

Another Generation

Von Jitsch

Kapitel 4: Another Darkness

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

His opponent only smirked.

Shō dried his tears with his sleeves and made a determined face. "I continue the duel! *Cyberdark Dragon*, attack *Zure Knight of Dark World!*"

The sinister dragon shot forward at the armored monster, but Mr. T was faster: "I activate my Trap! *Defense Draw!* It reduces the damage from this battle to zero and I can draw a card."

"But *Zure* is still destroyed", Shō triumphed.

As the claws of *Cyberdark Dragon* bore into *Zure*, the monster's hologram burst into pieces. So did the Spell card *Axe of Despair* it had been equipped with. But Mr. T's Life Point counter stayed at 4000 as he drew a card from his Deck.

Shō flinched. With *Cyberdark Dragon* on his field he was supposed to have the upper hand, but he would have to cause some damage in order to win.

"I set a card and end my turn", he announced.

Trueman drew and looked at his card, then at Shō.

"So you think he will wake up?" he asked with a mocking undertone.

Shō shuddered, but he told himself that it was because it was cooler in the shade of the trees. Still, he had no answer.

"You were not on the best terms with him, weren't you?" Mr. T continued. "You disagreed with how he dueled only in order to win, didn't you?"

Shō bit his lower lip. "T- that doesn't matter! He's still my brother!" he said, but his voice was insecure.

Truman grinned, but instead of pushing his point, he went back into the duel: "It's my turn, draw. First, I activate my set trap card *Crevice Into the Different Dimension*. I declare one Attribute, then I can select two monsters with that Attribute from either Graveyard. I declare the Attribute Dark and select *Cyberdark Horn* and *Cyberdark Edge* from your Graveyard. They are removed from play."

The hologram of the card flipped up and a shine emanated from it. As Shō's duel disk ejected the two selected monsters, balls of light flew towards the card. Shō tucked the cards away in his coat's pockets.

Cyberdark Dragon roared as its attack points went from 4600 to 4400. "*Cyberdark Dragon* loses 200 Attack Points because you have less cards in your Graveyard now", Mr. T explained needlessly.

"You still don't have a monster that can stand up to it", Shō said. But he was

eyeing *Dark Archetype* on his opponent's field with suspicion. He did not know this monster. Could it have a nasty effect? He had not only avoided attacking it because *Zure* was stronger and therefore more threatening. He also sensed a trap in how Mr. T had summoned it in face-up attack position despite it having only 1400 Attack Points.

"To you, Hell Kaiser is dead already, isn't he?" Mr. T said calmly.

Shō shuddered. "That's not true!" he protested.

Mr. T slowly shook his head. "Just look at you. You wear his coat and wield his deck as if they were yours already."

"I'm just standing in for him until he comes back!" Shō shouted.

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Johann was staring at Edo Phonenix with shock and disbelief.

"He has not woken up ever since that duel ended", Edo said, finishing his recapitulation of the duel between Jūdai and Hell Kaiser.

Johann needed a moment to gather his thoughts. "But... then it's not Jūdai's fault, is it?" he said helplessly, and looked over to where yet another student had taken up a duel against Jūdai.

Edo crossed his arms and gave a sigh. "Well, I certainly don't think it is. But among the students, nobody knew about Hell Kaiser's condition. He was very good at hiding it while in public. So to them, it looked like it was that duel, and that duel alone, that made him break down. I have also heard them whisper that Jūdai's card, *Yubel*, cursed him in some way."

Johann continued to look in the direction of Jūdai. *Yubel* was next to him in spirit form, sometimes pointing at cards in his hand or talking to him, giving advice. Sure the monster did look a bit sinister with its bat wings, the glowing red eye on its forehead and the claws on the right arm, but except for seeming a bit overprotective of Jūdai, Johann had the impression that it was just as friendly as its partner. But he also knew that he could only see it that way because he could perceive *Yubel* differently than everyone else.

"In the end, though, even knowing the details has not stopped Jūdai's friends to split over this", Edo remarked.

Johann turned back to him. "His friends?" he asked.

He shouldn't be surprised, but since no students had stayed with Jūdai when the duels were started he had somehow started to believe that *Yubel* was everything he had. He had probably projected himself into it too much.

Edo gave a serious nod. "He used to be very good friends with Shō Marufuji, and as you can probably guess by the name, he is Hell Kaiser's younger brother. He blames Jūdai for what happened and thinks Jūdai should have stopped the duel before Hell Kaiser's condition became fatal. Some of Jūdai's friends who think the same have deserted him as well."

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Mr. T smirked. "You think you are a fitting stand-in for Hell Kaiser?" he said mockingly.

"You cannot even beat me."

"The duel is not over yet!"

At this, a satisfied smirk appeared on Mr. T's lips.

"Oh yes it is."

Shō felt cold sweat on his skin. But why? There was no way he could lose now! He had *Cyberdark Dragon* with 4400 Attack Points and his face down Trap card *Fusion Guard* would be able to protect him against effect damage!

"First, I normal summon a monster. Appear: *Snoww, Unlight of Dark World*."

The monster appeared, a creature with vaguely human features. Its skin looked like it was halfway melting from its bones and on its head it had not hair but something that looked like tentacles. The counter showed 1700 attack points – more than *Dark Archetype* but not even close to those of *Cyberdark Dragon*.

Mr. T had one card left in his hand, but he did not play it and went right into battle instead: "*Dark Archetype*, attack *Cyberdark Dragon*!"

The queasy feeling that Shō had about *Dark Archetype* increased. For sure, his opponent wouldn't make it attack just to let it be destroyed.

The weird creature lurched forward, right into the claws of the dragon, and burst into pieces when it was destroyed. If Shō had any possibility to do so, he would have tried to stop that battle – but his cards did not allow it. To his surprise, the Life Point count of Mr. T reacted normally. His life dropped to 1000 in an instant.

Relief started to well up when Mr. T announced coldly: "The effect of *Dark Archetype*: when it is destroyed by battle, I can choose a monster from my Deck that has as many Attack Points as the Battle Damage I took. I lost 3000 Life Points, so I select *Dark Horus* which has 3000 Attack Points."

He searched the card from his deck and showed it to Shō, who was clenching his fists. What was going to happen with that monster?

"According to *Dark Archetype*'s effect, I send monsters whose levels equal that of *Dark Horus* from my hand to the Graveyard to special summon it. *Dark Horus* is Level 8, so it is sufficient that I discard this monster: *Grapha, Dragon Lord of Dark World*, which is also Level 8."

He put the card into the Graveyard slot and placed the *Dark Horus* card on a free slot of his duel disk. With a roar, the black metallic dragon appeared. It was filling the space between Mr. T and Shō almost completely. Shō stared at his opponent in shock and pain. He didn't even see the new monster. Unlike *Dark Archetype*, *Grapha* was a monster whose effect he knew.

While Shō's mind started to frantically think if there wasn't still a way to get out of this, Mr. T said calmly: "If *Grapha* is sent to the graveyard by a card effect, I can target one card you control and destroy it."

Wordlessly, he pointed at Shō's only monster with his left hand. A black mist spread from the Graveyard slot of his duel disk and engulfed it. Then *Cyberdark Dragon* was gone without a trace, leaving Shō completely defenseless. The two Trap cards he still had on his field were useless in this situation. And *Dark Horus* and *Snoww* had combined attack points of 4700. He had managed to not lose any of his 4000 Life Points until now, but that would be over in an instant.

"So much for your boasts that if Jūdai could beat me you would be able to do so as well. You would have done better to run back to your *Aniki* and ask him for help instead of being a poor imitation of Hell Kaiser", Mr. T sneered.

Shō just stared at the opponent monsters blankly.

"But don't you worry", Mr. T continued generously, "because now you will be swallowed by Darkness and forget everything in the embrace of nothingness."

Dark Horus opened its mouth. *Snoww* raised its staff. They attacked.

Shō fell backward when the impact hit him.

A sterile room with white walls and closed curtains. There was nothing inside except for a bed and a TV screen mounted on the wall. Ryō Marufuji, once known as Hell Kaiser, was lying in the bed. He was connected to several devices that kept him alive. His face was sunk in and his skin pale.

On the screen, someone announced: "We have a winner! Jūdai Yūki from Japan is the new World Champion in Duel Monsters!"

Someone turned off the TV. It was Shō, who was standing next to his brother's bed. He was wearing the black coat of Hell Kaiser, but it was ragged and torn in some places. He looked at the cards in his hands, then threw them into the air. They scattered across the bedsheets and the polished floor, fell on the tubes and cables connecting Ryō to the machines.

"What... did I do this for...?" he asked weakly. "I wore myself out using this deck but I couldn't ..."

A seizure took over his body. He buckled over, gasping for air.

In that moment, there was loud beep which signified that the heart of Ryō Marufuji had stopped beating.

"If this is the future, wouldn't you rather give yourself to the darkness?" a voice asked. Shō nodded.

Then he felt his consciousness fade into nothingness.

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"Man, where the Jurassic is everyone?"

Tyranno Kenzan was walking in the direction of the Ra Yellow dorm and looking around him. He had played two duels already and won both of them, but now the campus seemed to have become empty. He knew Jūdai was probably still held up at the main building, he had seen him surrounded by students before he left. But he did not want to go there.

He jolted when he heard a sudden scream that was cut off in the middle. It sounded unnatural – and like there was someone in real danger.

Kenzan turned in the direction that he had heard the sound from, which made him enter the forest. Beating through the bushes, he found something soon. A figure standing on a small clearing with the back to him. He didn't need him to turn around to recognize the black coat of Hell Kaiser.

"Marufuji-Senpai", he exclaimed, addressing his upperclassman properly as usual.

The figure turned around.

"Hello Kenzan-kun", came the reply.

Kenzan felt the hair of his neck stand up. An animalic growl escaped him.

"Who are you?" he asked. The person in front of him looked exactly like Shō Marufuji, but his instincts told him very clearly that it was someone else – someone he had to be wary of. And his instincts had never failed him.

Shō smiled. "Why don't you try to beat me in a duel and find out?"

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Jūdai wiped some sweat his forehead with the sleeve of his jacket.

"Am I done?" he asked and looked at the opponent he had just defeated. The group of

students around him had shrunk to three who had been cheering for his latest opponent and now looked very disappointed. None of them seemed to want to take the challenge anymore.

Yubel was turning their head in different directions. "Something is wrong", they said.

Jūdai looked alarmed. "What do you mean?"

"Where is everyone?" *Yubel* asked and gestured around them.

Jūdai turned to look at his surroundings. There was another duel going on near them – Johann, the exchange student from the Arctic Branch was dueling Edo Phoenix. But aside from that and the four students, the space in front of the Academy's main building was empty. The broad stone path that led up to it was completely deserted.

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"You see, you cannot beat me", Shō said.

Hovering above him was *Cyberdark Dragon* which was holding *Cyber End Dragon* in its fangs. Its attack points read as an impressive 5800.

Kenzan stood baffled. His opponent, whoever he was, had outplayed him with a masterly use of a deck that contained some of Shō's Roids mixed with the *Cyberdark* and *Cyber* style monsters of Hell Kaiser. He had not seen the real Shō use that deck before. But then he had hardly even exchanged a word with him since *that day*.

Kenzan had *Dark Tyranno* on his field with 2600 attack points, so *Cyberdark Dragon's* attack would give him 3200 points of damage. He had only 1000 life points left. Sure, he still had *Survival Instinct* face-down and ready to activate, but that would only buy him 1600 more life points if he banished all the monsters from his Graveyard. He knew he had lost.

"Why do you think you lost?" Shō asked.

Kenzan growled. "Because you're strong!" he replied. What was the point of that question?

"No, it was because you couldn't decide. You could have destroyed *Fusion Guard* when you attacked last turn, but you let me activate it and then used *Dino Stomp* on last card I had. If you had tried to guess you could have stopped me from using *Fusion Guard* and then I wouldn't have had *Cyber End Dragon* in my Graveyard."

"That sounds so simple when you say it now", Kenzan growled.

"You had a chance and you did not use it. Just like with me."

"What?"

The false Shō chuckled. His body quivered, and suddenly burst into fragments. They quickly gathered again to form the silhouette of an unknown man in a black leather suit.

"If you had decided to take Shō's side after his brother fell into a coma, he would not have been so desperate to show everyone that he could do it alone. He might not even have run into me, or you could have come to his help. But you shied away from him. Yet, you didn't even support Jūdai instead. You just acted like everything has nothing to do with you and put all your energy into that stupid graduation album."

"It's not stupid!" Kenzan shouted desperately. "I mean... what should I have done!? I've admired Jūdai all this time, but Shō was my friend! How could I take a side and go against the other!?"

He clenched his fists. They were shaking.

"It's over now, Tyranno Kenzan", his opponent said coldly. "You have lost your friend Shō because you could not take his side, and you have lost the duel because you

would not dare to guess which of my cards was the bigger threat to you. And now Jūdai is losing you as a friend and ally – but don't worry, before long you will all be reunited in Darkness."

With that, the man gestured for *Cyberdark Dragon* to attack.

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"No!"

The call made Johann hesitate. He had been about to order *Sapphire Pegasus*, who was equipped with *Crystal Release*, to attack *Destiny Hero – Dasher*. But the exclamation from *Crystal Master* and the appearance of the two spirits next to him stopped him momentarily.

"What is wrong?" he asked.

Crystal Keeper pointed.

Johann turned in the direction and called out: "Jūdai, where are you going?"

Jūdai stopped. He had already made a couple of steps down the stone path. Johann had been too absorbed in the new duel to notice that he had finished his final duel.

"Yubel says something's wrong. I am going to look for my friends!"

He was going to turn around again, but Johann shouted "Wait!" and he hesitated.

"I need to go! They could be in danger...! Asuka, Fubuki, Manjōme, Rei or Shō..." Jūdai said wearily.

The spirits next to Johann gasped. Johann looked up at *Crystal Keeper*: "What's wrong?"

"Someone is missing already", *Crystal Master* said in a whiny voice.

"Who is missing?" Jūdai asked. He had heard the monster spirit as well. *Yubel* appeared next to him again, glaring at Johann's ghostly companions with suspicion.

"Let me confirm: Do you remember Tyranno Kenzan?" *Crystal Keeper* asked Jūdai.

Jūdai looked lost. "Kenzan? As in the card *Hero Kenzan – A Hero Emerges*?"

"What is everyone talking about?" Edo interrupted them. "Are you seeing anything I can't?"

"Yes", Johann confirmed to him, "and the monster spirits are saying that people are going missing."

"They are not missing", *Crystal Keeper* said grimly, "they have been swallowed by darkness and that is why nobody can remember them anymore..."

"But you can", *Yubel* pointed out.

"You mean that ... Kenzan? Was a friend of mine and I just forgot about him?" Jūdai said in disbelief.

"Yes, I'm afraid", *Crystal Master* confirmed.

"That's crazy", Edo said.

Johann looked at him. "I think we have more pressing concerns now than ending this duel, don't you think?" he suggested.

Edo still looked a bit confused, but nodded. Johann put his hand on his deck and indicated a surrender. The holograms disappeared. Edo moved over to the other two and they stood together for a moment.

"The good news is that by this logic, everyone we *can* remember should still be fine", Johann summarized.

"Then we have to find them before something happens to them!" Jūdai said. He sounded really concerned and turned to leave again.

"Who are we up against, even?" Edo asked, but started to move in the same direction as Jūdai. Johann followed.

"It's a force called Darkness. It seeks to consume everyone, first this island and then the rest of the world", *Crystal Keeper* said. "Those who have a weak heart it swallows just like that, but with people like you it would use duels to weaken your resistance." Johann relayed the words to Edo.

"I see. But that would mean we can repel it if we do not lose the duel. Then it's best if we gather the best duelists. People like Manjōme", Edo suggested.

"Right", Jūdai nodded. "People like... uh... who was that again?"

"As I said... eh..." Edo stopped walking. "I can't remember who I was talking about."

In a distant corner of the island, Jun Manjōme's consciousness was swallowed by darkness while the fake version of Shō Marufuji was cackling.