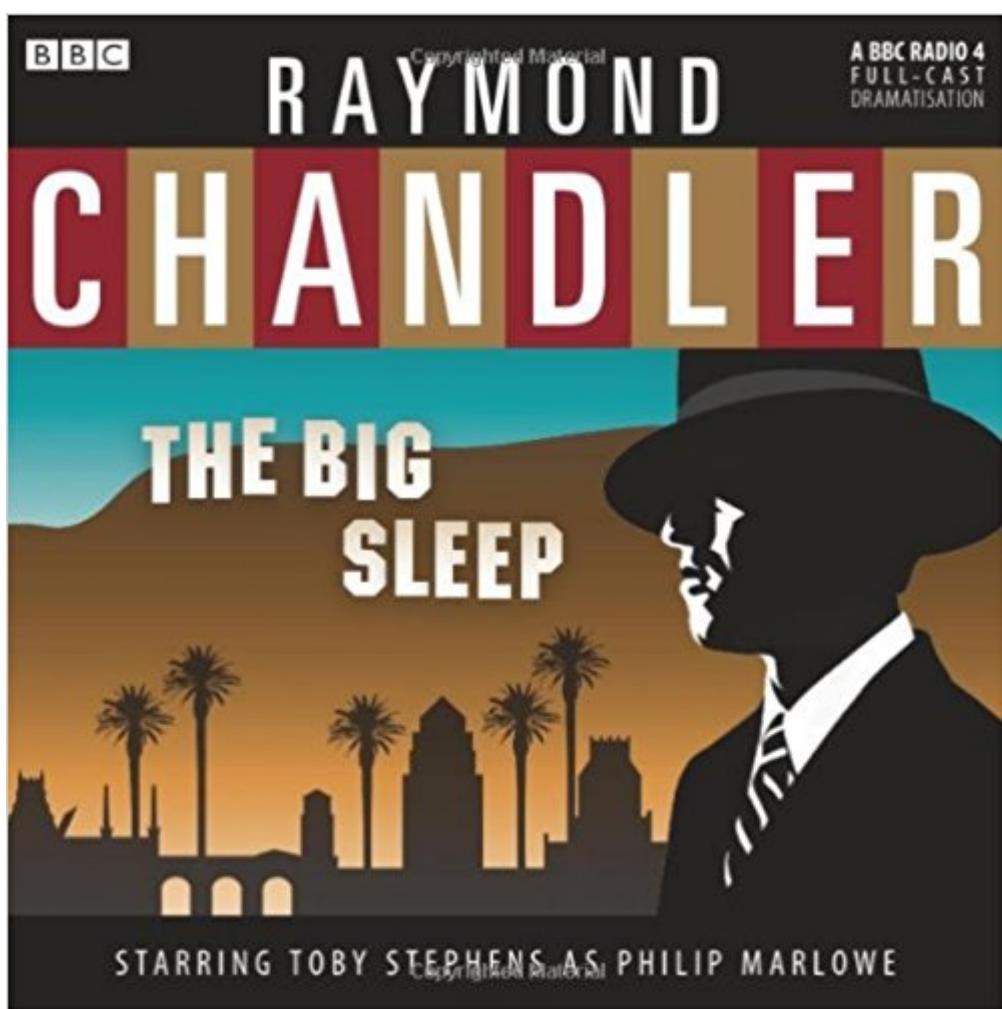


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# The Big Sleep: A BBC Radio 4 Full-Cast Dramatisation



## 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. The Big Sleep finds the world-weary, wisecracking investigator consulted by a wealthy family man with two big problems: his children. Carmen Sternwood has got herself mixed up with a blackmailer, while Vivian has managed to mislay her husband, ex-bootlegger Rusty Regan. Old, ailing General Sternwood hires Marlowe to take care of things— but it's not too long before the bodies start piling up, and Marlowe finds himself knee-deep in trouble. . . . Starring Toby Stephens, this landmark dramatization retains all the suspense and excitement of Chandler's complex and compelling novel. 2 CDs. 1 hr 26 mins.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"His thin, claw-like hands were folded loosely on the rug, purple-nailed. A few locks of dry white hair clung to his scalp, like wild flowers fighting for life on a bare rock." Published in 1939, when Raymond Chandler was 50, this is the first of the Philip Marlowe novels. Its bursts of sex, violence, and explosively direct prose changed detective fiction forever. "She was trouble. She was tall and rangy and strong-looking. Her hair was black and wiry and parted in the middle. She had a good mouth and a good chin. There was a sulky droop to her lips and the lower lip was full." --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

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 an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

"I went over to a floor lamp and pulled the switch, went back to put off the ceiling light, and went across the room again to the chessboard on a card table under the lamp. There was a problem laid out on the board, a six-mover. I couldn't solve it, like a lot of my problems. I reached down and moved a knight, then pulled my hat and coat off and threw them somewhere....I looked down at the chessboard. The move with the knight was wrong. I put it back where I had moved it from. Knights had no meaning in this game. It wasn't a game for knights." If that isn't some great noir writing, I don't know what is! To be honest, when I first set about reading *The Big Sleep* I wasn't sure how I was going to react to it as I spend most of my recreational reading time in sci-fi and fantasy. The idea of reading a "hard-boiled" detective novel was foreign to me. Seeing how I read the entire book in about two and a half weeks, I guess I took to it quite well! Now I finally understand why Chandler is considered one of America's great writers. His prose is terse and right to the point - sort of like Hemingway, I think. Despite the paucity of words, Chandler still somehow manages to make every sentence seem filled to the brim with lush descriptions and deep meaning, as with the above quote. Here is another: "She called me a filthy name. I didn't mind that. I didn't mind what she called me, what anybody called me. But this was the room I had to live in. It was all I had in the way of a home. In it was everything that was mine, that had any association for me, any past, anything that took the place of family. Not much; a few books, pictures, radio, chessmen, old letters, stuff like that. Nothing. Such as they were they had all my memories. I couldn't stand her in that room any longer. What she called me only reminded me of that." •Fantastic! The story itself is entertaining, if a bit convoluted at times. I have since read that *The Big Sleep* was cobbled together from various short stories Chandler worked on prior to hitting the big time. This seems accurate as this book often does seem like a collection of unrelated stories. Nonetheless, the writing is so sharp, and the character of Phil Marlowe so engaging, that I found I didn't mind at all! Overall, I highly recommend this novel, especially if it is going to be your first time in the world of hard-boiled detective fiction (as it was with me). Inviting, entertaining, and wonderfully written, *The Big Sleep* is rightly considered an example of America's best literature. I am looking forward to the next novel!

Wow, didn't realize there were so many paper editions and evidently even a dramatized digital version. For clarity, and looking inside my copy, this review is for a paper First Vintage/Black Lizard Edition, August 1992. I couldn't find a matching cover to the couple dozen choices under the paperback versions, so I chose to post my review here. I did read a few 1 and 2 star reviews after I'd finished the book, and I can understand someone not caring for a particular style, but had a hard time, without concrete examples, imagining what was boring or outdated (other than a few terms: "buzzer pinned to the flap" - "slaty eyes" - "a six mover"). Nothing more than I find reading British books (I'm in Texas), and the Kindle app usually can get me a definition for the cultural variances pretty easily. And that might be a good reason to opt for a digital version, though I personally would want to avoid any "dramatized" versions the reviews bring up. I feel I probably read the author's original intent in my edition. The descriptive atmosphere was sparing but, I thought, extremely effectively used. "Seaward a few gulls wheeled and swooped over something in the surf and far out a white yacht looked as if it was hanging in the sky." - "A nasty building. A building in which the smell of stale cigar butts would be the cleanest odor." Which brings me to two other things I really liked about Raymond Chandler's writing: sentence variation and a wry sense of self humor. I had been under the mistaken impression that Chandler mostly or even only used short sentences. In fact he has quite a variety, including the use of complex compound sentences followed by short fragments. The effect is stimulating and powerful: "I came out at a service station glaring with wasted light, where a bored attendant in a white cap and a dark blue windbreaker sat hunched on a stool, inside the steamed glass, reading a paper. I started in, then kept going. I was as wet as I could get already. And on a night like that you can grow a beard waiting for a taxi. And taxi drivers remember." The humor, I felt, was subtle. Enjoyed it tremendously. There's much more I could mention, pro and con, the well developed slowly evolving plot, the relationships and attitudes among the women and men, and lack of hispanics, blacks, or other ethnic groups (descriptive of the times) - but I'll end with Raymond's figurative use of language. I think the first contemporary author I became acutely aware of in their use of metaphors and similes was James Patterson in Zoo. In my review of Zoo, I mentioned how well they worked, most of the time, but occasionally seemed to veer off as not fitting the tone of the passage. I don't feel this is the case at all in The Big Sleep. The similes and metaphors are well spaced through-out from beginning to end. Appearing a bit more frequently during times of tension or mystery. And never, to my reading, out of place or jarring from the story: "Another man sat at the corner of the desk in a blue leather chair, a cold-eyed hatchet-faced man, as lean as a rake and as hard as the manager of a loan office." - "I pushed a flat

tin of cigarettes at him. His small neat fingers speared one like a trout taking the fly." - "Her very blue eyes flashed so sharply that I could almost see the sweep of their glance, like the sweep of sword." For me, this is top flight quality writing that entertains. About as pure a 5 Star as I can give.

I am so glad that I picked this older book up and read it. I can see why people back in the 1930's were so enamored by this type of writing. I thought maybe it would be a little weird language wise because it's from a totally different time period, but I actually felt the writing took me back in time. It's almost a hundred years old now and it still retains it's ability to please the reader. I really liked watching older noir movies when I was growing up, and have watched some since then...but this book really uses its language to take you back to the time period. I could see Humphrey Bogart as the protagonist in this book, and kind of smart assing his way around an Los Angeles that doesn't exist anymore. I'm going to definitely read some of the other classics from this time period. Lots of fun! Any one who appreciates literature and good writing needs to read this stuff.

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