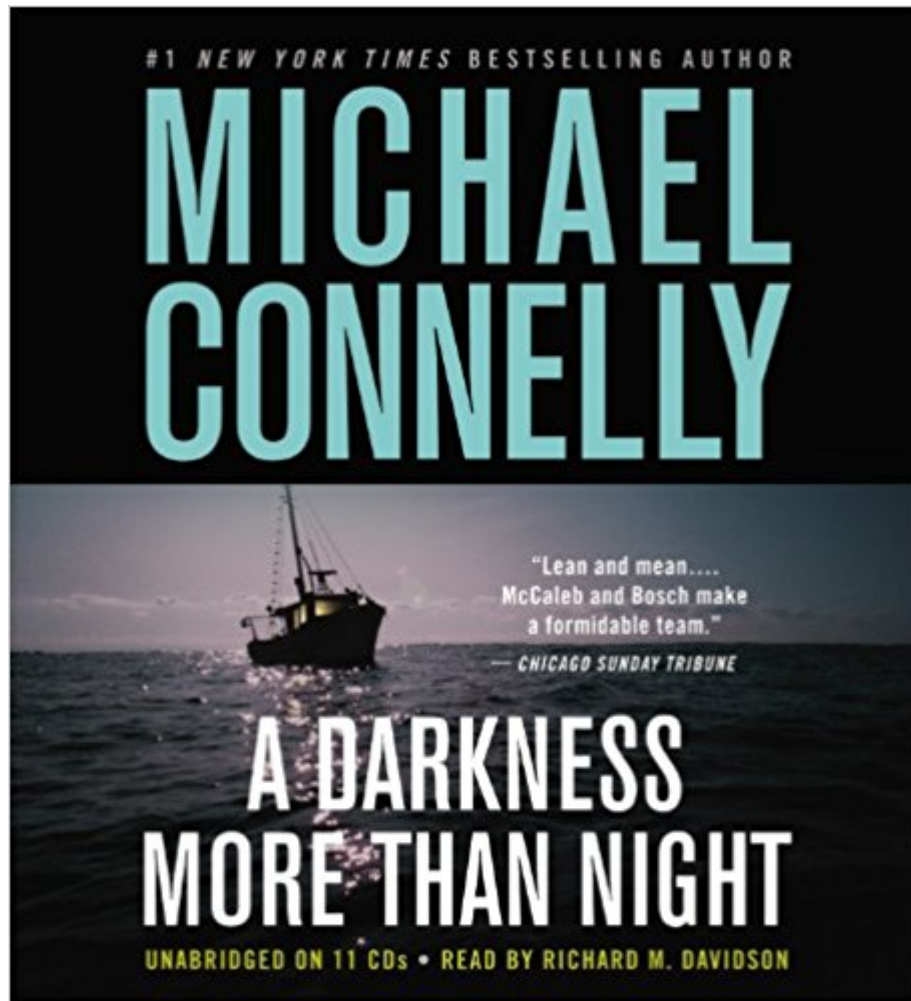


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A Darkness More Than Night (Harry Bosch)



Synopsis

When a sheriff's detective shows up on former FBI man Terry McCaleb's Catalina Island doorstep and requests his help in analyzing photographs of a crime scene, McCaleb at first demurs. He's newly married (to Graciela, who herself dragged him from retirement into a case in *Blood Work*), has a new baby daughter, and is finally strong again after a heart transplant. But once a bloodhound, always a bloodhound. One look at the video of Edward Gunn's trussed and strangled body puts McCaleb back on the investigative trail, hooked by two details: the small statue of an owl that watches over the murder scene and the Latin words "Cave Cave Dus Videt," meaning "Beware, beware, God sees," on the tape binding the victim's mouth. Gunn was a small-time criminal who had been questioned repeatedly by LAPD Detective Harry Bosch in the unsolved murder of a prostitute, most recently on the night he was killed. McCaleb knows the tense, cranky Bosch (Michael Connelly's series star--see *The Black Echo*, *The Black Ice*, et al.) and decides to start by talking to him. But Bosch has time only for a brief chat. He's a prosecution witness in the high-profile trial of David Storey, a film director accused of killing a young actress during rough sex. By chance, however, McCaleb discovers an abstruse but concrete link between the scene of Gunn's murder and Harry Bosch's name: "This last guy's work is supposedly replete with owls all over the place. I can't pronounce his first name. It's spelled H-I-E-R-O-N-Y-M-U-S. He was Netherlandish, part of the northern renaissance. I guess owls were big up there." McCaleb looked at the paper in front of him. The name she had just spelled seemed familiar to him. "You forgot his last name. What's his last name?" "Oh, sorry. It's Bosch. Like the spark plugs." Bosch fits McCaleb's profile of the killer, and McCaleb is both thunderstruck and afraid--thunderstruck that a cop he respects might have committed a horrendous murder and afraid that Bosch may just be good enough to get away with it. And when Bosch finds out (via a mysterious leak to tabloid reporter Jack McEvoy, late of Connelly's *The Poet*) that he's being investigated for murder, he's furious, knowing that Storey's defense attorney may use the information to help get his extravagantly guilty client off scot-free. It's the kind of plot that used to make great Westerns: two old gunslingers circling each other warily, each of them wondering if the other's gone bad. But there's more than one black hat in them thar hills, and Connelly masterfully joins the plot lines in a climax and denouement that will leave readers gasping but satisfied. --Barrie Trinkle

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Customer Reviews

"A Darkness More Than Night" (the title comes from a line in a novel by Raymond Chandler, who was Connelly's inspiration for becoming a writer) is Michael Connelly's 10th novel. Six of the first nine star LAPD detective Harry Bosch; one of the other three ("Blood Work") stars Terry McCaleb, a former FBI agent forced into retirement by heart disease necessitating a transplant. Although Bosch and McCaleb had worked together before, offscreen so to speak, "Darkness" brings them together in the same novel. McCaleb is happily retired from the serial killer profiling business, making a living from chartering fishing trips around Catalina Island in Southern California, when an LA Sheriff's Dept. deputy friend of his comes to him for his help on a strange murder. (In case you are wondering, the Sheriff's Department is a county agency; it polices the unincorporated areas of Los Angeles County. Crimes within L.A. city limits fall within the jurisdiction of the LAPD.) Against his wife's wishes, McCaleb agrees to take a look. He comes across a clue that the sheriff's deputies missed the first time, and that clue leads him into a whole new area of investigation that eventually points at . . . Harry Bosch. Some of Connelly's mysteries contain what for me were stunning twists -- "The Concrete Blonde" and "Trunk Music" come to mind. "Darkness," on the other hand, proved to be relatively easy to figure out about 100 pages before the end of the novel. Nevertheless, it's still a gripping read. Most of Connelly's books are dark and edgy, but the darkness and edginess are even more palpable in this book.

I've read all but two of Michael Connelly's books. I think he's a good writer, and through most of his work, I thought he was a good storyteller. Which is why I was unpleasantly surprised with A Darkness More Than Night. I think this book is a cheat. Connelly presents a flawed premise, pads

the middle of the book with a couple hundred pages of filler, and then creates an ending that is no surprise and doesn't even qualify for the term mystery. Connelly is a good writer, but even he couldn't pull this one off. A recurring theme in Connelly's books is the "good" versus "evil" situation. He also likes his good guy characters to struggle with philosophical questions about the evil that men/women do and what it takes to bring these people to justice. Harry Bosch seems to fluctuate between good and evil to the extent that the guy is more schizophrenic in this book than he's been in any of the others. I would buy that if there were a good reason to make him such an undefinable character. But in this case, there wasn't a reason like that. For no reason other than Connelly apparently wanted to give Terry McCaleb something to do, Bosch becomes a suspect in a murder. And while lip service was given to the thought that an investigation of Bosch had better produce hard evidence that he did what McCaleb suspects he may have done, it seems to me that everyone had no problem believing that Bosch just suddenly decided to become a cold blooded murderer. Given everything readers of Connelly's books have been led to believe about Bosch up to this point, that just doesn't make any sense. 400 pages of fill doesn't make it any more credible a premise.

Michael Connelly is the BEST mystery-thriller writer working today, so it almost goes without saying that this book stands head and shoulders above most others within this overcrowded genre. In **A Darkness More Than Night**, he demonstrates once again his extraordinary skills in terms of weaving intricate plots filled with twists, turns, and early-innocuous-clues-that-become-pivotal-later-on. He also has developed not just one but two extraordinary protagonists, Harry Bosch and Terrance McCaleb, and their "face-off" in this book adds a fascinating dimension to an already fine work. Connelly also does a wonderful job of creating the **noir**, "there is evil afoot in this world" mood/philosophy that pervades his books. The discussions of Hieronymus Bosch's paintings, the symbolic meanings of owls, etc., are absolutely riveting. Given that I've bestowed such effusive praise upon this novel, why four stars instead of five? First, it's apparent that the novel will be appreciated far more by readers who have already read not just one or two but ALL of Connelly's previous works. Yes, it's common for mystery writers to write their successive books with an element of "ongoing story" to the work, including occasional references to events and cases described previously. But Connelly employs this practice so heavily in this book that it almost seems futile for any reader to pick up **A Darkness More Than Night** without having gone through at least a few previous Connelly mysteries. The second reservation I had is one that other reviewers have mentioned, i.e., that although the McCaleb vs.

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