

WBUR's
THE MIDNIGHT REBELLION
CHAPTER 9 - SWIM FOR IT
By Dean Russell

[MUX]

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

Chapter 9, "Swim for It"

[MUX]

EXT. OUTSIDE BUNKER HILL WORK CAMP - DUSK

GREENHEAD: RIOTTTTTTT!!!

[SFX: CROWD YELLS. Riot outside Camp Bunker.]

NARRATOR: If you ever find yourself trapped in a crushing pit of angry rioters and tin-skinned officers with hands that shoot lightning, the sanest thing to do is ... [*alt: you can think is*]

JOULE: (to self, over din, urgent) I have to get out of here!

NARRATOR: And so that is what Joule does. Outside the barbed-wire fences of the Bunker Hill Work Camp for a Brighter, Joule plows through the crowd to make for the river.

[SFX: Joule plowing through riot]

NARRATOR: She cannot swim ...

JOULE: (over noise, running, to self) But maybe the water's not deep. Maybe?

NARRATOR: Sure, the warden said she'd help anyone. But, as Joule's mom once put it ...

(FLASHBACK) MOM: *Promises don't make a person, Joule. Actions do.*

NARRATOR: The warden clearly acts on behalf of that ... Bright Corporation, which is arresting people for seemingly no reason.

[SFX: Shockbolts. Rock throws.]

NARRATOR: So she runs. Fists and rocks and steel and shocks fly. Feet stomp on her bare toes, but she presses on, away and down the dirt road and up the levee steps to the river bank.

JOULE: Okay. Well, it doesn't look shallow. But, uh, maybe it's not hard. I mean, I almost drowned earlier, but I didn't. That has to mean something. (beat) Oh, this is a terrible idea.

NARRATOR: The vast river moves with violence. Its greasy waters shimmer grotesquely in the late-day light.

JOULE: No. No turning back. I have to get back to that machine and get home. This is the only way. (beat) One, two, [breath]...

[SFX: Joule JUMPS and DIVES UNDERWATER]

EXT. MYSTIC RIVER - CONT'D

JOULE (UNDERWATER): [ad-lib underwater panic]

NARRATOR: Instant regret. That is what Joule feels as she flails in the turbid water. Her arms move but cannot find purchase. Her legs kick at nothing. Her clothes grow heavy and drag her down.

JOULE (UNDERWATER): HEHHH HEHHH ["help!"]

NARRATOR: This is the end. She is sure.

(long beat) But then ...

[SFX: A body dives into the river]

NARRATOR: ... a bit of luck.

JOULE (UNDERWATER): [ad-lib underwater scream]

NARRATOR: I did not say good luck. Because something slithers under her arms and around her chest. She squirms. All that's visible in the dark water is a pair of bulbous eyes. A monster.

She fights but the monster tugs, it yanks, it pulls her ... up. Yes, up and up and up ... to the sunset-red surface.

[SFX: Joule breaks the surface GASPING. A KID BREATHES DEEP.]

[MUX]

JOULE: (choking, gasping) Wait ... you?

EXT. MYSTIC RIVER BANK - MINUTES LATER

NARRATOR: Minutes later, Joule is under a bridge that spans the mucky, trash-ridden river, staring at ...

JOULE: You're the boy that knocked out that copter with a rock.

KID [BUGGY]: That's me. Buggy.

JOULE: Buggy?

BUGGY: Buggy Banal. That's my name, you *can't* wear it out.

NARRATOR: Buggy Banal is very short – Joule's age or younger – with a watermelon-shaped head, and deep brown eyes magnified under industrial-type goggles. Nothing about Buggy suggests things like soap or hair dressers exist. Shaggy dark hair, grease-stained cargo shorts with overstuffed pockets, a pink backpack with a scent even the great bards could not describe.

JOULE: [sniffs, slight gag]

BUGGY: You don't look so good. Are you okay?

JOULE: Oh. Uh. It's — nothing. But also, I guess the last twenty-four hours have been kind of a lot. So there's that.

BUGGY: Because of the spaceship thing?

JOULE: *What?*

BUGGY: By the way, do you have an inhaler? Mine's low, and I have asthma. Lots of kids have asthma, so I thought, hey, maybe she has an extra inhaler.

JOULE: Wait. What spaceship? Do you mean you saw the machine?

BUGGY: Yup—I was out on Eastie Isle trying to find copper wire for my radio, which broke while I was listening to this secret message — Well my sibling says there are no secret messages, but anyway, there I was at midnight, and POW. Huge blast of light! Then the "machine" — personally, I'd go with a flashy name like the RAZZAMATAZZIAN — it came out of nowhere!

JOULE: Where'd it go?

BUGGY: Well, it went in that canal. I tried to find it, but I found you instead. So, to answer your question, I have no idea.

JOULE: Oh.

NARRATOR: Joule slumps into the muck, head in her hands. Hope there, hope gone. Without the machine, she'll never get home.

BUGGY: So was I right? Is it a spaceship?

JOULE: No. Sorry to disappoint.

BUGGY: So then what is it? The only other thing I can think is a time machine.

JOULE: I ... how-r

BUGGY: Ooh! That's it, isn't it? You're a time traveler. That makes PERFECT sense. You showed up in a mysterious machine. You can't swim. You're dressed weird. And you asked a flying tin for help, which means you're either nuts or you've been asleep for a long time. And you don't seem cuckoo to me.

JOULE: I—Look, all I know for sure is last night I was in my house, and now my house is nothing but splinters and sand. And Boston ... this isn't the Boston I know.

BUGGY: It's not called *Bahsten* anymore. Hasn't been since before I was born. We call it the Sac.

JOULE: The Sac?

BUGGY: Short for Intertidal Sacrifice Zone Numero 617. Bright supposedly owns hundreds of sacrifice zones. But I've never left this one.

JOULE: And what is Bright exactly? Why are they rounding people up and throwing them in that camp?

BUGGY: Bright kinda rules everything. It's got a bunch of factories here. There's the Algae-Os cannery, the GMO oyster farm, the coal plant. And they need workers, soooooo ...

JOULE: So they *force* them to work?

NARRATOR: Joule's head reels. There's so much she doesn't get. What happened to the government? What happened to the world? Her mom always made a big deal about the climate, but could a change in weather do all this?

JOULE: I need your help.

BUGGY: If it's swimming lessons, my sibling is a better teacher. Then again, Nico is very demanding. Hates strangers — like, *hates* them — so that would be a problem.

JOULE: I need to find the machine. I need to get home. But I don't think I can do this on my own.

NARRATOR: Under the waxing moon, Buggy's lips split into a luminous grin.

BUGGY: You know, I've always wanted to go on an adventure.

[MUX]

NARRATOR: We'll be right back...

[***MIDROLL***]

[MUX]

EXT. CITY STREETS - NIGHT

[SFX: Footsteps over wet roads and dirt.]

BUGGY: Okay, stay low and keep to the shadows.

NARRATOR: Joule and Buggy set out immediately, leaving the stink of the river behind for the grim streets.

BUGGY: We'll get to my canoe. I'll talk to my sibling and form a plan.

NARRATOR: With her bare foot in rough shape, walking is not easy. She keeps Buggy chatting as a distraction and quickly discovers that it has been a *century* since Joule's departure from the past.

BUGGY: Wow. So that makes you one hundred and twelve years old.

JOULE: My brother used to brag he was the first twin born. Guess he's not the oldest anymore. (beat) So, what's your brother like?

BUGGY: Oh, Nico? Nico's not my brother, *they* are my sibling. Or my sib. Or my sibby. That reminds me, do not call them a boy or a girl to their face. That'll only make them hate you more.

JOULE: Oh. Okay. (beat) Wait, More? How could Nico hate me *more*? They don't know I exist.

BUGGY: But they *will* hate you. 'Cause you're a stranger. But don't worry, Nico hates most people.

JOULE: Cool. Sounds like a fun kid.

[MUX]

NARRATOR: It's surreal, hurrying under stars and moon down quiet streets these many years later. The city Joule knew was bustling: horns, bus brakes, college students with loud, slurry singing. Now, Joule can hear her own heartbeat.

JOULE: (breathy, loud) Buggy. (breathing) Where are we going—

BUGGY: Shh! (whispers) We're heading into high-traffic tin territory. Wolves prowl here a lot.

JOULE: (whisper, worried) Did you say wolves?

BUGGY: (whisper) There are different kinds of tins. The copters we call octopods 'cause the tentacles. The "officers" are wolves.

JOULE: (whispers) Why? They don't look like wolves.

BUGGY: (whispers) They're shape-shifters, like werewolves. Part-humanoid, part-wolf...oid. (beat) Hold up here.

NARRATOR: He crouches behind a rusted lamp post.

[SFX: Buggy sniffs the air.]

BUGGY: (whispers) I can smell the tideline. We keep going south for a bit and we'll find the canoe.

JOULE: (whispers) I don't really like boats.

NARRATOR: Buggy pats her shoulder gently.

BUGGY: (whispers, sarcastic) Nico is going to love you.

NARRATOR: Then Buggy is off again, loping through the dark. Joule struggles to keep pace. Four days a week at baseball practice prepared her for a lot. But the pain has caught up with her.

[SFX: Joule's stomach growls.]

NARRATOR: And hunger doesn't help.

JOULE: (whispers) Do you have any food?

BUGGY: (whispers) Um. Let's see. I think I have some in my backpack. **[SFX: fishes around]** (muttering to self) Screw driver, screw driver, wrench, coil, screw driver, hammer, inhaler, hmm ... ah! Here.

JOULE: (whispers, skeptical) What is it? It looks like seaweed.

BUGGY: (whispers) Ahh, that's because it is seaweed. Sugar kelp. Try it. I got plenty.

NARRATOR: Joule pastes on a smile and accepts the leathery strip.

JOULE: (whispers, eating) Mm ... briney. You'd think with the word "sugar" in there it'd be sweet. But ... it tastes like ...

NARRATOR: ... like newspaper wrapped around week-old fish... like an unwashed jersey ... like a toenail-flavored fruit roll-up.

BUGGY: (whispers, proud) Tastes like heaven, right? The best is when bits get stuck in your teeth. Little treats for later.

JOULE: [swallow/gag]

[SFX: Distant metal footsteps, four - like an animal.]

BUGGY: (whispers) Get down!

NARRATOR: Joule nearly chokes when Buggy yanks her into the empty wheel-well of a broken-down bus. He cups his ear, listening.

[SFX: Footsteps getting closer.]

JOULE: (whispers softly) Is that ... a wolf?

NARRATOR: Joule watches in fear as a silvery human-shaped "officer" appears, then ... transforms. Its hulking arms lower to the ground. With four legs, it pads swiftly over the rubble street. An angular snout extends from its once-headless body.

[SFX: Footsteps getting closer. Mechanical nose sniff.]

BUGGY: [coughs a little]

NARRATOR: Joule glances at Buggy.

BUGGY: (whispers softly, wheezy) I'm fine. Just some kelp tickled my throat [coughs].

NARRATOR: Two beady blue eyes appear in the bus's side mirror.

BUGGY: [coughs, wheezes]

JOULE: (whispers) Buggy, quiet.

NARRATOR: Then Joule remembers: Buggy said he has asthma. This coughing fit could turn into an asthma attack any second now.

JOULE: (whispers) You have an inhaler in your backpack, right?

NARRATOR: Joule unzips the bag. It's too dark to see.

JOULE: (whispers, feeling around) C'mon. C'mon ... Got it. Here.

[SFX: Joule hands over inhaler. Buggy draws from inhaler.]

NARRATOR: The inhaler sounds regrettably loud. Joule checks the mirror. The wolf is twenty paces away. Its satellite-dish ears rotate. Its jaws spark with electricity. *Shockbolts.*

[SFX: Wolf sniffs, ears twitch. Static shocks in teeth.]

NARRATOR: Cold dread pumps through Joule's veins. She must take a chance. Deftly, she grabs a baseball-sized rock and hurls it.

[SFX: Window SHATTERS a ways away.]

NARRATOR: It smashes the window of a distant hotel. The tin turns away. And goes.

[SFX: Wolf turns, BARKS, RUNS AWAY.]

BUGGY: [exhales "Phew"], good arm. Almost as good as mine.

JOULE: Thanks. I play shortstop.

BUGGY: Huh. You don't look short to me. [*alt: What's that?*]

[MUX]

EXT. NEAR TIDELINE, CITY STREET - NIGHT

NARRATOR: The moon is high by the time they approach the boat, a long, aluminum canoe. Buggy stops short and points. Next to the canoe is a slender figure sharpening what looks to be a spear.

[SFX: SHARPENING SPEAR.]

BUGGY: (low) That's Nico. Remember, they really hate strangers.

JOULE: (low) You mentioned that.

BUGGY: (low) So. See this heap of seaweed? Hide in it.

JOULE: (low) What?! Ew. Why?

BUGGY: (low) C'mon. If Nico sees you, they will not react well. They're going to be mad enough as it is. See, I kind of ran off without telling him.

JOULE: (low) What? You didn't tell me that.

BUGGY: (low) Relax. I'll talk to them, ease them into the meet and greet while you hide. Plus its bladderwrack seaweed. Bladderwrack's not that bad. Just watch out for tube worms.

JOULE: (low) Why don't I say "hey" like a normal person? If I hide, I'll look like I have something to hide.

BUGGY: (low) Only if you get caught.

NICO (A LITTLE CLOSER): (yelling) Buggy?! **[mux]** Is that you?!

BUGGY: (low) Uh oh. Nico's coming. Joule, seriously, hide! Now!

[SFX: BROTHER marches closer.]

[MUX]

NARRATOR: Yikes! So what should Joule do? Stand up and introduce herself? If yes, go to Chapter 5, "Stand Up." Or, to do as Buggy says, select Chapter 10, "Hide."

Chapter 5, "Stand Up."

Chapter 10, "Hide."

Choose wisely. This is *The Midnight Rebellion*.

[CODA]

BUGGY: Hey! We just met. I'm Buggy. It's safe to say that so far, Joule has been terrified of almost everything. Which, I get it.

If things scare you, like climate change, that's normal too. But bravery is not having no fear. It's taking action in spite of it.

Don't ignore your fears. Learn everything you can about the crisis, and make a move. Be brave like Joule.

And keep listening for more tips and more robotic werewolves. 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 Paul Vaitkus.

Supporting mix and sound by Mumble Media.

This episode is starring:

Basma Ayatte as Joule,

Jett Dinh as Buggy,

K. Zedric Acruz as Nico,

Giselle Fernandez as Greenhead,

Jay Preston as Saugus,

Erika Henningson as Dr. Elizabeth Green,

and Erik Ransom as the narrator.

Samata Joshi is Managing Producer.

Paul Vaitkus is Production Manager.

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

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For a full list of cast and crew, visit our website:
wbur.org/themidnightrebellion.