

Another Generation

Von Jitsch

Kapitel 6: Another Hope

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.

Jim was the first to overcome the shock of the sudden event. "The *Rainbow Dragon's* in that helicopter, right?"

Johann pulled himself together. "Yes. We have to get it." He turned to look at the others.

"Please do", Asuka said sternly and crossed her arms. "I am going to look for Fubuki-Nii-san. Alone, if I must."

"I'll go with her", Jūdai said immediately and stepped closer to her.

Amon just raised his eyebrows and adjusted his glasses, but held back a comment. Jim nodded, as did Edo. Johann looked at his two spirit companions for guidance.

Crystal Master answered in his usual unhappy tone: "Fubuki is equally important as the *Rainbow Dragon* in order to beat Darkness. It cannot be helped." His counterpart nodded grimly: "But remember that you need to reunite if you want to beat Darkness."

Johann nodded and held out his hand to Jūdai. "Well, you heard them. Take care, and let's meet again here."

Jūdai pressed the offered hand briefly.

"That's a promise", he confirmed. Then turned to Asuka: "Let's go."

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The crash site was impossible to miss, even for the new arrivals who were completely unfamiliar with the school grounds. A pillar of thick black smoke that rose high into the sky marked the spot perfectly.

Nonetheless they had to enter the forest behind the academy building where no student ever seemed to have set foot. The trees stood closely and the underwood was deep. But Jim nonchalantly pulled a knife out of his belt and went ahead, cutting off branches when needed. Johann followed, but not too closely, because the crocodile that was strapped to Jim's back still seemed intimidating even though it could hardly move in this position. The other two were closely behind him.

"Did I catch that right? We're just here 'cause of this Darkness thing?" Jim asked over his shoulder after he had cut off another branch.

Johann made an uncomfortable face. "Essentially... yes", he admitted.

"Because you heard the voices of the spirits?" Amon reconfirmed from behind.

"Yeah." The answer was accompanied by a meek nod.

Jim moved again and everyone else followed, but Amon kept up the topic: "So what exactly did the spirits tell you?"

"Well..." Johann faked a laugh in a desperate attempt to lighten the mood somewhat, "they just appeared in my dreams one day. They told me that the world is in danger and that the only way to stop Darkness is for me to go to Duel Academy and join forces with Jūdai Yūki."

"Oh, but why are we here then?" Jim asked, slashing another vine. "You're not to join forces with us?"

Johann shook his head apologetically. "When I discussed everything with Mr. Crawford, he suggested that each of the Duel Academy branches should send one student. I guess he thought it would look weird if only I came."

"So according to the spirits we're not needed here?" Amon concluded sourly.

Before anyone could answer, Jim burst through a bush and exclaimed: "There it is."

They had been aware that the stench of burning plastic and metal parts was coming closer, but they were unable to see anything but the black smoke until they stepped out of the forests after Jim.

Amon gave an exasperated sigh.

The smoke came from a deformed part of metal that lay in the dirt just where the forest faded and gave way for the rocky terrain at the slope of the volcano. It was not a helicopter. At least not a whole one.

"So the fuel tank exploded...?" Johann surmised.

Edo crossed his arms. "That's obvious, isn't it?"

"Well, the other parts oughta be around here, right?" Jim mused and turned his head to look around. They could already see some smaller metal parts under nearby trees.

"Worst case the card we are looking for caught fire and is nothing but ash by now", Amon pointed out.

"That's-" Johann started in a protestful tone, but interrupted himself and finished, "... possible, I guess."

"It is not", said the blonde *Crystal Keeper* angrily. "You as its master should be able to feel the Dragon's presence!"

Johann turned to look at the monster with surprise, then his face slowly lit up. "Then that warm feeling..."

"Yes, it is the presence of the *Rainbow Dragon* no doubt", the dark *Crystal Master* confirmed.

Johann nodded and turned to the other humans, who were looking at him with varied expressions. "The spirits again, I guess?" Amon smirked.

Johann nodded. "The card must still be intact. I can feel the presence of its spirit." He turned around on the spot and looked in all directions. "But I can't really tell from where."

"Let's go looking for it, eh?" Jim suggested. He got on his knees and loosened the strap that had attached the big crocodile to his back. "Caren will help us."

When the reptile was on the ground, Johann, Edo and Amon all took a step back, but Jim already had something in his hand that looked like meat. Caren turned to him and opened her big jaws. Everyone held their breath when Jim put his hand right between her teeth and let go of the meat. But she shut her mouth very carefully, and with enough delay to let Jim pull his hand back out. "Good girl", he said and patted her head, then got back up.

"Let's go", he announced and started to walk to the left. Caren started crawling in his

direction. Johann followed after exchanging a glance with the other two.

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"Say, Jūdai... who do you still remember?"

Jūdai looked surprised when Asuka posed the question.

"Uh... hm... Well, there's Edo, right? And the exchange students. Johann, Jim and ... what was his name? The one with the glasses."

"Amon", Asuka confirmed, "I guess it's a good sign that we can still remember them all. And Fubuki as well... But who else?"

Jūdai scratched his chin.

"You know", Asuka elaborated, "I keep thinking about my memories with Fubuki, but some of them are so blurry... I know there must have been other people in my life. I must have parents, too. And I just can't remember any of them."

Jūdai slowly shook his head. "I can't remember my parents either," he admitted. "And who knows, maybe I even have brothers or sisters, but already forgot them."

Asuka nodded sadly.

"That's why we have to find Fubuki at all costs", Jūdai said and held up his fist.

She smiled. "Thank you... It's good to see you so motivated again."

"Yeah... I really don't know why I was so down recently."

They took a slightly brisker pace when walking on. Asuka had suggested they go to the conference house of the Academy and they were now on the way to it. She remembered that Fubuki had gone there often recently, although she could absolutely not recall why. They had concluded that it must be related to someone they had already forgotten.

"Oh!" Jūdai suddenly exclaimed. He ran a few steps ahead and started to walk backwards so he could look at Asuka while walking. "There is someone else I remember. Actually, there's two people. One of them is Yūgi Mutō, the King of Games."

Asuka smiled. "Who could ever forget him?" she mused. "Especially you..."

Jūdai nodded eagerly.

"And who's the other?"

"I don't know his name, actually", Jūdai said. "But he helped me and *Yubel* a lot. Right?" He looked at his monster partner with a smile.

Yubel nodded. "Yes. It should not surprise me that he seems to have not been consumed by Darkness so far. After all he could see me, which means that -"

"I think I never heard that story", Asuka said to Jūdai, oblivious to *Yubel* speaking, "can I hear it?"

Jūdai grinned. "Of course."

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Fubuki Tenjōin felt chased. Even though he had just repelled the sinister-looking man with the unhealthy skin color, he did not really feel successful – except that he somehow knew that if he had lost, he would have faced bad consequences.

He knew he'd had a reason to be in the conference house which was located rather far away from the school's main building on top of a cliff, looking out to the sea. He knew it had once been built to house the academy's owner whenever he was staying there, but as far as he knew it had not been used for that purpose for the entire time since

he had enrolled.

Why had he been there? There were no occasions in Duel Academy's schedule that had students come there. He still knew that he had gone there often in the past few weeks, but he could absolutely not remember what he had done there.

There was also something off about the facility itself. He had checked all rooms after he'd chased his opponent away, to make sure there were no other sinister figures hiding. He'd found a room full of medical devices with a sickbed, and there had been a file with patient's data lying around – except all the fields that should have patient information were blank. He'd also found a mobile phone which was decorated with a cat mascot on a strap, but although it had been unlocked, he had been unable to determine its owner. There was only one number saved in the address book – his own. It had prompted him to check his phone, and he had realized there were no numbers saved on there, either. Which was weird, because he *knew* that he was a collector who'd ask everyone, especially women, for their numbers. It was all really unsettling. When he decided that he would not get any answers at the conference house, he left and went on his way to the school's main building. Something weird was happening here, and he was worried about his sister who was also at the Academy. If something had happened to her...! The thought of her made him increase his pace.

He did not get far before he heard footsteps and saw someone coming up the gentle slope that led to the conference house. Instinctively, he stopped and waited for the approach. It was not long until two dark figures entered his vision.

"It's you again!" Fubuki exclaimed with terror.

"You... why are you wearing that mask?"

Before him stood the man he had been fighting earlier, the one who had introduced himself as Mr. T. Except that this time there was two of them. Two Mr. Ts that looked exactly the same. As if the man had not been eerie enough when appearing alone.

"I don't have to explain myself to the likes of you. Just try to beat me!" Fubuki shouted aggressively.

The two men exchanged a glance.

"We're not here to beat you. We were looking for you to...", one of them started.

"I don't care what you came here for! All this weird stuff is happening because of you, isn't it? Then I have to beat you!"

"You're not being yourself, Fubuki Tenjōin", the second Mr. T said.

"What do you even know about me?" Fubuki retorted.

The first Mr. T stepped forward. "You are not going to listen to either of us, are you? Then I'll duel you. Maybe that will make you realize what is really going on here."

"That's exactly what I want", Fubuki agreed and readied his Duel Disk.

The opponents took opposite stances and drew the initial cards from their decks. The Mr. T that was not going to duel placed himself at the side with a good view on both of them and crossed his arms.

Fubuki's opponent started: "I go first. I set a monster in face-down defense mode and a face-down spell or trap card, then I end my turn."

Fubuki eyed him suspiciously. Apparently his opponent was waiting for him to make a move first.

"Here I go, then. I draw!" He only regarded his cards briefly before he decided on the next move.

"I summon *Red-Eyes Black Chick* in attack position!" he announced.

The hologram of the monster, a tiny black dragon half hidden in a big reddish egg,

appeared with a squeal.

The monster had only 800 attack points and anyone who didn't know its effect would probably have taunted Fubuki for playing such a weak monster in attack mode. Mr. T did not.

"I use *Black Chick's* effect. I can send it to the Graveyard to special summon *Red-Eyes Black Dragon* from my hand!"

The small dragon made way for a much larger dragon, which was also black. The hologram let out a nasty scream, but Mr. T did not budge an inch.

"I activate from my hand the Spell Card *Inferno Fire Blast*. It damages your life points by the attack points of my *Red-Eyes Black Dragon*!"

The dragon roared, threw back its head, and then launched a red fire ball at Mr. T. The man in black braced himself against the attack, but was pushed back a few steps when it hit. His Life point counter dropped to 1600.

"That stung", he testified, "but according to the effect of *Inferno Fire Blast*, your *Red-Eyes* can't attack anymore."

This opponent really knew his cards very well, Fubuki registered. He had not even used this card in the previous duel. But it would not make a difference. He had beaten Mr. T once already, he would be able to do it again.

"*Red-Eyes* can't attack, but that doesn't mean that your monster is safe." He held up a card from his hand: "This monster can only be special summoned by tributing a *Red-Eyes Black Dragon*. So I do that and summon *Red-Eyes Darkness Dragon*!"

The dragon that appeared on the field now looked similar to the one that had been offered as a tribute, but had several dark-red stones set in its armor. It gave a vile screech when it appeared. "*Darkness Dragon* gains 300 attack points for every Dragon in my graveyard. Right now there's two, so it gains 600!" The counter next to the dragon jumped to 3000. "*Darkness Dragon*, attack his face-down monster!"

The attack went through and flipped up the card, showing the attacked monster just for seconds before it vanished.

Fubuki stared at it with surprise. He had not expected this kind of monster.

"I activate my face-down trap", Mr. T announced: "*Hero Signal*. When a monster I control is destroyed, I can special summon a Level 4 or lower monster from my hand or deck. I choose *Elemental Hero Bubbleman*!"

The hero in blue appeared on the field. "And because I have no other cards on my field, its effect allows me to draw two cards", Mr. T added and drew.

Fubuki stared. "E-Heroes?" he murmured.

"Is something the matter?" Mr. T asked.

Fubuki clenched his teeth. "If you think I'll go easy on you just because you use the same cards as Jūdai you're very mistaken!"

His opponent grimaced. "Is it that mask that blurs your vision?"

Fubuki felt for the mask on his face. When he had received it he had sworn to never wear it, but it had not been long until he had been forced to – in order to survive. This time was similar. In the previous duel he had quickly realized that he needed this power in order to win. And surprisingly he was still feeling pretty much himself, although the mask had previously tried to take over his mind even if he wore it just for a short time.

"Nothing is blurred. I see clearer than ever!" He checked the card in his hands again. "I set a card and end my turn. Just try to overpower *Darkness Dragon*!"

"It looks like Darkness already got a hold on you", the Mr. T who stood at the sidelines remarked.

Fubuki clenched his right fist. He was starting to feel the pressure of a foreign consciousness invading his own, but he was still himself: "What does it even matter to you! I will use its power to beat you!"

"I see", his opponent said. "But I won't make it easy for you."

Mr. T drew. Due to *Bubbleman's* effect he now had six cards in his hand.

"I equip *Great Sword* to my *Bubbleman*."

A Katana appeared in the left hand of the monster and the display next to it indicated that its attack points had just risen to 1100. Fubuki stayed alert. He knew the additional effect of *Great Sword*: the monster equipped with it could be counted as two tributes to summon a Warrior monster. But his opponent was using an E-Hero deck, and those decks were built around Fusion summons. Was there even an E-Hero that required two tributes?

"I tribute *Bubbleman*, who is counted as two tributes, to summon *Elemental Hero Neos*!"

Fubuki stumbled backwards.

"But that's...!" he exclaimed with shock. "I know only Jūdai has this card! How..."

"Are you understanding now?" Mr. T asked.

Fubuki straightened his back. "What did you *do* to Jūdai?" he shouted angrily. The Darkness seemed to press against his mind even stronger. Maybe he should just give in to it. This opponent needed to be beaten.

Mr. T shook his head. "Apparently not", he muttered.

"I equip *Neos* with *Neos Force*. He gains 800 attack points."

The hologram of Neos flexed its impressive arm muscles and energy started to gather around its right fist. The attack points now displayed as 3300.

"The additional effect of this equip spell is that when *Neos* destroys your monster, you receive damage equal to the attack points of the destroyed monster."

Fubuki's hand moved towards the switch that would activate his set card.

"That won't beat me yet!"

"Right", Mr. T confirmed. "*Neos*, attack *Darkness Dragon*!"

Neos stormed forward with his right fist pulled back, then jumped and released a punch that shattered *Red-Eyes Darkness Dragon*. The hologram burst into particles that fell to the ground. The impact even blew the card from its place in the duel disk. Fubuki's life points fell by 300 points due to the difference in attack points between their monsters, and another 3000 by the effect, leaving him with only 700.

But something odd was happening. Fubuki blinked.

When the hologram particles dissolved, the one in front of him did not look like Mr. T anymore. It was –

"Jūdai!"

His opponent's face lit up. "Can you see it's me now?" he asked.

"Nii-san!" came a voice from where the other Mr. T had been standing. But it was a blonde girl in the Obelisk Blue uniform who was standing there now. She ran towards him.

Fubuki suspended the duel and the hologram disappeared. Then he took off his mask. The one coming towards him still looked like...

"Asuka", he responded with relief.

His younger sister hugged him. "I'm so glad!" she exclaimed.

"Eh... me too..." he muttered. "What the hell was wrong with me?"

Jūdai pointed at the card on the ground that was supposed to show *Red-Eyes Darkness Dragon*. It looked pitch black. As the three looked on, the card dissolved, just

like the hologram before.

"The power of Darkness must have grabbed a hold of you through that card", Jūdai concluded.

"I... it really looked like I was dueling this terrible man, Mr. T... But... Darkness is in the mask, isn't it? How did it go into the card?" He was very confused.

"I don't get it all either, but I know that everything is different now", Jūdai said. "Because Darkness has taken form and is trying to consume the world."

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Edo had not been left with much of a choice except following Amon after Johann had gone with Jim. Not that he disliked him, but something about the attitude of the champion from the East branch annoyed him. He always acted as if he knew everything there was to know. Also he was walking ahead as if he was alone, not caring if a branch that he pushed out of his way would spring back and hit someone behind him. Edo had therefore let the distance between them increase quite a bit.

"Are you sure it makes sense to go farther that way?" he asked.

Amon did not even turn to answer. "The explosion of a fuel tank has a massive power. There must be bigger parts somewhere here."

Edo clenched his fists. Yes, if it was Amon asking him the same question, he would probably act in a similar way. That was the most annoying part of it.

"We should have-", he started, but he got short because he spotted a shadow below the trees.

He turned.

A small figure was standing beneath the trees. It was a small boy, but he was wearing the uniform of Obelisk Blue, the most prestigious of the Academy's dorms. He was smiling.

"Edo Phoenix... duel me."

Edo glanced at Amon, who was still moving and had apparently not noticed about his encounter.

If he could stop the enemy here, the others would be safe, right? And even if he could not he would be buying time for Amon, Jim or Johann to find the *Rainbow Dragon*.

"I guess it's time to play hero", he muttered, then got his Duel Disk ready and turned to the boy.

"Alright, let us duel!"