

米德奈特

(英汉对照读物)

MIDNITE

The story of a wild
colonial boy

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内 容 提 要

《米德奈特》是一本很风趣的小说。小说的主人公米德奈特出生在澳大利亚西部，自幼父母双亡，身边只有几只动物作伴。米德奈特以其自身的性格特点——诚实、迂拙和幼稚，在动物伙伴的协助下进行冒险活动，最后终于成就了一番“光辉”事业。

米德奈特生活在澳大利亚的开发时期，小说比较客观地反映了澳大利亚这一时期的历史真实——草寇劫掠和淘金热。小说文字浅显、朴实、生动，内容富有戏剧性，读者可从中了解到澳大利亚开发时期的自然风貌和社会风情。

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Captain Midnite's Gang

Once upon a time, in Western Australia a hundred years ago, a young man lived with his father in a cottage in a forest. The young man was called Midnite. At least, that is what I am going to call him, because that is what he called himself, later on, when he was famous. I am not going to put his real name into a book, because there are some people in Australia who might not like it.

The cottage was very small, with a roof made of bark and a verandah all around it. It stood on the slope of a valley, in the middle of an orchard, which was all pink-and-white with fruit blossom in the spring, and all shiny green-and-gold with orange and lemon trees summer and winter. At the bottom of the valley was a pretty creek, running through bracken and wild palms. Except for the orchard, and the paddocks where the horse and cow lived, there was nothing around Midnite's house except tall forest.

Midnite's mother had died when he was quite young, and he and his father lived all alone. His father had once been a sea-captain, and had brought home lots of shells and coral and carved boxes and little elephants and that sort of thing, as well as a very wise and handsome Siamese cat called Khat. Khat had blue eyes and mostly cream-coloured fur, with a coffee-coloured tail, and a coffee-coloured mask on his face, a bit like a bank-robber.

Besides Khat, there were four other animals living with Midnite and his father. There was a rather silly cow called Dora, who was not nearly so young as she thought she was. There was a very tall and noble-minded horse called Red Ned, with a strawberry-coloured body and a pale mane and tail. There was a cockatoo called Major, because he was a Major Mitchell cockatoo, which is hard to describe to anyone who has not seen a Major Mitchell cockatoo, but if you have seen what the clouds look like when the sun is coming up, then you can imagine the colour of Major's best feathers. Last of all, there was a young sheepdog called Gyp, who was always laughing and frowning at the same time, because he was never sure whether he was doing the right thing.

One day Midnite's father became ill, and soon afterwards he died. It is sad to have to begin a story like this, but that is what happened and this is a true book. So Midnite was left alone in the world with his five animals.

This made him very sorry and lonely, and for a long time he did nothing except sit on the verandah all day, whittling sticks with his pocket-knife and thinking sad thoughts. Sometimes a tear ran down his cheek, and when the young sheepdog, Gyp, saw this, he cried out loud. Day after day Midnite sat there, whittling sticks and forgetting to cook his dinner.

One day a voice said to him: 'Don't you think it is dinner-time?'

'I'm not hungry,' said Midnite.

'Aren't you?' said the voice. 'I am.'

Midnite went on whittling as if he had not heard, but after a while he began to wonder who it was who had spoken to him, for he was sure that he had never known anyone with a Siamese accent. He looked round at Khat, who was sitting beside him.

'Did you speak to me?' Midnite asked.

'I did,' said Khat.

'I didn't know you could talk,' said Midnite. 'You have never talked before.'

'There was nothing to talk about,' said Khat, yawning.

'How peculiar,' said Midnite; and he went on whittling, frowning with thought.

This is the place to tell you some things about Midnite that make him different from most heroes in books. One of these things you may have guessed already. It is that Midnite was not very clever. In fact, he was rather stupid, though even Khat forgave him this, because he was so good-natured. Another thing is that he was not very handsome, not nearly so handsome as Khat or Major or Red Ned, and he always needed a haircut. But he had nice blue eyes, white teeth, and a brown smiling face. It is hard to decide whether to call him a young man or a boy, and he was not sure himself which he was, but he thought that he was probably a young man. He was seventeen, and had begun to use his father's razor, though to tell the truth he had hardly any whiskers to shave off with it, and Khat used to laugh at him when he pretended. Khat was a rather superior person, and had splendid whiskers.

Well, Midnite went on whittling and thinking, and Khat went on looking at him. After a while, Khat said: 'You are sad.'

'Yes,' said Midnite. 'I am sad because I have no father and no money and nothing in the world except this house and this orchard.'

'And me,' said Khat.

'And you, of course,' said Midnite.

'Let us have dinner,' said Khat, 'and then we will talk about money.'

So Midnite went into the kitchen and cooked the dinner, and they ate it on the verandah, so that Gyp and Major and Red Ned and Dora could listen to the conversation.

'Now,' said Khat, when he had finished his dinner and was enjoying a saucer of tea, 'What are your plans?'

'I have no plans,' said Midnite, looking sad.

'If I were you,' said Khat, 'I should be a bushranger.'

'Would you, really?' said Midnite.

'I should call myself Captain Midnight,' said Khat, 'which is a fine name for a bushranger, but I should spell it M-I-D-N-I-T-E.'

'Why?' asked Midnite.

'Because that is more fierce and romantic,' said Khat. 'There is nothing romantic about good spelling.'

'Well,' said Midnite, 'that is an interesting plan, but what does a bushranger do?'

'He bushranges horses and cattle and sheep,' said Khat, 'and he holds up people's coaches and takes their money and their watches. Or their lives,' Khat added, 'but money and watches are more usual.'

'If I bushrange horses and cattle and sheep,' said Midnite, 'where am I to put them? People would come looking for them.'

'You must have a Secret Hideout,' said Khat, 'and I know the very place.'

'Oh,' said Midnite, 'do you mean the Hidden Valley?'

'Of course,' said Khat. 'Nobody knows how to find it except us.'

'That is a very interesting plan,' said Midnite, looking much happier. 'When shall we start being bushrangers?'

'Why not tomorrow?' said Khat. 'We can take all the pots and pans and things that we need, and we can live in the caves of the Hidden Valley quite comfortably.'

'Khat,' said Midnite, 'you are a very wise and handsome cat, and you can sleep in my bed for ever after, so long as you don't wash your face all night.'

'Thank you,' said Khat. 'That is exactly what I was going to do.'

The next day Midnite saddled Red Ned, and tied the pots and pans and food and blankets to the saddle, and they all set off for the Hidden Valley. Dora went first, and she was even sillier than usual, jumping around and running off into the bush and hiding, so that everyone got quite annoyed with her, and Gyp nipped her heels, and Major, who had a very bad temper sometimes, flew down and nipped her ear. In this fashion, chasing and scolding Dora all the way, they arrived at the Hidden Valley.

The Valley was like a great big paddock, and was a very secret place indeed. The steep rocky hills closed it in on three sides, and on the fourth side was a river, with red cliffs on the far bank of it. They were not cliffs of rock, but cliffs of red earth, and they looked very pretty when the sun shone on them. The only way into the Valley was through a gap in the hills so narrow that it only needed a gate across it to shut in the Valley completely and make it like a fenced field. In the side of the hills were big caves with rather clever paintings on the walls, made by the black people long ago. When Midnite had come to the biggest and most comfortable of these caves, Khat said: 'Let us stop here, and make this cave our Hideout.'

'Very well,' said Midnite. And before long they had turned the cave into quite a nice sort of house.

'Now,' said Khat, 'you must make a gate across the track into the Hidden Valley, so that when we have bushranged our horses and cattle and sheep they will not be able to get out again.'

All day Midnite laboured, building the gate, and when the sun was setting and the grass was glowing very green and the cliffs across the river were glowing very red, the gate was finished.

'Leave it open,' said Khat, 'and come back to the cave, and let us have supper.'

While they were having supper, Midnite noticed that Red



Ned and Gyp and Major and Dora had all disappeared. 'Where have they gone?' he asked Khat.

'They are preparing a surprise for you,' said Khat. 'Don't ask questions, but clean your teeth and go to bed, and in the morning you will be most astonished.'

Midnite was a bit annoyed at being told to clean his teeth by a cat, but he did it, and went to bed, and was soon fast asleep. In the morning, he was awakened by a voice whispering: 'Captain Midnite' in his ear.

'What is it?' Midnite asked, sleepily, when he had opened his eyes and seen that it was Khat who was whispering.

'Get up and close the gate,' said Khat. 'The surprise is here.'

Midnite got up, rubbing his eyes, and walked out of the cave, and then he certainly was most astonished. There was a white mist rising from the grass and the river, and in the mist he saw thirteen horses and thirty-one head of cattle and seventy-six sheep.

'Where did they come from?' Midnite asked, staring.

'Go and close the gate,' said Khat, 'and I will explain to you on the way.'

This is what Khat told Midnite as they walked through the wet grass.

First of all, he told him about Dora. The thing to remember about Dora is that she was an extremely aggravating cow, and she knew it. She was a big old yellow cow with hips like a garden gate, and a queer sense of humour. When Dora went out to bushrange cattle for Midnite, this is how she did it.

She went to where she knew the cattle were, and waited quite a long way from them, until she knew that they had seen her. Then she started jumping around and chasing her tail and behaving in the silliest way, all the while pretending that she didn't know that they knew that she knew that they were watching. She pretended that she was having a

great old time all by herself, which is a very aggravating sort of showing-off, just as aggravating when a cow does it as when a little girl does it. After a while all the cattle started murmuring to each other. At first they murmured that it was sad to see the poor silly thing carrying on like that at her age. But as Dora only went on getting sillier and more aggravating, they began to murmur: 'Let's rush up and butt her in the ribs.' Soon they started to galumph towards her, and when they came near, Dora galumphed off into the bush. They galumphed for miles and miles and miles, and whenever the cattle lost sight of Dora, she waited for them, and then jumped out of the bush and aggravated them again. The cattle became so angry that they hardly knew where they were going, and at last they chased Dora right through the open gate into the Hidden Valley.

As soon as they were safe inside, Dora went and hid in one of the caves, and the cattle settled down to eating the grass and forgot about her.

Next, Khat told Midnight about Red Ned. The thing to remember about Red Ned is that he was a very tall and noble-minded horse, and when he went out to bushrange horses for Midnite, he did it in quite a different way from Dora. He went to the place where he knew the horses were, and he just stood there, looking noble. After a while all the horses were so impressed and so curious that they couldn't eat or do anything except stare at Red Ned and wonder who he was. Bit by bit they began to come closer to him, and as soon as they did, Red Ned walked on. They followed and he walked, he walked and they followed, until at last they came through the open gate into the Hidden Valley. Then Red Ned allowed them to catch up with him, and when they stood around him, feeling shy, he said a few noble-minded things to them, and they decided to stay in the Hidden Valley for ever after.

Thirdly, Khat told Midnite about Gyp. The thing to remember about Gyp is that he was always frowning and smiling at the same time, and looking worried and wondering whether he was doing the right thing. He looked like this because he was a sheepdog. All sheepdogs have this look, and if you have ever seen a dog rounding up one sheep or two sheep, you will know why. It is easier for a dog to drive one or two lions than one or two sheep, because at least lions have brains and some idea of where they want to go. A sheep is the stupidest animal in the world, and hardly an animal at all, but more like a sort of walking cotton-bush. However, when Gyp went to bushrange sheep for Midnite, he bushranged seventy-six of them and it is much easier to drive seventy-six sheep than one or two. So he was able to bring them into the Hidden Valley without too much trouble, though of course, being sheep, they jumped over invisible objects all the way, and behaved very childishly.

All these things Khat explained to Midnite while they were walking to the gate and closing it. As they were going back to the cave, a fat white duck and twelve yellow ducklings came out of the grass and ran away from them.

'I have been busy making plans for the others,' said Khat modestly, 'and I have only had time to bushrange one duck and her ducklings.'

'Oh,' said Midnite, in a thoughtful voice. 'So everybody has been busy, except Major and me.'

When Major heard Midnite say that, the crest on his head stood up with rage, and he screamed. The thing to remember about Major is that he was always flying into terrible rages. Perhaps he knew that when he was bad-tempered he looked extremely handsome; for when his crest was standing up and his wings were flapping, he showed all his most beautiful feathers.

'Major has been busy, too,' said Khat; and he led Midnite to the box where Major had hidden all the things that he had bushranged. In the box were rings and watches and brooches and a silver christening mug and a great deal of money, as well as a few things that Major had bushranged for himself, such as buttons and clothes-pegs and a piece of mirror and a picture of Queen Victoria in five colours.

'I am sorry, Major,' said Midnite. 'You have worked very hard.'

After making this apology, Midnite sat down in front of the cave and began to whittle a stick, with his hair falling in his eyes.

'You are sad,' said Khat.

'Not very,' said Midnite. 'Just a little.'

'You ought not to be sad,' said Khat. 'You are a most successful bushranger.'

'Yes,' said Midnite, 'but I have done nothing myself. It has all been done for me.'

Khat sat and thought, and after a while he began to purr.

'What have you thought of?' asked Midnite.

'We will hold up a coach,' said Khat, 'and rob the passengers, and that will make you famous.'

'Will they write about me in the newspapers?' Midnite wondered.

'I should think they would,' said Khat. 'I should think they would make up songs about you, too. People are always making up songs about bushrangers.'

'Perhaps they will put me into a book,' said Midnite, growing excited.

'I should not be surprised,' said Khat, turning his wise blue eyes into wise blue slits as he tried to look into the future. 'I think I see somebody, a *hundred years from* today, sitting at a typewriter, making up a book called *Midnite*.'

'What is a typewriter?' asked ~~Midnite~~.

'It is a machine for writing books,' said Khat. 'People living a hundred years from today will be preposterously lazy.'

Captain Midnite Strikes

One morning His Honour Mr Justice Pepper (or Judge Pepper as he was called for short) put on his long curly wig made of horse-hair and his long robes, and packed his little hammer in a little suitcase, and got into a mail-coach. Judge Pepper's job was to send people like bushrangers to the great grey gaol by the sea, and the hammer was for banging on his Bench with to stop people from laughing in Court. Judge Pepper was a fat red-faced shiny man with a fat shiny watch and chain. He was very bad-tempered, and he was going in the coach to a country town to sentence a few people to spend years and years in prison.

There was another person in the coach with Judge Pepper, and his name was Trooper O'Grady. It is not easy to describe Trooper O'Grady. He was a rather tall thin man with the sort of face that got lines on it when he laughed, and he laughed a lot. He was a very popular man, and even Judge Pepper didn't hate him, although he was quite young for a grown-up, only twenty-four, and Judge Pepper usually did hate young people. Judge Pepper said that he was very polite, which was true; but there were other things about Trooper O'Grady that the Judge had not thought of: A trooper is a kind of policeman who usually rides a horse, and what the Judge had never considered is that a policeman, who is always mixing with people who steal and that

sort of thing, might come to learn bad habits from them. There was another thing, too, that the Judge had never considered, and that is that a young man who had already learned bad habits might feel safer if he became a policeman.

The coach rattled away through the town, and over a bridge, and was soon in the country. Birds were singing, and the bush was full of flowers, and even Judge Pepper was quite pleased to be going on a journey in such splendid weather. He made a joke now and then, and Trooper O'Grady laughed heartily, which showed what a polite young man he was. When they came to the hills, Trooper O'Grady got out and walked to make the coach lighter for the horses. As he walked along, he talked and made jokes with the driver, and the driver said to himself: 'What a nice chap.'

When they were about twenty miles from the town, and were going up a very steep hill, a voice called out of the bush: 'Stand and deliver! Your money or your lives!'

'Who said that?' demanded the Judge, sticking his red face out of the coach window.

'A bushranger, Your Honour,' said Trooper O'Grady. 'That is what they always say.'

'Well, shoot him,' said the Judge, crossly.

'You shoot him, sir,' said the trooper. 'My pistols are inside the coach with you.'

'Throw the pistols to me,' snarled the voice in the bush, 'or you are a dead man.'

'That's curious,' murmured Trooper O'Grady. 'The voice has a Siamese accent.'

'Don't make personal remarks,' snapped Khat (for of course it was Khat). 'Stand with your hands above your heads, and if I catch anyone not shivering in his shoes, he's in trouble.'

Trooper O'Grady and the driver put up their hands, while

Judge Pepper still stared from the coach. From being a red-faced shiny man he had turned into a white-faced shiny man.

'Throw me the pistols, Judge Pepper,' called Khat, 'or I'll tear out your heart and eat it.'

'No, no,' cried Judge Pepper, trembling, as he threw the pistols into the bush. 'Have pity on me. I have a great-aunt and eleven cousins in Wagga Wagga.'

'Let them beware,' said Khat, with a bloodcurdling laugh. 'Now, Judge Pepper, get out of the coach, and stand beside Trooper O'Grady with your hands up.'

The Judge got out as he was told, though his knees were shaking so much that he could hardly walk, and he stood in a line with Trooper O'Grady and the driver.

'Our leader is coming to rob you,' said Khat. 'If any one of you moves, he is a dead man.'

'You've already said that,' remarked Trooper O'Grady.

'Keep a civil tongue in your head, O'Grady,' snarled Khat, 'or I will nail it to a tree.'

Suddenly there was a thunderous crash, and out of the thick bush bounded a tall and noble-minded horse, with a long-legged bushranger on his back. The bushranger dismounted, and strode towards Judge Pepper. He had a red handkerchief over his face, hiding everything except his blue eyes, and he held one of Trooper O'Grady's pistols in his right hand.

'Your money or your life?' he asked Judge Pepper, rather shyly.

'Oh, my money,' said the Judge, shaking from head to foot, 'of course.'

'Give me your purse, then,' said the bushranger.

'And your watch and chain,' called Khat from the bush.

'And your watch and chain,' repeated the bushranger, going red in the tops of his ears.

The Judge pulled out his fat purse and his watch, and