

## Excerpt from *Shadow Blade* (Fantasy Novel)

Josiah Lebowitz

For a long time Milla remained silent then... “I thought I knew them...” she was trembling now but Geld couldn’t tell if it was from sadness or anger. Perhaps it was both. “I spent seventeen years in Caluri, I saw all the things Keen did for them, saw how he helped them, saw how much he loved the village... And then they all turn on him, just because of what one person said! Why would they do that to him? Why would they treat me any differently? I’ve done the same things he has. I’ve fought against The Empire, I’ve even killed people... So what if my reasons are just? So were Keen’s and that didn’t help him... I want to go back but, but... If they did that to me... I don’t think I could take it. I’m not strong like Keen...” For a moment she was startled as she felt Geld’s arm stretch across her shoulders but she did nothing to stop him. It felt good having him there, holding her...

“You’re stronger than you know.” the young man replied, hoping, praying, that he could give her the comfort she needed. “I’ve seen what you’ve done since you started traveling with us. Without you we never would have made it. And the most amazing thing is that this isn’t even your battle... I was trained to fight my entire life and now I do it to avenge the only home I ever knew. Keen was given the power and abilities he has solely for battle, he fights because it seems to be his destiny. We have to do this, it’s what we live for. You, you’re different... You were never trained to fight and no one asked you to risk your life time and time again. You left everything behind, put yourself in the most dangerous situations, just because a friend was in trouble. I admire you for that. I hope that, if I never need it, I’ll have the strength to do what you did.”

“But the villagers...”

“Who cares what they think? People make mistakes. And even if they still believe in The Emperor’s lie it doesn’t matter, that just makes them fools. Keen believes in you, I believe in you, and so do all the people you’ve helped and saved.”

“You really mean that?” Milla looked up, a hopeful smile on her tearstained face.

“Of course.” Geld pulled her closer as, for the first time, he realized just how much she meant to him. “How could I lie to the girl I love?”

“You want to know something?” she whispered, her lips nearly touching his ear. “I love you too.”

As the two embraced on the empty beach they no longer cared about their pasts, their futures, or even the upcoming battle. They knew that, as long as they had each other, they would be ready to face anything.