

CONTAGION, COINCIDENCE & CONFUSION

A spacefaring Golden Heroes scenario

by Simon Burley.

Background.

The worldship of the star-travelling Arcanni has been wracked by an unknown plague. Desperate for a cure, they have despatched a ship to Earth to recover one of their race's most brilliant Alchemists, who was marooned there years ago. (See *ELDRITCH: Golden Heroes Supervisor's Book* p.60). Themselves infected with the plague, the crew of the ship died in transit. Thus, it is a fully automated, pre-programmed, artificial hunter which is soon to arrive in Earth orbit to collect the Arcanni's prodigal son. However, the ship is possessed of a highly intelligent central computer capable of independent action, which can also generate a series of Arcannoid solid-holograph projections. Henceforth, this ship will be called *NETWORK*.

Unaware of his imminent rescue, Eldritch has recently brewed a plague of his own which he aims to unleash

upon the people of the Earth. The plague itself is fairly harmless, but is designed to panic the Earthlings into turning to Eldritch for a cure - a cure which doubles as an obedience

potion. A petty gambit, but surely sufficient to bring a sizeable portion of the Earth under his dominion. The only problem is that *Network* sends its energy forms to collect Eldritch in between his releasing the plague and issuing the cure, leaving the Earth an infected planet.

Eldritch.

For those who don't play Golden Heroes, Eldritch is the Arcanni's greatest Alchemist, using a subtle blend of Sorcery and science to further his own ends. Hurlled to Earth years ago he merely wishes to rule the planet. His willpower and ability to shape the forces of magic are his primary capabilities. Eight feet in height, weighing 150Kgs., Eldritch is a startling alien. Specialising in magical blasts, he is also capable of shielding himself from harm, and enhancing his physical body with mystical energies.



CARRIER

(Part 1)



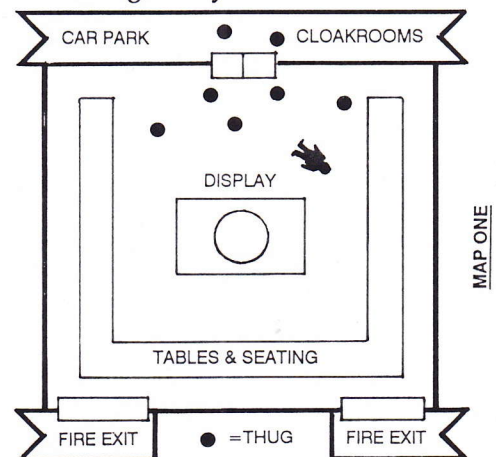
One or more of the heroes has been invited to a Variety Club charity dinner at which they will be guest speaker. The GM should use the event to introduce the heroes to a number of interesting or useful NPCs, either completely fictional or drawn from the real world. (Terry Wogan? Jimmy Tarbuck? Emu?). After a rather embarrassing series of speeches the hero rises to speak.

However, before they can utter a single word, the room is filled with the sound of gunfire. The main door to the room is thrown open and a tattered and bloodied figure staggers in, gasps the hero's name, and collapses. He is closely followed by half-a-dozen gasmasked, armed figures shrouded in a purple mist. They are all carrying firearms and are intent on making sure of their kill....

The wounded man is John Carlson, one of Eldritch's human hirelings. Like his cohorts (who are the figures pursuing him), Carlson was infected with the plague as a dummy run. Unlike them he was not cured. Seeing how Eldritch's potion turned his friends into mindless slaves, Carlson chose to run and warn the world. Eldritch equipped the remaining servants with weapons and vapours and sent them to silence Carlson. They caught up with him outside the charity dinner and succeeded in mortally wounding him before he could burst through the door. Releasing a knockout gas to subdue any possible rescuers, they have followed him in. The situation is shown on map one. There should be two attackers for each hero in the room. They are typical trained thugs carrying machine pistols and wearing

gasmasks.

This should be a very easy battle for the heroes. However, when it is all over, they will find that Carlson is dead. Anyone searching him will discover that he is covered in an unpleasant greenish rash, and will be able to locate his wallet and a map showing a section of the Pennines. A cross has been drawn on Snake Pass with a number of arrows coming out of it in all directions, labelled "plague". Anyone who touches Carlson will be infected with the plague and will start to suffer its ill effects prior to proceeding to part 2. Eldritch's hirelings are totally obedient and loyal to him, and will refuse to give any useful information.



CONTAGION

(Part 2)

If the heroes rush to Snake Pass, they catch Eldritch as he is about to release his contagion upon the land from a huge, ornately inscribed urn.

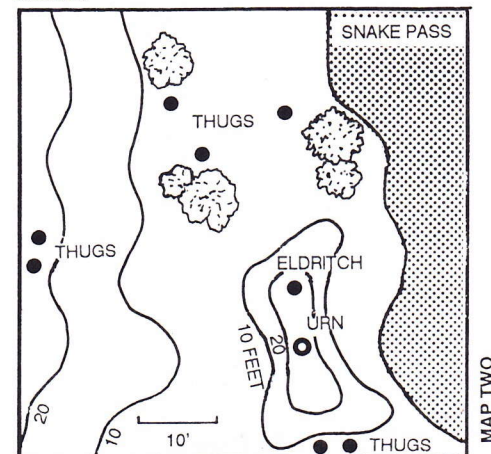
Map two shows a suitable setting for this battle. Eldritch's main aim is to release his plague and escape from the heroes. He will be assisted by two hirelings for each hero that is present.

The GM should try to ensure that the plague is released, or at least one or more of the PC's are infected. The plague proceeds by stages and will infect all human heroes who come into contact with it. The disease will advance one stage for each plot element they proceed through after contracting it. Thus, any hero infected by Carlson in part 1 should start this battle at Stage I.

The Disease.

- STAGE I: A feeling of general nausea. The hero can be stunned twice as easily as before.
- STAGE II: Rash starts to appear. "To Hit" rolls in combat penalised. 10% reduction in hits.
- STAGE III: Full body rash. Double "To Hit" penalty, 30% reduction in hits.
- STAGE IV: Reduction in actions per round. 50% reduction in hits.
- STAGE V: Comatose, possibly terminal. (A cure should be available by the time any heroes reach this stage).

Ideally, Eldritch should be captured at the end of this element and either taken to the heroes' own holding facility or handed over to an agency such as DICE for debriefing. However, the plot may still continue if he does escape, so the GM has no reason to hold back at all during this battle.



COINCIDENCE (Part 3)

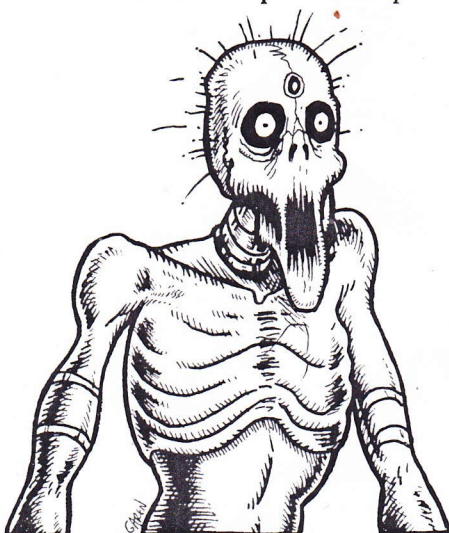
This plot element assumes that Eldritch has been captured and handed over to *DICE* and occurs while the heroes are being debriefed. If Eldritch managed to escape at the end of part 2 then he will issue details of his ultimatum (the cure in return for a certain amount of wealth, rare herbs and immunity to prosecution) and the heroes will be assigned to make the deal on neutral territory in which case the GM can run things on any available map.

Assuming the heroes have taken Eldritch to their local agency's base, then he will be taken to the maximum security cell shown on Map Three. When he recovers, he will boast that only he has a cure for the plague and demand to be released if he hands it over. While they consider this offer the local Commander (Dawson?) will take the heroes to his office and ask them for a full report on the events of Eldritch's capture whilst the agency Medtechs take blood samples etc. in the hope of finding a cure for the plague. Then alarms will sound, indicating some sort of attack on Eldritch's cell...

Rushing to the cell, the PC's will find a comatose Eldritch being carried out by a flying, glowing Arcannoid figure.

Though the astral extension carrying Eldritch is solid, *Network* will replicate as many additional forms as necessary to fight the heroes. These

will fly through the circuitry of the base's defensive equipment to take it over and use it to help their escape.



The following items may be included:

LIGHTS

The astral forms can turn off the lights in any single section of corridor or room to cause those within to fight in darkness.

BULKHEADS

These are huge doors that are concealed in the ceiling which can be dropped to seal off various sections of the base. Anyone underneath one when it is dropped must dive away or be trapped under the weight.

LASERS

Supposedly remote-controlled lasers covering the corridors.

FLOORS

A section of floor can be electrified.

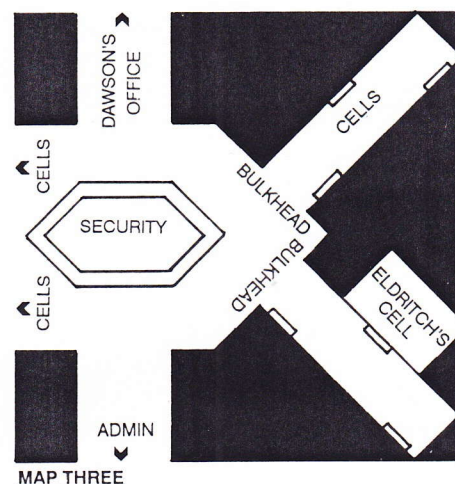
BLASTERS

A number of these are scattered about the floor (dropped from the hands of unconscious guards) and may be used for surprise attacks.

EQUIPMENT

Any hero with Electronic or Cybernetic equipment may find it being taken over and used against them. (This can be extremely embarrassing for armoured heroes who could be paralysed - or, worse - forced to fight their own allies.

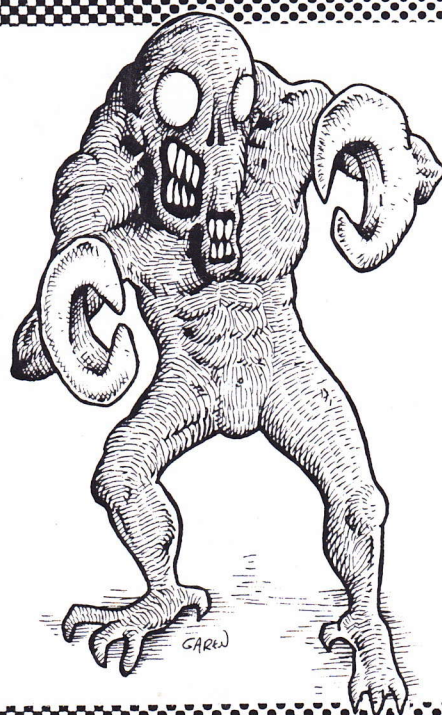
This should be a tricky and tough battle for the heroes and *Network*'s astral forms should manage to escape with Eldritch by one means or another, and carry him up to the waiting ship.



CONFUSION (Part 4)

Though an extension has escaped with Eldritch - the only person who knows the cure to the plague starting to take a grip on the country (and the heroes) - it is easy to track its energy trail. It leads up into the Earth's atmosphere to an exceptionally large "radar-shadow" - an area which is apparently empty, but which defies further investigation. The heroes should be able to acquire a low orbit vehicle eg. a shuttle or experimental spaceplane. The agency will supply a pilot if necessary, but will find it difficult to find a spare squad of men to assist them. Most agents are suffering badly from the plague, and others who aren't are busy controlling the growing panic and civil unrest. When the heroes take off and

approach the radar-shadow they will find it to be a huge space vehicle of some kind. Though the design is strange there is a more "conventional" vehicle (some kind of reusable rocket-pod) docked with it. The PC's can either dock with the spaceship themselves or adopt a parking orbit and spacewalk over. In either event, they will be able to board unchallenged. Wandering its vast corridors they will find a breathable atmosphere, and corpses of Arcanni, apparently dead from an even more virulent plague than that infecting the Earth. Patches of the skin appear to be eaten away and every one is extremely dehydrated. Fortunately, this particular bug has no effect on the human metabolism.



Eventually the heroes will come across the control room shown on Map four. Suspended in some kind of energy cage over a central control column is Eldritch, still unconscious. Manipulating the controls beneath him is a tall, skeletal, dark-haired old man flanked by three equally disreputable figures. It seems that the heroes have found Eldritch's abductors.

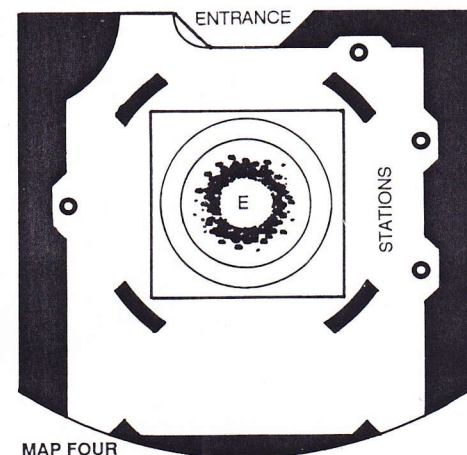
Unfortunately the four figures are the Canadian "*Legion Extraordinaire*", a group of Separatist Superhero/Terrorists - Monsieur Nuit, Le Chien, L'Homme Mort and Mistral. Full details of this team are given in the "Villains and Vandals" section at the end of the scenario.

M. Nuit's advanced radar system detected the Arcanni ship as soon as

it appeared in orbit, and he has brought his team here to see if it can be used to aid their cause. He is currently trying to free Eldritch. Unfortunately, none of the Legion speak more than a smattering of English, and at least one of them (Le Chien) has an extremely short temper. Even if the heroes do not automatically assume that the Legion are their enemies, the Legion will take steps to defend themselves and a full-scale brawl will develop.

Normally the heroes would be able to wipe the floor with the rather second-rate Legion Extraordinaire. However, by now they will be feeling the more advanced stages of the plague and this should be a closely-fought battle. GM's requiring more of a challenge can always arrange to

have Eldritch released during the fight, with his statistics reduced by his ordeal to a level commensurate with the fighting ability of the heroes.

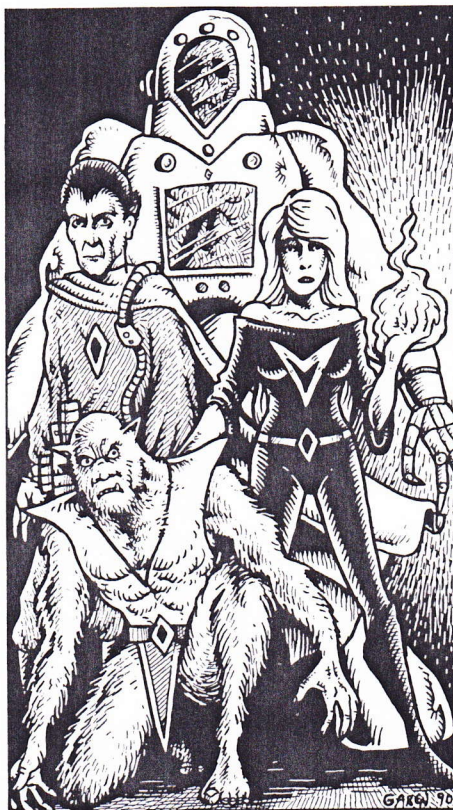


CONCLUSION (Part 5)

Up to this point, *Network* has ignored the humans in its corridors. After all, there is little harm they can do. However, once the battle breaks out in the control room and it seems likely that it will be damaged, *Network* will speak. Translating from Arcanni into French and English it will explain its mission and demand that the two teams leave so that it may carry Eldritch back to the worldship of the Arcanni. If any of the heroes speak, it will translate their speech into all three languages but will refuse to accede to any of their demands. Upon hearing of Britain's plight, the Legion will offer to aid the heroes' cause and help cure their nation.

When the heroes refuse to leave, *Network* will materialise its astral projections and try to subdue them, then throw them out. There are a number of possible endings, of which these are just three:

1] The heroes are kicked out of *Network* and it leaves the solar system, taking Eldritch with it. In this case, the heroes will return to Earth to find that the agency Medtechs were able to develop a serum from the blood of Eldritch's captured hirelings who were immune to the plague. If this sort of Deus ex Machina is required, however, the GM should employ the following sanctions. Firstly, any hero who is at



Stage V of the plague should make a saving throw against their Vigour or Constitution, else they die of the infection. Secondly, the rate of serum production is extremely slow, and until it can be improved there will be civil disorder throughout the country. The methods the agency use to determine who should be cured first may lead to some moral

dilemmas for the heroes. And what happens if some villain kidnaps Eldritch's hirelings to gain control of the serum production?

2] The heroes escape with Eldritch. In this case *Network* will pursue with its astral forms until it is neutralised by, for example, ramming its spaceship body with one of the two terrestrial orbital craft. The heroes can carry Eldritch down to Earth for him to cure Britain and any other infected parts of the world, and eventually the heroes should throw off the effects of his "cure" and raise rebellion against his rule.

3] The heroes' scientists (and/or M. Nuit) break into the control panel and isolate *Network*'s CPU. They are able to stop its attack, discover a cure for the plague without side effects and reprogram it to keep Eldritch in custody until it gets back to the Arcanni worldship.

If Eldritch does get back to the Arcanni, they will obviously be grateful to the heroes and may send a thank-you message or gift. If he does not get back, they may send a stronger expedition to fetch him. Other factors to take into consideration are the possibility of friendly relations with the Legion in future, and the effect that knowledge of susceptibility to disease can have on invulnerable heroes.

VILLAINS & VANDALS

Network

The ethereal projections look like naked, ghostly, glowing versions of Eldritch. They can fly at high speed, replicate, are intangible, can manipulate electrical fields and can stun enemies. *Network* is the central computer system of a highly advanced Arcanni hunter-ship. If the computer's Central Processing Unit can be isolated, it can be easily disabled or reprogrammed. It can create Arcannoid Astral Projections to carry out its work over distances up to 5000 miles. These are normally ethereal but can solidify to carry or manipulate objects. By flying through electrical circuitry they can disrupt and take control of it. By flying through sentient beings, they disrupt the bio-electric balance of the body doing stun damage. When solid they attack/can be attacked as normal. When a projection is destroyed, *Network* cannot regenerate it for another hour, but suffers no other ill-effects.

Legion Extraordinaire

This group of minor Canadian superheroes is devoted to the Separatist cause of Independance for Quebec. Though they themselves never use violence to further their cause they will not decry their colleagues who do.

Monsieur Nuit

A raven-haired Peter Cushing lookalike. Tall, thin. Costume is old fashioned and rather baggy (a la early Marvel villains such as Mole-Man) covered with various bits of wiring, gadgetry and equipment. Average human characteristics. Gadgets afford him the powers of energy blast, flight, and force-field. Skilled in stealth. Mechanical genius. Bertrand Nuit was a talented physicist who was always forced to work under lesser talents in the universities of his native Canada because of his poor command of English - a legacy of his rather puritan French-Canadian mother. He swore revenge upon the system and was an easy recruit for the Quebec Separatists. However, it has taken him the best part of thirty years to build the devices he needs to give him the powers he needs to aid his cause.

Le Chien

Hunched over, animalistic, snarling. Furry with a lot of it showing at the fringes of his costume - a rather spartan affair decorated with animal teeth. Strong willed, - strong full stop (!), agile and able-bodied. Uncanny sense of balance, short claws, animal senses, pugilistic combat technique.

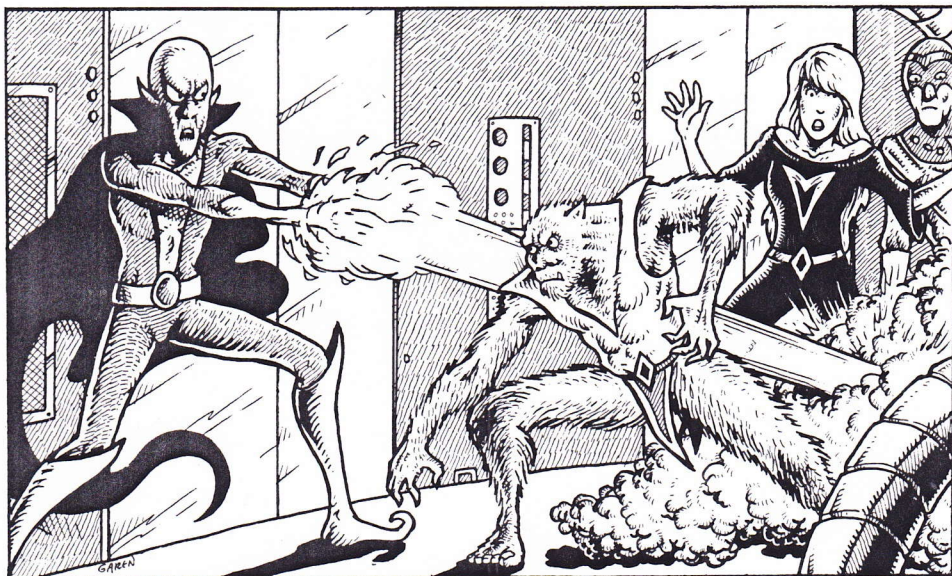
The Dog has no name. His first memories were of a cage in a laboratory somewhere in Canada. He was rescued by a group of French-speaking animal liberationists and raised in secret by two of their number. Nobody knows his true origins, and all the scientists from the lab have since died under unusual circumstances, apparently torn limb-from-limb by some maddened animal. (In fact, they were slain by Government agents trying to simultaneously hush-up their involvement in illegal research and frame Le Chien.)

respect for Constance. When he died, Nuit stole his body and attempted to reactivate his brain to help him with his research. He succeeded to a limited extent, and together they designed a mobile container for Constance's decaying body. Over the intervening years though, his mental capacities have slowly deteriorated until he is nothing more than a pawn of M. Nuit.

Mistral

A young, carefree girl with lots of long blonde hair blowing in the wind. Basic human statistics. Powers include energy attack, force shield and molecular manipulation. (See below).

Julienne Duffaut is a mutant with the ability to sense and manipulate the kinetic energy possessed by the molecules around her. The greater the energy, the more pronounced the effect she can have on them. Thus, her most noticeable power is over air



L'Homme Mort

Appears to be a large and rather clumsy robot (a la Jack Kirby). Possibly with clear, plasti-steel sections showing parts of the decaying corpse within. Now no will of his own to speak of, high strength (team brick), very low dexterity. High defenses due to armoured form. Dead.

Roger Constance was one of the English-speaking scientists who was promoted over Bertrand Nuit for a key Professorial post. Unlike the others though, Nuit had a nagging

molecules. She can create buffeting winds to attack opponents or to reduce the effects of attacks against herself. Note therefore that her "energy attack" is in the form of a wind and will not work in an airless environment.

Julienne can create minor effects on any other substance provided the molecules of that substance possess some kind of kinetic energy. This includes living tissue.

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