

THE NO.1 BESTSELLING CRIME WRITER

MICHAEL CONNELLY NIGHTSHADE

EXILED TO PARADISE. HAUNTED BY MURDER.

NIGHTSHADE

Also by Michael Connelly

Fiction

The Black Echo

The Black Ice

The Concrete Blonde

The Last Coyote

The Poet

Trunk Music

Blood Work

Angels Flight

Void Moon

A Darkness More Than Night

City of Bones

Chasing the Dime

Lost Light

The Narrows

The Closers

The Lincoln Lawyer

Echo Park

The Overlook

The Brass Verdict

The Scarecrow

Nine Dragons

The Reversal

The Fifth Witness
The Drop
The Black Box
The Gods of Guilt
The Burning Room
The Crossing
The Wrong Side of Goodbye
The Late Show
Two Kinds of Truth
Dark Sacred Night
The Night Fire
Fair Warning
The Law of Innocence
The Dark Hours
Desert Star
Resurrection Walk
The Waiting

Non-fiction

Crime Beat

Ebooks

Suicide Run
Angle of Investigation
Mulholland Dive
The Safe Man
Switchblade

**MICHAEL
CONNELLY
NIGHTSHADE**


ALLEN & UNWIN
SYDNEY • MELBOURNE • AUCKLAND • LONDON

The characters and events in this book are fictitious. Any similarity to real persons, living or dead, is coincidental and not intended by the author.

This edition published in 2025

First published in Australia and New Zealand by Allen & Unwin in 2025

Copyright © Hieronymus, Inc., 2024

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording or by any information storage and retrieval system, without prior permission in writing from the publisher. The Australian *Copyright Act 1968* (the Act) allows a maximum of one chapter or 10 per cent of this book, whichever is the greater, to be photocopied by any educational institution for its educational purposes provided that the educational institution (or body that administers it) has given a remuneration notice to the Copyright Agency (Australia) under the Act.

Allen & Unwin

Cammeraygal Country

83 Alexander Street

Crows Nest NSW 2065

Australia

Phone: (61 2) 8425 0100

Email: info@allenandunwin.com

Web: www.allenandunwin.com

Allen & Unwin acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the Country on which we live and work. We pay our respects to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders, past and present.



A catalogue record for this
book is available from the
National Library of Australia

ISBN 978 1 76147 285 5

eISBN 978 1 76150 627 7

Cover design: Luke Causby/Blue Cork

Cover photograph: Unsplash/Venti Views

For Callie

CONTENTS

[1](#)

[2](#)

[3](#)

[4](#)

[5](#)

[6](#)

[7](#)

[8](#)

[9](#)

[10](#)

[11](#)

[12](#)

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

26

27

28

29

30

31

32

33

34

35

36

37

38

39

40

41

42

43

44

45

46

47

48

49

50

EPILOGUE

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

NIGHTSHADE

1

THE MARINE LAYER was as thick as cotton and had formed a thousand-foot wall that shrouded the entrance to the harbor. The *Adjourned* was late and Stilwell waited for it in his John Deere Gator by the fuel dock behind the Casino. The harbor was almost empty, the red-and-orange mooring balls floating free in lines across the glass surface. Stilwell knew that as soon as the layer burned off, the weekenders would start arriving. The harbormaster's office had reported that it would be at full capacity for the first big weekend of summer. Stilwell was ready for it.

He heard another cart pull up behind his. An electric. Soon the seat next to Stilwell was taken by Lionel McKey.

He heard another cart pull up behind his. An electric. Soon the seat next to Stilwell was taken by Lionel McKey.

"What can I do for you, Lionel?" Stilwell asked. "Anything new to say about the mutilations up at the preserve? I've got about four hours till my deadline."

"*Mutilation*, not mutilations. One mutilation. It's still under investigation and I've got nothing new to report at this time. When I do, you'll be the first to know."

"Is that a promise?"

"It's a promise."

His answer was punctuated by a foghorn from somewhere inside the layer. Stilwell knew by the tone that it was the Catalina Express about to come

through the shroud. He wanted to be over there to watch the arrivals as he did most free mornings, counting the number of tourists who came believing that the Casino was a gambling house only to learn that it was a grand ballroom and movie theater. But meeting the *Adjourned* was more important this morning than counting fools.

“So what are you putting in the paper about it?” he asked.

“Well, not much,” McKey said. “I don’t want to look like an idiot, you know.”

“I think that’s wise.”

“Why, because you know something?”

“No, but I mean, use your common sense, Lionel. You really think it was a close encounter of the green kind?”

“No, not really.”

“Well, there you go. What time’s your deadline?”

“Two.”

“If anything changes before then, I’ll be sure to let you know.”

“Okay, thanks. I’ll be at the *Call*.”

“And I’ve got your numbers.”

“Have a good weekend.”

“If I can. It’ll be busy.”

“For sure.”

McKey hopped out of the Gator and went back to his cart. As he drove off, Stilwell saw the *Catalina Call* logo of linked Cs painted on the side panel.

A few seconds later the prow of the Express poked through the fog layer and headed toward the ferry landing on the other side of the harbor.

Following in its wake fifty yards behind was the *Adjourned*. It had been a smart move using the bigger vessel as a lead through the layer instead of coming in blind. The Express had the most modern navigational tools at the fingertips of its captain and crew.

The *Adjourned* was a forty-year-old Viking 35. Judge Harrell kept it clean and well maintained. It was white with distinctive blue trim and matching canvas over the salon’s windows. Stilwell watched it cut down the first

mooring lane, past the floating dock behind the Black Marlin Club, and come to the last orange ball. Harrell cut the engines and used a gaff to hook the line under the ball. He was wearing a wet suit, which told Stilwell he would not need a dinghy pickup. The judge quickly moored the boat, then climbed over the stern to the fantail and jumped into the cold water.

Stilwell got out of the cart and went to the storage box on the back. He unlocked it and got two green-and-white-striped towels out and draped one of them over the passenger seat. By the time he had it in place, Harrell was climbing up the ladder onto the fuel dock.

Stilwell threw him the other towel.

“Looked like some thick stuff out there, Judge,” he said.

“Trojan-horsed on the tail of the Express,” Harrell said.

Before getting into the Gator, he towed off the wet suit and draped the towel over his head.

“I saw that,” Stilwell said. “Smooth move.”

“Anyway, sorry to be late,” Harrell said. “I called Mercy and she’s cued everything up.”

Harrell took a seat in the cart on the towel Stilwell had spread.

“Yes, sir,” Stilwell said. “Just a few D-and-Ds and a wobbler.”

“Tell me about the wobbler,” the judge said.

Stilwell circled the Casino and headed toward the justice center in town.

“Well, technically, it’s a burglary of an occupied dwelling with a firearm enhancement,” Stilwell said. “But the dwelling is occupied by the suspect’s ex-girlfriend, and he claims he was stealing back his Glock because he was afraid of leaving it with her, like she might harm herself with it.”

“How noble,” Harrell said. “You know this man?”

“Kermit Henderson, born and raised here. Works up at the golf course running mowers and doing general maintenance. The girlfriend is Becki Trower, another local. I was thinking maybe you work a deal like you did with Sean Quinlan and we get some maintenance done around the sub. Especially since Sean is coming off his time.”

“Okay, we’ll hear him out. If that’s all you’ve got, I might get some fishing in later.”

“There’s also this.”

Stilwell leaned forward, reached into his back pocket, and pulled out the document he had printed earlier that morning and folded lengthwise to fit. He handed it to the judge, who unfolded it and started to read.

“Search warrant,” Harrell said.

He got quiet as he read the summary and probable cause statement. Then he shook his head, not because he disagreed with anything he had read but because it made him angry.

“You got a pen?” he said.

Stilwell took the pen out of his shirt pocket and handed it to Harrell. The judge scribbled his signature on the appropriate line and handed the pen and the warrant back to Stilwell.

“I gave up a long time ago trying to understand why people do what they do to each other,” Harrell said. “But cruelty to animals still gets to me. If this guy did what you suspect, then he better find a good lawyer and hope I don’t get the case.”

“I hear you,” Stilwell said. “I’m the same.”

A few minutes later they were at the justice complex on Sumner Avenue. Stilwell and Harrell went into the sheriff’s substation, where the judge kept his clothes and black robe in a locker. Stilwell unlocked the holding facility so that Harrell could use the shower and get dressed for court. Kermit Henderson, unable to make bail, was in one of the cells. He watched the judge go by, leaving wet footprints on the gray linoleum.

Stilwell saw no sign of Sean Quinlan. He texted him to tell him to mop the jail after the judge was finished showering and getting dressed. It would be Quinlan’s final duty, as the judge was set to release him from probation.

Stilwell went into the courtroom and saw that Monika Juarez was already in place at the prosecution table. Mercy Chapa was at the clerk’s desk for her one-morning-a-week gig. The rest of the time she was manager, dispatcher, and general overseer of the sheriff’s substation, and Stilwell’s right hand.