

Chapter 3

Kasper awoke early Saturday morning, far too early for his liking. He felt his excitement boiling over already, even though he had to wait till noon before the tournament. He ate breakfast and a small lunch, then gathered the side satchel his father had given him to use as a bag for his deck. Fueled by pure anticipation he bolted out into the city in the direction of Other World Games.

“Ah hello Kasper.” Peter Gray said with his wide smile.

“Hello Mr. Gray.” Kasper said with a wide smile.

“Please call me Peter.” Peter Gray said with a smile.

Kasper bit the inside of his cheek. Was it rude for him to call him Mr. Gray instead of Peter?

“Yo Kasper.” A familiar voice said. Kasper turned to the source of the voice, Alger.

Alger sat with Darryl and another guy, he was average height with dirty blonde hair that was cut short and gelled up. The three sat at a table with open paper bags, drinks, and some burritos in front of them.

“Oh uh, hey.” Kasper said, nervousness taking over.

“Glad you could make it.” Alger said, waving Kasper over. “Want a chip?” He pulled out a small bag of tortilla chips and salsa from the paper bag.

“Oh uh, no thats okay I already ate.” Kasper said.

“Hey Landon this is the guy I was telling you about.” Alger said to the blonde man.

“Yeah?” The Blonde, Landon, said. His voice seemed jovial and he looked at Kasper with wide eyes. “Well it's good to have ya Kasper, I'm Landon. It's nice to meet you, I'd shake your hand but I got a seven layer burrito.” He held up the burrito that was barely being held together by his sheer force of will.

“You're cleaning up any mess that happens.” Peter said from behind the counter.

“As always.” Landon responded. “So Kasper, you're playing Flaredrakes I hear.”

“Oh yeah, they are fun, and Burnova is so cool.” Kasper said.

“You improve on the starter deck yet?” Landon asked.

“Oh, no not yet, I haven't gotten anything to improve it yet.” Kasper replied sheepishly.

“No worries, starter decks kick butt out of the box in this game, and as long as you have fun that is all that matters, right Alger?” Landon said, looking to Alger for confirmation.

Alger had just taken a massive bean bite, and glared at Landon. He held up a finger as he began to chew furiously, then swallowed dramatically. “Of course, win or lose you just gotta have fun, and hey you can also learn about what to expect from everyone while you're at it. Good matchup knowledge will take you far.”

Kasper liked Landon, he seemed nice. It took him a minute to remember what Darryl and Peter had said the day before. Landon had made the top 40 at the regional level, same as Darryl. His defeat yesterday came to the front of Kasper's attention. If he wanted to get on Alger's level, he had to catch up to these other two.

“Oh yeah, he's starting to get good.” Darryl chimed in. “Kasper here almost beat me yesterday.”

“No way for real!” Alger said in disbelief. “I wish I had seen that, stupid tests.”

“You really got that close to beating Darryl?” Landon asked Kasper.

“I guess yeah.” Kasper said, tugging at the strap of his bag. “I don't know, I kinda felt that Darryl could have won easier if he had played his gate master sooner.”

“Darryl, you're still messing that up huh.” Alger said, teasing his friend.

“I'm used to people playing cards that disrupt my board, it's made me so defensive.” Darryl explained. “A byproduct of play testing with you two constantly.”

“Whaaatttt.” Alger said dramatically. “Just because I am a control heavy player doesn't mean anything.”

“I have no idea what you're even talking about.” Landon said, his face showing that he, intruth, did know.

“Hey Kasper, you sign up yet?” Alger said, changing the topic suddenly.

“Oh uh no, how do I do that?”

“You go up and talk to Peter, you'll sign up on the website.” Alger explained.

Kasper walked up to the counter. Peter showed him a QR code that led to the website he would use to sign up. He made an account, noticing a ranking tab.

“What's the ranking tab for?” Kasper asked.

“It shows events that take place, as well as their results. You can also check out a given players ranking. You'll have an ELO for yourself after today based on your record. Some players take raising their ELO pretty seriously.”

Kasper took that in, he could use the rankings to see how distant he was from his new friends.

He returned to the table and took a seat next to Alger as someone else entered the store. He was Latin American based on appearance, with very vascular arms that showed through his short sleeved shirt. He chewed on a protein bar while playing on a handheld game console.

“Diego, what ya hunting?” Alger asked.

“Naghawhga.” The new man, Diego, said through a muffled voice from the protein bar.

“Nice, mind helping me with a hunt when you're done?” Alger pulled out a similar console.

Diego swallowed, then grabbed the wrapper of the bar from his lips. “Yeah sure.” He said in a more gruff voice. “We got a new guy?” He hadn't taken his eyes off his game yet.

“Oh I'm Kasper.” Kasper said. He struggled talking to people since they expected him to look them in the eye, so it was easier since Diego wasn't looking at him.

“Welcome to the shop Kasper, I am Diego, resident Jupiter Master.” Diego said, heading towards Peter to register.

“Jupiter?” Kasper said aloud. “What kind of deck is that?” He played Venus, and Darryl played Saturn. He wondered what made Jupiter unique from others.

“They are a planet all about growing a big limit 3.” Alger explained. “Diego has a thing for plants so it's right up his alley.”

“Praise be to Elmeria.” Diego yelled out from the front desk.

“That sounds interesting, I haven't seen many limit 3 cards.” Kasper explained.

“It's a deck I think you would have fun playing against.” Alger said. “It's a good match up for both of you and can go either way.”

Kasper looked at Landon. “What planet do you play?”

“Me?” Landon said mischievously. “Why would I reveal that, giving a potential enemy free information doesn't seem wise wouldn't you say?”

“He plays Mars.” Darryl said.

“Come on, I was trying to be all dramatic!” Landon said, flicking a straw wrapper at Darryl.

“Mars is a good board control deck, and one of their gimmicks is making their units have infinite power.” Darryl explained.

“Infinite power!” Kasper said suddenly. “That's so strong!”

“Not infinite crit though.” Alger said. “Don't let that fool you.”

Diego took a seat with them and began to play with Alger. The bell chimed on the door, another person entering from the outdoors. She could only be described as goth to Kasper. She wore black jeans with a chain hanging off the side, a black band shirt for what looked like a screamo band. Her eyes and lips lined with black, and a stud sat on the left side of her nose. Half her hair was neon green, the other half a deep black. She carried a side bag with a stuffed animal from an anime hanging from the side.

“Yo, Winter.” Darryl said, waving a hand.

The goth girl turned to the group, breaking her stride from the front counter. "Sup." She said in a more cheery tone than Kasper had expected of her.

"Winter." Alger said, still staring down at his game. "Want some chips and salsa?"

Winter thought about it. "Sure." She walked over behind Alger while noticing the game he was playing. "You'd best be careful with that hunt" She said, reaching past him to grab his burrito.

"Nah my skills activate when low on life." Alger said. "Also, that's my burrito."

"Yep." Winter said, taking a large bite. She covered her mouth with her hand and chewed, placing the rest of the burrito back in place. "Pretty good, you get that from down the street?"

"Yep, best burritos in town." Alger said, eyes still locked downward.

Winter looked past Alger to Kasper. "Sup, you new here?"

"Oh ye-yes I'm Kasper." Kasper explained, maybe it was the make up but she had an intimidating look to her, yet she smiled kindly, it made Kasper unsure how to talk to her. Then again, he was never that good at talking to anyone anyways so nothing new.

"Winter. Nice to meet ya." She said, then headed over to sign up.

"Winter, have you seen the spoilers yet?" Alger called out.

"I think so." Winter said, filling out her info.

"Thoughts about the new Mercury deck?" Alger asked.

Winter paused, stiffening. "Ah, well it looks fun."

Alger gave a slight smirk. "You should try it, it seems right up your alley."

Winter turned back to him. "Cause its small cute dinos? Play style isn't my alley, I'll just enjoy Pluto for now. Vamps do the job just fine, thank you very much."

"Pluto?" Kasper asked Darryl.

"They are a Drop zone focused deck, watch out for Winter. Her Vampire Ladder deck is brutal." Darryl explained.

"Vampire Ladder?"

"It's a term we use to explain the deck. The deck involves you changing out your units when they hit to make bigger Vampires, like climbing a ladder."

"That sounds interesting but I'm not sure I understand." Kasper said.

"You haven't come across anything like it yet so that is understandable. Once you play Winter you'll see." Darryl said.

Once again the bell rang, inviting two people in. Rylee and Elijah entered with bags on their shoulders. The two were in discussion as they entered but cut it off as they looked at the group.

"Were we last again?" Rylee said exasperated. "I thought we left early enough to beat everyone here."

"Worth a shot." Winter said, walking past them to plop down next to Kasper, snatching chips from Alger's bag and using his salsa. "You're still early though."

"Exactly." Elijah said with a shrug. He spotted Kasper. "Hey, do you go to our school?"

Suddenly all attention fell on Kasper, he felt himself begin to shrink under the gaze. "Oh uh, yeah, we have a few classes together."

Rylee recognized Kasper then. "Oh yeah your, umm, hold on don't tell me." She shut her eyes tight. "David? No, Ryan?"

"Kasper right?" Elijah said.

"Yeah, it's Kasper."

"Dangit I was so close!" Rylee said in annoyance.

"In what dimension?" Elijah said. He turned back to Kasper. "You play System Gate? That's awesome."

"Oh yeah, I just started a few days ago."

"Don't let him fool you." Darryl said. "He's already getting crazy good."

"Seriously?" Rylee said shocked. "We'll have to see, huh. Peter, sign me up! Today is the day I run it back, Alger you're going down with my new and improved deck!"

"Look forward to playing ya Kasper." Elijah said, heading over to sign up.

After everyone was signed up Peter explained how the event worked. It was a swiss tournament which meant that Kasper could do well even if he lost a game. Each round was 50 minutes with 10 minute overtime. There would be three rounds today, and each round would be a best 2 out of 3.

"With that, we'll begin the first round pairings."

Rylee Versus Darryl

Deigo Versus Winter

Landon Versus Alger

Kasper Versus Elijah

“First round starting rough.” Elijah said to Rylee. “You got this?”

Rylee seemed to be hyping herself up. “I think so.”

Elijah turned to me. “Alright, let's play over here.”

“Hold on one second.” Peter said, coming between the two. “A present for a first time player. A play mat.” The playmat was a rubber mat that had all the game zones on it. The zones were red with a hyperspace style behind it.

“Thank you.” Kasper said, shocked at the gift.

“Best of luck to you today, make sure to have fun okay?” Peter said before retreating to watch some of the matches.

Kasper and Elijah sat across from each other, shuffling their decks. Elijah pulled out two dice and rolled them, a 4 and a 1.

“Alright, winner picks who goes first.” Elijah said, handing Kasper the dice. Kasper rolled a 6 and a 3. “You pick.”

Kasper thought about it. “I'll go second?” Seemed smart since he didn't know what to expect from Elijah's deck.

“Works for me.” Elijah said, presenting his deck. The two cut decks and returned them, then drew their opening hand.

Three Flame tag team, an Orion's clothesline, Melty Chef Dragon, and a Firespin Throny. He felt sad not seeing Burnova. He put two Flame tag on bottom of deck, keeping the last one incase. He drew another melty dragon and a dragon campfire. Elijah only put one on bottom, but didn't look happy with the card he got. They revealed their Gates.

“Cyber Space?” Kasper asked.

“Yep, it's a fun deck.” Elijah said. “My Gate Master is Spyder.”

“Alright, Draw, Energize.” Elijah said. “I equip Probability Sword, The Seed.” The item was a 5000/3/0 with the effect ‘After you flip a coin you may pay 1 energy, if you do redo the coin toss.’

“Coin flips?” Kasper questioned.

“Oh yeah my deck is all about them.” Elijah said with a laugh. “Makes things so interesting, it's like when you get a good coin flip it makes you feel awesome ya know? Anyways, I attack with Seed for 3.”

“I take 3, going to 15.” Kasper said.

“End my turn.”

“Draw, Energize.” Kasper said. “Summon Firespin to the left.” Kasper said. “Nova gift, draw and gain 1 energy.” He thought for a moment, should he play more or wait? If he held off his cards he would have a better chance of clearing any board threats that Elijah might play. He decided to play it safe. “Attack with Firespin for 2”

“I go to 18.”

“End Turn.”

“Stand, Draw, Energize.” Elijah chanted. “Alright, Ima Summon my Gate Master to the Right, activating his Gate master ability to draw a card. Then Spyder’s going to scan your Limit 1 Firespin!” Elijah dug through his deck due to the card effect “I’m going to add another copy of Spyder to the hand.” He shuffled his deck. “Right, Spyder will attack Firespin.”

Kasper let that happen, not wanting to over use his hand cards too early.

“Next, my Item attacks for 3.”

“I’m at 12.” Kasper didn’t like how low he was getting, but knew he could hold on.

“End turn.”

“Draw, Energize.” Kasper decided he needed to put a bit more pressure out.

“Equip Soul Sword. Melty dragon summon on my right. Then I pay 2 energy for the Tag Team to the left.”

It was a strong formation that could deal a lot of damage.

“Right, Tag Team attacks for 5.”

“I play Virtual Private Network, I fizzle the attack and flip a coin, if heads gain 2 life, if tails gain 1 energy.” Elijah pulled out the coin, then flipped. Tails. “I pay 1 energy to reflip it with Seed ability.” Tails again. “Dang, oh well. I gain the 1 energy and fizzle the attack.”

“Alright, I link attack with Melty and Soul sword, retarding Tag Team. the attack is for 4.”

“I take 4, going to 14.” Elijah said.

“Alright, Tag Team attacks for 5.”

“Another Virtual Private Network will shut that down!” When Elijah as the spell he tossed another coin in the air, only for it to hit the table with tails showing. He laughed.

“Oh well that is the fun of this deck.”

Kasper couldn’t help but smile at Elijah’s goofy laugh. “I end my turn.”

“Stand, Draw, Energize.” Elijah said. “Okay, I cast Unstable Hax. If luck’s on my side, I’ll get to take out your Soul Sword!” He flipped the coin, Tails. “Hey Peter can I swap my Quarter for a new one?” He got the new quarter then payed one energy. “Seed ability, re-flip.” The coin unceremoniously flopped over to tails. “I feel so defeated right now.” Elijah said with his goofy laugh.

“How do you get tails 6 times in a row?” Rylee said while playing her match at the next table over.

“It's the way the coin flips.” Elijah said matter of factly. “I play another Spyder and search for a limit 2.” He looked through his deck. “I grab Spyder Queen Routina.” The card was presented in landscape with a much brighter border than all of Elijah’s other units. Elijah confidently slid the ace card into his hand.

“Right attack phase.”

I move Melty Chef to the center.” Kasper declared. It would stop one attack at least. He also had a spell in his hand to destroy one of the spyders to stop another attack, all he had to worry about was the sword and that Finale Unit.

“Spyder on left, go attack Kasper’s center.” Elijah declared.

“I’ll cast my spell, Orion's Clothesline, destroying the Spyder on your right. Then Melty will be destroyed by your attack.”

Elijah considered his next play. “I attack Tag Team with Seed.”

Kasper grit his teeth, he hoped Tag team would survive to give him some attack power next turn, but he couldn't stop the attack. He put his unit into the drop.

Elijah enter his end phase with a confident glint in his eye. "Time to bust out my deck's ace. I summon Spyder Queen, Routina." Elijah tossed another coin in the air. After spinning on the table, the coin finally revealed heads. "Aw yeah! That feels good. I search my deck for Spyder and play it without paying cost, then I get another attack phase." Elijah searched. "I choose Jumping Spyder." It was a limit 1 7000/3/3000 Finale Unit. "Jumping Spider leaps at your life points!"

"10"

"Routina for 2 damage."

"8"

"End my turn." Elijah said.

"Stand, Draw, Energize." Kasper knew what he needed to do. He needed to destroy Elijah's field.

"I summon El Caliente to the right. Then I cast Solar breath to destroy my Elcaliente and your Jumping Spyder." This opened up the center. "Melly to right. This card will let me get a life and 1 energy when it attacks. Then I cast Dragon Campfire, discarding my hand to draw 3 new cards." He drew Crossfire Cyclone, Dragon Campfire, and Firespin Thorny.

"Thorny to the left, Nova Gift." There it was. Burnova appeared. Right on time! "Dropping Thorny for Burnnova. I got 7 life and gained an assault token. I use my Assault tokens effect, choosing the third effect to give all my cards +1 Crit this turn!"

Kasper grew nervous after looking to see that Elijah had 5 cards in hand. He had to have some way to fizzle attacks.

“Burnova attacks for 4! Power and penetrate to Melty”

“I go to 8”

“Burnova ability, Grabbing a second burnova. Now I link attack with Melty and Soul sword for 6, restanding Burnova.”

“I play Reboot!” Elijah declared. It was a spell that read ‘you may only cast this card when you would take damage, Counter: Flip a Coin, if Heads reduce damage to 0, if Tails gain 2 life’. If the coin showed tails, Kasper would win.

Elijah flipped, Tails. Elijah used his last Energy to reflip it. The coin seemed to move in slow motion as the two watched it spin in the air. The coin landed on the table with a deafening clink sound. Kasper and Elijah sucked in a breath. It was tails.

“I take 6, gain 2. Put me at 4.”

“Burnova for 4.”

Elijah revealed his hand. “No more fizzles.”

Kasper took an exhausted breath, that last coin flip decided it. “That is so exciting, you are right on that.” Kasper said with a breath of relief.

“Haha right?” Elijah said. “I love it, cause there are plenty of games where I get heads constantly. “Wanna sideboard before game 2?”

“What is a sideboard?”

“Hm?” Elijah said. “Oh, there are 12 cards outside your main deck, you can switch these cards with cards in your main deck between rounds, you can even change your gate master or Gate. it's a really handy mechanic that can turn a bad match up into a favorable one if you know what to expect.”

“I guess I'll have to build a side board.” Kasper responded.

Elijah blinked at him. “Wait, your just using the starter deck aren't you?”

Kasper nodded.

“No kidding, that is crazy! Well, Rylee and I got some extra Venus stuff we can send your way, neither of us play the deck, right Rylee?” Elijah said.

“Tomoe swings!” Rylee declared at Darryl.

“That's a game.” Darryl said in defeat. “Alright, ima go first this time.”

Elijah smiled then turned back. “She'll be fine with it. Hey, why don't we help ya build up the deck? We could all hang out and do some deck building.”

Kasper felt his cheeks glow red. “Yeah yeah that would be great!”

The second game felt a lot friendlier, with a lot more chit chat. But Kasper won it. Elijah talked to him about ways to improve the deck and tips to think about to improve his gameplay. Kasper was grateful for it, and the two exchanged phone numbers to talk more after the tourney. It made Kasper beyond happy that he had come today, he made a friend from school, someone his own age.

At the end of the round, Alger, Rylee, Winter, and Kasper won. They all had a few minutes to relax before the next round was announced.

Alger Versus Winter

Kasper Versus Rylee

Deigo Versus Elijah

Darryl versus Landon

Kasper couldn't believe his good luck, maybe he would talk with Rylee like he did Elijah, he hoped they could be friends. Yet Rylee stood hyping herself up again. He had to remember, he still needed to improve, if Alger beat Winter, and Kasper beat Rylee then Kasper was guaranteed to play against Alger in the last round. He felt determined to win this.