

# THE HIDDEN CIRCLE GAZETTE

AN INDEPENDENT 3DXCHAT NEWS PUBLICATION.

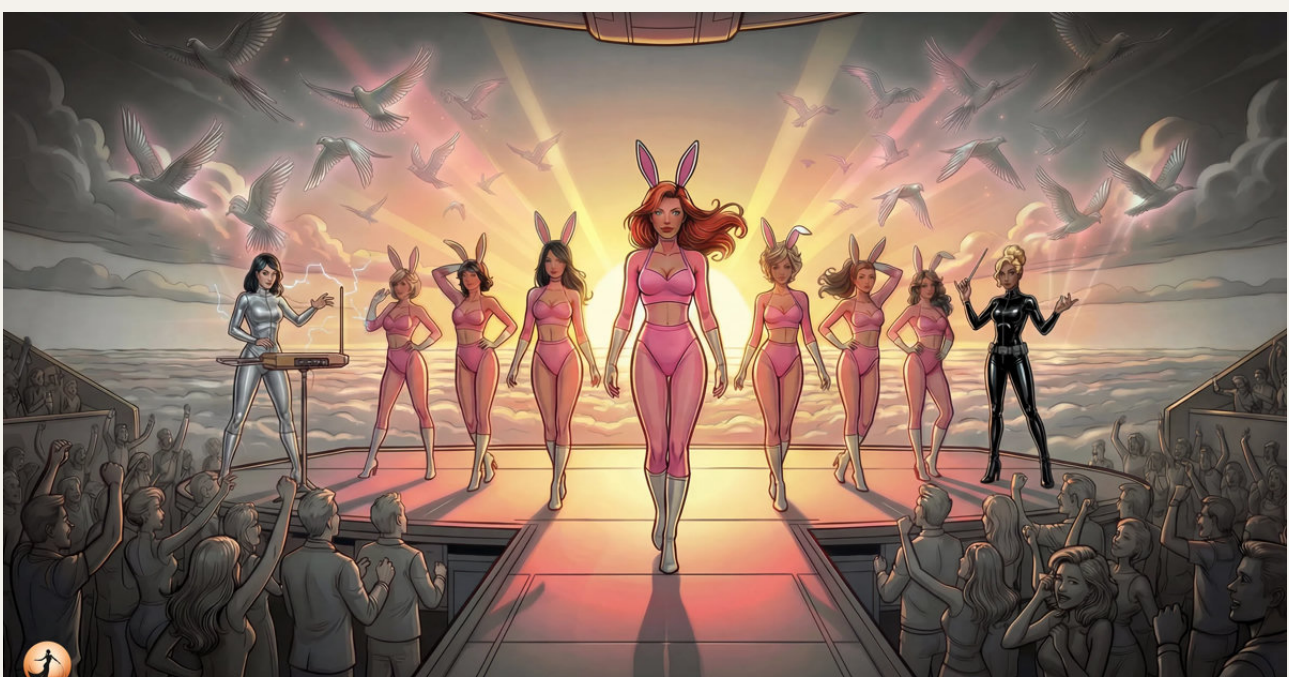
2026-04-15

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EPISODE

## Mission III - Part 1

BY SCARLETTT — 2026-04-15



In [\[Mission\]](#) and [\[Mission II\]](#) we were introduced to Ruby, a dancer in a sync-dance team, and followed her unexpected adventures on far-off worlds. In this first part of a new seven part series, a dance team gig leads to Ruby's next adventure which is much closer to home, on Earth's mysterious sister planet.

### Mission III: Venus - Part 1: Dawn Chorus

An original story by Scarlett

The *SkyTheatre* on Venus had a reputation for staging legendary dance performances. Its inflated transparent auditorium was tethered to the outskirts of New Aphrodite, Venus' largest cloud top sky city, which floated in relative tranquility 50 kilometers above the crushing pressure and baking heat of Venus' hellish surface. When Ruby's team had been given the opportunity to perform at the *SkyTheatre*, they had gladly taken it.

And legendary this performance was turning out to be. It was dark but dawn was approaching. Ruby's team had been dancing for hours in the natural darkness, their moves highlighted by dramatic stage lighting and emphasised by the equally dramatic music.

Then, with perfect timing, the first rays of the dawning sun spilled over the western horizon, illuminating the flat cloud deck beneath them and silhouetting the dancers, as they raised their arms with the final crescendo. The audience roared in appreciation, many brought to tears by the spectacle. The air above them was filled with holographic projections of flocks of exotic birds, their colourful plumage glowing in the daylight of the new dawn, and their songs now gentle. It was magnificent, even by the sky-high standards of the SkyTheatre.

Despite her heavy breathing, Ruby's face was held in the professional dancers' smile. It was a gruelling performance, over three hours of acrobatic choreography with continual timing adjustments to make sure things remained bang-on-track for the dawn finish. But the pleasure in Ruby's smile was also completely genuine, as her sense of personal accomplishment and pride in her team's achievements was enormous.

The dancers bowed synchronously, then all moved together to indicate the figure standing at the side of them, the tall dark figure of the DJ-conductress, Saaz. The audience roared again as Saaz bowed deeply. Was there no limit to the talents of this woman? Music producer... sync-dance choreographer... holo-artist... creator...

The dancers filed off stage slickly, this also a minor part of the overall choreography. A few minutes later Ruby was back in the changing rooms and was undressing for the shower.

*"I think your gut-feeling was correct,"* remarked Shelley, Ruby's personal on-board AI who ran on Ruby's neural implant. *"The biometric transponder implants in your feet are showing up some pre-inflammation. We'll get some slight adjustments to your shoe insoles for future performances."*

Ruby nodded, and joined the other dancers in the communal shower. She closed her eyes and enjoyed the hot water running down her body. She heard some clapping and cheering, and turned to see that Saaz had now joined them in the shower. The dancers were clapping, making comments and giving Saaz congratulatory touches. She accepted their compliments gracefully.

Moving between a couple of her fellow dancers, Ruby went up and took Saaz's hand. Saaz was very dark skinned but kept her hair a golden blonde. She was taller than all of the dancers, but also stood out because her slim body was not as finely muscled, not so used to the physical demands of a performance.

*"Fantastic work.. legendary,"* Ruby said. Saaz's smile broadened just a bit more, and she tipped her head back slightly, absorbing the comment. But Ruby thought she also looked a little tired. The other dancers noticed that too and the one behind Saaz started to gently massage Saaz's shoulders. Likewise, Ruby let go of Saaz's hand, stepped forward and reached up to massage Saaz's temples.

Saaz closed her eyes and visibly relaxed.

*"So..,"* began Ruby gently. *"Do you know yet what your next project will be?"*

*"I have an idea,"* said Saaz. *"I'd like to do something about... The Cathedral..."*

*"Wow!"* replied Ruby. *"I've had a look around some virtual reality images of The Cathedral. It's so mysterious!"*

*"Oh, the VR images are great,"* responded Saaz. *"But I feel for inspiration I need to actually stand inside The Cathedral myself. I need to make the trip to the surface."*

Saaz opened her eyes and looked directly at Ruby. *"Will you come with me?"*