

MEMORIES OF MIDNIGHT

In *The Other Side of Midnight* Sidney Sheldon created one of his most unforgettable characters: Constantin Demiris, billionaire, art lover, womanizer . . . and killer. To Noelle, the woman who betrayed him, and Larry, the man who stole her, Demiris brought a chilling retribution. Now, in *Memories of Midnight*, he confronts the problem of someone else he believes has stayed alive too long.

Greece, 1948. In the seclusion of a remote convent a young woman emerges from the trauma of memory loss. To Catherine Alexander, Larry's widow, Demiris seems a benefactor, the man who helps her build a life again. She knows that Larry and Noelle are dead but not who was responsible. Nor that Demiris' desire for revenge is unquenched; that there is a last, unsilenced victim.

In this atmosphere of deception, Catherine's move to London seems just another example of Demiris' good nature. Set down in a strange and unsettling environment she cannot guess the fate her benefactor has in store, or that her life is inextricably bound up with other victims of his mighty ego.

Moving from the exotic shores of the Mediterranean to postwar London, *Memories of Midnight* is the compelling portrayal

of
one woman's fight against a terrifying destiny. Sidney
Sheldon's
genius as a master storyteller has never been more
powerfully
displayed.

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By the same author

IF TOMORROW COMES

MASTER OF THE GAME

RAGE OF ANGELS

BLOODLINE

A STRANGER IN THE MIRROR
THE OTHER SIDE OF MIDNIGHT

THE NAKED FACE

WINDMILLS OF THE GODS

THE SANDS OF TIME

SIDNEY SHELDON

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MEMORIES OF
MIDNIGHT

GUILD PUBLISHING

LONDONNEW YORK

SYDNEYTORONTO

This edition published 1990 by Guild Publishing
by arrangement with William Collins Sons and Co Ltd

CN 55^5

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Photoset in Linotron 1 times Roman by
Rowland Phototypesetting Ltd, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk

Printed and bound in Great Britain by
William Collins Sons and Co Ltd, Glasgow

For Alexandra
with Love

v Sing me no songs of daylight,
For the sun is the enemy of lovers
Sing instead of shadows and darkness,
And memories of midnight

sappho

grow
Prologue

Kowloon May
1949

'It must look like an accident. Can you arrange that?'
It was an insult. He could feel the anger rising in him.
That
was a question you asked some amateur you picked up from
the
streets. He was tempted to reply with sarcasm: Oh, yes, I
think
I can manage that. Would you prefer an accident indoors? I
can
arrange for her to break her neck falling down a flight of
stairs. The dancer in Marseilles. Or she could get drunk and

drown in
her bath. The heiress in Gstaad. She could take an
overdose of
heroin. He had disposed of three that way. Or, she could
fall
asleep in bed with a lighted cigarette. The Swedish
detective at
L'Hôtel on the Left Bank in Paris. Or perhaps you would
prefer
something outdoors? I can arrange a traffic accident, a
plane
crash, or a disappearance at sea.
But he said none of those things, for in truth he was
afraid of
the man seated across from him. He had heard too many
chilling
stories about him, and he had reason to believe them.
So all he said was, 'Yes, sir, I can arrange an accident.
No one
will ever know.' Even as he said the words, the thought
struck
him: He knows that I'll know. He waited.
They were on the second floor of a building in the walled
city
of Kowloon that had been built in 1840 by a group of
Chinese
to protect themselves from the British barbarians. The
walls had
been torn down in the Second World War, but there were
other
walls that kept outsiders away: Gangs of cut-throats and
drug
addicts and rapists roaming through the rabbit warren of
crooked, narrow streets and dark stairways leading into
gloom.
Tourists were warned to stay away, and not even the
police would
venture inside past Tung Tau Tsuen Street, on the
outskirts. He
could hear the street noises outside the window, and the
shrill
and raucous polyglot of languages that belonged to the
residents
of the walled city.

The man was studying him with cold, obsidian eyes. Finally he spoke. 'Very well. I will leave the method to you.'
'Yes, sir. Is the target here in Kowloon?'
'London. Her name is Catherine. Catherine Alexander.'

A limousine, followed by a second car with two armed bodyguards, drove the man to the Blue House on Lascar Row, in the Tsim Sha Tsui area. The Blue House was open to special patrons only. Heads of state visited there, and movie stars, and presidents of corporations. The management prided itself on discretion. Half a dozen years earlier, one of the young girls who worked there had discussed her customers with a newspaperman, and she was found the next morning in Aberdeen Harbor with her tongue cut out. Everything was for sale in the Blue House: virgins, boys, lesbians who satisfied themselves without the 'jade stalks' of men, and animals. It was the only place he knew of where the tenth-century art of Ishinpo was still practiced. The Blue House was a cornucopia of forbidden pleasures. The man had ordered the twins this time. They were an exquisitely matched pair with beautiful features, incredible bodies, and no inhibitions. He remembered the last time he had been there . . . the metal stool with no bottom and their soft caressing tongues and fingers, and the tub filled with fragrant warm water that overflowed onto the tiled floor and their hot mouths plundering his body. He felt the beginning of an erection.
'We're here, sir.'

Three hours later, when he had finished with them, sated and content, the man ordered the limousine to head for Mody

Road.

He looked out the window of the limousine at the sparkling lights of the city that never slept. The Chinese had named it

Gau-lung nine dragons, and he imagined them lurking in the mountains above the city, ready to come down and destroy the weak and the unwary. He was neither.

They reached Mody Road.

The Taoist priest waiting for him looked like a figure from an ancient parchment, with a classic faded oriental robe and a long, wispy white beard.

'Jou sahn.'

'Jou satin.'

'Gei do chin?'

lYatchihn:

Vow.'

The priest closed his eyes in a silent prayer and began shaking

the chim, the wooden cup filled with numbered prayer sticks. A

stick fell out and the shaking ceased. In the silence, the Taoist priest consulted his chart and turned to his visitor. He spoke in

halting English. 'The gods say you will soon be rid of dangerous enemy.'

The man felt a pleasant jolt of surprise. He was too intelligent not to realize that the ancient art of chim was merely a superstition.

And he was too intelligent to ignore it. Besides, there was another good luck omen. Today was Agios Constantinous Day, his birthday.

'The gods have blessed you with good/ung shui.'

'Do jeh:

'Hou wah.'

Five minutes later, he was in the limousine, on his way to

Kai

Tak, the Hong Kong airport, where his private plane was waiting to take him back to Athens.

Chapter 1

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Ioannina, Greece July
1948

She woke up screaming every night and it was always the same dream. She was in the middle of a lake in a fierce storm and a man and a woman were forcing her head under the icy waters, drowning her. She awakened each time, panicky, gasping for breath, soaked with perspiration.

She had no idea who she was and she had no memory of the past. She spoke English but she did not know what country she was from or how she had come to be in Greece, in the small Carmelite convent that sheltered her.

As time went by, there were tantalizing flashes of memory, glimpses of vague, ephemeral images that came and went too quickly for her to grasp them, to hold them and examine them.

They came at unexpected moments, catching her off-guard, and filling her with confusion.

In the beginning, she had asked questions. The Carmelite nuns

were kind and understanding, but theirs was an order of silence,

and the only one permitted to speak was Sister Theresa, the elderly and frail Mother Superior.

'Do you know who I am?'

'No, my child,' Sister Theresa said.

'How did I get to this place?'

'At the foot of these mountains is a village called Ioannina.'

You were in a small boat in the lake during a storm last year.

The boat sank, but by the grace of God, two of our sisters saw

you and rescued you. They brought you here.'

'But. . . where did I come from before that?'

'I'm sorry, child. I do not know.'

She could not be satisfied with that. 'Hasn't anyone inquired

about me? Hasn't anyone tried to find me?'

Sister Theresa shook her head. 'No one.'

She wanted to scream with frustration. She tried again.

The

newspapers . . . they must have had a story about my being missing.'

'As you know, we are permitted no communication with the outside world. We must accept God's will, child. We must thank

Him for all His mercies. You are alive.'

And that was as far as she was able to get. In the beginning,

she had been too ill to be concerned about herself, but slowly,

as the months went by, she had regained her strength and her

health.

When she was strong enough to move about, she spent her days tending the colorful gardens in the grounds of the convent,

in the incandescent light that bathed Greece in a celestial glow,

with the soft winds carrying the pungent aroma of lemons and

vines.

The atmosphere was serene and calm and yet she could find no peace. I'm lost, she thought, and no one cares. Why?

Have I

done something evil? Who am I? Who am I? Who am I /?

The images continued to come, unbidden. One morning she awakened suddenly with a vision of herself in a room with a naked man undressing her. Was it a dream? Or was it something that had happened in her past? Who was the man? Was it someone she had married? Did she have a husband? She wore no wedding ring. In fact she had no possessions other than the black Order of the Carmelite habit that Sister Theresa had given her, and a pin, a small golden bird with ruby eyes and outstretched wings.

She was anonymous, a stranger living among strangers. There was no one to help her, no psychiatrist to tell her that her mind had been so traumatized it could stay sane only by shutting out the terrible past.

And the images kept coming, faster and faster. It was as though her mind had suddenly turned into a giant jigsaw puzzle, with odd pieces tumbling into place. But the pieces made no

sense. She had a vision of a huge studio filled with men in army

uniform. They seemed to be making a motion picture. Was I an

actress? No, she seemed to be in charge. But in charge of what?

A soldier handed her a bouquet of flowers. You'll have to pay for these yourself', she laughed.

Two nights later, she had a dream about the same man. She

was saying goodbye to him at the airport, and she woke up sobbing because she was losing him.

There was no more peace for her after that. These were not mere dreams. They were pieces of her life, her past. / must find out who I was. Who I am.

And unexpectedly, in the middle of the night, without warning, a name was dredged up out of her subconscious. Catherine. My name is Catherine Alexander.

Chapter 2

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Athens, Greece

The empire of Constantin Demiris could not be located on any map, yet he was the ruler of a fiefdom larger and more powerful than many countries. He was one of the two or three wealthiest men in the world and his influence was incalculable. He had no title or official position but he regularly bought and sold prime ministers, cardinals, ambassadors and kings. Demiris' tentacles were everywhere, woven through the woof and warp of dozens of countries. He was a charismatic man, with a brilliantly incisive mind, physically striking, well above medium height, with a barrel chest and broad shoulders. His complexion was swarthy and he had a strong Greek nose and olive-black eyes. He had the face of a hawk, a predator. When he chose to take the trouble, Demiris could be extremely charming. He spoke eight