



MUTANT

YEAR ZERO

ZONE SECTOR:
DENIZENS OF THE SINKHOLE



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In the center of an old dead ruined city, a whole block has fallen into a deep sinkhole. The buildings in the depths of the hole are relatively intact. The rooftops of the tallest buildings barely reach above the ground around the lip of the sinkhole.

OVERVIEW

The bottom of the sinkhole is covered with verdant vegetation, a mass of plants and trees reminiscent of the rain forests of old. The plants wind around and through the buildings stretching to the edges of the sinkhole.

On the roofs and top floors of the buildings live a group of gatherers and traders known as the *Uptops*. They explore their domain and trade whatever they find for food, supplies and tools. They are organized in a number of clans, each clan claiming one building as their territory.

The *Uptops* swing between the rooftops or use rope bridges to move between the buildings. Moving from one end of the sinkhole to the other without climbing down to the bottom and then up again can be a true challenge for unaccustomed visitors.

At the bottom of the hole lives a tribe called the *Downbelows*. They are a bit odd but very welcoming and live in complete harmony with their surroundings. The *Uptops* view them with great suspicion or even hostility. The *Downbelows* have no internal conflicts, but rumor has it they tend to try and make visitors stay down there; some even say they have a kind of siren's call that lure explorers to them and turn them into mindless drones.

The PCs can find the sector while passing by, but it is more exciting if they are drawn there in some other way. Perhaps they bump into some of the *Verdure's* agents, who have established themselves in the Zone but not been able to connect with their home.

The rumor of the clans selling artifacts is fairly well-known. Perhaps the PCs need something very specific, something they learn was recently found in the sector? Perhaps they meet a former clan member who is seeking revenge against those that exiled her, and need help to do so. There are artifacts, grub, water and bullets to be found both with the clans and in the buildings, as well as rivalries and conflicts to be drawn into.

THE SITUATION

If you stay too long at the bottom of the hole without protective gear you will be infected by mysterious airborne spores. The infection manifests itself as tiny blisters at the base of the neck and down towards the back, and can spread to other body parts.

The blisters burst and sprout flowers within a few weeks, if nothing is done about them. They can be cut out but will grow back if the root isn't removed completely, which is extremely painful. It is also possible to burn them off. That removes them from the surface of the skin but the roots keep growing.

There is a more sinister aspect of the infection. It begins as nightmares but soon escalates. The infected starts sleepwalking and even climbing, waking up in unfamiliar places high above the ground. The infection uses its host body to find suitable locations to release new spores from and the higher

it gets, the bigger the dispersion. By then, the roots have twisted around the victim's spine and brain and removing them is both complicated and risky.

If several people are infected, they will start having the same dreams and gradually develop the ability to read each others' thoughts. They might even start thinking as one, as if they were parts of a single creature. This also applies to other plants and animals that are infected.

The Verdure: All the plants, animals and Downbelows in the hole are parts of the same whole, of a single creature. Thousands if not millions of tiny plants communicating with radio waves form a huge neural network, a single giant brain. Each plant, each infected creature, carries a small part of that network with them and have a mutation that enables radio communication.

The infection is the Verdure's way of spreading to new lifeforms and incorporating them in the greater whole. The Downbelows are completely infected and are no longer individuals. They are



THE SINKHOLE



CLAN OHORI'S NEW ORACLE



A STURDY ROPE BRIDGE





A DOWNBELOW AWAITING INSTRUCTIONS

simply extensions of the Verdure and without it they are blank slates.

The Verdure's intellect is massive but alien, and it has little understanding of mutants or other individual organisms.

The oracles of the Uptops listen for signs that the Verdure is making new attempts to spread beyond the hole that it currently resides in. It makes an effort regularly and sends an enormous amount of spores up into the air, filling the ether with its "thoughts".

So far the Verdure has been unable to reach beyond the borders of the sector. Perhaps there is something in the ruined city around it stopping the spores from spreading? Perhaps it simply can't send them high enough into the air? It has sent infected agents to the outside world, but soon loses contact with them.

INHABITANTS

The top floors of the highest buildings are occupied by people making a living from exploring the ruins and bringing back various things. It might be canned food, more or less broken technology, books in languages no one speaks any more, keycards that open unknown doors in unknown places, and other curiosities.

They are organized in clans competing for the best buildings. Right now clan Ohori is the biggest. Some of the other clans feel threatened and are secretly planning a coup to knock Ohori down a peg or two. Each clan has one or several oracles, who spend hours every day listening to static from old radio receivers. These devices are very important to the Uptops, and it would take a lot for them to give one up.

Sometimes there is a certain pitch or pattern in the static from the devices, which is when the oracle sounds the alarm. All the windows and doors slam shut and everyone tries to get inside. Basically the whole settlement shuts its gates until the static is back to normal.

The Uptops are all mutants. The most common mutations among them are Pathokineses, Frog Legs or Extreme Reflexes. There are some variations among the clans, like clan Vorr having numerous Flame Breathers - they sell their services to the other clans and are very particular about who is allowed to marry into the clan. Other clans, such

as Marak, actively invite outsiders to give the clan as many advantages as possible by getting a wide variety of mutation.

Kana Ohori: An elderly, spry woman with short black hair speckled with gray. She is determined and does not like being wrong. When she risks being wrong, she prefers to steer the conversation in another direction or subtly makes it about something else where she is right. She has a limp from having injured her left leg in the past. Kana wants to maintain control over clan Ohori and watch it flourish. Once it's time for her to step down as leader of the clan, she wants someone worthy and suitable to take her place. Preferably, she would like her son Petel to take a greater interest in taking over after her, but most of all she wants him to have a good life.

Attributes: Strength 2, Agility 3, Wits 4, Empathy 5.

Skills: Manipulate 4, Sense Emotion 3, Command 3, Comprehend 3, Know the Zone 2, Fight 2.

Mutations: Human Magnet, Pathokinesis, 5 MP.

Gear: Ancient medallion around her neck ("Gold medal in Western Chess Club championship 1987"), good scrap knife, 3D6 bullets.

Petel Ohori: A young man with dark unruly hair. He is short and wide but not really fat. He has a rebellious streak that sometimes gets him into trouble. He doesn't like the way his mother Kana rules and hates the way she discusses clan issues. He has had a fair share of admirers of both sexes, from his own clan and others, but has rejected them all since he hasn't had any feelings of his own for them.

Petel would like nothing more than to get out of the sector to seek happiness elsewhere. The world outside seems so exotic! He would also like to find out what is really going on down at the bottom of the sinkhole. So far he lacks long-term goals, but is curious and adventurous.

Attributes: Strength 4, Agility 5, Wits 2, Empathy 3.

Skills: Force 4, Sneak 3, Shoot 3, Fight 3, Move 2.

Mutations: Pathokinesis, 3 MP.

Gear: Scrap pistol, 1D6 bullets, scrap axe, rope, grappling hook, ancient comic trade paperback.

Fered Ohori: A woman in late middle-age with blond hair and a powerful build. She sometimes comes off as arrogant but is mostly justified in her arrogance, since she is a very capable organizer and easily sees how different systems can become more effective.

Fered is very ambitious and hungry for power, and sees herself as most suitable to take leadership from Kana. She has many innovative ideas she would like to set into motion, but she needs to solidify her power – perhaps by marrying young Petel? And sooner or later Kana will probably have to be the victim of an unfortunate accident...

Attributes: Strength 3, Agility 4, Wits 5, Empathy 3.

Skills: Scout 4, Comprehend 3, Sense Emotion 3, Manipulate 3, Shoot 2, Move 2.

Mutations: Puppeteer, Rot-Eater, 3 MP.

Gear: Scrap pistol, 2D6 bullets, ancient camouflage jacket.

Saram Marak: A woman in her twenties who rules clan Marak with an iron fist. Since she came into power she has trained the clan members rigorously and established a system of rules, to maintain discipline. At the same time, she has allowed recruitment of new clan members. Under her rule the clan flourishes. There are some that complain but they cannot deny that her way of ruling has led to more food and free time for everyone.

Saram wants clan Marak to take over the whole Zone, and she has developed clear strategies to reach her goal. She uses peer pressure and social structures to maintain discipline and unity. If you're not with her you're against her.

Attributes: Strength 5, Agility 4, Wits 4, Empathy 3.

Skills: Fight 4, Force 3, Manipulate 3, Sense Emotion 2.

Mutations: Puppeteer, Rot-Eater, 3 MP.

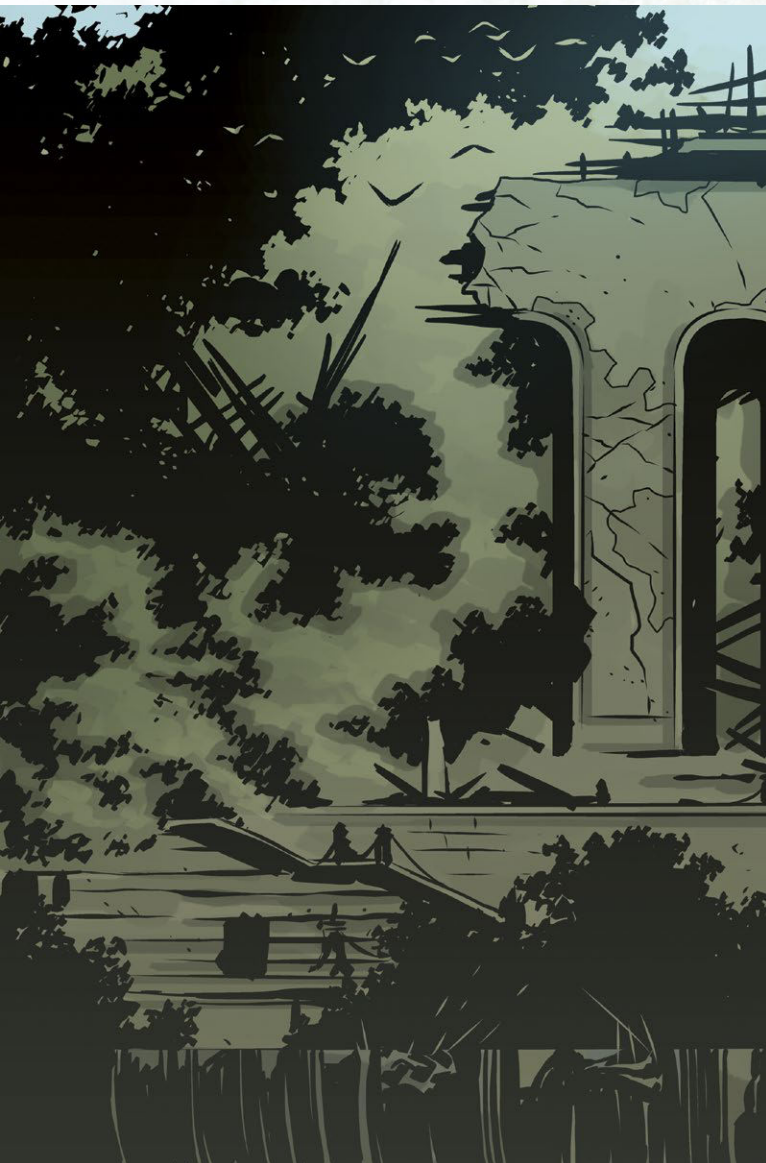
Gear: Cutlass, security chain wrapped around her arm, spikes shoes

Downbelows: In the bottom floors of the buildings and in the streets surrounding them live another group of mutants. These Downbelows look like regular people apart from the fact that their necks and backs are covered by some sort of flowers. They are open and inviting to strangers, but prefer that

visitors don't leave. They can even become violent should someone attempt to get away.

They seem to be a peaceful group, living in harmony with the strange animals and wild plants that have broken the asphalt and now reach up around the buildings. They have spears but it appears they never use them to hunt. It seems they don't have any fixed homes but simply fall asleep wherever they are when they become tired.

At the bottom of the sinkhole, everything is extra verdant and green. The air is thick with pollen and permeated with strong scents.



EVENTS

The shy Downbelows and the menacing Verdure can be used to scare paranoid PCs. Put them in the right mood by letting them experience the howl of the oracles' radio receivers and the horror of the Uptops as the alarm sounds.

- ❑ A girl climbs out from the bottom of the hole but shows no signs of infection. Where does she come from? How long has she been down there?
- ❑ Sarolin Vorr is a prominent member of her clan. During an expedition with members of clan Ohori she falls through the floor and is not seen again. Should the group search for her? And how do you tell clan Vorr about it?
- ❑ Mysterious lights have appeared down in the hole. It's impossible to tell if they're down at the bottom or from a few levels up in the buildings. Is it a signal from desperate or lost clan members? An attempt from the Verdure to communicate? Or maybe it's a trap...
- ❑ One of clan Marak's oracles has started speaking in tongues. Is it the Verdure that has learned how to reprogram people through the radio static? How can it be stopped? And what is the Verdure saying through the oracle?
- ❑ Young members from clan Vorr, supported by members of clans Ohori and Marak, have decided to make an attempt to eradicate the Verdure once and for all. The elders try to dissuade them, but they seem determined. Do they stand a chance? And if not, how will the Verdure respond? What can the PCs do?
- ❑ Downbelows are climbing up along the sinkhole's edges in ever greater numbers. Have they broken free from the Verdure or is this yet another ruse?
- ❑ The PCs are exploring the ruined city around the sinkhole when they suddenly hear the same whispers and patterns that make the oracles sound the alarm. Is there a radio nearby? Is the Verdure nearby? Has it broken free from the hole is this another specimen?

PLAYER MAP: DENIZENS OF THE SINKHOLE



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