



The Blue Dahlia: A Screenplay

Raymond Chandler

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A previously unpublished work by Raymond Chandler.

Raymond Chandler's screenplay for *The Blue Dahlia* is a valuable addition to the published canon for the writer who has been called the Shakespeare of hardboiled fiction. Converted from a never-completed novel, this screenplay is all that survives of the novel Chandler worked on between *The Lady in the Lake* and *The Little Sister*.

In 1944 Paramount Pictures, where Chandler was under contract, needed a rush script for Alan Ladd. Chandler agreed to cannibalize his novel-in-progress, but as detailed in producer John Houseman's memoir he became stuck and decided that he could only complete his screenplay drunk. *The Blue Dahlia* was completed on schedule and was well received, earning Chandler his second Academy Award nomination.

Although the writer's screenplay is metamorphosed by other hands in the movie-making process, the screenplay as written has an independent existence, and may be read and judged as a literary work. Indeed, the movie studio archives are a valuable literary resource; and it is inevitable that many screenplays will be published as the study of movies expands.

The Blue Dahlia is the story of a war hero who is suspected of having murdered his unfaithful wife. Although it does not involve a private-eye, the work utilizes familiar elements of Chandler's world: the loner hero, the quest for justice, the sense of a corrupt society, and above all the theme of personal honor.

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