

The background of the cover is a green, textured surface, possibly a book cover or a wall. Two white dice are positioned diagonally across the frame. The top die is slightly behind and to the left of the bottom die. Both dice show different faces with black pips. The lighting creates soft shadows on the green surface.

BESTSELLING
AUTHOR OF
THE POET

Michael
Connelly
TRUNK MUSIC

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This is for my editor, Michael Pietsch

I

As he drove along Mulholland Drive toward the Cahuenga Pass, Bosch began to hear the music. It came to him in fragments of strings and errant horn sequences, echoing off the brown summer-dried hills and blurred by the white noise of traffic carrying up from the Hollywood Freeway. Nothing he could identify. All he knew was that he was heading toward its source.

He slowed when he saw the cars parked off to the side of a gravel turn-off road. Two detective sedans and a patrol car. Bosch pulled his Caprice in behind them and got out. A single officer in uniform leaned against the fender of the patrol car. Yellow plastic crime-scene tape – the stuff used by the mile in Los Angeles – was strung from the patrol car's sideview mirror across the gravel road to the sign posted on the other side. The sign said, in black-on-white letters that were almost indistinguishable behind the graffiti that covered the sign:

L.A.F.D. FIRE CONTROL
MOUNTAIN FIRE DISTRICT ROAD
NO PUBLIC ADMITTANCE – NO SMOKING!

The patrol cop, a large man with sun-reddened skin and blond bristly hair, straightened up as Bosch approached. The first thing Bosch noted about him other than his size was the baton. It was holstered in a ring on his belt and the business end of the club was

marred, the black acrylic paint scratched away to reveal the aluminum beneath. Street fighters wore their battle-scarred stick proudly, as a sign, a not so subtle warning. This cop was a headbanger. No doubt about it. The plate above the cop's breast pocket said his name was Powers. He looked down at Bosch through Ray-Bans, though it was well into dusk and a sky of burnt orange clouds was reflected in his mirrored lenses. It was one of those sundowns that reminded Bosch of the glow the fires of the riots had put in the sky a few years back.

'Harry Bosch,' Powers said with a touch of surprise. 'When did you get back on the table?'

Bosch looked at him a moment before answering. He didn't know Powers but that didn't mean anything. Bosch's story was probably known by every cop in Hollywood Division.

'Just did,' Bosch said.

He didn't make any move to shake hands. You didn't do that at crime scenes.

'First case back in the saddle, huh?'

Bosch took out a cigarette and lit it. It was a direct violation of department policy but it wasn't something he was worried about.

'Something like that.' He changed the subject. 'Who's down there?'

'Edgar and the new one from Pacific, his soul sister.'

'Rider.'

'Whatever.'

Bosch said nothing further about that. He knew what was behind the contempt in the uniform cop's voice. It didn't matter that he knew Kizmin Rider had the gift and was a top-notch investigator. That would mean nothing to Powers, even if Bosch told him it was so. Powers probably saw only one reason why he was still wearing a blue uniform instead of carrying a detective's gold badge: that he was a white man in an era of female and minority hiring and promotion. It was the kind of festering sore better left undisturbed.

Powers apparently registered Bosch's nonresponse as disagreement and went on.

'Anyway, they told me to let Emmy and Sid drive on down when they get here. I guess they're done with the search. So you can drive down instead of walking, I guess.'

It took a second for Bosch to register that Powers was referring to the medical examiner and the Scientific Investigation Division tech.

He'd said the names as if they were a couple invited to a picnic.

Bosch stepped out onto the pavement, dropped the half cigarette and made sure he put it out with his shoe. It wouldn't be good to start a brush fire on his first job back with the homicide table.

'I'll walk it,' he said. 'What about Lieutenant Billets?'

'Not here yet.'

Bosch went back to his car and reached in through the open window for his briefcase. He then walked back to Powers.

'You the one who found it?'

'That was me.'

Powers was proud of himself.

'How'd you open it?'

'Keep a slim jim in the car. Opened the door, then popped the trunk.'

'Why?'

'The smell. It was obvious.'

'Wear gloves?'

'Nope. Didn't have any.'

'What did you touch?'

Powers had to think about it for a moment.

'Door handle, the trunk pull. That'd be about it.'

'Did Edgar or Rider take a statement? You write something up?'

'Nothing yet.'

Bosch nodded.

'Listen, Powers, I know you're all proud of yourself, but next time don't open the car, okay? We all want to be detectives but not all of us are. That's how crime scenes get fucked up. And I think you know that.'

Bosch watched the cop's face turn a dark shade of crimson and the skin go tight around his jaw.

'Listen, Bosch,' he said. 'What I know is that if I just called this in as a suspicious vehicle that *smells* like there's a stiff in the trunk, then you people would've said, "What the fuck does Powers know?" and left it there to rot in the sun until there was nothing left of your goddamn crime scene.'

'That might be true but, see, then that would be our fuckup to make. Instead, we've got you fucking us up before we start.'

Powers remained angry but mute. Bosch waited a beat, ready to continue the debate, before dismissing it.

‘Can you lift the tape now, please?’

Powers stepped back to the tape. He was about thirty-five, Bosch guessed, and had the long-practiced swagger of a street veteran. In L.A. that swagger came to you quickly, as it had in Vietnam. Powers held the yellow tape up and Bosch walked under. As he passed, the cop said, ‘Don’t get lost.’

‘Good one, Powers. You got me there.’

The fire road was one lane and overgrown at its sides with brush that came as high as Bosch’s waist. There was trash and broken glass strewn along the gravel, the trespasser’s answer to the sign at the gate. Bosch knew the road was probably a favorite midnight haunt for teenagers from the city below.

The music grew louder as he went further in. But he still could not identify it. About a quarter mile in, he came to a gravel-bedded clearing that he guessed was a staging point for fire-fighting apparatus in the event that a brush fire broke out in the surrounding hills. Today it would serve as a crime scene. On the far side of the clearing Bosch saw a white Rolls-Royce Silver Cloud. Standing near it were his two partners, Rider and Edgar. Rider was sketching the crime scene on a clipboard while Edgar worked with a tape measure and called out measurements. Edgar saw Bosch and gave an acknowledging wave with a latex-gloved hand. He let the tape measure snap back into its case.

‘Harry, where you been?’

‘Painting,’ Bosch said as he walked up. ‘I had to get cleaned up and changed, put stuff away.’

As Bosch stepped closer to the edge of the clearing, the view opened below him. They were on a bluff rising above the rear of the Hollywood Bowl. The rounded music shell was down to the left, no more than a quarter mile. And the shell was the source of the music. The L.A. Philharmonic’s end-of-the-season Labor Day weekend show. Bosch was looking down at eighteen thousand people in concert seats stretching up the opposite side of the canyon. They were enjoying one of the last Sunday evenings of the summer.

‘Jesus,’ he said out loud, thinking of the problem.

Edgar and Rider walked over.

‘What’ve we got?’ Bosch asked.

Rider answered.

‘One in the trunk. White male. Gunshots. We haven’t checked him out much further than that. We’ve been keeping the lid closed. We’ve got everybody rolling, though.’

Bosch started walking toward the Rolls, going around the charred remnants of an old campfire that had burned in the center of the clearing. The other two followed.

‘This okay?’ Bosch asked as he got close to the Rolls.

‘Yeah, we did the search,’ Edgar said. ‘Nothing much. Got some leakage under the car. That’s about it, though. Cleanest scene I’ve been at in a while.’

Jerry Edgar, called in from home like everybody else on the team, was wearing blue jeans and a white T-shirt. On the left breast of the shirt was a drawing of a badge and the words LAPD Homicide. As he walked past Bosch, Harry saw that the back of the shirt said *Our Day Begins When Your Day Ends*. The tight-fitting shirt contrasted sharply with Edgar’s dark skin and displayed his heavily muscled upper body as he moved with an athletic grace toward the Rolls. Bosch had worked with him on and off for six years but they had never become close outside of the job. This was the first time it had dawned on Bosch that Edgar actually was an athlete, that he must regularly work out.

It was unusual for Edgar not to be in one of his crisp Nordstrom’s suits. But Bosch thought he knew why. His informal dress practically guaranteed he would avoid having to do the dirty work, next-of-kin notification.

They slowed their steps when they got close to the Rolls, as if perhaps whatever was wrong here might be contagious. The car was parked with its rear end facing south and visible to the spectators in the upper levels of the Bowl across the way. Bosch considered their situation again.

‘So you want to pull this guy out of there with all those people with their wine and box lunches from the Grill watching?’ he asked. ‘How do you think that’s going to play on the TV tonight?’

‘Well,’ Edgar replied, ‘we thought we’d kind of leave that decision to you, Harry. You being the three.’

Edgar smiled and winked.

‘Yeah, right,’ Bosch said sarcastically. ‘I’m the three.’

Bosch was still getting used to the idea of being a so-called team leader. It had been almost eighteen months since he had officially investigated a homicide, let alone headed up a team of three investigators. He had been assigned to the Hollywood Division burglary table when he returned to work from his involuntary stress leave in January. The detective bureau commander, Lieutenant Grace Billets, had explained that his assignment was a way of gradually easing him back into detective work. He knew that explanation was a lie and that she had been told where to put him, but he took the demotion without complaint. He knew they would come for him eventually.

After eight months of pushing papers and making the occasional burglary arrest, Bosch was called into the CO’s office and Billets told him she was making changes. The division’s homicide clearance rate had dipped to its lowest point ever. Fewer than half of the killings were cleared. She had taken over command of the bureau nearly a year earlier, and the sharpest decline, she struggled to admit, had come under her own watch. Bosch could have told her that the decline was due in part to her not following the same statistical deceptions practiced by her predecessor, Harvey Pounds, who had always found ways of pumping up the clearance rate, but he kept that to himself. Instead, he sat quietly while Billets laid out her plan.

The first part of the plan was to move Bosch back to the homicide table as of the start of September. A detective named Selby, who barely pulled his weight, would go from homicide to Bosch’s slot on the burglary table. Billets would also be adding a young and smart detective transfer she had previously worked with in the Pacific Division detective bureau, Kizmin Rider. Next, and this was the radical part, Billets was changing the traditional pairing of detectives. Instead, the nine homicide detectives assigned to Hollywood would be grouped into three teams of three. Each of the three teams would have a detective third grade in charge. Bosch was a three. He was named team leader of squad one.

The reasoning behind the change was sound – at least on paper. Most homicides are solved in the first forty-eight hours after discovery or they aren’t solved at all. Billets wanted more solved so she was going to put more detectives on each one. The part that didn’t look so good on paper, especially to the nine detectives, was that previously

there had been four pairs of partners working homicide cases. The new changes meant each detective would be working every third case that came up instead of every fourth. It meant more cases, more work, more court time, more overtime, and more stress. Only the overtime was considered a positive. But Billets was tough and didn't care much for the complaints of the detectives. And her new plan quickly won her the obvious nickname.

'Anybody talk to Bullets yet?' Bosch asked.

'I called,' Rider said. 'She was up in Santa Barbara for the weekend. Left a number with the desk. She's coming down early but she's still at least an hour and a half from us. She said she was going to have to drop the hubby off first and would probably just roll to the bureau.'

Bosch nodded and stepped to the rear of the Rolls. He picked up the smell right away. It was faint but it was there, unmistakable. Like no other. He nodded to no one in particular again. He placed his briefcase on the ground, opened it and took a pair of latex gloves from the cardboard box inside. He then closed the case and placed it a few feet behind him and out of the way.

'Okay, let's take a look,' he said while stretching the gloves over his hands. He hated how they felt. 'Let's stand close, we don't want to give the people in the Bowl more of a show than they paid for.'

'It ain't pretty,' Edgar said as he stepped forward.

The three of them stood together at the back end of the Rolls to shield the view from the concertgoers. But Bosch knew that anybody with a decent pair of field glasses would know what was going on. This was L.A.

Before opening the trunk, he noticed the car's personalized license plate. It said TNA. Before he could speak, Edgar answered his unasked question.

'Comes back to TNA Production. On Melrose.'

'T and A?'

'No, the letters, T-N-A, just like on the plate.'

'Where on Melrose?'

Edgar took a notebook out of his pocket and looked through the page. The address he gave was familiar to Bosch but he couldn't place it. He knew it was down near Paramount, the sprawling studio that

took up the entire north side of the fifty-five-hundred block. The big studio was surrounded by smaller production houses and mini-studios. They were like sucker fish that swam around the mouth of the big shark, hoping for the scraps that didn't get sucked in.

'Okay, let's do it.'

He turned his attention back to the trunk. He could see that the lid had been lightly placed down so it would not lock closed. Using one rubber-coated finger, he gently lifted it.

As the trunk was opened, it expelled a sickeningly fetid breath of death. Bosch immediately wished he had a cigarette but those days were through. He knew what a defense lawyer could do with one ash from a cop's smoke at a crime scene. Reasonable doubts were built on less.

He leaned in under the lid to get a close look, careful not to touch the bumper with his pants. The body of a man was in the trunk. His skin was a grayish white and he was expensively dressed in linen pants sharply pressed and cuffed at the bottom, a pale blue shirt with a flowery pattern and a leather sport coat. His feet were bare.

The dead man was on his right side in the fetal position except his wrists were behind him instead of folded against his chest. It appeared to Bosch that his hands had been tied behind him and the bindings then removed, most likely after he was dead. Bosch looked closely and could see a small abrasion on the left wrist, probably caused by the struggle against the bindings. The man's eyes were closed tightly and there was a whitish, almost translucent material dried in the corners of the sockets.

'Kiz, I want you taking notes on appearance.'

'Right.'

Bosch bent further into the trunk. He saw a froth of purged blood had dried in the dead man's mouth and nose. His hair was caked with blood which had spread over the shoulders and to the trunk mat, coating it with a coagulated pool. He could see the hole in the floor of the trunk through which blood had drained to the gravel below. It was a foot from the victim's head and appeared to be evenly cut in the metal underlining in a spot where the floor mat was folded over. It was not a bullet hole. It was probably a drain or a hole left by a bolt that had vibrated loose and fallen out.

In the mess that was the back of the man's head, Bosch could see

two distinct jagged-edged penetrations to the lower rear skull – the occipital protuberance – the scientific name popping easily into his mind. Too many autopsies, he thought. The hair close to the wounds was charred by the gases that explode out of the barrel of a gun. The scalp showed stippling from gunpowder. Point-blank shots. No exit wounds that he could see. Probably twenty-twos, he guessed. They bounce around inside like marbles dropped into an empty jelly jar.

Bosch looked up and saw a small spray of blood splattered on the inside of the trunk lid. He studied the spots for a long moment and then stepped back and straightened up. He appraised the entire view of the trunk now, his mind checking off an imaginary list. Because no blood drips had been found on the access road into the clearing, he had no doubts that the man had been killed here in the trunk. Still, there were other unknowns. Why here? Why no shoes and socks? Why were the bindings taken off the wrists? He put these questions aside for the time being.

‘You check for the wallet?’ he asked without looking at the two others.

‘Not yet,’ Edgar replied. ‘Recognize him?’

For the first time Bosch looked at the face as a face. There was still fear etched on it. The man had closed his eyes. He had known what was coming. Bosch wondered if the whitish material in the eyes was dried tears.

‘No, do you?’

‘Nope. It’s too messy, anyway.’

Bosch gingerly lifted the back of the leather coat and saw no wallet in the back pockets of the dead man’s pants. He then opened the jacket and saw the wallet was there in an inside pocket that carried a Fred Haber men’s shop label on it. Bosch could also see a paper folder for an airline ticket in the pocket. With his other hand he reached into the jacket and removed the two items.

‘Get the lid,’ he said as he backed away.

Edgar closed it over as gently as an undertaker closing a coffin. Bosch then walked over to his briefcase, squatted down and put the two items down on it.

He opened the wallet first. There was a full complement of credit cards in slots on the left side and a driver’s license behind a plastic window on the right. The name on the license said Anthony N. Aliso.

'Anthony N. Aliso,' Edgar said. 'Tony for short. TNA. TNA Productions.'

The address was in Hidden Highlands, a tiny enclave off Mulholland in the Hollywood Hills. It was the kind of place that was surrounded by walls and had a guard shack manned twenty-four hours a day, mostly by off-duty or retired LAPD cops. The address went well with the Rolls-Royce.

Bosch opened the billfold section and found a sheaf of currency. Without taking the money out, he counted two one-hundred-dollar bills and nine twenties. He called the amount out so that Rider could make a note of it. Next he opened the airline folder. Inside was the receipt for a one-way ticket on an American Airlines flight departing Las Vegas for LAX at 10:05 Friday night. The name on the ticket matched the driver's license. Bosch checked the back flap of the ticket folder, but there was no sticker or staple indicating that a bag had been checked by the ticket holder. Curious, Bosch left the wallet and the ticket on the case and went to look into the car through the windows.

'No luggage?'

'None,' Rider said.

Bosch went back to the trunk and raised the lid again. Looking in at the body, he hooked a finger up the left sleeve of the jacket and pulled it up. There was a gold Rolex watch on the wrist. The face was encircled with a ring of tiny diamonds.

'Shit.'

Bosch turned around. It was Edgar.

'What?'

'You want me to call OCID?'

'Why?'

'Wop name, no robbery, two in the back of the head. It's a whack job, Harry. We oughta call OCID.'

'Not yet.'

'I'll tell you right now that's what Bullets is gonna wanna do.'

'We'll see.'

Bosch appraised the body again, looking closely at the contorted, bloodied face. Then he closed the lid.

Bosch stepped away from the car and to the edge of the clearing. The spot offered a brilliant view of the city. Looking east across the sprawl of Hollywood, he could easily pick up the spires of downtown

in the light haze. He saw the lights of Dodger Stadium were on for the twilight game. The Dodgers were dead even with Colorado with a month to go and Nomo due to pitch the game. Bosch had a ticket in his inside coat pocket. But he knew bringing it along had been wishful thinking. He wouldn't get anywhere near the stadium tonight. He also knew Edgar was right. The killing had all the aspects of a mob hit. The Organized Crime Intelligence Division should be notified – if not to take over the investigation entirely, then at least to offer advice. But Bosch was delaying that notification. It had been a long time since he'd had a case. He didn't want to give it up yet.

He looked back down at the Bowl. It looked like a sellout to him, the crowd seated in an elliptical formation going up the opposite hill. The seating sections furthest away from the music shell were the highest up the hill and at an almost even level with the clearing where the Rolls was parked. Bosch wondered how many of the people were watching him at that moment. Again he thought of the dilemma he faced. He had to get the investigation going. But he knew that if he pulled the body out of the trunk with such an audience watching, there likely would be hell to pay for the bad public relations such a move would cause the city and the department.

Once again Edgar seemed to know his thoughts.

'Hell, Harry, they won't care. At the jazz festival a few years back, there was a couple up on this spot doing the nasty for half an hour. When they were done, they got a standing ovation. Guy stands up buck naked and takes a little bow.'

Bosch looked back at him to see if he was serious.

'I read it in the *Times*. The "Only in L.A." column.'

'Well, Jerry, this is the Philharmonic. It's a different crowd, know what I mean? And I don't want this to end up in "Only in L.A.," okay?'

'Okay, Harry.'

Bosch looked at Rider. She hadn't said much of anything yet.

'What do you think, Kiz?'

'I don't know. You're the three.'

Rider was small, five feet and no more than a hundred pounds with her gun on. She would never have made it before the department relaxed the physical requirements to attract more women. She had light brown skin. Her hair was straightened and kept short. She wore jeans and a pink oxford shirt beneath a black blazer. On her small