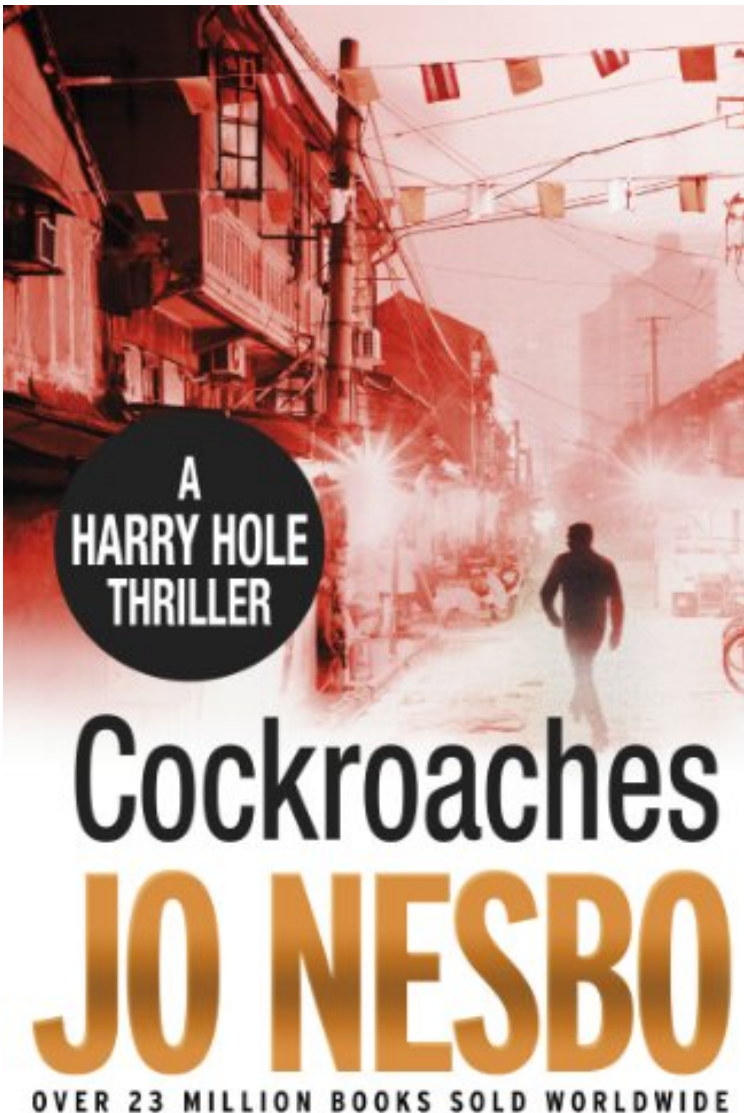


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## Cockroaches: Harry Hole 2



*Par Jo Nesbo*  
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### Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurOVER 33 MILLION BOOKS SOLD WORLDWIDEHarry is on a special missionDetective Harry Hole arrives in a steaming hot Bangkok. The Norwegian ambassador has been found dead in a seedy motel room, and Harry has been sent to investigate. Its clear that the Ambassadors family are hiding some secrets of their own, but few people are willing to talk.He needs to solve a crime and avoid a scandalWhen Harry lays hands on some incriminating CCTV footage, things only get more complicated. The man who gave him the tape goes missing, and Harry realises that failing to solve a murder case is by no means the only danger that faces the unwary.But in an unfamiliar city, who can you trust?Extrait1 Tuesday, January 7 The traffic lights changed to green, and the roar from lorries, cars, motorbikes and tuk-tuks rose

higher and higher until Dim could see the glass in Robinsons department store vibrating. Then the queues starte moving and the shop window displaying the long, red silk dress was lost behind them in the darkness. She took a taxi. Not a packed bus or a tuk-tuk riddled with rust but a taxi with air conditioning and a driver who kept his mouth shut. She leaned back against the headrest and tried to enjoy the ride. No problem. A moped shot past and a girl on the pillion clinging to a red T-shirt with a visor helmet gave them a vacant look. Hold on tight, Dim thought. On Rama IV Road the driver pulled in behind a lorry spewing exhaust fumes so thick and black she couldnt see the number plate. After passing through the air-conditioning system the exhaust was chilled and almost odorless. Almost. She wafted her hand discreetly to show her reaction, and the driver glanced in his mirror and moved into the outside lane. No problem. This was how her life had always been. On the farm where she had grown up she had been one of six girls. Six too many, according to her father. She had been seven years old when they stood coughing in the yellow dust and waving as the cart carrying her eldest sister trundled down the country road alongside the brown canal water. Her sister had been given clean clothes, a train ticket to Bangkok and an address in Patpong written on the back of a business card, and she had cried like a waterfall, even though Dim had waved so hard it felt as if her hand would fall off. Her mother had patted her on the head and said it wasnt easy, but it wasnt that bad, either. At least her sister wouldnt have to wander from farm to farm as a kwai, as her mother had done before she got married. Besides, Miss Wong had promised she would take good care of her. Her father had nodded, spat betel juice from between black teeth and added that the farangs in the bars would pay well for fresh girls. Dim hadnt understood what her mother meant by kwai, but she wasnt going to ask. She knew, of course, that a kwai was a bull. Like most people on the farms around them, they couldnt afford a bull, so they hired one of the ones that circulated the district when the rice paddy had to be ploughed. It was only later she found out that the girl who accompanied the bull was also called a kwai as her services formed part of the deal. That was the tradition. She hoped she would meet a farmer who would have her before she got too old. When Dim was fifteen her father had called her name as he waded across the paddy field with the sun behind him and his hat in hand. She hadnt answered at once; she had straightened up and looked hard at the green ridges around the small farm, closed her eyes and listened to the sound of the trumpeter bird in the leaves and inhaled the smell of eucalyptus and rubber trees. She had realized it was her turn. For the first year they had lived four girls to a room and shared everything: bed, food and clothes. The last of these was especially important, for without nice clothes you wouldnt get the best customers. She had taught herself to dance, taught herself to smile, taught herself to see which men only wanted to buy drinks and which wanted to buy sex. Her father had already agreed with Miss Wong that the money was to be sent home, so she didnt see much of it during the first few years, but Miss Wong was content and as time went by she kept more back for Dim. Miss Wong had reason to be content. Dim worked hard, and the customers bought drinks. Miss Wong should be pleased she was still there because a couple of times it had been a close-run thing. A Japanese man had wanted to marry Dim, but withdrew his offer when she demanded money for the plane ticket. An American had taken her along to Phuket, postponed his journey home and bought her a diamond ring. She had pawned it the day after he left. Some paid badly and told her to get lost if she complained; others reported her to Miss Wong if she didnt comply with everything they wanted her to do. They didnt understand that once they had bought her time from the bar Miss Wong had her money and Dim was her own boss. Her own boss. She thought about the red dress in the shop window. Her mother had been right: it wasnt easy, but it wasnt that bad, either. And she had managed to retain her innocent smile and happy laughter. They liked that. Perhaps that was why she had been offered the job Wang Lee had advertised in Thai Rath under the heading of GRO, or Guest Relation Officer. Wang Lee was a small, dark-skinned Chinese man, who ran a motel some way out on Sukhumvit Road, and the customers were mainly foreigners with special requests but not so special that she couldnt meet them. To tell the truth, she liked what she did better than dancing for hours in the bar. Besides, Wang Lee paid well. The sole disadvantage was that it took such a long time to get there from her apartment in Banglamphu. The damn traffic! It had come to a standstill again, and she told the driver she would get out, even though it meant crossing six lanes of cars to reach the motel on the far side of the road. The air wrapped itself around her like a hot, wet towel as she left the taxi. She searched for a gap, holding her hand in front of her mouth, aware that it made no difference, that there was no other air to breathe in Bangkok, but at least she was spared the smell. She slipped between vehicles, had to sidestep a pickup with the flatbed full of boys whistling, and she almost had her heel straps taken off by a kamikaze Toyota. Then she was across. Wang Lee looked up as she entered the deserted reception area. Quiet evening? she said. He nodded his displeasure. There had been a few of them over the

last year. Have you eaten? Yes, she lied. He meant well, but she was not in the mood for the watery noodles he boiled up in the back room. You'll have to wait, he said. The farang wanted to have a sleep first. Hell ring when hes ready. She groaned. You know I have to be back in the bar before midnight, Lee. He looked at his watch. Give him an hour. She shrugged and sat down. If it had been a year ago he would probably have thrown her out for speaking like that, but now he needed all the income he could get. Of course, she could go, but then the long journey would have been wasted. Also, she owed Lee a favor; she had worked for worse pimps. After stubbing out the third cigarette she rinsed her mouth with Lees bitter Chinese tea and rose for a final check of her make-up in the mirror over the counter. Ill go and wake him, she said. Mm. Have you got the skates? She lifted her bag. Her heels crunched on the gravel of the empty drive between the low motel rooms. Room 120 was right at the back, she couldnt see a car outside, but there was a light in the window. So perhaps he had woken up. A little breeze lifted her short skirt, but failed to cool her. She longed for a monsoon, for rain. Just as after a few weeks of flooding, muddy streets and mildew on her washing she would long for the dry, windless months. She tapped the door lightly with her knuckles and put on her bashful smile with the question Whats your name? already on her lips. No one answered. She tapped again and looked at her watch. She could probably haggle a few hundred baht off the price of the dress, even if it was Robinsons. She turned the door handle and discovered to her surprise that the door was unlocked. He was lying prone on the bed, and her first impression was that he was asleep. Then she saw the glint of the knives blue glass handle sticking out of the loud yellow jacket. Its hard to say which of all the thoughts racing through her brain appeared first, but one of them was definitely that the trip to Banglamphu had been wasted anyway. Then she finally gained control of her vocal cords. The scream, however, was drowned out by a resounding blast on a lorrys horn as it avoided an inattentive tuk-tuk on Sukhumvit Road. . . . \* \* \* 4

Thursday, January 9 The cold snap came so suddenly that when Harry stepped out of the door he involuntarily gasped for breath. He looked up at the reddening sky between the houses and opened his mouth to release the taste of gall and Colgate. In Holbergs class he caught the tram rattling down Welhavensgate. He found a seat and opened the Aftenposten. Another paedophilia case. There had been three of them over recent months, all Norwegians caught red-handed in Thailand. The leader reminded readers of the Prime Ministers promise during his election campaign that he would intensify investigation of sexual crimes, including those involving Norwegians abroad, and demanded to know when the public would see any results. Secretary of State Bjørn Askildsen, from the Prime Ministers office, commented that they were working with the Thai government to further investigative powers. This is urgent! the Aftenposten editor wrote. People expect to see some action. Its not right that a Christian minister can permit this outrage to continue. Come in! Harry opened the door and looked straight into Bjarne Millers yawning mouth. He was leaning back in his chair with his long legs sticking out from under the desk. There you are. I was expecting you yesterday, Harry. So I was told. Harry sat down. I dont work when Im drunk. Or vice versa. Its a kind of principle I have. This was intended to sound ironic. A police officer is a police officer twenty-four hours a day, Harry, sober or not. I had to persuade Waaler not to report you, you know. Harry shrugged, indicating that hed said all he had to say on the subject. OK, Harry, we wont discuss that now. Ive got a job for you. A job which in my opinion you dont deserve, but which Im going to give you anyway. Would it make you happy if I said I dont want it? Cut the Philip Marlowe stuff, Harry. It doesnt suit you, Miller replied brusquely. Harry smirked. He knew the PAS liked him. I havent even told you what it is. I assume from the fact that you send a car to get me in my free time its not to put me on traffic duty. Exactly, so why dont you let me finish? Harry gave a brief, dry chuckle and leaned forward in his chair. Can we speak our minds, PAS? What mind? Miller almost asked, but limited himself to a nod. Im not the man for important assignments right now, boss. I suppose youve seen how things are going at the moment. Or how things are not going. Or barely going. I do my job, the routine stuff, try not to get in anyones way and clock in and out in a sober condition. Id give the job to one of the other boys if I were you. Miller sighed, laboriously drew up his legs and got to his feet. Can I speak my mind, Harry? Had it been up to me, someone else would have got the job. But they want you. So it would be a great favor to me, Harry. . . Harry looked up warily. Bjarne Miller had helped him out of enough scrapes over the last year for him to know that it was just a question of time before he had to start repaying the debt. Hang on! Who are they? People in high positions. People who can make my life hell if they dont get what they want. And what will I get to take on the job? Miller knitted his brows as fiercely as he could, but he had always found it difficult to muster a stern expression on his open, boyish face. What do you get? You get your salary. For the duration. For Christs sake, what do you get! Ah, Im in the picture now, boss. Some of those high-up people reckon that officer who cleared up the

case in Sydney last year must be one hell of a guy, and its your job to make him toe the line. Am I wrong? Harry, please dont push this one too far. Im not wrong. I wasnt wrong yesterday when I saw Waalers face, either. Thats why Ive already slept on it and this is my suggestion: Im a good boy, I turn up for work, and when Ive finished, you give me two detectives full-time for two months and complete access to all our data. What are you talking about? You know what Im talking about. If this is about your sisters rape case, Im afraid I have to say no, Harry. The case was closed, once and for all, remember? I remember, boss. I remember the report in which it was stated she had Downs syndrome and that therefore it was not inconceivable that shed made up the rape to hide the fact that shed become pregnant by a casual acquaintance. Yes, indeed, I do remember. There was no concrete. She wasnt hiding anything. Jesus Christ, man, I went to her flat in Sogn and in the bathroom I saw her bra in the laundry basket, drenched with blood. He had threatened to cut off her nipples. She was terrified. She thinks everyone is like she is, and when this guy dressed in a suit bought her a meal and asked if she fancied seeing a film in his hotel room she just thought he was being nice. And even if she had remembered the room number, it would have been hoovered, cleaned and the bed changed more than twenty times since she was raped. There wouldnt be much concrete evidence. No one remembered any bloodstained sheets Ive worked in hotels, Miller. Youd be surprised how many bloodstained sheets you change over a couple of weeks. People bleed all the bloody time. Miller vigorously shook his head. Sorry. You had your chance to prove it, Harry. It wasnt enough, boss. It wasnt enough. Its never enough. But you have to draw a line somewhere. With our resources Well, give me a free hand. For a month. Miller suddenly raised his head with one eye closed. Harry knew hed been rumbled. You cunning bastard. Youve wanted the job all the time, havent you? You just had to do a bit of bartering first. Harry stuck out his lower lip and waggled his head from side to side. Miller looked out of the window. Then he sighed. OK, Harry. Ill see what I can do. But if you mess up Ill have to make a couple of decisions I know some people on the force think I should have made a long time ago. And you know what that means, dont you? Boot up the arse, boss, Harry smiled. Whats the job? I hope your summer suit is dry-cleaned and you can remember where you last put your passport. Your plane goes in twelve hours to a faraway destination. The further the better, PAS. \* \* \* The suitcase was packed. Harry had rung Stle Aune and told him he was flying to Bangkok on business. He hadnt had a lot to say and Harry didnt quite know why he had rung him. Perhaps because it was good to tell someone who might wonder where he was? Harry didnt think it was a great idea to ring the bar staff at Schrdrs. Take the vitamin B shots I gave you, Aune said. Whys that? Makes life easier if you want to be sober. New environment, Harry. It could be a good start, you know. Ill think about it. Thinkings not enough, Harry. I know. Thats why I dont need to take the shots. One of the boys from the hostel further up the street was leaning against the wall and shivering in a tight denim jacket while puffing away at a fag as Harry eased his suitcase into the boot of the taxi. Going away? Yep. South? Bangkok. Alone? Yep. Say no more. He gave Harry a thumbs up and winked. Harry took the ticket from the woman behind the check-in desk and turned. Harry Hole? The man with the steel-rimmed glasses eyed him with a sad smile. And you are? Dagfinn Torhus from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Wed like to wish you luck. And assure ourselves that youve understood the . . . delicacy of this assignment. After all, everything has moved with such haste. Thank you for the thought. Ive understood that it is my job to find a murderer without making too much of a splash. Miller has given me instructions. Good. Discretion is vital. Dont trust anyone. Not even officials who claim to be working for the Ministry. They might turn out to be from, well, for example, Dagbladet. Torhus opened his mouth as if to laugh, but Harry could see he was serious. Dagbladet journalists dont wear the Ministry badge on their lapel, herr Torhus. Or a jacket in January. By the way, Ive seen from the papers that youre my contact in the Ministry. Torhus nodded, mostly to himself. Then he jutted out his chin and lowered his voice by half a tone. Your plane goes soon, so I wont hold you up much longer. Just listen to what I have to say. He removed his hands from his jacket pockets and folded them in front of him. How old are you, Hole? Thirty-three? Thirty-four? You still have a career in front of you. Ive been doing a bit of digging, you see. Youre talented and its obvious people high up like you. And protect you. That can carry on for as long as things go well. But it wont take much for you to land flat on your arse and you could easily drag your pals down with you. And then youll find that your so-called friends are suddenly over the hills and far away. So try to stay on your feet, Hole. For everyones sake. This is well-meant advice from an old ice skater. He smiled with his mouth, but his eyes were studying Harry closely. You know what, Hole. I always have such a depressing sense of something finoshing when I come to Fornebu Airport. Something finishing and something new starting. Really? Harry said, wondering if he had time for a beer at the bar before the gate closed. Well, now and then that can be good. A renewal, I

mean. Lets hope so, Torhus said. Let us hope so. Revue de presse "If you've never read any Jo Nesbo, now is the perfect time to check out his excellent Harry Hole series" (Essentials) "As with the Australian setting of The Bat, Holes first outing, were again terra incognita (Asia here); Cockroaches, organised with greater concentration than its predecessor, turns out to be one of Nesbos most accomplished novels" (Barry Forshaw Financial Times) "Set to be another sure-fire hit" (Sun) "You'll be utterly enthralled" (Shortlist) "Beguiling as ever... An absolute treat" (Deirdre O'Brien Sunday Mirror)