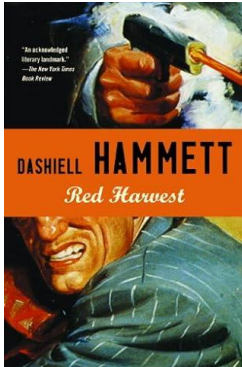


The Works of Dashiell Hammett

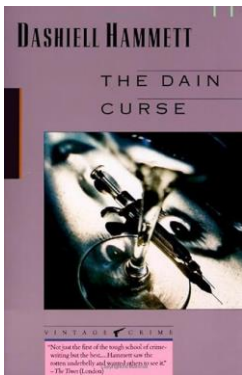
NOVELS



Red Harvest (1929)

When the last honest citizen of Poisonville was murdered, the Continental Op stayed on to punish the guilty--even if that meant taking on an entire town.

Red Harvest is narrated by the Continental Op, a frequent character in Hammett's fiction, much of which is drawn from his own experiences as an operative of the Pinkerton Detective Agency (fictionalized as the Continental Detective Agency). The plot follows the Op's investigation of several murders amid a labor dispute in a corrupt Montana mining town. Some of the novel was inspired by the Anaconda Road massacre, a 1920 labor dispute in the mining town of Butte, Montana.



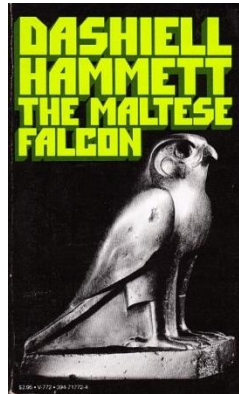
The Dain Curse (1929)

One of the Continental Op's most bizarre cases, as he is faced with Miss Gabrielle Dain Leggett, who has an unfortunate effect on the people around her - they have a habit of dying violently.

The Continental Op investigates a theft of diamonds from the Leggett family of San Francisco. The plot involves a supposed curse on the Dain family, said to inflict sudden and violent deaths upon those in their vicinity. Edgar Leggett's wife is a Dain, as is his daughter Gabrielle. The detective untangles a web of robberies, lies and murder. It is discovered that Gabrielle Leggett is under the influence of a mysterious religious cult and is also addicted to morphine.

Gabrielle escapes from the cult and marries her fiancé Eric Collinson, but bloodshed continues to follow her. The Continental Op, on behalf of four successive clients, investigates the reason behind all the mysterious, violent events surrounding Gabrielle Leggett, which he eventually uncovers.

In addition to these two novels, the Continental Op appears in 36 short stories by Hammett between 1923 and 1930 (a 37th appeared posthumously in 2017). Many of these stories have been reprinted in various multi-author anthologies and in collections filled only with Hammett's works.



The Maltese Falcon (1930)

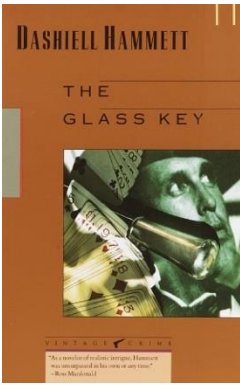
A treasure worth killing for. Sam Spade, a slightly shopworn private eye with his own solitary code of ethics. A perfumed grafter named Joel Cairo, a fat man name Gutman, and Brigid O'Shaughnessy, a beautiful and treacherous woman whose loyalties shift at the drop of a dime. These are the ingredients of

Dashiell Hammett's iconic, influential, and beloved **The Maltese Falcon**.

The story is told entirely in external third-person narrative; there is no description whatsoever of any character's thoughts or feelings, only what they say and do, and how they look. The novel has been adapted several times for the cinema, most famously with Humphrey Bogart in 1941.

The main character, Sam Spade (who also appeared later in some lesser-known short stories), was a departure from Hammett's nameless detective, The Continental Op. Spade combined several features of previous detectives, notably his cold detachment, keen eye for detail, unflinching and sometimes ruthless determination to achieve his own form of justice, and a complete lack of sentimentality. In 1990 the novel ranked 10th in Top 100 Crime Novels of All Time list by the *Crime Writers' Association*. Five years later, in a similar list by *Mystery Writers of America*, the novel was ranked third.

The character of Sam Spade appears in four additional short stories, "A Man Called Spade" (July 1932), "Too Many Have Lived" (October 1932), "They Can Only Hang You Once" (November 1932), and "A Knife Will Cut For Anybody" (an unfinished partial story, unpublished until appearing in a 2013 book, *The Hunter and Other Stories*).

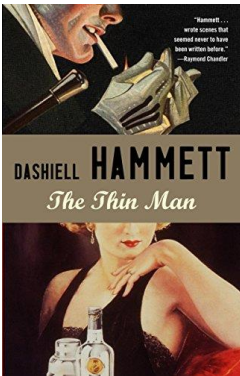


[The Glass Key](#) (1931)

Paul Madvig was a cheerfully corrupt ward-heeler who aspired to something better: the daughter of Senator Ralph Bancroft Henry, the heiress to a dynasty of political purebreds. Did he want her badly enough to commit murder? And if Madvig was innocent, which of his

dozens of enemies was doing an awfully good job of framing him?

The Glass Key tells the story of a gambler and racketeer, Ned Beaumont, whose devotion to Paul Madvig, a crooked political boss, leads him to investigate the murder of a local senator's son as a potential gang war brews. Hammett dedicated the novel to his onetime lover Nell Martin.



[The Thin Man](#) (1934)

Retirement suited Nick just fine. He had a pretty wife called Nora and a taste for good scotch. All it took was a little persuasion, like four bullets, a blonde, the cops, and a junked-up hoodlum in his bedroom before Nick Charles, former trans-American detective agency ace, was back in

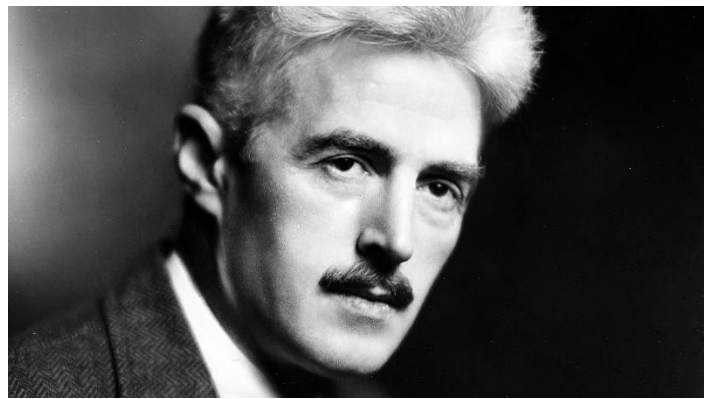
business.

The Thin Man appeared in book form in 1934. A film series followed, featuring the main characters Nick and Nora Charles, and Hammett was hired to provide scripts for the first two. His script treatments for "After the Thin Man" (1935), "Another Thin Man" (1938) and "Sequel to the Thin Man" (1938) were all later collected and printed in the 2012 hardback collection Return of the Thin Man.

STORY COLLECTIONS

Dashiell Hammett was a prolific short story writer, mainly for pulp magazines like The Black Mask. He wrote dozens of short works, some of which were later reprinted as "stand alone" novels by various publishers, and many of which were included in anthologies and short story collections.

For the purposes of our *Just Desserts* discussion of the works of Dashiell Hammett in October 2023, group members should read any one or more of the five novels listed in this booklist, **OR** any of the numerous short story collections featuring Hammett shorter works. For those who aren't fans of "hardboiled" detective fiction – for which Dashiell Hammett was described as "the deal of Hardboiled" – your best choice is [The Thin Man](#), which has a much different style and tone, or a short story collection.



This booklist created in September 2023 for the *Just Desserts Mystery Fiction Discussion Group* | SDC