

WBUR's  
**THE MIDNIGHT REBELLION**  
**CHAPTER 6 - MAKE FOR THE MARSH**  
By Dean Russell

[MUX]

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

Chapter 6, "Make for the Marsh"

[MUX]

**EXT. STREET, MUD MARKET - DAY**

[SFX: Alarm bells, market-goers yelling.]

**NICO:** Hurry, we gotta get out of here.

**NARRATOR:** Bright is coming. The tins are coming. Joule, Buggy, and Nico leave behind the old sage and follow a back alley. It dumps them into the middle of Mud Market.

The market is crowded. Merchants, buyers, everyone frenzies like a school of scared fish. They clamber up fire escapes. Looks of horror flash across faces as tin octopods fly overhead with blue tentacles writhing.

**NICO:** We should have gone a different way.

**BUGGY:** You mean to the marsh? Or the seawall?

**NICO:** No. That doesn't matter right now. We need to ... (fade)

**NARRATOR:** All of a sudden, Joule feels funny. Somehow, someway, it all comes to her, like a voice in her head. The tins rushing in. The tide rushing in. In. In.

**JOULE:** (solving) The tide was coming in. The machine is at Black Marsh. That's where we have to go.

**BUGGY:** What? You figured it out ... faster than me? Impressive.

**NICO:** It doesn't matter right now. We need to get to the canoe before we go anywhere else. Alright? So stick close. Follow me.

**NARRATOR:** Nico grabs Buggy and Joule by the hand, and they go. It's strange. Nico, who has been nothing but antagonizing and mercurial, changes in the chaos. They become clear-eyed. Leaderly. It's as though, amid mayhem, they are the true Nico.

**[SFX: Kids RUNNING through crowd]**

**NICO:** (running) Keep going. We're close.

**NARRATOR:** Nico heads for an alley but veers sharply away as a cloud of dull white pours out of the narrow lane.

**NICO:** (running) Buggy! Mask!

**BUGGY:** (running) I'm on it!

**NARRATOR:** Buggy throws on a freaky face shield with a cylindrical nose. When Joule's eyes and throat begin to burn, she knows why.

**JOULE:** (running, cough) It's tear gas. They're throwing tear gas!

**NICO:** (coughing) Bad for us. Deadly with asthma. We'll have to suffer through. Buggy, keep that mask tight.

**BUGGY (WITH MASK):** (hard to hear) Aye, aye, sibby.

**[SFX: Nico and Joule cough a little while running.]**

**NARRATOR:** Soon, the octopods drop gas grenades at one end of the street. A wall of white smoke flows east, pushing everyone in the same direction, to the shoreline.

**[SFX: Indistinct yelling, splashing, and bumping.]**

**EXT. DOCKS/WATERLINE, MUD MARKET - DAY**

**NARRATOR:** People are leaping into the water, onto boats, trying to get away. But they don't make it far.

**JOULE:** (over crowd) What's going on? Why aren't they moving?

**NICO:** (over crowd) There's a bottleneck. We have to push through. We can swim to the canoe.

**JOULE:** (over crowd) Is this a bad time to tell you I can't swim?

**NICO:** (over crowd) *What?*

**NARRATOR:** Nico shakes their head, unable or unwilling to respond. They barrel into the traffic jam, and Joule and Buggy trail them through knee-deep water. And that's when Joule hears it.

**[SFX: A dozen duck boats rumble in the water. SPARKS!]**

**JOULE:** That sounds bad.

**BUGGY (MASK):** (hard to hear) Duck Boat.

**JOULE:** What?

**BUGGY:** [pulls mask off, sighs in relief] I said duck boats!

**NARRATOR:** Duck boats, Bright's amphibious monstrosities. An indestructible flotilla blocks the shore. Headless humanoid tins hang off the sides, arms sparking. They take aim.

**CROWD MEMBER:** SHOCKBOLTS! SHOCKBOLTS!

**[SFX: Shockbolts! Crow yells!]**

**NARRATOR:** A burst of lightning hits twenty paces away. The shocks conduct through the water, and Joule's legs seize with pain.

**JOULE:** Ahh!

**[SFX: SHOCKBOLTS!]**

**JOULE:** We have to turn around.

**NICO:** We can't. We need the canoe. It has everything.

**JOULE:** And then what? Your canoe's aluminum. On the water, it's basically one giant mosquito zapper. We need another way.

**BUGGY:** She's right, Nico. We have to go back.

**[SFX: SHOCKBOLTS! CROWD YELLS!]**

**NARRATOR:** Nico digs out two handkerchiefs from their pocket, wets them, and tosses one to Joule.

**NICO:** Put this over your face. It'll help with the gas.

**JOULE:** (touched) ~~Oh.~~ Thanks.

**NICO:** I'm not being nice. I don't want you slowing us down.

**JOULE:** Right.

**EXT. STREET, MUD MARKET - DAY**

**NARRATOR:** And so, with great reluctance, the trio retraces their steps, now moving *against* the stream of bodies and *into the gas*.

Buggy darts through the crowd like a tiny ninja. Nico plows their own path. Joule brings up the rear. Her eyes feel like they've been dipped in hot sauce. Even with the bandana, her lungs rage.

**[SFX: Joule coughing and choking.]**

**NICO:** (running, choking, through bandana) Keep going. There's a bridge at the end of the road.

**NARRATOR:** But there's no way to see it, the air is too thick with poison. They run blind.

**[SFX: Buzzing tin octopod zooms in]**

**NARRATOR:** Then something bites into Joule's shoulder.

**[SFX: Octopod tentacle pincer BITES Joule]**

**JOULE:** (running, choking, through bandana) Ow!

**NARRATOR:** An octopod whirrs above her. Its tentacles twist, each with sharp beaky pincers. They latch onto her arms, her neck, her hair. The tin octopod lifts Joule off the ground.

**[SFX: Octopod buzzes louder, lifting Joule.]**

**OCTOPOD [TIN 3] (ROBOTIC):** Target acquired. Return to HQ.

**JOULE:** (choking, through bandana) Ahh! Put me down!

**NARRATOR:** Joule is soaring. Helpless. She tears at the tentacles, but for each one she throws off, another attaches.

**JOULE:** (choking, through bandana) Buggy! Nico!

**NARRATOR:** Then a silvery streak slices up through the air ...

**[SFX: HARPOON FLIES, NAILS THE OCTOPOD!]**

**NARRATOR:** A spear! It splits the octopod in two.

**[SFX: BOOM! JOULE FALLS!]**

**JOULE:** (falling) WHAAA! [hits ground] Oof!

**NARRATOR:** Joule falls hard. She rolls over, caked in mud. In the distance, a figure takes shape, holding another spear. Nico? No. Their frame is too big. (beat) Then she recognizes the man. The pirate she'd seen earlier.

**CUTTHROAT (DISTANT):** AARRRRRGGG!

**BUGGY (MASK):** (through mask) Joule! Come on!

**NARRATOR:** But a second later, Buggy is there, leading Joule away.

**CUTTHROAT (DISTANT):** WAIT!

**NARRATOR:** The pirate fades into the gas as they scramble down the street. On and on they go, until Joule has no more air, until ... until ... the bridge appears. A fast river flows beneath.

**NICO:** (panting, choking, bandana) Hey!

**BUGGY (MASK):** (through mask) NICO!

**NICO:** (panting, choking, bandana) I thought I lost you.

**JOULE:** (choking) Buggy came back for me.

**NICO:** (panting, choking) Alright. Into the river.

**JOULE:** But—

**NICO/BUGGY (MASK):** (duh) You can't swim.

**NICO:** Yeah, hang on to me. I won't let you drown. Probably.

**JOULE:** Uh.

**NICO:** Everyone ready? One. Two. THREE!

**NARRATOR:** Joule closes her eyes, and they all leap. We'll be right back ... after this.

[MUX]

[\*\*\*MIDROLL\*\*\*]

[MUX]

**EXT. TURNPIKE RIVER - DAY**

**NARRATOR:** They escape the attack. Barely. Floating down a swift river, Joule clings to Nico's back like a starfish ...

**NICO:** (in water) [gasps] I said don't hold my head under!

**JOULE:** (in water) Is that a shark?!

**BUGGY:** (in water) What's a shark?

**NARRATOR:** (sarcastic) Of course sharks are extinct.

**[SFX: Climbing out of water]**

**NARRATOR:** It's nightfall by the time they climb out of the river. Nico and Buggy don't know the neighborhood well, but Joule recognizes it: Chinatown. She takes them to an abandoned theater where she and Hart once saw a ballet. Her brother called the show "boring." Joule would give anything for "boring" right now.

**INT. WANG THEATER, CHINATOWN - NIGHT**

**[SFX: Echoey door closes]**

**NICO:** Okay. Not a bad find, Stranger Girl.

**JOULE:** Thanks.

**NICO:** Let's pull down these curtains to sleep on. Buggy, how much food do you have in your pack?

**BUGGY:** (digging through bag) Not much. It's mostly tools and my radio. ... Ooh! I've got a bag of fried roaches. Soggy, though.

**NICO:** I've got a couple cans of Algae-Os. That'll do for tonight.

**NARRATOR:** The moth-eaten velvet curtains tear down easily, and Joule and the others fluff them into one giant bed. Buggy flops over immediately.

**BUGGY:** Ahh. Sweet sleep.

**JOULE:** Don't you wanna-

**BUGGY:** [snores]

**JOULE:** -eat first? I guess not.

**NARRATOR:** Nico cuts open a can of green goo and passes it.

**JOULE:** Thanks.

**NARRATOR:** As hungry as she is, Joule can only manage a few sips of the lumpy, briney slime. Nico doesn't seem to notice. They sit on stage next to her, staring into the empty audience.

**BUGGY:** [snoring softly]

**NICO:** Buggy. He annoys me, always acting like life is some kind of adventure. I tell him all the time to take things seriously. But at the end of the day, he can sleep better than anyone.

**JOULE:** My brother's that way too. He's great. He's my best friend. But there's not a rule he wouldn't break. He thinks everything is a toy or a game. If it wasn't for him ...

**NICO:** Yeah?

**JOULE:** I'm sorry, Nico. This is all my fault. I should have never asked you and Buggy for help. (beat) Actually, if I really think about it, you could blame me for a lot more.

**NICO:** What do you mean?

**JOULE:** Well, I guess what I mean is ... where I'm from, we all know about climate change, you know? My mom and dad and teachers always told me it would be bad and that we should do something to stop it. Don't drive to baseball practice, don't eat hamburgers, don't leave the computer on – do you know what a computer is? – Nevermind, the point is *I knew*. But, honestly, I always figured someone else would fix it. I should've done more.

**BUGGY:** [snoring softly]

**NICO:** You know, after my parents died, Buggy didn't cry. I was supposed to be the tough one, and I wept every night. But Buggy? Eight years old. Not a tear. Then, a week later, he finally started crying and didn't stop. I thought maybe it was a delayed reaction. Like, he had finally accepted Ma and Pa were gone.

**JOULE:** I didn't believe my mom was dead at first either.

**NICO:** But it wasn't that. I realized Buggy was just ... hungry. That's why he was crying. We'd run out of food. (beat) So one night I hid in an alley. And when an old man came by carrying a bag of crabs, I snatched it and ran.

**JOULE:** (surprised) Oh ... well, you were starving. You shouldn't feel bad for doing one wrong thing.

**NICO:** One? I probably stole a hundred times 'til I learned to fish and scavenge. And the thing is, I *don't* feel bad. It was wrong. But when the world is wrong, what else can we do? We're kids. We can't change the world. So, Stranger Girl, as much as I'd love to blame you *and only you* for the apocalypse, I won't.

**NICO:** Besides, when has blaming anyone ever helped? You can't undo what already happened. What's done is done.

**JOULE:** Yeah. What's done is done.

**NARRATOR:** Nico goes to the curtain bed and lies down next to Buggy. After a while, they're both snoring softly.

**JOULE:** (to self, contemplating) "What's done is done..."

**NARRATOR:** Nico's words ring in her mind. She can understand them. But she's not sure they're right. From there, her thoughts drift. She thinks of what she's been through, from falling into the canal to the old sage's warnings about Bright. Bright. Bright.

**JOULE:** (to self) Why is Bright after the machine? To use it, obviously. But for what? ... Ugh, I don't know. I don't even know why this thing was in Mom's lab in the first place. I thought she invented fancy solar panels and carbon vacuums or whatever. She studied climate stuff. Not time travel. It makes no sense.

**NARRATOR:** Then Joule drops her can of algae. Her eyes go wide.

**JOULE:** Nico! Buggy! Get up! Get up!

**BUGGY:** (sleepy, kinda panicky) Huh? Who is it?

**NICO:** (sleepy, kinda panicky) Bright? Tins?

**JOULE:** No! Nothing bad. I just thought of something. Nico, "What's done is done." Right?

**NICO:** (sleepy, still a bit panicky) What?

**JOULE:** That's what you said. "What's done is done." But you're wrong.

**NICO:** (sleepy) You woke me up to tell me I'm wrong?

**JOULE:** No, I mean, normally you would be right. People can't change the past. But we can. I think that's what my mom was planning with the machine in her lab. And I've been so focused on finding it, I never thought about that. I never thought about what I can do when I actually get home.

**BUGGY:** (sleepy) Eat pizza? (beat) Wait, what are we talking about?

**JOULE:** With the machine, we can go back and tell people about this place - this *time*, what happens. If people *know*, really know what's in the future, they'll have to do something about it.

**NICO:** (doubtful) Okay, I'm going back to sleep.

**JOULE:** Nico, I'm serious.

**NICO:** So am I. It's hard enough for me to believe in time travel. Now you're talking about convincing *everyone in the world*? What, that climate change is bad and they should, pretty-please, stop it? You said they already knew that and didn't care! Squids, even you didn't believe it'd get like this, you told me yourself.

**JOULE:** Yes, but we'll have proof.

**NICO:** What proof?

**JOULE:** You. And Buggy. Your stories. And pictures, there's gotta be pictures of this place somewhere. And, I don't know, we'll bring water ... and dirt. Scientists love studying dirt.

**NARRATOR:** This is true.

**JOULE:** *And we'll have the machine.* So we can really show people.

**BUGGY:** Ooh. We can do tours! "[kghhh] Next stop: the end of the world. Fasten your seatbelts!" You see it, you believe it. I love this idea. I'm in. I mean, I've always been in, but now I'm IN.

**NICO:** You're forgetting that the "machine" is at the bottom of Black Marsh. And that's if you're right. We have to go find it with no canoe, barely any supplies, and a bunch of tins after us.

**NARRATOR:** The morning light sifts through cracks in the roof. Joule's amber eyes stare into Nico's black ones. They blink.

**NICO:** [sigh] But fine. Fine. I'm in. I mean, what other choice do we have really? Let's go save the world.

**BUGGY:** Woohoooo! To saving the world!

**JOULE:** To saving the world.

**BUGGY:** [kghh] Next stop: Black Marsh!

**[MUX]**

**NARRATOR:** Congratulations. You have reached the end of part one. We will release the next part of this uncharted adventure shortly, but if you would like more, now you can go back and listen to the choices you did not make. See you in part two! This is The Midnight Rebellion.

**[CODA – TMR TIPS]**

**NICO:** Hey. It's Nico. In this chapter, Joule says she once thought she could wait for someone else to fix climate change. A lot of people think that. But change doesn't happen unless you speak up. (beat) So once a month, write a letter to your mayor, governor, senator, or national leader. Remind them who they're supposed to protect. Tell them: "Please don't wait. Take action. This is my future."

And keep listening for more tips and more pizza talk.

**[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.

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See the full list of cast and crew at  
[wbur.org/themidnightrebellion](http://wbur.org/themidnightrebellion).