**On “I’ll be Waiting” by Raymond Chandler:**

One cannot overstate the polish of Chandler’s prose, the core of which is the hard-edged, broken-nosed dialogue. It’s always natural, always slick, but often so thick with idiom you have to read it twice. A good deal of the characters display a certain reluctance to come out and say what they mean in straightforward declarative sentences, so the most uncomfortable truths come out by implication.

On the flipside, the trouble is that the element of mystery is usually incidental to the plot. Chandler doesn’t write whodunits; he writeswhydunits—and one can only infer so much about a motive, be it a criminal’s or a detective’s, from the empirical evidence. A lot of it necessarily comes from confessions, which limits the detective’s role to asking the right people the right questions and hoping they spill the beans. I may as well reuse the line I applied to John le Carré’s [Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy](http://www.nicholastam.ca/2008/12/31/wednesday-book-club-tinker-tailor-soldier-spy/): these are plots that look a lot better from the back than the front.

…

The tipping point in a Chandler story is never so much the revelation of who killed whom with the candlestick in the billiard room, but a moral decision on the detective’s part: whether to pursue something or let it go, whether to protect somebody or leave their fates to conventional justice. “I’ll Be Waiting”, the only short story in the volume—that is, the only one under forty to fifty pages—is a vignette about nothing more than that: a hotel detective who protects a girl client instead of making the objectively correct move, and suffers the personal consequences.

<http://www.nicholastam.ca/2009/03/04/wednesday-book-club-the-simple-art-of-murder/>

**Deeper Thought Discussions:**

1. Does Tony presuppose Jonny Rails / Mr. Watterson is a virtuous character?
2. Did Tony intend for his brother, Al, to be murdered?
3. Describe Tony’s character archetype. Does he fit into the traditional “detective” box?
4. How does Chandler’s portrayal of the detective coincide or conflict with modern depictions of detectives that you’re familiar with?
5. Does Ms. Cressy fit the Femme Fatal Archetype?