

# First Chosen by the Dragon

7-9 minutes

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## Dreams Beyond Broken Wings — Timothy Campbell 5

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“I swear I mean no harm to you or your house,” I say, keeping my voice steady. “I only crossed into your territory because every other path was blocked.” I try to hold my ground even as every muscle in my body coils tight, ready to bolt if he decides to strike. “Blocked?” He raises an eyebrow. “How terribly convenient for you.” His dragon, Khaira I recall from the horror stories of our House, watches with ancient, knowing eyes from where she crouches nearby. The beast’s gaze feels heavier than Draven’s, as if she can see straight through every lie I’ve ever told or ever will. [www.NoVtIWork.com](http://www.NoVtIWork.com) “A storm swelled the Blackwater River two days ago,” I explain desperately, hoping he’ll believe at least the truth. “The eastern route was completely impassable. I had no choice but to cut through.” “There’s always a choice.” He circles me slowly, predator assessing prey. “Some are simply less pleasant than others.” “And some aren’t choices at all,” I counter. “Sometimes it’s simply survive or die.” “Poetic.” His voice drips with mockery. “But poetry doesn’t explain why a lone woman crosses the most dangerous territory in the realm.” He doesn’t believe me. I can see it clearly in the way he studies me, cataloging every detail with ruthless precision. My worn but finely made clothes. My calloused hands. My straight posture despite my exhaustion. “Where were you heading then?” he demands. “The neutral lands beyond your territory. I planned to pass through unnoticed and disappear completely.” “You failed spectacularly at that.” He stops before me, close enough that I feel his body heat. “My men found you easily enough.” “Your men tried to feed me to the sirens,” I counter before I can stop myself. “Is that standard patrol protocol in your lands?” Something flickers in his expression. Not anger. Something more complicated than simple fury. “They will be dealt with,” he says flatly. “Their methods were... excessive.” “I hope so,” I agree, softer now, remembering my place. “They pushed me off a cliff to die.” “And I caught you.” His eyes narrow dangerously. “Some might call that fortunate. Others might wonder if it was orchestrated.” “With all due respect,” I counter. “I wouldn’t arrange to be thrown to my death with a futile hope of any dragon nearby saving me.” “Stranger things have happened in these lands. Spies use creative methods to gain access to enemy territories. I’ve seen it before.” “I’m not a spy,” I insist firmly. “As I said, I’m just a wanderer and have nowhere else to go. No one is waiting for me anywhere in this world.” “Just a wanderer,” he repeats, voice heavy with skepticism. “With quality boots and

posture that screams formal training. You stand like a soldier, not a vagrant." My heart stutters. He's far too observant for my comfort. "Survival teaches hard lessons," I say carefully. "I've had to learn to defend myself on the road. It's kill or be killed out there." "Who taught you? Where exactly did you train before becoming this convenient wandering rogue?" "Various places. No single master. I learned from anyone willing to teach me in exchange for work or coin." "That's wonderfully vague." He resumes circling like a predator stalking wounded prey. "Almost deliberately so, wouldn't you say?" Khaira rumbles low in her throat and the sound vibrates through my bones like an earthquake's warning. Draven stops abruptly then. His eyes drop to my pack, still clutched protectively against my chest. "What are you hiding in there?" My blood runs cold. The dragon egg pulses faintly beneath the fabric, sensing the danger surrounding us both. "Nothing of value," I lie quickly. "Just clothes. Supplies. Everything I own in this world, which isn't much." "Then you won't mind showing me what's inside."

He reaches toward the pack and I flinch backward before I can control the reaction. My arms tighten around the worn fabric instinctively, protectively. His hand freezes mid-air and something in his expression shifts. Curiosity perhaps, or suspicion deepening into cold certainty. "Interesting," he murmurs softly. "For someone with nothing to hide, you guard that bag like it contains your very soul." "It contains everything I have left," I whisper. "Please. I've already lost everything else that mattered to me." "Everyone loses things. Not everyone runs straight into dangerous territory afterward." "Where else could I go? Every other house would turn me away. At least here..." "At least here what?" he pressed sharply. "Finish the thought." I stop the truth that almost escapes my throat. "At least here, there's a way to go forward. As I've said, every other path is blocked." He studies me for a long, terrifying moment. His dragon's presence weighs heavily against my consciousness, ancient and judging. Then, instead of searching my belongings, he just steps back. The breath I've been holding escapes in a rush. "You may stay," he says coldly. "Consider it as my good mood and will. But understand this clearly. If I suspect you're lying about anything at all, there won't be anywhere left for you to run." "I understand," I manage to say. "Do you truly? Because I don't think you grasp your situation fully." He leans closer, voice dropping to something barely above a whisper. "If you're a spy, I will end you myself. There will be no trial, no mercy, no second chances given." Relief crashes through me so suddenly my knees nearly buckle. I lock them in place, refusing to show any weakness before him now. *www.novell.com* "Thank you," I say quietly. "Don't thank me yet. You haven't earned anything here. You'll work for your keep and be watched constantly. One wrong move..." He doesn't finish the threat. He doesn't need to. He signals to guards lurking behind me and two men in dark armor step forward immediately at his command. *www.novell.com* "Take her to the compound," Draven orders. "Find her quarters in the servants' wing. She starts work at dawn." "Yes, Lord

Draven."The guards flank me without touching, but their presence makes abundantly clear I have no choice in this. As they escort me away from the cliff, my mind races through my remaining options.I could tell him the truth. All of it.That I'm the firstborn daughter of The House of Blue Dragon. That my own family cast me out and deliberately planned my death. That the dragon egg hidden in my pack was always rightfully mine, stolen back.But the thought dies as quickly as it forms.Why would he believe me? A daughter of his sworn enemy, appearing alone on his borders with a stolen dragon egg?He'd see it for exactly what it looks like. An elaborate infiltration. A spy's cover story designed to manipulate his sympathies and gain access. I'd be executed before I finished explaining. Perhaps tortured first for further information.No. The truth is a death sentence here.My only chance is to become someone else entirely. A nameless woman with no past worth investigating. No connections worth exploiting. Nobody from nowhere.Evelyn of Mintia's High House of the Blue Dragon must cease to exist.I'll build a new identity from nothing. Earn my place through work and silence. Bury every trace of who I was beneath careful, deliberate obscurity.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.