

Book Review: The Late Show
By Michael Connelly

About a year ago I saw that author Michael Connelly's newest novel, "The Waiting," featured the exploits of a young female detective working in the Los Angeles Police Department. It sounded interesting, but I quickly learned that the book was the 6th in a series featuring detective Renee Ballard.

Well, it's always best to start at the beginning, right? So, I put the first book in the series, "The Late Show," on my to-be-read list, and have *finally* gotten around to it.

And now, I'm looking forward to reading the next five installments. Just a bit late to the party.

As "The Late Show" unfolds, Detective Ballard is working the night shift in Hollywood, hence the book's title. She was once an up-and-coming detective, but she's now on the so-called graveyard shift as punishment for filing a sexual harassment complaint against a supervisor. More importantly, she was not supported in her complaint by her partner.

The problem for detectives working the night shift is that any case she begins must be turned over to the day shift detectives. In other words, she doesn't get to finish any.

But one night she catches two cases she doesn't want to part with: the brutal beating of a prostitute left for dead in a parking lot; and the killing of a young woman in a nightclub. Against orders and her own partner's wishes, Ballard begins working both cases by day while maintaining her shift at night.

As you may have guessed, the deeper Ballard digs, the more the cases entwine. And the more they point to corruption within the LAPD. Corruption deep enough to warrant killing to remain hidden.

Connelly's writing and pacing are excellent. The narrative is descriptive as Ballard slowly peels back the layers surrounding each case, and Connelly takes the reader into the detective's mindset, filtering in elements of her past that help to understand why she's so driven to resolve these cases no matter the cost.

There are a few moments where the unraveling and resulting connections are a bit fuzzy to follow. But Connelly doesn't leave them hanging without explanation for long.

I thoroughly enjoyed "The Late Show." And if you're a fan of mystery, crime and thriller novels, you might want to check out this first installment that I'm giving 4.5 stars to. You just might get hooked as I did.