

**The Midnight Hour:  
A Superhero Noir**

By  
Vincent S. Hannam

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## PRODUCTION HISTORY

THE MIDNIGHT HOUR: A SUPERHERO NOIR was presented virtually at the Rogue Theater Festival in New York City, June 2022. Produced by Mischief Tales. Directed by Penelope Parsons-Lord; costumes by Krista Weiss; technical support by Will Hanson; video editing by Caitlin Hammel; sound effects by Derek Dirlam. The cast was as follows:

ARMANDO FONTAINE	Derek Dirlam
SAMANTHA/ ALICIA	Rachel Linder
NICK ESPOSITO	Eduardo Rivera
DOROTHY	Cypher Mezzitello, Nicole Pelini (NYC double)
CAIN HUNTER/ LT. DIXON/ MAX	Vincent Hannam

THE MIDNIGHT HOUR was developed at Gateway High School in Kissimmee, Florida, October 28, 2008. Produced by Mischief Tales. Direction, light, sound design by Armando Rivera; set design by Hilary Hastings; costume design by Jenny Arzt & Lucas Rolison; publicity design by Luis Penedo & Lucas Rolison; the production stage manager was Vincent Hannam. The cast was as follows:

SAM FONTAINE	Austin Calantoni
ROGER SMITH/THE MIDNIGHT PHANTOM	Luis Penedo
NICK ESPOSITO/EL NIÑO	Ahsan Malik
DOROTHY	Constance Doty
THUG 1	Christian Stanley
THUG 2/COP	Josh Rios
THUG 3	Josiah Peterson
SALVATORE DONATO	Zack Linder
INFORMANT	Sami Main
ALICIA BAINBRIDGE/CITIZEN 2	Amber Paoloemilio
LIEUTENANT DIXON	Max Hannam
CITIZEN 1	Martha Meran
HOLLY DUBOIS	Danielle Loubier
CAIN HUNTER	Thor Jonsson

## CHARACTERS

ARMANDO FONTAINE/ THE MIDNIGHT PHANTOM:	An underworld negotiator moonlighting as a masked vigilante. Sincere, moody, vulnerable. Any gender. Any race/ethnicity. 30s.
CAIN HUNTER:	An android from the future, bent on human destruction. Scheming, merciless, evil. Any gender. Any race/ethnicity. 30s.
DOROTHY:	An android seeking protection from HUNTER. Sweet, intelligent, doesn't understand humor. Any gender. Any race/ethnicity. Teenager.
SAMANTHA (SAM) O'DAY:	A reporter and ARMANDO's informant. Serious, sassy, likes jazz. Any gender. Any race/ethnicity. 20s-40s.
NICK ESPOSITO/ EL NIÑO:	A two-bit mobster. Brash, arrogant, inflated sense of self. Any gender. Any race/ethnicity. 20s-40s.
ALICIA BAINBRIDGE:	ARMANDO's secretary and HUNTER's informant. Cunning, flirtatious. Any gender. Any race/ethnicity. 20s-40s.
LIEUTENANT DIXON:	Chief of the police force. Loud, bombastic, sweaty. Any gender. Any race/ethnicity. 30s-60s.
MAX SWANSON:	ARMANDO's junior partner. Impulsive, determined, out to prove himself. Any gender. Any race/ethnicity. Teens-20s.
RADIO ANNOUNCER/ RADIO VOICE:	Prerecorded or not. Double cast with NICK.

*Character genders are flexible.  
Please change character pronouns accordingly.*

**PLACE & TIME**

Los Angeles

1948

**NOTES**

Play may be performed with five actors. Doubling would like:

CAIN HUNTER/ LT. DIXON/ MAX  
SAMANTHA/ ALICIA

On the use of substances:

If an obstacle to production (especially in schools), please omit or substitute the herein depicted use of cigarettes and alcohol.

Happy to answer any questions.

~

**ADDITIONAL THANKS**

Donald Rupe, Max Hannam, Mike Swan, Lucas Rolison, and Ellen my love

## THE MIDNIGHT HOUR: A SUPERHERO NOIR

### PROLOGUE

*In the dark a radio broadcast is heard: an episode of the 1940s radio show, "The Adventures of Philip Marlowe."*

#### RADIO VOICE

"Hollywood after midnight is like any other city after midnight, night moves in and the city becomes hushed and stealthy. The nightclubs close up, one by one; now and then the police whistle and patrol car siren serenade the sleeper. If you got any cop in you at all, you get on edge, and you have to get dressed, and go out and walk it off to relax. Well, I was relaxing past the swank Carlton Hotel on the Sunset Strip about one a.m. when all of a sudden, recess was over - "

*Lights rise. A RADIO ANNOUNCER interrupts:*

#### RADIO ANNOUNCER

We interrupt tonight's episode of "The Adventures of Philip Marlowe" with breaking news: Reporting indicates a new masked menace, yet unidentified. After last year's appearance of the costumed vigilante known only as the "Justice Bandit", the streets of L.A. have been quiet until now. Field reporter Sami O'Day asks Lieutenant Dixon, head of the so-called "superhuman" task force, about what is going on.

#### SAM

Is the Justice Bandit and this new figure related?

#### DIXON

(blustery)

They'll both be mulch by the time I get my hands 'em.

#### SAM

The Justice Bandit busted a racketeering operation last year. All defendants convicted. Might the Bandit be a force for good?

DIXON

He'd be on my payroll if he was!

SAM

And the new mystery figure?

DIXON

A schmuck in a dimestore robot costume.

SAM

These costumes, Lieutenant, appear more sophisticated. Can you confirm the reports of energy-blasting weaponry?

DIXON

No

SAM

No?

DIXON

No comment!

SAM

Flight capabilities?

DIXON

No comment.

SAM

Are these individuals even human or more -

DIXON

More what?

SAM

The word you used was "robot".

RADIO ANNOUNCER

Stay tuned for more coverage tonight at eleven, following your regularly scheduled programming. And now we return to “The King in Yellow” from The Adventures of Philip Marlowe starring Van Heflin...

*Lights and sound fade.*

## SCENE 1

*Lights rise. A bleak, empty warehouse. On one side of the stage stands NICK ESPOSITO, a gangster wearing a trenchcoat. He holds tight to DOROTHY, a teenage girl.*

*Opposite them stands ARMANDO FONTAINE and his partner, MAX SWANSON. ARMANDO is older than MAX.*

MAX

Just give us the girl!

NICK

Rein in your pup, Fontaine!

ARMANDO

Cool it, Max.

MAX

We're sitting ducks here. You see all the guns pointed down at us?

ARMANDO

It's not about how big your guns are.

MAX

I wish we had some for protection.

ARMANDO

Look, first thing about being an Arbitrator is to arbitrate, not fight.

MAX

You wanna tell them that?

ARMANDO

You can lead on this one. I'm not going anywhere. Max? Breath.

MAX

(takes a breath)

Esposito, I'm afraid that both Mr. Fontaine and myself feel we cannot close any deal while under such... pressure.

NICK

Nice trick, pup! Fontaine teach you that all by himself? What about roll over?

ARMANDO

Easy, Max.

NICK

(considers)

Put 'em down, fellas.

ARMANDO

(to Max)

See what I mean? Let's wrap this up.

MAX

And the ones outside the door.

NICK

Say, who do you think you are!

MAX

Someone with a lotta cash. I don't think I'm asking for much.

NICK

You little punk.

(into a radio)

Put away the fire, boys.

(to MAX)

That good enough for you?

*MAX slides a briefcase of money across the stage to NICK.*

MAX

The girl.

NICK

You know, Fontaine, you got class. We go back long enough for me to admit it. But this kid?

ARMANDO

He's doing pretty good, don't you think?

NICK

I do business with you or not at all.

MAX

Armando?

ARMANDO

Just let me...

(to NICK)

What more could you possibly have to say?

NICK

I got a hot tip think you'd be interested in.

ARMANDO

(smiles)

What's up?

NICK

New player in town. Quite the shake up.

ARMANDO

What's his name?

NICK

Nobody knows. Nobody knows much at all about him.

MAX

He's toying with you -

ARMANDO

It's all part of the game Max -

MAX

Cut the crap, Esposito! If you got something to spill then spill it!

ARMANDO

MAX!

NICK

Wow. Little dog wants to play... What's your name?

MAX

Let's get on with it.

NICK

You in a hurry now? I asked you a question.

ARMANDO

Answer him.

MAX

Max Swanson.

NICK

Swanson? Of the Swanson Gang?

MAX

What's it to you?

NICK

I thought we had rid the city of you Swansons.

MAX

Yep.

ARMANDO

Alright, Nick. Enough is enough. Give us the girl and we'll catch up another time.

NICK

Max here's grown on me. What do you think, kid. Want to chat more? More about where you were hiding when we combed the city for Swansons, snuffing out every last one of ya.

ARMANDO

Shut up Nick! Max, don't pay him any attention.

*MAX is silent.*

NICK

Aw, now you don't want to talk to me? After that big mouth you had before. Well don't think I don't know you little Maxie Waxie. Because I do. I know your family.

ARMANDO

Leave him alone!

NICK

You ever find them around town? You look hard enough and you'll see 'em. In the parks, in the gutters... maybe here in these walls.

*MAX explodes, lunges at NICK.*

ARMANDO

Max, no!!

*Black out. The sound of gunfire erupts. Car doors slam and screeching tires are heard peeling away.*

*Lights rise. MAX lies dead on the floor. DOROTHY remains, now unbound. ARMANDO emerges from behind some crates, torn and bloody. He goes to MAX's body.*

DOROTHY

Armando Fontaine.

ARMANDO

What...?

I'm not what I seem. DOROTHY

Miss Donato, please... ARMANDO

I'm not that man's daughter. DOROTHY

*ARMANDO looks over MAX.*

I'm an android.

An... an android? ARMANDO

Esposito and others - DOROTHY

Please, Miss Donato. My partner... Max. ARMANDO

They will come back for me. DOROTHY

The deal is over! ARMANDO

*DOROTHY doesn't move. ARMANDO picks up MAX and exits.  
Lights fade.*

## SCENE 2

*Lights rise. A city park. A busker plays a saxophone nearby. Seated on a bench is ARMANDO and SAM O'DAY, as far away from each other as possible.*

SAM

You screwed up last week.

ARMANDO

I hadn't noticed.

SAM

You want to fill me in? Return the favor?

ARMANDO

The kid lost his cool. Esposito was there. He tore into him.

SAM

Who?

ARMANDO

What?

SAM

Max tore into Nick or Nick tore -

ARMANDO

Don't mess with me today.

SAM

(concedes)

How was the service this morning?

ARMANDO

Sparse. He was a Swanson, after all.

SAM

It was nice seeing Sister Margaret there.

ARMANDO

She always makes me uncomfortable. Wait, how do you...?

SAM

I've got eyes, my friend.

ARMANDO

That makes me uncomfortable.

SAM

Anyways, I liked what you said about his spirit.

ARMANDO

He had a lot of it for a kid his age. Most of 'em can't get their heads out of the funnies long enough to shake your hand, but Max... he was special. He knew he'd get out of St. Kate's eventually.

SAM

That kind of arrogance reminds me of someone.

ARMANDO

I won't apologize for knowing what I want.

*SAM risks a look at ARMANDO. He does not turn his head. The busker plays something sad.*

You shouldn't look at me while we're out here.

SAM

I know.

ARMANDO  
(re: busker)

That guy's here every week.

SAM

Yeah.

ARMANDO

You say that like you know him.

SAM

I do.

ARMANDO

(laughs)

Come on, Sam! What's his racket?

SAM

Just plays music for us.

*They share a moment. ARMANDO and SAM each light a cigarette.*

ARMANDO

Things sure have been strange in this town lately.

SAM

How was Esposito?

ARMANDO

I'll kill him for what he done... for Max and the double-cross. Nothing is more important in an arbitration than good faith.

SAM

How'd the android make out?

ARMANDO

And what the hell is an android?

SAM

A robot. Automaton. You ever see "Metropolis"?

ARMANDO

The whatever-you-call-it is fine. Keepin' it at my place for now until I can figure the going-rate on something like this.

SAM

Cold, don't you think?

ARMANDO

It's business, Sam.

SAM

Still... she seems more human than tin can.

ARMANDO

I have too much to worry about already... least of which is why this decoy in the first place.

SAM

Are you asking?

*ARMANDO nods. SAM smiles.*

Dorothy Donato, the real one, has been dead for over twenty years.

ARMANDO

You didn't tell me this before?

SAM

I only found out recently myself.

ARMANDO

If Max died for a bogus deal I better know it.

SAM

Salvatore Donato lost his daughter and decided to build a new one. He'd stumbled upon some advanced tech left over from the war. Nothing nefarious, just a heartbroken and desperate man. Problem was, he built this droid too well. It made him - and her - a target.

ARMANDO

But after twenty years? Why now?

SAM

Does the name Cain Hunter mean anything to you?

ARMANDO

No.

SAM

Nick didn't mention anything?

ARMANDO

Yeah, said there's a new guy making a splash.

SAM

Word on the street is he means business. Lots of cash, lots of power.

ARMANDO

(irritated)

But Nick didn't take the android.

SAM

Easy, Armando. I pick up a lot, but sometimes it takes time.

ARMANDO

While I'm waiting for you, this Hunter guy and Esposito are having a field day in the city... (*figuring*) Wait. If they don't want - or need - the android... then they gotta have something better.

SAM

Sounds like you ought to watch yourself, Armando. Dorothy herself is highly advanced. If they've got an improvement on that... the Justice Bandit could be in deep water.

ARMANDO

Don't make me laugh.

SAM

I'm serious. And you came up with that name yourself.

ARMANDO

OK, OK, you keep your ear to the pavement and let me know the moment you hear anything else. Even I don't think the city needs another jerk running around in a super suit.

SAM

Look at you getting your own supervillain.

ARMANDO

You know, I don't come here to be ridiculed.

*ARMANDO stands. The busker plays something jazzier.*

SAM

Are you going to tip him this time?

ARMANDO

I'll think about it. And for your information, I'm changing my name. Again.

SAM

Oh, please tell me.

*ARMANDO touches his ear and then points to the pavement. He exits. SAM smiles after him. Lights and sound fade.*

### **SCENE 3**

*Lights rise. Armando's office. Sofa, desk, cocktail tray, etc.*

*Staring out a large window, with her back to the door, is DOROTHY. ARMANDO enters. He is taken by the woman at the window.*

ARMANDO

Hello there.

*DOROTHY turns around.*

Oh for the love of - this is my private office.

DOROTHY

I need your help, Armando Fontaine... I need you to protect me.

ARMANDO

No, no, no, no! I'm not in the Protection business, I'm an Arbitrator. It's far less noble and -

*A phone rings.*

- anyways, a machine like you don't need protecting. A machine like you gets scrapped.

*The phone continues to ring. ARMANDO yells off:*

Alicia!? Look. You're here until I know what to do with you.

DOROTHY

I need your help.

ARMANDO

I'll put a couple of bodyguards outside your window.

DOROTHY

Only you, Armando Fontaine.

ARMANDO

Just call me Armando. Can you at least have a seat?

*The phone stops ringing. ALICIA BAINBRIDGE enters swiftly.  
To ALICIA:*

Too late.

ALICIA

Sorry Arman -  
(sees Dorothy)  
Excuse me, Mr. Fontaine.

ARMANDO

It's alright, this ain't business... It's Dorothy.

*ARMANDO fixes himself a drink.*

ALICIA

I see. Pleasure to meet you.

DOROTHY

I need Armando's help.

ALICIA

You too?

ARMANDO  
(sardonic)

Ha. Ha.

DOROTHY

He has been most disagreeable.

ALICIA

Yeah? How long have you known him?

ARMANDO

Alicia...

DOROTHY

Since the warehouse.

ALICIA

Worse places to meet a fella.

ARMANDO

Lay off, will ya?

ALICIA

Only lightening up the mood.

(to Dorothy)

Hey honey, I'm only teasing.

DOROTHY

I know you're being funny, only I don't understand the concept.

ALICIA

Well. How about a drink?

*ALICIA fixes herself one.*

DOROTHY

No, thank you.

ALICIA

Just trying to help, honey.

DOROTHY

Can you help him help me?

ARMANDO

(to Alicia)

After you're done swilling my booze, maybe you can relay that message for me?

*ALICIA, with glass in hand, crosses to a machine and presses a button. The angry voice of Lieutenant Dixon is heard.*

DIXON (v.o.)

Fontaine!!

*The recording ends.*

ALICIA

I swear Lieutenant Dixon has no control over the volume of his voice.

ARMANDO

He sounded worried.

ALICIA

That was worry?

ARMANDO

Look, he's on his way over. Would you mind showing Dorothy to her room?

ALICIA

And what? Sing her a lullaby?

ARMANDO

Just get her out here before Dixon charges in.

DOROTHY

Is this Dixon someone who can help you help me?

ARMANDO

Right now Miss Bainbridge is going to show you back to your room. Let me see what's up with the good lieutenant before... Well, before we chat again.

ALICIA

Come along. We'll keep you safe for the night at least.

DOROTHY  
(to Armando)

There's still much for you to know.

ARMANDO

Doesn't interest me.

*DOROTHY and ALICIA move to exit.*

DOROTHY

I must be protected...

*The women exit. ARMANDO, distraught, pours another drink.*

ARMANDO

Private office...

*Drinks deeply.*

Max, I could use your help on this one.

*ARMANDO breathes. ALICIA's voice comes over an intercom.*

ALICIA (v.o.)

Lieutenant Dixon for you, sir.

ARMANDO

Yeah.

*ARMANDO finishes the drink. DIXON is heard off stage.*

DIXON (o.s.)

Where!?

ALICIA (o.s.)

Yes, right through there.

DIXON (o.s.)

I know where I'm going!

*LIEUTENANT DIXON charges in.*

DIXON (cont'd)

Sal Donato's dead.

ARMANDO

Don't tell me you came all the way here for that.

DIXON

Don't play coy, Fontaine. You're on thin ice from that warehouse job.

ARMANDO

Are you going to arrest me?

DIXON

I very well could!

ARMANDO

OK, Donato's dead. What's it to me?

DIXON

I know he was there that night. What I don't know is why.

ARMANDO

I won't break my client's confidentiality.

DIXON

Your client was found this morning with a hole in his chest the size of a grapefruit.

ARMANDO

You don't say?

DIXON

A scientist like that murdered like that... you've read the papers. I'm not going to ask again.

ARMANDO

Drink, Lieutenant?

*ARMANDO fixes two drinks. DIXON paces.*

Donato hired me to negotiate the return of his daughter - I know - dead twenty years, but he hopes against hope she's out there somewhere. Turns out to be an... turns out the girl wasn't his. Nonetheless, as straightforward a deal as they come.

DIXON

Until...?

ARMANDO

I've played out the scenario a million times... and honestly, Donato's dead, big whoop.

DIXON

What happened to the girl?

ARMANDO

(lying)

Esposito kept her and the money. I get to come home and have a drink.

DIXON

And Max?

ARMANDO

Occupational hazard.

DIXON

(sincere)

I saw that kid taking over for you one day.

ARMANDO

You show up here to tell me my business?

DIXON

Truth be told, I don't understand it. You're the underworld's top go-between and for what? To give me the inside scoop...

ARMANDO

I'm lucky you're runnin' the force these days.

DIXON

You're lucky you were the best partner I ever had. *(beat)* So uh... speaking of scoops... anything on the Justice Bandit?

ARMANDO

I could've used him alright.

DIXON

You could've used the police! This town don't need a mug like that. For all I know, he's the one who smoked Donato.

ARMANDO

I assure you that's not the case.

DIXON

That's another thing, Fontaine: don't get too close to that wacko.

ARMANDO

I happened to have picked up some intel from that wacko. *(suspenseful beat)* He's changed his name.

DIXON

Again??

ARMANDO

He told me this one's gonna stick - The Midnight Phantom.

DIXON

I really hate this guy...

*DIXON gets up to leave.*

DIXON (cont'd)

If it weren't for your cockamamie relationship with him...

ARMANDO

And the intel he provides.

DIXON

I'm up to my ears in intel! I need something hard on these superpowered jokers or the D.A.'s going to tan my hide!

ARMANDO

Believe me, I wish I had something on the newcomer.

DIXON

You and the Justice Bandit, both. I miss the days of good honest mobsters. So what's Esposito hope to gain from all this Donato nonsense?

ARMANDO

It ain't Nick pulling the strings on this one. A new fella named Hunter. Cain Hunter.

DIXON

We know the name. And there ain't so much as a birth certificate with this guy, but the streets are buzzin' with the name.

ARMANDO

I bet he's the one who offed Donato. 'Course I have no proof of that whatsoever.

DIXON

Thanks, Sherlock. As for your costume wearing friend...

ARMANDO

The Midnight Phantom.

DIXON

You just tell him he's on borrowed time.

ARMANDO

You got it, partner.

DIXON

And watch yourself, Fontaine.

*DIXON's radio chatters.*

RADIO VOICE

Lieutenant Dixon, come in. Lieutenant Dixon. There's an emergency at the Currency Courtesy Bank, West Hollywood. Appears to be Justice Bandit.

DIXON

There, you see! Bank's getting a shipment of gold tonight and leave it to that joker to be on it stink on a pig.

*DIXON exits.*

ARMANDO

Cain Hunter.

*ALICIA enters.*

ALICIA

Where's he off to?

ARMANDO

Alicia, how's Dorothy?

ALICIA

Staring out her window, wanting to talk to you. You know I don't get the best feeling from her.

ARMANDO

Right now just keep her in that room! There's trouble brewin'. I gotta run and see what kind of a deal I can make.

ALICIA

I'll keep an ear out for you on the radio.

ARMANDO

Dorothy! Now!

*ARMANDO exits. Lights fade.*