

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

