

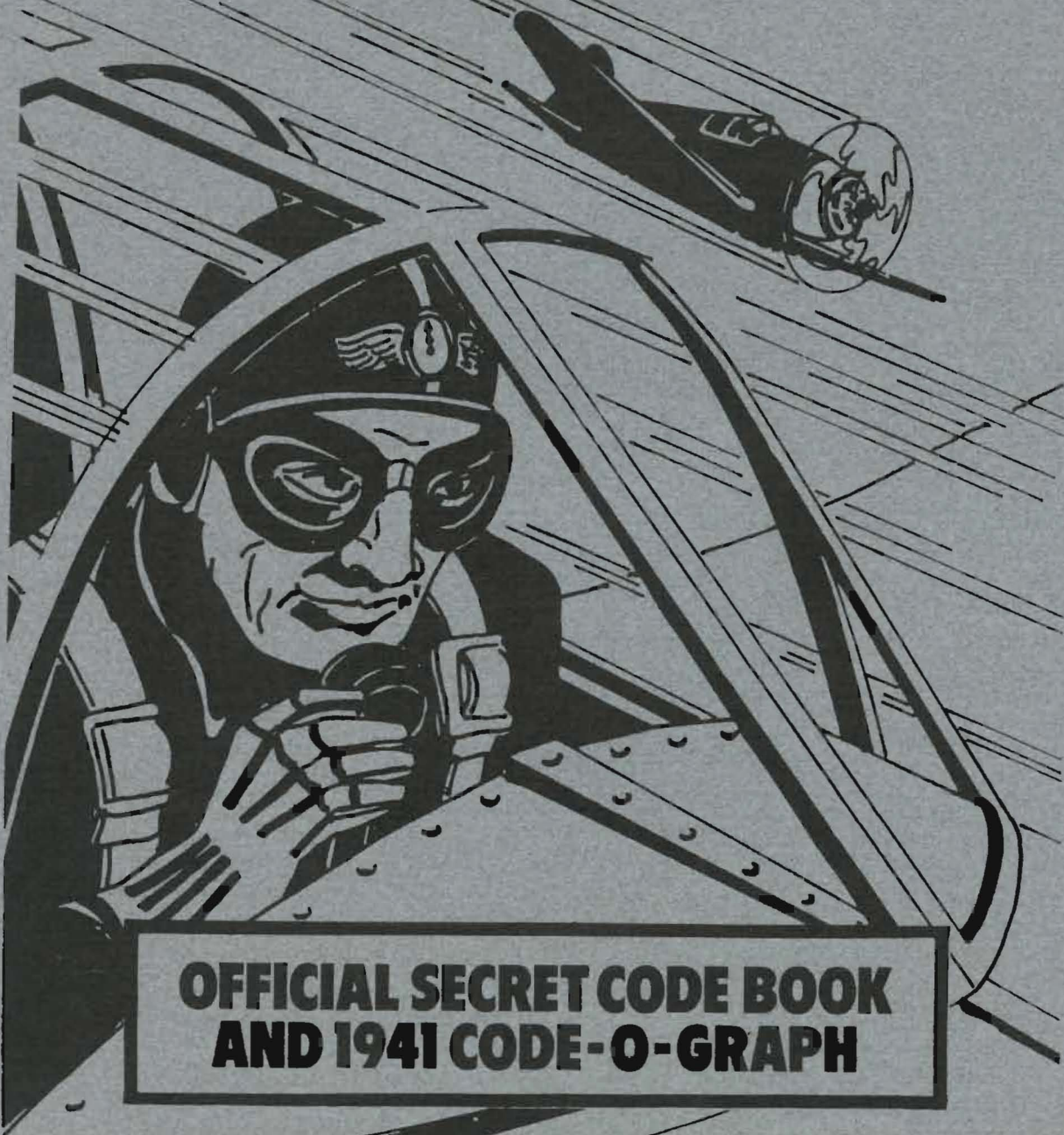
OTRC

vol. 18
1992

MEMORIES

Captain Midnight's

SECRET SQUADRON



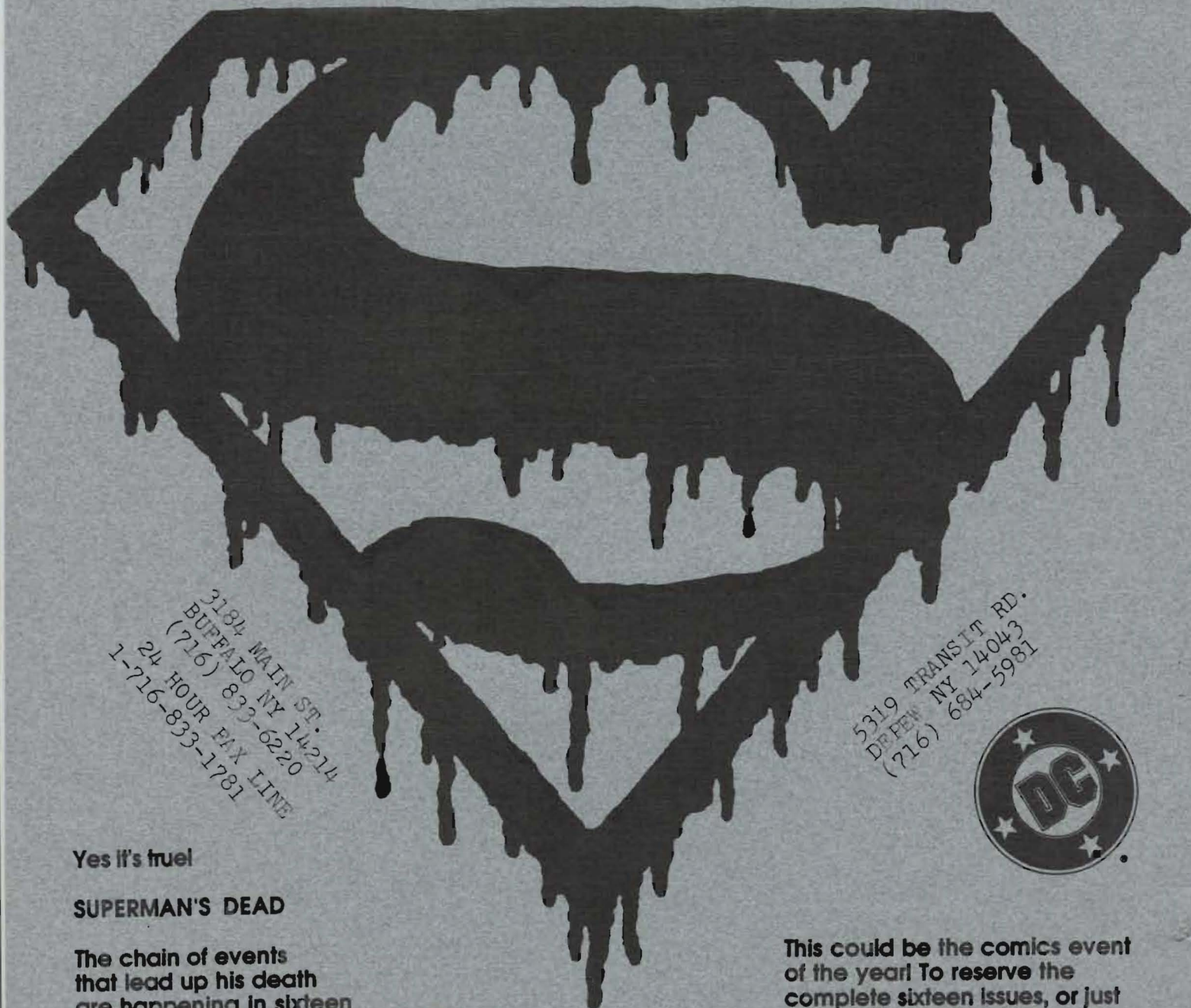
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CAPTAIN MIDNIGHT
and SHEIK JOMAK KHAN

Chapter I
THE GREAT HELENA

Ikky Mudd stretched luxuriously. He rose from the davenport and strolled into the bedroom where Captain Midnight was carefully tying a bow tie.

"Gettin' dolled up, heh, Cap'n?" Ikky cried. "A date, mebee?"

"Pick up the sixty-four dollars," laughed Midnight, "A date's just what I've got. I'm in the mood for some fun, too."

"Has she got a girlfriend for me, too?" asked Ikky hopefully.

"Of course. If only to keep you out of my hair."

A loud knock drowned Ikky's reproachful. "Aw, gee."

He opened the door and a messenger boy handed him an envelope, saying tersely, "For Captain Midnight. Important"

Ikky handed the message to Midnight. "Say, mebbe the gals ain't comin' after all?"

Captain Midnight opened the message and read it.

"What gives?" Ikky asked anxiously. "Bad news?"

"The date's off."

"Yeah, I knew that right away. But what's the matter? Is something wrong?" pressed Ikky.

"No, we're just getting another job to do. Colonel Harnish wants to see us."

"Colonel Harnish," echoed Ikky. "That means action!"

The two men entered the Colonel's offices, where a secretary was busily engaged at the typewriter. As he rose and advised them that Colonel Harnish would see Captain Midnight in a few minutes, the Colonel himself walked in. "Captain Midnight?" he repeated. "Colonel Harnish will see CAPTAIN MIDNIGHT right now. This way, gentlemen." He led them into his private office, where a handsome but tired-looking man awaited them.

Colonel Harnish spoke, "Of course you recognize Mr.---"

"Of course. Who doesn't know him?" smiled Midnight as he shook hands. "All the boys say he's swell on the entertainment tours of the fighting fronts."

"Yeah," laughed the man. "So I'm kicked upstairs as adviser on civilian show business. Colonel Harnish is the big MORALE expert for the armed forces."

"Which means," interpolated the Colonel, "that what the boys WANT, we give'em."

Captain Midnight nodded, "And now the boys want--?"

"And now the boys want Helena Troy," sighed the Colonel.

"Yes," said Mr. Brown, the entertainment expert. "Helena Troy. Hollywood's highest priced star. Too pin-up for words. From Tarawa to Tunis, the boys whistle for HELENA TROY. She says she'll go on a tour if she get a private plane and escort."

"I'm beginning to catch on," commented Midnight dryly.

Colonel Harnish smiled. "Helena Troy is much too temperamental for the tough spots, but we would like to send her to Africa. If you, Captain Midnight, would consider escorting her--"

Captain Midnight nodded. "Squirring screen stars isn't exactly my pidgin, but if that's what HQ thinks I can do best right now-- why, of course I'll do it."

"It won't be easy," warned Brown. "She's a pain in every way except to look at."

Ikky stood near the door.

"Africa--and a movie star," he dreamed. "This'll be like a vacation. Oh, boy!"

A musical "Hello, there," intruded, and he glanced up to see a lovely, dark-haired girl in the doorway. "G-Gawsh!" he gasped.

"Are you going to fly us to Africa?" the vision asked.

"No, ma'am," he said. "Ikky Mudd's the name. Golly, Miss Troy, you're even prettier than in the movies!"

A sharp soprano voice interrupted them. "ANNIE!"

Ikky and the girl whirled to face a stately blonde.

"What are you doing?" she demanded. "I am Helena Troy. If you've been pretending you're me, you're fired!"

The gay smile disappeared from the girl's face. "But, Miss Troy," she protested, "this gentleman just saw me and--"

Miss Troy ignored her and stared at Ikky. "Is this miserable monkey to escort ME overseas?"

Helena Troy stalked over to the three men and stormed at Brown, "I demand a high-grade pilot, not a circus freak! You can't do this to Helena Troy! I won't go!"

Brown spoke in a conciliatory tone. "Now, now, Helena. That's only Ichabod Mudd, and of course he's not your escort." He put his hand on Captain Midnight's shoulder and drew him over to meet Helena Troy. "Here is your pilot and escort to fly you overseas, my dear. Meet CAPTAIN MIDNIGHT."

The startled Helena cried, "Oh!" She inspected the good-looking young captain carefully, smiled at him graciously and allowed herself to be placated. "I'm ready, gentlemen, to fly ANYWHERE with Captain Midnight," she announced.

Brown smiled. "I knew you'd be satisfied. Captain Midnight is such a competent pilot. And good-looking, too. Now come over here, Helena, and let's go over your routine."

While they retired to a corner of the room, Captain Midnight exchanged glances with Colonel Harnish, who smiled patiently.

"When do we take off to fly Miss Troy overseas?" asked Midnight.

"Right now," replied the Colonel. "I'll drive you to the airfield where your plane is being warmed up."

The Colonel drove Midnight and Ikky to their apartment to pick up the bags which were always packed in readiness for just such emergencies. When they arrived at the airport Helena was busily engaged in directing Annie as to just where and how to place her luggage. Ikky hastened to assist the girl.

The Colonel handed Captain Midnight a slip of paper. "Here's your route. First stop's in the West Indies. Good luck, Captain!"

"I'll need it," sighed Midnight, "with all that ego on board!"

At last Helena Troy's baggage was satisfactorily packed in the plane, and the girls were seated.

"All set?" asked the Captain, and when the girls nodded, the plane took off.

"Oh, Miss Troy," Annie wailed. "I forgot to pack your electric massager. I'm so sorry."

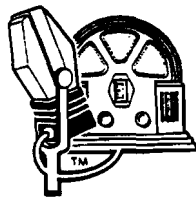
"Buy me one when we land, Annie, out of YOUR salary. That'll teach you not to be so careless."

Captain Midnight scowled. "Helena Troy may be top flight in the movies--but in person she's strictly an ingrown toenail!"

Helena was complaining bitterly.

"We're lucky we're up front!" Midnight remarked quietly.

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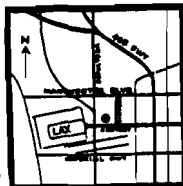
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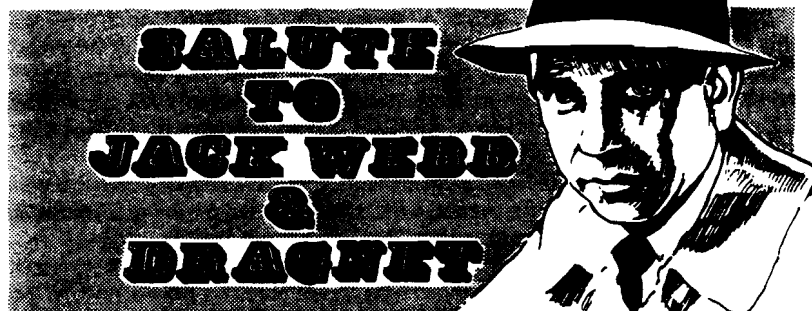
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NOTE: If you wish to be seated with other guests, please send all reservations in together.

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 3. Saturday daytime activities (9 a.m. to 5 p.m.) \$15.00. _____
 4. Saturday evening banquet and program \$35.00 _____
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[] Check here if you worked in early radio.

Send checks or money orders, payable to SPERDVAC, to: SPERDVAC Convention, c/o Chester Allen, 13415 Egbert St., Sylmar, CA 91342. For additional details or to volunteer convention assistance, call Larry Gassman at (310) 947-9800.

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SPERDVAC 1992 OLD TIME RADIO CONVENTION

SPERDVAC's 1992 Old Time Radio Convention is set for November 20, 21 and 22. The convention site is the Holiday Inn Crowne Plaza, 5985 W. Century Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90045.

Registration begins at 5:30 p.m. Friday. The dinner and the program begin at 7:30 p.m. The Collectors' Room will be in operation Saturday from 9:00 a.m. until 7:00 p.m. Our Saturday workshops and panel discussions run from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. There is no lunch planned as part of the convention package. However, we have allotted the 11:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. slot for lunch. Our Saturday evening banquet and show begin at 7:30 p.m. We plan to conclude the Friday and Saturday night presentations at about 10:30 p.m. Sunday's brunch and program will run from 9:00 until 11:30 a.m. (Check out time for hotel patrons is 12 noon.)

Scheduled activities include banquets on Friday and Saturday evenings. Friday night's presentation includes a re-creation of Voyage of the Scarlet Queen starring Harry Bartell and Jeanne Bates. Sound effects masters Ray Erlenborn and Bob Mott will provide the sounds for this show. We will feature a re-creation of Ethel and Albert starring Peg Lynch and Parley Baer on Saturday afternoon.

"Stan Freberg and Friends" will be another of our Saturday afternoon presentations. June Foray, Peter Leeds and Billy May will be on hand to discuss the radio and recording work of the popular American satirist.

Our salute to Dragnet and the radio work of Jack Webb will include Peggy Webber, Herb Ellis, Sam Edwards and Harry Bartell, all frequent performers on Dragnet, plus original sound effects expert Wayne Kenworthy.

During meals and presentations, SPERDVAC will observe the "First Nighter Policy"—smoking in the outer lobby only, *please!*

Admission to the complete convention is \$95. For the benefit of those unable to attend the entire weekend, we are offering rates for specific events, which are indicated on the registration form. Registration packets will be distributed at the door. Your cancelled check will serve as your receipt.

Because of the popularity of our guests and re-creations, we highly recommend advance reservations. We cannot guarantee seating availability for those who do not purchase tickets prior to the convention.

Dealers' tables will be available, for \$20 each for SPERDVAC members and \$30 each for non-members, for those who wish to sell radio-related items in our Collectors' Room Saturday. (Unauthorized sales of unlicensed radio broadcasts is prohibited.) Dealers wishing to attend events outside the Collectors' Room must register for those events. To reserve a table, contact Catherine Passarelli at 10615 Butterfield Road, Los Angeles, CA 90064.

The Holiday Inn Crowne Plaza has accommodations available for those who wish to stay overnight. The special SPERDVAC convention rate is \$73.13 per room per night, including 12.5% bed tax. To take advantage of these rates contact the hotel directly and specify you are attending the SPERDVAC convention. The hotel also offers a special \$5.50 per day parking rate for tickets validated by SPERDVAC. Campers, motor homes and trailers may park in the valet parking lot behind the hotel. Shuttle service from Los Angeles International Airport is available free by phoning the Holiday Inn Crowne Plaza from the airport. Their number is (310) 642-7500. The hotel has a gift shop and a Budget Rent-a-Car counter in the lobby.

Chapter II
MISS TROY-MORALE BUILDER

"We're ready to land now, girls," called Captain Midnight.

"Thank you, Captain," replied Helena Troy sweetly. "And what IS this place?"

"This is an island in the West Indies," Midnight answered.

Helena gazed around her. "It's a pretty little island, but why did they spoil it? It's been armed and navied to death."

"To keep it from being despoiled by Axis armies or navies!"

Helena cried, "Nobody to meet us! Don't they know HELENA TROY is here? Who's supposed to take charge?"

Midnight waved a casual arm toward two approaching soldiers.

"Here's your reception committee. Are you happy now?"

Helena muttered, "And I thought I LIKED you!" Then she walked pointedly away from him and greeted the men.

"Allow me, Miss Troy, I'm General Gordon."

Helena trilled, "Oh, General, I'm so happy and honored to visit you and your men."

"You don't know how delighted we are to have you here."

While driving to camp, Helena showed great interest in everything. The General explained about how eagerly the boys awaited her arrival. When they alighted at camp, they were at once surrounded by soldiers eager to see their favorite star. Helena smiled and said, "Please, General, DO let me talk to them!"

Astounded, Midnight whispered to Ikky, "Am I dreaming, or is the queen of the movies going human on us?"

At the General's nod of assent, the boys swarmed around Helena, begging for autographs on any scrap of paper. One lad asked, "Sign on my arm, Miss Troy. Then I'll have it tattooed on!"

Helena said modestly, "It's silly for me to give you autographs. YOU are the real stars in the biggest show ever staged!"

"Don't delay her men," called the General. "The show starts in an hour."

The boys turned out in full force at show time and applauded vigorously when Helena entered. She looked glamorous best in evening regalia, and sang sentimental ballads.

"Yay, what songs!" cried one soldier. "Can you dance, too?"

"Indeed I can," she laughed. "With good partners! Come up on this platform, some of you!"

General Gordon watched her and beamed approvingly. "This means plenty to our men! Miss Troy's a first-class morale builder," he said.

"I can see that," agreed Midnight. "That's why I'm flying her on this tour, General Gordon. I'm glad it's so worth while."

After the show, Captain Midnight went backstage to congratulate Helena.

"I didn't like you at first, Miss Troy," he told her candidly. "I had you pegged for a cold, hard proposition. But the way you acted today with those boys--"

Helena lit a cigarette and blew the smoke nonchalantly in his face. "Oh, that was just being a good actress, my dear Captain. And I AM a good actress. This tour means BIG PUBLICITY and a NEW

CONTRACT for me--that's all." She added insolently, "So don't be getting any romantic ideas."

Captain Midnight was furious. "Who said anything about romance?" he demanded. "I thought you were REGULAR. Well, I was wrong. And anyway, if I did feel romantic, I'd far rather pitch woo at a PAPER DOLL any day."

Helena laughed. "All right, so that's settled. And now, let's take off. There's a BIGGER audience waiting overseas!"

"Right," said the Captain. "Let's go. This can't be over too soon for me."

In short order Captain Midnight, Ikky and the girls were flying over the Atlantic.

"I'm glad that one's over," sighed Helena. "Our next stop is North Africa, isn't it, Captain? I've heard it's horribly hot out there. Is that true?"

"If it is, I think we can count on you to chill it off."

Helena laughed. "My, what a temper!"

Ikky took advantage of the altercation between Midnight and Helena to chat with Annie, "Say, Annie," he asked, "have you got to work for that blond witch? You could get a lot of good jobs."

"Sh, Ikky," Annie cautioned him. "She'll hear you. If she fired me, she'd blacklist me so I couldn't get work. Big time movie stars can do that."

"What?" gasped Ikky.

"Oh yes," Annie asserted. "Of course, very few of the stars ever blacklist anyone, but they CAN."

"I'm glad you say that few of 'em do. I guess one Helena Troy's all any industry needs."

Annie laughed. "She's on her good behavior so far. You should see her when she gets a run in those hoarded nylons!"

"I bet," said Ikky dryly. "Hey, look," he cried, standing up. "Land ahead. We'll hit our airport pretty quick now."

The plane glided smoothly to a landing and the quartet emerged. Helena glanced around for her reception committee. A tall, sunburned young man approached, saluted smartly and said, "Welcome to North Africa, folks. I'm Sergeant Forney."

"A sergeant!" exclaimed Helena scornfully. "Our reception committee a sergeant! Last time it was a major general!"

The Sergeant, puzzled, apologized. "I'm sorry, Miss Troy. Maybe Colonel Bough will be along. He expected to be here."

Captain Midnight had heard Helena's tirade, and with an apologetic glance at the Sergeant, he spoke. "Hold it, Miss Troy. Here comes somebody with plenty of rank. Look!"

"Yes," said the Sergeant. "That's Colonel Bough. I'm glad he could make it."

As an officer approached he saluted and said, "Sorry I'm late, Sergeant Forney."

The Sergeant smiled acknowledgment, returned the salute, and performed introductions.

Helena was once again her ingratiating self, as she addressed the Colonel. "I'm so happy to be here, Colonel, and I hope the boys will enjoy my show. I'm very curious about something, though, if I may confess ignorance of military procedures?"

"Yes?" invited the Colonel.

"Well, Colonel Bough, I thought I saw you salute this sergeant BEFORE he saluted you?"

The Colonel nodded. "I did, Miss Troy. See the ribbon Sergeant Forney is wearing?" He pointed it out. "That's the Congressional Medal of Honor. America's highest award for valor! A Medal-of-Honor man may be saluted by a general."

Helena was properly impressed and looked at the embarrassed sergeant with interest. "How interesting," she purred. "You must tell me about it--later."

To her annoyance, Captain Midnight interrupted. "I think we had better get going. It's late." The Colonel assisted the girls into the rear of the car and seated himself between them, while Midnight sat up beside the driver.

"I hope our tardiness didn't inconvenience you too much," he apologized.

The Sergeant laughed. "Not at all. We're waiting up--what there are of us--to see HELENA TROY. You can't imagine what her coming here means to us!"

Captain Midnight laughed. He turned around to Helena and said. "Hear that, Your Highness? Curtain's being held for you!"

Helena replied frigidly, "When will you learn, Captain, that this isn't amateur night?"

A tense silence prevailed as they drove on, until the Sergeant said, "We're almost there now. See the barracks just ahead?"

"Why, it's pitch dark," cried Helena. In a mock-serious tone she asked the Colonel, "No bright lights for me, sir?"

"No offense, my dear," replied the Colonel. "We just don't want a German raider to spoil our fun. Every man left in cap is waiting in the mess hall."

"Good!" she exclaimed. "I like to play to packed houses."

"You see," he continued, "most of us were shipped out on sudden orders. This detail stayed with me to welcome you."

They entered the mess hall and Helena looked around. The soldiers rose to greet her.

"Why, there are no more than a dozen men here," Helena cried.

"These dozen men will enjoy your show as much as a thousand," Sergeant Forney said.

Helena turned on him in a storm of fury. "Do you think I'll put on a show for less than twelve men? I'm HELENA TROY! I play to crowds--or I DON'T PLAY! I fly clear to Africa, away from civilization, to find a handful--!"

"Quiet, Miss Troy," intervened Captain Midnight icily. "These FEW are men who think you're an American girl, and wonderful. They've been away from civilization too."

"I've never been so let down," the blond actress screamed.

"Nor have these men," answered Midnight, "because they know that show business is full of people NOT like you."

"Listen, smart guy," Helena raved at him, "if I didn't need you to fly me out of this hole--"

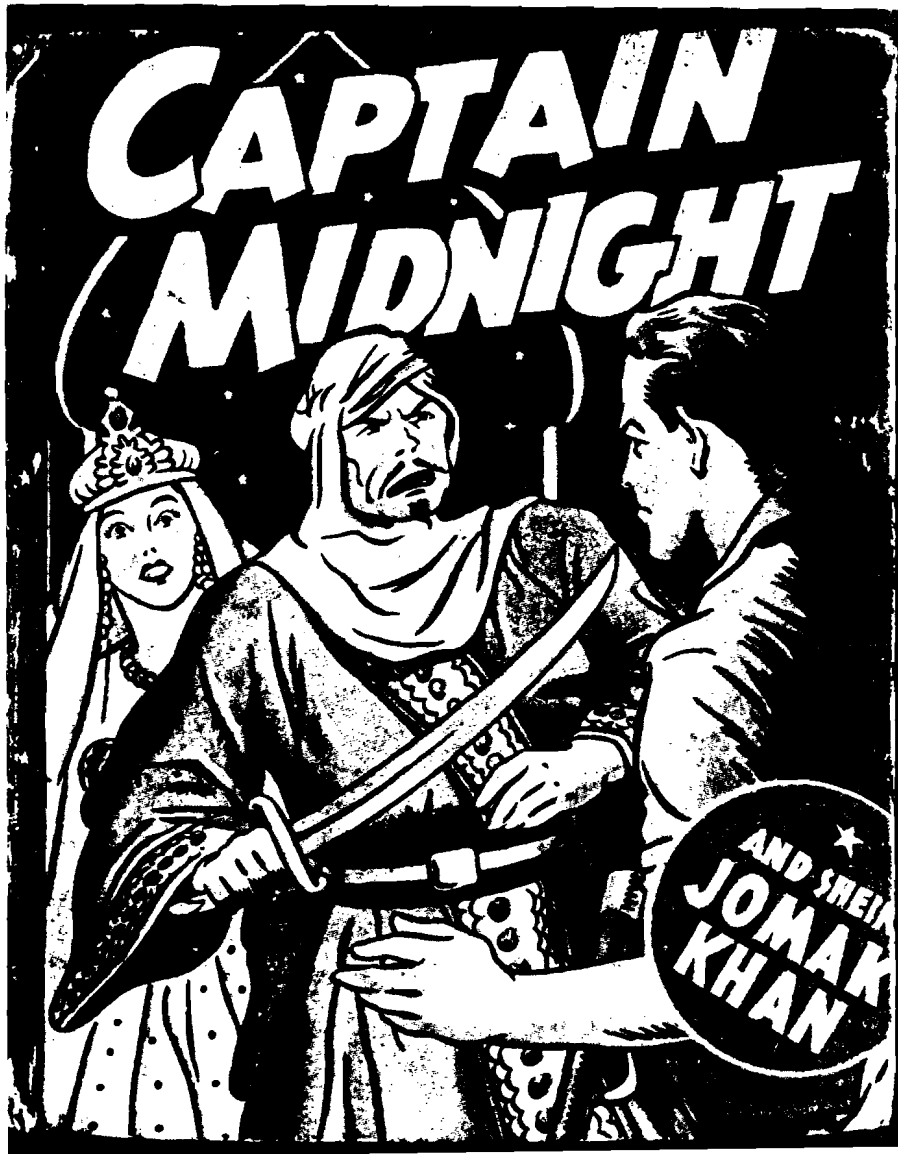
Midnight ignored her and turned to the driver. "My apologies, Sergeant Forney. Please drive us back to the landing field."

"Give me a full house next time," Helena said, "and I'll show you what makes BOX OFFICE in big letters."

"What you need, girlie," Midnight told her, "is a spanking, but I'd settle for boxed ears."

They drove in silence to the airport. Captain Midnight again apologized to the Sergeant, who smiled understandingly at him.

"Get into the plane, all of you," ordered Midnight. "Let's go."



CAPTAIN MIDNIGHT, one of the best remembered serials of old radio, was developed at Station WGN, Chicago, and was on the air regionally in 1939 for the Skelly Oil Company. When Ovaltine dropped LITTLE ORPHAN ANNIE in 1940, CAPTAIN MIDNIGHT became its replacement on Mutual, first heard September 30, 1940.

Five times a week, Andre and company came roaring out of the early evening sky, luring thousands of boys and girls into its Secret Squadron before folding on December 15, 1949. The show eventually turned up on TV, but even a 21-inch screen was too small for CAPTAIN MIDNIGHT. For two generations of kids, nothing less than broad imagination would do.

Chapter III
ATTACK OVER THE SAHARA

"It's beautiful over the Sahara at night, isn't it?" said Annie. Helena glanced at her scornfully and turned her head to look out. Then she cried, "Captain! You're flying into that storm!"

"Oh, no. Miss Troy," Ikky reassured her. "There's a storm all right, but Cap'n will fly around the edge of it to our next stop. We're safe. Don't worry."

Helena ignored Ikky's reassurance. She fidgeted in her seat a few moments before saying, "This is dangerous. We should have stayed at that camp. Can't we go back there?"

Midnight answered her. "After you treated those soldiers like dirt? I didn't think even you had brass enough for that."

As Captain Midnight skillfully piloted the plane through the eerie darkness of the night, the quiet was broken by the sound of thunder and the flash of lightening. Suddenly a loud rat-tat-tat and a crash of breaking glass startled the passengers. The girls screamed, and Ikky cried, "German plane machine-gunning us, and we haven't even a bean-shooter."

Annie recovered herself. "Oh, yes we have, Captain Midnight. I've got an automatic pistol if that will help us any. Will it?"

"Will it! Give it to me, Annie," demanded Midnight. "We can return some of their fire, and we have a fighting chance now".

Annie produced the pistol and handed it to the Captain. He passed it to Ikky, who gave Annie a big grin. "We'll show'em, eh?"

The plane zigzagged through the air. Helena screamed. "Hold on, Miss Troy," called Midnight, "I'm dodging the Nazi's tracer bullets."

"Wonder how that Nazi plane got here in the first place," mumbled Ikky. "Must have blown off its course."

The enemy's machine gun continued to rat-tat-tat, but thanks to Midnight's maneuvers, none of the bullets hit.

"Try to hit the Nazi pilot with Annie's pistol, Ikky," commanded Midnight. "It's all the armament we've got."

"I wish she'd come heeled with a cannon," Ikky responded. "I'll try all right, but it's hard with the plane doing flip-ups."

Obediently he took aim and fired, but failed to hit his mark.

The two girls were huddled in back, frightened by the combination of storm and gunfire.

Despite Captain Midnight's calm demeanor, he was perturbed. "We never expected to meet any enemy planes, or we'd have been armed. We should have been armed anyway. If anything happens to those girls--"

Aloud, he called, "Duck, girls, he's coming at us again!"

The machine gun once more spit forth its fire and withdrew rapidly, despite Ikky's vain attempts to hit the pilot. "He's comin' at us again," called Ikky, "and Annie's hit!"

Ikky, too busy to help Annie, stared at the pistol. "Roarin' rumpuses, we gotta hit him with some'n heavier than this!"

Helena leaned over to Midnight and screamed, "Get me out of this! We'll all be killed!"

The Captain called, "Take over, Ikky. Bring us wing to wing and stop his fire while I--"

Ikky hastened to obey. "What're you goin' to do, clip him?"
The German pilot watched in amazement as the American transport
plant approached him. "VAS IST?" he pondered. "Do they come along-
side to surrender? They seem unarmed, but I shall fly under and
over to make sure."

He's divin' under us, Cap'n," called Ikky. "What do I do now?"
"Fine. Hold it. Stick right over him as long as you can,
Ikky!"

Helena roused herself from her terror to watch Midnight's myste-
rious actions. He opened the door and began to haul her precious
trunk toward it.

"What are you doing with my trunk?"

He ignored her and continued to lug it toward the door-way.

"Stay away," he cautioned her.

"That trunk contains my costumes, extra jars of face cream, and
my--WAIT!"

Midnight propped the trunk in the doorway and leaned against it.

"What are you going to do with my trunk?" Helena demanded
again.

Midnight answered her nonchalantly. "You checked it to North
Africa, lady. So in the next lightening flash, I am going to deliv-
er it. Stick around and watch the fun." Before she could utter
further protests, he added in a more serious tone. "It's your trunk
or your life. Which do you value most?"

Midnight stood tensed, hands propped against the trunk, ready
and waiting. Lightning flashed, enabling him to see the Nazi plane
still directly beneath. With one violent push, he heaved the trunk
out and jubilantly watched it crash on the enemy ship.

"How's that for baggage smashing, Ikky?" he cried triumphant-
ly. "We got him!"

"Fine," replied Ikky. "But he got US, too! He shot our gas
tank and rudder all to bits!"

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Chapter IV
LOST IN THE DESERT

The attacking Nazi had been destroyed, but the storm blew Helena Troy's plane off course, and most of the instruments had been ruined. Captain Midnight, back piloting the plane, watched the gas gauge with alarm.

"I'll land her, Ikky," he said. "But I don't know where." He brought the plane down to a smooth landing in the sands of the Sahara, and said on a sigh of relief, "We're down okay."

"Everybody out," he ordered, "and let's see what our next move will be."

"Annie's been hurt," called Ikky. "I'll have to help her." She had been shot in the arm and had bled profusely. She smiled at Ikky gratefully now.

"I'll help Annie," said Captain Midnight. "Ikky, will you take a look at the plane and see if you can fix it.?"

Ikky busied himself determining the extent of the damage. "Well, folks," he announced at last, "I can fix the plane but the gas leaked out through the bullet holes. Not enough left to get us off the ground."

Here Helena approached Captain Midnight in a fury. "Well, Captain Midnight, what a lovely mess you flew us into! You blundered into the storm and that Nazi plane! Now we're lost in a desert, and you don't even look sorry!"

Ikky laughed, "Say, Miss Troy, lay off Cap'n an' blame the boy with the little mustache, in Berlin. He started the war."

"You keep out of this, you--mechanic!" Helena screamed. "As for you, Captain Midnight, I was a fool to be talked into letting you pilot my plane!"

Midnight favored her with a cool smile. "You can fire me, Miss Troy," he advised her, "AFTER we get out of here alive!"

He stalked over to Ikky, leaving Helena gaping after him. "No need to tell you this is a serious predicament for us," Midnight said. "Lost in the desert! What we need most is water, Ikky. How about our cooler?"

Ikky disappeared into the plane to investigate. He returned to say, "That kraut gunned the water cooler, too." He held out a tin cup. "Just enough left to rinse one throat."

Midnight hid his dismay to replay. "Well, in the case, you had better give it to Annie. I'm sure we'll find water around here somewhere."

As Ikky approached Annie with the cup of water, Helena called imperiously, "Wait! My maid can drink AFTER me!"

Ikky and Midnight stared in astonishment. Then Midnight said, "Miss Troy, you don't know what you're saying! We're all thirsty, but Annie's been wounded and she's lost a lot of blood. She NEEDS that water!"

Ikky handed the water to Annie, completely ignoring Helena's outburst. The actress ran toward them and shouted at Midnight, "I won't let you be nasty to me just because I said you're not fit to be a flier. If I don't get a drink, NOBODY does!"

With those words, she dashed the cup from Annie's hands.

They watched the precious liquid sink away, absorbed into the desert sand. Helena herself was too aghast to speak.

The first to recover power of speech from the shock of Helena's rash action was Ikky. Rarely had Midnight seen the amiable Ichabod so angry, as he vented his wrath upon Helena. "I wish you were a man for just long enough to let me land one punch--"

Midnight thought it best to intervene rather than risk Ikky's self control. He said placatingly to the mechanic, "Anyone who loses her temper and throws away water in the desert, Ikky, should be ignored."

Helena was thoroughly cowed and frightened. If these ruffians took Annie and deserted her--! And they had no water through her own action! "I'm sorry. Perhaps I did make a sort of scene," she said.

Midnight turned his back on her. "I'm not a good listener, either, girlie," he said.

Midnight led the way across the desert. Ikky, helping Annie, walked right behind him, and Helena, unused to walking, brought up the rear. The rest ignored her completely.

The little group marched in silence. Midnight was concerned with the problem of water and food. Annie was wearily grateful for Ikky's assistance.

The unfriendly attitude of the other members of the party annoyed Helena. If she didn't hear the sound of a human voice soon, she'd go crazy. She HAD to speak!

"Isn't it--quiet? No trees, no people--nothing!"

Ikky replied, "That don't bother me none, Miss Troy, because right now I'd feel sorta ashamed to be seen--with you."

The little group walked on. The hot sun beat down mercilessly, and Annie's steps began to drag more and more, despite Ikky's assistance. "Don't be afraid to lean on me, Annie," he told her. She smiled at him and stuttered, "I'm s-sorry to be a s-sissy. Why don't you leave me and go on? I'm afraid I can't make it." She stumbled, and Ikky looked to his Captain for the next move.

Annie's plea reached Captain Midnight. "You'll make it, Annie! You've been so brave right along. Just keep it up," he said.

He placed her arm on his shoulder and put his own arm around her. "I'll help her on this side, Ikky, while you take care of her on the other side. Come on."

The two men, with Annie between them, began to march again, while Helena was left once more to bring up the rear.

"The sun," she screamed. "It's burning like fire. I'll go mad!"

"It's no hotter for you than it is for Annie" Midnight said. When she stumbled, he called, "Keep moving! If you fall you'll never get up." But though she heard his words, they held no meaning for her.

"I can't go on," she cried, and collapsed to the ground.

Midnight heard Ikky call, "Cap'n, Miss Troy's passed out--and Annie, too, now." Then: "I'm goin', too. Get out if you can, Cap'n. Good luck!"

Captain Midnight felt weak and exhausted, too, but the tableau of the two girls and his faithful companion stretched on the desert sands spurred him on.

"I must find help," he gasped.

It seemed to him that he'd been wandering for hours. He could go no further, when suddenly he saw a man in Arabian dress, and leading a horse.

Midnight raised himself from the sand. He rubbed his eyes and gazed again. If this were a mirage, it was a persistent one.

"They're alive! They're real! thank God," he murmured.

The stranger stopped short. He raised his right hand in greeting and called, "Allah Akbar!"

CAPTAIN MIDNIGHT

- CAST:

Captain Midnight

Ed Prentiss

Bill Bouchey

Paul Barnes

Joyce Ryan

Angeline Orr

Marilou Neumayer

Chuck Ramsey

Bill Rose

Jack Bivens

Johnny Coons

Icahod (Ichy) Mudd

Hugh Studebaker

Art Hern

Sherman Marks

Ivan Shark

Boris Aplon

Fury Shark (Ivan's daughter)

Rene Rodier

Sharon Grainger

Gardo

Earl George

Rogart

Marvin Miller

Dr. Glazer

Maurice Copeland

SS-11

Olan Soule

Captain Einman (Nazi)

Marvin Miller

CAPTAIN MIDNIGHT - FORMAT:

The story of a private citizen who devoted his life to fighting crime. Named "Captain Midnight" for his daring air tactics during World War I, Captain Albright commands the Secret Squadron, a government organization designed to combat evil. Assisted by Chuck Ramsey, Ichabod Mudd, and Joyce Ryand, he battles the sinister forces of evil.

Announcer: Pierre Andre, Don Gordon, Tom Moore

Sponsor: Skelly Oil Company, Ovaltine.

Length: 15 minutes

Syndicated (1939), Mutual (1940).

First Broadcast: 1939.

Chapter V
HIDDEN OASIS

Midnight smiled at the Arab and rose unsteadily. He beckoned the man to follow him.

"I must tell him we're dying of thirst, but I don't know Arabic," thought Midnight. "Still these natives often know French."

The Arab knew at a glance what these people needed. He put the water pouch to Ikky's lips.

"Merci beaucoup, mon ami, Nous faisons mourir de soif!" and Midnight. The Arab made no sign of recognition as he revived Ikky. Perhaps Italian Libya, thought Midnight, since he didn't seem to understand French. "Parlo Italiano?"

Ikky took the water flask with a grateful smile and walked over to give some of the life-saving liquid to Annie. The Arab gazed around him and smiled at the Captain, but made no reply.

"No Italian," sighed Midnight. "What other language can I try?"

Annie propped herself on her elbow and watched Ikky as he now took the precious water flask to Helena Troy.

"Surely we didn't land in Spanish Morocco," pondered Midnight, but decided to try Spanish just on the chance. "Por favor..Habla usted Espanol?" To Midnight's disappointment, the Arab ignored this question.

In rapid succession, Midnight questioned the Arab.

"Sprechen sie Deutch?"

"Fale Portuges?"

"Stava Sweed, Jo?"

The Arab favored him with a blank look to all questions, and Midnight turned to Ikky.

"No use, Ikky. The native doesn't understand a word of any language I know," he said.

Upon hearing Midnight's remark to Ikky, the Arabian suddenly beamed, and shouted. "Greetings, friend! You sound like home! You're from the United States?"

Midnight, Ikky and the two girls stared in amazement at the Arab. Midnight recovered himself sufficiently to ask, "You're American? How did you get here?"

"Let's get going and I'll tell you," replied the Arab.

"Right," agreed Captain Midnight. He helped Helena Troy and Annie mount the Arab's horse, and said, "We're ready."

The Arab led the way while Midnight questioned him. "What's your name, and before we die of curiosity as well as hunger, do tell us how you got here."

"I'm Cassio Lee. Alabama's my home. I went to school in the East, read of the far-off lands and set out to see'em. So here I am!"

"It's fantastic," cried Captain Midnight. "Like a tale out of the Arabian Nights. We get lost in the heart of the Sahara desert, and an American Negro lad comes to our rescue in the nick of time. I can't tell you how grateful and appreciative we are!"

Cassio grinned broadly. "I'm a real son of the the Sahara, all right."

"Have you joined some native community?" asked Midnight.

Cassio nodded. "Yes. I am a member of the desert outlaw tribe of the great JOMAK KHAN!"

"Jomak Khan?" repeated Midnight. "You're taking us to him?"

"Yes." Cassio pointed ahead.

The group made out the outlines of a high wall with an arched entrance far in the distance. Inside the wall numerous palm trees spread their shade.

They approached eagerly, and Casino said, "Welcome to the hidden oasis of Sidi-es-gamit! We outlaws live there."

Captain Midnight repeated thoughtfully, "Outlaws, eh? What kind of outlaws are you?"

Cassio replied, "Here, deep in the desert, man preys upon man. They raid caravans and settlements, steal jewels, food, money, yes--even women."

"So that's what you do--rob caravans." commented Midnight.

Cassio corrected him. "No. We do not. We're big operators. We rob the robbers."

"Rob the robbers," gasped Ikky. "Shades of prohibition! That's hijacking--in the Sahara!"

"Whose idea was that?"

"That of our chief, Shiek Jomak Khan! You'll see him directly for we are at the gates."

Cassio led the way. They walked down a long path to a house.

"Where are you taking us, Cassio?" asked Midnight.

"To the house of Jomak Khan's chief counselor! He, too, speaks English."

"Who taught him? You?"

"Not I," denied Cassio. "Jomak Khan did. He talks all languages! Here is Zamarr now."

The little party watched attentively as Zamarr, the chief counselor, approached offering hospitality. He was a tall, bearded man, stockily built, kindly and gracious in manner.

"People ran ahead to tell me of your coming." He addressed Captain Midnight, whom he recognized to be the head of the party. "Favor me by being my guests."

Captain Midnight thanked him on behalf of the entire group, and Zamarr gave some rapid instructions. The girls were escorted by an Arabian woman while Ikky and Midnight were led to the men's quarters.

"I've washed half the Sahara Desert off me," sighed Captain Midnight later. He dabbled his hands in a bowl of water, which Arabian lads filled, in sheer pleasure at the feel of it. "I feel like a human being again," he smiled at Zamarr.

"Hanna-kumu'llah...May Allah make it pleasant to you!" was the cordial response. "Your women also are being refreshed. And then we shall be happy to have you partake of our food!"

Annie and Helena were in deed being cared for. "This girl is as good as a trained nurse," commented Annie as a young Arabian maid changed her bandage. Helena, luxuriating in the attentions of another maid, agreed. "This one beats the Hollywood beauty shops!"

"I'm starved," Helena said. "Come, Annie, let's go find the men and get something to eat." The maids led the way to the dining-room, where the girls found Captain Midnight and Ikky seated at a table full of delicacies.

"Is that food?" asked Helena.

Captain Midnight laughed. "Thanks to Zamarr, lots of it. We've been waiting for you and Annie."

They ate heartily and in silence. Finally, all agreed that they had had more than enough.

"Now if I only had a bed," sighed Ikky.

Zamarr smiled. "You have." He summoned servants and bade them show Ikky and the two girls their sleeping quarters. This left Captain Midnight alone with Zamarr, and he voiced his gratitude. Zamarr merely nodded acknowledgement, and said, "If you have eaten well, let us now talk, Captain."

ECHOES OF THE PAST

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FOR REELS, CASSETTES AND BLANK TAPES

Back-to-school blues and the radio serials cure

By GEORGE KUNZ

The same flip of the calendar that ended summer and sent us back to school also restored the late-afternoon radio serials. Suspended during vacation months, the daily lineup of cereal-sponsored serials was an engrossing world for kids of my era.

Many afternoon dramas drew their inspirations from popular comic strips: Dick Tracy, Skippy, Terry and the Pirates, Little Orphan Annie, Captain Midnight. Others relied on quasi-folklore: Tom Mix, Jack Armstrong.

Children's radio serials signed on at 5 p.m., each feature lasting a quarter-hour. Allowing for commercials at start and finish, actual drama time ran about 11 minutes.

Time passes more slowly for a child, and the daily segment seemed a fair allotment. It ended too soon — that was life — but there was always the next day. "Tune in tomorrow," as the announcer said.

It was amazing how quickly we kids could make the transition from one afternoon story to the next. Yet there was no problem-keeping straight the characters, the situation. Of course, the announcer tried to help.

"You remember yesterday, boys and girls: Terry had lost his way in the jungle. Stumbling through the thick, wild brush, he suddenly heard a low moan . . ." Late-afternoon radio was in session.

Many serials wove music into their introductions. "Jack Armstrong, the All-American Boy!" started with Jack's school song: "Wave the flag for Hudson High, boys/Show them how we stand."

Subtly, this melody blended into a commercial: "Have you tried Wheaties? . . . They're crispy, they're crunchy the whole day through/Jack Armstrong never tires of them/And neither will you."

At 5:30, Tom Mix would gallop on with a song to suit his cereal sponsor: "When it's Ralston time at breakfast/Then it surely is a treat . . ." Tom's story

generally involved cattle thieves or wolf packs that preyed on sheep.

The final afternoon slot opened with a musical question: "Who's that little chatterbox/The one with pretty auburn locks?" For any child, now well-aged, who can't identify the program, I'll drop a hint: She had a dog named Sandy whose cachet was "Arf."

The drama and revelry to which I allude was but a prelude to the unfurling glories of autumn. Within weeks, announcers were cooing about enticing free offers whereby kids could obtain lucky charms, secret decoders, lapel pins, breakfast mugs, club badges, engraved spoons.

I still have some of the prizes I received by return mail during that golden age of cereal radio. Still better, I cherish a barrel of memories of programs that helped me forget the misery of being back at school.

GEORGE KUNZ is a retired high school teacher. He lives in Snyder.

Chapter VI
CAPTIVE BRIDE

The two men seated themselves comfortably. Midnight smiled at Zamarr. "There's not much to tell, sir. Our plane was forced down in the desert. We had no food nor water, and without your kind assistance, we'd have died!"

Zamarr nodded. "My scouts have already discovered your plane. They are wheeling it here across the sands."

Captain Midnight again expressed his appreciation.

"Can your plane be repaired?" asked Zamarr. Captain Midnight assured him that it could.

"What's troubling us chiefly is the need of gasoline," he added.

Zamarr waved a reassuring hand. "We have plenty of gasoline. We captured it in our raids, Captain Midnight."

"That's splendid, Zamarr," beamed the Captain. "That means we won't need to trouble you much longer."

Captain Midnight failed to note the disapproving frown on Zamarr's bearded countenance, as he discussed his future plans.

"Ikky and I can tinker that ship back into shape in a few hours. Then we'll fill our tanks, pay you for your trouble and take off!"

Zamarr raised his hand in protest. "Please, my friend, it is not as simple as that."

"What do you mean," asked Midnight in bewilderment. "You do have the gasoline, do you not? That is all we need."

"You do not understand, my friend," Zamarr said. "Surely you must see that you cannot leave us, Captain Midnight! We are outlaws and must remain hidden from the world!"

Midnight spoke quietly. "You don't think we'd betray you, Zamarr, after you saved our lives?"

Zamarr smiled and rose. "I shall bid you good night and we shall continue this discussion in the morning."

The next morning, after a refreshing sleep and a hearty breakfast, Midnight, Ikky, Annie and Helena entered Zamarr's conference room. He greeted them courteously and addressed Midnight.

"Captain, I have given much thought to the matter, and my solution is this: We shall welcome you and your friend, as stout fighting men, to join our ranks!"

Midnight and Ikky stared at Zamarr in astonishment.

"That's impossible," Midnight protested, "Besides, what about Miss Troy and Annie?"

Zamarr said, "The fate of the damsels will be decided by the Sheik Jomak Khan! He comes now."

The little group turned to the door and watched the stately entrance of the Sheik, flanked by attendants on either side.

Zamarr made a deep bow as the Sheik entered the room. "Salaam aleikoum, O Master," he cried.

The Sheik glanced at the strangers. He was a tall, sturdy dark man, with a fierce expression. "I am Jomak Khan, Sheik of this tribe," he told Midnight. "And you?"

"I am Captain Midnight, United States of America. With me is my friend, Ichabod Mudd; and Miss Troy with her maid, Annie."

The Sheik's gloomy, saturnine countenance brightened. "Girls! American girls, by Allah!" he exclaimed joyfully. "Long have I wished for an American wife to comfort my loneliness!"

He gazed long and happily up on the two girls, until Helena could no longer control her temper. She turned upon him in one of her now familiar furies. "Clearly you have seen no American movies lately. I am Helena Troy, and if you think I'm going to marry some small-time desert racketeer--" she began.

The Sheik looked at her scornfully. "By the Prophet, you are weak of understanding." Brushing her aside roughly, he pointed to Annie.

"Not for a moment did I consider you for my wife. It is this one who calls to my heart!"

Annie stood stock-still, too frightened to move. She stared in speechless terror.

Captain Midnight recovered from his surprise and stepped forward. "Annie is an American girl, Sheik Jomak Khan," he said sternly. "She doesn't have to marry a man she doesn't want."

The Sheik ignored him entirely. "Annie," he said. "Is that your name? You shall marry me and rule by my side."

Zamarr addressed Captain Midnight placatingly. "Be calm, Captain. If you should get angry, the great Sheik might--" The suggested threat did not alarm the Captain, but served to attract the Sheik's attention.

"Enough, Zamarr," he said imperiously. "Captain Midnight does not fully understand me." He signaled to the Captain, "Come to this window."

Midnight jointed the Sheik at the window and was astonished to see men with camel towing the damaged plane.

Jomak Khan spoke. "I admire all things American. We have recovered your damaged plane. You shall repair it. We have gasoline. I appoint you to the post of AIR FORCE CHIEF of my tribe."

Captain Midnight laughed shortly. "I thank you for the honor, Sheik."

Before Jomak Khan could utter another word, Midnight folded his arms across his chest and added, "Naturally, I can't possibly accept. Besides, we were talking about Annie."

The Sheik's countenance darkened with anger, but he replied coolly, "She, too, is an American thing which I admire. She goes with me to prepare for the wedding."

He stalked over to Annie and took her hand. "Come," he ordered.

"You can't get away with this," cried Midnight. But before he and Ikky could take a step, two of the Arabs pounced upon them with clubs. Ikky, taken unaware from behind, received a heavy blow on the head, but Midnight was able to avoid the worst of it by ducking. As the club glanced off his shoulder he grabbed it.

He soon dropped it, however, and resorted to his fists.

Midnight landed a knockout blow on the assailant's chin. Zamarr, watching from the sidelines, screamed, "Allah na'al abuk, ya nazrani!" The Arab who had hit Ichabod pounced upon Midnight, and the two men fought furiously. The sight of Ikky prone on the floor inflamed Midnight. He hit the Arab a powerful punch that knocked him down. "That's for slugging Ikky," he cried, as he looked around to get his bearings.

Zamarr, Captain Midnight noted, confined his fighting activities to giving orders. With Midnight the victor of the brief battle, Zamarr slipped from the room. The Sheik, too, had taken advantage of the disturbance to disappear, but he had taken Annie with him.

Midnight bent to examine Ikky and was pleased to find that he was quickly recovering from the blow on his head and appeared to be otherwise uninjured. "Take care of Ikky," he ordered Helena. "I've got to save Annie."

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4. They were also known as SS-2 and SS-3. Which was which?
5. Another "SS" was the faithful airplane mechanic and comic relief. His name?
6. Who was their common enemy, the archvillain of the piece?
7. His daughter?
8. The announcer? (Yes, you know him; he was a holdover from LITTLE ORPHAN ANNIE.)

ANSWERS: (1) Captain Red Albright. (2) Ed Prentiss. (3) Chuck Ramsey and Joyce Ryan. (4) Chuck was SS-2, Joyce was SS-3. (5) Ichabod "Ikky" Mudd. (6) Ivan Shark. (7) Fury. (8) good old Pierre Andre.

Chapter VII
MIDNIGHT TO THE RESCUE

Captain Midnight departed in search of Annie. He heard a faint scream and entered the room where the Sheik clasped Annie's arm tightly. "Come, Annie," he was saying, "my men are disposing of Midnight."

"ARE they disposing of Midnight?" questioned the Captain serenely. The Sheik turned to stare at him. "Don't worry, Annie," reassured Midnight. "You won't have to marry this brute."

The Sheik recovered himself. "Ya ibn jahannam!" he cried.

Two Arabs, armed with spears, appeared as if by magic.

"If those are fighting words, let's go," said Midnight as he dashed toward one of the men. He grabbed the spear from the startled enemy and thrust it into his shoulder, disabling him without killing. He followed suit with the second assailant, and cried, "Maybe you don't know this trick with a spear! Wonder how Ikky's doing with his share of Arabs?"

The Sheik had taken advantage of this second fracas to again disappear with Annie. While Midnight stood pondering, a voice behind him called, "H'st, Captain Midnight, sir! Dash in here!"

It was Cassio. "Can I trust you, Cassio?" the Captain asked. "You belong to the Sheiks' outlaw tribe."

Cassio grinned. "Yes, sir, but I'm likewise an American."

"I'll HAVE to trust you," said Midnight.

"There are more of Jomak Khan's men searching for you" said Cassio. "Go this way and get up on the roof where you can hide."

Midnight reached the roof in safety. "Safe for the moment, any way," he thought. "When the excitement moves on I'll head for Jomak Khan's house. That's the logical place for him to have taken Annie. I hope Ikky and Miss Troy are all right, but I don't think anyone will bother them. This IS a spot!"

Captain Midnight was roused from his meditation by a loud call. "Y'Allah Il Allah!" Glancing up, he saw the muezzin with outstretched arms, calling the Moslems to prayer.

The faithful paused in their pursuit of Midnight and turned their thoughts to holy things. The muezzin called: "There is no majesty nor might save in Allah! And Mohammed is his prophet!"

Captain Midnight watched as one after another of his pursuers fell to the ground and bowed in holy worship.

Suddenly he stood erect. "It's a perfect chance for me to escape now," he decided. Quickly, he crossed the roofs in search of Jomak Khan's home. He found a residence, much larger than the others, which he decided must be the one.

Captain Midnight's guess was correct. The large house was Jomak Khan's, and this was where he had brought Annie. Releasing his hold on her arm, the Sheik summoned female servants.

"These women will prepare you for the wedding, Annie. I shall wait in the main hall!"

Annie protested, "But, Jomak Khan--!"

"Go," ordered the Sheik, and the women led Annie away.

Despite the seriousness of her predicament, Annie relaxed under the women's skillful hand. They bathed her, brushed her hair,

anointed her with perfumes, and helped her don the wedding gown, which did full justice to her slender figure.

"Jomak Khan certainly doesn't take 'No' for an answer, does he?" Annie said to the silent women. "Wonder who's coming to my wedding?"

Jomak Khan would not have been so complacent regarding his approaching marriage to Annie, had he overheard the conversation taking place in another outlaw camp not far away.

An Arabian messenger was approaching his sheik.

"Mighty Sheik El-Kimri!" he cried. "I bring tidings. Your rival, Jomak Khan, takes a foreigner to wife!"

"A foreigner to wife!" repeated the Sheik El-Kimri. "But he was to marry my daughter! It was arranged to ally our tribes!"

The significance of the messenger's statement penetrated to Sheik El-Kimri's brain. "So Jomak Khan takes a foreigner to wife, ignoring his promise to my daughter! This I shall avenge. Muster my fighting forces immediately. Jomak Khan shall have SWORDS and GUNS at his marriage feast!"

In blissful ignorance of the efforts of Sheik El-Kimri and Captain Midnight to prevent his marriage, Jomak Khan entered the room where the women were completing Annie's preparations.

"Leave us. I wish to be alone with Annie who is to be my wife this day," he ordered.

The women bowed and withdrew. Annie faced him defiantly.

"Jomak Khan," stormed Annie in her best imitation of one of Helena Troy's tempers, "you haven't even asked me if I WANT to marry you. I'm an American girl, and we don't do things so high-handedly in America!"

The Sheik ignored her outburst. "You're so beautiful," he murmured. "Let me speak first. Now that no one is around to hear us, I will tell you a secret."

Captain Midnight climbed across the rooftops until he reached the one opposite the house he felt belonged to Jomak Khan.

"All the doors are probably guarded," he mused, "but that window looks forgotten. I'll give it a try, anyway. Nothing to lose but my life."

He tossed a spear into the wall above the forgotten window, lassoed the rope around the spear, and tugged at it to make sure it would carry his weight.

Captain Midnight swung himself over to the Sheik's house. He landed not far from the open window, and he climbed into the room.

The sight of Annie in her wedding finery, with the Sheik whispering, "I want to tell you, Annie, that I--" surprised him. He had not expected success so quickly.

Annie screamed at the sight of Captain Midnight in the window.

"Look," she cried. "Jomak Khan, it's Captain Midnight."

The Sheik, accustomed to quick action in emergencies, swung around, his spear in hand.

"So my blundering men let you escape," he cried. "I must win my own battles then!"

The two adversaries faced each other. Annie huddled in a corner, watching them. Suddenly, Midnight made a quick grab for the spear and wrenched it from the Sheik's grasp. "Let's stage our scrap without cutlery," he suggested.

Jomak Khan rubbed his wrist. "Ow! What is that come-along hold you used? For the love of Mike, it's brutal!"

Captain Midnight stared at the Sheik in astonishment. He repeated softly, "'For the love of Mike' isn't Arabic. It's just plain American!"

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Chapter VIII
AN AMERICAN SHEIK

Captain Midnight was dumfounded when he heard the American slang expression used by the outlaw chief. He recovered himself quickly, however, and tossed the knife to Annie.

"Keep this cheese-cutter out of the scrap, Annie," he said.

"Very well, then," Jomak Khan agreed. "it is to be fists," and he braced himself for hand-to-hand battle.

Captain Midnight acted swiftly, before the Sheik could move. He landed a hard punch right in his enemy's midriff. "Right to your fuselage," he cried, as the Sheik let out an "Oof!" of pain. Jomak Khan fought back furiously despite the handicap of flowing robes and long sleeves. However, accustomed to the desert instrument of warfare, the spear, he was no match for Midnight.

Annie watched in fascinated horror, Jomak Khan was taking a terrific beating. He was knocked to the floor, picked himself up and was knocked down again.

"Are you going to KILL him?" Annie demanded of Midnight.

"Unless he quits first, Annie," was the calm reply as another punch connected. This time the Sheik stayed down.

Captain Midnight bent over the prone figure. "Are you ready to give up?" he asked.

The Sheik groaned. "Okay, UNCLE, Midnight! Enough."

"All right, you can get up now," Midnight told him. "And I'd like an explanation, incidentally. You don't sound like a sheik. You use American slang, and I think you ARE an American. What's your real name, and what is this all about, anyhow?"

The Sheik painfully raised himself to a sitting position. He put a hand to his aching head. "My real name is Jomak Khan," he replied. "Only in American it's got a different accent. JOE McCANN of Omaha. Deserter years ago from the Foreign Legion."

Midnight took up the story. "Then you joined these outlaws and became their chief. Why did you desert from the Legion?"

Joe told his story. "It's a relief to speak real American again," he said. "Anyhow, I deserted because I'd have been stuck in prison for years for losing my head with an officer. The desert is better than prison, and I've done okay here. Are you thinking of giving me back to the French?"

"Annie!" He walked over to her. "I'm on the level with Annie, Captain Midnight! I fell hard when I saw a swell American girl like I used to know."

Midnight continued to stare at him. Joe went on, "I want Annie for my QUEEN. And don't think that isn't going to mean trouble, too! It certainly isn't going to please a sheik named El-Kimri who's set on marrying his daughter to me to ally our tribes!"

Trouble with El-Kimri was right on Joe McCann's doorstep at the moment, if he had only known it. Near the oasis of Sidies-Samit, his messengers reported to their Sheik: "Jomak Khan has a large sentry post to guard his oasis, O mighty El-Kimri!"

"Our men are all armed and ready to battle, are they not?" he replied. "Give them orders to charge. Tell them to cut down the sentry." The messengers hastened to obey.

El-Kimri's men attacked the unsuspecting sentry post, cutting down men right and left. One of the enemy called, "See, great Sheik, one sentry escapes!" They chased him in vain, and the lone sentry, Cassio, galloped to safety.

"Quick," ordered the Sheik. "Before that fugitive warns Jomak Khan, CHARGE THE OASIS!"

The men pushed into the oasis crying, "Ulululululallahu Akbar!"

Midnight was still undecided about his course of action.

Joe McCann spoke impatiently. "All right, so I'm Joe McCann, American-Foreign Legion deserter-desert outlaw chief--and nuts about Annie! What are you going to do about it?"

"Why did you force me to slap the truth out of you?"

"Because I'm a dead pigeon if the Legion catches me!"

Captain Midnight laughed. "You're behind on your news! North Africa's under new management, and this back country isn't so far back any more. Why don't you offer your services and influence to the NEW government? You might be rewarded instead of arrested."

"It might be an angle at that," Joe conceded. "But how do I know you aren't a Legion spy?"

Midnight ignored his suggestion, and Annie interceded: "Please listen to Captain Midnight, Mister McCann...Joe!"

Joe smiled at her. "I hate to refuse you anything, Annie."

Captain Midnight pressed him further. "You're a right guy, Joe, or you'd have set your guards on me! You'll get a fair hearing by the Allied staff at Algiers, that I can promise you."

Joe turned away. "What's that outside? A riot?" he cried, hastening to the window. "Horses...yells...SHOTS! It's a raid. El-Kimri's men are attacking us! He must have got the news that I was going to marry Annie, and this is his answer. I've got my OWN war, right now!"

He disappeared from the room to round up his men. Annie and Midnight dashed to the window. "He's fighting like a lion," cried Annie.

"He's fighting like an AMERICAN," corrected Midnight. "I'll help him as soon as I take you and Helena Troy to safety."

Joe found his men frightened and surprised, ready to desert. "El-Kimri will slaughter us all," they cried. "Let us flee! Escape!"

"No, by heaven," Joe shouted. "We will NOT run. We'll stand and fight like men." He thrust himself into the thick of the fray and battled furiously. Inspired by his example, his men cried, "Allah favors brave men!" and renewed the fight.

El-Kimri watched in amazement. "Jomak Khan does not run. It will not be such an easy victory!"

McCann shouted encouragement to his men: "Stand and fight Keep those dogs out of OUR oasis!"

A messenger advanced to El-Kimri. "Jomak Khan's defense is too deadly," he warned. "We dare not advance against it."

"Leave a few men here to draw their fire. The rest will attack the rear," the Sheik ordered.

Chapter IX
DESERT RAID

Cassio had made his way in safety to the home of Jomak Khan. He entered the room where Ikky and Helena waited. "Cassio," demanded Ikky, "what's all the shootin' for?"

"Bad business," replied Cassio. "I better get you out."

Midnight barged in with Annie. "Cassio! Can you find that gasoline Jomak Khan says is here?"

Cassio exhibited no surprise at Midnight's abrupt appearance and demands. "Yes, sir!"

"Bring us a tankfull," ordered the Captain, and waved Cassio out of the room. "Ikky," he then said, "we're getting our plane into this scrap. Come on. You can get the plane ready to fly while Cassio's getting the gasoline."

"Action! That's what I like!" Ikky rubbed his hands together gleefully and followed Midnight out of the room. Helena Troy and Annie meekly followed.

Ikky busied himself readying the plane, while Helena attempted futilely to talk to Captain Midnight. "Listen--" she tried to engage his attention.

"There comes Cassio," Midnight said.

Cassio approached happily, leading heavy-laden pack animals. "I got the gas. Likewise rifles and ammunition!" he cried.

"Good work, Cassio!"

As Cassio went to assist Ikky, Helena succeeded in extracting a response from Midnight.

"Are you really going to get us out of his jam?" she asked.

"In a roundabout way. First, I'm getting us INTO it."

"What do you mean by that?" asked Helena. "Aren't you going to get us out of here?"

"Nope. You and Annie will be safe here. Cassio, Ikky and I will drive back those attackers!"

Slowly the significance of Midnight's plan dawned upon Helena. "You're leaving us here while you help that Sheik who kidnaped Annie? Suppose something happens to you? We're stuck here at their mercy!"

His calmness infuriated her.

"You idiot!" she screamed. "Your plane is unarmed. Those Arabs are murderous. It's not OUR fight. I DEMAND you fly us away from here at once!"

"Please stand clear," he replied, "while I pretend not to listen."

Annie had been listening. Suddenly she turned so rapidly that the coat she had flung across her shoulders to hide her scanty wedding gown flapped wildly in the breeze. She ran toward the house. In reply to Helena's imperious, "Annie, where are you going?" she answered, "Joe McCann may be wounded. I'm going to see."

Captain Midnight smiled at Annie's swiftly departing back. "Trust that girl to think of someone else's safety before hers," he murmured. "You had better follow her to a safer spot," he advised Helena. "This is a little far from the battlefield, but you better get under cover from the sun."

"I'll do nothing of the kind," stormed Helena. "I'll wait right here for your return." She sat down in the sand defiantly.

Before Midnight could reply, Ikky and Cassio approached him.

"All ready to take off, Cap'n!" greeted Ikky. "No trouble at all to fix the plane."

Cassio spoke. "Better snap it up! See El-Kimri there with his whole gang of trouble?"

"Right!" agreed Midnight, and the three men entered the plane.

Ikky took the controls, while Cassio stationed himself at one port with a rifle and Midnight did likewise at the other side.

The plane rose in the air.

They flew over the oasis and watched until they spotted the attacking force.

As the plane swooped over them, El-Kimri's men cried, "Almighty Allah! What darkens the sky?" In response to Midnight's orders, the plane rose in the air again while the Arabs watched.

"We sure surprised them" laughed Ikky. "They're so busy lookin' at us, they've forgotten to fight."

"Fine!" agreed Midnight. "Now, Ikky, swoop low over them!" The plane nose-dived once more down into the battle-field to create chaos.

"Open fire, Cassio!" ordered the Captain. He, himself aimed his rifle and shot into the thick of the fray.

The plane rose in the air again, giving Midnight and Cassio time to reload their rifles.

"Good shot, pal," the Captain congratulated Cassio. "Was that Ek-Kimri you knocked off his horse?"

Cassio was embarrassed but highly pleased at the praise. "I dunno. But the survivors better skedaddle!" He aimed his rifle, ready for action as soon as he could sight the enemy. Midnight followed suit.

The attacking tribe scattered in terror. They screamed at the "infidel war-bird." El-Kimri's voice cried, "Run! Save yourselves!"

The three passengers of the plane laughed heartily as they watched the ignominious retreat across the desert. El-Kimri had taken the horse of a man who had fallen in battle, and was heading for home.

"I'm gonna follow that El-Kimri guy for a while just for the heck of it," announced Ikky. "At least, it'll give him a good scare to see the war-bird still on his trail."

However, El-Kimri was too intent upon reaching a safe haven to waste time gazing into the heavens. Swiftly he rode across the desert--directly toward Helena Troy, who had fallen asleep under the hot sun despite her anxiety. The clatter of the horse's hoofs awoke the blond actress, and she began to run.

The Sheik watched the slender blond girl in slacks, and chuckled. "Bismallah!" he said. "A white girl. I retreat-yes. But I take a prize with me!" As he overtook the actress, he calmly scooped her up in one arm and placed her in front of him on the horse, laughing triumphantly at her frantic screams.

"Put me down," cried Helena, "before my friends shoot you!"

"They dare not shoot," replied the Sheik. "They might hit you."

He was right. The three men in the plane had witnessed the kidnaping and were powerless. However, Captain Midnight's fertile brain soon evolved a plan of rescue.

As the plane nosed toward the ground, Midnight took the scimitar from Cassio. "Tell Ikky to go lower now so I can jump," he directed. "After that, go on gunning El-Kimri's warriors." Cassio nodded. Midnight braced himself, and as the plane swept low, near El-Kimri's unsuspecting back, the Captain jumped.

He landed on the horse already burdened with a double load, and flung his arm about the Sheik's neck, bringing him to the ground.

Both Midnight and the Sheik spring to their feet, swords drawn, ready for a deadly duel. Each knew that only one of them could live.

"Ya roumi nidatami! You infidel dog!" shrieked El-Kamri.

"Save your breath for fighting," Midnight coolly advised.

Despite his apparent indifference, Midnight knew he had best be on guard every second. This warfare with scimitars was to his opponent's advantage, not Midnight's. It must be a fast duel.

The Sheik El-Kimri, too, wanted to end this senseless battle, take the girl and make his way to his own oasis where comforts waited. He had no doubt that this would be an easy victory.

Helena Troy watched in terror as the men fought. Silently, keenly they countered thrusts and watched for opportunity. The Sheik, feeling himself the winner, relaxed his vigilance for one moment, and Midnight quickly took advantage of this carelessness to thrust his spear into the chief's heart.

El-Kimri's death cry echoed through the desert and his sword fell from his hands and he sank to the ground.

Helena and Captain Midnight watched El-Kamri as he lay motionless.

"You've killed him!" cried Helena.

Midnight regarded her coldly. "I've killed him," he acquiesced. "It was his life or ours. And if you are still beefing--!"

Helena interrupted. "Beefing! she repeated. "Beefing?" She placed her hands on his shoulders and said softly, "I'm not complaining any more!"

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Chapter X VICTORY

In the meantime, Annie had made her way to Joe McCann.

"Joe," she cried, "are you wounded?"

McCann gazed at her in delight and bewilderment. "I've only been scratched, Annie. And El-Kimri's raiders are on the run! Thanks to Captain Midnight and his plane, we are victorious!"

After Captain Midnight had deserted the plane to rescue Helena, Ikky and Cassio flew back to the battle. They resumed their duties--Ikky at the controls, and Cassio at his rifle. The enemy had already scattered, and there was little to be done as Joe McCann's men captured the raiders.

Annie pointed out the plane to Joe McCann. "It's still driving them off," she said. "NOW do you think we're your enemies?"

"How could I?" responded McCann with feeling.

They watched as the plane circled and finally landed. McCann's men assisted Cassio and Ikky to the ground.

"Gosh, Ikky," Cassio beamed. "Look who's glad to see us!"

"Yeah, Cassio," agreed Ikky. "And wait till they hear about Cap'n!"

Joe McCann, with Annie at his heels, approached the plane.

"Where is Captain Midnight?" Joe asked Ikky. "I want to thank him for what he's done."

"Cap'n jumped out of the plane to rescue Miss Troy from Sheik El-Kimri," Ikky replied.

Joe looked worried, and Ikky grinned. "Don't worry. Cap'n will be here with us any minute, and Miss Troy, too. Wait and see."

Hardly had Ikky finished reassuring Joe McCann, when Captain Midnight and Helena returned.

"You need not fear El-Kimri any longer," Midnight told McCann. "He is dead."

McCann gazed at him. "I don't understand how you could kill the Sheik El-Kimri, but I am certainly happy that you did. My whole tribe owes its existence to you. I'm sorry I didn't trust you but you did see my position, didn't you? Consider yourself free to go when you like. Anything I have is yours."

"Do you mean that, Joe?" asked Midnight. "ANYTHING?"

"Yes, Joe said. "I mean it. My people owe their lives to you. Anything I can do to repay you will be gladly done."

"All right," Midnight replied, "Then I take YOU, Joe McCann."

"You'll take ME?" repeated Joe in bewilderment. "I don't understand."

"The Allies need you," explained Midnight. "You're the man to organize this back country."

Annie added her plea: "Believe me, Joe. Captain Midnight means what he says! Trust him!"

"You win, Annie," smiled Joe. "Captain--make room in your plane for another passenger!"

"But what will become of us in the meantime?" protested Zammar. "Who will lead us? I am old and not a man of action."

"Zamarr," Joe told him, "you are the brains of this tribe. Cassio is the man of action. Therefore, in my absence, you will command, and Cassio will be your faithful helper!"

"Yes, sir," beamed Cassio. "That I will!"

Zamarr nodded approval.

"The plane's ready to take off," called Ikky. "When do we start?"

Midnight glanced at Joe. "We're waiting for you," he said.

"Okay." Joe nodded. "My tribe will get along fine with Zamarr and Cassio. I'm ready."

With many good wishes from the natives, they all entered the plane.

"It'll be good to set foot on American soil," sighed Joe.

Zamarr and Cassio gazed after the plane.

"He has promised to come back," said Zamarr. "All will be as it has been."

Cassio nodded absently in agreement. Suddenly he turned to Zamarr and said, "Not quite! If he make a deal with the Allied Generals, we'll have to become RESPECTABLE fighters."

"We must be somewhere near Algiers," said Ikky. "Do you want to try radioing, Cap'n?"

Midnight nodded, and called into the instrument: "Captain Midnight to airport below! Is that Algiers? I want to land! Over!"

Then: "Algiers to Captain Midnight! Come on in! We've been looking everywhere for you!"

"Hurray!" cried Ikky. "Here we go. Happy landings at Algiers!"

They were warmly greeted by men in uniform, and one of the soldiers addressed Captain Midnight. "Some of the General Staff to see you, Captain. We've heard of you and your exploits," he said.

The Captain returned the soldier's salute. "I've brought someone to see you, too. Someone you'll be glad to know!"

The soldier smilingly introduced the officers at his side. "Captain Midnight, meet General Douglass, British Army Intelligence. And this is General Fabrique, French Military Government."

Midnight acknowledged the introductions and added, "And this is my friend, Joe McCann. He can do plenty to help you."

The General looked startled. "Of this man I have heard rumors, and none of them good. Before the war we strove hard to bring him to justice. This Joe McCann has a record of insubordination, desertion and outlawry, Captain Midnight. How, then, can such a man be of service to us?"

Joe McCann favored Midnight with an "I-told-you-so" look.

"May I speak, General?" the Captain asked. "Let's overlook rumors. McCann is a NEW and VALUABLE ALLY, with power among the desert people. Surely we do not wish to discard aid because of ancient history?"

General Fabrique's stern countenance did not relax, but General Douglass laughed, and cried, "Hear! Hear!"

General Fabrique stroked his chin thoughtfully and gazed at Joe.

"Come, come, Fabrique," cried General Douglass. "I like the chap's looks, and if Captain Midnight trust him, hanged if I won't."

"You need the friendship of the desert chieftains," Midnight inserted persuasively. "And he has a powerful tribe."

"Very well," finally acceded the General. "I shall accept your judgment." He approached Joe with outstretched hand. "I also accept Captain Midnight's recommendation. Here is my hand in friendship."

They clasped hands ceremoniously, and Midnight breathed a sigh of relief.

He turned to join the girls and Ikky, but was stopped by General Douglass. "Don't stray too far, Captain. We have a special assignment--important and dangerous--for you!"

The two men conferred for a few moments, and Midnight joined his little group. Annie approached. "Tell me, Captain," she begged. "Is Joe--?"

"He's all right. He has just joined up with the United Nations, Annie!"

Ikky plied him with questions, which Captain Midnight answered absent-mindedly, gazing at Helena Troy with an odd expression.

"Is somethin' wrong, Cap'n?" asked Ikky. "You look kinda bothered."

"I AM bothered," admitted the Captain. "I have a chance to go on an important mission, but--"

"But what?" demanded Ikky. "That's what you want, isn't it?"

"BUT--" continued Midnight, "I'm piloting Miss Troy's show."

"Do you mean that I'm in your way, Captain Midnight?" Helena asked. "I'm keeping you from something important?"

Midnight nodded. "Well, Miss Troy, you do have priority on my services as your special pilot and escort."

"I release you, then," she said. "You see, I'm a big girl now. I've grown up, facing danger with you. I can manage the show alone! That's MY job--and I'm not letting it interfere any more with YOUR job. You accept that mission!"

Her obvious sincerity could not be denied. Captain Midnight beamed down at her happily. "You ARE a regular American girl, aren't you?" he said. "So this is good-by and good luck! Each to our job!"

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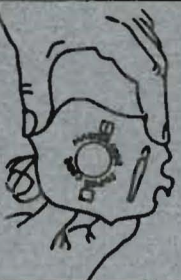
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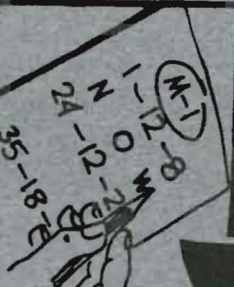
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