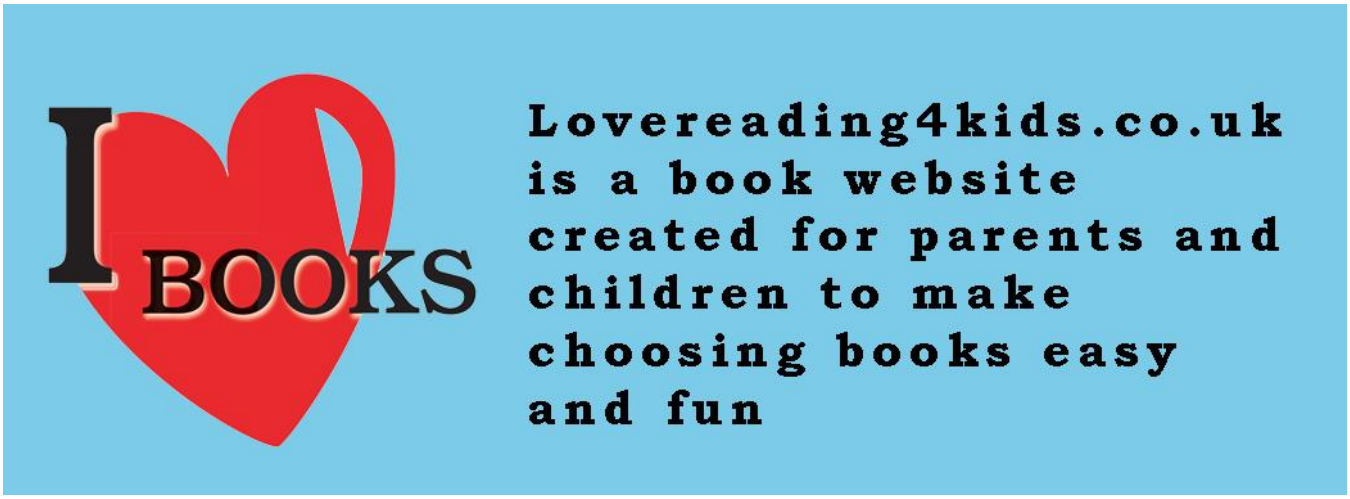


Opening extract from

Battle for the Shadow Sword

Written by

Adam Blade

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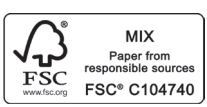
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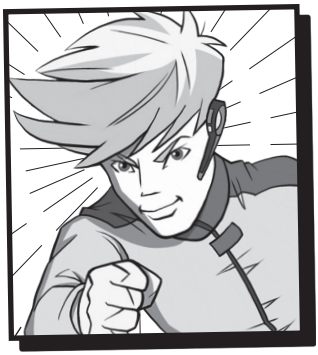


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MEET TEAM HERO ...



JACK

POWER: Super-strength
LIKES: Ventura City FC
DISLIKES: Bullies

RUBY



POWER: Fire vision
LIKES: Comic books
DISLIKES: Small spaces



DANNY

POWER: Super-hearing
LIKES: Pizza
DISLIKES: Thunder

... And Their Greatest Enemy

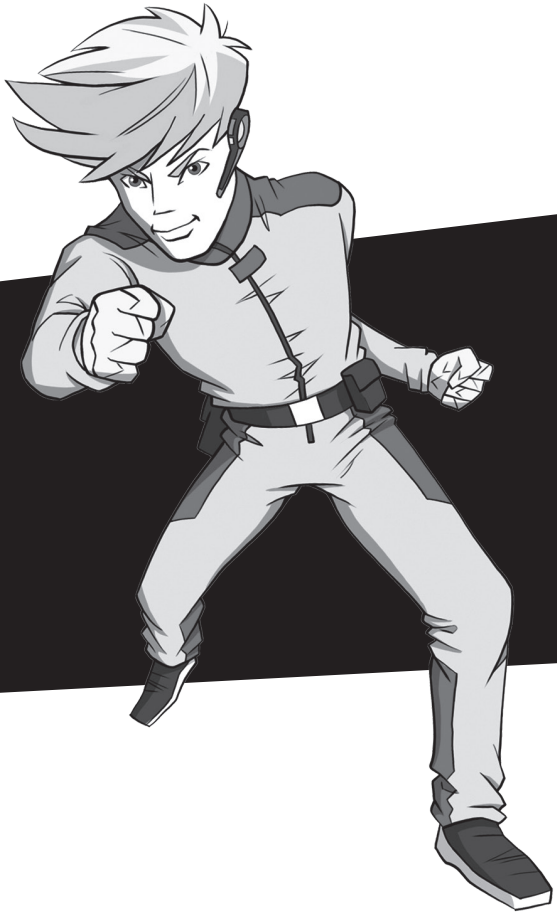


General Gore

Power: Brilliant warrior

Likes: Carnage

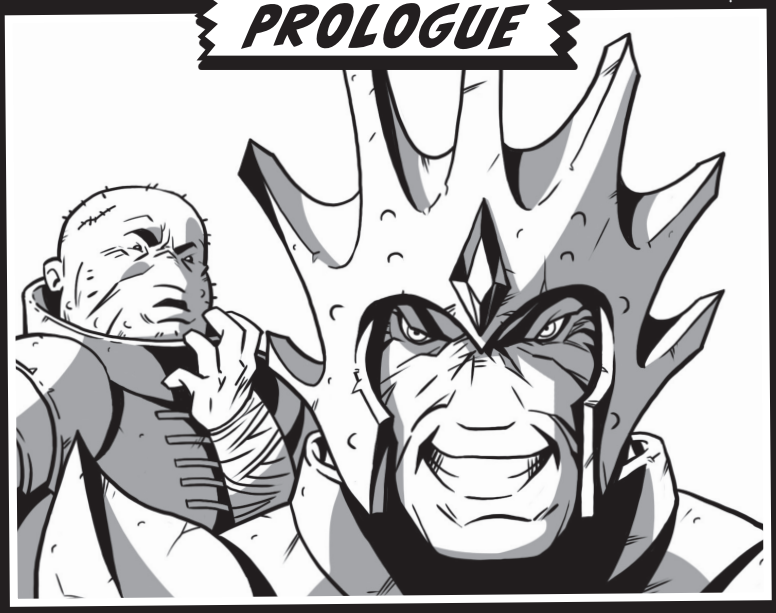
Dislikes: Unfaithful minions



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PROLOGUE

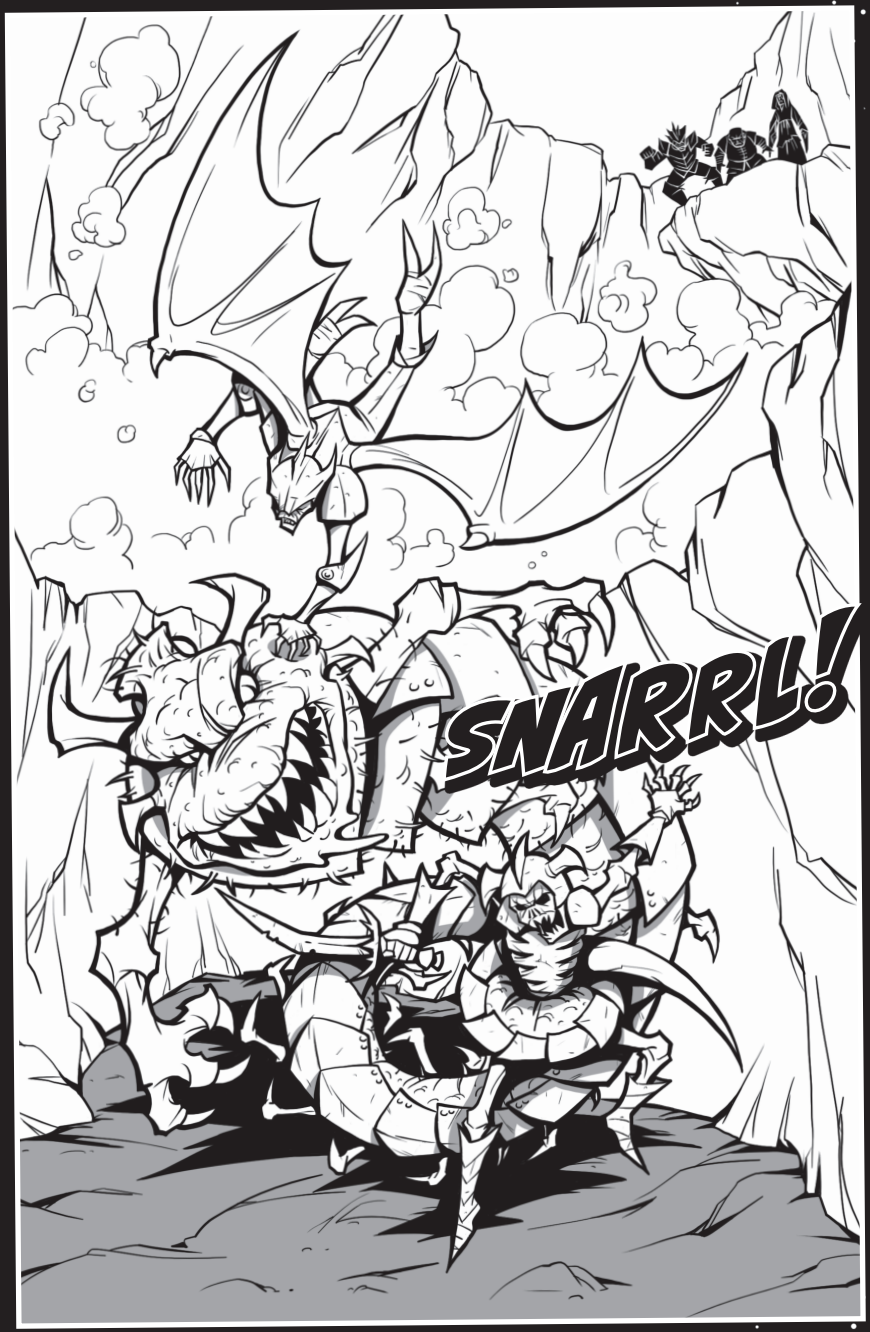


CLOUDS OF foul smoke filled the Great Cavern of Noxx. From the north wall, a river of lava fell, crashing into a fiery lake below. On a high viewing platform carved into a cliff, Bulk shifted in his leather tunic. He scratched his warty chin and watched his master smile cruelly.

"Training is going *perfectly*," said General Gore.

Two warriors circled a giant armoured centipede in a fighting pit below. One was a man with the wings of a huge bat. His hands had deadly sharpened claws, his feet ragged talons. The other fighter was a living skeleton armed with a curved sword.

As the skeleton lunged with his blade, the centipede's tail lashed and coiled around his middle. The crowd around the edges of the pit leaned in, chanting and shaking their fists as the centipede squeezed. But the bat soldier took his chance.


SNARRL!

He pounced, claws raised, landing on the centipede's head. The creature writhed, its shriek echoing around the cavern.

Bulk scratched his hairless scalp and shuffled up closer to his master. "General, sir, would it not be better to rest our troops? *Your* troops, I mean?"

General Gore turned, his black cloak whipping round. He fixed Bulk with blazing red eyes that could have melted rock. "Did I ask for your advice?" he snarled.

"N … n … no, my lord," said Bulk, quivering.

"You are wise, Master," hissed a voice

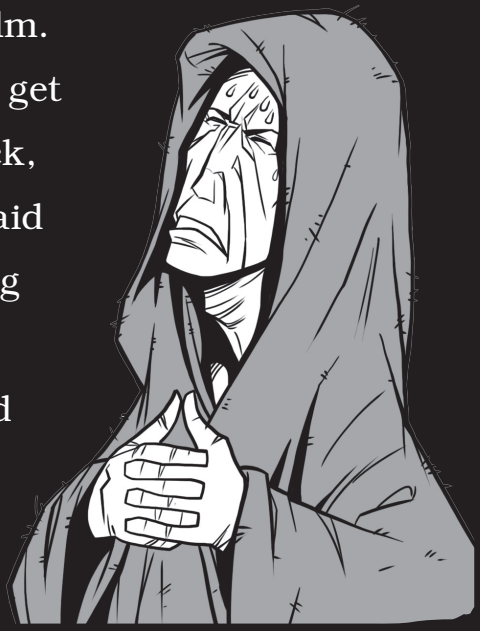
from the shadows. “How can you test their mettle properly unless they fight one another?”

Bulk shot a scowl at the other speaker. Smarm seemed almost to slide across the ground, stopping alongside General Gore with his hands clasped in front of him. He wore long robes of brown wool, his gaunt face barely visible under his hood. His hands glowed pale blue with magical energy.

“This time, we will not fail,” General Gore declared, driving one gauntleted fist into the palm of his other hand. “Their wretched world will fall at my feet.”

Bulk stared out across the vast cavern, where thousands of troops had gathered. Skeletons, bats and centipedes, all armed and ready to rise from Noxx on to the earth's surface — ready for vengeance against the human realm.

"And you can get your sword back, too, my lord," said Smarm, nodding towards the empty scabbard that hung at General Gore's waist.



Their master's face twisted in rage — he didn't like to be reminded of the lost Shadow Sword. Bulk was pleased to see a bead of sweat trickle down Smarm's temple.

"Yes, slave," the General said. "I *will* reclaim what is mine." He raised his arms and bellowed across the cavern. "Enough!"

Silence fell. Every warrior looked up at him.

"I have waited down here in the dark for a thousand years," Gore shouted. "Last time, my forces let me down. But you will *not* repeat that mistake."