

Book Review: Dark Sacred Night, The Night Fire, and The Dark Hours  
By Michael Connelly

Back in January I posted a review of Michael Connelly's "The Late Show," the first book in the Detective Renee Ballard series that began in 2017.

Yes, I was late to the party. But it's *never* too late to read a good book. Or start a good series. And having thoroughly enjoyed "The Late Show" I looked forward to continuing the series.

And as a man of my word, I have.

"Dark Sacred Night," "The Night Fire" and "The Dark Hours" are books two, three and four in the Renee Ballard series. They also kick off the partnership between Ballard and retired Detective Harry Bosch, a legendary Connelly character with his own series of more than a dozen books. And none of the books disappoint.

In "Dark Sacred Night" Ballard meets Bosch, now retired from the LAPD, as he works a cold case that has gotten under his skin. Fifteen-year-old Daisy Clayton, a runaway on the streets of Hollywood was brutally murdered nine years ago and her body left in a dumpster. Ballard finds herself drawn to the case, and the two begin working together to bring Daisy's killer to justice.

The book is split into sections, multiple chapters in each section, to reflect each of the detective's perspectives. It's an excellent way to reveal how each approaches the case; how they gradually reach a level of mutual trust and respect; and insight into Bosch for readers who may not have followed his series.

In typical Connelly fashion, breadcrumbs scattered about early in the narrative slowly come together, so you can't discard the events of Chapters 1 and 2 as irrelevant, because they soon will be *very* relevant.

Ballard and Bosch eventually solve the cold case and agree to work together as future cold cases arise. Which, of course, happens in “The Night Fire” when Bosch’s mentor John Jack Thompson dies and leaves behind the files for a murder that occurred nearly 30 years ago.

Why did Thompson take the files with him when he retired 20 years ago?

Ballard and Bosch begin working the case while simultaneously addressing more recent homicides. And (you guessed it), they all connect as the narrative unfolds.

But that’s all I’ll give away.

“The Dark Hours” is (in my opinion) the best of the three. It starts with a bang (literally) and never lets up. Ballard has a more dominant and career-impacting role in this one, but again the team of Ballard and Bosch is unbeatable as they link a current murder with a cold case while simultaneously taking on the rampage of serial rapists. And Connelly’s incorporating of the Covid pandemic, and the impact of the Black Lives Matter protests bring another layer of realism to the story.

“Dark Sacred Night,” “The Night Fire” and “The Dark Hours” are excellent murder/crime mysteries, and Ballard and Bosch are a great pair who are easy to root for. Connelly’s history as a crime reporter lends authenticity to these works of fiction and makes them that much more enticing to read.

Four-and-one-half stars for each book. And the series continues.