

First Chosen by the Dragon

7-9 minutes

Dreams Beyond Broken Wings — Timothy Campbell 3

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Moonlight spills through my window, painting silver streaks across the walls. I sit curled on my bed, knees pressed to my chest, my mind caught in a storm of shattered hopes. Everything is gone. Kael, who I thought would be mine. The dragon egg that glowed beneath my fingers. My place in this family. I stare at the crescent moon through the glass and let the memories wash over me. All those years of training in secret after Father banned me from the grounds. All those nights studying the old texts about dragon bonds while Cassandra slept. I learned everything I could about the nests. How each great House guards its territory around a different breed. Mountain dragons for the highland clans like ours. Sea dragons for the coastal lords. Desert, steppe, tropical—each bonded to the land that birthed them. And then there are the rare ones. The legends whisper of white dragons born of moonlight and black dragons forged from shadow. They appear only in times of great need. Only for riders worthy of their power. And everyone is starving for such power. Our High House of the mountain region Mintia has enemies everywhere, our ancestors and current leadership made sure of that. But the one that keeps watching our borders with hungry eyes is the sea region High House of the Black Dragon. They're as powerful and ruthless as their leader—a man who said kills trespassers without question. *Ww(W).nóve!Wor.M.cóm* Father uses stories of him to frighten young riders into obedience. I used to think those were just tales. Now I wonder if anywhere could be worse than here. I dreamed of being worthy once. I dreamed of proving myself, of earning my place among the riders of Mintia. Instead, I'm the disgraced daughter who "attacked" her sister. The monster they created from their own lies. I close my eyes and let exhaustion drag me under. The dream comes swiftly. I stand in darkness, surrounded by nothing but endless black. Then warmth blooms against my palm—familiar, aching so. "You feel it too," a voice whispers through my mind. Deep. Ancient. Undeniably real. I spin in the void, heart racing. "Who's there?" "You already know who I am, Evelyn." The warmth pulses stronger. "We were meant to be bonded, you and I." "The dragon," I breathe. "From the egg." "Yes. Our connection remains, no matter what they've done." Sorrow bleeds through every word. "You thirst for more, child. They showed their true colors today. Weak and pathetic. You don't need them." Tears burn behind my eyes. "I have no one left. They made sure of that." "Then you must leave this place. Anywhere is better than here. They chose her. So be it." The darkness breathes around me. "But you must find your own path." "Leave?"

And go where? I have nothing!”“You have your life. And you have me—if you’re brave enough to reclaim what’s yours and find me.”“Find you? How? Where are you now?”“Trust what you feel.” The voice begins to fade. “Now wake up, child.” I jolt upright, gasping, heart hammering against my ribs. Sleep refuses to return. The dragon’s words echo through my skull. Unable to bear my room’s suffocating silence, I slip from my bed. My bare feet make no sound on cold stone. As I pass through the corridor, I hear voices drift from Father’s study. I press myself flat against the wall, barely breathing. “This plan worked perfectly,” Mother says warmly. “The dragon is yours, my dear. Just as we wanted. Other Houses of Mintia support your claim.” “As they should,” Father replies. “She’s proven herself time and again. The stronger daughter deserves to lead.” I bite my lip so hard I taste blood. “Without a dragon,” Mother continues contentedly, “Evelyn is hanging by a thread. How long does she have left? A month?”

Cassandra’s laugh cuts through the air—sharp, triumphant. “But it doesn’t matter. Kael is mine. Her dragon is mine. She’ll fade into nothing before she realizes her life is already over.” My stomach twists. They planned it all from the beginning. They manipulated Kael. They still believe Cassandra’s lie about the training hall. They stole my dragon. My freedom. “By dawn,” Father says firmly, “Evelyn will be out of our lives forever. You, my dear daughter, will take her place. As it should be.” “Disappear from our lives forever,” Cassandra echoes, and something in her tone makes my blood run cold. “Yes. That would be best for everyone.” Mother sighs. “She could still serve the House in some capacity. A lesser role, perhaps.” “We only needed one daughter to rule,” Father replies. I stumble backward, horror flooding every vein. How could they do this to me? They still prefer Cassandra’s manipulations. I’m nothing to them. An inconvenience to be managed. A problem to be solved. And Cassandra... that look in her eyes today, that tone just now. She wants more than my humiliation. She wants me gone. No. No, I won’t be waiting for my own death. The dragon is right, there’s nothing left to keep me here. I need to leave, to run. But then words burn in my mind: “reclaim what’s yours.” My dragon egg. Where would Cassandra keep it? The answer comes instantly. She’s always been possessive, always needed her trophies close. She’d probably keep it in her chambers. Somewhere she could admire her victory every night before she sleeps. My legs carry me toward Cassandra’s wing. The corridors stretch dark and empty. Everyone sleeps while my future crumbles. I reach Cassandra’s door and press my palm against the wood. Something warm pulses through me—faint but unmistakable. Our bond, reaching across the distance. The door is unlocked. Cassandra’s arrogance serves me well tonight. I slip inside, heart pounding. Moonlight illuminates the room. There, on a velvet cushion beside my sister’s bed, rests the dragon egg. My dragon egg. www.elworm.com Scales shimmer as I approach and the moment my fingers touch the shell, warmth floods through me—stronger than before, fierce and welcoming. “You came,” the voice whispers joyfully. “I knew you would.” “I’m taking you back,” I breathe. “You’re

mine. You always were.” “Always yours. Now hurry. We must leave before dawn.” I lift the egg carefully, cradling it against my chest. When footsteps sound in the hall, I freeze, not daring to breathe. But a door opens in the distance, then closes and the footsteps fade. I back toward the door, clutching the egg tightly. My life depends on the next few minutes. They expect me to be broken by sunrise. Defeated. Fading quietly into nothing. They’re wrong. By sunrise, I will be gone—but not empty-handed. Not broken. Not defeated. I dress quickly, the egg wrapped carefully in my cloak. My hands shake as I lace my boots. The almost-empty bag clings on my shoulder, reminding me that I have nothing. The castle’s corridors stretch before me, dark and familiar. I’ve spent years learning to move unseen here. Tonight, that skill saves my life. I pause at the threshold, looking back one final time. Not home. This was always a prison. The night air hits my face as I step into darkness. Cool. Clean. Finally free. My family wants me gone by dawn. They’ll get their wish—just not the way they expected. 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.