

10 The Long and Winding Road

GM'S PONDERINGS

As we approach the end of this particular quest, I have to find a way to wrap up the story that makes narrative sense and yet hold on to the "NOT KNOWING" as long as possible.

To that end, here are my thoughts so far...

FACTS ESTABLISHED...

Kato Jen is a **bad** guy. He lured Lexi to this place. He asked his son to betray Lexi and, when Kato Jet refused, he mentally dominated him and is currently working him as a remote puppet.

K Jen's ASPECTS are **Ancient Trump Artist from Amber, Cunning Apprentice of Brand & Desperate**

K Jen is old (his "Ancient" Aspect) and wants to extend his own life at any cost (his "Desperate" Aspect) *Likely* - or maybe his son's life although that seems *Almost Impossible* or else just restore Brand out of loyalty

K Jen believes he can achieve this "immortality" desire either by sacrificing Lexi or restoring Brand *50/50*.

K Jen had no way to reach this place or he could have created a Trump for it rather than need Lexi to find it by shadow-walking.

Kato **Jet** is *Almost Certainly* a "good" guy – on Lexi's side

THINGS THAT SEEM LIKELY OR POSSIBLE ...

Brand is involved ("Cunning Apprentice of Brand") so Kato Jen's story about Brand taking him to see this WONDER could be at least partially true - *Likely*.

Who is REALLY behind it all?

- A) BRAND came up with the scheme and K Jen is following orders faithfully
- B) As A but BRAND is betraying K Jen
- C) As B but BRAND is actually doing something GOOD for his daughter – *Almost Impossible*
- D) BRAND came up with the scheme and K Jen is aiming to subvert it for his own ends
- E) K Jen really is the prime mover (either cleverly scheming or mistaken in how the WONDER works)
- F) Some unknown 3rd party is behind it all with K Jen not aware
- G) As F but K Jen is knowingly following orders (perhaps fooled into thinking the orders come from Brand)

Kato Jen's Intention

Either K Jen's **intention** is to use Lexi's life-force to

a) restore Brand to life - *Likely*

b) steal it for himself - *50/50*

c) perhaps he DOES love his son and actually wants to steal it for him – *if neither of the above*

The Nature of the WONDER

The WONDER could be...

- a Pattern - *50/50*
- a partly-drawn Pattern - *Unlikely*
- a work of Trump Art (*Likely* if not a Pattern)
 - A lifelike sculpture or painting of Brand (trapping? Controlling? Linked to?) *50/50*
 - A painting or sculpture (trapping, controlling, monitoring?)
 - The Logrus, the Unicorn, the Serpent, the Pattern, the Abyss, Amber, Tir'Na Nogth, Rebma, The Courts of Chaos, Oberon (trapped), Dworkin (trapped), Finndo, Osric or some other Descendant of Dworkin, some Lord/Lady of Chaos.
- Or The WONDER is Brand himself (if none of the above)...
 - In a coma?
 - In a prison?
 - Locked in battle with some Abyssal Monster

SPECULATION

How would KJ intend to get Lexi to fulfil the scheme?

- A) Rely on her curiosity - *Unlikely*
- B) Just triggered by proximity - *Unlikely*
- C) Push her into/onto it - *Unlikely*
- D) Trump Domination to force her onto it- *Unlikely*
- E) Activate it when she is in range - *Unlikely*
- F) Activate it himself and then use its power to drain Lexi remotely – if NOT any of the others

THE GUARDIAN

I used Midjourney to generate art of a “Guardian of the Final Chamber”. Might it...

- ignore Lexi? *Unlikely*
- Attack her companion? *Almost Certainly* (if it does, we will need to work out if K Jen created/controls it - *Unlikely*)
- Attack specifically because K Jen is controlling his son? If so it's a guardian Brand left to keep K Jen from activating the WONDER. - *Unlikely*
- Might it need some kind of password or proof of Lexi's blood-line?
- Riddle? Puzzle? Combat? Evasion?

I haven't used Lexi's Trump Sketch power at all in this story – maybe if she can see the area beyond the Guardian she can Sketch a way past?

Maybe Kato Jen will become stuck in his son's body and become a recurring villain with his own powers AND Jet's martial prowess?

The Motorhome at the End of the Road

The Motorhome was a great idea, comfortable beds (it was a family-sized thing) and a well-stocked fridge with bottled beers, meat, vegetables, fruit. There's eggs and bread too all with strange labels and packaging written in Thari.

They **should** be able to get a good night's sleep here, despite the anticipation and Kato Jet's apparent nervousness.

A disturbance seems 50/50... **YES+** 82 I decided to roll for a Monstrosity as it was a big YES+ but not matching numbers so probably not The Guardian itself. All Stress back but Lexi is still Fatigued (-1 on all rolls).

Full Character

Full Monstrosity

Name: Snuffle
Size: Small (hound-sized)
Primary Form: Bird
Characteristics: Oversized mouth & Antennae / sensory organs
Abilities: Paralyzing & Echolocation

Stats for this seem like...

"Snuffles"

Aspects: Nocturnal Hunters, Bat-like Birds

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

Stunts: Echolocation, Flock (attack as a pack with +2 skill and damage +2 and Consequences to reduce those by 1 each time)

Combat: +2 (Body plus one relevant Aspects), **Damage:**+1 ("hunter") + "paralyzing" **Armor:**0
Stress:2, no Consequences (unless as a Flock)

Lexi has just fallen asleep when rustling and rattling on the roof of the vehicle wakes her. She opens a curtain to look out and a prehensile appendage (similar to an elephant's trunk but much thinner) snakes through the small window and, at the end, a mouth full of fangs snaps at her.

Lexi- DEFEND

Intention Dodge single Snuffle bite

Roll 1 HASTE + 1

Fatig on Broken 0

As a single attacker, Combat is only +2, but surprise (and Fatigue) are slowing her down. Dammit no, she'll call on her "Amber" Aspect with a FATE point to drag herself out of the way.

Surprised and shocked and barely scrambling away from the clacking fanged horror, she calls out to "Jet!".

There are more of them on the roof, scrabbling about.

Maybe Kato Jen has shut down his son's body and is taking a break? 50/50... **YES+** 75 It's going to be unlikely he will join in this encounter – I'll check each round for an Unlikely result.

There's no reply from Kato Jet and suddenly the window smashes and half a dozen black birds the size of dogs, crash through, filling the **Cramped Space** with flapping bodies. To add to the horror, the things are eye-less.

Nb. **Cramped Space** will be an Aspect of the situation that either Lexi or the Enemies can call upon. The Flock will have 2 FATE Points! Midjourney struggled to add a tentacled snout with fangs!



Lexi tries to back up into the first doorway leading towards the back of the trailer.

Lexi - CREATE ADVANTAGE

Intention Back up to the doorway
Roll -1 GUILLE + 3
Fatig on Broken 0

Against the flock's +4 this would have been a failure due to her tiredness, but she'll spend another FATE Point to invoke the "Cramped Space" Aspect get the narrative positional advantage (effectively just converting the FATE point into a BOOST)

The bird-things are hampered by the cramped space and she just manages to back up into the doorway. She can only see Kato Jet's feet from here – he seems to be sleeping through it! "JET!".

Will Jet wake up... **NO!** 37

The snuffling tentacles reach for her, teeth snapping, and she tries to block them with the door.

Lexi- DEFEND

Intention Block the flock (+4)
Roll -2 FORCE + 2
Fatig on Broken 0

She'll use the Boost to reduce the number of shifts and reduce the damage from 6 (+1 for their "hunter" aspect and 5 for the shifts as she has her -1 Fatigue too) down to only 4. Her Amber toughness reduces it further to just 2. However there is the "paralyze" to defend against, let's call that a target of +2...

Lexi- DEFEND

Intention Resist the poison (+2)
Roll -1 FORCE + 2
Fatig on Broken 0

Her last FATE point will have to go on that!

With the desperate strength of her Amber heritage, she slams shut the door after getting only a scratch from the teeth. She can see poison dripping from the fangs but seems to have avoided it for now. "JET! Wake the hell up!"

The door opens inwards to the bedroom, maybe they won't be able to operate door handles and work out how to pull. She drops back into the wider living area and shakes the sleeping Kato Jet.

Will Jet wake up... **Yes** 94

Groggily the man opens his eyes. For a moment there is a look of fear in them as he shrieks and recoils.

Lexi - OVERCOME

Intention See that something is wrong (opposed)

Roll 0 GUILLE + 3

Fatig on Broken 0

Taking off her Fatigue that's only a +2.

I'm going to give Kato Jen a penalty for the shock and suddenness of it, so he's only got +2 and a Roll.

He just manages to avoid giving himself away.

Kato Jen - DEFEND

Intention Flustered Deception

Roll 1

Bonus +2 Fair

After the momentary confusion, the samurai gropes for his blade and looks around at the sound of scraping and screeching from the bedroom. "Whaaa... What is it?"

"Oh! Just half a dozen Tweety Pies trying to rip me apart while you do your Sleeping Beauty thing!" Seeing he is still confused, she adds. "Crazy bird things with fanged snouts – trapped behind the door for now but it won't hold them long."

Holding the katana unsteadily, he stands (he was fully clothed already), looks about and asks "What should we do?"

Lexi is tired and frustrated but still has a lot of Guile. To avoid a protracted combat, I'll let her sacrifice the good night's sleep in spectacular fashion in order to end it here.

The young woman turns to the stove, twisting the controls to release the hiss of gas. She grabs the box of matches from the rack on the wall...



They watch as the trailer explodes and burns.

"At least the birds went with it". Turning to Jet, "What the hell was wrong with you? Wasn't I screaming loud enough!"

Biting back a look of anger, the man turned away and muttered "Perhaps I had entered a meditative state to prepare for the final step of this journey"

She can have 1 FATE Point back for the sacrifice of the comfortable resting place. She'll get her Stress back, but now won't recover her Fatigue.

The explosion MIGHT have attracted The Guardian (50/50)... **No** 35

The Winding Road

The broad track winds up the hill before them. The smoke and stench of feathers lingers behind. According to the old man, Brand's WONDER lies up there somewhere.

They have not spoken much since last night, barely a few words. Lexi is annoyed, as she thought they were actually becoming friends.

She starts up the trail and the silent samurai falls in a few steps behind her.

Will climbing the trail be an ordeal? Seems Unlikely... **Yes** 77 Oh! Well what do I know (and Matching numbers for extra effect too). Is it just the long uphill or perhaps weather trying to drive them back. 50/50 for the Gradient?... **NO!** 28

The smouldering remains of the caravan are a speck in the distance below when the rain starts. With each step it seems to fall harder and the trail becomes slippery with mud.

How hard should it be?

Start at +2 and add +Fudge roll (only positives)... **+1 +1 +1 -1** Total **+2** so +4!

Lexi - OVERCOME

Intention Trudging up through the rain

Roll **1** FORCE + 2

Fatig on **Broken 0**

She's forced to use her only remaining FATE point to keep her footing, invoking her "Determined" Aspect.

The torrential downpour threatens to sweep them off the hillside, despite her fatigue, Lexi lowers her head and stubbornly presses forward.

Kato Jet (dominated) - OVERCOME

Intention Grit teeth and follow

Roll **-1**

Bonus +4 Great

The possessed Kato Jet has Body+3 and I can give him +1 for the old man's "Desperate" Aspect, but he's still going to stumble...

Struggling to keep his balance against the gusts, the driving rain and the mud-slides, Kato Jet slips and falls.

Could he drop the sword (the focus of his father's magical possession) giving him a few seconds of freedom? Seems Unlikely he'd have it out... **Yes** 85 So opposed Mental Combat between the two Kato Js...

Kato Jen - ATTACK

Intention Retain Control

Roll **2**

Bonus +6 Fantastic

Kato Jet (dominated) - DEFEND

Intention Break Free

Roll **-3**

Bonus +3 Good

The old man's will is like iron as he clamps down on his son's frantic attempt to break free.

The man's body is scraped and bruised as he slowly regains his footing. He may even have broken something inside, but he doesn't cry out and stoically follows Lexi, ignoring her concerned questions.

I'm going to give Kato Jet his Wounded Consequence (-2 on all rolls) due to internal injury that his father is forcing him to ignore. Perhaps blood will stain his clothes and Lexi will notice later.

Is there further hardship on the climb – seems Unlikely... **Yes** 87

Wow! Getting there is harder than I expected. I think this makes some of the possible explanations even less likely. Now maybe Brand's magic is trying to prevent Lexi from reaching the place? Maybe it's just aimed at stopping her companion?

Is it the Guardian? Seems Unlikely... **NO!** 35 Is it more Weather? 50/50... **NO!** 1

Is it a Rockfall 50/50... **Yes** 62

Let's make it Difficulty only +2 but with severe consequences for failure Fudge Roll+Shifts damage!

Lexi- DEFEND

Intention Avoid Rockfall

Roll -1 HASTE + 1

Fatig on Broken 0

-1 0 0 -1 Total 0

At least that's only 3 Stress for Lexi (she was already fatigued so had -1 on the roll).

Kato Jet (dominated) - DEFEND

Intention Avoid Rockfall (-2 for Wounds)

Roll 0

Bonus +3 Good

With that additional -2 for Wounds it would be 4 Stress, which would knock him out cold.

I'll let Lexi try to shield him with her own body, difficulty +2 and take 2 stress per 1 she stops.

Oops, she'll take another 2 Stress and he takes the full 4.

Lexi - OVERCOME

Intention Try to shield KJ

Roll -2 FORCE + 2

Fatig on Broken 0

Finally noticing that her companion is badly injured, Lexi tries to block one of the largest boulders from hitting him. They are both struck and tumble twenty feet back down the hill. Kato Jet strikes his head and passes out.

Lexi has only 2 Stress left before she has to tick "Broken"

"This is like bloody Caradhras except with rain instead of snow! We can't stay here... must get into shelter...". She lifts the body of the samurai and keeps climbing.

Is there further hardship on the climb – seems Unlikely... **NO!** 8 Phew!

Is there a cave for shelter? 50/50... **YES+** 100 That seems REALLY emphatic, so the cave contains the WONDER (and the Guardian!)

After pushing on for what seems like an hour, she spots a cave and hauls Kato Jet inside, out of the rain and wind.

After a few moments, her eyes begin to adjust and she sees that a tunnel leads deeper into the hill and there is a strange glow... like candles... from further in.



There is some kind of figure, looming in the flickering light... it must be ten feet tall.

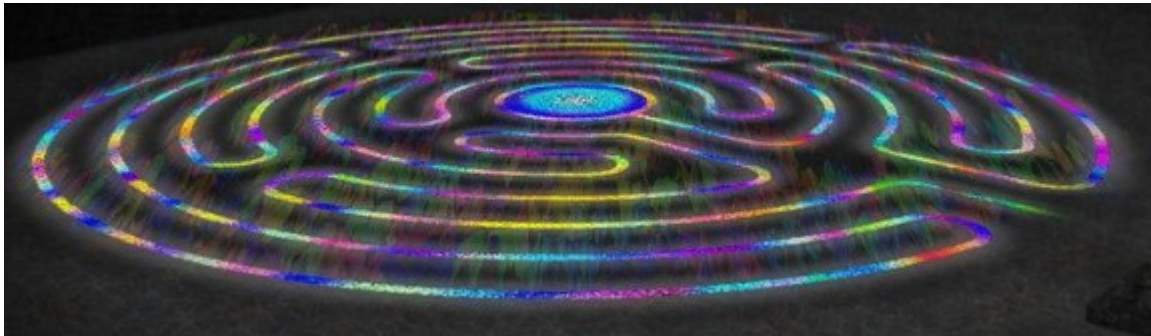
Beyond it lies ...

Now to determine what the WONDER looks like...

1. A Pattern
2. Trump art
3. The Monster IS the Wonder.
4. Nothing

50/50 for a Pattern... **Yes** 65

... the unmistakable curving track of a PATTERN!!!



***** End of Session 10 *****

Kato Jet's body is currently unconscious, so if his Father needs to do anything to enact the plan, he can't. Unless Lexi takes his trump from Jet and calls the old man.

Lexi herself is Fatigued and has only 2 of her Standard Stress left. At least she'll get 2 FATE Points back next Session.

She'll probably take the Trump-etched Katana for self-defence, which might let Kato Jen attempt to control her!

Maybe Kato Jet will mumble something like "Father..." and she'll interpret it as "take the trump and call my Father"?

STRESS & CONDITIONS		
0	Stress	<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input checked="" type="radio"/> <input checked="" type="radio"/> <input checked="" type="radio"/> <input checked="" type="radio"/>
0	Indebted	<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input checked="" type="radio"/>
0	Fatigued - 3 Stress (-1 on all Rolls)	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
0	Broken - 6 Stress (-2 on all Rolls)	<input type="radio"/>
0	PATTERN	<input checked="" type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>
0	TRUMP	<input checked="" type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>