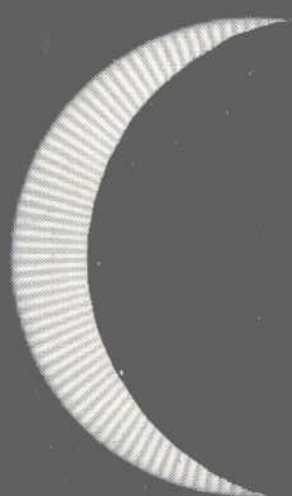


THE *NEW YORK TIMES* BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF *ANGELS FLIGHT*

MICHAEL CONNELLY



A NOVEL

VOID MOON

"ONE OF AMERICA'S FINEST WRITERS. DON'T MISS HIM."

—*CLEVELAND PLAIN DEALER*

104361
**MICHAEL
CONNELLY**

**VOID
MOON**

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PRAISE FOR MICHAEL CONNELLY AND *VOID MOON*

"VOID MOON offers readers a full house of entertainment. Bet on it. . . . Cassie is damaged but tough and resilient—a wonderfully engaging character. Jack Karch, the pit bull, is not only a chilling sicko, but also an incredibly skilled investigator. Casino boss Victor Grimaldi is spectacularly reptilian. Lesser characters are very finely drawn, too. Connelly really does his homework: Cassie's criminal tradecraft—and the casinos' security systems—will fascinate crime fans. And the pacing of this thriller is as good as you'll find in the genre."

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"Michael Connelly is one of those masters . . . who can keep driving the story forward in runaway locomotive style."

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"Recalls no one so much as Raymond Chandler . . . ambitious, skillful, moving, intricate and clever."

—**Los Angeles Times**

more . . .

"[Michael Connelly] is raising the hard-boiled detective novel to a new level . . . adding substance and depth to modern crime fiction."

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"In VOID MOON, as in all of Michael Connelly's books, you care about the people, you care what happens to them, and you can't stop reading until you find out. Connelly is so good he's beginning to annoy me."

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"An elegant, insightful writer."

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"Among the many writers who have employed the City of Angels as their backdrop, no one has captured its corrupt yet compelling ambience better than Michael Connelly . . . brings to life fallible human beings."

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"A first-rate purveyor of crime fiction . . . Connelly has developed into a master of character studies."

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"Powerful storytelling and writing skills."

—**Houston Chronicle**



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TO LINDA,
FOR THE FIRST FIFTEEN

VOID MOON

All around them the cacophony of greed carried on in its most glorious and extreme excess. But it couldn't make a dent in their world.

She broke the connection between their eyes just long enough to look down and find her glass and then raise it from the table. It was empty except for ice and a cherry but that didn't matter. He raised his glass in return, maybe one swallow of beer and foam left in it.

"To the end," she said.

He smiled and nodded. He loved her and she knew it.

"To the end," he began and then paused. "To the place where the desert is ocean."

She smiled back as they touched glasses. She raised hers to her lips and the cherry rolled into her mouth. She looked at him suggestively as he wiped the beer foam out of his mustache. She loved him. It was them against the whole fucking world and she liked their chances just fine.

Then her smile was gone as she thought about how she had played the whole thing wrong. How she should have known what his reaction would be, how he wouldn't let her go up. She should have waited until after it was over to tell him.

"Max," she said, very serious now. "Let me do it. I mean it. One last time."

"No way. It's me. I go up."

There was a whoop from the casino floor and it was loud enough to break the barrier surrounding them. She looked out and saw some ten-gallon Texan dancing at the end of one of the craps tables, just below the pulpit that reached out over the casino floor. The Texan had his dial-a-date at his side, a woman with big hair who had been working the casinos since all the way back when Cassie was dealing at the Trop for the first time.

Cassie looked back at Max.

"I can't wait until we're out of this place for good. Let me at least flip you for it."

Max slowly shook his head.

"Not in the cards. This one's mine."

Max stood up then and she looked up at him. He was handsome and dark. She liked the little scar under his chin, the way no whiskers ever grew there.

"Guess it's time," Max said.

He looked out across the casino, his eyes scanning but never stopping and holding on anything until they traveled up the arm of the pulpit. Cassie's eyes followed his. There was a man up there, dressed darkly and staring down like a priest on his congregation.

She tried to smile again but couldn't bring the corners of her mouth up. Something didn't feel right. It was the

change of plans. The switch. She realized then how much she wanted to go up and how much she was going to miss the charge it would put in her blood. She knew then it was really about her, not Max. She wasn't being protective of Max. She was being selfish. She wanted that charge one last time.

"Anything happens," Max said, "I'll see you when I see you."

Now she frowned outright. That had never been part of the ritual, a good-bye like that. A negative like that.

"Max, what's wrong? Why are you so nervous?"

Max looked down at her and hiked his shoulders.

"'Cause it's the end, I guess."

He tried a smile, then touched her cheek and leaned down. He kissed her on the cheek and then quickly moved over to her lips. He reached a hand down beneath the table where nobody could see and ran his finger up the inside of her leg, tracing the seam of her jeans. Then, without another word, he turned and left the lounge. He started walking through the casino toward the elevator alcove and she watched him go. He didn't look back. That was part of the ritual. You never looked back.



I

THE house on Lookout Mountain Road was set far in from the street and nestled against the steep canyon embankment to the rear. This afforded it a long and flat green lawn running from the wide front porch to the white picket fence that ran along the street line. It was unusual in Laurel Canyon to have such an immense lawn, front or back, and one so flat as well. It was that lawn that would be the key selling point of the property.

The open house had been advertised in the real estate section of the *Times* as starting at two P.M. and lasting until five. Cassie Black pulled to the curb ten minutes before the starting time and saw no cars in the driveway and no indication of any activity in the house. The white Volvo station wagon she knew belonged to the owners that was usually parked outside was gone. She couldn't tell about the other car, the black BMW, because the little