

THE HIDDEN CIRCLE GAZETTE

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EPISODE

Mission - Part 4

BY SCARLETTT — 2025-10-02



Part 3¹ of "Mission" followed Ruby's attempt at first contact, which perhaps did not go as well as would have been hoped for. In this fourth part of the six part series, Ruby encounters a friendlier face, but at a very strange club.

Mission - Part 4: Second Contact

An original story by Scarlett

Tears welled up in Ruby's eyes. How did the local's on-board AI not detect that Ruby was not sexually interested in her from Ruby's bio-signs and analysis of Ruby's speech patterns and body language? How come it did not perform even the most rudimentary drama-risk assessment of a sexual interaction?

Ruby sobbed...

¹<https://new.thehiddencircle.com/mission-part-3/>

"The local was not equipped with an on-board AI", Melanie was saying. "Please try not to get upset. The situation could not have possibly been your fault in any way. I am adjusting your endorphin levels..."

Ruby felt better straight away. She heard a buzzing and turned around to see that the lifting vehicle had sent a small drone carrying toiletries. Ruby freshened up and felt better still.

Slipping off her shoes again, she continued walking towards the next set of buildings along the beach. It seemed also to be an open-air club, but an odd combination of clashing styles of building. There also seemed to be two sets of music playing simultaneously; similar dance music genres, but their beats clashing and jarring in Ruby's ears. Melanie reduced the perceived volume of the music for Ruby to help with this.

As she got closer, Ruby could see there were quite a few people on the dance floor, and judging by their crude dance attempts (Ruby did not need AI prompting for this), about half were dancing to one of the rhythms, and the other half to the other. The dancers all wore augmented reality headsets, but despite that, seem to regularly collide with each other. It was as if one set of club goers could not see the other set.

On the steps of the strange club, a slim blonde girl was sitting, one of the few without a headset. She smiled at Ruby as she approached, and patted the step next to her, inviting Ruby to sit by her. She seemed friendly, so Ruby sat as invited.

"Hey, alien", said the girl. "I'm Anna. I thought I would not see anybody to talk to tonight. But it looks as if you aliens are also 'torn'."

Ruby was naturally pleased to see a friendly face but also puzzled by the comment.

"Hi, I'm Ruby", she replied. "Nice to meet you Anna, but I am not sure what you mean by 'torn'. Do you mind explaining?"

Anna giggled. *"Your alien planet must be a long long way away if you have never heard of the club wars! Nobody really knows how it started, or what it's really about. Anyway, most clubs are either on one side or another and both run continuously to attract people away from the other, so as to reduce their attendance rankings."*

"So, those augmented reality headsets allow people to enjoy both?", wondered Ruby.

"Oh no, my pretty and innocent alien friend," replied Anna, kissing Ruby gently on the cheek. "You're cute but so strange! They are wearing 'Iggy Specs'. They make people on your 'Ignore List' invisible, and you can't hear any sounds they make."

Anna sighed and continued. *"I came with my girlfriend and my boyfriend. They had some sort of argument and each joined a different side here. But I've always been 'torn' and could never decide which side to support. Because I did not join one or other of them quickly enough.. they both 'iggied' me."*

She sniffed loudly and a small tear ran down her cheek. Anna linked her arm with Ruby's and lay her head on Ruby's shoulder.

Ruby felt so sorry for Anna, and carefully unlinked her arm and placed it around Anna's waist. Poor thing, thought Ruby.. and she seemed so.. civilized.

"Well, what do we have here?", said a voice familiar from a recent encounter. Ruby looked up. It was the local in the leather jacket from the rock club, and she had two big hares with her. "It's that stuck-up alien bitch. She turned me down for this skinny little girl..."