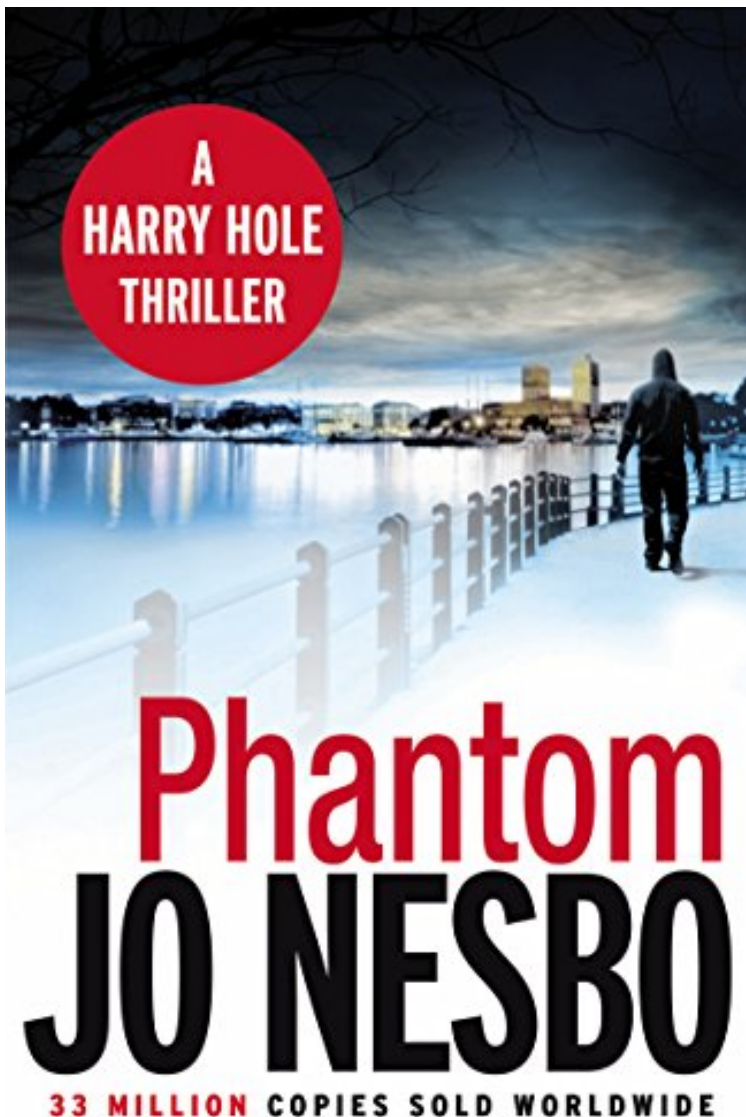


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Phantom: Harry Hole 9



Par Jo Nesbo
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Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurOVER 33 MILLION BOOKS SOLD WORLDWIDEHARRY'S IN TROUBLE...After the horrors of a case that nearly cost him his life, Harry Hole left Oslo and the police force far behind him.

Now he's back, but the case he's come to investigate is already closed, and the suspect already behind bars.THE POLICE DON'T WANT HIM BACK...Denied permission to reopen the investigation, Harry strikes out on his own, quickly discovering a trail of violence and mysterious disappearances apparently unnoticed by the police. At every turn, Harry is faced with a wall of silence.THE CRIMINALS DON'T WANT HIM BACK...But Harry is not the only one interested in the case. From the moment he steps off the plane, someone is watching his every move. ...SOMEONE WANTS HIM SILENCEDExtraitAmid the

noises of the night in downtown Oslo 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 a rat went on the hunt for food. She ran her nose over the filthy linoleum on the kitchen floor. The pungent smell of gray cigarette ash. The sugary-sweet aroma of blood on a piece of cotton gauze. The bitter odor of beer on the inside of a bottle cap, Ringnes lager. Molecules of sulfur, saltpeter and carbon dioxide filtered up from an empty metal cartridge case designed for a nine-by-eighteen-millimeter lead bullet, also called a Makarov, after the gun to which the caliber was originally adapted. Smoke from a still-smoldering cigarette with a yellow filter and blackpaper, bearing the Russian imperial eagle. The tobacco was edible. And there: a stench of alcohol, leather, grease and asphalt. A shoe. She sniffed it. 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 smelled 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. The church bells were ringing in time with the human heart now. One beat, two. Three, four . . . The rat bared her teeth. July. Shit. It sucks to die in July. Is that really church bells I hear, or were there hallucinogens in the damn bullets? OK, so it stops here. And what difference does it make? Here or there. Now or later. But do 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 the window? Do I deserve to be lying on the floor of an infected junkie pit with an extra hole in my body, as life rushes out of it along with flashbacks of everything that led me here? Is that me, is that everything, is that my life? I had plans, didn't I? And now it's no more than a bag of dust, a joke without a punchline, so short I could have told it before that insane bell stopped ringing. Shit! No one told me it would hurt so much to die. Are you there, Dad? Don't go, not now. The joke goes like this: My name is Gusto. I lived to the age of nineteen. You were a bad guy who screwed a bad woman and nine months later I popped out and got shipped to a foster family before I could say Da-da. I caused as much trouble as I could. They just wrapped the suffocating care blanket even tighter and asked me what I wanted. A fricking ice cream? They had no goddamn idea that people like you and me would end up shot, exterminated, 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 come into the bathroom I had left the door open, and hadn't turned 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's my talent, Dad: I can see what people want. Do I take after you? After she left I looked at myself in the full-length mirror. She wasn't the first to call me handsome. I had developed earlier than the other boys. Tall, tight, already broad-shouldered. Hair so black it gleamed. 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 called me. Didrik, think that was his name. He was going to be a concert pianist. I'd just turned fifteen, and he said it out loud in class. That brown rat can't even read right. I just laughed and, of course, I knew why he'd said it. Knew what he wanted. Kamilla. He was secretly in love with her; she was not so secretly in love with me. At a school dance I copped a feel to see what she had under her sweater. Which wasn't much. I mentioned it to a couple of the boys and Didrik must have picked up on it, and decided to shut me out. Not that I gave a shit about being in, but bullying is bullying. So I went to Tutu in the motorcycle club, the bikers. I'd dealt some hash for them at school, and said that I needed some respect. Tutu said he'd take care of Didrik. Later Didrik wouldn't explain to anyone how he got two fingers caught under the top hinge of the boys' bathroom door, but he never called me a 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 a peep, I swear. There goes the church bell again. Dad? It was almost midnight at Gardermoen, Oslo's principal airport, as Flight 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 arrival. He and the first officer started the checklist for shutdown and parking, since 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 kroners worth of fuel to make it. In the end, his boss had called him on the carpet. To make what? he had yelled. You didnt have any passengers with connecting flights! The worlds most punctual airline, Tord Schultz had mumbled, quoting the advertising slogan. The worlds most economically fucked-up airline! Is that the best explanation you can come up with? Tord Schultz had shrugged. After all, he couldnt 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 organization 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 worlds most economically fucked-up pilot. He signed the log, got up and left the cockpit to flash his row of pearly-white pilot teeth at 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 peoples 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 captains 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 in flying school at Sheppard. Received a smile of acknowledgment. There had been a time when he could have arranged a meeting in the arrivals hall with such a smile. And indeed had. 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 pilots cap, but the tailor-made uniform emphasized 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 inches too long in the spine, that the cockpits of F-5s and F-16s disqualified all but dwarfs. The truth was he hadnt measured up to the competition. His body was all he had managed to maintain from those times, the only thing that hadnt fallen apart, that hadnt 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 Schultzs gaze fell on a man coming toward 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 gray tan typical of whites who had spent a long time in Southeast 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 traveled economy class. But it was neither the suit nor his height that had caused Tord Schultzs gaze to fix on this person. It was the scar. It started at 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 Schultzs brain repeated the words as he strode down the corridor to the flight crew center. Didnt you have a little carry-on up top? asked one of the flight attendants, pointing to Tords rolling Samsonite suitcase. He couldnt 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 youre looking at me? They walked past the partition by the entrance to the flight crew center, where in theory there was room for a jack- in-the-box customs officer. Ninety-nine percent 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 center. As usual, Sergey Ivanov ensured that 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 vacuum and opened the captain's locker. Lifted out the small Samsonite carry-on, unzipped it, removed the metal plate at the bottom and checked the four bricklike one-kilo packages. Then he put them into the vacuum cleaner, pressing them into position between the tube and the large cleaner 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 garbage bags in the back of the Daihatsu and went back to the lounge. There were 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 that showed arrival and departure times. No delays. Ill 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. Ive got Bergen covered, Jenny said. You can wait for Trondheim. Ill do Bergen, Sergey said. Nick can do Trondheim. Jenny looked at him. As you like. Dont work yourself to death, Sergey. Sergey went to a chair by the wall and sat down. Leaned back carefully. The skin around 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 the Nizhny Tagil prison, and there was still quite a bit left to do. Sergey thought of the tattoos his uncles 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 wasnt 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 wasnt 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 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 wouldnt 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 walkietalkie. Sergey got up. Yawned. The procedure in the second cockpit was even simpler. Open the vacuum cleaner, put the contents in the carry-on in the first officers locker. On their way out they met the crew on their way in. Sergey Ivanov avoided the first officers eyes, looked down and noted that he had the same kind of wheeled suitcase as Schultz did. Samsonite Aspire GRT. Same red. Without the little red carry-on that could 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 cell phones, purchased in Thailand, so they could send a text in case there were changes to the schedule. Andrey limited all information to a strictly need-to-know basis. For that reason, Sergey didnt have 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 air to land, there was no customs check, no security check. The officer took the carry-on to the hotel in Bergen where he and the crew were 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 math. 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 were looking

forward to the next installment. Revue de presse "Like a Scandinavian police version of the Jason Bourne series... a compulsive page turner... Nesbo leads us into the murky back-streets of Oslo and a world of drug addiction and smuggling, gang warfare and corrupt officialdom all of which social context is handled with real skill by the author." (Independent on Sunday) "Jo Nesbo writes tightly plotted, claustrophobic thrillers with plenty of snow and a brutal yet hopelessly romantic policeman hero with the wonderful name of Harry

Hole... they're also exuberantly, ingeniously gruesome." (John Preston Sunday Telegraph) "Phantom is arguably a much better book than any previous instalments. Nesbo wrings out the tension, by turns painful and delicious, with consummate skill." (David Connolly Sunday Express) "Nesbo's extraordinary writing power still mesmerises" (The Times) "Phantom will maintain Jo Nesbo's unstoppable momentum" (The

Independent)