

## Resurrection Walk Excerpt

The family gathered in the visitor lot. Jorge Ochoa's mother and brother and me. Mrs. Ochoa was dressed as if going to church, a pale yellow dress with white cuffs and collar, her hands wrapped in rosary beads. Oscar Ochoa was in full *cholo* regalia; baggy low-slung jeans cuffed over black Doc Martens, wallet chain, white T-shirt, and black Ray-Bans, his neck wrapped in blue ink, complete with his Vineland Boyz moniker "Double O" prominently on display.

And me, I was in my Italian three-piece, looking good for the cameras, wrapped in the majesty of the law.

The sun was dropping in the sky and coming at a flat angle through the prison's twenty-foot exterior fence line, casting us all in the chiaroscuro light of a Caravaggio painting. I looked up at the guard tower and through the smoked glass thought I could see the silhouettes of men with guns.

This was a rare moment. Corcoran State wasn't a prison where men often left on their own two feet. It was an L-WOP facility, for men serving life without parole. You checked in but you never checked out. This was where Charlie Manson died of old age. But many inmates didn't make it to old age. Homicides in the cells were common. Jorge Ochoa was just two steel doors down from an inmate who had been beheaded and dismembered in his cell a few years back. His avowed Satanist cellmate had then strung together his ears and fingers to make a necklace. That was Corcoran State.

But somehow Jorge Ochoa had survived fourteen years here for a murder he did not commit. And now this was his day. His life sentence was vacated after a court finding of factual innocence. He was rising up, coming back to the land of the living. We had driven up from Los Angeles in my Lincoln, two media vans trailing behind us, to be at the gate to welcome him.

Promptly at 5 p.m. a series of horn blasts echoed across the prison and drew our attention. The cameramen from the two L.A. news stations hoisted their equipment to their shoulders while the reporters readied their microphones.

A door opened at the guard house at the bottom of the tower and a uniformed guard stepped out. He was followed by Jorge Ochoa.

"*Dios mio*," Mrs. Ochoa exclaimed when she saw her son. "*Dios mio*."

It was a moment she never saw coming. That nobody saw coming. Until I took the case.

The guard unlocked a gate in the fence and Jorge was allowed to walk through. I noted that the clothes I had bought him for his release were a perfect fit. A black polo and khaki pants, white Nikes. I didn't want him looking anything like his younger brother for the cameras. There was a wrongful-conviction lawsuit coming and it was never too early to engage in messaging the jury pool.

Jorge walked toward us and at the last moment started to run. He bent down and grabbed his diminutive mother, taking her off the ground at first and then gently putting her down.

They held each other for a solid three minutes while the cameras captured from all angles the tears they shed. Then it was Double O's moment for hugging and manly back pounding.

And then it was my turn. I put out my hand but he pulled me into an embrace.

"Mr. Haller, I don't know what to say," he said. "But thank you."

"It's Mickey," I said.

"You saved me, Mickey."

"Welcome back to your life."

Over his shoulder I saw the cameras recording our embrace. But in that moment I suddenly didn't care about any of that. I felt the hollow I had carried inside for a long time start to close. I had resurrected this man from the dead. And with it came a fulfillment I had never known in the practice of law or life.

## Part One

### The Haystack

#### 1

Bosch had the letter propped on the steering wheel. He noted that the printing was legible and the margins were clear. It was in English but not perfect English. There were misspellings and the misuse of words. Homonyms, he thought. *I din't do this and want to higher you to clear me.*

It was the last line of that paragraph that held his attention: *The attorney said I had to plea guilty or I would get life for killing a law enforcement officer.*

Bosch turned the page over to see if there was anything written on the back. There was a number stamped at the top, which meant someone in the intel unit at Chino had at least scanned the letter before it was approved and sent out.

Bosch carefully cleared his throat. It was raw from the latest treatment and he didn't want to make things worse. He read the letter again. *I didn't like him but he was the father of my child. I would not kill him. That's a lie.*

He hesitated, deciding whether to put the letter in the possibles stack or the rejects stack. Before he could decide, the passenger door opened and Haller climbed in after first grabbing the stack of unread letters off the seat and tossing them up on the dashboard.

"You didn't get my text?" he asked.

"Sorry, I didn't hear it," Bosch said.

He put the letter up on the dashboard and immediately turned the Lincoln's ignition on.

"Where to?" he asked.

"Airport courthouse," Haller said. "And I'm late. I was hoping you would pick me up out front."

“Sorry.”

“Yeah, well, tell that to the judge if I’m late for this hearing.”

Bosch dropped the transmission into drive and pulled away from the curb. He drove up to Broadway and turned into the entrance to the northbound 101. The rotary was lined with tents and cardboard shanties. The recent mayoral election had hinged on which candidate would do a better job with the city’s teeming homeless problem. So far, no change.

Bosch immediately transitioned to the southbound 110, which would eventually get him to the Century Freeway and a straight shot to the airport.

“Any good ones?” Haller asked.

Bosch reached to the dash and handed him the letter from Lucinda Cruz. Haller started reading it but first he checked out the name of the inmate.

“A female,” he said. “Interesting. What’s her story?”

“She killed her ex,” Bosch said. “Sounds like he was a cop. She pled nolo to manslaughter to avoid life without.”

“Man’s laughter...”

He continued to read and then tossed the letter on top of the stack of letters he had thrown up on the dashboard.

“That’s the best you got?” he asked.

“So far,” Bosch said. “Still have more to go.”

“Says she didn’t do it but doesn’t say who did. What can we do with that?”

“She doesn’t know. That’s why she wants your help.”

Bosch drove in silence while Haller checked his phone and then called his case manager, Lorna, to go over his calendar. When he was finished, Bosch asked how long they would be at the next stop.

“Depends on the judge’s disposition today,” Haller said. “It’s a sentencing and he may or may not entertain hearing my guy’s kid beg for mercy—if he even bothers to show.”

“What’s the case?” Bosch asked.

“Financial fraud. Guy’s looking at eight to twelve. You want to come in and watch?”

“No, I’m thinking that while we’re over there, I might drop by and see Ballard—if she’s around. It’s not far from the courthouse. Text me before you leave the courthouse and I’ll swing back.”

“If you even hear the text.”

“Then call me. I’ll hear that.”

Ten minutes later he pulled to a stop in front of the courthouse on La Cienega.

“Later, gator,” Haller said as he got out. “Turn your phone up.”

After he shut the door, Bosch adjusted his phone as instructed. He had not been completely open with Haller about his hearing loss. The cancer treatments at UCLA had resulted in a side effect that limited the audio range of his hearing. Rather than listening for an incoming message or call, he relied more on the accompanying vibration. But he had put his phone in the car’s cup holder earlier and therefore missed both the sound and vibration that came when Haller wanted to be picked up outside the downtown courthouse.

As he pulled away, Bosch called Renée Ballard’s cell. She picked up quickly.

“Harry?”

“Hey.”

“You all right?”

“Of course. You at Ahmanson?”

“I am. What’s up?”

“I’m in the neighbourhood. All right if I swing by in a few minutes?”

“I’ll be here.”

“On my way.”

## 2

The Ahmanson Center was on Manchester ten minutes away. It was the Los Angeles Police Department’s main recruitment and training facility. But it also housed the department’s cold case archive—six thousand unsolved murders going back to 1960. The Open-Unsolved Unit was located in an eight-person pod at the end of all the rows of shelving holding the murder books. Bosch had been there before and considered it sacred ground. Every row, every binder, was haunted by justice on hold.

At the reception desk Bosch was given a visitor’s tag to clip to his pocket and sent back to see Ballard. He declined an escort and said he knew the way. Once he went through the archive door, he walked along the row of shelves, noting the case years on 3 x 5 cards taped on the endcaps.

Ballard was at her desk at the end of the pod in the open area beyond the shelves. Only one of the other cubicles was occupied. In it sat Colleen Hatteras, the unit’s Investigative Genetic Genealogy expert and closeted psychic. Colleen looked happy to see Bosch when she noticed his approach. The feeling wasn’t mutual. Bosch had served a short stint on the all-volunteer cold case team the year before, and he had clashed with Hatteras over her supposed hyper-empathic abilities.

“Harry Bosch!” she exclaimed. “What a nice surprise.”

“Colleen,” Bosch said. “I didn’t think you could be surprised.”

Hatteras kept her smile as she registered Bosch's crack.

"Still the same old Harry," she said.

Ballard turned in her swivel chair and broke into the conversation before it could go from cordial to contentious.

"Harry," she said. "What brings you by?"

Bosch approached Ballard and turned slightly to lean on the cubicle's separation wall. This put his back to Hatteras. He lowered his voice so he could speak as privately to Ballard as was possible.

"I just dropped Haller off at the airport courthouse," he said. "Thought I might just come by to see how things are going over here."

"Things are going well," Ballard said. "We've closed nineteen cases so far this year. A lot of them through IGG and Colleen's good work."

"Great. Did you put some people in jail, or were they cleared others?"

What occurred often in cold case investigations was a DNA hit leading to a suspect who was long dead or already incarcerated. This, of course, solved the case, but it was carried on the books as "cleared other" because no prosecution resulted.

"No, we've put some bodies in lockup," Ballard said. "About half, I'd say. The main thing is the families, though. Just letting them know that it's cleared, whether the suspect's alive or dead."

"Right," Bosch said. "Yeah."

But telling members of a victim's family that the case had been solved but the identified suspect was dead had always bothered Bosch when he'd worked cold cases. To Bosch, it was admitting that the killer had gotten away with it. And there was no justice in that.

"So that's it?" Ballard asked. "You're just dropping by to say hi and bust Colleen's chops?"

"No, that wasn't what..." Bosch mumbled. "I wanted to ask you something."

"Then ask."

"I've got a couple names. People in prison. I wanted to get case numbers, maybe pull cases."

"Well, if they're in lockup, then you're not talking about cold cases."

"Right. I know."

"Then what...you want me to—Harry, are you kidding?"

"Uh, no, what do you mean?"

Ballard turned and sat up straight so she could glance over her privacy wall in the direction of the cubicle where Hatteras sat. Hatteras had her eyes on her computer screen, which meant she was probably trying to hear their conversation.

Ballard stood up and started walking toward the main aisle that ran in front of the archives.

“Let’s go up and get a coffee,” she said.

She didn’t wait for Bosch to answer. She kept going and he followed. When he glanced back at Hatteras, she was watching them go.

As soon as they got to the break room, Ballard turned and confronted him.

“Harry, are you kidding me?”

“What are you talking about?”

“You are working for a defense attorney. You want me to run names for a defense attorney and risk getting fired?”

Bosch paused. He hadn’t seen it that way until this moment.

“No, I didn’t think that—”

“Yeah, you didn’t think. I can’t run names for you if you are working for the Lincoln Lawyer. They could fire my ass without even a board of rights. And don’t think there aren’t people over at the PAB gunning for me. There are.”

“I know, I know. Sorry, I didn’t think it out. Forget I was even here. I’ll leave you alone.”

He turned toward the door, but Ballard stopped him.

“No, you’re here, we’re here, let’s have that cup of coffee.”

“Uh, well, okay. You sure?”

“Just sit down. I’ll get it.”

There was one table in the break room. It was pushed up against the wall, with chairs on the three open sides. Bosch sat down and watched as Ballard filled to-go cups with coffee and brought them over. They both took their coffee black and Ballard knew this.

“So,” she said after sitting down. “How are you, Harry?”

“Uh, good,” Bosch said. “No complaints.”

“I was over at Hollywood Division about a week ago and ran into your daughter.”

“Yeah, Maddie told me, said you had a guy in a holding cell.”

“A case from ’89. A rape-murder. We got the DNA hit but couldn’t find him. Put out a warrant and he got picked up over there on a traffic violation. Didn’t know we were even looking for him. Anyway, Maddie said you got into some kind of test program at UCLA?”

“Yeah, a clinical trial. Supposedly running a seventy percent extension rate for what I’ve got.”

“Extension?”

“Extension of life. Remission if you’re lucky.”

“Oh. Well, that’s great. Is it getting results with you?”

“Too early to tell. And they don’t tell you if you are getting the real shot or the placebo. So who knows.”

“That kinda sucks.”

“Yeah. But...I’ve had a few side effects, so I think I’m getting the real stuff.”

“Like what?”

“My throat is pretty rough and I’m getting tinnitus in my left ear, which is kind of driving me crazy.”

“Well, are they doing something about it?”

“Trying to. But that’s what being in the test group is about. They monitor this stuff, try to deal with side effects.”

“Right. When Maddie told me, I was kind of surprised. Last time we talked, you said you were just going to let things run their course.”

“I sort of changed my mind.”

“Maddie?”

“Yeah, pretty much. Anyway...”

Bosch leaned forward and picked up his cup. The coffee was still too hot to drink, especially with his ravaged throat, but he wanted to stop talking about his medical situation. Ballard was one of the few people he had told about it, so he felt she deserved an update, but his practice had been not to dwell on the situation and the various possibilities for his future.

“So tell me about Haller,” Ballard said. “How is that going?”

“Uh, it’s going,” Bosch said. “Staying pretty busy with the stuff coming in.”

“And now you’re driving him?”

“Not all the time, but it gives us time to talk through the requests. They keep coming in.”

The year before, when Bosch worked as a volunteer with Ballard in the Open-Unsolved Unit, they broke open a case that identified a serial killer who had operated unknown in the city for several years. During the investigation, they also determined that the killer was responsible for a murder for which an innocent man named Jorge Ochoa had been imprisoned. When politics in the District Attorney’s Office did not result in immediate action to free Ochoa, Ballard tipped Haller to the case. Haller went to work and in a highly publicized habeas hearing was granted a court order freeing Ochoa and declaring him innocent. The media attention garnered by the case resulted in a flood of letters and collect phone calls to Haller from inmates in prisons across California, Arizona, and Nevada. All of them claimed their innocence and pleaded for his help. Haller set up what amounted to an

in-house Innocence Project that he called the “Ochoa Project” and installed Bosch as the first level of review of the claims. Haller wanted an experienced detective’s eye on the first view.

“These two names you wanted me to run, you think they’re innocent?” Ballard asked.

“No, too early for that,” Bosch said. “All I have are their letters from prison. But since I started this, I’ve rejected everything except these two. Something about them tells me I should at least take a further look.”

“So based on a hunch you’re going to run with them.”

“More than a hunch, I think. Their letters seem...desperate...in a certain way. Hard to explain. I don’t mean like desperate to get out of prison but desperate...to be believed. If that makes sense. I just need to take a look at the cases. Maybe then I find they’re bullshit.”

Ballard pulled her phone out of her back pocket.

“What are the names?” she asked.

“No, I don’t want you to do anything,” Bosch said. “I shouldn’t have asked.”

“Just give me the names. I’m not going to do anything right now with Colleen in the pod. I’m just going to send myself an email with the names. It will remind me to get back to you if I get something.”

“Colleen. She’s still sticking her nose into everything?”

“Not so much, but I don’t want her to know anything about this.”

“You sure? Maybe she can just get a feeling or a vibe and tell me whether they’re guilty or not. Save both of us a lot of time.”

“Harry, give it a rest, would you?”

“Sorry. Had to.”

“She does good work on the IGG stuff. That’s all I care about. It makes it worth putting up with her ‘vibes’ in the long run.”

“I’m sure.”

“I have to get back to the pod. Are you going to give me the names?”

“Lucinda Cruz. She’s in Chino. And Edward Dale Coldwell. He’s at Corcoran.”

“Coldwell?”

“No, cold. Coldwell.”

She was typing with her thumbs on her phone.

“DOBs?”

“They didn’t think to add those in their letters. I have inmate numbers if that helps.”



“Not really.”

She slid her phone back into her pocket.

“Okay, if I get anything, I’ll call you.”

“Thanks.”

“But let’s not make it a habit, okay?”

“It won’t be.”

Ballard took her coffee and headed toward the door. Bosch stopped her with a question.

“So, who’s gunning for you?”

“What do you mean?”

“You said there are people gunning for you.”

“Oh, just people. The usual shit. People hoping I’ll fail. Your everyday woman-in-charge stuff.”

“Well, fuck them.”

“Yeah, fuck them. I’ll see you, Harry.”

“See you.”