



# Hardboiled: An Anthology of American Crime Stories

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What are the ingredients of a hard-boiled detective story? "Savagery, style, sophistication, sleuthing and sex," said Ellery Queen. Often a desperate blond, a jealous husband, and, of course, a tough-but-tender P.I. the likes of Sam Spade or Philip Marlowe. Perhaps Raymond Chandler summed it up best in his description of Dashiell Hammett's style: "Hammett gave murder back to the kind of people that commit it....He put these people down on paper as they were, and he made them talk and think in the language they customarily used for these purposes."

*Hard-Boiled: An Anthology of American Crime Stories* is the largest and most comprehensive collection of its kind, with over half of the stories never published before in book form. Included are thirty-six sublimely suspenseful stories that chronicle the evolution of this quintessentially American art form, from its earliest beginnings during the Golden Age of the legendary pulp magazine *Black Mask* in the 1920s, to the arrival of the tough digest *Manhunt* in the 1950s, and finally leading up to present-day hard-boiled stories by such writers as James Ellroy. Here are eight decades worth of the best writing about betrayal, murder, and mayhem: from Hammett's 1925 tour de force "The Scorched Face," in which the disappearance of two sisters leads Hammett's never-named detective, the Continental Op, straight into a web of sexual blackmail amidst the West Coast elite, to Ed Gorman's 1992 "The Long Silence After," a gripping and powerful rendezvous involving a middle class insurance executive, a Chicago streetwalker, and a loaded .38. Other delectable contributions include "Brush Fire" by James M. Cain, author of *The Postman Always Rings Twice*, Raymond Chandler's "I'll Be Waiting," where, for once, the *femme fatale* is not blond but a redhead, a Ross Macdonald mystery starring Macdonald's most famous creation, the cryptic Lew Archer, and "The Screen Test of Mike Hammer" by the one and only Micky Spillane. The hard-boiled cult has more in common with the legendary lawmen of the Wild West than with the gentleman and lady sleuths of traditional drawing room mysteries, and this direct line of descent is on brilliant display in two of the most subtle and tautly written stories in the collection, Elmore Leonard's "3:10 to Yuma" and John D. MacDonald's "Nor Iron Bars." Other contributors include Evan Hunter (better known as Ed McBain), Jim Thompson, Helen Nielsen, Margaret Maron, Andrew Vachss, Faye Kellerman, and Lawrence Sanders.

Compellingly and compulsively readable, *Hard-Boiled: An Anthology of American Crime Stories* is a page-turner no mystery lover will want to be without. Containing many notable rarities, it celebrates a genre that has profoundly shaped not only American literature and film, but how we see our heroes and ourselves.

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