

First Chosen by the Dragon

7-9 minutes

Dreams Beyond Broken Wings — 101

Feb 25, 2026[Draven's POV]The southern walls are solid. Three generations of lords reinforced them against sea assault — catapult platforms sunk into bedrock, cliff batteries angled to cover overlapping fields of fire, harbor chains thick enough to stop a warship dead in the narrows. Whatever Aldric throws at the harbor, it will cost him. The east is the problem. Riven walks beside me along the ridge path, his eyes scanning the coastline below. The Shattered Coast stretches east from the compound — a jagged maze of rock and current, reefs like teeth breaking the surface at low tide. For generations, this approach has protected itself. No naval chart marks it as passable, and no commander has ever tried. Until now. "The funneling point is here." I stop at the eastern gate — a narrow cut in the ridge where the coastline compresses any approaching force into a corridor barely fifty yards wide. "If they come through the Shattered Coast, this is where the terrain works for us. Fifty yards of kill zone, high ground on both flanks." Riven crouches and studies the approach. "The problem is the beach below. If longboats land before we can position, they'll have cover behind the rock formations. Once they're in the rocks, dislodging them becomes house-to-house fighting without the houses." "Which is why we don't let them land. I want fortifications at the gate — palisades, archer positions, anything that turns this corridor into a death sentence for anyone walking through it." "How long do we have?" "Four weeks, maybe less." "I can have palisades up in two. Archer platforms in three, and the concealed positions along the ridge are already occupied — my flanking force has been sleeping in the scrub for a week." "How are they holding?" "Cold, irritated, and sharp. Exactly how I want them." He straightens and surveys the ridge. "If the longboats come, they'll hit the beach at the tidal window. My force drops from the ridge onto their flank before they reach the gate. Between the palisade in front and my fighters behind, we turn the beach into a box." **www.Novelworm.com** "And if there are more than two hundred?" "Then we hold the box until you can redirect from the harbor, which means the harbor defense needs to function without you for at least two hours." "Theron can hold the harbor." "He can hold anything. That man was born with a fortification in each hand." Riven kicks a loose stone off the ridge and watches it tumble toward the surf below. "Speaking of permanent arrangements. The consort bond." I glance at him. "What about it?" "I've heard enough about the politics from Sera and Corwin and every warrior with an opinion and a mouth. I'm asking something different." He meets my eyes. "Are you happy?" The question

catches me off guard: not the word — the sincerity behind it. Riven deflects everything with humor, handles vulnerability the way he handles blades — keeping it at arm's length, always moving. For him to ask directly, without a joke wrapped around it, means he actually wants the answer. "I'm terrified," I say. "Of losing someone again." The words come out before I can shape them into something less exposed. "Aldric isn't what keeps me awake. The fleet, the assault, the tactical problems — I know how to fight those. What I don't know is how to stand next to someone I chose in front of three hundred people and survive it if the world takes her the way it took Lyanna." Riven is quiet. The wind pulls at his hair. Below us, the waves break against the Shattered Coast, white spray exploding against dark rock. "Lyanna would have liked her," he says. The grief that surfaces is old and familiar, but its edges have worn smooth. Not the sharp thing that used to cut me when I breathed — something softer, rounder, carrying warmth alongside the ache. Lyanna's face in my memory has lost its accusatory edge. She looks at me the way she did in the mornings, when the light was gentle and neither of us had anywhere to be.

"She would have called me an idiot for waiting this long." I say. "You are an idiot, but you got there." We walk in silence along the ridge. The compound spreads below us — stone and timber, torches guttering at the gates, the organized chaos of a household preparing for siege. My household, the one Evelyn chose when choosing meant death. Riven breaks the silence, and his voice carries a different quality — lighter, almost careful. "Mira's been training with the flanking force." "I know, Sera assigned her." "She's good. Fast hands, smart footwork, and adapts to formation changes quicker than fighters twice her experience." He's studying the horizon with unusual intensity. "We've been drilling together. She has a talent for reading the angles." "Evelyn's friend Mira, the red-haired one?" "I know which one she is, Draven." I raise an eyebrow. Riven catches the look and his jaw tightens. "It's professional. She's in my unit, and I'm assessing her capabilities." "You're assessing her capabilities." "In a tactical context." He clears his throat. "The point is, the flanking force is shaping up well. Morale is solid, and the eastern ridge positions—" [www.ñovêlWôrM.CoM](#) "Riven, you said her name three times in thirty seconds." "I'm providing a personnel assessment. Her name is relevant to it." [www.ñóVêlwôrM.Com](#) "Your ears are red." "It's the wind." He turns sharply toward the ridge path. "We should check the northern sight lines. I want to confirm the signal relay positions before—" "Riven! Be careful," I say. "War is a bad time to start something." "I'm not starting anything. I told you, it's tactical." He walks ahead, and the set of his shoulders tells me the conversation is over. But the seed is planted — in his step, in the way he said her name, in the deflection so transparent it confirmed everything he was trying to deny. I file it away. My brother's heart is his own business, as long as it doesn't compromise the eastern flank. Footsteps behind us, fast. Sera appears at the ridge path, and the expression on her face drains the warmth from the afternoon. [www.ñovêlWôrM.CoM](#) She's white — not pale,

white. The color of someone carrying information that rewrites everything. “The spy has been caught,” she says. “It’s a servant in the administrative wing, recruited through the dead drop by a Mintian operative who left the compound before we sealed it after the summit.” “How?” “Money and ideology, family connections to a minor house allied with Mintia. They’ve been active for weeks — long enough to transmit everything that passed through the administrative document flow.” “Everything.” “Every patrol schedule, supply assessment, and defensive analysis, including the eastern approach briefing.” She meets my eyes, and her voice drops. “They know about the eastern defenses, Draven. Everything we’ve built in the last month — Aldric has it.” The wind off the Shattered Coast cuts through my shirt. Riven has turned back, his face tight. Four weeks until the fleet arrives, and the enemy already knows exactly where we’re standing. 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.

First Chosen by the Dragon

7-9 minutes

Dreams Beyond Broken Wings — 102

Feb 25, 2026[Evelyn’s POV]I’m walking the eastern wall when Kael finds me. The guards track his approach but don’t intervene — he’s a diplomatic detainee with limited movement privileges, permitted access to the courtyard and certain common areas under escort. The escort hangs back twenty paces, close enough to watch, far enough to give the illusion of privacy. He looks terrible. The confident jaw has eroded, bone more prominent beneath skin that’s lost its color. Shadows under his eyes like bruises. Thinner — the broad shoulders diminished, a man whose body is consuming itself from the inside. “Evelyn.” “Kael.” We stand on the wall with the sea wind between us. The last time we spoke was in Mintia, the night he told me the betrothal was off and he’d chosen Cassandra. He couldn’t meet my eyes then. He meets them now, and what I see in them is worse than cowardice — it’s the particular devastation of a man who finally understands what he did. “I need to tell you something,” he says. “You won’t want to hear it from me, but you need to hear it before it’s too late.” “Talk.” “The fleet is coming, but it is a diversion — the real assault comes through the Shattered Coast. A secondary force of two hundred elite warriors in shallow-draft longboats, approaching through the eastern channel during the spring tide window.” My pulse kicks. This

confirms what the captured spy revealed, but hearing it from Kael — from inside Cassandra’s operation — carries a different weight. “Cassandra has been communicating with your father through a coded channel. The cipher is hers. She’s been feeding intelligence since the first week of confinement.” *Ww(w).(n)ovê(l)wσRm.č(o)M* “We know about the channel. The spy has been caught.” “But Cassandra’s direct communication with Aldric goes through a different relay — one the spy didn’t know about. Separate chain, separate drop point. Kael-to-sentry-to-kitchen-corridor. The sentry doesn’t know what he carries.” New information, and my hands tighten on the parapet stone. “There’s more. The Shattered Coast pilot — a smuggler from the Strait of Callos — has already run preliminary reconnaissance. The tidal window aligns in roughly five weeks. The secondary force will position in advance, concealed among the outer reef islands, and move through the channel on the tide.” “Numbers?” “Two hundred confirmed. Your father’s personal guard and veterans from the Border Campaigns.” He pauses. “And your father is coming personally.” *wŴ(w).ñoVé(Ŵ)ormm.©Om* The wind catches my hair. Father on the water, commanding. The man who planned my death and held Cassandra’s hand in a mountain cave and told her she was the strong one — crossing the sea to finish what he started. “Why are you telling me this?” Kael’s jaw works. His hands hang at his sides, and I notice they’re trembling — a fine vibration that he can’t control, the body betraying what the face is trying to hold together. “I can’t undo what I did.” His voice is halting, stripped of the easy confidence I once loved in him. “Leaving you, standing beside your sister while she planned your destruction, pretending I didn’t see what your family was doing because acknowledging it would have meant giving up everything Cassandra offered.” He swallows. “I watched them hurt you for years. I told myself it wasn’t my concern. That was a lie I chose because the truth was expensive and I wasn’t willing to pay.” “Kael—” “I know what I am to you — the man who chose the easier sister and lived with it until the cost caught up. I’m not here to be forgiven.” *www.NoVellwo(r)m.c©m*

His eyes are red-rimmed and steady. “But I can stop helping the people who did this to you. I can give you what I know and let you use it to survive what’s coming. That’s the only currency I have left.” I study the man I was once betrothed to. He abandoned me when Cassandra offered something easier, and the betrayal carved a wound I carried across the sea. I don’t hate him anymore, and that surprises me. The hatred burned out somewhere between the sea caves and the training yard. What’s left isn’t forgiveness — it’s the absence of enough space to carry old grievances when the new ones demand everything I have. “Thank you for the intelligence,” I say. No comfort, no reconciliation, no bridge built across the gap between what we were and what we are. Just the transaction — information exchanged, debt unpaid, two people who shared a history standing on a wall with nothing left to share. Kael nods — the nod of a man who expected nothing more. He turns and walks back toward his escort, steps carrying the heaviness of someone who emptied his pockets and found them lighter

but not cleaner. I don't watch him go. I'm already moving. Draven is in the council chamber with maps spread across the table, revising positions with Theron. He looks up when I enter, reads my face, and dismisses Theron with a glance. "Kael came to me. He's been inside Cassandra's operation — the coded channel, the communication with my father. He gave me everything." I lay out the intelligence, including my father's personal presence on the flagship. Draven's expression darkens with each detail. "The secondary force — timing, approach route, numbers. It confirms what the captured spy revealed." "But Kael adds detail the spy didn't have. The advance force will stage behind the outer reef islands before moving through on the tide. And my father's guard forms the core of the assault — his best fighters." "Elite warriors through a concealed approach while we're engaged at the harbor." Draven pulls a fresh map toward him and begins marking positions. "We need to adjust Riven's flanking force. If they know our eastern defenses — and they do — the original ambush positions are compromised. Riven repositions to secondary concealment. New angles, new timing." "Can it be done in four weeks?" "It has to be." He's already writing orders, his pen moving with the controlled urgency of a man redrawing a battle plan against a shrinking clock. "Draven, Cassandra's confinement... Are the guards sufficient? If she's been communicating this whole time—" "They have doubled since we caught the spy. Four-hour rotations, no gaps. She's contained." "She still managed to run a coded intelligence operation from inside a locked room, so don't underestimate her." He meets my eyes. "I don't, but the room is secured. The channel is dead, and whatever she built, it's dismantled now." The logic is sound. But through the bond, Aspis stirs. Her presence rises from background warmth into sharp focus, and her voice carries the particular vibration she uses when something ancient and instinctive is pressing at the edges of her awareness. "The sister has been working in her cage. She is patient, and patience is the most dangerous thing a caged creature can possess." I stand in the council chamber, watching Draven redraw his battle lines, and the unease coils in my gut like a living thing. Cassandra is patient. In a woman raised to fulfill a prophecy, patience is a weapon no guard rotation can defend against. 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.

First Chosen by the Dragon

7-9 minutes

Dreams Beyond Broken Wings — 103

Feb 25, 2026The weather turns wrong. Storms gather on the western horizon in formations that don't belong to any season. The clouds move in spirals, rotating around a center that shifts position every hour. The sea beneath churns in directions that contradict the current — water pulling east while the tide runs west. Every dragon in the compound feels it. Khaira refuses to roost. She circles the compound in tight, agitated patterns, her wingbeats carrying a resonance that vibrates in my chest even from the ground. The two minor house dragons — smaller beasts bonded to visiting riders — snap at their handlers with a viciousness that sends one man to the healer with a gash across his forearm. Aspis is the worst. The white dragon stands on the sea cliff like a statue. She hasn't moved in hours — wings folded, body rigid, violet eyes locked on the storms with a focus that borders on trance. Through the bond, images flood faster than I can process. Ancient skies filled with shadows that move like living things. Dragons that haven't existed for centuries screaming warnings into a void that swallows sound. A presence behind the darkness, vast enough to blot out stars, patient enough to wait centuries between judgments. The Watcher — not arriving, because it's been here, but watching from a distance that makes measurement meaningless, the way the ocean watches the shore. Something has drawn it closer. The convergence of white and black, the approaching war or the prophecy reaching its tipping point. "It is almost here," Aspis says. "In the way winter arrives — slowly, then all at once, and then the world is different." I find Thalissa in the lower archives. She's not reading — she's standing in the center of the room with her palm flat against the floor, her eyes closed, her cane abandoned on the table. The expression on her face when she opens her eyes is something I haven't seen from her before: fear, unfiltered and undisguised. "You feel it," I say. "The ancient nests beneath this compound have reactivated. Dragon roosts that have been dormant for centuries — the subsonic vibrations are resonating through the foundation stones. I've been feeling it since dawn." She straightens and retrieves her cane. "The storms?" "Aspis has been staring at them for hours. Through the bond, she's showing me things I can barely process. Ancient dragons, ancient skies, something vast moving behind the weather." "The Watcher is closing the distance. I was afraid of this." "You told Draven it watches and judges. What happens when it stops watching and starts acting?" She paused, searching for something before she spoke again. "Sit down, Evelyn." "I don't want to sit down. Give me answers." Thalissa studies me. Then she pulls a chair from the reading table and sits herself, folding her hands on her cane. "The Watcher isn't just observing anymore. The convergence of factors — white and black dragons bonded in the same territory, a prophecy reaching resolution, a war bringing the two bloodlines into direct conflict — has triggered something I've only read about in accounts from the Seraphine era. The Watcher is positioning itself for judgment." "On what?" **W.ñ@ve(l) WøŘm.Com** "Whether the cycle breaks or continues. That's all it cares about — the pattern:

white and black converge, and power builds. The riders either break the cycle of destruction or they feed it. If the cycle breaks, the Watcher departs. The power stabilizes, and the dragons and their riders coexist.”“If it doesn’t break?”“WŴW.novEL(w)ORM.čom“Destruction. The dragon bonds themselves destabilize. The power that connects rider to dragon turns inward, consuming both. In the Seraphine era, the collapse killed both riders, drove their dragons to madness, and shattered the Alliance for a generation.”

She pauses.“And the accounts suggest that was a mild judgment. The Watcher is capable of worse.”“What does the cycle continuing look like, specifically? What is the pattern it’s watching for?”Thalissa holds my gaze.“One sister kills the other out of hate. That’s what the cycle has always been — violence answering violence, generation after generation. The Watcher doesn’t care about armies or politics. It watches the sisters, whether the stronger one chooses to perpetuate the killing or end it.”The words land in my chest with a weight that compresses my lungs.“I have to face Cassandra not to fight her, but to break the pattern. To be the stronger sister by refusing to answer her violence with mine.”“That’s my reading of the prophecy’s intent, yes.”“And if Cassandra comes at me with a blade and the absolute conviction that the prophecy demands my death?”Thalissa’s expression doesn’t change, but something shifts behind her eyes — the particular grief of a scholar watching a tragedy she’s studied for decades approach the people standing in front of her.“You’ll have to find a way to break the cycle while someone is trying to kill you. I didn’t say it would be easy. It is necessary.”The archive feels smaller than it did when I entered — the walls pressing in, the weight of centuries of records and prophecies and failed attempts bearing down on the stone.“She won’t listen,” I say. “You understand that? Cassandra has spent years believing the prophecy demands my death. Every mechanism of her life has been built around the certainty that killing me saves her house. I can’t talk her out of that in the middle of a battle.”“No, you probably can’t.”WŴW.novEL(w)ORM.co(m)“Then how do I break a cycle when the other person in it doesn’t know it needs breaking?”Thalissa is quiet for a long time. The subsonic vibration hums through the floor beneath our feet — the ancient nests resonating, the dragons stirring, the world shifting on an axis that was set in motion centuries before either of us was born.“I don’t know,” she says finally. “Seraphine didn’t find a way. Every account says she tried to reason with the other rider and failed. The cycle consumed them both.”“That’s not encouraging.”“It’s meant to be honest.” She meets my eyes. “But Seraphine didn’t have what you have either. She didn’t have a consort bond with the Black Dragon lord or friends willing to sit across from her in a mess hall when the world said they shouldn’t.”The reference to Mira tightens something in my throat.“Find the way Seraphine couldn’t,” Thalissa says. “That’s all I can tell you.”WŴW.novEL(w)ORM.cóml leave the archives. The corridor is dim, the storm light filtering through narrow windows casting everything in shades of bruised purple. Through the bond, Aspis sends a steady pulse — not comfort or encouragement, but

resolve. The cold, clear certainty of a creature that has faced this before, in other lives, through other bonds, and knows what it costs. Cassandra is coming to kill me. She will not listen, so I have to find another way, before the fleet arrives, her cage opens, and the prophecy resolves in blood or silence. The storms spiral closer, and the compound trembles beneath my feet. 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.

First Chosen by the Dragon

8-10 minutes

Dreams Beyond Broken Wings — 104

Feb 25, 2026[Draven's POV]The war council fills the chamber for the last time before the fleet arrives. Every seat is taken. Sera and Theron at the flanks, Riven standing at the map, and Torren and the senior warriors lining the walls. Evelyn beside me, silver hair braided back from her face in the warrior's plait Seren taught her. "Here's what we know," I say. "The southern fleet is a feint. Forty ships bearing down on the harbor to pin our defenses and draw every eye west." I tap the map at the Shattered Coast. "The real assault comes here. Two hundred elite warriors in longboats, threading the eastern channel at dawn during the spring tide. They'll stage behind the outer reef islands and move through when the water clears the rocks." "Aldric's personal guard," Sera adds. "Veterans, hand-selected, not conscripts." Riven takes over. "My flanking force has repositioned to secondary concealment along the eastern ridge. The original positions were compromised by the intelligence leak, so we've shifted north — new angles, new terrain, same killing principle." He traces the approach with his finger. "When the longboats commit to the beach, we hold. Let them land, form up, and start moving toward the gate. Then we hit their flank from the ridge and funnel them into the corridor." "The eastern gate becomes the kill zone," Theron says. "Exactly. Fifty yards wide, palisades on both sides, archer platforms at elevation. Anyone who makes it past Riven's flanking force walks into a corridor of crossfire." "And the southern fleet?" Maret asks. "We hold the harbor defenses with the main garrison. Cliff batteries, harbor chains, catapult positions — everything stays manned. The fleet has to believe we've taken the bait." I look around the table. "If the south holds and the east holds, we win. If either breaks, we're fighting on two fronts with half the numbers we need." The room absorbs this. Warriors exchanging glances,

running calculations, weighing odds. The particular silence of soldiers who've heard the plan and are deciding whether it's enough. "There's one more element," I say. *www.novelworm.com* The room focuses. "Evelyn and I will fly. Khaira and Aspis — together, providing aerial support over the eastern approach and drawing the fleet's attention from the southern engagement." The ripple moves through the room like wind through tall grass. Heads turn and eyes widen. Torren's scarred face goes still. Black and white dragons flying together. Every person in this room grew up on stories of the last convergence — the destruction, the madness, the Alliance shattered. *www.novelworm.com* Now I'm proposing they do it deliberately, in combat, over the heads of people they're trying to protect. "The tactical advantage is significant," Sera says into the silence. "No one alive has faced dual dragon combat. The fleet won't have doctrine for it. The psychological impact alone could break their formation before the first catapult fires." "And if the dragons don't cooperate?" Theron asks. "They will," Evelyn says. "Aspis and Khaira have been sharing territory for months. The bond between riders reinforces coordination through the dragons." "You've tested this?" "We've drilled formations flying over the eastern water for the past week. Khaira takes high position, and Aspis takes low. The crossfire pattern covers twice the area of a single dragon pass." The room digests this. The strategic advantage is immense — but the symbolic weight is heavier. The houses that have warred for generations, their dragons united in the sky. If it works, the image alone will rewrite what every person on that battlefield believes is possible.

Torren stands. The veteran rises from his seat with the deliberate gravity of a man who has earned the right to speak last. His scarred hands rest on the table, and his voice carries the measured weight of twenty years of service. "My unit will hold the eastern gate." The words settle into the chamber. The eastern gate — the most dangerous position, the narrowest point, the place where the fighting will be thickest and the margin for error the smallest. Riven glances at me. The assignment wasn't predetermined — I'd left the gate command open, waiting to see who would claim it. Torren looks at Evelyn. Not warmth, but what he's offering is worth more — the calculated acknowledgment of a soldier who has weighed the evidence and revised his assessment. She brought the eastern vulnerability to the table. Her tactics improved his unit's survival odds. Her moonlight techniques gave his fighters advantages they didn't have three weeks ago. "The intelligence she provided made the eastern defense possible," Torren says. "The tactics she developed are the reason my fighters can hold that corridor. I'll put my unit where those tactics matter most." Evelyn holds his gaze. She nods, matching the one he gave her in the training yard: a closed circuit, the debt of competence, paid in kind. "Assignments are confirmed," I say. "Riven holds the ridge, Torren holds the gate, and Theron holds the harbor. Sera coordinates intelligence and communications. Evelyn and I provide aerial support." I look around the table one final time. "Dismissed. Get your people

ready.”The chamber empties. Warriors file out with the focused energy of soldiers who’ve received their orders and have hours, not days, to prepare.Riven catches my eye at the door and nods — the same curt gesture from the ridge, carrying everything we can’t say.The room clears. Evelyn squeezes my hand once, brief and fierce, then follows Sera to coordinate the aerial approach patterns.I stay.The map lies spread across the table, marked with positions and approach routes and the careful geometry of a battle plan built from intelligence, terrain, and the desperate hope that we’ve anticipated correctly.Every mark on the paper represents a decision that will cost lives if it’s wrong.I roll the map and leave the chamber.The wall at midnight is cold. The storms have moved closer — the spiral clouds now visible without squinting, their rotation carrying a faint luminescence that has nothing to do with moonlight.The sea below is dark and restless, waves breaking in patterns that change direction mid-crest.The fleet will arrive in days. Maybe sooner, if the winds favor Aldric. I close my eyes and reach for Khaira through the bond.Ⓜwww.NoVeLwoRM.comShe’s on the high roost, her massive body coiled against the stone, wings folded. Through the connection, I draw on what I’ve always drawn on — the dragon’s ancient calm, the steady pulse of a creature that has lived through storms and wars and the slow erosion of centuries.Khaira has been my anchor since the day we bonded. When Lyanna died, it was Khaira’s heartbeat that kept mine going.But tonight the calm isn’t there. Khaira shifts on her roost, talons scraping stone, and through the bond I feel what she feels — a vastness pressing against the edges of the world, patient and immeasurable, watching with an attention that makes the approaching fleet feel like a distraction.“What comes after the war,” Khaira says, “may be worse than the war itself.”I open my eyes. The storms spiral on the horizon, and somewhere behind them, something ancient waits for the prophecy to finish what it started.The fleet is days away, and the Watcher is closer. My dragons and I will fly into both.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.

First Chosen by the Dragon

7-9 minutes

Dreams Beyond Broken Wings — 105

Feb 25, 2026wW.nOVe(I)WoRm.coM[Evelyn's POV]The compound hums with the particular energy of people who might die tomorrow.wW.nOVe(I)WoRm.coMIt lives in the air like static — sharpened edges, a strange tenderness in the way warriors check each other's armor and clasp shoulders a beat longer than necessary. In the barracks, someone is singing. In the armory, blades ring against whetstones.I walk the grounds. Dorian is in the armory, working a blade's edge with long, steady strokes. His face carries the focused calm of a man who has decided to be ready."Tomorrow," I say from the doorway.He looks up and studies my face the way he studied it the day I told him who I was — direct, unhurried, measuring what's real against what isn't."See you on the other side," he says and goes back to his blade.The simplicity steadies something inside me. No speeches, just the confidence that we'll both be standing, spoken like fact.Mira is in the supply corridor outside the eastern gate, checking inventory for Riven's flanking force: crates of arrows, water skins, bandage rolls.She's counting with a pencil behind her ear, and when she sees me, she stops.She crosses the corridor in three steps and grabs me in a hug so fierce my ribs compress.Her arms lock around my shoulders, her red hair pressing against my cheek, and she holds on with the desperate strength of someone who has already imagined what tomorrow costs and is refusing to let it take this moment.I hold her back with nothing that needs to be said.She releases me, wipes her eyes with the back of her hand, and picks up her pencil. I leave her to her counting.The training wall is quiet. Most warriors have retreated to barracks or the mess hall, where the kitchen staff has opened the wine stores without being asked. But Finn stands alone on the wall where he once turned his back on me.He hears my footsteps and turns."I figured it out," he says.I wait."You're still you. The person who sparred with me when nobody else would partner with a loudmouth from the lower ranks. That person didn't change because a name did."He pauses, and his jaw works once."And my uncle would've wanted me to fight beside the people who fight for this house, no matter where they came from."My throat closes. The heat behind my eyes is sudden and fierce, and I blink it back because if I start crying on this wall I won't stop.I nod, and he nods back. The circuit closes — with acceptance, which was always his to give.Sera's intelligence quarters smell like lamp oil and cold tea. The spymaster hasn't slept in two days, and I can see it in the hollows beneath her cheekbones and the particular sharpness of her movements, every gesture stripped to maximum efficiency because her body has nothing left to waste."You should sleep," I tell her."I'll sleep when Aldric is dead or retreating. Until then, I have deployments to verify."Sera.She looks up. Her dark eyes are bloodshot and alert, and the ghost of something almost warm flickers across her face before she buries it under professional composure."Don't die tomorrow," she says. "I've invested too much in you."The humor is dry as bone, and it cracks my composure more than tears would have. I laugh — short, sharp, wet at the edges — and Sera's mouth twitches in what might be the first genuine smile I've ever seen from her."Same to you," I manage.

"I don't die, I'm too vindictive." www.NoVelWoRm.com I leave her to her maps and her cold tea and her two-day sleeplessness, and I go to find the man I chose. Draven's chambers are quiet. His armor is laid out on the stand — black leather and steel, every buckle arranged with the precision of a man who dressed for battle before he dressed for anything else. Through the balcony doors, Khaira's dark mass is silhouetted against the storm-lit sky. He's sitting on the edge of the bed, forearms on his knees, head bowed. He looks up when I enter, and the expression on his face strips every layer of lord and commander and leaves just the man underneath — tired, afraid, reaching for me with his eyes before his hands follow. I sit beside him, and our shoulders touch. "Don't talk about the battle," I say. "Tell me what we do when it's over." He's quiet for a moment. Then his hand finds mine, and his voice drops to the register he uses when it's just us — low, warm, carrying a roughness that has nothing to do with command. "We eat a meal that isn't rations, something with actual flavor. I'll make Margit cook that lamb stew the kitchen does when there's something to celebrate." "What else?" "We fly. Take Khaira and Aspis out over the open water where there's nothing but wind and cloud, and we stay up until our legs go numb." "And then?" "A morning where neither of us has to be anywhere. No briefings, councils, or intelligence reports, but just the bed and the light through the windows and nowhere to go." www.NoVelWoRm.com The promises are fragile. We both know it — the fleet is hours away, and promises made the night before battle are the most breakable things in the world. But we make them anyway, stacking small plans against the darkness like stones against a rising tide, because the alternative is silence, and silence tonight would be unbearable. I lean into him. He wraps his arm around my shoulders and pulls me close, and I press my face into the curve of his neck, breathing in the smell of leather and steel polish and the warmth beneath. "We're going to survive this," I say. "Yes, we will." "Say it like you mean it." "We're going to survive this, and then I'm going to eat that stew." I laugh against his skin. He presses his lips to my temple and holds them there, and the room narrows to the warmth between us — like the cave felt months ago, the world reduced to a single point of heat in the dark. I fall asleep against his chest. His heartbeat is the last thing I hear before the dream takes me. The Watcher, vast, patient, filling a sky that has no stars. Its eyes are dying suns — dim, ancient, burning with a light that existed before anything living drew breath. It looks at me across a distance that doesn't belong to any geography I understand, and it speaks. A single word, one syllable, carrying the weight of centuries. I strain to hear it. The sound is there — at the very edge of perception, just beyond the threshold where meaning forms from noise. I can't quite hear it. I wake with the word dissolving on the air like smoke, and Draven's arms around me, and the first gray light of battle pressing against the windows. 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.

First Chosen by the Dragon

7-9 minutes

Dreams Beyond Broken Wings — 106

Feb 25, 2026 Dawn comes grey and heavy, pressing down on the compound like a hand closing into a fist. I'm on the eastern sea cliff before the light clears the horizon, pulling the last buckle on riding armor that Theron's armorers adapted for dragonback — light leather reinforced at the thighs and forearms, cut close to the body so the wind can't catch it. *www.N* *©(v)Elw(O)rm.com* My silver hair is braided tight against my skull. My hands are steady, but the rest of me is vibrating at a frequency I can feel in my teeth. Aspis waits on the cliff edge, and the sight of her stops my breath even now. The hatchling I held in a sea cave is gone — replaced by a dragon that shakes the ground when she shifts her weight. White scales catch the grey morning light and throw it back in fractured patterns. Her wingspan, unfurled, blocks out a quarter of the sky. The violet eyes that tracked me from the egg are ancient now, carrying a depth that holds centuries of accumulated memory. She lowers her shoulder, and I climb onto her back. My legs press against warm scales, my hands find the ridge between her shoulders, and the bond blows open like a door torn from its hinges. Everything she feels, I feel. The predatory focus sharpening her vision until every detail of the coastline below is etched in razor clarity. The electric anticipation running through her muscles, every fiber coiled and ready. The moonlight power coiling in my chest like a second heartbeat, feeding through the bond, cycling between us in a loop that builds with each pass. *(W)w.noVellw©rm.(C)* *Om* "Are you ready?" she asks. "No, but let's go anyway." "Good. Readiness is overrated, and it's commitment that matters." Below us, the compound arranges for battle. Warriors move in formation along the walls — organized, purposeful, the choreography of a household that has drilled this for weeks. Supply runners sprint between positions. Archer teams climb to the platforms Riven's crews built along the eastern palisade. The sounds of preparation carry on the salt wind: shouted orders, clanging steel, the rhythmic thud of boots on stone. Then I look south, and my stomach drops. Sails emerging from the morning mist like ghosts resolving into flesh. First a handful — dark silhouettes against the grey horizon, their outlines sharpening as the light grows. Then more and more. Dozens of warships. More than intelligence estimated — the minor houses must have committed additional vessels, because the fleet spreading across the southern horizon is larger than anything Sera's scouts predicted. Blue Dragon

banners snap from every mast, the cerulean and gold of my father's house bright against the grey sea. The formation is wide, aggressive, designed to project overwhelming force before a single catapult fires. For a moment, I see my father's house the way the world sees it: magnificent, terrible, and unstoppable. A naval power that has dominated the southern seas for three generations, crossing the water to crush a lesser house that dared to shelter its runaway daughter. The fear is physical — a cold fist closing around my windpipe, my lungs refusing to expand. Then Aspis spreads her wings. The membrane stretches, translucent in the dawn light, and the shadow she casts across the cliff is vast enough to swallow three men standing abreast. The power surging through the bond burns away the cold fist, replaces it with something older and hotter — the fury of a creature that was caged from birth and will never be caged again. "They are not unstoppable," Aspis says. "They have never fought us."

The compound's horns sound. Three blasts — long, deep, resonating through the stone and the air and the bones of every person in the fortress. Battle stations. The sound I've been training toward for months, the sound that means the waiting is over. Warriors flood to positions. Torren's unit moves toward the eastern gate with grim efficiency — thirty fighters in tight formation, shields locked, blades drawn. The veteran leads from the front, his scarred face set in the expression of a man who has done this before and intends to do it again. Brennan is in the second rank, jaw clenched, shield steady. Seren takes the left flank, her tall frame anchoring the line. On the opposite cliff, movement. Khaira launches. The black dragon hurls herself from the high roost with an explosion of muscle that cracks the stone beneath her talons. She climbs fast — dark scales against grey sky, wings beating in powerful strokes that send shockwaves through the air. On her back, Draven rides in black armor, his body low against the dragon's spine, one hand gripping the ridge, the other resting on the blade strapped across his back. The sight of both dragons airborne — white on the eastern cliff, black rising from the west — sends a sound through the compound that I will carry for the rest of my life. Warriors on the walls shout. Not words — a sound torn from somewhere deeper than language, the raw expression of people watching something they were raised to believe was impossible. Black and white dragons in the same sky, their riders choosing to fight together instead of against each other. Three centuries of history rewritten in the span of a wingbeat. Aspis launches. The vertical drop hits my stomach, the cliff face blurring upward, and then the updraft catches her wings and we surge into the sky with a force that pins me against her spine. The world tilts — sea below, storm clouds above, the compound shrinking to a dark cluster of stone and timber on the coastline. I climb until the air thins, until the fleet below is a scatter of dark shapes on grey water, until Khaira's black silhouette banks toward me from the west. Two dragons converging. Two riders locking eyes across two hundred feet of open air. Draven's face is a mask of controlled focus — jaw set, dark eyes burning with the particular intensity he carries

into every fight. The wind tears at his cloak. Beneath the mask, through the bond that connects our dragons and through the connection that has nothing to do with magic, I see what he's holding: the same terrified determination I feel. The knowledge that what we're about to do will either save everything or destroy it, and the decision to do it anyway. He nods once. One sharp dip of his chin, carrying the weight of every promise we made last night — the stew, the flight, the morning with nowhere to go. I nod back. Below us, the fleet advances. The Shattered Coast sits quiet on the eastern approach, its reefs hidden beneath the rising tide. Somewhere behind those rocks, two hundred elite warriors wait in longboats for the signal to move. Somewhere in the compound below, Cassandra works with patient hands. And somewhere behind the storm clouds that spiral above us, the Watcher turns its ancient attention toward the two dragons hanging in the grey dawn sky, and waits. Aspis folds her wings, and Khaira folds hers. We dive.

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.

First Chosen by the Dragon

8-10 minutes

Dreams Beyond Broken Wings — 107

Feb 25, 2026 [Draven's POV] Blue Dragon banners stretch taut in the wind. Catapults on the foredeck crews load and angle toward our cliff batteries. The sound carries across the water: shouted commands, the groan of loaded siege engines, the rhythmic drum-beat of oarsmen driving the warships forward. I sweep Khaira across the southern line. Low pass, close enough that the downdraft from her wings sends spray across the nearest deck. Ballista bolts chase us — two, three, whistling past Khaira's flank — and she rolls hard to avoid the fourth. The bolts are designed for dragons, heavy iron shafts with barbed heads that could punch through scale at close range. "They brought dragon-killers," Khaira says. "Aldric came prepared." "Stay above their range. We need to draw fire, not absorb it." Below, warriors man the southern walls. Cliff batteries return fire — catapult stones arcing toward the fleet, exploding against hulls and water in plumes of white spray.

WwW.Nô(v)ℓworM.c(o)m

The harbor chains hold across the narrows, forcing the lead ships to slow. Theron commands from the western battery, his voice carrying over the chaos with the steady authority of a man who was born to hold fortifications. It's a theater, convincing, necessary theater. Every eye on the southern

fleet, every defender visible on the walls, every catapult firing at maximum rate. Aldric needs to believe his feint is working — that we've committed everything to the harbor defense. The real war is east. "Khaira, eastern approach. What do you see?" ~~www.NoVelworm.com~~ Through the bond, her vision sharpens — dragon eyes cutting through distance and mist with a clarity that makes human sight feel like blindness. The Shattered Coast resolves in razor detail: rock channels, churning surf, and there — threading through the gaps between reef teeth — movement. "Boats, small and shallow. Twenty — no, more. They follow a lead vessel through the channels. The pilot knows the path." Aldric's secondary force. Two hundred elite warriors in shallow-draft longboats, sliding through the rock maze guided by their smuggler pilot. They think they're invisible and the fleet has pulled every defender south. But Riven is waiting for them. I bank Khaira east. The turn is hard, pulling blood from my head, and I flatten against her spine as the horizon tilts. The southern fleet falls behind us — still firing, still advancing, still playing its role in the performance. Ahead, white scales catch the grey light. Evelyn on Aspis, paralleling my course from the eastern cliff. The white dragon flies with the savage grace of a creature born for exactly this — wings slicing the air, body streamlined, every movement precise and predatory. Evelyn rides low against Aspis's spine, silver hair streaming from beneath her helmet, and even in the chaos, the sight steals my breath. Black and white, side by side. The Alliance will hear about this, and the world will hear about this. Whatever happens today, the image of these two dragons cutting the sky together will rewrite what every house in the realm believes is possible. "Together," Khaira says. "Together," Aspis answers through the bond — the first time I've heard the white dragon's voice directly, resonant and fierce. We strike the eastern force. Khaira dives first. Shadow-fire erupts from her jaws — not flame but something darker, a concentrated blast of energy that hits the lead boats in a wave of black heat. Wood splinters, and men scream. Two longboats shatter on impact, warriors thrown into the churning water between the reef teeth. Aspis follows. Through Evelyn, moonlight power channels into a blinding shockwave that detonates across the channel — white light erupting in a sphere that turns the grey morning into noon for three savage seconds. Warriors in the approaching boats throw themselves flat, hands over their eyes, formations breaking as the light sears through their vision.

The combination is devastating. Shadow-fire from above, blinding light from below — the channel becomes a killing ground of disoriented men and burning wreckage. But Aldric's elite are disciplined. The rear boats adjust course, pulling tight against the reef walls where the dragon passes can't reach without risking the rocks. Officers shout commands, rallying the blinded warriors, reforming lines. The pilot vessel pushes forward through the chaos, threading channels too narrow for a dragon's wingspan, leading the surviving boats toward the eastern shore. They're taking casualties and pressing through. These aren't conscripts

breaking at the first pass — they're veterans who've trained for exactly this kind of hell. "They're reaching the beach," Khaira reports. I see it. The first longboats grounding on the eastern shore — warriors vaulting over the sides, boots hitting wet sand, blades drawn. They form up with terrifying speed, shields locking into formation before the surf recedes from their ankles. The eastern gate. Torren's unit braces at the narrow entry point — thirty fighters behind palisades, archers on the platforms, the killing corridor ready. I see Torren at the center of the line, scarred face visible even from altitude, his sword drawn and his shield planted. "Now," I tell Khaira. Riven's flanking force erupts from the ridge. Fifty warriors pouring down the slope like water, finding cracks in stone, hitting the exposed column from above while it's still forming on the beach. The sound reaches me even at altitude — the crash of shields, the scream of steel, the deep-throated roar of fighters who've been crouching in cold scrub for days and finally have something to hit. *www.no(v)elworm.com* The beach becomes a box. Riven from above, and Torren at the gate. Aldric's elite are caught between three walls with nowhere to go, and the killing begins in earnest. I bank Khaira for another pass. The ballista crews on the surviving longboats have repositioned — three heavy weapons angled skyward, tracking us. The first bolt screams past Khaira's wing, close enough to feel the displaced air. "Anti-dragon fire from the boats. They're targeting our approach vector." "Circle wide and come from the north." I pull Khaira into a climbing turn and search for Aspis. The white dragon was paralleling our last pass over the channel — she should be on our eastern flank, banking for another moonlight strike. She's not there. I scan the sky. Smoke from the burning longboats drifts across the eastern approach in thick columns, grey and black against the storm clouds. Visibility drops to nothing in the smoke banks. I search for white scales — the flash of moonlight, the silhouette of wings. Nothing. "Khaira, where is Aspis?" The black dragon extends her senses through the bond, reaching for the white dragon's presence. A pause. Then: "Separated. The ballista fire forced her south, and I cannot see her through the smoke." Another bolt screams past — this one clipping Khaira's tail, and she roars, banking hard. I grip the ridge and hold on as the world tilts. Below, the battle rages at the eastern gate. Riven's force drives into the column, and Torren's line holds the corridor. The southern fleet pounds the harbor. Somewhere in the smoke that swallows the eastern sky, Evelyn and Aspis are alone, separated from us by anti-dragon fire and the chaos of a battle that is no longer following any plan. *www.novelsor.com* I search the smoke for white scales and find nothing. 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.

First Chosen by the Dragon

7-9 minutes

Dreams Beyond Broken Wings — 108

Feb 25, 2026[Evelyn's POV]The battle is nothing like training. I knew this intellectually. I feel it now in every bone as Aspis banks hard left and a ballista bolt screams past my shoulder close enough to feel the displaced air. "Left flank — two more incoming!" "I see them!" Aspis rolls and I press flat against her scales, thighs burning with the effort of staying mounted. Two more bolts cut through the space we occupied a heartbeat ago. Below us, the eastern shore writhes with movement — landing boats, warriors in blue and gold, the organized chaos of an invasion that refuses to stop. "The ridge. Riven's force is engaging." "How many boats are still coming?" "Two more." "For every one we scatter, two more push through." "Then we must be more efficient. The channel mouth — I can create a barrier." "Steam wall?" "Like we practiced." I scan the cliffs. Three ballista positions, staggered heights, overlapping fields of fire. "Get me a clear line. Five seconds." "The crews are coordinating their fire. You will need to be fast." "Fast I can do, trust me." "I always trust you. It is the power I do not trust." Aspis dives and I reach for the moonlight. It comes surging through the bond, wilder than in training. The current pulls against my control like a river fighting its banks. "Steady. Channel through me." "I'm trying. The power feels different — like it's fighting me." "Combat amplifies everything. Channel the energy, do not fight it." I narrow the light. The beam cuts across the approach channel and hits the water. Steam erupts — a wall of white vapor that swallows the incoming boats, blinds the crews, turns their coordinated assault into chaos. "It's working!" "Hold the channel. Don't let the power —" The surge hits me like a fist. The same spike from the training yard, but amplified by combat, by fear, by the bond straining at its limits. Light erupts from my body. Not a beam — a sphere that expands fifty feet in every direction, searing white radiance that turns the air to glass. Aspis's wings lock mid-beat as she channels everything she has into containing the surge, pulling the worst of it away from allies below. "EVELYN!" The sphere collapses. I'm gasping. My vision spots with afterimages — black shapes burned into my sight. My hands feel like they're on fire, and when I look down, I see light still bleeding from my fingertips in silver wisps. "Aspis, are you hurt?" "I am functional, but it seems you are not. That surge nearly broke the bond." "I didn't mean to lose control —" "The power consumes you. Each burst costs more than the last: the moonlight is outpacing your ability to channel it." "What do I do?" "Let me carry the overflow. Filter through the bond instead of forcing it alone." I force my eyes to focus, blinking against the afterimages still seared across my vision. Below, the eastern gate

holds: Torren's unit fighting with savage efficiency. Bodies pile at the threshold. But to the south, smoke rises. My stomach drops. "The residential quarter is burning. Draven's people are dying, and we need to relieve the southern front." "Another surge like that could kill you." "What about those people inside those walls?!" "Do not use them against me," my dragon's cuts sharp through the bond, edged with, as it seems to me for the first time, fear. "I am trying to keep you alive." *www.NovElo(r)m.com* "If the compound falls, none of it will matter. Can you get me there?" Silence. Then, heavy with reluctance: "I can, but promise me: we work as one! And if I feel you slipping again —" "You pull me back, I know." Aspis banks south. Smoke thickens, acrid and choking, and the sounds of combat swell from every direction.

I see Khaira in the distance, Draven on her back raining shadow-fire on the fleet. He's too far away. The ballista crews have forced us apart. "The southern gate — siege equipment. A battering ram coming up the main approach." "I see it! Too much crossfire from the positions. And... Evelyn, your hands." I look down. She's right: a tremor runs from wrist to fingertip that I can't suppress. "I can do this, I have to. Every second I hesitate, someone dies. Help me control it, Aspis. That's what partners do." I gather the moonlight, smaller this time, controlled. I think of it like breathing — in and out — rather than like a weapon. The power barely responds. The first burst clips a ballista position — wood splinters, the crew scatters. But the recoil hits me harder than it should. Pain spikes behind my eyes, and the tremor in my hands worsens. "One more, and then we pull back. That is the agreement." "One more. I can hold it." "Can you? Or are you telling yourself what you need to hear?" "One more, Aspis." I aim for the second position, draw the power, and shape the beam. The volley hits before I can fire. Four ballista bolts — coordinated, sequenced, fired in a pattern designed to bracket rather than strike. Aspis dodges the first two. The third passes beneath her belly, and the fourth catches her left wing at the joint where membrane meets bone. She screams. The bond carries every shred of her agony into me. Her wing buckles, membrane tears, and we are falling — a controlled descent that still carries too much speed. "Brace — I cannot hold the glide —" "Aspis!" "BRACE!" She hits the ground hard. Her legs absorb the first impact, but the momentum throws me forward. *www.NovElo(r)m.com* I'm airborne for a sickening instant — rock and smoke and sky spinning — and then I hit the earth and roll. Stone tears through my armor. My shoulder takes the worst of it — a grinding impact that sends pain lancing from collarbone to fingertips. I roll twice, three times, and come up on my knees, with vision blurred. Aspis is twenty yards away. She's on the ground, damaged wing extended at a wrong angle, fighting to rise. Through the bond, I feel her fury — not at the pain but at the indignity of being grounded, reduced from sky to earth. "I can still fight. The wing will not lift me, but I can still fight." "How bad is the damage? Tell me honestly." "Membrane torn at the joint and the bone is intact. I will heal, but not today, not in time for this battle." "Can you move at

all?”“On the ground, yes. Not in the air. I am sorry, Evelyn.”“Just don’t move! Let me get to you —”“Evelyn, behind you!”Between us and the compound, the secondary wall has been breached — stone blown inward by concentrated catapult fire. A gap wide enough for soldiers to pour through.They are pouring through.Mintian warriors in blue and gold, with blades drawn, flooding onto compound ground. A dozen already through the gap. More behind them.Their eyes find me — silver-haired, dragon-bonded, grounded — and recognition sharpens their focus.“The silver hair. They know exactly who you are.”“Yes, they’ve been waiting for this.”“Can you reach me?”I’m on the wrong side of them, separated from the compound and from Draven. The gap between us fills with blue and gold armor.“Evelyn, can you reach me?”My dragon cannot fly.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.

First Chosen by the Dragon

7-9 minutes

Dreams Beyond Broken Wings — 109

Feb 25, 2026[Cassandra’s POV]The horns shatter the dawn silence, and the compound becomes a kicked anthill.I’m on my feet before the second blast fades, pressing my palm to the chamber door. The organized chaos of a house scrambling to war stations. Through the window, smoke rises from the southern approach.Father’s fleet has arrived. The guard outside my door shifts — the creak of leather, the nervous adjustment of a sword belt.“What’s happening out there?”“Stay inside, Lady Cassandra. The compound is under attack.”“I can hear that. Who’s attacking? How many ships?”“The Mintian fleet, dozens. The southern approach is overwhelmed.”“What about the Shattered Coast assault?”wŴ(w).n(o)VelworM.cómHe hesitates. I shouldn’t know about the eastern assault, and I shouldn’t know anything.“I don’t know what you mean, Lady Cassandra.”“Of course you don’t.”Another horn blast: different pattern, the eastern gate.wŵŴ.nôvE(l)wOrM.C@M“Rellen!” A shout from down the corridor. “Eastern gate reports contact! They need every blade!”“My post is here. I can’t abandon—”“The lord’s orders! Everyone to the walls! Move!”“Lady Cassandra is my responsibility. If she escapes during the battle—”“She’s locked in a room with iron hinges! She’s not going anywhere! Move, soldier!”I press my ear to the wood. Footsteps — rapid, retreating. The corridor falls silent. I count to thirty: no returning boots, and no

replacement. Weeks of patient work. Nights with my eating knife, loosening wrought iron hinges millimeter by millimeter until the screws held by friction alone. The door was never the obstacle, the guards were. Now there are no guards. I plant my shoulder against the wood and shove. The hinges give — a single hard impact, and the door swings inward, scraping stone. I step into an empty corridor. The diplomatic wing is abandoned. Smoke drifts through open windows. I move with purpose toward the armory annex where they stored our confiscated weapons. Three weeks of observation: every corridor memorized, and every route the servants used. The prophecy burns in my chest like a second heartbeat. I am the stronger sister, and I have always been the stronger sister. The armory annex door is locked, but the lock is old iron, and I have sixty seconds and a stolen knife. The mechanism clicks. Inside, the confiscated weapons hang on pegs — and there, my blade: Mintian steel, light and lethal. Father commissioned it for my tenth birthday. The balance is perfect, and the edge holds forever. I've killed with this blade before; I will kill with it again. I move. Through the central corridor, past the council chamber, toward the eastern wing where the fighting sounds loudest. The compound is chaos — warriors sprinting to positions, servants hauling water buckets, a cook screaming about fire in the kitchens. Nobody looks at me. *www.Nôreℓw(O) Rm.Cô(m)* The eastern corridor opens ahead. And there, coming toward me with documents clutched against his chest, is Kael. He sees me the same moment I see him. His stride falters, and his face goes pale. "Cassandra, how did you—" "Weeks of work. Did you think I was sitting idle in that chamber?" "The guards—" "Called to the walls, every blade needed." I study the documents pressed against his chest. War council seals and troop positions. "You're defecting."

His jaw works. He was never good at lying — too soft, too weak, too burdened by whatever remnant of conscience he never managed to kill. "I'm trying to save lives on both sides." "By betraying your own house and handing our battle plans to the enemy?" "People are going to die, Cassandra. Hundreds of people who never chose this war. Servants, stable hands, children in the compound who have nothing to do with your father's conquest!" "Acceptable losses. That's what war requires." "That's what your father requires. And what you require, not war. You." I move to pass him. He sidesteps, blocking the corridor. "You're going after her. Evelyn." "Step aside, Kael." "She's your sister. Whatever the prophecy says, whatever your father taught you to believe, she's your blood. The same mother held both of you. Doesn't that mean anything?" "It doesn't. She was a curse, and Father knew it from the moment she drew breath." Kael's face twists — something between grief and disgust. "You can't actually believe that. You're intelligent, Cassandra. You're calculating, so you have to see how convenient that prophecy is for a man who wanted an excuse to destroy his own daughter." "The witch had no reason to lie." "She told your father what he wanted to hear. And you've spent your entire life performing that hatred because it was the only way to survive

him."The words hit harder than they should. I feel them land somewhere beneath my ribs, in the soft place where doubt lives. I crush it immediately."You don't know anything about surviving my father."I know what you were like before he made you into this. I remember the girl who used to read poetry in the garden and cried when her horse died. That girl asked me once, years ago, if I thought people could choose to be different from their parents."She was weak, and I corrected the weakness."You buried her. There's a difference."Kael." I grip his shoulder, hard enough to bruise. "You want to save people? Run. Take your documents to your new master. Betray everything you are to soothe the guilt you'll carry for the rest of your miserable life. But don't stand between me and what I was born to do."You weren't born to do this. There's still time to choose differently."There is no difference, only the prophecy."Cassandra—"www.NoV(e)lworm.com"Step aside, or I will move you."He stares at me for a long moment. Something dies in his eyes — the last ember of hope that I might be reachable, might be savable. Good. Hope is a liability. He shifts, clearing the corridor."I loved you once," he says quietly. "I think part of me still does, but I don't recognize you anymore."You never did. You loved the performance."I move past him without looking back.The eastern corridor ends at a section of wall that used to be solid stone. Catapult fire has opened a gap — rubble scattered, dust settling, screaming sunlight pouring through the breach. I climb through onto rocky ground east of the gate.The battle rages. Mintian warriors in blue and gold clash with Black Dragon defenders at the gate — a chokepoint of screaming steel. Bodies litter the stone, and blood makes the footing treacherous.I scan the field for her. And there — fifty yards away, on the rocky ground between the breach and the battle line — is Evelyn.Dismounted. Her dragon is down, wing crumpled at an unnatural angle. Evelyn herself is on her knees, winded, silver hair streaked with dust and blood.Between her and the compound, Mintian warriors are moving, recognizing the target.She's alone and vulnerable. She's everything the prophecy promised me.I grip my blade until my knuckles ache. Two daughters, one stronger... My sister looks up, and her eyes find me across fifty yards of blood-soaked stone.I begin to move.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.

First Chosen by the Dragon

7-9 minutes

Feb 25, 2026[Evelyn's POV]I don't think but move.The first Mintian warrior swings high. I duck under the blade, drive my shoulder into his chest, and put my knife through the gap in his armor. He drops.The second one thrusts toward my throat — I deflect, pivot, channel moonlight into my palm, and throw a burst of light into his eyes. He screams and staggers. I cut his legs out.“Evelyn — behind you!”I spin. A third warrior is already mid-swing, blade descending toward my skull.“No time to block!”I throw my hand up and the moonlight erupts — ragged, uncontrolled, a spray of white fire that deflects the blade just enough to miss my head.“How did I do that?”“Instinct. The bond acted before your mind could, but it cost you.”The warrior stumbles back. I disarm him — blade against wrist, twist, pull — and his sword clatters to stone.“Your reserves are depleting. I can feel the cold spreading through you.”“I know. My fingers are going numb.”“How is your breathing?”“It's getting worse. How's your wing?”“Useless. I cannot reach you, and I cannot fly to you.”“Then I come to you, just hold on.”I push forward, stepping over bodies, slipping on blood. Twenty yards to Aspis. Another warrior is coming — skilled and professional.I channel moonlight into my forearm to block. The power sputters, surges, holds for a heartbeat before flickering out. He goes down when I feint left and drive my blade into his armpit.Fifteen yards to Aspis.“Evelyn, movement at your two o'clock. Coordinated formation.”I look, and my blood runs cold. A dozen fighters in blue-marked armor are moving across the field toward Aspis.“They are not here to kill me.”“The chains at their belts — they're here to capture you.”“Yes, I am the prize. The white dragon, claimed for Mintia. My father's ultimate trophy.”“That's not happening. I won't let it happen.”“Evelyn, there are twelve of them. You are exhausted, and your power is failing. The mathematics do not favor us. Evelyn—”“I'm not leaving you, and I'm not letting them take you. Tell me you understand that!”“I understand. I also understand that you may die trying.”I break into a run. The cold at my edges spreads deeper — fingers numbing, vision tunneling.I don't care, and I don't stop. Aspis is twenty yards away, and twelve elite guards are closing on her with chains designed to bind dragons.The first two fighters turn as I approach. I scream and throw everything I have left into a burst of moonlight. The light erupts in ragged arcs, catching both fighters full in the face.“Two down. Ten remaining.”“I can count, Aspis!”“I am trying to help.”I close the distance. My blade finds the gap in the third fighter's armor. The fourth swings at me and I duck, but my legs are shaking. His return stroke clips my arm — a shallow cut, pain flaring from elbow to wrist.“You are injured.”“Just a shallow cut, I'm fine.”“You are lying to me.”(w)www.novëlw©rM.Co(m)“I'm managing. Keep talking to me — it helps.”“What should I say?”“Tell me I'm not going to die here.”“I cannot promise that. But I promise I will not let them take me alive. If you fall, I fall with you.”“That's not comforting, Aspis.”“It was not meant to be so. It was meant to be true.”

I'm not managing. Ten fighters surround me now, blades coming from every direction. I block one strike, channel light to deflect another, but the power sputters and dies. A blade grazes

my ribs. "Your power is failing, and the reserves are empty." "Then don't watch. Close your eyes." "I cannot do that. You are my rider, my everything." "Maybe, but I'm not done yet." I plant my feet and raise my blade. The elite guard circles closer: one gestures — a hand signal — and three fighters break toward Aspis while the rest close on me. *www.novelworm.com* "No!" I lunge at the nearest guard and he parries easily. Another blade comes from my left — I twist, barely avoiding it, and a third catches my thigh. The pain is white-hot, and my leg buckles. "EVELYN!" I'm on one knee, and blood runs down my arm, my ribs, and my leg. The elite guard towers over me, blade raised. Through the bond, I feel Aspis's terror — not for herself but for me, about to die fifteen yards from where she lies helpless. Aspis is screaming. A body slams into the guard on my left. Not elegantly — brutally, a shoulder-check that sends him sprawling, followed by a blade through the gap in his armor. Venna. She's wearing unmarked leathers. Her face is bloody, and her eyes are alight with something I've never seen in them: pure, undiluted purpose. "MOVE!" she roars at me, and plants herself between me and the remaining elite guard. "What are you doing here?" "What does it look like? Fighting!" "You're supposed to be at the western barricade—" "I SAID MOVE!" She doesn't wait for me to obey. She's already fighting — savage, precise, beautiful in her violence. The first guard comes at her and she sidesteps, opening his throat in a single clean stroke. "How did you find me?" "Followed the screaming dragon!" The second guard attacks from her blind side; she spins, catches his blade, drives her knee into his groin, finishes him with a thrust through the eye. "She seemed like a good indication of where you'd be!" Three fighters fall before the rest even register her as a threat. "She is buying you time. Use it." I try to stand, but my leg screams in protest. Blood soaks through my leathers. "Venna! There's too many of them — you can't hold all of them alone!" "I need to hold them long enough for you to get to your damn dragon!" She parries a blow meant for her head, returns with a cut that takes the attacker's hand off at the wrist. "Get to Aspis! Get in the air!" "She can't fly! Her wing is damaged!" "Then fight from her back, like ground combat! Use her fire, just get to her!" "I can't leave you here to die—" *www.novelworm.com* "You're giving my death meaning! GO!" The fourth guard lunges at Venna. She twists to avoid the killing strike but not fast enough — his blade punches through her side, between her ribs. She doesn't stop. She grabs his sword arm, holds him in place, and drives her own blade through his throat. He falls, and she staggers but keeps her feet, blood pouring from her side. "She is dying." "I know." "She knows it too, and she chose this." "I know, but I don't understand why." "Perhaps you do not need to understand. Perhaps you only need to honor it." *www.novelworm.com* Venna's eyes find mine. For a single heartbeat, the woman who spent months hating me looks at me with something that might be respect. "Why?" I ask her. "After everything — why?" "You're worth more than my grudge." She turns back to face the remaining guards. "And someone has to hold the gate. GO!" Six elite guards remain. She faces them alone, bleeding from a wound that should have killed her, blade raised, stance

perfect. I run. 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.