

WBUR's
THE MIDNIGHT REBELLION
CHAPTER 24 - ACROSS THE CITY
By Dean Russell

[MUX]

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

Chapter 24, "Across the City"

[MUX]

EXT. (INT.) SKY ISLAND PARK - DAY

[SFX: OCTOPOD FLYING AWAY, SIRENS]

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

NARRATOR: Buggy tugs on Joule. Tin wolves burst from patrol cars and race up the hill toward them, while Nico disappears in the distance, clutched in the tentacles of an octopod.

JOULE: (realizing) It's too late. Nico - Nico's too far.

BUGGY: What? They're my sibling. We have to go after them.

NARRATOR: Buggy, red-faced, backs away from Joule, as if she were a stranger. She opens her mouth to explain. But he is not hearing it. He turns ... and runs-no, *charges*-the wolves.

[SFX: SPARKING, BARKING, RUNNING]

BUGGY: (war cry) AHHHHHHH!!

NARRATOR: Buggy careens down the hill, past the tins, straight for the lake ...

[SFX: SHOCKBOLTS!!!]

BUGGY: [jumping sounds]

NARRATOR: ... and then dives.

JOULE: BUGGY, WAIT!

[**SFX: SPLASH!**]

JOULE: BUGGY!

[**FADE OUT**]

EXT. (INT.) UNDERWATER, LAKE - LATER

NARRATOR: Buggy swims ... far ...

He glides over the crystal bottom. Soon, shark-shaped shadows appear. He begins to panic. He dives deep, his asthmatic lungs scream. And just as the last of his air leaves him, a grate appears. Buggy squeezes through the bars into a little inlet.

EXT. (INT.) LAKESIDE (ELSEWHERE), SKY ISLAND - LATER

NARRATOR: And when he finally reaches the surface again ...

[**SFX: BUGGY BURSTS OUT OF THE WATER GASPING**]

BUGGY: (tread water) [breathing deep]

BUGGY: (tread water) The air is different on Sky Island. I can breathe here.

NARRATOR: Buggy twists round to share such excellent news but ...

BUGGY: (tread water) Oh right. I'm alone.

NARRATOR: He crawls onto the grassy bank as the weight of loneliness settles into his bones, a heaviness he has not felt in weeks. Before Joule arrived, Buggy spent hours on his own – even when he was with Nico, he was rarely ever *with* Nico. His sibling was always preoccupied with *survival* and had no time for Buggy's curiosities.

Joule had changed that somehow. It was like the days before their parents died, when Nico laughed (occasionally) and did more than throw sharp sticks into the bellies of strange fish.

BUGGY: And now Nico is gone. And I ditched Joule. And Fin ...

FIN (DISTANT): (flying) SQUAWK!

BUGGY: Fin?!

[SFX: FIN LANDS]

NARRATOR: A surprise. The brown-speckled juvenile gull swoops down and alights by Buggy's side.

BUGGY: How'd you find me?

FIN: [ad-lip chatter]

BUGGY: You know, I really wish I spoke Seagullese.

NARRATOR: Fin blinks his red-ringed eye as if to say ... Well, I don't know. I can't speak Seagullese either.

FIN: SQUAWK!

BUGGY: Anyway, I saw Nico go that way, toward that building that looks like a 9-volt battery. See it?

FIN: (maybe "yes"?) Squawk.

BUGGY: Great. I think. (beat) Let's go.

[MUX]

EXT. CITY STREETS, SKY ISLAND - DAY

NARRATOR: They climb a slope and push through bushes, which dump them out onto a sidewalk unlike any Buggy has known. It is made

of frosted glass and diamonds. And the street it borders, which would be empty in the Sac, is rife with hovercars zooming at unimaginable speeds.

[SFX: Traffic, horns honking]

BUGGY: Whoa. Cool.

[SFX: walking, people talking ad-lib, keep traffic]

NARRATOR: Back at the park, Buggy managed to snag a turquoise poncho and orange belt, and so he does not stand out at all. Fin, on the other hand, ...

FIN: (friendly) Squawk.

SKY ISLANDER 1: Ugh!

SKY ISLANDER 2: Agg!

SKY ISLANDER 3: Ew!

BUGGY: Hmm. Maybe you should hide in my backpack for a while.

FIN: (defeated "okay") Squawk.

NARRATOR: He follows a long avenue deeper into the city, keeping the 9-volt battery-shaped building in his sights. This is challenging at times because Sky Island is a carnival of delights. Every few steps, a new holographic cartoon appears selling strange wares ...

AD 1: Intelligent toothpaste! Now with friendship mode!

AD 2: Self-cleaning skidless underwear!

AD 3: Doggie translators!

BUGGY: Huh. I wonder if they have one for seagulls.

FIN: Squawk?

NARRATOR: And then ...

AD 4: House of Pie. Now serving cheesy goodness.

BUGGY: [gasp!] FIN! LOOK! PIZZA!

NARRATOR: All thoughts of the mission and Nico and silly things like being hunted by tins suddenly flies out of mind. In moments, Buggy is inside a steamy shop salivating over these flat yellow blobs called pizza. Fin cannot help himself either.

FIN: (excited) Squawk!

NARRATOR: The bird bursts forth from Buggy's bag and lands on a table next to a globular man with half a pizza in his mouth.

PIZZA MAN: (mouth full) AHH!!!

FIN: ("AHH!") Squawk!

BUGGY: Fin!

NARRATOR: Buggy rushes to scoop up the bird.

BUGGY: Sorry about that!

PIZZA MAN: Sorry? Seagulls are outlawed! I must call the authorities so they can shoot it before we all get a disease!

NARRATOR: He raises his wristwatch to his mouth.

PIZZA MAN: Ahem. Brightwatch, call-

BUGGY: Wait! Wait, no. You don't want to do that.

PIZZA MAN: Really? And why is that?

NARRATOR: The man studies Buggy. Orange grease dribbles down his chin.

BUGGY: (kinda grossed out) Uh, because ... (thinking) because Fin is special. He's an endling. Right, Fin?

FIN: ("right") Squawk.

PIZZA MAN: You mean the bird is for ... the Executive Hunt?

NARRATOR: In the back of Buggy's mind, he recalls Cutthroat saying something about the head of Bright shooting nearly extinct animals for sport ...

(FAINT FLASHBACK) CUTTHROAT: The deadly kind. Pow. [laughs crazily]

NARRATOR: ... It was such a disturbing idea that Buggy tried to forget about it. But could you? I should think not.

BUGGY: (hesitant) Uhhhh, yeah. The Executive Hunt. I'm taking Fin out for his last meal. (whispers) But don't tell him?

FIN: ("eh?") Squawk?

PIZZA MAN: Ah. Mum's the word. Seagulls are disgusting. They poop, did you know?

NARRATOR: Buggy gives him a look, wondering how much the man knows about the rest of the animal kingdom's digestive habits. A new thought comes, though, when Buggy spots a pin on his shirt.

BUGGY: What's that for?

PIZZA MAN: This? This is my security clearance.

BUGGY: I recognize the design. It's that building that looks like a battery, isn't it?

PIZZA MAN: Yes! The Central Power Station! The most important place on Sky Island.

NARRATOR: Power station? This is not what Buggy expected. Why would a tin steal Nico away to a power station?

BUGGY: Are you sure it's not a prison?

PIZZA MAN: Am I sure? Of course! You must be thinking of the Bright Security Office across the street from us. Dreadful place, overflowing with those ugly constructs. I keep telling people they need a makeover. But, no one listen—uh— What's that face for?

BUGGY: What face?

NARRATOR: It is the look of understanding. The tin was not going to the central power station, whatever that is. It was bringing Nico to the building opposite, a Bright Security Office. This is exactly the information Buggy needs. The only problem is that getting Nico out of a building full of tins will not be easy.

Buggy blinks. The greasy-chinned man is talking again.

PIZZA MAN: ... the boss may work at the top of Bright Tower, but *Central Power* delivers all of the electricity to the city. I run the twelfth floor at the main switchboard. If something went wrong there, the island would be in chaos. What could be more critical than preventing a total blackout, right?

BUGGY: Riiight. Blackout. Chaos. Very interesting. (excited)
Anyway, gotta go!

PIZZA MAN: Wait! What about the bird's last meal?!

BUGGY: Oh, I left my money at home.

PIZZA MAN: Well, I suppose I could share some?

BUGGY: Okay. Thanks mister!

FIN: ("thanks!") Squawk!

NARRATOR: And seconds later, Buggy and Fin are out the door, eating on the run, and ready with a rescue plan.

BUGGY: (mouth full, running) MMMMM! PIIHAAA!

[MUX]

NARRATOR: We'll be right back after this.

[***MIDROLL***]

[MUX]

EXT. SKY ISLAND CITY - DAY

NARRATOR: The plan is simple ...

BUGGY: Alright, Fin. I'm going to sneak into the Central Power Station *undetected*. You stay outside the Security Office. Okay?

FIN: Squawk?

BUGGY: Wait until I cut the power to go in. That'll cause chaos, and you can find Nico and bring them outside. Then we'll steal a hovercar or something and get back to Joule.

FIN: Squawk?

BUGGY: Yeah, of course I'm mad at her. She's still my friend.

FIN: Squawk?

BUGGY: You don't understand anything I'm saying, do you?

FIN: ("maybe") Squawk.

BUGGY: [sighs]

INT. CENTRAL POWER STATION - MOMENTS LATER

[SFX: Door opens into high-ceilinged lobby; chatter]

NARRATOR: Buggy enters the crowded lobby of the Central Power Station. All around are Bright banners and ornate fixtures of gold and silver. No one seems to be looking, so Buggy heads straight for the staircase.

TIN 1: Excuse me! Stop right there!

NARRATOR: He freezes.

BUGGY: Squids. A tin. (beat) Uh, I was just ... whoa!

NARRATOR: The tin grabs Buggy. He tenses for the electric shock. Instead, the tin points to the other side of the room .

TIN 1: Stay with your tour group, boy child.

BUGGY: Huh?

GUIDE (DISTANT): Alright, students, gather around.

TIN 1: Is that not your class?

BUGGY: Uh. Yeah. Sorry. I'm with them.

NARRATOR: Buggy quickly pulls away from the tin and slips into the back of the group. A sallow-faced woman stands at the front.

GUIDE: And please stop using your virtual sets. I'm your tour guide. I'm here to educate. No killing aliens while I'm talking.

SNARKY KID: (snarky) What about zombie games?! [laughs]

MULTIPLE KIDS: [laughs]

GUIDE: Ugh. I hate this job.

NARRATOR: The other kids look about Buggy's age, though none are wearing turquoise ponchos and they smell less salty than him. In fact, they give off a strong sticky odor that makes Buggy's stomach curdle. (Imagine melted gummy bears and cream cheese.)

[SFX: Elevator ding, doors open]

GUIDE: Alright! Everyone get in!

NARRATOR: The students shove their way into a kind of closet. The doors close, but for some reason no one seems to panic. Buggy, however, starts to get that familiar wheezy itch. He cannot move more than an inch, there are too many bodies.

ELEVATOR: (chipper) GOING UP!

[SFX: ELEVATOR MOVES]

BUGGY: Wha!

NARRATOR: As the floor starts to shake, Buggy grabs a kid next to him. The kid, a boy, makes a sour face and jerks away.

BUGGY: Sorry. It's just— What's going on? Why's the room moving?

SNARKY KID: What? It's an elevator, you dummy.

BUGGY: A what?

[SFX: ELEVATOR STOPS! DING! DOORS OPEN!]

ELEVATOR: (chipper) FLOOR TEN.

NARRATOR: Buggy's stomach flips. The boy turns away and shuffles out with the rest of the class.

SNARKY KID: (to self) New kids. Idiots. And they smell.

NARRATOR: Buggy ignores the nasty boy. Instead, he examines the numbers on the elevator panel. Twelve is right there.

GUIDE: HEY! BOY! Off the elevator. LET'S GO!

NARRATOR: Buggy hesitates. Then he steps out. The other students gather in front of a portrait of a square-jawed, stoney man.

GUIDE: Welcome to the Central Power Station. My name is ... not important. Can anyone tell me who this man is?

NARRATOR: Ms. Not Important clicks her heel on the marble floor. No one seems eager to answer. And Buggy can't resist answering a question, so ...

BUGGY: It's Brutus Bright.

NARRATOR: The class turns toward Buggy.

BUGGY: (to self) So much for going undetected.

GUIDE: Very good, boy with the turquoise dress. Brutus Bright was the founder of Sky Island and the Bright Corporation and there's a giant statue of him on the lake, so at least one person knows.

SNARKY KID: [cough] SUCK UP.

MULTIPLE KIDS: [laughs]

GUIDE: Anyway, Brutus Bright built Sky Island to run our own energy grid, which powers everything from the sky to the security officers to the stabilizers that keep us afloat to the electromagnetic enforcers ...

NARRATOR: Whatever the guide is going on about, Buggy stops listening. So do the rest of the students because right then ...

[SFX: ELEVATOR STOPS! DING! DOORS OPEN!]

ELEVATOR: (chipper) FLOOR TEN.

NARRATOR: ... the elevator door opens. And in it ...

BUGGY: Nico?

NICO: Buggy.

SNARKY KID: [gasp] Is that ... A SEAGULL?!!!

FIN: (reigning terror) Squawk! Squawk! Squawk!

GUIDE: That's it. I'm outta here.

MULTIPLE KIDS: [scream]

[SFX: STUDENTS SCREAM AND RUN; FIN TAKES FLIGHT]

NARRATOR: Total frenzy. The students, despite their knowledge of elevators have almost none of gulls. They flee Fin's reign of terror.

SNARKY KID: DON'T LET IT POOP ON ME!!!!

NARRATOR: Buggy rushes against the tide, into the elevator. He takes hold of his sibling.

NICO: I'm glad you're okay.

BUGGY: Me? I was trying to rescue you.

NICO: You were? Then why did Fin lead me here?

BUGGY: He did?

NICO: I was in the security office, when Fin literally walked into the room. All of the tins tried to shockbolt him and ended up taking each other out instead. Then I followed Fin here, and so here I am. By the way, elevators? I'm not a fan.

BUGGY: Neither am I.

[SFX: ALARMS!]

TIN 1 (OVER PA): ALERT! INTRUDERS IN THE BUILDING! DO NOT APPROACH! MAY USE FECES AS WEAPON! REPEAT! ...

NICO: We should get out of here.

NARRATOR: Nico reaches for the Lobby Floor button.

BUGGY: Wait! I have an idea. I was going to cut the power to get you out, but it may help Joule too.

NICO: Where is she?

BUGGY: I'll tell you on the way. FIN! C'MON!

FIN: (flying) SQUAWK!

[SFX: Elevator button press. DING!]

NICO: Floor Twelve? What's on Floor Twelve?

BUGGY: Total chaos.

ELEVATOR: (chipper) GOING UP!

[SFX: FIN FLIES IN. DOOR CLOSE.]

[MUX]

NARRATOR: The story continues in Chapter 22, "Bright Tower."

That's *Chapter 22, "Bright Tower."*

This is *The Midnight Rebellion.*

[CODA]

BUGGY: It'ssss Buggy. Sky Islanders zoom around in hovercars, keep the lights on big and bright, and order far more food than they need.

But all that extra energy and stuff cost the planet resources.

So next time you're thinking about new sneakers or the latest game console or the super-extra large pizza that no one will finish, ask yourself: Do I need this, or do I just want it?

A world with less waste leaves more for everyone.

Keep listening for more tips and more stuff. Up next: *Chapter 22, "Bright Tower."*

[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,

Cadden McArthur as Fin,

and ... Erik Ransom as the narrator.

Additional performances by Emmanuel Chumaceiro and Amory Sivertson.

Managing Producer: Samata Joshi.

Production Manager: Paul Vaitkus.

Director of Digital Audio: Ben Brock Johnson.

Funding provided in part by the Arthur Vining Davis Foundations.

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

VARIOUS BKGD CHATTER

SHOPPING CENTER

Ha! That shirt is so yesterday.

Are you sure this diamond's big enough?

Throw it on the ground. The tins'll get it.

(parent to a kid) What'd I tell you? Only losers say "please."

Thank *Bright* the tins were there.

PIZZA PALACE

Yes, I would like the fillet mignon pizza, extra large.

Order up. Caviar on champagne dough.

Get as much as you want. Who cares if we can't finish it?

CENTRAL POWER

I told the guy, "I won't go any higher than ten billion dollars."

Yeah, we need a tin on Floor Twelve. The door won't lock.

Something's up with the shipment from 617.

Ugh, another school tour? I hate kids.

FG RANDOM KID VOX

Wild kid lines in pizza restaurant / walking around Sky Island
City being brats

Kids in lobby mulling about in their tour group

Kids reacting to kid cracking a joke ("What about zombie games")

Kids shoving onto the elevator

Kids get off elevator. Maybe a little bit of shuffling.

Reax to "Suckup" comment from other student

Reax to Seagull attack - complete bedlam!