

Another Generation

Von Jitsch

Kapitel 2: Another Big brother

While Jūdai Yūki was surrounded by dozens of students in front of the main building, Shō Marufuji stood below the rustling trees of the forest that covered large parts of the island. Draped over his shoulders he wore a black coat with silvery seams. It was obviously too large for him. Its tails were dragging in the grass next to his feet. But the somewhat clumsy impression this could have given was easily set off by the impressive figure of the pointy steel fangs and wings of a dragon-like beast that hovered in front of him and which was wired to a similarly vile-looking dragon with black scales.

“*Cyberdark Dragon*, direct attack”, Shō ordered coolly.

His opponent yelped when the impact of the solid vision hit him. His life point counter went down to 0. He fell onto his knees.

Shō adjusted the small pair of glasses on his nose. “Does anyone else want to test what an *easy target* I am?” he sneered.

Two Ra Yellow students who had been watching quickly shook their heads. One of them helped the loser, also a Ra Yellow, back to his feet. A fourth student from the same dorm who gloomily stood next to them didn’t show much of a reaction.

“Yeah, I thought so. Excuse me then”, Shō said coldly and turned around, dragging the black coat behind as he advanced through the woods. The eyes of the other students followed him until he vanished out of sight. Only then did one of them let out a sigh of relief.

“Man, I had no idea the younger Marufuji could be that scary...”

Shō had not gotten very far, but already tripped over a tree root and almost lost his coat which was caught in a tree, when he encountered a new person. Although he had been warily looking around, he was taken aback completely by the figure that suddenly entered his vision. He had not seen it moments before, nor had he heard anyone approaching. But even if he were not shocked by the sudden appearance, the looks of the man who was blocking his path would have sent a chill down his spine.

He was tall, several heads higher than Shō who had to put his head back to see the other’s face. Said face was angular and bony, and the skin had an unhealthy color, even adjusting for the slightly dim light beneath the trees. The man’s eyes were hidden behind a pair of glasses. His hair was styled backwards and looked somewhat spiky. There were also spikes at his joints and along his upper thighs adorning the black leather suit he wore. He was definitely not a student of Duel Academy.

Shō bumped back and almost tripped over his coat. He caught his balance, gathered the coattails and turned his back on the man with a muttered “Sorry, gotta go”.

He managed to advance just one hurried step before his path was blocked again. The same man was now standing in front of him, at the opposite direction of where he'd been just a blink of an eye ago.

"Now now, don't run away", he said. His voice was calm, but something about it made the hairs on Shō's neck stand up.

"Stay away from me!" Shō shouted and turned the other way again.

This time he couldn't even make a single step before the man stood in his way again like a wall.

"It's useless, young Marufuji", the man said.

Shō flinched.

"Who are you?" he asked with a shrill voice.

"You can refer to me as Mr. T, short for Trueman. That is how I introduced myself to your friend Jūdai."

"He is not my *friend!*" Shō shouted. The anger in his voice drowned out the previous hints of fear.

A thin smile appeared on the lips of Mr. T.

"Well, anyway. Your *not-friend* was able to beat me. I was wondering if you are capable of it as well."

At this, Mr. T raised his left arm. It quivered as if its insides were boiling. Structures that resembled bat wings shot forth from it. Shō realized that there were five wings and that each of them had a small flat area in the same form as the card slots on a duel disk. A deck of cards rose from Mr. T's wrist as well.

Shō understood. "If Ani-, I mean, Jūdai beat you in a duel, there's no way I will lose", he proclaimed and turned on the duel disk on his left arm.

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"It's here, I can feel it!"

The sudden exclamation made Johann jolt.

He was still standing in front of the Duel Academy's main building watching Jūdai duel. He would be dueling himself had anyone challenged him, but so far he was completely being ignored in the questionable favor of Jūdai.

The shout had come from one of the two spirits that were now showing faintly on either side of Johann. He just inclined his head a bit in the direction of the one who had spoken, the white knight who was known as the *Crystal Keeper*.

"Are you saying...?" Johann asked in a whisper, just too aware of how weird it looked to regular people when he spoke with spirits that nobody else could see. Well, "nobody else" was not true anymore, but Jūdai was too absorbed in the duel to even have noticed. Only Yubel, who had silently been standing behind him all the time, had turned their head and was staring in the direction of Johann and the two spirits with open distrust in their oddly colored eyes.

"I can feel it too. Darkness is gathering on this islands", the darker spirit, *Crystal Master*, said, his voice thick with worry.

Johann turned his head in several directions. "I don't notice anything special", he replied.

"Not yet", the Keeper said grimly. "Just make sure that you stay close to Jūdai. When the time comes you have to stand together."

Johann nodded, but he kept scanning his surroundings with a worried expression while he followed the ongoing duel.

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Shō's starting hand was not ideal but something he could work with. After scanning his cards, he raised his head to check what his opponent was doing. Mr. T already had his five cards in hand and was looking at him with an unreadable expression.

"Please go ahead", he said and made an inviting gesture with his right hand.

Shō gave a concentrated nod. When he felt for the top card in his deck he told himself that all he needed to do was duel the way he had practiced all the time. But he could not shake the nervousness that had gripped him. This was no ordinary opponent, and he was already convinced that he would lose more than just a duel if his life hit zero first.

"My turn! Draw", he announced.

The card he pulled from his deck was a trap that might come in handy later but that didn't alter the plan for his first turn that he had already played out in his head.

"First I normal summon *Infernal Dragon*", he announced.

The hologram of a dragon with black scales appeared in the air before him with a roar. It displayed an impressive attack power of 2000.

"It's very strong for a level four monster", Shō explained, "but if use it to attack, it will be destroyed in the End Phase. Not that I could do that in my first turn, anyway."

There was no visible reaction in Mr. T, so Shō continued. "Now I set three cards in the Spell- and Trap zone."

The card holograms appeared face-down in front of him when he inserted the real cards into the duel disk.

"That ends my turn", he concluded. He adjusted his glasses, satisfied that he was off to a solid start.

Mr. T nodded as if something made a lot of sense. "You are going all out with a strong monster but keeping your defense up with all those traps. Your friend Jūdai didn't keep a backrow like that when he dueled me."

"I said he is not my friend", Shō said sharply.

"Excuse me", Mr. T said in an ironic tone. "He is not your friend but your *Aniki*, or big brother."

Shō quickly shook his head in revulsion. "I don't call him that anymore", he retorted, trying to sound cold. But his voice was shaking ever so slightly. In his distress, he did not even wonder how his opponent, whom he had never met before, could possibly know such a detail.

A mean smile appeared on Mr. T's thin lips. "Right, right. You have a real brother, after all", he said.

At this remark, Shō averted his gaze. Suddenly he looked very small with the black coat thrown over him, but the mass of fabric did a good job of hiding his shaking fists. Mr. T ignored Shō's obvious internal struggle and reached for his deck.

"It's my turn now. Draw. I summon *Zure, Knight of Dark World*."

The monster that appeared as a hologram was as ghastly as its master, with a skull-like face, thick horns on his head, and a full plate armor. The attack points were displayed as 1800.

"And I equip *Zure* with the Spell *Axe of Despair*. This way it gains 1000 attack points."

An axe with a handle made of knotty roots that resembled the shape of a head appeared in the hands of the monster.

Shō slowly looked up again. He needed to concentrate on the duel!

"Too bad", Mr. T taunted him. "Even though you brought up such a strong dragon in your first turn, it is mere fodder for my Knight. *Zure*, attack *Infernal Dragon*."

A faint smile appeared on Shō's face.

"Did you really think I was not ready for this? In fact I should be thankful that you allow me to play this move."

Now it was too late for Mr. T to call off the attack. The axe cut right through Shō's dragon and the hologram shattered.

"I activate *Power Wall*! When I take battle damage from a monster, I can send cards from my deck to the graveyard and reduce the damage by 100 for each card!"

Shō went through his deck quickly. "I am sending 8 cards to reduce the damage from 800 to zero", he announced before he inserted the cards into the graveyard slot of his disk.

"This move... He was famous for it, wasn't he?" Mr. T hinted. Shō narrowed his eyes, but Mr. T did not dwell on the topic.

"I set three Spell- or Trap cards face down and end my turn."

Shō made a determined face. The conditions were good. He could win this. He could already see how he would do it.

"My turn! Draw!"

The card he had drawn was another trap he had no use for right now. Checking the remaining cards in his hand, there was another one he could not use, but seeing it made him feel uneasy. He should have left it out of his deck, after all. Had he even played it once since he started using it?

But that was not what he needed to think about right now. The other card there was all he needed. His way to victory. He would be a fool not to use it just because of the risk that came with it.

"I activate a Spell card! *Cyberdark Impact*!"

Shō inserted the card into a free slot of his disk with a sweeping movement.

"I return *Cyberdark Horn*, *Cyberdark Edge* and *Cyberdark Keel*, which I just discarded to activate *Power Wall*, to my Deck. Now I can Special Summon *Cyberdark Dragon* from my Extra Deck!"

Holograms of the three fusion materials appeared on the field just to vanish again in a whirl of dark energy. The dragon appeared, a creature with steel fangs and pointed steel wings. When it let out a metallic cry, Shō grit his teeth and clutched his chest.

"I activate a trap", Mr. T announced. Shō bent over as if these words had caused him more pain, then his head shot up in panic.

"*Triggered Summon*. When a monster is Special Summoned to my opponent's field, each player can Special Summon a level 4 or lower monster from their hand."

Shō breathed deeply. He had feared that his freshly summoned dragon would immediately be destroyed, but this was not so bad.

"I summon *Dark Archetype*", Mr. T announced and laid the card on one of the bat wings of his disk. The hologram that appeared was another ghastly creature that looked like it had just escaped from a tank in a mad scientist's lab. Its main body consisted of raw muscles and oozed a slime-like fluid. The extremities were covered in grey skin that was coated in slime as well. They were wired to a technical device around its head.

"You can summon a monster as well", Mr. T advised. Shō checked the cards in his hands although he already knew, then shook his head. "I don't have any."

"But," he added, "the effect of *Cyberdark Dragon* activates when it is Special Summoned. I equip to it a Dragon-Type monster from either player's Graveyard. And I choose this one...!"

His duel disk released the selected card and Shō put it into a free Spell- and Trap slot. The hologram that appeared was a dragon without doubt - but one made of metal.

"*Dragonroid* is a Machine-Type monster, but while it is in the Graveyard, it's treated as a Dragon-Type, so I can equip it to *Cyberdark*", he explained. Electronic wires shot forth from the main body of *Cyberdark Dragon* and attached themselves to *Dragonroid's* bright red panels. The Roid gave a weak sound of protest as it was pulled into the fangs of the sinister Dragon. *Cyberdark* screeched again, and just like before, Shō winced with pain. As *Dragonroid's* body went limp, the attack points of *Cyberdark* which were displayed next to the hologram started to increase.

"Cyberdark... gains attack points... equal to those of... the equipped monster", Shō said, still clutching his chest and breathing heavily.

"*Dragonroid* has 2900 attack points, adding to *Cyberdark's* 1000 that makes 3900... also..."

He had to draw a deep breath in order to continue talking.

"Also, *Cyberdark* gains an additional 100 attack points for each card in my graveyard... Right now there are *Power Wall* and *Cyberdark Impact*, the *Infernal Dragon* that you destroyed... and four of the cards I discarded to activate *Power Wall* - a total of 7 cards. So he gains 700 more attack points. That's... a sum of 4600!"

Shō spread his arms dramatically just when the attack point display in the air stopped increasing.

Mr. T's expression stayed blank, at least as far as one could tell despite his sunglasses. But he raised his hands to clap, slowly and deliberately.

"Most impressive indeed", he said. "But looking at this, I wonder... which one is you?"

Shō frowned. "What do you mean?"

A hint of a smile appeared on Mr. T's lips. He pointed at the monster holograms in the air with one of his long, bony fingers.

"Using others or to be used... One of them is preying on the strength of the other and making it his own. You may think of yourself as the one who controls this deck, but to me you look just like your *Dragonroid* which is strong enough on its own but is offering itself to the vile dragon that uses its strength and draws from its life force."

"What would you know about me?" Shō shouted angrily, but there was a quiver in his voice.

"I know all I need, younger brother of Hell Kaiser", Mr. T said calmly.

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Jūdai was showing signs of exhaustion after three duels in a row, but there were still many students who wanted to face him. Johann thought that the chances for them looked slim - Jūdai's deck was versatile enough to deal with different strategies directed at him and, more importantly, the cards seemed to always come into his hand right when he needed them. Taking him down would take a very good strategy, or a similarly close bond with one's deck. Johann flexed his fingers. He was itching to duel himself. He had hoped that someone would come to challenge him sooner or later because of the points the students were promised to get dueling one of the foreign guests, but at this rate he would have to place the challenge himself.

Lost in this kind of thoughts he had not noticed anyone approaching when someone spoke next to him.

"I thought his dueling might be affected by what happened, but he's doing as good as ever."

Johann whirled around. But before he even really checked who the speaker was, a much more important question burst out: "Affected by *what* that happened?"

Edo Phoenix looked at him, stunned at the sudden reaction.

"I mean..." Johann remembered his manners, "it's a pleasure to meet you, Mr. Phoenix."

Edo raised his eyebrows.

"The pleasure's all mine. I have heard only good things about you, Johann Andersen", he said and shook Johann's hand with a firm grip.

The question from whom he might have heard those good things entered Johann's mind, but his other question was more important.

"So... you do know why everyone at this school seems to hold a grudge against Jūdai?"

Edo folded his arms and nodded. "Right, only students of this school could know... But I assume that you have heard of the professional duelist, Hell Kaiser Ryō?"

Johann nodded. "Yes. He was really strong and I was looking forward to dueling him some day, but he just vanished... what was it... two months ago?"

Edo glanced sideways towards where Jūdai was just summoning his ace monster *Neos* again.

"You see", Edo said in a hushed voice, "the reason why Hell Kaiser disappeared is because he won't be able to duel ever again."

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"Shut up", Shō whispered.

"You see, I am calling myself Trueman because I am the one who speaks the truth. If you believed he would wield it again, you would not be using your older brother's deck."

"Shut up..." Shō pressed his hands over his ears.

"You did not even like him that much. *He* was not the one you called *Aniki*."

"Shut UP!"

"But I can understand that this changed..."

Shō's hands over his ears shook because he was trying so hard not to hear. But it was in vain. The words still reached him.

"... because it was your *Aniki* that killed your real big brother."