

Another Generation

Von Jitsch

Kapitel 3: Another Tragedy

"... because it was your *Aniki* that killed your real big brother."
Shō could not help it; the words of Mr. T made him think back to that fateful day.

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It was morning and the sun was shining brightly through the windows of the large hall in the Obelisk Blue Boys' dorm where breakfast was served. It was a Sunday and before 9 in the morning, so there were not many students yet. Shō was sitting alone on a larger table and had already finished half of his food when someone called him.

When he looked up, Jūdai was coming his way, carrying his breakfast on a tray. He wished a good morning as he sat down across the table.

Shō rubbed his eyes. "Who are you and what did you do to my Aniki?" he asked with suspicion. It was far too early. Even on a weekday it would have been unusual to see Jūdai at this time of the day.

Jūdai laughed. "I just couldn't sleep anymore because I'm so excited", he explained and took a big bite from the croissant on his plate. "I mean... today is the day", he added through a full mouth.

Shō had long given up reminding his friend that talking and eating at the same time was considered bad manners, so he just gave a low sigh. "I can understand that you're excited", he admitted slowly, "but to be honest I'm a bit worried."

Jūdai took a sip of orange juice to help the last bite down his throat, then said merrily: "You needn't worry about me! I'm just gonna give it my all so no matter how it ends I won't regret it."

Shō shook his head. "It's not you I'm worried about", he admitted.

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"Signore e signori!" Professor Chronos de Medici greeted. He was standing in the middle of the big duel arena, the centerpiece of Duel Academy. The seats around the arena were filled to the brink –there was not a single student who would miss this important occasion. Shō was sitting in the first row with Jūdai's other friends Asuka and Fubuki Tenjōin, Tyranno Kenzan and Rei Saotome.

"You have all been fighting hard but in the end there was only one student who could make it... Please greet Jūdai Yūki!"

The applause was most fervent from Shō and the people next to him, but almost everyone clapped their hands as well.

"Tch, it should have been me", Jun Manjōme grumbled when Jūdai entered the arena and stepped up to Professor Chronos. Manjōme was sitting one row behind everyone else, pretending that he was not interested enough to care for a seat in front.

"Well, it would have been you - if you had not lost to Aniki in the final yesterday", Shō pointed out teasingly.

"Shut up", Manjōme grumbled.

Jūdai waved his hands in the air, visible enjoying all the attention directed at him, and he was beaming across the whole face. After the applause had calmed down, Chronos raised his voice again: "And now let us greet his opponent. An alumnus of our dear school and now a professional duelist. Let me hear your applause for Signor Ryō Marufuji who is known to the world as Hell Kaiser!"

This time's applause was decidedly louder – except for the group around Shō where only Asuka and Fubuki clapped their hands.

The Hell Kaiser entered the arena with long strides. The ex-student was dressed in his well-known black outfit and the tails of his long coat flapped up and down with his movements. He did not smile, nor did he acknowledge the crowd that was cheering for him. His gaze was fixated solely on his opponent. He stopped in front of Jūdai.

"Hey Kaiser", Jūdai said and held out his hand, "I got to face you again."

Ryō ignored the hand offered to him and just nodded approvingly. "I am counting on you, Jūdai", was all he said, then he strode off to his side of the field.

Jūdai seemed a little baffled when he watched him go there, then he shook his head and smiled again. "Let's make this an unforgettable duel!" he announced. He hurried over to his side of the field and turned on his duel disk. Professor Chronos took a few steps back to clear the battlefield and announced that they could start.

The two opponents called out: "Duel!"

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Only those in the first rows heard the suppressed groan of pain that Ryō gave when the direct attack hit him. To anyone farther away, it probably looked like the usual overplaying of a professional duelist when he went down on his knees. While several students applauded Jūdai's breakthrough, Shō was jumping up from his seat and called out to Ryō, shouting "Onii-san!"

Before he could get on the field, however, Ryō raised a flat hand in his direction. "I'm fine", he groaned. The anguish in his voice made it clear that the opposite was the case. Nevertheless Shō stopped at this, just like Jūdai who had also started to move with a worried expression.

During the course of the duel it had become more and more apparent that Ryō was not in good physical condition, but so far his claims that he was just a bit exhausted had been somewhat convincing.

"So Shō was right...?" Jūdai muttered to himself.

Shō was nodding. "It's those terrible collars he wears in the underground duels", he said, loud enough so that his friends could hear it. "The pain was almost unbearable for me when I used them once and he's been doing it without a break... it must have damaged him more badly than he would admit..."

"Just as I thought", Edo Phoenix said. He was sitting next to Manjōme since he had come in during the third turn. Everyone turned around to him, which prompted him to explain in more detail: "He's been dueling less and less during the last half year. Recently I met him right after a duel and he was completely worn out. But when I said that it would be

foolish to continue in his condition, he said it would be foolish to stop before he found a worthy opponent."

Asuka gasped silently. Sho hurled around again to look at his older brother with worry. "Yes", Edo continued, "when I learned that he asked Principal Samejima to hold a tournament at this school whose winner would get to duel him, I knew he hoped to find that worthy opponent here... worthy for a final duel."

"What do you mean, final?" Kenzan asked aggressively. "He's just a bit older than we are!"

Edo did not reply. His thoughtful gaze was fixated on Ryō.

During the friends' short discussion, Ryō had gotten on his feet again. He looked instable, but was somehow holding up. Watching this, the worry on Jūdai's face deepened.

"Kaiser..." he said, hesitant. "I didn't know... I think we..."

Ryō's fierce look made him fall silent. "The duel is not over yet."

Jūdai swallowed. He sounded hesitant when he announced the end of his turn.

The last attack had left Ryō with 200 life points and no monsters. The only card on his field was a face-down spell or trap card. His hand was also empty. In contrast, Jūdai still had 2000 life points, two cards in hand, one face-down on the field, and hovering on his field was Elemental Hero Air Neos which currently had 3000 attack points thanks to the active Field Spell Neo Space. But there was still fighting spirit in Ryō's eyes.

"It is my turn now! Draw!"

He pulled the new card from his deck fiercely. Too fiercely, it seemed, because he had to draw a deep breath afterwards. But he only allowed himself that short break.

"I normal summon Cyber Valley in attack mode!"

The hologram of a huge metallic dragon adorned with red rhinestones appeared on the field. Its attack points were displayed as zero.

"I activate one of three possible effects of Cyber Valley: I remove this card and one other card I control from play in order to draw two cards!" Ryō announced. His breath was more regular now, but his stance still looked a bit weak.

Cyber Valley and the set card on Ryō's side of the field vanished into balls of light that flew towards his deck from where he draw the new cards after he had tucked away the banished ones in his coat.

Fubuki gasped. "That's an all-or-nothing move", he commented.

Edo and Manjōme nodded simultaneously. "Jūdai has him completely cornered. It's his only option if he still wants to win. And I can tell that he does", Edo remarked.

Asuka slowly shook her head. "He's sick", she whispered. Her voice was thick with worry. "He should have different things on his mind than winning."

Ryō regarded the two new cards in his hand and a smirk appeared on his lips.

"I activate the Spell Card Overload Fusion! I can remove Monsters from my Graveyard that are listed as materials on a Machine-Type Fusion Monster to Special Summon it! The Fusion Monster I am going to call is Chimeratech Fortress Dragon. It requires one Cyber Dragon and one or more Machine-Type Monsters as Fusion Materials. I remove from play the three Cyber Dragons, Cyber Laser Dragon and Cyber Barrier Dragon that you destroyed until now!"

The five monsters appeared in the air as holograms when Ryō pulled the cards from his graveyard and put them into his coat's inner pocket. The holograms all disappeared in an explosion that marked the activation of Overload Fusion.

Ryō's breath grew unstable when the summoned monster appeared on his side of the

field: A massive dragon whose body was made up by connected metal wheels. Hatches opened in five of the wheels, showing the heads of the monsters that had just been offered for the Summon.

Jūdai gazed up at the monster with awe. He had not encountered this one before. It was impressive.

"When... this monster is summoned... all the cards I control are destroyed. But there are none anymore", Ryō said, gasping for breath after every few words. It made Jūdai focus on his opponent's condition again. "Kaiser... after all... you should..." he started.

Ryō did not let him finish what he was going to say. He raised his right arm and snapped: "I attack Air Neos with my Chimeratech!"

The head of the Cyber Dragons in the leftmost wheel shot a beam at Jūdai's monster. Jūdai stared at the incoming attack dumbfounded. Chimeratech looked impressive, but its attack points were zero!

Ryō clutched his chest again, fighting another seizure. But his look was focused at Jūdai and expressed confidence. This was not a suicide move.

"Chimeratech's effect: When it attacks... damage calculation does not take place! But... each time this card attacks... I inflict 400 points... of damage... to my opponent!"

The beam went right through Air Neos and hit Jūdai, who staggered. His life point counter went down to 1600. The head of the Cyber Dragon that had fired the beam pulled back and disappeared behind a hatch in Chimeratech's body.

Cheers and clapping of hands welled up in the spectator ranks. Hell Kaiser was not finished after all!

Ryō grinned in spite of the pain. "That is not all. Chimeratech can attack once for every monster that was used for its Fusion Summon."

"Wait, does that mean..." Asuka gasped.

"If Jūdai can't stop him, Hell Kaiser wins", Edo confirmed.

Jūdai obviously had the same realization as his surprise made way for honest amazement. "Kaiser!" he exclaimed, deeply impressed.

Ryō was still clutching his chest. "Chimeratech, attack!" he shouted. The second Cyber Dragon released an attack.

The second attack hit Jūdai, lowering his life points to 1200.

"And attack!"

Jūdai was down to 800.

"Fourth attack!"

Down to 400.

Cheers erupted from the crowd. Now it was obvious for everyone. The attack corresponding to Cyber Barrier Dragon was still left. It would inflict 400 points of damage, and that was just enough to eradicate Jūdai's remaining life points. He still had a face-down card, but if it could help him, wouldn't he already have used it?

While excitement gripped the audience, Shō sat there and clasped his hands together like in prayer. "Please, just finish this duel already", he pleaded to nobody in particular.

When Ryō slowly raised his arm to announce the fifth attack he was gripped by a new seizure. Clutching his chest he fell on his knees again. "Onii-san!" Shō gasped. "Ryō!" Asuka chimed in. Fubuki was also shouting for Ryō. The cheers ceased and made way for confused whispers among the students.

Jūdai looked at Ryō with clear worry. "Kaiser. After all..." he started again, but Ryō shook his head. The look in his eyes was desperate. It seemed to take all of his willpower, but somehow he pulled himself back up again.

Jūdai looked insecure. It was obvious that dragging out the duel would not be good for Ryō's health.

"Jūdai", Ryō said, slowly and earnestly. "I was glad when I learned it would be you today. Because you know what it means to be a duelist with all your heart and soul!"

The words clearly affected Jūdai, but he still seemed undecided.

Ryō grimaced and raised his arm again. "Chimeratech's fifth attack!" he commanded fiercely.

The beam shot out. Jūdai raised his arms for protection and vanished in a cloud of smoke when it hit. Cheers erupted throughout the stadium.

But when the smoke cleared, Jūdai was still standing - his life point counter showed 1000. Ryō smirked as if he had expected nothing else.

"Before your attack hit me I activated my Trap, Elemental Recharge!" Jūdai explained. "It gives me 1000 life points for each Elemental Hero monster I control! And Air Neos is one! So this duel is not yet over!"

He grinned. Ryō smiled as well.

"I expected nothing less from you", he remarked weakly.

Some students cheered for Jūdai, including a high-pitched "Jūdai-sama!" from Rei that brought her annoyed looks from Asuka and Shō.

"This is the end of my battle phase. I set my last card face-down and end ... my... turn..." Ryō's voice grew faint at the last words. He staggered and for a moment it looked like he was going to collapse again.

"Onii-san!" This time Shō did jump over the barricade.

"STOP!" The shout that caused Shō to stop in his tracks had not come from his brother this time, but from Jūdai. Shō looked at him, shocked. "But..."

"Don't... interfere..." Ryō added. He was still standing, after all.

"No! Onii-san! You have to stop! At this rate you will..." Shō pleaded.

But Ryō interrupted him. "I will finish this duel", he spat out. "I don't care what happens afterwards. This is my pride as a duelist."

Shō shifted his gaze to Jūdai. "Aniki..." he pleaded.

Jūdai looked back at him sadly. "I made up my mind", he explained. "You always looked up to Kaiser because he dueled with respect for his opponent. And I think that this is how I must show my respect for him."

Shō looked back to Ryō, but he was already ignoring his younger brother again.

"It is your turn", Ryō pointed out and looked at Jūdai.

Jūdai nodded. He placed his hand on the top card of his deck.

Shō slowly moved back to his seat with a gloomy expression.

"I draw!" Jūdai announced loudly.

He checked the new card and nodded, but he did not play it and went right into battle.

"Air Neos, attack Chimeratech Fortress Dragon! When it is not the one who attacks its effects don't activate so it's only a weak monster with zero attack!"

Ryō nodded grimly. "And that's why I set this card", he said and pressed the activation switch on his duel disk. His movements were sluggish but his voice was clear.

"I activate the Quick Spell Dimension Explosion. I return one Fusion Monster to my Extra Deck! Now I can Special Summon as many monsters which were removed from play as I want!"

He pulled out the cards he had previously tucked away. "I Special Summon three Cyber Dragons and Cyber Valley in Attack Mode."

The metallic dragons appeared in the arena and loomed over Jūdai. Air Neos stopped. If he was going to continue his attack, Jūdai had to choose a new target. But none of the monsters Ryō had just called had nearly as many attack points as Air Neos – no matter which one he would choose, the difference was enough to bring Ryō down to zero. But Ryō obviously knew that, too: “I activate one of the other effects of Cyber Valley. During the Battle Phase, I can remove this monster from play to end the Battle Phase. Then I can draw one card.”

Cyber Valley disappeared just as quickly as it had come. Ryō drew the card and signaled Jūdai to go on, but the chance to end the duel was over.

“I set two cards face down and end my turn”, Jūdai declared.

Shō took a deep breath. “Why can’t it be over already?” he whispered.

“Isn’t it obvious?” Edo asked. “They are both duelists. There’s no way either of them will just give up.”

“But...” Sho whispered. None of the others said a word.

Ryō drew his next card with a shaking hand. But when he saw what he had just drawn, determination took over his face and then his whole posture. He straightened himself up. Then he called out in a surprisingly clear voice that echoed through the arena: “Whether I win or lose... this will be my last turn. Prepare yourself, Jūdai!”

He pushed the card into a slot of his disk. “I activate ... Power Bond!”

Gasps were coming from the crowd. People recognized Hell Kaisers’s ace card.

“With the effect of Power Bond I fuse my three Cyber Dragons to summon the almighty Cyber End Dragon!”

The dragons roared, disappeared in a whirl of energy, and made place for a monster that dominated the arena. Its three heads roared, then they faced Jūdai and Air Neos.

The only response that Jūdai was able to get out was an amazed “wow”.

“The additional effect of Power Bond: The attack points of Cyber End Dragon are doubled! But at the end of this turn I will take damage equal to Cyber End’s Attack Points.”

The smile that underlined this announcement turned into a mask of pain when a seizure took over Ryō’s body. He groaned and fell to his knees again, buckling over. It looked worse than all the previous times. Shō shrieked in horror. Fubuki rose from his seat. Asuka clenched her fists.

Jūdai started moving towards his opponent to help him. But Ryō, still cowering on the ground, uttered one word. “Attack.”

Jūdai stopped when Cyber End Dragon threw back its three heads and gathered energy. The monster’s attack points were 8000 now. This attack would finish him for good. Unless...

“Sorry Kaiser, but I can’t just let you win. I activate the Quick-Spell De-Fusion! It lets me return Air Neos to my Extra Deck and Special Summon its fusion material monsters, Elemental Hero Neos and Neo Spacian Air Hummingbird!”

Air Neos dissolved and made place for the two monsters.

“Then I’ll just attack Air Hummingbird”, Ryō said calmly. He was still on the floor but not in immediate pain anymore.

“Not gonna happen! Because now I activate another Quick-Spell, Quick Summon! I can normal summon a monster – right now!”

“And what monster would be able to stand up to Cyber End’s 8000 attack points?” Ryō sneered.

Jūdai smiled and spread his arms. "My dear partner", he said.

Then he slapped the card onto his disk.

Thorny vines broke out from the ground, wound themselves around Neos and Air Hummingbird and crushed them before they could even move. The vines united to form a humanoid silhouette. Bat-like wings spread out. A faint glow emanated from the head, slowly revealing shocks of white and blue hair, purple skin and sharp claws.

The crowd fell silent. Cyber End was hovering undecidedly.

Ryō raised his upper body to regard the new monster properly.

Then he smiled. It was a soft, content smile quite unlike the fierce expression he had been wearing the whole duel. "I thought you don't use Yubel in duels", he said.

Jūdai just smiled. And although it was supposed to be just a hologram, it looked like the monster smiled in the same way.

"You know Yubel's effect, don't you?" Jūdai re-confirmed, "When you attack Yubel, you receive damage equal to the attack points of your monster."

Ryō nodded. He pulled himself up from the ground once more. His legs were shaking. He could not raise the left arm with his duel disk anymore. But he managed to keep standing.

"Jūdai..." he said weakly. "That you would even use Yubel... Yes, you could not make it any clearer that you respect me as a strong opponent."

"Onii-san", Shō gasped.

"This is a feeling I forgot..." Ryō whispered. "Respect for me, after all I did... Yes, I am glad it was you in this last duel. Thank you..."

It took Jūdai a moment to realize the meaning of these words, then he shook his head in revulsion. "Don't say that. You still have a lot ahead of you", he said pleadingly.

Ryō silently shook his head. "Respect... I am going to show you my respect... my last ... move..."

His right hand moved towards his duel disk. It was shaking so badly he could hardly fit the card into the slot. It was his last one.

"Activate... Quick-Spell... Cybernetic Zone. Cyber End Dragon is banished by its effect."

He slowly sank to the ground as the dragon disappeared. Those in the audience that didn't know Yubel's effect expressed astonishment and disappointment. Whispers broke out when others started to explain what was happening.

And then Cyber End Dragon came back. It threw its three heads back and let out a long, sad cry that reverberated through the arena. The counter showed its attack points: 16000. "During my End Phase, Cybernetic Zone brings back the banished monster with doubled attack", Ryō explained.

Jūdai looked up at the monster. There were tears in the corners of his eyes now.

"It's impressive", he admitted.

Ryō smiled, then he closed his eyes. "The effect of Power Bond also activates during my end phase", he whispered.

There was a bolt of lightning. Ryō raised his head towards the ceiling to greet it.

It hit him.

His life points fell to zero.

The duel was over.

Ryō Marufuji, also known as Hell Kaiser, fell onto the ground as all force left his body. He did not hear the voices calling his name anymore.

Shō's eyes were full of tears. "He... **he is not dead!**" he shouted at Mr. T.