

A LONG WAY DOWN

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Welcome back to the frontier, Junior,

Cold wind. Long shadows. Creaking branches and the patter of small stones rolling.

You're a long way from home, Soldier, and that pulverized communicator from your pack would lend to the idea that the cavalry's likely at least a half a dozen klicks due East. Bad news, but it still gets worse when you notice the vanishing shafts of light from a setting sun. You won't get far off your visor's fading helmet light.

Your only way out is forward and away from your best chance of finding other humans for now. You need to seek basic shelter, find some water, and hunker down.

Good luck, Dropper...

You may sincerely need it.

As an elite shocktrooper of the enterprising corporate playgrounds of distant stars, it is a "Dropper's" job to respond to threats to national security and corporate megacorps alike. Territorial warfare has engulfed the many spacefaring nations to rise from the muddled smaller of the Planet Earth. Plenty of guys and gals enlist in the *Freedom Militia's* of the Outer Gulches, the United Americas Commerce Guild's peacekeepers troops, or patrol the starports with the Coast Guard.

However, our brave hero reserves the title of hero across the UACG as a member of the UA'S airborne shocktroopers. No farm boy, hick, pencil pushing Lieutenant does what these guys can do with their rated-for-orbital-re-entry drop pods.

After an insertion gone wrong, the lone Dropper finds themselves stranded on the seemingly desolate moon of Voa-3C224. Though the rock is eerily quiet and a bit barren to the artistic eye, the Dropper quite quickly discovers evidence of deserted human activity: mining lights, scattered and trailing off into the distance towards a large... crater? Sinkhole perhaps?

Moon quarry?

This world isn't quite used to seeing evidence of that which goes beyond human (other than an occasional cyborg or mutant of course). The lone dropper, armed with a service pistol and their helmet's headlamp, encounters something very strange at the crater site, a certain alien flora with an alluring glow. Seeing them dense around a what looked like a mining sinkhole would catch our lone soldier's eye.

Whatever drove the moon's previous inhabitants away, whether it be resource dry-up, something *inhuman*, or just plain old human cruelty so far from centralized powers, the Dropper takes their chances as the veil of night draws in around them and outside temperature drops.

The idea is to follow up on our Dropper's descent down winding cave systems of alien flora, traverse sci-fi miners' camps and colonial outposts, and Duke it out with anything unfriendly scattered between them and a ticket to the farthest star from here.

Pulsating purple plant growth keeps through human space mines, a more twisted and seemingly sinister twist on nature reclaiming abandoned civilizations on earth. The warped growth coils around rotted bones, old worksuits, and seems to provide some degree of power to the decrepit machinery abandoned by the miners.

What seem to be lunar debris impact craters doughty the planet's surface and make travel in the night even more uncertain, even as the deafening silence, buzz of worn-out machinery, and crashes of meteor strikes heard from underground threaten the Dropper's sanity. Unknown bacteria could make any scrape their last with dipping into short stock of life-saving miracle stims of the future spec ops arsenal.

Worse: in these hauntingly wide open spaces or anxiety-inducing cramped tunnels, one can only ponder if they're beginning to hallucinate the strange figures that stalk the edges of the dark or the rock spires of distant horizons, or if the Dropper must contend with something festering within this frightening world.