

WBUR's  
**THE MIDNIGHT REBELLION**  
**CHAPTER 22 - BRIGHT TOWER**  
By Dean Russell

[MUX]

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

Chapter 22, "Bright Tower"

[MUX]

**EXT. (INT.) SKY ISLAND PARK - DAY**

[SFX: CHOPPER FLYING AWAY, SIRENS NEARING]

**BUGGY:** Joule, what do we do?

**NARRATOR:** This is bad. All they needed was to get cleaned up and slip into Sky Island without drawing too many eyes or noses. Instead they've gotten spotted bathing in a shark-infested lake, knocked over a nosy Islander, and then scattered without a clue where they were going.

**BUGGY:** Joule! C'mon! We have to get Nico!

**NARRATOR:** Nico. Yes. Buggy points across the lake to where the tentacled tin flies away with his older sibling.

[SFX: GROWLS! BARKS!]

**NARRATOR:** And now tins are charging up the hill after them.

**JOULE:** (realizing) It's too late. Nico - Nico's too far.

**BUGGY:** *What?* They're my sibling.

**NARRATOR:** How can she explain that it makes more sense to save her mom first? Bright Tower is close. Her mom will know more

about the city, she may even know where to find Nico. But Joule can't speak the words. And Buggy is red with anger.

**BUGGY:** We have to go after them.

**NARRATOR:** Then he does the unthinkable. ...

**[SFX: SPARKING, BARKING, RUNNING]**

**BUGGY:** (war cry) AHHHHHHH!!

**NARRATOR:** ... and charges down the hill straight for the tins.

**JOULE:** WAIT!

**NARRATOR:** Joule follows. But Buggy moves too quickly. He dodges the first wolf, and slings his heavy backpack at the second ...

**[SFX: SLAM! CRACKLE!]**

**BUGGY:** [whistles] FIN!

**FIN:** SQUAWK!

**NARRATOR:** Fin bursts from the trees and *unloads* on the third's camera eye, sending it into a blind rage.

**[SFX: PLOP! TIN WOLF FREAKS OUT]**

**NARRATOR:** Buggy reaches the lakeshore. And jumps.

**[SFX: SPLASH!]**

**NARRATOR:** Joule doesn't see him get away. She only feels the voltage as it surges through her body ...

**[SFX: SHOCKBOLTS!!!!!!]**

**TIN 1:** TARGET ACQUIRED.

**[FADE OUT]**

**INT. HOSPITAL ROOM, BRIGHT TOWER - DAY**

**[SFX: Hospital beep.]**

**NARRATOR:** The brightness comes slowly ...

**[SFX: Various futuristic hospital sounds.]**

**NARRATOR:** Joule tugs at the ... sheets? Where is she? ~~She blinks.~~  
Bed rails. Medical equipment. She must be in a hospital.

**[SFX: spoon scraping Jell-O]**

**NARRATOR:** A gray-haired man sits beside her, spooning wiggly chunks of something into his mouth. He swallows and grins.

**MAN:** Berry blue. Not as good as it once was. But that's what happens when they use lab-grown horse hooves for the gelatin. Want some?

**JOULE:** (dazed) Where am I? Who are you?

**MAN:** You mean, you can't tell?

**NARRATOR:** The man is handsome and dressed in a dark suit. Near her dad's age. In fact, he looks like her dad. Dark, freckled nose, broad shoulders. His irises, eclectic blue. Joule sits up.

**JOULE:** [soft gasp] *Hart?*

**HARTREE:** Sis. It's Hartree now. Sounds more grown up.

**JOULE:** But ... how? You're ...

**HARTREE:** ... one hundred and twelve years old. Yep. The miracles of robotics, Sailor.

**NARRATOR:** The man - *Hartree*, her brother - tugs playfully at her sail-sized ears. She had forgotten her embarrassing nickname.

Nico and Buggy never even mentioned her ridiculously large ears. But it's Hartree's other words that draw her attention.

**JOULE:** Robotics? What does that have to do with being old?

**NARRATOR:** His grin widens. Before she can understand what's happening, he picks at one of his cuticles and proceeds to peel back the skin on his hand. But instead of blood and muscle, there's grease and gears. Joule looks on in horror.

**HARTREE:** I think your friends would call me a "tin-skin." But you can see my skin is actually a special silicone I designed myself.

**NARRATOR:** Hartree relays the skin and it mends itself instantly.

**JOULE:** (unwell) I have to get up.

**NARRATOR:** She kicks back the sheet and drops her feet over the bed onto clean vinyl flooring. She tries to stand, but her legs are weak and her gown tangles ...

**[SFX: Falling, catching]**

**HARTREE:** Whoa. Easy, Sailor. You got zapped good at the park. It'll take a minute to get your head right.

**JOULE:** (freaking) This isn't real. I need to wake up. WAKE UP!

**HARTREE:** Take a deep breath! You are okay. I'm here for you.

**NARRATOR:** Hartree meets her amber eyes with his ... fake ones.

**HARTREE:** Maybe I shouldn't have started with the skin peel. But relax. Before my organic body died, I uploaded my thoughts and memories to a computer so I could keep living. **[intentional shifting to HART'S voice and back]** Joule, I am your brother. And I'm happy to see you. I've waited a long time.

**JOULE:** I-I-but where are my friends? Where's Mom?

**HARTREE:** All fine. They'll be excited you're awake. Get dressed, and I'll explain everything, okay? You're safe now. Trust me.

[MUX]

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

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

[MUX]

**INT. HOSPITAL ROOM, BRIGHT TOWER - DAY**

**NARRATOR:** Inside the hospital room, Joule dons the fresh clothes left by her bedside: A pair of jeans and sweater remarkably similar to the ones she was wearing the night she left home.

Her head is still cloudy. She slowly double knots her laces and checks her mom's pocket watch.

[SFX: TICKING]

**JOULE:** Good.

[SFX: OPENS DOOR, EXITS]

**INT. HALLWAY, BRIGHT TOWER - DAY**

[SFX: People bustle about]

**NARRATOR:** Once she gets into the hallway, it becomes clear that this is not a hospital. There are no nurses or patients.

**JOULE:** [gasps]

**NARRATOR:** They are on a balcony hallway in an enormous glass atrium. Her brother leans on the guardrail, which, if Joule had to guess, is made of gold.

**JOULE:** (nervous) Hart, what is this place?

**HARTREE:** I'm afraid if I tell you, you'll freak out.

**JOULE:** Just say it.

**HARTREE:** You're in Bright Tower.

**JOULE:** *What?* But Bright is hunting me!

**HARTREE:** Bright isn't hunting you. We were trying to rescue you. Just like we rescued Mom.

**NARRATOR:** Joule takes a step back.

**JOULE:** *We? You work for Bright?*

**HARTREE:** Don't make a face, Joule. I was always good with robots. Plus, I needed a home when the world fell apart.

**JOULE:** But Hart ...

**HARTREE:** I know what those people say on the outside. But Joule, people get stuff wrong all the time. They assume things. Or make them up. It's easy to hate what you don't understand.

**NARRATOR:** Hartree's shoulder slump. Even though she knows he's a robot, she recognizes the gesture as classic Hart.

**HARTREE:** Let's take a walk. I have something to show you.

**JOULE:** Are we going to meet the others?

**HARTREE:** C'mon.

[MUX]

[SFX: Walking]

**NARRATOR:** The balcony walkway spirals up the atrium and past vistas of the city. Colorful advertisements play on the sides of the glass buildings. Hovercars move in dense and speedy streams.

**HARTREE:** (walking) ... Everything runs on electricity here. And I mean *everything* ...

**NARRATOR:** Joule cannot get a word in. Hartree talks the whole time, barely pausing to breathe ...

**HARTREE:** (walking) ... Which I don't actually need to do since I'm a robot, but I wanted to look natural. Impressive, right? ...

**NARRATOR:** The individuals they pass dress in expensive silks and silver threaded collars and heels inlaid with gemstones. The dominant hairstyle looks like soft serve dipped in diamonds. And ...

**JOULE:** (walking) What are those weird bubble goggles everyone's wearing? I saw them at the park too.

**HARTREE:** Residents spend most of their days in virtual reality. When you're trapped on an island, it's the only escape.

**JOULE:** But—

**HARTREE:** What? You think we want to be here? No. Those old enough to remember the first world miss it. And people born here itch for something beyond this city.

**JOULE:** I never thought about that. And the people ... are *real*?

**HARTREE:** You mean, are they "tins?" No. I am unique.

**NARRATOR:** Joule goes to speak, but Hartree hurries ahead into a glass tube elevator. The platform, visible in the tube, isn't attached to any pulleys or wires.

**HARTREE:** It's electromagnetic. That's how it floats. (charming) [chuckle] If the power went out, we'd crash to our deaths.

**JOULE:** Uh. You're kidding, right?

**HARTREE:** Don't worry. We've got our own energy grid. An outage is impossible.

**NARRATOR:** This does not reassure Joule, but she steps onto the platform anyway. Whatever gets her closer to the others. To Mom.

**HARTREE:** By the way, it's a little fast.

[SFX: DOORS CLOSE. ELEVATOR TAKES OFF!]

**JOULE:** AHHHHHHHH!!!!

[SILENCE]

INT. ROTUNDA, BRIGHT TOWER - DAY

[SFX: DING! DOORS OPEN, JOULE BREATHING HARD]

**ELEVATOR:** Floor Two Hundred.

**HARTREE:** [laughs] (humored) Just like old times, eh, Sailor? I remember how I always had to push you to do anything.

**JOULE:** (breathing, annoyed) You mean you used to *pressure* me into doing things I didn't want to do.

**HARTREE:** And look at you now. Just don't throw up, okay?

**NARRATOR:** Joule steps off the elevator into a large rotunda. The marble floor is decorated with a sun made of sapphires.

**JOULE:** Well, where are they?

**HARTREE:** Patience.

**JOULE:** (annoyed) No, Hart. I'm tired and confused, and I don't want to be here. I want to see my friends and Mom.

**HARTREE:** [terse laugh] Least now you know how it feels.

**JOULE:** What's that supposed to mean?

**HARTREE:** Did you ever think what my life was like after you disappeared?

**JOULE:** I-I ...

**HARTREE:** You know Dad blamed me for your death? He forced me to stop inventing as a punishment. And he never forgave me, even when I figured out the truth that you and Mom abandoned us.

**JOULE:** Abandoned? I've been trying to go home this whole time.

**HARTREE:** Oh, have you? Because you haven't once brought up the "machine." You've asked about Mom and those tide rats an annoying amount of times, but not the Horologium. Why is that?

**JOULE:** I don't like you like this.

**HARTREE:** If I changed, that's your fault.

**JOULE:** You want to talk about the Horologium? Okay. Let's talk about it! Bright's the reason I didn't come home. I'd be there now if those stupid tins didn't steal the machine.

**HARTREE:** *Why does everyone call them that?* They're not even made of tin! It's a chrome alloy! And besides, if they hadn't taken the Horologium, then your friends, the rebels, would have gotten their grubby hands on it and used it however they wanted. They don't care about some girl going home to her family. You realize that, right? They were going to use you, just like they used our mother. Filled her brain with nonsense about Bright, "the evil corporation that polluted the world." *Everyone* polluted the world. Captain Ugly always leaves that part out. Bright is no worse than the rest. We just played the game better.

**JOULE:** They're the bad guys. Can't you see that? Your robots terrorize people in the Sac. They force them to work. They dump chemicals in their water and air. For what? VR and perfect parks and hovercars? No one should live in luxury while everyone else can barely live at all. Why are you defending Bright?

**HARTREE:** BECAUSE I AM BRIGHT! (beat) People say Brutus Bright's son runs the show. [laughs] He had no family. He only had me. See, after you disappeared, I went to see Brutus at a rally. He spoke of a future where people like me – the brilliant ones – would be respected, not left behind or told what they couldn't do. He saw my worth, took me in, taught me to never back down, and I became his best mind, his sharpest inventor. I stayed loyal when the war broke out. And before he died, he entrusted me with the Bright Corporation. He knew I could crush the rebels, and I did. I ended the war and made what I could from the leftovers.

**JOULE:** And how'd that work out for you?

**HARTREE:** [ad-lib mimicking] Don't be smart. My perfect future has yet to come.

**NARRATOR:** His eyes flare, and the sapphire sun at the center of the room splits. A shape rises through the floor ...

**JOULE:** The Horologium.

**HARTREE:** I promised you would see your mother and friends again. I will keep that promise ... if you help me.

**NARRATOR:** Hartree pushes her toward the machine.

**JOULE:** Ow!

**HARTREE:** The Horologium arrived weeks ago, and much to my disappointment, it did not work. So I kindly asked its inventor to show me how to use it, and she not-so-kindly refused. Dr. Green said she would rather live with sharks. [laughs] She's locked up now, thinking about her choices. In the meantime, I decided to track down the only other soul familiar with the machine. Even if you eluded my tins, I still lured you here.

**JOULE:** (struggling) You wish.

**HARTREE:** Oh. And who do you think sent those radio signals?

**JOULE:** What?

**HARTREE:** I couldn't have it be too easy. You needed to believe it was a "secret code." But do you really think mommy-dearest could rig up a radio station in a prison? She's barely hanging on.

**JOULE:** (struggling) LET ME GO!

**NARRATOR:** He releases her collar and bends to her ear.

**HARTREE:** (low) Very well. [**gitching with HART'S voice**]  
Go on, sister. Show me how you made the Horologium work.

**JOULE:** No. I won't let you go back. Whatever your plan is, you'll only make the world worse.

**HARTREE:** I really doubt that's possible. But I don't care about the past. I plan to go so far forward in time that the only thing left of humanity will be the oil squeezed from their decayed bodies. It may take millions of years, but the climate will reset once humans die off, our resources will renew, and I will have all I need to raise a race of perfect machines – humans with all of the bad stripped out. I'm sick of this world.

**JOULE:** You made this world. You polluted it. And now, what? You'll abandon it. (snarky) Just like I abandoned you, right?

**HARTREE:** SHUT UP!

**NARRATOR:** He gives her one more hard shove. She falls, sliding on the hard floor. He towers over her. She flips over and crab walks backward, closer and closer to the Horologium. (beat) And that is when she feels the pulse of her pocket watch stop.

**JOULE:** Huh?

**NARRATOR:** Red lights flicker on behind her. She turns to see it.

**[SFX: MACHINE STARTS]**

**HARTREE:** You made it work. *What did you do?*

**JOULE:** I—I don't know.

**NARRATOR:** Then his eyes fall on the watch. The clock face glows the same shade of red. Joule realizes ...

**JOULE:** They go together ...

**HARTREE:** ... machine and watch ...

**JOULE/HARTREE:** *It's a key.*

**NARRATOR:** Hartree lunges. Joule rolls sideways and makes for the elevator. But Hartree's eyes flare again, and the doors slam. At the same moment, the Horologium opens. Joule sees her chance. Run. Jump inside. Disappear.

**HARTREE:** You won't do it.

**JOULE:** You don't get to decide what I do. Not anymore.

**NARRATOR:** Her eyes cut between Hartree and the machine. There's enough distance. She could make it.

**HARTREE:** If you leave, you will never see them again. I will end your precious mother and friends, and burn the Sac for good measure. (beat) But here is my offer: Give me the key, and I'll let you go. I won't hurt them. Cross my "Hart" and hope to die.

**NARRATOR:** She crouches, shoulders set, legs flexed.

**HARTREE:** So what will it be? Save your friends, or save yourself?

**[MUX]**

**NARRATOR:** To agree to Hartree's offer and give him the key in exchange for the others, go to Chapter 23, "Accept." To reject the deal, select Chapter 25, "Refuse."

Chapter 23, "Accept."

Chapter 25, "Refuse."

Choose wisely. This is *The Midnight Rebellion*.

#### [CODA]

**NARRATOR:** Hartree is right. One day the climate will reset and start cooling again. But if we do not stop burning fossil fuels, that could take millions of years.

So don't be like Hartree and try to escape. Take responsibility. That means saying: Okay. This is on us. What do we do next?

Waste less.

Save energy.

Conserve water.

Join others.

Be heard.

Choose the future you want. Up next: *Chapter 23, "Accept"* or *Chapter 25, "Refuse."*

#### [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 Emily Jankowski and Mumble Media.

This episode is starring ...

Me, Basma Ayatte, as Joule,

Jett Dinh as Buggy,

K. Zedric Acruz as Nico,

Cadden McArthur as Fin,

Jaylen Askins as Hartree,

and ... Erik Ransom as the narrator.

Additional performances by Emmanuel Chumaceiro and Amory Sivertson.

Managing Producer: Samata Joshi.

Production Manager: Paul Vaitkus.

Director of Digital Audio: Ben Brock Johnson.

Funding provided in part by the Arthur Vining Davis Foundations.

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