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EPISODE

Mission III - Part 7

BY SCARLETTT — 2026-06-13



In [part 6]/(mission-iii-part-6/) the triggered memories experienced by Ruby and Saaz in The Cathedral seem to grow even more intense. In this seventh and final part of Ruby's mission on Venus, Ruby and the HB-Infinite discuss what may have just happened.

Mission III: Venus - Part 7: Inspiration

Back in the airship, Ruby and Saaz were quickly stripped of the environment suits and then laid naked on couches as a number of medical scanners hummed and whirred about them. The medical equipment was asking them specific questions about their experiences interleaved with other apparently random questions including simple arithmetic and names of members of their families. Ruby felt certain muscles in her body tense and relax, and guessed that her neural implant was working along with the medical tests.

Eventually, the medical equipment was retracted, the AI systems seemingly satisfied there was no physical nor mental damage. As Ruby dressed, she noticed the holographic avatar of the HB-Infinite had joined them in the cabin. The HB-Infinite was looking thoughtfully at the two women.

"So, what happened?", asked Ruby.

"We don't know", replied the HB-Infinite. *"It's not surprising that The Cathedral triggered an emotional response, but we did not expect it to be as powerful nor the exact nature of the triggered responses to be so specifically similar in both of you."*

"Yes", said Ruby, *"has there been anything like this before?"*

"Nothing", said the HB-Infinite in response. *"The Cathedral has been extensively studied by AI equipment and even by human scientific teams, but no similar experiences have ever been reported."*

"The crystalline structure of The Cathedral is extremely complex and some sections are as intricate as electronic circuitry used in our computing systems", continued the HB-Infinite. "But the patterns of organisation are like nothing known to our technology. For example, there is no indication of how the system could be powered, assuming it was some sort of equivalent of our electronics. Perhaps the structure acts as a kind of passive resonator, amplifying certain thoughts and emotions when the conditions are right."

"That would make some sort of sense," said Ruby, considering the concept. *"It may go to explain why the basic themes of what Saaz and I were thinking seemed to be the same. There was a strong feeling of a warning against a tragic technological disaster caused by a sort of hubris, well-meaning intentions but hubris none the less. What could the warning be about?"*

"There is something from our own pre-history", replied the HB-Infinite. *"In the century or so before the modern era, there was an initiative called [Project Plowshare](#project-plowshare). The general idea was to use large nuclear explosions to help with excavations for large civil engineering projects, such as creating canals and harbours for ocean-going surface ships. There were some test detonations, but they seemed to encounter problems from radiation and from having a poor understanding of the underground geology of the test sites. At one test, an unexpected radioactive steam cloud was produced. There were also concerns about triggering earthquakes."*

"So...", speculated Ruby, *"perhaps there was once a technological civilisation on Venus, and they triggered the volcanic activity on the surface by their equivalent of Project Plowshare. Maybe the last act of their dying civilisation was to construct The Cathedral to pass on a warning to others.."*

The HB-Infinite smiled. *"That would be a nice poetic explanation", she said. "I have quarantined the area for now in case The Cathedral is actually a sophisticated AI which could potentially be a danger to humanity. Alternatively, we may just prove that it is not a technological structure of any sort at all."*

Saaz had also dressed and had been listening in to the conversation. *"But... it was fantastic inspiration!", she exclaimed. "My next production will be.... 'The Warning from The Cathedral'!"*

Ruby will be back in "Mission IV: Cyberspace".

PROJECT PLOWSHARE: WHEN NUKES WERE SUPPOSED TO BE HELPFUL

In the 1950s and 60s, there was a brief period when humanity looked at the atomic bomb and thought, *"Yes, this could definitely improve civil engineering."*

This was Project Plowshare, a United States government program dedicated to finding peaceful uses for nuclear explosions. The idea was simple enough: if a nuclear device could excavate a gigantic crater in a fraction of a second, why not use it to dig harbors, carve canals, extract natural gas, or reshape landscapes?

Scientists proposed using nuclear bombs to create a new sea-level canal through Central America, excavate mountain passes, and even build artificial harbors in remote locations. One test in Nevada displaced millions of tons of earth almost instantly, producing a crater large enough to make ordinary construction equipment look like children's toys.

There was, unfortunately, a small catch. The resulting landscapes tended to be somewhat radioactive.

As it turned out, people were surprisingly reluctant to live, work, fish, farm, or vacation in areas recently improved by thermonuclear landscaping. Public enthusiasm waned, costs rose, and by the 1970s the project quietly faded away.

Project Plowshare remains a fascinating relic of the Atomic Age, an era when technological optimism was so powerful that "*Have you tried using a nuclear bomb?*" was considered a serious answer to an astonishing number of questions.

Watch: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h3DCdWyb0cc>