



The Dain Curse, The Glass Key, and Selected Stories

Dashiell Hammett

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(Book Jacket Status: Jacketed)

One of the most popular American writers of the twentieth century, Dashiell Hammett gave us crime fiction stripped down to its most subtle and searing essentials and, at the same time, elevated to literature. The diamond-sharp prose and artfully manipulated intrigue for which he is known are on full display in the four classic short stories and two riveting novels published here in one volume.

The Continental Op, Hammett's anonymous antihero, was the indelible prototype for generations of tough-guy detectives. Single-minded, emotionally detached, and decidedly unglamorous, he narrates the four linked stories collected here—"The House in Turk Street," "The Girl with the Silver Eyes," "The Big Knockover," and "\$106,000 Blood Money." In **THE DAIN CURSE**, the Continental Op takes on his most bizarre case, that of a wealthy young woman who appears to be the victim of a deadly family curse. And **THE GLASS KEY**—Hammett's own favorite among his works—features his most cynical and morally ambiguous hero, Ned Beaumont, caught in a hard-boiled love triangle.

The Dain Curse, The Glass Key, and Selected Stories Details

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Author : Dashiell Hammett

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From Reader Review The Dain Curse, The Glass Key, and Selected Stories for online ebook

John says

What an incredible writer Mr. Hammett truly was! Every story was written in the style of an incident report (which I do as part of my job duties) ... and the twists and surprise endings made these whodunnits thoroughly entertaining to read.

Stuart says

It comes as a surprise when reading these two novels and short stories and you come across a cliché of detective fiction and suddenly realise that this is the original, where the cliché came from. You can see the genesis of so many other books, films and television programmes here. For instance, The Glass Key must have inspired practically all of Miller's Crossing. Hard men doing a job and wanting to do it right - morality is a peripheral consideration, and so quite often seems personal safety. They, of course, bear little relation to reality but that doesn't matter at all. The quality of these is mixed but there is something interesting in all of them - The Glass Key is by far the best. Great books to read in between deeper fare.

Barbara says

the Dain Curse is way off balance. rambling for pages and pages, tying everything up at the end in an unlikely convoluted way. only one character is more than one dimensional, and she is two dimensional. I loved The Glass Key -- read it many years ago. it's said that Hammett felt The Glass Key to be his best novel, and thought The Dain Curse "silly." I agree. Am looking forward to reading the Continental Op stories one of these days.

Patti says

I love the Noir, tough guy stories.

Rog Harrison says

The selected stories are "The house in Turk Street", "The girl with the silver eyes", "The big knockover" and "\$106,000 blood money" which all feature the Continental Op. "The Dain curse" is also a Continental Op novel. I am not sure why I like the Op so much but I love the no nonsense brutal way he deals with all situations. Granted some of the situations are preposterous but if you go with the flow they are great. I have read all these before and no doubt will read them again. I had also read "The glass key" before but I don't find Ned Beaumont so appealing. He is certainly a clever man who can deal with trouble and the solution to the mystery is neat but had I just read the story in a book of its own I would only have given it three stars.

Lise says

A great selection of Hammett's works. The four stories, "The House in Turk Street", "The Girl with the Silver Eyes", "The Big Knockover" and "\$106,000 Blood Money" actually go in pair, with one of the key characters appearing in both the first and second one, while "\$106,000 Blood Money" is very much the sequel of "The Big Knockover", all involve Hammett anonymous operative from the San Francisco branch of the Continental, as does *The Dain Curse*. As written in my previous reviews, both novels are superb and really worth reading.

Martin says

This hardcover omnibus collects the other Hammett novels (see *The Maltese Falcon*, *The Thin Man*, *Red Harvest*) and the overall (read: *average*) score is four stars, but here are the individual stories' & novels' scores & reviews:

Selected Stories - - 5 stars - -

By far the highlight of this collection, the four Continental Op short stories offer exciting action and intriguing mysteries. I liked them so much that I ordered *Crime Stories and Other Writings*, which contains the full set of stories featuring the Continental Op (one of my all-time favourite characters, and I don't even know his name!). The four included stories are (1) *The House in Turk Street*, (2) *The Girl with the Silver Eyes*, (3) *The Big Knockover*, and (4) *\$ 106,000 Blood Money*. (2) is the sequel to (1), and (4) is the sequel to (3).

The Dain Curse - - 4 stars - -

More of a straight-forward mystery than a "crime" story, *The Dain Curse* is a very good follow-up to *Red Harvest*. Because Dashiell Hammett set the bar very high for himself with the superlative "Red Harvest", and that to top it with his sophomore novel would've been quite a feat in itself (which was *not* to happen), it makes this book suffer by comparison.

I thought there was a Chandler-esque quality to *The Dain Curse*, probably because of the way the mystery itself is structured (and eventually resolved). Those of you who are looking for *another* "Red Harvest" **might will** be disappointed.

The Glass Key - - 3 stars - -

Thinking back on *The Glass Key*, there were a number of things that annoyed me about it so three stars is really the most I can give it (and I think I might even be rounding up). It's supposedly Hammett's favourite of his own novels, and that's good for him and all that, but for me it's the total opposite.

What's different about it from other Hammett novels is that there really is no explanation given as to who's who (specifically Paul & Ned) and what they do. I still don't know what the two main characters did (as a job). What exactly is Paul's occupation/role? What about Ned's? And what is up with the narrator (Hammett)

giving us Ned Beaumont's full name every time he talks about him? Seriously: Every. Single. Time. I think by page 5 the reader would be okay with just «Ned». But no, it's Ned Beaumont this and Ned Beaumont that. Also, Ned apparently knows everybody in "town" (no name given), even though he's only been in "town" for only a little over a year (or so I was led to believe), and he's got the District Attorney (and other people) afraid of him, and we're never told why. ** I tried looking up people's reviews on Goodreads for hints (or flat-out revelations) as to the main two characters' jobs/roles, but I got the general impression that nobody else really knows, either, so that didn't help. **

The story sort of picked up halfway-through (it took too long!) and there *were* some good bits sprinkled here and there. But the way the title is squeezed into the story (near the end) is inconsequential.

Maybe a re-read (in few years) will change my overall enjoyment of *The Glass Key*, who knows?

Rebecca says

The problem with collections is always figuring how to weigh uneven ones. Here we have a handful of fairly good mystery short stories, one mess of a mystery novel, and one elegantly dark mystery/drama.

The stories and *The Dain Curse* all feature a nameless private detective as a narrator. The stories themselves are linked--the plots stand alone, but to really get the full effect, one must read all of them. And they're worth reading--stylish and stylized, this is where so many of the noir tropes come from. I'd never actually read a noir novel before, only the endless riffs on them that permeate contemporary culture. The language is hyperbolic, but somehow stops just short of ridiculousness. There's the femme fatales and the world-weary gumshoes, and betrayal and cynicism and Pyrrhic victories one might expect. They're a lot of fun, in a dark kind of way.

The Dain Curse, unfortunately, is a hot mess. Fun to read, but the plot really makes very little sense. Several big action pieces are strung together, with the flimsiest of motives at the end. The finale is rather unsatisfying.

Surprisingly, *The Glass Key* is barely a mystery. Instead, it's a story about a cog in a political machine who goes a bit rogue. The Continental Op at least appears on the side of the angels; this protagonist is quite a bit murkier. No one is a hero here. It's more subtle, as well--much goes unspoken. An excellent piece.

Kevin says

If "The Dain Curse" had been as strong as the other selections in this anthology, I would have bumped it up another star. As it stands, the first four short stories -- which could be turned into two novellas, given that the second is a sequel to the first, and the fourth to the third -- and the two novels ("Dain" and the excellent "The Glass Key") make for a fun, engrossing collection. Only "The Glass Key" does not star the Continental Op nor tells its tale through first person narration. I mention this, because after four hundred odd pages of following the Op's adventures and hearing his voice in my head, I found the shift in perspective and technique a little jarring. It broke the continuity; I'd rather have had "Red Harvest" squeezed in and let "Dain" be the finale.

But then again, "Dain" would have been a weak note to end on, and "The Glass Key" is so good. There is much about "Dain" I liked: it has plenty of action, the prose is sharp and witty, and the characters were interesting enough. But it felt like three short stories crammed into a novel (thus shooting down my previous novella proposal), and relied too much on exposition to wrap up loose ends at the close of each of the three sections. Way too much Peroit in the parlor, if you catch my drift. Nonetheless, it improves as it progresses, and the third act is a lot of fun.

For "Miller's Crossing" fans, "The Glass Key" will strike a lot of familiar notes. The Coen Bros. lifted a lot of character types and plot elements from this novel and recast, rearranged and rewrote them to make their masterpiece homage to Hammett. Yet saying so spoils nothing for the source material. All of the weirdness, coarse and violent humor, and the utterly corrupt political machinations of the movie can be found in their original form in how Ned Beaumont solves the murder of his boss's intended fiancée's brother. Good stuff. It's like crack.

Nathan says

Dash Hammett was the first of the great hardboiled detective authors, and this volume provides a spread of his work from a tight little short story through to the Dain Curse's convolutions that would do Chandler proud, through to a look from the other side, with a criminal's meandering through conspiracy and politics in the Glass Key. Hammett writes in a very simple, almost childlike way but the language he uses and the stories he tells are wonderful, by turns gloomy and gleeful. I like him a lot. Rated M for adult concepts and moderate violence. 4/5

Longhare Content says

I'll confess, I haven't read the Dain Curse yet, but I'm putting the collection aside for now to get to other stuff. Hardboiled with mustard. Good stuff.

Ian says

The description "hard-boiled" hardly does it justice. The Glass Key is a treasure of a tale, as Ned Beaumont, a corrupt politician's sidekick, unravels the double-crosses, ambitions, fears and jealousies of the power-makers at election time. Friendship, justice, honour? How can any survive the expediency of murder and politics. Classic.

Donald says

The Continental Op is the man! With this collection, he may very well have taken over Philip Marlowe as my favorite private dick! He is, and I quote from the story "The Girl with the Silver Eyes", a "little fat detective whose name I don't know"! "The Big Knockover" was my favorite in the collection, with a harrowing caper and a cast of the best crook names I've ever seen/hear/or read! The only thing keeping this collection from getting 5 stars was that I did not love "The Glass Key".

Otherwise, bravo!!!

Jessica says

So I read all the stories, which I didn't enjoy nearly as much as I did the last time, years ago. I kept meaning to get around to the novels, but then something happened. What happened was that I stopped spending evenings on the fire escape, and began eating other things besides beer and salad for dinner. I started wearing clothes to bed, and even dug up a light blanket, to supplement the sheet. My fan's gone still and silent, and when I wake up in the morning now I brew coffee and drink it hot, instead of icing it and holding the glass to my forehead as I sweat and iron work clothes, cringing at the warm fabric. I've swept up the sand, washed and folded the bikini, and I'm feeling oddly studious and am in the market for new boots.

In short, it is Fall, and I don't know that I can really read crime fiction after Labor Day. So this guy's headed back to the library, I think, and I'll take him out with the white shoes and try again next year.

My general impression this time is that it hasn't aged well, or I haven't. I do prefer Chandler, though I feel like that's not cool or something, and I did want to like this more than I did. It's very vintagey, which is where I got most of my kicks, because I do love that type of thing, but the problem is that it isn't enough anymore. I liked Hammett a lot more when I was younger, in the same way that I liked all vintage dresses and cars then, just because they were old and that's cool. I still think all old stuff is cool and I do like Hammett, but not as much as I did, because I am more discriminating: some old stuff is cooler than others.... Hammett's Continental Op is a lot cooler than MacDonald's Archer because he's ugly, and the procedural stuff in here's nice, as is my Bay Area, but I've renewed the book too many times and now it's got to go back. It's been sitting here too long, and I can't justify it. Them's the rules. I have so few that I do need to follow them, or chaos will result.

I have no idea what to read next. I've lost my will to review lately, which might be linked to the fact that I'm not so excited about the books I've been reading.

What's good autumnal reading? Also, anyone know any good Vegas books? I really want something great to read when I go there next week. Any recommendations would be greatly appreciated!

Wm says

devastatingly, cynically, plot-twistingly, dry-wittedly, body-countily amazing.
