

First Chosen by the Dragon

8-9 minutes

Dreams Beyond Broken Wings — Timothy Campbell 4

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The night swallows me whole as I flee through the cliffs beyond Mintia's borders. Wind whips through my hair, and the dragon egg pulses warmth under my cloak like a second heartbeat. The mountain path grows steeper with every step. Sharp rocks bite through my thin boots, and the air thins until each breath feels like swallowing ice. The peaks of trees of my homeland rise like jagged teeth against the stars—beautiful and treacherous, just like everything else I'm leaving behind. Every shadow could be a pursuer. Every sound could mean capture. But I won't wait to die. I'd rather be a homeless wanderer or a rogue, than fall victim to my own family's cruel plan. "You must keep going, child," the voice whispers in my mind. "Further. They cannot follow where we're going." "Where exactly is that?" "Through the coastal territories of Aeloris." My blood runs cold. It's a forbidden territory, filled with monsters. But everyone in Mintia knows those territories have something worse than monsters, because it's the lands where the High House of the Black Dragon holds absolute dominion. Our houses have been at war for three generations, ever since Lord Draven's grandfather slaughtered an entire diplomatic envoy from the High House of Blue Dragon over a disputed egg. "That's suicide. Our houses are blood enemies. If they find out who I am—" "Better a chance at life than certain death. Your family will kill you the moment they find you." The dragon is right. Behind me lies a family that wants me dead. Ahead lies danger—but danger means a chance. And right now, a chance is more than I've ever been given. I push harder, lungs burning. The path begins to descend, and I notice the change gradually—rocky alpine terrain giving way to something softer. The air grows warmer, thicker, carrying salt and sea-spray. Ahead stretches a world of windswept cliffs overlooking dark waters, ancient forests clinging to rocky soil, and the distant gleam of what might be dragon roosts carved into seaside stone. www.Overworm.com This is Aeloris, the Black Dragon territory. And every step takes me deeper into enemy lands. I've heard the stories my whole life. How their riders patrol these borders without mercy. How they execute trespassers and leave the bodies as warnings. How the last Blue Dragon scout who crossed into these lands was returned to us in pieces. My plan is simple, I tell myself, though nothing about this feels simple. Cross through without being detected. Reach the neutral lands beyond. Find somewhere I can disappear. Become no one. Let my dragon hatch in peace, far from anyone who might recognize what I carry—or who I really am. A fragile hope, but it's all I have. "Well, look what we have here." "Hide me," the voice

in my head urges. "They cannot know what you carry." I tuck the egg deeper into my pack, burying it beneath spare clothes. My heart pounds as I pull my cloak tight just as a rough hand seizes my shoulder from behind. I'm wrenched around to face three men in dark leather armor bearing the Black Dragon sigil. The one holding me is massive—scarred face twisted into a cruel grin. "Are you lost, sweetheart?" The man asked, already backing me closer to the cliff's edge. "I'm just a wanderer. I have nowhere else to go." "A wanderer, huh?" Another man behind him scuffed. "What's a wanderer doing so close to the forbidden zone?" "Please, don't!" I plead, feeling how one of my legs is practically hanging over the sea depths under the cliff. "I didn't mean to." The man who's holding me by my shoulders shoved me a bit further. "You came here on your own, little one. It was your mistake. So now your body will be an offering for the sirens." "No! Please...!" Then comes one final shove. The world tilts and wind rushes past my ears. I'm falling—cliffs racing up to meet me, my pack tearing from my shoulder, my dragon's terrified shriek echoing through my mind. That's it. My final moment. I close my eyes, waiting for the impact that will end everything.

My pain. My sufferings. My stupid plan and pathetic hopes that it will work. But nothing came. Suddenly, warm air gusts across my face and my hand touches something hard and scaled. Strong arms catch me from behind, pulling me against a solid chest. My pack lands safely beside me on warm scales. My eyes fly open. I'm on dragonback—a massive black dragon with scales that drink the light whole, wings spanning wider than any beast I've ever seen. "Welcome to my lands," a new voice rumbles through my mind—the dragon's voice, ancient and amused. "But unfortunately he must accept you first. Don't waste your chance, choose words wisely." *www.nowElw©rM.čOm* The dragon rises above the cliff, landing near the three men who pushed me. They scramble backward, terror replacing confidence. I finally turned back to see who caught me and holding me is the most striking man I've ever laid eyes on. Dark curls frame sharp features and onyx eyes bore into mine with barely contained fury. Everything about him radiates power and danger—the kind of authority that comes from being born to rule. "Lord Draven." The scarred one drops to his knees. "We caught her snooping around our lands, says she has no one else to go." This is him. Lord Draven. The man whose name Mintia's children whispers like a curse. *wWw.ñŮⓅeIWórM.côm* Gods help me... "By throwing her off a cliff?" His voice could freeze fire when he addressed his men and then he turned to me. "Who are you?" His arms release me, but I'm still pressed against him, feeling the heat radiating from his body. I clutch my pack protectively, praying he can't sense the warmth hidden inside. Wars have started over less. An egg from an enemy house, smuggled across enemy borders? That's not theft. That's an act of war. "My name is Evelyn. I'm nobody. Just a wanderer with no House." He shoved me forward, forcing me to dismount the dragon. The moment my feet touched the ground, he swung down from the beast's massive, scaled back and took position behind me, cutting off any path of retreat with his men

and the dragon closing in around me. When I turned to face him fully, I realized just how much bigger than me he is. Lord Draven is massive, loomed over me broad and unyielding. His presence pressing down like a living threat, leaving no doubt that I stood exactly where he wanted me—trapped beneath his shadow. “A wanderer, in my territory.” He tilts his head, studying me like prey, “You expect me to believe that you wandered into Black Dragon territory by accident?” His lip curls. “No one comes here unless they’re desperate or foolish.” Both. I’m both. If Draven learns I’m the firstborn daughter of Mintia’s ruling house, he won’t just kill me. He’ll make an example of me. My death would be a gift to his people. www.novE/WorM.com “It’s the truth. I have nothing.” Draven steps closer, his presence overwhelming. The dragon behind him shifts, violet eyes glowing at me with some kind of curiosity. “You have one minute,” he says, voice dropping dangerously low, “to convince me why I shouldn’t kill you right here.” I force myself to meet his eyes despite the terror clawing at my chest with icy fingers. Those onyx depths promise death, but I cannot look away. Cannot show weakness. “I didn’t come here to cause trouble. I’m just trying to survive.” “Survive, huh?” he scoffed. “And what makes you feel I care about that?” 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.