

Another Generation

Von Jitsch

Kapitel 5: Another Memory

"I see. But that would mean we can repel it if we do not lose the duel. Then it's best if we gather the best duelists. People like Manjōme", Edo suggested.

"Right", Jūdai nodded. "People like... uh... who was that again?"

"As I said... eh..." Edo stopped walking. "I can't remember who I was talking about."

The whole group came to a halt below the trees. They looked at each other. Jūdai looked seriously shaken.

"You mean... I just forgot that person we were talking about?" he asked with a hint of panic in his voice.

None of the other two dared to confirm, but their worried faces said it all.

The hesitation only continued for a moment, then Jūdai turned into the direction they had been walking and moved again.

"We need to find the ones we can still remember!" he exclaimed.

Johann nodded and quickly caught up with him. "Yeah, I think that's our best option", he agreed. "We should find and warn as many people as possible."

Jūdai stopped again. "I'm going to look for Asuka", he announced.

Edo gave a nod. "I have no objections. Among the students she's one of the most skilled duelists I can still remember. Personally I would go looking for the other students who came here as the champions of their schools."

"You mean we split up?" Jūdai concluded. He was tapping his feet nervously. It was obvious he would rather get going now than to further discuss.

Edo looked at Johann. "I think it is an option. If our opponent is using duels, moving in a group doesn't help a lot."

Johann looked insecure. The monsters had already stepped in to remind him that he and Jūdai should stay together, but right now they didn't interfere although they were still floating next to him. And he would have to agree that finding the other school's champions sounded like it would help them.

"Yubel, you'll protect him, right?" he asked the monster which had been quietly following Jūdai ever since they had noticed people were missing.

"Of course I will. That is what I was made to do."

Johann nodded. "Then I'm okay with splitting up. Let's meet again in front of the main building in half an hour, whether we find anyone or not."

The three young men nodded, then Jūdai finally turned around and dashed down the path. He was only a few steps away before he started shouting Asuka's name.

Johann looked at Edo. "I think we should stay together", he admitted, "since I don't know the school grounds very well. But the same goes for the other champions, so I

hope they are still somewhere close to the main building.”
Edo confirmed with a nod, and they started to move as well.

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Jūdai was jogging along, shouting Asuka’s name every now and then. He had already forgotten several of his friends - that much was clear even though he couldn’t even remember whom he had forgotten. What a frightening power. He mustn’t forget Asuka as well. Not her. Because he still owed her an answer to the question. The question from back then...

“Hey, Asuka.”

Night was falling over the island. Most students were most likely back at their dorms by now, but two of them walked slowly along the banks of the small lake in front of the Obelisk Blue dormitory. Both of them wore the dark blue color of the dorm. The girl, Asuka Tenjōin, stopped and turned to the one who had silently been walking beside her.

Jūdai Yūki gave her an honest but slightly worn out smile. “Thank you for being my partner today.”

Asuka smiled too, but there was a hint of sadness in it. “I’d always tag with you again, you know?” she emphasized.

Jūdai nodded. “I wasn’t so sure about that when the tournament was announced” he admitted, looking on the ground. “After everything that happened...”

Asuka sighed. “I know a lot of people blame you for what happened to Ryō. But I... I know what a kind person you are. I’m sure you didn’t want this. You don’t deserve to be shunned by everyone.”

Jūdai was still staring at the ground. “But they’re not wrong... I could have stopped the duel. Then he wouldn’t...” He couldn’t finish the sentence. Asuka saw him clench his fists. “Listen”, Asuka said, raising her voice, “I know this is hard for everyone. But I think you have done everyone you could. Ryō wanted to duel you. He knew his condition. And as a duelist, it was right of you to see his challenge through to the end.”

Jūdai looked at her again. “You think so?” he asked.

Asuka nodded. “I’ve always liked how you approach dueling. When I got into this school it was to find out what happened to Fubuki-Nii-san, and of course I was confident in dueling. But meeting you taught me that fun is also a part of it. And I hope that today I could remind you of that a little.”

Jūdai looked astonished, but then he smiled. “Yes. Yes, I think you did. Thank you.”

They stood silently for a while, listening to the soft splashing of the water and leaves rustling in the wind. By now, night had engulfed the island. The lake and the trees behind it had become a huge black mass. The light from the dorm’s windows barely reached them, but provided just enough guidance so they could make out each other’s silhouettes.

“This might not be the right time to say this”, Asuka started, slowly, “but we’ll graduate soon and if I don’t say it now, I might miss the chance altogether.”

Jūdai looked at her, but didn’t say a word.

She took a deep breath. “I really like you. No, wait. You’d just misunderstand that. What I want to say is... I love you.”

They were both silent again. Asuka’s feet scratched the ground nervously.

“Can you... accept these feelings?”

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While Jūdai walked across the Academy grounds, shouting Asuka's name with increasing desperation, he wished he had reacted differently back then. He had thanked her, but then claimed that people would hate her as well if she stuck with him, then left. They had not really talked since then. And now it could be too late already. But no, as long as he could still remember, it was fine, right?

He had checked the path to the Obelisk Blue Dormitory, then gone down to the other dorms but without success to find Asuka. Or anyone else, for that matter. Even the forest seemed so silent today. Did the animals disappear, too? Now he was already going back in the direction of the school building.

Turning towards the forest which was now on his left, he shouted Asuka's name once again.

When he turned his head back in the direction he was heading to, he stopped abruptly. Someone was standing in front of him, blocking his path. But it was not Asuka.

It was like a flash hit him. He knew that person, but realized at the same time that only seconds ago he had been unable to remember him.

"Shō."

How could he have forgotten the one person who had been with him since day one? The small build, messy hair and the glasses that made his eyes seem too big for his face? The one who had never doubted him – until that terrible thing happened to his brother?

"Shō, are you still mad at me?" he asked.

Yubel materialized next to him. "Be careful. We had already forgotten about him, which means that he already fell victim to the darkness. This one might not be the real thing."

Jūdai looked at them, then back at the small figure who was wearing the far too big coat of Hell Kaiser. "But..."

"Ah, it's no use trying to fool your Guardian", Shō said, but his voice didn't sound like Shō at all. His figure dissolved into dozens and dozens of black cards which set themselves back together to form the shape of a much larger and taller man. Jūdai had seen him before.

"You're Trueman!"

"Indeed. And just like last time you are too late."

"What do you mean? I beat you!" Jūdai protested.

The tall, bony man who called himself Mr. T smirked. It looked more similar to a crack appearing on the lower half of his face than to what would commonly be called a smile.

"Oh right, you cannot remember him, can you... I don't mind telling you now. When we met the first time, I had already accomplished what I wanted to do. The monster spirit *Honest*, which was threatening my plans, is gone."

"A monster spirit...?"

Mr. T shrugged. "You wouldn't know about him. Fujiwara was the only one who could remember *Honest*. That's why it was so easy to erase him."

Jūdai and *Yubel* exchanged glances. It was obvious that both of them didn't really know who their opponent was talking about.

"And this time you will be the one to be erased", the man continued. He raised his

arm, which burst into a flock of cards that, when rearranging themselves, formed a Duel Disk in the form of bat wings. "Face me, Jūdai Yuki and *Yubel*."

Jūdai pulled the deck from his belt and inserted it into his Duel Disk, but before he could activate the device, a voice called out: "Not so fast!"

A third person arrived on the scene. It was one of the new arrivals from that morning, the dark-skinned champion of the West Branch. He must have rushed their way and was still catching his breath.

"Hey, you're... O'Brien, right?" Jūdai said, remembering his name.

"Affirmative."

Mr. T looked dismayed. "Why are you interfering? Don't worry, you will be erased as well. Your turn will come soon."

"My orders are to ensure the wellbeing of Yuki Jūdai", O'Brien replied. "I will face you in his stead."

He stepped in front of Jūdai without hesitation.

"I don't need someone to protect me", Jūdai protested immediately. "I will beat that guy and save everyone!"

O'Brien turned around to him. "Don't be naïve. You have no way of knowing if you will win. And if you lose, all will be lost."

Jūdai looked taken aback. "But..." he started, but *Yubel* interrupted him. "He is right. The last time we faced Mr. T we almost did not make it. I think we should avoid the risk."

O'Brien could not hear *Yubel's* words, but used Jūdai's sudden silence to add something: "There's something I need you to do. Mr. Crawford has let me know that the *Rainbow Dragon* was created. It is on the way here. Mr. Andersen needs to know about that."

Jūdai looked very confused. "Johann...? And Crawford as in the creator of Duel Monsters? What's the *Rainbow Dragon*?"

Before O'Brien could answer, he suddenly pushed Jūdai away. The teenager was propelled several meters and fell backwards on his buttocks, unable to keep the balance. "Ow, what the..." he complained, but when he got up again, he saw that Mr. T had closed in on them and was now standing right where they both had been just seconds before. O'Brien had managed to withdraw a few steps and, at the same time, attached and activated his Duel Disk which looked very similar to a rifle gun.

"I will take you on", he said.

Mr. T, whom he had addressed, looked bored. "Fine. It will not take long anyway."

He took a few steps backward to make place for the playing field and held up his left arm with the bat-wing Duel Disk.

"Duel!" shouted the opponents.

Jūdai scrambled to his feet. "O'Brien..." he said with worry.

O'Brien turned to look at him over his shoulder. "Just go", he urged him.

Then he turned back to his opponent. "I start! Draw! I summon *Volcanic Slicer* in Attack position!"

Jūdai saw the hologram of a fully armored monster appear from the corner of his eye while he was hurrying back to where he had come from.

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"Jūdai is coming back", Edo said and pointed.

Several heads turned to see a figure in an Obelisk Blue uniform running up the path to the main building.

"Jūdai", Asuka shouted. Hearing her, he increased his speed. "Asuka! You're okay!" He arrived in front of her and caught his breath. "I'm glad", he said, looking at her. She smiled. "Me too", she admitted.

There was a short awkward silence between them, but it was cut short by Johann who asked: "Did you find anyone else?"

Jūdai raised his head and saw that aside of Asuka and Johann, there were Edo as well as the champions of the East and South branch. Not many, but most likely capable duelists.

"Yes, um... I met O'Brien", Jūdai said and went on to explain what had just happened as briefly as possible.

"The *Rainbow Dragon* is good news", Johann said when Jūdai asked about it. "It is the final Ace monster that I need to complete my deck. I was told it will be needed to beat the Darkness."

"It is based on the legend, correct?" Amon Garam reconfirmed. The muscular champion of the East branch had been quietly listening so far. Johann replied to his question with a nod, but Asuka cut in: "What Legend?"

Amon looked at Johann and then decided to tell it himself: "Johann's deck contains seven ultra rare monsters, the Crystal Beasts. They are based on a legend according to which Julius Caesar, the emperor of Rome, once collected seven gemstones from different parts of the world. They were supposed to be put into a single stone tablet depicting a Dragon. But the gems and the tablet were lost in rough seas. Mr. Crawford has been able to track down the stone tablet recently, and created the *Rainbow Dragon* card based on the dragon carved into it."

Johann frowned. "That's true but how do you know about the tablet?" he asked with a hint of suspicion.

Amon adjusted his glasses. "I don't think that is the most pressing question right now", he appeased.

"I agree", Asuka said. "I still think we should look for Fubuki-Nii-san. He must be somewhere on the island."

"I'm repeating myself, but I do not think that finding him is worth the risk of splitting up", Amon said.

"He is my brother", Asuka protested.

"He is important. His connection with Fujiwara is a key to beat Darkness." This remark came from *Crystal Keeper*, the blonde knight monster that was now showing up next to Johann again.

"Did you say Fujiwara?" Jūdai gasped.

Everyone looked at him. "Nobody said Fujiwara. What are you talking about?" Amon said.

"Are you hearing the voices of your monsters again?" Asuka asked. Jūdai nodded.

Amon sighed. "I guess in this situation it would be irrational to doubt that you can hear the voices of the cards. But can you please let the rest of us know what they are saying?"

Johann spoke: "They are saying that Asuka's brother is important because his connection to..." he listened to the spirit before he continued, "... to Fujiwara is a key to beat Darkness."

Then he looked at Jūdai. "Why did that surprise you? Do you know who Fujiwara is?"

"I don't", Jūdai admitted, "but that Trueman guy mentioned him and a monster spirit called *Honest*."

"Is *Honest* not with you?" *Crystal Master* asked worriedly.

Jūdai looked at the sinister monster with surprise. "No, I've only ever heard about him when Trueman mentioned him."

The face of *Crystal Master* was not visible behind his mask, but the mouth of the other spirit, *Crystal Keeper*, showed great dismay.

Yubel rose behind Jūdai with crossed arms and eyed the monster duo next to Johann. "Why do you think he should be with Jūdai?" they asked sternly. When neither of the two answered, *Yubel* continued: "You seem to have already known that something would happen here. Why do you want Jūdai and Johann to stick together? How do you know about Fujiwara when nobody else seems to remember someone with that name? Who..."

They stopped when Jūdai rose a hand. "*Yubel*, I understand that you are suspicious. But... I can't help it, I want to trust them."

Yubel sighed. "You are naïve as always. What if this is a trap?"

"I know it's strange, right?" Johann cut in. "These two just appeared one day and told me that Darkness is approaching and that they know the way to beat it. But we already found the *Rainbow Dragon* thanks to them, and if it weren't for them, I and the other champions wouldn't even be here. I vouch for them."

Yubel squinted at him. "And why should I trust *you*?"

Johann was at a loss, but Jūdai announced: "Well, I trust him."

He continued, looking at *Yubel* while he talked: "Nothing comes out of distrusting strangers. If I had not trusted a stranger back then, we would not even be here, I think. I couldn't even thank that guy back then, but I want to honor his memory by accepting help from others."

Yubel kept eye contact with Jūdai a little longer, visible struggling, and finally shrugged. "You have a point. Distrusting him will probably not help us."

"I think we missed a lot here, but the gist is that we should trust the voices of the spirits you hear, yeah?" Edo confirmed, guessing from the continued silence that the conversation was over.

Jūdai and Johann nodded simultaneously.

"Then we should-" Edo started but stopped talking when he heard some noise that was getting louder by the second. The others started to listen as well. Then the tallest of the group, Jim of the South branch, who had not said anything all the time, raised his arm to point at something in the sky. The crocodile which was tied to his back started to squirm and growl.

Jūdai got excited as well. "That must be the helicopter with the *Rainbow Dragon* that..." Suddenly he hesitated. "... I forgot who told me about it."

Before anyone could say anything more, the helicopter started to change direction. It had been approaching exactly in their direction, but now it suddenly swayed left and started to lose altitude.

"Something must have happened to the pilot!" Edo exclaimed.

There was nothing they could do from their position. The machine shot past them in a safe distance, continuously losing altitude, and appeared out of sight behind the Academy's main building. Then there was a loud crash.