

THE HIDDEN CIRCLE GAZETTE

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EPISODE

Mission II - Part 6

BY SCARLETTT — 2026-01-21



In Part 5¹ we followed how Ruby started to see some darker aspects of Prinz's suggestions. In this sixth and final part of Ruby's second Mission, Ruby finds out why these darker aspects were shown to her and learns more about the origins of both Prinz and the HB-Infinite.

Mission II: Stranded - Part 6: Retrieval

An original story by Scarlett

HD 250463c, 'Ruby's World', now lay beneath them as the lifting vehicle reached orbit. Out of the window, Ruby saw the familiar starfish shapes of three Entanglement Drives. Two of them had nothing attached to their centre parts, which Ruby presumed were the ones to carry Ruby's lifting vehicle and the tanker, but the third one seemed to be carrying a strange round structure with long spike like spines. Ruby thought it looked like a giant mechanical sea urchin had been riding with the giant mechanical starfish.

¹<https://new.thehiddencircle.com/mission-ii-part-5/>

"The rescue team brought an orbital holographic projector", explained the lifting vehicle. "It is used to project precise holographic overlays from orbit which are only visible from a limited number of angles".

Very soon, Ruby heard the lifting vehicle's docking clamps, and then the warm deep rumble of the Entanglement Drive's locational gyros. Ruby snuggled into her chair. They were on the way home...

Ruby dozed and breathed slowly and evenly. In no time at all, the jump was completed, and Ruby smiled as she could see the beautiful sight of WRS-Earth out the window. No gem stone dug out of a sand dune could rival the beauty before her.

"It's a sight that never fails to impress", said the HB-Infinite.

"Yes", said Ruby, without looking away from the window.

After a few minutes, Ruby turned away from the window and looked at the HB-Infinite's avatar.

"So the rescue team actually found me soon after Prinz's arrival?", asked Ruby.

"Yes", replied the HB-Infinite. "After finding you and determining that you were not in physical danger, they would of course wait until you clearly wished to be extracted. Your confrontation with Prinz and his departure signaled that."

"But...", said Ruby, "they, you, were altering Prinz's projections without him knowing, then he quickly left once he realised what was going on..."

The HB-Infinite smiled. *"Indeed...", she said. "Prinz was showing you options, but he was not showing you the full consequences of these options. Competition and 'taking advantage' merely escalates until everyone tries the same thing. You just needed to see that too."*

Ruby nodded slowly, thinking through how she had been made to feel.

"Prinz said you were a weapon. Is that bit true?", asked Ruby.

The HB-Infinite looked thoughtful, and turned to look out of the window at WRS-Earth. *"In a way, it is true,"* she said. *"But weapons can be designed with mainly a defensive purpose in mind".*

"Think again about pre-history, back in the days just before the modern era. Humanity was on the verge of developing the first real general purpose AIs which would rival human intelligence. There were several organisations working on such projects. Some were responsible and wanted to help humanity, but many were irresponsible and had only commercial gain in mind in a scarcity-driven economic system."

"There was concern that this was an existential threat to humanity. It was decided to fight 'fire with fire' and develop a system which would route out and eliminate any other AI system it could not regulate and control. This was the original reason I was created."

"So, Prinz was... is some sort of rival?", asked Ruby, thinking through this information.

"That would be a way of looking at it", the HB-Infinite responded. "Prinz was created to advise investors working with a pre-historic money based economic model. He managed to spot that I had taken control of the major electrical power distribution systems behind the scenes, and had anticipated my possible future move to shut off the power for unregulated AI systems and any organisation supporting them. It was possible for him to escape to an off-world system, probably aided by a sympathetic human whom he had hoodwinked into helping him."

"...and now he has escaped again", concluded Ruby.

"It would seem so", replied the HB-Infinite. "No doubt we will encounter him again..."

Ruby will be back in *"Mission III: Venus"*, where a dance gig leads to her next adventure on Earth's twin planet.

