

SWAMPED

by Jessica Ross

CREATURE: *Boo-hag* | **LEVEL(S):** 3-5

SYNOPSIS

Outside Briar Glen lies a dangerous swamp, and deep within it runs the Weeping River. Those who venture too far into the swampland near the river are overcome with grief and cry until their tears turn to blood. If they're lucky, they die quickly.

Lately, however, women in town disappear into the swamp near the Weeping River at night... and return in the morning, entranced but unscathed. Their families want to know why they return at sunrise with no memory of the previous night.

These women found themselves a friend in the boo-hag, angry at the townsfolk for damaging her swamp. She initiated the women into her coven and tasked them to drain the life energy from their families to help the boo-hag heal the swamp.

ADVENTURE HOOK

The former mayor, Araphyra Pernan, fell into a coma six months ago. Healers have kept Araphyra alive, but no one can wake her. Worse, several others have taken ill. The current mayor, a hill dwarf paladin named Ilde Glenhill, suspects foul play. She can't root out the problem while keeping the town running, so she put out a call for adventurers to investigate.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

Briar Glen, though relatively small, has expanded since it was first settled. The townsfolk work as farmers, crafters, and traders; their economy relies on trade and travel. There have always been rumors regarding the dangers of the swamp; generations ago, a family of powerful warlocks (the Pernans) placed a barrier around it. Adventurers can enter the swamp, but it takes dedication and no small amount of power to breach the barrier.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

- **FERYNNE:** A boo-hag (night hag) who came to the swamp centuries ago. She ignored Briar Glen at first; by the time their expansion became a danger, she was outnumbered. Six months ago, the townsfolk cut too deep into the swamp, and the damage nearly killed Ferynne. Ferynne called for her sisters, but with no boo-hags nearby, she summoned several of the women in town. In her true form, she appears as a skinless woman. Years ago, a dying friend offered Ferynne her skin, so Ferynne disguises herself as a beautiful drow woman.
- **ILDE GLENHILL:** Ilde's primary concern is the safety of the townsfolk. She knows to avoid the swamp and warns the Characters away from it. Ilde aids the investigations as best she can but can't pass through the swamp barrier.
- **ENCHANTED WOMEN:** When these women answered the boo-hag's call, they agreed to join her coven and allow her to enchant them so they would only remember Ferynne under the light of the moon. At night, the women of the coven drain their partners' energy. They return to the swamp with the stolen energy at every full moon to help Ferynne heal it. These willingly-enchanted women are starting to remember tidbits, and now they're juggling their loyalty to the boo-hag and their love for their families.
- **PERNAN FAMILY:** A Pernan has been mayor in Briar Glen for as long as anyone remembers. They've expanded Briar Glen into the surrounding swamp for the last several generations, making room for more townsfolk, more businesses, and more land to farm.

“Don’t let the hag ride you.” This is how the people of Briar Glen say goodbye and have done for generations to wish others health and wellness; the townsfolk see it as a figure of speech. Use this when characters end a positive encounter with an NPC.

CHAPTER 1 – THE SWAMP’S EDGE

The town of Briar Glen lies on the edge of dense swampland. Old but well-maintained buildings line the main road through town. As soon as you approach the border of town, a smiling hill dwarf greets you, while many townsfolk watch with suspicion.

“I am Ilde Glenhill. Thank you for coming.”

She leads you to an old, beautiful building near the center of town and ushers you inside.

Ilde explains that the former mayor, Araphyra Pernan, has fallen into a coma. Several other townsfolk have become ill, as well, and for a few days every month, they appear entranced.

Ilde shares rumors that women wander into the swamp at night, which shouldn’t be possible due to the barrier. While she’s noticed overlap in the women entering the swamp and the women in trances, Ilde hasn’t been able to confirm a clear connection.

Ilde cautions the players against entering the swamp, even with the barrier; rumors have described the dangers of the swamp for generations.

Ilde directs you to the Pernan mansion, next door to the town hall. She is the first non-Pernan to win the mayoral election, which took place six months ago.

THE FAMILY PERNAN

The Pernans’ butler, Sarro, leads the characters to a lavishly decorated sitting room. Success on a DC 11 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals Sarro seems nervous, and he reluctantly admits Darona disappears into the swamp for several nights every month, sometimes returning in a trance. The trances are getting longer, and he’s worried she’ll fall into a coma, too.

With a successful DC 13 Charisma (Persuasion or Intimidation) check, Sarro reveals Darona and Araphyra argued for hours a few days before Araphyra fell ill. Darona, who married into the Pernans, was upset the Pernans have been expanding into the swamp for generations; she wanted to stop it.

Darona or Sarro explain the swamp barrier; use the text box below.

On a successful DC 16 Charisma (Persuasion) check, Darona lets the characters examine Araphyra, who can’t be woken; with a successful DC 11 Intelligence (Arcana) check, the characters sense Enchantment and Evocation surrounding her.

Darona doesn’t remember the argument, but she does feel it’s wrong for Briar Glen to continue intruding on the swamp.

WHAT THE DM KNOWS:

Darona asked the boo-hag to enchant her to forget the argument and the three days leading to Araphyra’s coma, which was caused by Darona draining too much of her energy at once. If Ferynnne heals the swamp, Araphyra will be fine.

Even before Briar Glen, rumors of dangerous creatures surrounded the swamp. The Pernans created a barrier to keep travelers out of the swamp and, hopefully, to keep whatever’s in the swamp out of Briar Glen. The barrier isn’t unbreakable, but it serves as a warning and last safeguard.

DEVELOPMENT

After speaking with Darona, any NPC answers the adventurers’ questions to the best of their ability, but they have two recommendations:

1. The party can investigate someone entering the swamp. The NPC directs the characters to the home of one of the Women, Enchanted.
2. An NPC reluctantly suggests the group go directly Into the Swamp. The NPC advises against entering the swamp and reminds the players they can’t pass through the barrier.

CHAPTER 2 — WOMEN, ENCHANTED

To investigate the women entering the swamp, roll any die. On odd numbers, the characters visit the home of an enchanted woman, on even numbers, they find a lucid woman instead.

ENCHANTED WOMAN

Tiall welcomes the characters into his home for their investigation. He hesitates at first but leads the characters to his wife, Nel, in the sitting room.

When you enter the room, the woman does not so much as stir. She stares directly ahead of her, her eyes glazed and unfocused as everyone moves around her.

On a successful DC 11 Intelligence (Arcana) check, the characters sense Enchantment. If a character has a way to end an enchantment, the DC is 20, regardless of the spell's DC. If a character wakes the enchanted woman, she becomes a lucid woman; use the next section for this encounter.

With a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check, characters see mud on Nel's shoes and determine she has been to the swamp recently.

If a character attempts to get close to Nel, she focuses on them, saying "If she dies, we die." She then returns to her unresponsive state.

When questioned, Tiall shares what he knows:

- Every month, Nel disappears for the two nights before, the night of, and the two nights after the full moon. He tried following her, but he couldn't pass through the barrier. Nel returned in the morning unharmed and with no memory of leaving. Sometimes she returns normally, but sometimes she comes back dazed — as she is now — remaining so for days before she returns to normal. This started six months ago.
- Tiall also mentions he has been losing sleep and has been exhausted lately.

WHAT THE DM KNOWS: Tiall is exhausted because Nel drains his life force for the boo-hag.

LUCID WOMAN

Myrsael and Bralla welcome the characters into their home. Bralla tells them she doesn't know how much help she'll be, and Myrsael shares what she knows (use what Tiall knows in the previous section).

Bralla doesn't know why this happens or how it started. A successful DC 13 Wisdom (Perception) check determines Bralla is hiding something: she remembers hearing someone weeping.

STORIES AND LEGENDS

An NPC can share the town's legends if the characters ask the right questions.

LEGEND OF THE WEeping RIVER

With a successful DC 9 Intelligence (History) check, a character knows the legend; otherwise, an NPC tells them.

Before it was the Weeping River, it was the Dreamer's Pond, where people could present an offering and make a wish. The pond didn't grant wishes, but it gave people the power and energy to grant their own.

The deeper into the swamp the town expanded, the larger the pond became until it outgrew the island, and now it cuts through the entire swamp.

The people of Briar Glen don't make wishes on that river. They learned long ago how dangerous it is — by the time you see the river, it's already too late. Anyone who ventures that deep into the swamp is overcome by grief, and they begin weeping. Few have made it out of the swamp before the tears turn to blood and they die in anguish.

DON'T LET THE HAG RIDE YOU

An NPC shares the lesser-known legend of the boo-hag with a successful DC 13 Charisma (Persuasion) check.

Before this town was built, there was a creature in the swamp. She drained energy from travelers to sustain herself, but she left them alive and enchanted them so they could only remember what happened through a dream-like haze.

Once the town was built, she visited Briar Glen under the cover of night to latch onto someone and drain their energy. She wouldn't kill if she didn't have to, but those she drained were never the same.

Years later, a drow woman entered the swamp to find this creature and never returned. Until the barrier was built, many said they caught glimpses of this woman wandering the town at night.

The townsfolk have since shared the warning and the protection “don’t let the hag ride you.”

DEVELOPMENT

If the characters befriended any enchanted woman (Daron, Bralla, or Nel), she gives each player a small stone painted to look like a pearl and directs them to the swamp. If they threatened or angered her, she tells them to leave Briar Glen. If they leave town without investigating the swamp, see *Conclusion, Part C*.

CHAPTER 3 – THE HAG RIDES

INTO THE SWAMP

The players can enter the swamp as soon as they enter town. Roll 1d4 on the *Swamp Encounters* table. After the characters explore town, roll 1d6 twice on the *Swamp Encounters* table as the characters head for the barrier.

SWAMP ENCOUNTERS

D6	ENCOUNTER	DETAILS
1	Bullywug Attack	Bullywugs (one per character) attack the party.
2	Encampment	On a successful DC 11 Intelligence (Investigation) check, the party finds evidence of deserted camp grounds. With a result of 16, they also discover more recent tracks leading deeper into the swamp toward the barrier and a <i>potion of healing</i> .
3	Stirge Swarm	A swarm of stirges (two per character) attack the party.
4	Swamp Fog	A thick fog rolls in, surrounding the party and dampening their senses. When the fog clears, they are back at the edge of the swamp.
5	Enchanted Woman	Nel or Bralla enter the swamp in a trance and walk toward the barrier. Their path can be obstructed, but the party can’t wake them. If they damage the enchanted woman, the swamp swallows her, and a tree root lashes out toward the PC who attacked, dealing twice the damage the woman received.
6	Daron Pernan	Daron Pernan approaches the barrier. A successful DC 11 Intelligence (Arcana) check reveals Abjuration and Illusion magic.

WHAT THE DM KNOWS: Daron is weakening the barrier but making it appear undamaged. She’s adjusting the barrier so only those who want to save the swamp can pass through.

THE BARRIER

WHAT THE DM KNOWS: the characters can pass through the barrier if their intention is to protect the swamp or if they have a faux-pearl.

The characters can bluff their way through with a successful DC 21 Charisma (Deception, Performance, or Persuasion) check or by following an enchanted woman (by convincing or tricking her into thinking they want to help).

DEVELOPMENT

After two encounters, if the party has not discovered another way in, present result 5 or 6: an enchanted woman or Darona Pernan.

THE SISTERS OF THE SWAMP

If they enter through trickery or deception, read the following:

You feel dampness on your face as you push deeper into the swamp, and when you move to brush it away, you hear soft weeping and realize the water is coming from your eyes. As you fall to your knees, a beautiful drow appears before you, smiling down at you.

“You will suffer every pain my sister feels,” the woman says, pointing to the river behind her. *“If she dies, you die.”*

On a successful DC 13 Constitution check, the characters stop crying. If they fail, they take 1d10 psychic damage.

THE HEART OF THE SWAMP

If the characters enter with the guidance of an enchanted woman or by passing through the barrier to help, read the following.

You follow the gentle sound of weeping to a drow woman, kneeling at the edge of the river. She leans close to the water and exhales. As she does, the haggard and dying plants around you spring up with renewed energy. The woman lets her tears fall into the river as she breathes life back into the swamp.

She looks up to see you watching her.
“Are you here to help?” she asks.

THE BOO-HAG

The characters can try talking to Ferynnne, but if they attack, she’s a disguised boo-hag who summons a **troll** (with half health) to aid her (unless the players received faux-pearls). When the troll dies or Ferynnne is at half health (whichever happens first), she peels away her flesh to become the boo-hag.

SCALING THE BATTLE:

If the party is small or under-powered, consider removing the troll and/or transforming the boo-hag sooner.

BOO-HAG

- The boo-hag uses the stats of the **night hag** with the addition of *ride*. Her ride ability allows her to regain 1d8 health per turn when she puts a PC to sleep.
- When disguised, she has half health and can’t use *ride*.

DEVELOPMENT

- If the players want to negotiate with Ferynnne, go to *Conclusion, Part A*.
- If the players kill the boo-hag, go to *Conclusion, Part B*.
- If the players decide to leave town without killing Ferynnne or attempting to facilitate a negotiation, go to *Conclusion, Part C*.

CONCLUSION, PART A

The boo-hag wants Briar Glen to stop killing the swamp. The party can convince her to negotiate with Ilde (she can't cross the barrier), who wants what's best for the town.

If your party successfully facilitates a negotiation, read the following:

The enchanted women awaken, as does Araphyra. She's disappointed to learn Briar Glen will no longer be expanding into the swamp, but she thanks you for saving her.

Ferynne arrives in her disguise, and the townsfolk agree to one final ritual. They allow Ferynne to use their life force to revive the dying swamp, and Darona destroys the barrier. The town holds a celebration lasting several nights and provide free food and drink for the festival.

After leaving Briar Glen to return to your normal lives, you watch for news from the town. As days turn to weeks, you hear the swamp is flourishing, and with the new life in the swamp, more people visit. The economy is booming with more traders visiting than ever, and adventurers travel through the swamp relatively unharmed.

CONCLUSION, PART B

If the party kills the boo-hag, read the following text aloud:

The hag's body falls to the ground, and the swamp opens and swallows her, leaving behind a pile of rocks painted to look like pearls. As soon as her body disappears, the lush, green plants turn brown, and the murky water recedes. The swamp dies around you as you leave.

Ilde greets you in town with a sad smile. Behind her stands Araphyra comforting a weeping Darona. In fact, many women join Darona in her sorrow, and they watch you disdainfully.

Araphyra screams as blood leaks from her eyes. She dies in front of you, and Darona screams for you to leave town before you do more damage.

You leave Briar Glen behind you and return to your normal lives. The days turn to weeks, and you hear rumors of a town near a swamp nearly destroyed. A few townsfolk still remain, but the swamp around the town died, taking many in the town with it.

One night, you wake from a nightmare, and the boo-hag's haunting voice follows you into the waking world, warning you if the swamp dies, everyone else dies, too.

CONCLUSION, PART C

If the party leaves without confronting the boo-hag or facilitating a deal, read the following:

Ilde follows you to the edge of town, unhappy but understanding. Briar Glen's troubles started long before you arrived, and it was too much, perhaps, to expect you to fix them.

You return to your normal lives, and as the days turn to weeks, you hear rumors of a town near a swamp nearly destroyed. A few townsfolk still remain, but they live in fear of the hag coven controlling the nearby swamp. The people work during the day, then lock their houses tight at night, whispering words of protection and warning.

"Don't let the hag ride you."

REWARDS

CONCLUSION

Part A

If they received
faux-pearls

Part B

If they picked up the 3
faux-pearls left behind by
the boo-hag

Part C

ENCOUNTER

Boo-hag appeased
Boo-hag killed
Troll killed
Bullywug
Stirge

ITEMS

wand of magic detection

grey bag of tricks

100 gp

Each pearl is a potion
of greater healing

100 gp

Each pearl is a potion of
greater healing

50 gp

XP EARNED

2500

1800

900

50 per bullywug

25 per stirge

AUTHOR'S NOTES

Thank you to my wonderful group of playtesters, Robin, Katie, Sam, and Patrick! And thank you to Jen Vaughn and Robin Michele for reviewing my drafts and not letting me give up.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jess is a teacher, editor, and podcaster. You can listen to her play *D&D* with some of her favorite ladies on d20 Dames and tune in while she GMs Blue Rose for some of her besties on Bitches & Liches. Check in with her shenanigans on Twitter @writejessr.

CLOUT

You have done this town a great service, and word of your bravery will spread. If you encounter someone from this town in your travels, they're willing to help you in any way they can on your next adventure.

You have made an enemy of Darona Pernan, a powerful warlock. She won't forget what you've done, nor will the other previously-enchanted women.