



Blood on Snow

Jo Nesbø , Neil Smith (translator)

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From the internationally acclaimed author of the Harry Hole novels—a fast, tight, darkly lyrical stand-alone novel that has at its center the perfectly sympathetic antihero: an Oslo contract killer who draws us into an unexpected meditation on death and love.

This is the story of Olav: an extremely talented “fixer” for one of Oslo’s most powerful crime bosses. But Olav is also an unusually complicated fixer. He has a capacity for love that is as far-reaching as is his gift for murder. He is our straightforward, calm-in-the-face-of-crisis narrator with a storyteller’s hypnotic knack for fantasy. He has an “innate talent for subordination” but running through his veins is a “virus” born of the power over life and death. And while his latest job puts him at the pinnacle of his trade, it may be mutating into his greatest mistake. . . .

Blood on Snow Details

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From Reader Review Blood on Snow for online ebook

Lyn says

A hit man with a heart.

A Norwegian hit man to be more exact. From the best-selling author of the fabulously well to do Harry Hole series, Jo “I can write like Mickey Spillane when I want to” Nesbo, his 2014 fast paced novella (translated into Murican by Neil Smith) is a fun departure from his Hole mystery writing.

Not a Scandinavian murder mystery, but most definitely still Nordic Noir. This is a dark and gritty journey into underworld Oslo. Set in the late 70s, Nesbo leads us into the shadowy world of Norsk crime as a hit man gets his signals crossed and gets sideways of some heroin dealers. We meet a walrus mustachioed kingpin named The Fisherman and a host of sinister and thuggish characters and ne'er do wells.

Actually, Nesbo channels his inner Jim Thompson and comes up with a cold pulp fiction with some attention-grabbing twists and turns.

Not for everyone, perhaps, but for fans of Nesbo and for crime pulp fiction readers.

Supreeth says

If you could see my bookshelves (real bookshelf), Jo Nesbo is the first name you'd read. When I was on thriller binge, like two years ago, I heard about Nesbo and bought bunch of his books, all pretty lengthy, his name written with big fonts on the spine of the book. I've five books of him, but unfortunately, I don't think I'll ever read any of them. When i read Redbreast i thought it was pretty amazing even though I'd skimmed last few pages- I rated it four stars here because I thought I'd missed something and I'm the one to blame. I tried this novella, which is not a Harry Hole book, just to try out if there's a tiny hope that i can get into Nesbo, looks like that gate's closed.

Talking about this book, this is the sort of book I'm supposed to like. Dark, gritty, short length, short chapters, philosophical, character study, melancholic, written by middle aged man, and Nordic. But the hackneyed translation, or real bad writing, I can't say which for sure - spoiled it all. If you're looking for a Japanese version of something like this, you should try out Fuminori Nakamura.

John says

Quite different from other work by Nesbo that I've read, this short novel is a psychological thriller about an Oslo hitman ("fixer"), Olav.

Olav guesses that his life is going to go all to hell when his crime-kingpin boss, Hoffmann, tells him his new commission is to fix Hoffmann's trophy second wife, Corina, who's been having an affair. As soon as Olav sees Corina, though, he's consumed by love/lust for her, and on impulse he fixes the boyfriend instead. What

he doesn't realize at the time is that the boyfriend was Hoffmann's son by his first marriage . . .

Olav takes Corina into hiding with him and they become lovers, but they both know they'll never be able to live in peace while Hoffmann still lives. Olav realizes the only way to get himself into a position to fix Hoffmann is to do a deal with Hoffmann's rival in the Oslo drugs 'n' prostitution racket, the Fisherman. But what are his chances of getting out of such a deal alive?

Olav tells us his tale himself, and a very companionable narrator he proves to be. He's full of self-criticism over such failings as his inability to do even simple mental arithmetic and his lack of education -- although time and time again he startles us with a piece of arcane knowledge that he just happened to pick up in a book he once read. And we feel, too, his sudden obsession with Corina although, being somewhat more distanced than he is, we're not blinded to the fact that she might be by no means the innocent angel he thinks she is. I became completely absorbed by his tale, and only afterwards was I appalled at myself for having developed a strong sympathy for a ruthless multiple murderer.

The denouement manages to be both a bit of a cheat and completely satisfying.

Recommended as a fast, gritty read.

James Thane says

This relatively slim novel is a stand-alone from Jo Nesbo, the creator of the great series featuring Norwegian homicide detective Harry Hole. The protagonist is a contract killer named Olav who works for a crime boss in Oslo. Olav is one of the best "fixers" in the business and approaches his work with a cold-blooded efficiency until he is given the job of killing a woman who has taken a lover, thus infuriating her husband.

In preparation for the hit, Olav watches the woman for several days from an apartment across the street from hers and finds himself feeling sympathy and some affection for his target. This doubtless violates virtually all of the guidelines in the Hitman's Handbook, but of course, it's great for the reader because of the conflict it creates in Olav.

The story is narrated by Olav, and the reader can't help but feel a tinge of sympathy for the guy, in spite of his profession. The choices that he makes will have significant consequences for himself as well as for his targets, and that's really all one can say about the plot without giving away significant developments.

One can say that this book is up to the high standards that Nesbo has set in the Harry Hole series. As always, the characters are well drawn, and the setting--here, Oslo in the dead of winter--is rendered very well. The moral issues are also very interesting, and this is a book that should appeal to any serious fan of crime fiction.

Parenthetically, I had the opportunity to hear Nesbo at a book event this week while he's touring for the new Harry Hole novel, *The Thirst*. He's a very interesting guy and it was a lot of fun listening to him talk about the origin of the series and about his own life as a writer. If he makes it to your town, he's definitely worth seeing.

Brandon says

My first experience with Jo Nesbo came about two years ago when I received his first Harry Hole novel, *The Bat*, as a gift. Honestly, I didn't see what all the fuss was about. I found that the story was all over the map like a dysfunctional GPS. However, when I heard he had recently released a stand-alone thriller*, I thought I would give him another shot. I'm glad I did.

Blood on Snow tells the story of Olav, a “fixer” for a heroin dealer in Oslo. When a job goes awry, Olav becomes his boss’ target. Reaching out to his boss’ competitor, Olav sets out to “fix” his former employer before fleeing Norway forever.

While I usually love stories that meander, sometimes a straightforward story with a simple plot can get the job done just as well, as long as the writing does its job in sustaining my interest, which Nesbo does in spades here when it comes to the novel's protagonist and narrator, Olav.

Nesbo's Olav is a simple man who longs for companionship but due to the nature of his work, is unable to form a substantial relationship with anyone. Throughout the course of the story, you learn of his troubled childhood, his battle with dyslexia accompanied by a limited education; effectively endearing him to the reader. He's a very sympathetic killer – a man whom the system has seemingly failed. Don't get me wrong, I'm not saying he spends the whole two hundred pages whining and playing the poor me card, but you definitely feel like he deserves better.

Blood on Snow has inadvertently motivated me to revisit Nesbo's signature Harry Hole series. I've got to assume the series gets better as evidenced by how much I enjoyed this quick read.

*The novel is no longer a stand-alone as a sequel entitled "The Midnight Sun" is currently being written.

Also posted @ Every Read Thing

Mandy says

My first Nesbo read and I really enjoyed the style. Looking forward to reading the Harry Hole series next

Parastoo Ashtian says

Diane says

This was my first Nesbø book, so I didn't know what to expect. It's a fast read, but it felt like a first draft of a novella, rather than a completed work.

Blood on Snow is the story of a "fixer" named Olav, which means he's a contract killer. Olav has a dry sense of humor and says killing is the only thing he's good at.

"To sum up, let's put it like this: I'm no good at driving slowly, I'm way too soft, I fall in love far too easily, I lose my head when I get angry, and I'm bad at math. I've read a bit, but I don't really know much, and certainly nothing anyone would find useful. And stalactites grow faster than I can write."

One day Olav is asked to kill the wife of a powerful crime boss. But things take an unusual turn when Olav falls in love with the woman he's supposed to kill. Meanwhile, Olav senses that the boss is now trying to fix him. There is going to be a lot of bloodshed before the story ends!

I thought Olav's narration was amusing and I was entertained by the plot, even though I saw the twists coming. But the book felt meaningless. This story passed through my fingers as lightly as falling snow, and I will forget it as soon as it touches the ground.

Gary says

This is the 1st book in the 'Blood on Snow' series by Jo Nesbo.

The lead character Olav Johansen is a seasoned criminal with a sordid past and whose one success in life is as a 'fixer'. He is employed by the drug baron Daniel Hoffmann to kill his wife Corina Hoffman who he suspects of adultery. While casing the proposed crime Olav becomes infatuated by Corina and his plan changes when he witnesses the abusive lover and decides he is a more deserving victim. This decision has life threatening consequences that spiral out of control.

Not in the same league as the 'Harry Hole' series but proved a decent read.

Michael says

A surprisingly satisfying tale of a hitman with a human heart and the capacity to take risks out of love and an emerging sense of justice. This stand-alone novella from the author of the popular series about Norwegian detective Harry Hole gives you the interior view of the minimalist life of Olav, who has the job as "fixer" for a powerful gangster in Oslo. He acquired the position by default after inadequacies in other positions such as pimp or getaway driver. The few people he had to kill were not worth grieving over. But this time his target is the beautiful young wife of his boss due to her infidelity. In spying on her, Olav can't help feeling empathy and attraction for her. His actions lead him inevitably to a deadly breach with his boss, and has to seek recourse with his competitor in the heroin trade, known as "The Fisherman". This has lots of atmospherics, dialog, and suspense, brought out very effectively in the audiobook version read by Patti Smith.

Carol says

An enjoyable (and very dark) read with a sympathetic anti-hero.

Mark says

Blood on Snow is a novella by Norwegian crime author Jo Nesbo.

Olav is a hitman, that's all he can be. A life of crime and some pimping have left his options limited. Why a hitman? Well, he's no good at driving a getaway car, no good at maths, is dyslexic so reading and writing are major issues - but he is a practical man, knows the game well and he's a survivor.

His boss is the runner of half of the empire of heroin in Norway. The other half is run by the 'fisherman', as with most crime parties, they don't see eye to eye. A phone call and Olav has landed another hit job from his boss but this one is too close to home and has all the trademarks for a reprisal. Faced with a lose/lose situation Olav has to think quick and take matters into his own hands, even if that means betrayal.

A hit is done, but not THE hit and now Olav needs to get out in a hurry but he is a wanted man. Olav's boss, Hoffman, and the 'fisherman' are not the sort of people to double cross - nor do they forget.

A quick read but there are some memorable twists at the end. Mistakes are made and realized too late. Sometimes the players get played.

Daiva says

The storytelling, characters, descriptions, dialogues and whole action somehow reminded me of Quentin Tarantino movies. Also, quite broken, disturbed, psychotic characters seems to be Nesbo forte. I liked Olav, the main character, the 'fixer' who falls in love too easily, which also seems to be his biggest weakness.

I would not say the book is among my favorites but I definitely enjoyed all aspects of it. I can move on to part 2 now.

Rachel Hall says

Never having been introduced to the legendary Harry Hole or having read Jo Nesbo before I had few preconceptions ahead of reading Blood on Snow and hence for me, meeting "fixer" Olav in this clever noir thriller was an unexpected delight. A contract killer with a soft-centre might sound mutually exclusive but that is until readers meet Olav who narrates this short offering set in the brutal chill of a pre-Christmas Oslo in 1976. Protagonist and anti-hero, Olav, has worked for Daniel Hoffmann for four-years and has finally found his ideal role; namely "fixing" (read killing) those who get in the way of Hoffmann's burgeoning empire. His moral compunction has seen him fail as a getaway driver, robber and a pimp, due largely to his

sensitive nature and obvious scruples. But what Olav can do is the straightforward dispatching of the minions of Hoffmann's prime competitor in the drugs trade (the Fisherman). However, Hoffmann's next commission for Olav proves not nearly so simple, namely "fixing" the enchanting Mrs Corina Hoffmann, second wife of the boss. Abandoning his 'gift for subordination' sees Olav proving a true knight in shining armour and shooting Corina's lover, awkwardly Hoffmann's eldest son, thereby resulting in the unlikely duo hiding out together and Olav with a very large price on his head. Whether a fairytale love story blossoms between Olav and Corina is for readers to discover but along the way expect plenty of bloodshed (albeit without any real gratuitous detail). People die left, right and centre in Blood on Snow, but Nesbo certainly does not revel in the gore factor.

Olav might be held back in his reading endeavours by his dyslexia but it has certainly not blunted his vivid imagination as his re-writing of Les Miserables and later his own story proves. This is tightly plotted noir action that delivers several stings in the tail as Olav's story plays out. Stripped back prose and a beguilingly honest Olav will leave readers rooting for a baddie with a big heart and a capacity for taking a chance on love. Admittedly the plot of Blood on Snow might seem a little cliched but the seamless execution and guile of Olav along the way in outsmarting the real bad guys of the hour makes this a brilliantly wry gem of a thriller!

George K. says

Το μικρ? αυτ? βιβλιαρ?κι, που περισσ?τερο σε μεγ?λη νουβ?λα φ?ρνει παρ? σε μυθιστ?ρημα, θα ?λεγα ?τι ε?ναι μια προσπ?θεια του Ν?σμπο να μιμηθε? κατ? κ?ποιο τρ?πο τα αμερικ?νικα αστυνομικ? παλπ παλαι?τερων δεκαετ?ν, αλλ? και ταιν?ες στο στιλ Ταραντ?νο. Σαν λ?τρης και των δυο, μπορ? να πω ?τι τα κατ?φερε μια χαρ?, δεν ξ?ρω ?μως πως θα φανε? σε ?σους λατρε?ουν τον Ν?σμπο ελ?ω Χ?ρι Χ?λε.

Το σεν?ριο απλ?: Βρισκ?μαστε στα μ?σα της δεκαετ?ας του '70, στο ?σλο της Νορβηγ?ας. Ο Ο?λαφ Γι?χανσεν ε?ναι ?νας πληρωμ?νος δολοφ?νος, με αρκετ? κουσο?ρια και κατ? β?θος καλ? καρδι?. Δουλε?ει για ?να απ? τους ?ρχοντες του υποκ?σμου του ?σλο, τον Ντ?νιελ Χ?φμαν. Ο τελευτα?ος θα του ζητ?σει μια μ?ρα να ξεκ?νει την γυνα?κα του, ον?ματι Κορ?να Χ?φμαν, μια παν?μορφη ξανθι? που ?χει μ?θει να κερδ?ζει π?ντα. Σαν βλ?κας ο Ο?λαφ θα ερωτευτε? το υποψ?φιο θ?μα του και ?λα θα π?νε κατ? δια?λου...

Κλασικ? ιστορ?α, με αντι?ρωα πρωταγωνιστ?, πληρωμ?νους δολοφ?νους, ανθρ?πους του υποκ?σμου και μια μοιρα?α γυνα?κα στην μ?ση. ?πως ε?πα, το βιβλιαρ?κι αυτ?, με την εξ?λιξη της πλοκ?ς που ?χει, τους χαρακτ?ρες, το ?φος γραφ?ς και την ατμ?σφαιρα, ακολουθε? την συνταγ? με την οπο?α ?χουν γραφε? αστυνομικ? μυθιστορ?ματα της παλπ λογοτεχν?ας. Ε?ναι μικρ? σε μ?γεθος, διαβ?ζεται μονορο?φι, η ιστορ?α ?χει αρκετ?ς δυνατ?ς σκην?ς (ειδικ? μια ε?ναι κομμ?νη και ραμμ?νη για τον Ταραντ?νο) και δεν υπ?ρχει πολ?ς χ?ρος για τρομερ? αν?πτυξη χαρακτ?ρων ? ανο?σιες φλυαρ?ες.

Προσωπικ? μου ?ρεσε, ?μως εγ? ?ξερα τι να περιμ?νω: ?να βιβλ?ο-φ?ρο τιμ?ς στα αστυνομικ? παλπ. Ευχαριστ?θηκα τρ?λα και ατμ?σφαιρα και το δι?βασα μονοκοπαν?, χωρ?ς διαλε?μματα, μ?σα σε λιγ?τερο απ? τρεις ?ρες (το ?ρχισα στις ?ντεκα και κ?τι και το τελε?ωσα στις δυο το βρ?δυ!). Το μ?νο σ?γουρο ε?ναι ?τι με το που κυκλοφορ?σει στα ελληνικ? το επ?μενο βιβλ?ο της διλογ?ας, θα το αγορ?σω ?μεσα. Α, και ο Ν?σμπο τε?νει να γ?νει ?νας απ? τους αγαπημ?νους μου

συγγραφε?ς του ε?δους, χωρ?ς καν να ?χω διαβ?σει ακ?μα X?ρι X?λε!

Greg says

I never went and looked through Jo Nesbo's page of books he had written on Goodreads, and I only know him because of his Harry Hole novels, but he writes other books, too.

Some of those are a series of books for kids that revolve around farting.

And he also has this stand alone novel that was written under a pseudonym and is being released this spring.

I've only read one of Nesbo's books before, so I'm not all that familiar with how his novels go. But the one that I read was a fairly dense and involved one, at least as far as the genre goes. More in the vein of someone like Tana French instead of someone who has a whole shelf of mass markets in the bookstore that all have some pun or the same word used in every single title.

This is different though. It's not a police procedural, or detective focused or whatever you want to call his Harry Hole novels. Instead it is about a fixer, a guy who kills people for a living.

It's tough for me to read one novel by a guy who is writing about a kind of depressed and layered detective and then read a novel about a hit man and not think and compare him to Lawrence Block. I'm sure Block isn't the first person to have a detective type series and also dip into writing from the perspective of killer—it would seem like a thing people would do who enjoy letting their imaginations run wild in this kind of way.

This is quite different than Block's *Hit* books though. The characters are similar in that they are both detached loners who probably read too much (does Keller read actually, it seems like he should, I can't remember for sure, way to go Greg at giving unknown facts again!). But the fixer in Nesbo's book, Olav, does his work for a the local crime kingpin specializing in prostitution and heroin.

When you're in that line of business it's good to have someone on the books who can get rid of people for you. Especially when there is some upstart trying to lure away some of your junkies.

It's a weird thing to have as a favorite part of the book, but I loved the part where Olav is describing why he became a fixer. I won't butcher the reasons, but basically he showed himself to be inept at being a driver, a stickup man or a pimp because of his psychological weaknesses and feelings for other people; but he's shown himself quite capable at killing people for money.

Like Block, there is a definite amount of romanticizing going on about the character of someone who would choose to be a professional killer—it's more like the John Cusack from *Grosse Pointe Blank*, than some goon or psychopath (my mind just went kaput when trying to come up with another pop-culture reference there, because everyone I could think of was also some kind of romanticized anti-hero, oh well. Add your own below or tweet it at #gregsnotclever (actually don't, I'll never know if you do)). This might be the liberties authors can take with the characters they create, or it could be how professional killers really are, I don't think I actually know any professional killers.

Olav's got a problem though, one which I never considered before would be a problem for a hit man. Because of the nature of his work he just happens to know too much, like literally where the bodies are

buried, and he's getting concerned that this is making him more of a liability than an asset to his boss.

Then he's given a new assignment. And it's a doozy. His boss wants Olav to kill the boss's wife.

And that is what this book is about.

I only gave it three stars. Not because I didn't enjoy it, I did quite a bit. I flew through it, but I kept comparing it to the first Block novel and it just wasn't as good as that. And it was also fairly quick and it started to run out of steam at one point. My enjoyment was probably closer to four stars (however you would quantify enjoyment to abstract star ratings), but when I'm comparing it to other books I've enjoyed I feel like for my future self I should see that it was good but not great. You really needed to know this bit of reasoning that I went through.

The ending (spoilers!, don't click if you haven't read it)(view spoiler)

The following is just some rambling, and might be better skipped because it really doesn't have all that much to do with the book, but more about the position that Olav put himself into, it might contain a couple of spoiler type things for the trajectory the novel takes, but nothing unexpected if you read what the novel is about. I'll put it in spoiler tags though, just because it's so much of an aside that you might not want to even have the words polluting your visual and mental space.

(view spoiler)

Sandra says

Not as captivating as the Harry Hole series. Still good, cause Nesbø.

3.5*

Wilma says

Bij de eerste zin dacht ik...in wat voor kinderlijk verhaal ben ik nu weer belandt? Toch echt een goede 'Nesbo'...!! Ik hou van zijn eenvoudige, ingenieuze en rauwe schrijfstijl...nu lezend in het tweede deel...wordt vervolgd!

Evgnossia O'Hara says

Can someone explain to me what happened in this story?

Anastasia ^^ says

3.5 αστ?ρια κατ' ακρ?βεια

Τι τ?λος ?ταν αυτ?; Αγκ...

Καταρχ?ς, νομ?ζω ?τι αξ?ζει να διαβαστε? για το τ?λος. Μου ?ρεσαν οι σκην?ς δρ?σεις, ο Νεσμπο σε κ?νει να ε?χαι χωμ?νος στο κ?θισμα της πολυθρ?νας, να τρως τα ν?χια σου και να ανυπομονε?ς για την συν?χεια. Γλυκ?ς ανατροπ?ς που μπορο?σες να τις προβλ?ψεις αμυδρ?.

Το μ?νο που δεν μου ?ρεσε ?ταν στην αρχ? ο "ερωτας με την πρ?τη ματι?" καθ?λου πειστικ?ς και αρκετ? πλαστ?ς. Επ?σης, δεν φαιν?ταν σαν ?να καλογραμμ?νο ?ργο αλλ? κ?τι γρ?γορο και κ?πως πρ?χειρογραμμ?νο.

Δε?τερον, ο πρωταγωνιστ?ς ε?ναι κ?τι ?ξω απ? τα συνιθισμ?να ?νας αρκετ? καλ?καρδος δολοφ?νος, που ε?χε ?να ασχημο παρελθ?ν για αυτ? και επ?λεξε τ?τοιου ε?δους δουλει?. Κ?τι που φα?νεται να μην του αρ?σει αλλ? η συνθ?κες τον οδ?γησαν εκε?. Ξ?ρει πολλ? πρ?γματα προσθ?τει δι?φορες γν?σεις του στην πλοκ? και επ?σης κ?ποιες φ?σεις ?ταν αρκετ? αστε?ος και ιδια?τερα πονηρ?ς στο επ?γγελμα.

Το προηγο?μενο του Νεσμπο που δι?βασα, αν και μου ?ρεσε, δεν μου ?κανε τ?σο μεγ?λη εντ?πωση ?σο αυτ?. Σε αυτ? βο?θησε και η γρ?γορη ρο? της ιστορ?ας.

Συστ?νεται σε λ?τρεις του ε?δους ιδια?τερα τα Χριστο?γεννα.(? για καν?να readarthon *wink* *wink*)
