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Cockroaches: The Second Inspector Harry Hole Novel



Synopsis

When the Norwegian ambassador to Thailand is found dead in a Bangkok brothel, Inspector Harry Hole is dispatched from Oslo to help hush up the case. But once he arrives Harry discovers that this case is about much more than one random murder. There is something else, something more pervasive, scabbling around behind the scenes. Or, put another way, for every cockroach you see in your hotel room, there are hundreds behind the walls. Surrounded by round-the-clock traffic noise, Harry wanders the streets of Bangkok lined with go-go bars, temples, opium dens, and tourist traps, trying to piece together the story of the ambassador's death even though no one asked him to, and no one wants him to - not even Harry himself.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

First a clarification: While the translation is marketed as 'an early Harry Hole case' Cockroaches is the second Hole novel by Mr Nesbo. Second the answer to: Is it worth going backwards through time to read this one? Yes indeed. Sent to Thailand in the hopes of being too drunk to solve a murder too sensitive to be solved, Harry indeed finds himself drunk, sweating, and out of his depth in Bangkok. The novel balances Harry's personal life, own demons and the murder mystery well. Focusing mostly on the action and intrigue (and some the most intense violence read by this reader for a while) with just enough contact with 'Sis' and Harry's father to tug at heart strings and drive Harry onward. My only beef is that the epilogue is a little light - with so much carnage in this story one

wants a little more loose end tying and (as far as I can recall) Redbreast does not confront these at all (aside from searing criticisms from various colleagues which is a common feature of Hole novels) In short, while many may be worried that Cockroaches won't sit well with them after being further through the series, Harry's trip to Thailand has an almost episodic feel to it that prevents discombobulation from the timeline jumping. Also unlike some of the more dry Hole plots, Cockroaches mixes business with pleasure and mayhem in perfect balance. Recommended.

In this novel, Joe Nesbo places his protagonist, Detective Harry Hole in Bangkok, Thailand where he is sent to investigate the brutal murder of the Norwegian ambassador found stabbed in a seedy motel. As Harry begins his investigation, he notices the swarm of cockroaches crawling everywhere he goes. Soon, the reader realizes the symbolism of the cockroaches take on a three tiered significance. There are the physical cockroaches ever present in the book. Then, the reader realizes the cockroaches symbolize the decadence and criminality of the Norwegian expatriates in Thailand and finally, at the cockroaches swirling in Harry's fragile mind. When we leave the book Harry is trying to silence his own demons in the stillness of the opium pipe.

In typical Jo Nesbo fashion, the book opens with a gruesome murder. Norway's ambassador to Thailand, Atle Molnes, is found dead in a Bangkok brothel and Inspector Harry Hole is dispatched from Oslo to hush up the case. It's the politicians who want him there because he performed well 'down under' in Nesbo's earlier novel titled The Bat. Bjarne Moller, Harry's boss, is only too happy to have him out of town for a while and get dried out. Unfortunately, Harry didn't get the memo. He works hard to solve the crime, regardless of where it leads, and makes several enemies along the way. The story moves along well and Nesbo gives us plenty of colorful detail about Bangkok and its major tourist attraction, the sex business. "Everything is available," remarks Police Inspector Liz Crumley, Harry's counterpart for the murder investigation. The city is terribly overcrowded and suffocatingly hot in January as everyone complains about the heat and traffic. We're reminded of the heat throughout the book where even the mention of it seems overdone. This is Nesbo's second Harry Hole novel. It was originally published in 1998 and republished in trade fiction last year. I noticed several typos, grammatical disconnects, and logical breaks, perhaps because the book was translated into English from Norwegian. This is not a big issue and didn't detract from my enjoyment. The Molnes family is a strange bunch of characters. The deceased ambassador was quite wealthy and owned a furniture company in Norway. The widow Hilde Molnes is an alcoholic and has been having an affair with another Norwegian, Jens Brekke. (Atle was gay and had some

bizarre sexual habits.) The Molnes daughter, Runa, has a disfigured arm and wears a prosthesis. She will come into the Molnes fortune when she turns 23 but mother Hilde will control the money until then and be able to spend it. There are a number of twists, turns, and surprises in a rather complicated plot. It will keep you turning the pages until the exciting conclusion which stops just short of being wildly implausible.

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