

One Batter One Pitch

Michael Connelly

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Michael A. Connelly tells the story of Boston-born-and-bred Kevin “Rocky” Collins’ coming of age—middle age that is—in this sequel to *An Informal Boston Education*. At forty-three this pessimistic mid-level executive behaves as if he were the “smartest guy...the most outspoken and biggest asshole in the room” even though he ranks the lowest—this combination is not conducive to executive success. Rocky’s group of lifelong friends say that he is seeking that “elusive middle ground between snob and slob.”

Rocky’s wife Kelly provides balance and they maintain a surprisingly strong and loving marriage. Their children have picked up all of Rocky’s worst phrases and attitudes. As a fairly typical middle-class suburban family their lives are lived on the limited time allotted after long hours at frustrating and mind-numbing jobs. As life ticks by Rocky sees his body succumb to time and gravity and he reaches for a last hurrah to vindicate his existence. When a group of venture capitalists embrace his acerbic ways and offer him a chance to use his creativity Rocky finds his stride turning around mid-sized manufacturing companies birthing a new baseball league designing a sports bar and even helping a minister set up a life training center.

Dialogue flashes dizzyingly like a fireworks display—or perhaps something earthier like a manure fight. Profanity unkind quips put-downs and racist epithets fly unfettered. Some original phrases elicit wincing and groans from readers although the targets of those invectives barely notice. The novel’s frenetic pace slows a bit and takes on a more structured tone when turned toward corporate accounts turning around companies and dealing with numbers.

The author a retired senior executive and former semi-pro baseball player spent most of his life in Boston. He knows of what he writes. His writing is energized innovative and almost a stream-of-consciousness experience. The novel’s structure takes on the character’s persona—frenetic in-your-face and like Rocky it reaches to accomplish great things. A skilled editor might have pared down some of the long and repetitive strings of colorful dialogue.

The novel gives readers a wild ride grounded in truth and gritty fact. Anyone who faces the doldrums of middle age and appreciates the Boston attitude baseball weight lifting and a glimpse at the movers and shakers in corporate America will embrace Rocky and this novel.

DAWN GOLDSMITH (April 8, 2009)

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