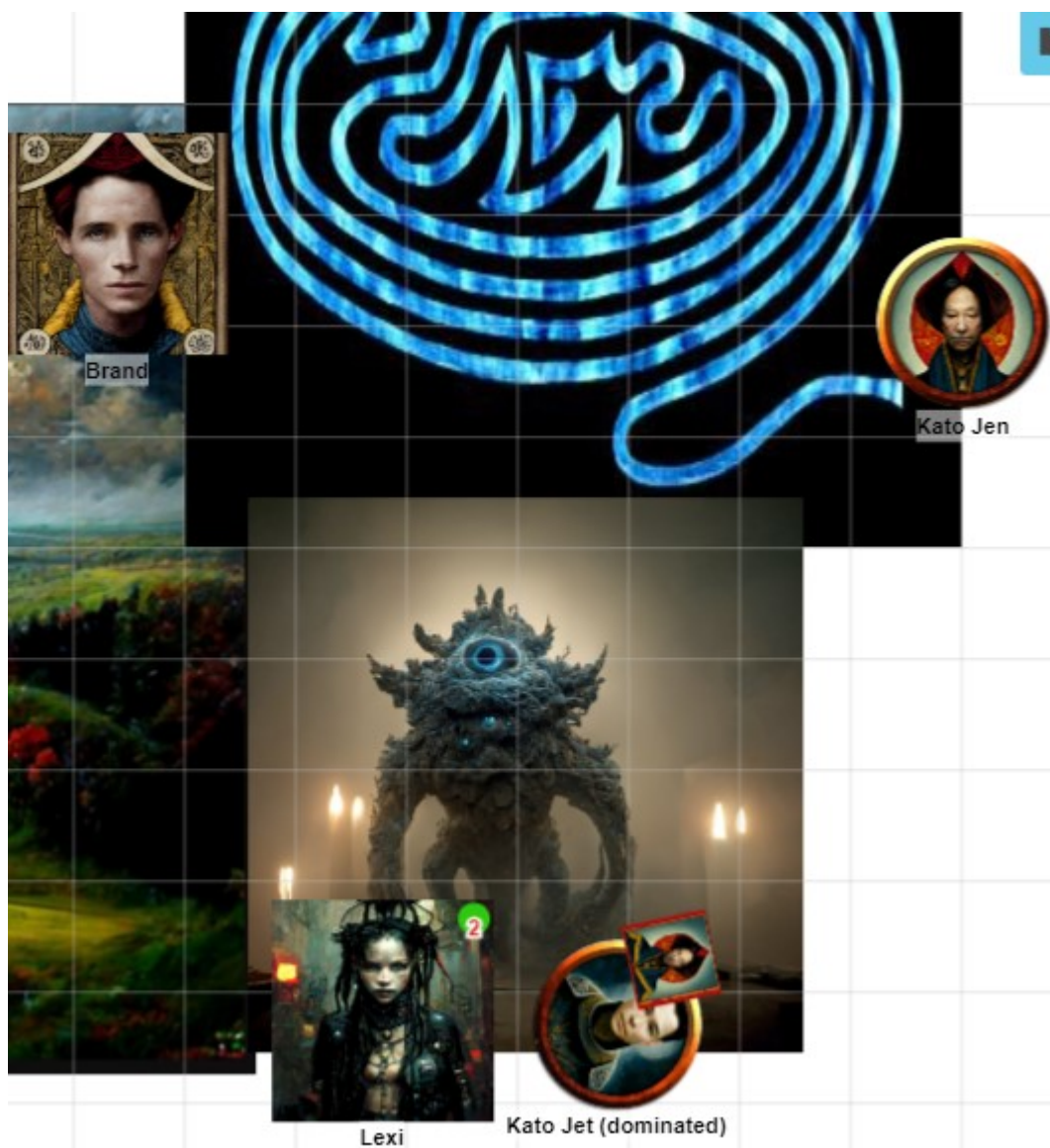


## 11 – A New Brand of Pattern



Beyond the looming behemoth, the Pattern glistens, blue and white curves and switchbacks, shot through with writhing red veins. Not still, like the Pattern in Amber, this one “squirms” like a living thing.

I figure that Brand’s Pattern might try to merge all three of the major forces in the multiverse – Pattern, Logrus and Trump Artistry.

The beauty of this new Pattern “calls” to Lexi, something in it causes her heart to race and, in her blood, she feels its lure.

Deciding up front on Lexi’s immediate actions. I’ll leave it to Chance and work through a series of Likely options until one emerges.

Does she pick up Kato Jet’s Trump-etched Katana LIKELY... **Yes** 31

Does this release Kato Jet from his father’s domination? LIKELY... **No** 23

Does it give Kato Jen a chance to control Lexi? 50/50... **YES+** 79

In this case, the old man will relinquish domination over his son to concentrate fully on Lexi.

Never taking her eyes off the looming monster, Lexi's hands grope behind her to find the pommel of her unconscious companion's katana. Slowly she draws it from its scabbard and holds it two-handed before her.

The Samurai is still unconscious and badly beaten by the violence of the trip up the mountain.

Back in his studio on the hill outside Amber, the old man, Kato Jen, relinquishes his control over his son by passing a hand over the trump card. He withdraws the one for Lexi and begins to force his will upon that. It will take a few minutes to bring the power of his mind to bear on her.

### **The Guardian!**

*I'll generate a list of possibilities first and then work down them making the rolls...*

Is its purpose to guard the Pattern against ALL Intruders? Likely... **YES+** 82

Is its purpose to imprison a "creature" that is trapped inside the Pattern? (like the Amber Pattern has its Unicorn and the Logrus has its Serpent – Does Brand's Pattern have some "creature"?)  
50/50... **YES+** 85

Is its purpose to TEST would-be Pattern Walkers with some riddle or skill challenge?  
Unlikely... **Yes** 95

Is it actually keyed to recognise Brand's bloodline and either Kill them or Allow them to Pass?  
Unlikely... **NO!** 36

If this is the case, is Lexi REALLY Brand's child? Almost Certain. (we'll find out if/when she steps on the Pattern)

As the young woman edges sideways to get a better view of the Pattern, it shuffles to intercept her. It's clearly coiled like a spring waiting to pounce if she approaches.

"Easy there, big boy!" her voice is little more than a whisper "I just want to look at it. No need to get all excitable"

As it hasn't instantly attacked, will it remain where it is unless she goes closer? Likely... **YES+** 59

Seeing that it hasn't yet attacked, Lexi lets out the breath she hadn't noticed she was holding and sits on a rock next to Kato Jet. The man's chest is still rising and falling, but he's badly injured. Maybe she should call his father – the old man's trump should be...

As she lowers the katana and reaches one hand for the pouch where Jet keeps the card, she feels the familiar stirring in her mind of an incoming contact. "Convenient..." With another glance at the Guardian, she composes herself and opens her mind "I was just going to call you..." and the full weight of the old man's will falls upon her, gripping her mind like a steel vice. The patterns along the blade she holds flare up.

Lexi is already fatigued so it's going to be tough to resist, but she does have 2 FATE Points at the beginning of this new session. Kato Jen has already expended 3 of his 5 Trump Stress to control his son, so is down to 2 Trump Stress, 3 Magic Stress and 3 Standard Stress, with only 1 Consequence (3 Stress and -2 on all rolls). His Mental power is +6. I'll rule that the Katana is enabling the control, not adding any more bonuses.

**Lexi- DEFEND**

**Intention** Resist KJ's +6 Mental Attack

**Roll** 3 FOCUS + 4

**Fatig on** Broken 0

Perhaps suspicious of the perfect timing of Kato Jen's call, somehow Lexi, despite her fatigue, was prepared and resists the old man's mental assault.

Their minds are locked, for the moment.

Such a contest is bound to be draining, so each loses 1 Trump Stress.

"What the..." she hisses between clenched teeth. "Tracherous dog!" Her eyes stray to the unconscious form of Kato Jet and a hot rush of anger and disappointment and tears well up in her eyes.



The old man sneers in her head and almost spits his contempt. "NO, that fool betrayed ME! His own father! My Lord Brand alone understood... the only use for an ungrateful

**STRESS & CONDITIONS**

- Stress: 0 (6 icons: 1 empty, 5 crossed)
- Indebted: 0 (6 icons: 5 empty, 1 crossed)
- Fatigued - 3 Stress (-1 on all Rolls): 0 (1 icon: 1 crossed)
- Broken - 6 Stress (-2 on all Rolls): 0 (1 icon: 1 empty)
- PATTERN: 0 (3 icons: 1 with 'i', 2 empty)
- TRUMP: 0 (3 icons: 1 with 'i', 2 empty)

child is as a vessel for our re-birth. And soon, with the power of His Legacy, that re-birth shall be MINE". With that his mind beats again at Lexi's defences.

**Lexi- DEFEND**

**Intention** Resist vs +6

**Roll** -2 FOCUS + 4

**Fatig on** Broken 0

This time even if she spent both FATE Points, she'd still come up short. I'm going to give her a third FATE for the revelation that Kato Jet had not betrayed her!

Spending ALL three just keeps her in front. She drops to only 1 Trump Stress remaining, her attacker is out of Trump Stress and relying on the power of his body alone.

"Your son may be the only thing you've ever created that's worth a damn" With those words, Lexi lashes back at him with all her remaining strength.

**Lexi - ATTACK**

**Intention** Menat Assault vs +6

**Roll** 2 FOCUS + 4

**Fatig on** Broken 0

If she had any FATE left or wasn't Fatigued, this would have broken through, but the steel trap mind of the old man holds form. The exchange still drains 1 from each of them. So Lexi is out of Trump Stress and the old man loses one of his 3 Standard Stress.

Will he falter, as he realises, he could actually have lost this contest if she scored 1 higher (because she is "of Amber" she would have done 2 more damage to him). Unlikely... **Yes** 86

In frustration, fear and clearly mentally exhausted, the old man passes a hand over the card and breaks the link. "Damn you girl!"

Lexi slumps back onto a rock and sighs heavily. If the old man hadn't been so afraid of dying, he would have probably won that contest. She drops the katana with a clang, remembering how the blade had glittered while Kato Jen had been trying to take possession of her.

Throughout the contest, which seemed to have taken a long time, but must surely have only been a few seconds, the monstrous guardian had not moved.

“How did that old bugger think he was going to get past that? Even if he controlled my body, surely, he didn’t think he could fight it? His only real power is Trump... Maybe there’s some way to control it or bypass it using a Trump ... or a Trump Sketch?”

She can’t really do anything until she’s rested and maybe Kato Jet will know more when (and if) he wakes up. Just got to keep that cursed blade away from him to stop another Hijacking.

**STRESS & CONDITIONS**

0 Stress	<input type="radio"/> <input checked="" type="radio"/> <input checked="" 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 checked="" type="radio"/> <input checked="" type="radio"/> <input checked="" type="radio"/> <input checked="" type="radio"/> <input checked="" type="radio"/>
0 TRUMP	<input checked="" type="radio"/> <input checked="" type="radio"/> <input checked="" type="radio"/> <input checked="" type="radio"/> <input checked="" type="radio"/> <input checked="" type="radio"/>

With the loss of that final Stress point...  
She’s just one point of Standard Stress away from Broken (although she has 1 point of Pattern left she could use as Standard Stress if it came down to the wire!)

Thinking that the old man is probably too worn out to try again until after a night’s sleep, she makes a pillow out of her jacket and calmly settles down to sleep. She hides the katana beneath her, along with Kato Jet’s Trump of his father.

Will anything disturb them? Unlikely... **NO!** 48  
Will Kato Jet wake first? 50/50... **YES+** 84  
Will he do anything significant (other than wait for her)? Unlikely... **Yes** 85  
What???

*Action: Explore Theme: Duty*

The storm outside has abated when Lexi wakes up, but Kato Jet has gone. She must have been more exhausted than she thought to sleep through his movements. Or perhaps she just trusts him enough to not have been disturbed.

Then a shadow blocks the morning sun for a moment as the man walks unsteadily back into the cave. “There is no other way in, I circled the hilltop, there is nothing.” He bows deeply.

“Lexi-san, I am deeply sorry. I had no idea what my Father planned. I fought him, but his mind was too strong. I failed you.”

She rose and hugged him, causing him to grimace from his wounds. “Ooops! Not your fault. The old bugger nearly had me too. There’s something dodgy about that sword of yours. The trump images on it kept flaring up as he was trying to overwhelm me. It felt like the images of snakes and ivy were coiling around me squeezing...”

Jet nodded “Yes, I feel the sword was always meant as a trap for me” he scowled. It can’t be pleasant to realise that the father you had loved and honoured all your life had betrayed you, especially with what had seemed like such a loving gift – in Jet’s samurai culture the sword represents his inner being and now he looks at it as a tainted thing.

Would he have learned his Father’s intentions while dominated? 50/50... **YES+** 96  
So now I need to know what those intentions actually are...

As listed in session 10, Kato Jen's Intention is to use Lexi's life-force to...

a) restore Brand to life – Likely... **NO!** 3

b) steal it for himself - 50/50... **Yes** 66 Yes with matching numbers!

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

Kato Jet explains, "While our minds were joined, I sensed his intentions. The Trump card of you is a similar sort of Trap. If he uses it to contact you as you walk this Pattern he can siphon off the power it grants you. As you pass along it you will become weaker and weaker and the owner of the card will grow stronger." His eyes are suddenly cast down as he realises something else "Lexi-san, I'm sorry, but the Card was created by **your** Father – Brand..." He trails off to let this sink in.

Lexi slumps back onto a nearby rock "Huuu! What else should I have expected. He DID once try to destroy the universe. I guess I can let go of any ideas that my father might have secretly been a good guy who loved his daughter all along..."

The look on Kato Jet's face told her that he had the same revelation about his own father. "Family eh?" she said with a crooked smile.

Jet's eyes narrowed "Indeed. Yours is beyond your vengeance, Lexi-san, but my father is not. For what he has done to me and what he intended for you, I shall kill him." He said it without any particular flourish, his voice and face calm and cold.

The decision taken and stated aloud, he straightened and looked around the chamber "But what now Lexi—san? What of this Pattern and that... thing" indicating the Guardian monster with his chin.

She tore some strips of cloth from her shirt to wrap around the pommel. "If you're sure about that, but you may need this." She handed the blade back to Jet. He took it carefully as if worried it would bite him.

That rest, without comfort, food & water will have restored their Standard Stress, but only one point of Trump and Pattern. Kato Jet is still Wounded and Lexi is still Fatigued.

"I've seen this place myself now" she says, stooping to pick up some dirt from the floor and tuck it into a pocket of her leather jacket. "I reckon I can find my way back. Once I have my Trump... THEN I'll come back and walk Brand's Pattern to find out where it leads. It's not going anywhere."

She slowly turned around, drinking in the look of the place.

### **Trump:Sketch**

Ten minutes and some drawing/sculpting materials, including a drop of fresh blood from the subject or some materials from the Place, and a Great (+4) Focus or Flair roll can create a One-use (1 minute max) Trump Image that costs double the usual amount of stress to use and gives you -2 on the Focus Roll to establish communication

She moves to a flat section of the cave wall and takes out her felt pens and a small watercolour paint set. From between the pages of her sketch-pad journal, she takes a single pink cherry blossom, spits on the back of it and sticks it to the wall, then begins to sketch around it.

"Time to go home Kato Jet... time to go home."



She had sketched him a few times during the trip, so he was aware of her skill, but as the image of Kato Jen’s studio took shape, he marvelled at how good her memory must be as each detail made it more and more real.

**Lexi - OVERCOME**

**Intention** Sketch of Cherry Blossom House

**Roll** -1 FOCUS + 4

**Fatig on** Broken 0

The rolled total is only +2 because of the fatigue, but Lexi has +1 to Trump rolls for having two Trump stunts and +1 Painting Skill, so she reaches the target of GREAT (+4) and the Trump Sketch seems eerily REAL. It takes 1 Trump Stress so she is all out of Trump Stress again.

She beckons the samurai to stand beside her and holds his hand, feeling slightly awkward. “Remember when we had tea under the tree? How the sun shone and the light breeze rustled the leaves above us...”

She’ll take extra time and effort and use the shared memory of both of them to get a +2 bonus for this one.

**Lexi - OVERCOME**

**Intention** Activate the Sketch Portal

**Roll** -3 FOCUS + 4

**Fatig on** Broken 0

With the +2 for the time and shared memory that’s +3, -1 for the Fatigue, but she also has +1 for the additional Trump Stunt and +1 for Painting, so the image activates!

Nb. I might not allow the +1 for Painting on future attempts at Activation

Slowly as they stare and remember, they smell the cherry blossom and hear the rustle of the leaves, then the image brightens and gains colour. She squeezes Jet’s hand and they step through together.

\* \* \* End of Session 11 \* \* \*

That went in a direction I hadn't intended! Just turned around and left the place they spent all that effort to reach and now back to deal with Kato Jen.

Somehow having that mysterious Pattern and its Guardian still unexplored seems particularly AMBERish.

Kato Jen will have had a rest in comfort so recovers all his Stress AND his Wounded Status, but I'll say only one of his Trump Stress because of the gnawing worry and desperation.

Lexi just lost two Standard Stress to activate the Portal and is still Fatigued.