

Maltese Falcon Summary

The Maltese Falcon (1941) is one of the most popular and best classic detective mysteries ever made, and many film historians consider it the first in the dark *film noir* genre in Hollywood. It leaves the audience with a distinctly down-beat conclusion and bitter taste. The low-budget film reflects the remarkable directorial debut of John Huston (previously a screenwriter) who efficiently filmed this American classic for Warner Bros. studios.

The precocious director Huston was very faithful to Dashiell Hammett's 1929 novel *The Maltese Falcon*, that had originally appeared as a five-part serialized story in a pulp fiction, detective story magazine publication named *Black Mask*. However, for an early preview audience, the film took a different, short-lived title, *The Gent From Frisco*. There were two major differences between the book and film: (1) Gutman was killed by Wilmer, and (2) the last quotable line of dialogue was thought up by Bogart on the set.

Hammett's novel had previously been filmed twice: a low-budget film (directed by Roy Del Ruth) with Ricardo Cortez and Bebe Daniels as *Dangerous Female* (1931) (aka *The Maltese Falcon*), and again remade as *Satan Met a Lady* (1936) (directed by William Dieterle) with Warren William and rising star Bette Davis. Huston was convinced that he could remake the film with a more precise screenplay and better acting than the other two adaptations. The idea of a sequel following the film's success, to be titled *The Further Adventures of the Maltese Falcon*, was scrapped when Huston became unavailable and when Hammett demanded an exorbitant financial guarantee. As a footnote, it was refilmed in the mid-70s as the satirical *Black Bird* (1975) with George Segal as Sam Spade, Jr., with two appearances by original cast members (Elisha Cook, Jr., and Lee Patrick). The classic mystery film has also been spoofed in *The Maltese Bippy* (1969) with TV-show stars Dan Rowan and Dick Martin, *Murder By Death* (1976), and *The Cheap Detective* (1978).

The bejeweled, priceless 'Maltese Falcon' [a 50-pound plaster cast, seven in all, made by the Props Department at Warners] is at the center of the intriguing film as an elusive but valuable object that is greedily desired, for different reasons, by all the principals. The film is a mixture of mystery, romance, and thriller. It is mostly known for a number of memorable portrayals of corrupt, deceitful, hard-nosed villains ("The Fat Man"), low-life quirky crooks (Peter Lorre and 'gunsel' Elisha Cook, Jr.) and heroes, interwoven complex interactions between characters, double-crossing intrigues and deceptions (e.g., the treacherous, lying Mary Astor character identifies herself with three aliases - as Miss Ruth Wonderly, Miss Leblanc, and Brigid O'Shaughnessy), posturings, betrayals and materialistic greed. Everything is contained in marvelous characterizations and lines of dialogue.

B-movie lead character Humphrey Bogart, now introduced as a 'good guy', presented the definitive Sam Spade in the mystery thriller classic - as a San Francisco sleuthing private-eye who lives by a code of ethics. Bogart had just finished another Warner Bros. film *High Sierra* (1941), in a role that was also turned down by WB's contract player George Raft. Geraldine Fitzgerald was originally chosen to play the role that Mary Astor eventually portrayed.

The film received three nominations, but no Academy Awards: Best Picture, Best Supporting Actor (almost 300 lb. Sydney Greenstreet in his talkie film debut), and Best Adapted Screenplay (by the director - John Huston). Competition from John Ford's *How Green Was My Valley* (1941) took the Best Picture and Best Supporting Actor Oscars (Donald Crisp), and *Here Comes Mr. Jordan* (1941) took the screenplay honors. However, in the same year, its un-nominated star Mary Astor, in the best performance of her career, was

actually the recipient of the Best Supporting Actress Oscar for her role in *The Great Lie* (1941). Neither Astor nor Bogart were nominated for their immortalized roles.

The credits wash down the screen over a view of the Maltese Falcon - a black figurine that casts a dark shadow from an angular source of light. [All four major stars' names, Bogart, Astor, George, and Lorre - in that order - appear on the second screen, following the film title.] The mysterious legend of the fabled, treasured statuette scrolls up the screen (above the falcon) to set the stage:

In 1539, the Knights Templar of Malta, paid tribute to Charles V of Spain, by sending him a Golden Falcon encrusted from beak to claw with rarest jewels- - - - but pirates seized the galley carrying this priceless token and the fate of the Maltese Falcon remains a mystery to this day.

Familiar locations in a grayish 1940s San Francisco are viewed with a slow pan - the Golden Gate Bridge, the Ferry Building, the Transbay (Oakland Bay) Bridge, and a few skyscrapers. The camera views the San Francisco office window (with backwards lettering of the names Spade and Archer) of cynical, realistic, and tough detective Sam Spade (Humphrey Bogart) and his partner Miles Archer. The two detectives share the same sparse office [and, behind the scenes, the same woman - Archer's wife Iva.] Spade's loyal, wholesome blonde secretary/'Girl Friday' Effie Perine (Lee Patrick) enters his office where he is alone rolling a cigarette. She tells him that there is a new "customer" - a Miss Wonderly - to see him, and the prospective client is a "knockout."

Spade is confronted by an innocent-looking, stunning brunette beauty, a nervy but cool client named "Ruth Wonderly" (Mary Astor). She has a fur draped over her left shoulder and part of it rests on her right arm. In a desperate and tense mood, Wonderly tells Spade that she is from New York and that her younger sister (Corinne) is missing. The client ostensibly asks Spade for help in locating her sister, who vanished after writing that she was in San Francisco (she had left General Delivery as her only address). Supposedly, she had been seduced by a mysterious, menacing man named Floyd Thursby while her wealthy parents were in Honolulu, and then ran away with the man. Miss Wonderly claims that she is hoping to find Corinne before her parents return. She met Thursby at the post office when he was picking up her second (and last) letter to Corinne. She explains what Thursby said: an appointment-date had been arranged to meet her sister that evening (after 8 o'clock) at the St. Mark Hotel:

He wouldn't tell me where Corinne was. He said she didn't want to see me. I can't believe that. He promised to bring her to the hotel [The St. Mark] if she'd come this evening. He said he knew she wouldn't. He promised to come himself if she didn't.

Just then, Spade's less brainy partner, Miles Archer (Jerome Cowan) enters the room and is filled in on the details of Miss Wonderly's story:

Miss Wonderly's sister ran away from New York with a fellow named Floyd Thursby. They're here in San Francisco. Miss Wonderly is seeing Thursby and has a date to meet him tonight. Maybe he'll bring the sister with him. The chances are he won't. Miss Wonderly wants us to find the sister, get her away from him and back home...If - after we've found her - she still doesn't want to leave him, well, we have ways of managing that.

Breathlessly, Wonderly tells them about Thursby's violent tendencies: "Oh, but you must be careful. I'm deathly afraid of him. What he might do. She's so young and he's bringing her here from New York for such a serious...Mightn't he...Mightn't he do something to her?" She believes he is a "dangerous man" who wouldn't stop at anything - he might even kill her sister. Archer asks if Thursby could cover up by marrying her sister. She replies that he has a wife and three children in England, to which Sam comments sardonically: "As they usually do, though not always in England." Thursby is identified as a dark-haired gentleman with thick bushy eyebrows: "He gives the impression of being a violent person."

Stepping up to claim the case (and eager to get to know the pretty client personally), the wolfish and gallant Archer quickly volunteers to shadow Thursby and Miss Wonderly that night and then free the sister. Spade receives a substantial fee from the appealingly-feminine Miss Wonderly - \$200 for the job. Archer promises he will be at her service: "You don't have to look for me. I'll see you all right."

After Miss Wonderly has left the office, Miles asserts his salivating interest in the striking, rich, and helpless woman who hires them to rescue her sister:

Archer: Oh, she's sweet. Maybe you saw her first, Sam, but I spoke first.

Sam: (with irony) You've got brains. Yes, you have.

[Archer also claimed his wife first, but Spade ultimately took her as his own.] The camera pans to the floor of the office, where the window lettering is boldly projected - with Spade's name on top.

After a dissolve, the next scene is on a dark street at the corner of Bush and Stockton Streets. [This is the ONLY scene in the film without the presence of Sam Spade.] The half-smile of recognition on Archer's face as he approaches the camera [and an unknown person] quickly turns to a look of disbelieving horror as an unseen assailant [suspect Thursby never appears in the film] pulls a gun and shoots him dead at close range. Miles is blown backwards through a fence barrier and he tumbles down a steep hill.

The camera cuts to an indoor shot, a close-up of a telephone ringing urgently. An alarm clock shows 2:05 am in the background, blowing curtains flutter. A hand gropes for the receiver, and a grunting, sleepy voice responds off-camera to the call. Spade is informed of his partner's death [from Police Sergeant Tom Polhaus, we learn later] at the corner of Bush and Stockton. After receiving the news, Spade seems unaffected and unmoved. With an impassive face, he phones his secretary to notify Iva, Miles' wife:

Now Effie. It's me...Now listen, Precious. Miles has been shot...Yeah, dead. Now don't get excited...Now, you'll have to break the news to Iva. I'd fry for it...*And keep her away from me...*That's a good girl...Now get right over there...You're an angel. Bye.

After a dissolve, Spade arrives in a taxi at the street corner of the film-noirish murder scene - a deserted blind alley, one lone street lamp, dark shadows against a brick wall (displaying a dilapidated poster for *Swing Your Lady (1938)* - a comedy starring Humphrey Bogart), and a broken fence. There, a cool-headed Spade talks with plainclothes Police Sergeant Tom Polhaus (Ward Bond), who shows him the location of Miles' body sprawled near some rocks and the murder weapon. They rehearse the crime - the evidence reveals that Archer was caught off guard - he was shot at close range with one bullet, and his overcoat ("the blast burnt his coat") was buttoned with his gun unfired and tucked away on his hip. Someone he trusted must have fired the shot. Polhaus asks Sam if Miles was working, but Sam refuses to tell the police much about their case - and is in too much of a hurry to view his dead partner's body closeup.

Private detective Spade only reveals that Miles was tailing a guy named Thursby to find out where he lived. "Don't crowd me, Tom," Spade demands, revealing that they are long-time adversaries and acquaintances as cop and detective. Knowing that Spade was having an affair with his partner's wife, Polhaus suspects a crime of passion although it is not mentioned. The police sergeant comments on Miles' demise - providing his only epitaph:

Polhaus: It's tough, him getting it like that, ain't it? Miles had his faults just like any of the rest of us, but I guess he must have had some good points too, huh?

Sam: (dispassionately and detachedly) I guess so.

Spade telephones Miss Wonderly's hotel, but finds that she has checked out without leaving any forwarding address. He returns to his dingy apartment, where he sleeps in the living room. He is visited in the dark, early morning by Polhaus and his superior, Lieutenant Dundy (Barton McLane). Surrounded by the two

cops, he is grilled and forced to repeat that Miles was tailing Thursby for an unnamed client. The cops, especially the Lieutenant, act suspicious for a number of reasons:

- he refuses to identify his client or provide details about the case
- he didn't go to Miles' house to break the news to his wife Iva as he said he did (he gave the job instead to Effie, his efficient assistant)
- he has no witnesses to support his whereabouts for the last hour

And then they divulge the reason for their visit - Floyd Thursby was murdered in front of his hotel only a half hour after Sam left the Archer murder scene. When Dundy points at Spade and implicates him in the murder, Spade bursts back: "KEEP YOUR PAWS OFF ME." But then Spade cleverly eases off and rationalizes:

Sorry I got up on my hind legs, boys, but you fellas tryin' to rope me made me nervous. Miles gettin' bumped off upset me, and then you birds crackin' foxy, but it's all right now, now that I know what it's all about.

Thursby was shot four times in the back with a .44 or .45 from across the street, with no witnesses. [By the end of the film, it is revealed that a *gunsel* named Wilmer killed Thursby.] Spade proclaims his innocence: "I've never seen Thursby dead or alive." But Dundy, a tough uncompromising cop, suspects that Sam is now involved in *two* murders - he possibly killed Thursby to avenge his partner Archer's death:

Well, you know me, Spade. If you did it, or if you didn't, you'll get a square deal from me and most of the breaks. Don't know as I blame you much - a man that kills your partner, but that won't stop me from nailing ya.

"Fair enough," Spade replies. They share a drink, toasted by Spade: "Success to crime!"

The morning headlines of the *San Francisco Post-Dispatch* broadcast the news:

Thursby, Archer Murders Linked! - Private Detective Was Shadowing Thursby Miles Archer, private detective of the firm of Spade and Archer, murdered last night, had been shadowing the mystery man, Floyd Thursby, who shortly afterwards met the same violent fate outside the Hotel Florence.

That same morning, a grieving, black-clothed Iva (Gladys George), Archer's widow, is waiting for Spade in his office the day after the murders - Effie had unsuccessfully tried to keep her away. After closing the door to his PRIVATE office, the two embrace passionately - they have been having an affair for quite a while, but Spade has obviously lost interest. Through her tears, a half-hoping Iva asks Spade if he killed Miles so that they could marry:

Iva: Sam, did you kill him?

Spade: Who put that bright idea in your head?

Iva: Well, I thought you said if it wasn't for Miles, you'd --- Be kind to me, Sam!

Spade: (He smiles broadly, laughs, and claps his hands.) (mockingly) You killed my husband, Sam. Be kind to me.

He hurriedly comforts her and brushes her off - not wanting anything more to do with her. He dismisses her out the door and gives her a half-hearted promise to see her later. [Despite their obvious past, he is now sickened by the widowed woman (dressed to resemble the black, lead falcon revealed at the end). His newfound curiosity for the elusive Brigid O'Shaughnessy replaces his desire for Iva - a woman now uninteresting because of Archer's murder.]

HUMPHREY BOGART · MARY ASTOR



the Maltese Falcon

Effie enters his one-person office, and in a comfortable pose, sits up on his desk to light his cigarette. He asks for her opinion about his guilt: "Who do you think I shot?" She avoids his question with another query: "Are you going to marry Iva?" When Effie hypothesizes that Iva killed Miles, Spade calls Effie "an angel, a nice, rattle-brained little angel... You're a detective, darling, but she didn't kill him." Their conversation turns to her concern about the many risky predicaments he often finds himself enmeshed in - but he evades her devoted worry:

Do the police really think you shot this 'what's-his-name'? Do they? Look at me, Sam. You worry me. You always think you know what you're doing but you're too slick for your own good.

While they talk, Spade receives a call from 'Miss Wonderly.' She has left the St. Mark Hotel and is now at the Coronet Apartments (#1001) on California Avenue, under the name of Miss Leblanc. As he burns the phone message in his hands (Effie wrote down the details of the call as he dictated them), Sam asks Effie to have Miles' desk moved out of the office and Miles' name removed from the office door.

At the Coronet when he sees his client again, she is wearing a striped robe (in her room heavily striped by venetian blind shadows). She confesses immediately: "That story I told you yesterday was just a story." Spade has already assumed as much, knowing that the deceptive schemer was lying from the start about both her story and her real name:

We, we didn't exactly believe your story, Miss, uh... What is your name, Wonderly or Leblanc?... We didn't exactly believe your story, Miss O'Shaughnessy; we believed your two hundred dollars... I mean, you paid us more than if you'd been telling us the truth, and enough more to make it all right.

Spade reassures her that he doesn't even consider her *indirectly* at fault for Miles' death, since she did warn them about how dangerous Thursby was. When she expresses regret at the murder, Spade doesn't want to hear it: "Stop it. He knew what he was doing. Those are the chances we take." The detective explains how the remorseless widow will benefit from his life insurance policy:

With ten thousand in insurance, no children, and a wife that didn't like him.

Spade tells her he hasn't told the police about her identity - he has been stalling until now, but he must know the real truth about her and Thursby. Still remaining obscure and vague, Brigid - with a trembling, helpless voice - entreats him to protect her with his "courage and strength." Manipulative, slippery and full of cunning, Brigid pleads for help from an admiring Spade:

Do they have to know about me, I mean - can't you shield me so that I won't have to answer their questions... I can't tell you now. I will later when I can. You've got to trust me, Mr. Spade. Oh, I'm so alone and afraid. I've got nobody to help me if you won't help me. Be generous, Mr. Spade. You're brave. You're strong. You can spare me some of that courage and strength surely. Help me, Mr. Spade. I need help so badly. I've no right to ask you, I know I haven't, but I do ask you. Help me.

He compliments her convincing sincerity act - knowing that he can't trust her or believe her:

You won't need much of anybody's help. You're good. It's chiefly your eyes, I think, and that throb you get in your voice when you say things like 'Be *generous*, Mr. Spade.'

She admits she was putting it on too thick, but he is obviously attracted and allured to her anyway:

Brigid: I deserve that. But the lie was in the *way* I said it. Not at all in *what* I said. It's my own fault if you can't believe me now.

Spade: (smiling and grinning) Now you *are* dangerous.

Fearful and in trouble, Miss O'Shaughnessy explains the story of her association with Thursby, whom she met in the Orient: "He first came to the Orient as bodyguard to a gambler who had to leave the States. The gambler had since disappeared and Floyd knew about the disappearance." She had hired the treacherous man to protect her ("only that sort could have helped me"), but he presumably betrayed her. Thursby came to San Francisco from Hong Kong a week earlier and probably killed Archer - Thursby was always "heavily armed" and carried an extra revolver in his overcoat pocket. She feels threatened by the circumstances:

Spade: How bad a spot are you actually in?

Brigid: As bad as could be.

Spade: Physical danger?

Brigid: I'm not heroic. I don't think there's anything worse than death.

Spade: Then it's *that*?

Brigid: It's *that* as surely as we're sitting here - unless you help me.

Spade: Who killed Thursby? Your enemies or his?

Brigid: I don't know. His, I suppose. I'm afraid, I don't know.

She is concerned that Spade will tell the police about her. Although *he* is the one who is the prime suspect in two murders, she holds the real key to the two deaths. He is confused by her motives and her story, and is about to give up on her case. When she pleads: "I'll have to take my chances," he sympathetically relents to her manipulations and promises to conceal her existence from the police and look after her interests (whatever they are!). Spade demands to be paid to find out who is behind the killings. He takes all of her alleged money - an additional \$500 that he forces out of her. As she retrieves the money, he notices the label from her fashionable hat: "Lucille Shop, Queen's Road C, Hong Kong." He advises her to pawn her furs and jewelry. And he takes her apartment key: "I'll be back as soon as I can with the best news I can manage. I'll ring four times - long, short, long, short - No, you needn't bother to come to the door. I'll let myself in."

Soon after when he returns to his office, the front door is being freshly painted to read "Samuel Spade, Confidential Investigator." Effie alerts Spade to a homosexual client who has just arrived in the outer office and presented her with a gardenia-perfumed business card. Spade sniffs the card - reacting with a bemused expression. A strange, bug-eyed, shifty man - an effeminate, bow-tied Mr. Joel Cairo (Peter Lorre) confronts Spade in his office. Cairo's entry line refers to Archer's murder: "May a stranger offer condolences for your partner's unfortunate death?" While fondling his cane, Cairo also asks if there is any relationship between Archer's and Thursby's death. He is searching for a statuette of a black bird:

I'm trying to recover, an ornament that, ah, shall we say has been mislaid...I thought and hoped you could assist me. The ornament, ah, is a statuette, the black figure of a bird...I am prepared to promise that - what is the phrase? (He gestures knowingly) 'No questions will be asked!'

Cairo offers Spade the sum of \$5,000 for the missing bird's recovery on behalf of the figure's "rightful owner." (Spade suspects that Brigid and Cairo are both connected pieces of the mystery.) After Spade's secretary leaves the outer office for the night and Spade has turned away, Cairo surprises and threatens Spade in his office with a drawn gun:

You will please clasp your hands together at the back of your neck. I intend to search your offices, Mr. Spade. I warn you, if you attempt to prevent me, I shall certainly shoot you.

While checking if Spade is armed, the slick Spade catches Cairo off guard, easily disarms him and knocks him out cold with one quick punch to the jaw. While Cairo is unconscious on the sofa, Spade empties his pockets' contents:

- A Greek passport with Cairo's name and picture
- Other passports - French and British
- An orchestra seat ticket to the Geary Theater in San Francisco for the evening performance on Wednesday the 18th (that evening)
- A wallet containing a wad of money
- A scented silk handkerchief (Spade smells it and reacts quizzically)
- \$5,000, the price that Cairo offers to pay, isn't there ("It's just hooey!")

When Cairo regains consciousness, he looks at his face in a mirror - but Spade's image is all that the mirror reflects. Upset, Cairo whines that his shirt is ruffled ("Look what you did to my shirt!"). Without missing a beat, Cairo re-states his "genuine" offer to pay \$5,000 for the figure's return, but is bewildered by Spade's defense of his office space:

But if it isn't here, why did you risk serious injury to prevent my searching for it?

Cairo apologizes for not divulging the identity of the bird's owner or the statuette itself. Spade demands a retainer (of \$200.00, double Cairo's first offer) for assisting Cairo in locating the bird:

Cairo: You will take, say, one hundred dollars?
Spade: No - I will take, say, *two* hundred dollars.

Spade denies having the black bird, or knowing where it is (or where he can get it), but would agree to be hired, for a profit, to "get it back, if possible, in an honest, lawful way." Cairo informs Spade that he is staying at the Hotel Belvedere, Room 635 and can be contacted there. As he prepares to leave, Cairo tells Spade: "I sincerely expect the greatest mutual benefit from our association."



And then Cairo immediately pulls the gun on Spade again after his gun is returned. He persists in his demands to search Spade's office for the much-desired black bird despite being roughed up: "Will you please clasp your hands together at the back of your neck? I intend to search your offices." Spade looks on in amusement, laughing at him: "Why, sure. G - go ahead, I won't stop ya."

Later, after his encounter with Cairo, Spade leaves his office in the Commercial Building [in the background behind him is the Bailey Theatre marquee, playing *The Great Lie* (1941), a film starring Oscar-winning Mary Astor]. On the street, he realizes that he is being followed, but evades the young-faced thug (a trench-coated gunman named Wilmer) by ducking away into another theatre lobby [advertising the musical *The Girl From Albany*], taking off in a Yellow Cab taxi, and eluding him in front of an apartment complex.

Spade revisits Brigid in her hotel room (letting himself in with her key). Brigid still appears fearful but cautious. After observing the shady lady's behavior, she offers an understated confession of her base nature - while still looking for sympathy from the shamus:

Spade: You, uh - you aren't exactly the sort of a person you pretend to be, are ya?
Brigid: I'm not sure I know exactly what you mean.
Spade: The schoolgirl manner, you know, blushing, stammering, and all that.

Brigid: I haven't lived a good life - I've been bad, worse than you could know.

Spade: That's good, because if you actually were as innocent as you pretend to be, we'd never get anywhere.

Brigid: I won't be innocent.

Spade: Good.

Spade isn't interested in her tantalizing, innocent act and tries to pry more information out of her. Spade nonchalantly tells her that he has met with Cairo whom he knows "only slightly." Brigid nervously moves around the room as Spade watches her in amusement. He laughingly tells the untrustworthy woman that he admires and appreciates her ability to lie and deceive:

You're good. You're *very* good!

Brigid asks about Cairo and learns that he "offered \$5,000 for the black bird." She rises, in response. He knows that she is concealing knowledge of the statuette: "You're not gonna go around the room straightening things and poking the fire again, are ya?" Spade considers the sum Cairo was willing to pay "a lot of money." "Tis," replies Brigid with a cynical, bitter tone - she doesn't have that much money.

It's more than I can ever offer you if I have to *bid* for your loyalty.

Spade has heard enough from the duplicitous, vulnerable-acting woman - he rises from his chair, completely frustrated by her lack of forthcoming, trust and honesty:

Spade: That's good coming from you. What have you ever given me beside money? Have you ever given me any of your confidence, any of the truth? Haven't you tried to buy my loyalty with money and nothing else?

Brigid (quivering): What else is there I can buy you with?

After seductively asking him what she can offer besides money, Spade brutally takes her face in his hands and kisses her roughly - he digs his thumbs into her cheeks. She accepts his lingering kiss. Spade walks away, demanding more information if he is to be the 'helpless' woman's protector:

I don't care what your secrets are. But I can't go ahead without more confidence in you than I've got now. You've got to convince me that you know what this is all about, that you aren't just fiddling around, hoping that it will all come out right in the end.

Brigid still pleads for his patience and for more time ("Can't you trust me a little longer?") - but reluctantly agrees to speak to Joel Cairo. Spade phones and leaves a message at Cairo's hotel to meet them in his apartment later that evening. After a wipe left dissolve, they take a cab there. Brigid (wearing the fur that she said she would pawn) and Spade walk by an expectant Iva furtively waiting for him (the spectre of Miles' death trails him everywhere) in a black convertible parked out front.

Still uneasy about the trust issue between them, Spade clarifies things with Brigid. When the visit with Cairo has been concluded, Spade is expecting to deal with her:

Brigid: You know I never would have placed myself in this position if I didn't trust you completely.

Spade: That again?

Brigid: You know that's true, you know.

Spade: You don't have to trust me so long as you persuade me to trust you. Don't worry about that now. He'll [Cairo] be along any minute. You get your business with Cairo over with, then we'll see how we stand.

When he peers out his apartment window through a blowing, gauzy window curtain, he sees the diminutive hit-man who had followed him earlier in the evening eye-ing his apartment from across the street under a streetlamp. Brigid comes up to him and gushes:

Brigid: You are a god-send.
Spade: Oh, now don't overdo it.

Treasure-hunting Cairo joins them there, and notifies Spade of a "boy" who is watching the apartment. Cairo greets Brigid with false courtesy: "I'm delighted to see you again, Madame." They talk about Cairo's \$5,000 cash offer for the Maltese Falcon and the bird's whereabouts. After admitting that she hasn't "got the Falcon," Brigid promises that she will have it back in about a week from where Floyd Thursby hid it. She claims that she is selling the bird and disposing of it because she is fearful of the bird's deadly trail and how it led to Thursby's murder:

Cairo: And why, if I may ask another question, are you willing to sell it to me?
Brigid: Because I'm afraid. After what happened to Floyd, I'm afraid to touch it except to turn it over to somebody else.
Cairo: What exactly did happen to Floyd?
Brigid (while knowingly shaking her head and looking down): 'The Fat Man.'

As they guardedly discuss their past dealings with references to the 'Fat Man,' Cairo gets tense when Brigid mentions that the 'Fat Man' is in San Francisco and she gets excited when he repeats a warning about "the boy outside" - two additional pieces to the mysterious puzzle. Cairo and Brigid openly detest and mutually insult each other [with hints of sexual bargaining and deviance]:

Brigid: But you might be able to get around him [the boy], Joel, as you did the one in Istanbul, what was his name?
Cairo: You mean the one you couldn't get to --!!

Brigid slaps Cairo hard - when he raises his hand to slap her back and then draws his gun, Spade disarms him and the gun drops to the floor. Cairo weakly protests: "This is the *second* time that you've laid hands on me." Spade forcibly grabs Cairo and slaps him three times:

When you're slapped, you'll take it and like it!

Brigid reaches for the gun as they are interrupted by loud knocking at the door and the sound of the buzzer. In the hallway, Spade talks to police detectives Polhaus and Dundy in a second after-hours call. The cops are there because an anonymous phone-caller [later discovered to be Iva Archer] has informed them that Spade was romantically involved with Iva - and killed Miles to marry her:

There's talk going around about you and Archer's wife...The talk is that she tried to get a divorce from him so she could put in with you, and he wouldn't give it to her...There's even talk that that's why he was put on the spot.

Dundy wants to ask hard-nosed questions - interrogation that Spade deflects by blocking his door and pointing out that Thursby's death destroys their theory:

Your first idea that I killed Thursby because he killed Miles falls to pieces if you blame me for killing Miles too.

As the police are about to leave after accusing Spade of more "lying answers," they hear a scuffle inside and Cairo loudly screaming: "Help!" Spade is forced to let the cops in when Cairo starts fighting with Brigid - they barge into the apartment where a fracas between his two clients is in progress. They witness a

bloodied, whining Joel Cairo complaining that Spade brutally entrapped him in the apartment where Brigid ("you dirty filthy liar") attacked him and was threatening to kill him. Dundy stands between the two antagonists as he listens to their conflicting versions and explanations of what happened. When Brigid counter-accuses Cairo of lying and then kicks him, Dundy threatens to run everyone into the police station. To extricate them from a possible jailing, Spade explains their rough interrogation of Cairo - a story consistent with their somewhat limited knowledge:

Miss O'Shaughnessy is an operative in my employ since yesterday...Cairo is an acquaintance of Thursby's. He came into my office late this afternoon and hired me to find something that Thursby was supposed to have on him when he was bumped off. It, uh, looked funny to me, the way he put it, so I wouldn't touch it. Then he pulled a gun on me. Well, that's neither here nor there unless we start proffering charges against each other. Anyway, Miss O'Shaughnessy and I discussed the matter and we decided to find out exactly how much he knew about Miles' and Thursby's killings so we asked him to come up here. Now maybe we did put the questions to him a little roughly. You know how that is, Lieutenant. But we didn't hurt him enough to make him cry for help.

When the police detectives still threaten to haul them away to jail, Spade further jokes that the theatrics were part of a pre-conceived plan. He presses his explanation, exaggerating their conflict and making an intimidated Cairo confess that his questioning was all a joke:

Aw, don't you know that you're being kidded?...When I heard the buzzer, I said to Miss O'Shaughnessy and Cairo here, I said, 'There's the police again. They're getting to be a nuisance. When you hear them going, one of you scream and then we'll see how far along we can string 'em until they tumble.'...Don't be a sap. That gun was a plant. It was one of mine. Too bad it was only a .25 or maybe you could prove that was the gun that Miles and Thursby were shot with.

Exasperated with Spade's impertinence and for being set up with a fake fracas, Dundy is provoked to punch him. Both Brigid and Cairo back Spade up, preferring not to press charges against each other, since that would involve them further with the police - and compromise their ability to swiftly search for the falcon. Then, the bewildered police have no choice but to leave, even though they want to get contact information for both Brigid and Cairo.

After Cairo slithers out and the cops depart, Brigid butters Spade up with another seductive compliment - she is amazed by his "high-handed" manner:

You're absolutely the wildest, most unpredictable person I've ever known. Do you always carry on so high-handed?

Threatening that "the boy outside hasn't gone home yet," Spade insistently presses the evasive Brigid for more information about the bird statuette:

Hey, what's this bird, this falcon that everybody's all steamed up about?

Uninterested in how the statue looks ("It's a black figure as you know, smooth and shiny. A bird, a hawk, a falcon about that high"), Spade is more interested in what makes it "so important" to so many people. Brigid spins another tall tale - she was offered the sum of 500 pounds to steal the bird in Turkey, and Cairo and Thursby were in on the heist. However, she and Thursby learned that Cairo had planned to desert them. To retaliate, Floyd and Brigid double-crossed Cairo and took off with it. However, Floyd had no intentions of keeping his promise to share the falcon equally with her either.

Boldfacedly, Spade calls her a liar. Brigid wearily admits that there isn't much truth in her yarn and lies back:

Spade: (smiling) You are a liar.

Brigid: I am. I've always been a liar.

Spade: Don't brag about it. Was there any truth at all in that yarn?

Brigid: Some...not very much...Oh, I'm - I'm so tired, so tired of lying and making up lies, not knowing what is a lie and what's the truth. I wish... (Striking a sensual, languishing pose, she reclines back on the couch)

As Spade bends over to kiss the *femme fatale*, the curtains blow apart, revealing the perilous real-world outside - the 'boy' gunman is still in a dark doorway across the street. [Undoubtedly, they spend the night together, although the scene is eliminated from the film.]

A direct cut displays the brass plaque of the Hotel Belvedere - the next day. Spade enters the hotel, uses the desk phone and asks to speak to Cairo. He spots the gungel-tail again sitting in a lobby chair facing away from him and reading a newspaper. He hangs up the phone and sits down next to the 'boy' - Wilmer (Elisha Cook, Jr.). [Wilmer is the quintessential caricature of the gangster in 30s B films.] Deducing from the vague conversation between Brigid and Cairo that the "boy" was hired by either the 'Fat Man' or Cairo to follow him, he delivers a message to the gungel's boss:

Where is he?...Cairo...You're gonna have to talk to me before you're through, sonny. Some of you will. And you can tell the 'Fat Man' I said so.

Incited to anger, Wilmer responds with "shove off," and ineffectually threatens: "Keep askin' for it and you're gonna get it, *plenty*. I told you to shove off. Shove off." Spade reprimands him, telling the young, insulting thug that he should be polite. He then signals the house detective Luke (James Burke) to run Wilmer, wearing an oversized overcoat, out of the hotel lobby: "What do you let these cheap gunmen hang around the lobby for, with their heaters bulging in their clothes?" As Wilmer is roused out, Spade blows smoke in his face.

Just then, a beaten-up, disheveled and tired Cairo returns to the hotel lobby [Cairo was booked and interrogated by police at the police station after leaving Spade's apartment]. Spade confronts him and explains his motives:

Spade: Let's go someplace where we can talk.

Cairo: No, no, no. Our private conversations have not been such that I'm anxious to continue them. Forgive my speaking so bluntly, but it is the truth.

Spade: (Do) you mean last night? What else could I do? I had to throw in with her. I don't know where the bird is and neither do you. She does. How are we gonna get it if I don't play along with her?

Cairo: You always have a very smooth explanation ready, huh?

Spade: What do you want me to do - learn to stutter?

Cairo was roughed up during questioning in the all-night police grilling, but he didn't talk - except to repeat Spade's unreasonable and 'goofy' story ("I adhered to the course you indicated earlier in your rooms...I distinctly felt like an idiot repeating it"). [He also searched and ransacked Brigid's apartment during the night - while she was spending the night with Spade.] He pleads to be left alone so that he won't be further mussed up.

Spade returns to his office, where Effie tells him about his phone calls - three from Iva, a call from the DA's office, and a call from a Mr. Gutman - saying that he had received Spade's message from "the young man." (In a moment of insight, Spade realizes that Mr. Gutman is the 'Fat Man.') Effie has also admitted Brigid into Spade's inner office where she is waiting for him. In his office, a distraught Brigid tells Spade that her apartment has been thoroughly searched ("Darling, somebody's been in my apartment. It's all upside down, every which way"). Spade suspects Cairo might have lied about the "police grilling" and ransacked her place in the meantime - he is still baffled by the twisting turns of the film's plot:

I've got to keep in some sort of touch with all the loose ends of this dizzy affair *if* I'm ever gonna make heads or tails of it.

With her "woman's intuition," Effie feels protective of Brigid (rating her as "all right") - having been beguiled by Miss O'Shaughnessy's persuasive smile and manner. Effie agrees to let the endangered Brigid stay at her own apartment for safekeeping since Brigid refuses to return to her own place. After he phones the DA's office to set up an appointment for 2:30 that afternoon, the dark image of Iva Archer shows up in front of Spade. "Mad, crazy with jealousy," Iva admits she sent the police to Spade's apartment the previous night and begs for his forgiveness. He wonders if she had murdered Miles and whether she has an alibi:

Spade: By the way, where were you the night Miles was murdered?

Iva: Home. (He disagrees by shaking his head.) I was!

Spade: No, but if that's your story, it's all right with me.

Impatient to deal with her and revealing his misogynistic tendencies, he sends her along on her way. His ringing phone brings an invitation to see Gutman immediately.

Spade proceeds to Gutman's hotel suite (Room 12C), where he is greeted at the door by Gutman's ferretty gungsel, Wilmer. [Cairo and Gutman are both members of an international gang of crooks.] Spade meets Cairo's partner, Kaspar Gutman or the 'Fat Man' (Sydney Greenstreet in his film debut at the age of 61), wearing a black penguin-like waistcoat. He puts both of his hands on Spade's right arm as he leads him to a chair. In their first meeting together, a classic scene, Gutman is supremely interested in retrieving the bird and outfoxing Spade, as he speaks in oratorical fashion and peppers his words with aphorisms. Likewise, Spade is intent on trapping Archer's killer and discovering how Gutman is involved in the conspiracy to acquire the falcon.

Gutman's great bulk (enormous gut) is emphasized by low-angle shots in front of a curtained window, and his cultured talk conceals his disregard for everything but the bird. He pours Spade a stiff drink, emphasizes the importance of straight-talking, betrays some homosexual tendencies ("I'm a man who likes talking to a man...") and waits for Spade's reaction, but there isn't one. Spade explains that he is acting on his own behalf - he's not there "as Miss O'Shaughnessy's representative":

Gutman: We begin well, sir. I distrust a man who says 'when'. If he's got to be careful not to drink too much, it's because he's not to be trusted when he does. Well, sir, here's to plain speaking and clear understanding. (They drink.) You're a close-mouthed man.

Spade: No, I like to talk.

Gutman: Better and better. I distrust a close-mouthed man. He generally picks the wrong time to talk and says the wrong things. (Gutman offers Spade a cigar.) Talking's something you can't do judiciously unless you keep in practice. Now, sir, we'll talk if you like. I'll tell you right out - I'm a man who likes talking to a man who likes to talk.

Spade: Swell. Will we talk about the black bird?

Gutman (chuckling): You're the man for me, sir. No beating about the bush, right to the point. Let's talk about the black bird, by all means. But first, answer me a question. Are you here as Miss O'Shaughnessy's representative?

Spade: Well, there's nothing certain either way. It depends.

Gutman: It depends on? Maybe it depends on Joel Cairo.

Spade: Maybe.

Gutman: The question is, then, which you represent. It'll be one or the other.

Spade: I didn't say so.

Gutman: Who else is there?

Spade: There's me.

Gutman: Ah. That's wonderful sir, wonderful. I do like a man who tells you right out he's looking out for himself. Don't we all? I don't trust a man who says he's not.

In their competitive jockeying for position, Spade compliments Gutman for being the only one to fully understand the nature of the "black bird" and know its real value ("You know what it is"). Spade also reveals that he knows the bird's whereabouts, but waits for Gutman to release further information first. And then he has a temper tantrum - he smashes his drink glass to the floor, accuses Gutman of wasting his time, and storms out of the suite with a threatening ultimatum:

Spade: Uh-huh. Now, let's talk about the black bird.

Gutman: Lets. Mr. Spade, have you any conception of how much money can be got for that black bird?

Spade: No.

Gutman: Well, sir, if I told you - if I told you half, you'd call me a liar.

Spade: No, not even if I thought so. But you tell me what it is and I'll figure out the profit.

Gutman: (chuckles) You mean you don't know what that bird is?

Spade: Oh, I know what it's supposed to look like. (Coldly) And I know the value in human life you people put on it.

Gutman: She didn't tell you what it is? Cairo didn't either?

Spade: He offered me ten thousand for it.

Gutman (dismissively): Ten thousand. Dollars, mind you, not even pounds. Do they know what that bird is, sir? What is your impression?

Spade: Oh, there's not very much to go by. Cairo didn't say he did and he didn't say he didn't. She said she didn't, but, uh, I took it for granted she was lying.

Gutman: Not an injudicious thing to do. (Smiles with purpose) If they don't know, I'm the only one in the whole wide, sweet world who does.

Spade: Swell. When you've told me, that'll make two of us.

Gutman: Mathematically correct, sir, but I don't know for certain that I'm going to tell you.

Spade: Oh, don't be foolish. You know what it is and I know where it is. That's why I'm here.

Gutman: Well, sir, where is it? You see, I must tell you what I know but you won't tell me what you know. That's hardly equitable, sir. No, no, I don't think we can do business along those lines.

Spade (violently angry): (He tosses his cigar away in disgust) Now think again and think fast. I told that gungel of yours you'd have to talk to me before you're through. I'm telling you now, you'll talk to me today or you are through! (Throwing his drink to the floor.) What are you wasting my time for? I can get along without you! And another thing: Keep that gungel out of my way when you're makin' up your mind! I'll kill him if you don't, I'll kill him!

Gutman (calmly): Well, sir, I must say you have a most violent temper.

Spade (leaving): Think it over. You've got till 5 o'clock, then you're either in or out! For keeps!

Their conversation reaches a standoff because neither party is willing to divulge what he knows first. Feigning impatient greed, Spade is infuriated that Gutman will not reveal more about the bird and gives Gutman until later that evening to talk. Smiling and laughing to himself in the hallway while departing, Spade is self-satisfied with his dramatic false display of rage as a man with "a most violent temper." Yet he glances down at his hands at the elevator, noticing that they are visibly trembling as a result of his violent outburst. He enters a descending elevator just as Cairo steps off the other ascending car without seeing him.

In the next scene at the District Attorney's office after being pulled in, Spade is questioned about the two murders by a strait-laced Bryan (his responses are recorded by a stenographer), but he refuses to bend to any questions. He admits, however, that "*Everybody has something to conceal.*" In a scene similar in tone to the one with Gutman, he tells them off with a provocative tone, knowing that they have nothing on him. He demands that the law leave him alone and not intimidate him any further so that he can continue his investigation into the murder cases and clear his name:

And as far as I can see, my best chance of clearing myself from the trouble you're trying to make for me is by bringing in the murderers all tied up. And the only chance I've got of catching them and tying them up and bringing them in is by staying as far away as possible from you and the police because you'd only gum up the works...Now if you want to go to the board and tell them I'm obstructing justice and ask them to revoke my license - hop to it! You tried it once before and it didn't get you anything but a good laugh all around...And I don't want any more of these informal talks. I have nothing to say to you or the police. And

I'm tired of being called things by every crackpot on the city payrolls. So if you want to see me, pinch me or subpoena me or something and I'll come down with my lawyer. I'll see you at the inquest - maybe.

On a sunny street outside his office building, Spade is summoned by Wilmer to meet with Gutman again. Presumably, the 'Fat Man' has decided to reveal the mystery of the bird. Wilmer, a caricature of a young-faced killer, an adolescent in a world of real killers, conceals his guns with his hands stuck in his coat pockets. Spade enjoys needling the weak gunman. Wilmer threatens Spade after another insult:

Wilmer: Keep on ridin' me. They're gonna be pickin' iron out of your liver.

Spade: (laughing) The cheaper the crook, the gaudier the patter, huh?

In the hotel corridor outside Gutman's hotel room suite, Spade moves behind Wilmer and uses the gunsel's own coat to pin his arms and then take his guns away. He tells a disgruntled Wilmer: "Come on. This will put you in solid with your boss." In front of Gutman, he embarrasses and humiliates the bungling Wilmer by handing the weapons over to the gunman's boss, explaining: "Here. You shouldn't let him go around with these. I know he might get himself hurt...A crippled newsie took 'em away from him, but I made him give them back!" Gutman appreciatively compliments Spade with a deep belly laugh - and one of his many trademark 'by gad' statements [Censors had replaced the screenplay's 'By God']:

By gad, Sir. You *are* a chap worth knowing, an amazing character...

Gutman, now wearing a robe with silk lapels, dismisses Wilmer to the back room and again sits down with Spade. Over drinks (that are replenished by Gutman), they "talk about the black bird." Spade finally learns from the eloquent criminal all about the exotic history, origin, and value of the valuable black bird statuette. It was made in 1539 from gold and jewels from the coffers of the crusading Knights of Rhodes (the order of the Hospital of St. John of Jerusalem): "We all know the Holy Wars to them were largely a matter of loot." Buccaneer pirates stole the jewel-encrusted bird when it was sent by galley ships from the Knights of Rhodes to Emperor Charles V of Spain, as a tribute, in appreciation for his granting them the island of Malta: "It never reached Spain." Then in 1713 after its long disappearance, the bird turned up again in Sicily. In 1840, it re-appeared in Paris, where by that time, it had acquired a painted coat of black enamel "so that it looked nothing more than a fairly interesting black statuette." Afterwards, it "kicked around Paris for over three score years by private owners too stupid to see what it was under the skin."

Years later in 1923, a Greek antique dealer found the falcon in an "obscure shop" and recognized its real value. While researching the bird's history, the dealer re-enameled the bird with another coat of black paint. The dealer's establishment was burglarized and he was murdered - and the falcon was stolen again, before Gutman could acquire it. Gutman reveals that in his passionate, obsessive quest for the last 17 years ("I'm a man not easily discouraged when I want something"), he has been trying to locate the bird - and often has just missed getting his hands on it. The falcon was then traced to the home of a Russian general (named Kemidov) in an Istanbul suburb. Gutman offered to purchase it and sent hired agents [Brigid and Thursby] to get it, but failed because they betrayed him:

I made him an offer, so I sent him some - ah, agents, to get it. Well, sir, they got it - and I haven't got it - *BUT* I'm going to get it.

Gutman believes that the owner of the black bird with "a clear title" is the one who owns it "by right of possession." He sits next to Spade, touches his knee repeatedly, and learns that Spade can produce the bird in a couple of days. So the Fat Man promises to offer Spade \$50,000: \$25,000 for the bird's delivery and either another \$25,000 later on or one-fourth of the proceeds from its sale (the more valuable of the two options). He gloats while speculating on the bird's real value - possibly between a quarter of a million and a million dollars:

Gutman: That would amount to a vastly greater sum.

Spade: How much greater?

Gutman: Who knows? Should we say a hundred thousand? Would you believe me if I name a sum that seems a probable minimum?

Spade: Why not?

Gutman: What would you say to a quarter of a million?

Spade: And you think the dingus is worth a million, huh?...That's a lot of dough....Minimum, huh? What's the maximum?

Gutman: The maximum I refuse to guess. You'd think me crazy. I don't know. No telling how high it could go, sir. It is the one and only truth about it.

As Spade thinks of his options and ponders the falcon's vast worth, his vision unexpectedly blurs. Drugged by Gutman during the long, drawn-out tale so that the knockout drug will take effect, Spade stands up, staggers, lurches forward and knocks into a small flower table as he grabs his hat. Wilmer is called from the back room - he trips the unsteady Spade and sends him sprawling to the floor where he passes out before he can leave. As the conspirators (Cairo, Gutman, and Wilmer) hastily depart in search of the black bird, Wilmer savagely kicks Spade in the right side of his head.

Later on after several hours (darkness has fallen), Spade regains consciousness. He calls Effie to discover that Brigid didn't show up as planned. When he tells her to go to his office, he adds some scolding ("Let's do something right for a change"). In a search of Gutman's hotel suite, Spade finds a vital clue - a newspaper clipping with a notice of Shipping News. Under "Arriving Today," 5:35 pm - *La Paloma* from Hong Kong has been circled. Spade rushes to the docks just in time to find that the abandoned ship is on fire. One of the dock officers (Emory Parnell) tells Spade that the crew and passengers have survived. Spade then returns to his office, where Effie tends to his bruised face, and he speculates that he was bluffed: "Maybe they went down to the ship, maybe they didn't."

Suddenly, a gaunt, dying man with a black hat pulled down over his face staggers into Spade's inner office to deliver the black bird, crudely wrapped in newspapers. Effie screams. As he clutches and then drops the bundled-up bird, collapsing dead, the man murmurs: "You know...the falcon." Spade searches the wallet of the dead man who has been shot to death and discovers it is *La Paloma's* Merchant Marine Captain Jacobi. [Walter Huston, director Huston's father and a veteran character actor, unbilled in the credits, appears in the cameo role as a good luck gesture for his son's directoral debut. He would re-appear as one of the main characters in his son's *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre (1948)*, and between the two of them, they won three of the film's four Academy Awards nominations.] With a wide, lascivious grin, affected like so many others on the search for the bird, Spade unwraps the newspapers. Revealing that he isn't much unlike the other villainous and greedy characters, he exults to Effie that he possesses the valuable, coveted statuette: "We've got it, angel. We've got it." He simultaneously grabs Effie's wrist, causing her pain, as she squirms: "You're hurting..."

While they discuss this turn of events, Brigid phones, and gives her location: 26 Ancho Street in Burlingame. But then she screams, signalling that she is in trouble - and the line goes dead. Effie interprets that she is in danger and needs Spade's immediate assistance ("Go help her, Sam"). She thinks that the Captain was helping Brigid and they killed him, and Brigid is the next target. Spade orders Effie to call the police after he is gone and tell them how the captain died - but omitting the part about the falcon ("the bundle"). As Spade leaves, he pats Effie on the arm: "You're a good man, sister."

Spade takes the newspaper-wrapped falcon under his arm to a baggage parcel area of the Union Bus Terminal and checks it, then mails himself the claim check stub - addressed to his own postal address at Box 589, P. O. Station C. in the City. Spade hires a taxi to take him to rescue Brigid at 26 Ancho Street, but it is revealed to be an empty lot (for sale) next to a Grocery and Meat Market. He suspects that she tricked him with a fake address - a "bum steer" and "hooley" to get him out of the way. Spade realizes that Brigid has always been a psychopathic liar and that she is as deeply involved in the pursuit of the bird as everyone else.

When he returns and is entering the outer doors of his San Francisco apartment, Spade finds a weakened and breathless Brigid waiting (and hiding) for him in a doorway up the street. The two of them head up the

elevator to his apartment - when he flicks on the lights, Wilmer is hiding and lying in wait with gun drawn behind the front door. Gutman (seated) and Cairo are in the living room waiting for them.

Cleverly, he brings together the alliance of self-interested, greedy falcon-seekers to find out the true story. In the tense, final sequence in Spade's apartment, Wilmer wants to frisk Spade, but he won't allow it: "Take your paws off me or I'll make you use that gun. Ask your boss if he wants me shot up before we talk." Gutman calls off his gungel: "Never mind, Wilmer." Tempted by the financial allure of the bird, Spade asks for his first payment for the falcon ("Are you ready to make the first payment, and take the falcon off my hands?") - Gutman tests Spade and hands him an envelope with \$10,000 - less than the \$25,000 promised earlier. Gutman tells Spade why the cash he is handing him is far less than he offered earlier:

Gutman: Yes, sir, we were, but this is genuine coin of the realm. With a dollar of this you can buy ten dollars of talk. And they're more of us to be taken care of now.

Spade: That may be, but I've got the falcon.

Cairo: (sternly) ...you may have the falcon, but we certainly have you.

Rather than talk about money issues, Spade is more concerned about finding a believable "fall guy" - someone that the police can pin the murders on. [Spade counts three murders - including the Captain's killing. But Cairo counts only two - Thursby killed Archer.] Spade shrewdly proposes two-bit gungel Wilmer as an appropriate, logical choice for a 'fall guy':

Spade: I'm in this up to my neck, Gutman. I've got to find somebody - a victim - when the time comes. If I don't, I'll be it. Let's give 'em the gungel. He actually did shoot Thursby and Jacobi, didn't he? Anyway, he's made to order for the part, look at him. Let's give him to 'em.

Gutman: (bursting out laughing) **By gad, sir, you are a character, that you are. There's never any telling what you'll say or do next, except that it's bound to be something astonishing.**

At first, Gutman refuses to hand over Wilmer - feeling indebted to his 'son.' [At the time of the novel's writing by Hammett, 'gungel' strictly meant a young homosexual partner kept by an older man. Its meaning was stretched in the film to include Wilmer's function as a gun-toting bodyguard.]

I feel towards Wilmer here just exactly as if he were my own son.

He is concerned that Wilmer would tell police "every last detail" about the falcon. But Spade reassures Gutman that the police won't listen to Wilmer in their eagerness to convict him ("I'll guarantee you nobody will do anything about it"). Wilmer is quietly seething with internal rage at Spade for even suggesting his guilt: "Mighty funny." Sam reassures Brigid who sits nervously to the side: "How do you feel now, any better precious?...Don't be [frightened]. Nothing very bad is going to happen here." Spade convinces Gutman that the DA "standing on his head" could easily convict Wilmer. The gungel is infuriated by this ultimate threat and moves close to Spade with his gun:

Get up on your feet. I've taken all the riding from you I'm gonna take. Get up and shoot it out.

After Gutman calls off Wilmer and refuses to give him up, Spade suggests other fall-guy alternatives - he nominates Cairo - and even Brigid:

Spade: (pointing) Give them Cairo.

Gutman: (chuckling) Well, by gad, sir.

Cairo: (incensed) And suppose we give them you or Miss O'Shaughnessy? How about that, huh?

Spade: You want the falcon. I've got it. The fall guy's part of the price I'm asking. As for Miss O'Shaughnessy, if you think she can be rigged for the part, I'm perfectly willing to discuss it with you.

When Gutman threatens to torture Spade (a "means of persuasion") to find the falcon's location, Spade cleverly negotiates and bets that Gutman won't gamble foolishly and kill him. To get at the truth, Spade realizes the fine line he is walking as he pragmatically analyzes the delicacy and dangerous nature of his alternatives:

Spade: If you kill me, how are you gonna get the bird? And if I know you can't afford to kill me, how are you gonna scare me into giving it to you?

Gutman: Well, sir, there are other means of persuasion besides killing and threatening to kill.

Spade: Yes, that's, that's true. But - they're none of 'em any good unless the threat of death is behind them - do you see what I mean? If you start something, I'll make it a matter of your having to kill me or call it off.

Gutman: (chuckling) That's an attitude, sir, that calls for the most delicate judgment on both sides. 'Cause as you know, sir, in the heat of action, men are likely to forget where their best interests lie and that their emotions carry them away.

Spade: Then the trick from my angle is to make my play strong enough to tie you up, but not make you mad enough to bump me off against your better judgment.

Gutman: By gad, sir, you *are* a character.

Cairo whispers into Gutman's ear - lending his final judgment to Spade's suggestion to give up Wilmer. Spade announces the stakes:

(To Wilmer) Six, two and even, they're selling you out, sonny. (To Gutman) I hope you're not letting yourself be influenced by the guns these pocket-edition desperados are waving around, because I've practiced taking guns away from these boys before so we'll have no trouble there.

Acutely paranoid that he is going to be offered up by his side, a furious Wilmer (after being called a "pocket-edition desperado" by Spade) again threatens Spade with his gun. Spade, who correctly claims that he had "practiced taking guns away from these boys before," knocks him out cold and confiscates his gun. In an agreed-upon exchange, Gutman will give up Wilmer as the fall guy and Spade promises to deliver the "dingus" the next morning. Gutman summarizes their deal:

In exchange for the \$10,000 and Wilmer, you'll give us the falcon and an hour or two of grace...

To straighten things out in his mind ("so I can be sure the parts that don't fit are covered up"), Spade additionally demands candid answers from Gutman about the plot information that he had missed:

Why did Wilmer shoot Thursby, and why and where and how did he shoot Captain Jacobi?

- Brigid left the falcon with Jacobi in Hong Kong and came to San Francisco with Thursby. Thursby was Miss O'Shaughnessy's loyal ally - so eliminating Thursby would be an intimidating show of force for Brigid and persuade her to ally with them: "We believe that disposing of him in the manner we did would cause Miss O'Shaughnessy to stop and think that perhaps it would be best to patch up her differences with us regarding the Falcon." Gutman had tried to "make a deal" with Thursby before "giving him the works" [Wilmer was ordered to kill him]. Gutman reveals that he spoke to Thursby the very night of his death, but failed to reach an agreement: "I could do nothing with him - he was quite determined to be loyal to Miss O'Shaughnessy. So Wilmer followed him back to the hotel and did what he did."

[This fact contradicts what Brigid had said about being betrayed by Thursby, and it places Thursby away from the Archer murder scene, thus placing the guilt for Archer's murder upon Brigid herself. She appears anxious during these revelations.]

- Captain Jacobi's death was "entirely Miss O'Shaughnessy's fault," according to Gutman. After Cairo had run into a string of bad luck with Spade, he "recognized the mutual advantage of pooling forces" and "with nice judgment" allied himself back with Gutman. Brigid (and Thursby) deceived Gutman and Cairo in Istanbul, Turkey. She fled with him from Turkey to Hong Kong (and then to the US) - trailed by everyone. Cairo read the docking notice in the newspaper about *La Paloma*. He surmised that the Captain would be delivering the falcon to Brigid when the ship from Hong Kong arrived. Cairo had also remembered that he heard in Hong Kong that Brigid and Jacobi were seen together: "She had given the bird to Jacobi to bring here for her."
- Spade was 'slipped a mickey' to keep him out of the way, so Gutman and Cairo could surprise Jacobi and Brigid at the dock - "to spare ourselves any possible embarrassment." Cairo, Gutman, and Wilmer found Captain Jacobi with Brigid on the ship. She agreed to give up the black bird for a price at Gutman's hotel, but she never arrived, as promised: "In many ways, the conference was difficult, but we finally persuaded Miss O'Shaughnessy to come to terms, or so we thought. We then left the boat and set out for my hotel where I was to pay Miss O'Shaughnessy and receive the bird...Enroute, she, Captain Jacobi and the falcon slipped completely through our fingers. It was neatly done, sir. Indeed it was."
- Wilmer, while trying to find the falcon on board the boat, was the one who ineptly set the fire on *La Paloma*: "No doubt, he was careless with matches."
- Cairo and Gutman caught up with Captain Jacobi and Brigid at her apartment, with Wilmer covering the fire escape. As the Captain (carrying the falcon) attempted to elude them in flight down the fire escape, Wilmer shot him, but the rugged sea captain still made his escape: "While she was asking us who we were through the door and we were telling her, we heard a window go up. Wilmer shot Jacobi as he was coming down the fire escape. Shot him more than once. Jacobi was too tough to fall or drop the falcon. He climbed down the rest of the way, knocked Wilmer over, and ran off."
- Under harsh questioning, Brigid was "persuaded" to tell them where she had told Jacobi to take the falcon - to Spade's office. She was further "persuaded" to try and lure Spade away from his office to Burlingame with a distressed phone call - before Captain Jacobi arrived. But the call was late in coming and the bird was already delivered into Spade's hands: "You had the falcon before we could reach it." The gang then reconvened in Spade's apartment to await his arrival, while Brigid hid in the shadows outside.

After Wilmer regains consciousness before being sacrificed as the 'fall guy,' Gutman fondly tells him:

Well, Wilmer, I'm sorry indeed to lose you, but I want you to know I couldn't be fonder of you if you were my own son. Well, if you lose a son, it's possible to get another. There's only *one* Maltese falcon. When you're young, you simply don't understand these things.

When Brigid leaves the room to make coffee, Gutman requires that she hand over the money envelope with \$10,000: "Business should be transacted in a business-like manner." Gutman examines the envelope, finding only nine bills instead of ten. He accuses Brigid of taking one of the bills and *for once*, she honestly denies having done so. After considering the accusation for a moment, Spade knows she didn't take the money - he suspects Gutman of deceptively palming one of the thousand dollar bills. Gutman is forced to turn over the bill - he merrily laughs and jokes about it as an example of gamesmanship.

Spade: You palmed it!

Gutman: Yes sir, that I did. I must have my little joke now and then. And I was curious to know what you'd do in a situation of this sort. I must say, you passed the test with flying colors.

Spade receives the envelope with \$10,000 - the first installment of payment. The Fat Man advises that Spade be untrusting of Brigid and not give her much of the money ("...don't give her as much as she thinks she ought to have...Be careful."). But Spade won't let Gutman feel superior to Brigid's deceptive nature. He asks, rhetorically: "Dangerous?" Spade calls Effie with "the plot" - he asks her to get the claim check in an envelope at the post office and pick up the "bundle" and bring it to him at his apartment.

The next morning, Effie delivers the Falcon and it is placed on a table in front of the conspirators. The bundle is feverishly unwrapped by Gutman - he speaks a final word before disclosing its contents: "Now, *after seventeen years...*" Gutman stands the statue up, turns it slowly, and strokes and caresses it with lascivious lust. The others salivate at the sight of the valuable, ebony statuette. To "make sure" it is genuine, he repeatedly and frantically scrapes and hacks at the leaden bird with his penknife, marking it and peeling back layers - horribly realizing that its surface can be scarred and that the coated bird doesn't contain jewels. In total frustration, he declares memorably that it is a leaden forgery:

Fake! It's a phony! It-it's lead! It's lead! It's a fake!

Everyone is disappointed - Spade blames Brigid, but she denies substituting the bird, insisting that it is the bird she got from the Russian general Kemidov. In an eruptive, hysterical, almost tearful outburst, Cairo rages at fellow crook Gutman for being tricked and for finding a fraudulent, counterfeit black statuette. Cairo blames him for his earlier attempt to buy it - a purchase that revealed its real value to others:

You, it's you who bungled it, you and your *stupid* attempt to buy it. Kemidov found out how valuable it was. No wonder we had such an easy time stealing it. You, you *imbecile!* You *bloated* idiot! You *stupid* fathead!

Cairo collapses into an arm chair, blubbing and whimpering. Gutman rubs his fat, sweaty neck.

Recomposing himself and accepting another failed attempt, Gutman vows to continue his pursuit of the real bird that is still in Russian hands: "Well sir, what do you suggest? We stand here and shed tears and call each other names, or shall we go to Istanbul?" Gutman prepares to leave with Cairo, instantly his companion again, to continue their quest for the real falcon. They decide to spend yet another year on its trail by going to Istanbul ("We must spend another year on the quest. Well sir, it will be an additional expenditure in time of only five and fifteen-seventenths per cent"). In the confusion, they realize that Wilmer has escaped from the apartment. Spade guffaws: "A swell lot of thieves."

Gutman holds a gun on Spade and demands the return of his \$10,000 in the envelope. Spade cooperates, but calmly keeps \$1,000 of the money for his "time and expenses." Gutman attempts to coax the detective and procure his assistance on a trip to Istanbul to continue the search:

Quite frankly sir, I'd like to have you along. You're a man of nice judgment and many resources.

When he is turned down, Gutman expresses magnanimity in defeat, and his regrets to Spade that there isn't going to be any fall guy. He leaves the falcon on the table as a memento - bequeathed to Brigid.

I leave the *rara avis* on the table there, as a little memento - heh, heh.

The overweight Gutman waddles out the door with his familiar penguin-like, waistcoated torso jutting forth - he leaves with fellow crook Cairo.

After they have left, Spade phones Sgt. Tom Polhaus and reports them - the police are to pick up Gutman, Cairo, and Wilmer on their way to the Alexandria Hotel before they "blow town." (The Sergeant is told that Wilmer, ordered by Gutman, killed both Thursby and Captain Jacobi as part of his obsessive quest for the

Maltese Falcon. Polhaus is also cautioned about the reckless gunsel: "And watch yourself when you go up against the kid.")

Sam is left with one final loose end - the deceitful, ruthless, and amoral Brigid. He turns to her after the call and urgently tells her that Gutman will talk once he is apprehended - and they will both be implicated: "They'll talk when they're nailed about us. We're sitting on dynamite. We've only got minutes to get set for the police." Spade has it all figured out - and convinces her to talk and lead him toward the real truth. In the climactic confrontation with Brigid, he pushes mercilessly for a confession of murder from her, expressing his over-riding motive for self-protection and preservation. If she confesses the truth, then he is released from the gallows's rope. Brigid admits her crime - she killed Miles as he suspected:

Spade: Now give me all of it fast. When you first came to my office, why did you want Thursby shadowed?

Brigid: I told you, Sam. I thought he was betraying me and I wanted to find out.

Spade: That's a lie...You wanted to get rid of him before Jacobi came with the loot so you wouldn't have to split it with him. Isn't that so? What was your scheme?

Brigid: I thought if he knew someone was following him, he'd be frightened into going away.

Spade: Miles wasn't clumsy enough to be spotted the first night. You told Thursby he was being followed.

Brigid: I told him. I told him. Yes, but please believe me, Sam. I wouldn't have told him if I thought Floyd would kill him.

Spade: If you thought he wouldn't kill Miles, you were right, angel. Miles hadn't many brains but he'd had too many years experience as a detective to be caught like that by a man he was shadowing up a blind alley with his gun in his hip and his overcoat buttoned. But he'd have gone up there with you, angel. He was just dumb enough for that! He would have looked you up and down and licked his lips and gone, grinning from ear to ear. And then you could have stood as close to him as you liked in the dark and put a hole through him with a gun you got from Thursby that evening.

Spade (impatiently): The police will be here any minute. Now talk!

Brigid: Oh, why do you accuse me?

Spade: This isn't the time for that school girl act. We're both of us sitting under the gallows. Now, why did you shoot Miles?

Brigid: I didn't mean to at first. Really, I didn't. But when I found out that Floyd couldn't be frightened, I...oh, I can't look at you and tell you this... (hiding her head in her hands)

Spade: You thought Thursby would tackle Miles, and one or the other of them would go down. If Thursby was killed, you were rid of him. If it was Miles, you'd see that Thursby was caught and set up for it, isn't that right?

Brigid (sobbing): Something like that.

Spade: When you found that Thursby wasn't going to tackle him, you borrowed his gun and did it yourself, right? And when you heard Thursby was shot, you knew Gutman was in town, and you knew you needed another protector, somebody to fill Thursby's boots. So you came back to me.

Brigid: Yes. But oh, sweetheart. It wasn't only that. I'd have come back to you sooner or later. From the very first instant I saw you, I knew...

[He learns that she hired them as detectives and then told Thursby that he was being followed. She had hoped that Thursby would kill - or be killed - by Archer. She had, it seems, intended the murder of Archer to be pinned on Thursby, her partner, so that she wouldn't have to split the booty with him once Jacobi docked on *La Paloma*. However, Thursby wouldn't abide by her plan to commit violence, so she murdered Spade's partner Archer herself. She borrowed Thursby's gun and lured Archer to his death - in order to incriminate and implicate her accomplice Floyd Thursby. And then, when Thursby was murdered shortly thereafter, she understood that Gutman and Cairo were on her trail again, and she turned to Spade to be her new "protector."]

To save herself, Brigid attempts to throw herself at Spade once again, hoping that he will continue to protect her and conceal her crime. With a fluttery, bogus innocence, she wildly professes the existence of her love for him and begs him not to turn her in. Relishing her fear, he coldly and flatly tells her:

Well, if you get a good break, you'll be out of Tehachapi in 20 years and you can come back to me then. I hope they don't hang you, precious, by that sweet neck... Yes, angel, *I'm gonna send you over*. The chances are you'll get off with life. That means if you're a good girl, you'll be out in 20 years. I'll be waiting for you. If they hang you, I'll always remember you.

At first, Brigid thinks his threat to turn her over to the police is only for dramatic effect. She responds by accusing him of playing with her and tries to laugh away the threat: "Don't, Sam. Don't say it even in fun. Ha, ha, ha. Oh, I was frightened for a minute. I really thought... You do such wild and unpredictable things." Almost hateful of her, Spade tells her that he is resolved:

Spade: Don't be silly. You're taking the fall.

Brigid: You've been playing with me. Just pretending you care to trap me like this. You didn't care at all. You don't love me!

Spade: *I won't play the sap for you!*

Brigid: Oh you know it's not like that. You can't say that.

Spade: Do you ever fight square with me for half an hour at a stretch since I've known you?

Brigid: You know down deep in your heart and in spite of anything I've done I love you.

Spade: I don't care who loves who!! I won't play the sap for you. I won't walk in Thursby's - and I don't know how many other's - footsteps. You killed Miles and you're going over for it.

Brigid: How can you do this to me, Sam? Surely, Mr. Archer wasn't so much to you as... (crying)

Brigid is stunned by the realization that Spade is going to turn her into the police for Miles' murder. Even though he loves her, Spade resolutely describes his professional integrity and his committed belief to adhere to a strict code of honor among detectives. It is to his own self-motivated, self-protective advantage ('good business') to discourage the murder of fellow detectives - it protects his own life and business. This explains why he is turning her in. [Spade, however, is giving lip service to the code. He cares nothing about avenging her victim or the illegality of her act. And he conducted a casual affair with his partner's wife!]:

Spade: When a man's partner's killed, he's supposed to do something about it. It doesn't make any difference what you thought of him, he was your partner, and you're supposed to do something about it. And it happens we're in the detective business. Well, when one of your organization gets killed, it's - it's bad business to let the killer get away with it. Bad all around. Bad for every detective everywhere.

Brigid: You don't expect me to think that these things you're saying are sufficient reasons for sending me to the...

Spade (interrupting): Wait'll I'm through. Then you can talk.

At a crossroads, he discusses how he weighed the pros and cons of both alternatives, ultimately deciding to turn her in and let her take the fall. After weighing all the reasons for turning her in or risking letting her go, Spade admits that he can't completely deny his love for her. But the main factor that makes it impossible to turn his back on Miles' murder (and let her go) is that he distrusts her treachery and murderous, lying nature - he is not sure that someday she might kill him, playing him as the sucker:

I've no earthly reason to think I can trust you, and, if I do this and get away with it, you'll have something on me that you can use whenever you want to. Since I've got something on you, I couldn't be sure that you wouldn't put a hole in me some day. All those are on one side. Maybe some of them are unimportant - I won't argue about that - but look at the *number* of them. And what have we got on the other side? All we've got is that maybe you love me and maybe I love you.

Although he feels emotionally involved with her, Spade denies his feelings and refuses to let himself love Brigid, because he admits that her manipulative nature dangerously outweighs the possibilities of mutual love. It is too great a risk for him. In the end, he shows Brigid the same disdain that he maintained toward Archer's widow:

Brigid: You know whether you love me or not.

Spade: Maybe I do. Well, I'll have some rotten nights after I've sent you over, but that will pass. If all I've said doesn't mean anything to you, then forget it and we'll make it just this: I won't because all of me wants to, regardless of consequences, and because you counted on that with me the same as you counted on that with all the others.

Too late, Brigid learns that Spade is not as crooked as people suppose him to be, although people talk that way simply because it is good for business. She insinuates that his determination to put her away might have been different if the falcon had been real and he had been handsomely paid: "Would you have done this to me if the falcon had been real, and you'd got your money?" Uncertain about the criminal temptations facing him, Spade retorts that a lot more money may have tipped the scales in Brigid's favor:

Don't be too sure I'm as crooked as I'm supposed to be. That sort of reputation might be good business, bringing high-priced jobs and making it easier to deal with the enemy, but a lot more money would have been one more item on your side of the scale.

Brigid maintains that love could never be outweighed by the factors he has outlined: "If you'd loved me, you wouldn't have needed any more on that side." She offers him one last kiss.

After all her timid, transparent, agonized protests, the police arrive after apprehending the departing crooks, and Brigid is handed over to the cops for the murder of Miles Archer. To divest himself of all the evil antagonists and their environment, Spade also hands over to the police Wilmer's gun, the \$1,000 bill given him by Gutman (lying to Polhaus that he was bribed with it in exchange for his silence: "the thousand dollars I was supposed to be bribed with"), and the fatal black bird - "this black statuette here that all the fuss was about."

The cold-hearted, tough Spade has slickly and skillfully manipulated all the major characters in the film, descended into the netherworld of crime and decadence (suspected as being indistinguishable from that world by the police), flirted with the evil inherent in the guise of an attractive woman (that he has affectionately called Angel and Precious), and slipped away from evil's grasp at the last moment by refusing to identify with the group of accomplices - all because of his self-protective instincts and commitment to protecting society.

Brigid is escorted out the door and led away to the hallway's elevator by Dundy. The lieutenant openly appears frustrated and disappointed ("broken-hearted") that Spade is not among the guilty (i.e., that he didn't kill Archer or Thursby). Spade asks: "Well, shall we be getting down to the hall?"

Police Sergeant Polhaus delivers one of the film's final lines when he looks down at the heavy black bogus statuette and lifts it up as they are leaving the room: "It's heavy. What is it?" Spade responds grimly while touching the bird [paraphrasing from Prospero's speech in Act IV of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*]:

The, uh, stuff that dreams are made of.

The actual final word of the film is the detective's puzzled response, "Huh?" Spade takes the statuette from Polhaus' hands, cradles it, and walks to the stairs in the hall.

In a memorable parting close-up, Brigid is tearfully being taken away next to Dundy, and waiting in the elevator for the gates to close. The steel cage is pulled in front of her like the bars on a captive's cell, framing her frightened, motionless, lonely face staring fixedly between the bars of the gate. The outer door shuts (paralleling the closing of a theatre's curtains at the conclusion of a performance) and the elevator drops from view - she disappears down the elevator shaft. Spade walks off-stage by taking the stairs with Polhaus.

The case is closed.