

# Session 05 Cherry Blossom

I want to start a more significant Story than just Lexi's first wanderings in Shadow, so I rolled on the **Action + Theme** button on my [https://aigm.igm4u.com/amber\\_oracles.html](https://aigm.igm4u.com/amber_oracles.html) page...

*Action: Defy Theme: Destiny*

As with all Oracle results when you play Solo, this needs some creative interpreting.

**"DEFY DESTINY"** will become a **CAMPAIGN ASPECT**.

## For AMBER plots, and particularly for SOLO & GM-LESS campaigns ...

I could start by deciding whether the SOLO/GM should know much about the Plot or whether to let events unfold and then try to retro-fit a Plot to explain them. I think both work, but this time I fancy knowing the APPARENT PLOT and then trying to fit future events in to it and later making a check to see if the APPARENT PLOT is actually the REAL PLOT.

To challenge an Amber Player/Character, you ideally want to present a PLOT or SCHEME by either another Amberite, or a Chaos Lord or a Cabal of Chaosites or maybe a group in a Shadow that's significant to the character or (less likely) some as-yet unknown agency or a mixed bag.

There should also be a chance that the apparent ENEMY is not the ACTUAL Enemy, but we'd roll for that when the Character uncovers the Apparent plot.

So, let's randomly determine an Apparent Enemy.

1d6 **1**=Amberite, **2**=Cabal of Amberites, **3**=Chaos Lord, **4**=Cabal of Chaos Lords, **5**=Shadow Organisation, **6**=OTHER or roll twice!

**1**

Let's break this down further to people with the power and influence needed to challenge a PC.

1d6 **1**=An Elder Amberite, **2**=Amberite of the PC's Generation, **3**=A Senior Amber Court Noble, **4**=A Cabal of Amber Nobles, **5**=A Merchant or Soldier or Ruler of a Shadow of the Golden Circle, **6**=A Trump Artist or Sorcerer or Shapechanger from Amber or the Golden Circle

**6**

and then 1d3 **1**

I'll use the **Full Character** button to get an idea and a name for this mysterious Trump Artist...

- Name: Kato
- Role: Adventurer
- Apparent Goal: Collect a debt
- Descriptor: Confused & Critical
- Apparent Disposition: Unfriendly
- Apparent Activity: Restoring

I used the **Starforged Surnames Oracle** to generate a last name for him and now have **Kato Jen**.

The sound of the name suggests somebody of oriental heritage. “**Confused**” suggests that they might be old, getting desperate to act before becoming too old.

The Role “**Adventurer**” doesn’t seem to fit so I’ll ignore that for now, but maybe Kato Jen is a **Trump Artist** who lives in **Amber**. I’d envisage that Trump Artistry is VERY rare and VERY difficult for anyone who isn’t of the Blood (Amber or Chaos) or someone who isn’t a PC. Maybe it takes such an NPC a full year to draw a single card (after a week of the subject sitting) and a week to draw a Trump Sketch.

As Lexi’s Trouble Aspect is about her Father, trying to destroy the Universe, perhaps Kato was promised Lexi’s life for assisting Brand in constructing some Trump-powered artefact. Brand promised that the proper sacrifice of Lexi would imbue Kato with her power and virtual immortality. This is the “**DEBT**” Kato wants to **COLLECT**, but he’ll have to be careful as Lexi is “of the Blood of Amber” so very dangerous.

Given that Kato is a Trump Artist, perhaps the Apparent Activity: **RESTORING** means he’s either restoring a damaged Trump or.... Working to **RESTORE BRAND!**

I’m trying **not** to imagine further plot twists and reveals, so I can “**Play to Find Out**”, but am already liking the idea of this Sacrifice Ritual being a double-bluff from Brand intended to bring him back from the dead through the sacrifice of his child!

OK – if Kato aims to sacrifice Lexi, what are his options for getting her to a specific place and vulnerable? His steps towards his goal need to lead to “adventure opportunities” for the PC and should be suitably underhand and mysterious.

1. Friendly contact – ask Lexi for help with something? Convince King Random that she needs some advanced tutoring to master her own Trump skills? Hire Lexi (perhaps there are some other ingredients that need fetching before the Sacrifice)? Drop some hints that Kato knew her father and/or might have some of Brand’s art works.
2. Kidnap attempt. Would need to be a significant attempt, knowing that Lexi is “of Amber”. Mercenaries, Relatives (children) of Kato? Some Trump-artefact beast with Shadow Trail?
3. Bring the “Trump Macguffin” close to Lexi, unnoticed, unsuspected.
4. Set some Chaos Mercenaries on to Lexi, with a clue in their possession that suggests Kato is also on their list – this one looks like a mere Kidnap attempt but is expected to fail – very suited to an Amber Intrigue
5. Threaten somebody significant to Lexi
6. Some kind of Trump Trap / Domination.

We can assume Brand gave Kato some of his daughter’s blood and hair to allow Kato to make a Trump or Trump Sketch of her, or to target her with a Trump Trap. Either Brand drew a Trump of her or Kato did, with Brand’s complicity, four or five years ago, when Lexi was about 16.

Can roll to see which of these gets attempted first..1d6 **1** and then 1d4 **3** so, “**Hire Lexi (perhaps there are some other ingredients that need fetching before the Sacrifice)**”.

That’s enough with the Plotting, off we go...

## An Unexpected Caller

Having first checked that the Drone was safely trapped, Lexi slept fitfully in one of the Pods until she was woken by a faint but insistent ringing in her ears. Her first thought was to reach for a mobile phone, but, at Flora's suggestion, she had left it back in her bedroom in Shadow Earth when her Aunt came to take her to Amber.

It took her a moment to realise what was happening before she recognised what it must be...

"Who the hell has got a Trump of ME?"

With that she ran a hand nervously through her hair, glanced at a dishevelled and grubby reflection, shrugged and mentally accepted the call.

A picture appeared for a moment of an old man, wrinkled but with unusually black hair, with strange robes and an ornate hood. She couldn't help thinking "Emperor Ming!". Then the painting resolved into the man himself, but long hair now grey and gathered behind his head, no hood, but still in odd archaic robes of blue and gold. There was an art studio behind him. Through a wall of clear glass, she could see it was a sunny day and a cherry blossom tree.

"No – not an Emperor, merely an old and foolish painter my dear girl." He spoke in Thari, a language she had suddenly "known" after Queen Vialle did something to her, on her arrival in Amber only a month ago.

"I am Kato Jen, I recently came into possession of your Trump, Miss Brandon. I have long been an admirer of your Father's artistry and this piece came up at an auction..." seeing a scowl cross her face at the mention of her father, the old man paused "...have I called you at a bad time perhaps...".

He seemed relieved when she shook her head, and mumbled "no... not at all... I just didn't know my father had created a Trump of me. May I see it?"

It was Kato Jen's turn to look confused. He picked up the card, causing the image to swim a little, then must have held it up and rotated it. Much like if someone rotated a smartphone during a video call, she couldn't see the card itself, but got a good look around the studio.



trump\_james\_hong\_as\_kato\_jen\_mj.png

"You see the problem, Miss Brandon?" When the image returned to the old man's face, she could tell he was sweating a little and remembered what an effort of will it was for her to open the call to Flora.

"Yes, I see. Still, I'd love to take a look. Is there any chance you could pull me through? Not if it's too much bother... I don't want to intrude."

The old man chuckled and shook his head slightly. "I can certainly try... if you are sure? Are you willing to bear the brunt of the strain or shall I? Do you need an hour to gather your things and I can call later?"

Holding up her hand "give me a few seconds...there's no wine I'm afraid but..." she reached behind her for a bottle of Dr Salt, the fizzy soda. Always best to take a gift. Then she turned back, took the old man's hand, said "I'll take the strain, please don't wear yourself out on my account" and was swallowed by rainbows.

It amused me to think how surprised Kato Jen must have been when she offered to come through immediately – he'd probably spent months coming up with a plan to get his hands on her, and she just ... unbelievable!

## Back in Amber

Although I'm not expecting any immediate trouble, it's time to dream up Stats for Kato Jen as a Significant NPC...

### KATO JEN

**Aspects:** *Ancient Trump Artist from Amber, Cunning Apprentice of Brand, Desperate*

**Approaches:** Body-1, Speed-2, Mind+4

**Stunts:** Trump Use, Trump Teleport, Trump Sketch, Trump Artistry, Magic 1, Magic 2

**Physical Combat:** -1 (Body + no relevant Aspects), **Damage:**0 **Armor:**0

**Mental Combat:** +6 (Mind plus two relevant Aspects), **Mental Damage:**3

**Stress:**3 (5 Trump Stress, 3 Magic stress), **1 Consequence: WOUNDED (3 Stress, -2 to all rolls)**

I'll detail the Magic later but envisage illusions and the conjuring of beasts.

He will have a small number of Trumps of his own and a couple made by Brand

The teleportation drained two Stress, which **looked** like it might have finished off the feeble old man. He actually has a Trump 5 Track due to his years of training, but Lexi wouldn't know that.

Amber Accelerated | Roll20 x Token Stamp 2 - RollAdvantage x +

app.roll20.net/editor/

AMBER Pattern+4, Tech+0, Magic+1

Lexi Kato Jen Kato Jet

Mick H.

NPC\_Action Fudge Lexi: ATTACK Lexi: DEFEND Lexi: CREATE-ADVANTAGE Lexi: OVERCOME TEST?

She's arrived in the studio room and stumbles on arrival from the sudden change in the air. It's something she hopes to get used to with practice.

The cherry blossom through the window is even more lovely than it appeared, and the sunlight filtered through it, lends a magical quality to the room.

After a moment of looking around, at the half-finished scrolls with mountain scenes and willows, she looks at the card in the old man's left hand.

"I guess I've changed quite a bit!" she says, with a nervous laugh, letting go of the old man's dry, frail right hand.

Kato Jen smiles back and shakes his head. "Not in any way that truly matters..." gestures at her vaguely "... this... just clothes and makeup, and dirt! And ... these ... twisted hair.."

"Dreadlocks" she gives another embarrassed smile and raises a hand to them "They're called dreadlocks. My father would not have approved... that might be why I've got them. It was certainly easier to keep clean before..." She runs a hand over the image on the card and it feels cold to the touch.

It's definitely HER. More so than the image she sees in the bathroom mirror. The artist... her **father**... has captured something unique. She hadn't thought he'd known her that well. A hot flush rises to her cheeks, and she breathes deeply and shakes off the unwanted emotion.

Kato Jen hasn't let go of it. For a moment she thinks of snatching it from his hand, but politeness takes over and reluctantly she lets her hand drop.

At this point I have to imagine what the old man wants her to get for him so he can lure her with the offer of her Trump in exchange. It seems like another one of Brand's Trumps that grants control over some sort of Monstrous Assassin or Unusual Power Source would fit this plot ideally.

50/50... is it the Assassin? **NO!** 22 In the section of the rulebook about GM Decisions it says...

*With "matches" 11, 22, 33, 44, 55, 66, 77, 88, 99, 00 being more extreme results, either for good or bad"*

... so, we are looking at a POWERFUL Power Source, perhaps a secret Pattern drawn by Brand? That



would explain why he has to use Lexi to get to it, nobody else would survive the Patternwalk. But Kato Jen believes that Brand's Pattern won't grant her Power but will grant it to him via this Trump instead.

In a moment of Pathos, we see that Lexi can feel pleased that her father DID notice her, well enough to make a detailed painting of her, showing her as beautiful and strong, while the truth is, he didn't do it out of love, but to sacrifice her and gain her life-force! At the moment when it happens, we will get to find out if he has ALSO tricked Kato Jen and the sacrifice will instead resurrect Brand, or if Kato Jen intends to use the Power to resurrect Brand.

## Tea and Bath House

The home of Kato Jen is on a hillside a couple of miles from the sea and the Castle and City of Amber. From the garden, Castle Amber can be seen on the mountain that rises from the centre of the sprawling harbour city. Sails dot the distant ocean, from small dinghies to huge triple-masted galleons.

They sit on low stools at a small wrought-iron table carved with black vines and colourful serpents, drinking tea. Lexi is a little self-conscious, in a light kimono, her hair long and wet and straight after her bath.

A maid brought the tea out into the garden beneath the cherry blossom, and they've been joined by Kato Jet, the old man's son.



Jet is not much like his frail, skinny father. He seems to be a man of action. To Lexi's unsophisticated eye, a 40-year-old samurai with a sword to match. He is polite but watchful – maybe he knows about her father?

Time to consider stats for Kato Jet – I'm envisaging him accompanying Lexi on a quest to find this Pattern of Brand's. He MAY or MAY NOT know that his father is sending her to die. Kato Jen MIGHT even be willing to sacrifice his own son in the same way that Brand may be sacrificing Lexi!

In case he does have to provide a challenge for Lexi, best make him a Significant NPC with some decent combat training – and maybe even a trump-enhanced blade – 50/50... **YES+** 71

### KATO JET

**Aspects:** *Samurai, Son of a Trump Sorcerer, Prince Charming*

**Approaches:** Body+3, Speed+3, Mind+2

**Stunts:** Magic 1, Katana+1, Awareness+1, Magic Katana:+2 Damage from Trump Etched Blade

**Combat:** +5 (Body plus one relevant Aspects + Skill), **Damage:**4 (Physical Combat) **Armor:**1

**Mental Combat:** +3 (Mind plus one relevant Aspect), **Mental Damage:**1

**Stress:**4 (+2 Trump Stress, +2 Magic Stress), **1 Consequence: WOUNDED (3 Stress, -2 on all rolls)**

I'll detail the Magic later but envisage minor illusions.

He will have a Trump of his father and one of a Mercenary ally

The old man gets his son to bring a big leather wallet from the studio and takes out a sketch of an unusual landscape.



“You would like the Trump, I’m guessing?” Lexi nodded warily, “I teach. Art. Painting. It’s how I make my living. Your father studied here once you know.” The old man’s voice was low, as if this was a secret. “Long before his.... before ... Long ago. I learned as much from him as he from me. What a raw talent!” he sipped his tea and waited for a sign of interest from Lexi. She nodded at him eager to hear more.

“He took me out on horseback one day, wanting to show me something. Where he took me, I don’t know, for I’ve ridden out that way many times since and never reached the place. I know about Shadow-walking. That must have been what he did with me – although few can manage it here, so close to Amber. After a few hours we came to this place.” Tapping the parchment. “A winding track led up into the hills and just beyond that last curve, was where he was taking me, to see **something wondrous!**”

Another pause for a drink, the old man was tense, his mouth drying. “The horses grew nervous, and I must admit, so did I. The strangeness of the journey, the scent in the air, something about that trail worried me. Something about the eagerness of Prince Brand, something disturbing in his smile... I begged him to take me back. He was angry... disappointed in me... but he brought me home.”

The old man sighed wistfully.

“He didn’t mean me any harm, I think and had indeed hoped to show me **something wondrous**, something he was proud of, but my cowardice held me back. He left me soon after. I’ve always wondered what it was, what I’d have seen, what I’d have learned.”

He patted the sketch again. “This is just a sketch. I brought back nothing from the journey, no soil , nothing to mix with the paint and I had not been there long enough to absorb its essence, so this is not a Trump Sketch. Yet my skill with a brush might be good enough for one such as you... a Shadow-walker... to find this place.”. He leaned forward intently. “Go there, find the way and call me, let me see what it is... through the Cards... let me see what he wanted to show me.” He sat back and Lexi realised she had been holding her breath. She nodded “And in exchange... I get my Trump?”.

Kato Jen nodded wearily, “Take my son with you. Jet has **my** Trump, One of you can call me when you arrive... And in exchange... you get **your** Trump.”.

**\*\*\* End of Session Five \*\*\***

## What Next for Lexi?