

WBUR's
THE MIDNIGHT REBELLION
CHAPTER 21 - GULF OF MAINE
By Dean Russell

[SFX: WAVES CRASH AGAINST STRUCTURE; STORM IN DISTANCE]

NARRATOR: At exactly 44°N, 68°W, in the churning waves of the Gulf of Maine, there lies ... a *nearly* invisible city. So nearly invisible, you could stare at it forever and not notice how it shifts the currents or the slight break it makes in the horizon.

But it is there, a city under a mile-high, miles-wide *dome*. Billions of tiny mirrors cover it, reflecting the surrounding gray sea and clouds in such a way that it blends into the background like the faintest smudge. In fact, the only way to find this city ... is to already know where to look.

[MUX]

EXT. SAILBOAT - NIGHT

[SFX: WAVES, WIND IN SAILS]

JOULE/BUGGY/NICO: WOOOOHOOOO! / SKY ISLAND! / WE MADE IT!

NARRATOR: It has been six weeks since our heroes left Fenway Park – a long and harrowing journey – and finally, *finally* they have found it. Their battered vessel crests and falls on the waves, seawater spills over the gunwales, wind buffets the ragged sails and chaps their faces. But *they are here*. Joule, Nico, Buggy, and ...

FIN: ("HI!") SQUAWK!

BUGGY: FIN, CAN YOU BELIEVE IT?

NARRATOR: ... an unexpected friend, who showed up a few days after their departure on what they assumed – or hoped – were

Cutthroat's orders. (beat) Much could be said of their voyage since then, of each trial and brush with death, how they worked together to escape the Sac and decipher the messages ...

NEWSCASTER (RADIO, BKGD): ... *The West Antarctic Ice Sheet* ...

NARRATOR: ... but those stories are for another time. For these four rebels have a mother to save and a world to fix. And so do you, listener.

JOULE: Now let's go kick some Bright butt.

[MUX]

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

Chapter 21, "Gulf of Maine"

[MUX]

EXT. SAILBOAT, GULF OF MAINE - NIGHT

[SFX: BREWING STORM, DISTANT TUNDER]

NARRATOR: The hour is after midnight, and Joule Watts-Green is stuffing the last of her belongings into a waterproof bag. She glances up from their small sailboat and out over the vast waters. The mirror-skinned dome is just a quarter mile away.

[SFX: Joule PACKING]

NARRATOR: Joule rubs her puffy eyes and rechecks the pocket watch hanging round her neck. She had hoped to get one last sleep before attempting to breach Sky Island, but a storm is drawing near.

[SFX: DISTANT THUNDER!]

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

[SFX: DISTANT (but closer) THUNDER!]

NICO: We should get going. I don't like the look of that thing.

BUGGY: Almost ready! I'm packing some of Fin's shiny things too.

FIN: ("YES! DON'T!") SQUAWK!

NICO: [sighs]

NARRATOR: They had spent their weeks at sea going over and over the little bit Joule had learned about Sky Island. She had less than a day to look through the rebel-stolen blueprints and written accounts with Cutthroat. It was enough to work out a basic plan – or, at least to get them into the city.

NICO: Okay everyone, see the dark spot on the dome?

BUGGY: Mmm. What dark spot? It's nighttime.

[SFX: THUNDER!]

BUGGY: Ohhhh! I see it now.

NICO: That's where we're swimming. Right, Joule?

JOULE: I think so. We've been around the island twice. It's the only thing that looks like the, uh, um ...

BUGGY: The poop chute?

JOULE: Well, I was going to say the sewer. But yeah. Cutthroat said that's the way in if we want to avoid tins.

NICO: When we're ready, I'll sink the boat. Horologium or bust, right?

[SFX: THUNDER!]

NICO: Then we swim for the sewer.

FIN: (agreeing) SQUAWK!

NICO: Except Fin. Who can fly ... or, here's a thought, *just not come with us.*

FIN: (defensive) Meh-meh. Squawk!

BUGGY: (playful) C'mon, Nico. Cutthroat sent him for a reason.

NICO: If that reason is to eat our food and steal our stuff – gimme that compass back – then mission accomplished.

JOULE: We'll stick together. Fin too.

NARRATOR: Nico huffs. Then they stab a rusty harpoon they'd salvaged during the journey into the deck. Water spurts through immediately.

NICO: No turning back.

JOULE: Let's go.

[SFX: JUMPS, SINKING, WAVES]

[MUX]

NARRATOR: No place in the world is as protected as Sky Island. It is said that even in the most violent storm, you would never feel it under the dome. The city runs on its own energy grid, which powers the stabilizers that keep the floating island *a*float and electrifies the electromagnetically reinforced walls. The dome has never been breached, not by sea nor beast nor man.

But no fortress is perfect. And so often the weakest point is where no one is looking – because it is too gross.

EXT. NEAR PIPES, SKY ISLAND - NIGHT

[SFX: SWIM. CLIMBING ONTO LEDGE. FIN ALIGHTS, SQUAWKS]

BUGGY: [surfaces, coughing] So this is the poop chute.

NICO: Can we please not call it that?

NARRATOR: After a tiring swim, which would have drowned Joule if she had not kept up with her lessons, they climb onto a ledge attached to the dome. Water cascades from a pipe above. The foul, sour smell is enough to be sure this is the right place.

JOULE: Alright. Up the ladder, into the pipe.

NARRATOR: They climb in silence, passing the mirrored surface. Joule pauses and wipes one clean of salt.

JOULE: Is that what I look like? Ugh. I never thought I'd miss my hair brush.

NARRATOR: When they reach the pipe, they slip inside. It opens up into a large tunnel with a thin embankment along a lemon-brown river.

NICO: Tides, that smells nasty.

JOULE: We've been through worse.

BUGGY (GAS MASKED): Yeah, Nico. *We've been through worse!*

NICO: Bug, you're wearing a gas mask. And don't tell me it's for your asthma.

NARRATOR: Joule supposes that even paradise-dwellers need to go to the bathroom. Still, it's worse than she imagined. Not just gross. There are corroded fixtures and cracking pillars. As they follow the river, chunks of ceiling rain down on them.

[SFX: Falling ceiling]

JOULE: Maybe Cutthroat was wrong. Maybe it's not so great in there. It's like this place is falling apart.

NARRATOR: They walk for ages, bending round and round, seeking an exit, a door, anything. The tunnel splits and reconnects. Their flashlight battery drains lower and lower, until they can barely make out the way. Then ...

[SFX: LIGHT FLICKERS OUT, FOOTSTEPS STOP, KIDS BUMP]

BUGGY(MASKED)/NICO: Oof! / Watch it!

NICO: Joule, c'mon. Put back on the light.

JOULE: I can't. It's dead.

NICO: I can see that. Use the spare batteries.

JOULE: What spare batteries?

NICO: The ones I gave you to pack in your bag.

JOULE: You didn't do that. Did you give them to Buggy?

BUGGY: **[takes mask off]** I don't have 'em.

NICO: Seriously? I put them right next to you, Joule, on the ... deck. Of the boat. Which we sank. *Squids*. Squids, squids, squids!

JOULE: Calm down. We'll just have to move slower and feel our way around. Yeah?

FIN: (freaking out) SQUAWK! SQUAWK! **[wings flutter]**

[SFX: Slight rumble, building]

NICO: Apparently the bird likes that idea less than I do.

FIN: (freaking out) SQUAWK! SQUAWK! [ad-lib freak out]

BUGGY: Anyone else hear that?

NARRATOR: They all listen for a long second as the sewer begins to moan and groan and rumble, like a giant toilet flushing. Joule tenses. She smacks the flashlight over and over ...

JOULE: [smacking flashlight] C'mon!!!!

NARRATOR: ... and, and, and [SFX: FLICKERS ON!] thank the tides, it comes back. Joule starts to run. The others follow. Her eyes search desperately. Nothing. Nothing at all. Nothing but—

JOULE: (over rumble) THERE! LADDER, DEAD AHEAD!

NARRATOR: The river begins to swell, rising to the embankment and spilling over. They charge ahead, slipping and cursing. And then ... they're there. The ladder hangs from the ceiling ...

JOULE: (over rumble) I can't reach it. *I can't reach it!*

NARRATOR: Wordlessly, Nico laces their fingers together, forming a platform. They nod at Buggy, who leaps, pushing off Nico...

BUGGY: [JUMP GRUNT]

NARRATOR: ...and flies. Both of his hands lock onto the ladder.

NICO: (over rumble) Joule, you're next.

NARRATOR: She does the same. Then ...

[SFX: WALL OF WATER COMING]

NARRATOR: ... down the straightaway, a foaming, feverish overflow races toward them. Nico is up to their knees.

JOULE: Give me your hand!

NICO: You're too far up!

NARRATOR: Joule, desperate, hooks her knees on the bottom rung and flips upside down, hands outstretched. Nico jumps.

NICO: [grunts (jumps)]

JOULE: Gotcha.

NARRATOR: Nico scrambles up over Joule, after Buggy, through the ceiling into a vertical pipe. Joule swings up.

FIN: SQUAWK!

NARRATOR: Fin swoops in at the last second, right before—

[SFX: WALL OF WATER FLOWS RIGHT BY ... FADE OUT]

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

[MUX]

[***MIDROLL***]

[MUX]

EXT. (INT.) SKY ISLAND PARK - DAY

[SFX: pleasant park sounds]

NARRATOR: In a green park with twittering birds and a shimmering lake, families and couples and important-looking business folk trot along, speaking into the air, tapping at their light-up wrist bands and bubble-lens glasses, so engrossed in their own worlds that no one notices the heavy sewer covering in the sidewalk as it slowly rises and slides aside.

[SFX: Manhole cover opens]

NARRATOR: Nor do they clock the four figures, caked in filth, climbing out, blinking madly at the bright light.

JOULE: Whoa.

NICO: Whoa.

BUGGY: Whoa.

FIN: ("Whoa") Squawk.

NARRATOR: Joule, heart still racing, is the first on the surface. As her eyes adjust, Sky Island comes into view ...

JOULE: Flowers. And bees – real bees. And ...

NARRATOR: ... just beyond the park is the city. Glass, everything is made of glass. Tall, twisting, glimmering towers like none she has ever seen. Highways weaving through the buildings, and ...

BUGGY: Are those ... hovercars?

NARRATOR: Nico points to the blue sky.

NICO: It was storming outside. But this ...

JOULE: Everything on the island is controlled, remember?

NICO: Right. It's fake. But it looks so real.

NARRATOR: That is when Joule sees her first Sky Islander, strutting down the sidewalk in a bulbous, diamond-speckled suit.

JOULE: (whispers) Everyone. *Into the bushes!*

SMELLING MAN: ... so then I said, coal? [sniffs] Ugh. This park smells. See, that's why I hate nature ... [walks away] (FADE)

JOULE: We should find some new clothes. And a shower.

NICO: Where are we supposed to do that?

BUGGY: What about there?

NARRATOR: Buggy points at a perfectly round lake with a statue in the center. The bronze man, several stories tall, peers down.

JOULE: That must be Brutus Bright.

BUGGY: He looks like a cranky grandpa. Think he'll mind if we use his lake?

NARRATOR: And so they do. After sneaking around, snatching various clothes from sleeping park-goers, they all dip into the lake and scrub themselves raw. They nearly go unnoticed. But ...

PARK RANGER (DISTANT): [WHISTLES] EXCUSE ME! GET OUT OF THERE!

JOULE: Uh-oh.

NARRATOR: ... then they see a turtle-faced woman in a brown uniform hurrying down the hill. Quickly, they run back to the shore and grab their clothes. But not fast enough.

PARK RANGER: Stop it right there! In all my years as Sky Island's number one volunteer human park ranger, I have never!

JOULE: Sorry. We were just going.

PARK RANGER: Don't move a muscle, or I'll call the BSO on you!

NICO: We didn't do anything, lady.

PARK RANGER: *Didn't do anything?* Truants, in my park! Skipping school. And in the lake, no less! You could have been killed.

BUGGY: Oh don't worry, we know how to swim.

PARK RANGER: Do you? *So do the sharks!*

JOULE: [gasps] Right.

NICO: Uh. What's she talking about?

JOULE: I forgot. Cutthroat said sharks aren't extinct on Sky Island. They raise them in the lake.

BUGGY: You mean the monster fish with teeth? Cool.

NICO: Really Joule. Monster fish. You forgot about *monster fish*.

JOULE: I've had a lot on my mind! Sheesh.

PARK RANGER: Quiet, you brats! Where are your parents? Take me to them. I'll have some words.

NARRATOR: The woman snatches Buggy's wrist. And all at once, things fall apart. Buggy pulls her off balance, while Nico lunges to push her away, accidentally taking out her legs. She lands turtle-face-first on a rock.

[SFX: PARK RANGER YELLS, FAKE ROCK CRACKS, BIRDS]

NARRATOR: Only it's not a rock, but a plastic replica, inside of which is a hidden speaker playing bird song.

[SFX: "BIRDS" DIE, WOMAN CRIES OUT]

NARRATOR: The woman rolls over. She touches her face, which is riddled with plastic shards. Her front teeth are missing too. She pulls away her hand, bloodied. And ...

PARK RANGER: (whistling) [SCREAMS!] TRUANTS! DELINQUENTS TRYING TO KILL ME! HELP! HELP! CALL BRIGHT SECURITY!

BUGGY: Uhhh.

JOULE: RUN!

NARRATOR: They sprint up the hill from the lake shore, bedraggled and half-dressed. Joule slams into one person after another.

[SFX: RUNNING INTO PEOPLE, SKY ISLANDERS YELL, SIRENS!]

NARRATOR: She heads for the glass city just beyond the park. Her eyes lock onto the tallest building, a spiraling mammoth and the only structure with a name on it.

JOULE: (running) Bright Tower! That's where we're going!

BUGGY: (running, confirming) Bright Tower!

FIN: (agreeing) SQUAWK!

NARRATOR: Then Joule looks behind her ... and stops.

JOULE: (slowing) Nico?

BUGGY: (slowing) What's wrong?

JOULE: NICO!

[**SFX: CHOPPER IN DISTANCE**]

NICO (GAGGED, DISTANT): [ad-lib yelling]

NARRATOR: Nico hovers in the air, bound by eight tentacles. A giant octopod has whisked them up and away, across the shark-infested lake. Buggy grabs Joule's arm.

BUGGY: What do we do?

[**SFX: SIRENS GETTING CLOSER**]

NARRATOR: Suddenly, several hovercars flashing blue lights zoom over the park fence and swerve to a stop by the water. Tin officers jump out of the vehicles. They transform into wolves.

MULTIPLE TINS (ROBOTIC): [**GROWLS! BARKS!**]

PARK RANGER (DISTANT): (whistling) THE YOUTHS WENT THAT WAY!

BUGGY: Joule! C'mon! We have to get Nico!

NARRATOR: Buggy pulls on her arm. But something holds Joule back. Nico disappears; Bright Tower is dead ahead.

They have two people to save now. Who should they save first?

[MUX]

NARRATOR: To keep pursuing Joule's mom, go to Chapter 22, "Bright Tower." For Nico, select Chapter 24, "Across the City."

Chapter 22, "Bright Tower."

Chapter 24, "Across the City."

Choose wisely. This is *The Midnight Rebellion*.

[CODA]

JOULE: Hey, it's Joule. Sky Island floats to escape the changing world below. But floating cities could be a good thing too. They can rise *with* the seas and provide affordable housing for a growing population.

Design your own "future city" to help people live with the planet, not hide from it. What would you include? We've already mentioned a few ideas: white roofs, green seawalls, agroforests.

Send us your designs so we can share them with others. Email us at midnightrebellion@wbur.org.

Keep listening for more tips and more sharky waters. Up next: Chapter 22, "Bright Tower" or Chapter 24, "Across the City."

[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,

Cadden McArthur as Fin,

and ... Erik Ransom as the narrator.

Additional performances by Emmanuel Chumaceiro, Sarah Jiang, and Jay Preston.

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.