

Another Generation

Von Jitsch

Kapitel 13: Another Partner

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..."

"Jūdai!" Johann hurried over and put an arm around the other boy's shoulder. "Stay strong! If you give in to the darkness we cannot beat it!"

Jūdai swallowed. "I know... I know that... but how can I be the hope to beat darkness when I hurt someone so much..."

"Do not falter! This is unlike you, Yūki Jūdai!" *Crystal Keeper* shouted impatiently. "You are the one who can turn this around!"

Jūdai looked up at the card spirit. He looked lost. "I really don't know why you put so much trust in me. I have done nothing to earn it," he said.

Crystal Master shook his head. "Yes you have. You just do not know. But it is Yūki Jūdai who can beat Darkness. We just know."

Johann helped Jūdai stand up again. He was still weak on his legs.

"If they say so it must be true, right," Johann said, but his optimism seemed just a little bit forced this time.

Jūdai wiped away his tears with the sleeve of his uniform and tried to look determined. "I will try my best," he said. Behind him, *Yubel* nodded in agreement.

"You have not beaten me yet!" he told Darkness. "And now it is my turn."

Darkness cards were flipped down and shuffled again when Jūdai already drew his card.

Jūdai checked the card that he had just drawn.

"I set a Spell or Trap card," he announced and put it on his field. Then he looked at his opponent.

"It has to work this time! *Neos*, attack his *Darkness Eye*!"

"Your struggles are futile. I activate *Zero* and *Infinity*."

Yet again, the *Darkness Eye* opened, telling Darkness which card was which, and he activated them. *Zero* was now farthest to the right and *Infinity* in the middle, with only one card between them.

"You get to live another turn, but you cannot destroy my monster. The card that activates is *Darkness 1* which destroys a card you control. I choose *Neos*."

The card flipped up and the lightning bolt hit *Neos* in the chest. It disappeared immediately, leaving Jūdai with two set cards, one of them being the one he had just

placed there.

"Why are you still fighting?" Darkness asked darkly. "You can feel it, can you not? The memory of Kaiser and of your group of friends falling apart - you would be better off without that, wouldn't you?"

Jūdai swallowed.

"Don't lend him an ear! There might be painful memories, but you also have good ones, don't you?" Johann reminded him.

He did not wait for Jūdai to reply: "If your turn is over, let me continue!"

Jūdai nodded. Darkness' cards flipped back down and rearranged themselves, waiting for the next turn.

Johann smiled at the sight of his drawn card. "There is still hope, and this card proves it," he announced.

"I activate my Spell *Rare Value*. I can send *Amber Mammoth* from the Spell and Trap zone to the Graveyard in order to draw two cards."

The amber gem on Johann's field disappeared and sent a ray of light to his hand. He drew and nodded.

"I activate the Equip Spell *Golden Rule*! I equip it to a Crystal Beast that I control, and I choose *Sapphire Pegasus*. Now I can place two level 3 or lower Crystal Beasts in my Spell and Trap zone as continuous spell cards. Appear, Level 3 *Crystal Beast Ruby Carbuncle* and Level 3, *Crystal Beast Amethyst Cat*!"

A bright red and a purple gem appeared before Johann.

"*Golden Rule* would also allow me to summon a Crystal Beast from my hand, but I have none. But I can do this: I special summon *Ruby Carbuncle* from the Spell and Trap Zone to the field in defense mode, then I can special summon other Crystal Beasts which are currently on my field as Continuous Spells."

The red gem glowed and became a small, cat-like creature with blue fur and a long tail that landed in the zone that was reserved for monsters. It gave a high-pitched squeal. The red gem at the end of its tail glowed magically, causing the purple gem to glow as well. That gem turned into a large cat with pink fur who had a golden emblem on its chest that carried a purple gem.

"Ready to rock!" the cat exclaimed with a female voice.

"This is the sixth of his seven Crystal Beasts, and he has five of them on the field," Yubel felt compelled to point out.

Johann grinned. "Just wait until I get the seventh out!" he said proudly. He turned to Darkness again.

"Time to break your combo for good. *Sapphire Pegasus*, attack *Darkness Eye*!"

The pegasus jumped forth. But this time as well, Darkness did not let it go through.

"I use *Darkness Eye*'s effect to see my cards, then I activate *Zero* and *Infinity*, and as the first card between them, *Darkness 2*," he said. The cards flipped up. The image of *Darkness 2* showed a ball of fire above a surface of water.

"We haven't seen this one yet! What does it do?" Johann asked warily.

"A monster that I control gains 1000 attack points until the end phase. It also gains 1000 more points for each card between *Zero* and *Infinity*."

There was only one card left to activate and it flipped up promptly. *Darkness Eye*'s attack points increased to 2000, letting the eyeball grow out of proportion and tower over *Sapphire Pegasus*.

"No!" Johann gasped but it was too late. A beam shot from the huge eye and hit *Sapphire Pegasus* in mid-air. Johann's Life Point counter fell to 3800.

"Crystal Beasts do not leave the field but become Continuous Spell Cards when they are destroyed," Johann explained. A blue, rough gem appeared on his field.

"But you have no monsters that can beat *Darkness Eye* or *Darkness Slime*," Darkness pointed out.

"That's right, but there is still something I can do! *Amethyst Cat*!" Johann called.

The cat flexed her claws and jumped.

"*Amethyst Cat* can attack you directly, but then the damage is halved," Johann explained. The *Cat* had 1200 attack points, so the damage would be 600.

The cat's claws ripped at Darkness' Cloak. He was down to 1100 Life Points.

"We almost have him!" Jūdai cheered.

Crystal Keeper and *Crystal Master* nodded, but the expression on the visible part of the *Keeper's* face still looked tense.

"I use the effect of *Emerald Tortoise* to move *Amethyst Cat* into defense mode," Johann announced. The Tortoise nodded, pulled its extremities into its shell and raced across the field, throwing the cat onto her hind paws. She gave a sulky meowing sound, but then settled down.

Johann nodded, content with the successful turn. "I can't do any more than this," he admitted. "I play two cards face-down and end my turn."

A new card appeared in Darkness' hand. "It is time to show you that all resistance is futile," he said. "I tribute *Darkness Eye* to summon *Darkness Bramble*."

A monster appeared on the field. True to its name, it looked like a bramble surrounded by thorny vines. It had 2000 attack points.

Darkness turned his head ever so slightly, showing that he was concentrating on Jūdai. He had 1000 life points left and no monsters, but he did not look too worried. After all, he still had two set cards, and Darkness had just given up the advantage of being able to check his set cards with *Darkness Eye's* effect.

"I attack Jūdai directly with *Darkness Bramble*," Darkness ordered.

But Jūdai had waited for this. "I activate my Trap *Limit Reverse*! I can special summon a monster from my Graveyard which has less than 1000 attack points. I choose my partner: *Yubel*."

Thorns broke from the ground and formed the sinister shape of *Yubel*.

Johann had already seen the monster at Jūdai's side in spirit form, but as a solid vision hologram on the field it seemed more menacing. The bat wings spread wide, the red third eye on its forehead was glowing, and there was a harsh, merciless expression on the monster's face. It emanated the determination to destroy anyone who might threaten Jūdai.

"Thank you for calling me. I will protect you," *Yubel* announced grimly and spread their arms as well.

"I do not think so," Darkness said with a chuckle. "The effect of *Darkness Bramble* lets me check my set cards."

The dark structure of the bramble quivered, and the round sections of what had looked like a fruit turned out to be eyes that shot open, all in the same instant.

Darkness nodded and the eyes closed again. "I activate *Zero* and *Infinity*." The cards opened farthest to the left and second from right. There were two cards between them.

He pointed at the card. "*Darkness 1. I destroy Yubel.*"

The lightning bolt hit *Yubel* right in the chest.

"NO!" Jūdai exclaimed desperately. He even stumbled forward as if he was trying to get a hold of the monster hologram and keep it from disappearing. It was no use. *Yubel* was gone.

Jūdai stared at where the monster had been seconds ago.

"No... this cannot... this cannot be. You *always* protected me! You are invincible! *Yubel*...!" Jūdai shouted desperately.

"I use the second card to destroy my own card, *Darkness Slime*. After all it looks like your *Neos* right now - but he as well cannot protect you anymore."

The lightning hit. *Neos*, or what looked like it, went up in smoke.

Jūdai had one set card left, but his expression said that it would not help him against a direct attack. He looked at *Darkness* like a deer in a headlight.

"I activate my Trap! *Cut Jewel!*" Johann said quickly. "I send a Crystal Beast from my Deck to the Graveyard to halve the original attack points of one of your monsters! I send *Crystal Beast Topaz Tiger* to the graveyard to halve the original attack points of *Darkness Bramble!*"

The card flipped up, Johann searched the Crystal Beast card from his deck and put it into the graveyard. An energy pulse from the card hologram hit *Bramble*, which went down to 1000 attack points.

Johann grit his teeth. His move could have helped Jūdai if he still had more than 1000 Life Points left, but at this rate he was just using it to search the final Crystal Beast from his deck. There was nothing he could do anymore.

"Jūdai," he called out. "I'm sorry."

Jūdai looked at him. He looked utterly lost.

"It's me who is sorry," he said miserably. "You and your spirit partners thought I could beat *Darkness*, but I was totally useless. I always need the help of others to do anything... Without *Yubel* I would have been able to do nothing until now... Yes, it was all thanks to *Yubel*, and that man."

"NO!"

The cry came from both sides of Johann. *Crystal Master* and *Crystal Keeper* had spoken simultaneously.

Johann turned his head to check their expressions. *Crystal Master* was trembling. *Crystal Keeper* had balled both hands into fists and his mouth was quivering.

"Why..." *Crystal Master* whispered sadly.

"This is not what I wanted," *Crystal Keeper* said. "Everything was supposed to be *better*."

Jūdai stared at the two spirits. He was looking bewildered.

"It puzzled me," he said in a shaky voice. "I forgot one person after another, but all this time I was always remembering the man who helped *Yubel* and me back then."

"What man...?" Johann asked.

Jūdai closed his eyes. He remembered it like yesterday.

Jūdai was sitting alone on a bench in a small park near the municipal hospital. He was only a child, but there was no adult to be seen near him. In his small hands, he held a single Duel Monsters card and sighed at it.

The boy became aware of footsteps. He quickly put the card that he had been looking at into a pocket of his jacket before he looked up.

Leisurely strolling towards him was a man, an adult. He wore black pants and a loose shirt, and had voluminous teal hair that was partly tied up into a small ponytail and partly fell almost to his shoulders. He was wearing sunglasses, but Jūdai could tell that he was looking at him. He came closer with short, slow steps. Jūdai remembered that his teachers had told him to not talk to strangers, but he had never really understood why someone who didn't know him would have a reason to do something bad to him.

"Hey boy," the man said when he was just a few steps away.

Jūdai looked taken aback. "Oh, it's a foreigner," he murmured in Japanese. "Um, I - harro... naisu to meet... you...?"

The man chuckled. "I can speak Japanese... a bit," he said and crouched to bring his face on the same level as Jūdai's.

Jūdai looked less timid immediately: "Wow, it's the first time I meet a foreign old man who can speak Japanese!"

An eyebrow half hidden behind the large sunglasses twitched. "Old man?" the man repeated complaintfully.

Jūdai cocked his head. "You are an adult, right? All adults are old."

The man looked a bit beaten, but he sighed. "You're just a kid, I get it," he murmured in English. Then he became more serious again. "You have a problem?" he asked, changing the topic. He sounded a bit insecure about his choice of words and his pronunciation was a bit strange, but Jūdai could understand him fine.

Jūdai turned his head away. "It's not my fault," he said quickly.

"Your fault?" the man asked.

Jūdai shook his head. "I said it is not my fault!" he insisted.

The man still looked serious. "I want to help you," he said. "Please tell what happen."

Jūdai shook his head. "The doctor's say they can't help."

"Doctors? Help with what?"

Jūdai's head drooped. "Osamu. A friend. He just... he is not waking up."

The man slowly got up and took a seat on the bench next to Jūdai.

"What happen?"

Jūdai pulled up his shoulders and pouted. "If I tell you you'll just not believe it and tell me to not make things up, just like all the other adults," he said.

The man considered it for a moment, maybe he had not understood everything completely. "I believe you," he said nevertheless.

Jūdai looked sceptical. "Nobody believes me," he insisted.

"And your parents?"

"They haven't heard of this yet. Dad is on a business trip and mom said she will be late today..."

The man nodded thoughtfully. "I believe you," he repeated earnestly. "Tell me."

Jūdai hesitated, but the empathetic smile on the man's face convinced him. "I was playing duel monsters with Osamu. And I summoned my strongest monster. But Osamu used a trap card and destroyed my monster. And then he just fell asleep and didn't wake

up."

Jūdai skeptically looked at the man who had been listening with concentration.

"Your strongest monster..." he said thoughtfully. "Is it a monster who looks like human with bat wings and white and blue hair?"

Jūdai looked surprised. "Yes! How do you know?"

The man smiled. "I can see monster behind you. They look sad."

"What!?"

Jūdai jumped up and turned, kneeling on the bench.

There was nobody to be seen.

"Are you making fun of me?" he asked the man with a pout.

The man immediately shook his head. "You can't see them yet," he concluded, "but I have a special... power. I can see spirits of Duel Monsters. I can talk to them."

Jūdai's eyes went big. "Really?!"

"Really," the man said with a small laugh.

Jūdai looked excited now. "Nobody believes me when I tell them that I can hear the cards speak!" he exclaimed.

The man propped his arms into his sides. "I believe you. You have the same special power like me."

Jūdai's eyes were shining. "You can really see the monsters?" he asked.

The man nodded.

"And you can talk to them?"

Another nod.

"Then you can talk to Yubel?" he asked and pulled the card from his jacket and held it in front of the man.

The man looked at the card, then at someone behind Jūdai. "Yes, I can talk to Yubel," he said.

"I know Yubel did something to Osamu! Please tell them that they must not hurt my friends like that!" Jūdai pleaded immediately. "And to wake up Osamu!"

The man scratched his chin, watching the invisible monster behind Jūdai. "Yubel can hear you," he pointed out. "But I ask Yubel why they do this."

"Thank you! Thank you so much!" Jūdai said.

The man got up. "I have done nothing. I talk to Yubel now and tell you what they say. Okay?"

Jūdai nodded happily.

The man moved a bit away from the bench. Jūdai watched him for quite a while, peering over the bench's backrest. The man was talking to someone Jūdai could not see, that much was obvious. But it still looked weird how he talked and gestured all by himself, so it made Jūdai giggle from time to time.

Then the man came back. Jūdai jumped from the bench and looked at him with great expectation.

"I talk to Yubel," the man said and got to his knees again to be on Jūdai's level. "I explain why it is forbidden to hurt people." Jūdai nodded happily.

"Yubel say they want to protect you. They say another kid is mean to you and makes you cry."

Jūdai shook his head vehemently. "I... I was just sad because he destroyed Yubel! I want Yubel to appear in the duel and beat the opponent!"

"See?" the man said. Apparently it was directed at the monster.

He turned to Jūdai again: "Yubel say they get angry when they see you cry."

"Then I will not cry anymore!" Jūdai announced.

The man shook his head: "It's okay to cry. When you tell Yubel what makes you sad, they help you. They say that. And someday, you will be able to talk to Yubel like me."

Jūdai suddenly looked timid. "O- okay... Yubel..." he looked at where he thought Yubel must be. "Then will you... will you be my friend?"

There was a short pause. "Yubel says yes," the man relayed with a smile.

Jūdai beamed. "Thank you Yubel!"

He turned. "Yubel, let's go, we have to wake up Osamu!"

He started to run in the direction of the nearby hospital then stopped again after a few steps and turned around.

"Thank you, old man!" he shouted and waved his hand.

Then he ran off.

A tear rolled down Jūdai's cheek when he remembered this. It was no use. *Yubel* was gone, and he would disappear right after them.

"Die, Yūki Jūdai," Darkness ordered with ice-cold calm.

The dozens of eyeballs that made up *Darkness Bramble* opened their lids and a beam came out. Jūdai went down with a low gasp.

"Thank you old man," he whispered. Then his body slackened.

Darkness simply continued his turn: "The effect of *Darkness Bramble*: During the End Phase, my Life Points become 4000 again if I have less."

Darkness' Life Point counter rose. His combo cards set themselves back face-down and shuffled. He chuckled.