



The Maltese Falcon

Dashiell Hammett

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Sam Spade, a slightly shop-worn private eye with his own solitary code of ethics, stars in Hammett's detective fiction, a novel that has haunted 2 generations of readers.

The Maltese Falcon Details

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From Reader Review The Maltese Falcon for online ebook

Dan Schwent says

2012 re-read...

Sam Spade's partner is murdered and Sam is determined to find his killer. But what does Miles Archer's murder have to do with the client he was working for or the mysterious Maltese Falcon?

What can I say about one of the Big Two pulp detective novels, the other being The Big Sleep? Well, let's see...

The Maltese Falcon embodies a lot of what made pulp detective fiction great, leading to hordes of imitators. You've got the wise-cracking detective who has a way with the ladies, gunplay, deceit, sex, and murder. Throw in an elusive macguffin and you have a blueprint a lot of writers have been following for over three quarters of a century.

Sam Spade, that blonde Satan, is the father of many detectives that came him. In fact, it would be interesting to see whether he or Raymond Chandler has more bastard detective descendents. The plot the Maltese Falcon is fairly simple. Somebody has the Maltese Falcon and everyone seems to think Sam Spade knows where it is. Miles Archer's murder complicates things a bit but really isn't much more than a bump in the road until his killer is revealed.

The bad guys and supporting cast are an interesting bunch. Brigid O'Shaughnessy lays the groundwork for a lot of femme fatales to come. Gutman, Cairo, and Wilmer are more than just stock characters. The cops were a little light on personality but they were mostly in the story to hassle Spade so that's not such of a big deal.

Hammett's prose drives the plot along but lacks the poetry of Raymond Chandler's. Seventeen years after I read The Maltese Falcon for the first time, I have more of an appreciation for Hammett's spare style. The plot keeps moving forward without a single misstep. It's only 200-ish pages but by the end, it feels like the perfect length for such a tale.

Any complaints? Not as such. Modern readers will probably not like the book's treatment of women but it was written in the late 1920's so it has to be given a bit of slack. Honestly, my only complaints are that there aren't any more Sam Spade books and that Dashielle Hammett wasn't Raymond Chandler.

For a parting thought, this line of dialogue nicely sums up Sam Spade's character:

"When a man's partner is killed he's supposed to do something about it. It doesn't make any difference what you thought of him."

John Culuris says

I once read the following in some TV guide regarding the classic movie adaptation: "The 1941 mystery is the yardstick against which all private-eye films are measured." It is even more true of the novel. Never before (or since) has a protagonist been forced to look so deeply within himself, to have to explain who he is to so many while not completely understanding why he is that way himself. Sam Spade knows what he has to do, and externally he knows why he has to do it. He acts assuredly, without hesitation. Yet there is a deeper part

of himself that is merely along for the ride, as if some of his decisions were never really decisions at all. He has led a life with more than a few amoral choices but when confronted with what should be the easiest of shortcuts, he discovers he has a moral core that cannot be so easily overruled. An array of fascinating characters and an explanation and solution, perhaps the greatest explanation of all time because of the drama interwoven within, and upon rereading they almost become side issues compared how exposed Spade becomes and how he refuses to see it. **THE** masterpiece.

Matthew says

Story wise - just so-so for me. It is supposed to be a classic, so I expected more from the story.

But, if you are looking for all the stereotypical hard-boiled detective stuff (dames and all that) this book definitely delivers.

J.L. Sutton says

I enjoyed Dashiell Hammett's *The Maltese Falcon*. I'd seen the movie; however, this was my first read of Hammett's iconic detective story. There's a lot of story to unravel (the history of the Maltese Falcon statue being the most prominent here) and lots of characters with their own motivations and shifting allegiances. Hammett's novel also introduces the no nonsense detective, Sam Spade. As such, it is one of the precursors of hardboiled detective fiction often associated with noir fiction. I'd often linked Hammett to Raymond Chandler and works such as *The Big Sleep* which introduced the detective, Philip Marlowe. Chandler's work comes 10 years after *The Maltese Falcon*. Although both works are about crime, they are not essentially crime dramas. For one, finding who committed the crime is not the aim of the story. At least part of the story is about the damaged and cynical detectives who do the investigating.

These were new kinds of stories which, I think, had a profound influence on the continuation of noir fiction (in both detective fiction and other genres such as science fiction). The grittiness and atmosphere-laden scenes I associate with these early works finds its way into lots of science fiction (some of which I've read like China Mieville's *The City & the City* and Philip K. Dick's *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep* (titled *Blade Runner* in the film version and some like Jim Butcher's *The Dresden Files* which I still need to read). I guess that was something of a digression, but I just wanted to stress *The Maltese Falcon* as a forerunner of literature that's still being written.

Forrest says

Call me an uncultured Cretin (it's true), but I've never seen the movie, so I have nothing to compare it to but the only other classic noir book I've ever read (told you I was a Cretin), Raymond Chandler's *The Big Sleep*. Where Chandler's prose sets a baseline from which he can occasionally spring a trick in the form of a clever turn of phrase, Hammett's prose is as straightforward as it gets, which I saw as a minus. That said, the blandness of the language lets the reader concentrate on plot and characterization, where Hammett shines a touch more than Chandler. Unlike the overly-convoluted un-plot of *The Big Sleep*, which Chandler admits he

just sort of made up as he went along and never fully understood himself, Hammett unravels a mystery, the details of which are made very clear by the end of the book. That's not to say that it's transparent, by any means. Sam Spade, the protagonist, is perpetually surrounded by liars and he's a pretty good fabricator of truths, or at least a master at twisting the truth, himself. There are plenty of surprises in store for the reader unfamiliar with the story (i.e., one who hasn't seen the movie yet - shame on you for peeking ahead!), and the reveals at the end are rewarding enough. Part of the reason for this is that Spade, while staying true to his inner self, is a great wearer of masks. His unexpected actions, which several other characters remark upon, might actually be coldly-calculated, rather than merely whimsical. And though one must question whether Spade is a good guy or a bad guy, throughout, in the end we see that he simultaneously remains true to himself while revealing his true underlying morality. Hammett shows a deft hand in presenting all of the villainous, bungling supporting cast, but shows the master-stroke in hiding the *real* Sam Spade until the end of the novel, where Spade's strong sense of ethics is unveiled to the reader. Perhaps this is why I found him a more fascinating, deeper character than Chandler's Philip Marlowe (whom I admired, actually).

All told, though, I'm glad I read both.

And there will be more noir in my future. That's no mystery.

Duane says

This novel is set in 1920's San Francisco and creates the character of Sam Spade, a name now synonymous with crime detective fiction. And Modern Library ranks *The Maltese Falcon* in it's 100 best novels of the 20th century. One of the remarkable things about the novel is that it's not dated at all. The setting could be 1980 as well as 1929. The cast is small and well defined, and the plot is straight-forward, not complicated. And with Hammett's ability to add exquisite detail, the end result is a masterpiece in the genre.

Glenn Sumi says

Quick: Can you remember the plot of *The Maltese Falcon*?

I read it a couple of weeks ago, and I've seen the classic 1941 film noir at least twice. But even I'm hazy on the fine details of the story.

In late 1920s San Francisco, a bunch of people want the priceless titular statue, and will do anything – bribe, steal, frame, kill, and lie their faces off – to get their claws on it.

It's up to detective Sam Spade to keep various parties in the dark about what the others know. There's the mysterious woman who initially hires him and his partner Miles Archer to "find her sister" – that backfires, since Miles winds up dead (not a spoiler: it's revealed a dozen pages in). There are the two cops who suspect Sam killed Miles because he'd been sleeping with the guy's wife. And there are the three unsavoury characters who've been following the black bird across the globe.

While navigating all of these rather unlikeable characters (I think the receptionist is the only "good" person in the book), Sam has to figure out where the statue is, who killed Miles and try to pocket a few bills as well. And damn it, he's not gonna take the fall for anyone.

The thing is, the plot isn't the point of this crime classic. It's about the mood, the atmosphere, the hardboiled language and tough talk. It's about people being up at 3 am in the morning and thinking nothing of it. It's a character using sex to distract someone from asking difficult questions. It's the pair of contrasting, grotesque quasi villains, one an effeminate Greek homosexual* (whose relationship with another character was written out of the film version), the other a morbidly obese man whose fat rolls jiggle every time he laughs.

And it's about the steady and cool way Spade figures out what's going on, the way he gets out of situations using his brains and brawn, and his nearly expressionless attitude towards crime and carnality. He's tough, but he's still got something of a moral code buried beneath his stony demeanour.

I noticed some things in the book that aren't in the movie (besides the two gay lovers subplot):

- A full description of the history of the eponymous statuette! It has quite the provenance! (These details would have slowed down the film's pace.)
- When there's the suspicion that the central female, Brigid O'Shaughnessy, may have stolen a \$1000 bill, Spade takes her to the washroom and demands she remove all her clothes so he can see if she's hiding it. She complies. Wow. This definitely wouldn't have passed the Production Code inspection!

Dashiell Hammett's writing is entertaining and quite effective. There's one passage where a woman talks, looks down at a settee, her eyes "tracing eights," which is a clever way of showing us that she's probably lying.

I literally LOL'd when I read the following description of a contemptuous bit of dialogue: "two words, the first a short, guttural verb, the second you." (We can assume that "short, guttural verb" began with the letter F.)

And there are Sam's classic quotes: "If they hang you I'll always remember you." "I don't care who loves who I'm not going to play the sap for you."

Rumour has it that director John Huston said, while approving the script (and I'm paraphrasing), "How can you improve on the dialogue in the book?"

So true. I look forward to reading some other Hammett books, like *The Glass Key* and *The Thin Man*.

** By today's standards, reading the descriptions of Joel Cairo with his mincing walk, his use of perfume and his "high-pitched voice" – and the sneering, dismissive way the other characters treat him and call him "queer" and "a fairy" – is difficult. But this book was written in 1930, so I suppose it's understandable.*

Werner says

C. S. Lewis once observed that you shouldn't review individual books or stories of a general type that you dislike, because your basic distaste for the genre is apt to blind you to the relative merits of how well the author handles the individual features of his/her work, and how it stacks up against other works of the same sort. When it comes to the whole *noir* school of detective fiction, that's probably advice I should heed; based both on the little of it that I've read and what I've read about it, it's not my cup of tea. The problem for me isn't the dark subject matter: my literary tastes run to the Romantic school, with its appeal to emotion, and the perils and adventures associated with urban vice and crime in sinister settings can be potentially rife with

appeal to various emotions. Rather, my negative reaction is to the moral orientation (or lack of it); the *noir* vision is typically amoral and cynical, convinced that virtue is virtually nonexistent and doomed to defeat if it does exist, and larded with an industrial-strength existential pessimism guaranteed to thoroughly depress most any reader. Related to this is the fact that while the traditional mystery genre sees crime as an aberration of the order of things, which can be detected and set straight by the application of reason, *noir* views crime as the norm and denies that reason and logic can do much with it. So, *noir* detectives don't do much traditional detecting.

To try to give Hammett his due within this subgenre, though, this is a well-done example of the school; its classic status is no accident. Sam Spade and the other characters are archetypes, not yet degenerated into stereotypes by the flood of imitations that would follow; Spade's likability factor is about nil (like all detectives of this stamp, he's often obnoxious, awash in chip-on-the-shoulder bad attitude), but you don't readily forget him, or Brigit O'Shaughnessy, Casper Guttman, or Joel Cairo. I read this novel forty years ago (it was included in a mystery anthology, the title of which I don't remember, made up otherwise of short stories); the fact that I can remember it very well after all this time says something about the vividness and force of the writing. And the solution to the murder of Spade's partner is one that does call for genuine deduction on his part, and is one I didn't see coming --though I might have if I'd been more familiar with the *noir* conventions. (It isn't as surprising as Christie's solution in *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd* --but it comes close.) A valid criticism might be that the San Francisco setting isn't really evoked very strongly --beyond a few place names and isolated details, the locale could be the mean streets of any city of that day. But Hammett's interest didn't lie in regional realism or a sense of place.

Later examples of *noir* acquired a reputation for milking sex and violence for all the titillation it was worth, but Hammett avoids explicit sex (though he makes it clear that some illicit sex went on at one point) or gratuitous directly-described violence. Likewise, the bad language is well within the bounds of respectable realism for the characters and situations.

Lyn says

Dashiell Hammett's *The Maltese Falcon* introduces the world to Sam Spade and established a benchmark upon which a genre – the hard-boiled crime novel – was popularized.

Of his character, Hammett says:

“Spade has no original. He is a dream man in the sense that he is what most of the private detectives I worked with would like to have been and in their cockier moments thought they approached. For your private detective does not — or did not ten years ago when he was my colleague — want to be an erudite solver of riddles in the Sherlock Holmes manner; he wants to be a hard and shifty fellow, able to take care of himself in any situation, able to get the best of anybody he comes in contact with, whether criminal, innocent by-stander or client.”

Influencing such later writers as Mickey Spillane, John D. MacDonald, Ross Macdonald, Robert B. Parker and scores of others, Hammett in this 1930 release founded an archetypal hero and a formulaic storyline. Hammett's Spade, epitomizing these hard boiled protagonists, was not just a solver of mysteries, distancing him from the earlier Arthur Conan Doyle model, but was himself a man of the streets. Hammett describes Spade in sinister terms, calling him a devil and revealing him to be a solver of problems with his iron will and his fists as much with his mind.

The Maltese Falcon, of course, was later made into a film starring Humphrey Bogart and directed by John Huston. Reading the book and thinking of the movie, which stayed loyal to Hammett's vision, I gained an even greater appreciation for Bogart's portrayal of Spade and for Huston's direction.

A very entertaining and recommended novel.

Kemper says

This book is pretty good. Too bad it's not better known. And it'd be cool if somebody made a decent movie version of it someday...

James says

Book Review

4 out of 5 stars to The Maltese Falcon, a classic mystery novel written in 1930 by Dashiell Hammett. If you ask a mystery fan when the genre started, a good chunk of them will say during the Golden Age (1920s & 30s) with authors like Dashiell Hammett, specifically with the creation of the Sam Spade character. Immediately what comes to mind is the old-fashioned black-and-white movies with the coat and hat on the detective, the accents and the chase scenes. While these are all true, few have actually read these novels. I've been a fan of mystery since I was a young kid, reading a bunch in my teenage years. I re-read a lot during an independent study course I design while getting my English degree while in college. This book was one of the first the Dean and my professor recommended to me. I had read parts of it and seen the movies made from it, but I wasn't as familiar with the whole Golden Age. But once you read this book, you thirst for more. It's so well-written (apart from some of the ideas that have positively changed since then, e.g. racial or gender bias) from a mystery perspective, you are immediately engaged. And one of the sub-plots in these types of books are often "will he get the girl" or "is the girl on his side of the bad guy's side?" In The Maltese Falcon, you get it all. It's international. It's romantic. It's dangerous. It's scary. It's complex. And it ends in a very unexpected kinda way. It's a game-changer for the genre and that's why it's called the Golden Age. For mystery fans, you better have read this one. For non-mystery fans, it's a good story, and if you like older books, then you should give it a chance.

About Me

For those new to me or my reviews... here's the scoop: I read A LOT. I write A LOT. And now I blog A LOT. First the book review goes on Goodreads, and then I send it on over to my WordPress blog at <https://thisismytruthnow.com>, where you'll also find TV & Film reviews, the revealing and introspective 365 Daily Challenge and lots of blogging about places I've visited all over the world. And you can find all my social media profiles to get the details on the who/what/when/where and my pictures. Leave a comment and let me know what you think. Vote in the poll and ratings. Thanks for stopping by.

Jason Koivu says

You got nothin' on this book, *see?! Yeah! That's right, skedaddle and quick-like!*

Private detective Sam Spade smells trouble when a crazy dame walks into his office, and sure enough, his life is soon turned topsy turvy. Spade gets all tangled up in a fishy double murder. The coppers are on him, he's on to the dame and people keep popping outta the woodwork goin' on and on about this g. d. bird! If things keep up like this somebody's gonna get themselves killed dead.

Since the book's publication, the Spade character has become the ideal from which all other hired sleuths to follow would be molded. He's cool and calculating. He's no angel. No, he's in it for himself, yet only gets what he deserves (often a sock on the jaw) and somehow still comes out smelling like roses. This fantastically tight-wound story is a joy to read, made even more so by a hero who defines the word character.

Hammett's like an Italian tailor who's cut and sewn one of the finest suits you could imagine. It's sleek. It's stylish. You feel like a million bucks in it and you want it to last forever. Hell, with quality craftsmanship like that, it just might!

Brina says

Born in 1894 and serving as a sergeant in World War I, Dashiell Hammett used his experiences to become one of the premier detective writers of the first half of the twentieth century. Set in Depression Era San Francisco and introducing the world to Samuel Spade, Hammett's *The Maltese Falcon* became a detective story that many in the genre still try to measure up to today. A classic that helped change the way writers told detective stories, *The Maltese Falcon* is a classic case that contains all the elements of a fun whodunit.

Drawing inspiration from his own life, Hammett created Samuel Spade, a private eye detective who saw action in Europe in World War I. At the opening of this book, Spade has taken on the services of a new client, one Miss Bridget O'Shaughnessy, who requests protection from thugs who have tailed her around the globe. Along with the assistance of his partner Miles Archer, Spade takes the case; however, Archer is quickly gunned down by one of the aforementioned thugs, and the case spirals into action. Spade is forced to work alone with only bit help from his secretary Effie Perrine and a classic whodunit ensues.

We find out that Spade has contacts all over San Francisco from his work as a private eye detective. The police do not desire that a private detective encroaches on their work, and the chief as well as the district attorney are out to get him for Archer's murder, as far fetched as that sounds. Underneath the murder and thugs is the root of the case- a Maltese Falcon figurine estimated to be worth a million dollars. In the depression era this was a large fortune, and O'Shaughnessy hopes that Spade helps her procure the Falcon and deliver both her and it to safety before the thugs find them.

As this is detective noir, O'Shaughnessy goes from client to lover and good to bad. Each thug has at least one gun or pistol, and more goons seem to be hanging around each corner, all as far fetched in character as the next: Gutman, the fat man and only one with brains in the group; Cairo, the apparent boy loving Levantine; and Wilmer, Gutman's hired kid and fall guy. Each attempts to force Spade into a corner, which of course, he eventually gets his way out of.

The Maltese Falcon is a classic detective noir story and fun whodunit. A depression era story where everyone wore a trench coat and hat and rolled their own cigarettes, it is also a holdover from the 1920s gangster era, which is becoming one of my favorite eras to read about. A pulp noir story that became a movie

starring Humphrey Bogart, *The Maltese Falcon* is a classic detective tale in a genre that I am quickly starting to enjoy. I rate *The Maltese Falcon* 4.5 and look forward to reading more of Dashiell Hammett's detective cases.

Apatt says

Anybody who read this book without any prior knowledge of it would probably dismiss it as being full of cliches, archetypes and tropes, they would be dead wrong of course because this is where these tropes originated. The anti-hero, smooth talking P.I., the femme fatale, the plucky Girl Friday secretary, the gay gangster (uh, I'm not sure if this actually caught on) etc.

I don't actually have a lot to say about this book because, while it was moderately enjoyable, it did not do anything above and beyond being that. I don't particularly like any of the characters, except the plucky secretary Effie Perine may be, the protagonist Sam Spade is very smart but I find him a little irritating and unappealing.

I suppose he makes a change from defective detectives who sit around smoking pipes, playing violins and going on about their little grey cells but I like the old(er) school quirky fellows better. I guess Raymond Chandler's Philip Marlowe is cut from the same cloth, which would explain why I do not like *The Big Sleep* much either. Don't mind me, I believe it's all good stuff, just not my biscuit (much less an entire cuppa tea).

I do however like Hammett's clean prose and dialogue, I don't know much about this subgenre he was writing in but if he is indeed the first author to popularize it he probably should have coined the term iNoir. In my quick Googly research about this book I read that it has a theme of *"What it's like to want something—a fortune, a lover, or even respect—so bad that you would kill for it, give up a chance at happiness to get it, until finally the chase itself means more to you than what you're chasing."* I have to confess this bit of profundity escaped me entirely, I thought it was just about a tough-guy P.I. who is too cool to be fooled by foxy ladies. Further proof, if any was needed, of my idiocy I guess.

Glenn Russell says

My top ten reasons why this Dashiell Hammett is one of the greatest crime novels ever written:

1. The Voice – Tough, Crisp hardboiled – the story isn't told in first-person but certainly has the feel of first-person since we are so close to Sam Spade it's as if we're peering over the detective's shoulder from first to last page.
2. The City – The buildings and streets in San Francisco have such a tangible presence, even today, after nearly 100 years, they still give *Maltese Falcon* tours.
3. Femme Fatale – Brigid O'Shaughnessy is the femme fatale. Her looks, her way of speaking, her cunning, her charms, her allurements—legions of writers of detective fiction have changed her name, her home town, color of her hair and eyes, but all you have to do is scratch the surface and there she is.

4. Outside the Law – Nobody likes a cog in the legal wheel or a grey flannel flunkey following orders. Sam Spade is anything but – an outsider to the police, district attorney and even his clients, Sammy is his own man, cracking the case in his own way, in his own time and even willing to get socked in the jaw by a police lieutenant or pulled in by a high ranking official to make it happen.

5. Tone – Sharp and crisp. If you read (and look) carefully, an entire world is disclosed, as for example: “Spade emptied the unconscious man’s pockets one by one, working methodically, moving the lax body when necessary, making a pile of the pockets’ contents on the desk. When the last pocket had been turned out he returned to his own chair, rolled and lighted a cigarette, and began to examine his spoils. He examined them with grave unhurried thoroughness.”

6. Violence – Nothing juices the action in a detective fiction more than cold bloody murder. An entire string of murders are featured here, all happening at the right time to accelerate tempo. Also, there’s a good amount of roughhouse, with the least likely man in the novel, Joel Cairo, getting beat up every time he turns around. Serves him right for thinking himself so refined and above it all.

7. The Color of Character – Dashiell Hammett set the gold standard here for writers of detective fiction. “The fat man was flabbily fat with bulbous pink cheeks and lips and chins and neck, with a great soft egg of a belly that was all his torso, and pendant cones for arms and legs. As he advanced to meet Spade all his bulbs rose and shook and fell separately with such step, in the manner of clustered soap-bubbles not yet released from the pipe through which they had been blown. His eyes, made small by fat puffs around them, were dark and sleek. Dark ringlets thinly covered his broad scalp. He wore a back cutaway coat, black vest, black satin Ascot tie holding a pinkish pearl, striped grey worsted trousers, and patent-leather shoes. His voice was a throaty purr.”

8. The Moral Code – As one character finds out the hard way, Sam Spade is a man of the high, uncompromising character. You will have to read the novel to find out just how high and just how uncompromising.

9. The Whole is Greater than the Parts – The Maltese Falcon has that special something that separates it from other crime fiction, even crime fiction of the first order. What is it? Hard to put your finger on it, but as millions of readers have discovered every time they pick it up, this is one doozy of a classic.

10, The Dingus – Ah, yes, the object of obsessive desire, the bird with all those long-lost jewels. Has there ever been a famous actor more closely connected with a famous object? And, yes, in many ways, the much sought after black bird adds a unique aesthetic dimension to this tale of noir.

++

Stephen says

[image error]

Robin says

"I don't mind a reasonable amount of trouble."

I haven't seen the famous movie version of this book starring a young, dreamy Humphrey Bogart, but now I sure want to.

This 1930's noir beauty set the template for hard-boiled detective stories, paving the way for other writers like Raymond Chandler and James M. Cain.

The action begins when our hero Sam Spade, finds out his partner, Phil Archer is found shot while on a job. The story has all you could ask for: a tough, smart private eye, a gorgeous femme fatale, murder, priceless jewels, red herrings, gangsters, guns, police, and all in the backdrop of the city of San Francisco. The characters are just perfect, one of the more memorable ones being the mincing Joel Cairo whose voice on the audiobook that I listened to sounded like the python "Kaa" from the Disney film *The Jungle Book*.

It's so stylish and distinctive, not to mention cinematic. I couldn't help but think of the characters moving around in black and white, smoke curling around their fingers as they bring a drink to their lips, while eyeing up a potential enemy in the room.

"And when you're slapped you'll take it and like it."

kohey says

It's my BIBLE.

Sanjay Gautam says

Everything seemed separated for the first sixty pages, with no connection whatsoever. But the story was full of suspense and unfolded with many surprises after that. The plot was very captivating, and seemed very realistic. The main thread is 'Maltese Falcon' (I'm not going to tell you what it is, as it would be a spoiler and I hate to give spoilers) around which everything revolves. Its a good read and keeps you guessing till the last.

Highly recommend!

Evgeny says

Welcome to Spade and Archer detective agency. One day a gorgeous woman came in asking to help tracking her sister who ran away with a bad guy. The down payment was good, so the detectives took the case, no questions asked. As the direct result one of the detectives - Sam Spade - got to experience all of the traditional noir fun while readers follow ever-twisting plot.

I said it countless times before and I will say it again: Sam Spade is **the** grandfather of all PIs in all noir, in particular all Californian PIs - Raymond Chandler's Philip Marlowe included. Dashiell Hammett created the

genre and most of its tropes. Speaking about them - this was my reread of the book and this time I was trying to count them as they appear. For those doubting Hammett's paternity of noir I can say the following. I found them *all* in here. I might miss something, but every single major trope is present.

Does it show its age? Yes, a little. Is it still fun to read? You bet it is. In fact this book - along with *Red Harvest* by the same author - is responsible for my love of noir, just like in several generations of readers before me. It is most probably a safe bet to say that Sam Spade made Philip Marlowe possible. While Hammett's prose is not as stylish as Chandler's - nobody's prose is - it is still quite good and does not feel antique.

My rating is **4 stars**, exactly the same as it was during my first read; recommended to any noir fan, just for historical value if nothing else.
