

First Chosen by the Dragon

Dreams Beyond Broken Wings — Timothy Campbell 1

[Evelyn's POV] I make myself small on the edge of the sofa while Cassandra holds court in the center of the room. She's telling our parents about training again, voice bright with excitement, a dagger dancing between her hands as she acts out her victory. Our parents watch her like she's the sun and they've been living in darkness. "—and I dodged at the last second, right under his arm!" Mother clasps her hands together, beaming. Father rises to stroke Cassandra's hair, pride radiating from him. Her fiery red locks catch the light as she preens under his attention. "You are so talented, Cassandra," Mother says. "You're everything the future ruler of House of Blue Dragon should be." "Cassandra has such natural speed and skill," Father agrees. His gaze flicks to me—long enough for the warmth to drain from his face—then back to my sister. "She was born to be a leader." I've heard variations of this my whole life. Cassandra is gifted. Cassandra is special. Cassandra is everything I'm not. She's always been the golden child—beautiful, fierce, impossible to ignore. Her copper-red hair demands attention wherever she goes. Her sharp eyes command respect without effort. I'm the shadow she casts. Pale where she's vibrant. Silent where she's bold. Forgettable. "Those are just basic drills," I mutter before I can stop myself. "Anyone could do that. Especially with so much training." Silence crashes over the room. Father turns slowly, expression darkening. "No, Evelyn. It takes talent. Real talent. Maybe you should try harder. Learn from your sister." Cassandra drifts toward me, her smile sweet as poison. "Maybe if you weren't always lost in your daydreams, you'd actually accomplish something." Our parents laugh along with my sister and I feel tears prick at my eyes, and one escapes before I can stop it. "Right," I whisper, and stand up to leave without another word. "My daughter," I hear Father pleading behind me. "You are the best thing that had ever happened to us. Our future is with you, my dear Cassandra." This is how it always goes. Cassandra shines while I shrink. She learned early that she could do anything to me without consequence—throw stones at my head during training, then scream and blame me when our parents arrived. They believed her, of course. They always believe her. Mother slapped me that day. Father banned me from the training grounds entirely. I still don't understand why she hates me so much. Maybe she doesn't need a reason. You're worthless. No one will ever want you. You're a threat. You're a monster. You're a freak. All those words were following me for my whole life. For so long I got used to them, they've become a part of me. [www.no\(v\)E\(1\)w\(0\)rm.com](http://www.no(v)E(1)w(0)rm.com) Later that night, I slipped outside to escape the suffocating walls and stare up at the sky. [www.noVe\(1\)w\(0\)rm.com](http://www.noVe(1)w(0)rm.com)

wOrM.Com Then I see two dragons soar across the stars—a black one with wings spread wide, and a red one close behind, scales glinting in the moonlight. They move like they own the sky, wild and free. “Beautiful,” I breathe. For a moment, watching them, I don’t feel small. I feel like I could be up there too, leaving everything behind. “Someday,” I whisper, “I won’t be alone either.” *www.(n)(o)veILWORM.com* I stay until they vanish beyond the mountains, then return to my room with something strange sitting in my chest. Hope. Because no matter how much my family despises me, there’s one thing they can’t take away. Kael. My betrothed. We’ve been promised to each other a year ago—an arrangement between our families, sealed even when Cassandra decided she wanted everything that was mine. That was a hope for the future of The House of Blue Dragon, if not for the whole territory of Mintia—elder daughter of the Leader and the only son of my father’s consort. The strongest warrior. The most promising child in our House.

I’ve known him most of my life. He trained alongside us when we were young, back before I was banned from the practice grounds. Even then, he was different. He never mocked me. Never joined in when others laughed. And soon we’ll be married, and I’ll finally have someone on my side. Someone bound to me by something stronger than my sister’s whims. He’s my future. My happiness. I hold onto that thought for the whole week, waking each morning thinking of him. When the day of the gathering arrived, the courtyard buzzed with future dragon riders and leaders in their finest clothes, talking and laughing in the afternoon sun. Half of Mintia seems to be here. When they notice me hovering near the entrance, their smiles twist before they turn away. Whispers follow me like smoke. I straightened my shoulders and walked forward, determined to look worthy. Today I did my best to look appropriate—braided my silver hair and pulled it over one shoulder, put on my only formal uniform, the blue coat with the high collar and buttons all the way up. Fastened the leather straps over my shoulders and tightened the belt at my waist, made sure everything sat straight. I chose the black leather trousers and tucked them into my tall boots, lacing them carefully. I knew others were watching as I passed them, but I kept my gaze forward. I scan the crowd, heart pounding, searching for that familiar face—and find him near the center of the gathering. Kael looks so handsome. So sure of himself. My feet move before I can think and take a step forward. But then Cassandra appears at his side, sliding her arm through his like she belongs there. She whispers something that makes him chuckle, and his arm wraps around her waist. Possessive. Familiar. Like they’ve done this a hundred times. I stop breathing. “Kael?” He glances up and looks at me the way you look at something unpleasant you’ve stepped in. “Evelyn.” He sighs, like my name exhausts him. “What do you want now?” “I just... I thought...” “You thought what?” He raises an eyebrow, and a few people nearby snicker. “Spit it out.” Cassandra’s eyes find mine, bright with triumph. “Oh, Evelyn. Didn’t anyone tell you? Well, we were just discussing our future. We’ve decided to get married. This

union will lead us forward together. Your engagement is off.” “What? The ground tilts beneath me. “No... You can't. He's mine.” “Things change,” Kael cuts in, his voice flat. “I asked your father to release me from the arrangement. He agreed.” “But... you were kind to me. You—” “I was being polite.” His voice turns cold, any pretense of warmth stripped away. “I felt sorry for you, Evelyn. That's all it ever was.” The words hit like a blade between my ribs. “I never wanted this engagement,” he continues, louder now. “Your father forced it on my family. Now that there's a better option, why would I settle?” Someone laughs. Then someone else. The sound spreads through the courtyard like fire. “Let me be clear, dear sister.” Cassandra laughs, soft and cruel. “Nothing here is yours. Did you actually believe that someone like him would ever want you? A spineless freak?” “Look at her,” Kael adds, shaking his head with a smirk. “She really thought she had a chance. Pathetic.” The courtyard blurs around me. Everyone is watching now—every future rider and leader of Mintia, witnessing my humiliation. Some look away in secondhand embarrassment. Most don't bother hiding their amusement. I thought I had one thing. One person who was mine. An engagement my sister couldn't steal. I was wrong. My own father gave him away. The kindness was a pity. The smiles were an obligation. And now my betrothed stands with his arm around my sister while everyone watches and laughs.

Cedella is a passionate storyteller known for her bold romantic and spicy novels that keep readers hooked from the very first chapter. With a flair for crafting emotionally intense plots and unforgettable characters, she blends love, desire, and drama into every story she writes. Cedella's storytelling style is immersive and addictive—perfect for fans of heated romances and heart-pounding twists.