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# MEMESIS

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THE REDBREAST

A NOVEL

HOW DO YOU CATCH A KILLER

WHEN YOU'RE THE NUMBER ONE SUSPECT?

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Jo Nesbo

# Nemesis

TRANSLATED FROM THE NORWEGIAN BY

Don Bartlett

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Part I

1

## The Plan

*I'M GOING TO DIE. AND IT MAKES NO SENSE. THAT WASN'T THE plan, not my plan, anyway. I may have been heading this way all the time without realising. It wasn't my plan. My plan was better. My plan made sense.*

*I'm staring down the muzzle of a gun and I know that's where it will come from. The messenger of death. The ferryman. Time for a last laugh. If you*

*can see light at the end of the tunnel, it may be a spit of flame. Time for a last tear. We could have turned this life into something good, you and I. If we had followed the plan. One last thought. Everyone asks what the meaning of life is, but no one asks about the meaning of death.*

## 2

### The Astronaut

THE OLD MAN REMINDED HARRY OF AN ASTRONAUT. THE comical short steps, the stiff movements, the dead, black eyes and the shoes shuffling along the parquet floor. As if he were frightened to lose contact with the ground and float away into space.

Harry looked at the clock on the white wall above the exit. 15.16. Outside the window, in Bogstadveien, the Friday crowds hurry past. The low October sun is reflected in the wing mirror of a car driving away in the rush hour.

Harry concentrated on the old man. Hat plus elegant grey overcoat in dire need of a clean. Beneath it: tweed jacket, tie and worn grey trousers with a needle-sharp crease. Polished shoes, down at the heel. One of those pensioners of whom Majorstuen seems to be full. This wasn't conjecture. Harry knew that August Schulz was eighty-one years old and an ex-clothes retailer who had lived all his life in Majorstuen, apart from a period he spent in Auschwitz during the War. And the stiff knees were the result of a fall from a Ringveien footbridge which he used on his daily visits to his

daughter. The impression of a mechanical doll was reinforced by the fact that his arms were bent perpendicularly at the elbow and thrust forward.

A brown walking stick hung over his right forearm and his left hand gripped a bank giro he was holding out for the short-haired young man at position number 2. Harry couldn't see the face of the cashier, but he knew he was staring at the old man with a mixture of sympathy and irritation.

It was 15.17 now, and finally it was August Schulz's turn.

Stine Grette sat at position number 1, counting out 730 Norwegian kroner for a boy in a blue woollen hat who had just given her a money order. The diamond on the ring finger of her left hand glistened as she placed each note on the counter.

Harry couldn't see, but he knew that in front of position number 3 there was a woman with a pram, which she was rocking, probably to distract herself, as the child was asleep. The woman was waiting to be served by fru Braenne, who was loudly explaining to a man on the telephone that he couldn't charge someone else's account unless the account holder had signed an agreement to that effect. She also informed him that she worked in the bank, and he didn't, so on that note perhaps they should bring the discussion to a close.

At that moment the door opened and two men, one tall, the other short, wearing the same overalls, strode into the bank. Stine Grette looked up. Harry checked his watch and began to count. The men ran over to the corner where Stine was sitting. The tall man moved as if he were stepping over puddles, while the little one had the rolling gait of someone who has acquired more muscle than he can accommodate. The boy in the blue hat

turned slowly and began to walk towards the exit, so preoccupied with counting money that he didn't see the two men.

'Hello,' the tall man said to Stine, banging down a black case on the counter. The little one pushed his reflector sunglasses in place, walked forward and deposited an identical case beside it. 'Money!' he said in a high-pitched squeak. 'Open the door!'

It was like pressing the pause button: all movement in the bank froze. The only indication that time hadn't stood still was the traffic outside the window. And the second hand on the clock, which now showed that ten seconds had passed. Stine pressed a button under her desk. There was a hum of electronics, and the little man pressed the counter door against the wall with his knee.

'Who's got the key?' he asked. 'Quick, we haven't got all day!'

'Helge!' Stine shouted over her shoulder.

'What?' The voice came from inside the open door of the only office in the bank.

'We've got visitors, Helge!'

A man with a bow tie and reading glasses appeared.

'These gentlemen want you to open the ATM, Helge,' Stine said.

Helge Klementsén stared vacantly at the two men dressed in overalls, who were now on his side of the counter. The tall one glanced nervously at the

front door while the little one had his eyes fixed on the branch manager.

'Oh, right. Of course,' Helge gasped, as if he had just remembered a missed appointment, and burst into a peal of frenetic laughter.

Harry didn't move a muscle; he simply let his eyes absorb every detail of their movements and gestures. Twenty-five seconds. He continued to look at the clock above the door, but from the corner of his eye he could see the branch manager unlocking the ATM from the inside, taking out two oblong metal dispensers and handing them over to the two men. The whole thing took place at high speed and in silence. Fifty seconds.

'These are for you, pop!' The little man had taken two similar metal dispensers from his case and held them out for Helge. The branch manager swallowed, nodded, took them and slotted them into the ATM.

'Have a good weekend!' the little one said, straightening his back and grabbing the case. One and a half minutes. 'Not so fast,' Helge said. The little one stiffened.

Harry sucked in his cheeks and tried to concentrate. 'The receipt . . .' Helge said.

For one protracted moment the two men stared at the small, grey-haired branch manager. Then the little one began to laugh. Loud, reedy laughter with a piercing, hysterical overtone, the way people on speed laugh. 'You don't think we were going to leave here without a signature, do you? Hand over two million without a receipt!'

'Well,' Helge said. 'One of you almost forgot last week.'

'There are so many new bods on deliveries at the moment,' the little one said, as he and Helge signed and exchanged yellow and pink forms.

Harry waited for the front door to close again before looking at the clock once more. Two minutes and ten seconds.

Through the glass in the door he could see the white Nordea security van drive away.

Conversations between the people in the bank resumed. Harry didn't need to count, but he still did. Seven. Three behind the counter and four in front, including the baby and the man in overalls who had just come in and was standing by the table in the middle of the room, writing his account number on a payment slip. Harry knew it was for Sunshine Tours.

'Good afternoon,' August Schulz said and began to shuffle in the direction of the front door.

The time was exactly 15.21.10, and that was the moment the whole thing started.

When the door opened, Harry saw Stine Grette's head bob up from her papers and drop down. Then she raised her head again, slowly this time. Harry's attention moved to the front door. The man who had come in had already pulled down the zip of his boiler suit and whipped out a black-and-olive-green AG3. A navy blue balaclava completely covered his face, apart from his eyes. Harry started to count from zero.