

WBUR'S
THE MIDNIGHT REBELLION
CHAPTER 14 - TRUTH
By Dean Russell

[MUX]

NARRATOR: You're listening to *The Midnight Rebellion*.

Chapter 14, "Truth"

[MUX]

INT. CAPTAIN'S QUARTERS, SHIP (THE SUNDIAL) - NIGHT

[SFX: Creaking cabin, waves sloshing outside]

NARRATOR: Aboard the two-masted brigantine *The Sundial*, below decks in the captain's quarters, Joule, Buggy, and Nico look expectantly at the tattooed, piratey man. They have spoken the truth. The whole story ... from the lab to the factories to now.

CUTTHROAT: [growls idly]

NARRATOR: But instead of saying anything in return, Cutthroat sits there on a flimsy chair, staring at his wall of clocks ...

[SFX: CLOCKS TICKING]

NARRATOR: ... brooding.

CUTTHROAT: [growls more angrily]

JOULE: Well? Are you gonna say anything?

NICO: Hello? Cutthroat?

BUGGY: I think we broke him.

CUTTHROAT: [growls again]

NARRATOR: Just as Joule considers calling for help ... perhaps a psychiatrist or a reverse hypnotist ... he rises.

CUTTHROAT: Alright. And you're sure you saw the *Horologium* on Bright's cargo vessel? It wasn't some other device?

JOULE: Uh. Yeah. It's pretty distinct.

BUGGY: Ooh! Unless there is *another* Horologium ... like if a future us came back to now and *also* lost their machine ... which would mean there's another US here ... which would mean—!

NICO: Stop! Stop. (beat) Yes, we're sure we saw it.

NARRATOR: Cutthroat blinks once. Then he grabs his chair and hurls it ...

CUTTHROAT: [yells]

[SFX: WOODEN CHAIR CRASHES into CLOCKS]

JOULE: Yikes.

NICO: Squids.

BUGGY: Yeah, we definitely broke him.

NARRATOR: The captain's face turns crimson. He looks ready to snap their bones and feed their broken bodies to the fish.

CUTTHROAT: (heaving, angry) I ... (calming) owe you an apology.

NICO: Uh. Did not see that one coming.

CUTTHROAT: We tried to save ya, and instead we turned a seasquall into a cyclone. This is all my fault.

JOULE: So you're not going to throw us overboard because we lost the machine?

CUTTHROAT: Throw ya overboard? Do I look like I'd do a thing like that to three kids?

JOULE/BUGGY/NICO: Kinda./ Hundred percent./ Surprised you haven't done it already.

CUTTHROAT: [sigh] Look, I promised yer ma if the Horologium was ever stolen, I'd do everything in my power to get it back. So I been pushin' myself and the crew to our limits to find it, and maybe I came on a little strong.

NICO: Ha! A little?

CUTTHROAT: Okay, a lot. This is dire business. Imagine Bright with the power of time travel, eh? Do you think they'd use it for good? They could dig up more fossil fuels and burn twice as much. They could go back to the start and rewrite humanity entirely.

JOULE: So that's why you want the machine. Because my mom asked you to protect it? But how do you even *know* my mom? How do you know about the machine? We told you the truth. Now, we want answers. What do a bunch of pirates have to do with any of this?

CUTTHROAT: Truthfully ... nothin'. 'Cause we ain't pirates. I told ya we ain't pirates. We're The Midnight Rebellion.

NARRATOR: Cutthroat's words hang heavily in the humid air.

JOULE: The what?

CUTTHROAT: The Midnight Rebellion. We've been fightin' against Bright and its destruction for years. And your ma is one of us.

JOULE: I don't understand. My mom is a *rebel*? You're telling me she sails around throwing harpoons at tins?

CUTTHROAT: Sometimes. Mostly she's the brains of our operation.

NICO: And why midnight?

CUTTHROAT: Because it sounds spooky.

BUGGY: Really?

CUTTHROAT: No! It's a metaphor. When the Doomsday Clock ticks midnight, that means civilization has fallen. We're well past that now. Our mission is to rewind the clock. Tock-tick.

BUGGY: Ohhhhh! Now I get it.

JOULE: So you want to go back in time with the Horologium to fix everything. That's what we were planning too.

CUTTHROAT: The apple don't fall far from the tree. 'Course that wasn't always the plan. Doc Green invented it as a way of seein' the *future*. She thought if people knew beyond a doubt where they were headed, they'd change their ways.

JOULE: So my mom invented a time machine; she accidentally got stuck here when the first machine was destroyed; she met you and joined your rebel group; and then rebuilt the machine, got captured, and somehow the thing went back with only her pocket watch inside?

CUTTHROAT: That's the gist. Though you left out the bit about the war.

JOULE/BUGGY/NICO: The war?! What war?

[SFX: FAINT INSECT-Y BUZZING enters the room]

NARRATOR: Before Cutthroat can answer, everyone turns their attention to the sound coming from two dots, which seem to drift in through the porthole, riding the breeze.

[SFX: INSECT-Y BUZZING grows louder]

NARRATOR: They radiate blue, gently dimming and brightening. The insects touch down, one on each of Joule's hands. Momentarily mesmerized, she studies their glowing bulbs and diaphanous wings.

JOULE: (mesmerized) They're fireflies.

CUTTHROAT: (semi-pleasant) Huh. I ain't seen them since I was a boy. Thought they died out.

NARRATOR: That's when Joule recalls that fireflies shine green, not electric blue. And these have rather sharp rumps, almost like stingers. Suddenly, the hue turns yellow, then orange, then deep red. The next thing Joule feels is hot iron piercing her skin.

[SFX: FLESH BURNING]

JOULE: Ahh! Ahh!

NARRATOR: Joule flings her hands about, but the stingers dig deeper. The flies refuse to detach.

CUTTHROAT: Hold still!

NARRATOR: Cutthroat draws a hooked blade and sinks the tip into her skin – once, twice – prying off the insects. He crushes the first, cleaves the other. Tiny sparks shoot out as they die.

BUGGY: Tins.

CUTTHROAT: Yes. A new breed. Bright's getting creative.

NICO: Let's hope there's not more.

[SFX: DISTANT BUZZING of MANY "FIREFLIES"; ALARM BELLS]

NARRATOR: Joule peers through the porthole. In the distance, a phosphorescent cloud moves against the wind.

JOULE: You were saying?

REBEL CREW (ON DECK): TOCK-TICK! WE'RE UNDER ATTACK! TOCK-TICK!

[SFX: BUZZING CRESCENDOS]

NARRATOR: We'll be right back ... after the break.

[MUX]

[***MIDROLL***]

[MUX]

EXT. MAIN DECK, THE SUNDIAL - NIGHT

[SFX: Waves, wind in sails, cannon blasts, shouting, BUZZING]

CUTTHROAT: Trim the topsails! All hands on deck!

REBEL CREW: TOCK-TICK!

NARRATOR: It is an air battle at sea. A fresh nightmare of red-hot robotic fireflies swarm The Sundial, burning flesh, setting the deck aflame.

CUTTHROAT: Fire at port! Fire at starboard!

NARRATOR: Among them, tin octopods swoop, issuing shockbolts from their eight stringy tentacles.

[SFX: SHOCKBOLTS!]

ZAPPED REBEL: GAHHHHHH!!

NARRATOR: Joule, Nico, and Buggy spring into action, newly equipped from the rebel armory ...

BUGGY: (over chaos) Ohh! I'm pretty good with this slingshot.

[SFX: Slingshot!]

NICO: (over chaos) Harpoon feels good!

[SFX: Harpoon!]

JOULE: (over chaos) This bat is just like baseball.

[SFX: Bat smashes tins!]

NARRATOR: Fireflies crawl through their hair and down their shirts. Welts bloom on their skin. But they are beyond pain.

JOULE: (over chaos) AHHHHHHHHH—TAKE THAT!

[SFX: SWINGS BAT, KILLING FIREFLIES]

NARRATOR: Joule bats through a cloud of tins so dense that the bodies pile at her feet. Behind her, the swivel guns blast ...

[SFX: Cannon boom!]

NARRATOR: ... and Fin, the gull, drops guano bombs from above.

FIN: (battling) Squawk! Squawk!

[SFX: SPLAT!]

JOULE: (to self) Gross.

NARRATOR: In fact, the battle looks like it's going well.

CUTTHROAT: We're nearly there!

NARRATOR: ... but looks can be deceiving.

[SFX: BOOM! SHIP RATTLES]

NARRATOR: Suddenly, the ship shakes violently ...

JOULE: (over chaos, closer) What was that?

[SFX: BOOM! SHIP LURCHES]

NARRATOR: Joule staggers awkwardly, like a body made of elbows. Her boots slip as the deck tilts portside. She looks to her compatriots. Buggy swings on the rigging. Nico takes hold of the mast net. Then the ship keels ninety degrees and the deck drops out from beneath Joule's feet.

JOULE: AHHHHHHHHHHH—OOF.

[SFX: NICO GRABS JOULE.]

NICO: Gotcha.

JOULE: Thanks.

NARRATOR: But the water below starts to churn, as if the harbor were boiling. Or worse. As if a beast were rising.

JOULE: WHAT IS THAT?!

BUGGY: That is a tentacle. A very, very large tentacle.

REBEL CREW: KRAKEN! TIN SQUID! KRAKEN!

NARRATOR: Countless writhing chrome arms erupt from the water. They wrap around the gunwales and masts, pulling the ship down.

Joule watches one tentacle snatch a rebel into the depths.

BLACKFISH: AHHHH!

[SFX: SPLASH!]

NARRATOR: The fireflies surge, emboldened, and attack the sails. They find the powder kegs and ignite ...

[SFX: BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!]

NARRATOR: Then Joule feels one wet metal arm slither around her leg. It yanks ...

JOULE: Ahh!

NARRATOR: Nico's hold slips. Buggy cannot reach to help.

JOULE: (in pain) Let go! Before we both go in!

NICO: No!

NARRATOR: Out of the corner of her eye, Joule sees Captain Cutthroat perched on the hull. He lifts a metal barrel overhead. It seems to be humming. He looks down. Then heaves it overboard.

CUTTHROAT: TOCK-TICK!

[SFX: SPLASH!]

NARRATOR: It sinks. And from the deep dark ...

[SFX: STRANGE UNDERWATER BOOM, BUBBLES, HUGE BOOM ABOVE WATER, TINS DIE DRAMATICALLY]

NARRATOR: ... an invisible pressure wave courses through Joule's bones.

JOULE: Ah!

NARRATOR: And all at once, the shockbolts cease, the light of the flies and octopods go out and their bodies rain down into the water. The magnificent kraken shutters ... its arms falling away like felled trees ...

JOULE: [huge gasp of relief] Thank the tides!

[SFX: SHIP RIGHTS ITSELF]

NARRATOR: The ship rights itself.

REBEL CREW: (joyous) YEAHHHHHH!

JOULE/NICO/BUGGY: YEAHHHHHHH!

[MUX]

EXT. MAIN DECK, THE SUNDIAL - LATER

NARRATOR: Hours later, The Sundial is sailing again, a bit worse for the wear. Joule learns Cutthroat had used an electromagnetic

pulse – a giant sort of bomb that fries any tin within a half-mile radius. She would have liked to have a few of those, but that was, apparently, the only one. Without it, they'd be down in Davey Jones' locker.

[SFX: CUTTHROAT'S FOOTSTEPS ON DECK]

CUTTHROAT: You three. We need to talk.

[SFX: FOOTSTEPS, ETC. TRANSITION TO ...]

INT. GALLEY, BELOW DECKS – MOMENTS LATER

NARRATOR: The captain's quarters did not fare well. It reeks of briney ash. So they meet in the galley, where nets of oranges and limes swing from the beams. Joule wonders how such things can even exist in the Sac, but there are more pressing matters.

CUTTHROAT: You did well out there. Bright'll think twice before launching another assault.

JOULE: But they will come again, won't they?

CUTTHROAT: Aye. They may have the machine, but they haven't given up their hunt for you. I can't say why.

JOULE: What's *wrong* with Bright? It's like they enjoy being evil.

CUTTHROAT: They enjoy power and profit.

NICO: What about this war? I've never heard of any war, and Buggy and I live here.

CUTTHROAT: You're young. The war ended years ago. Bright likes to pretend it never happened. Talking about it'll earn you a lifetime of shockbolts, so I'm not surprised you don't know.

JOULE: But what does it have to do with us?

CUTTHROAT: Hmm. How much do you know about Brutus Bright?

NARRATOR: Joule eyes the others. Nico and Buggy shrug.

CUTTHROAT: Well, as you might guess, Brutus Bright founded the corporation way back in Joule's time.

JOULE: I *thought* I recognized the name Bright when I first heard it here in the Sac. They used to play his voice on the radio. My mom was not a fan.

CUTTHROAT: He was one of them tech geniuses. Started out makin' tins, robots they called 'em. But their inventions needed power, a lot of it. So Bright Corp bought up oil and gas and coal reserves. Soon it were more than a robot company. It supplied the nation's fossil fuels. If you filled your car, it was with Bright gasoline. The lights in your house? Powered by Bright coal. People been burning fossil fuels since the Industrial Revolution, hundreds of years ago. But Brutus Bright pushed us over the edge.

[SFX: Bkg fades ... disasters, newsreel underscore monologue]

MONOLOGUE WITH FLASHBACK SFX, ETC.

CUTTHROAT: The Earth was heating. Climate disasters never seemed to end. There'd be wildfires in California, floods in Korea, droughts in Africa, all at once. The famines were the worst. Wars broke out over food. Finally, the people had enough.

(FLASHBACK) PROTESTORS [CROWD]:

NO MORE COAL,
STOP THE OIL,
CUT THE GAS,
OR WE'LL BOIL!

CUTTHROAT: They called for a permanent end to fossil fuels.

JOULE: I bet Brutus Bright didn't like that idea.

CUTTHROAT: No. Not a bit ...

(FLASHBACK) BRIGHT: *These people say that coal is the enemy; that the gasoline powering your cars and schoolbusses, the oil warming your houses are to blame for the weather. It's lunacy. Climate change is a lie. But do you know what is real? Money. Convenience. A ban on fuels would send us all into financial ruin. It will make your life harder. These rebels come for our freedom. We must shut them down. We must declare war.*

CUTTHROAT: It was the war to end all wars. The last gasp of humanity. The final tick-tock on civilization's clock.

[SFX: WAR SOUNDS crescendo to SHARP CUT TO ...]

EXT. MAIN DECK, THE SUNDIAL - CONT'D

JOULE: Midnight.

CUTTHROAT: And as cities everywhere fell to ruin, Brutus Bright fled. Rumor is his son, Brutus Jr. took over. He runs the corporation from his fortress, Sky Island. We think that's where Bright's taken yer mother, Joule.

NICO: And Sky Island, you said that's where Bright's cargo ship was going. So...

BUGGY: So the machine and Joule's mom are *in the same place!*

CUTTHROAT: Aye.

JOULE: I thought you didn't know where she was.

CUTTHROAT: We *don't* know where Doc Green is. Because Sky Island is hidden. Its location is a secret. Finding them now ... is near impossible.

NARRATOR: Joule could sink through the floorboards. Her mother is alive yet farther away than ever. Her ride home, ditto. But she will not give in and wait for fate to claim her.

JOULE: Near impossible.

CUTTHROAT: Eh?

JOULE: You said *near*. That means there's still a chance.

CUTTHROAT: I'm not one to give up a fight, but you should accept the reality. Even if we could find Sky Island, we won't walk away unscathed. If we walk away at all.

JOULE: You said it yourself. This isn't just about my mom. The Horologium in Bright's hand is a weapon. We can't let them use it. We have to keep going. We have to try.

NICO: I agree.

BUGGY: Me too.

CUTTHROAT: Then it's settled. We'll regroup and come up with a plan. This isn't over.

[MUX]

NARRATOR: Congratulations. You finally know where the name of the show comes from.

We will release the next part of this uncharted adventure shortly, but if you would like more, now you can go back and listen to the choices you did not make. See you in Part III, Chapter 18: "Rebel." Coming soon.

Follow the show to get notified about new chapters. And while you're at it, rate the show. Your support keeps us going

This is the Midnight Rebellion.

[CODA]

NARRATOR: In this chapter, Joule tells the truth even though she's afraid. It's a good thing too. Because hiding the truth doesn't make problems smaller. It only makes them harder to fix.

When people are honest with each other, they can finally make a plan. The truth can hurt. But it's also where hope begins.

Keep listening for more tips and more deadly fireflies.

[CREDITS]

BASMA: *The Midnight Rebellion* is a production of WBUR in Boston.

Created by Ben Brock Johnson and Dean Russell.

Written and produced by Dean Russell.

Directed by Emily Jankowski and Dean Russell.

Mix and sound design for this episode by Emily Jankowski.

Additional post-production by Fred Greenhalgh and Mumble Media.

This episode is starring ...

Me, Basma Ayatte, as Joule,

Jett Dinh as Buggy,

K. Zedric Acruz as Nico,

Jay Preston as Cutthroat,

Cadden McArthur as Fin,

and ... Erik Ransom as the narrator.

Additional performances by Emmanuel Chumaceiro, Giselle Fernandez, Marc Graue, and Sarah Jiang.

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See the full list of cast and crew at wbur.org/midnight.