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The latest batch of beer from Pinebox's local brewery is a bit...off.

Joker

This adventure is designed for Junior level characters, though it is easily modified for more or less experienced study groups.

BACKGROUND

A few years ago Jason Hess took a giant risk and invested his life savings in a failing Pinebox brewery. He put his heart and soul into turning around the business, re-branding and marketing the beer as Brazen Hussy and building popularity throughout East Texas.

A few months ago he nearly lost the company in a nasty divorce, but eventually held on to the business—if not much else. His ex-wife, Jana, still isn't satisfied. Bitter and convinced her ex-husband had cheated on her, she sought out the services of a Bruja named Maria Estella Ramirez (yes, the same as in *East Texas University* One-Sheet *Jack's Back*), who lives in the nearby town of Cavalas. Bruja Ramirez agreed to curse Jason's company for Jana, but also saw an opportunity to blackmail Jason and gain lots of money in the process.

Maria cast a very powerful ritual on the brewery's equipment. Now when anyone drinks three or more Brazen Hussy beers in a 24 hour period, they experience High Strangeness.

THE BREW'S EFFECTS

All effects last for 24 hours and are hallacinatory, affecting only the victim. The only exception is the Joker result, which affects everyone who sees the victim. If wounded or "killed" by these visions, the victim wakes up at the end of the 24 hour duration, sore, but okay. Draw a card for effects:

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Card	Effect	
2	Instant Sickness: Victim suffers from the shakes and fever (as if from food poisoning), -2 Fatigue for the duration.	
3	Bug Bomb: Victim begins vomiting earthworms, grubs, and roaches every hour (Vigor – 1 to resist).	
4	Ghost Calls: Whispers on the wind. Victim hears the dead talking to her in the wind and must succeed on a Smarts roll or suffer a level of Fatigue from fear. If Exhausted, the victim passes out.	
5	La Cucarachas: A swarm of cockroaches attacks the victim and chases him for the next 24 hours.	
6	Lame (Major Hindrance): The victim loses use of one of her legs.	
7	Hard of Hearing (Major Hindrance): Victim has lost her hearing, automatically failing Notice rolls to detect sounds.	
8	One Arm (Major Hindrance): Victim loses use of one arm.	
9	Blind (Major Hindrance): Victim is completely blind.	

	Card	Effect
	10	Dunce: Victim's Smarts die is reduced to a d4 and he suffers from the Clueless Hindrance.
	Jack	Technology Killer: Any technology the victim touches is fried, including televisions, cell phones, lights, automobiles, anything that uses an electric system.
	Queen	Shadow Attack: The victim's shadow takes 3 dimensional form and attacks. Only bright, 360 degrees of light can keep the shadow at bay. Shadow has the same attributes as the victim.
	King	Something's Out There: The victim is immersed in a thick fog and a scarecrow (see ETU) is stalking him.
	Ace	Tooth Loss: The victim experiences losing a tooth every hour.
	loker	Joker Nosferatu: Victim takes on the physical visage of a 1930s horror movie nosferatu. (Unlike the others, this is

visible to anyone who views her). Suffers a -2 Charisma

and causes Fear to anyone she speaks directly to.



THE INVESTIGATION

Although tests have come back inconclusive, the health department is threatening to close Brazen Hussy in the next 48 hours under suspicion of drugs in the beer.

The study group either suffers from drinking the cursed brew or witnesses several others who do. Alternately, a classmate in fear of losing his internship may ask the students to investigate.

While the students are on site Jason is contacted by his ex, Jana, who demands \$100,000 to stop the curse. (Actually it is the bruja in a magical disguise). Jason offers a thousand dollar reward to the study group to find out how his ex wife "doped" the beer and how to prevent further tampering.

Jana is behind the curse but has no idea about Maria's blackmailing scheme. She can be Intimidated or Persuaded to spill the truth of going to La Bruja and quickly gives up Maria Estella Ramirez in Cavalas.

After the group leaves Jana, she calls Maria and confronts her. Maria realizes she may have called too much attention to herself. She sends two imps (see Demons: imps in *East Texas University*) to ambush the students while she lures Jason to her home in Cavalas. Given time, she plans on forcing Jason to pay a ransom for his release before using her magic to wipe his memories.

To rescue Jason the study group must overcome Maria and two more of her two imps. This is a fight to defeat or kill Maria and is very dangerous.

Cavalas is a "recovering ghost town," only sparsely repopulated after having been completely abandoned ten years ago. Maria has claimed what used to be the Sunlight Inn, although it is no longer open to the public.

JASON HESS

Jason, an ETU dropout, is in his early thirties. He wears glasses and keeps his hair long. His usually ready smile is strained under the difficult circumstances.

Jason is being held in one of the motel's rooms, his mouth stuffed with old rags.

For stats use the White Collar Worker Extra found in East Texas University.

MARIA ESTELLA RAMOREZ

Maria takes on the guise of a pretty Hispanic girl with long, dark hair and big brown eyes. If she believes she will lose a confrontation or becomes trapped, she is willing to drop the curse. She hates losing, though, so the team gains a powerful enemy in the process.

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*.
- 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.
- **Hidden:** A bruja gains +2 to Stealth as she utilizes magic to cloak herself in shadow and darkness.
- Mortal Guise: Maria can take a completely human form or change back as a free action. None of the other Special Abilities apply in this form except for her ability to use Rituals, which is unchanged. Even the Bane and Weakness do not apply. 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.
- 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:** Maria can cast rituals she calls My Pretty Treasure (*create talisman*), Mal Ojo (*curse*), Blank Slate (*forget*) and three other rituals of the Dean's choosing.
- 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.



Maria Estella Ramirez is an urban bruja, as described in the ETU *Creature Feature: La Bruja*, but she is still young for a bruja and not yet matured into her full abilities. The Creature Feature provides much more information on these witches as well as figure flat miniatures for your game.

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