

Synopsis

Sages or priests around the kingdom receives portents of an impending disaster centred on the remote castle of the great magician Nennius. A deputation of powerful officials are sent to negotiate with the magician, but shortly after their arrival the spell is completed: the spell poly morphs animals and humans within a 100 mile radius into other creatures. The party are the survivors of the escort provided to the delegation and are caught amidst the chaos.

About half of the castles inhabitants (both humans and animals) have been metamorphosed into different forms (ranging from humanoids to various animals, both magical and mundane), another quarter have simply vanished and the remaining quarter have stayed as they are. Add in a few escaped convicts from the castles dungeon a party of raiding orcs passing outside the walls, and a few other curious onlookers and the party will have plenty of opponents to cut their way through as they seek to survive. Some of the encounters would be humorous eg. the players enter a formal dining room to find a bemused looking orange tabby sitting on the highly polished table regarding a shivering kobold which is frantically striving to shove its head into a mouse hole.

And that basically is the game. Escape from a castle gone mad.

The setting:

I was envisaging a standard medieval castle with a laboratory and dungeons located beneath a central keep, an outer bailey with a small village for the castles retainers, maybe a small river flowing through it - diverted at one point to make a moat. A curtain wall with towers and barbicans encircling the keep and village, with catapults and ballista that can be used by the characters on monsters without and within.

Introduction 1

Two weeks ago you were dispatched as part of an escort to a powerful group of adventurers sent to reason with the mage. The adventure starts with the party arriving at the castle. Upon arrival, most of the group is escorted to the mages inner sanctum where the adventurers and the various ambassadors are admitted to the mages private suite, While you and most of the rest of the low level soldiery are left outside the great bronze valves. As you restlessly wait in the antechamber an argument breaks out inside, voices rise and fall. The doors are too thick for individual words to be discerned but obviously the argument within is being carried on passionately.

Then a voice screams "nooooooooooooo", before the scream can finish a massive explosion throws you to the floor.

When you pick yourself up, you find the massive bronze doors have been buckled out by the force of the explosion and are unopenable. A muffled sound brings your head around, and you see the captain of the guard lying on the floor, his throat papitating spasmodically. His skin seems to be stretching elastically, and darkening, his limbs lengthening, and as you watch he metamorphs into a giant frog before your astonished eyes.

Introduction 2

You have been assigned to escort a group of notable seers, sages and clerics to the castle of the great mage Nennius. Some weeks ago the heads of certain sects in the capital all

experienced the same prophetic dream of a catastrophe that threatens not only the stability of the kingdom, but the dominance of mankind within the realm of living things. Divinations of the dreams revealed that the locus of the threat was the castle of Nenius. It is known that the mage has been conducting certain magical experiments in the greatest of secrecy.

So you have ridden hard for two gruelling weeks and today you have arrived. An hour ago you were admitted through the front gates of the castle. Nenius's guards escorted you into the keep, guiding you through a bewildering maze of corridors

Now you wait in an antechamber as the sages confer with Nenius in his inner sanctum. About twenty minutes ago, there was a lot of shouting, but it seems to have died down now.

Suddenly a voice shouts "NOOOOOOOOOOOOOO"

The captain of the guard stands up, dropping his hand to the pommel of his sword "I think I'll go investigate" he says

BOOM

A massive concussion shakes the room, and you are thrown from your seats. Picking yourselves up from the floor exchanging bewildered glances

urrrg.... gruh arrrrr

You turn to see what is making the weird noises. The captain lies of the floor, his mouth terribly distorted. As you watch it stretches incredibly wide, and then his hair seems to melt into his scalp. His arms and legs are lengthening and are taking on a greenish tinge, the eyes bulge, the head flattens.

And before your astonished eyes a giant frog sits in the puddle of the captains uniform.

1. The antechamber is richly appointed with elegant tapestries. Inspection of the massive bronze valves leading to the mages inner sanctum will reveal that they have been jammed shut and no amount of effort on the characters behalf will be able to force them. Shouting to the rooms occupants will go unanswered.

2. Two guards stood at this post when you entered. Now one lies in a pool of blood, and crouching over his supine body is a lizard like creature. As you approach it swivels to face you, and you see its claws are red with blood.

The former guard is now a Troglodyte, HP 10

3. This is formal dining room, richly decorated, obviously where the great mage entertained the rich and important. On a highly polished mahogany table a bemused looking orange tabby is sitting on the highly polished table regarding a shivering kobold which is frantically striving to shove its head into a mouse hole.

Orange Tabby AC 7 HP 2

Kobold (former mouse) AC 7 HP 3

4 Owlbear. This creature can be found roaming the corridors. If approached by the party it will sit on its hind legs and beg for a treat. Around its neck is a torn collar bearing the name Fido. If not killed it may be encountered later in hot pursuit of the orange tabby from 3.

5. Nursery. This cheerfully decorated room contains two beds. On one reclines a heavily pregnant young lady, and lying in the collapsed ruins of the other bed is an equally pregnant and rather flustered looking cow.

“I always said Gretta was a bit of a cow”, the young woman wearily announces as you enter.

Cow (former Gretta) AC 10 HP 8

Young lady no AC HP 3

6 Barbican. A large sized salmon thrashes dying amidst a tangle of chain mail, if tossed into the moat or the river, it will disappear with a flash of silvery scales into the murky depths. Should the players take their time, then the fish will be dead by the time they arrive. Over a period of days various creatures will come by and devour portions of the fish.

7 Battlements near the barbican. High

The Hamlet of Tern

As the party approaches this small hamlet, an elf wearing the robes of a magi bursts through the mudbrick wall of a hovel and blunders towards the party as a stream of angry villagers pour from house behind him, waving pitchforks and hurling insults at his fleeing back. The fleeing elf is Rowan Highleaf, a prestigator. Rowan is loud braying sort with a horsey laugh and the face and wits to match.

Rowan Highleaf 4th level elven magic user

Str 10 Int 9 Wis 8 Dex 6 Con 12 Char 10 AC 10 HP 7

armed with: dagger

Spells, 1st level: Shocking grasp, Shield, Unseen Servant, Read Magic, Magic Missile

2nd level: Stinking Cloud, Levitate

Should the party fail to come to his aid, the angry villages will drag down Rowan like a pack of rabid wolves pulling down a doe, as he clumsily makes a break for it over the ploughed fields surrounding the hamlet. The villagers will then tar and feather him, stick sticks of celery up his nose and in his ears and then run him out of town.

Vegetable Garden

As the party approaches their attention will be drawn to a large red-brown woolly mammoth is enthusiastically uprooting the vegetable patch. Judging from the half masticated carrots in the drool coatings its jowls, it's already well and truly gorged, and from the sweet odour on its breath, and its tottering 2-3 gate, absolutely and totally smashed (drunk). A quick look over the stonewall into the neighbouring apple orchard will reveal that it's eaten all the fermented windfall apples.

If the party acts in a non-hostile manner, the mammoth will ignore them utterly. If disturbed it will toss the offending characters through the broad side of a nearby barn.

The Grand Ballroom

The ballroom is a light airy place of space of burnished fittings and light blonde wood floors, but all eyes will be drawn to the moose running in frantic circles, hurtling sofa's and settee's while a group of frightened debutantes cower in terror behind a grand piano. Swinging from the crystal chandelier overhead is an agitated jermelaine (the ex-music master – hp 2) who will shriek gibberish at the party.

Should the party not intervene within a round, the moose will crash into the piano, reducing it to splinters, the debutantes will hitch up their filmy gowns and flee the scene screaming.

Moose (ex ballet teacher) hp 25

The Kitchen

An angry cockatrice parades the kitchen, its plumage proudly puffed out. As soon as the party enters it will rush at them crowing fearsomely. Around the kitchen lie the fallen stone statues of the kitchen staff.

Cockatrice (ex head chef) hp 18

The Grand Hall

The great feasting hall of the castle. Overturned chairs lie strewn about and on one table, a group of terrified servants cling together as giant monitor lizard slithers past. Giant monitor lizard (ex major domo hp 25).

The Outer Bailey

If the party escapes the castle within the

The Stables

The stables are redolent with scent of freshly cut hay. At the far end a group of shivering horses crowd into a corner, standing as far away as possible from a cougar which sits along side the carcass of a partially devoured mare, neatly licking the blood of its recent repast from its claws.

The cougar will avoid combat with the party, lazily leaping through a nearby window and disappearing with a swish of its tail. Should the cougar be bailed up or shot at, it has 22 hp.

The Leather Workers Shop

The parties attention will be attracted to this shop by the combination of despairing cries for help and the profundo growls of some great monster. On entering they will be confronted by a huge brown bear (hp 33) prowling around the front room of the shop while Vondan the leather worker desperately swings from the rafters overhead, trying to keep his heels above its snapping jaws. If rescued Vondan can supply the characters with leather armour, whips and other examples of his art.

The Harbour

Two ships have taken refuge in the harbour. Through the portcullis of the lowered sea gate the party will see the coils of a huge sea serpent writhing through the green swell. Closer at hand, the crews of two ships are verging on the point of blows. Huge, hairy Vikings clutching huge battle axes clamber up the gunwales of their long boat while on the cog wallowing alongside, pirates shouting hearty oaths are drawing cutlasses and drawing beads with

crossbows. Unless the party intervenes immediately to halt the imminent blood bath, the Vikings will slaughter the pirates, casting their bodies overboard to be drawn out by the receding tide to the sea serpent.

The Rose Garden

Puddles of bright silk decorate the green lawns before the blooming rose beds. The gowns belong to the Lady Nenius and her attendant ladies in waiting. The Lady Nenius, an ancient harridan of vine-garish disposition and sour puckered features has been transmogrified into a harpy and is currently hunting her ex-ladies in waiting, who she hated for their youth and beauty.

Harpy (the ex-lady Nenius) hp 20

White Bunny(ex lady-in-waiting #1) hp 1

Ginger Kitten (ex lady-in-waiting #2) hp 1

The Shattered House

Loud bestial roars which can be heard from some blocks away should draw the party to this location. Protruding from a hole in the the roof of a ruined house are two heads that that belong to a giant. The ettin is energetically ripping away at the debris imprisoning it, tearing away chunks of masonry and beams of timber which it hurls away into the street below.

Ettin (former schizophrenic cow farmer) hp 52.

Some hours after the incident, the ettin will smash its way free of the ruins and embark in an orgy of destruction across the town, leaving a trail of devastation in its wake.

The Treant

A noble elm tree was uprooted itself from the place where it has stood for hundreds of years in the middle of the town market place. The former elm, its dirt encrusted roots now forming vestigal limbs lumbers down the narrow cobblestone streets driving the screaming crowds before it. Giant (120' tall) treant hp 90.

The One Tonne Tomato

Not far from the feeding mammoth, one of the tomato bushes has transformed into a single vast tomato, twice the height of a tall man. As the days pass, various birds of the air will attack the tomato, gorging themselves on its crisp, firm flesh, until within a week, all that will remain is a hollow husk.

The Woodyard

Piles of wood surround a hut, the door of which stands ajar. From within comes the sound of sobbing, and anyone looking in will see a fat bugbear wearing tattered tartan trousers and leather jerkin sits drowning its sorrows in a jack of ale. Should the bugbear catch sight of the characters it will blunder across the room, knocking over chairs, and collapse blubbering on the nearest characters shoulder. Bugbear (ex wood chopper) hp 13.

a lizardman darts from one ruined rose bush to the next, its tongue frantically dabbing at the mashed blooms. If the party approaches it too closely it will scuttle towards them on all fours, its legs and arms bustling, and then forcefully butt the characers shins with its chin

The Princesses Garden

Through the elaborate ivy laced trellis work forming the sides of a pergola can be seen a corner of a finely embroidered gown and a pair long golden platts. From within emanates squeals of delight, and the gown shakes, even although there is no breeze.

Upon entering the pergola, the party will be confronted with a ladies silken gown draped over a garden seat beside a table laden with afternoon tea. The gown quivers with movement, and if the gown is whipped back, a small pink piggy with golden down and a black lace ribbon around its neck will be found rooting around its confines in search of an errant cream puff, while all the time squealing in delight.

Once freed from the gown and the cream puff devoured, she (the piglet) will attach herself to the most handsome male character and follow him around everywhere with dreamy dedication.

Piglett (former Princess) hp 2

Wine Cellars

As the party approaches this area of the subterranean complex they will hear the crash of falling masonry. At area xx, they will encounter a large hole smashed through the wall (the bricks have been thrown out the other side), beyond is a confused mass of shattered racks and wine casks. The air is thick with the intoxicating fumes of the dripping wine. Beyond in the wine cellar there rampages an enormous bulette which is ravenously hunting some of the hobbit servitors who have fled here.

Bulette ex-wine steward (hp 81)

3 hobbit servitors (hp 4, 5, 5) armed with knives

Nenius is by reputation a powerful, shadowy figure on the borders of civilisation. Recently the kingdoms oracles have predicted a calamitous event will strike before the summer solstice, its origin seemingly connected to the mage as the locus point is his castle.