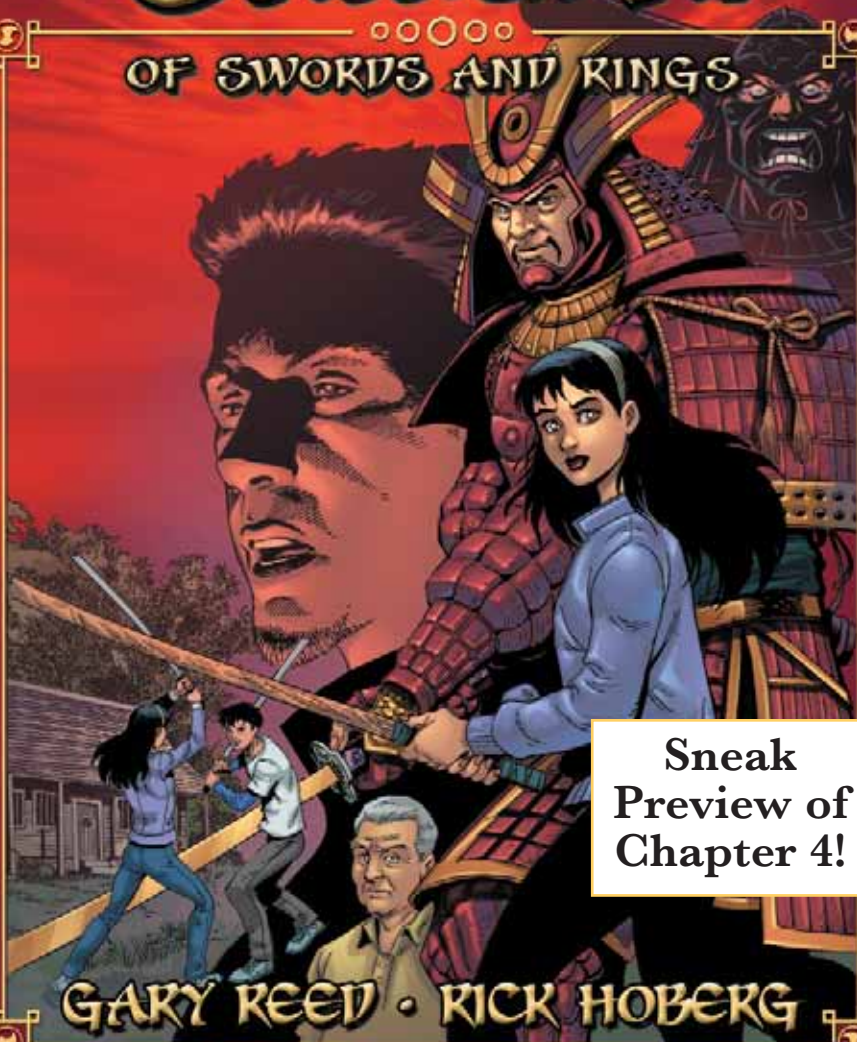


# SPIRIT OF THE SAMURAI

OF SWORDS AND RINGS



**Sneak  
Preview of  
Chapter 4!**

**GARY REED • RICK HOBERG**

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## CHAPTER FOUR

### Secrets Revealed

**I**t was very dark inside. The room had no electricity, and the walls were solid with no windows, but the roof was raised a few inches above the walls, and that allowed a little bit of light to come in. Kat saw the cloudy sky through this gap and through a large overhang in the roof that kept out the rain...most of the time.

Kat and David always called the dojo, “the barn,” since it was large and had a dirt floor covered with straw mats. There were only two doors, one that came from the dojo house and another door that led to Grandfather's temple. She and David were not allowed in the temple. She had never even seen the inside of it.



Now the temple door was open and David was inside. Grandfather was sure to come soon and she knew that he would be mad at David...and mad at her if she went in.

She walked along the wall until she reached the temple door. Holding her breath, she peeked inside. It was dark except for some lit candles. At the far end was an altar. On the walls to either side hung large paintings. Kat couldn't make them out at first, but as her eyes adjusted to the dark she saw that they were of samurai warriors in battle.

Kat snuck in, keeping an eye on David, who was lighting more candles at the altar. The wall behind her was adorned with many different kinds of weapons. On each side of the door were three sets of samu-





rai armor. Kat barely had time to wonder why Grandfather had all of this before David spoke.

“It's time you saw this,” David said without turning. “He has kept it from us for too long.”

Kat stepped forward, a little uneasy, as she wasn't sure why David wasn't mad. She asked, “Kept what from us?”

David waved his arm around the room. “This...all of this. It belongs to us, not to Grandfather.” David moved toward the altar as he turned to look at her. “It's ours. Can't you see that?”

”No.” Kat wanted to leave before Grandfather came.

David lifted a book that was lying on the altar. “It's all in here. Grandfather never told us, so I found out for myself.”

Kat inched closer, now more curious than scared. “I don't know what you're talking about.”

“We're special.” David sat down on the altar with the





book in his lap. "It's all in here."

David told Kat about what was in the book. It was a history of the great warriors of Japan called the samurai. Trained from youth, samurai were taught to fight with great swords called katanas, made by only the finest sword-smiths in the country. The samurai served their masters, the Shogun, and swore allegiance to their master for life.

He told her about the great battles between two major clans of Japan—the Toho Clan and the Clan of the Black Rings—hundreds of years ago. Both clans had samurai warriors, but the Clan of the Black Rings were said to be samurai warriors that had died and were brought back to life. They no longer served their Shogun, but the leader of the Black Rings, Lord Hiro. The four rings of Hiro were forged from a meteor that had crashed into his village. Hiro was trying to take over the other clans and kill all the samurai so that the risen warriors would serve only him.

The samurai of the Toho Clan, led by Lord Toho, were the only ones who could stand against the dark war-





riors of Hiro. Toho had the greatest sword-smith in the land, Niatato, make special swords that could slay the undead samurai. These katanas were made of a special metal called Heavensblade. Heavensblade was metal made of steel and gold flecks that fell from a comet. For years, Toho and his samurai warriors fought against Hiro's Clan of the Black Rings, but neither side could gain the advantage.

As the years passed, the brave samurai of Toho fell, as did the Clan of the Black Rings, until only Toho and Hiro were left. They stood on the Plain of Mimsota, each knowing it would be the end of one of them in final battle. If Toho fell, he knew that Hiro would bring him back from the dead to serve the evil Lord, and then Hiro would rebuild his undead army.

David stepped down from the altar and pointed to one large painting. "That shows the great battle between





Toho and Hiro. All the Heavensblade swords were destroyed except for Toho's. His sword was special because his blood was mixed in when they were forging the sword.”

Kat looked at the painting of two warriors with their great swords locked in combat. She guessed which one was Lord Hiro of The Clan of the Black Rings. His sword had four rings built into the handle, one for each of Hiro's fingers. His armor was black, and on the chest plate was an emblem of four interlocking rings. Toho wore armor of red and gold, and his katana, made of the Heavensblade metal, shone more like gold than silver.

Kat was thrilled by the story. She asked David excitedly, “What happened?”

David stared at the painting. He didn't have to look at the book to finish the story. “At the time of this battle, Hiro and Toho were old, and had lost most of their strength. Still, they fought for hours, each of them suffering severe wounds. Even the winner would probably not live to see another day.”





David explained that finally the two warriors just stood there, the life draining out of them. They had fought into the night, but neither could raise their sword to finish the battle. Both of them were dying. As they stood there, each breathing their last breath, they caught sight of a rare and stunning event, The Dragon's Tail, a brilliant comet blazing across the sky.

David turned from the picture. “Both of their swords began to glow, and they realized that their magic—the rings of Hiro and the Heavensblade metal of Toho's katana—were made of the same metal. The metal that fell from The Dragon's Tail comet.”

David clapped his hands. “Then the two swords were yanked from their hands and came together. People watching the battle said the two swords crossed and hung in mid-air, glowing first silver, then red, then gold, until with a flash, the swords fell to the ground. At the same time, Toho and Hiro dropped to the ground, both dead.”

David walked up to Kat. “That is what Grandfather





has been keeping from us.”

Kat looked with surprise at David. “It’s just a story, David.”

“Just a story! Don’t you get it?” David’s eyes flashed with anger as he pointed at the painting. “Toho! His sword belongs to us. He was our ancestor!”

Kat was shocked. “We’re Japanese?”

“Yes.”

Both Kat and David turned when they heard Grandfather’s voice as he entered the dojo. He told them, “You both have the blood of the greatest of the Japanese warriors in you.”

Kat looked at David, then at Grandfather. “But we don’t look Japanese...and you don’t either.”

“It’s a long story and for another day.” Grandfather approached the two of them. His face was stern. “The question should be, what are you two doing in here?”

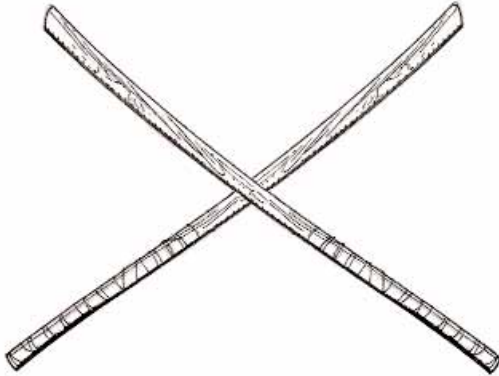
“No,” said David as he walked towards the altar. “It’s our turn for questions.”





Kat was stunned. David was sounding much older than his fourteen years and he spoke to Grandfather with a lack of respect. Kat didn't like it.

“I know everything, Grandfather,” David said as he



held up the book. “I read the chronicles.”

Grandfather smiled. “As Kat said, David, they're just stories.”

“No, they're not!” screamed David. “And I found more.” David stepped towards Grandfather and held up a small empty box. “I found the rings.”

Grandfather looked surprised. “What did you do





with them, David? Where are they?"

David held up his right hand. He was wearing three rings. "That's the secret, isn't it, Grandfather? The swords and the rings—they must be together."



Kat stood next to her Grandfather. She didn't like David's attitude, but Grandfather seemed more concerned about the rings than David's lack

of respect.

David glared at Grandfather. "When were you going to tell us? Were you even going to tell us?"

Grandfather held his hand towards David. "There is so much you don't know. It's dangerous. Please, give me the rings and I'll explain everything. I promise."

David walked towards his sister. He seemed calmer now. "Haven't you ever wondered, Kat, why we go through





all of this training? It's not just exercise. It's to prepare us.”

“Prepare us for what?” Kat moved closer to her Grandfather and looked at him. “What's David talking about?”

David jumped to the altar. Hanging above the altar were two crossed wooden swords. He went to grab one.

Kat felt Grandfather move away from her and towards David. She was shocked at how fast he moved.

“No, don't touch them!” Grandfather yelled as he rushed towards David.

David's hand stopped, but he didn't move away. “Why not, Grandfather? They're just wooden swords, like the ones we practice with.”

David held out his hand with the rings on it. “Don't come any closer.”

Grandfather stopped.

David looked at Kat. “See, Kat, they look like wooden swords, but once I touch one, the sword's magic will be restored. These are the swords of Toho and Hiro.”





“But this will only work if a blood relative touches it, and it has to be tonight, because it is when The Dragon's Tail returns.”

Grandfather was shocked. “How did you know that?”

Kat looked at Grandfather. “You mean the stories are true?”

“Oh they're true, aren't they, Grandfather?” David's voice sounded more like an accusation than a question.

“Yes, David, it's true that the comet will bring them back, but you don't understand everything. Please, don't—” Grandfather pleaded.

“Too late.” David put his hand over one of the crossed wooden swords. “I know that as soon as I grab the Heavensblade, I will have the power of Toho. It's why you trained me in sword fighting, so that I could use the power.”

As David placed his hand on the wooden hilt, he looked at Kat. “It's in our blood. The power belongs to us.”

David grabbed the wooden sword and raised it in the





air, waiting for the power to be unleashed.

Nothing happened.

Kat was relieved. And then she giggled. It was a nervous giggle, but she was so happy that all of this had just been nonsense, just stories.

But when she looked at Grandfather, she could tell he was even more scared.

David stood there, looking confused as he stared at the wooden sword. “I don't understand,” he said quietly.

David let the wooden sword drop from his hand as he looked at Grandfather. “It's the night of the Dragon's Tail.”

Grandfather spoke softly. “David, please, come here. I'll explain everything.”

Then David looked at the second sword on the wall and reached for it.

Grandfather rushed towards David again. “No!”

It was too late. As soon as David's hand touched the sword, Kat saw the weapon change from wood to gleaming





black metal. The sword glowed and electric bolts shot from it.

The bolts bounced around the room. Kat saw one hit Grandfather, and he crumpled to the floor. Then she saw a flash of light and something pushed





against her, like someone hitting her, and she felt dizzy. Kat dropped to her knees and felt herself losing consciousness.

As her eyes started to close, there was another flash of lightning and she saw David holding the wooden sword. Then she saw a samurai warrior in black armor holding a black katana. Then it went back to David with the wooden sword. With every flash it kept going back and forth.

The last thing Kat saw before she passed out was the handle of the black sword. It had three rings on it and inside the rings were David's fingers.

