

WBUR's  
**THE MIDNIGHT REBELLION**  
**PART II: THE REBELS**  
**CHAPTER 12 - SMOKE AND SAILS**  
By Dean Russell

[MUX]

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

Part II. The Rebels ... Chapter 12, "Smoke and Sails."

[MUX]

**NARRATOR:** Three days have passed since that fateful night when Joule Watts-Green rocketed into the future by accident, and then lost the machine that took her there.

She has survived floods and tin-skinned killers. She has made unlikely friends. And now, after their daring escape from Mud Market, Joule, optimistic Buggy Banal, and Buggy's less optimistic sibling Nico have found themselves alone in a Chinatown theater ... with a new mission.

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

**JOULE:** We can use the machine ... not only so I can get home and you can escape the Sac. .. . We can change the world.

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

**NICO:** (flat) Or death by shockbolt.

**NARRATOR:** Yes, the powerful Bright Corporation – the ruler of the Sac, the maker of the tins – is after Joule and the others. Yes, our heroes have few supplies and no canoe. And yes, they need to act quickly to recover the machine. But ...

**JOULE:** *But?*

**NICO:** But ... you need swimming lessons.

**JOULE:** *Swim lessons?* Bright is looking for the machine. If we wanna use it to change history, who knows what evil things they could do. We need to get to Black Marsh before they steal it!

**BUGGY:** True, true, true. Great points, Joule. Except ...

**JOULE:** Oh don't tell me you're with Nico. The world is at stake, and you want me to splash around in the canal.

**BUGGY/NICO:** It'll be fun. / Unless you wanna die.

**EXT. CANAL, CHINATOWN - DAY**

**NARRATOR:** If there is one rule in "Intertidal Sacrifice Zone #6-1-7," it is that you *must* know how to swim. And so ...

**[SFX: Splash!]**

**JOULE:** (choking, swimming) I ... can't ... do ... this ...

**NICO:** Stop moving your arms like that. You look like a deranged mackerel!

**JOULE:** (choking, swimming) Buggy! ... Help!

**[SFX: Radio static in bkgd]**

**BUGGY:** What's that? Sorry, I'm scanning for secret messages ...

**NEWSCASTER (STATICKY):** - ire - Nor - ild -

**BUGGY:** Did you know I've been hearing the same messages every single day-

**JOULE:** (choking, swimming) I ... don't ... care!

**NARRATOR:** Classic Buggy. (beat) While Joule masters the art of the "doggy paddle," Nico manages to craft a spear and smoke fish

for their journey. Buggy – when he isn't doing the radio thing – braids ropes and crafts a spyglass from discarded glass bottles. And together, they patch one of the theater's prop boats, a small wooden dinghy, and finally set out ...

**[SFX: Paddling]**

**NICO:** Worth it, right? If we tip, you won't drown.

**JOULE:** I won't drown because I've swallowed all the water.

**BUGGY:** Sooooo, about those secret messages ...

**NICO/JOULE:** Not now, Buggy.

**BUGGY:** *Tides*, you two are in a mood.

**NICO:** Let's just stay focused. We should be there in a few hours.

**[SFX: Paddling]**

**[MUX]**

**EXT. DINGHY, BLACK MARSH - DAY**

**NARRATOR:** The Sac is gross, but Black Marsh is worse: a sulfurous bog of swirling black and yellow ribbons, wreaking sluggishly through a web of soot-colored sloughs. Wisps of sickly grasses cling to the earth like the last, desperate hairs on Joule's vice principal's balding head. Nothing lives here but death itself.

**[SFX: Paddling dinghy]**

**NARRATOR:** They enter the mouth of a wide channel, rowing the dinghy quietly, tasting metal with every breath. Buggy fixes a gas mask to his face, and Joule and Nico don their bandanas. They peer into the acrid water.

**JOULE:** No amount of swimming lessons will convince me to go in there.

**NICO:** Yeah. We never come here. I knew it was bad, but not this.

**JOULE:** What's wrong with the place?

**BUGGY:** (with mask) [unintelligible]

**JOULE:** What?

**BUGGY:** [pulls off mask] I said, "it's from the coal."

**NARRATOR:** Coal: the dirtiest fossil fuel. Joule's mom taught her that when she was three years old. Not only does burning it give off tons of carbon dioxide, it fills the air with soot and smog.

**NICO:** See up ahead, in all that smoke? Those are Bright's factories and its power plant. We lived downwind when Buggy was a baby. We think that's why he has asthma.

**BUGGY:** And after they burn the coal, they throw whatever's left over in the marsh. [coughs, inhaler]

**NICO:** Buggy. Mask on, or you'll use up the inhaler.

**BUGGY:** [coughs] Yeah, yeah. [inhaler] [mask on]

**NARRATOR:** It dawns on Joule that she had been to this marsh when it went by a name she cannot recall. As much as she didn't love it then – marshes in general are a bit marshy – it was preferable to now, inching along, prodding the viscous, gloopy bottom with an oar to feel for the machine.

**JOULE:** There has to be a faster way. At this rate, it'll take another hundred years to find it.

**BUGGY:** (masked) [unintelligible]

**JOULE:** What?

**[SFX: underwater, DONG!]**

**BUGGY:** [lifts mask] I said, "I think I found it."

**[SFX: DONG! DONG!]**

**NARRATOR:** The channel below them begins to glow.

**[SFX: Humming from underwater]**

**NICO:** (stunned) Whoa. Is that really ... ?

**JOULE:** The machine.

**NARRATOR:** Visions of home swirl in her mind's eye. After days in this wretched place, she is finally reunited with her glorious ship home, her Queen Mary, her Old Ironsides, her Titanic!-

**[SFX: "RECORD SCRATCH"-TYPE STOP]**

**NARRATOR:** -wait, no, not that one. (beat) Anyway, this is their ride back to a better world! Joule grabs a rope and ...

**JOULE:** (like calling an outfield catch) I got it!

**[SFX: Splash!]**

**NARRATOR:** ... she's in, doggy paddling down, reaching out to the bulbous body. As carefully as she can, she hooks the rope around something - she can't see much - and then pushes off.

**[SFX: BREAKS SURFACE! Boat motor in distance]**

**JOULE:** (surfacing) This is it! It's really the machine! It's-

**NARRATOR:** She peers around. Her companions are gone.

**BUGGY:** Psst. Over here.

**NARRATOR:** Joule faces the marshy bank. Nico and Buggy have dragged the dinghy up into the thin cordgrass.

**NICO:** Joule, get over here. Tins! They're trawling the channel.

**NARRATOR:** A heavy boat winds down the waterway, dragging some sort of contraption. A net.

**[SFX: Joule swims]**

**NARRATOR:** Joule makes for the bank, rope in her teeth. How is it the moment they find the machine, the tins show up?

**EXT. ON THE PEAT, BLACK MARSH - CONT'D**

**JOULE:** They're going to scoop it up. We need to pull the machine out of the way. Quickly. Before they get here.

**NICO:** (arguing) We need to hide.

**JOULE:** We need to pull.

**NARRATOR:** Joule digs her rubber boots into the muddy peat and tugs with all of her strength. And even when Nico and Buggy join, the machine does not budge. The Bright trawler twists down the channel, getting closer and closer. There is no stopping it.

**NICO:** (apologetic) Joule, it's too late. We need to hide, now.

**NARRATOR:** Joule, red-faced, drops the rope bitterly. The three of them lie down in the reeking muck as the trawler comes around the bend, and ...

**[SFX: Trawler moving, then catches on something, slows down suddenly to a stop. Tins converse in bleeps and bloops.]**

**NARRATOR:** The trawler stops. Tins motion to one another. They pull up the net.

**BUGGY:** Squid suckers.

**NICO:** Ugh.

**JOULE:** No.

**NARRATOR:** Bright has found the machine.

**NARRATOR:** We'll be right back ... after the break.

[MUX]

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

[MUX]

**EXT. ON THE PEAT, BLACK MARSH - DAY**

**NARRATOR:** Bright has the machine. Our heroes have lost.

[SFX: The trawler leaves]

**NARRATOR:** The trawler zips away towards the smoke of Bright's factories, and Joule slumps in the mud.

**NICO:** (judgmental) What are you doing?

**JOULE:** I'm sulking. Can't a girl sulk?

**NICO:** No. Get up. We have to go after it. Now.

**JOULE:** I wanted to come here sooner, you made us wait. I wanted to keep pulling, you made us hide. What'd you change your mind?

**BUGGY:** Yeah, Nico, even I think going to the factories is risky.

**NICO:** Of course it is. It's about taking the right risks. We were never going to pull that thing out of the water in time. All we would have done is get caught. This way, we still have a chance.

**NARRATOR:** Joule studies Nico. They seem different.

**NICO:** I know I'm a stick in the mud. But now that I've actually seen the thing, I get it. We can't let Bright keep that machine.

**BUGGY:** All right, sibby!

**JOULE:** So what do we do? There have to be a hundred tins at those factories, right? We can't fight them all.

**NICO:** We don't have to. Tins run security. All the factory work is done by people. Prisoners. They bring more in every day.

**JOULE:** So ... (getting it) we sneak in.

**NICO:** Exactly.

[MUX]

**EXT. SHORELINE, BLACK MARSH, NEAR FACTORY - LATER**

[SFX: Nico pushes DINGHY into WATER]

**NARRATOR:** Armed with a plan, they return to the dinghy and take the channel to the end of the marsh. Only a brown-splotched seagull sees them ...

**SEAGULL:** SQUAWK!

**JOULE:** (bewildered, in passing) I think I know that bird.

**NARRATOR:** Once on shore, they follow a road through dunes of slag and coal until they reach a long, high fence topped with tangled coils of barbed-wire and a gate bearing the words "Be Bright ..."

**JOULE:** "... Be right."

**BUGGY:** [pulls off mask] More like "Be Bright. Yeah, right." Am I right? [sigh]

**NARRATOR:** [ahem/sigh] A pack of tin wolves stands guard at the front. Joule looks on anxiously.

**[SFX: Trucks rumbling close]**

**NARRATOR:** And that's when a line of hybrid duckboats comes barreling down the road, kicking up black dust, belching exhaust. The six-wheeled ducks brake at the gate. The wolves circle, sniffing – and snarling at the people tied-up in the beds.

**JOULE:** So those are the prisoners.

**BUGGY (MASKED):** Yep.

**NICO:** They're our ticket in. Once we're through the gate, we stick with the prisoners until we can slip away. Then we search.

**JOULE:** And how do we get through the gate?

**NARRATOR:** The gate opens. The ducks move.

**[SFX: Inhaler. Buggy and Nico run]**

**NARRATOR:** And then Nico and Buggy take off after them.

**JOULE:** [growls] You could have just answered my question.

**[SFX: Joule runs]**

**NARRATOR:** Joule follows. In the kicked-up dust, she loses sight of her friends. The trucks too. But she makes it past the gate.

**EXT. BRIGHT FACTORIES CAMPUS - CONT'D**

**[SFX: Tin wolves GROWL and BARK]**

**NARRATOR:** She hears them first. The wolves turn on their heels and give chase. The dust thins as the trucks pull away. And Joule runs exposed across an open lot. She looks left to the factories. Smokestacks spew poison. She glances right, where a river runs.

**JOULE:** (running) BUGGY! NICO! WHERE ARE YOU? WHERE—OOF.

**[SFX: Tin wolf BITES/SNARLS!]**

**NARRATOR:** Electric teeth sink into her leg. She hits the earth.

**[SFX: JOULE HITS GROUND. Tin wolves GROWL as they close in]**

**NARRATOR:** Joule is trapped in a ring of flexing pistons and electric blue eyes. Sparking jaws snap.

**JOULE:** (scared) Nice doggies. You don't eat people do you?

**[SFX: Tin wolf BARKS VICIOUSLY]**

**NARRATOR:** Joule thinks of the machine one more time. Of her brother. Her father. Her mother. Of her plan to save the world, which feels foolish now. She steels herself for the end.

Then all of a sudden, she hears angels sing.

**PRISONERS (SINGING SEA SHANTY, "Spanish Ladies" melody):**

*Farewell and adieu to you Bright blue-eyed devil,  
Farewell and adieu to your doom-tickin' tins,  
We'll drain 'em and beat 'em in the name of ol' Boston,  
We'll rewind the clock, 'fah Midnight again.*

**NARRATOR:** No. Not angels.

**JOULE:** *The prisoners?*

**NARRATOR:** The "prisoners" stuffed into the beds of the duckboats leap out, singing, and carrying cudgels and harpoons.

**JOULE:** They're not angels or prisoners. They're pirates.

**PIRATES:** TOCK TICK!

**[SFX: BRIGHT'S ALARM goes. WOLVES BARK AND RUN.]**

**NARRATOR:** At once, the wolves – which had been just as mesmerized as Joule – leave her and charge the pirates.

**[SFX: EXTENDED MELEE! PIRATES V. TINS]**

**JOULE:** BUGGY! NICO!

**NICO (DISTANT):** OVER HERE!

**NARRATOR:** She finds them huddled by a gas pipe. Nico holds Buggy, who is maskless and sucking desperately at his inhaler.

**BUGGY:** (gasping) [inhaler] pirate [inhaler] knocked off mask ...

**JOULE:** Why are pirates here?

**NICO:** No idea. It doesn't matter. We found the machine. It's at the river on a shipping vessel. Bright's taking it away.

**JOULE:** Where?

**NICO:** Out of the Sac, probably. After that, we'll never find it.

**JOULE:** Then we can't let it leave.

**[SFX: SHIPPING VESSEL HORN]**

**NICO:** The ship's pulling away.

**EXT. DOCKS, BRIGHT FACTORIES CAMPUS - CONT'D**

**NARRATOR:** The three sprint, dodging harpoons and shockbolts. Joule pushes ahead. The ship is massive, larger than her entire middle school. It chugs slowly, parting from the river bank. ... She jumps ...

**[SFX: Joule GRUNTS, GRABS CHAIN]**

**NARRATOR:** ... and her hands close around a huge iron chain holding the anchor. She's made it. She looks back.

**JOULE:** BUGGY! NICO!

**[SFX: NICO struggling, mouth covered. BUGGY choking and gasping.]**

**NARRATOR:** Buggy is on the dock, gasping. A pirate has Nico in her arms, a hand over their mouth. Two wolves snap at Nico's feet.

**NICO:** KEEP GOING! DON'T LET BRIGHT WIN! – OOF!

**NARRATOR:** And then the pirate takes Nico down. (beat) The machine is on the ship. Her friends are not.

**NICO:** (face on ground, struggling) KEEP GOING!

**[MUX]**

**NARRATOR:** What next? You decide. Return to the docks? Chapter 13, "Jump Ship." Stay with the ship? Chapter 15, "Joule Aboard."

Chapter 13, "Jump Ship."

Chapter 15, "Joule, Aboard."

Choose wisely. This is *The Midnight Rebellion*.

**[CODA - TMR TIPS]**

**NARRATOR:** Even today, many towns still get electricity from coal plants, which create unhealthy smoke and nasty leftovers called coal ash. Coal ash can wash into rivers during big storms and make animals – and people – sick. Just like Black Marsh.

Want to help? Ask an adult where your electricity comes from. Your family might be able to choose clean power, join a community solar program, or support wind energy. It's a big difference!

Keep listening for more tips and more sea shanties. And tell us your thoughts on the show. Ask a parent or guardian if you can fill out a short survey at [wbur.org/midnightsurvey](http://wbur.org/midnightsurvey).

Up next: *Chapter 13, "Jump Ship." Or Chapter 15, "Joule, Aboard."*

**[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 Jake Young.

Additional post-production by Mumble Media.

This episode is starring ...

Me, Basma Ayatte, as Joule,

Jett Dinh as Buggy,

K. Zedric Acruz as Nico,

and ... Erik Ransom as the narrator.

Additional performances by Giselle Fernandez, Marc Graue, Sarah Jiang, Cadden McArthur, Jay Preston, and Jake Young.

Managing Producer: Samata Joshi.

Production Manager: Paul Vaitkus.

Director of Digital Audio: Ben Brock Johnson.

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