

Another Generation

Von Jitsch

Kapitel 14: Another Rainbow

The darkness that had been around them since the field spell had been activated weighed heavily on Johan. Jūdai was lying there. Unlike Jim or Fubuki, his body was still here, maybe because the duel was not yet over, but clearly his mind was already gone. And after they had steadily worn him down, their opponent had just recovered all his lost Life Points as if everything they had done so far was pointless.

"Johann! Don't you dare think this is over already!" *Amethyst Cat* called out from the field and shook him up.

"Yeah, we still have a lot we can do!" *Cobalt Eagle* agreed.

Ruby Carbuncle cried out as well, although it could not use words.

Johann took a deep breath.

"You are right. I just have to believe in my bond with you and with my deck."

He reached for the top card of his deck and closed his eyes. And he could feel something.

"I draw!"

Johann looked at the card.

"I will show you that the rainbow can pierce the darkness!" he called out. "The seven gems are now gathered! I have all seven Crystal Beasts on my field or in my Graveyard and that means I can summon the Ultimate Crystal God."

Johann gently put the card down on his Duel Disk. Rays of light rose from the field: A red one from *Ruby Carbuncle*, a purple one from *Amethyst Cat*, a light blue one from *Cobalt Eagle*, a green one from *Emerald Tortoise*, a darker blue from the gem that had been *Sapphire Pegasus*. They were joined by orange and yellow rays of light that represented *Amber Mammoth* and *Topaz Tiger* who had been sent to the graveyard.

The rays of light became polished, round gems, and then a body formed along those gems.

A majestic white dragon with an elegant, snake-like body. The colorful gems adorned its side. The wings that it spread were pure white, and emitted a gentle light.

"*Rainbow Dragon!*" Johann introduced the ace monster that he had just summoned for the very first time. The monster had 4000 attack points.

Darkness reacted quickly: "I shall crush your hope. I activate the effect of *Bramble* to

see my cards. I activate *Zero* and *Infinity*."

The two cards flipped up. There were three cards between them. A dark chuckle came from Darkness.

"I activate *Darkness 1* to destroy *Rainbow Dragon*," Darkness said and pointed at the dragon monster.

"I don't think so!" Crystal Master called out.

Darkness' finger sank slowly. "And why is that?"

Johann explained: "In addition to enabling the Pendulum Summon, *Crystal Keeper* and *Crystal Master* have effects that apply while they are used as pendulum scales. The effect of *Crystal Master* is that you cannot target any Crystal Beasts or Ultimate Crystal monsters in my monster zone with card effects."

"Fine, then I just destroy *Crystal Master* instead," Darkness said.

The lightning bolt from the card hit the monster in the pillar of light. *Crystal Master* cried out in pain. The pillar of light disappeared and he sank to the ground. The mask that he had worn fell off and shattered. His image flickered, and the hologram was clearly dissolved, but the spirit was still there, crouching on the ground, his face covered by his long shaggy hair.

"I activate the second card. This time, I shall destroy *Rainbow Dragon*," Darkness insisted. The lightning bolt stuck, but the *Rainbow Dragon* flapped its giant wings and continued to majestically loom over the field.

"What?" Darkness asked impatiently.

Crystal Keeper had drawn his sword and explained: "My effect as *Crystal Keeper* is that the first time you try to destroy a Crystal Beast or an Ultimate Crystal monster, it is not destroyed."

"Begone!" Darkness cried out impatiently. The third card flipped up and the lightning bolt hit *Crystal Keeper*. The pillar of light that he had been levitating in went out, and just like *Crystal Master* before, he fell to the ground and flickered back into the form of a semi-transparent spirit. The mask that had covered his eyes and nose fell to the ground and dissolved.

"Oh, I see," Darkness said, and there was a hint of joy in his tone. His eyes seemed to glow stronger.

"What?" Johann was confused about his opponent's attitude that didn't fit together with the fact that he had failed to remove *Rainbow Dragon* from the field.

"All this time I was looking for your darkness. But you are so selfless, brave and hopeful, I could not find anything... But now I see it. Your darkness is not in *this version of you*. It's in them!"

Johann turned his head when *Crystal Keeper* and *Crystal Master* slowly rose to their feet.

Because the masks had fallen off, their faces that had been hidden behind the masks were now visible.

Or rather, their face.

It was the same face.

It was Johann's.

The figures of the two monsters flickered and were pulled together by an invisible force, uniting in the middle right where Johann was standing.

Memories poured into his mind.

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A man was sitting hunched over the counter at a bar. It was clearly Yūki Jūdai, judging by the hair that was light brown on top and darker at the ends and by his deer-brown eyes, but he was noticeably older, somewhere in his twenties. He did not wear the colors of Obelisk Blue but a worn-down jacket in the colors of Osiris Red that had been patched at both elbows.

He stared at a tumbler with an amber liquid and a few ice cubes inside which he was balancing on the tips of his fingers.

"When spirits want to be friends with humans who cannot see them, it always gets complicated. It's good that you could help that girl," he said thoughtfully, referencing a previous conversation.

The man who sat next to him at the bar nodded. He was about the same age and wore black leather pants and a light blue shirt with frills at the end of the sleeves. He had teal, bushy hair and clear, green eyes.

Jūdai took a sip from the glass and put it down.

"Sometimes I wonder where I would be if I had been able to talk to Yubel back then," he said. "If I had understood that all they wanted was to protect me, things would have gone differently."

He looked at the other man, Johann Andersen. "It would have kept you from getting hurt."

"Come on," Johann said amicably and put an arm around Jūdai. "That was years ago and I'm doing fine. It's no use thinking about it."

"I guess so," Jūdai agreed and took another sip, but his gaze was distant.

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Johann was lying on a bed in a hotel room and stared at the ceiling. The clothes from before were strewn across the ground, forming a path from the entrance door to the bed. He was alone.

That is, until a gentle light emanated from the card deck that was neatly placed on a low table next to the bed. Johann sat up in surprise and looked at how the light became brighter and then formed the silhouette of his ace monster, the Rainbow Dragon .

Johann looked up at the majestic creature in awe. The dragon had never showed itself like this before.

"Johann Andersen," the dragon said in a deep voice that resonated in his head.

Johann nodded.

"I have appeared because I could feel that you have a wish. A pure, unselfish wish for another person's happiness."

Johann stared at the dragon. "Yes..." he murmured. "I mean... most of the time he does seem happy, but I can't forget what he said today. He mentioned that it would save me a lot of pain, but the one who was hurt most by what happened with Yubel is himself. I wish I could help him."

"You can," the Rainbow Dragon said.

Johann gasped.

"You have used me in duels and nurtured me with your bond. It would not have been possible years ago, but now I have the power to grant you a wish."

Johann considered it. He closed his eyes for a moment. Then he opened them again.

"Thank you for the offer," he said with a somewhat forced smile. "But I like to look at the future instead of the past. I will just try harder to make Jūdai happy myself."

"So be it. But remember that this power is not lost for you. If you ever wish to help others in a way that you cannot do yourself, I will grant it."
The spirit of the Rainbow Dragon disappeared again, leaving Johann alone in the dark hotel room.

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Months later, Johann was watching the last moves of a duel that took place in the last light of the day on an empty pier near the port of Baltimore.

Jūdai, in the tattered Osiris Red jacket as always, was facing an elderly, dark-skinned man in a green coat.

The opponent had 1300 Life Points left and the monster Vampire Vamp on his field - a female creature with bat wings, long white hair and a very beautiful face that had 2000 attack points. Jūdai had Flare Neos out, which currently showed 2900 attack points because of a set trap card on Jūdai's side of the field.

"Flare Neos, attack," Jūdai ordered and pointed at Vampire Vamp.

"Please don't!" the female monster cried out in panic, showing that it was not a mere hologram. "I promise I will not do it again! I will never steal life force from any person on this planet! Please, I just..."

Jūdai quietly shook his head.

The insect-like hero raised its arm and shot a fireball from its palm that hit the vampire. It disappeared with a scream of pain.

In the same moment, something happened to Jūdai's opponent. He had been old before, but now within seconds, the wrinkles on his face deepened, his remaining sparse hair fell off and he buckled over. Then he fell flat forward on his face and moved no more.

Johann dashed to him. "What did you do!?" he shouted at Jūdai before he crouched next to the old man and pulled back the sleeves of his coat to feel his pulse.

"Arun...! Arun...!" The Vampire Vamp reappeared in translucent spirit form, hovering over Johann and the man whose name she was calling.

Johann could not find a pulse. "He... he is dead..." he realized with a gasp.

"Arun...!" the Vampire exclaimed desperately. She was crying.

Jūdai walked towards them. His face was a blank mask, showing no emotions. Johann glared at him, still crouching next to the dead man.

"What did you do?" Johann repeated his question from earlier with an impatient tone.

"I did not do anything. She was sucking the energy out of other people to keep him younger than he actually was," Jūdai said and gestured at the Vampire Vamp with his chin. "I simply cut him off from the energy that he got from her and he returned to the age he should be by now."

Johann stared at the old man for a moment. "You knew that he would die?" he asked Jūdai with a shaking voice.

"It was extremely likely, given his real age," Jūdai admitted. It was not the answer Johann had wanted to hear.

Vampire Vamp was still sobbing.

"If you miss him that much, I can help you to follow him," Jūdai said to the monster and bent down to reach for the monster card that was still lying on a slot in the dead man's Duel Disk.

Johann slapped his hand away. "Don't you dare!" he exclaimed.

He pushed Jūdai back.

"You killed him!" he shouted angrily. "And now you want to kill that poor monster too?"

Get lost! I will take care of this!"

Jūdai shrugged. "Fine. I'm not good at dealing with this kind of stuff anyway," he said and turned.

Johann watched him leave into the shadows of the onsetting night.

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"Rainbow Dragon! I need your power!"

Johann was standing in his hotel room that overlooked the port of the city. He was wearing black pants and a loose shirt and had his hair partly tied into a ponytail, just like shortly before at the pier.

The deck that he had placed in the middle of the bed started to glow and the dragon appeared in a flash of light, just like that night a few months before.

Johann looked up to the dragon. "I was wrong. I thought that I could make Jūdai happy myself if I just try... but he is already broken! He is so cold! He doesn't care about the lives of humans, or monsters... he wasn't like that when I met him. It is because of Yubel. Because they hurt him."

He had been talking mostly to himself, to rationalize what he was about to do, but then he raised his head and looked at the majestic dragon.

"I want to change the past. Jūdai said so himself: If someone had helped him understand Yubel when he was a child, nothing would have happened like this."

"Your wish shall be granted."

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When the light abated, Johann was standing in a small park. The buildings were not familiar, but he saw some signs on them that indicated that he was in Japan. Then he spotted the young boy on the bench. Even from afar, it was easy to recognize him as Jūdai. Johann started to walk to him, then realized something. He took the pair of sunglasses that he had in his shirt pocket and put them on before he approached.

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"Thank you, old man!" the young Jūdai shouted minutes later and waved his hand before he ran away. Johann watched him leave with mixed feelings - he was sure that Jūdai would be happy now, but there was also, deeply within him, a kind of envy that Yubel would get to be his partner from such a young age.

In that instant, the world turned upside down. Johann's vision blurred. His stomach turned. He felt something tearing him apart.

What would become of him now? He had changed it to a past where he would never have a reason to travel back in time.

Was it really the right thing?

With a painful scream that no being on earth could perceive, the soul of Johann Andersen split in two, driven by the conflicting feelings of having done the right thing and regretting it.

The two beings that he became were just fragments of a self that would never exist in the future. They had no place on this earth. All they could do was watch.

And so they watched.

Jūdai playing Duel Monsters with friends. Jūdai seeing Yubel's spirit form for the first time. Jūdai rejoicing that he had beaten the teacher at the Duel Academy entrance exam. Jūdai checking out his room in the Osiris Red dorm together with his new roommate Shō Marufuji. A duel against Asuka Tenjōin. One against Jun Manjōme. Jūdai and Shō proudly donning Yellow uniforms. A duel against a Ra Yellow student with black hair. Jūdai looking at himself in the mirror, now in an Obelisk Blue uniform, Yubel proudly floating at his side in spirit form. More and more dangerous duels that always ended in Jūdai's victory. Jūdai meeting the Neo-Spacian monsters.

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"Darkness is coming." A man with long silky blue hair and a white strand of hair on his forehead was sitting in a chair in a clean but sterile-looking hospital room. He was Takuma Saiō, a former fortune teller who had been possessed by the Light of Destruction, but Yūki Jūdai had chased it out of him not too long ago.

"Are you sure...?" an old man whispered. He was lying in the hospital bed, his back propped up mechanically and attached to an abundance of devices that measured his vitals. He was Kagemaru, the elderly chairman of Duel Academy who had once plotted to use the power of the three Sacred Beasts and steal the ability of Yūki Jūdai to gain eternal youth.

"I already saw it in a vision years ago," Saiō said. "Starting at Duel Academy, it will engulf the world and erase everything. The seed will be the young man who was possessed by it as one of your Seven Stars."

"Duel Academy, yes?" Kagemaru repeated weakly. "But could Darkness really gain foot with him there?"

"I have seen it in my visions even before the Light got hold of me," Saiō said. "They have never shown me a hint how to repel the Darkness."

Kagemaru sighed. "So we cannot count on Yūki Jūdai and his monster partners this time?" he asked.

"No," Saiō said. "The cards were very clear. There is no future for us."

They were wrong, the two fragments were convinced. They remembered it. Jūdai had been fighting the Darkness. He had almost given in to it, but then Johann had been able to snap him out of it and together they had beaten Yūsuke Fujiwara.

That was when they realized. In the world that they knew, Johann had travelled to Duel Academy by the invitation of Professor Cobra from West Academy, who turned out to be manipulated by Yubel. But in this world, this would not happen. Johann would never get to know Jūdai and help him beat the Darkness.

Shortly after that realization, the two fragments, who now called themselves Crystal Master and Crystal Keeper, appeared in the dreams of this world's Johann Andersen.

That same Johann Andersen was now standing in front of Darkness and understanding for the first time why he was here.

Except nothing had worked out as planned.

The Johann of the alternative reality had memories of fighting and beating Yūsuke Fujiwara together with Jūdai. But that was a different Jūdai - one who had forged a close bond with Johann through numerous duels where they had supported each other or teamed up. A Jūdai who had been hurt deeply by the evil schemes

of *Yubel* who had become his enemy in that reality, but who had become stronger by overcoming that hurt. Strong enough to beat Darkness, even after the alternative Johann had been swallowed by it.

It was that Jūdai that *Crystal Keeper* and *Crystal Master* had put so much trust in all this time.

But things had gone completely differently in this world. Jūdai was just a nice boy who was good at dueling and had followed his destiny to beat the Light of Darkness, aided by his partner *Yubel* and the Neo-Spacians. He was a good duelist, but lacked something that the Jūdai in the other reality had possessed, something that made him resistant to the lure of darkness. Something that the fragment's of the other Johann's souls had assumed to be inherent in his personality, but had turned out to be the result of the hurtful experiences that they had successfully saved him from.

This world's Johann held his head and let out a loud scream.

Darkness laughed. The dark messenger who had been all calm and collected so far was rejoicing. "There is nothing darker than the despair of someone who has devoted everything to a single thing, just to lose it."

Johann shook his head in revulsion.

"Johann!" *Crystal Beast Amethyst Cat* called his name. The other Crystal Beasts were calling for him as well, but their voices were not reaching him.

So the cat wheeled around on the spot and jumped. Her claws ripped at his face, leaving a scratch.

That finally snapped him out of it.

"Hey, I'm not the opponent," he protested.

"That's right! Our opponent is over there!" *Cobalt Eagle* shouted.

"You finally managed to summon the *Rainbow Dragon*! Come use it!" *Amethyst Cat* added.

Ruby Carbuncle gave an encouraging meow.

Johann looked at the Crystal Beasts before him. They were right. It looked dark, but not grim. He still had his ace monster, it was way stronger than his opponent's *Darkness Bramble*, and Darkness had already used his combo for this turn to destroy his Pendulum.

"I move *Cobalt Eagle* and *Amethyst Cat* into attack mode," Johann announced. After *Rainbow Dragon*'s attack, he would need them to eradicate Darkness' remaining Life Points. He could win this.

"*Rainbow Dragon*, attack *Darkness Bramble*!"

The dragon roared and threw back its head, getting ready for the attack.

Darkness was not yet out of tricks: "When my opponent declares an attack, I can activate the effect of *Darkness Raincrow* in my hand. I send *Raincrow* from my hand and *Darkness Bramble* from my field to the Graveyard to summon *Darkness Neosphere*."

What appeared on the field was a ghastly creature in vaguely human shape. On the left side of its chest and on its right shoulder it showed an eye, and it had mismatched wings, one of which was white and bird-like the *Rainbow Dragon*'s, while the other was dark and bat-like, resembling *Yubel*'s.

The new monster had 4000 attack points, just like *Rainbow Dragon*.

And it was then that Johann knew.

This was a dead end.

He could have *Rainbow Dragon* and *Darkness Neosphere* destroy each other and direct attack with his attack-position monsters, but it would not be enough to bring down Darkness' Life Points entirely. Then it would be his opponent's turn, and he had several cards in his hand providing all kinds of options. He had already recovered all his life points once and it seemed not unlikely that he would be able to do it again. On top of that he still had the dreadful combo that harbored the possibility to destroy his remaining Crystal Beasts that were now unprotected, to boost the attack points of a new monster that he was likely to be able to summon, or just reduce Johann's Life Points directly.

In contrast to that, Johann's only remaining set card would be useless once *Rainbow Dragon* was gone.

So he had to use it now.

"I activate *Bridge of Salvation*. There must be Level 10 or higher monsters of the field with at least two different Types. *Rainbow Dragon* and *Darkness Neosphere* are both Level 10 and they are Dragon and Fiend type. All cards in our hands, fields and Graveyards are shuffled back into the deck."

A ray of light shone from the image of the activated Trap card. It was caught in the seven colorful gems along the body of the *Rainbow Dragon* and reflected in all directions. The holograms on the field faded.

Darkness raised an arm to shield himself from the light.

"Do you really think you can win if you just go back to the start?" Darkness taunted.

Johann shook his head. He felt incredibly sad, but at the same time, the light filled him with something... hope.

"I am not using this card to reset the duel. I am using it to reset... this world."

He looked up at the *Rainbow Dragon*, who had turned his head in his direction. The monster's face was not very expressive, but Johann was sure that he could see a deep sadness there.

"Rewrite the past once more, to how it was before my other self foolishly sought to change it," he told the *Rainbow Dragon*. And to Darkness, he added: "I cannot beat you, but *that* Jūdai can, and he will."

"Your wish shall be granted," *Rainbow Dragon* said.

The Ultimate Crystal God roared.

Darkness let out a frustrated howl.

Light exploded before Johann's eyes.

Then there was only white.