

Another Generation

Von Jitsch

Kapitel 1: Another Encounter

The main branch of Duel Academy was located on an island in the Pacific Ocean. Going there by helicopter from Domino City took two hours, and they had been told that the passage would take half a day by boat. Johann was thankful that they had opted for flight because of the limited time. Had they gone by boat, he would probably have hidden in some cabin for the whole cruise to not let anyone witness him in a pathetic state of seasickness.

When the pilot announced that the island was coming into view, Johann immediately craned his neck to try and peer out of the windows. But all he could see from this angle was the vast ocean that lay flat like a mirror in bright sunshine. It took a few more minutes until the pilot started the descent. When the helicopter turned sideways to adjust to the landing platform, the island was already up close. Now he could see an impressive volcano towering over everything and green forests covering most of the island. At the foot of the volcano was the academy's main building, prominently displaying large obelisks and three smaller domes in the colors blue, yellow and red as part of its architecture.

"Hey Caren, we're almost there", Jim Cook said. He was one of only four human passengers, a tall and lean man wearing a Cowboy's hat. Johann turned and saw him caress the crocodile that was also on board. As Jim had explained, Caren was his family and he would go nowhere without her. Johann had been slightly worried about the predator on board, but during the whole flight Caren had been calm and hardly moved.

Amon Garam adjusted his glasses. "I must say I envy the students of this academy. So far away from everything they are able to concentrate on dueling and nothing else", he remarked. Amon was bronze skinned and muscular, but the glasses and his behavior gave the redhead the air of an intellectual.

"Yeah, that's really cool", Johann agreed and looked out of the window again. Amon seemed nice enough, but the way he spoke always gave the impression that he knew something everyone else didn't.

Outside, Johann could see a long paved alley leading to the main building. Students dressed in uniforms were heading towards it. The uniforms were either blue, yellow or red, and most of the students seemed to move among groups of their own color. Watching them, Johann added to his previous words: "But I really wouldn't-"

He was interrupted by the jolt that occurred when the machine touched ground. The sound of the rotors slowly faded.

Austin O'Brien, the fourth passenger, got up calmly. He had not talked since they had introduced themselves when they gathered for the flight at Domino City airport. He

did not talk now, either. He simply stepped to the door and activated the unlock mechanism. Johann would not even have known where to look for it. When the door slid open, warm air came in. The temperature was noticeably higher than back in Domino.

"I heard it's always good weather on the island", Amon said when he got up to follow O'Brien. "There are no mountains that would cause rainclouds to open here." He jumped off the helicopter and put his head back. "No clouds", he confirmed with the same profound smile that he had been wearing all day. Johann climbed from the helicopter after him. Jim came last. He had taken the time to strap Caren to his back in order to free his arms for climbing down.

They were already being awaited. Two men came to them across the landing platform. One was tall, lean and blonde; the other small, fat and dark-haired. Johann thought they might as well be a comedy duo.

"Signori", the tall one addressed them and spread his arms proudly, "welcome to Duel Academy."

*

The main auditorium of Duel Academy was large. For today's event, all students had gathered, neatly divided between the colors of the three houses of the school: Obelisk Blue, Ra Yellow and Osiris Red. Johann was standing on a platform in front, next to the other three from the helicopter, so he had a good view on all of the students. Two caught his eye because they were not wearing uniforms.

One of them was sitting in the front row, among Obelisk Blue students. He was wearing a black, shabby-looking coat. Johann recognized him – he was a third-year student who had recently played some noteworthy duels under the nickname of Oja-Manjoume.

The other was sitting in the last row, also among Obelisk Blues. His dress was a silver suit that matched the platinum blonde of his hair. This one was probably known to anyone who had any interest in professional dueling. Edo Phoenix, the youngest person to ever gain a professional license, stepson of the former world champion and an ever-rising star in the pro league. Johann was surprised to see him here, out of all places. But given his age it was probably not too unlikely that he was a student at this prestigious school.

Johann had no time to examine the other students because now the principal of the academy stepped forward, a professor Samejima who had warmly welcomed Johann and the others shortly before. He was a thick, bald man with a friendly face in a dark red coat. The duo that had picked them up at the helicopter landing was also there. In the meantime, Johann had learned that the tall one was Chronos de Medici, head teacher of the Obelisk Blue house, and the smaller was the vice principal who had introduced himself as Napoléon.

"Dear students...", Samejima began.

He went on to explain the particulars of the academy's Graduation Duels. Johann listened duly; the gist was that the students who were hoping to graduate needed to gather enough points. Points were awarded per played duel, but of course there were bonus points for winning, depending on the year and house of the opponent. The maximum number of bonus points was 5, which could be earned by beating a 3rd year Obelisk Blue student.

"And this year we have some special guests to make it even more exciting", Principal Samejima announced and gestured at Johann and the other three. "We have invited representatives of four branch schools of Duel Academy. Each of them has been selected as the best of his respective school. You could say they are champions. Please give them a warm welcome."

Applause filled the auditorium.

Samejima waited for it to ebb out. Then he cleared his throat. "Let me introduce them. First, the representative of the Duel Academy East Branch: Amon Garam."

Amon stepped forward and waved politely. There was a new wave of applause, but a bit shorter than the last.

"Representative of Duel Academy West Branch: Austin O'Brien."

O'Brien just made a step forward and gave a court nod. The applause still came.

"Representative of Duel Academy South Branch: Jim Crocodile Cook."

Jim made a huge step that, thanks to his long legs, brought him farther ahead than the other two, and loudly shouted "Howdy!" Caren, who was still strapped to his back, growled. Only a few students clapped their hands. They seemed to be just as wary of the crocodile as Johann had initially been.

"Last but not least, the representative of the Duel Academy Arctic Branch: Johann Andersen."

Johann stepped next to Jim and waved with both hands. There was some more applause again, but it quickly died when Samejima cleared his throat once more.

"And of course, our Duel Academy also has a champion. Please come up here, Jūdai Yūki."

The moment the name was dropped the whole atmosphere in the room changed. Everyone in the room felt silent as a boy in the first row stood up. He was wearing the coat of Obelisk Blue like the students next to him, but unlike them he had not zipped it up. As he made his way up to the stage, whispers broke out here and there. Johann noticed unhappy faces, some openly hostile glares. Only a handful of students that had been sitting right next to Jūdai demonstratively clapped their hands. Jūdai had his eyes fixed on some point on the wall and was obviously trying to ignore the atmosphere around him when he climbed the steps to the platform. Samejima made an unhappy face when Jūdai trod past him, but did not say anything. Jūdai passed the four champions and silently lined up next to Johann.

Johann glanced sideways at him. This was not what he had expected.

Samejima took up the explanation again: "As you might have guessed, these five play a special role in the Graduation Duels. Beating any of them will grant you 10 points. But you can be sure that they will not be easy to defeat, so choose wisely!"

He closed the meeting by asking everyone to duel fairly, then the students started to leave.

The other champions started to move as well, but Johann turned around to Jūdai and held out his hand.

"Hi, nice to meet you", he said.

Jūdai looked at his hand, then at his face. A weak smile appeared.

"Nice to meet you", he answered.

The moment they shook hands, something happened. Jūdai's eyes went wide as two silhouettes appeared on both sides of Johann, then vanished again. He immediately let go and took a step back, looking bewildered. Now another silhouette appeared

next to him – it looked transparent to Johann and was, without doubt, the spirit of a duel monster. It looked humanoid, but had purple skin and giant bat-like wings. And it was staring at Johann with distrust.

"Sorry, I didn't mean to startle you", Johann said. "It's just my friends."

With a purr, a small creature appeared next to him. It jumped and climbed on his shoulder, then said "rubiii" in a small voice. "That's *Ruby*", Johann introduced his companion, then looked at the spirit behind Jūdai. "And who might you be?"

Jūdai's face lit up with excitement. "Oh, you can see them?"

Johann nodded.

"How impolite of me. Please allow me to introduce myself", the spirit said. "I am *Yubel*."

Johann looked at it, fascinated by its eyes. One was dark green, the other orange. On its forehead there was a third eye with a red iris.

"Nice to make your acquaintance, *Yubel*", Johann said.

It looked like *Yubel* didn't find that so nice, though. They only gave a court nod.

"Sorry", Jūdai apologized, "*Yubel* is a bit overprotective sometimes."

Yubel folded their arms. "That's because you're too naïve sometimes", they countered.

Johann chuckled at the exchange. "So that's how it works", he remarked, "you must be really good partners."

At these words, Jūdai looked unexpectedly surprised. "Something the matter?" Johann asked.

Jūdai scratched his chin. "We didn't meet before, did we?" he asked.

"I'm pretty sure it's the first time", Johann said, "but it doesn't really feel like that to me, either."

Jūdai smiled, expressing that he agreed.

"Hey, we should duel", Johann suggested, "that's the best way to get to know each other."

"I'd love to", Jūdai answered.

Johann turned around and realized that the others had already left. "Let's go", he said. He would have started the duel right there, but it was part of the rules that all duels must take place outside the main building.

*

The duel did not come about as planned. As soon as they left the main building through a glass door, a group of at least 20 students gathered around them – or rather, around Jūdai. Johann was pushed aside and could only watch how Jūdai gave in and took the first duel challenge from an Obelisk Blue student of small build. Johann gathered from the conversation that his name was Okuda. When the opponents took their stances, the other students gathered around them in a circle.

Johann decided to stay and watch. As long as nobody challenged him to a duel, he could at least figure out Jūdai's style of dueling. And there was another thing that he was curious about.

"Duel!" the two opponents shouted, marking the start of their battle. Jūdai looked a bit insecure when he drew his first cards, and eyed the people around them. None of them looked particularly friendly, except for Johann, who gave Jūdai an encouraging smile.

Okuda went first. "I draw! I set a monster in face-down defense position and set two cards face-down." The card holograms appeared on the field. "Turn end."

Jūdai drew. He looked at his cards for seconds only before he started to play.

"I summon *Neo-Spacian Grand Mole*." The monster appeared on the field, true to its name a mole with some gear around its neck. Johann had already heard of the Neo Space monsters but never seen any up close.

"Now I activate the magic card *Fake Hero* which allows me to special summon an Elemental Hero monster on my side of the field, but it cannot attack this turn and will return to my hand in the end phase. I choose *Elemental Hero Neos*."

The monster appeared, a muscular giant in white. Okuda did not look surprised, though.

"A strong starting hand, as always", someone close to Johann commented.

"You know what comes next, right?" Jūdai said to Okuda. "Neo-Spacians are capable of contact fusion! By returning *Neos* and *Grand Mole* to my deck I can special summon a card from my Extra Deck. Appear, *Elemental Hero Grand Neos*!"

In a flash of light, Neos and Grand Mole disappeared and made way for a muscular Hero in green armor that wielded a giant drill in place of its right hand. Johann was impressed. Getting out such a strong fusion monster so quickly was not easy.

Okuda was less impressed: "You think you've got me in the bag, but look at this! I activate *Chthonian Polymer*! I tribute the monster on my side of the field to take control of the Fusion monster you just summoned!"

The card hologram was flipped up, showing the image of a dark figure in the middle of a firestorm. The set monster on Okuda's field that he had announced to be tributed burst in flames and vanished. The flames did not appear after that but crawled across the ground towards *Grand Mole*.

But Jūdai smirked. The insecurity had all but disappeared. He was clearly having fun now.

"Not so fast. I activate the quick-spell card *Contact Out* to return *Grand Neos* to my extra deck! Now I don't have any fusion monster anymore that you can take control of!"

The monster disappeared as quickly as it had come. The flames disappeared, leaving only a black spot where Okuda's monster had been.

Jūdai was not done yet: "With *Contact Out*, I get *Grand Mole* and *Neos* back from my deck!"

The monsters appeared on the field again.

"But the card I just tributed was Warm Worm! When it is destroyed, I send the top three cards from your deck to the graveyard", Okuda shouted.

The hologram of a red worm sprang forth from Okuda's deck and jumped at Jūdai's Duel Disk. Jūdai put the three cards away as required, but didn't seem to mind so much.

"Your field is almost empty now. I activate the magic card *Contact Soul*: When I have Neos on my side of the field, I can special summon a Neo-Spacian from my hand, field or graveyard. At the end of the turn I need to return all monsters from the field to my deck, but I'm taking that chance!" Jūdai announced.

This was a risky move; if Okuda's remaining set card could stop Jūdai this turn, he would be left with an empty field and only the single card he still had in hand.

Jūdai went on: "I choose *Neo-Spacian Flare Scarab* from my Deck."

The monster appeared, a humanoid monster in a black insect-like armor.

Jūdai went on: "Now I activate *Space Gift* which allows me to draw one card for each Neo-Spacian I control. With *Grand Mole* and *Flare Scarab* that's two."

Johann nodded to himself. Jūdai had just increased his chances, but he needed to

draw something that would help him get over that set card unless he was going to recklessly rush in and just hope that the card would not stop him.

Jūdai's wide smile betrayed that he had drawn just what he needed "I activate one of the cards I just drew. *R – Righteous Justice* destroys as many spell or trap cards as I have Elemental Hero monsters. I have only *Neos*, but that's enough to get rid of your remaining set card."

Okuda flinched as *Neos* pointed at the card and shot through it with an energy beam. Apparently he had no means to stop that from happening.

"Now I contact-fuse again! *Grand Mole*, *Flare Scarab* and *Neos* – combine into *Elemental Hero Magma Neos*."

The monster that appeared this time still looked a lot like *Neos*, but had the claws of *Grand Mole* and the wings of *Flare Scarab*. Its Attack points were 3000.

Jūdai continued: "*Magma Neos* gains 400 Attack points for every card on the field. Right now there's only one card, *Magma Neos* itself, so it has 3400 attack points."

"I'm going to survive this!" his Okuda shouted angrily, "I still have 4000 Life Points!"

From everything that he had seen already, Johann was pretty sure that he would turn out to be wrong.

"Sorry", Jūdai said, and inserted the last card from his hand into the field spell slot of his Duel Disk.

"I activate *Neo Space*! It gives fusion monsters which have *Neos* as a fusion material a boost of 500 attack points! Also it's one more card on the field, so *Magma Neos*' attack becomes 4300!"

The field was warped and became a wide space filled with stars and cosmic dust. Okuda's face went blank. He stared at the cards in his hand, then back at Jūdai. "This can't be true", he murmured, "I haven't even really started..."

Jūdai did not respond to that.

"Battle! I attack your life points directly with *Magma Neos*! There is nothing you can do!"

And there wasn't. The monster's hologram raised its arm to conjure a giant ball of magma and hauled it at its opponent. The boy was knocked from his feet by the shockwave and his Life Point counter went down to 0.

"Gotcha. That was a fun duel," Jūdai said and pointed at Okuda with two fingers. But his smile quickly died when whispers broke out among the surrounding students again.

Johann heard things like "He *killed* him" and "He's really *that* merciless, isn't he?" Someone loudly exclaimed: "Fun duel my ass!" Jūdai's head sagged more with every comment.

Johann found it hard to bear to watch and was about to say something when another student stepped in front of the defeated Okuda. This one was a Ra Yellow.

"I'll be next! Can you also *kill* me so easily?" he shouted.

Jūdai flinched at those words. *Yubel* appeared next to him. "Don't listen. Just duel like you always do", they said in a consoling tone.

Nevertheless, there was a hint of desperation in Jūdai's expression when he shouted "Duel!"