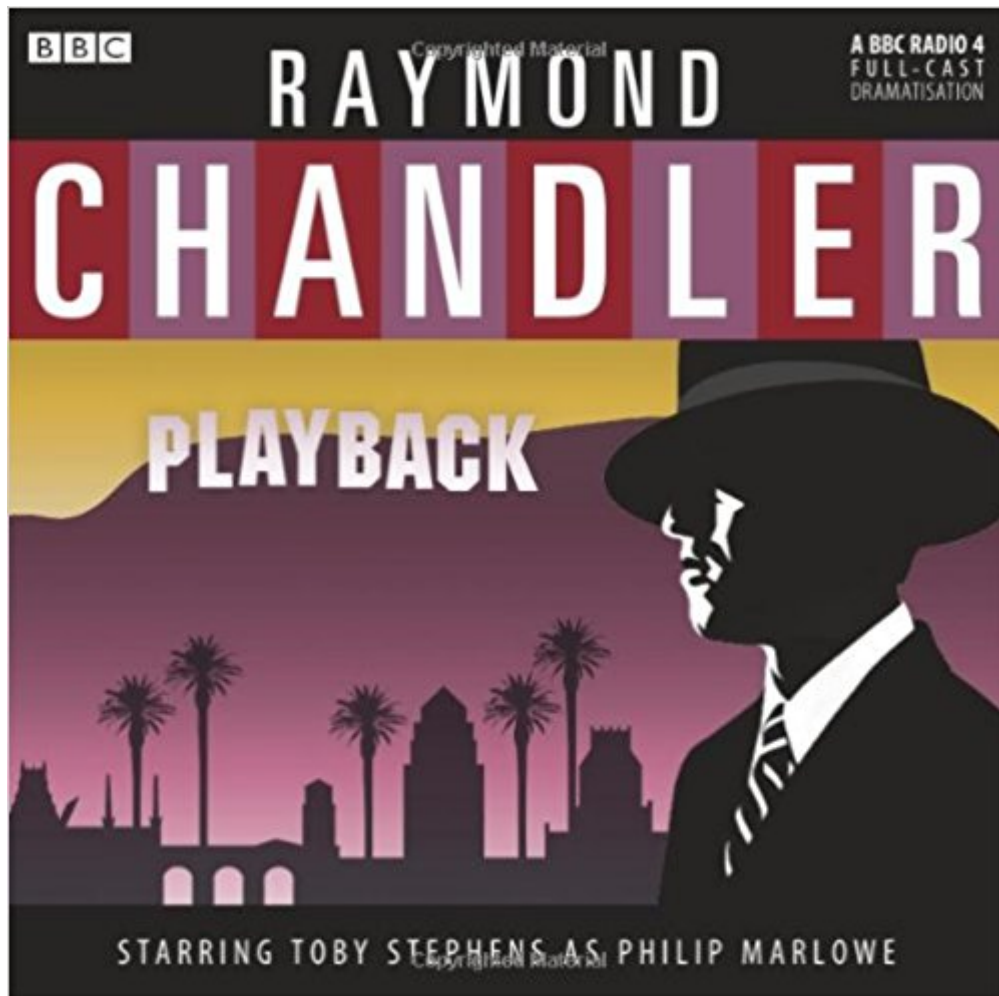




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# Raymond Chandler Playback (BBC Radio)



## Synopsis

Fast-talking, trouble-seeking private eye Philip Marlowe is a different kind of detective: a moral man in an amoral world. California in the 1940s and 1950s is as beautiful as a ripe fruit and rotten to the core, and Marlowe must struggle to retain his integrity amidst the corruption he encounters daily. In *Playback*, Marlowe is awakened early in the morning by a phone call from a lawyer. Clyde Umney instructs him to meet the eight o'clock train from Chicago, and shadow one of the passengers. The lady in question, Eleanor King, is beautiful, classy, and clearly unhappy. Obediently, Marlowe follows her all the way to Esmerelda, where she's going under the name Betty Mayfield and being leaned on by a cheap blackmailer. Stuck doing a sneaky job for people he doesn't like, Marlowe feels even grubbier than usual: and he's soon in more trouble than usual too as he comes up against gangsters, hard men, and a hitman. . . . Starring Toby Stephens, this exciting dramatization retains all the verve of Chandler's last novel. 1 CD. 56 mins.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Chandler is not only the best writer of hardboiled PI stories, he's one of the 20th century's top scribes, period. His full canon of novels and short stories is reprinted in trade paper featuring uniform covers in Black Lizard's signature style. A handsome set for a reasonable price. Copyright 2002 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to the Audible Audio Edition edition.

"Raymond Chandler is a master." --"The New York Times""[Chandler] wrote as if pain hurt and life mattered." --"The New Yorker "Chandler seems to have created the culminating American hero: wised up, hopeful, thoughtful, adventurous, sentimental, cynical and rebellious." --Robert B. Parker, "The New York Times Book Review "Philip Marlowe remains the quintessential urban private eye." --"Los Angeles Times "Nobody can write like Chandler on his home turf, not even Faulkner. . . . An original. . . . A great artist." --"The Boston Book Review "Raymond Chandler was one of the finest prose writers of the twentieth century. . . . Age does not wither Chandler's prose. . . . He wrote like an angel." --"Literary Review "[T]he prose rises to heights of unselfconscious eloquence, and we realize with a jolt of excitement that we are in the presence of not a mere action tale teller, but a stylist, a writer with a vision." --Joyce Carol Oates, "The New York Review of Books "Chandler wrote like a slumming angel and invested the sun-blinded streets of Los Angeles with a romantic presence." --Ross Macdonald""Raymond Chandler is a star of the first magnitude." --Erle Stanley Gardner""Raymond Chandler invented a new way of talking about America, and America has never looked the same to us since." --Paul Auster "[Chandler]'s the perfect novelist for our times. He takes us into a different world, a world that's like ours, but isn't." --Carolyn See" --This text refers to the Audible Audio Edition edition.

"... The girl sat motionless beside me, looking straight ahead and not speaking. She wasn't seeing the fog or the back of a truck we were coming up behind. She wasn't seeing anything. She was just sitting there frozen in one position, stony with despair, like somebody on the way to be hanged. Either that or she was the best little scene stealer I had come across in a long long time."There's a reason I had to read this book again. Although it starts off and builds like a conventional PI novel, at the hands of a master of the genre, no less, it seems to vanish into the fog like a pier- a disappointed bridge. I wrote that Chandler was tired before I found a letter dated 13 Mar 53 (search Chandler Playback Letter) where he says just that:... Playback is getting a bit tired. I have 36,000 words of doodling and not yet a stiff. That is terrible. I am suffering from a very uncommon disease called (by me) atrophy of the inventive powers. I can write like a streak but I bore myself. That being so, I could hardly fail to bore others worse. I can't help thinking of that beautiful piece of Sid Perelman's entitled "I'm Sorry I Made Me Cry."This review, written 14 Jan 2015, replaces my original review.

Playback has a fairly straightforward plot compared to other Phillip Marlowe novels. When the big mystery about Betty Mayfield is revealed at the end, I thought, "So that's it?" But the point of this

novel isn't necessarily to rack up the tough guys and body-counts requisite for pulp detective fiction. Chandler always opted for a little more realism in Phillip Marlowe -- so maybe "hard-boiled" works on the reader as well as the time, place, and characters. Take it or leave it. Even though the Phillip Marlowe of *Playback* is still the same Phillip Marlowe of *The Big Sleep*, we see how he has changed over time. He is still tough with human weakness underneath, he still sticks to his principles and tries not to bend the law too much, he still looks for the driving force behind the superficial crimes sometimes against his better judgment, given how violent those superficial crimes sometimes are. But he is just a little more jaded, exhausted, and reflective of his life behind and his life ahead -- but, being Phillip Marlowe, not in a maudlin sort of way: he does what he does and will keep doing it; he is a man that knows full well the life he has chosen for himself. He just thinks about it a little more. The setting of *Playback* reflects this unsettledness. It takes place mostly in Esmeralda, which is apparently a stand-in for La Jolla. Most of the novel finds Marlowe away from the comforts -- or at least certainties -- of his office and chessmen. Like a college student the week after midterms who last looked at his watch two, maybe three days ago, and finding he has too few changes of clothes and not finding his toothbrush, and not entirely sure where he is, Marlowe in Esmeralda (though better prepared and more sober) is out of his Los Angeles element stepping gingerly on uncertain footing. This tension created by Chandler is unlike that in any previous Phillip Marlowe novel, and is one of the great things about this book. It even reminded me a little of how James Bond evolves as a person in the Ian Fleming novels -- a really golden element of the novels absent from the celluloid Bond. But Marlowe is much more of a rock than Bond. The more Marlowe changes, the more Marlowe stays the same -- and we see that here as he muscles through the uncertainties of times, places, and persons of *Playback*.

Raymond Chandler personifies classic detective writing. Marlowe is tough talking and tough as nails. It was a terrific read, although not as good some of his others.

What I love about Raymond Chandler is his ability to get you to suspend disbelief. He pulls you in, instantly, with a welter of detailed description of the setting, and then carries you along into the story he's telling, and you're off! A master story teller, in the noir genre, with his chevalier, Phillip Marlowe, the post modern knight. Always fun, and engaging. Good trash in the best sense!

Interesting book from the Chandler cannon of Philip Marlowe, being the second to last -- or rather the last one published -- and maybe the one least parented and cared for by Chandler and his

editors. I was intrigued as to exactly where this book was going after the first thirty pages and was pretty much left in the exact state until the very end. While this one may fall in the lesser attempts, I'd still say that the dialogue was as good as some of the earlier novels and even has a comedic ring to it that's reminiscent of *The Big Lebowski* in certain ways. Yes, I just said that. *The Big Lebowski*. I was happy to finally see Marlowe disrobe a few girls and spend the night. Back then, bedroom drama wasn't very mainstream but Chandler did his best to adjust with changing times. Usually his books are a study of whatever Police Department he's involved with during the case. This one takes place in La Jolla, but only touches on the local constabulary towards the very end. *Playback* actually reads like it might have been meant to be a love story more than a deep-thought sluetheer. I recently read that it was originally a stage play that Warner Brothers gave the thumbs down to, and is still one of the last books yet to be filmed. I read this one twice as Chandler is pretty deceptive and hides much in the sub-plots, but this one is pretty straight forward. Any chance where I can imagine Humphrey Bogart in my mind for a few hundred page is alright by me.

Although it's not rated as one of Chandler's best, I must disagree. It's obvious the novel was Chandler's own take on the world as he knew it personified through his mainstay alter ego, Philip Marlowe. I also thought the added soliloquy per the eighty-year-old Mr. Clarendon was spot-on Raymond Chandler's own voice. A bit of plot manipulation, perhaps, or editorializing, but damn good nonetheless.

OK. When I read Marlow, I always picture Bogart. That makes it come alive.

*Playback* is a great Chandler story. Not his best but decent. Graphic novel idea is good. Trying to read on kindle fire and iPhone not so good. I have a paperwhite as well, didn't even try to read it there as I'm sure it wouldn't be any better.

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