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Raymond Chandler Farewell My Lovely (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 *Farewell My Lovely*, Marlowe has a chance encounter with a not-so-gentle giant outside Florian's nightclub. Just released from prison, Moose Malloy is looking for his old flame, red-haired Velma Valento, who he last saw eight years ago. Before Marlowe can blink, Malloy has smashed up the club, broken the manager's neck, and headed out of the door. Marlowe knows this mess is none of his business, but he has a hunch that he can find Velma. He just has to hope that curiosity doesn't get him killed as well. . . Starring Toby Stephens, this fast-paced dramatization is full of wisecracks and colorful characters, and retains all the charm and humor of Chandler's stylish, suspenseful novel. 2 CDs. 1 hr 26 mins.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Raymond Chandler's second novel is both more and less successful than his first. *THE BIG SLEEP* suffered from a plot that fell apart in midstream; *FAREWELL, MY LOVELY*, however, is much more consistent throughout. On the other hand, for all its twists and turns, *THE BIG SLEEP* was quite plausible; *FAREWELL, MY LOVELY*, however, is about as farfetched as you can get. But once again, such criticisms are almost beside the point: the great attraction is still Chandler's knock-you-flat prose, his tone of voice, his often imitated but seldom equaled style, and it is so

powerful that it keeps you turning page after page after page. In general, *FAREWELL, MY LOVELY* once more finds street-smart and super-savvy California P.I. Philip Marlowe sticking his nose where it has no business being--and when curiosity leads him to follow a massively built white man into a black nightclub he finds himself embroiled in a murder no one cares about solving... at least not until it begins to figure in what seems to be a completely different case with a high-society spin. And encounters with stolen jewels, a spiritualist racket, police corruption, and a gambling ship quickly follow. Along the way Chandler again paints a gritty portrait of the seamy side of life. On this occasion, he takes a passing look at race, and makes the point that from a police point of view two standards apply: the authorities care nothing about the murder of a black man, but they treat a white man's murder very differently indeed.

Raymond Chandler was such a master at his style of prose that you only have to read the first two paragraphs of *FAREWELL, MY LOVELY* to know exactly what sort of story you're in for. Those two paragraphs perfectly set up the plot that follows: a thriller crossing in and out of the racial divisions of 1940's Los Angeles involving seedy speakeasies, and off-shore gambling, with double-crossing as far as the eye can see. Wonderfully gritty stuff. This particular Chandler novel has a lot going for it. The hero, Philip Marlowe, is as entertaining as ever. The setting is the familiar scene of other Chandler stories -- alive, heavy and oppressively Los Angeles. The plot is logical, but jumps around a lot, which is not necessarily a bad thing. In fact, the more it moves around, the more room Chandler has to incorporate evil-doings; I quite lost track of exactly how many crimes are committed or alluded to during the course of the book. No matter how farfetched it is, Chandler's prose is utterly gripping and absorbing. I think Philip Marlowe must drink his weight in cheap liquor several times over during the course of this adventure, but you can't help but like the guy. He punches, he shoots, he boozes. He even solves the case by the end. He sure takes a beating in this one, but he keeps coming back for more. He's everything a pulp detective should be - angry, arrogant, determined, and with just a hint of pathos to make him interesting enough to carry the story. The book as a whole is just too appealing and entertaining not to be a fun experience. Chandler is pretty much the benchmark for these sorts of stories about guns, police, and corruption, so if you like the genre, you might as well read the man who invented it. Tough guys yelling, "Beat it!"

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