



The Continental Op

By Dashiell Hammett

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Short, thick-bodied, mulishly stubborn, and indifferent to pain, Dashiell Hammett's Continental Op was the prototype for generations of tough-guy detectives. In these stories the Op unravels a murder with too many clues, looks for a girl with eyes the color of shadows on polished silver, and tangles with a crooked-eared gunman called the Whosis Kid.

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Editorial Review

Review

'...the Continental Op features in seven superb stories in this collection. Please, dear reader, I beg you, buy this book and treat yourself to the work of a true master of the crime genre.' -- Vincent Banville **IRISH TIMES** 'Orion's magnificent Crime Masterworks series ...has collected seven of the finest Continental Op short stories in a single volume... It is a magnificent collection, marking year zero in the hard-boiled school of crime fiction... Hugely recommended.' **BURTON EVENING MAIL** 'Some of the best examples of Hammett's work, painting a bleak picture of an American society warped by brutality, greed and treachery.' **WESTERN DAILY PRESS**

From the Inside Flap

Short, thick-bodied, mulishly stubborn, and indifferent to pain, Dashiell Hammett's Continental Op was the prototype for generations of tough-guy detectives. In these stories the Op unravels a murder with too many clues, looks for a girl with eyes the color of shadows on polished silver, and tangles with a crooked-eared gunman called the Whosis Kid.

About the Author

Dashiell Samuel Hammett was born in St. Mary's County. He grew up in Philadelphia and Baltimore. Hammett left school at the age of fourteen and held several kinds of jobs thereafter—messenger boy, newsboy, clerk, operator, and stevedore, finally becoming an operative for Pinkerton's Detective Agency. Sleuthing suited young Hammett, but World War I intervened, interrupting his work and injuring his health. When Sergeant Hammett was discharged from the last of several hospitals, he resumed detective work. He soon turned to writing, and in the late 1920s Hammett became the unquestioned master of detective-story fiction in America. In **The Maltese Falcon** (1930) he first introduced his famous private eye, Sam Spade. **The Thin Man** (1932) offered another immortal sleuth, Nick Charles. **Red Harvest** (1929), **The Dain Curse** (1929), and **The Glass Key** (1931) are among his most successful novels. During World War II, Hammett again served as sergeant in the Army, this time for more than two years, most of which he spent in the Aleutians. Hammett's later life was marked in part by ill health, alcoholism, a period of imprisonment related to his alleged membership in the Communist Party, and by his long-time companion, the author Lillian Hellman, with whom he had a very volatile relationship. His attempt at autobiographical fiction survives in the story "Tulip," which is contained in the posthumous collection **The Big Knockover** (1966, edited by Lillian Hellman). Another volume of his stories, **The Continental Op** (1974, edited by Stephen Marcus), introduced the final Hammett character: the "Op," a nameless detective (or "operative") who displays little of his personality, making him a classic tough guy in the hard-boiled mold—a bit like Hammett himself.

Users Review

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