

Another Generation

Von Jitsch

Kapitel 12: Another Final

The dark silhouette slowly showed its features. It wore a hood that was part of a long cloak. Its face was entirely covered in shadow, but the eyes were glowing menacingly. Fubuki shivered.

"Darkness", he whispered.

Dread crept upon everyone present. Johann could feel a cold shiver down his back, and when he looked at Jūdai who was standing next to him, he could see that he was experiencing something similar.

"You have beaten my emissary, but you will never beat Darkness itself," a voice said. It did not sound like it was coming from the figure itself, more like it was resonating all around them.

Caren, the crocodile, let out an aggressive growl and crawled towards the figure on the ground.

"Caren, stop!"

Jim threw himself on top of the reptile to hold her. "Thank you for worrying, but I don't think you can help us against that," he said.

"That is correct," the voice of Darkness said. "Nobody can help you against me. In fact, you have not realized it yet but there is no need to *help* anyone."

Jim glared at the tall figure. The red orb in place of his right eye started to glow again, casting a red light over the scene.

There was fear. And sadness. Despair. Insecurity.

The visions of humans floated into Jim's mind.

"It's just because of Aniki that my brother died..."

"I let down Aniki and Shō at the same time..."

"I will never be accepted by the dueling world as long as Jūdai is there..."

"I cannot stay with Jūdai if I went to be independent, but I don't want to leave him..."

"I almost let my mother die because I thought she was expendable..."

Jim pressed both hands over his ears, but he could still hear them. His eye was glowing stronger than before. More and more visions rushed into him.

"Jim!" Jūdai shouted, realizing his pain. But Jim could not hear him.

"Make... it stop..." he gasped.

"Nothing easier than that," the voice of Darkness said.

And there was silence.

The red bead in Jim's eye cracked and fell to the ground in pieces. All power left his

body and he fell forward. Caren howled, but then she fell silent too.

The others watched in dread how their bodies turned pitch black. The black turned into cards, just like Fujiwara moments ago. They did not fall to the ground but moved, as if being sucked in by a black hole, rapidly towards the shade below the hood of the figure before them.

"What," Johann gasped.

"He's too powerful!" Fubuki exclaimed. His voice was full of panic. "He doesn't even have to duel us! He will just..."

He fell silent when the cloaked figure crouched and got on one level with his face.

"You already know the power of darkness. Come join me, and forget."

Fubuki stared into the black below the hood, then he nodded with an empty gaze. Just like Jim, he turned into cards that were sucked in and became one with the cloaked figure, which slowly got up again, standing up to its full size that was several heads taller than a normal human.

Now, only Jūdai, Johann and Amon were left.

The Crystal Beasts and *Yubel* defensively appeared in front of their partners.

"You," Darkness said and pointed at Amon. His hand looked like that of a skeleton, it was only bones.

Amon shivered.

"How can you be the king when there are no more people left in this world?" Darkness simply asked.

Amon opened his mouth. Then he shut it again.

Without a word, he turned into black cards that were swallowed by the space below Darkness hood.

Johann made a grim face. "I guess this is where I need to make a stand, right?" he asked and readied his Duel Disk.

"Yes... you and Jūdai. If anyone has a chance to beat Darkness itself, it is you," *Crystal Keeper* said.

Crystal Master agreed: "This is why we are here. To set things right."

Jūdai looked at them. "I... I don't know why you think so highly of me," he admitted. "I was able to beat the Light of Destruction, but that was only because everyone supported me. I don't remember them, but I'm sure I couldn't have done anything myself. And I can't do anything now..."

"That's not true," *Yubel* objected. "You have a strength, and you have always shown it."

"And you are not alone!" Johann added. "It's just like with me and the Crystal Beasts." He nodded at the beasts that were still gathered around him. "We have this strong bond with the monsters. It makes us different, and that's not always easy, but it also means we will never really be alone."

Jūdai started to smile. "You are right," he agreed. He looked at *Yubel*. "As long as I have you, there is no way we can lose."

He turned his attention back to Johann. "Let's fight together."

Judia held out his hand. Johann took it. Then they both turned to face Darkness.

"I shall let you try. But know that you are only delaying your salvation," Darkness said.

"Stop talking like you are here to do us a favor," Jūdai protested. "How is erasing everyone salvation? You are just destroying everything!"

Darkness took a few steps back.

"For you who have not yet accepted the embrace of Darkness, it would look like destruction. But that is not what I am. Despair, fear of the future, sadness... there are so many bad feelings in the human world. Have you never wished these would disappear?"

The figure stopped at a distance from Johann and Jūdai that left enough space for a playing field.

"Humans who experience these feelings wish for them to be gone. That is me. I am the desire of all the people who have ever wished to be free of those negative feelings. And I am the power that grants their wish. To nullify all those negative feelings. To feel nothing. To find eternal peace. That is what I am."

"That's terrible!" Johann exclaimed. "Life is not always easy, but there are also good things and there is always hope for a better future!"

Darkness' eyes glowed. Five wings unfolded from behind his head, two on his right side and three on the left.

"Is there, though? Who says that the future will be better? What if the future holds only more pain and sadness? What if this world itself is heading to its destruction? By becoming one with me, all those people need not worry about that anymore. They have discarded their hope, but also their despair. They exist in nothing, in eternal peace."

"That doesn't sound right," Jūdai objected strongly. He looked at Johann, who nodded in agreement.

"Show him that there is hope for the future," *Crystal Keeper* said.

"We are counting on you," *Crystal Master* added.

Johann and Jūdai both activated their Duel Disks.

"Alright, let's go," Jūdai said.

Darkness nodded. "We will play by the same Battle Royale rules as before. Try to beat me," he said.

His two opponents nodded.

"DUEL!"

While Jūdai and Johann drew their first five cards, Darkness just raised his left, bony hand and the cards appeared in it.

"I will start," he announced. "I summon *Darkness Eye*."

Darkness had no Duel Disk, the monster card that he had just announced to play simply disappeared from his hand and appeared on one of the wings on his head. The monster that appeared on the field looked like a dark ball that was attached to some veins that seemed to grow out of the ground. It had zero attack points.

"Looks like another deck full of nasty tricks," Johann remarked.

Darkness continued calmly: "I activate the field spell *Darkness*."

A dark orb appeared right behind Darkness' body. It was glowing, but the glow did not emit light. The scenery around them was swallowed by shadows. It had already been dark, but now it became hard to see anything.

"When I activate *Darkness*, I set the following five cards from my deck in my Spell and Trap zone in random positions." As he called out the names of the cards, face-down cards appeared on the outer side of the wings near his head and simultaneously as holograms on the field: "*Zero, Infinity, Darkness 1, Darkness 2, Darkness 3*."

"What is this going to be?" *Yubel* wondered warily.

"I cannot look at my face-down cards as long as *Darkness* is on the field," Darkness explained. "But you will soon learn to fear them anyway. This ends my turn."

"Let me—" Johann started, but was interrupted: "Next is me," Jūdai announced and drew a card.

Johann shut his mouth again. In his urge to do something, Jūdai had not even noticed that he had tried to suggest going first.

"First, I activate my Spell Card *Fake Hero*. I special summon an Elemental Hero monster from my hand, but it cannot attack. I choose my trusted companion *Elemental Hero Neos*!"

The muscular hero in white appeared on the field. Johann had already seen this monster a couple of times when watching Jūdai duel. Summoning it was a standard move for him.

"Next I summon *Neo-Spacian Aqua Dolphin*."

The monster that appeared was decidedly less bulky than *Neos* but also a humanoid figure with well-defined muscles, except its head was that of a dolphin.

"I activate *Aqua Dolphin's* effect! I discard a card from my hand to look at your hand!" Jūdai dutifully put a card to the graveyard. Holograms of the cards from Darkness' hand appeared around him in a half circle. Jūdai regarded them. "I select a monster card from your hand," he said and pointed at the card. "Then, if I have a monster which has more attack points, I destroy it and you get 500 points of damage. *Neos* has 2500 and your *Darkness Necroslime* that I selected has zero attack points, so it is destroyed!"

The card hologram exploded and Darkness' Life Points fell to 3500. The dark entity did not seem to care.

"Good job!" Johann said nevertheless, and gave Jūdai a thumbs-up.

"Now I use the two monsters on my field for Contact Fusion! I shuffle *Neos* and *Aqua Dolphin* back into my deck to call forth the aquatic hero: *Elemental Hero Aqua Neos*!"

Neos and *Aqua Dolphin* rose into the air and combined into a monster that looked like a bulkier version of *Aqua Dolphin*. It showed 2500 Attack Points. Jūdai pumped his fist.

"*Aqua Neos*, attack that weird monster!"

When Jūdai's monster got into a fighting stance, Darkness said calmly: "Now I shall activate my combo. I told you that I cannot see which of my face-down cards is which, but the effect of *Darkness Eye* lets me do it once per turn."

A slit opened in the dark ball that was the main body of the monster and revealed an eye. Darkness nodded. The eye closed again.

"I see. Then I shall activate this card first."

Of the five set cards on the field, the one second from the left flipped up at a hand signal from Darkness. The card image of the Trap showed a small ball of light amid darkness, above the rippling surface of water.

"*Zero*," he read the card's name. "When I do not control a face-up *Infinity*, I activate one set card next. This one."

The second card from the right flipped up. "*Infinity*", Darkness read. This card's image showed an entire galaxy. "When I activate *Infinity* while *Zero* is already activated, I activate all set cards which lie between *Zero* and *Infinity* in an order I choose."

"There is only one card," Jūdai noted.

"Indeed," Darkness said. "But that is all I need. The card that I activate is this: *Darkness 1*. When it is the first card activated after *Zero* and *Infinity*, I can destroy one card that my opponent controls."

He silently pointed at *Aqua Neos*. A lightning bolt shot from the revealed card, which showed a rough surface of water. The monster was stuck and disappeared.

"Damn," Jūdai muttered.

"Those cards... they're Continuous Traps," Johann realized when neither of the cards that Darkness had just activated disappeared after activation.

"You're right," Jūdai noticed uneasily. "Is there some other effect to them?"

"See, you rushed too much," Yubel chided him. "If you had waited to see what his combo can do..."

"Hey, I'm perfectly prepared for this," Jūdai protested. "I activate my Spell: *Relationship*. If a monster that I control was destroyed this turn I can special summon an Elemental Hero who has the same attack points as the destroyed monster. *Aqua Neos* had 2500 attack points so I can summon *Neos* from the deck who has the same strength!"

Neos appeared back on the field from within a small explosion and flexed its muscles. Yubel sighed with relief.

"I set a card and end my turn," Jūdai closed.

"During each end phase, all my Spell and Trap cards are set face-down again and their positions shuffled," Darkness announced, revealing the secret of his continuous Traps. The card holograms flipped down and switched places quickly.

"Wow, that is nasty. So he can use this combo again every turn?" Yubel noticed.

"I guess *Darkness 2* and *Darkness 3* also have some effect that activates when they are between *Zero* and *Infinity*," Jūdai mused, "And we still have no idea what they can do."

"But it's random which cards are between those two," Johann said optimistically. "And he only knows which one is which because of *Darkness Eye*, so I only need to destroy it."

He looked at Jūdai and gave him a nod. "I'm taking over," he announced and drew.

"There you are," he said to the card he had just drawn, then looked around with a smile. "Prepare for a way of summoning that the world has yet to see!"

Johann held up two cards with the back to everyone else. They started to glow.

"Swing, Pendulum of souls. Draw a rainbow into the sky!" he announced and inserted the cards into the spell and trap card slots farthest to the right and farthest to the left.

Pillars of gentle, rainbow-colored light rose on both sides of Johann's part of the field. One of them showed the number 2, the other a 5. The holograms of *Crystal Keeper* and *Crystal Master* appeared in the light.

"Huh?," Jūdai said confused and peered at Johann's Duel Disk - but he had really put the cards into Spell and Trap card slots. "I thought they were monsters," he admitted. "They are, but also they aren't," Johann said and winked. "They are called Pendulum cards."

"Why have I never heard of cards like that?" Jūdai asked.

"Because you always sleep during the lessons," Yubel remarked.

Johann grinned. "Nah, they're just really special. As far as I know they're the only ones in the world."

"Wow," Jūdai gasped.

"An irregularity. Something like this should not exist," Darkness said a bit sourly.

"Well, but they do. And they're going to help me win this!" Johann said with conviction.

"Yes? What do they do?" Jūdai asked excitedly.

"Watch and see," Johann said and puffed out his chest, then he spread his arms.

"Pendulum Summon! Appear, my trusted Crystal Beasts!"

A circle appeared in the sky between the pillars of light. Two flashes of light shot out of it, one dark blue and one green. They hit the field and in them appeared two monsters.

"*Crystal Beast Sapphire Pegasus! Crystal Beast Emerald Tortoise!* Join me in this fight!"

The first monster was an elegant white horse with large wings. On its forehead glistened a blue gem-like horn. The other monster was a large tortoise on whose shell green gems were growing.

"Thank you for calling us," the pegasus said in a deep voice.

"We will help you," the tortoise said calmly.

"Thanks for coming," Johann smiled.

"Wait... did you just summon two monsters at the same time?" Jūdai said surprised.

"Yes," said *Crystal Keeper*. "We are the pendulum scales that make this possible."

"*Crystal Keeper* has scale 2 and I have scale 5. With a Pendulum summon, Johann can call forth as many monsters with a level between those scales as possible," *Crystal Master* elaborated.

"Thank you, this helps a lot!" Johann said to them, then came back to the duel: "And when *Sapphire Pegasus* is summoned, I can place a Crystal Beast from my hand, Deck or Graveyard in my Spell and Trap card zone as a Continuous Spell. Join us from the Deck, *Crystal Beast Amber Mammoth!*"

He inserted another card into a Spell and Trap slot, but what appeared was not a monster, just a round orange stone with a polished surface. "As long as it's in the Spell zone, it's just a gem," Johann remarked.

He looked at Darkness. "Well, now let's try attacking that disgusting thing there," he said and pointed at *Darkness Eye*.

Darkness chuckled. "I activate my combo again. *Zero* and *Infinity!*"

The *Darkness Eye's* lid opened for a moment and closed again. There was a pause. Darkness silently pointed at the two cards farthest to the right and they flipped up. They were *Zero* and *Infinity*, but there was no card between them that could be activated.

Johann smirked. "You have a bad start it seems. *Pegasus*, continue to attack *Darkness Eye.*"

"On it," the winged horse called and pranced on its hind legs, then took off and rushed right into *Darkness Eye* which was destroyed without resistance. Darkness' Life points fell to 1700.

"Great!" Jūdai called out.

"I summoned *Emerald Tortoise* in defense position so you are safe for now," Johann told Darkness. "I play a Spell or Trap card face-down and end my turn."

The cards on Darkness' side of the field flipped down and switched places quickly.

A new card appeared in Darkness' bony hand instead of a draw. The dark messenger was down to 1700 Life Points and he had no monsters on the field, but seemed not worried by that at all.

"I summon *Darkness Necroslime,*" he announced. A black, wobbly blob that floated in the air appeared. Just like *Darkness Eye* before, it had zero attack points. "I activate its effect, which allows me to send it to the Graveyard and get another monster back instead. I summon *Darkness Eye* back to the field in defense position."

"Just when I thought I had broken his combo," Johann muttered.

"I can also special summon *Darkness Slime* in defense position if the total attack points of all my monsters are zero. Now I select an opponent's monster. *Slime's* attack points become equal to the defense of that monster, and its defense points equal to that monster's attack points. I choose *Neos*."

Darkness Slime's shape quivered and it turned into a grey double of *Neos'* that crouched in defense position, where it showed 2500 points, the same as *Neos'* attack points.

"I use my *Zero* and *Infinity* combo again," Darkness said. *Darkness Eye* opened and the two cards flipped up at Darkness' hand signals. Jūdai and Johann gasped simultaneously: This time, the two cards were the ones on the farthest left and right, meaning that their opponent could choose freely which of the cards in between them to activate.

"I activate *Darkness 3* which deals 1000 points of damage to my opponent. I choose Jūdai."

The card in the middle flipped up. It showed a dark bubble surrounded by water. Lightning shot from the card and hit Jūdai right in the chest. His Life Point counter went down to 3000.

The boy in the Osiris Blue uniform buckled over and struggled to keep himself on his legs.

An image filled his mind - the one of another duelist in a black coat who was struggling in a similar way.

"Kaiser," Jūdai gasped.

"What?" Johann asked, unable to make sense of that word.

"Oh, he is just remembering something," Darkness said calmly and raised his hand to continue his move: "The effect of *Darkness 3* continues: For each card between *Zero* and *Infinity* that I flip up after it, I can deal another 1000 points of damage."

The second card, left of *Darkness 3*, flipped up. A second bolt of lightning from the original card hit Jūdai who cried out in pain. His Life Points fell to 2000.

"Is this... how it felt like for Kaiser...?" he panted. "And he was fighting anyway... he was... If I had known how it feels for him, I should have..."

"Jūdai, he is trying to weaken your spirit by showing you those memories," *Yubel* said worriedly.

"I know," Jūdai replied, "but the memory is real, isn't it? That duel... I dueled Kaiser, and I knew his condition was not good, but..."

Silently, Darkness gestured for the last remaining card to flip up. The third lightning bolt struck and brought Jūdai's life to 1000. This time, Jūdai's legs gave way and he fell to his knees.

"This is where I activate my Trap! *Trap Strap!* I can activate it when my opponent activates a trap to set it back face down when it resolves. Then I can special summon a Crystal Beast from the deck. Appear, *Crystal Beast Cobalt Eagle!*"

The new Crystal Beast that appeared on the field with a flap of wings was, as its name suggested, an eagle. It bore a metal breastplate that presented a blue polished gem. "Here we go!" the monster shouted in a rather squeaky voice.

It was only then that Johann realized that Jūdai was sobbing. "I killed him," Jūdai whispered. "If I had not dueled him, he would still be doing well..."