THE
JEALOUSY MAN
& OTHER STORIES

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Jo Nesbo

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Translated from the Norwegian
by Robert Ferguson
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THE JEALOUSY MAN

I glanced out at the propeller on the wing of the forty-seater ATR-72 plane. Beneath us, bathed in sea and sunshine, lay a sandy-coloured island. No visible vegetation, only yellowish-white chalk. Kalymnos.

The captain warned us we might be in for a rough landing. I closed my eyes and leaned back in my seat. Ever since I was a child I have known I was going to die in a fall. Or to be more precise, that I was going to fall from the sky into the sea and drown there. I can even recall the day on which this certainty came to me.

My father was one of the assistant directors in the family firm of which his older brother, Uncle Hector, was head. We children loved Uncle Hector because he always brought presents when he came to see us, and let us ride in his car, the only Rolls-Royce cabriolet in all Athens. My father usually returned from work after I had gone to bed, but this particular evening he was early. He looked worn out, and after tea he had a long, long telephone conversation with my grandfather in his study. I could hear that he was very angry. When I went to bed he sat on the edge of it and I asked him to tell me a story. He thought about it for a bit, then he told the tale of Icarus and his father. They lived in Athens, but they were on the island of Crete when his father, a wealthy and celebrated craftsman, made a pair of wings from feathers and wax with which he was able to fly through the sky. People were mightily impressed by this, and the father and his whole family were everywhere regarded with great respect. When the father gave the wings to Icarus, he urged his son to do exactly as he had done, and follow exactly the same route, and everything would be all right. But Icarus wanted to fly to new places, and to fly even higher than his father. And once he was airborne, intoxicated at finding himself so high above the ground as well as by the onlookers, he forgot that it wasn't because of his supernatural ability to fly but because of the wings his father had given him. In his overweening self-confidence he flew higher than his father and came too close to the sun, and the sun melted the wax that held the wings in place. And with that Icarus fell into the sea. Where he drowned.

As I was growing up it always seemed to me that my father's lightly adapted version of the Icarus myth was intended as an early warning to his oldest son. Hector was childless, and it was presumed that I would succeed him when the time came. Not until I was grown up did I learn that at around that time the firm had almost gone bankrupt as a result of Hector's reckless gambling on the

price of gold, that my grandfather had fired him, but for the sake of appearances allowed him to keep his title and office. In practice it was my father who ran the firm thereafter. I never found out whether the bedtime story he told me that evening referred to me or to Uncle Hector, but it must have made a deep impression on me because ever since I have had nightmares that involve falling and drowning. Actually, on some nights the dream seems like something warm and pleasant, a sleep in which everything painful ceases to exist. Who says you can't dream of dying?

The plane shook and I heard gasps from the other passengers as we sank through so-called air pockets. For a moment or two I felt something like weightlessness. And that my hour had come. But it hadn't, of course.

[line #]

The Greek flag was blowing straight out from the flagpole by the little terminal building as we left the plane. As I passed the cockpit I heard the pilot say to the stewardess that the airport had just closed and that it was unlikely they would be able to return to Athens.

I followed the queue of passengers into the terminal building. A man wearing a blue police uniform stood with arms folded in front of the luggage belt and studied us. As I headed towards him he gave me a quizzical look and I nodded my confirmation.

'George Kostopoulos,' he said, holding out a large hand, the back of it covered with long black hairs. His grip was firm, but not exaggeratedly so, as is sometimes the case when provincial colleagues feel they're in competition with the capital.

'Thank you for coming at such short notice, Inspector Balli.'

'Call me Nikos,' I said.

'Sorry I didn't recognise you, but there aren't many pictures of you, and I thought you were . . . er, older.'

I had inherited – probably from my mother's side – the kind of looks that don't age particularly with the years. My hair was grey and the curls gone, and I had maintained a fighting weight of seventy-five kilos, though nowadays less of it was muscle.

'You don't think fifty-nine is old enough?'

'Well, goodness me yes, of course.' He spoke in a voice that I was guessing was a little deeper than his natural register and smiled wryly beneath a moustache of the type men in Athens

had shaved off some twenty years earlier. But the eyes were mild, and I knew I wouldn't be getting any trouble from George Kostopoulus.

'It's just that I've been hearing about you ever since I was at the Police Academy, and that seems like a pretty long time ago to me. Any more baggage I can help you with?'

He glanced at the bag I was carrying. And yet I had the feeling he was asking about something more than what I was actually bringing with me in a physical sense. Not that I would have been able to answer him. I carry more with me on my travels than most men, but my baggage is the type that is carried alone.

'Only hand baggage,' I said.

'We've got Franz Schmid, the brother of the missing man, at the station in Pothia,' said George as we left the terminal building and crossed to a small, dust-coated Fiat with a stained windscreen. I guessed he had parked beneath some stone pines to keep out of the direct sunlight and instead got a dose of that sticky sap that in the end you have to scrap off with a knife. That's the way it is. You raise your guard to protect your face and you leave your heart exposed. And vice versa.

'I read the report on the plane,' I said, putting my bag on the back seat. 'Has he said anything else?'

'No, he's sticking to his story. His brother Julian left their room at six in the morning and never returned.'

'It said Julian went for a swim?'

'That's what Franz says.'

'But you don't believe him?'

'No.'

'Surely drownings can't be all that unusual on a holiday island like Kalymnos?'

'No. And I would have believed Franz if it hadn't been for the fact that he and Julian had a fight the previous evening, in the presence of witnesses.'

'Yes, I noticed that.'

We turned down a narrow, pitted track with bare olive trees and small white stone houses on both sides of what must have been the main road.

'They just closed the airport,' I said. 'I suppose that's because of the wind.'

'It happens all the time,' said George. 'That's the trouble with having the airport on the highest point of an island.'

I could see what he meant. As soon as we got between the mountains the flags hung limply down from the flagpoles.

'Fortunately my evening flight leaves from Kos,' I said. The secretary in the Homicide Department had checked the travel itinerary before my boss had given me permission to make the trip. Even though we give priority to the very few cases involving foreign tourists, a condition of the permission was that I was to spend only one working day on it. Usually I was given free rein, but even the legendary Detective Inspector Balli was subject to budget cuts. And as my boss put it: this was a case with no body, no media interest and not even reasonable grounds to suspect a murder.

There were no return flights from Kalymnos in the evening, but there was one from the international airport on the island of Kos, a forty-minute ferry ride from Kalymnos, so he had grunted his assent, reminding me as he did so of the cutback on travel expenses and that I should avoid the overpriced tourist restaurants unless I wanted to pay out of my own pocket.

'I'm afraid the boats to Kos won't be going either in this weather,' said George.

'This weather? The sun is shining and there's hardly a breath of wind, except up there.'

'I know it seems unlikely from here, but there's a stretch of open sea before you reach Kos and there have been a number of accidents in sunny weather just like this. We'll book a hotel room for you. Maybe the wind will have eased off by tomorrow.'

For him to say the wind would 'maybe' ease off instead of the more typically overoptimistic 'bound to have eased off' suggested to me that the weather forecast didn't favour either me or my boss. I thought disconsolately of the inadequate contents of my bag, and a little less disconsolately of my boss. Perhaps I might be able to get a little well-earned rest out here. I'm the type who has to be forced to take a holiday, even when I know I need one. Maybe being both childless and wifeless is what makes me so bad at holidays. They feel like a waste of time and serve only to reinforce what is an admittedly voluntary loneliness.

'What's that?' I asked, pointing towards the other side of the car. Surrounded on all sides by steep inclines lay what looked like a village. But there were no signs of life. It looked like a model someone had carved from grey rock, a gathering of small houses like Lego blocks, with a wall enclosing the whole, all of it in the same monotonous grey.

'That's Palechora,' said George. 'Twelfth century. Byzantine. If the inhabitants of Kalymnos spotted hostile ships approaching they would flee up there and barricade themselves. People hid up there when the Italians invaded in 1912 and when the Allies bombed Kalymnos, when it was used as a German base during the Second World War.'

'Obviously a must-see,' I said, without adding that neither the houses nor the fortifications looked especially Byzantine.

'Hm,' said George. 'Or actually no. It looks better from a distance. The last time it was repaired was by the Knights Hospitaller in the sixteenth century. It's overgrown, there's rubbish, goats, even the chapels are used as latrines. You could get up there if you could manage the stone steps, but there was a landslide and now the climb is even more strenuous. But if you're really interested I could get a guide for you. I can promise you you'll have the entire stone village all to yourself.'

I shook my head. But I was, of course, tempted. I always find myself tempted by what rejects me, shuts me out. Unreliable narrators. Women. Logical problems. Human conduct. Murder cases. All the things I don't understand. I am a man of limited intellect but limitless curiosity. It is, unfortunately, a frustrating combination.

Pothia turned out to be a lively labyrinth of houses, narrow one-way streets and alleys. Even though November was approaching, and the tourist season had ended some time ago, the streets were crowded with people.

We parked outside a two-storey house in the harbour area where fishing boats and yachts that were not too extravagantly luxurious lay alongside one another. A small car ferry and a speedboat with seating for passengers underneath and up the top were tethered to the quayside. Further along the quay stood a group of people, obviously foreign tourists, discussing something with a man in some kind of naval uniform. Some of the tourists had rucksacks with coils of rope sticking out from each side of the top flap. Several of those I had travelled on the plane with had been similarly equipped. Climbers. Over the last fifteen years, Kalymnos had changed from being a sun-and-surf island to a destination for sports climbers from all over Europe; but that happened after I had hung up my climbing boots. The man in the seagoing uniform spread his arms wide as though to protest that there was nothing he could do about it, pointing to the sea. There were white crests here and there but, as I far as I could see, the waves weren't dangerously high.

'As I said, the problems arise further out, you can't see from here,' said George, who had obviously read the look on my face.

‘That’s often the case,’ I said with a sigh, and tried to come to terms with the fact that, for the time being at least, I was trapped on this little island which, for some reason or other, seemed even smaller now than it did from the air.

George entered the police station ahead of me, passed a counter, and I nodded greetings left and right as we made out way through a cramped and overcrowded open-plan office where not only the furniture seemed outdated but also the bulky computer screens, the coffee machine and the oversized photocopier.

‘George!’ called a woman from behind a partition. ‘A journalist from *Kathimerini* rang. They want to know if it’s true that we’ve arrested the brother of the missing man. I told them I would ask you to ring them.’

‘Call them yourself, Christine. Say there have been no arrests in the case and that at this moment in time we have no comment.’

I understood, of course. George wanted to work in peace and to keep hysterical journalists and other distracting elements at bay. Or did he perhaps just want to show me, the guy from the big city, that out here in the provinces they were professionals too? Best for our working relationship if that was the case, so I wouldn’t have to use my experience to explain to him that pedantic points of detail were, as a rule, a bad strategy to adopt when dealing with the press. And of course, since Franz Schmid voluntarily made himself available for questioning, he was not technically under arrest – indeed, had not even been apprehended. But once it emerged – and here there was no ‘if’’ about it – that Franz was being held behind closed doors at the station for hours and the police gave the impression of wanting to keep quiet about it, it would give rise to the type of speculations that were meat and drink to journalists. In that case, better to give a more open and friendly reply, something to the effect that the police were, of course, talking to anyone who could give them a better picture of what might have happened, and that included the missing man’s brother.

‘Cup of coffee and something to eat?’ asked George.

‘Thanks, but I’d rather get going straight away.’

George nodded and stopped in front of a door. ‘Franz Schmid’s in there,’ he whispered.

‘OK,’ I said, lowering my voice but not whispering. ‘Has the word “lawyer” been mentioned yet?’

George shook his head. ‘We asked if he wanted to call the embassy or the German consul on Kos, but, as he put it, “What can they do to help find my brother?”’

'Does that mean you haven't confronted him with your suspicions?'

'I asked him about the fight, but that's all. But he probably realises that we've asked him to wait here until you come for a reason.'

'And who did you say I was?'

'A specialist from Athens.'

'Specialist in what? Finding missing persons? Or finding killers?'

'I didn't specify, and he didn't ask.'

I nodded. George remained standing there for a couple of seconds before it dawned on him that I wasn't going to enter until he had left.

The room I stepped into was about three metres by three. The only light came from two narrow windows high up on a wall. The person in the room was sitting at a small, square table on which stood a jug of water and a glass. There was a tall man man seated at it. Both forearms were resting on the blue-painted wooden tabletop, his elbows making ninety-degree angles. How tall? Maybe one ninety? He was slender, with a face aged beyond what his twenty-eight years might suggest, one that conveyed the spontaneous impression of a sensitive nature. Or maybe it was rather the fact that he seemed calm and content just to sit there, bolt upright, as though his head were so full of thoughts and feelings that he had no need of external stimuli. On his head he wore a cap with horizontal stripes in Rasta colours, with a discreet little skull on the rim. Dark curls protruded from beneath the cap, such as I once had. The eyes were so deep-set I couldn't immediately fathom them. And at the same moment it dawned on me that there was something familiar here. It took a second for my brain to dig it up. The cover of a record Monique had at her room in Oxford. Townes van Zandt. He's seated at a similar table, posed in almost the same way, and with a similarly expressionless face that still managed to seem sensitive, so naked and unprotected.

'*Kalimera*,' I said.

'*Kalimera*,' he replied.

'Not bad, Mr . . .' I glanced at the folder I had removed from my bag and placed in front of me on the table. 'Franz Schmid. Does that mean you speak Greek?' I asked in my very British English, and he gave the expected reply.

'Unfortunately no.'

I hoped that with my question I had established our starting point. That I was *tabula rasa*, I knew nothing about him, I had no reason to have any preconceived notions about him and that he could – if he so wished – change his story for this new listener.

'My name is Nikos Balli, I am an inspector from the Homicide Department in Athens. I am here hopefully to remove any suspicion that your brother has been the victim of criminal activity.'

'Is that what you think has happened?' The question was posed in a neutral and straightforward way. He struck me at once as a practical man who simply wanted to acquaint himself with the facts. Or wished to give that impression.

'I have no idea what the local police think, I can only speak for myself, and at this moment in time I don't believe anything. What I do know is that murders are rare occurrences. But any murder is so harmful to Greece as a holiday destination that when one does occur, it is our duty to show the rest of the world that this is something we take very seriously indeed. As in the case of plane crashes, we have to find the cause and solve the mystery, because we know that whole airlines have gone bankrupt over a single unexplained crash. I'm saying that to explain why I might be asking you about details which might seem irritatingly irrelevant, especially to someone who has recently lost his brother. And that it might sound as though I am convinced that you or others are responsible for killing him. But be aware that, as a homicide investigator, it is my task to test out the hypothesis that a murder may have been committed, and that it will be a mark of my success if I am able to dispense with any such hypothesis. And that, regardless of the outcome, we might be a step closer to finding your brother. All right?'

Franz Schmid gave a small smile that didn't quite reach to his eyes. 'Sounds like my grandfather.'

'Sorry?'

'Scientific approach. Programming of the object. He was one of the German scientists who fled Hitler and helped the USA develop the atom bomb. We . . .' He stopped and wiped his hand across his face. 'I'm sorry, I'm wasting your time, Inspector. Fire away.'

Franz Schmid's gaze met mine. He seemed tired, but alert. I couldn't tell just how far he had seen through me, but it was a keen gaze that – as far as I could judge – signalled intelligence. When he said 'programming of the object' he was clearly referring to the fact that I had formulated his motivation for helping me; that it might help us to find his brother. It was standard manipulation, no more than expected. But I suspected that Franz Schmid had also spotted the more obscure manipulation involved, part of the interrogator's method of getting the person being interrogated to

lower their guard. The reason I almost apologised in advance for the aggressive tone of the interrogation that was about to follow and laid the blame on the economic cynicism of the Greek authorities. It was to make me appear to be the decent, honest cop. Someone in whom Franz Schmid could safely confide.

'Let's begin with yesterday morning, when your brother disappeared.'

As I listened to Franz Schmid's story I observed his body language. He seemed patient, didn't lean forward and talk rapidly and loudly, the way people do when they unconsciously feel that their explanation is the key to the solution of a case they would like to see solved, or to prove their own innocence. But the opposite wasn't the case either. He didn't tiptoe around as though he were navigating a minefield, didn't hesitate. His explanation came in a calm, steady stream. Maybe it was because he had been able to rehearse it in conversation with others. In any case that didn't tell me much; the performance of the guilty is often more precise and convincing than that of the innocent. The reason might be that the guilty come well prepared and have a story ready, whereas the innocent tell the story as it comes to them then and there. So even though I observed and analysed, body language was a secondary issue for me. Stories are my field, my speciality.

Even though I concentrated on his story, my brain also drew conclusions based on other observations. Such as that Franz Schmid, in spite of being clean-shaven, seemed to be a certain type of hipster, the type that wears a cap and a thick flannel shirt indoors even when it's hot. A jacket hung on the hook behind him, and to judge by the size it was his. The sleeves of the flannel shirt were rolled up and the bare forearms seemed disproportionately muscular when compared to the rest of his body. As he spoke he now and then scrutinised his fingertips and carefully squeezed the joints of his fingers, which seemed thicker than average. The watch on his left wrist was a Tissot T-touch which I knew had a barometer and an altimeter. In other words, Franz Schmid was a climber.

According to the case notes both Franz and Julian Schmid were American citizens, resident in San Francisco, unmarried, with Franz working as a programmer for an IT firm and Julian in marketing for a well-known producer of climbing equipment. As I listened to him I thought how his American English had taken over the world. How my fourteen-year-old niece sounded like something out of an American teens' film when she talked to her foreign friends at the International School in Athens.

Franz Schmid told me he had woken at six in the morning in the room he and his brother Julian had rented in a house right by the beach in Massouri, a town about a fifteen-minute drive from Pothia. Julian was already up and about to go out, that was what had woken Franz. As usual, Julian intended to swim the eight hundred metres to the neighbouring island of Telendos, something

he did every morning, there and back. The reason he did this so early was, in the first place, because it gave the brothers enough time to climb the best rock faces before the sun hit them from midday onwards. Secondly, Julian liked to swim naked, and it didn't begin to get light until around six thirty. Thirdly, Julian felt that the dangerous undercurrents in the sound were less strong before sunrise and before the wind got up. Usually Julian would be back and ready for breakfast by seven, but on this particular day he simply never showed up again.

Franz made his way down the steps to the small, crumbling stone jetty that lay in a little bay directly below the house. The large towel his brother usually took with him lay at the end of the jetty, a stone on top of it to stop it blowing away. Franz felt it with his hand. It was dry. He scanned the water, called to a fishing boat that was chugging up the sound, but no one on board seems to have heard him. Then he ran back up to the house and got the landlord to ring the police in Pothia.

First on the scene were the mountain rescue team, a group of men in orange shirts who, mixing professional seriousness with a friendly, bantering tone, at once got two boats out on the water and commenced the search. Next came the divers. And finally the police. The police got Franz to check that none of Julian's clothes were missing and satisfied themselves that Julian could not have gone to his room unseen by Franz – who was eating breakfast in the basement – dressed, and left the house.

After scouring the beach on the Kalymnos side, Franz and some of his climbing friends rented a boat and crossed over to Telendos. The police searched from the boat along the shoreline, where the waves broke against jagged rocks, while Franz and his friends visited the houses scattered across the mountainside, asking if anyone had seen a naked swimmer come ashore.

After returning from the failed search Franz spent the rest of the evening calling family and friends to explain the situation. He was contacted on the phone by journalists, some of them German, and spoke briefly to them about what had happened. That they were still hopeful, and so on. He hardly slept that night and at daybreak the police telephoned and asked if he could come to the station to assist them. Naturally he had done so and that was now – Franz Schmid looked at his Tissot watch – eight and a half hours ago.

'The fight,' I said. 'Tell me about the fighting the night before.'

Franz shook his head. 'It was just a stupid quarrel. We were in a bar at the Hemisphere and playing billiards. We were all a bit drunk. Julian started shooting his mouth off, I had a go back at him, and next thing I know I've thrown a billiard ball at him and hit him on the head. Down he went,

and when he came to he was nauseous and throwing up. I thought concussion, so I got him in the car to drive him to the hospital in Pothia.

'Do you often fight?'

'When we were kids yeah. Now, no.' He rubbed the stubble on his chin. 'But we don't always take our drink that well.'

'I see. Well, that was brotherly of you to take him to the hospital.'

Franz snorted briefly. 'Sheer egoism. I wanted to get him checked so we would know if we could go ahead with the long multi-pitch we planned to climb the next day.'

'So you drove to the hospital.'

'Yes. Or actually, no.'

'No?'

'We were some distance out of Massouri, and Julian insisted he was feeling better and that we should turn round. I said it would do no harm to check, but he said that in Pothia we risked being stopped by the police and they'd suspect me of driving under the influence, I'd end up in a cell and he wouldn't have anyone to climb with. It was hard to argue against that, so we turned round and drove back to our place in Massouri.'

'Did anyone see you come back?'

Franz carried on scratching his jaw. 'Someone's bound to have. It was late at night, but we parked on the main road, where all the restaurants are, and there are always people there.'

'Good. Did you meet anyone you think can help us so we can get independent confirmation of this?'

Franz took his hand away from his chin. I don't know whether it was because he realised the rubbing might be interpreted as nerves or because it simply wasn't itching any more. 'We didn't meet anyone we know, I don't think. And when I think about it, it was actually fairly quiet. The bar at the Hemisphere was possibly still open, but all the restaurants were probably closed for the evening. Now in the autumn it's mostly climbers in Massouri, and climbers go to bed early.'

'So no one saw you.'

Franz sat up straight in his chair. 'I'm sure you know what you're doing, Inspector, but can you tell me what this has to do with my brother's disappearance?' His voice was still calm and

controlled, but for the first time I saw something that might have been tension in the look on his face.

‘Yes I can,’ I said. ‘But I’m pretty sure you can work it out for yourself.’ I nodded towards the folder on the table in front of me. ‘It says in there that the landlord says he was woken by the sound of one or several loud voices coming from your room, and that he heard chairs being dragged about. Were you still quarrelling?’

I saw a slight twitch pass across Franz Schmid’s face. Was it because I reminded him that the last words that had passed between the brothers had been hard?

‘As I told you, we weren’t exactly sober,’ he said quietly. ‘But we were friends by the time we fell asleep.’

‘What were you quarrelling about?’

‘Just some nonsense.’

‘Tell me.’

He took hold of the glass of water in front of him as though it were a lifebelt. Drank. A postponement that gave him time to work out how much he should tell me, and what he should leave out. I folded my arms and waited. I knew of course what he was thinking, but he seemed sharp enough to know that if I didn’t get the information from him then I would get it from witnesses to the quarrel. What he didn’t know was that George Kostopoulos already had this from the one of the witnesses. That this was what caused George to ring the Homicide Department in Athens. And why it had ended up on my desk. The Jealousy Man’s desk.

‘A dame,’ said Franz.

I tried to work out the significance – if any – the use of this word had for him. In British English dame was an honorary form of address, an aristocratic title. But in America, dame was Chandleresque slang, as in a chick, a broad, a bird, not exactly derogatory, but then not a hundred per cent respectful either. Meaning someone a guy could have, or someone he better watch out for. But in Franz’s native language dame had an entirely neutral ring, like the way I interpret it in Heinrich Böll’s *Gruppenbild mit Dame*.

‘Whose dame?’ I asked to get to the heart of the thing as quickly as possible.

Again that slight smile, a flicker and then gone. ‘That’s exactly what the discussion was about.’

'I understand, Franz. Can you give me the details there too?'

Franz looked at me. Hesitated. I had already used his forename, which is an obvious and yet surprisingly efficient way of creating intimacy with someone you're interrogating. And now I gave him the look and the body language that gets murder suspects to open their hearts to the Jealousy Man, Phthonus.

The murder rate in Greece is low. So low that a lot of people wonder how it's possible in a crisis-ridden country with high unemployment, corruption and social unrest. The smart answer is that rather than kill someone they hate, Greeks allow the victim to go on living in Greece. Another that we don't have organised crime because we're incapable of the organisation required. But of course we have blood that is capable of boiling. We have *crime passionnel*. And I'm the man they call in when there's a suggestion that jealousy is the motive behind a murder. They say I can smell jealousy. That's not true of course. Jealousy has no distinct smell, colour or sound. But it has a story. And it's listening to this story, what is told as well as what is left out, that enables me to know whether I am sitting in the presence of a desperate, wounded animal. I listen and know. Know because it is me, Nikos Balli, I am listening for. Know, because I am myself a wounded animal.

And Franz told me his story. He told it because this – this bit of the truth – is always good to tell. To get it out, to air the unjust defeat and the hate that are the story's natural consequences. For there is, of course, nothing perverse in wanting to kill whatever might stand in the way of our primary function as biological creations; to mate, in order to propagate our unique genes. It is the opposite that is perverse; to allow ourselves to be hindered in this by a morality that we have been indoctrinated to believe is natural or divine in origin but which is, in the final analysis, merely a matter of practical rules dictated by what are, at any given time, the needs of the community at large.

On one of their rest days from climbing Franz had rented a moped and ridden to the northern side of Kalymnos. In the country village of Emporio he met Helena, who waited tables in her father's restaurant. He fell hard for her, overcame his natural shyness and got her phone number. Three dates and six days later they became lovers in the cloister ruins of Palechora. Because she was under strict instructions from home not to get involved with guests, and foreign tourists in particular, Helena insisted their meetings be kept secret and involve just the two of them, because on the northern side of Kalymnos everyone knew her father. So they were discreet; but of course, Franz kept his brother informed of events from the moment of that first meeting at the restaurant; every word they exchanged, every look, every touch, the first kiss. Franz showed Julian pictures of her, a video of her sitting on the castle wall and looking down at the sunset.

They had done this ever since childhood, shared every tiny detail, so that all experiences became shared experiences. For example, Julian – who was, according to Franz, the more extrovert of the two – had shown Franz a video he had made in secret a few days earlier of himself having sex with a girl in her apartment in Pothia.

'As a joke Julian suggested I visit her, pretend to be him, and see if she noticed any difference between us as lovers. An exciting idea, of course, but . . .'

'But you said no.'

'Well, I'd already met Helena, I was already so much in love that I couldn't think or talk about anything else. So maybe it wasn't so surprising that Julian was attracted to Helena too. And then fell in love.'

'Without ever even having met her?'

Franz nodded slowly. 'At least, I didn't think he'd ever met her. I had told Helena I had a brother, but not that we were identical twins, exact physical copies of each other. We don't usually do that.'

'Why not?'

Franz shrugged. 'Some people think it's weird that you come in two identical copies. So we usually wait a bit before mentioning it or introducing each other.'

'I understand. Please continue.'

'Three days ago my phone suddenly went missing. I looked everywhere for it, it was the only place I had Helena's number and she and I exchanged text messages all the time, she was bound to be thinking I was through with her. I made up my mind to drive to Emporio but the following morning heard it vibrating in the pocket of Julian's jacket while he was out swimming. It was a text message from Helena thanking him for a nice evening and hoping they could meet again soon. And so of course I realised what had happened.'

He noticed my – probably badly acted – expression of puzzlement.

'Julian had taken my phone,' he said, sounding almost impatient when I apparently still failed to get it. 'He found her number among my contacts, called her on my phone so she assumed it was me when she saw the caller ID. They arranged to meet and even after they met it didn't occur to her that the person wasn't me but Julian.'

'Aha,' I said.

'I confronted him when he returned from his swim, and he admitted everything. I was furious, so I went off climbing with some others. We didn't meet again until the evening, at that bar, and then Julian claimed that he'd called Helena, explained everything, that she'd forgiven him for tricking her and that they were in love with each other. I was furious, of course and ... and yes, so we started arguing again.'

I nodded. There were a number of different ways of interpreting Franz's honest account. It might be that the pressures of jealousy were so intense that the humiliating truth simply had to be told, even if it cast him in a suspicious light now that his brother had gone missing. If that was the case – and if he had killed his brother – the combined pressure of his guilt and his lack of self-control would produce the same result: he would confess.

Then you had the more intricate interpretation: that he guessed I would interpret his openness in precisely this fashion, that I would suppose he found the inner pressures irresistible, so that if, after these confessions, he did not crack up and admit the murder, I would be the more willing to believe in his innocence.

Finally, the most likely interpretation. That he was innocent and therefore had no need to consider the consequences of telling all.

A guitar riff. I recognised it immediately. 'Black Dog'. Led Zeppelin.

Without rising from his seat Franz Schmid turned and took a phone from a pocket of the jacket hanging on the wall behind him. Studied the display as the riff went into a variation after the third repetition, the one where Bonham's drums and Jimmy Page's guitar just don't go, and yet go together so perfectly. Trevor, a friend who had the room next to mine at Oxford, wrote a mathematical paper about the intricate rhythmic figures in 'Black Dog', about the paradox that was John Bonham, Led Zeppelin's drummer, better known for his ability as a drinker and wrecker of hotel rooms than for his intelligence, in which he compared him to the semi-literate and apparently simple-minded chess genius in Stefan Zweig's 'Chess'. Was Franz Schmid that kind of drummer, that kind of chess player? Franz Schmid touched the display, the riff stopped, and he held the phone to his ear.

'Yes?' he said. Listened. 'One moment.' He held the phone out to me. I took it.

'Inspector Balli,' I said.

'This is Arnold Schmid, uncle to Frank and Julian,' said a guttural voice in that much-parodied German-accented English. 'I am a lawyer. I would like to know on what grounds you are holding Franz.'

'We are not holding him, Mr Schmid. He has expressed a willingness to assist us in the search for his brother, and we are taking advantage of that offer as long as it remains open.'

'Put Franz back on the line.'

Franz listened for a while. Then he touched the screen and placed the phone on the table between us with his hand on top of it. I looked at it as he told me he was tired, he wanted to get back to the house now, but that we were to call him if anything turned up.

Like a question? I wondered. Or a body?

'The phone,' I said. 'Do you mind if we take a look at it?'

'I gave it to the policeman I was talking to. With the PIN code.'

'I don't mean your brother's, I mean yours.'

'Mine?' The sinewy hand tightened like a claw around the black object on the table. 'Er, will this take long?'

'Not the actual phone,' I said. 'Of course, I realise you must have it with you under the present circumstances. So what I'm asking for is formal permission to access the call log and text messages that have been registered on your phone over the last ten days. All we need is your signature on a standard release form to acquire the information from the telephone company.' I smiled as though it was a regrettable necessity. 'It will help me to cross your name off the list of possible leads we need to follow.'

Franz Schmid looked at me. And in the light coming from the windows above I could see his pupils distend. Distension of the pupils, allowing more light to enter, can have a number of causes, such as fear, or lust. On this occasion it seemed to me to indicate only heightened concentration. As when a chess opponent makes an unexpected move.

It was as though I could feel the thoughts racing through his head.

He'd been prepared for us to want to check his phone, so he'd deleted the calls and text messages he didn't want us to see. But maybe nothing got deleted at the telephone provider, he thought, or – shit! – how did it work? He could of course refuse. He could ring his uncle now and get confirmation that there was no difference under Greek, American or German law, he was not

obliged to give the police anything at all so long as they had no legal right to demand it. But how would it look if he made things difficult? In that case I was hardly going to cross his name off the list, he was probably thinking. I saw what looked like the onset of panic in his eyes.

‘Of course,’ he said. ‘Where do I sign?’

His pupils were already contracting. His brain had scanned the messages. Nothing crucial there, probably. He hadn’t shown me his cards, but for one revelatory moment he had at least lost his poker face.

We left the room together and were on our way through the open-plan offices looking out for George when a dog, a friendly-looking golden retriever, slipped out from between two partitions and jumped up barking happily at Franz Schmid.

‘Well, hey there!’ he cried spontaneously, squatting to scratch the dog behind the ear in the practised way of people with a genuine love of animals, something which the animal instinctively seems to realise; it was probably the reason it had chosen Franz and not me. The big dog’s tail whirled like a rotor as it tried to lick Franz’s face.

‘Animals are better than people, don’t you think?’ he said as he looked up at me. His face was radiant; suddenly he looked like a different person to the man who had been sitting opposite me.

‘Odin!’ cried a sharp voice from between the walls of the partition, the same voice as had told George that a journalist had called. She emerged and grabbed the dog by the collar.

‘I’m sorry,’ she said in Greek. ‘He knows he’s not allowed to do that.’

She looked to be about thirty. She was small and compact, athletic-looking in a uniform with the white ribbon of the tourist police. She raised her head. She was red around the eyes, and when she saw us her cheeks turned the same colour. Odin’s claws scraped against the floor covering as she dragged the whimpering dog back behind the partitions. I heard a sniffle.

‘I need help to print out a warrant to check the contents of a phone,’ I said, addressing the partition. ‘It’s on the home page of –’

Her voice interrupted me. ‘Just go to the printer at the end of the corridor, Inspector Balli.’

[line #]

‘Well?’ said George Kostopoulos as I poked my head in between the partition walls around his desk.

‘The suspect is on a moped on his way back to Massouri,’ I said, handing him the sheet of paper with Franz Schmid’s signature. ‘And I’m afraid he suspects that we’re on to him and could do a runner.’

‘No danger of that. We’re on an island, and the forecast is for the wind to increase. Are you saying that you . . . ?’

‘Yes. I think he killed his brother. Can you mail me the printouts as soon as you get them from the telephone company?’

‘Yes. Shall I ask them to send Julian Schmid’s text messages and call logs too?’

‘Unfortunately that requires a court order so long as he’s not officially confirmed dead. But you’ve got his phone?’

‘Sure have,’ said George and opened a drawer.

I took the phone, sat in a chair at his desk and tapped in the PIN code written on the Post-it note on the back. Browsed through the calls logs and text messages.

I saw nothing of immediate relevance to the case. Just a message about a climbing route that had been ‘Sent’, which in climber’s lingo means that it has been climbed and which automatically made my palms begin to sweat. Mutual congratulations exchanged. Dinners arranged, the name of the restaurant where ‘the gang’ were gathering and the time. But by the look of it, no conflict and no romance.

I jumped as the phone began to vibrate in my hand at the same time as a male vocalist started singing in the kind of pathos-filled and passionately choked-up falsetto that shows you’re a devotee of mainstream pop from the 2000s. I hesitated. If I answered I would probably have to explain to a friend, a colleague or relative that Julian was missing and presumed drowned on a climbing holiday in Greece. I took a deep breath and pressed ACCEPT.

‘Julian?’ whispered a female voice before I had time to say anything.

‘This is the police,’ I said in English and then stopped. I wanted to let it hang there. Allow the realisation that something had happened to sink in.

‘Sorry,’ said the female voice with resignation. ‘I was hoping it might be Julian, but . . . any news?’

‘Who is this?’

'Victoria Hässel. A climbing friend. I didn't want to bother Franz and . . . yeah. Thanks.'

She hung up and I took a note of the number.

'That ringtone,' I said. 'What was it?'

'No idea,' said George.

'Ed Sheeran,' came the voice of the dog owner from the other side of the partition. '"Happier".'

'Thanks,' I called back.

'Anything else we can do?' asked George.

I folded my arms and thought it over. 'No. Or actually yes. He was drinking from a glass in there. Can you get it fingerprinted? And DNA if there's any saliva on the rim.'

George cleared his throat. I knew what he was going to say. That this would require the permission of the person involved, or a court order.

'I suspect the glass might have been at a crime scene,' I said.

'Sorry?'

'If in the DNA report you don't link the DNA to a named individual but simply to the glass, the date and the place, that'll be OK. It might not be admissible in a court of law, but it could be useful for you and me.'

George raised one of his chaotic eyebrows.

'That's the way we do it in Athens,' I lied. The truth is that sometimes that's the way *I* do it in Athens.

'Christine,' he said.

'Yes?' There was the scraping of a chair and the girl in the tourist-police uniform peered over the divider.

'Can you send the glass in the interrogation room for analysis?'

'Really? Do we have permission from –'

'It's a crime scene,' he said.

'Crime scene?'

'Yes,' said George, without taking his gaze from me. 'Apparently that's the way we do things here now.'

[line #]

It was seven in the evening and I was lying on the bed in the hotel room in Massouri. The hotels in Pothia were all full, probably because of the weather. That was OK by me, I was nearer the centre of things here. High above me, on the hills on the other side of the road, yellow-white limestone rock rose up. Mysteriously beautiful and inviting in the moonlight. There had been a fatal accident on the island in the summer, the newspapers had written about it. I remember I hadn't wanted to read about it but did so anyway.

On the other side of the hotel the mountainside plunged more or less straight down into the sea.

The second day of searching was over, the waters in the sound between Kalymnos and Telendos had been calmer further out. But, given the forecast for tomorrow, there wasn't going to be any third day, I was told. In any event, when someone is believed to have been lost at sea, the search is limited to two days, American or not. The wind rattled the windowpanes and I could hear the sound of the waves breaking against the rocks out there.

My task – to make a diagnosis, to decide whether jealousy of a homicidal nature was involved – was over. The next step – the tactical and technical investigation – wasn't my strongest suit. My colleagues from Athens would take care of that. Now the weather had postponed the changing of the guards, and it emphasised and even exposed my inadequacies as a homicide detective. I simply lacked the imaginative ability to see how a murderer might have set about killing someone and then hiding his tracks. My chief said it was because what I possessed in the way of emotional intelligence I lacked in practical imagination. That's why he called me the jealousy investigator, that's the reason I was sent in as a scout and pulled out as soon as I had given the case the red or green light.

There's something called the eighty per cent rule in murder cases. In eighty per cent of cases the guilty party is closely related to the victim, in eighty per cent of cases the guilty party is the husband or boyfriend, and in a further eighty per cent of these the motive is jealousy. It means that as soon as we answer a call in the Homicide Department and hear the word 'murder' at the other end of the line, we know there's a fifty-one per cent chance that the motive is jealousy. This is what makes me, in spite of my limitations, an important man.

Jo Nesbø – *The Jealousy Man*. Translated by Robert Ferguson

I can pinpoint exactly when it was I learned to read other people's jealousy. It was when I realised that Monique was in love with someone else. I went through all the agonies of jealousy, from disbelief, via despair, to rage, self-contempt and finally depression. And perhaps because I had never before in my life been exposed to such emotional torture, I discovered that, at the same time as the pain was all-consuming, it was like observing oneself from the outside. I was a patient lying without an anaesthetic on the operating table at the same time as I was a spectator in the gallery, a young medical student getting his first lessons in what happens when a person has the heart cut out of their breast. It might seem strange that the extreme subjectivity of jealousy can go hand in hand with that kind of cold, observational objectivity. My only explanation is that I, as the jealous one, took steps that made me a stranger in my own eyes, to such an extent that it forced me into the position of the frightened observer of myself. I had lived enough to see the self-destruction in others but had never thought the poison might lie within me too. I was mistaken. And what was surprising was that the curiosity and fascination were almost as strong as the hate, the pain and the self-contempt. Like a leper who watches as his own face dissolves, sees the diseased flesh, his own rotten interior manifest itself in all its grotesque and disgusting and terrifying horror. I emerged from my own leprosy permanently damaged, that much is clear, but it also rendered me immune. I can never again experience jealousy, not in that way. If that also means I can never love anyone, not in that way, I really don't know. Maybe there were other things my life besides jealousy that led to my never having felt the same about anyone as I felt about Monique. On the other hand: she made me what I have become in my professional life. The Jealousy Man.

From childhood onwards I have had a striking ability to become deeply engaged in stories. Family and friends described it as everything from remarkable and moving to pathetic and unmanly. To me it was a gift. I wasn't a part of Huckleberry Finn's adventures; I *was* Huckleberry Finn. And Tom Sawyer. And, when I started at school and learned how to be Greek, *The Odyssey*, of course. Naturally, they don't have to be the great tales of world literature. A very simple, even badly told story about infidelity, real or imagined, it doesn't matter which, will do. I am inside the story. From the first sentence I am a part of it. It's like turning on a switch. And it also means that I am able to spot quickly any false notes. Not because I have a unique talent for reading body language, the timbre of a voice or the automatic rhetorical strategies of self-defence. It's the story. Even in a crudely and very obviously falsely conceived character I am able to read the main themes, the person's probable motivation and place in the story, and on the basis of this I know what inexorably leads to what in this character. Because I have been there myself. Because our jealousy evens out the difference between you and me, beyond the barriers of class, sex, religion, education, IQ, culture, upbringing, our behaviour begins to resemble each other's, the way drug addicts resemble

each other in their behaviour. We are all of us living dead who rave through the streets driven on by this single need: to fill the enormous black hole that is inside us.

One more thing. The power of imaginative projection is not the same as empathy. 'That I understand doesn't mean I care,' as Homer says. Homer Simpson, that is. But in my case it is, unfortunately, one and the same thing. I suffer, suffer, with the jealous one. And that's why I hate my job.

The wind pulled at the window sash, trying to open it. Wanting to show me something.

I fell asleep and dreamed of falling from a great height. And woke an hour later when the falling man hit the ground, so to speak.

I had mail on my phone. It contained a printout of Franz Schmid's deleted SMSs and call logs. The night before his brother went missing he had, according to the log, called a certain Victoria Hässel eight times without reply. I checked the number and was able to confirm that it was the same Victoria I had briefly spoken to on Julian's phone. But the feeling of someone hitting the ground from a great height, the distinct shiver, the sound of flesh against stone that you never, never forget, that didn't come until I read the text message Franz had sent to a Greek number registered to Helena Ambrosia.

I have killed Julian.