

WBUR's
THE MIDNIGHT REBELLION
PART III: BRIGHT SKY
CHAPTER 18 - REBEL
By Dean Russell

[MUX]

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

Part III: Bright Sky. Chapter 18, "Rebel."

[MUX]

EXT. SHIP DECK, CANALS, FENS - DAY

[SFX: Sailing in calm waters, low radio static in bkgd]

NARRATOR: Things are looking up. Joule and the others have told the truth. They've joined forces with Cutthroat and the Midnight Rebellion. They've set a new goal: not only to take back the machine but also to save Joule's mom, who is, as far as they know, not dead. The only tiny-winy, eensy-weensy problem, is ...

JOULE: We have no idea where she is.

NICO: Well, Cutthroat says she's probably in the same place as the machine. And we know *that* was probably taken to Sky Island on the shipping vessel.

JOULE: Besides the fact that you just said "probably" twice, even if she is at Bright Headquarters, we don't know where *that* is.

NARRATOR: Joule's eyes are dark with exhaustion. She had gone to bed in great spirits but woke up at three a.m., when she began dreaming of all the things that could go wrong. Like that Bright could use the machine to rewrite the past. Or, you know, her mom could die ... again.

So now Joule is cranky and pacing the deck, oblivious to the surrounding buildings and slow-moving canal. She doesn't

appreciate, either, that Nico, the chronic pessimist, is trying to cheer *her* up.

[SFX: Creep in radio static, coming from small radio, shifts as if someone is dialing the radio searching for a station.]

NICO: It'll be okay. Cutthroat'll figure it out. We're not on our own anymore and, for once, I actually believe that's a good thing.

[SFX: Radio static getting louder in bkgd]

JOULE: I know. It's just all I can think about, and— Buggy can you *please* turn that radio down? It's been static all morning.

BUGGY: I'm waiting for the secret messages. They only come on at certain times of the day. (beat) What? I've mentioned this before! **[CLICK! OFF]** Fine, no secret messages! It's not like we're looking for information or anything.

NARRATOR: Nico rolls their eyes. This, at least, makes Joule smile. Buggy is very smart, but there are *actual* mysteries in this world, and *imagined* ones. Joule would prefer to stick with reality for now.

[SFX: Cutthroat's boots on deck]

NARRATOR: Cutthroat appears from below decks, neck scar shiny in the daylight. His face seems ... friendlier today. Sort of.

CUTTHROAT: You three all set? We're almost at Home Base. We'll load up on supplies and see if we can't crack this Sky-Island nut. Probably take a while, but we can use the time to prep.

NARRATOR: Joule nods, (beat) and then, for the first time, she notices what's behind Cutthroat and startles.

JOULE: What's wrong with these buildings? They're *all* white.

CUTTHROAT: Oh yeah. The albedo effect. White reflects the sun best, so we painted the roofs. And most of the walls. Keeps this neighborhood ten degrees cooler.

NICO: Where'd you find enough paint?

CUTTHROAT: You know. Scavenging, raids. And a little help from our friends. Finito!

FIN: (friendly greeting) SQUAWK!

NARRATOR: Fin, the great black backed gull, circles them and drops an eggy white blob on the deck.

JOULE: Aw, gross. You used bird poop for paint, didn't you?

FIN: MEH MEH!

CUTTHROAT: Heh. Desperate times, we use anything we can, girly.

[SFX: BELLS!]

CREW [REBELS] (DISTANT): TOCK-TICK! / TOCK-TICK!

NARRATOR: Next moment, the ship rounds a bend in the canal, and a hulking structure comes into view. Even though it's painted with guano, the archways and decorative brick hits Joule with sudden memories of breezy nights and the cheers of thousands of people.

[SFX: Quick MEMORY – BASEBALL CRACK, CHEERS!]

JOULE: Whoa. That's Fenway Park ... where the Red Sox play.

CUTTHROAT: *PlayeD.* And Yep. Welcome to what we rebels call ... Home Base.

[MUX]

INT. FENWAY PARK TUNNELS - MINUTES LATER

[SFX: Busy concourse, the gang walking]

NARRATOR: Minutes later, they follow Cutthroat through one of the baseball stadium's iron gates and into the tunnel concourse where vendors once sold overpriced hot dogs and hats. Now it is buzzing with people of all kinds like a tiny city . Some growl and sport salt-stained boots and candy-colored mohawks. Others sing ...

SINGERS [REBELS] (BKGD): *Farewell and adieu to yaah doom-tickin' tins ...*

NARRATOR: ...and wear rope suspenders, cheerful skirts, and gem-toned head scarves. They are old and young, dark and light, tall and small, walking and wheeling. They are ... smiling, though quite a few are missing teeth.

CUTTHROAT: Ever see Fenway like this in your day?

JOULE: No. Usually everyone's dressed in Sox colors. And no one's walking around with ... is that a basket of tomatoes?

FRIENDLY REBEL (WALKING BY): Welcome back, Cap.

CUTTHROAT: Ray. Lookin' ripe.

BUGGY: Wait, what basket of toes? Whose toes?

CUTTHROAT: Toe-MAY-toes. It's a fruit. We grow 'em to eat.

NICO: Do they grow in the water?

NARRATOR: Cutthroat grins and waves them along, leading them up a set of concrete steps out into the stands ...

[SFX: Footsteps up stairs]

EXT. SEATS, NEAR FIELD, FENWAY PARK - CONT'D

NARRATOR: ... and at the top, everyone halts. The scene before Joule is like a bizarre dream. She peers down at the field, where there is not a baseball diamond.

JOULE: (maybe happy, maybe mad) What did you do to this place?

CUTTHROAT: Your mom said you'd hate it. I know you're big on the sport. But a farm is just more practical.

JOULE: A farm. It's ... amazing.

NICO: I've never seen so many trees in one place.

BUGGY: And look! More *May toes*. I wanna eat one.

CUTTHROAT: You're lookin' at an agroforest. Got trees for shade, and between them we grow fruits, veggies, beans. We compost what we can't eat for fertilizer. Nothing gets wasted. We even turned the foul ball poles into wind turbines for power.

[SFX: Windmills]

BUGGY: You have electricity?

CUTTHROAT: Not much. But we got lights, desalinators to clean the drinking water, and we pump seawater through the concourse pipes for cooling. 'Course, we'll need another turbine soon. We're always gettin' more rebels. Good thing you can't run out of wind.

JOULE: So everyone here, even the kids and the old people - they're rebels too? How do they fight?

CUTTHROAT: Rebellion ain't just about smashin' tins, though that is pretty fun. Real rebellion is about different folks working together toward a goal, which is to turn back the clock 'fore Midnight. We don't need fists for that.

JOULE: But you do need the Horologium.

CUTTHROAT: Need? Nah. Everythin' we do here ticks the clock back to a time of community, clean air, good soil. Little ticks add up. Your ma taught me that. 'Course the machine is pretty important too.

NARRATOR: As he says this, Cutthroat taps a finger on Joule's pocket watch. She can feel it beating away against her chest. And for a moment, she can imagine her mom, teaching and inventing. Dr. Green – Lightning Lizzie – was probably happy here.

BUGGY: ~~Captain~~, Huh. What's up there?

NARRATOR: Buggy points at the announcer's box at the top of the stadium, where a few people are moving about.

CUTTHROAT: From there, we can talk to other rebel groups in other sacrifice zones: the Florida Sea Guerreros, Colorado Desert Tribes, the Lost Angelenos, and so on and so forth. This is our communications tower.

BUGGY: Ooh! Can I go? I've been tryin' to get a stronger signal on my radio, and it's almost time for the secret message.

NICO: Buggy, c'mon. Don't bother him with that stuff.

CUTTHROAT: Now, hold on. What secret message?

BUGGY: On the radio. I've mentioned this before.

(Ch5) (FLASHBACK) BUGGY: ... I've been trying to crack this secret message ...

(Ch9) (FLASHBACK) BUGGY: ... while I was listening to this secret message

(Ch12) (FLASHBACK) BUGGY: ... Sorry, I'm scanning for secret messages!

BUGGY: Doesn't anyone listen to what I say?

NARRATOR: I've been listening, but nobody asked me.

BUGGY: [sighs] Every day at the same times, 12:44 and 1:08, someone plays the same exact message. But I can never hear it good enough. It's always too crackly. And since we're not running for our lives today, I thought I could finally figure it out.

NARRATOR: Nico opens their mouth to object, but the captain holds up a hand, kneels, and becomes very serious.

CUTTHROAT: Buggy, listen carefully. You and Nico head back into the concourse. Look for a girl with green braids. She can take you to the comms team.

NICO: What's going on?

CUTTHROAT: Maybe nothin'. We don't usually use FM radios to talk 'cause anyone could overhear. But ... in desperate times, someone might just send a message that way.

JOULE: Someone who had the know-how to build a transmitter. Someone like—

CUTTHROAT: Yep. If anybody could figure that out in lockup, it'd be Doc Green. Buggy, good work.

BUGGY: Ha! Told you, Nico.

NICO: He said it *could* be something.

CUTTHROAT: Which is why you two need to figure it out. Joule?

JOULE: Yeah.

CUTTHROAT: Come with me. You and I got a rescue mission to plan.

[MUX]

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

[***MIDROLL***]

[MUX]

NARRATOR: After Buggy and Nico leave for the communications tower, Cutthroat hurries Joule across the field to a hidden door in the Green Monster – the famously giant outfield wall of Fenway Park.

JOULE: Whoa.

[SFX: Door opens]

NARRATOR: They descend rough-hewn steps into what appears to be ... a cave. The craggy walls drip sweat. Insects skitter in the shadows. And yet, it is also filled with bookshelves, crates of materials, and dusty chalkboards covered in Dr. Green's writing.

INT. BASEMENT CAVE, FENWAY PARK - LATER

[SFX: Footsteps into cave]

JOULE: This is her lab, isn't it?

CUTTHROAT: It was a big dig. Took us years. But it was the best way to keep the Horologium hidden while she rebuilt it. If we ever came under attack, there's also a tunnel that leads out of the park. 'Course never needed it. Bright's never sent tins here.

JOULE: Really? But it's not like Fenway is hard to find.

CUTTHROAT: We got ways of deterring 'em. Traps, distortion fields. And if Bright did find us, I still don't think it would attack. It can't spare that many tins. Bright might've won the Midnight War, but it lost a lot too. No one's got unlimited resources.

JOULE: I never thought about that. When I've seen tins, there's always so many of them.

CUTTHROAT: Bright is all about *appearances*.

NARRATOR: Cutthroat reaches into the bookshelves.

CUTTHROAT: Right now, I brought you here for this ...

NARRATOR: He removes a heavy blue binder and passes it to Joule.

CUTTHROAT: This is everything we've learned about Sky Island.

JOULE: That binder is huge. How do you know so much if the place is supposed to be hidden?

CUTTHROAT: Believe it or not, some rebels grew up there and ran away. So they know a thing or two about what to expect.

JOULE: Great. Why don't they take us?

CUTTHROAT: 'Cause Sky Island is never in the same place twice. See, it floats. It's like a cruise ship times a thousand. It changes location every few weeks. Sometimes days. That's why whenever we get the *coordinates*, we gotta move fast.

NARRATOR: As his words sink in, feeding Joule's worries, Cutthroat flips open the binder in her hands to a diagram: A large ring divided into twelve equal slices with a smaller circle in the middle.

CUTTHROAT: The island city is a few miles wide and dense enough to get lost in, so it's important to know where to go. See these lines crossing the circle like spokes on a wheel? Those are the main avenues. You ever get turned around, follow them to the center. Shark Lake.

JOULE: I'm sorry. It sounded like you said *Shark Lake*.

CUTTHROAT: Heh! It ain't for swimmin'. Bright breeds the things. Don't know why - sharks are extinct everywhere else. Maybe Brutus Jr. likes fishin' for maneaters.

JOULE: (flat) He sounds ... normal.

CUTTHROAT: Yeah, well, Junior also invented shockbolts and tin wolves. He's got a ... way of doin' things. (beat) Anyway, our best guess is the Horologium will be at Bright Tower. That building's got the highest security, and it's where he keeps his personal lab.

JOULE: But what about my mom?

CUTTHROAT: We think she'll be in the Tower too. Junior'll want the Horologium's creator close-by since she knows how it works.

JOULE: But it's not like she'd tell him anything. (beat) Right?

NARRATOR: Joule shifts her focus from the map to Cutthroat, who's wearing a pained expression.

CUTTHROAT: (sigh)

JOULE: He's hurting her, isn't he?

CUTTHROAT: I couldn't say. What I know is, Doc's tougher than tin. Long as we get her soon, she'll be okay.

JOULE: Right. Then how do we break in?

[MUX]

EXT. FIELD, FENWAY PARK - NIGHT

[SFX: Hubbub of a dinner gathering]

SINGERS [REBELS] (BKGD): ... We rant and we rahr like twelve a.m. rebels, / We bear our harpoons and ships sharp as fns ...

NARRATOR: After dark, the entire Midnight Rebellion gathers on the field for dinner. Joule finds her friends at a crowded table, Buggy's face covered in a riot of colorful curries and a mouth full of crispy tofu nuggets and "May toes."

BUGGY: (mouth full) JOUHH! OVAH HEH!

NICO: Bug, I don't wanna see inside your mouth. It's disgusting.

BUGGY: (mouth full) Whah? Ihs dehishus ...

JOULE: (sitting down) Hey, I'm starving. My brain is mush from looking at blueprints all day. Did you make any progress on the radio stuff?

BUGGY: (mouth full) YUH, WEH MAYH SUH MUH PRAHREH-

NICO: Please stop.

BUGGY: (mouth full) FIHH.

NICO: So the rebels think Buggy might actually be right. We heard the broadcasts today.

JOULE: And? Is it my mom?

NICO: Eh. It's a deep voice.

NICO: They gave us a recording so you could hear it. It's on this smartphone? Whatever that is. Anyway, here, listen. This one came on at 12:44 today.

[SFX: CLICK! On.]

NEWSCASTER: *North Carolina is on fire ... North Carolina is on fire ... North-*

[SFX: CLICK! Off.]

NICO: And this one at 1:08 ...

[SFX: CLICK! On.]

NEWSCASTER: *The West Antarctic Ice Sheet is collapsing ... The West Antarctic Ice Sheet collapsing ... The West-*

[SFX: CLICK! Off.]

NARRATOR: Joule grabs Buggy and Nico. Her heart leaps.

JOULE: (stunned) [gasp] These are from my mom. Buggy, you're a genius.

BUGGY: (swallows) Well thank you. Nice to be appreciated.

NICO: But, Joule ... how do you know?

JOULE: Well, it's not my mom's voice. But it is my *dad*. He's a radio reporter. She must have a recording, and she's using it to tell us where she is. These messages, at these times... it's a code. All we have to do is solve it. Let's get Cutthroat!

NARRATOR: With overwhelming joy, Joule rises. But just as she scans for the captain, the streak of luck comes to a booming end.

[SFX: Six BOOMS.]

NARRATOR: Six plumes erupt around the stadium, one at each gate. The rebels are stunned into a brief silence. And then ...

FRIENDLY REBEL: They're here!

FIN: SQUAWK!

[SFX: Tins marching, SHOCKBOLTS. Chaos.]

NARRATOR: Like a vicious, roiling river, tin wolves stream out of the concourse and onto the field, jaws snapping, shockbolts bringing down rebels left and right. Dinner tables flip, food flies, and men, women, and children run in all directions.

[SFX: Chaos. Then, flying tins arrive.]

NARRATOR: Out of nowhere, tin octopods descend. Joule watches as their tentacles lift a man away from his family and into the air.

REBEL: AHHH!

NARRATOR: Maybe it's Joule's burning hate for these metal beasts, or maybe it's the energy of the old baseball park, but she doesn't think. She snatches a huge tomato and hurls it like a fast ball at the bottom of the ninth ...

[ROARING CROWD (FENWAY DAYDREAM)]

BASEBALL ANNOUNCER: *(fast)* ... And there it goes, right down the middle. **BAM!** Nailed him. **OUCH.** You gotta believe she did that on purpose. Boy, and look at this. The batter is charging the mound. But the Banal siblings are not having it. Nico Banal's tossing the catcher's mitt and **OHH** Nico's got the bat. **CRACK!** Now Buggy with the Bug-Eyed Goggles is there with a **PIE** – where this kid got a pie, I do not know – but **WOW,** here it is, the wind up, and **SPLAT!** Right in the kisser. The crowd is going wild, folks. **WILD!** But **WAIT.** Hold on. This is no good, no good at all. The whole Bright team has zeroed in on Watts-Green, and they are storming out of the dugout, armed to the very-sharp teeth. She doesn't seem to care though, she's screaming words we cannot repeat on this family-friendly program. What happened to that rule-loving girl? I say, **WHO CARES?** This rebel is sparking. But, uh oh, just as she's about to smash tin, Coach Cutthroat is on the field, pulling her back, back, back ...

[SFX: SNAP BACK INTO FIGHT SCENE]

NARRATOR: ... back into reality.

JOULE: *(over fight, coming to)* Huh? What?

CUTTHROAT: *(over fight)* I said, *Yas need to get out of Fenway.* The three of you. Leave the fighting to the rest of us.

JOULE: *(over fight)* Are you serious? No. We just got here.

NICO: *(over fight)* Yeah. We're in this with you.

BUGGY: *(over fight)* And I'm getting good with these pies.

CUTTHROAT: (over fight) Listen to me. Take the secret passage out.

JOULE: (over fight) But those radio messages are from my mom. I know it. We need to solve the code and get her together.

CUTTHROAT: (over fight) You'll figure it out. Find Sky Island, and we'll find you. That's an order, rebels. Tock-tick? I said, *Tock-tick?*

JOULE/NICO/BUGGY: (reluctant) Tock-tick.

CUTTHROAT: Now run. (beat) RUN!

[MUX]

NARRATOR: And here comes the tricky part. You must figure out where to go next by using the secret messages ... The first broadcast at 12:44 ...

NEWSCASTER: *North Carolina is on fire ...*

NARRATOR: And the second at 1:08 ...

NEWSCASTER: *The West Antarctic Ice Sheet is collapsing ...*

NARRATOR: Deciphering the messages will tell you Sky Island's location AND what chapter to choose next.

Chapter 19, Cape Cod Bay.

Chapter 20, The Nakambe [nah-KAHM-bay] River.

Chapter 21, The Gulf of Maine.

19, Cape Cod Bay.

20, The Nakambe River.

21, The Gulf of Maine.

Find Sky Island. This is *the Midnight Rebellion*.

[CODA]

CUTTHROAT: Ahoy. It's yer Captain speakin'. Joule used to think fixing the climate would come from one big moment – one choice, one hero. She's starting to see that when we work together, small acts add up. Some people grow food, some build windmills, some paint roofs white to keep cities cool. Some rebels march in the streets. We call this *collective action*. That is how the clock ticks backward.

Tell us your thoughts on the show. Ask a parent or guardian if you can fill out a short survey at wbur.org/midnightsurvey. And keep listening for more tips and more May Toes. Up next: Chapters 19, 20, or 21.

[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 Paul Vaitkus.

Additional post-production by 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.