

WBUR's
THE MIDNIGHT REBELLION
CHAPTER 7 - GET TO THE COPTER
By Dean Russell

[MUX]

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

Chapter 7, "Get to the Copter"

[MUX]

EXT. DRY-ISH CITY STREET - DAY

NARRATOR: Joule looks left to the copter. Then right to the mangy kid, who had, just a moment ago, hurled a rock at it. he takes off down the muddy way.

KID: (running) [laughs madly]

NARRATOR: Joule lifts a foot to follow. But she freezes at the sound of the damaged copter caterwauling in the fog.

[SFX: COPTER BUZZES, GROANS from getting rocked.]

NARRATOR: She tunes her ears toward the noise...

JOULE: I have to get to the copter.

NARRATOR: ...and goes.

[SFX: JOULE takes off RUNNING, one foot bare.]

JOULE: (running) Wait! Wait!

NARRATOR: She cuts through the gray like an arrow. Her feet pound the damp earth, jumping hunks of concrete and rebar, knocking aside stacks of waste.

[SFX: BUZZING zigs and zags, getting closer.]

NARRATOR: Blue light gutters ahead.

JOULE: There it is!

NARRATOR: The copter pitches and yaws like a wounded fly. Then it zips around an old Boston post office.

JOULE: (running) I'm not losing you!

[SFX: BUZZING gets FARTHER away.]

NARRATOR: But then the copter levels. It starts to speed over the cobblestone road. At the same time, Joule's bare foot is going numb and floppy. Her lungs sting. She slows. The light fades.

EXT. COBBLESTON CITY STREET - CONT'D

[SFX: Joule STOPS RUNNING. GASPING. Buzzing fades.]

JOULE: (running, slower, breathing, desperate) No. Don't leave! Please. Please. No.

NARRATOR: Bent over, breathing, tears burn in her eyes. She is alone, again. Alone and—wait. Her ears perk.

WOMAN [GREENHEAD] (10 FT AWAY): Get off me! I didn't do anything!

JOULE: (breathing hard, to self) What's going on?

NARRATOR: A woman moves in the mist, arms behind her back, cursing and thrashing. She bares her teeth and whips neon green braids of hair.

[SFX: BOOTS. MECHANICAL NOISES.]

NARRATOR: Then there are two others, their features fuzzier. They circle the woman, crouching with their bulky arms out. Emblazoned across their broad backs is the word, "officer."

JOULE: (to self, relieved) Police!

NARRATOR: One lunges for the woman. But she is quick. She dodges, and then kicks over the second officer - and bolts.

[SFX: KICK! WOMAN running. "POLICE" (robots) chase.]

OFFICER 1 (ROBOTIC-ISH): (shouts) Halt! Halt right there!

WOMAN [GREENHEAD]: (running) Bite a battery, you lousy tins!

JOULE: (to self) Did she say "tins"?

NARRATOR: The criminal zags. Then zigs. Her green braids trail mockingly. The first officer aims something, a weapon? It *sparks*.

[SFX: SHOCKBOLT BLAST!]

NARRATOR: A bright thread of electricity shoots wide. Joule follows the shot with her eyes. It hits an old postal box.

[SFX: Box EXPLODES!]

JOULE: Whoa.

WOMAN [GREENHEAD]: (running) Outta the way kid!

JOULE: OOF!

[SFX: WOMAN knocks JOULE over.]

NARRATOR: ... the criminal knocks Joule to the ground.

[SFX: MORE RUNNING. Another blast. Running fades away.]

NARRATOR: Moments later, the woman and lighting-shooting officer are gone. Joule blinks. The second officer is standing over her. Up close, he's unlike any policeman she's seen. Cobalt-chrome armor covers every inch of him, as if it were skin. His slender, springy knees bend unnaturally backward. And ... he has no head.

JOULE: (realizes) *Tins*. (to it) You're a robot, aren't you?

NARRATOR: The officer taps a badge shaped like a sun. And a word.

JOULE: "Bright." Is that your name? Wow, this is weird, but I am happy to see you, Officer Bright. I'm very lost, and I have no idea what's going on here.

NARRATOR: Joule's brother would lose his mind if he saw this robot. It doesn't even bother her that much that Officer Bright is headless. He— or, it has friendly blue lights on its chest like eyes, and it extends a hand as fluidly as a human.

JOULE: Thanks.

NARRATOR: But Officer Bright smacks her arm away and grabs her by the collar.

JOULE: (jostled) Hey, whoa.

OFFICER 2 [TIN 2]: On your feet, tide rat.

JOULE: (jostled) Wait, what?

OFFICER 2 [TIN 2]: Hands behind your back. You're under arrest.

JOULE: (jostled) You're confused. I'm not with that lady. You don't understand. I'm just a kid.

NARRATOR: The robot cuffs her wrists, and then the day goes dark as a thick blindfold slips over her eyes.

JOULE: (struggling) I'm not a criminal! Listen to me. I need help. I need help! HELP!

[MUX]

NARRATOR: We'll be right back.

[***MIDROLL***]

[MUX]

EXT. COBBLESTON CITY STREET - DAY

NARRATOR: The next hour is the worst of Joule's life. She is blindfolded, disoriented, hungry, and lost. The police robot refuses to tell her why she's been arrested...

JOULE: (STRUGGLING) Please, I'm a kid. A kid! What did I do wrong? Hey, what are you doing with that gag? Hey [ad-lib gag]

NARRATOR: And then it tosses her onto what sounds like a giant truck with dozens of criminals. Unwashed ones, apparently.

[SFX: Other criminals muttering with gags.]

JOULE: [sniffs] [ad-lib grossed out groan with gag]

EXT. DUCK BOAT - DAY

[SFX: DUCK BOAT on land, transition to in water (under narr).]

NARRATOR: For a long while, Joule sits helpless as the truck roars along. The constant jerking hurts her tailbone. Eventually the motion turns into soft rocking, and the motor sounds change. Joule realizes that the truck is floating in water.

JOULE: [with gag] UH DUHH BOW

NARRATOR: Yes, a duck boat. A seafaring truck. Duck boats gave tours of the Charles River and Long Wharf "back home" in normal times. Joule always refused rides. She hates the water, can't even swim, much to her Mom's disappointment ...

(FLASHBACK) MOM: Joule, the sea is where life began. An ocean of bacteria that evolved into fish and trees and us. Even today, every drop is full of invisible creatures writhing around. Isn't that fascinating? Why wouldn't you want to dive into that primordial soup?

NARRATOR: Despite her mother's belief, the term "primordial soup" was not exactly a selling point. But now, with visions of sinking ships in Joule's head, she wishes she'd taken those swim lessons.

[SFX: Boat ENGINE IDLES, DOCKS]

OFFICER 1 [TIN 1] (ROBOTIC): Tide rats! Stand up. We are reaching the dock and will disembark shortly. The officers will now remove your blinds and gags but you are not authorized to speak.

[SFX: Removing blind and gag from Joule.]

JOULE: (groans in relief)

OFFICER 2 [TIN 2] (ROBOTIC): Proceed down the gangway. Follow the other officers through the gate to *Intake*. Be warned: Rebellious actions will be met with *shocking* force.

JOULE: Um. Excuse me. Officer!

NARRATOR: With inhuman speed, the officer is upon Joule, twisting her collar. It raises a hand; its fingers spark.

OFFICER 2 [TIN 2] (ROBOTIC): You are not authorized to speak. Do you compute?

NARRATOR: Joule opens her mouth, then nods yes. She's released.

JOULE: [JOULE falls, GRUNTS]

OFFICER 1 [TIN 1] (ROBOTIC): MOVE OUT!

[SFX: Detainees begin moving]

EXT. OUTSIDE CAMP BUNKER HILL (DETENTION CENTER) - MOMENTS LATER

NARRATOR: They disembark the duck boat, which floats on a wide river bordered by a tall levee wall. They follow a set of rusting stairs way down to the bottom of the levee, to a dirt road.

[SFX: Walking down metal stairs to dirt road]

NARRATOR: By now the fog has lifted, and other than ominous black smoke roiling in the distance, the day is cloudless and warm. Joule feels sweat forming on her brow as the officers direct them to a dusty dirt road on the dry side of the levee.

OFFICER 1 [TIN 1] (ROBOTIC): Keep moving! To the gate!

NARRATOR: It's odd. The other so-called criminals are mostly kids and elders.

JOULE: (to self, urgent) Maybe they're all here by mistake? Like me.

NARRATOR: The woman with the green braids is here too, next to Joule, tugging at her cuffs. She seems younger now, a teenager.

rrGREENHEAD: (whisper) Psst. Kid. (beat) Hey. Kid. (louder) Kid!

JOULE: Shh.

GREENHEAD: What are those tins gonna do? Arrest us? ... Oh, wait.

JOULE: (whisper yell, urgent) Well, I don't want to get zapped.

GREENHEAD: Pft. I've been shockbolted plenty. You get used to it. (beat) But, uh, seriously ... just wanna say sorry I knocked you over. So, what's your deal, kid?

MAN [SAUGUS]: Hey! Greenhead, shut it.

NARRATOR: Joule peeks back at a man with horse teeth and two bruised black eyes. He glares miserably at Greenhead.

GREENHEAD: Oh, Saugus. Got you too? Can't say I'm sad about that.

JOULE: (whisper yell, urgent) Please. They're gonna hear us.

SAUGUS: Smart girl. We ain't all trying to stir up trouble, like you Greenhead.

GREENHEAD: I got news for yah. In the Sac, trouble stirs up you. Which is why I got a plan for getting out of here.

SAUGUS: What plan? They'll stick a tracker in you the second you cross the gate. Escape, and they hunt you like Moby Dick.

GREENHEAD: Then don't cross the gate, genius.

SAUGUS: You're the fool. I turned *myself* in. I'd rather be here than running loose. At least they give you food.

GREENHEAD: Coward. (beat) What do you say, kid?

JOULE: (urgent, over walking noise) Who? Me?

GREENHEAD: Yeah. You look like trouble. You ready to riot?

JOULE: (urgent, over walking noise) I'm not even supposed to be here. The police thought I was with you.

GREENHEAD: Psh, *police*. You mean the tin-skins? Saugus, you hear this dreamer? She called the tins "*police*." Next she'll be talkin' 'bout Big Foot and hippos! Pure fantasy.

JOULE: (urgent, over walking noise) Wait, what? Hippos aren't fantasy. And neither are police.

[SFX: MIC FEEDBACK on PA.]

WARDEN (OVER PA): Attention. Attention.

NARRATOR: The crowd halts. A white-suited lady stands on a platform in front of a tall barbed-wire fence. A large banner with a blue sun hangs over her, reading ...

JOULE: (to self, reg volume) "Be Bright. Be right"? Huh. Bright.

NARRATOR: The lady blows her nose with a silk handkerchief and casts it aside. She gives a warm smile to the crowd, which is strange given they're all in handcuffs. But also reassuring.

WARDEN (OVER PA): My name is Ms. Lynn Leominster. I am pleased to welcome you to the *Bunker Hill Work Camp for a Brighter Now*. The Bright Corporation has graciously made me your warden, and I take the job seriously. As we say, Be Bright, be right!

A FEW CROWD MEMBERS: BOOOOO!

WARDEN (OVER PA): Excuse me. *Excuse me*. For those of you who would consider yourselves some kind of rebel outlaws, please note the twenty Bright Safety Officers located around you. We have more BSOs positioned in the towers to my left and right and there are also Bright surveillance constructs above you.

NARRATOR: Ms. Leominster points to the copters above. Joule feels a tap on her shoulder.

GREENHEAD: (low) Check it, kid. Got my cuffs off. Turn around, I'll do you too.

NARRATOR: Joule considers pulling away, but that would only draw attention. So she stands stonily as Greenhead works her bindings, pinching skin and pulling hairs. Joule bites her tongue.

WARDEN (OVER PA): Now, instead of punishing criminals, Bright is here to help rehabilitate you at your new home. Here. You will be fed. You will receive a job at one of Bright's many brilliant factories. And you will sleep relatively sometimes. That said, I understand if you feel you do not belong here. Anyone, anyone at all who believes they did no wrong and are not criminals, Worry not! We are friends. You may speak with me directly after intake.

JOULE: (to self, excited) Wait, really? That's perfect.

[SFX: Cuffs are off.]

GREENHEAD: There you go. You're free. Now get ready.

JOULE: (caught off-guard) Oh. Ready for what? That lady said—

GREENHEAD: Eh, lady schmady. Here's what you do. Wait twenty seconds, then make for the river.

JOULE: (arguing) But ... I can't swim. And the warden-

WARDEN (OVER PA): Please form a line to the gate ...

GREENHEAD: (not listening) Get ready, dreamer.

WARDEN (OVER PA): ... And remember, "Be Bright. B--"

GREENHEAD: (yelling) BE WRONG!

[SFX: SLOW MOTION...]

NARRATOR: Several things happen at once. Greenhead produces a canister from her pocket, pulls a pin, and throws it.

[SFX: Smoking canister.]

NARRATOR: The canister spews green smoke, and forms an arc that ends right as it thumps the grinning Ms. Leominster in the face.

[SFX: Canister HITS WARDEN, WARDEN GRUNTS]

NARRATOR: Then all around, a rainbow of smoke ...

[SFX: Hissing pops; PSH, PSH, PSH]

NARRATOR: And finally ... pandemonium.

[SFX: SLOW MO > REGULAR SPEED]

GREENHEAD: RIOTTTTTT!!!!

CROWD: YEAHHHHH!!!! [include a hidden "TOCK-TICK!"]

[SFX: Rioting begins. Shockbolt blasts.]

NARRATOR: The crowd begins to boil. Shockbolts fly. Saugus screams, horse teeth wide, and runs for the front gate.

SAUGUS: EVERYONE RUN!

JOULE: (to self, over din, urgent) Should I follow him?

GREENHEAD: (yelling) KID! TURN AROUND. CROSS THE RIVER!

NARRATOR: Joule looks to the camp, then back to the river.

JOULE: (to self, over din, urgent) What do I do? What do I do?

[SFX: RIOT noise SWELLS.]

[MUX]

NARRATOR: What *will* Joule do? If she should take her chances with the authorities, select Chapter 8, "Find the Warden." To attempt an escape at the river, go to Chapter 9, "Swim for It."

Chapter 8, "Find the Warden."

Chapter 9, "Swim for It."

Choose wisely. This is *The Midnight Rebellion*.

[CODA – TMR TIPS]

NARRATOR: Here's something: Because of climate change, cities everywhere are now using flying drones – like that copter – to measure flooding, track wildfires, and monitor rising seas. Better data makes it easier to plan for disasters and avoid them.

You can collect data too. To get involved, join a school science club, build a weather station, or volunteer with amateur groups that track rainfall, tides, and air quality. You don't need a flying robot to help, just curiosity and human elbow grease.

And keep listening for more tips and more sea voyages. Up next: *Chapter 8, "Find the Warden,"* or *Chapter 9, "Swim for It."*

[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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Supporting mix and sound by Mumble Media.

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Giselle Fernandez as Greenhead,

Jay Preston as Saugus,

Sarah Jiang as Warden Leominster,

Erika Henningson as Dr. Elizabeth Green,

and Erik Ransom as the narrator.

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Ben Brock Johnson is Executive Producer and WBUR's Director of Digital Audio.

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