

WBUR's
THE MIDNIGHT REBELLION
CHAPTER 25 - REFUSE
By Dean Russell

[MUX]

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

Chapter 25, "Refuse"

[MUX]

INT. ROTUNDA, BRIGHT TOWER - DAY

[SFX: MACHINE WHIRRING]

HARTREE: So what will it be? Save your friends, or save yourself?

NARRATOR: Joule stares at her brother and his contorted, silicone face. Unconsciously, her fingers go to the pocket watch. Hartree, beaming, holds out a hand expectantly.

HARTREE: Yes. Be a good girl. Don't let your friends suffer.

[SFX: MACHINE SHAKES]

NARRATOR: But the machine is steps away. Joule could jump inside, and end it all. Nico, Buggy, Mom. They'd understand, right?

JOULE: (to self) This is how we beat Bright. *Sacrifice*.

HARTREE: Speak up, sister. I don't have your giant ears.

NARRATOR: Joule shoves the watch back under her collar.

JOULE: You wanted money and power. You wanted robots and flying cars. And you didn't care what that meant for people like my friends, people you call "tide rats." Instead of *making any sacrifices yourself*, you burned away everything that matters.

You're selfish and a coward and not my brother. You don't deserve this. (beat) And at least my ears are real.

HARTREE: (can't think of a good comeback) How—! You—! I—! GAH!

NARRATOR: And for the first time, it seems Hartree Watts-Green does not know what to say. Joule grins ... and bolts.

[SFX: SQUEAKING SHOES, RUNNING]

HARTREE: NO!

NARRATOR: She leaps into the Horologium.

[SFX: JOULE GRUNTS, REACHES MACHINE, DOOR CLOSSES]

NARRATOR: The hatch closes. This time, she finds the control panel easily.

MACHINE (ROBOTIC): Warning... (FADE UNDER)

JOULE: [deep breath] (to self) I can do this. I have to.

NARRATOR: She lifts her foot ... and smashes the controls.

JOULE: (punctuating kicks) No. Machine. For. Anyone. **[SFX: SMASHES CONTROLS]**

MACHINE (ROBOTIC, DETUNING): ... twooo, oooooo ["wahhhhh"] ...

HARTREE (BEHIND DOOR): NO! (FADE UNDER) **[SFX: BANGING ON DOOR]**

NARRATOR: She could never leave her friends or abandon her mom. But she will not allow Hartree to ruin yet another future either.

[SFX: MACHINE MAKES WILD NOISES, ABOUT TO EXPLODE (CONT'D)]

NARRATOR: With inhuman strength, Hartree tears off the hatch.

[SFX: HATCH TEARS OFF!]

HARTREE: YOU CHILD! YOU IGNORANT BRAT!

NARRATOR: He grabs the chain around her neck and yanks ...

JOULE: WUAAAHAH!

NARRATOR: He drags her out of the Horologium as it rattles and roars. He lifts her off the ground and twists the chain tight ...

JOULE: [chokes]

NARRATOR: Joule thrusts her head back and feels the crunch of his metal face against her skull.

JOULE: [chokes] (choking) Har' ... ma'hine ... e'splo' ...

HARTREE (GLITCHY): [laughs crazily] Wanna know a secret? I used to envy you, Joule. The golden child. The rule follower. The better twin. Mom always said you'd grow up to be somebody. But you'll never grow up at all, will you?

JOULE: [chokes] (choking) Har' ... ma'hine ... e'splo' ...

HARTREE (GLITCHY): You have reached your en-

[SFX: MACHINE EXPLODES INTO PIECES! WINDOWS SHATTER!]

[FADE OUT]

INT. ROTUNDA, BRIGHT TOWER - LATER

[SFX: Inside JOULE's head. EARS RING, MUFFLED SFX, WATCH TICKING]

NICO/BUGGY (VERY MUFFLED): [ad-lib, searching for Joule]

[SFX: MUFF TICKING CRESCENDOS > NORMAL SFX (BKGD: LOW RUMBLING)]

JOULE: [gasps, coughs]

NICO: Buggy, she's over here!

BUGGY: JOULE!

NARRATOR: Joule wakes in a pile of rubble. But Joule also wakes to the tight embrace of friends.

BUGGY/NICO: You're alive! / Thank the tides!

[SFX: BIG HUG.]

JOULE: [coughs] (coughing) ... you ... found me ...

NICO: Buggy's idea.

BUGGY: I just thought, where else would they take Joule but to the boss? And then I was like, where else would Bright Jr. be but the top of Bright Tower, looking down at everyone and twirling his mustache, you know? I mean, I don't know if he has a mustache but most evil bad guys have a mustache.

NICO: Buggy. Give her a second to breathe.

NARRATOR: Joule attempts a smile. Her ribs scream. One side of her head is wet and sticky. And her left ear feels funny. But ...

JOULE: I'm so happy you're here.

NARRATOR: She blinks and brushes away glass and bits of marble. The windows in the rotunda are shattered; beyond them, the sky is dark. A hovercar is parked in the middle of the room. And in its headlights are the smoldering fragments of the machine.

NICO: (hesitant) I swear we didn't hit it with our getaway car. The machine was like that when we got here. (beat) And so was he.

NARRATOR: Nico gestures to a broken mechanical body. Its silicone skin is in ribbons – except for the face, which has melted away.

NICO: That's not a regular tin, is it?

NARRATOR: Joule hesitates. The truth hurts too much to say aloud.

JOULE: (as if confirming) That was him ... that was the boss.

BUGGY: Yeesh. "Was" being the key word. 'Cause that tin is fin ... ished. Finished. Get it?

FIN: ("ha!") SQUAWK!

BUGGY: Speaking of Fin: Joule, you are looking at the real hero. We'd be toast without him. Nico would still be in cuffs.

FIN: (proud of himself) SQUAWK!

JOULE: (recalling) That's right! Nico, how did you get free?

NICO: It's complicated.

BUGGY: Yeah, if this was a radio show, it'd be a whole episode.

[SFX: Long beat.]

NARRATOR: [clears throat]

NICO: We'll tell you later. Right now, we gotta get out of here. *Somebody* thought it was a good idea to blow the power.

BUGGY: We needed a distraction. How was I supposed to know it'd blackout the whole island?

JOULE: What are you talking about? What blackout?

NARRATOR: Joule looks again at the dark sky, then her watch.

JOULE: It's the afternoon. I thought for sure it was night. Are you saying you turned the sky off?

NICO: More than that. Remember what you told us about the electricity here?

JOULE: (realizing) [gasp] It powers everything. That's what Cutthroat said. All of the dome's defenses.

NICO: And remember what was going on outside right before we got here?

JOULE: The storm. Oh no. So what's that mean for the island?

[SFX: ISLAND QUAKES]

BUGGY: I admit, I may have zoned out when Joule mentioned the stuff about stabilizers or whatever. In my defense, how could this place – with EVERYTHING – have no backup generator?

NARRATOR: Then, suddenly, Joule remembers. Cutthroat's words come back to Joule.

(FLASHBACK) CUTTHROAT: Bright might've won the Midnight War, but it lost a lot too. No one's got unlimited resources.

(FLASHBACK) HARTREE: The climate will reset once humans die off, our resources will renew, and I will have all I need to raise a race of perfect machines ...

JOULE: ... because Sky Island doesn't have everything. Bright's run out of materials. Fuel, metal. Think about the sewer, those beams falling apart. This city looks perfect. But it's dying.

[SFX: METAL MOANING, DOME SHIFTING]

NARRATOR: The island rattles again, its dome rafters snapping. The floor starts to keel, and pebbles roll down the incline and out of the broken windows.

NICO: Everyone into the hovercar. We're leaving.

JOULE: But my mom. I can't go without her. Har-er, Bright's boss said she's locked up. There has to be a prison on the island.

NARRATOR: Joule dusts herself off.

JOULE: You two go, and I'll find her. You've done enough for me.

NICO: We're in this together, Joule.

BUGGY: Yeah.

[SFX: METAL MOANING, DOME SHIFTING, BANGING ON THE DOME]

JOULE/NICO/BUGGY: (balancing) Whoa!

NARRATOR: The island shifts even more dramatically. The hovercar, its bottom resting on the marble, slides and stops inches from the broken window at the top of the tower.

And that is when ...

[SFX: DOME CRACKS]

NARRATOR: ... a jagged gray line forms in the sky; the unbreakable dome breaks. The storm tears its way in.

[SFX: DOME CRACKS MORE, STORM]

NARRATOR: We'll be right back ... after this.

[MUX]

[*MIDROLL***]**

[MUX]

EXT. CITY STREETS, SKY ISLAND - STORM

[SFX: STORM. ISLAND FALLING APART. ALARMS.]

NARRATOR: With the power out, Sky Island's defenses are no match for a storm of this magnitude. In minutes, cracks form across the dome, and the wind rips away huge portions, like it's peeling a hard boiled egg. The glass towers shatter, their steel bones

bend. Rain and sea fill the streets. And soon, Sky Island reminds Joule of where she started: ~~the Sac~~, a flooded city of ruin.

[SFX: HOVERCAR ZOOMS BY]

INT. HOVERCAR, CITY STREETS, SKY ISLAND

NARRATOR: Crammed inside the hovercar, three kids and one gull zoom down the streets-turned-canals. Nico cuts the wheel.

BUGGY: I really think *I* should be driving.

NICO: You can't reach the pedals. And I drive just fine.

JOULE: Alright, we find the prison. Somehow. And then ... what's the plan after that? Drive into the storm?

NICO: Hope for the best. Anything's possible, right?

BUGGY: You know, sibby. You've really evolved.

NICO: Thanks. Now, if I could please focus on driving.

JOULE: CAR!

NARRATOR: Nico slams the brake and throws the wheel right.

[SFX: SWERVE! HONK!]

JOULE/NICO/BUGGY/FIN: AHH! / SQUAWK!

NICO: Wow. That was close.

JOULE: (over din, saw something odd) Huh.

NICO: What?

JOULE: Nothing. Just, for a second it looked like ... nothing.

BUGGY: Joule, are you sure Bright didn't say anything else about your mom? Sometimes *I* tune stuff out.

JOULE/NICO: We know.

BUGGY: CAR!

[SFX: SWERVE! HONK!]

JOULE/NICO/BUGGY/FIN: AHH! / SQUAWK!

JOULE: I saw it again. That thing ... was that a Duck boat?

NICO: The rain's too thick. It's all blobs to me.

JOULE: This is a bad idea. We're never going to find a prison. I don't know, maybe we should-

FIN: SQUAWK!!!

ALL: [SCREAM]

[SFX: SWERVE! HONK! - PUNCTUATE BELOW WITH SHARP CUTS]

NARRATOR: [CRASH] They Flip. [FLIP] Hit the water [SINK] and sink.

EXT. UNDERWATER, SKY ISLAND - CONT'D

[SFX: UNDERWATER]

NARRATOR: When Joule opens her eyes, Nico isn't moving, and Buggy pulls at their sibling's seatbelt. Joule unbuckles her own and kicks the windshield out.

[SFX: KICK OUT WINDSHIELD]

NARRATOR: Fin zooms away toward the surface. Joule grabs Buggy and motions him to follow the bird. Buggy looks reluctant, but

bubbles stream out of his mouth – he is running out of air. So he goes. Joule takes over tugging at Nico's belt.

[SFX: TUGGING UNDERWATER, BUBBLES]

JOULE (UNDERWATER): [ad-lib grunts]

NARRATOR: But it's stuck. She tugs at the seatbelt until her lungs sting. Seconds stretch into a minute. Two minutes. Joule is losing hope. (beat) And then ... a figure catches her eye.

She turns and, there, before her, is a silver body. It has two lidless eyes, pink gums, white teeth. It is terrible and beautiful. The shark swims closer. Joule grabs Nico's unmoving hand. Her body goes rigid. The mouth opens ...

[SFX: SHARK SWIMS BY]

NARRATOR: But the shark passes over them. A single tooth falls, spinning like a leaf. Joule catches it and cuts Nico free.

[MUX]

EXT. CANAL, SKY ISLAND - SECONDS LATER

[SFX: Bursting through the surface. STORM CONTINUES, LESS WIND.]

JOULE/NICO: [gasps]

BUGGY (OFF): THAT'S THEM!

CUTTHROAT (OFF): REBELS! PORT SIDE!

REBELS (OFF): TOCK-TICK!

NARRATOR: It is the greatest relief she can imagine: By some miracle, Captain Cutthroat and the rebels are aboard a fleet of Bright Duck boats. From the bow, Buggy tosses a lifesaver.

[SFX: SPLASH!]

CUTTHROAT: Reel 'em in!

BUGGY: Tock-tick, Cap'n!

INT. CABIN, DUCK BOAT, SKY ISLAND - MINUTES LATER

NARRATOR: Minutes later, Joule is wrapped in a towel in the cabin, standing beside her friends, thoughts swirling. One thought in particular.

CUTTHROAT: You probably have a million questions.

JOULE: Yes, but—

CUTTHROAT: I'm sorry it took us this long to find you.

JOULE: That's okay, I—

CUTTHROAT: We fought our way out of Fenway and seized the Ducks. And a good thing we did. They can take a beating. We had to get through the storm to get here.

JOULE: Great, so—

CUTTHROAT: Anyway, we came ready for a fight but most of the tins were down when we got here. We been evacuating Sky Islanders instead. Only problem is we still haven't found your ma, and—
(beat) You okay, kid?

JOULE: That's what I'm trying to tell you! Down in the water, I remembered something. My mom told Bright's boss that "she would rather live with sharks," than help him. I didn't think it meant anything. But—

CUTTHROAT: The shark lake.

JOULE: Bright's statue is in the middle of it. What if *that's* the prison? It's just a hunch.

NARRATOR: Nico and Buggy stare at Joule, looking impressed. Cutthroat rubs his neck and nods. A grin crosses his face.

CUTTHROAT: We make for the lake! We got a rebel to save!

[MUX]

NARRATOR: The finale is next. Chapter 26, "Into the Lake."

That's *Chapter 26, "Into the Lake."*

This is *The Midnight Rebellion*.

[CODA]

JOULE: Joule here. In this chapter, I don't trade my friends for power. I don't trade power for my friends. I get creative.

Sometimes the right choice is obvious. Often, it isn't.

Think of a problem related to climate change in your area. Talk through the *solutions* with your friends. Get wild. Get weird. Think outside the box.

Keep listening for ... the end. *Chapter 26, "Into the Lake."*

[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 Mumble Media.

This episode is starring ...

Me, Basma Ayatte, as Joule,

Jett Dinh as Buggy,

K. Zedric Acruz as Nico,

Cadden McArthur as Fin,

Jay Preston as Cutthroat,

Jaylen Askins as Hartree,

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.

Funding provided in part by the Arthur Vining Davis Foundations.

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