



The Maltese Falcon

Dashiell Hammett (1894 - 1961)

Read by:	Mark Nelson	Format:	MP3 CD in DVD case
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The Maltese Falcon by Dashiell Hammett is a classic 1930 detective novel that follows private investigator Sam Spade in San Francisco. The story begins when a mysterious woman, Miss Wonderly—later revealed as Brigid O'Shaughnessy—hires Spade and his partner Miles Archer to follow a man named Floyd Thursby. Archer is soon murdered, and Thursby is killed shortly afterward, drawing Spade into a dangerous web of lies, greed, and betrayal. As Spade investigates, he encounters a group of criminals—Joel Cairo, Casper Gutman, and Wilmer Cook—who are all searching for a priceless jeweled statue known as the Maltese Falcon. Each character attempts to manipulate Spade, offering money or threats to gain his cooperation.



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Throughout the novel, Spade maintains a tough, emotionally detached exterior, relying on wit and careful observation rather than brute force. The plot twists repeatedly as alliances shift and the truth about the falcon and the murders slowly emerges. Ultimately, the coveted statue proves to be a fake, revealing the futility of the criminals'

obsession. In the end, Spade turns Brigid over to the police for Archer's murder despite his feelings for her, demonstrating his strict personal code of justice. The novel is known for its hard-boiled style, moral ambiguity, and influential role in shaping modern detective fiction.

Dashiell Hammett (1894–1961) was an American author best known for pioneering hard-boiled detective fiction and shaping the modern crime novel. Born in St. Mary's County, Maryland, he left school as a teenager and worked various jobs before joining the Pinkerton National Detective Agency, an experience that deeply influenced his writing. Hammett served in the U.S. Army during World War I, where he contracted tuberculosis, a condition that affected his health for the rest of his life.

In the 1920s and 1930s, Hammett published short stories in pulp magazines such as *Black Mask*, introducing gritty realism, sharp dialogue, and morally complex characters to detective fiction. His most famous novels include *The Maltese Falcon* (1930), *The Thin Man* (1934), *Red Harvest* (1929), and *The Glass Key* (1931). These works featured memorable detectives like Sam Spade and Nick and Nora Charles and emphasized corruption, urban settings, and psychological depth over traditional puzzle-style mysteries.

Beyond literature, Hammett was active in left-wing political causes, which led to imprisonment and blacklisting during the McCarthy era. Despite producing relatively few novels, his influence on crime writing and film noir was profound. Hammett's spare prose style and realistic portrayal of crime established a lasting legacy in American literature.