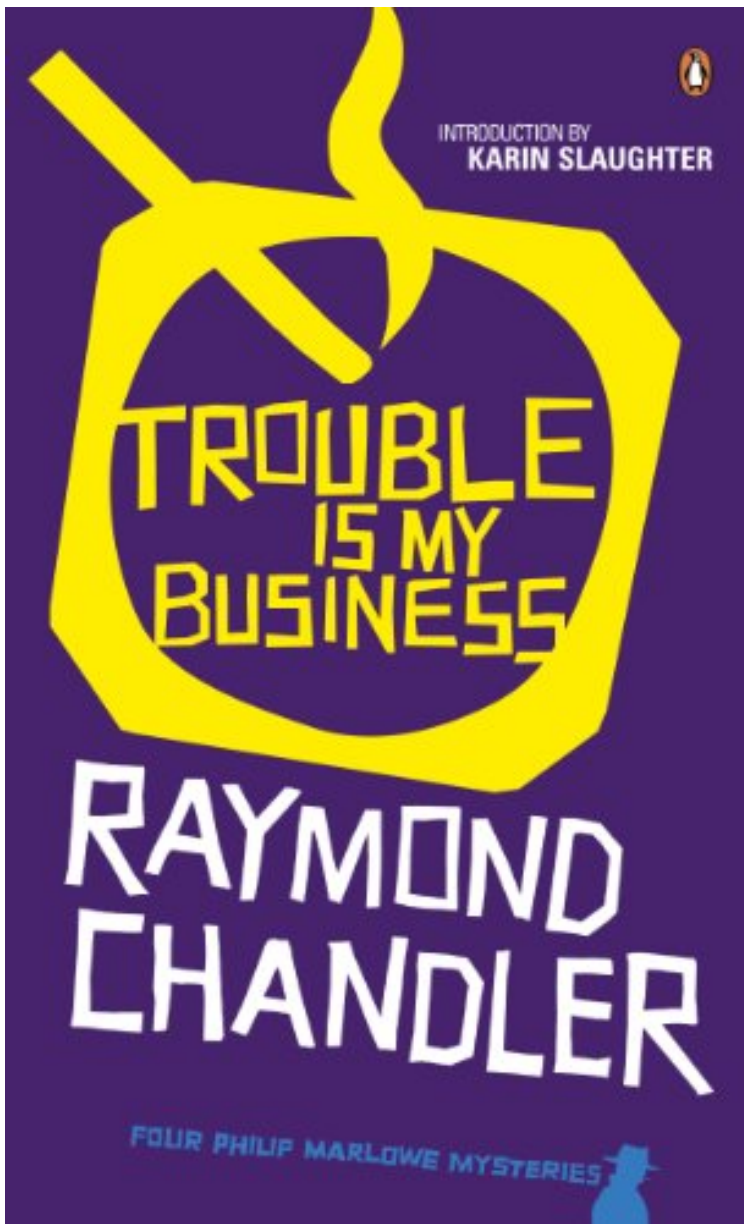


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# Trouble is My Business



*Par Raymond Chandler*  
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**Par Raymond Chandler : Trouble is My Business** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Trouble is My Business:

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**Description :** Description du produitIn the four long stories in this collection, Marlowe is hired to protect a rich old guy from a gold digger, runs afoul of crooked politicians, gets a line on some stolen jewels with a reward attached, and stumbles across a murder victim who may have been an extortionist.From the eBook edition.

Prsentation de l'diteurTrouble is My Business is a collection of four riveting novellas from Raymond Chandler. In the first of the four cases in Trouble is My Business, LA PI Philip Marlowe is offered a job that leaves a bad taste in the mouth: smearing a girl who's 'got her hooks into a rich man's pup'. Before too long

Marlowe's up to his neck in corpses and cops and he's taken pity on the girl. There's nothing like making trouble of your business . . . The four novellas collected here are quintessential Raymond Chandler: slick, crystal-clear writing that pins the reader to the seat and won't let go until the last page is turned. Praise for Raymond Chandler: 'Chandler's prose flies off the pages like a burst from a Tommy gun. Chandler was perhaps the finest exponent of the fledgling genre now known as pulp fiction' *Scottish Field* 'One of the greatest crime writers, who set the standards others still try to attain' *Sunday Times* 'Nobody can write like Chandler on his home turf, not even Faulkner . . . An original . . . A great artist' *Boston* 'Raymond Chandler invented a new way of talking about America, and America has never looked the same to us since' *Paul Auster* Raymond Chandler was born in Chicago in 1888 and moved to England with his family when he was twelve. He attended Dulwich College, Alma Mater to some of the twentieth century's most renowned writers. Returning to America in 1912, he settled in California, worked in a number of jobs, and later married. It was during the Depression era that he seriously turned his hand to writing and his first published story appeared in the pulp magazine *Black Mask* in 1933, followed six years later by his first novel. *The Big Sleep* introduced the world to Philip Marlowe, the often imitated but never-bettered hard-boiled private investigator. It is in Marlowe's long shadow that every fictional detective must stand - and under the influence of Raymond Chandler's addictive prose that every crime author must write.

Extrait ONE Anna Halsey was about two hundred and forty pounds of middle-aged putty-faced woman in a black tailor-made suit. Her eyes were shiny black shoe buttons, her cheeks were as soft as suet and about the same color. She was sitting behind a black glass desk that looked like Napoleon's tomb and she was smoking a cigarette in a black holder that was not quite as long as a rolled umbrella. She said: "I need a man." "I watched her shake ash from the cigarette to the shiny top of the desk where flakes of it curled and crawled in the draft from an open window." "I need a man good-looking enough to pick up a dame who has a sense of class, but he's got to be tough enough to swap punches with a power shovel. I need a guy who can act like a bar lizard and backchat like Fred Allen, only better, and get hit on the head with a beer truck and think some cutie in the leg-line topped him with a breadstick." "It's a cinch," I said. "You need the New York Yankees, Robert Donat, and the Yacht Club Boys." "You might do," Anna said, "cleaned up a little. Twenty bucks a day and ex's. I haven't brokered a job in years, but this one is out of my line. I'm in the smooth-angles of the detecting business and I make money without getting my can knocked off. Let's see how Gladys likes you." She reversed the cigarette holder and tipped a key on a large black-and-chromium annunciator box. "Come in and empty Anna's ash tray, honey."; We waited. The door opened and a tall blonde dressed better than the Duchess of Windsor strolled in. She swayed elegantly across the room, emptied Anna's ash tray, patted her fat cheek, gave me a smooth rippling glance and went out again. "I think she blushed," Anna said when the door closed. "I guess you still have it." "She blushed--and I have a dinner date with Darryl Zanuck," I said. "Quit horsing around. What's the story?" "It's to smear a girl. A redheaded number with bedroom eyes. She's shill for a gambler and she's got her hooks into a rich man's pup." "What do I do to her?" Anna sighed. "It's kind of a mean job, Philip, I guess. If she's got a record of any sort, you dig it up and toss it in her face. If she hasn't, which is more likely as she comes from good people, it's kind of up to you. You get an idea once in a while, don't you?" "I can't remember the last one I had. What gambler and what rich man?" "Marty Estel." "I started to get up from my chair, then remembered that business had been bad for a month and that I needed the money. I sat down again." "You might get into trouble, of course," Anna said. "I never heard of Marty bumping anybody off in the public square at high noon, but he don't play with cigar coupons." "Trouble is my business," I said. "Twenty-five a day and guarantee of two-fifty, if I pull the job." "I gotta make a little something for myself," Anna whined. "O.K. There's plenty of coolie labor around town. Nice to have seen you looking so well. So long, Anna." I stood up this time. My life wasn't worth much, but it was worth that much. Marty Estel was supposed to be pretty tough people, with the right helpers and the right protection behind him. His place was out in West Hollywood, on the Strip. He wouldn't pull anything crude, but if he pulled at all, something would pop. "Sit down, it's a deal," Anna sneered. "I'm a poor old broken-down woman trying to run a high-class detective agency on nothing but fat and bad health, so take my last nickel and laugh at me." "Who's the girl?" I had sat down again. "Her name is Harriet Huntress--a swell name for the part too. She lives in the El Milano, nineteen-hundred block on North Sycamore, very high-class. Father went broke back in thirty-one and jumped out of his office window. Mother dead. Kid sister in boarding school back in Connecticut. That might make an angle." "Who dug up all this?" "The client got a bunch of photostats of notes the pup had given to Marty. Fifty grand worth. The pup--he's an adopted son to the old man--denied the notes, as kids will. So the client had the photostats experted by a guy named Arbogast, who

pretends to be good at that sort of thing. He said O.K. and dug around a bit, but he's too fat to do legwork, like me, and he's off the case now." "But I could talk to him?" "I don't know why not." Anna nodded several of her chins. "This client--does he have a name?" "Son, you have a treat coming. You can meet him in person--right now." She tipped the key of her call box again. "Have Mr. Jeeter come in, honey." "That Gladys," I said, "does she have a steady?" "You lay off Gladys!" Anna almost screamed at me. "She's worth eighteen grand a year in divorce business to me. Any guy that lays a finger on her, Philip Marlowe, is practically cremated." "She's got to fall some day," I said. "Why couldn't I catch her?" The opening door stopped that. I hadn't seen him in the paneled reception room, so he must have been waiting in a private office. He hadn't enjoyed it. He came in quickly, shut the door quickly, and yanked a thin octagonal platinum watch from his vest and glared at it. He was a tall white-blond type in pin-striped flannel of youthful cut. There was a small pink rosebud in his lapel. He had a keen frozen face, a little pouchy under the eyes, a little thick in the lips. He carried an ebony cane with a silver knob, wore spats and looked a smart sixty, but I gave him close to ten years more. I didn't like him. "Twenty-six minutes, Miss Halsey," he said icily. "My time happens to be valuable. By regarding it as valuable I have managed to make a great deal of money." "Well, we're trying to save you some of the money," Anna drawled. She didn't like him either. "Sorry to keep you waiting, Mr. Jeeter, but you wanted to see the operative I selected and I had to send for him." "He doesn't look the type to me," Mr. Jeeter said, giving me a nasty glance. I think more of a gentleman--" "You're not the Jeeter of Tobacco Road, are you?" I asked him. He came slowly towards me and half lifted the stick. His icy eyes tore at me like claws. "So you insult me," he said. "Me--a man in my position." "Now wait a minute," Anna began. "Wait a minute nothing," I said. "This party said I was not a gentleman. Maybe that's O.K. for a man in his position, whatever it is--but a man in my position doesn't take a dirty crack from anybody. He can't afford to. Unless, of course, it wasn't intended." Mr. Jeeter stiffened and glared at me. He took his watch out again and looked at it. "Twenty-eight minutes," he said. "I apologize, young man. I had no desire to be rude." "That's swell," I said. "I knew you weren't the Jeeter in Tobacco Road all along." That almost started him again, but he let it go. He wasn't sure how I meant it. "A question or two while we are together," I said. "Are you willing to give this Huntress girl a little money--for expenses?" "Not one cent," he barked. "Why should I?" "It's got to be a sort of custom. Suppose she married him. What would he have?" "At the moment a thousand dollars a month from a trust fund established by his mother, my late wife." He dipped his head. "When he is twenty-eight years old, far too much money." "You can't blame the girl for trying," I said. "Not these days. How about Marty Estel? Any settlement there?" He crumpled his gray gloves with a purple-veined hand. "The debt is uncollectible. It is a gambling debt." Anna sighed wearily and flicked ash around on her desk. "Sure," I said. "But gamblers can't afford to let people welsh on them. After all, if your son had won, Marty would have paid him." "I'm not interested in that," the tall thin man said coldly. "Yeah, but think of Marty sitting there with fifty grand in notes. Not worth a nickel. How will he sleep nights?" Mr. Jeeter looked thoughtful. "You mean there is danger of violence?" he suggested, almost suavely. "That's hard to say. He runs an exclusive place, gets a good movie crowd. He has his own reputation to think of. But he's in a racket and he knows people. Things can happen--a long way off from where Marty is. And Marty is no bathmat. He gets up and walks." Mr. Jeeter looked at his watch again and it annoyed him. He slammed it back into his vest. "All that is your affair," he snapped. "The district attorney is a personal friend of mine. If this matter seems to be beyond your powers--" "Yeah," I told him. "But you came slumming down our street just the same. Even if the D.A. is in your vest pocket--along with that watch." He put his hat on, drew on one glove, tapped the edge of his shoe with his stick, walked to the door and opened it. "I ask results and I pay for them," he said coldly. "I pay promptly. I even pay generously sometimes, although I am not considered a generous man. I think we all understand one another." He almost winked then and went on out. The door closed softly against the cushion of air in the door-closer. I looked at Anna and grinned. "Sweet, isn't he?"; she said. "I'd like eight of him for my cocktail set." I gouged twenty dollars out of her--for expenses. TWO The Arbogast I wanted was John D. Arbogast and he had an office on Sunset near Ivar. I called him up from a phone booth. The voice that answered was fat. It wheezed softly, like the voice of a man who had just won a pie-eating contest. "Mr. John D. Arbogast?" "Yeah." "This is Philip Marlowe, a private detective working on a case you did some experting on. Party named Jeeter." "Yeah?"; "Can I come up and talk to you about it--after I eat lunch?" "Yeah." He hung up. I decided he was not a talkative man. I had lunch and drove out there. It was east of Ivar, an old two-story building faced with brick which had been painted recently. The street floor was stores and a restaurant. The building entrance was the foot of a wide straight stairway to the second floor. On the directory at the bottom I read: John D. Arbogast, Suite 212. I

went up the stairs and found myself in a wide straight hall that ran parallel with the street. A man in a smock was standing in an open doorway down to my right. He wore a round mirror strapped to his forehead and pushed back, and his face had a puzzled expression. He went back to his office and shut the door. I went the other way, about half the distance along the hall. A door on the side away from Sunset was lettered: JOHN D. ARBOGAST, EXAMINER OF QUESTIONED DOCUMENTS. PRIVATE INVESTIGATOR. ENTER.

The door opened without resistance onto a small windowless anteroom with a couple of easy chairs, some magazines, two chromium smoking stands. There were two floor lamps and a ceiling fixture, all lighted. A door on the other side of the cheap but thick new rug was lettered: JOHN D. ARBOGAST, EXAMINER OF QUESTIONED DOCUMENTS. PRIVATE. A buzzer had rung when I opened the outer door and gone on ringing until it closed. Nothing happened. Nobody was in the waiting room. The inner door didn't open. I went over and listened at the panel—no sound of conversation inside. I knocked. That didn't buy me anything either. I tried the knob. It turned, so I opened the door and went in. This room had two north windows, both curtained at the sides and both shut tight. There was dust on the sills. There was a desk, two filing cases, a carpet which was just a carpet, and walls which were just walls. To the left another door with a glass panel was lettered: JOHN D. ARBOGAST. LABORATORY, PRIVATE. I had an idea I might be able to

remember the name. The room in which I stood was small. It seemed almost too small even for the pudgy hand that rested on the edge of the desk, motionless, holding a fat pencil like a carpenter's pencil. The hand had a wrist, hairless as a plate. A buttoned shirt cuff, not too clean, came down out of a coat sleeve. The rest of the sleeve dropped over the far edge of the desk out of sight. The desk was less than six feet long, so he couldn't have been a very tall man. The hand and the ends of the sleeves were all I saw of him from where I stood. I went quietly back through the anteroom and fixed its door so that it couldn't be opened from the outside and put out the three lights and went back to the private office. I went around an end of the desk. He was fat all right, enormously fat, fatter by far than Anna Halsey. His face, what I could see of it, looked about the size of a basket ball. It had a pleasant pinkness, even now. He was kneeling on the floor. He had his large head against the sharp inner corner of the knee-hole of the desk, and his left hand was flat on the floor with a piece of yellow paper under it. The fingers were outspread as much as such fat fingers could be, and the yellow paper showed between. He looked as if he were pushing hard on the floor, but he wasn't really. What was holding him up was his own fat. His body was folded down against his enormous thighs, and the thickness and fatness of them held him that way, kneeling, poised solid. It would have taken a couple of good blocking backs to knock him over. That wasn't a very nice idea at the moment, but I had it just the same. I took time out and wiped the back of my neck, although it was not a warm day. From Library Journal 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.