

CREATURE FEATURE: LA BRUJA

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Dark tales of brujas and their sinister deeds are legion throughout the Southwest. According to Mexican folklore, brujas are deformed, perverse night dwellers who make use of evil magic and feed on the blood of the weak and helpless. At a distance, they appear as an elderly woman but a closer look reveals them as twisted, gnarled, and predatory.

Brujas are malevolent witches who practice black magic. To survive, they consume the blood of children or lost travelers. They fly on brooms and when they take flight, they often cry, "Sin Dios ni Santa María!" translated in English to "Without God or the Holy Virgin Mary!"

Accounts of brujas vary. Some describe forest-dwelling nightstalkers hiding among the treetops to hunt their prey. Others tell of hard, callused mountain inhabitants who await any unwary traveler. There are also tales of brujas who live in the plains and near lakes. Rare tales of brujas living among humans in cities are considered nothing more than paranoid delusions.

Following World War II, a group of men camping in the Big Thicket witnessed strange lights moving through the trees. At first, they believed the lights were cars, but they quickly realized the lights moved far too quickly to be any normal vehicle. Soon, their campsite was shrouded in intense darkness. Even their campfire did little to fight off the shadows. The men huddled together and drank the liquor they packed until they passed out.

The following morning, the men returned to town to have breakfast at a local restaurant. Their waitress overheard them discussing the previous night and told them the lights they saw were brujas, the darkness a spell they cast before attacking their prey. All of the men, she said, were lucky to be alive.

Younger generations often regard brujas as superstition, but the elderly are not so quick to dismiss them. Old women often hang crucifixes on their doors and say prayers at night to ward off the creatures. Some also believe a pair of scissors opened to make an "X" and placed on a windowsill keeps them away.



BRUJA

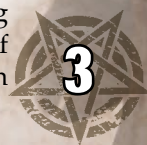
Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d8, Spirit d10, Strength d8, Vigor d10

Skills: Fighting d8, Intimidation d10, Knowledge (Occult) d8, Notice d8, Ritualism d8, Shooting d6, Spellcasting d10, Stealth d8

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 7

Special Abilities:

- **Bane (Holy Items):** Because of a bruja's evil nature and a symbiotic, almost dependent relationship with black magic, a character may keep a bruja at bay by displaying a holy item. See Bane in *East Texas University*.
- **Bloodletting:** The bruja makes an opposed roll of Spellcasting versus the target's Spirit. If successful, blood pours from



the target's eyes and nose, and from beneath his or her fingernails. On a success, the target is Shaken (blood in your eyes will do that) and suffers a -2 penalty to all attacks (bloody, slick hands) for 1d4 rounds after recovering. On a raise, the victim also suffers a level of Fatigue, recovered after 30 minutes or half the time with a successful Healing roll.

- **Fangs/Nails:** Str+d4. The fangs and hardened nails of a bruja are as deadly as knives.



- **Fear (-2):** A bruja's gruesome appearance is terrifying to any who see it.
- **Flight:** A bruja has a flying Pace of 12".
- **Hidden:** A bruja gains +2 to Stealth as she utilizes magic to cloak herself in shadow and darkness.
- **High Strangeness:** When High Strangeness manifests near a bruja's home, it almost always takes the form of unearthly sounds and dancing lights just at the edge of perception. The Dean draws two cards for High Strangeness, and if neither is a Joker, the above effect is used. If either is a Joker, the other card is applied as the effect.
- **Low Light Vision:** Brujas ignore all penalties for Dim and Dark lighting.
- **Powers:** *Boost/lower Trait, curse, fear (mental illusion of target's greatest fear), light/obscure (obscure only), pain transference, summon demon*
- **Power Points:** 25
- **Regeneration, Slow:** Wounded brujas make natural Healing rolls once per day if they have consumed a Fatigue level worth of blood that day.
- **Rituals:** While they prefer using spellcasting, brujas are also capable ritualists. The Dean should decide what, if any, Rituals a bruja has available. One common memorized Ritual is The Spiraling Path, the puppet power affecting up to half their Spirit die type in targets. The Spiraling Path causes them to unconsciously travel to a specific location or to circle back to their original location whenever they attempt to go in another direction. Brujas use the Ritual to draw victims to their lairs.
- **Vampiric Bite:** Although typically reserved for feeding, brujas use this ability to weaken and defeat their enemies. When a bruja gets a raise on a Fighting roll, she lashes out with two rows of razor sharp teeth and drains the victim's blood. This attack causes the target a level of Fatigue and gives the bruja the Hardy ability for one hour. The ability's duration begins from the last Fatigue level caused and is not cumulative. If Incapacitated by Fatigue, the target must succeed at a Vigor roll or die in 2d10 rounds. Only arcane healing



or a blood transfusion and Healing roll at -2 can prevent death. Victims who survive a bruja's vampiric bite attack heal one level of Fatigue every eight hours.

- **Weakness (Holy Water):** Brujas' black magic makes them susceptible to holy water. Brujas contacted by holy water must succeed at a Spirit roll at -2 or be Shaken.

BRUJA VARIATIONS

On the following pages are five different types of brujas you can use in your *East Texas University* campaign.

FOREST BRUJA

Forest bruja are the most elusive of their kind. They remain hidden by day and venture out at night. Typically, they keep to the shadows, especially when hunting for potential victims.

Most forest bruja form covens of at least three or four members. Although traditionally the least aggressive of the bruja living in the wild, they still pose a great danger to any who meet them—especially if their coven is threatened.

Additional Special Abilities:

- **Envelop Attack:** The forest bruja uses magic to control vines, tree branches, and roots to grab and squeeze a target. She makes a Spellcasting roll opposed by the target's Agility. Success indicates partial restraint so that the target suffers a -2 penalty to Pace and skills linked to Agility. A raise restrains the target fully: he cannot move or use any skills linked to Agility or Strength and suffers 2d8 damage. On its action, an enveloped target may make a Strength or Agility roll to break free. Other characters may also attempt to free the enveloped target by making a Strength roll at -2. Maintaining the effect counts as an action for the bruja, applying a -2 to any other actions attempted and ending on her turn if she is unable to take actions (Shaken or recovering without a raise).

- **Improved Frenzy:** Forest bruja become enraged when a member of their coven is Incapacitated or killed. At that point, other members of the coven can make two attacks per round.

LAKE BRUJA

Lake bruja tend to keep to themselves, often ready to viciously defend their home turf against perceived invaders.

Like other bruja, a lake bruja feeds on the blood of the weak, the helpless, and the unwary. She hides among the trees or even in the depths of the lake, waiting for the chance to attack her prey unawares.

Additional Special Abilities:

- **Acidic Spit:** With a Shooting roll, a lake bruja can spit a stream of acid (2d6 damage) at any single target within 2".

- **Aquatic:** Pace 6.

- **Immunity:** Acid.



MOUNTAIN BRUJA

Mountain brujas are solitary creatures that live like hermits high in the mountains. They keep to the trails used by travelers, hoping to find someone to capture and devour.

Although loners by nature, mountain brujas are fiercely aggressive when confronted by a potential threat or met with a possible meal.

Additional Special Abilities:

- **Improved Frenzy:** The mountain bruja may make two attacks per round at no penalty.

- **Pounce:** Mountain brujas may pounce on their prey, usually from a hidden location. She can leap 1d6" to gain a +4 on her attack and damage, though her Parry is reduced by

–2 until her next action when performing this maneuver.

PLAINS BRUJA

Plains brujas pose the greatest danger to those who live near them. While forest brujas, mountain brujas, and lake brujas tend to keep to their own turf, plains brujas are known for sneaking into homes after dark and feeding on children. Many lure their prey outside and spirit them away, leaving nothing behind but empty beds. A select few, however, enter their victims' bedrooms and feed on them there, leaving drained corpses to be discovered the next day.

Plains brujas form smaller covens with two or three members.

Additional Special Abilities:

- **Improved Frenzy:** Plains brujas become enraged when a member of their coven is Incapacitated or killed. At that point, other members of the coven can make two attacks per round.

- **Powers:** Plains brujas have *puppet* in addition to their other powers, but must continuously sing softly to the target when using it. They cannot perform any other actions nor talk while the power is active, but can perform other free actions.

- **Telepathy:** A plains bruja may use this ability to speak with any sentient creature within 8" regardless of language.

URBAN BRUJA

The rarest of the variants, urban brujas live among humanity. They can take on human form completely. It costs much of their power, but also negates normal bruja weaknesses as well, making it nearly impossible to pierce the façade.

Unlike other brujas, urban ones aren't inherently aggressive or hostile to humanity. In fact, they quite enjoy all the luxuries and benefits of civilization and would do almost anything to avoid losing them, even temporarily. Their protectiveness of their secret can put anyone who discovers it at risk.

Urban brujas often work at jobs providing easy access to blood such as doctors, nurses, and other medical professions. Ironically enough, urban brujas are often beneficial to their community, though due to logical self-preservation not altruism.



Urban brujas are not merely loners but extremely territorial. They actively work to remove any other bruja daring to enter what they consider their city.

Additional Special Abilities:

- **Mortal Guise:** An urban bruja can take a completely human form or change back as a free action. None of the standard bruja Special Abilities apply in this form, except for her ability to perform Rituals, which is unchanged. Even the Bane and Weakness do not apply. The specific human form a bruja takes is predetermined, but can be changed to a different one if the bruja stays in her natural form for 1d6 days. The form can have any appearance though brujas favor an Attractive or Very Attractive female one.

She maintains this form even if unconscious. Only three things cause her to transform back to a bruja: death (just prior to disintegrating), consciously choosing to change back, or physical contact with consecrated iron.

- **Rituals:** Urban brujas use Rituals more often, knowing 1d4+1 memorized Rituals, and typically having access to 2d6 other Rituals of the Dean's choice.

- **Traits:** Urban brujas are intelligent, knowledgeable, and perhaps most frightening of all, friendly and charming. They have a d10 in Smarts, Knowledge (Occult), Persuasion, Ritualism, and Streetwise. Depending on their mortal cover, they have a d6 to d10 in a profession-based skill as well, usually Healing.

- **Weakness (Consecrated Iron):** Legend says urban brujas paid for their Mortal Guise ability with an ancient pact, and the price was consecrated iron burns them like acid. Urban brujas take 2d6 damage from bodily contact (clothing blocks) with consecrated iron and are forced into their bruja form for 2d6 rounds. Consecrated iron weapons add +2d6 to their damage.

