

A Forgotten Wrath Preview

By ALR

Their swords clash as the two warriors stare into each other's eyes. Both light and grievous wounds cover their bodies and their blood decorates their leaf stained battlefield. The large tree above shields the warriors from the harsh rain around them. The sun has just set, and the moon is peeking over the horizon, anticipating the result of the duel. They share a small moment, unique only to them before their swords separate. They step away from each other and move away to get back into their respective stances. Wind blows past them, cooling their blood and sweat soaked bodies with cold droplets of rain. Their eyes have remained locked on each other the entire time, unwavering in their desire to watch their opponent. They continue their battle in their mind. Blow for blow, reading each other's movements from the faintest of twitches. These two know each other. They know how each other thinks and how they would react in any situation. Because of this, their mental battle is long and grueling, matching the physical one they've just fought just seconds before.

"Your form is as good as always, Yamato." The samurai on the left sputters. His blade glistens in the rising moonlight as he holds it above his head.

"Flattery won't spare you this time, Jin. Our 5 year battle ends tonight." The ronin responds. His blade held forward and low to the ground, with his arms crossed over each other.

"It has been 5 years, hasn't it.. To think it would be a ronin who would be my greatest rival."

"That's only because you look down on ronin. You've grown too accustomed to the luxuries you samurai have. You forgot how it feels to try."

Jin grunts, "I try every day Yamato. Peace is only a respite. My blade must always be ready." Jin shifts his stance and takes a step back to sheath his sword.

"Old habits die hard..." Yamato smiles. "I guess it would be fitting. That's always been your go to when you can't find a way to defeat your opponent." Yamato sheaths his blade as well. Neither moving a muscle. The wind stiffens. The crickets fall silent. Only the rain remains, gently falling to the ground. It's sound slowly fading from their thoughts. "Jin," Yamato's voice is softer, and calmer. "Do you remember when we met?"

"Everyday..." Jin's voice becomes firm. "The vow we made is the reason I remain to this day."

“Of course it is.” A tinge of anger slips out of Yamato’s voice. “And yet, you left me in that village.”

“You could have come with me. You were just as capable. If only you...” Jin’s voice trails. “We walk different paths now.”

“That’s right Jin. You are samurai. I am ronin, and your target.”

“You didn’t have to Yamato. If we had just talked this wouldn’t have happened.” Jin’s voice wavers for a split second. “We ate together, slept together, trained together. You were my brother.”

“But you were his samurai.” Yamato’s eyes grow cold, and he grips the hilt of his blade.

“There was still a chance. You know that.” Jin’s eyes show remorse. He knows he’s lying.

“The moment you drew your blade that night was the moment you cut the bond between us.”

“You know there was nothing I could do.” Another lie.

Yamato’s grip on his hilt tightens. “That’s why I said you’ve grown too accustomed to the world of the samurai. You claim you act as honorable warriors for your lords, but you’re nothing more than personal killers.”

With nothing more to say, they widen their stances, ready to pounce. Jin’s hand hovers over his hilt while Yamato ever so slightly lowers his chest. The rain then stops, and the night becomes completely silent. Then, a single drop falls off one of the leaves from the tree. It gently travels down, falling right in between the line of sight for the two warriors. As it falls just below their eye line, Yamato steps forward, rushing in for the kill. Jin holds firm, and as soon as Yamato steps within range, he grips his sword. At the last second, Jin finally steps in, and in an instant, both men draw their blade at blistering speed, each reaching the arch of their swing before the rain drop has time to hit the ground. A small wound appears on Jin’s chest, but he shrugs it off, as he wipes the blood of Yamato off of his sword and onto the sleeve of his kimono, and sheaths his blade. Yamato falls to the ground, having lost their exchange. Jin turns and looks down at his old friend. He kneels and rolls him over, only to see him gripping something in his hand. Yamato looks up at him and extends his hand outward. Jin reaches over and places his hand under Yamato’s, allowing him to drop what he was holding. What he sees immediately makes him tear up, and he looks over at his friend, who now lays dead on the ground. Jin takes one more look at the pendant in his hand and

opens it. Inside was a small note. After reading it, he sticks the pendant in the sash around his waist. He then takes the time to bury his friend, and after making a small prayer, walks away.

“That day he cut ties with his lord, and became a ronin himself. He would go on a killing spree, murdering all who incurred his wrath. The pendant that was given to him was the pendant of his wife. See Jin and Yamato were once attacked by bandits when they were children, but they were saved by a samurai that was nearby. That day, the two of them vowed to be samurai themselves.” The young man in an all white suit took a long drag of his cigarette. “However only one of them, Jin, would be recognized by the lord of their land. Before he officially became a samurai of this lord, he was sent to other lands to ‘test his skills’. But in reality, he was just a glorified assassin, hunting down those who the lord wanted killed. One night, while returning from completing said task, he was told that his wife was kidnapped and killed by a group of wandering ronin. Yamato was a part of this group and Jin was sent along with a few other samurai to cut them down. Yamato tried to explain to Jin that it was, in fact, Jin’s lord who was abusing the women of the territory that he controlled, and Jin’s wife became his most recent target of ‘affection’. She fled with some of the other women, but they were cut down by the very men Jin was with to hide this secret. Jin however, didn’t believe him. How could he? He had no proof. And the samurai who were with them saw the mutilated bodies of the women for themselves. Of course *they* were right, right?.....