

#1 *NEW YORK TIMES* BESTSELLING AUTHOR

MICHAEL CONNELLY

A
LINCOLN LAWYER
NOVEL

RESURRECTION WALK

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**MICHAEL
CONNELLY**



Little, Brown and Company
New York Boston London

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Little, Brown and Company

Hachette Book Group

1290 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10104

littlebrown.com

twitter.com/littlebrown

facebook.com/littlebrownandcompany

First ebook edition: November 2023

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ISBN 978-0-316-56378-9

E3-20231013-JV-NF-ORI

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THE FAMILY GATHERED in the visitor lot. Jorge Ochoa's mother and brother and me. Mrs. Ochoa looked as if she were going to church in a pale yellow dress with white cuffs and collar, her hands wrapped in rosary beads. Oscar Ochoa was in full cholo regalia: baggy low-slung jeans cuffed over black Doc Martens, wallet chain, white T-shirt, and black Ray-Bans. His neck was wrapped in blue ink, complete with his Vineland Boyz moniker "Double O" prominently on display.

And me, I was in my Italian three-piece, looking good for the cameras, wrapped in the majesty of the law.

The sun was dropping in the sky and coming at a nearly flat angle through the prison's twenty-foot exterior fence line, casting us all in the chiaroscuro light of a Caravaggio painting. I looked up at the guard tower and through the smoked glass thought I could see the silhouettes of men with long guns.

This was a rare moment. Corcoran State wasn't a prison where men often left on their own two feet. It was an LWOP facility, for men serving life without parole. You checked in but you never checked out. This was where Charlie Manson died of old age. But many inmates didn't make it to old age. Homicides in the cells were common. Jorge Ochoa was just two steel doors down from an inmate who had been beheaded and dismembered in his cell a few years back. His avowed Satanist cellmate had strung together his ears and fingers to make a necklace. That was Corcoran State.

But somehow Jorge Ochoa had survived fourteen years here for a murder he did not commit. And now this was his day. His life sentence had been vacated after a court finding of actual innocence. He was rising up, coming back to the land of the living. We had driven up from Los Angeles in my Lincoln, two media vans trailing us, to be at the gate to welcome him.

Promptly at 5 p.m. a series of horn blasts echoed across the prison and drew our attention. The cameramen from the two L.A. news stations hoisted their equipment to their shoulders while the reporters readied their microphones and checked their hair.

A door opened at the guardhouse at the bottom of the tower and a uniformed guard stepped out. He was followed by Jorge Ochoa.

"*Dios mío,*" Mrs. Ochoa exclaimed when she saw her son. "*Dios*

mío.”

It was a moment she'd never seen coming. That nobody had seen coming. Until I took the case.

The guard unlocked a gate in the fence and Jorge was allowed to walk through. I noted that the clothes I had bought him for his release were a perfect fit. A black polo and tan chinos, white Nikes. I didn't want him looking anything like his younger brother for the cameras. There was a wrongful-conviction lawsuit coming and it was never too early to engage in messaging the Los Angeles County jury pool.

Jorge walked toward us and at the last moment started to run. He bent down and grabbed his diminutive mother, lifted her off the ground at first and then gently put her down. They held each other for a solid three minutes while the cameras captured from all angles the tears they shed. Then it was Double O's moment for hugging and manly back-pounding.

And then it was my turn. I put out my hand but Jorge pulled me into an embrace.

“Mr. Haller, I don't know what to say,” he said. “But thank you.”

“It's Mickey,” I said.

“You saved me, Mickey.”

“Welcome back to the world.”

Over his shoulder I saw the cameras recording our embrace. But in that moment I suddenly didn't care about any of that. I felt the hollow I had carried inside for a long time start to close. I had resurrected this man from the dead. And with that came a fulfillment I had never known in the practice of law or in life.

PART ONE

MARCH — THE HAYSTACK

1

BOSCH HAD THE letter propped on the steering wheel. He noted that the printing was legible and the margins were clean. It was in English but not perfect English. There were misspellings and some words were misused. *Homonyms*, he thought. *I din't do this and want to higher you to clear me.*

It was the last line of that paragraph that held his attention: *The attorney said I had to plea guilty or I would get life for killing a law enforcement officer.*

Bosch turned the page over to see if there was anything written on the back. There was a number stamped at the top, which meant someone in the intel unit at Chino had at least scanned the letter before it was approved and sent out.

Bosch carefully cleared his throat. It was raw from the latest treatment and he didn't want to make things worse. He read the letter again. *I didn't like him but he was the father of my child. I would not kill him. Thats a lie.*

He hesitated, unsure whether to put the letter in the possibles stack or the rejects stack. Before he could decide, the passenger door opened and Haller climbed in, grabbing the stack of unread letters off the seat and tossing them up on the dashboard.

"You didn't get my text?" he asked.

"Sorry, I didn't hear it," Bosch said.

He put the letter on the dashboard and immediately started the Lincoln.

"Where to?" he asked.

"Airport courthouse," Haller said. "And I'm late. I was hoping you would pick me up out front."

"Sorry about that."

"Yeah, well, tell that to the judge if I'm late for this hearing."

Bosch dropped the transmission into drive and pulled away from the curb. He drove up to Broadway and turned into the entrance to the northbound 101. The rotary was lined with tents and cardboard shanties.

The recent mayoral election had hinged on which candidate would do a better job with the city's teeming homeless problem. So far, Bosch hadn't noticed any changes.

Bosch immediately transitioned to the southbound 110, which would eventually get him to the Century Freeway and a straight shot to the airport.

"Any good ones?" Haller asked.

Bosch handed him the letter from Lucinda Sanz. Haller started reading it, then checked out the name of the inmate.

"A woman," he said. "Interesting. What's her story?"

"She killed her ex," Bosch said. "Sounds like he was a cop. She pleaded nolo to manslaughter because they were holding life without over her head."

"Man's laughter..."

Haller continued to read and then tossed the letter on top of the stack of letters he had thrown onto the dashboard.

"That's the best you got?" he asked.

"So far," Bosch said. "Still have more to go."

"Says she didn't do it but doesn't say who did. What can we do with that?"

"She doesn't know. That's why she wants your help."

Bosch drove in silence while Haller checked his phone and then called his case manager, Lorna, to go over his calendar. When he was finished, Bosch asked how long they would be at the next stop.

"Depends on my client and his mitigation witness," Haller said. "He wants to ignore my advice and tell the judge why he's not really all that guilty. I'd rather have his son beg for mercy for him, but I'm not sure he'll show, whether he'll talk, or how that will go."

"What's the case?" Bosch asked.

"Fraud. Guy's looking at eight to twelve. You want to come in and watch?"

"No, I'm thinking that while we're over there, I might drop by and see Ballard—if she's around. It's not far from the courthouse. Text when you're finished in court and I'll swing back."

"If you even hear the text."

"Then call me. I'll hear that."

Ten minutes later he pulled to a stop in front of the courthouse on La Cienega.

“Later, gator,” Haller said as he got out. “Turn your phone up.”

After he shut the door, Bosch adjusted his phone as instructed. He had not been completely open with Haller about his hearing loss. The cancer treatments at UCLA had affected his hearing. So far, he had no issue with voices and conversation, but some electronic noises were at the limits of his range. He had been experimenting with various ringtones and text alerts but was still searching for the right setting. In the meantime, rather than listening for incoming messages or calls, he relied more on the accompanying vibration. But he had put his phone in the car’s cup holder earlier and therefore missed both the sound and vibration that came when Haller wanted to be picked up outside the downtown courthouse.

As he pulled away, Bosch called Renée Ballard’s cell. She picked up quickly.

“Harry?”

“Hey.”

“You all right?”

“Of course. You at Ahmanson?”

“I am. What’s up?”

“I’m in the neighborhood. Okay if I swing by in a few minutes?”

“I’ll be here.”

“On my way.”

2

THE AHMANSON CENTER was on Manchester ten minutes away. It was the Los Angeles Police Department's main recruitment and training facility. But it also housed the department's cold-case archive — six thousand unsolved murders going back to 1960. The Open-Unsolved Unit was located in an eight-person pod at the end of all the rows of shelving holding the murder books. Bosch had been there before and considered it sacred ground. Every row, every binder, was haunted by justice on hold.

At the reception desk Bosch was given a visitor's tag to clip to his pocket and sent back to see Ballard. He declined an escort and said he knew the way. Once he went through the archive door, he walked along the row of shelves, noting the case years on index cards taped on the endcaps.

Ballard was at her desk at the back of the pod in the open area beyond the shelves. Only one of the other cubicles was occupied. In it sat Colleen Hatteras, the unit's Investigative Genetic Genealogy expert and closet psychic. Colleen looked happy to see Bosch when she noticed his approach. The feeling wasn't mutual. Bosch had served a short stint on the all-volunteer cold-case team the year before, and he had clashed with Hatteras over her supposed hyper-empathic abilities.

"Harry Bosch!" she exclaimed. "What a nice surprise."

"Colleen," Bosch said. "I didn't think you could be surprised."

Hatteras kept her smile as she registered Bosch's crack.

"Still the same old Harry," she said.

Ballard turned in her swivel chair and broke into the conversation before it could go from cordial to contentious.

"Harry," she said. "What brings you by?"

Bosch approached Ballard and turned slightly to lean on the cubicle's separation wall. This put his back to Hatteras. He lowered his voice so he could speak as privately to Ballard as possible.

"I just dropped Haller off at the airport courthouse," he said. "Thought

I might just come by to see how things are going over here.”

“Things are going well,” Ballard said. “We’ve closed nine cases so far this year. A lot of them through IGG and Colleen’s good work.”

“Great. Did you put some people in jail or were they cleared others?”

What occurred often in cold-case investigations was a DNA hit leading to a suspect who was long dead or already incarcerated for other crimes with a life sentence. This, of course, solved the case, but it was carried on the books as “cleared other” because no prosecution resulted.

“No, we’ve put some bodies in lockup,” Ballard said. “About half, I’d say. The main thing is the families, though. Just letting them know that it’s cleared whether the suspect’s alive or dead.”

“Right,” Bosch said. “Yeah.”

But telling members of a victim’s family that the case had been solved but the identified suspect was dead had always bothered Bosch when he’d worked cold cases. To Bosch, it was admitting that the killer had gotten away with it. And there was no justice in that.

“So that’s it?” Ballard asked. “You’re just dropping by to say hi and bust Colleen’s chops?”

“No, that wasn’t what...” Bosch mumbled. “I wanted to ask you something.”

“Then ask.”

“I’ve got a couple names. People in prison. I wanted to get case numbers, maybe pull cases.”

“Well, if they’re in lockup, then you’re not talking about cold cases.”

“Right. I know.”

“Then, what... you want me to — Harry, are you kidding?”

“Uh, no, what do you mean?”

Ballard turned and sat up straight so she could glance over her privacy wall at Hatteras. Hatteras had her eyes on her computer screen, which meant she was probably trying to hear their conversation.

Ballard stood up and started walking toward the main aisle that ran in front of the archives.

“Let’s go up and get a coffee,” she said.

She didn’t wait for Bosch to answer. She kept going and he followed. When he glanced back at Hatteras, she was watching them go.

As soon as they got to the break room, Ballard turned and confronted him.

“Harry, are you kidding me?”

“What are you talking about?”

“You’re working for a defense attorney. You want me to run names for a defense attorney?”

Bosch paused. He hadn’t seen it that way until this moment.

“No, I didn’t think that —”

“Yeah, you didn’t think. I can’t run names for you if you’re working for the Lincoln Lawyer. They could fire my ass without even a board of rights. And don’t think there aren’t people over at the PAB gunning for me. There are.”

“I know, I know. Sorry, I didn’t think it through. Forget I was even here. I’ll leave you alone.”

He turned toward the door, but Ballard stopped him.

“No, you’re here, we’re here. Let’s have that cup of coffee.”

“Uh, well, okay. You sure?”

“Just sit down. I’ll get it.”

There was one table in the break room. It was pushed up against the wall, with chairs on the three open sides. Bosch sat down and watched as Ballard filled to-go cups with coffee and brought them over. Like Ballard, Bosch took his coffee black, and she knew this.

“So,” she said after sitting down. “How are you, Harry?”

“Uh, good,” Bosch said. “No complaints.”

“I was over at Hollywood Division about a week ago and ran into your daughter.”

“Yeah, Maddie told me, said you had a guy in a holding cell.”

“A case from ’89. A rape-murder. We got the DNA hit but couldn’t find him. Put out a warrant and he got picked up over there on a traffic violation. He didn’t know we were even looking for him. Anyway, Maddie said you got into some kind of test program at UCLA?”

“Yeah, a clinical trial. Supposedly running a seventy percent extension rate for what I’ve got.”

“‘Extension’?”

“Extension of life. Remission if you’re lucky.”

“Oh. Well, that’s great. Is it getting results with you?”

“Too early to tell. And they don’t tell you if you’re getting the real shot or the placebo. So who knows.”

“That kinda sucks.”

“Yeah. But... I’ve had a few side effects, so I think I’m getting the real stuff.”

“Like what?”

“My throat is pretty rough and I’m getting tinnitus and hearing loss, which is kind of driving me crazy.”

“Well, are they doing something about it?”

“Trying to. But that’s what being in the test group is about. They monitor this stuff, try to deal with side effects.”

“Right. When Maddie told me, I was kind of surprised. Last time we talked, you said you were just going to let nature take its course.”

“I sort of changed my mind.”

“Maddie?”

“Yeah, pretty much. Anyway...”

Bosch leaned forward and picked up his cup. The coffee was still too hot to drink, especially with his ravaged throat, but he wanted to stop talking about his medical situation. Ballard was one of the few people he had told about it, so he felt she deserved an update, but his practice had been not to dwell on the situation and the various possibilities for his future.

“So tell me about Haller,” Ballard said. “How’s that going?”

“Uh, it’s going,” Bosch said. “Staying pretty busy with the stuff coming in.”

“And now you’re driving him?”

“Not always, but it gives us time to talk through the requests. They keep coming, you know?”

The year before, when Bosch worked as a volunteer with Ballard in the Open-Unsolved Unit, they broke open a case that identified a serial killer who had operated unknown in the city for several years. During the investigation, they’d also determined that the killer was responsible for a murder for which an innocent man named Jorge Ochoa had been imprisoned. When politics in the district attorney’s office prevented immediate action to free Ochoa, Ballard tipped Haller to the case. Haller went to work and in a highly publicized habeas hearing was granted a court order freeing Ochoa and declaring him innocent. The media attention garnered by the case resulted in a flood of letters and collect phone calls to Haller from inmates in prisons across California, Arizona, and Nevada. All of them professed their innocence and pleaded for his help. Haller set up what amounted to an in-house innocence project and installed Bosch to do the initial review of the claims. Haller wanted a gatekeeper with an experienced detective’s eye.

“These two names you wanted me to run—you think they’re innocent?” Ballard asked.

“It’s too early for that,” Bosch said. “All I have are their letters from prison. But since I started this, I’ve rejected everything except these two. Something about them tells me I should at least take a further look.”

“So based on a hunch, you’re going to run with them.”

“More than a hunch, I think. Their letters seem... desperate in a certain way. Hard to explain. I don’t mean like desperate to get out of prison but desperate... to be believed, if that makes sense. I just need to take a look at the cases. Maybe then I find their bullshit.”

Ballard pulled her phone out of her back pocket.

“What are the names?” she asked.

“No, I don’t want you to do anything,” Bosch said. “I shouldn’t have asked.”

“Just give me the names. I’m not going to do anything right now with Colleen in the pod. I’m just going to send myself an email with the names. It’ll remind me to get back to you if I get something.”

“Colleen. She’s still sticking her nose into everything?”

“Not so much, but I don’t want her to know anything about this.”

“You sure? Maybe she can just get a feeling or a vibe and tell me whether they’re guilty or not. Save both of us a lot of time.”

“Harry, give it a rest, would you?”

“Sorry. Had to.”

“She does good work on the IGG stuff. That’s all I care about. It makes it worth putting up with her ‘vibes’ in the long run.”

“I’m sure.”

“I have to get back to the pod. Are you going to give me the names?”

“Lucinda Sanz. She’s in Chino. And Edward Dale Coldwell. He’s at Corcoran.”

“Caldwell?”

“No, *Cold* — Coldwell.”

She was typing with her thumbs on her phone. “DOBs?”

“They didn’t think to add those in their letters. I have inmate numbers if that helps.”

“Not really.”

She slid her phone back into her pocket.

“Okay, if I get anything, I’ll call you.”

“Thanks.”