



The Black Echo

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Those readers admiring quickly paced police procedural novels with well-defined and developed main characters will find themselves enthralled by Michael Connelly's first novel, THE BLACK ECHO.

Hieronymous (known as Harry) Bosch, the victim of parental abuse and the Vietnam War, tries to capture criminals responsible for killing a fellow veteran-turned-addict, Billy Meadows. Meadows is found stuffed inside a pipe at a construction site.

The hunt for the murderer or murderers is long and contorted, being complicated by Bosch's realization that someone he works with may not only be covering up police involvement in Meadows' death, but also trying to kill him. Thus Bosch and his newly assigned partner, FBI officer Eleanor Wish (with whom he gradually falls in love), must be ever alert for buggings, harassment, and even assassination attempts.

After discovering that Meadows, as Bosch himself did, fought Viet Cong irregulars in the elaborate, terror-inducing tunnels of Vietnam, Bosch takes a personal interest in the case. His quest first takes him to Meadows' squalid apartment in seedy Sepulveda. In the meantime, a gold bracelet with fish-shaped links, found with Meadows' body, links him with the murder of a seventy-one-year-old woman. When the autopsy report reveals that Meadows may have been tortured before having been given a lethal heroin injection, Bosch hypothesizes that the torture had something to do with the bracelet.

The reader is then given a lengthy account of Bosch's last tunnel exploit in Vietnam during which he found the horribly mutilated corpse of a fellow soldier named Crofton. The trauma suffered that day has left Bosch with a horror of tunnels. Bosch then is introduced to his partner, Eleanor Wish, only to find that she lacks the experience he had hoped for. She soon proves herself highly competent, however, and even invaluable. Ultimately their investigation brings them to the Los Angeles tunnels for a climactic encounter.

Connelly constantly keeps readers interested and puzzled: No one knows who is in cahoots with whom. The ending is electric as well as unexpected.

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