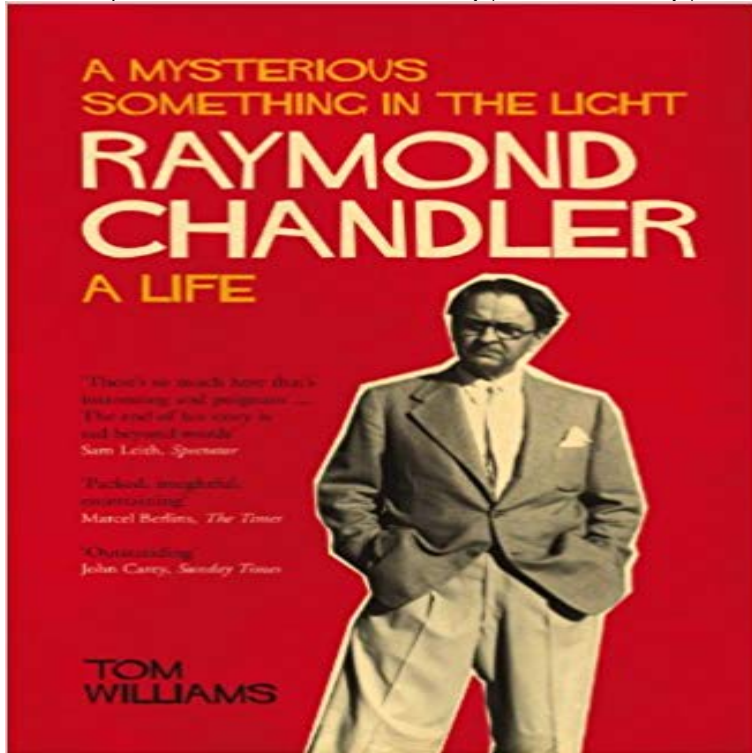


A Mysterious Something in the Light: Raymond Chandler: A Life



A major new biography of the writer who, more than any other, has defined modern crime fiction. What we know of Raymond Chandler is obscured by secrets and half-truths as deceptive as anything in his magisterial novel *The Long Goodbye*. Now, drawing on new interviews, previously unpublished letters and archives on both sides of the Atlantic, literary gumshoe Tom Williams casts light on this most mysterious of writers. The Raymond Chandler revealed is a man troubled by loneliness and desertion from an early age experiences that fuelled his writing as much as they scarred his life. Born in Chicago in 1888, his childhood was overshadowed by the cruel collapse of his parents' marriage, his father's alcohol-fuelled violence eventually forcing the boy and his doting mother to leave for Ireland, and later London. As a young man, eager to forge a new life unconstrained by the stuffy English class system, he returned to the US, where in corruption-ridden Los Angeles he met his one great love: Cissy Pascal, a married woman 18 years his senior. It was only during middle age, after his own alcoholism wrecked a lucrative career as an oilman, that Chandler seriously turned to crime fiction, although his success was to prove bittersweet. An obsessive attitude towards his craft, unrealised literary ambitions and a suicidal turn after Cissy's death combined to prevent him from recapturing the verve of his earlier writing. However, his legacy—the lonely, ambiguous world of Philip Marlowe endures, compelling generation after generation of crime writers to go down mean streets. In this long-awaited new biography, the most thorough and comprehensive yet written, Tom Williams shadows one of the twentieth century's true literary giants and considers how crime was raised to the level of art.

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