




I THINK I'VE FIGURED
OUT WHERE YOU *CAME*
FROM, ROVER. I'VE FOUND
WRECKAGE OF *ANOTHER*
SHIP FROM EARTH.



THE WRECK MUST HAVE
BEEN *BAD*, BUT I FOUND
SOME USABLE SALVAGE.

NOVEMBER 9, 2179. 1:07 PM, EARTH
CENTRAL TIME. LV-225. ONE OF THREE
KNOWN MOONS OF THE CALPAMOS
PLANET IN THE ZETA 2 RETICULI SYSTEM.

MAYBE I CAN PATCH UP SOME KIND OF
PRESSURIZED SUIT AND GO EXPLORING
THE SURFACE *OUTSIDE* THE JUNGLE...

SEE WHAT THE
REST OF THIS MOON
LOOKS LIKE. THAT BLACK
GOD ACTED AS SOME KIND
OF *ACCELERANT*, I'M
SURE OF IT. THAT WOULD
ACCOUNT FOR THE
ACCELERATED
EVOLUTION.

BUT WAS IT
ORIGINALLY AN ASPECT
OF THE TERRAFORMING ARRAY?
OR INTRODUCED LATER? A CLOSER
LOOK AT THE UNCHANGED
SURFACE MIGHT HELP ME
UNDERSTAND.

AND IT
WOULD BE KIND
OF FUN TO GO
CAMPING, DON'T
YOU THINK?



ROVER?



FINE. *DON'T*
SAY ANYTHING.
YOU'RE JUST STILL
POUTING THAT I
KEEP YOU
LEASHED UP.

I THOUGHT
MAYBE YOU'D HAVE
SOMETHING *USEFUL* TO
CONTRIBUTE TO THE
CONVERSATION...



NOVEMBER 12, 2179
9:50 AM, ECT.

GETTING HARDER AND HARDER TO FIND FRUIT THAT HASN'T BEEN TAINTED BY THE BLACK GOO. EVENTUALLY I MIGHT HAVE TO--

HEY, WHAT'S THIS?



IT'S STANDISH'S DIARY. SHE MUST HAVE DROPPED IT WHEN SHE WAS RUNNING FROM THE ALIENS.

IT'D BE NICE TO HAVE SOMETHING I COULD WRITE IN. MAYBE I CAN RIG UP A KIND OF STYLUS FROM A TREE BRANCH AND USE THE BLANK PAGES.




MIGHT BE NICE TO READ WHAT STANDISH WROTE FIRST, THOUGH. ALMOST LIKE HAVING SOMEONE BESIDE'S ROVER TO TALK TO, AND--












HOW COULD CALE STILL BE *ALIVE*? AND WHAT *HAPPENED* TO HIM? HE MUST HAVE BEEN EXPOSED TO THE ACCELERANT, LIKE LUIZ WAS. BUT THE EFFECT IS CLEARLY DIFFERENT.

LUIZ SOMEHOW *FUSED* WITH ONE OF THE ALIENS, BUT CALE HAS TURNED INTO SOMETHING *LIKE* THEM. NOT THAT THEY SEEM TO GET ALONG VERY WELL, THOUGH.



BUT WHY DIDN'T THE ALIENS COME AFTER *ME*, TOO? THEY GOT TO THE FOOT OF THIS MOUNTAIN BUT CHASED CALE. THEY COULD HAVE CAUGHT *ME EASILY*.

WHY HAVEN'T THEY FOUND THIS PLACE? WHY AM I *SAFE* HERE?



I MEAN, I *KNOW* THAT THE MOUNTAIN HAS BEEN *GROWING*, SOMEHOW...



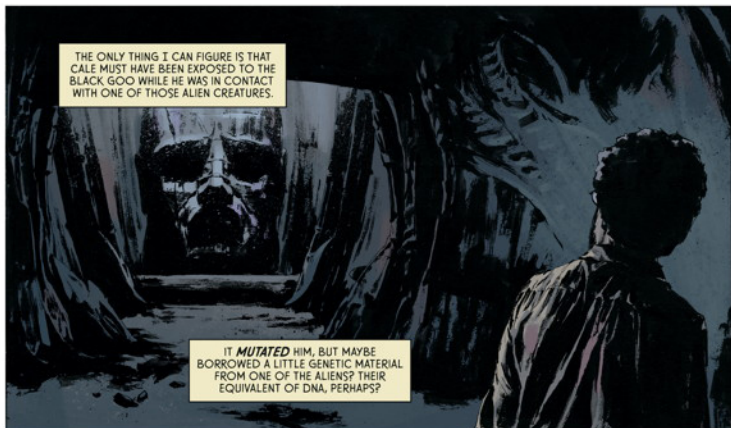
COULD THE MOUNTAIN BE *PROTECTING* ME?

ROVER, DO YOU THINK IT *LIKES* ME?





AFTER FINDING THAT
CRASHED SHIP,
I RETURNED TO ONE
THAT I FOUND INTACT
A FEW MONTHS AGO.



THE ONLY THING I CAN FIGURE IS THAT
CALE MUST HAVE BEEN EXPOSED TO THE
BLACK GOO WHILE HE WAS IN CONTACT
WITH ONE OF THOSE ALIEN CREATURES.

IT *MUTATED* HIM, BUT MAYBE
BORROWED A LITTLE GENETIC MATERIAL
FROM ONE OF THE ALIENS? THEIR
EQUIVALENT OF DNA, PERHAPS?



MAYBE THAT'S WHAT
THE ACCELERANT WAS
DESIGNED TO DO?
FORCE MUTATIONS,
SPEED UP EVOLUTION?
IS THE BLACK GOO
SOME KIND OF
TECHNOLOGY?

EITHER WAY, IT SEEMS TO
HAVE MADE CALE *MORE* FIT
TO SURVIVE HERE THAN HE WAS
BEFORE. BETTER SUITED TO
LIVE IN THIS ENVIRONMENT.



THESE GUYS
PROBABLY
KNOW ALL
ABOUT THAT
BLACK GOO.

I COULD JUST *ASK*
THEM, IF I COULD
EVER MANAGE TO WAKE
ONE OF THEM UP.