

THREE HARRY BOSCH STORIES

MICHAEL  
CONNELLY

ANGLE OF  
INVESTIGATION



# **Angle of Investigation: Three Harry Bosch Stories**

# Michael Connelly



## Christmas Even

The Three Kings Pawnshop on Hollywood Boulevard had been victimized by a burglar three times in two years. The criminal methods of each break-in were similar and so it was suspected by the Los Angeles Police Department that the same thief was responsible each time. But the thief was careful never to leave a fingerprint or any other clue to his identity. No arrests were ever made and none of the stolen property was ever recovered. Nikolai Servan, the Russian immigrant who owned the store, was left to wonder about the justice system of his adopted country.

On the day before Christmas of this year Servan unlocked the rear door of the pawnshop, entered and discovered that his business had been victimized a fourth time. He also discovered that the burglar was still inside. It was this discovery that ultimately brought Detective Harry Bosch and his partner, Jerry Edgar, to the Three Kings Pawnshop.

Shortly after 10 A.M. they arrived in a slickback Bosch had checked out of the motor pool at the Hollywood Division. They knew a burglary detective named Eugene Braxton was already waiting inside the shop with Nikolai Servan. Along with the body.

“Look at that, Harry, looks like a big old Christmas present,” Edgar remarked as Bosch killed the engine. “Just waitin’ for us to open it.”

Edgar was right. The exterior walls of the small, single-story pawnshop were painted a garish red. The yellow crime scene tape that had been strung across the front by the patrol officers looked like a bow. Bosch didn’t bother to comment on his partner’s observation. He got out and closed the car door.

Bosch stood for a moment on the sidewalk and studied the front of the pawnshop. It was between a porno emporium and a shop that offered private mailboxes. A steel security gate had been folded open—presumably by Servan that morning after he called the police. Bosch looked up at the sign on the front wall above the plateglass windows. He saw that the triangular formation of three balls—the international pawnshop emblem—had been modified to include a king’s crown on each ball.

“Cute,” Edgar said, looking up at the sign, too.

“Very,” Bosch said. “Let’s get this done.”

“Don’t worry about me, Har. I’m not going to hold things up. It’s Christmas Eve. I wanna wrap this thing up and get home early for a change.”

Bosch stepped in and moved through the front of the shop, past the bicycles and golfe="ize clubs and antiques and musical instruments, and reached the counter where Braxton and Servan waited.

Braxton, who had investigated the previous three burglaries at Three Kings, had gotten there first because Servan had his business card taped to the side of the telephone. When the shop owner came to work that morning and found the dead burglar behind the jewelry case, he didn’t dial 911. He dialed Braxton.

“Merry Christmas, Brax,” Bosch said. “What have we got?”

“Deck the halls, Harry,” Braxton said. “We’ve got one less burglar in the world. And that makes Christmas a good one for me already.”

Bosch nodded and looked at Servan, who was seated on a tall stool on the other side of the counter. He was about fifty with black hair thinning on the top. He had a lot of muscle that was going soft. He had no visible tattoos.

“This is Nikolai Servan,” Braxton said. “This is his store.”

Bosch reached a hand across the counter to shake Servan’s hand. The Russian came off the stool and shook hands firmly.

“Mr. Servan, I’m Detective Bosch. This is Detective Edgar.”

“Nick. Call me Nick, please.”

His accent was heavy. Bosch guessed he’d been in the country only a few years. Edgar reached across the counter and shook his hand as well.

Bosch moved around Braxton and over to the area behind the glass jewelry counter. Sprawled on the floor in this close space was the body. He was a white man dressed head to toe in black. All except for the right hand. It was not wearing a glove, while the left hand was. Bosch crouched like a baseball catcher next to the body and studied it without touching anything. A knit ski mask had been pulled down over the face. There were openings for the eyes and mouth. Bosch noted that the eyes were open and the lips were pulled back despite the teeth being closed together tightly. He spoke without looking up.

“What’s the ETA on ME and SID?”

“On the way,” Braxton said. “That’s all I can tell you. Not much traffic today, though.”

The medical examiner’s team and the forensics people would be coming from downtown. Bosch and Edgar had driven only eight blocks from the station where they were posted.

“You know this guy, Brax?”

“Can’t see enough of him to know for sure.”

Bosch didn’t say anything. He waited. He knew that Braxton had to have taken a quick look under the ski mask, even though this would have violated crime scene protocol.

“It kind of looks like a guy I popped about five years back nath=ears bamed Monty Kelman,” Braxton said.

Bosch nodded.

“Local guy, I take it?”

“Most of the time. From what I heard, he used to take out-of-town assignments. Was on a crew that took work from a setup guy named Leo Freeling. Worked out of the Valley. But Leo got himself killed a few years back. I think Monty’s been sort of setting up his own capers since then.”

“Works alone?”

“Depends on the job.”

Bosch took a pair of latex gloves out of his pocket, blew them up like balloons to make them fit better and then slipped them on. He adjusted his position and tried to roll the body a little bit to check for wounds and the missing glove. He didn’t see anything but he didn’t want to roll the body completely over until after photos were

taken and the medical examiner's investigators surveyed the scene.

"So how did this guy die?"

The question was rhetorical but he looked up at Servan just as he said it. It seemed to take the shop owner by surprise, as if he had been accused of something. Servan spread his hands and shook his head.

"I don't know this," he said. "I come to shop, unlock, he is dead right there."

Bosch nodded and looked around the counter area. He noticed Edgar was no longer there. He looked at Braxton.

"Brax, why don't you take Mr. Servan to one of the patrol cars so we can work in here."

While Braxton took Servan outside, Bosch went back to the body and continued his examination. He lifted the bare hand and studied it, trying to figure out why there was no glove. He noticed a discoloration on the pad of the thumb. A brownish yellow line. There was a matching line of discoloration on the index finger. Using both hands he placed the thumb and finger together, aligning the two marks. It appeared as though the hand—the right hand—had been holding a pen or some other thin instrument when the marks had been made.

Bosch carefully placed the hand on the floor and moved down the body to the feet. He removed the right shoe, a black leather athletic shoe with a black rubber sole, and peeled off the black sock. On the ball of the dead man's foot was a circular discoloration that was brown at its center, tapering outward in yellow.

"Whadaya got, Harry?"

Bosch looked up. It was Braxton.

"I'm not sure yet. You see a glove? The guy's missing a glove."

"Over here."

It was Edgar. He was behind another display case on the other side of the shop. Bosch stood up and walked over. Edgar crouched and pointed beneath the case.

"There's a black leather glove under the case. I don't know if it's a match but it is a glove."

Bosch got down on his hands and knees so he could look underneath the display case. He reached under and pulled out the glove.

"Looks the same," he said.

"If it does not fit, you must acquit," said Edgar.

Bosch looked at him.

"Johnnie Cochran," Edgar said. "You know, the O.J. gloves."

"Right."

Bosch stood up. One of his knees made a popping sound as he did so. He looked into the case. It contained two shelves lighted from inside. On the shelves were non-jewelry items of what appeared to be high value. There were coins and some small jade sculptures, gold and silver pillboxes, cigarette cases and other ornate and bejeweled trinkets. It was high-end stuff. Most of the coins, Bosch noticed, were Russian.

Bosch stepped away from the case and surveyed the shop. Other than the two display cases there was mostly junk, the property of financially desperate people willing to part with almost anything in exchange for cash.

"Brax," Bosch said. "Where's the entry?"

Braxton signaled him toward the back and led the way. Bosch and Edgar followed. They came to a rear room that was used as an office and for storage. Gravel and other debris were scattered on the floor. They all looked up. There was a hole roughly cut in the ceiling. It was two feet wide and there was blue sky above.

“It’s a composite roof,” Braxton said. “No big thing cutting through. A half hour maybe.”

“It would make noise,” Edgar said. “Anybody know when the porno palace closes?”

“I remember I checked one of the other times this place was hit,” Braxton said. “He closes at four, reopens at eight. Four-hour window.”

“The roof the entry point in the other three hits?” Bosch asked.

Braxton shook his head.

“He hit the back door the first two times and then the roof. This is the second time through the roof.”

“You think it was Monty all three times before?”

“Wouldn’t doubt it. That’s what these guys do. Hit the same places over and over. After the second time the back door was used, Mr. Servan took precautions there. Added more steel reinforcement. So the guy went up onto the roof into thf.”

“Why this place so many times?” Edgar asked.

“A lot of immigrants come here. Russians, Koreans, from all over. They pawn the stuff they brought with them from the homeland. Jade. Gold. Coins. Small, expensive stuff. Burglars love that shit, man. That case where you found that glove? It’s all in there. That’s what the guy came in for. I don’t know why he ended up behind the jewelry case.”

“What’s been the take on the prior three?” Bosch asked.

“It’s probably averaged out to forty to fifty grand a hit,” Braxton said. “That’s on the high side for a pawnshop. That’s why this guy kept getting hit.”

A patrolman stepped back into the rear room and told the detectives that the medical examiner’s people had arrived.

The three detectives continued to huddle for a moment to discuss initial impressions and Bosch’s theory on what had happened to the burglar and to set a case strategy. It was decided that Edgar would stay on scene and assist the ME and SID teams as necessary. Bosch and Braxton would handle Servan and next-of-kin notification.

As soon as the medical examiner’s investigator rolled a set of prints off the burglar’s exposed hand, Bosch and Braxton headed back to Hollywood Division along with Nikolai Servan.

Bosch scanned the prints into the computer and sent them downtown to the print lab at Parker Center. He then conducted a formal and taped interview with Servan. Though the pawnbroker added nothing new to what he had told them in his shop, it was important for Bosch to lock down his story on tape.

By the time he was done with the interview he had a message waiting from a print technician named Tom Rusch. The prints were matched by computer to a thirty-nine-year-old ex-convict named Montgomery George Kelman. Kelman was on parole for a burglary conviction.

It took Bosch three calls to locate Kelman’s parole agent and to get the dead man’s current address and employer. He was told Kelman worked a morning dishwashing shift at a restaurant on Hillview. The parole agent had already received a call that

morning from the restaurant owner, who reported that Kelman had not shown up for work or called in sick—as parole regulations dictated. The agent seemed pleased to learn he didn’t have to bother filing all the paperwork needed to show Kelman violated parole.

“Merry Christmas!” he said to Bosch before hanging up.

After checking with Edgar by phone and learning the techs were still working the body and scene, Bosch told his partner that the victim had been IDed as Kelman and that he and Braxton were headed to the address the parole agent had provided for Kelman. He said they were going to leave Nikolai Servan behind in an interview room at the division.

Monty Kelman’s address was an apartment on Los Feliz near Griffith Park. Bosch’s knock was answered by a young woman in shorts and a short-sleeved turtleneck shirt. She was thin to the point of being gaunt. An obvious junkie. She abruptly collapsed into the fetal position on the couch when they gave her the bad news about Monty. While Braxton attempted to console her and gather information from her at the same time, Bosch took a quick look around the one-bedroom apartment. As he expected, there was no obvious sign that the premises belonged to a burglar. This apartment was the front—the place where the parole agent visited and Kelman kept the semblance of a law-abiding life. Bosch knew that any active burglar with a parole tail would keep a separate and secret place—a safe house—for his tools and swag.

In the bedroom was a small desk in which Kelman kept his checkbook and personal papers. Bosch flipped through the checkbook and saw nothing unusual. He looked through everything else in the drawer but found no lead to Kelman’s safe house. He wasn’t particularly anxious about it. It was just a loose end, something that would be of greater concern to Braxton, as a burglary detective, than to Bosch.

As he turned to leave the bedroom he saw a saxophone propped on a stand in the corner by the door. He recognized from its size that it was an alto. He stepped over and lifted it into his hands. It looked old but well cared for. It was polished brass and he saw the buffing cloth pushed down into the mouth of the instrument. Bosch had never played the saxophone, had never even tried, but the instrument’s sound was the only music that had ever been able to truly light him up inside.

He held the instrument with a sense of reverence he rarely exhibited for any person or thing. And for a moment he was tempted to raise the mouthpiece to his lips and try to sound a note. Instead, he gripped the instrument the way he had seen countless musicians—from Art Pepper to Wayne Shorter—hold theirs.

“Harry, you got anything?” Braxton said from the other room.

Bosch carried the saxophone and stand out to the living room. The woman was sitting up on the couch now, her arms folded tightly across her chest. Tears streaked her face. Bosch didn’t know if she was crying over her lost love or her lost junk ticket.

He held up the saxophone.

“Whose is this?”

She swallowed before answering.

“It’s Monty’s. Was.”

“He played?”

“He tried. He liked jazz. He always said he wanted to take lessons. He never did.”

A new rush of tears cascaded down her cheeks.

“It’s gotta be swag,” Braxton said, ignoring her and speaking to Bosch. “I can run it on the box when we get back. On those things the manufacturer and serial number are engraved inside the bell.”

He pointed to the mouth of the horn.

“In there. Wouldn’t surprise me if it came out of Servan’s shop on one of the earlier B and Es.”

Bosch pulled the felt buffing cloth out of the opening and looked inside. There was an inscription on the curved brass but he couldn’t read it. He walked over to the window and angled the instrument so sunlight flooded into the mouth. He bent close and turned the instrument so he could read it.

CALUMET INSTRUMENTS

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

CUSTOM MADE FOR QUENTIN MCKINZIE, 1963

“THE SWEET SPOT”

Bosch read it again and then a third time. His temples suddenly felt as if someone had pressed hot quarters against them. A flash memory filled his thoughts. A musician under the canopy set up on the deck of the ship. The soldiers crowded close. Those in wheelchairs, the men missing limbs, at the front. The man playing the sax, bending up and down and in and out like Sugar Ray Robinson coming from the corner of the ring. The music beautiful and agile, lighting him up. The sound better than anything he had ever heard. The goddamn light at the end of all his tunnels.

“Jesus, Harry, what’s it say?”

Bosch looked over at Braxton, the memory retreating into the darkness.

“What?”

“You look like you saw a ghost hidin’ in there. What’s it say?”

“Chicago. It was made in Chicago.”

“Calumet?”

“How’d you know?”

“I’m a burglary detective. It’s my job to know. Calumet is one of the big ones. Been around a long time. We might be able to trace it.”

Bosch nodded.

“You finished here?” he asked. “Let’s go.”

On the way back to the station Bosch let Braxton drive so that he could hold and study the saxophone.

“What’s something like this worth?” he asked after they were halfway to their destination.

“Depends. New, you’re talking in the thousands. To a pawnbroker probably a few hundred.”

“You ever heard of Quentin McKinzie?”

Braxton shook his head.

“I don’t think so.”

“They called him Sugar Ray McK. On account of when he played the sax he’d bob and weave like the fighter Sugar Ray Robinson. He was good. He was mostly a session guy but he put out a few records. ‘The Sweet Spot,’ you never heard that tune?”

“Sorry, man, not into jazz. Too much of a cliché, you know? Detectives and jazz. I listen to country myself.”

Bosch felt disappointed. He wanted to tell him about that day on the ship but if Braxton didn’t know jazz it couldn’t be explained.

“What’s the connection?” Braxton asked.

Bosch held up the saxophone.

“This was his. It says inside here, ‘Custom made for Quentin McKinzie.’ That’s Sugar Ray McK.”

“You ever see him play?”

Bosch nodded.

“One time. Nineteen sixty-nine.”

Braxton whistled.

“Long time ago. You think he’s still alive?”

“I don’t know. He’s not recording. Last disc he put out was *Man with an Ax*. That was at least ten years ago. Maybe longer. It was a compilation.”

Bosch looked at the saxophone.

“Can’t record without this anyway, I suppose.”

Bosch’s cell phone chirped. It was Edgar.

“Harry, whereyat?”

“On the way back to the station. We just checked out Kelman’s apartment.”

“Anything?”

“Not really. A junkie and a saxophone. What have you got?”

“First off, we’ve got lividity issues. This guy was moved.”

“And what’s the ME say about cause?”

“He’s going with your theory at the moment. Electrocutation. The burns on the hand and foot—where the juice went in and out.”

“You find the source?Kelm sasource?”

“I looked around. Can’t find it.”

Bosch thought about all of this. Postmortem lividity was the settling of the blood in a dead body. It was a purple gravity line. If a body is moved after the blood has settled, then a new gravity line will appear. It is an easy tip-off that most people outside of homicide investigation don’t know about.

“You looked around the case where the glove was?”

“Yeah, I looked. I can’t find any electrical source that can explain this. The case you’re talking about has internal lighting but there’s no malfunction.”

Braxton pulled into the parking lot behind the station and into a spot reserved for investigators’ cars.

“You do a property inventory on the guy yet?”

“Yeah, nothing. Pockets empty. No ID or anything else.”

“All right, we’re at the cop shop. Let me think about it and call you back.”

“Whatever, Harry. I just want to get out of here on time tonight and I don’t like the looks of this.”

“I know, I know.”

Bosch closed the phone and got out of the car with the saxophone.

“What has he got?” Braxton asked.

“Nothing much,” Bosch said over the top of the car. “It looks like an electrocution.”

“You called it.”

“When we get in, can you pull the reports on the three prior B and Es at Three Kings?”

“You got it. What about Servan?”

“I’ll check on him but I’m going to let him sit for a while.”

They went into the station and down to the detective bureau, where they split up, Braxton going to the burglary corral to get the reports, and Bosch to the rear hallway that led to the interview rooms. Servan was in interview room 3, pacing in the small space when Bosch opened the door.

“Mr. Servan, are you okay? It shouldn’t be too much longer.”

“Yeah, okay, okay. You find?”

He pointed to the saxophone. Bosch nodded.

“Did this come from your store?”

Servan studied the instrument and nodded vigorously.

“I think so, yes.”

“Okay, well, we’ll find out for sure. We’ve got a few things to do and then we’ll get back to you. You want some coffee or to use the bathroom?”

Servan declined both and Bosch left him there. When he got to the homicide table he started looking for Quentin McKinzie, running searches on the DMV, voter registration and crime index computers. He came up with a record of drug arrests in Los Angeles in the 1970s and 1980s but no address and nothing that gave a clue to his current whereabouts.

Braxton came over and dropped three thin files on his desk. Bosch told him to take the photo of Monty Kelman they had pulled off the computer and show it to Servan to see if he recognized Kelman as ever coming into the shop as a customer.

After Braxton was gone Bosch started looking through the burglary reports, beginning with the first break-in at Three Kings. He quickly flipped through the pages until he got to the stolen-property inventory. There was no saxophone on the list. He scanned the items listed and determined they were all small pieces taken from the lighted display cabinet.

He flipped back to the summary, which had been written by Braxton. It reported that the unknown suspect or suspects had broken through the rear door to enter the establishment, then had emptied the display case containing the highest-value items in the shop. Braxton noted that the display case had a key lock that had either been left unlocked or was expertly picked by the thief.

He went on to the next report and found a saxophone listed on the stolen-property inventory. It was described as an alto saxophone but there were no other identifiers and no listing of who the person was who had pawned the saxophone. He read the summary and found it mirrored the summary in the first burglary report; the burglar or burglars broke through the rear door, opened the display case and took all of the high-

price valuables. The saxophone appeared to have been taken as an afterthought and Bosch knew now that that was because Monty Kelman had always wanted to learn to play the instrument.

The third report was the same, with the exception of the method of entry. This time, with the back door fortified, the burglar or burglars cut through the composite roof and dropped down. The lock on the display case was picked and the shelves emptied for the third time.

The losses from the three burglaries averaged out to \$40,000 a hit. Servan had insurance—though Bosch assumed the premiums were ever increasing. Most of the items stolen were sale items, meaning their original owners had let the pawn period lapse and ownership now belonged to Servan.

Braxton walked out of the back hallway and came to the homicide table.

“Yeah, he recognizes him,” he said. “Said he came into the store a couple days ago. Looked at some of the coins in the case.”

“He ever see him before that?”

“He thinks so but can’t be sure.”

“Anybody else work in that shop besides him?”

“No, he’s a one-man show. Six days a week, nine to six. Your average hardworking immigrant story.”

Bosch leaned back in his chair and combed one side of his mustache with his thumb. He didn’t say anything. After a few moments Braxton got tired of waiting.

“Harry, what else you need from me?”

Bosch didn’t look up at him.

“Um, can you go back in there and ask him about the case?”

“The case? You mean the display cabinet?”

“Yeah, ask him if he’s sure he locked it every time. On all the burglaries.”

He could tell Braxton was still waiting by the table.

“What?”

“What am I? The errand boy here?”

“No, Brax, you’re the guy he trusts. Go ask him the question.”

Bosch waited, stroking his mustache and thinking. Braxton wasn’t long.

“He said he absolutely locks that case. Even when he’s open for business it’s locked. He only unlocks it to put something in or take something out. Then he relocks it, every time. He keeps the key with him, all the time. There are no copies.”

“So then our guy used picks.”

“Looks that way.”

Bosch nodded.

“Um, one more thing, Brax. The saxophone. He has to keep pawn records, right?”

“He has to keep them and we get copied as well. The pawn detail. They compare pawn inventories to stolen-property reports. You know, look for matches.”

Bosch reached over and lifted the saxophone off the desk.

“So then how can I find out who pawned this?”

Braxton seemed mildly taken aback.

“What’s it got to do with all of this?”

“Nothing, as far as I know. But I want to find out who pawned it.”

“It shouldn’t be too hard. The guys in the detail keep everything separated by

store.wited by s In shoeboxes. They could just look through the box for Three Kings. Depending on how far back they go, it might be in there.”

“What would work better, if you call them or I call them?”

“They’re not going to like it either way, but let me take a crack at it.”

“Thanks, man.”

Bosch looked at his watch. It was almost noon.

“And tell them we’d like to hear back on it today.”

“I’ll tell them but I doubt they’ll make any promises. It’s Christmas Eve, Harry. People are trying to get home early.”

“Just tell them it’s important.”

“To you or the case?”

Bosch didn’t answer and eventually Braxton went back to his desk to make the call. Bosch looked through the three burglary reports again. When he finished he got up and went down the back hallway to the interview rooms. Instead of going into 3, where Servan was, he went into 4 and looked through the mirrored glass at the pawnbroker. He was sitting at the table with his arms folded and his eyes closed. He was either sleeping or meditating. Maybe both.

He left the room and went back to the homicide table. He sat down and picked up the saxophone again. He liked handling it, the feel and weight of it in his grasp. Knowing that the instrument could produce a sound that echoed all the sadness and hope of humanity gave him pause. Again, he remembered the day on the ship. Sugar Ray bobbing and weaving through “The Sweet Spot” and a few other tunes. Bosch fell in love with the sound that day. It felt like it had come from somewhere deep within himself. He was not the same after that day.

He came out of the memory and walked over to a shelf that ran above the row of file cabinets. He took down one of the forensics manuals and turned to the index. He found what he wanted and went to the page. He was sitting down, reading the manual, when his cell phone chirped and he dug it out of his pocket. It was Edgar.

“Harry, they’re about to clear here. You want me to come in?”

“Not yet.”

“Well, what are we doing?”

“There was nothing with the body, right? No tools, no picks?”

“That’s right. I already told you.”

“I just read through the reports from the three priors. That display case was hit each time. It was picked. Servan said it was always locked.”

“Well, we got no lock picks here, Harry. I guess whoever moved the body took the picks.”

“It was Servan.”

Edgar was quiet and then said, “Why don’t you run it down for me, Harry.”

Bosch thought for a moment before speaking.

“He’d been hit three times in two years. Every time the high-end case was picked. It’s hard to work a set of picks with gloves on. Servan probably knew that the one time this guy took off his gloves was to work the picks. Steel picks going into a steel lock.”

“If he put a hundred ten volts into that lock, it could’ve shut this guy’s heart down.”

“Not necessarily. I’ve been sitting here reading one of the manuals. One-ten can stop your heart, but it all depends on the amps. There’s a formula. It has to do with

resistance to the charge. You know, like dry skin versus moist skin, things like that.”

“This guy just took his glove off. He probably had sweaty hands.”

“Exactly. So if the resistance was low and Servan had somehow rigged a one-ten line going directly into that lock, then the initial jolt could have contracted the muscles and left our burglar unable to let go of the pick. The juice goes through him, hits the heart and the heart goes into V-fib.”

“Ventricular fibrillation is a natural cause, Harry.”

“Not when you use one-ten to get it.”

“Then we’re talking more than just homicide. This is lying in wait.”

“The DA can decide all of that. We just have to bring in the facts.”

“By the way, how’d you know to take off his sock and look for the exit burn?”

“The burns on his fingers. I saw them and just took a shot.”

“Well, I’d say you hit the bull’s-eye, partner.”

“Got lucky. So now you have to get into that case and find out how he wired it. Did SID leave?”

“They’re still packing up.”

“Tell them to take the case as evidence.”

“The whole case? It’s ten feet long.”

“Tell them to take it with them. You go with it. The case is the key. And tell them to be careful with it.”

“They’re going to have to get a Special Services truck out here.”

“Whatever. Call them now. Get it done.”

Bosch closed the phone and got up from his desk. He went down the hallway past the watch office to the locker rooms. He bought two packages of peanut butter crackers from the vending machine. He opened one and ate all the squares while he was walking back to the detective bureau. He put the other package in his coat pocket for later. He stopped once on the way back to get a drink from the water fountain.

Braxton was waiting for him at the homicide table with a sheet of paper in his hand.

“You got lucky,” he told Bosch as he approached. “The guy pawned that saxophone two years ago but they still had the slip.”

He gave the sheet of paper to Bosch. It was a photocopy of the pawn slip. It contained the name, address and phone numbers of the customer. The man who had pawned Quentin McKinzie’s saxophone was named Donald Teed. He lived in the Valley. Nikolai Servan had given him \$200 for the instrument.

Bosch sat down and noticed that Teed had listed his work phone number with a 323 area code and a Hollywood exchange. That might explain why a man who lived in the Valley had used a pawnshop in Hollywood. He picked up the phone and punched in Teed’s work number. It was answered immediately by a woman who said, “Splendid Age.”

“Excuse me?” Bosch said.

“Splendid Age Retirement Home, how can I help you?”

“Yes, is Donald Teed a resident there?”

“A resident? No. We have a Donald Teed who works here. Is that who you mean?”

“I think so. Is he there?”

“He is here today but I am not sure where he is right now. He’s a custodian and moves around. Who is calling? Is this a solicitation?”

Bosch felt things falling into place. He decided to take a shot.

“I’m a friend. Can you tell me if another friend of mine is there? His name is Quentin McKinzie.”

“Yes, Mr. McKinzie is a resident here. What is this about?”

“I’ll call back.”

Bosch hung up the phone and his eyes drifted to the saxophone.

Nikolai Servan opened his eyes the moment Bosch came through the door. Bosch put the piece of paper he carried down on the table and took the seat across from Servan, folding his arms and putting his elbows on the table in almost a mirror image.

“We’ve hit a snag, Mr. Servan.”

“A snag?”

“A problem. Actually a few imaually aof them. And what I’d like to do here is give you the opportunity to tell me the truth this time.”

“I don’t understand. I tol’ you truth. I tol’ you truth.”

“I think you left some things out, Mr. Servan.”

Servan clasped his hands together on the table and shook his head.

“No, I tol’ everything.”

“I’m going to advise you of your rights now, Mr. Servan. Listen closely to what I read you.”

Bosch read Servan his rights from the paper on the table. He then turned it around and asked the pawnbroker to sign it. He gave him the pen. Servan hesitated and seemed to slowly reread the rights waiver form all over again. He then picked up the pen and signed. Bosch asked the first question the instant the point of the pen came off the paper.

“So what did you do with the burglar’s lock picks, Mr. Servan?”

Servan held his lips tightly together for a long moment and then shook his head.

“I don’t understand.”

“Sure you do, Mr. Servan. Where are the picks?”

Servan only stared at him.

“Okay,” Bosch said, “let’s try this one. Tell me how you wired that display case.”

Servan bowed his head once.

“I have attorney now,” he said. “Please, I have attorney now.”

Bosch pulled to a stop in front of the Splendid Age Retirement Home and got out with the saxophone and its stand. He heard Christmas music drifting out of an open window. Elvis Presley singing “Blue Christmas.”

He thought about Nikolai Servan spending Christmas Eve and Christmas Day in the Parker Center jail. It would probably be the only jail time he’d ever see.

The District Attorney’s Office would not decide until after the holiday whether to charge him or kick him loose. And Bosch knew it would probably be the latter. Prosecuting the case against the pawnbroker was fraught with difficulties. Servan had lawyered up and stopped talking. Afternoon-long searches of his home, car, the pawnshop and the trash containers in the alley failed to produce Monty Kelman’s lock

picks or the method by which the display case had been rigged to deliver the fatal charge. Even the cause of death would be difficult to prove in a court of law. Kelman's heart had stopped beating. A burst of electricity had most likely caused ventricular fibrillation, but in court a defense lawyer could easily and most likely successfully argue that the burn marks on the victim's hand and foot were inconclusive and possibly not even related to cause of death.

And all of these obstacles were minor in comparison with the main difficulty—the victim was a thief killed during the commission of a crime. He had engaged in repeated offenses against the defendant. Would a jury even care that Nikolai Servan had set a fatal trap for him? Probably not, the prosecutor told Bosch and Edgar.

Bosch planned to go back to the pawnshop the following morning. In his personal ledger, everybody counted or nobody counted. That included burglars. He would look until he found the picks or the wire Servan had used to kill Monty Kelman.

As he approached the front doors of the retirement home he noticed that not much about it looked particularly splendid. It looked like a final stop for pensioners and people who hadn't planned on living as long as they had. Quentin McKinzie, for example. Few jazzmen and drug users went the distance. He probably never thought he'd make it this far. According to the information Bosch got off the computer, he was seventy-two years old.

Bosch entered and walked up to a welcome counter. The place smelled like most of the low-rent retirement homes he had ever been in. Urine and decay, the end of hopes and dreams. He asked for directions to Quentin McKinzie's room. The woman behind the counter suspiciously eyed the saxophone under Bosch's arm.

"Do you have an appointment?" she asked. "Evening visiting is by appointment only."

"Is that to give you time to clean the place up before the kids come by to see dear old dad?"

"I beg your pardon?"

"I don't need an appointment. Where is Mr. McKinzie?"

He held his badge up, a foot from her face. She looked at it for a long moment—longer than it took to read it—and then cleared her throat.

"He's in one-oh-seven. Down the hall on the left side. He's probably sleeping."

Bosch nodded his thanks and headed down the hall.

The door to 107 was ajar. The light was on in the room and Bosch could hear television sounds coming from inside. He knocked softly and didn't get a response. He slowly pushed the door open and stuck his head in. He saw an old man sitting in a chair next to a bed. A television mounted high on the opposite wall was droning. The old man's eyes were closed. He was gaunt and depleted, his body taking up only half of the chair. His black skin looked gray and powdery. Despite the thin face and loose skin gathering below his chin, Bosch recognized him. It was Sugar Ray McK.

He stepped into the room and quietly came around the bed. The man didn't stir. Bosch stood still for a moment, wondering what he should do. He decided not to wake the man. He put the instrument stand down on the floor in the corner. He then cradled the saxophone in it. He straightened up, took another look at the sleeping jazzman and nodded to him in some sort of unnoticed acknowledgment. As he headed out of the room he reached up and turned off the television.

At the door he was stopped by a raspy voice.

“Hey!”

Bosch turned. Sugar Ray was awake and looking at him with rheumy eyes.

“You turned off my box.”

“Sorry, I thought you were asleep.”

He came back into the room and reached up to turn the television on again.

“Who are you, boy? You don’t work here.”

Bosch turned to face him.

“My name is Harry. Harry Bosch. I came—”

Sugar Ray noticed the saxophone sitting in the corner of the room.

“That’s my ax.”

Bosch picked up the saxophone and handed it to him.

“I found it. I saw your name in it and I wanted to get it back to you.”

The man held the instrument like it was as precious as a new baby. He slowly turned it in his hands, studying it for flaws or maybe just wanting to look at it the way he would look at a loved one long gone away. Bosch felt a constriction rising in his chest as the jazzman brought the instrument to his mouth, licked the mouthpiece and then held it between his teeth. His chest rose as he drew in a breath.

But as his fingers went to work and he blew out the riff, the wind escaped from the weak seal his lips made around the mouthpiece. Sugar Ray closed his eyes and tried again. The same result sounded from his instrument. He was too old and weak. His lungs were gone. He could no longer play.

“It’s all right,” Bosch said. “You don’t have to play. I just thought it should be back with you, that’s all.”

Sugar Ray cradled the instrument in his lap as if he were protecting it. He looked up at Bosch.

“Where did you get this, Harry Bosch?”

“I took it from a guy who stole it from a pawnshop.”

Sugar Ray nodded like he knew the story.

“Was it stolen from you?” Bosch asked.

“No. I had it pawned. A fellow here did it for me so I could get money for the box. I don’t like being in the dayroom with the others. They’re all suicides waitin’ to happen. So I needed my own box.”

He shook his head. His eyes went up to the tefy"up to television on the wall over Bosch’s shoulder.

“Imagine, a man trading the love of his life for that.”

Bosch looked up at the tube and saw a commercial where a Santa Claus was drinking a cold beer after a long night of delivering presents and cheer. He looked back at Sugar Ray. He didn’t know whether to feel good or bad about what he had done. He had returned an instrument to a musician who could no longer play it.

But as this indecision gripped his heart he saw Sugar Ray pull the saxophone closer to his body. He held it there tightly, as if it were all he had in the world. He brought his eyes to Bosch’s and in them Harry saw that he had done the right thing.

“Merry Christmas, Sugar Ray.”

Sugar Ray nodded and looked down. Bosch knew it was time to leave him alone. He reached over and gripped his shoulder for a moment.

“Why?” Sugar Ray asked.

“Why what?”

“Why did you do this for me? You think you’re playing Santa Claus or something?”

Bosch smiled and squatted down next to the chair. He was now looking up into the old man’s eyes.

“I did it to try to make us even, I guess.”

The old man just looked at him, waiting.

“In December nineteen sixty-nine I was on a hospital ship in the South China Sea.”

Bosch touched his left side, just above the hip.

“I got bamboo-bladed in a tunnel four days before. You probably don’t remember this but—”

“The USS *Sanctuary*. Off Danang. Of course I remember. You were one of the boys in the blue bathrobes, huh?”

Sugar Ray smiled. Bosch nodded and continued.

“I remember the announcement that the show was canceled because the seas were too high and the fog too thick. The big Hueys with all the equipment couldn’t land. We had all been waiting on deck. We saw the choppers coming in through the mist and then just turning around to go back.”

Sugar Ray raised a finger.

“You know, it was Mr. Bob Hope who told our pilot to turn that son of a bitch around again and put it down on that boat.”

Bosch nodded. He had heard it was Hope. One chopper turned again and came to the *Sanctuary*. The small one. The one with the headliners onboard.

“I remember it was Bob Hope, Connie Stevens, you and a beautiful black girl from that TV show.”

“Teresa Graves. *Laugh-In*.”

“Man, you remember everything.”

“Just ‘cause I’m old doesn’t mean I can’t remember. The man on the moon was there, too.”

Bosch smiled. Sugar Ray was filling in details he had forgotten.

“Neil Armstrong, yeah. But the rest of the band—the Playboy All-Stars—was on one of the other choppers and it went back to Danang. It was only you and you carried your own ax. You played for us. Solo.”

Bosch looked at the instrument in the old man’s gray hands. He remembered the day on the *Sanctuary* as clearly as he remembered any other moment of his life.

“You played ‘The Sweet Spot’ and then ‘Auld Lang Syne.’ ”

“I played the ‘Tennessee Waltz,’ too. By request of a young man in the front row. He’d lost both his legs and he asked me to play that waltz.”

Bosch nodded solemnly.

“Bob Hope told us his jokes and Connie Stevens sang ‘Promises, Promises.’ A cappella. In less than an hour it was all over and the chopper took off. Man, I can’t explain it but it meant something. It made something right in a messed-up world, you know? I was only nineteen years old and I wasn’t sure how or why I was even over there.

“Anyway, I’ve listened to a lot of saxophone since then but I haven’t heard it any better.”

Bosch nodded and stood up. His knee creaked loudly. He guessed it wouldn't be too long before he was in one of these places. If he was lucky.

"I just wanted to tell you that," he said. "That's all."

"You were in the tunnels over there, huh? I heard about them."

Bosch nodded.

"Coulda used you going about this bin Laden character."

He pointed up to the TV, as if that were where the terrorist was.

Bosch shook his head.

"Nah, it's a different game. Back then they gave you a flashlight and a forty-five, said good luck and dropped you in a hole. Now it's sound and motion detectors, heat sensors, infrared... it's a different game."

"Maybe. But a hunter is still a hunter."

Bosch look lu">Bosched at him for a moment before speaking.

"Take it easy, Sugar Ray."

He headed toward the door and one more time Sugar Ray stopped him.

"Hey, Santa Claus."

Bosch turned back.

"You strike me as a man who is alone in the world," Sugar Ray said. "That true?"

Bosch nodded without hesitation.

"Most of the time."

"You got plans for Christmas dinner?"

Bosch hesitated. He finally shook his head.

"No plans."

"Then, come back here at three tomorrow. We have a dinner and I can bring a guest. I'll sign you up."

Bosch hesitated. He had been alone so often on Christmases past that he thought it might be too late, that being around anyone might be intolerable.

"Don't worry," Sugar Ray said. "They won't put your turkey in the blender as long as you've got teeth."

Bosch smiled.

"All right, Sugar Ray, I'll be by."

"Then, I'll see you then."

Bosch walked down the yellowed corridor and out into the night. As he headed to the car he heard Christmas music still playing from an open window somewhere. It was an instrumental, slow and heavy on the saxophone. He stopped and it took him a moment to recognize it as "I'll Be Home for Christmas." He stood there on the walkway and listened until the end of the song.

*The author would like to gratefully acknowledge John Houghton for recounting and sharing the experience on the USS Sanctuary that inspired this story.*

## Father's Day

The victim's tiny body was left alone in the emergency room enclosure. The doctors, after halting their resuscitation efforts, had solemnly retreated and pulled the plastic curtains closed around the bed. The entire construction, management and purpose of the hospital was to prevent death. When the effort failed, nobody wanted to see it.

The curtains were opaque. Harry Bosch looked like a ghost as he approached and then split them to enter. He stepped into the enclosure and stood somber and alone with the dead. The boy's body took up less than a quarter of the big metal bed. He had worked thousands of cases but nothing ever touched Bosch like the sight of a young child's lifeless body. Fifteen months old. Cases in which the child's age was still counted in months were the most difficult of all. He knew that if he dwelled too long he would start to question everything—from the meaning of life to his mission in it.

The boy looked like he was only asleep. Bosch made a quick study, looking for any bruising or other sign of mishap. The child was naked and uncovered, his skin as pink as a newborn's. Bosch saw no sign of trauma except for an old scrape on the boy's forehead.

He pulled on gloves and very carefully moved the body to check it from all angles. His heart sank as he did this but he saw nothing that was suspicious. When he was finished, he covered the body with the sheet—he wasn't sure why—and slipped back through the plastic curtains shrouding the bed.

The boy's father was in a private waiting room down the hall. Bosch would eventually get to him but the paramedics who had transported the boy had agreed to stick around to be interviewed. Bosch looked for them first and found both men—one old, one young, one to mentor, one to learn—sitting in the crowded ER waiting room. He invited them outside so they could speak privately.

The dry summer heat hit them as soon as the glass doors parted. Like walking out of a casino in Vegas. They walked to the side so they would not be bothered but stayed in the shade of the portico. He identified himself and told them he would need the written reports on their rescue effort as soon as they were completed.

"For now, tell me about the call."

The senior man did the talking. His name was Ticotin.

"The kid was already in full arrest when we got there," he began. "We did what we could but the best thing was just to ice him and transport him—try to get him in here and see what the pros could do."

"Did you take a body temperature reading at the scene?" Bosch asked.

"First thing," Ticotin said. "It was one-oh-six-eight. So you gotta figure the kid was up around one-oh-eight, one-oh-nine before we got there. There was no way he was going to come back from that. Not a little baby like that."

Ticotin shook his head as though he was frustrated by having been sent to rescue