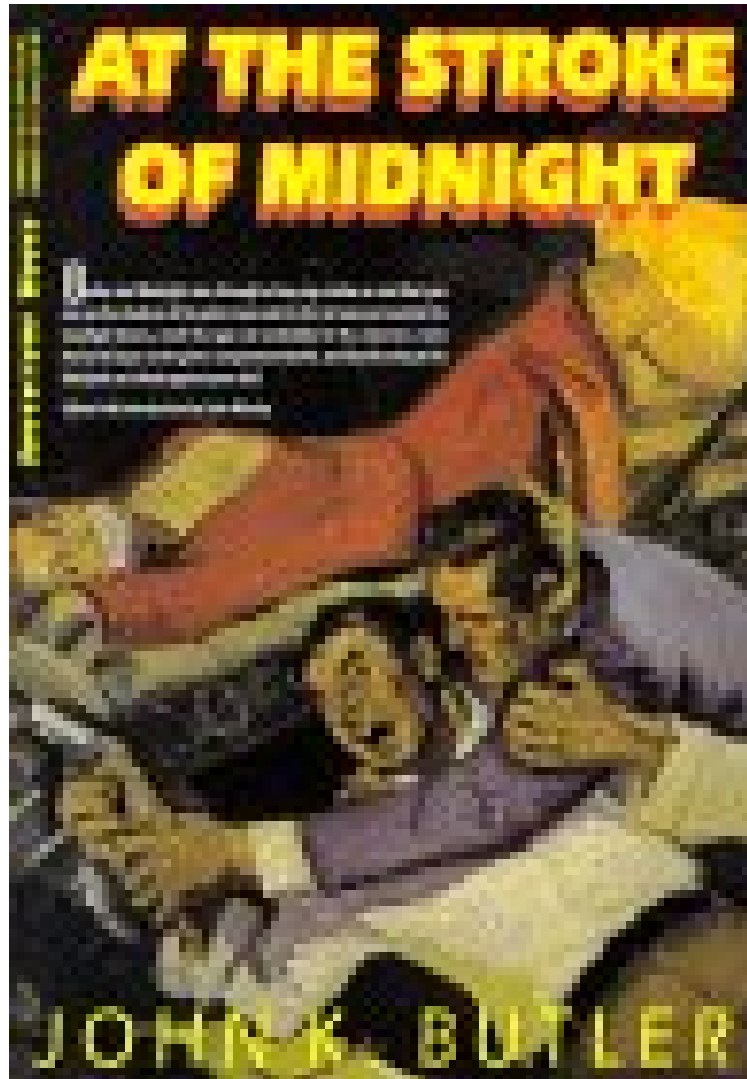


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## At the Stroke of Midnight

*John K. Butler*

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**John K. Butler : At the Stroke of Midnight** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised At the Stroke of Midnight:

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Enjoyable pulp fiction from the FortiesBy Arthur FriedThe stories in At the Stroke of Midnight feature Steve Midnight, a cab-driver working in the LA suburbs in the early 1940s who is constantly getting caught between criminals and the law. In just about every story he has to play private detective to get himself out of trouble with the crooks and the cops. Writer John K. Butler, who went on to a career writing screenplays for Republic Pictures and early television, was an adept plotter, pretty good at characterization and atmosphere. The stories are violent -- Midnight gets concussed so often he ought to wear a football helmet instead of

his cabby cap -- but that is par for the course in pulp detective fiction of that era. I read the Steve Midnight stories one after another and enjoyed them all, although none of them stood out as particularly memorable. Unfortunately, the Midnight stories kept bringing to mind the work of Raymond Chandler, who was writing his detective fiction during the same period and in the same milieu. Chandler was a great writer; Butler was merely a good one.

In the 1930s and '40s, he wrote about the otherworldly landscape of Southern California with a tough elegance themes bordered on poetry, driving his tarnished but noble knight through a neon-lit neverland. After a few years, a call from Hollywood sprung him from the pulpwood pages of the detective-fiction magazines and onto a movie lot, where he began crafting features that would light up the screens during Tinsletown's golden age. It wasn't Raymond Chandler. It was Chandler's compadre from the pages of Black Mask and Dime Detective magazines, John K. Butler, whose star shone as brightly as Chandler's in the pages of the pulps. Chandler went on to movies and best-selling novels; Butler stayed in the picture business, his work never reaching book form. Until now.

From the Back Cover Advance Praise - "At the Stroke of Midnight is a must for the library of any pulp aficionado and anyone who admires a good, old-fashioned, atmospheric detective stories." --Bill Pronzini, author of BLUE LONESOME, HARDCASE, ILLUSTIONS and more. "Cruising the foggy night streets of Los Angeles in his Red Owl taxi, dodging blondes, bruisers, and bullets in a series of rapid-fire, fast-paced novelettes from the 1940s, his complete adventures are gathered here between book covers for the first time. This is one cab ride you won't want to miss!" --William F. Nolan, author of LOGAN'S RUN and THE BLACK MASK BOYS. Excerpt. © Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved. Introducing Steve Midnight, hacker extraordinary for the Red Owl Cab Company, and his amazing fare, Zohar the Great. Steve had seen Zohar work his magic on a three-a-day vaudeville circuits, but the turbaned mystic had never bamboozled him so thoroughly from the stage as he did the night he produced a blond corpse instead of the customary rabbits from his gimmick coffin right in the back seat of Steve's own hack.