

# The Maltese Falker

by

Jen Herrmann

First Draft 12/10/07  
Second Draft 12/12/07  
Third Draft 12/17/07  
Fourth Draft 12/19/07  
Fifth Draft 3/20/08  
Sixth Draft 6/11/08  
Seventh Draft 6/12/08  
Eighth Draft 10/14/08

FADE IN:

INT. SAM'S OFFICE - DAY

A large suitcase of money sits open on the desk.

The room is small, darkened by blinds over the windows and doors. On the door window, the letters "Sam Diamond, P.I." can be read. There are some plain, gray file cabinets against the bare walls. In the center of the room is a plain wooden desk, with a few piles of paper and pencils (as well as the suitcase) on top.

On one side of the desk is a wooden swivel chair, matching the desk. Here sits SAM DIAMOND, a student detective wearing a trenchcoat and leaning in to listen.

On the other side, in a leather chair, sits TONY, an enormous, burly, intimidating mountain of a senior guy. He is speaking with Sam, but the dialogue remains clouded beneath background music until:

TONY  
The legendary Maltese Falker.

Tony leans back in his chair, as though he has just reached the point of a long speech.

TONY (CONT'D)  
You **will** find this for me, Sam.

Sam closes the suitcase and puts it behind his desk.

SAM  
Money talks. I'll get it.

FADE TO BLACK.

BLACK SCREEN

SAM (V.O.)  
The name is Sam. Sam Diamond, private eye for the elites and for the underworld. I play for dough, and lots of it. That's what got me on this case-- the case that changed everything.

FADE IN:

INT. BASEMENT HALLWAY - DAY

SUPERSCRIPT -- "2 Days Ago"

Sam Diamond, a student detective wearing a trenchcoat and walking confidently, leads the two vice principals, MR. IMBUSCH and MR. CONNOR, to an inconspicuous door labeled "Athletic Trainer."

SAM  
They're right in here, boys.

MR. IMBUSCH  
Are you sure?

SAM  
Have I ever been wrong?

Mr. Imbusch turns and bursts open the door. Sam and Mr. Connor stand at the door frame, looking in.

INT. TRAINER'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

A group of students sit huddled in the room, backs to the camera.

MR. IMBUSCH  
Nobody move!

The students look up in surprise, dismayed.

STUDENT 1  
No! Don't take it away from us! We need it!

MR. IMBUSCH  
These Pokemon cards are contraband, you know that. I'm taking you in.

Mr. Imbusch begins to round up the students, who shuffle into line like a group of men condemned to death.

INT. BASEMENT HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Sam and Mr. Connor stand outside the room, watching as Mr. Imbusch rounds up the dealers.

MR. CONNOR  
Tell me Sam, how did you do it?  
We've been trying to break up this ring for years.

SAM  
You just need to know where to look-  
-sometimes the clues aren't as big  
as you think they should be.

A distraught voice is heard from inside the room. This is the voice of ALEX. Sam and Mr. Connor turn to see what is happening.

INT. TRAINER'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Alex is dressed as a beatnik, all black, complete with beret.  
He is before Mr. Imbusch, on the verge of hysteria.

ALEX  
I don't know anything about this, I  
swear! I'm just waiting for the  
trainer!

Alex gets up and begins to hobble around, favoring his ankle.

ALEX  
See?

MR. IMBUSCH  
You don't even play a sport, Alex.

Sam takes a step into the room.

SAM  
Give it up.

Sam pulls a tape recorder out of his pocket and presses play.

ALEX  
(on tape)  
I just work the deals. Pokemon  
cards mean serious money these  
days; you'd be surprised at the  
jack some people are willing to  
cough up.

Sam switches the tape recorder to off.

Alex stands speechless.

Sam nods to Mr. Imbusch.

SAM  
All yours.

Sam walks out of the room.

INT. BASEMENT HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Sam comes out of the trainer's office.

MR. CONNOR  
That was some smart work, catching  
him on tape.

SAM  
That's my job. No mess to clean up.

Sam walks off, leaving Mr. Connor outside the room.

SAM (V.O.)  
 That was the way most of my cases  
 went: pitiful ploys by some  
 unimportant people. Thought I'd  
 never see anything different.

INT. SAM'S OFFICE - DAY

Sam sits alone behind his desk, leaning back in his chair and  
 shuffling through a folder of papers.

SAM (V.O., CONT'D)  
 And then one day, in walked Sophie  
 Taylor.

There is a KNOCK at the door.

SAM  
 Come in.

SAM (V.O.)  
 She was a senior, top of her class,  
 but real big on the jazz life. She  
 sang Friday nights at some smoky  
 little joint downtown.

The door opens SOPHIE enters. She is an iron, straight-  
 shooting, pistol-in-the-purse kind of girl.

SOPHIE  
 Word on the street is that you can  
 solve any case you get.

SAM  
 For a price. Have a seat, and let's  
 talk it over.

Sophie shakes her head, refusing to sit.

SOPHIE  
 Listen, I can't pay you much now,  
 but I promise you that this case  
 will be the biggest one you ever  
 take.

SAM  
 Cash is cash. How much ya got?

Sophie throws down an envelope with some cash inside.

Sam picks up the envelope and holds it open, counting the  
 bills.

SAM  
 Mm-hmm. Just what do you want me to  
 do?

Sophie goes into her purse and pulls out a yellowed, crumpled  
 piece of paper.

SOPHIE  
I want you to find me a statue with  
this signature on it.

She hands him the paper, and we see that it is a hall pass  
dating from decades past with terrible handwriting on it.

SAM  
This is all you got for me?

SOPHIE  
Can't handle it?

SAM  
When do you need it by?

SOPHIE  
The next school committee meeting.

SAM  
Why? Planning on making a Christmas  
present of it?

SOPHIE  
That's none of your business. Just  
find the statue, that's your job.

Sophie turns and walks out, giving Sam no chance to say  
something else.

Sam sits back in his chair and contemplates.

He looks down at the pass in his hand.

SAM (V.O., CONT'D)  
Only one lead, but I'd gone on less  
before. You learn fast in my world  
to grab a hold of what you've got  
before it disappears on you.

INT. LIBRARY - DAY

Sam sits in the back corner of the library on his own,  
surrounded by cases of uniformly drab books. He flips through  
old yearbooks, looking from the pass to them and back again.

INSERT - THE PASS

"Student: EC      To: Bathroom  
From: Rm 189      Faculty: MF  
Time: 11:32"

BACK TO SCENE

SAM  
(muttering)  
189...there is no room 189...that  
means it's before the  
construction...

Sam pulls over another pile of older yearbooks and begins to search through them.

Sam sees a photo taken from just outside the orchestra room, where the numbers 8 and 9 are barely visible in the corner of the picture. The bulk of the photo is taken up by a long-haired, burly music teacher wildly conducting a scared-looking group of students. This, as the caption indicates, is FALKER. His initials match those on the pass.

SAM  
 (softly, to himself)  
 Music? There hasn't been a music  
 department for years.

Sam flips through more photos: Falker conducting, the large staff of the music program in its heyday, groups of students who made it into state music programs.

Sam comes to the more recent yearbooks, and finds that the music program begins to dwindle. In one yearbook, he goes past a page reading "New Vice Principal: Welcome Edward Connor" to a page reading "Farewell Falker". He closes it to reveal the cover, which reads "Walpole High School 1991".

SAM (V.O.)  
 The music was at least something to  
 go off of. I figured if I wanted to  
 find the genuine article, the best  
 place to look was over in the old  
 wing.

INT. ART HALLWAY - DAY

Sam approaches the music wing, a hallway branching off of the art hallway. Although the sign above it still reads "music," it is boarded up and has clearly been abandoned for a long time.

Glancing around, Sam ducks underneath the barriers and enters the darkened hallway.

INT. MUSIC HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Sam begins to walk down the hall, but as he passes a door in the wall it creaks open gently, then stops. Sam goes in.

INT. MUSIC OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Sam walks in. The room is dark, but the light from a door illuminates an old switch. Sam hits it.

Gershwin's "They Can't Take that Away from Me" begins to play. The song is punctuated by record scratches.

Sam notices a switch on the outside wall and turns it on. The lights flicker and then turn on.

The room is messy, covered with old sheets of music, CDs, and other random clutter. There is a phonograph right next to the door, playing the record. Sam turns it off. As he does so, his hand brushes against a tuba part with every note written in. It is labeled "E.C." All over the room, in no apparent order, are stacks of folders 3 feet high, full to the bursting, labeled with years.

Sam looks around, whistling.

SAM (V.O.)  
 Looked like this Falker guy wasn't too organized. More like a pack-rat. There was stuff here dating back decades.

Sam reaches into one of the folders labeled "1984" and pulls out a stack of papers, flipping through them. He sees several different music parts, and a few quizzes on musical notation. One is headed with the following, in the same handwriting as the pass: "F-. This is the worst that I have ever seen! What are you doing?!" The initials at the top read "E.C."

SAM (V.O., CONT'D)  
 But nothing on the statue. It had to be somewhere else.

Sam gets up and goes out the door.

INT. MUSIC HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Sam walks out of the office and approaches a door nearby: the old music room.

SAM (V.O.)  
 The music room was Falker's joint for the last years of his time here.  
 (Sam tries to open the door, but it is locked.)  
 It was the last place there'd ever been a song in this God-forsaken school. There was bound to be something in there. It was time to start on the real dirt.

INT. MR CONNOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Sam approaches the half-open door to Mr. Connor's office, where Mr. Connor sits behind his desk on the phone. He motions Sam in.

Sam enters and sits down.



MR. CONNOR  
 (on the phone)  
 Oh, no, Mr. Superintendent, I know just where we could set up the course, and I assure you that we could find a club advisor...just the go ahead and the check from you...I think a badminton club would be very beneficial! We could always use a few more sports!...yes, I'm sure there would be a high interest from the students...alright, thank you sir...Yes, sir, 1:15 on Thursday...I'll be there...Of course I won't be late this time!...yes, I know, but there was traffic that day sir!...yes sir. Goodbye.

Mr. Connor hangs up the phone and turns to Sam.

MR. CONNOR  
 Alright, Sam, what can I do for you?

SAM  
 I've got a favor to ask. I was wondering if you had a key to the old music room.

MR. CONNOR  
 The music room? What do you want that for?

SAM  
 I can't tell you that. Cases are confidential.

MR. CONNOR  
 Of course, of course. Well, sorry, I can't help you out. In fact, I've been looking for a key to that myself. It hasn't been used in so long that--

The phone rings, and Mr. Connor picks it up with an apologetic look to Sam.

MR. CONNOR  
 (on the phone)  
 Hello, this is Ed Connor...Oh, yes!

Mr. Connor covers the receiver with his hand and mouths to Sam.

MR. CONNOR (CONT'D)  
 (mouthing silently)  
 I've got to take this.

Sam nods, and gets up.

MR. CONNOR (CONT'D)  
 (on the phone)  
 No, now would be fine.

Sam shuts the door.

INT. SAM'S OFFICE

A large suitcase, full of cash, slams down on Sam's desk.

Sam looks at the money, whistling in amazement.

SAM  
 That's some heavy sugar.

Tony stands on the other side of Sam's desk.

TONY  
 This is very important.

SAM  
 What's the case?

Tony sits down in the chair across from Sam.

TONY  
 You're looking for a figurine,  
 about 20 years old.

SAM  
 Collecting antiques?

TONY  
 Hardly. Now, I know that there are  
 other people asking you for this  
 too, but, as you can see,  
 (gestures toward the  
 suitcase)  
 I've already made this worth your  
 while. You will want to give it to  
 me, and to me alone.

Tony leans menacingly over the desk.

TONY (CONT'D)  
 Do I make myself clear?

SAM  
 (unconcerned)  
 Perfectly. Tell me about this  
 statue.

TONY  
 A long while back, there was a  
 music program, here, headed by one  
 man: Michael Falker.

Tony tosses down a photograph, which Sam picks up and  
 examines as Tony talks.

The photo is of Falker, looking grim, several old music students, and another young teacher. This is MACPAV. He flips it over to read the names on the back: "Falker, Jones, Terrylys, Ubelhoer, Remmen, Maccini. 1990"

SAM  
(wryly)  
Looks pleasant.

TONY  
Strange man, and a hard taskmaster.  
Rumor has it that he came from a  
long line of musicians, all of them  
proud of that heritage.

(V.O., over montage)  
The first to reach America created  
the family treasure. Now, legend  
has it that as he grew old, he  
feared abandoning all of his  
teachings. And so, he decided he  
would find a way never to leave.  
When he finally did go, he left  
behind his legacy -- the family  
legacy--this statue:

PHOTO MONTAGE -- CREATION OF THE MALTESE FALKER

--Falker, a man in curly hair and dressed in colonial clothing, stands in a dark blacksmith shop in the corner of the art room, backlit with red flames, forging something that cannot be seen by the camera. He finishes and holds it up above his head.

--Falker, still in colonial clothes, carries a musket and goes off to war.

--Falker, dressed now in frontier clothes, stands in the woods, face to the wind.

--Falker, dressed in Civil War uniform, falls to the ground as gunfire and smoke flows around him.

--Falker, dressed in a 1920s suit, plays piano in a jazz club.

--Falker, dressed in hippie clothes, plays guitar in a field with flowers in his hair.

--Falker, dressed in modern clothes and a trenchcoat, carries a suitcase out of the music wing. He takes a look behind him, and then leaves.

END MONTAGE--BACK TO SCENE

Tony and Sam still sit across from each other.

TONY (CONT'D)  
The legendary Maltese Falker.

Tony sits back in his chair.

TONY (CONT'D)  
You **will** find this for me, Sam.

Sam closes the suitcase and puts it behind his desk.

SAM  
Money talks. I'll get it.

Tony exits.

Sam sits back in his chair and picks up the photograph again, then turns it over to the back to read the writing. He runs his finger underneath the name "Maccini."

SAM (V.O.)  
"Maccini." She had been working at the middle schools, but she must have been here if she was with Falker. That was my next lead.

Sam studies the photo, pockets it, and exits.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Sam leaves his office and begins to walk down the hall.

SOPHIE  
You!

Sophie comes on from another direction.

Sam looks up, surprised but unperturbed.

SOPHIE (CONT'D)  
You dropped my case?

Sam shrugs.

SAM  
I told you before, I work for cash.  
I got a better offer.

SOPHIE  
A better offer? It's not an offer,  
it's a price. You're selling  
yourself.

SAM  
I'm a private eye. I sell my time.

SOPHIE  
And you're spending it as a stooge  
for the hammers in the office. Do  
you have any idea what this statue  
is?

SAM  
It's a suitcase of brand-new 50s in  
my office.

SOPHIE  
(scornfully)  
You idiot, it **is** the music  
department! I've done my research,  
too. This statue...it's not just an  
antique, it has power. It can show  
people what music does. It can show  
them how important it is, show them  
that there's more to life than  
numbers on a board or words on a  
page. It's like--it's like those  
jazz songs that hit you hard, cuz  
they're just what you've been  
thinking about but couldn't quite  
say. We need that, Sam. We have to  
bring it back. Don't you understand  
that?

Sam pulls out his wallet and then counts out 3 \$20 bills.

SAM  
I understand this.

Sam waves the money, and then hands it back to Sophie.

SOPHIE  
(with disgust)  
It's all you do understand. I  
should've known you'd end up  
another sap.

Sam endures the insult with a slight smile.

SAM  
At least I'm going somewhere after  
graduation. If I see you playing on  
the subway in a few years, I'll  
drop you a dime.

Sophie slaps him.

MR. CONNOR  
Whoa! What's going on here?

We see Mr. Connor coming towards Sam and Sophie.

MR. CONNOR (CONT'D)  
That's a detention!

SAM  
No, there's no problem, Mr. Connor.

Sam looks pointedly at Sophie.

SAM (CONT'D)  
 Just clearing up a bit of  
 unfinished business.

Sam walks out the door.

Sophie stands in the lobby, her eyes narrowing. She crumples the money in her hand.

INT. JMS BASEMENT - DAY

Sam walks down the empty middle school hallway, approaches Macpav's room, and, finding it open, walks in.

INT. MACPAV'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The room is empty. A setup of chairs around an old, cracked piano dominates the room, and in the back corner is a gray desk.

The soundtrack to Gershwin's "Crazy for You" is playing in the background. The CD is propped up against the player behind the desk.

Macpav is seated at her desk, grading papers.

Sam walks in.

Macpav looks up, and sees Sam. She turns off the music.

MACPAV

Yes?

Sam approaches the desk and extends his hand.

SAM

Sam Diamond.  
 (shaking hands)  
 I'm up at the high school. I found something of yours.

Sam pulls out the photograph and hands it to her.

Macpav looks down at the photo in amazement.

MACPAV

Where did you get this?

SAM

I've been snooping around the music wing.

MACPAV

This wouldn't be down there;  
 administration took all the photos  
 when the music wing was closed.

SAM  
But you were teaching at the high school before that, right?

MACPAV  
What are you playing at?

SAM  
I need to know about Mr. Falker-- anything.

MACPAV  
This is ridiculous. What are you really here for?

SAM  
I'm serious. I'm working a case on him and--

MACPAV  
Working a case? You're a kid, not a cop.

SAM  
I might as well be, the way the big cheese needs me up there.

MACPAV  
They don't need you. They know exactly what they're doing, trust me.

SAM  
Back to the point: I need to find something this Falker guy left. Did he leave you a key to the old music room?

MacPav shakes her head.

MACPAV  
All he left me was this.

She goes into her drawer and pulls out a very small key. She hands it to Sam. He turns it over in his hands.

SAM  
I see. Then could you tell me about him?

MACPAV  
Look, I barely even saw him when I was up there. By then, the department was already going down-- it started in the 80s. When he was fighting the board to get music back in the elementary schools.

SAM  
Elementary schools? I thought he  
was a high school teacher?

MACPAV  
He was a *music* teacher. He knew it  
was important to get kids started  
early, before they were his  
students. If you love something  
when you're young, people can never  
take it away from you.

SAM  
But what about the upperclassmen?  
People say he worked 'em hard.

MACPAV  
Well, he'd already started to go  
off his rocker by then.

SAM  
So if he were to leave something  
behind...

MACPAV  
Listen buster, I don't know what  
you're looking for. You want the  
"legend" of Falker? It was music.  
That's all. You want to understand  
him? You've got to understand how  
important it was to him that the  
music program survived, because he  
gave little kids a reason to stick  
with school, something to be proud  
of. He saw kids come into the high  
school who didn't care about  
anything, and he shook their hand  
at graduation and sent them off to  
college with a goal in mind, with  
something to live for. **That's** what  
music does, what it is. It's a  
dream--and it changes everything.

Beat.

MACPAV (CONT'D)  
(disgusted)  
I have work to do.

She turns the CD player on again. Gershwin's "They Can't Take  
that Away from Me" begins to play softly.

Sam looks startled by the music, but makes no large reaction  
to it.

SAM  
Thank you anyway.

Sam turns and walks out.



INT. MUSIC HALLWAY - NIGHT

Sam ducks back in between the boards and approaches the music office door. He pulls out the key.

SAM (V.O.)  
 My gut told me it was no use trying  
 the key here, but I didn't listen  
 to it. I wanted to be certain.

He reaches his hand out, touches the handle, and begins to fit the key. It doesn't work.

SAM (V.O., CONT'D)  
 Big mistake.

Sam hears a noise, and turns back, looking for the source. He is clubbed on the head with the body of a string bass.

Sam blacks out.

FADE TO BLACK.

FADE IN:

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - NIGHT

Sam awakens to find himself bound and gagged in a very small room. The place is dusty, and there is an old, chipped piano in the corner, yellowed keys. The room is lit with a single bulb, cop-interrogation-style lighting. Anything outside the light is in total darkness.

Tony stands menacingly above Sam.

TONY  
 So, you think you can mooch on us,  
 do you? You think you can play both  
 sides in this? I offer you  
 everything you need, and you're  
 talking with your little lady  
 friend about the case?

SAM  
 (coolly)  
 It wasn't--

Tony slams the wall with his hand.

TONY  
 Money changed hands! That means  
 it's business! But you're outta  
 time, Diamond. You've got 24 hours  
 to get me the Maltese Falker. 8:00,  
 Thursday the 24th, and then the  
 game is up.

Tony leans in close to Sam.

TONY (CONT'D)  
Do you understand me?

Sam stares at Tony defiantly.

Tony, angered, smacks Sam, knocking him out again.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

Sam awakens once again in the interrogation room, untied. He feels his head and finds a bruise.

Suddenly, he begins frantically searching his pockets and the area around him.

He looks down at his watch: 1:30.

SAM (V.O.)  
1:30. I had 6 and a half hours  
left, and my one hope for a lead  
was lost. I had to find that key.

Sam gets up and leaves the room.

INT. HALLWAY -- CONTINUOUS

Sam walks down the hall.

Sam comes around the corner towards the lobby and walks into Mr. Connor.

MR. CONNOR  
Oh, sorry Sam.  
(noticing Sam's lump)  
That's quite the bruise.

SAM  
It's quite the case.

MR. CONNOR  
All of this for something in the  
music wing, huh? The things some  
people will do.  
(looking at his watch)  
Oops! I'm supposed to be at a  
meeting...ah...5 minutes ago.  
Better get going. You should see  
the nurse about that, Sam.

SAM  
I may not have time.

MR. CONNOR  
No, you should go. I'll write you a  
quick pass.

Mr. Connor pulls out a pad and starts scribbling on it.

SAM  
 Alright.

Mr. Connor tears off a piece of paper and hands it to Sam.

MR. CONNOR  
 Here, go take care of that. I've  
 gotta run. I was supposed to be at  
 a meeting--uh--  
 (He looks at his watch.)  
 Ten minutes ago.

Mr. Connor walks off in a hurry.

Sam goes around the corner into the lobby.

INT. LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

Sam walks into the lobby.

Tony slinks into the Nurse's office.

Sam sees him go in, and then stops. He looks down at the  
 pass, and a look of realization comes across his face.

MONTAGE -- SAM'S EPIPHANY

--Replay of Mr. Connor saying "You should see the nurse about  
 that, Sam."

--Replay of the sheet music labeled "E.C."

--Replay of Mr. Connor on the phone saying "I know the  
 perfect room for it"

--Shot of the boarded up music wing.

--Replay of Mr. Connor in his office saying "I've been  
 looking for a key to that myself."

--Replay of MacPav saying "the administration took all the  
 photos"

--Shot of the photo of Macpav in Sam's hand

--Replay of Tony in Sam's office saying "You will want to  
 give it to me, and to me alone. Do I make myself clear?"

--Replay of Macpav saying "it started in the 80s"

--Replay of Sam opening the folder labeled "1984" and finding  
 the quiz labeled "E.C."

--Replay of Tony interrogating Sam in the practice room,  
 saying "you think you can mooch on us, do you?"

--Replay of Mr. Connor saying "The things some people will do."

INT. LOBBY

Sam stands, eyes narrowed, mulling over his thoughts.

SAM (V.O.)  
That was when I knew: the case went all the way up to Connor. He was running the show; I was working for him.

Sam looks at the clock.

SAM (V.O., CONT'D)  
And I had six hours left.

INT. MUSIC HALLWAY

Sam once again enters the music hallway and approaches the music room.

He reaches down and begins feeling on the floor. His finger finds the key halfway under the door and he pulls it out.

As it comes out, a corner of a paper appears. Sam gets up to leave, but then notices this and reaches down, pulling it out.

It is a photo of Falker with elementary aged students. The label on the back reads "Boyden Elementary Spring Concert, '68". Sam holds it up next to the key, and seems to realize something.

Macpav's voice and a soft double track of Gershwin's "They Can't Take That Away From Me" plays in his epiphany.

MACPAV (V.O.)  
If you love something when you're young, people can never take it away from you.

Sam, now determined, gets up and leaves.

EXT. BOYDEN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Sam pulls up to the school and walks in.

INT. BOYDEN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - CONTINUOUS

Sam walks into the school. He hears a taunting voice. This is JOSEPH.

JOSEPH  
Why're you wearin' that funny hat!

Sam turns to see two children, about aged eight. One is Joseph, who is sneering in a smart aleck manner. The other is a girl: PENNY.

Sam keeps his P.I.'s gruff nonchalance.

SAM  
I'm workin' a case kid.

JOSEPH  
You're not a cop!

SAM  
P.I. Do you know where the music room is?

JOSEPH  
Music room? You said you were a detective!

SAM  
Just answer the question.

JOSEPH  
I don't take music classes!

Joseph runs off, laughing.

Sam turns to Penny.

SAM  
What about you?

PENNY  
Me? Well I'm in the third grade, and that's my brother--

SAM  
No, the music room.

PENNY  
There isn't a music room. We don't have a teacher.

Sam turns away, exasperated.

PENNY (CONT'D)  
But sometimes they sing upstairs.

Sam stops.

FADE TO BLACK.

Piano music plays, and a woman begins singing. The voice is Sophie's.

SOPHIE  
 (singing)  
 The way you wear your hat, the way  
 you sip your tea, the memory of  
 all that--no, no, they can't take  
 that away from me.

FADE IN:

INT. BOYDEN AUDITORIUM

Sam walks in, and leans against the doorframe, listening. On the stage stands Sophie, dressed in a solid strapless dress and singing into the microphone. She stands in the only spotlight. Nearby, a man plays piano softly to accompany her. This is RICK.

SOPHIE  
 (singing)  
 The way your smile just beams, the  
 way you sing off-key, the way you  
 haunt my dreams -- no, no, they  
 can't take that away from me.

Sam still stands entranced at the door.

She finishes the song, and the Rick closes the piano.

RICK  
 Sounds great, sugar. You'll be  
 ready.

SOPHIE  
 Thanks, Rick. I'm gonna stick  
 around for a little while. You go  
 ahead and get yourself some joe,  
 I'll see you tonight.

Rick packs up his things and leaves.

Sophie moves aimlessly on stage, something obviously on her mind, running her hand over the black piano. She pauses and stands still, but keeps her back to Sam.

SOPHIE  
 What is it, Sam?

Sam moves towards her while there is a pause. He doesn't let down his guard, though.

SAM  
 You sound good, Sophie.

She gives a sniff of scornful laughter.

SOPHIE  
 (wryly)  
 Thanks.

She turns to face him.

SOPHIE (CONT'D)  
Means a lot coming from you.

Beat.

SAM  
Why are you here? Nothing's wrong  
with the high school auditorium.

SOPHIE  
(reminiscently)  
This is where it all started for  
me. I wanted to come back one more  
time before I left for good, to  
remember how I began.

Beat. She catches herself and puts up her guard again. She looks at him with a touch of disbelief and disgust.

SOPHIE (CONT'D)  
But it's over now. You cut the base  
out from under me and left me  
holding the bag.

She picks up her things to leave.

SOPHIE (CONT'D)  
There's nothing left to say.  
Goodbye, Sam.

She walks out.

Sam walks over to the piano and runs his fingers over the lid.

Sam's eyes catch on to something. He looks to the piano bench, where there is a plaque that reads "Thanks! Class of 1991."

FLASHBACK - SEARCHING FOR FALKER

On the screen we see Sam's view of the yearbooks, when he flips to a page reading "Farewell Falker!" He closes the cover, which reads 1991.

SOPHIE (V.O.)  
This is where it all started for  
me.

BACK TO SCENE

Sam's eyes widen. He goes over to the bench and tries to lift up the lid. It does not open.

He reaches in his pocket and pulls out the key, looks at it for a second, then fits it into the bench. It turns, and he opens the lid, pulling out a bundle.

Sam leans over and picks it up, unwrapping it, but the view of the object is hidden by his shoulder.

SAM  
So this is the Maltese Falker.

He looks at it, weighing it in his hands.

FADE TO BLACK.

There is the click of a tape recorder, at which point some recording static and voices begin to play.

SAM  
Right here.

MR. CONNOR  
What are you talking about?

SAM  
It's right there, Connor. That's all there is.

MR. CONNOR  
There's nothing there Sam. What are you trying to pull?

FADE IN:

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM

The school committee sits in session, all leaning forward and listening intently. At the head of the table sits the SUPERINTENDENT. Sophie sits behind the "Student Representative" plate. All look both intrigued and concerned.

SAM  
Listen, I slugged through all your hard boiled torpedoes and your idiotic schemes. I've searched every last haunt for this, and I'm telling you--the Falker's just a dream.

MR. CONNOR  
(slightly manic)  
Are you saying it's not real? Diamond, I've worked for years to keep the music department down, to repay my debts, to accomplish something. We don't need music here, it eats up our resources. All of those e-mails, all of those letters, I've managed to keep them down. The suckers on the school board have no idea.

There is visible unrest and anger among the board members at this speech.



MR. CONNOR (CONT'D)  
I've kept the whole thing under wraps. I've looked for this for years. It's the last sign of the music department. I can't afford to have it out there somewhere: it has to be destroyed.

SAM  
(coolly)  
That's no concern of mine. I have my money.

MR. CONNOR  
The best P.I. in the town and you've got nothing for me?

SAM  
Even the best P.I. can't get his hands on something that's not real Connor. Let's call it closed.

Sam's hand clicks "stop" on a TAPE PLAYER. He looks at the school committee. The room is silent for a moment, and then murmurs begin to break out as the committee talks among themselves.

The superintendent brings the gavel down.

SUPERINTENDENT  
Order! Order everyone!

The door opens and Mr. Connor walks enters in a hurry.

MR. CONNOR  
Sorry I'm late again. I have my report, so we can get started.

The superintendent leans forward in his seat, looking severely unforgiving..

SUPERINTENDENT  
Glad you came, Ed. We have quite a bit to discuss with you.

EXT. TOWN HALL - NIGHT

Sam walks out of the hall towards his car. As he reaches it, he looks across the lot and makes eye contact with Sophie. He tips his hat to her with a smile, and opens the door.

SAM (V.O.)  
That was the end of the Maltese Falker. The music wing re-opened the next year, but I haven't been down there since. As for the statue-well, it was just a jazz-smoke dream, gone as soon as you found it-and there was nothing to find.

(MORE)

SAM (V.O.) (cont'd)  
I guess that's how Falker would  
have wanted it. Like Maccini said,  
music's just a dream--and no one  
could ever get his hands on that to  
take it away.

Sam drives off.

INT. AUDITORIUM

As the voice-over continues, the audience sees the smashed  
bench, but there is nothing inside but a tattered sheet of  
"They Can't Take That Away From Me" in Falker's scrawl.

FADE OUT.