

**DASHIELL
HAMMETT**

**THE
MALTESE
FALCON**



(1929)

1

SPADE AND ARCHER

SAMUEL SPADE'S JAW WAS LONG AND BONY, his chin a jutting v under the more flexible v of his mouth. His nostrils curved back to make another, smaller, v. His yellow-grey eyes were horizontal. The v *motif* was picked up again by thickish brows rising outward from twin creases above a hooked nose, and his pale brown hair grew down—from high flat temples—in a point on his forehead. He looked rather pleasantly like a blond satan.

He said to Effie Ferine: "Yes, sweetheart?"

She was a lanky sunburned girl whose tan dress of thin woolen stuff clung to her with an effect of dampness. Her eyes were brown and playful in a shiny boyish face. She finished shutting the door behind her, leaned against it, and said: "There's a girl wants to see you. Her name's Wonderly."

"A customer?"

"I guess so. You'll want to see her anyway: she's a knock-out."

"Shoo her in, darling," said Spade. "Shoo her in."

Effie Ferine opened the door again, following it back into the outer office, standing with a hand on the knob while saying: "Will you come in, Miss Wonderly?"

A voice said, "Thank you," so softly that only the purest articulation made the words intelligible, and a young woman came through the doorway. She advanced slowly, with tentative steps, looking at Spade with cobalt-blue eyes that were both shy and probing.

She was tall and pliantly slender, without angularity anywhere. Her body was erect and high-breasted, her legs long, her hands and feet narrow. She wore two shades of blue that had been selected because of her eyes. The hair curling from under her blue hat was darkly red, her full lips more brightly red. White teeth glistened in the crescent her timid smile made.

Spade rose bowing and indicating with a thick-fingered hand the oaken armchair beside his desk. He was quite six feet tall. The steep rounded slope of his shoulders made his body seem almost conical—no broader than it was thick—and kept his freshly pressed grey coat from fitting very well.

Miss Wonderly murmured, “Thank you,” softly as before and sat down on the edge of the chair’s wooden seat.

Spade sank into his swivel-chair, made a quarter-turn to face her, smiled politely. He smiled without separating his lips. All the v’s in his face grew longer.

The tappity-tap-tap and the thin bell and muffled whir of Effie Perine’s typewriting came through the closed door. Somewhere in a neighboring office a power-driven machine vibrated dully. On Spade’s desk a limp cigarette smoldered in a brass tray filled with the remains of limp cigarettes. Ragged grey flakes of cigarette-ash dotted the yellow top of the desk and the green blotter and the papers that were there. A buff-curtained window, eight or ten inches open, let in from the court a current of air faintly scented with ammonia. The ashes on the desk twitched and crawled in the current.

Miss Wonderly watched the grey flakes twitch and crawl. Her eyes were uneasy. She sat on the very edge of the chair. Her feet were flat on the floor, as if she were about to rise. Her hands in dark gloves clasped a flat dark handbag in her lap.

Spade rocked back in his chair and asked: “Now what can I do for you, Miss Wonderly?”

She caught her breath and looked at him. She swallowed and said hurriedly: “Could you—? I thought—I—that is——” Then she tortured her lower lip with glistening teeth and said nothing. Only her dark eyes spoke now, pleading.

Spade smiled and nodded as if he understood her, but pleasantly, as if nothing serious were involved. He said: “Suppose you tell me about it, from the beginning, and then we’ll know what needs doing. Better begin as far back as you can.”

“That was in New York.”

“Yes.”

“I don’t know where she met him. I mean I don’t know where in New York. She’s five years younger than I—only seventeen—and we didn’t have the same friends. I don’t suppose we’ve ever been as close as sisters should be. Mama and Papa are in Europe. It would kill them. I’ve got to get her back before they come home.”

“Yes,” he said.

“They’re coming home the first of the month.”

Spade’s eyes brightened. “Then we’ve two weeks,” he said.

“I didn’t know what she had done until her letter came. I was frantic.” Her lips trembled. Her hands mashed the dark handbag in her lap. “I was too afraid she had done something like this to go to the police, and the fear that something had happened to her kept urging me to go. There wasn’t anyone I could go to for advice. I didn’t know what to do. What could I do?”

“Nothing, of course,” Spade said, “but then her letter came?”

“Yes, and I sent her a telegram asking her to come home. I sent it to General Delivery here. That was the only address she gave me. I waited a whole week, but no answer came, not another word from her. And Mama and Papa’s return was drawing nearer and nearer. So I came to San Francisco to get her. I wrote her I was coming. I shouldn’t have done that, should I?”

“Maybe not. It’s not always easy to know what to do. You haven’t found her?”

“No, I haven’t. I wrote her that I would go to the St. Mark, and I begged her to come and let me talk to her even if she didn’t intend to go home with me. But she didn’t come. I waited three days, and she didn’t come, didn’t even send me a message of any sort.”

Spade nodded his blond satan’s head, frowned sympathetically, and tightened his lips together.

“It was horrible,” Miss Wonderly said, trying to smile. “I couldn’t sit there like that—waiting—not knowing what had happened to her, what might be happening to her.” She stop-

ped trying to smile. She shuddered. "The only address I had was General Delivery. I wrote her another letter, and yesterday afternoon I went to the Post Office. I stayed there until after dark, but I didn't see her. I went there again this morning, and still didn't see Corinne, but I saw Floyd Thursby."

Spade nodded again. His frown went away. In its place came a look of sharp attentiveness.

"He wouldn't tell me where Corinne was," she went on, hopelessly. "He wouldn't tell me anything, except that she was well and happy. But how can I believe that? That is what he would tell me anyhow, isn't it?"

"Sure," Spade agreed. "But it might be true."

"I hope it is. I do hope it is," she exclaimed. "But I can't go back home like this, without having seen her, without even having talked to her on the phone. He wouldn't take me to her. He said she didn't want to see me. I can't believe that. He promised to tell her he had seen me, and to bring her to see me—if she would come—this evening at the hotel. He said he knew she wouldn't. He promised to come himself if she wouldn't. He——"

She broke off with a startled hand to her mouth as the door opened.

The man who had opened the door came in a step, said, "Oh, excuse me!" hastily took his brown hat from his head, and backed out.

"It's all right, Miles," Spade told him. "Come in. Miss Wonderly, this is Mr. Archer, my partner."

Miles Archer came into the office again, shutting the door behind him, ducking his head and smiling at Miss Wonderly, making a vaguely polite gesture with the hat in his hand. He was of medium height, solidly built, wide in the shoulders, thick in the neck, with a jovial heavy-jawed red face and some grey in his close-trimmed hair. He was apparently as many years past forty as Spade was past thirty.

Spade said: "Miss Wonderly's sister ran away from New York with a fellow named Floyd Thursby. They're here. Miss Wonderly has seen Thursby and has a date with him tonight. Maybe he'll bring the sister with him. The chances are he

won't. Miss Wonderly wants us to find the sister and get her away from him and back home." He looked at Miss Wonderly. "Right?"

"Yes," she said indistinctly. The embarrassment that had gradually been driven away by Spade's ingratiating smiles and nods and assurances was pinkening her face again. She looked at the bag in her lap and picked nervously at it with a gloved finger.

Spade winked at his partner.

Miles Archer came forward to stand at a corner of the desk. While the girl looked at her bag he looked at her. His little brown eyes ran their bold appraising gaze from her lowered face to her feet and up to her face again. Then he looked at Spade and made a silent whistling mouth of appreciation.

Spade lifted two fingers from the arm of his chair in a brief warning gesture and said:

"We shouldn't have any trouble with it. It's simply a matter of having a man at the hotel this evening to shadow him away when he leaves, and shadow him until he leads us to your sister. If she comes with him, and you persuade her to return with you, so much the better. Otherwise—if she doesn't want to leave him after we've found her—well, we'll find a way of managing that."

Archer said: "Yeh." His voice was heavy, coarse.

Miss Wonderly looked up at Spade, quickly, puckering her forehead between her eyebrows.

"Oh, but you must be careful!" Her voice shook a little, and her lips shaped the words with nervous jerkiness. "I'm deathly afraid of him, of what he might do. She's so young and his bringing her here from New York is such a serious— Mightn't he—mightn't he do—something to her?"

Spade smiled and patted the arms of his chair.

"Just leave that to us," he said. "We'll know how to handle him."

"But mightn't he?" she insisted.

"There's always a chance." Spade nodded judicially. "But you can trust us to take care of that."

“I do trust you,” she said earnestly, “but I want you to know that he’s a dangerous man. I honestly don’t think he’d stop at anything. I don’t believe he’d hesitate to—to kill Corinne if he thought it would save him. Mightn’t he do that?”

“You didn’t threaten him, did you?”

“I told him that all I wanted was to get her home before Mama and Papa came so they’d never know what she had done. I promised him I’d never say a word to them about it if he helped me, but if he didn’t Papa would certainly see that he was punished. I—I don’t suppose he believed me, altogether.”

“Can he cover up by marrying her?” Archer asked.

The girl blushed and replied in a confused voice: “He has a wife and three children in England. Corinne wrote me that, to explain why she had gone off with him.”

“They usually do,” Spade said, “though not always in England.” He leaned forward to reach for pencil and pad of paper. “What does he look like?”

“Oh, he’s thirty-five years old, perhaps, and as tall as you, and either naturally dark or quite sunburned. His hair is dark too, and he has thick eyebrows. He talks in a rather loud, blustery way and has a nervous, irritable manner. He gives the impression of being—of violence.”

Spade, scribbling on the pad, asked without looking up: “What color eyes?”

“They’re blue-grey and watery, though not in a weak way. And—oh, yes—he has a marked cleft in his chin.”

“Thin, medium, or heavy build?”

“Quite athletic. He’s broad-shouldered and carries himself erect, has what could be called a decidedly military carriage. He was wearing a light grey suit and a grey hat when I saw him this morning.”

“What does he do for a living?” Spade asked as he laid down his pencil.

“I don’t know,” she said. “I haven’t the slightest idea.”

“What time is he coming to see you?”

“After eight o’clock.”

“All right, Miss Wonderly, we’ll have a man there. It’ll help if——”

“Mr. Spade, could either you or Mr. Archer?” She made an appealing gesture with both hands. “Could either of you look after it personally? I don’t mean that the man you’d send wouldn’t be capable, but—oh!—I’m so afraid of what might happen to Corinne. I’m afraid of him. Could you? I’d be—I’d expect to be charged more, of course.” She opened her handbag with nervous fingers and put two hundred-dollar bills on Spade’s desk. “Would that be enough?”

“Yeh,” Archer said, “and I’ll look after it myself.”

Miss Wonderly stood up, impulsively holding a hand out to him.

“Thank you! Thank you!” she exclaimed, and then gave Spade her hand, repeating: “Thank you!”

“Not at all,” Spade said over it. “Glad to. It’ll help some if you either meet Thursby downstairs or let yourself be seen in the lobby with him at some time.”

“I will,” she promised, and thanked the partners again.

“And don’t look for me,” Archer cautioned her. “I’ll see you all right.”

Spade went to the corridor-door with Miss Wonderly. When he returned to his desk Archer nodded at the hundred-dollar bills there, growled complacently, “They’re right enough,” picked one up, folded it, and tucked it into a vest-pocket. “And they had brothers in her bag.”

Spade pocketed the other bill before he sat down. Then he said: “Well, don’t dynamite her too much. What do you think of her?”

“Sweet! And you telling me not to dynamite her.” Archer guffawed suddenly without merriment. “Maybe you saw her first, Sam, but I spoke first.” He put his hands in his trousers-pockets and teetered on his heels.

“You’ll play hell with her, you will.” Spade grinned wolfishly, showing the edges of teeth far back in his jaw. “You’ve got brains, yes you have.” He began to make a cigarette.

2

DEATH IN THE FOG

A TELEPHONE-BELL RANG IN THE DARKNESS. When it had rung three times bed-springs creaked, fingers fumbled on wood, something small and hard thudded on a carpeted floor, the springs creaked again, and a man's voice said:

“Hello. . . . Yes, speaking. . . . Dead? . . . Yes. . . . Fifteen minutes. Thanks.”

A switch clicked and a white bowl hung on three gilded chains from the ceiling's center filled the room with light. Spade, barefooted in green and white checked pajamas, sat on the side of his bed. He scowled at the telephone on the table while his hands took from beside it a packet of brown papers and a sack of Bull Durham tobacco.

Cold steamy air blew in through two open windows, bringing with it half a dozen times a minute the Alcatraz foghorn's dull moaning. A tinny alarm-clock, insecurely mounted on a corner of Duke's *Celebrated Criminal Cases of America*—face down on the table—held its hands at five minutes past two.

Spade's thick fingers made a cigarette with deliberate care, sifting a measured quantity of tan flakes down into curved paper, spreading the flakes so that they lay equal at the ends with a slight depression in the middle, thumbs rolling the paper's inner edge down and up under the outer edge as forefingers pressed it over, thumbs and fingers sliding to the paper cylinder's ends to hold it even while tongue licked the flap, left forefinger and thumb pinching their end while right forefinger and thumb smoothed the damp seam, right forefinger

and thumb twisting their end and lifting the other to Spade's mouth.

He picked up the pigskin and nickel lighter that had fallen to the floor, manipulated it, and with the cigarette burning in a corner of his mouth stood up. He took off his pajamas. The smooth thickness of his arms, legs, and body, the sag of his big rounded shoulders, made his body like a bear's. It was like a shaved bear's: his chest was hairless. His skin was childishly soft and pink.

He scratched the back of his neck and began to dress. He put on a thin white union-suit, grey socks, black garters, and dark brown shoes. When he had fastened his shoes he picked up the telephone, called Graystone 4500, and ordered a taxicab. He put on a green-striped white shirt, a soft white collar, a green necktie, the grey suit he had worn that day, a loose tweed overcoat, and a dark grey hat. The street-door-bell rang as he stuffed tobacco, keys, and money into his pockets.

Where Bush Street roofed Stockton before slipping downhill to Chinatown, Spade paid his fare and left the taxicab. San Francisco's night-fog, thin, clammy, and penetrant, blurred the street. A few yards from where Spade had dismissed the taxicab a small group of men stood looking up an alley. Two women stood with a man on the other side of Bush Street, looking at the alley. There were faces at windows.

Spade crossed the sidewalk between iron-railed hatchways that opened above bare ugly stairs, went to the parapet, and, resting his hands on the damp coping, looked down into Stockton Street.

An automobile popped out of the tunnel beneath him with a roaring swish, as if it had been blown out, and ran away. Not far from the tunnel's mouth a man was hunkered on his heels before a billboard that held advertisements of a moving picture and a gasoline across the front of a gap between two store-buildings. The hunkered man's head was bent almost to the sidewalk so he could look under the billboard. A hand flat on the paving, a hand clenched on the billboard's green frame, held him in this grotesque position. Two other men stood awkwardly together at one end of the billboard, peeping through the few inches of space between it and the building at that end. The building at the other end had a blank grey sidewall that looked down on the lot behind the billboard.

Lights flickered on the sidewall, and the shadows of men moving among lights.

Spade turned from the parapet and walked up Bush Street to the alley where men were grouped. A uniformed policeman chewing gum under an enameled sign that said *Burritt St.* in white against dark blue put out an arm and asked:

“What do you want here?”

“I’m Sam Spade. Tom Polhaus phoned me.”

“Sure you are.” The policeman’s arm went down. “I didn’t know you at first. Well, they’re back there.” He jerked a thumb over his shoulder. “Bad business.”

“Bad enough,” Spade agreed, and went up the alley.

Half-way up it, not far from the entrance, a dark ambulance stood. Behind the ambulance, to the left, the alley was bounded by a waist-high fence, horizontal strips of rough boarding. From the fence dark ground fell away steeply to the billboard on Stockton Street below.

A ten-foot length of the fence’s top rail had been torn from a post at one end and hung dangling from the other. Fifteen feet down the slope a flat boulder stuck out. In the notch between boulder and slope Miles Archer lay on his back. Two men stood over him. One of them held the beam of an electric torch on the dead man. Other men with lights moved up and down the slope.

One of them hailed Spade, “Hello, Sam,” and clambered up to the alley, his shadow running up the slope before him. He was a barrel-bellied tall man with shrewd small eyes, a thick mouth, and carelessly shaven dark jowls. His shoes, knees, hands, and chin were daubed with brown loam.

“I figured you’d want to see it before we took him away,” he said as he stepped over the broken fence.

“Thanks, Tom,” Spade said. “What happened?” He put an elbow on a fence-post and looked down at the men below, nodding to those who nodded to him.

Tom Polhaus poked his own left breast with a dirty finger. “Got him right through the pump—with this.” He took a fat revolver from his coat-pocket and held it out to Spade. Mud inlaid the depressions in the revolver’s surface. “A Webley. English, ain’t it?”

Spade took his elbow from the fence-post and leaned down to look at the weapon, but he did not touch it.

“Yes,” he said, “Webley-Fosbery automatic revolver. That’s it. Thirty-eight, eight shot. They don’t make them any more. How many gone out of it?”

“One pill.” Tom poked his breast again. “He must’ve been dead when he cracked the fence.” He raised the muddy revolver. “Ever seen this before?”

Spade nodded. “I’ve seen Webley-Fosberys,” he said without interest, and then spoke rapidly: “He was shot up here, huh? Standing where you are, with his back to the fence. The man that shot him stands here.” He went around in front of Tom and raised a hand breast-high with leveled forefinger. “Lets him have it and Miles goes back, taking the top off the fence and going on through and down till the rock catches him. That it?”

“That’s it,” Tom replied slowly, working his brows together. “The blast burnt his coat.”

“Who found him?”

“The man on the beat, Shilling. He was coming down Bush, and just as he got here a machine turning threw headlights up here, and he saw the top off the fence. So he came up to look at it, and found him.”

“What about the machine that was turning around?”

“Not a damned thing about it, Sam. Shilling didn’t pay any attention to it, not knowing anything was wrong then. He says nobody didn’t come out of here while he was coming down from Powell or he’d’ve seen them. The only other way out would be under the billboard on Stockton. Nobody went that way. The fog’s got the ground soggy, and the only marks are where Miles slid down and where this here gun rolled.”

“Didn’t anybody hear the shot?”

“For the love of God, Sam, we only just got here. Somebody must’ve heard it, when we find them.” He turned and put a leg over the fence. “Coming down for a look at him before he’s moved?”

Spade said: “No.”

Tom halted astride the fence and looked back at Spade with surprised small eyes.

Spade said: "You've seen him. You'd see everything I could."

Tom, still looking at Spade, nodded doubtfully and withdrew his leg over the fence.

"His gun was tucked away on his hip," he said. "It hadn't been fired. His overcoat was buttoned. There's a hundred and sixty-some bucks in his clothes. Was he working, Sam?"

Spade, after a moment's hesitation, nodded.

Tom asked: "Well?"

"He was supposed to be tailing a fellow named Floyd Thursby," Spade said, and described Thursby as Miss Wonderly had described him.

"What for?"

Spade put his hands into his overcoat-pockets and blinked sleepy eyes at Tom.

Tom repeated impatiently: "What for?"

"He was an Englishman, maybe. I don't know what his game was, exactly. We were trying to find out where he lived." Spade grinned faintly and took a hand from his pocket to pat Tom's shoulder. "Don't crowd me." He put the hand in his pocket again. "I'm going out to break the news to Miles's wife." He turned away.

Tom, scowling, opened his mouth, closed it without having said anything, cleared his throat, put the scowl off his face, and spoke with a husky sort of gentleness:

"It's tough, him getting it like that. Miles had his faults same as the rest of us, but I guess he must've had some good points too."

"I guess so," Spade agreed in a tone that was utterly meaningless, and went out of the alley.

In an all-night drug-store on the corner of Bush and Taylor Streets, Spade used a telephone.

"Precious," he said into it a little while after he had given a number, "Miles has been shot. . . . Yes, he's dead. . . . Now don't get excited. . . . Yes. . . . You'll have to break it to Iva. . . . No, I'm damned if I will. You've got to do it. . . . That's a

good girl. . . . And keep her away from the office. . . . Tell her I'll see her—uh—some time. . . . Yes, but don't tie me up to anything. . . . That's the stuff. You're an angel. 'Bye."

Spade's tinny alarm-clock said three-forty when he turned on the light in the suspended bowl again. He dropped his hat and overcoat on the bed and went into his kitchen, returning to the bedroom with a wine-glass and a tall bottle of Bacardi. He poured a drink and drank it standing. He put bottle and glass on the table, sat on the side of the bed facing them, and rolled a cigarette. He had drunk his third glass of Bacardi and was lighting his fifth cigarette when the street-door-bell rang. The hands of the alarm-clock registered four-thirty.

Spade sighed, rose from the bed, and went to the telephone-box beside his bathroom door. He pressed the button that released the street-door-lock. He muttered, "Damn her," and stood scowling at the black telephone-box, breathing irregularly while a dull flush grew in his cheeks.

The grating and rattling of the elevator-door opening and closing came from the corridor. Spade sighed again and moved towards the corridor-door. Soft heavy footsteps sounded on the carpeted floor outside, the footsteps of two men. Spade's face brightened. His eyes were no longer harassed. He opened the door quickly.

"Hello, Tom," he said to the barrel-bellied tall detective with whom he had talked in Burritt Street, and, "Hello, Lieutenant," to the man beside Tom. "Come in."

They nodded together, neither saying anything, and came in. Spade shut the door and ushered them into his bedroom. Tom sat on an end of the sofa by the windows. The Lieutenant sat on a chair beside the table.

The Lieutenant was a compactly built man with a round head under short-cut grizzled hair and a square face behind a short-cut grizzled mustache. A five-dollar gold-piece was pinned to his necktie and there was a small elaborate diamond-set secret-society-emblem on his lapel.

Spade brought two wine-glasses in from the kitchen, filled them and his own with Bacardi, gave one to each of his visitors, and sat down with his on the side of the bed. His face was placid and uncurious. He raised his glass, and said, "Success to crime," and drank it down.

Tom emptied his glass, set it on the floor beside his feet, and wiped his mouth with a muddy forefinger. He stared at the foot of the bed as if trying to remember something of which it vaguely reminded him.

The Lieutenant looked at his glass for a dozen seconds, took a very small sip of its contents, and put the glass on the table at his elbow. He examined the room with hard deliberate eyes, and then looked at Tom.

Tom moved uncomfortably on the sofa and, not looking up, asked: "Did you break the news to Miles's wife, Sam?"

Spade said: "Uh-huh."

"How'd she take it?"

Spade shook his head. "I don't know anything about women."

Tom said softly: "The hell you don't."

The Lieutenant put his hands on his knees and leaned forward. His greenish eyes were fixed on Spade in a peculiarly rigid stare, as if their focus were a matter of mechanics, to be changed only by pulling a lever or pressing a button.

"What kind of gun do you carry?" he asked.

"None. I don't like them much. Of course there are some in the office."

"I'd like to see one of them," the Lieutenant said. "You don't happen to have one here?"

"No."

"You sure of that?"

"Look around." Spade smiled and waved his empty glass a little. "Turn the dump upside-down if you want. I won't squawk—if you've got a search-warrant."

Tom protested: "Oh, hell, Sam!"

Spade set his glass on the table and stood up facing the Lieutenant.

"What do you want, Dundy?" he asked in a voice hard and cold as his eyes.

Lieutenant Dundy's eyes had moved to maintain their focus on Spade's. Only his eyes had moved.

Tom shifted his weight on the sofa again, blew a deep breath out through his nose, and growled plaintively: "We're not wanting to make any trouble, Sam."

Spade, ignoring Tom, said to Dundy: "Well, what do you want? Talk turkey. Who in hell do you think you are, coming in here trying to rope me?"

"All right," Dundy said in his chest, "sit down and listen."

"I'll sit or stand as I damned please," said Spade, not moving.

"For Christ's sake be reasonable," Tom begged. "What's the use of us having a row? If you want to know why we didn't talk turkey it's because when I asked you who this Thursday was you as good as told me it was none of my business. You can't treat us that way, Sam. It ain't right and it won't get you anywheres. We got our work to do."

Lieutenant Dundy jumped up, stood close to Spade, and thrust his square face up at the taller man's.

"I've warned you your foot was going to slip one of these days," he said.

Spade made a depreciative mouth, raising his eyebrows. "Everybody's foot slips sometime," he replied with derisive mildness.

"And this is yours."

Spade smiled and shook his head. "No, I'll do nicely, thank you." He stopped smiling. His upper lip, on the left side, twitched over his eyetooth. His eyes became narrow and sultry. His voice came out deep as the Lieutenant's. "I don't like this. What are you sucking around for? Tell me, or get out and let me go to bed."

"Who's Thursby?" Dundy demanded.

"I told Tom what I knew about him."

"You told Tom damned little."

"I knew damned little."

"Why were you tailing him?"

"I wasn't. Miles was—for the swell reason that we had a client who was paying good United States money to have him tailed."

“Who’s the client?”

Placidity came back to Spade’s face and voice. He said reprovingly: “You know I can’t tell you that until I’ve talked it over with the client.”

“You’ll tell it to me or you’ll tell it in court,” Dundy said hotly. “This is murder and don’t you forget it.”

“Maybe. And here’s something for you to not forget, sweetheart. I’ll tell it or not as I damned please. It’s a long while since I burst out crying because policemen didn’t like me.”

Tom left the sofa and sat on the foot of the bed. His carelessly shaven mud-smearred face was tired and lined.

“Be reasonable, Sam,” he pleaded. “Give us a chance. How can we turn up anything on Miles’s killing if you won’t give us what you’ve got?”

“You needn’t get a headache over that,” Spade told him. “I’ll bury my dead.”

Lieutenant Dundy sat down and put his hands on his knees again. His eyes were warm green discs.

“I thought you would,” he said. He smiled with grim content. “That’s just exactly why we came to see you. Isn’t it, Tom?”

Tom groaned, but said nothing articulate.

Spade watched Dundy warily.

“That’s just exactly what I said to Tom,” the Lieutenant went on. “I said: ‘Tom, I’ve got a hunch that Sam Spade’s a man to keep the family-troubles in the family.’ That’s just what I said to him.”

The wariness went out of Spade’s eyes. He made his eyes dull with boredom. He turned his face around to Tom and asked with great carelessness: “What’s itching your boy-friend now?”

Dundy jumped up and tapped Spade’s chest with the ends of two bent fingers.

“Just this,” he said, taking pains to make each word distinct, emphasizing them with his tapping finger-ends: “Thursby was shot down in front of his hotel just thirty-five minutes after you left Burritt Street.”

Spade spoke, taking equal pains with his words: “Keep your God-damned paws off me.”

Dundy withdrew the tapping fingers, but there was no change in his voice: “Tom says you were in too much of a hurry to even stop for a look at your partner.”

Tom growled apologetically: “Well, damn it, Sam, you did run off like that.”

“And you didn’t go to Archer’s house to tell his wife,” the Lieutenant said. “We called up and that girl in your office was there, and she said you sent her.”

Spade nodded. His face was stupid in its calmness.

Lieutenant Dundy raised his two bent fingers towards Spade’s chest, quickly lowered them, and said: “I give you ten minutes to get to a phone and do your talking to the girl. I give you ten minutes to get to Thursby’s joint—Geary near Leavenworth—you could do it easy in that time, or fifteen at the most. And that gives you ten or fifteen minutes of waiting before he showed up.”

“I knew where he lived?” Spade asked. “And I knew he hadn’t gone straight home from killing Miles?”

“You knew what you knew,” Dundy replied stubbornly. “What time did you get home?”

“Twenty minutes to four. I walked around thinking things over.”

The Lieutenant wagged his round head up and down. “We knew you weren’t home at three-thirty. We tried to get you on the phone. Where’d you do your walking?”

“Out Bush Street a way and back.”

“Did you see anybody that——?”

“No, no witnesses,” Spade said and laughed pleasantly. “Sit down, Dundy. You haven’t finished your drink. Get your glass, Tom.”

Tom said: “No, thanks, Sam.”

Dundy sat down, but paid no attention to his glass of rum.

Spade filled his own glass, drank, set the empty glass on the table, and returned to his bedside-seat.

“I know where I stand now,” he said, looking with friendly eyes from one of the police-detectives to the other. “I’m sorry I got up on my hind legs, but you birds coming in and trying to put the work on me made me nervous. Having Miles knocked off bothered me, and then you birds cracking foxy. That’s all right now, though, now that I know what you’re up to.”

Tom said: “Forget it.”

The Lieutenant said nothing.

Spade asked: “Thursby die?”

While the Lieutenant hesitated Tom said: “Yes.”

Then the Lieutenant said angrily: “And you might just as well know it—if you don’t—that he died before he could tell anybody anything.”

Spade was rolling a cigarette. He asked, not looking up: “What do you mean by that? You think I did know it?”

“I meant what I said,” Dundy replied bluntly.

Spade looked up at him and smiled, holding the finished cigarette in one hand, his lighter in the other.

“You’re not ready to pinch me yet, are you, Dundy?” he asked.

Dundy looked with hard green eyes at Spade and did not answer him.

“Then,” said Spade, “there’s no particular reason why I should give a damn what you think, is there, Dundy?”

Tom said: “Aw, be reasonable, Sam.”

Spade put the cigarette in his mouth, set fire to it, and laughed smoke out.

“I’ll be reasonable, Tom,” he promised. “How did I kill this Thursby? I’ve forgotten.”

Tom grunted disgust. Lieutenant Dundy said: “He was shot four times in the back, with a forty-four or forty-five, from across the street, when he started to go in the hotel. Nobody saw it, but that’s the way it figures.”

“And he was wearing a Luger in a shoulder-holster,” Tom added. “It hadn’t been fired.”

“What do the hotel-people know about him?” Spade asked.

“Nothing except that he’d been there a week.”

“Alone?”

“Alone.”

“What did you find on him? or in his room?”

Dundy drew his lips in and asked: “What’d you think we’d find?”

Spade made a careless circle with his limp cigarette. “Something to tell you who he was, what his story was. Did you?”

“We thought you could tell us that.”

Spade looked at the Lieutenant with yellow-grey eyes that held an almost exaggerated amount of candor. “I’ve never seen Thursby, dead or alive.”

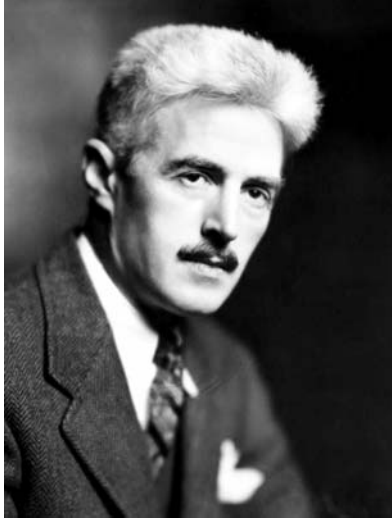
Lieutenant Dundy stood up looking dissatisfied. Tom rose yawning and stretching.

“We’ve asked what we came to ask,” Dundy said, frowning over eyes hard as green pebbles. He held his mustached upper lip tight to his teeth, letting his lower lip push the words out. “We’ve told you more than you’ve told us. That’s fair enough. You know me, Spade. If you did or you didn’t you’ll get a square deal out of me, and most of the breaks. I don’t know that I’d blame you a hell of a lot—but that wouldn’t keep me from nailing you.”

“Fair enough,” Spade replied evenly. “But I’d feel better about it if you’d drink your drink.”

Lieutenant Dundy turned to the table, picked up his glass, and slowly emptied it. Then he said, “Good night,” and held out his hand. They shook hands ceremoniously. Tom and Spade shook hands ceremoniously. Spade let them out. Then he undressed, turned off the lights, and went to bed.

The End of the *Free Preview Edition*



DASHIELL HAMMETT

(May 27, 1894 — January 10, 1961)

Title page photo: 1941 prop from the film [*The Maltese Falcon*](#)

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