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JO NESBO

PHANTOM

A HARRY HOLE THRILLER

Jo Nesbo is one of the world's bestselling crime writers. When commissioned to write a memoir about life on the road with his band, Di Derre, he instead came up with the plot for his first Harry Hole crime novel, *The Bat*. His books *The Leopard*, *Phantom*, *Police*, *The Son*, *The Thirst*, *Knife* and *Killing Moon* have all since topped the *Sunday Times* charts. He's an international number one bestseller and his books are published in 50 languages, selling over 60 million copies around the world.

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JO NESBO

Phantom

TRANSLATED FROM THE NORWEGIAN BY
Don Bartlett

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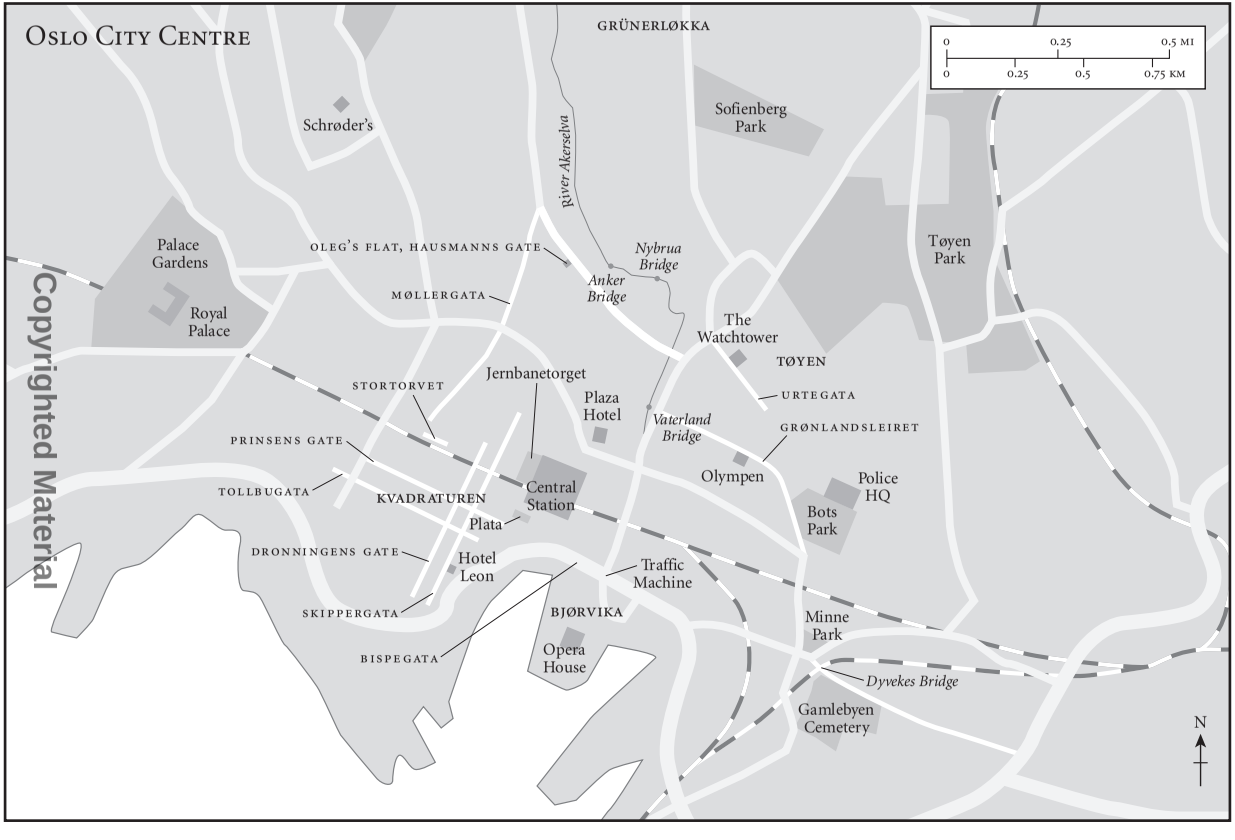

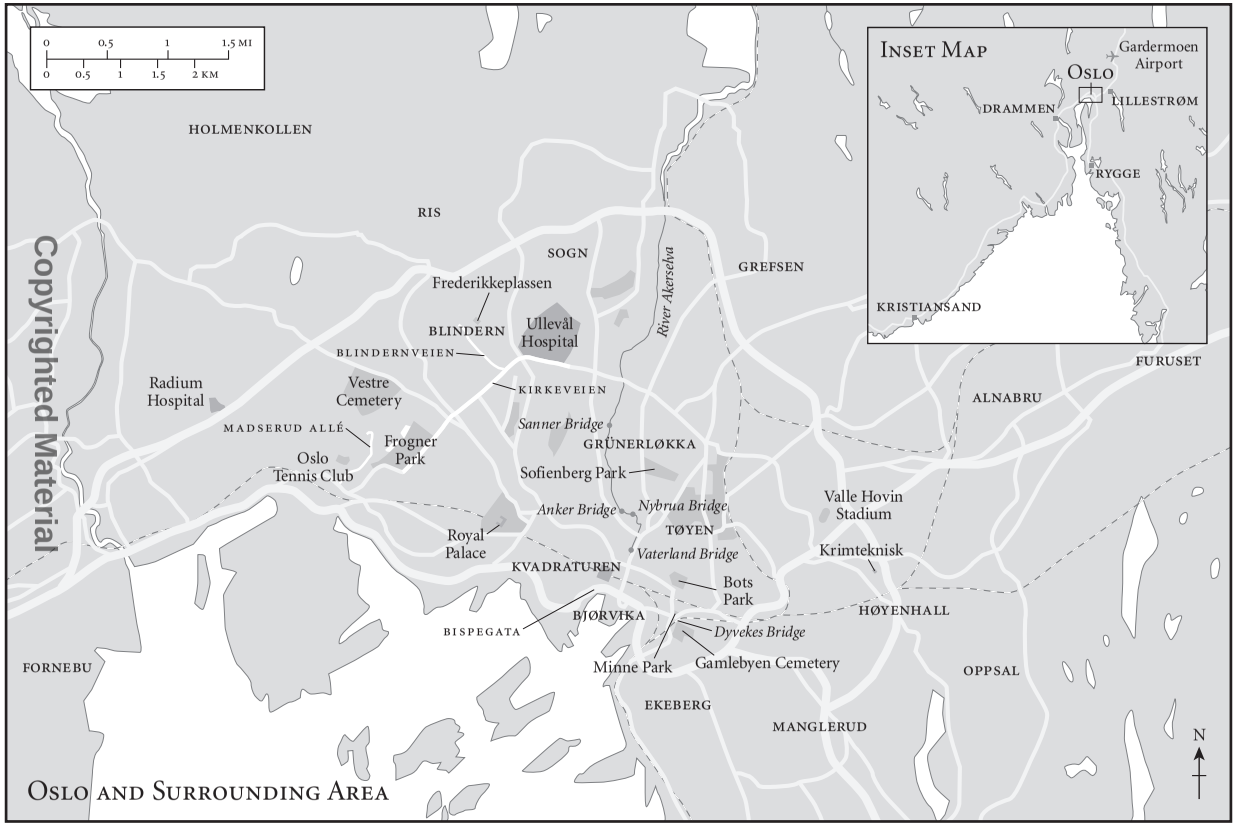

Oslo and Surrounding Area

Part One

1

The squeals were calling her. Like acoustic spears they pierced all the other noises of the night in Oslo city centre: the regular drone of cars outside the window, the distant siren that rose and fell, and the church bells that had begun to chime nearby. She went on the hunt for food. She ran her nose over the filthy linoleum on the kitchen floor. Registering and sorting the sounds as quick as lightning into three categories: edible, threatening or irrelevant for survival. The pungent smell of grey cigarette ash. The sugary sweet aroma of blood on a piece of cotton wool. The bitter odour of beer on the inside of a bottle cap, Ringnes lager. The gas molecules of sulphur, saltpetre and carbon dioxide filtered up from an empty metal cartridge case designed for a lead bullet of nine by eighteen millimetres, also called a Makarov after the gun to which the calibre was originally adapted. Smoke from a still-smouldering cigarette with a yellow filter and black paper, bearing the Russian imperial eagle. The tobacco was edible. And there: a stench of alcohol, leather, grease and tarmac. A shoe. She sniffed it. And decided it was not as easy to eat as the jacket in the wardrobe, the

one that smelt of petrol and the rotten animal from which it was made. Then the rat brain concentrated on how to force its way through what lay in front of her. She had tried from both sides, tried to squeeze past, but, despite the fact that she was only twenty-five centimetres long and weighed well under half a kilo, she couldn't. The obstacle lay on its side with its back to the wall blocking the entrance to the nest, and her eight newly born, blind, hairless babies were screaming ever louder for her milk. The mountain of flesh smelt of salt, sweat and blood. It was a human body. A living human being; her sensitive ears could detect the faint heartbeats between her babies' hungry squeals.

She was frightened, but she had no choice. Feeding her young took precedence over all dangers, all exertions, all her other instincts. Then she stood with her nose in the air waiting for the solution to come to her.

The church bells were ringing in time with the human heart now. One beat, two. Three, four . . .

She bared her rat teeth.

July. Shit. You should not die in July. Is that really church bells I can hear, or were there hallucinogens in the bloody bullets? OK, so it stops here. And what sodding difference does it make? Here or there. Now or later. But did I really deserve to die in July? With the birds singing, bottles clinking, laughter from down by the Akerselva and fricking summer merriment right outside your window? Did I deserve to be lying on the floor of an infected junkie pit with an extra orifice in my body, from which it all runs out: life, seconds and flashbacks of everything that led me here?

Everything, big and small, the whole bundle of fortuitous and semi-determined events; is that me, is that everything, is that my life? I had plans, didn't I? And now it is no more than a bag of dust, a joke without a punchline, so short that I could have told it before that insane bell stopped ringing. Fires of hell! No one told me it would hurt so much to die. Are you there now, Dad? Don't go, not now. Listen, the joke goes like this: my name's Gusto. I lived to the age of nineteen. You were a bad guy who porked a bad woman and nine months later I popped out and was shipped to a foster-family before I could say 'Dad'! And there I caused as much trouble as I could. They just wrapped the suffocating care blanket around even tighter and asked me what I wanted to calm me down. A fricking ice cream? They had no bloody idea that people like you and me would end up shot at some point, eradicated like a pest, that we spread contagion and decay and would multiply like rats if we got the chance. They have only themselves to blame. But they also want things. Everyone wants something. I was thirteen the first time I saw in my foster-mother's eyes what she wanted.

'You're so handsome, Gusto,' she said. She had entered the bathroom – I had left the door open, and refrained from turning on the shower so that the sound wouldn't warn her. She stood there for exactly a second too long before going out. And I laughed, because now I knew. That is my talent, Dad: I can see what people want. Have I taken after you? Were you like that as well? After she had gone out I looked at myself in the large mirror. She wasn't the first to say it: that I was handsome. I had developed earlier than the other boys. Tall, slim, already broad-shouldered and muscular. Hair so black it gleamed, as if all light bounced

off it. High cheekbones. Square chin. A big, greedy mouth, but with lips as full as a girl's. Smooth, tanned skin. Brown, almost black eyes. 'The brown rat', one of the boys in the class had called me. Didrik, think that was his name. He was going to be a concert pianist. I had turned fifteen, and he said it out loud in the classroom. 'That brown rat can't even read properly.'

I just laughed and, of course, I knew why he had said it. Knew what he wanted. Kamilla. He was secretly in love with her; she was not quite so secretly in love with me. At the class party I had had a grope to feel what she had under her jumper. Which was not a great deal. I had mentioned it to a couple of the boys and I suppose Didrik must have picked up on it, and decided to shut me out. Not that I was so bloody concerned about being 'in', but bullying is bullying. So I went to Tutu at the MC club, the bikers. I had already done a bit of hash dealing for them at school, and said that I needed some respect if I was going to do a decent job. Tutu said he would take care of Didrik. Later Didrik refused to explain to anyone how he had got two fingers caught under the top hinge of the boys' toilet door, but he never called me 'brown rat' again. And – right – he never became a concert pianist, either. Shit, this hurts so much! No, I don't need any consoling, Dad, I need a fix. One last shot and then I'll leave this world without any bother, I promise. There, the church bell has rung again. Dad?

2

It was almost midnight at Gardermoen, Oslo's principal airport, as SK-459 from Bangkok taxied into its allocated spot by Gate 46. Captain Tord Schultz braked and brought the Airbus 340 to a complete halt; then he quickly switched off the fuel supply. The metallic whine from the jet engines sank through the frequencies to a good-natured growl before dying. Tord Schultz automatically noted the time, three minutes and forty seconds since touchdown, twelve minutes before the scheduled time. He and the first officer started the checklist for shutdown and parking as the plane was to remain there overnight. With the goods. He flicked through the briefcase containing the log. September 2011. In Bangkok it was still the rainy season and had been steaming hot as usual, and he had longed for home and the first cool autumn evenings. Oslo in September. There was no better place on earth. He filled in the form for the remaining fuel. The fuel bill. He had had to find a way of accounting for it. After flights from Amsterdam or Madrid he had flown faster than was economically reasonable, burning off thousands of kroner worth of fuel to make it. In the end, his boss had carpeted him.

'To make what?' he had yelled. 'You didn't have any passengers with connecting flights!'

'The world's most punctual airline,' Tord Schultz had mumbled, quoting the advertising slogan.

'The world's most economically fucked-up airline! Is that the best explanation you can come up with?'

Tord Schultz had shrugged. After all, he couldn't say the reason, that he had opened the fuel nozzles because there was something he himself had to make. The flight he had been put on, the one to Bergen, Trondheim or Stavanger. It was extremely important that *he* did the trip and not one of the other pilots.

He was too old for them to do anything else to him but rant and rave. He had avoided making serious errors, the organisation took care of him, and there were only a few years left before he reached the two fives, fifty-five, and would be retired whatever happened. Tord Schultz sighed. A few years to fix things, to avert ending up as the world's most economically fucked-up pilot.

He signed the log, got up and left the cockpit to flash his row of pearly-white pilot teeth set in his tanned pilot face to the passengers. The smile that would tell them that he was Mr Confidence in person. Pilot. The professional title that had once made him something in other people's eyes. He had seen it, how people, men and women, young and old, once the magic word 'pilot' had been enunciated, had looked at him and discovered not only the charisma, the nonchalance, the boyish charm, but also the captain's dynamism and cold precision, the superior intellect and the courage of a man who defied physical laws and the innate fears of mere mortals. But that was a long time ago. Now they regarded him as the bus driver he was and asked

him what the cheapest tickets to Las Palmas were, and why there was more leg room on Lufthansa.

To hell with them. To hell with them all.

Tord Schultz stood at the exit next to the flight attendants, straightened up and smiled, said 'Welcome back, Miss' in broad Texan, the way they had learned at flying school in Sheppard. Received a smile of acknowledgement. There had been a time when he could have arranged a meeting in the arrivals hall with such a smile. And indeed had done. From Cape Town to Alta. Women. Many women. That had been the problem. And the solution. Women. Many women. New women. And now? His hairline was receding beneath the pilot's cap, but the tailor-made uniform emphasised his tall, broad-shouldered physique. That was what he had blamed for not getting into fighter jets at flying school, and ending up as a cargo pilot on the Hercules, the workhorse of the sky. He had told them at home he had been a couple of centimetres too long in the spine, that the cockpits of Starfighters, F-5s and F-16s, disqualified all but dwarfs. The truth was he hadn't measured up to the competition. His body was all he had managed to maintain from those times, the only thing which hadn't fallen apart, which hadn't crumbled. Like his marriages. His family. Friends. How had it happened? Where had he been when it happened? Presumably in a hotel room in Cape Town or Alta, with cocaine up his nose to compensate for the potency-killing drinks at the bar, and his dick in not such a Welcome-Back-Miss to compensate for everything he was not and never would be.

Tord Schultz's gaze fell on a man coming towards him down the aisle. He walked with his head bent, yet still he towered over the other passengers. He was slim and broad-shouldered like himself. Younger though. Cropped blond

hair stood up like a brush. Looked Norwegian, but was hardly a tourist on his way home, more likely to be an expat with the subdued, almost grey tan typical of whites who had spent a long time in South-East Asia. The indisputably tailor-made brown linen suit gave an impression of quality, seriousness. Maybe a businessman. Thanks to a not altogether thriving concern, he travelled economy class. But it was neither the suit nor his height that had caused Tord Schultz's gaze to fix on this person. It was the scar. It went from the left corner of his mouth and almost reached his ear, like a smile-shaped sickle. Grotesque and wonderfully dramatic.

'See you.'

Tord Schultz was startled, but did not manage to respond before the man had passed and was out of the plane. The voice had been rough and hoarse, which together with the bloodshot eyes suggested he had just woken up.

The plane was empty. The minibus with the cleaning staff stood parked on the runway as the crew left in a herd. Tord Schultz noticed that the small, thickset Russian was the first off the bus, watched him dash up the steps in his yellow high-visibility vest with the company logo, Solox.

See you.

Tord Schultz's brain repeated the words as he strode down the corridor to the flight crew centre.

'Didn't you have a boarding bag on top?' asked one of the flight attendants, pointing to Tord's Samsonite trolley. He couldn't remember what her name was. Mia? Maja? At any rate he had fucked her during a stopover once last century. Or had he?

'No,' Tord Schultz said.

See you. As in 'see you again'? Or as in 'I can see you're looking at me'?

They walked past the partition by the entrance to the flight crew centre, where in theory there was room for a jack-in-the-box customs officer. Ninety-nine per cent of the time the seat behind the partition was empty, and he had never – not once in the thirty years he had worked for the airline – been stopped and searched.

See you.

As in 'I can see you, all right'. And 'I can see who you are'.

Tord Schultz hurried through the door to the centre.

Sergey Ivanov ensured, as usual, he was the first off the minibus when it stopped on the tarmac beside the Airbus, and sprinted up the steps to the empty plane. He took the vacuum cleaner into the cockpit and locked the door behind him. He slipped on latex gloves and pulled them up to where the tattoos started, flipped the front lid off the vac and opened the captain's locker. Lifted out the small Samsonite boarding bag, unzipped it, removed the metal plate at the bottom and checked the four brick-like one-kilo packages. Then he put them into the vac, pressed them into position between the tube and the large dust bag he had made sure to empty beforehand. Clicked the front lid back, unlocked the cockpit door and activated the vacuum cleaner. It was all done in seconds.

After tidying and cleaning the cabin they ambled off the plane, stowed the light blue bin bags in the back of the Daihatsu and went back to the lounge. There was only a handful of planes landing and taking off before the airport closed for the night. Ivanov glanced over his shoulder at Jenny, the shift manager. He gazed at the

computer screen showing arrival and departure times. No delays.

'I'll take Bergen,' Sergey said in his harsh accent. At least he spoke the language; he knew Russians who had lived in Norway for ten years and were still forced to resort to English. But when Sergey had been brought in, almost two years ago, his uncle had made it clear he was to learn Norwegian, and had consoled him by saying that he might have some of his own talent for picking up languages.

'I've got Bergen covered,' Jenny said. 'You can wait for Trondheim.'

'I'll do Bergen,' Sergey said. 'Nick can do Trondheim.'

Jenny looked at him. 'As you like. Don't work yourself to death, Sergey.'

Sergey went to a chair by the wall and sat down. Leaned back carefully. The skin round his shoulders was still sore from where the Norwegian tattooist had been plying his trade. He was working from drawings Sergey had been sent by Imre, the tattooist in Nizhny Tagil prison, and there was still quite a bit left to do. Sergey thought of the tattoos his uncle's lieutenants, Andrey and Peter, had. The pale blue strokes on the skin of the two Cossacks from Altai told of their dramatic lives and great deeds. But Sergey had a feat to his name as well. A murder. It was a little murder, but it had already been tattooed in the form of an angel. And perhaps there would be another murder. A big one. If *the necessary* became necessary, his uncle had said, and warned him to be ready, mentally prepared, and to keep up his knife practice. A man was coming, he had said. It wasn't absolutely certain, but it was probable.

Probable.

Sergey Ivanov regarded his hands. He had kept the latex

gloves on. Of course it was a coincidence that their standard work gear also ensured that he would not leave any fingerprints on the packages if things should go wrong one day. There wasn't a hint of a tremble. His hands had been doing this for so long that he had to remind himself of the risk now and then to stay alert. He hoped they would be as calm when *the necessary* – *chto nuzhno* – had to be performed. When he had to earn the tattoo for which he had already ordered the design. He conjured up the image again: him unbuttoning his shirt in the sitting room at home in Tagil, with all his urka brothers present, and showing them his new tattoos. Which would need no comment, no words. So he wouldn't say anything. Just see it in their eyes: he was no longer Little Sergey. For weeks he had been praying at night that the man would come. And that *the necessary* would become necessary.

The message to clean the Bergen plane crackled over the walkie-talkie.

Sergey got up. Yawned.

The procedure in the second cockpit was even simpler.

Open the vacuum cleaner, put the contents in the boarding bag in the first officer's locker.

On their way out they met the crew on their way in. Sergey Ivanov avoided the first officer's eyes, looked down and noted that he had the same kind of trolley as Schultz. Samsonite Aspire GRT. Same red. Without the little red boarding bag that can be fastened to it on top. They knew nothing of each other, nothing of motivations, nothing of the background or the family. All that linked Sergey, Schultz and the young first officer were the numbers of their unregistered mobile phones, purchased in Thailand, so they could send a text in case there were changes to the schedule. Sergey

doubted Schultz and the first officer knew of each other. Andrey limited all information to a strictly need-to-know basis. For that reason, Sergey hadn't a clue what happened to the packages. He could guess though. For when the first officer, on an internal flight between Oslo and Bergen, passed from airside to landside there was no customs check, no security check. The officer took the boarding bag to the hotel in Bergen where the crew was staying. A discreet knock on the hotel door in the middle of the night and four kilos of heroin exchanged hands. Even though the new drug, violin, had pushed down heroin prices, the going rate on the street for a quarter was still at least 250 kroner. A thousand a gram. Given that the drug – which had already been diluted – was diluted once more, that would amount to eight million kroner in total. He could do the maths. Enough to know he was underpaid. But he also knew he would have done enough to merit a bigger slice when he had done *the necessary*. And after a couple of years on that salary he could buy a house in Tagil, find himself a good-looking Siberian girl, and perhaps let his mother and father move in when they got old.

Sergey Ivanov felt the tattoo itch between his shoulder blades.

It was as though the skin was looking forward to the next instalment.

3

The man in the linen suit alighted from the airport express at Oslo Central Station. He established it must have been a warm, sunny day in his old home town, for the air was still gentle and embracing. He was carrying an almost comical little canvas suitcase and exited the station on the southern side with quick, supple strides. From the outside, Oslo's heart – which some maintained the town did not have – beat with a restful pulse. Night rhythm. The few cars there were swirled around the circular Traffic Machine, were ejected, one by one, eastwards to Stockholm and Trondheim, northwards to other parts of town or westwards to Drammen and Kristiansand. Both in size and shape the Traffic Machine resembled a brontosaurus, a dying giant that was soon to disappear, to be replaced by homes and businesses in Oslo's splendid new quarter with its splendid new construction, the Opera House. The man stopped and looked at the white iceberg situated between the Traffic Machine and the fjord. It had already won architectural prizes from all over the world; people came from far and wide to walk on the Italian marble roof that sloped

right down into the sea. The light inside the building's large windows was as strong as the moonlight falling on it.

Christ, what an improvement, the man thought.

It was not the future promises of a new urban development he saw, but the past. For this had been Oslo's shooting gallery, its dopehead territory, where they had injected themselves and ridden their highs behind the barracks which partially hid them, the city's lost children. A flimsy partition between them and their unknowing, well-meaning social democratic parents. What an improvement, he thought. They were on a trip to hell in more beautiful surroundings.

It was three years since he had last stood here. Everything was new. Everything was the same.

They had ensconced themselves on a strip of grass between the station and the motorway, much like the verge of a road. As doped up now as then. Lying on their backs, eyes closed, as though the sun was too strong, huddled over, trying to find a vein that could still be used, or standing bent with bowed junkie-knees and rucksacks, unsure whether they were coming or going. Same faces. Not the same living dead when he used to walk here, they had died long ago, once and for all. But the same faces.

On the road up to Tollbugata there were more of them. Since they had a connection with the reason for his return he tried to glean an impression. Tried to decide if there were more or fewer of them. Noted that they were trading in Plata again. The little square of asphalt to the west of Jernbanetorget, which had been painted white, had been Oslo's Taiwan, a free trade area for drugs, established so that the authorities could keep a wary eye on what was happening and perhaps intercept young first-time buyers. But as business grew in

size and Plata showed Oslo's true face as one of Europe's worst heroin spots, the place became a pure tourist attraction. The turnover for heroin and the OD statistics had long been a source of shame for the capital, but nonetheless not such a visible stain as Plata. Newspapers and TV fed the rest of the country with images of stoned youths, zombies wandering the city centre in broad daylight. The politicians were blamed. When right-wingers were in power the left were in an uproar. 'Not enough treatment centres.' 'Prison sentences create users.' 'The new class society creates gangs and drug trafficking in immigrant areas.' When the left was in power, the right were in an uproar. 'Not enough police.' 'Access for asylum seekers too easy.' 'Six out of seven prisoners are foreigners.'

So, after being hounded from pillar to post, Oslo City Council came to the inevitable decision: to save itself. To shovel the shit under the carpet. To close Plata.

The man in the linen suit saw a youth in a red-and-white Arsenal shirt standing on some steps with four people shuffling their feet in front of him. The Arsenal player's head was jerking left and right, like a chicken's. The other four heads were motionless, staring only at the dealer in the Arsenal colours, who was waiting until there were enough of them, a full cohort, maybe that was five, maybe six. Then he would accept payment for the orders and take them to where the dope was. Round the corner or inside a backyard where his partner was waiting. It was a simple principle; the guy with the dope never had any contact with money and the guy with the money never had any contact with dope. That made it harder for the police to acquire solid evidence of drug-dealing against either of them. Nonetheless, the man in the linen suit was surprised, for what he saw was the old

method used in the 1980s and 90s. As the police gave up trying to catch pushers on the streets, sellers had dropped their elaborate routines and the assembly of a cohort and had started dealing directly as punters turned up; money in one hand, drugs in the other. Had the police started arresting street dealers again?

A man in cycling gear pedalled past, helmet, orange goggles and heaving, brightly coloured jersey. His thigh muscles bulged under the tight shorts, and the bike looked expensive. That must have been why he took it with him when he and the rest of the cohort followed the Arsenal player round the corner to the other side of the building. Everything was new. Everything was the same. But there were fewer of them, weren't there?

The prostitutes on the corner of Skippergata spoke to him in pidgin English – Hey, baby! Wait a minute, handsome! – but he just shook his head. And it seemed as if the rumour of his chasteness, or possible pecuniary difficulties, spread faster than he could walk because the girls further up showed no interest in him. In his day, Oslo's prostitutes had dressed in practical clothing, jeans and thick jackets. There hadn't been many of them; it had been a seller's market. But now the competition was fiercer, and there were short skirts, high heels and fishnet stockings. The African women seemed to be cold already. Wait until December, he thought.

He advanced deeper into Kvadraturen, which had been Oslo's first town centre, but now it was an asphalt-and-brick desert with administrative buildings and offices for 250,000 worker ants, who scuttled home at four or five o'clock and ceded the quarter to nocturnal rodents. When King Christian IV built the town in square blocks, according to

Renaissance ideals of geometrical order, the population was kept in check by fire. Popular myth had it that down here every leap year's night you could see people in flames running between houses, hear their screams, watch them burn and dissolve, but there would be a layer of ash left on the tarmac, and if you managed to grab it before the wind blew it away the house you occupied would never burn down. Because of the fire risk Christian IV built broad roads, by the standards of Oslo's poor. Houses were erected in the un-Norwegian building material of brick. And along one of these brick walls he passed the open door of a bar. A new violation of Guns N' Roses' 'Welcome to the Jungle', dance-produced reggae pissing on Marley and Rose, Slash and Stradlin, belted out to the smokers standing around outside. He stopped at an outstretched arm.

'Gotta light?'

A plump, top-heavy lady somewhere in her late thirties looked up at him. Her cigarette bounced provocatively up and down between her red lips.

He raised an eyebrow and looked at her laughing girlfriend, who was standing behind her with a glowing cigarette. The top-heavy one noticed and then laughed as well, taking a step aside to regain her balance.

'Don't be so slow,' she said in the same Sørland accent as the Crown princess. He had heard there was a prostitute in the covered market who got rich by looking like her, talking like her and dressing like her. And that the 5,000-kroner-an-hour fee included a plastic sceptre which the customer was allowed to put to relatively free use.

The woman's hand rested on his arm as he made to move on. She leaned towards him and breathed red wine into his face.

'You're a good-looking guy. How about giving me . . . a light?'

He turned the other side of his face to her. The bad side. The not-such-a-good-looking-guy side. Felt her flinch and slip as she saw the path left by the nail from his time in the Congo. It stretched from mouth to ear like a badly sewn-up tear.

He walked on as the music changed to Nirvana. 'Come As You Are.' Original version.

'Hash?'

The voice came from a gateway, but he neither stopped nor turned.

'Speed?'

He had been clean for three years and had no intention of starting again.

'Violin?'

Least of all now.

In front of him on the pavement a young man had stopped by two dealers; he was showing them something as he spoke. The youngster looked up as he approached, fixing two searching grey eyes on him. Policeman's eyes, the man thought, lowered his head and crossed the street. It was perhaps a little paranoid; after all, it was unlikely such a young police officer would recognise him.

There was the hotel. The dosshouse. Leon.

It was almost deserted in this part of the street. On the other side, under a lamp, he saw the dope seller astride the bike, with another cyclist, also wearing professional cycling gear. The dope seller was helping the other guy to inject himself in the neck.

The man in the linen suit shook his head and gazed up at the facade of the building before him.

There was the same banner, grey with dirt, hanging below

the third- and top-floor windows. 'Four hundred kroner a night!' Everything was new. Everything was the same.

The receptionist at Hotel Leon was new. A young lad, who greeted the man in the linen suit with an astonishingly polite smile and an amazing – for Leon – lack of mistrust. He wished him a hearty 'Welcome' without a tinge of irony in his voice and asked to see his passport. The man assumed he was often taken for a foreigner because of the tanned complexion and the linen suit, and passed the receptionist his red Norwegian passport. It was worn and full of stamps. Too many for it to be called a good life.

'Oh, yes,' the receptionist said, returning it. Placed a form on the counter and handed him a pen.

'The marked sections are enough.'

A checking-in form at Leon? the man thought with surprise. Perhaps some things had changed after all. He took the pen and saw the receptionist staring at his hand, his middle finger. The one that had been his longest finger before it was cut off in a house on Holmenkollen Ridge. Now the first joint had been replaced with a matt, greyish-blue, titanium prosthesis. It wasn't a lot of use, but it did provide balance for his adjacent fingers when he had to grip, and it was not in the way as it was so short. The only disadvantage was the endless explanations when he had to go through security at airports.

He filled in *First name* and *Last name.*

Date of birth.

He wrote knowing he looked more like a man in his mid-forties now than the damaged geriatric who had left Norway three years ago. He had subjected himself to a strict regime

of exercise, healthy food, plentiful sleep and – of course – absolutely no addictive substances. The aim of the regime had not been to look younger, but to avoid death. Besides, he liked it. In fact he had always like fixed routines, discipline, order. So why had his life been chaos instead, such self-destruction and a series of broken relationships between dark periods of intoxication? The blank boxes looked up at him, questioningly. But they were too small for the answers they required.

Permanent address.

Well, the flat in Sofies gate was sold right after he left three years ago, the same applied to his parents' house in Oppsal. In his present occupation an official address would have carried a certain inherent risk. So he wrote what he usually wrote when he checked in at other hotels: Chungking Mansion, Hong Kong. Which was no further from the truth than anything else.

Occupation.

Murder. He didn't write that. This section hadn't been marked.

Telephone number.

He put a fictitious one. Mobile phones can be traced, the conversations and where you make them.

Next of kin's telephone number.

Next of kin? What husband would voluntarily give his wife's number when he checked in at Hotel Leon? The place was the closest Oslo had to a public brothel, after all.

The receptionist could evidently read his mind. 'In case you should feel indisposed and we have to call someone.'

Harry nodded. In case of a heart attack during the act.

'You don't need to write anything if you don't . . .'

'No,' the man said, looking at the words. *Next of kin.* He had Sis. A sister with what she herself called 'a touch of

Down's syndrome', but who had always tackled life a great deal better than her elder brother. Apart from Sis there was no one else. Absolutely no one. All the same, next of kin.

He ticked 'Cash' for mode of payment, signed and passed the form to the receptionist. Who skimmed through it. And then at last Harry saw it shine through. The mistrust.

'Are you . . . are you Harry Hole?'

Harry Hole nodded. 'Is that a problem?'

The boy shook his head. Gulped.

'Fine,' said Harry. 'Have you got a key for me?'

'Oh, sorry! Here. 301.'

Harry took it and noticed that the boy's pupils had widened and his voice constricted.

'It . . . it's my uncle,' the boy said. 'He runs the hotel. Used to sit here before me. He's told me about you.'

'Only nice things, I trust,' Harry said, grabbing his canvas suitcase and heading for the stairs.

'The lift . . .'

'Don't like lifts,' Harry said without turning.

The room was the same as before. Tatty, small and more or less clean. No, in fact, the curtains were new. Green. Stiff. Probably drip-dry. Which reminded him. He hung his suit in the bathroom and turned on the shower so the steam would remove the creases. The suit had cost him eight hundred Hong Kong dollars at Punjab House on Nathan Road, but in his job it was an essential investment; no one respected a man dressed in rags. He stood under the shower. The hot water made his skin tingle. Afterwards he walked naked through the room to the window and opened it. Second floor. Backyard. Through an open window came the groans of simulated enthusiasm. He grasped the curtain pole and leaned out. Looked straight down onto an open skip

and recognised the sweet smell of rubbish rising forth. He spat and heard it hit the paper in the bin. But the rustling that followed was not of paper. There was a crack, and the stiff green curtains landed on the floor on either side of him. Shit! He pulled the thin pole out of the curtain hem. It was the old kind with two bulbous pointed ends; it had broken before and someone had tried to stick it together with brown tape. Harry sat down on the bed and opened the drawer in the bedside table. A Bible with a light blue synthetic leather cover and a sewing kit comprising black thread wound round card with a needle stuck through. On mature reflection, Harry realised they might not be such a bad idea after all. Afterwards guests could sew back torn fly buttons and read about forgiveness of sins. He lay down on the bed and stared at the ceiling. Everything was new. Everything . . . He closed his eyes. On the flight he hadn't slept a wink, and with or without jet lag, with or without curtains, he was going to have to sleep. And he began to dream the same dream he had had every night for the last three years: he was running down a corridor, fleeing from a roaring avalanche that sucked out all the air, leaving him unable to breathe.

It was just a question of keeping going and keeping his eyes closed for a bit longer.

He lost a grip on his thoughts; they were drifting away from him.

Next of kin.

Kin. Kith.

Next of kin.

That's what he was. That's why he was back.

* * *

Sergey was driving on the E6 towards Oslo. Longing for the bed in his Furuset flat. Keeping under 120, even though the motorway was virtually empty so late at night. His mobile phone rang. The mobile. The conversation with Andrey was concise. He had spoken to his uncle, or *ataman* – the leader – as Andrey called Uncle. After they had rung off Sergey could not restrain himself any longer. He put his foot down. Shrieked with delight. The man had arrived. Now, this evening. He was here! Sergey was not to do anything for the moment, the situation might resolve itself, Andrey had said. But he had to be even more prepared now, mentally and physically. Had to practise with the knife, sleep, be on his toes. If the necessary should become necessary.

4

Tord Schultz barely heard the plane thundering overhead as he sat on the sofa breathing heavily. Perspiration lay in a thin layer on his naked upper body, and the echoes of iron on iron still hung between the bare sitting-room walls. Behind him were his weights and the mock-leather upholstered bench glistening with his sweat. From the TV screen Donald Draper peered through his own cigarette smoke, sipping whiskey from a glass. Another plane roared over the rooftops. *Mad Men.* The sixties. USA. Women wearing decent clothes. Decent drinks in decent glasses. Decent cigarettes without menthol and filters. The days when what didn't kill you made you stronger. He had bought only the first season. Watched it again and again. He wasn't sure he would like the next series.

Tord Schultz looked at the white line on the glass coffee table and dried the edge of his ID card. He had used his card to chop it up, as usual. The card that he attached to the pocket of his captain's uniform, the card that gave him access to airside, the cockpit, the sky, the salary. The card that made him what he was. The card that – with everything

else – would be taken from him if he was found out. That was why it felt right to use the ID card. There was – in all the dishonesty – something honest about it.

They were going back to Bangkok early tomorrow morning. Two rest days at Sukhumvit Residence. Good. It would be good now. Better than before. He hadn't liked the arrangement when he flew from Amsterdam. Too much risk. After it had been discovered how deeply involved the South American crews were in cocaine smuggling to Schiphol, all crews, regardless of airline, risked having their hand luggage checked and being subjected to a body search. Furthermore, the arrangement had been that, on landing, he would carry the packages and keep them in his bag until later in the day when he flew an internal flight to Bergen, Trondheim or Stavanger. Internal flights that he *had to* make, even if it meant he was forced to absorb delays from Amsterdam by burning up extra fuel. At Gardermoen he was airside all the time of course, so there was no customs check, but occasionally he had to store the drugs in his bag for sixteen hours before he could deliver them. And deliveries had not always been without risk, either. Public car parks. Restaurants with far too few customers. Hotels with observant receptionists.

He rolled up a thousand-krone note he'd taken from an envelope he'd been given the last time he was here. There were especially designed plastic tubes for the purpose, but he was not that kind: he was not the heavy user she had told her divorce lawyer he was. The sly bitch maintained she wanted a divorce because she did not wish to see her children growing up with a drug-addict father and she had no interest in watching him sniff away their house and home. And it had nothing to do with air stewardesses, she couldn't give a

damn, she had stopped worrying about that years ago, his age would take care of that. She and the lawyer had given him an ultimatum. She would take over the house, the children and the remnants of the inheritance he hadn't squandered. Or they would report him for possession and use of cocaine. She had gathered together enough evidence for even his own lawyer to say that he would be sentenced and dumped by his airline.

It had been a simple choice. All she had allowed him to retain were the debts.

He got to his feet and went to the window and stared out. Surely they would be here soon, wouldn't they?

This was quite a new arrangement. He was to take a package on an outward flight, to Bangkok. God knows why. Fish to Lofoten, as they said in Norwegian, and so on. Anyway, this was the sixth trip, and so far everything had gone without a hitch.

There was light in the neighbouring houses, but they were so far apart. Lonely habitations, he thought. They had been officers' quarters when Gardermoen had been a military base. Identical single-storey boxes with large, bare lawns between the houses. Least possible height so that a low-flying machine wouldn't collide. Greatest possible distance between the houses so that a fire following a crash wouldn't spread.

They had lived here during his compulsory national service when he had been flying Hercules transport planes. The kids had run between houses, visiting other children. Saturday, summer. Men round the barbecues wearing aprons and holding aperitifs. Chatter coming from the open windows where the women were preparing salads and drinking Campari. Like a scene from *The Right Stuff*, his

favourite film, the one with the first astronauts and the test pilot, Chuck Yeager. Damned attractive, these pilots' wives. Even though they were only Hercules pilots. They had been happy then, hadn't they? Was that why he had returned? An unconscious urge to go back in time? Or to find out where it all went wrong, and make amends?

He saw the car coming and automatically checked his watch. Logged that they were eighteen minutes late.

He went to the coffee table. Breathed in twice. Then placed the rolled-up note against the lowest end of the line, bent down and sniffed the powder up his nose. It stung the mucous membrane. He licked his fingertip, ran it over the remaining powder and rubbed it into his gums. It had a bitter taste. The doorbell rang.

It was the same two Mormon guys as always. One small, one tall, both wearing their Sunday best. But tattoos protruded from under their sleeves. It was almost comic.

They handed him the package. Half a kilo in one long sausage that would just fit inside the metal plate around the telescopic handle of the cabin bag. He was to remove the package after they had landed in Suvarnabhumi and put it under the loose rug at the back of the pilots' locker in the cockpit. And that was the last he would see of it; the rest would probably be sorted out by the ground crew.

When Mr Big and Mr Small had presented the opportunity to take packages to Bangkok, it had sounded like lunacy. After all, there was not a country in the world where the street price of dope was higher than in Oslo, so why export? He hadn't probed, he knew he wouldn't get an answer, and that was fine. But he had pointed out that smuggling heroin to Thailand carried a sentence of death if caught, so he wanted better payment.

They had laughed. First the little one. Then the big one. And Tord had wondered if maybe shorter nerve channels produced quicker reactions. Maybe that was why they made fighter-jet cockpits so low, to exclude tall, slow pilots.

The little one explained to Tord in his harsh, Russian-sounding English that it was not heroin, it was something quite new, so new that there wasn't even a law banning it yet. But when Tord asked why they had to smuggle a legal substance they had laughed even louder and told him to shut up and answer yes or no.

Tord Schultz had answered yes as another thought announced its presence. What would the consequences be if he said no?

That was six trips ago.

Tord Schultz studied the package. A couple of times he had considered smearing washing-up liquid over the condoms and freezer bags they used, but he had been told that sniffer dogs could distinguish smells and were not fooled so easily. The trick was to make sure the plastic bag was fully sealed.

He waited. Nothing happened. He cleared his throat.

'Oh, I almost forgot,' said Mr Small. 'Yesterday's delivery . . .'

He slipped his hand inside his jacket with an evil grin. Or perhaps it wasn't evil, perhaps it was Eastern bloc humour. Tord felt like punching him, blowing unfiltered cigarette smoke into his face, spitting twelve-year-old whiskey in his eye. Western bloc humour. Instead he mumbled a thank-you and took the envelope. It felt thin between his fingertips. They had to be big notes.

Afterwards he stood by the window again and watched the car disappear into the darkness, heard the sound being drowned by a Boeing 737. Maybe a 600. Next generation

anyway. Throatier and higher pitched than the old classics. He saw his reflection in the window.

Yes, he had taken their coin. And he would continue to take it. Take everything life threw in his face. For he was not Donald Draper. He was not Chuck Yeager and not Neil Armstrong. He was Tord Schultz. A long-spined pilot with debts. And a cocaine problem. He ought to . . .

His thoughts were drowned by the next plane.

Bloody church bells! Can you see them, Dad, the so-called next of kin all standing over my coffin? Crying crocodile tears, their sombre mugs saying: 'Gusto, why couldn't you have just learned to be like us?' Well, you sodding self-righteous hypocrites, I couldn't! I couldn't be like my foster-mother, a daft, spoilt airhead, going on about how wonderful everything is, provided you read the right book, listen to the right guru, eat the right fricking herbs. And whenever anyone punctured that woolly wisdom she had bought into, she always played the same card: 'But look at the world we have created: war, injustice, people who don't live in harmony with themselves any longer.' Three things, baby. One: war, injustice and disharmony are natural. Two: you are the least harmonious of all in our disgusting little family. You wanted only the love you were denied, and you didn't give a shit about the love you were given. Sorry, Rolf, Stein and Irene, but she had room only for me. Which makes point three all the more amusing: I never loved you, baby, however much you considered you deserved it. I called you Mum because it made you happy, and life simpler for me. When I did what I did it

was because you let me, because I couldn't stop myself. Because that's the way I am.

Rolf. At least you told me not to call you Dad. You really tried to love me. But you could not fool nature; you realised you loved your own flesh and blood more: Stein and Irene. When I told other people you were 'my foster-parents' I could see the wounded expression in Mum's eyes. And the hatred in yours. Not because 'foster-parents' shrank you to the only function you had in my life, but because I wounded the woman you, incomprehensibly, loved. I think you were honest enough to see yourself as I saw you: a person who at some point in your life, intoxicated on your own idealism, undertook to raise a changeling but soon understood that your account was in deficit. The monthly sum they paid you for care did not cover the real expense. Then you discovered that I was a cuckoo in the nest. That I ate everything. Everything you loved. Everyone you loved. You should have realised earlier and thrown me out, Rolf! You were the first to see that I stole. Initially it was only a hundred kroner. I denied it. Said I'd been given it by Mum. 'Isn't that right, Mum? You gave it to me.' And Mum nodded after some hesitation, with tears in her eyes, said she must have forgotten. The next time it was a thousand. From your desk drawer. Money that was meant for our holiday, you said. 'The only holiday I want is from you,' I answered. And then you slapped me for the first time. And it was as if it triggered something in you, because you went on hitting. I was already taller and broader than you, but I have never been able to fight. Not like that, not with fists and muscles. I fought in another way, one where you win. But you kept hitting me, with a clenched fist now. And I knew why. You wanted to

destroy my face. Take my power away from me. But the woman I called Mum intervened. So you said it. The word. The Thief. True enough. But it also meant I would have to crush you, little man.

Stein. The silent elder brother. The first to recognise the cuckoo by the plumage, but smart enough to keep his distance. The clever, bright, smart lone wolf who upped and left for a student town as far away as possible and as soon as he could. Who tried to persuade Irene, his dear little sister, to join him. He thought that she could finish school in fricking Trondheim, that it would do her good to get away from Oslo. But Mum put a stop to Irene's evacuation. She knew nothing of course. Didn't want to know.

Irene. Attractive, lovely, freckled, fragile Irene. You were too good for this world. You were all I was not. And yet you loved me. Would you have loved me if you had known? Would you have loved me if you had known that I was shagging your mother from the age of fifteen? Shagging your red-wine-soaked, whimpering mother, taking her from behind against the toilet door or the cellar door or the kitchen door while whispering 'Mum' in her ear because it made both her and me hot. She gave me money, she covered my back if anything happened, she said she only wanted to borrow me until she was old and ugly and I met a nice, sweet girl. And when I answered, 'But, Mum, you *are* old and ugly,' she laughed it off and begged for more.

I still had the bruises after my foster-father's punches and kicks the day I rang him at work and told him to come home at three, there was something important I had to tell him. I left the front door ajar so that she wouldn't hear him

come in. And I spoke into her ear to drown his footsteps, said the sweet nothings she liked to hear.

I saw the reflection in the kitchen window, of him standing in the kitchen doorway.

He moved out the next day. Irene and Stein were told that Mum and Dad had not been getting on well for a while and had decided to separate for a bit. Irene was broken-hearted. Stein was in his student town, and he answered with a text: 'Sad. Where would u like me to go 4 Xmas?'

Irene cried and cried. She loved me. Of course she searched for me. For the Thief.

The church bells rang for the fifth time. Crying and sniffling from the pews. Cocaine, incredible earnings. Rent a city-centre flat in the West End, register it in some junkie's name who you pay off with a shot, and start selling in small quantities by stairways or gates, ratchet up the price as they begin to feel secure; coke folk pay anything for security. Get on your feet, get out, cut down on dope, become somebody. Don't die in a squat like a bloody loser. The priest coughs. 'We are here to commemorate Gusto Hanssen.'

A voice from far back: 'Th-th-thief.'

Tutu's tribe sitting there in biker jackets and bandanas. And even further back: the whimpering of a dog. Rufus. Good, loyal Rufus. Have you come back here? Or is it me who has already gone there?

Tord Schultz placed his Samsonite bag on the conveyor belt winding its way into the X-ray machine beside the smiling security official.

‘I don’t understand why you let them give you such a schedule,’ the flight attendant said. ‘Bangkok twice a week.’

‘I asked them to,’ Tord said, passing through the metal detector. Someone in the trade union had proposed that the crews should go on strike against having to be exposed to radiation several times a day. American research had shown that proportionally more pilots and cabin crew died of cancer than the rest of the population. But the strike agitators had said nothing about the average life expectancy also being higher. Air crew died of cancer because there was very little else to die of. They lived the safest lives in the world. The most boring lives in the world.

‘You want to fly that much?’

‘I’m a pilot. I like flying,’ Tord lied, taking down his bag, extending the handle and walking away.

She was alongside him in seconds, the clack of her heels on Gardermoen’s grey antique foncé marble floor almost drowning the buzz of voices under the vaulted wooden beams and steel. However, unfortunately it did not drown her whispered question.

‘Is that because she left you, Tord? Is it because you have too much time on your hands and nothing to fill it with? Is it because you don’t want to sit at home—’

‘It’s because I need the overtime,’ he interrupted. At least that was not an outright lie.

‘Because I know exactly what it’s like. I got divorced last winter, as you know.’

‘Ah, yes,’ said Tord, who didn’t even know she had been married. He shot her a swift glance. Fifty? Wondered what she looked like in the morning without make-up and the fake tan. A faded flight attendant with a faded flight attendant dream. He was pretty sure he had never rogered her. Not

face on, anyway. Whose stock joke had that been? One of the old pilots. One of the whiskey-on-the-rocks, blue-eyed fighter pilots. One of those who managed to retire before their status crashed. He accelerated as they turned into the corridor towards the flight crew centre. She was out of breath, but still kept up with him. But if he maintained this speed she might not have enough air to speak.

'Erm, Tord, since we've got a stay-over in Bangkok perhaps we could . . .'

He yawned aloud. And felt no more than that she had been offended. He was still a bit groggy after the night before – there had been some more vodka and powder after the Mormons had gone. Not that he had ingested so much he would have failed a breathalyser test, of course, but enough for him to dread the fight against sleep for the eleven hours in the air.

'Look!' she exclaimed in the idiotic glissando tone that women use when they want to say something is absolutely, inconceivably, heart-rendingly sweet.

And he did look. It was coming towards them. A small, light-haired, long-eared dog with sad eyes and an enthusiastically wagging tail. A springer spaniel. It was being led by a woman with matching blonde hair, big drop earrings, a universally apologetic half-smile and gentle, brown eyes.

'Isn't he a dear?' she purred beside him.

'Mm,' Tord said in a gravelly voice.

The dog stuck its snout into the groin of the pilot in front of them, and passed on. He turned round with a raised eyebrow and a crooked smile, as if to suggest a boyish, cheeky expression. But Tord was unable to continue that line of thought. He was unable to continue any line of thought except his own.

The dog was wearing a yellow vest. The same type of vest the woman with the drop earrings was wearing. On which was written CUSTOMS.

It came closer, and was only five metres from them now.

It shouldn't be a problem. Couldn't be a problem. The drugs were packed in condoms with a double layer of freezer bags on the outside. Not so much as a molecule of odour could escape. So just smile. Relax and smile. Not too much, not too little. Tord turned to the chattering voice beside him, as though the words that were issuing forth demanded deep concentration.

'Excuse me.'

They had passed the dog, and Tord kept walking.

'Excuse me!' The voice was sharper.

Tord looked ahead. The door to the flight crew centre was less than ten metres away. Safety. Ten paces. Home and dry.

'Excuse me, sir!'

Seven paces.

'I think she means you, Tord.'

'What?' Tord stopped. Had to stop. Looked back with what he hoped did not appear to be feigned surprise. The woman in the yellow vest was coming towards them.

'The dog picked you out.'

'Did it?' Tord looked down at the dog. How? he was thinking.

The dog looked back, wagging its tail wildly, as though Tord was its new play pal.

How? Double layer of freezer bags and condom. How?

'That means we have to check you. Could you come with us please.'

The gentleness was still there in her brown eyes, but there was no question mark behind her words. And at that

moment he realised how. He almost fingered the ID card on his chest.

The cocaine.

He had forgotten to wipe down the card after chopping up the last line. That had to be it.

But it was only a few grains, which he could easily explain away by saying he had lent his ID card to someone at a party. That wasn't his biggest problem now. The bag. It would be searched. As a pilot he had trained and practised emergency procedures so often it was almost automatic. That was the intention, of course, even when panic seized you this was what you would do, this brain kicked in for lack of other orders: the emergency procedures. How many times had he visualised this situation: the customs officials asking him to go with them? Thinking what he would do? Practising it in his mind? He turned to the flight attendant with a resigned smile, caught sight of her name tag. 'I've been picked out, it seems, Kristin. Could you take my bag?'

'The bag comes with us,' the official said.

Tord Schultz turned back. 'I thought you said the dog picked me out, not the bag.'

'That's true, but—'

'There are flight documents inside which the crew needs to check. Unless you want to take responsibility for delaying a full Airbus 340 to Bangkok.' He noticed that he – quite literally – had puffed himself up, filled his lungs and expanded his chest muscles in his captain's jacket. 'If we miss our slot that could mean a delay of several hours and a loss of hundreds of thousands of kroner for the airline.'

'I'm afraid rules—'

'Three hundred and forty-two passengers,' Schultz interrupted. 'Many of them children.' He hoped she heard a captain's grave concern, not the incipient panic of a dope smuggler.

The official patted the dog on the head and looked at him.

She looks like a housewife, he thought. A woman with children and responsibility. A woman who should understand his predicament.

'The bag comes with us,' she said.

Another official appeared in the background. Stood there, legs apart, arms crossed.

'Let's get this over with,' Tord sighed.

The head of Oslo's Crime Squad, Gunnar Hagen, leaned back in his swivel chair and studied the man in the linen suit. It was three years since the sewn-up gash in his face had been blood red and he had looked like a man on his last legs. But now his ex-subordinate looked healthy, had put on a few sorely needed kilos, and his shoulders filled out the suit. Suit. Hagen remembered the murder investigator in jeans and boots, never anything else. The other difference was the sticker on his lapel saying he was not staff but a visitor: HARRY HOLE.

But the posture in the chair was the same, more horizontal than sitting.

'You look better,' Hagen said.

'Your town does too,' Harry said with an unlit cigarette bobbing between his teeth.

'You think so?'

'Wonderful opera house. Fewer junkies in the streets.'

Hagen got up and went to the window. From the sixth floor of Police HQ he could see Oslo's new district, Bjørvika, bathed in sunshine. The clean-up was in full flow. The demolition work over.

'There's been a marked fall in the number of fatal ODs in the last year.'

'Prices have gone up, consumption down. And the City Council got what it craved. Oslo no longer tops OD stats in Europe.'

'Happy days are here again.' Harry put his hands behind his head and looked as if he was going to slide out of the chair.

Hagen sighed. 'You didn't say what brings you to Oslo, Harry.'

'Didn't I?'

'No. Or, more specifically, to Crime Squad.'

'Isn't it normal to visit former colleagues?'

'Yes, for other, normal, sociable people, it is.'

'Well.' Harry bit into the filter of the Camel cigarette. 'My occupation is murder.'

'*Was* murder, don't you mean?'

'Let me reformulate that: my profession, my area of expertise, is murder. And it's still the only field I know something about.'

'So what do you want?'

'To practise my occupation. To investigate murders.'

Hagen arched an eyebrow. 'You'd like to work for me again?'

'Why not? Unless I'm very much mistaken I was one of the best.'

'Correction,' Hagen said, turning back to the window. 'You

were *the* best.' And repeated in a lower tone: 'The best and the worst.'

'I fancy one of the narco murders.'

Hagen gave a dry smile. 'Which one? We've had four in the last six months. We haven't made an ounce of headway with any of them.'

'Gusto Hanssen.'

Hagen didn't answer, continued to study the people sprawled over the grass. And the thoughts came unforced. Benefit cheats. Thieves. Terrorists. Why did he see that instead of hard-working employees enjoying a few well-earned hours in the September sunshine? The police look. The police blindness. He half listened to Harry's voice behind him.

'Gusto Hanssen, nineteen years old. Known to police, pushers and users. Found dead in a flat in Hausmanns gate on 12 July. Bled to death after a shot to the chest.'

Hagen burst out laughing. 'Why do you want the only one that's cleared up?'

'I think you know.'

'Yes, I do,' Hagen sighed. 'But if I were to employ you again I would put you on one of the others. On the undercover cop case.'

'I want this one.'

'There are, in round figures, about a hundred reasons why you will never be put on that case, Harry.'

'Which are?'

Hagen turned to Harry. 'Perhaps it's enough to mention the first. The case has already been solved.'

'And beyond that?'

'We don't have the case. Kripos does. I don't have any vacancies. Quite the opposite, I'm trying to make cuts. You're not eligible. Should I go on?'

'Mm. Where is he?'

Hagen pointed out of the window. Across the lawn to the grey-stone building behind the yellow leaves of the linden trees.

'Botsen,' Harry said. 'On remand.'

'For the moment.'

'Visits out of bounds?'

'Who traced you in Hong Kong and told you about the case? Was it—?'

'No,' Harry interrupted.

'So?'

'So.'

'Who?'

'I might have read about it on the Net.'

'Hardly,' Hagen said with a thin smile and lifeless eyes. 'The case was in the papers for one day before it was forgotten. And there were no names. Only an article about a drugged-up junkie who had shot another junkie over dope. Nothing of any interest for anyone. Nothing to make the case stand out.'

'Apart from the fact that the two junkies were teenage boys,' Harry said. 'Nineteen years old. And eighteen.' His voice had changed timbre.

Hagen shrugged. 'Old enough to kill, old enough to die. In the new year they would have been called up for military service.'

'Could you fix up a chat for me?'

'Who told you, Harry?'

Harry rubbed his chin. 'Friend in Krimteknisk.'

Hagen smiled. And this time the smile reached his eyes. 'You're so damned kind, Harry. To my knowledge, you have three friends in the police force. Among them Bjørn Holm

in Krimteknisk. And Beate Lønn in Krimteknisk. So which one was it?'

'Beate. Will you fix me up with a visit?'

Hagen sat on the edge of his desk and observed Harry. Looked down at the telephone.

'On one condition, Harry. You promise to keep miles away from this case. It's all sunshine and roses between us and Kripos now, and I could do without any more trouble with them.'

Harry grimaced. He had sunk so low in the chair now he could study his belt buckle. 'So you and the Kripos king have become bosom pals?'

'Mikael Bellman stopped working for Kripos,' Hagen said. 'Hence, sunshine and roses.'

'Got rid of the psychopath? Happy days . . .'

'On the contrary.' Hagen's laugh was hollow. 'Bellman is more present than ever. He's in this building.'

'Oh shit. Here in Crime Squad?'

'God forbid. He's been running Orgkrim for more than a year.'

'You've got new wombos, I can hear.'

'Organised crime. They merged a load of the old sections. Burglary, trafficking, narc. It's all Orgkrim now. More than two hundred employees, biggest unit in the Crime Department.'

'Mm. More than he had in Kripos.'

'Yet his salary went down. And you know what that means when people take lower paid jobs?'

'They're after more power,' Harry said.

'He was the one who got the drugs market under control, Harry. Good undercover work. Arrests and raids. There are fewer gangs and there's no in-fighting now. OD figures

are, as I said, on the way down . . .' Hagen pointed a finger at the ceiling. 'And Bellman's on the way up. The boy's going places, Harry.'

'Me too,' Harry said, rising to his feet. 'To Botsen. I'm counting on there being a visitor's permit in reception by the time I arrive.'

'If we've got a deal?'

'Course we have,' Harry said, grabbing his ex-boss's outstretched hand. He pumped it twice and made for the door. Hong Kong had been a good school for lying. He heard Hagen lift the telephone receiver, but as he reached the threshold he turned nonetheless.

'Who's the third?'

'What?' Hagen was looking down at the keypad while tapping with a heavy finger.

'The third friend I have in the force?'

Unit Head Gunnar Hagen put the receiver to his ear, sent Harry a weary look and said with a sigh: 'Who do you think?' And: 'Hello? Hagen here. I'd like a visitor's permit . . . Yes?' Hagen laid a hand over the receiver. 'No problem. They're eating now, but get there for around twelve.'

Harry smiled, mouthed a thank-you and closed the door quietly after him.

Tord Schultz stood in the booth, buttoning up his trousers and putting on his jacket. They had stopped short of examining orifices. The customs official – the one who had stopped him – was waiting outside. Standing there like an external examiner after a viva.

'Thank you for being so cooperative,' she said, indicating the exit.

Tord guessed they'd had long discussions about whether they would say 'we're sorry' whenever a sniffer dog had identified someone but no dope was found. The individual stopped, delayed, suspected and shamed would undoubtedly consider an apology appropriate. But should you complain about someone doing their job? Dogs identified innocent people all the time, and a complaint would be a partial admission that there was a flaw in the procedure, a failure in the system. On the other hand, they could see by his stripes that he was a captain. Not a three-striper, not one of the failed fifty-year-olds who had stayed in the right-hand seat as a first officer because they had messed up their career. No, he had four stripes, which showed that he had order, control; he was a man who was a master of the situation and his own life. Showed that he belonged to the airport's Brahmin caste. A captain was a person who ought to welcome a complaint from a customs official, whether it was appropriate or not.

'Not at all, it's good to know someone is on the mark,' Tord said, looking for his bag. In the worst-case scenario they had searched it; the dog hadn't detected anything there. And the metal plates around the space where the package was hidden were still impenetrable for existing X-rays.

'It'll be here soon,' she said.

There were a couple of seconds when they silently regarded each other.

Divorced, Tord thought.

At that moment another official appeared.

'Your bag . . .' he said.

Tord looked at him. Saw it in his eyes. Felt a lump grow in his stomach, rise, nudge his oesophagus. How? How?

'We took out everything and weighed it,' he said. 'An empty twenty-six-inch Samsonite Aspire GRT weighs 5.8 kilos. Yours weighs 6.3. Would you mind explaining why?'

The official was too professional to smile overtly, but Tord Schultz still saw the triumph shining in his face. The official leaned forward a fraction, lowered his voice.

'. . . or shall we?'

Harry went into the street after eating at Olympen. The old, slightly dissipated hostelry he remembered had been renovated into an expensive Oslo West version of an Oslo East place, with large paintings of the town's old working-class district. It wasn't that it wasn't attractive, with the chandeliers and everything. Even the mackerel had been good. It just wasn't . . . Olympen.

He lit a cigarette and crossed Bots Park between Police HQ and the prison's old, grey walls. He passed a man putting a tatty red poster on a tree and banging a staple gun against the bark of the ancient, and protected, linden. He didn't seem to be aware of the fact that he was committing a serious offence in full view of all the windows at the front of the building which contained the biggest collection of police officers in Norway. Harry paused for a moment. Not to stop the crime, but to see the poster. It advertised a concert with Russian Amcar Club at Sardines. Harry could remember the long-dissolved band and the derelict club. Olympen. Harry Hole. This was clearly the year for the resurrection of the

dead. He was about to move on when he heard a tremulous voice behind him.

'Got'ny violin?'

Harry turned. The man behind him was wearing a new, clean G-Star jacket. He stooped forward as though there were a strong wind at his back, and he had the unmistakable bowed heroin knees. Harry was going to reply when he realised G-Star was addressing the poster man. But he carried on walking without answering. New wombos for units, new terms for dope. Old bands, old clubs.

The facade of Oslo District Prison, Botsen in popular parlance, was built in the mid-1800s and consisted of an entrance squeezed between two larger wings, which always reminded Harry of a detainee between two policemen. He rang the bell, peered into the video camera, heard the low buzz and shoved the door open. Inside stood a uniformed prison officer, who escorted him up the stairs, through a door, past two other officers and into the rectangular, windowless Visitors' Room. Harry had been there before. This was where the inmates met their nearest and dearest. A half-hearted attempt had been made to create a homely atmosphere. He avoided the sofa, sat down on a chair, well aware of what went on during the few minutes the inmate was allowed to spend with a spouse or girlfriend.

He waited. Noticed he still had the Police HQ sticker on his lapel, pulled it off and put it in his pocket. The dream of the narrow corridor and the avalanche had been worse than usual last night, he had been buried and his mouth had been stuffed with snow. But that was not why his heart was beating now. Was it with expectation? Or terror?

The door opened before he had a chance to reach a conclusion.

'Twenty minutes,' the prison officer said, and left, slamming the door behind him.

The boy standing before him was so changed that for a second Harry had been on the point of shouting that this was the wrong person, this was not him. This boy was wearing Diesel jeans and a black hoodie advertising Machine Head, which Harry realised was not a reference to the old Deep Purple record but – having calculated the time difference – a new heavy metal band. Heavy metal was of course a clue, but the proof was the eyes and high cheekbones. To be precise: Rakel's brown eyes and high cheekbones. It was almost a shock to see the resemblance. Granted he had not inherited his mother's beauty – his forehead was too prominent for that, it lent the boy a bleak, almost aggressive appearance. Which was reinforced by the sleek fringe Harry had always assumed he had inherited from his father in Moscow. An alcoholic the boy had never really known properly – he was only a few years old when Rakel had brought him back to Oslo. Where later she was to meet Harry.

Rakel.

The great love of his life. As simple as that. And as complicated.

Oleg. Bright, serious Oleg. Oleg, who had been so introverted, who would not open up to anyone, apart from Harry. Harry had never told Rakel, but he knew more about what Oleg thought, felt and wanted than she did. Oleg and he playing Tetris on his Game Boy, both as keen as each other to smash the record. Oleg and he skating at Valle Hovin; the time Oleg wanted to become a long-distance runner and in

fact had the talent for it. Oleg, who smiled, patient and indulgent, whenever Harry promised that in the autumn or spring they would go to London to see Tottenham playing at White Hart Lane. Oleg, who sometimes called him Dad when it was late, he was sleepy and had lost concentration. It was years since Harry had seen him, years since Rakel had taken him from Oslo, away from the grisly reminders of the Snowman, away from Harry's world of violence and murder.

And now he was standing there by the door, he was eighteen years old, half grown up and looking at Harry without an expression, or at least one Harry could interpret.

'Hi,' Harry said. Shit, he hadn't tested his voice; it came out as a hoarse rasp. The boy would think he was on the verge of tears or something. As if to distract himself, or Oleg, Harry pulled out a pack of Camel cigarettes and poked one between his lips.

He peered up and saw the flush that had spread across Oleg's face. And the anger. The explosive anger that appeared from nowhere, darkening his eyes and making the blood vessels on his neck and forehead bulge and quiver like guitar strings.

'Relax, I won't light it,' Harry said, nodding to the NO SMOKING sign on the wall.

'It's Mum, isn't it?' The voice was also older. And thick with fury.

'What is?'

'She's the one who sent for you.'

'No, she didn't, I—'

'Course she did.'

'No, Oleg, in fact she doesn't even know I'm in the country.'