

WBUR'S
THE MIDNIGHT REBELLION
CHAPTER 4 - CHASE THE KID
Written by Dean Russell

[MUX]

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

Chapter 4, "Chase the Kid"

[MUX]

EXT. WIDER, DRIER CITY STREET - DAY

[SFX: The KID runs in mud. JOULE gives chase, one foot bare.]

NARRATOR: The kid is *fast*. By the time Joule turns away from the copter, the small figure is already a block away, disappearing into the fog. Joule pursues, using her oversized ears to follow.

[SFX: Heavy BOOT fall. Kid GIGGLES.]

NARRATOR: Like a human pinball, footsteps bound ahead from mud to gravel to refuse.

[SFX: More running. Loud grunts, jumps, etc.]

JOULE: (running) Wait! I want to talk to you!

NARRATOR: Joule hasn't gotten a good look at the kid, but best guess, there's a boy under that wild shock of black hair. Either that or she's chasing a feral mop. His legs are short. Joule's are long, and she goes to baseball practice three days a week. Even missing a shoe, she has the advantage. She lowers her head and imagines rounding the bases at Fenway Park.

JOULE: (really hustling) You. Won't. Out. Run. Me.

NARRATOR: Then the fog opens up to a wide road pockmarked with trash piles: plastic bags, broken vacuums, rust and a riot of sludge. He cuts left, into a crumbling building.

[SFX: Joule pivots.]

NARRATOR: Joule pivots after him. He skids to a halt. And then she sees why: He is standing at the top of a magnificent pit. But Joule cannot stop. They collide. And fall in.

[SFX: OOF! JOULE CRASHES into KID. They tumble down into a pit, rolling, banging, grunting, until they slow to a stop.]

EXT. PIT, CITY STREET - CONT'D

[SFX: Joule groans.]

NARRATOR: Joule, very dirty and very sore, flips onto her back. Dust curls up around her in a kind of crater. She sits up.

[SFX: Kid COUGHS, GASPS, ASTHMA ATTACK begins.]

NARRATOR: The boy is right there, red-faced and convulsing.

JOULE: Hey! Hey! Are you okay?

KID: [hacking, wheezing]

JOULE: 'Course you're not okay. How do I help? Water. Need water?

KID: [hacking, wheezing] (hard to understand) Nuh. Bah.

JOULE: What? I don't know what that means.

KID: [hacking, wheezing] (hard to understand) BAH. BAHHHG.

NARRATOR: Joule clocks the ragged pink backpack not five feet away. Quickly, she dumps its contents: a jumble of tools and scraps and books and rocks and wires and—

JOULE: There's too much stuff! What do you *need*?

KID: [hacking, wheezing] (hard to understand) AIH... AIHMA.
AHHMAAA.

JOULE: Asthma! You need an *inhaler*. Which is ... Here!

[SFX: JOULE GRABS INHALER. GIVES. KID INHALES DEEPLY.]

NARRATOR: The boy shoves the inhaler in his mouth. Joule watches his tomatoey coloring fade.

JOULE: Phew.

NARRATOR: In the face, he looks around her age, but he is almost a foot shorter. Scabs mark his elbows and knees. His bulbous goggles sit on his forehead, so that he appears to have four eyes, not the normal two.

KID: (a bit wheezy) That was a bad one. Thanks.

JOULE: Yeah. Sure.

KID: (silly snark) 'Course, it was kind of your fault.

JOULE: My fault?

NARRATOR: Joule glares, indignant. But he doesn't seem to notice because next second, he's up, picking gunk from his teeth.

KID: Feels like I've got some jellyfish jerky stuck in my molars. But whatever. (beat) I'm Buggy, by the way. Buggy Banal.

JOULE: Uh. Joule. (beat) And that wasn't my fault. I was only chasing you because you attacked that copter thing.

KID [BUGGY]: Copter thing? You mean the tin? We call 'em tins. (sing-songy) Because their skin is made of tin. Get it?

JOULE: (flat) Yeah.

BUGGY: Anyway, I was doing you a favor. You can't trust a tin, not a one. Doesn't matter what kind, they're all bad.

JOULE: "What kind"? You mean there are more?

BUGGY: Tons. Those flying tins with the tentacles are the ocotopods. But you also got *tin wolves*. Do not mess with them. I tried to capture a tin wolf to rewire it, and it almost ate my sibling. They were *not* happy.

JOULE: (baffled) What are you talking about?

BUGGY: Uh, tins. I thought I said that? Did I not say that? Sometimes I talk in my head when I mean to talk out loud or I talk out loud when I mean to talk in my head. Like right now, I think I'm talking. But I'm also thinking about how I'm thinking I'm talking, which I'm talking about. Know what I'm saying?

JOULE/NARRATOR: No.

BUGGY: So if you don't know tins, you must not be from around here, are you?

NARRATOR: Joule isn't sure she should trust this Buggy. He seems a little nutso. Then again, Buggy reminds her of her brother, Hart, who also tells bad jokes and talks a lot.

JOULE: "Am I from around here?" Well, it's complicated.

BUGGY: Because of your weird spaceship thing, right?

BUGGY: My coin's on you being an alien but your parents were Earthlings. So you're from here. But you're not from here. Hence: complicated. Am I close?

JOULE: Um, sorry I- ... You saw the machine?

BUGGY: Is that what you call it? Kinda expected a better name, like the DYNAMOTALAMAGENE! Or the ROLBDAMAGLANKIT 10.0! But yeah. It was the coolest thing I've ever seen. I was just out trollin' the rooftops at night, as I do, and right at 12 o'clock, BAM! It was like a star being born. You lit up the whole city for, like, one second, and then the light was gone and *the machine* – okay, the name's growing on me – it went down into the canal. Plop! Whoosh!

JOULE: (urgent, excited) Where did it go?

BUGGY: Ummmmmmmmmmmmmmmm. No idea.

JOULE: (defeated) Ah. Okay.

BUGGY: But I did see you pop up. I kinda dragged you to safety.

JOULE: You what? Are you saying you saved my life? I don't remember that. And why did I wake up in a bunch of seaweed?

BUGGY: Well, you were out of it. And I left you there because technically I'm not allowed to go near strangers without my sibling, even unconscious ones. I'm not even supposed to be out without them, so I should probably get back.

NARRATOR: As if this has been a completely normal exchange, Buggy collects his things and begins climbing out of the pit.

JOULE: None of this makes sense.

NARRATOR: The one thing she does know is that she has no idea what she is doing, and if there really are evil robots roaming around Boston, she would be better off with a buddy. A Buggy.

JOULE: Wait! Can I go with you?

BUGGY: Did you not just hear the thing about strangers? Because–

JOULE: (cuts off a monologue) NO! No, I heard. It's just. I'm ...

BUGGY: ... not from around here. Well, okay. You can come on one condition! You have to tell me *everything* about the machine.

NARRATOR: Joule hesitates. Then nods.

JOULE: One more question, Buggy: What year is it?

[MUX]

NARRATOR: We'll be back after this.

[***MIDROLL***]

[MUX]

EXT. VARIOUS CITY STREETS - DAY

[SFX: Empty street ambience, breeze, distant ocean]

NARRATOR: At the bottom of the pit, Joule considers Buggy's answer to that question, What year is it?

BUGGY: Are you okay? You don't look so hot!

JOULE: One hundred years. I'm *one hundred years* in the future.

NARRATOR: Buggy apparently does not need convincing. He seems to believe Joule's story more than Joule.

[SFX: JOULE and BUGGY walking, ad-lib background talking]

NARRATOR: They make their way out of the pit and down the muddy blocks. They go quietly at first, under the gray clouds. Then, about an hour in, the sky clears and Joule gets her first view of the city skyline. If she needed any more proof of her new reality, it stands there before her now.

JOULE: What happened? Half of the buildings are gone.

BUGGY: A lot fell down. Did you know the city was built on a landfill? Terrible idea. Once it flooded, it became very unstable. (beat) It is kinda fun to watch the buildings fall, though. As long as you're not in them.

JOULE: And everything flooded because of climate change?

NARRATOR: Buggy nods, then climbs up a rickety ladder and onto a raised highway littered with the carcasses of vehicles. The sun beats down, though Buggy seems used to it. He keeps talking.

EXT. RAISED HIGHWAY (ROUTE 1) - CONT'D

BUGGY: I mean, "climate change" is a funny name. It sounds like the planet wanted a new coat. But yeah, glaciers melting and all. And it's not just that. Most of the canals – that's what we call the old, flooded streets – most are toxic. People fight over food. The Sac's a mess.

JOULE: The Sac?

BUGGY: No one's called it Boston in *forever*. Now its (playfully) "Intertidal Sacrifice Zone #617." That's a fancy way of saying the government – when there was one – decided the city was beyond saving. Anyway, that name's too long, so to us, it's *the Sac*.

NARRATOR: Joule slows her steps. She can barely take one more awful fact about this place. She has half a mind to give up and just wait for the sun to turn her into bacon.

BUGGY: Ah, cheer up, Joule! Ask me something fun. C'mon. Anything. You may not know this yet, but I am a bit of a genius.

JOULE: Well ...

BUGGY: Yeah?

JOULE: I guess I was wondering. Why are you so upbeat? I mean, this place is kind of terrible. No offense.

BUGGY: Hmmm. I don't know. Has anything bad ever happened to you?

JOULE: I came here. (beat) And my mom died. A year ago.

NARRATOR: Buggy goes silent for a moment, thinking. Joule hates the way most people react when she breaks the news. Grown ups tend to make lots of sad sighing noises and kids usually walk away, as if parental death were contagious. Buggy does neither.

BUGGY: Well, then YOU know. Feeling bad feels bad. And if I felt bad *all the time*, then I would miss out on a lot of cool stuff. Believe me, if you knew my sibling, you'd understand.

JOULE: Yeah. That makes sense. (beat) Hey, why do you keep saying your "sibling" and not your brother or sister?

BUGGY: Oh, yeah, Nico. That's because *they* are not a boy or a girl, they're just Nico. Which I think is pretty neat because that means there's only one Nico. Well, I guess there's other Nicos. But you get it.

NARRATOR: Suddenly, Buggy's head snaps right.

BUGGY: Ooh! Hear that?

[SFX: Not far off, DUCK BOAT, ELECTRIC BLAST (SHOCKBOLT)]

JOULE: Uh. Yeah. It sounds like—

[SFX: Footsteps]

NARRATOR: Without waiting, Buggy jumps off the elevated highway and drops a ways into a gigantic mound of mud.

JOULE: Buggy?! Are you okay?!

BUGGY (FROM BELOW): [laughing]

EXT. WET STREET - CONT'D

NARRATOR: Not interested in breaking a limb, Joule scurries down nearby scaffolding to the corner of an apartment complex, right on the water's edge. Crouching, Buggy fishes through his backpack and hands her a set of plum-colored binoculars.

BUGGY: Look down the canal. Can you see it?

NARRATOR: Not far off, a heavy, black boat bobs in the water. It is all sharp lines. The engine churns, and then the vessel *drives* up onto the embankment. Six gnarled tires dig into the mud. It's not just a boat. It's a truck too.

BUGGY: We call them ducks.

JOULE: Right. Duck boats. I know those. Finally, something I understand.

BUGGY: Yeah, the name's based on some extinct bird, I think.

JOULE: Wait, what? Ducks are extinct?

NARRATOR: Buggy nudges the binoculars. Joule looks again. Slowly, two shiny figures come into focus. They have hulking chests, huge arms, and no heads. Their legs bend backward, like a dog's.

BUGGY: Watch. They're hunting.

TIN 1 (DISTANT): Suspect last seen wearing brown robes

TIN 2 (DISTANT): Movement on our twelve. Prepare for pursuit

NARRATOR: Suddenly, a man in dirty robes bursts out of a building and runs. The two tins contort; their bodies fold forward and their arms become front legs. Triangular heads, hidden before, pop out. Their jaws are *sparkling* with static electricity.

[SFX: Growling! Sparks!]

NARRATOR: Then they're off after the hapless man.

JOULE: So those are tins too? Like the octopod?

BUGGY: Rinny-tin-tins! Yep. Wolf tins. *Electric* bites. [bites]

JOULE: That's horrible. Why are they chasing that man?

BUGGY: Why does the sun rise, sister? Because Bright tells it too. That's what they'd say, at least.

JOULE: uh...

BUGGY: You don't know what Bright is, do you? Squids, you missed a lot in a hundred years. (sighs) Well, here's the gist. All those tins? They're owned by the Bright Corporation. Bright is kinda like ... a government. Only, us Saclanders don't have rights. Bright keeps us trapped in the Sac and captures people to work its plants and factories. That is, unless you are *Buggy Banal* and too smart for those dum-dums. I've never been caught.

JOULE: Bright? Why do I recognize that name? And why is a corporation running a city?

[MUX]

INT./EXT. APARTMENT/WATER'S EDGE - NIGHT

NARRATOR: Hours later, they reach their destination, a shallow lagoon with a tied-up canoe.

BUGGY: My sibling won't be back til after sunrise, so we should get some rest. I don't know about you, but I am [yawns] sleepy.

JOULE: Yeah.

NARRATOR: Seconds later, Buggy is snoring.

[SFX: Buggy SNORES.]

JOULE: (to self) I can't just follow this kid around forever. But how am I supposed to find the machine? It could be anywhere.
(beat) I wish Hart were here. Or Mom. She'd know what to do.

NARRATOR: She gazes up at the sky, thinking of nights "back home" – one hundred years ago – when bright city lights blotted out the stars. Now the Milky Way shimmers. Joule rests her head, thinking of the machine, and doesn't notice when her eyes finally close.

INT./EXT. APARTMENT/NEAR TIDELINE, CITY STREET- NIGHT

[SFX: Buggy SHAKES Joule.]

BUGGY (FADE UP): [ad-lib for fade up] Hello, Earth to Joule?

JOULE: (waking) Huh? What?

BUGGY: I said wake up!

JOULE: (suddenly worried) What's wrong? Tins?

BUGGY: Nico's back early. You need to get in the seaweed.

JOULE: *What?*

NARRATOR: Buggy, face urgent, points to a heap of fly-infested algae. Its smell wafts up, reeking like Hart's socks.

JOULE: You want me to get in *that*? Because of your sibling?

BUGGY: Always with the questions! Yes, around that corner is an angry kid with a fishing spear. And if they see you, *stranger*, they're probably going to impale you. Then they'll stick me too.

JOULE: Didn't you know they were coming? Was this your plan?

BUGGY: Yes! Did I not say that? Maybe I didn't. Anyway, just let me talk to them first. You'll only need to stay in there for, like, an hour. Or two.

JOULE: An hour?!

BUGGY: Or two. (beat) Joule, I'm serious.

NARRATOR: She needs Buggy's help – if that means swimming in wet salad, maybe that's the best thing. Of course, if this Nico really does hate strangers, hiding won't earn Joule any favors.

NICO (DISTANT): (yelling) Buggy?! Is that you?!

BUGGY: (low) Uh oh. He's coming over. Hurry, Joule. Hide!

[SFX: NICO marches closer.]

[MUX]

NARRATOR: What to do? If Joule should stand up and introduce herself to Buggy's sibling, go to Chapter 5, "Stand Up." If she should follow Buggy's orders, select Chapter 10, "Hide."

Chapter 5, "Stand Up."

Chapter 10, "Hide."

Choose wisely. This is *The Midnight Rebellion*.

[CODA – TMR TIPS]

BUGGY: Hey! This is Buggy, with a Buggy Fact. So, we call our home the Sac, short for "sacrifice zone" – a place powerful people decided was okay to pollute and abandon.

Sacrifice zones exist in your time too. From Texas to South Dakota to New Jersey, many kids who live near highways, factories, or power plants breathe dirtier air and are more likely to have asthma attacks, just like me.

But it doesn't have to be that way. Ask grown-ups to turn off idling car machines, plant trees, and write to a local leader about cutting pollution in your community. Small actions repeated by lots of people can turn a sacrifice zone into a better place.

Keep listening for more tips and more jaws that shoot lighting.
Up next: *Chapter 5, "Stand Up,"* or *Chapter 10, "Hide."*

[CREDITS]

NARRATOR: *The Midnight Rebellion* is a production of WBUR in Boston. It was created by Ben Brock Johnson and Dean Russell.

The series was written and produced by Dean Russell.

Directing by Emily Jankowski and Dean Russell.

Mix and sound design for this episode by Emily Jankowski.

Supporting mix and sound by Mumble Media.

This episode is starring:

Basma Ayatte as Joule,

Jett Dinh as Buggy,

K. Zedric Acruz as Nico,

And, me, Erik Ransom as the narrator.

Additional performances by Emmanuel Chumaceiro and Emily Jankowski.

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Executive producer: Ben Brock Johnson.

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