

WBUR's
THE MIDNIGHT REBELLION
CHAPTER 16 - LIES
By Dean Russell

[MUX]

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

Chapter 16, "Lies"

[MUX]

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

[SFX: Creaking cabin, waves sloshing outside]

CUTTHROAT: Well? What do you say, girly? Tell me where you've hidden the Horologium. You can trust me. Your mom did.

NARRATOR: Joule glares at Captain Cutthroat, his tattoos sharp in the candlelit room. Because of this man, she is trapped in a damp cabin with Nico and Buggy, aboard *The Sundial*, a ship that looks straight out of the golden age of piracy. Because of this man, the machine got away.

JOULE: (to self) And he wants the *truth*?

NARRATOR: The captain gestures impatiently at his wall of clocks.

[SFX: TICKING CLOCKS]

CUTTHROAT: Thirty seconds is almost up. Four, three, two—

JOULE: Okay. I'll tell you. If you tell *me* where my mom is.

CUTTHROAT: Tides, we already did this dance. I don't know. Least, I ain't sure.

JOULE: I'm listening.

CUTTHROAT: [sighs] Best guess? She's on Sky. Sky Island.

NICO: The place you mentioned before? You said their cargo ship was going there.

CUTTHROAT: Bright headquarters. We know it exists. We don't know how to find it. The location is a secret.

JOULE: Well then we'll find it.

CUTTHROAT: It ain't that simple. The most important thing is the Horologium. We need that machine.

JOULE: Good luck. Because ...

NARRATOR: Joule makes a gamble. A lie.

JOULE: The machine is gone. Donezo. Smashed to smithereens.

NARRATOR: Cutthroat's face goes slack. This could not have been what he was expecting. He peers furtively at Buggy and Nico.

NICO: It's ... true. Right, Buggy?

BUGGY: Uh. Right. Yeah. Exploded into a zillion pieces.

CUTTHROAT: (disbelieving) I see. You don't look too upset about losing your only way home, girly. When the first Horologium was destroyed, your ma near wept herself to death.

JOULE: Liar. You don't know a thing about my mom.

CUTTHROAT: Don't I?

NARRATOR: He pushes past them and kneels at a large safe.

JOULE: What are you doing? What's in that?

CUTTHROAT: The truth.

NARRATOR: Joule's mind goes to the worst possibilities. Strange torture devices to force the truth out of her? An array of cutlasses? Flaying knives? Cutthroat twists the lock ...

CUTTHROAT: (muttering) [spin] ... and [spin] four ... [spin] twenty-two ... and then [spin] ... [spin] thirteen ... [spin] ...

NARRATOR: And just as the door unlocks, a noise draws everyone's attention to the porthole.

[SFX: INSECT BUZZING]

NARRATOR: Two tiny insects buzz into the cabin, glowing the color of ice, or lightning. They alight on each of Joule's palms. She blinks. Nobody moves.

BUGGY: What are they?

JOULE: Fireflies?

NICO: They don't shoot flames, do they?

BUGGY: No. I've read about them. They're harmless. But aren't they extinct?

NARRATOR: Joule looks closer. Their blue rumps are oddly shaped. Like freshly sharpened pencils.

JOULE: They feel warm. Really warm.

NICO: They're changing color too. Red, almost like hot ... metal.

CUTTHROAT: Tins!

NARRATOR: Cutthroat lurches. But Joule is too far to reach. The robotic fireflies stab deep into her flesh.

[SFX: The stingers stab Joule and burn flesh]

JOULE: Ahhh! They're hot! They burn!

NARRATOR: Joule runs in circles, clawing at the things, but they latch on. Her skin sizzles and pops. Dizzy with pain, she brings her hands down flat on the floor ...

[SFX: BASH! BASH! BASH!]

JOULE: [grunts in pain]

NARRATOR: The creatures shatter. Cutthroat checks her blisters.

CUTTHROAT: It's a cruel joke. *Fireflies*. Made to burn.

[SFX: DISTANT BUZZING of MANY "FIREFLIES"]

CUTTHROAT: And more are coming. Much more.

NICO: If those things burn, and this ship is wood?

BUGGY: Then that's bad.

CUTTHROAT: Aye. We're in for a battle. You three, stay here.

JOULE: What, you think we can't fight?

CUTTHROAT: I've no doubt ya can, girly. But in war, ya must trust one another. 'Til then, you'll do as I say.

[SFX: ALARM BELLS]

CREW [REBELS] (ON DECK): TOCK-TICK! TOCK-TICK! TOCK-TICK!

NARRATOR: Before Joule can protest, Cutthroat dashes away, locking the door behind him.

[SFX: DOOR SLAM, LOCK]

NARRATOR: And through the porthole, the three heroes spy the restless, radiant swarm in the night sky closing in.

JOULE: C'mon. We're gettin' out of here.

[SFX: BUZZING CRESCENDOS]

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

[MUX]

[*MIDROLL***]**

[MUX]

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

[SFX: On the water, BUZZING]

CUTTHROAT (ON DECK): AIM! FIRE!

[SFX: CANONS BLAST ON DECK!]

NARRATOR: Locked below decks in the captain's quarters of The Sundial, Joule, Buggy, and Nico watch, wide-eyed, as the vibrating, superheated cloud of tins draws near.

JOULE: I see octopods too. Lots of tentacles.

BUGGY: (a little excited) I can't believe we've never seen the fireflies before. Do you think Bright's really making more tins?

NICO: Why does it sound like you're happy about that?

BUGGY: What? Can't a kid admire a little ingenuity?

NICO: Not if it's trying to kill us.

JOULE: Okay, okay. We have to work together. We could break down the door, but that'll take us to the deck with all the pirates.

NICO: Cutthroat won't let us abandon ship if he sees us.

BUGGY: So we need another way out. Portholes?

JOULE: Too small. Even for you.

NARRATOR: Suddenly, a ball of light flies by the porthole.

[SFX: Fireflies slams against boat wall]

NARRATOR: Everyone turns to the stern-side wall.

[SFX: MULTIPLE FIREFLIES SLAM INTO BOAT, LIKE RAIN]

NARRATOR: A pirate, on fire, dives into the harbor, quelching the flames.

CREW [REBELS] (ON DECK): Ahh! It burns! It burns!

NARRATOR: Then tins stream into the cabin ...

[SFX: BUZZING! FLAMES!]

JOULE/NICO/BUGGY: [yelling]

NARRATOR: Stingers begin to sear their skin and singe their hair. The fireflies fasten to the walls and shelves in clumps. Books and maps ignite, the wall clocks go haywire,

[SFX: WALL CLOCKS GOING HAYWIRE (this should stand out)]

NARRATOR: and then the wood begins to smolder. Fire climbs to the ceiling.

JOULE: (over noise) We're cooked if we don't do something.

NICO: (over noise) The wood's getting weaker. We need something heavy to break through the bulkhead.

BUGGY: (over noise, coughing) The ... safe!

NARRATOR: Buggy points to the steel vault in the cabinet.

BUGGY: (over noise, coughing) ... ram ...

JOULE: (over noise) Yes! A battering ram.

NARRATOR: Joule and Nico lift the safe. Her sweating hands slip. Her arms ache. But they make it to the burning wall and swing ...

JOULE/NICO: (heaving) One ... two ... *three!*

[SFX: BANG! Safe slams into flaming wood.]

JOULE/NICO: (heaving) One ... two ... *three!*

[SFX: BANG! Safe slams into flaming wood.]

JOULE: (coughing) C'mon. Break already.

JOULE/NICO: One ... two ... [GRUNT]

[SFX: BANG! CRACK! Wall breaks.]

NARRATOR: The safe crashes through the bulkhead.

[SFX: SAFE goes in. SPLASH!]

NARRATOR: A hole, ringed by conflagration, opens in the ship. On the other side, the night harbor churns. Buggy dives first ...

[SFX: BUGGY COUGHS, SPLASH!]

NARRATOR: ... then Nico ...

[SFX: NICO GRUNTS, SPLASH!]

NARRATOR: And then Joule glances back at the ruined room, its heat-shattered clocks ...

[SFX: CLOCK SPRINGS SHOOT OUT, FLAMES]

NARRATOR: ... and thinks of her mom. An uneasy feeling takes hold, as if Joule is leaving something behind with these pirates. Cutthroat has not shared all. She's sure of it.

[SFX: FLAMES!]

NARRATOR: Then she dives.

[SFX: JOULE YELLS, SPLASH!]

[MUX]

EXT. ISLAND SHORE - MORNING

[SFX: Shoreline waves]

NARRATOR: The sun rises. Bright Seawall is just visible in the distance, a dark line on the horizon beneath a corona of light. The Sundial is nowhere to be seen.

[SFX: Shoreline waves]

NARRATOR: Joule sits in the sand, letting the waves roll up to her toes. She is exhausted from the hours-long swim away from the burning ship to this unknown island.

JOULE: (to self) What wasn't he telling us?

[SFX: Radio static with unintelligible voices]

NARRATOR: She does not notice Buggy, scanning his radio ...

[SFX: Radio static]

NARRATOR: She does not hear Nico approaching ...

[SFX: NICO WALKS ON SAND, CLOSER]

NARRATOR: Until ...

NICO (NEARING): Well, I didn't find much to eat. Only this.

[SFX: NICO DROPS SAFE on SAND]

NARRATOR: The safe sits at Nico's feet.

JOULE: It didn't sink?

[SFX: Radio OFF]

BUGGY: It must be sealed pretty tight.

NICO: We're stranded until we can build a raft. And there may be food or tools inside. Buggy, think you can open it?

BUGGY: (confident) Can I open it?

NARRATOR: He spits on both hands and rubs them together.

BUGGY: Okay, everyone gather 'round.

NARRATOR: Joule, doubting Cutthroat would store something as practical as beef jerky in his safe – honestly, it's probably more clocks inside – nevertheless finds a seat next to Buggy.

[SFX: lock dial twists]

BUGGY: Okay, first things first. The lock dial is numbered zero through twenty-five. How many times did he turn it? Five?

NARRATOR: Joule thinks back.

(FLASHBACK) CUTTHROAT: (muttering) [spin] ... [spin] ... [spin] ... [spin] ... [spin] ... [spin] ...

JOULE: Six. Three forwards, three backwards.

BUGGY: Perfect. Now, I didn't see him spinning it. But I think I remember that on the second turn, he mumbled to himself ...

(FLASHBACK) CUTTHROAT: (muttering) ... and [spin] four ...

BUGGY: ~~Four~~. Anyone got anything else?

JOULE: Hmm. Yeah, actually. After four he also said ...

(FLASHBACK) CUTTHROAT: *(muttering) [spin] twenty-two ... and then [spin] ... [spin] thirteen ...*

BUGGY: So that's blank, four, twenty-two, blank, thirteen, blank. That's half the code done already!

NICO: Yeah, but the other half is missing.

JOULE: That is usually how halves work, Nico. Try to be positive.

NICO: Hey, I'm just sayin'. Three blanks. Twenty-five options each. That's a lot of guessing.

NARRATOR: Joule frowns. She twists the dial.

JOULE: Hmm. Actually, there are twenty-six each. It's zero through twenty-five. Zero is a number too.

BUGGY: There are twenty-six letters in the alphabet! It's a word. [gasp] It's a secret code word! Each number represents a letter. That means zero equals A. One is B. Two is C. (beat) Blank, four, twenty-two, blank, thirteen, blank.

JOULE: So four would be E! Twenty-two is ... W. And thirteen-

NICO: Tides. I think I got it.

JOULE: Really?

BUGGY: Don't tell me!

NICO: Think about Cutthroat. What do we know about him?

JOULE: He's got anger issues.

BUGGY: He likes body art.

NICO: True. But what's he *obsessed* with? And what's that thing his crew says? Remember?

JOULE: [gasps] Nico! You're a genius.

NICO: Thanks. It all comes from staying positive, you know?

NARRATOR: Joule rolls her eyes and reaches for the dial.

[SFX: SPIN]

[MUX]

NARRATOR: Did you get all of that? Something about an E and W and the inner workings of Captain Cutthroat's mind.

If you didn't catch it all, I suggest you *rewind* ... because to listen to the next episode, you must go to wbur.org/midnightcode and enter the numbers of the safe's passcode.

That's wbur.org/midnightcode.

However, if you hate puzzles, you can go back even farther and pretend this chapter never happened. ...

[SFX: REWIND]

NARRATOR: ... and instead, tell Cutthroat about the machine in Chapter 14, "Truth."

Tock-tick. This is *The Midnight Rebellion*.

[CODA]

NICO: It's Nico. And you want the truth? Everyone lies sometimes. Whatever the reason, good or bad – usually bad – the end is the same: a lie builds a wall between the deceiver and the deceived. It makes it impossible to work together.

Remember that when you're working with others on a big problem like fixing the climate. Be honest about the crisis we face. When

people talk and listen, they can figure things out together. Lies divide. Truths unite.

Keep listening for more tips and more problem solving. Up next: Go to wbur.org/midnightcode to enter the key to listen to the next episode.

[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 Fred Greenhalgh.

Additional post-production by Emily Jankowski 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 Giselle Fernandez, Marc Graue, and Sarah Jiang.

Managing Producer: Samata Joshi.

Production Manager: Paul Vaitkus.

Director of Digital Audio: Ben Brock Johnson.

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