. Right now the President is on his way to –'

Harry groaned and switched off the radio. 'What is it with this country, Ellen?'

She shrugged her shoulders.

'Passed Post 27,' the walkie-talkie on the dashboard crackled.

He looked at her.

'Everyone ready at their posts?' he asked. She nodded.

'Here we go,' he said. She rolled her eyes. It was the fifth time he had said that since the procession set off from Gardemoen Airport. From where they were parked they could see the empty motorway stretch out from the toll barrier up towards Trosterud and Furuset. The blue light on the roof rotated sluggishly. Harry rolled down the car window to stick out his hand and remove a withered yellow leaf caught under the windscreen wiper.

'A robin redbreast,' Ellen said, pointing. 'Rare to see one so late in autumn.'

'Where?'

'There. On the roof of the toll booth.'

Harry lowered his head and peered through the windscreen.

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'Oh yes. So that's a robin redbreast?'

'Yep. But you probably can't tell the difference between that and a redwing, I imagine?'

'Right.' Harry shaded his eyes. Was he becoming short-sighted?

'It's a rare bird, the redbreast,' Ellen said, screwing the top back on the thermos.

'Is that a fact?' Harry said.

'Ninety per cent of them migrate south. A few take the risk, as it were, and stay here.'

'*As it were?*'

Another crackle on the radio: 'Post 62 to HQ. There's an unmarked car parked by the road two hundred metres before the turn-off for Lørenskog.'

A deep voice with a Bergen accent answered from HQ: 'One moment, 62. We'll look into it.'

Silence.

'Did you check the toilets?' Harry asked, nodding towards the Esso station.

'Yes, the petrol station has been cleared of all customers and employees. Everyone except the boss. We've locked him in his office.'

'Toll booths as well?'

'Done. Relax, Harry, all the checks have been done. Yes, the ones that stay do so in the hope that it will be a mild winter, right? That may be OK, but if they're wrong, they die. So why not head south, just in case, you might be wondering. Are they just lazy, the birds that stay?'

Harry looked in the mirror and saw the guards on either side of the railway bridge. Dressed in black with helmets and MP5 machine guns hanging around their necks. Even from where he was he could see the tension in their body language.

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'The point is that if it's a mild winter, they can choose the best nesting places before the others return,' Ellen said, while trying to stuff the thermos into the already full glove compartment. 'It's a calculated risk, you see. You're either laughing all over your face or you're in deep, deep shit. Whether to take the risk or not. If you take the gamble, you may fall off the twig frozen stiff one night and not thaw out till spring. Bottle it and you might not have anywhere to nest when you return. These are, as it were, the eternal dilemmas you're confronted with.'

'You've got body armour on, haven't you?' Harry twisted round to check. 'Have you or haven't you?'

She tapped her chest with her knuckles by way of reply.

'Lightweight?'

She nodded.

'For fuck's sake, Ellen! I gave the order for ballistic vests to be worn. Not those Mickey Mouse vests.'

'Do you know what the Secret Service guys use?'

'Let me guess. Lightweight vests?'

'That's right.'

'Do you know what I don't give a shit about?'

'Let me guess. The Secret Service?'

'That's right.'

She laughed. Harry managed a smile too. There was a crackle from the radio.

'HQ to post 62. The Secret Service say it's their car parked on the turn-off to Lørenskog.'

'Post 62. Message received.'

'You see,' Harry said, banging the steering wheel in irritation, 'no communication. The Secret Service

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people do their own thing. What's that car doing up there without our knowledge? Eh?'

'Checking that we're doing our job,' Ellen said.

'According to the instructions *they* gave us.'

'You'll be allowed to make *some* decisions, so stop grumbling,' she said. 'And stop that drumming on the wheel.'

Harry's hands obediently leapt into his lap. She smiled. He let out one long stream of air: 'Yeah, yeah, yeah.'

His fingers found the butt of his service revolver, a .38 calibre Smith & Wesson, six shots. In his belt he had two additional speed loaders, each holding six shots. He patted the revolver, knowing that, strictly speaking, he wasn't actually authorised to carry a weapon. Perhaps he really was becoming short-sighted; after the forty-hour course last winter he had failed the shooting test. Although that was not so unusual, it was the first time it had happened to Harry and he didn't like it at all. All he had to do was take the test again – many had to take it four or five times – but for one reason or another Harry continued to put it off.

More crackling noises: 'Passed point 28.'

'One more point to go in the Romerike police district,' Harry said. 'The next one is Karihaugen and then it's us.'

'Why can't they do it how we used to? Just say where the motorcade is instead of all these stupid numbers,' Ellen asked in a grumbling tone.

'Guess.'

They answered in unison: 'The Secret Service!' And laughed.

'Passed point 29.'

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He looked at his watch.

'OK, they'll be here in three minutes. I'll change the frequency on the walkie-talkie to Oslo police district. Run the final checks.'

Ellen closed her eyes to concentrate on the positive checks that came back one after the other. She put the microphone back into position. 'Everything in place and ready.'

'Thanks. Put your helmet on.'

'Eh? Honestly, Harry.'

'You heard what I said.'

'Put your helmet on yourself!'

'Mine's too small.'

A new voice. 'Passed point 1.'

'Oh shit, sometimes you're just so . . . unprofessional.' Ellen pulled the helmet over her head, fastened the chin strap and made faces in the driving mirror.

'Love you too,' said Harry, studying the road in front of them through binoculars. 'I can see them.'

At the top of the incline leading to Karihaugen the sun glinted off metal. For the moment Harry could only see the first car in the motorcade, but he knew the order: six motorcycles from the Norwegian police escort department, two Norwegian police escort cars, a Secret Service car, then two identical Cadillac Fleetwoods (special Secret Service cars flown in from the US) and the President sitting in one of them. Which one was kept secret. Or perhaps he was sitting in both, Harry thought. One for Jekyll and one for Hyde. Then came the bigger vehicles: ambulance, communications car and several Secret Service cars.

'Everything seems quiet enough,' Harry said. His binoculars moved slowly from right to left. The air

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quivered above the tarmac even though it was a cool November morning.

Ellen could see the outline of the first car. In thirty seconds they would have passed the toll gates and half the job would be over. And in two days' time, when the same cars had passed the toll going in the opposite direction, she and Harry could go back to their usual work. She preferred dealing with dead people in the Serious Crime Unit to getting up at three in the morning to sit in a cold Volvo with an irritable Harry, who was clearly burdened by the responsibility he had been given.

Apart from Harry's regular breathing, there was total quiet in the car. She checked that the light indicators on both radios were green. The motorcade was almost at the bottom of the hill. She decided she would go to Tørst and get drunk after the job. There was a guy there she had exchanged looks with; he had black curls and brown, slightly dangerous eyes. Lean. Looked a bit bohemian, intellectual. Perhaps . . .

'What the –'

Harry had already grabbed the microphone. 'There's someone in the third booth from the left. Can anyone identify this individual?'

The radio answered with a crackling silence as Ellen's gaze raced from one booth to the next in the row. There! She saw a man's back behind the brown glass of the box – only forty or fifty metres away. The silhouette of the figure was clear in the light from behind, as was the short barrel with the sights protruding over his shoulder.

'Weapon!' she shouted. 'He's got a machine gun.'

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'Fuck!' Harry kicked open the car door, took hold of the frame and swung out. Ellen stared at the motorcade. It couldn't be more than a few hundred metres off. Harry stuck his head inside the car.

'He's not one of ours, but he could be Secret Service,' he said. 'Call HQ.' He already had the revolver in his hand.

'Harry . . .'

'Now! And give a blast on the horn if HQ say it's one of theirs.'

Harry started to run towards the toll booth and the back of the man dressed in a suit. From the barrel, Harry guessed the gun was an Uzi. The raw early morning air smarted in his lungs.

'Police!' he shouted in Norwegian, then in English.

No reaction. The thick glass of the box was manufactured to deaden the traffic noise outside. The man had turned his head towards the motorcade now and Harry could see his dark Ray-Bans. Secret Service. Or someone who wanted to give that impression.

Twenty metres now.

How did he get inside a locked booth if he wasn't one of theirs? Damn! Harry could already hear the motorcycles. He wouldn't make it to the box.

He released the safety catch and took aim, praying that the car horn would shatter the stillness of this strange morning on a closed motorway he had never wanted at any time to be anywhere near. The instructions were clear, but he was unable to shut out his thoughts: *Thin vest. No communication. Shoot, it is not your fault. Has he got a family?*

The motorcade was coming from directly behind the toll booth, and it was coming fast. In a couple of

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seconds the Cadillacs would be level with the booths. From the corner of his left eye he noticed a movement, a little bird taking off from the roof.

Whether to take the risk or not . . . the eternal dilemma.

He thought about the low neck on the vest, lowered the revolver half an inch. The roar of the motorcycles was deafening.

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2

Oslo. 5 October 1999.

'That's the great betrayal,' the shaven-headed man said, looking down at his manuscript. The head, the eyebrows, the bulging forearms, even the huge hands gripping the lectern, everything was clean-shaven and neat. He leaned over to the microphone.

'Since 1945, National Socialism's enemies have been masters of the land; they have developed and put into practice their democratic and economic principles. Consequently, not on one single day has the sun gone down on a world without war. Even here in Europe we have experienced war and genocide. In the Third World millions starve to death – and Europe is threatened by mass immigration and the resultant chaos, deprivation and struggle for survival.'

He paused to gaze around him. There was a stony silence in the room; only one person in the audience, on the benches behind him, clapped tentatively. When he continued, fired up now, the red light under the microphone lit up ominously, indicating that the recording signal was distorted.

'There is little to separate even us from oblivious affluence and the day we have to rely on ourselves and the community around us. A war, an economic or ecological disaster, and the entire network of laws and

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rules which turns us all too quickly into passive social clients is suddenly no longer there. The previous great betrayal took place on 9 April 1940, when our so-called national leaders fled from the enemy to save their own skins, and took the gold reserves with them to finance a life of luxury in London. Now the enemy is here again. And those who are supposed to protect our interests have let us down once more. They let the enemy build mosques in our midst, let them rob our old folk and mingle blood with our women. It is no more than our duty as Norwegians to protect our race and to eliminate those who fail us.'

He turned the page, but a cough from the podium in front of him made him stop and look up.

'Thank you, I think we've heard enough,' the judge said, peering over his glasses. 'Has the prosecution counsel any more questions for the accused?'

The sun shone across courtroom 17 in Oslo Crown Court, giving the hairless man an illusory halo. He was wearing a white shirt and a slim tie, presumably on advice from his defending counsel, Johan Krohn Jr., who right now was leaning backwards in his chair, flicking a pen between middle and forefinger. Krohn disliked most things about this situation. He disliked the direction the prosecutor's questions had taken, the way his client, Sverre Olsen, had openly declared his programme, and the fact that Olsen had deemed it appropriate to roll up his shirtsleeves to display to the judge and colleagues on the panel the spider-web tattoos on both elbows and the row of swastikas on his left forearm. On his right forearm was tattooed a chain of Norse symbols and VALKYRIA, a neo-Nazi gang, in black gothic letters.

But there was something else about the whole pro-

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cedure that rankled with him. He just couldn't put his finger on what.

The Public Prosecutor, a little man by the name of Herman Groth, pushed the microphone away with his little finger, which was decorated with a ring bearing the symbol of the lawyers' union.

'Just a couple of questions to finish, Your Honour.' The voice was gentle and subdued. The light under the microphone showed green.

'So when, at nine o'clock on 3 January, you went into Dennis Kebab in Dronningens gate, it was with the clear intention of performing the duty of protecting our race which you were just talking about?'

Johan Krohn launched himself at the microphone.

'My client has already answered that a row developed between himself and the Vietnamese owner.' Red light. 'He was provoked,' Krohn said. 'There's absolutely no reason to suggest premeditation.'

Groth closed his eyes.

'If what your defending counsel says is correct, herr Olsen, it was therefore quite by chance that you were carrying a baseball bat at the time?'

'For self-defence,' Krohn interrupted and threw his arms up in despair. 'Your Honour, my client has already answered these questions.'

The judge rubbed his chin as he surveyed the counsel for the defence. Everyone knew that Johan Krohn Jr. was a defence constellation in the ascendancy – particularly Johan Krohn himself – and that was presumably what finally made the judge accede with some irritation: 'I agree with the defending counsel. Unless the prosecutor has anything new to add, may I suggest we move on?'

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Groth opened his eyes so that a narrow white stripe could be seen above and beneath the iris. He inclined his head. With a fatigued movement, he raised a newspaper aloft.

'This is *Dagbladet* from 25 January. In an interview on page eight one of the accused's co-idealogues –'

'I object . . .' Krohn began.

Groth sighed. 'Let me change that to a man who expresses racist views.'

The judge nodded, but sent Krohn an admonitory glare at the same time. Groth continued.

'This man, commenting on the attack at Dennis Kebab, says we need more racists like Sverre Olsen to regain control of Norway. In the interview the word "racist" is used as a term of respect. Does the accused consider himself a "racist"?'

'Yes, I am a racist,' said Olsen before Krohn managed to interpose. 'In the sense that I use the word.'

'And what might that be?' Groth smiled.

Krohn clenched his fists under the table and looked up at the podium, at the two associate judges flanking the judge. These three would decide the fate of his client for the next few years, and his own status in the Tostrupkjeller bar for the next few months. Two ordinary citizens representing the people, representing common-sense justice. They used to call them 'lay judges', but perhaps they had realised that it was too reminiscent of 'play judges'. To the right of the judge was a young man wearing a cheap, sensible suit, who hardly dared raise his eyes. The young, slightly plump woman to the left seemed to be pretending to follow the proceedings, while extending her neck so that the incipient double chin could not be seen from the floor.

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Average Norwegians. What did they know about people like Sverre Olsen? What did they want to know?

Eight witnesses had seen Sverre Olsen go into the burger bar with a baseball bat under his arm and, after a brief exchange of expletives, hit the owner, Ho Dai – a forty-year-old Vietnamese, who came to Norway with the boat people in 1978 – on the head. So hard that Ho Dai would never be able to walk again. When Olsen started to speak, Johan Krohn Jr. was already mentally shaping the appeal he would lodge with the High Court.

'*Rac-ism*,' Olsen read, having found the definition in his papers, 'is an eternal struggle against hereditary illness, degeneration and annihilation, as well as a dream of and a desire for a healthier society with a better quality of life. Racial mixture is a kind of bilateral genocide. In a world where there are plans to establish gene banks to preserve the smallest beetle, it is generally accepted that you can mix and destroy human races that have taken millennia to develop. In an article in the respected journal *American Psychologist* in 1972, fifty American and European scientists warned about the dangers of suppressing inheritance theory arguments.'

Olsen stopped, encompassed courtroom 17 in one sweeping glare and raised his right index finger. He had turned towards the prosecutor and Krohn could see the pale *Sieg Heil* tattoo on the shaven roll of fat between the back of his head and his neck – a mute shriek and a strangely grotesque contrast to the cool rhetoric of the court. In the ensuing silence Krohn could hear from the noise in the corridor that courtroom 18 had adjourned for lunch. Seconds passed. Krohn remem-

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bered something he had read about Adolf Hitler: that at mass rallies he would pause for effect for up to three minutes. When Olsen continued he beat the rhythm with his finger, as if to drum every word and sentence into the listeners' brains.

'Those of you who are trying to pretend that there is not a racial struggle going on here are either blind or traitors.'

He drank water from the glass the court usher had placed in front of him.

The prosecutor broke in: 'And in this racial struggle you and your supporters, of whom there are a number in this court today, are the only ones who have the right to attack?'

Boos from the skinheads in the public gallery.

'We don't attack, we defend ourselves,' Olsen said. 'It's the right and duty of every race.'

A shout from the benches, which Olsen caught and passed on with a smile: 'In fact, even among people from other races there is race-conscious National Socialism.'

Laughter and scattered applause from the gallery. The judge asked for silence before looking enquiringly at the prosecutor.

'That was all,' Groth said.

'Does the defence counsel have any more questions?'

Krohn shook his head.

'Then I would like the first witness for the prosecution to be brought in.'

The prosecutor nodded to the usher, who opened the door at the back of the room. There was a scraping of chairs outside, the door opened wide and a large man strolled in. Krohn noted that the man was wearing a

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suit jacket which was slightly too small, black jeans and large Dr Martens boots. The close-shaven head and the slim athletic body suggested an age somewhere around the early thirties – although the bloodshot eyes with bags underneath and the pale complexion with thin capillaries bursting sporadically into small red deltas pointed more in the region of fifty.

'Police Officer Harry Hole?' the judge asked when the man had taken a seat in the witness box.

'Yes.'

'No home address given, I see?'

'Private.' Hole pointed with his thumb over his shoulder. 'They tried to break into my place.'

More boos.

'Have you ever made an affirmation, Police Officer Hole? Taken the oath, in other words?'

'Yes.'

Krohn's head wobbled like the nodding dogs some motorists like to keep on their parcel shelf. He began feverishly to flick through the documents.

'You investigate murders for Crime Squad, don't you?' Groth said. 'Why were you given this case?'

'Because we wrongly assessed the case.'

'Oh?'

'We didn't think that Ho Dai would survive. You usually don't with a smashed skull and parts of the insides on the outside.'

Krohn saw the faces of the associate judges wince involuntarily. But it didn't matter now. He had found the document with their names. And there it was: the mistake.

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3

Karl Johans Gate. 5 October 1999.

You're going to die, old chap.

The words were still ringing in the old man's ears when he walked down the steps to leave and stood still, blinded by the fierce autumn sun. As his pupils slowly shrank, he held on tight to the handrail and breathed in, slow and deep. He listened to the cacophony of cars, trams, the beeping sounds telling pedestrians they could cross. And voices – the excited, happy voices which hastened by to the accompaniment of the clatter of shoes. And music. Had he ever heard so much music? Nothing managed to drown the sound of the words though: *You're going to die, old chap.*

How many times had he stood here on the steps outside Dr Buer's surgery? Twice a year for forty years, that would make eighty times. Eighty normal days just like today, but never, not before today, had he noticed how much life there was in the streets, how much exhilaration, what voracious lust for life. It was October, but it felt like a day in May. The day peace broke out. Was he exaggerating? He could hear her voice, see her silhouette come running out of the sun, the outline of a face disappearing in a halo of white light.

You're going to die, old chap.

The whiteness took on colour and became Karl

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Johans gate. He arrived at the bottom step, stopped, looked to the right and then to the left as if he couldn't make up his mind which direction to take, and fell into a reverie. He gave a start as if someone had woken him and began to walk towards the Palace. His gait was hesitant, his eyes downcast and his gaunt figure stooped in the slightly oversized woollen coat.

'The cancer has spread,' Dr Buer had said.

'Right,' he had answered, looking at the doctor and wondering if that was something they learned at medical school, to take off their glasses when serious issues had to be talked about, or if it was something short-sighted doctors did to avoid looking patients in the eye. Dr Konrad Buer had begun to resemble his father as his hairline receded, and the bags under his eyes gave him a little of his father's aura of concern.

'In a nutshell?' the old man had asked in the voice of someone he had not heard in more than fifty years. They had been the hollow, rough, guttural sounds of a man with mortal dread quivering in his vocal cords.

'Yes, there is in fact a question about –'

'Please, doctor. I've looked death in the eye before.'

He had raised his voice, chosen words which forced it to stay firm, the way he wanted Dr Buer to hear them. The way he himself wanted to hear them.

The doctor's gaze had flitted across the table top, across the worn parquet floor and out of the dirty window. It had taken refuge out there for a while before returning and meeting his own. His hands had found a cloth to clean his glasses again and again.

'I know how you –'

'You know nothing, doctor.' The old man had heard himself utter a short, dry laugh. 'Don't take offence,

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Dr Buer, but I can guarantee you one thing: you know nothing.'

He had observed the doctor's discomfort and at the same time heard the tap dripping into the sink at the far end of the room. It was a new sound, and all of a sudden and incomprehensibly he seemed to have the hearing of a twenty-year-old.

Then Dr Buer had put his glasses back on, lifted a piece of paper as though the words he was going to say were written on it, cleared his throat and said: 'You're going to die, old chap.'

The old man would have preferred a little less familiarity.

He stopped by a gathering of people, where he heard a guitar being strummed and a voice singing a song that must have sounded old to everyone except him. He had heard it before, probably a quarter of a century ago, but to him it could have been yesterday. Everything was like that now – the further back in time it was, the closer and the clearer it seemed. He could remember things he hadn't thought of for years. Now he could close his eyes and see things projected on his retina that he had previously read about in his war diaries.

'You should have a year left, at any rate.'

One spring and one summer. He would be able to see every single yellowing leaf on the deciduous trees in Studenterlunden as if he were wearing new, stronger glasses. The same trees had stood there in 1945, or had they? They hadn't been very clear on that day, nothing had. The smiling faces, the furious faces, the shouts he barely heard, the car door being slammed shut and he might have had tears in his eyes because

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when he recalled the flags people were waving as they ran along the pavements, they were red and blurred. Their shouts: *The Crown Prince is back!*

He walked up the hill to the Palace where several people had collected to watch the changing of the guard. The echo of orders and the smack of rifle stock and boot heels reverberated against the pale yellow brick façade. There was the whirr of video cameras and he caught some German words. A young Japanese couple stood with their arms around each other, happily watching the show. He closed his eyes, tried to detect the smell of uniforms and gun oil. It was nonsense, of course; there was nothing here that smelled of his war.

He opened his eyes again. What did they know, these black-clad boy soldiers who were the social monarchy's parade-ground figures, performing symbolic actions they were too innocent to understand and too young to feel anything about. He thought about that day again, of the young Norwegians dressed as soldiers, or 'Swedish soldiers' as they had called them. In his eyes they had been tin soldiers; they hadn't known how to wear a uniform, even less how to treat a prisoner of war. They had been frightened and brutal; with cigarette in their mouths and their uniform caps at a rakish slant, they had clung to their newly acquired weapons and tried to overcome their fear by smacking their rifle stocks into the prisoners' backs.

'Nazi swine,' they had said as they hit them, to receive instant forgiveness for their sins.

He breathed in and savoured the warm autumn day, but at that moment the pain came. He staggered backwards. Water in his lungs. In twelve months' time, maybe less, the inflammation and the pus would

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produce water, which would collect in his lungs. That was said to be the worst.

You're going to die, old chap.

Then came the cough. It was so violent that those standing closest to him moved away involuntarily.

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4

Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Viktoria Terrasse. 5 October 1999.

The Under Secretary for Foreign Affairs, Bernt Brandhaug, strode down the corridor. He had left his office thirty seconds ago; in another forty-five he would be in the meeting room. He stretched his shoulders inside his jacket, felt that they more than filled it out, felt his back muscles strain against the material. *Latissimus dorsi* – the upper back muscles. He was sixty years old, but didn't look a day over fifty. Not that he was preoccupied with his appearance. He was well aware that he was an attractive man to look at, without needing to do very much more than the training that he loved anyway, as well as putting in a couple of sessions in the solarium in the winter and regularly plucking the grey hairs from what had become bushy eyebrows.

'Hi Lise!' he shouted as he passed the photocopier, and the young Foreign Office probationer jumped, managing only a wan smile before Brandhaug was round the next corner. Lise was a newly fledged lawyer and the daughter of a friend from university days. She had started only three weeks ago. And from that moment she had been aware that the Under Secretary, the highest civil servant in the building, knew who she

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was. Would he be able to have her? Probably. Not that it would happen. Necessarily.

He could already hear the buzz of voices before he opened the door. He looked at his watch. Seventy-five seconds. Then he was inside, casting a fleeting glimpse around the room to confirm that all the authorities summoned were represented.

'Well, well, so you're Bjarne Møller?' he shouted with a broad smile as he offered his hand across the table to a tall thin man sitting beside Anne Størksen, the Chief Constable.

'You're the PAS, aren't you? I hear you're running the roller-coaster leg of the Holmenkollen relay?'

This was one of Brandhaug's tricks. Coming by a little piece of information about people he met for the first time. Something that wasn't in their CV. It made them insecure. Using the acronym PAS – the internal abbreviation for *Politiavdelingssjef*, the head of Crime Squad – particularly pleased him. Brandhaug sat down, winked at his old friend Kurt Meirik, the head of *Politiets overvåkningstjeneste*, or POT, the Security Service, and studied the others sitting round the table.

As yet, no one knew who would take charge of the meeting as the representatives were equally high ranking, theoretically at least, coming from the Prime Minister's Office, Oslo police district, Norwegian Security Service, Crime Squad and Brandhaug's own Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Prime Minister's Office had called the meeting, but there was no doubt that Oslo police district, in the guise of Anne Størksen, and POT, in the shape of Kurt Meirik, wanted the operational responsibility when procedures were that far advanced. The Under Secretary of State from the Prime

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Minister's Office looked as if he envisaged taking charge.

Brandhaug closed his eyes and listened.

The nice-to-see-you conversations stopped, the buzz of voices slowly subsided and a table leg scraped on the floor. Not yet. There was the rustling of papers, the clicking of pens – at important meetings like these most heads of department had their personal note-takers with them in case at a later point they began to blame each other for things that had happened. Someone coughed, but it came from the wrong end of the room and apart from that it wasn't the kind of cough that preceded speaking. Sharp intake of breath. Someone spoke.

'Let's begin then,' Bernt Brandhaug said, opening his eyes.

Heads turned towards him. It was the same every time. A half-open mouth, the Under Secretary of State's; a wry smile from Anne Størksen showing that she understood what had taken place – but otherwise, blank faces looking at him without a hint of recognition that the battle was already over.

'Welcome to the first co-ordination meeting. Our task is to get four of the world's most important men in and out of Norway more or less in one piece.'

Polite chuckles from around the table.

'On Monday, 1 November, we will receive a visit from the PLO leader Yasser Arafat, the Israeli PM Ehud Barak, the Russian PM Vladimir Putin and, last but not least, the cherry on the cake: at 6.15 a.m., in exactly twenty-seven days' time, Air Force One, with the American President on board, will be landing at Gardemoen Airport, Oslo.'

Brandhaug's gaze moved from face to face down the

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table. It stopped at the new one, Bjarne Møller's.

'If it isn't foggy, that is,' he said, earning himself a laugh and noticing with satisfaction that Møller forgot his nervousness for a moment and laughed along with the others. Brandhaug responded with a smile, revealing his strong teeth which had become even whiter since his last cosmetic treatment at the dentist's.

'We still don't know exactly how many people are coming,' Brandhaug said. 'The President had an entourage of 2,000 in Australia and 1,700 in Copenhagen.'

Mumbles around the table.

'However, in my experience, a guesstimate of around 700 is probably more realistic.'

Brandhaug was quietly confident his 'guesstimate' would soon be confirmed as he had received a fax an hour before with a list of the 712 people coming.

'Some of you are probably wondering why the President needs so many people for a two-day summit meeting. The answer is simple. What we are talking about here is the good old-fashioned rhetoric of power. Seven hundred, if my assessment is correct, is precisely the number of people Kaiser Friedrich III had with him when he entered Rome in 1468 to show the Pope who the most powerful man in the world was.'

More laughter round the table. Brandhaug winked at Anne Størksen. He had found the reference in *Aftenposten*. He brought his two palms together.

'I don't need to tell you how short a time two months is, but it means that we're going to need daily co-ordination meetings at ten in this room. Until these four men are off our hands you'll just have to drop everything else. There's a bar on holidays and time off. And sick leave.

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Any questions before we go on?'

'Well, we think –' the Under Secretary of State began.

'That includes depressions,' Brandhaug interrupted, and Bjarne Møller couldn't help laughing out loud.

'Well, we –' the Under Secretary began again.

'Over to you, Meirik,' Brandhaug called.

'What?'

The Head of the Security Service (POT) raised his shiny pate and looked at Brandhaug.

'You wanted to say something about POT's threat assessment?' Brandhaug said.

'Oh that,' Meirik said. 'We've brought copies with us.'

Meirik was from Tromsø and spoke a strangely haphazard mixture of Tromsø dialect and standard Norwegian. He nodded to a woman sitting beside him. Brandhaug's eyes lingered on her. OK, she wasn't wearing make-up, and her short brown hair was cut in a bob and held in an unbecoming hairslide. And her suit, a blue woollen job, was downright dull. But even though she had made herself look exaggeratedly sober, in the way that professional women who were afraid of not being taken seriously often did, he liked what he saw. Brown, gentle eyes and high cheekbones gave her an aristocratic, almost un-Norwegian appearance. He had seen her before, but the haircut was new. What was her name again – it was something biblical – Rakel? Perhaps she was recently divorced. That might explain the new haircut. She leaned over the attaché case between her and Meirik, and Brandhaug's eyes automatically sought the neckline on her blouse, but it was buttoned too high to show him anything of interest. Did she have children of school age? Would she have

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any objections to renting a room in one of the city centre hotels during the day? Was she turned on by power?

Brandhaug: 'Just give us a short resumé, Meirik.'

'Fine.'

'I would like to say one thing first . . .' the Under Secretary of State said.

'Shall we let Meirik finish first? Then you can say as much as you like afterwards, Bjørn.'

That was the first time Brandhaug had used the Under Secretary's Christian name.

'POT considers there to be a risk of an attack or the infliction of other damage,' Meirik said.

Brandhaug smiled. Out of the corner of his eye he saw the Chief Constable do the same. Smart girl, law degree and flawless administrative record. Perhaps he ought to invite her and her husband to a trout supper one evening. Brandhaug and his wife lived in a spacious timber house in the green belt in Nordberg. In winter you had only to put on your skis outside the garage and you were off. Brandhaug loved the house. His wife had thought it was too black. She said that all the dark wood made her afraid, and she didn't like the forest being around them, either. Yes, an invitation to supper. Solid timber, and fresh trout he'd caught himself. They were the right signals to give.

'I may remind you that four American presidents have died as a result of assassinations. Abraham Lincoln in 1865, James Garfield in 1881, John F. Kennedy in 1963 and . . .'

He turned to the woman with the high cheekbones who mouthed the name.

'Oh, yes, William McKinley. In . . .'

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'1901,' Brandhaug said with a warm smile and a glance at his watch.

'Exactly. But there have been a great many more attempts over the years. Harry Truman, Gerald Ford and Ronald Reagan were all targets of serious attacks while they were in office.'

Brandhaug cleared his throat: 'You're forgetting that the present incumbent was shot at a few years ago. Or at least his house was.'

'That's true. But we don't include that type of incident as there would be too many. I doubt that any American president over the last twenty years has completed his term of office without at least ten attempts on his life being uncovered and the perpetrator arrested. The media were none the wiser.'

'Why not?'

Crime Squad chief Bjarne Møller imagined he had only thought the question and was as surprised as the others when he heard his own voice. He swallowed when he noticed the heads turning and tried to keep his eyes on Meirik, but couldn't help them wandering in Brandhaug's direction. The Under Secretary for Foreign Affairs winked reassuringly.

'Well, as you know, it's usual to keep attempted assassinations under wraps,' Meirik said, taking off his glasses. They looked like the glasses which go darker as you go into the sun, worn by Horst Tappert in the Oberinspektor Derrick role, very popular with German mail-order catalogues.

'Attempted assassinations have proved to be at least as contagious as suicides. And besides, we in the field don't want to reveal our working practices.'

'What plans have been made regarding surveillance?'

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the Under Secretary of State asked.

The woman with the cheekbones passed Meirik a sheet and he put on his glasses again and read it.

'Eight men from the Secret Service are coming on Thursday. We will then start going through the hotels and the route, vet all those who will come into contact with the President and train the Norwegian police officers we're going to deploy. We'll need to call in units from Romerike, Asker and Bærum.'

'And they will be used to what end?' Brandhaug asked.

'Mainly observation duties. Around the American embassy, the hotel where the entourage will be staying, the car park –'

'In short, all the places where the President isn't.'

'POT will take care of that. With the American Secret Service.'

'I thought you didn't like doing surveillance jobs, Kurt?' Brandhaug said with a smirk.

The memory caused Kurt Meirik to grimace. During the Mining Conference in Oslo in 1998, POT had refused to offer surveillance on the basis of their own threat assessment. They concluded it was 'medium to low security risk'. On the second day of the conference the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration drew the conference's attention to the fact that one of the Norwegian drivers POT had cleared for the Croat delegation was a Bosnian Muslim. He had come to Norway in the 1970s and had Norwegian citizenship for many years. But in 1993 both his parents and four members of his family had been butchered by Croats at Mostar, in Bosnia Herzegovina. When the man's flat was searched they had found two hand-grenades and

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a suicide letter. Of course, the press had never got a sniff of it, but the repercussions reached government level, and Kurt Meirik's career had hung in the balance until Bernt Brandhaug himself had intervened. The matter had been hushed up after the police inspector in charge of the security clearances had resigned. Brandhaug couldn't remember the man's name, but ever since then his working relations with Meirik had been excellent.

'Bjørn!' Brandhaug exclaimed, clapping his hands together. 'Now we're all keen to hear what it was you wanted to tell us. Come on!'

Brandhaug scanned the room, swiftly moving past Meirik's assistant, but not so swiftly that he didn't notice her looking at him. That is, she was looking in his direction, but her eyes were expressionless, blank. He considered whether to return her look, to see what expression would emerge when she realised what he was doing, but he dropped the idea. What was her name? Rakel, wasn't it?

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5

Palace Gardens. 5 October 1999.

'Are you dead?'

The old man opened his eyes and saw the outline of a head standing over him, but the face merged into a corona of white light. Was it her? Had she come to collect him already?

'Are you dead?' the bright voice repeated.

He didn't answer because he didn't know whether his eyes were open or he was simply dreaming. Or, as the voice asked him, if he was dead.

'What's your name?'

The head moved and he saw the tips of trees and blue sky. He *had* been dreaming. Something in a poem. *German bombers are overhead*. Nordahl Grieg. The King fleeing to England. His pupils began to adjust to the light again and he remembered he had sat down on the grass in the Palace Gardens to rest. He must have fallen asleep. A little boy crouched beside him and a pair of brown eyes looked at him from under a black fringe.

'My name's Ali,' the boy said.

A Pakistani boy? He had a strange, turned-up nose.

'Ali means God,' the boy said. 'What does your name mean?'

'My name's Daniel,' the old man said with a smile.

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'It's a name from the Bible. It means "God is my judge".'

The boy looked at him.

'So, you're Daniel?'

'Yes,' the man said.

The boy didn't take his eyes off him and the old man felt disconcerted. Perhaps the young boy thought he was homeless as he was lying there fully clothed, using his woollen coat as a rug in the hot sun.

'Where's your mother?' he asked, to avoid the boy's probing stare.

'Over there.' The boy turned and pointed.

Two robust, dark-skinned women were sitting on the grass some distance away. Four children were frolicking around them, laughing.

'Then I'm the judge of you, I am,' the boy said.

'What?'

'Ali is God, isn't he? And God is the judge of Daniel. And my name's Ali and you're –'

The old man had stuck out his hand and tweaked Ali's nose. The boy squealed with delight. He saw the heads of the two women turn; one was getting to her feet so he let go.

'Your mother, Ali,' he said, motioning with his head in the direction of the approaching woman.

'Mummy!' the boy shouted. 'Look, I'm the judge of that man.'

The woman shouted to the boy in Urdu. The old man smiled, but the woman shunned him and looked sternly at her son, who finally obeyed and padded over to her. When they turned, her gaze swept across and past him as if he were invisible. He wanted to explain to her that he was not a bum, to tell her he'd had a

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hand in shaping society. He had invested in it, in spades, given everything he had until there was no more to give, apart from giving way, giving in, giving up. But he was unable to do that, he was tired and simply wanted to go home. Rest, then he would see. It was time some others paid.

He didn't hear the little boy shouting after him as he was leaving.

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6

Police HQ, Grønland. 9 October 1999.

Ellen Gjelten looked up at the man who burst through the door.

'Good morning, Harry.'

'Fuck!'

Harry kicked the waste-paper basket beside his desk and it smashed into the wall next to Ellen's chair and rolled across the linoleum floor, spreading its contents everywhere: discarded attempts at reports (the Ekeberg killing); an empty pack of twenty cigarettes (Camel, tax free sticker); a green *Go'morn* yoghurt pot; *Dagsavisen*; a used cinema ticket (*Filmteateret*: *Fear & Loathing in Las Vegas*); a used pools coupon; a music magazine (*MOJO*, no. 69, February 1999, with a picture of Queen on the cover); a bottle of Coke (plastic, half-litre); and a yellow Post-it with a phone number he had considered ringing for a while.

Ellen looked up from her PC and studied the contents of the bin on the floor.

'Are you chucking the *MOJO* out, Harry?' she asked.

'Fuck!' Harry repeated. He wrestled off his tight suit jacket and threw it across the twenty metre square office he and Ellen Gjelten shared. The jacket hit the coat stand, but slid down to the floor.

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'What's up?' Ellen asked, reaching out a hand to stop the swaying coat stand from falling.

'I found this in my pigeon-hole.'

Harry waved a document in the air.

'Looks like a court sentence.'

'Yep.'

'Dennis Kebab case?'

'Right.'

'And?'

'They gave Sverre Olsen the full whack. Three and a half years.'

'Jesus. You ought to be in a stupendous mood.'

'I was, for about a minute. Until I read this.'

Harry held up a fax.

'Well?'

'When Krohn got his copy of the sentence this morning, he responded by sending us a warning that he was going to pursue a claim of procedural error.'

Ellen made a face as if she had something nasty in her mouth.

'Ugh.'

'He wants the whole sentence quashed. You won't fucking believe it, but that slippery Krohn guy has screwed us on the oath.' Harry stood in front of the window. 'The associate judges only have to take the oath the first time they act as judges, but it must take place in the courtroom before the case begins. Krohn noticed that one associate judge was new. And that she didn't take her oath in the courtroom.'

'It's called affirmation.'

'Right. Now it turns out that according to the certificate of sentence the judge had attended to the affirmation of the associate judge in his office, just before

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the case started. He blames lack of time and new rules.'

Harry crumpled up the fax and threw it in a wide arc, missing Ellen's waste-paper basket by half a metre.

'And the result?' Ellen asked, kicking the fax to Harry's half of the office.

'The conviction will be deemed invalid and Sverre Olsen will be a free man for at least eighteen months until the case comes up again. And the rule of thumb is that the sentence will be a great deal milder because of the strain which the waiting period inflicts on the accused blah, blah, blah. With eight months already served in custody, it's more than bloody likely that Sverre Olsen is already a free man.'

Harry wasn't speaking to Ellen; she knew all the ins and outs of the case. He was speaking to his own reflection in the window, articulating the words to hear if they made any sense. He drew both hands across a sweaty skull, where until recently close-cropped blond hair had bristled. There was a simple reason for him having had the rest shaved off: last week he had been recognised again. A young guy, in a black woollen hat, Nikes and such large baggy trousers that the crotch hung between his knees, had come over to him while his pals sniggered in the background and asked if Harry was 'that Bruce Willis type guy in Australia'. It was three – three! – years ago since his face had decorated the front pages of newspapers and he had made a fool of himself on TV shows talking about the serial killer he had shot in Sydney. Harry had immediately gone and shaved off his hair. Ellen had suggested a beard.

'The worst thing is that I could swear that lawyer bastard had a draft appeal ready before the sentence was passed. He could have said something and the

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affirmation could have been taken there and then, but he sat there, rubbing his hands and waiting.'

Ellen shrugged her shoulders.

'That sort of thing happens. Good work by the defence counsel. Something has to be sacrificed on the altar of law and order. Pull yourself together, Harry.'

She said it with a mixture of sarcasm and sober statement of fact.

Harry rested his forehead against the cooling glass. Another one of those unexpectedly warm October days. He wondered where Ellen, the fresh, young policewoman with the pale, doll-like, sweet face, the little mouth and eyes as round as a ball, had developed such a tough exterior. She was a girl from a middle-class home, in her own words, an only child and spoiled rotten, who had even gone to a girl's boarding school in Switzerland. Who knows? Perhaps that *was* a tough enough upbringing.

Harry laid back his head and exhaled. Then he undid one of his shirt buttons.

'More, more,' Ellen whispered as she clapped encouragement.

'In neo-Nazi circles they call him Batman.'

'Got it. *Baseball* bat.'

'Not the Nazi – the lawyer.'

'Right. Interesting. Does that mean he's good-looking, rich, barking mad and has a six-pack and a cool car?'

Harry laughed. 'You should have your own TV show, Ellen. It's because Batman always wins. Besides, he's married.'

'Is that the only minus?'

'That . . . and him making monkeys of us every

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time,' Harry said, pouring himself a cup of the home-blended coffee Ellen had brought with her when she moved into the office two years ago. The snag was that Harry's palate could no longer tolerate the usual slop.

'Supreme Court judge?' she asked.

'Before he's forty.'

'Thousand kroner he isn't.'

'Done.'

They laughed and toasted with their cardboard cups.

'Can I have that *MOJO* magazine then?' she asked.

'There are pictures of Freddie Mercury's ten worst centrefold poses. Bare chest, arms akimbo and buck teeth sticking out. The full whammy. There you are.'

'I like Freddie Mercury, I do. Liked.'

'I didn't say I didn't like him.'

The blue, punctured office chair, which had long been set at the lowest notch, screamed in protest as Harry leaned back, lost in thought. He picked up a yellow Post-it with Ellen's writing on from the telephone in front of him.

'What's this?'

'You can read, can't you? Møller wants you.'

Harry trotted down the corridor, imagining as he went the pursed mouth and the two deep furrows the boss would get when he heard that Sverre Olsen had walked yet again.

By the photocopier a young, rosy-cheeked girl instantly raised her eyes and smiled as Harry passed. He didn't manage a return smile. Presumably one of the office girls. Her perfume was sweet and heavy, and simply irritated him. He looked at the second hand on his watch.

So perfume had started irritating him now. What

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had got into him? Ellen had said he lacked natural buoyancy, or whatever it was that meant most people could struggle to the surface again. After his return from Bangkok he had been down for so long that he had considered giving up ever returning to the surface. Everything had been cold and dark, and all his impressions were somehow dulled. As if he were deeply immersed in water. It had been so wonderfully quiet. When people talked to him the words had been like bubbles of air coming out of their mouths, hurrying upwards and away. So that was what it was like to drown, he had thought, and waited. But nothing happened. It was only a vacuum. That was fine, though. He had survived.

Thanks to Ellen.

She had stepped in for him in those first weeks after his return when he'd had to throw in the towel and go home. And she had made sure that he didn't go to bars, ordered him to breathe out when he was late for work, after which she declared him fit or unfit accordingly. Had sent him home a couple of times and then kept quiet about it. It had taken time, but Harry had nothing particular to do. And Ellen had nodded with satisfaction on the first Friday they could confirm that he had turned up sober for work on five consecutive days.

In the end he had asked her straight out. Why, with police college and a law degree behind her and her whole life in front of her, had she voluntarily put this millstone around her neck? Didn't she realise that it wouldn't do her career any good? Did she have a problem finding normal, successful friends?

She had looked at him with a serious expression and answered that she only did it to soak up his experi-

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ence. He was the best detective they had in Crime Squad. Rubbish, of course, but he had nonetheless felt flattered that she would bother to say so. Besides, Ellen was such an enthusiastic, ambitious detective that it was impossible not to be infected. For the last six months Harry had even begun to do good work again. Some of it even excellent. Such as on the Sverre Olsen case.

Ahead of him was Møller's door. Harry nodded in passing to a uniformed officer who pretended not to see him.

If he had been a contestant on Swedish TV's *The Robinson Expedition*, Harry thought, it would have taken them no more than a day to notice his bad karma and send him home. Send him home? My God, he was beginning to think in the same terminology as the shit TV3 programmes. That's what happened when you spent five hours every night in front of the TV. The idea was that if he was locked up in front of the goggle box in Sofies gate, at least he wouldn't be sitting in Schrøder's café.

He knocked twice immediately beneath the sign on the door: Bjarne Møller, PAS.

'Come in!'

Harry looked at his watch. Seventy-five seconds.

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7

Møller's Office. 9 October 1999.

Inspector Bjarne Møller was lying rather than sitting in the chair, and a pair of long limbs stuck out between the desk legs. He had his hands folded behind his head – a beautiful specimen of what early race researchers called 'long skulls' – and a telephone gripped between ear and shoulder. His hair was cut in a kind of close crop, which Hole had recently compared with Kevin Costner's hairstyle in *The Bodyguard*. Møller hadn't seen *The Bodyguard*. He hadn't been to the cinema in fifteen years as fate had furnished him with an oversized sense of responsibility, too few hours, two children and a wife who only partly understood him.

'Let's go for that then,' Møller said, putting down the phone and looking at Harry across a desk weighed down with documents, overflowing ashtrays and paper cups. On the desktop a photograph of two boys dressed as Red Indians marked a kind of logical centre amid the chaos.

'There you are, Harry.'

'Here I am, boss.'

'I've been to a meeting at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in connection with the summit in November here in Oslo. The US President is coming . . . well, you read papers, don't you. Coffee, Harry?'

Møller had stood up and a couple of seven-league

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strides had already taken him to a filing cabinet on which, balanced atop a pile of papers, a coffee machine was coughing up a viscous substance.

'Thanks boss, but I –'

It was too late and Harry took the steaming cup.

'I'm especially looking forward to a visit from the Secret Service, with whom I'm sure we will have a cordial relationship as we get to know each other better.'

Møller had never quite learned to handle irony. That was just one of the things Harry appreciated about his boss.

Møller drew in his knees until they supported the bottom of the table. Harry leaned back to get the crumpled pack of Camels from his trouser pocket and raised an enquiring eyebrow at Møller, who quickly took the hint and pushed the brimming ashtray towards him.

'I'll be responsible for security along the roads to and from Gardemoen. As well as the President, there will be Barak –'

'Barak?'

'Ehud Barak. Prime Minister of Israel.'

'Jeez, so there's another fantastic Oslo agreement on the way, then?'

Møller stared despondently at the blue column of smoke rising to the ceiling.

'Don't tell me you haven't heard about it, Harry. Or I'll be even more worried about you than I already am. It was on all the front pages last week.'

Harry shrugged.

'Unreliable paper boy. Inflicting serious gaps in my general knowledge. A grave handicap to my social life.' He took another cautious sip of coffee, but then gave up and pushed it away. 'And my love life.'

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'Really?' Møller eyed Harry with an expression suggesting he didn't know whether to relish or dread what was coming next.

'Of course. Who would find a man in his mid-thirties, who knows all the details about the lives of the people on *The Robinson Expedition* but can hardly name any head of state, or the Israeli President, sexy?'

'Prime Minister.'

'There you are. Now you know what I mean.'

Møller stifled a laugh. He had a tendency to laugh too easily. And a soft spot for the somewhat anguished officer with big ears that stuck out from the close-cropped cranium like two colourful butterfly wings. Even though Harry had caused Møller more trouble than was good for him. As a newly promoted PAS he had learned that the first commandment for a civil servant with career plans was to guard your back. When Møller cleared his throat to put the worrying questions he had made up his mind to ask, and dreaded asking, he first of all knitted his eyebrows to show Harry that his concern was of a professional and not an amicable nature.

'I hear you're still spending your time sitting in Schrøder's, Harry.'

'Less than ever, boss. There's so much good stuff on TV.'

'But you're still sitting and drinking?'

'They don't like you to stand.'

'Cut it out. Are you drinking again?'

'Minimally.'

'How minimally?'

'They'll throw me out if I drink any less.'

This time Møller couldn't hold back his laughter. 'I need three liaison officers to secure the road,' he said.

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‘Each will have ten men at their disposal from various police districts in Akershus, plus a couple of cadets from the final year at police college. I thought Tom Waaler . . .’

Waaler. Racist bastard and directly in line for the soon-to-be-announced inspector’s job. Harry had heard enough about Waaler’s professional activities to know that they confirmed all the prejudices the public might have about the police. Apart from one: unfortunately Waaler was not stupid. His successes as a detective were so impressive that even Harry had to concede he deserved the inevitable promotion.

‘And Weber . . .’

‘The old sourpuss?’

‘. . . and you, Harry.’

‘Say that again?’

‘You heard me.’

Harry pulled a face.

‘Have you any objections?’ Møller asked.

‘Of course I have.’

‘Why? This is an honourable mission, Harry. A feather in your cap.’

‘Is it?’ Harry stabbed out his cigarette furiously in the ashtray. ‘Or is it the next stage in the rehabilitation process?’

‘What do you mean?’ Bjarne Møller looked wounded.

‘I know that you defied good advice and had a run-in with a few people when you took me back into the fold after Bangkok. And I’m eternally grateful to you for that. But what is this? *Liaison Officer?* Sounds like an attempt to prove to the doubters that you were right, and they were wrong. That Hole is on his way up, that he can be given responsibility and all that.’

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'Well?' Bjarne Møller had put his hands behind the long skull again.

'Well?' Harry aped. 'Is that what's behind it? Am I just a pawn again?'

Møller gave a sigh of despair.

'We're all pawns, Harry. There's always a hidden agenda. This is no worse than anything else. Do a good job and it'll be good for both of us. Is that so damned difficult?'

Harry sniffed, started to say something, caught himself, took a fresh run-up, then abandoned the idea. He flicked a new cigarette out of the pack.

'It's just that I feel like a bloody horse people bet on. And I loathe responsibility.'

Harry let the cigarette hang loosely from his lips without lighting it.

He owed Møller this favour, but what if he screwed up? Had Møller thought about that? *Liaison Officer*. He had been on the wagon for a while now, but he still had to be careful, take one day at a time. Hell, wasn't that one of the reasons he became a detective? To avoid having people underneath him, and to have as few as possible above him? Harry bit into the cigarette filter.

They heard voices out in the corridor by the coffee machine. It sounded like Waaler. Then peals of laughter. The new office girl perhaps. He still had the smell of her perfume in his nostrils.

'Fuck,' Harry said. *Fu-uck*. With two syllables, which made his cigarette jump twice in his mouth.

Møller had closed his eyes during Harry's moment of reflection and now he half-opened them. 'Can I take that as a yes?'

Harry stood up and walked out without saying a word.

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Toll Barrier at Alnabru.
1 November 1999.

The grey bird glided into Harry's field of vision and was on its way out again. He increased the pressure on the trigger of his .38 calibre Smith & Wesson while staring over the edge of his gun sights at the stationary back behind the glass. Someone had been talking about slow time on TV yesterday.

The car horn, Ellen. Press the damn horn. He has to be a Secret Service agent.

Slow time, like on Christmas Eve before Father Christmas comes.

The first motorcycle was level with the toll booth, and the robin was still a black dot on the outer margin of his vision. The time in the electric chair before the current . . .

Harry squeezed the trigger. One, two, three times.

And then time accelerated explosively. The coloured glass went white, spraying shards over the tarmac, and he caught sight of an arm disappearing under the line of the booth before the whisper of expensive American tyres was there – and gone.

He stared towards the booth. A couple of the yellow leaves swirled up by the motorcade were still floating through the air before settling on a dirty grey grass

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verge. He stared towards the booth. It was silent again, and for a moment all he could think was that he was standing at an ordinary Norwegian toll barrier on an ordinary Norwegian autumn day, with an ordinary Esso petrol station in the background. It even smelled of ordinary cold morning air: rotting leaves and car exhaust. And it struck him: perhaps none of this has really happened.

He was still staring towards the booth when the relentless lament of the Volvo car horn behind him sawed the day in two.

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Part Two

GENESIS

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9

1942.

The flares lit up the grey night sky, making it resemble a filthy top canvas cast over the drab, bare landscape surrounding them on all sides. Perhaps the Russians had launched an offensive, perhaps it was a bluff; you never really knew until it was over. Gudbrand was lying on the edge of the trench with both legs drawn up beneath him, holding his gun with both hands and listening to the distant hollow booms as he watched the flares go down. He knew he shouldn't watch the flares. You would become night-blind and unable to see the Russian snipers wriggling out in the snow in no man's land. But he couldn't see them anyway, had never seen a single one; he just shot on command. As he was doing now.

'There he is!'

It was Daniel Gudeson, the only town boy in the unit. The others came from places with names ending in -dal. Some of the dales were broad and some were deep, deserted and dark, such as Gudbrand's home ground. But not Daniel. Not Daniel of the pure, high forehead, the sparkling blue eyes and the white smile. He was like a recruitment-poster cut-out. He came from somewhere with horizons.

'Two o'clock, left of the scrub,' Daniel said.

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Scrub? There can't be any scrub in the shell-crater landscape here. Yes, there was because the others were shooting. Crack, bang, swish. Every fifth bullet went off in a parabola, like a firefly. Tracer fire. The bullet tore off into the dark, but it seemed suddenly to tire because its velocity decreased and then it sank somewhere out there. That was what it looked like at any rate. Gudbrand thought it impossible for such a slow bullet to kill anyone.

'He's getting away!' yelled an embittered, hate-filled voice. It was Sindre Fauke. His face almost merged with his camouflage uniform and the small, close-set eyes stared out into the dark. He came from a remote farm high up in the Gudbrandsdalen region, probably some narrow enclave where the sun didn't shine since he was so pale. Gudbrand didn't know why Sindre had volunteered to fight on the Eastern Front, but he had heard that his parents and both brothers had joined the fascist *Nasjonal Samling* Party, and that they went around wearing bands on their arms and reporting fellow villagers they suspected of being partisans. Daniel said that one day the informers and all those who exploited the war for their own advantage would get a taste of the whip.

'No, he's not,' Daniel said in a low voice, his chin against his gun. 'No bloody Bolshevik gets away.'

'He knows we've seen him,' Sindre said. 'He'll get into that hollow down there.'

'No, he won't,' Daniel said and took aim.

Gudbrand stared out into the grey-white dark. White snow, white camouflage uniforms, white fire. The skies are lit up again. All sorts of shadows flit across the crust of the snow. Gudbrand stared up again. Yellow

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and red flashes on the horizon, followed by several distant rumbles. It was as unreal as being at the cinema, except that it was thirty degrees below and there was no one to put your arm around. Perhaps it really was an offensive this time?

'You're too slow, Gudeson. He's gone.' Sindre spat in the snow.

'No, he hasn't,' Daniel said even quieter and took aim, and then again. Almost no frost smoke was coming out of his mouth any longer.

Then, a high-pitched, screaming whistle, a warning scream, and Gudbrand threw himself into the ice-covered bottom of the trench, with both hands over his head. The ground shook. It rained frozen brown clumps of earth; one hit Gudbrand's helmet and he watched it slide off in front of him. He waited until he was sure there was no more to come, then shoved his helmet back on. It had gone quiet and a fine white veil of snow particles stuck to his face. They say you never hear the shell that hits you, but Gudbrand had seen the result of enough whistling shells to know this wasn't true. A flare lit up the trench; he saw the others' white faces and their shadows as they scrambled towards him, keeping to the side of the trench and their heads well down, as the light gradually faded. But where was Daniel? Daniel!

'Daniel!'

'Got 'im,' Daniel said, still lying on the edge of the trench. Gudbrand couldn't believe his own ears.

'What did you say?'

Daniel slid down into the trench and shook off the snow and earth. He had a broad grin on his face.

'No Russian arsehole will be able to shoot at our

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