

Extract from chapter two of Shadows (Part two)

It was a chilly Sunday afternoon and she'd fallen asleep while reading the last chapter of Jane Eyre. She still held the book in her hand when she was suddenly woken out of her dreams by something tickling her face. She brushed it away reluctant to wake up. Opening her eyes she felt familiar hands stroking her hair. James was lying on his side, his hands suddenly entwined in hers holding her tightly. He bent over and kissed her softly on the cheek.

'Sorry to wake you, you looked so peaceful,' he whispered in her ear.

She moved to kiss him, but he held her firmly in the same position. 'Stay still. I want to ask you something and I need you to listen before answering or getting distracted.'

She liked distractions and not seeing him for a couple of days found it difficult to concentrate on anything else. She closed her eyes again feeling his warmth, as she lay securely in his arms. 'Fine, if you insist. What would you like to ask me?'

He whispered in her ear, making her body tingle with the sensation. 'You know I love you more than anything or anyone else in the world...'

Jo nodded wishing he would let her turn over to look at him but he held her tighter.

'...I know we're young and you're still at school, but I can't help wanting to be with you ... I don't want to wake up without youI want to come home to you each night... I need you to be with me and never leave.'

Jo opened her eyes, wide awake now realising how serious his tone was. She squeezed his hand, 'James, we've already discussed this. You know we can't live together. It would upset Peter, Sarah and Daniel too much. They really want me to finish school first.'

'I don't want to just live together... I want to be with you... always... officially.'

He finally let Jo turn over so she could see the seriousness in his eyes. She put her arms around his neck and drew him close so their lips almost touched.

He locked eyes with hers, ‘Jo... I want to marry you.... I love you. Will you marry me?’

There was no need for champagne or roses. The only important parts were the words and the genuine and sincere way he said them. She had no hesitation seeing his face and the loving way he looked at her.

‘Yes,’ she said softly, before they kissed tenderly, sealing their commitment to each other forever...