

WBUR'S  
**THE MIDNIGHT REBELLION**  
**PART I: CITY OF TIDES**  
**CHAPTER 1 - ALMOST MIDNIGHT**  
Written by Dean Russell

**NARRATOR:** If you are listening to this, congratulations. You have made it to the first chapter of *The Midnight Rebellion*.

This is an *interactive* podcast. That means you will hear two choices at the end of each chapter. I will say something like, "Should our heroes play it safe or risk it all?" Then you must choose. How? I will explain that when the time comes.

For now just know that your decisions determine the outcome of our story. Good or bad, life or death. It's on you.

Choose wisely.

**[MUX]**

**NARRATOR:** This is *The Midnight Rebellion*.

Part I. City of Tides ... Chapter 1, "Almost Midnight."

**[MUX]**

**INT. JOULE'S HOUSE, BOSTON RESIDENTIAL - NIGHT (PRESENT DAY)**

**[SFX: RAIN. THUNDER rolls, soft at first. ]**

**NARRATOR:** The hour is nearing midnight, but Joule [JOOOL] Watts-Green cannot sleep. She lies in bed, watching bombettes of rain explode against her window skylight, counting the seconds  
...

**JOULE:** (to self, soft) ... two, three, four ...

**NARRATOR:** ... between the blindingly bright flashes of lighting  
...

**[SFX: CRACKLING, medium distance away.]**

**JOULE:** (to self, soft) ... six, seven ...

**NARRATOR:** ... and the rolling booms of thunder.

**JOULE:** (to self, soft) ... ten, eleven, twelve—

**[SFX: Thunder BOOM, closer.]**

**NARRATOR:** Joule's mom, Dr. Elizabeth Green, taught her this counting trick: The shorter the time between flashes and booms, the closer the heart of the storm .

**JOULE:** (to self, soft) ... two, three ...

**NARRATOR:** But it is not the nearing storm that keeps Joule up. It is the fact that when the clock ticks twelve a.m., it will be one year to the day when her mom, Dr. Green, entered her laboratory during a storm just like this ... and never came home.

**[SFX: Thunder BOOM - closer still]**

**NARRATOR:** As the thunder goes outside, a creak *inside* catches Joule's ears. She sits up. A pale shadow shifts in her doorway.

**VOICE [HART]:** (whispering) Joule ... Joule ...

**NARRATOR:** The shadow enters her room. A flashlight flick on ...

**[SFX: A soft CLICK - flashlight turns on]**

**NARRATOR:** And there is a grinning face. Joule's shoulders relax.

**JOULE:** (quietly) Hart! You scared me.

**NARRATOR:** It is her brother, Hartree, or Hart.

**HART:** I scared you? Would you say I gave you a *Hart* attack? Eh?

**JOULE:** Please, never become a comedian.

**HART:** No promises, sis. (beat) Now, wakey wakey. It's time.

**NARRATOR:** She stares at Hart. His irises shine bright like a blue flame. He has the same broad build as Joule, the same freckled nose, the same coarse hair. Their ears are different. His are slim and regal. Hers are so big some say they make her look like a sailboat, earning her the much-loathed nickname ...

**HART:** C'mon, *Sailor!* (piratey) Argh, the winds be blowin'. Hang on to yer sails.

**JOULE:** I really wish you wouldn't call me that. It doesn't even make sense. I hate the ocean. I hate being wet ... and speaking of, it's pouring. I'm not going outside.

**HART:** But now's our chance, sis. Dad's asleep. We're not. It's basically destiny.

**NARRATOR:** Joule shakes her head. How could two people born on the same day into the same family be so different? Twins, age twelve: Joule, the law-abiding citizen. And Hart, the roguish leader with the ability to drag Joule along no matter how much she resists.

She followed him out of the womb. Will she follow him now?

**JOULE:** No. Dad said the lab is off limits. Nobody's been in there since ... since ...

**HART:** Since Mom died. You can say it.

**JOULE:** The lab is dangerous, Hart.

**HART:** It will be good for us. C'mon. I know you miss her. What better way to honor her than raiding her stuff?

**NARRATOR:** Hart has been trying for months to get Joule into the lab – always, he says, “to honor” their mom. While this may be true, it is also the case that Hart is, like their mother was, an inventor. And Dr. Green's lab is full of gizmos for inventing.

No one knows what she was creating the day of the accident. The police found nothing outrageous in the lab, except of course, Dr. Green's ashes. It was enough to condemn the place.

**(FLASHBACK) DAD:** *Are you sure, Detective? She was a physicist, she studied climate change. She wasn't a bomb maker.*

**(FLASHBACK) DETECTIVE:** *Mr. Watts, if I was you, I'd lock up that lab of hers and never step foot inside again.*

**NARRATOR:** This led to much speculation at East Boston Middle. The dominant theory was that Dr. Elizabeth Green had faked her death because she was tired of being a mom. It is well known that before she was "Mom," people called her "Lightning Lizzie."

**(FLASHBACK) KID 1:** *My dad called her a "radical."*

**(FLASHBACK) KID 2:** *... an "Earth nut."*

**(FLASHBACK) KID 3:** *... a "Green freak."*

**(FLASHBACK) KID 1:** *... a "rebel."*

**NARRATOR:** Many moms are tired of being moms, and some even have exciting pasts involving protests and jail time. Yet faking a death to escape one's children is very, very rare.

Unfortunately, that leaves us with the hard truth that Joule's mom is dead, and something in the scientist's lab did it.

**[SFX: Thunder BOOM – sharp and jarring]**

**HART:** You're just like Dad. Afraid of breaking the rules.

**JOULE:** I break rules.

**HART:** Name one.

**JOULE:** I ... I don't double-knot my shoelaces sometimes.

**HART:** That's not a rule. That's never been a rule anywhere ever. Besides, I see your shoes every day. They're double-knotted.

**JOULE:** That's not true. I triple-knot for baseball.

**HART:** Ugh! Fine. Stay here. I'm following in Mom's footsteps, and that means, I'm going. With or without you.

**[SFX: Door closes, Hart walks away]**

**JOULE:** Hart, wait! You'll get yourself hurt ... Grrr. Fine!

**NARRATOR:** I wish I could tell you why exactly Joule decides to go after her brother. I do not think she herself knows. It may be that she is worried for him. Or that she is jealous of how similar he is to their mom. Regardless, Joule throws on a sweater and jeans and tiptoes downstairs.

**[SFX: Quick movements - clothes rustling, soft footsteps, etc.]**

**NARRATOR:** She laces her sneakers - single-knotted because, at this moment, she is feeling quite rebellious - and follows Hart out the sliding back door into the rain.

**EXT. BACKYARD - CONT'D**

**NARRATOR:** The laboratory was once the family's detached garage. A two-story Victorian with purple shutters, it sits far back from their street, and on the top floor offers a lovely view of Boston Harbor, when it is not storming.

**[SFX: Running through rain, muddy yard, arrives at door]**

**NARRATOR:** Immediately, Joule regrets her wardrobe. Her sneakers squelch through mud. The sweater drinks in the chilly June rain as she waits, seemingly forever, for Hart to pick the lock.

**JOULE:** C'mon, Hart. I'm freezing.

**NARRATOR:** Idly, Joule kicks the pools forming in the handprints on the walkway. Years ago, when her parents were converting the garage, she and Hart had pressed their palms into the concrete

walkway as it dried. It was another thing Hart made her do. She thought her parents would get upset. But they loved it.

**[SFX: WINDOW SMASH.]**

**INT. GARAGE LAB, JOULE'S HOME - CONT**

**NARRATOR:** Joule looks up. Hart drops a rock and slips his hand into the broken glass window to unlock the door.

**JOULE:** Seriously?

**HART:** Eh, it was cracked already. Dad'll think the storm did it.

**[SFX: DOOR opens.]**

**HART:** Ah ha! Here we are. (jokey evil) The LABORATORY! (beat) Now, keep your eyes peeled. I need a few actuators and a light sensor and a new battery for my latest creation... the K-9000. Get it, like 'canine'? Because it's a dog robot.

**NARRATOR:** Joule rolls her eyes. Wringing out her mane of hair, she enters the cluttered space. Pinewood crates stacked to the ceiling, whiteboards with strange symbols, glass jars of brown liquids lining the shelves; all of it, gathering dust.

**JOULE:** (concerned) Hey, be careful with that stuff.

**[SFX: Crate thudding, paper crinkling, tools clinking]**

**NARRATOR:** Hart is head down in a crate, tossing out gizmos. His feet kick in the air. Then he reemerges flushed and pleased.

**HART:** Ha! Look! Mom's most advanced piece of technology.

**NARRATOR:** He holds aloft a radio. A little red radio. The sight of it hits Joule with a wave of emotions. Her mother loved that radio, listened to it every day while she worked ...

**[SFX: Switch CLICKS. STATIC BLARES from a RADIO speaker.]**

**NEWS ANCHOR (STATICKY):** This is 90.9 WBUR, Boston's NPR. It's eleven fifty-nine, here's the news. Brutus Bright held a rally today on Boston Common...

**HART:** I can just feel Mom in here. Can't you?

**NEWSCASTER/REPORTER (STATICKY):** ... The tech billionaire received roars of approval when downplaying the severity of climate change:

**CANDIDATE (PA, STATICKY):** First they take your fuel! Then they'll take your freedom! We won't let that happen! ... (APPLAUSE)

**NARRATOR:** ... and the sound throws her back in time ...

[SFX: Static clears and newscaster voices crossfade.]

**FLASHBACK: INT. GARAGE LAB, JOULE'S HOME - DAY (1 YEAR AGO)**

[SFX: Low background static, rain pelting against windows, soft MECHANICAL WHIR in the background]

**NARRATOR:** It is a gray morning in June. It is the day her mom died. Joule watches as her mom hunches over her workbench, twisting away at tiny gears and springs.

**MOM:** Grr. This is ridiculous.

**JOULE:** Can you fix it? I'm sorry. I don't know what I did wrong.

**NARRATOR:** Her mom is mending a gold pocket watch. A family heirloom that Dr. Green carries it with her everywhere. That was except for the day before, when Joule borrowed it for a class presentation, and the timepiece broke.

**MOM:** What, hun?

**JOULE:** Your watch. You seem mad.

**MOM:** (gentle) Oh, no. It's not the watch, Joule. It's that.

**NEWSCASTER (STATICKY):** ...said he would burn more fossil fuels like coal, oil, and gas, despite the fact that they are the single biggest cause of climate change-

**[SFX: Radio LOWERS.]**

**MOM:** I just worry about the world we grown-ups are leaving you. By the time you're my age, it'll be too hot to think and half the city will be underwater.

**JOULE:** Oh. Yeah.

**MOM:** Did you know a bad climate brought down a civilization before? The Maya. Old Egypt. I swear, if we keep making poor choices, it'll happen again to us.

**JOULE:** I know. You told me before.

**MOM:** (realizing) Ah. Right. Your dad tells me that I scare you kids with all the doom talk. Sorry. It's just that I care.

**JOULE:** I know.

**MOM:** You're strong, Joule, you and Hart are my little spark and fire. You'll be okay.

**JOULE:** I know.

**MOM:** And the watch will be okay too. Just one more twist. Listen.

**[SFX: Soft ticking – a clock resumes its rhythm]**

**[SFX: Radio static surges – MORPH into music. Thunder rumbles.]**

**INT. GARAGE LAB, JOULE'S HOME - NIGHT**

**NARRATOR:** Joule shakes herself from the memory. It is night, her mother is dead, and Hart has found the worst station imaginable.

**[SFX: LOUD, BAD MUSIC]**

**HART:** (over din) Do you think K-9000 should have a scary bark? Or should it speak English? Is that weird?

**JOULE:** (over din) I'm going upstairs. I can't think straight.

**HART:** What do you want to think about?

**NARRATOR:** She doesn't answer because saying it aloud is too hard.

**HART:** Whatever, *Sailor*. Oh! But don't forget K-9000 needs an actuator. Let me know if you see one!

**[SFX: Wood creaking as Joule climbs the loft ladder. Trap door shuts. Rain becomes louder, now pounding on the roof above.]**

**INT. SECOND FLOOR, GARAGE LAB - CONT**

**NARRATOR:** Joule climbs the creaking ladder to the hatch door in the ceiling and emerges in a dark den. She flips the switch.

**[SFX: Light switch - CLICKS multiple times.]**

**JOULE:** (to self) Nothing. Hm. There's got to be a lamp around.

**NARRATOR:** She peers into the dimness. Then she spots a circular silhouette, like a black hole. A flash ...

**[SFX: SUPER LOUD THUNDER!]**

**NARRATOR:** ... And that is when she sees it.

**JOULE:** Whoa. What is that?

**NARRATOR:** Tall. Round. A metallic sheen of not one color but many: copper, nickel, silver, bronze. She steps closer.

**[SFX: Step. Machine lights up. Begins humming.]**

**NARRATOR:** And the thing comes to life. Red lights flicker on. The object is twice her height, a globe on four steel legs, like a lunar lander or a diving bell. There is a heavy vault-like door and a single porthole window, from which more light shines.

**[SFX: Objects whirling.]**

**NARRATOR:** Rods sticking out from the body begin to twirl. Copper coils spark.

**[SFX: Sparks.]**

**JOULE:** Ahh!

**NARRATOR:** Ribbons of steam curl into the air.

**JOULE:** (cautious) What are you?

**NARRATOR:** It is ugly, as if it climbed out of a junkyard. The legs are uneven. The coils lurch and stutter. The spherical shell is a patchwork of metals.

Its purpose is far from obvious. But it is a device of some sort. An instrument. A vessel. A mechanism. A ... what's the word?

**JOULE:** A *machine*.

**[SFX: Pssshhhhhh! Pneumatic door.]**

**NARRATOR:** The door opens, folding down like a gangway, and the machine ... vomits.

**[SFX: WET SPLAT – something slimy lands on metal]**

**JOULE:** (disgusted) Ugh. Eww. Smells like fish guts.

**NARRATOR:** Reeking fluid floods out of the opening: water and slimy green ropes of seaweed and, yes...

**JOULE:** It *is* fish guts. Gross.

**NARRATOR:** The machine quakes. She opens her mouth to call ...

**JOULE:** (almost calling out) Har-

**NARRATOR:** ... but her brother's name dies on her lips. Because something else catches her eye. Inside the machine, on the cabin floor ...

**[SFX: Thundercrack.]**

**JOULE:** (shocked) Mom's pocket watch.

**NARRATOR:** ... the one Dr. Green kept with her always. The gold watch chain is caught in the grating at the back of the cabin.

**[SFX: Machine hum intensifies - Storm goes crazy.]**

**NARRATOR:** Joule steps to the threshold, driven by curiosity.

**JOULE:** No. This is crazy. I should call Hart. I should ...

**NARRATOR:** Her mind narrows. The sound of the storm slips away. The machine, too, shakes in silence. All she hears is the blood pumping through her body, her heart ticking like a clock.

**[SFX: SILENCE except HEARTBEAT mixed with imagined CLOCK TICK.]**

**[MUX]**

**NARRATOR:** This is where you come in. Joule faces a choice, and you must help her decide Should she run to get her brother, or should she step into the machine right now? *Alone.*

To find her brother, select Chapter 2, "Get Hart."

To step inside, select Chapter 3, "Into the Machine."

That's right, you will not listen to this story in numerical order. To make your choice, go to *Chapter 2, "Get Hart,"* or *Chapter 3, "Into the Machine."*

Choose wisely. This is *The Midnight Rebellion*.

**[CODA – TMR TIPS]**

**NARRATOR:** One more thing. This is a show about making choices, in the story – *and out*. So we will end each chapter with a real-life challenge. Today's chapter features a bad thunderstorm. Because of climate change, storms are increasing in places like Boston, the Southeast, and the tropics. A warmer planet evaporates more water into the air, making storms more common and stronger.

But just like Joule makes choices, we can too. Try one simple thing this week. For instance, to reduce pollution, ride a bike or take the bus instead of the car. Big changes start small.

Keep listening for more tips and more adventure. Up next: *Chapter 2, "Get Hart" OR Chapter 3, "Into the Machine."*

**[CREDITS]**

**NARRATOR:** *The Midnight Rebellion* is a production of WBUR in Boston. It was created by Ben Brock Johnson and Dean Russell.

The series was written and produced by Dean Russell.

Directing by Emily Jankowski and Dean Russell.

Mix and sound design for this episode by Emily Jankowski.

Supporting mix and sound by Mumble Media.

Story by Dean Russell, with Joanna Lewis, Taylor Orci, Craig Rowin, and Kristine Songco.

Editing by Mary Kole and Dave Shaw.

This episode is starring:

Basma Ayatte as Joule,

Elohim Nycalove as Hart,

Erika Henningson as Dr. Elizabeth Green,

and me, Erik Ransom, as the narrator.

Additional performances by Casper Anderson, Jalen Askins,  
Emmanuel Chumaceiro, Maddux Hernandez, and Jay Preston.

Samata Joshi is managing producer.

Paul Vaitkus is production manager.

Ben Brock Johnson is the executive producer and WBUR's Director  
of Digital Audio.

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See the full list of cast and crew at  
[wbur.org/themidnightrebellion](http://wbur.org/themidnightrebellion).