

# Recoil Damage

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For a few months after the mess that had been Battle City, they had all but forgotten about Kaiba, even though it was hard to ignore the ever-present Kaiba Corporation. With their adventures in not-really-old-Egypt and the aftermath of Atem leaving, it was really no surprise - after all, Jounouchi, as well as Yugi, Anzu and Honda, all had their own problems to sort out. And then, suddenly, there were exams still waiting and with them, the looming question of what would come after that, after school.

With all those very real and serious things ahead of them, it came almost as a surprise to be handed the flyers at school. KC was looking for young duelists to test something that sounded very much like a new dueling system. Of course, that was a welcome break from boring real life problems. Yugi had been curious, and Jounouchi was more than ready to accompany him, and when they managed to get an invitation for a bit of play testing, they spent the entire afternoon speculating about what gimmicks a new Duel Disk would have to offer.

"Maybe there's gonna be a tournament soon", Jounouchi proposed, and Yugi nodded, equally enthusiastic.

"That would be great!"

"Yeah, I really could use the chance to let off some steam after all that cramming for school."

The actual play testing was not as exciting as Jounouchi and Yugi had dreamed them up to be. All they had been tasked to do was to pick cards from what seemed to be a limitless virtual database and play a few not too challenging mock duels with no special effects. That did not dampen their enthusiasm, though, and they had much to theorize about as soon as they could take their simulation visors off.

"I'm sure we haven't seen all of it yet", Yugi mused when they were waiting in the corridor with the others that had been play testing the system. "Kaiba would probably not give away too much in advance, you know?"

A murmur went through the small crowd, drawing Yugi's attention, and Jounouchi

turned his head just to see that the great Seto Kaiba himself made his way to through the corridor, accompanied by two of his employees. Just as he walked past them, Yugi came up to him to greet him.

"Hello, Kaiba!", he said, genuinely pleased about the chance to compliment him in person, "What I've seen from your new system so far looks pretty great already! I'm really looking forward to it."

First, it seemed as if Kaiba hadn't noticed him at all, but when Yugi expressed his excitement, he shot him a look that was nothing short of disdain. That made Yugi stop in his tracks, caught by surprise.

"Hey, dickhead, he's talking to you!" Jounouchi rose to his feet in an instant, but Yugi's hand on his arm kept him from launching after Kaiba to drag him right back.

"You should let me teach him some manners", Jounouchi insisted, but Yugi shook his head.

"It's not worth it, and I really don't want you to get into trouble."

Jounouchi wanted to protest, but he was quickly distracted by the frown on Yugi's face as he watched Kaiba vanish into one of the hallways down the corridor. Jounouchi did not like the way Kaiba's jerkass behaviour seemed to concern Yugi more than anything.

Yugi was lost in thought after that, but before Jounouchi quite succeeded in either cheering him up or getting him to talk about it, he was called into one of the small bureaus for his feedback talk.

Since he was left to wait for someone to come and interview him, Jounouchi sat down in the chair in front of the desk and tried his best to not get too worked up about what had happened. It really hadn't been too much to ask for a warmer greeting from Kaiba, after all that Yugi had done for him. But by now, shouldn't they all know better than to expect basic human decency?

When it came down to it, Kaiba had been looking for trouble ever since he had attempted to murder them all and had continued to be a massive dickhead with zero regrets whenever they met. He was just lucky that Jounouchi was usually above that kind of shit nowadays and that Yugi did not appreciate a more violent approach, or he would have beaten Kaiba's face in six ways from Sunday already on several occasions.

But as it turned out, given the right opportunity, like meeting Kaiba alone in a small room, Kaiba's face as unmoving and arrogant as usual and the dismissive glance he'd given Yugi still fresh on Jounouchi's mind, Jounouchi wasn't above anything less than what Kaiba deserved.

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As soon as Kaiba entered the room, Jounouchi was all too aware that something was not right about this. Why on earth would Kaiba bother with questioning him

personally? And when Kaiba locked the door behind him, Jounouchi's instincts had him already on the edge.

He got up from his chair.

"Alright, spit it out, what do you want with me, Kaiba?"

Without even giving him so much as a glance, left alone any answer to his question, Kaiba took off his coat to hang it on the coatrack beside the door. When he came over to Jounouchi, the fact that he was standing and glaring at him did not seem to concern him the slightest. Of course not, when had Kaiba ever taken him seriously.

Jounouchi's anger had been simmering right beneath the surface, but he was still containing it, waiting for Kaiba to make the first move. Kaiba, however, was very purposefully ignoring that Jounouchi had dared to address him. Well, Jounouchi had news for him then. He wouldn't just let that kind of behaviour fly, especially not considering it had made Yugi feel bad.

In all honesty, Jounouchi was by now just looking for an excuse and Kaiba, it seemed, was only too ready to give him one.

"I cannot believe a low-tier duelist like you was allowed access", Kaiba said as he glared down on him, all tall and mighty, ready to unleash the assault, "A mistake I'll have to remedy imm--."

There was something immensely satisfying about shutting Kaiba up.

When Jounouchi's fist collided with Kaiba's bony face, it sent Kaiba stumbling backwards until he caught himself with one hand on the desk, the other pressed to his face. He hissed at the pain, his eyes now on Jounouchi. There was nothing mocking in them anymore, just anger.

That was much better.

Kaiba straightened his posture again and was about to open his mouth, but Jounouchi was faster. He did not wait for the inevitable threat. In fact, he was well-aware that this could really get him into trouble - after all, Kaiba had his own security and all that - but Jounouchi certainly was not intimidated by that. He'd survived Kaiba's worst already, and there were no sick, twisted games or payed goons to help him now.

A calm had come over Jounouchi, an anger that was not as hot, but sharp and dangerous. He'd be lying if he said he hadn't been itching to do this for ages.

This time, Jounouchi aimed straight for the nose. It wasn't exactly a surprise that Kaiba had awful reflexes when it came to physical fights and barely evaded the punch at all, and Jounouchi hit him square in the face with an ugly, cracking sound.

There was blood on Jounouchi's knuckles when he withdrew, leaving Kaiba to sink against the table to regain his senses. Kaiba's nose was bleeding, the dark liquid

dripping from his chin in thick drops, but Kaiba did not bother trying to stem the flow. Instead, he seemed strangely fascinated by the sight of his own blood-stained fingers after he had inspected the damage.

For a second, Kaiba did not react at all. Jounouchi assumed that no one had ever dared to bash his precious face in before, which was a miracle in and of itself, since Kaiba was the single most punchable person Jounouchi had ever met.

Then Kaiba started laughing, and it was a hollow, joyless laughter that brought back some pretty awful memories of near-death experiences Jounouchi usually preferred to forget about but had never quite forgiven him for.

"Is that all?", Kaiba said, and his derisive tone was unusually calm. "I should have expected as much."

"There's plenty more where that came from." Jounouchi rolled his shoulders and gave Kaiba an appraising look. No matter how much he'd like to deliver, Kaiba already had to lean against the table to support himself, and Jounouchi wouldn't kick anyone who was already basically on the ground. "But I usually prefer a more even fight. I think you had enough."

There was a strange gleam in Kaiba's eyes as he pushed himself off the desk again, slightly wobbly on his legs and his face half-covered in blood.

"That's a weakling's excuse", he snapped, and took a step towards him, probably to intimidate him. "But if you want to run like a coward as soon as you see some blood, you can try leaving. Just know that you will not get anywhere unless I let you."

That was definitely a creepy thing to say, especially considering that Kaiba had locked the door before they had even started talking, but Jounouchi was not backing away.

"I'm not afraid of you, Kaiba", he said, his tone heated but firm, even though he did not appreciate their sudden proximity all that much.

Kaiba made a dismissive noise. He had recovered astonishingly well, even though he was still bleeding on the collar of his black turtleneck.

"Why are you hesitating, then, I wonder?", he asked, and the condescending way he said it was enough to make Jounouchi's blood boil. It was only then that it finally clicked. That bastard was not only mocking him, he was daring him.

"If this is your attempt at revenge, it is nothing but pathetic", Kaiba snarled as he looked down on him, his gaze cold and impassive. "I had you grovelling in the dirt at my feet once I was through with you."

That did it. Whatever else Kaiba had wanted to say was derailed by him getting yanked forward by the collar of his turtleneck and lost in a choked noise as Jounouchi's knee met his stomach with full force, effectively knocking the air right out of him. Before Kaiba could catch his breath and even make as much as a sound, he

found himself trapped with his back on the table and Jounouchi above him, his forearm pressed to Kaiba's throat and shoulders to keep him down, effectively choking him.

Admittedly, Jounouchi really should have known better than to take Kaiba's bait, but rational decisions had never been his strong suit. There, something they apparently had in common, because Kaiba should have known better than to challenge him like this.

Now that he was pressing Kaiba down with his own body weight, Jounouchi noticed for the first time how thin Kaiba was - despite his wavy coats and impressive height, there was not much to him. Still, Jounouchi had expected him to have some ace up his sleeve and not to end up lying beneath him, defenceless, bloodied and beaten, and entirely unable to speak. That in and of itself should probably not have felt as good as it did, but right now, Jounouchi could not find it in him to care. All he knew was that he had the upper hand for now, and it was an elevating feeling that rushed through him with sudden, hot intensity. Jounouchi couldn't help but to press down a little harder, just to savour it.

When Kaiba made a strangled noise in response, however, it started to seep in that something was not right about the way Kaiba reacted to this. It did not help that Kaiba did not even grab his arm and attempt to fight him. His hands were uselessly resting on the table surface beside his head as he struggled for breath, and something about how vocal he was with his choked, gagging noises was decidedly off. It was only then that Jounouchi realized he was basically pushing Kaiba on the table with his hips between Kaiba's legs and the rush this entire situation was giving him mingled a bit too well with Kaiba gasping wordlessly and squirming against him.

That was enough to make him release Kaiba again and Kaiba tried to collect himself while struggling to breathe, coughing and wheezing, sending blood spraying from his lips.

"Man, you're such a fucking weirdo", Jounouchi muttered, more to himself than anything, but Kaiba's eyes were immediately on him again.

"And what does that make you then?" Kaiba's voice was hoarse and his breath was still rattling in his windpipe thanks to the blood he inevitably inhaled, but his gaze trailing to Jounouchi's crotch made his point clear enough.

And yes, all that squirming and gasping had definitely done something for Jounouchi, and he did not really know what to do with that realization. Not that he wasn't aware he had some fucked-up shit deep inside of him, and overpowering Kaiba was something he could get the appeal of. It was just that being aroused by Kaiba, or just in the vicinity of Kaiba, was decidedly awkward.

"Listen, Kaiba", he decided, "I don't know what kind of game you're playing, but I'm done here."

It was clear Kaiba was getting some strange kick out of provoking him, and Jounouchi wouldn't be used liked that. But before he could even take a step back, Kaiba grabbed his arm in what seemed more like a kneejerk reaction, his fingers digging into the

fabric.

“Don’t think I’ll let you leave like this.”

Kaiba probably meant that far more menacing then it sounded, but his voice was pressed and wavering slightly, and that he was still sitting on the desk did not really help much, either.

In hindsight, this was exactly the moment when Jounouchi should have left. But for the first time, Jounouchi had some sort of leverage over Kaiba, something that Kaiba seemed to want, even need, from him. It was too tempting to give that up just now.

“Why, what are you gonna do, Kaiba?”, he asked, and he wasn’t even just teasing, he was honestly curious. Kaiba was not the one to call the shots here, for once, and that meant he was running out of options. “Threaten me? Order me around?”

Instead of an answer, Kaiba grabbed him by the collar of his jacket to pull himself up, and Jounouchi let him. He did not bend down, however, and Kaiba had to practically cling to him just to look him in the eye. It was only with their faces this close that Jounouchi couldn’t help but notice how awful Kaiba looked, and it wasn’t just because there was dark blood splattered all over his bruised mouth and cheek. He was pale, almost drained, his face was practically emaciated and there was something haunted in his look.

“I’m certainly not going to beg for it”, Kaiba finally responded through gritted teeth.

As Kaiba leaned forward, he did not even blink, and something about his entirely ungraceful attempt at pressing their lips together kept Jounouchi strangely hooked.

Kaiba was not playing with him. Kaiba was desperate.

It must have been the adrenaline from the fight, or something about Kaiba’s sudden vulnerability, but Jounouchi found it hard to resist. Without another thought, Jounouchi grabbed Kaiba’s neck so he could kiss him back, hard and unceremoniously. Kaiba’s fingers were tugging at his jacket to keep him steady and Jounouchi tasted nothing but blood on Kaiba’s lips, but it was less sickening than it should have been. Before Jounouchi could figure out what exactly he was going for here, Kaiba grabbed his wrist with an impatient grunt to put Jounouchi’s hand on his throat again, and for a moment, Jounouchi took that invitation, forcefully pressing him down on the table. Kaiba’s pulse was thick beneath his fingers and he felt the Adam’s apple move under his grip as Kaiba struggled for breath, his hips jerking against Jounouchi’s crotch. There was something undeniable hot about that sight, the sensation of Kaiba’s life, his entire spiteful, smug existence, right in Jounouchi’s hands while Kaiba was so obviously turned on by being choked violently, and the sound of those gagged moans - it was enough to make Jounouchi gasp with arousal.

Still, Kaiba getting all that he wanted did not sit right with him, and he was not so keen on finding out where it would take them. Kaiba’s façade had been torn away to reveal something entirely wretched, and Jounouchi did not want to see how deep this

rabbit hole went. He released his grip on Kaiba's throat to grab his wrists instead – so bony and thin, he almost expected them to be brittle enough to break – and held them in place next to Kaiba's head. Kaiba groaned through gritted teeth, and Jounouchi preferred to keep him like this, all wordless noises and no arrogant drivel. So, he moved his crotch against Kaiba's and kissed him again, pressing Kaiba's lithe body onto the table surface with his own weight. It was a sloppy kiss that was probably as awful for Kaiba, who could not breathe through his nose at all, as it was for him, who had to put up with Kaiba's idea of kissing. When Kaiba bit him especially viciously, Jounouchi had enough of that, and he grabbed Kaiba by the hair to pull his head back, sharp and fast. That seemed to do the trick for Kaiba, at least. There was a soft, strangled noise at the back of Kaiba's throat, and a shudder went through his body, before it went limp. For a moment, Jounouchi thought he'd come, but as he let go of him, Kaiba's head had started rolling slightly, his gaze strangely unfocused, as if he was almost passing out.

"Kaiba?" Fuck, he hadn't even hit him that hard, had he? Jounouchi grabbed him by the shoulders and shook him slightly, in hopes that Kaiba was not really out of it yet. "Kaiba!"

It wouldn't look good if he had to call a doctor now, with Kaiba unconscious, his face bloodied and Jounouchi the only one to blame. Yugi had warned him that messing with Kaiba would only be trouble.

But to his relief, Kaiba was not entirely gone. Maybe it was just exhaustion getting the better of him. Coming to think of it, something had seemed off about him ever since he had entered the room, and Jounouchi had a suspicion it was more than just lack of sleep. Whatever pills he was taking to support his sleep-deprived skin-and-bones lifestyle, he was probably overdoing it.

Suddenly, Kaiba's eyes opened, his pupils blown wide, but he wasn't looking at him. Instead, he stared straight past him, his gaze fixated on a spot somewhere beyond the ceiling. It was then that Jounouchi realized Kaiba was mouthing words in a barely audible, frantic whisper.

"Close", Jounouchi believed to hear him breathe, voicelessly, "so-- close—"

"Kaiba, snap out of it!" Because he didn't know what else to do, Jounouchi slapped him, hard, and that finally seemed to have some effect.

It took a moment for Kaiba's gaze to focus and him to resurface from his delusions. Maybe he did have a concussion, Jounouchi thought, as he pulled Kaiba into a sitting position, or maybe all this choking business hadn't been that much of a great idea.

"Hey, can you hear me?", Jounouchi asked. "Maybe you should call someone to come and get you."

"Don't give me that", Kaiba said, his tongue heavy and his voice hoarse, but the disdain still pretty clear in his words. "We both know you don't care."

There was something between caring deeply and not wanting someone to pass out on you while they engaged with you in some questionable making out after you almost broke their nose, but Jounouchi did not want to get into that. In fact, he was very much done with this entire situation.

"You need a doctor, Kaiba", he insisted. "And we're still locked in here."

As usual, Kaiba was barely listening. He had put a hand on the bruise marks on his throat, slightly pressing against them, as if he was appraising them.

"Considering your past, I'd have expected worse from you." Only Kaiba could manage to sound so derisive about someone not properly choking him senseless.

"Yugi would not like it if I broke your ribs and rearranged your face", Jounouchi said with a shrug. By now, it did barely surprise Jounouchi that Kaiba was obviously stalking them with whatever intel KC probably had, though it did not sit well with him. In any case, that made it easier to see right through Kaiba's bullshit. It almost made sense now, in as twisted, Kaiba sort of way, even though Jounouchi was not entirely sure what prompted it. "I guess you just have to do it the hard way and get over yourself without someone kicking your ass for you. But that's none of my business."

Kaiba frowned at that, but he had to keep himself from keeling over, and Jounouchi did not feel like waiting for a response.

"Listen, Kaiba, now either you call someone yourself or I'll have to kick the door in and get some employee to patch you up."

Finally, Kaiba obliged, and to Jounouchi's relief, Kaiba's favourite sunglasses-wearing assistant came by just moments later to not only make sure Kaiba was taken care of, but also to personally see Jounouchi out.

There were still blood stains on Jounouchi's shirt, and so it was probably for the better that this way he avoided meeting up with Yugi who was probably already waiting for him. He quickly texted him to tell him not to wait and to promise him they'd meet up tomorrow instead.

On his walk home, Jounouchi did not feel all too peachy, and it wasn't really because he was worried about Kaiba. Kaiba'd be fine, at least as fine as he could be. It was just that Kaiba had a way of getting under one's skin. As far as Jounouchi was concerned, Kaiba was nothing but a bully who had too much anger inside of him and was letting it out on anyone, picking fights and making others miserable to make himself feel better. In fact, Jounouchi understood that part all too well. But it was precisely because Jounouchi knew what it was like to hate himself and take his hatred out on others that he did not feel a lot of sympathy.

If there was one thing he'd taken from this, it was that Kaiba seemed to physically need someone to subdue him, in one way or the other, and while Jounouchi did not exactly disagree, he really wasn't the one to do it.



Even though Kaiba had tried his best to pull him on his level, Jounouchi had changed. Unlike Kaiba, who despite Yugi offering him friendship and support countless of times, still chose to stay a miserable jerk. Jounouchi had taken his chance when he had gotten it, and he had worked hard to become a better person. He was both proud and lucky that he had managed to leave that sort of self-destructive shit behind him, and he'd like for it to stay that way.

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He still hoped Yugi wouldn't be too mad with him when he'd have to eventually confess that he had had a run-in with Kaiba, though Jounouchi decided to play down the details. Kaiba would probably appreciate that staying between them, anyway.

But when they hung out after school at Yugi's place to learn, which actually meant they'd spent most of the time playing video games and talking, it was not Kaiba Yugi seemed most concerned about.

"It was no big deal", Jounouchi said with a shrug. "I roughed him up a little, that's all."

It was only when he noticed Yugi's eyes were fixed on his lips that Jounouchi realized they had to be pretty torn and bruised.

"Seems like he roughed you up quite a bit, too", Yugi noted, but there was something in his voice that made Jounouchi feel strangely and unexpectedly guilty all of a sudden.

"Yugi, I- I'm not gonna do any of that again, believe me." He really meant it. Now that he'd seen more of Kaiba's issues that he'd ever cared to, Jounouchi was really not very keen on having any more of that.

To his relief, Yugi smiled, even though he seemed a bit confused by Jounouchi's stammering reaction.

"Good", Yugi said, but then hurried to clarify, "I mean, I do think that's for the better, but you really don't have to justify yourself to me." He paused, looking away and biting his lip, uncertain. "It's just-"

"You know what I was thinking about the other day?" Without waiting for Yugi to answer, Jounouchi pulled him closer by wrapping his free arm around his shoulders, maybe embracing him a bit too tightly as he held him close. "Just how lucky I am to know you", he declared with a grin.

"Jounouchi, that hurts", Yugi interjected, but as Jounouchi released him, he looked up to him with a smile. Jounouchi felt his cheeks heat under Yugi's gaze, and he quickly turned to face the screen again and pick up the controller.

"Hey, we've still got a final round to play, I almost forgot about that!"

"Alright, you're on!", Yugi said, immediately all set and ready, but before he pressed

start, his eyes were on Jounouchi again. Then, as if it was the most natural thing in the world, he reached out to put his hand on Jounouchi's, squeezing it in a way that made Jounouchi's heart skip a beat.

"I'm really happy that I know you, too."

Jounouchi beamed right back at him, a warmth spreading inside of him that was so familiar to him now but that he'd never take for granted.