

First Chosen by the Dragon

7-9 minutes

Dreams Beyond Broken Wings — 81

[Draven's POV]The summons arrive not from my council but from my warriors.Seventeen senior fighters. A formal audience request, delivered by Theron with his jaw set and his eyes empty.Under house law, the law my grandfather carved into the foundation stones, a lord cannot refuse a formal petition from more than ten ranked warriors.I enter the inner hall and find them standing in a loose arc facing the lord's seat. Shoulders squared, hands at their sides. Battle formation without weapons.Torren stands at the center. Twenty years of service carved into the lines of his face.Three battle scars visible above his collar, the worst disappearing beneath his shirt where a Mintian blade opened him during the ambush that killed Lyanna's escort.He was there. He carried bodies back and helped dig the graves in the cliff cemetery.I take my seat and give their words the respect house law demands."Speak," I say.Torren steps forward. His voice shakes, and I can see the effort it costs him to keep the tremor contained, controlled fury vibrating through every word like a blade struck against stone."You harbored an enemy agent in this compound for months and concealed her identity from your intelligence chief, from your commanders, from the warriors who trained beside her. You compromised every defensive position by allowing an unvetted Mintian access to our routines, our layouts, our vulnerabilities."He pauses. The hall is silent enough to hear breathing."Lyanna died because of Mintia. You swore vengeance for her over her grave, with every warrior in this house as witness. You hunted their raiders for two years. You built this house into a fortress against the people who murdered your partner."His voice drops, rougher now."How do we trust a lord who breaks his own oath for a woman carrying enemy blood?"The words land like hammer blows against an anvil. I absorb each one without flinching.A second warrior speaks. It's Maret, a woman with close-cropped gray hair and hands scarred from decades of combat."The Luminary Protocol protects the dragon. We accept that — the Alliance verification was thorough. But the Protocol says nothing about the rider's loyalty. She lied to enter this house and stay. Every bond she formed here was built on deception."Voss, younger, one of Theron's lieutenants, adds:"Four of my fighters sparred with her this morning, and the rest refused. That's not division, my lord — that's a compound that doesn't know whether the woman in the training yard is an ally or a threat waiting to open the gates."More voices follow. A warrior whose brother died in border skirmishes. Another who served on Lyanna's honor guard, a woman

who trained beside Evelyn and now can't reconcile the friend with the bloodline. I don't interrupt, defend, or explain. Not until the last voice finishes. "Sit down," I say. "All of you." They sit — on benches or the stone ledge, wherever they can find purchase. Torren remains standing for three defiant heartbeats before lowering himself to the nearest bench. "You've told me what you know. Now I'll tell you what you don't." I lean forward and begin with clinical precision. www.Noelworm.com "Evelyn is the eldest daughter of Lord Aldric. She is the firstborn, so she is the rightful heir to the House of Blue Dragon. She, not her sister."

I watch their faces as I continue. "The dragon egg Evelyn carried was hers. It responded to her bond before it was stolen and awarded to Cassandra in a public ceremony designed to humiliate her. When Evelyn protested, her parents accused her of theft and instability — fabrications orchestrated by her sister to eliminate a rival." The hall has gone still. The anger hasn't left, but something else has entered alongside it. "When her family discovered the egg had bonded to her, they decided she needed to disappear. She overheard her parents planning it the night she fled and ran into our territory with nothing. She was thrown off a cliff by our own border patrol before Khaira caught her." I pause and let the weight of it settle. "Sera." Sera steps forward from the doorway. Her face is composed — the intelligence chief delivering a briefing, nothing more. "Since the revelation, I've conducted a full assessment of Evelyn's background using Alliance channels, intercepted Mintian correspondence, and direct testimony from multiple sources." Her voice carries the flat authority that has made her the most trusted voice in this compound for a decade. www.Noelworm.com "The abuse patterns are consistent and corroborated. The escape circumstances match every piece of physical evidence we have — her condition on arrival, the injuries she carried, the psychological markers I flagged in my initial assessment months ago." She meets Torren's eyes directly. "I was furious when I learned the truth. I told Lord Draven as much, to his face. But fury doesn't change facts. Evelyn didn't infiltrate this house. She survived it. And my professional assessment — not as someone who cares about her, but as someone whose entire purpose is identifying threats — is that she poses none." Sera steps back. The hall absorbs her words in heavy silence. I stand. I look at each face in the arc — the doubt, the anger, the grudging discomfort of certainties being rearranged. "You have every right to question my judgment. House law grants you that, and I won't pretend this was handled without mistakes. But if you're asking whether I'd shelter her again, knowing everything I know now — the answer is yes. Every time." Torren stands. His scarred face works through something I can't fully read — the old grief still there, and the fury still burning. But alongside it now a fracture in the conviction that carried him into this room. He looks at me for a long, measured moment. His mouth opens, and I see the words forming — something he's carried since Lyanna's funeral, something that has nothing to do with Evelyn

and everything to do with the oath I swore over a grave four years ago. He doesn't say it. He closes his mouth, turns, and walks out without a word. The others file out behind him. Some meet my eyes but most don't. Maret pauses at the threshold and gives me a single nod — not agreement or absolution, but acknowledgment that the ground has shifted beneath her feet. The door closes, and the inner hall empties. I press my palms flat against the armrests of the lord's seat. The wood is worn smooth by generations of hands that gripped it through harder decisions than mine. This isn't over. The doubt hasn't died — it's changed shape. What walked into this room as accusation will walk out as something quieter, slower, harder to fight. The kind of uncertainty that lives in sideways glances and the distance warriors keep when they're not sure the person beside them has earned the right to be there. But the shape changed, and that's enough for today.

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

8-9 minutes

Dreams Beyond Broken Wings — 82

[Evelyn's POV] The sea cave breathes around us — tide pulling in, pushing out — and I sit cross-legged on the stone with my palms against Aspis's flank, trying to understand the darkness she showed me. "Tell me again," I say. "Slower this time." Aspis lowers her massive head until her snout rests on the stone beside my knee. Her violet eyes half-close, and through the bond comes not words but a cascade of images: fragmented, overlapping, like trying to read a book with half the pages torn out. A sky, vast and ancient. Something moving behind it, the way a leviathan moves beneath still water — displacing everything without breaking the surface. A presence so enormous it registers not as a shape but as a change in pressure, the way your ears pop before a storm. "It watches," Aspis murmurs. "It has always watched. When white and black exist in the same territory, the watching begins." "How do you know that? You've barely been alive a year." *w(w)(w).Novel(1)Worm.©o(m)* "The knowledge lives in the egg. In the shell, in the marrow of what I am. I was born knowing this the way you were born knowing how to breathe — without learning, without choosing. The body understands what the mind has not yet named." I press harder against her scales, as if physical contact could make the images clearer. "You said it watched before. When?" Another

cascade. Sharper, laced with grief that isn't mine — ancient, echoing, like a sound bouncing through a canyon long after the scream. I see a woman with dark hair riding a black dragon through a storm. Lightning fractures the sky, and behind the lightning, something watches with eyes like dying stars. "Seraphine," Aspis whispers. "The last white dragon rider, centuries ago. She bonded, and the watching began. The Watcher came, and what followed was destruction. Fire that consumed two territories, dragons that turned on their riders, and a reckoning that shattered the old alliance and left the realm in pieces for a generation." My stomach clenches. "You think this is happening again because of us — you and Khaira, white and black in the same territory." "I feel it. The way you feel someone standing behind you in a dark room. The certainty that precedes proof." "What does it want?" Aspis sends a single image, crystalline in its clarity: two sets of scales — one white, one black — resting on opposite sides of a balance. The balance tilts, steadies, tilts again. Something vast holds the fulcrum, and the weight of its attention presses down on both sides equally. "Judgment." The word reverberates through our bond like a struck bell. I feel it in my teeth, in my spine, in the place behind my ribs where our connection lives. "Judgment of us, the riders? Of the dragons?" "Of whether the power is worthy of the vessels that carry it. Whether the realm deserves what white and black together can become." "And if the judgment goes wrong?" Aspis doesn't answer. The image of fire consuming two territories lingers in my mind like a burn. My fingers tremble against her scales. Fear rises through my body — cold, electric, tightening the muscles across my shoulders, accelerating my heartbeat. And the moonlight answers. Silver light bends around my fingers without permission: not summoned, not shaped, just there. It spills from my hands like water finding cracks in stone, crawling up the cave wall in shifting patterns that pulse with my heartbeat. Branching silver lines, intricate as frost on glass, beautiful and utterly involuntary. The light is responding to my fear. I clench my fists, nails bite into palms, and the light resists — flickering, pulsing brighter for one defiant moment before fading. The silver patterns dim to afterimages on the stone, ghostly traces that linger like a warning. "You're afraid of what you carry," Aspis observes quietly.

"Shouldn't I be? It moves on its own, Aspis. I didn't call or shape it. My hands just started glowing because my heart rate spiked." "The moonlight doesn't answer your thoughts. It answers your blood, your breath. The deeper currents that run beneath conscious choice. When you learn to trust those currents instead of fighting them—" "And if the currents drown me?" Aspis presses her snout against my chest. The warmth floods through me, steadying my pulse, easing the trembling. "I will be your shore. That is what bonds are for." *Ww.nôveLwOrM.cOm* I stay pressed against her, breathing salt air and the mineral scent of dragon scale, letting the bond smooth my fear. The afterimages on the wall slowly fade until the stone is just stone. When I finally rise, my legs are stiff from cold rock. I touch Aspis's snout one last time, and she sends warmth that follows me into the tunnels like a

lantern beneath my skin. The passage narrows as it climbs. I'm halfway to the surface when a second shadow joins mine. "You know," Riven says, falling into step beside me, "most people use nighttime for sleeping. Revolutionary concept, you should try it." Despite everything, a tired breath escapes me that's almost a laugh. "You're one to talk. How long have you been down here?" "Enough to count every drip from the ceiling. Forty-seven, in case you're curious, thrilling stuff." He adjusts his stride to match mine. "How are you holding up? Honest answer, not the brave one." "The household hates me." "It doesn't know what to do with you, and that's different." He glances sideways at me, and in the dim torchlight his features are softer than Draven's — the same dark coloring, but warmer, more open. *www.novelworld.com* "Hate requires energy and conviction. What you're getting right now is uncertainty. People frozen in place, trying to figure out which direction to fall." "And which direction will they fall?" "Depends on what you give them. Uncertainty can be turned, Evelyn. It just takes time and enough evidence to outweigh the fear." He pauses. "Mira asked about you today. Found me after the evening meal and wanted to know if you were eating, sleeping, whether you'd been down to the caves." The tightness in my chest loosens a fraction. "She asked about me?" "Her exact words were 'Is the idiot remembering to eat, or is she drowning herself in dragon bonding and self-pity.' So, classic Mira." The almost-laugh becomes something closer to real. Mira's particular brand of caring has always worn the mask of irritation. We reach the tunnel's upper passage, where the rock opens toward the cliff path. Night air rushes in: cool, salt-laden. Riven stops walking and tilts his head upward. "Something's different about the stars tonight. Have you noticed?" His easy tone has shifted, quieter now, an edge beneath the warmth. "Khaira's been restless since sundown. Every dragon in the compound is. The roost handlers reported all of them pacing, growling at shadows. Khaira won't settle on her perch." I step past him to the opening and look up. The sky is wrong. The stars are there, but dimmed, as though something has slid between them and the earth. The darkness itself has thickened beyond the natural black of a clouded night into something denser. The air presses against my skin with a weight that has nothing to do with weather. My breath catches. Deep in my chest, the bond pulls taut as a bowstring, and Aspis sends a single pulse — sharp, urgent, cutting through every other sensation like a blade through silk. *www.novelworld.com* "It sees us." 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.

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8-10 minutes

Dreams Beyond Broken Wings — 83

[Draven's POV] Venna arrives in full warrior's dress. Every buckle polished, the Black Dragon sigil catching torchlight, hair pulled back in the tight braid of a ranked commander. She has dressed for this meeting the way she'd dress for a formal inspection, wearing the rank she knows she's about to lose. The deliberateness of it is so precisely Venna that something behind my ribs tightens. Sera stands to my left, and Corwin is to my right. The council chamber is otherwise empty — the formal seat of house authority stripped to its bones. No spectacle, just witnesses and judgment. Venna stops three paces from the table and stands at attention. Her spine is iron, and her eyes find mine and hold them without flinching. I begin. *www.móvélwóřm.cóM* "You provided classified intelligence to a foreign delegate during an active diplomatic summit. Patrol schedules, compound layouts, the location of restricted areas, and the timeline of a protected revelation. This information was transmitted to the House of Blue Dragon through a coded correspondence channel you personally established." She doesn't blink or shift: a statue in polished armor. "You have acknowledged these actions. Sera's investigation has confirmed them. Under house law, this constitutes treason during a period of active hostility." "I understand the charges," Venna says, with her voice level. "Effective immediately, you are stripped of your title as Senior Commander. Your command position is dissolved. Your quarters in the senior barracks are forfeit — you'll be reassigned to general housing." I hold her gaze. *www.NOvélwóřm.cóM* "You are reduced to unranked status within this household. You retain the right to train alongside other warriors but hold no authority over any member of this house." The words land in the silence like stones dropping into still water. "You are not expelled," I continue. "You will remain within the compound under standard behavioral review." Venna absorbs it standing. No tears or pleas. Her jaw tightens once — a single involuntary flex — and then settles. "If war comes?" "You'll fight as a foot soldier. If you survive, we'll discuss what comes after." She holds my eyes for a long moment. I see the cost passing behind her face like weather behind glass — grief, fury, shame, compressed into something she'll carry beneath the surface until it either breaks her or forges her. She inclines her head with impeccable formality, the same bow she gave me on the balcony weeks ago. A warrior acknowledging her lord's authority even as that authority strips her bare. She turns and walks out. Her boots echo steady on stone until the door closes. "She just became the most dangerous person in this compound," Sera says quietly. *wŴŴ.nOVeLwóřm.cóM* She hasn't moved from her position at my left, but her eyes remain fixed on the closed door. "A disgraced warrior with nothing left to lose and a personal grudge against the woman she blames for her fall." "I'm aware." "Venna has allies. Warriors who served beside her for a decade, who still believe she acted to protect this house.

Stripping her rank won't change their loyalty to her — it might deepen it.”“And executing her would turn her into a martyr. Expelling her would fracture the household along the exact line I'm trying to hold together.” I press my knuckles into the table. “This is the path that doesn't make things worse.”“It doesn't make them better, either.”“No, but it buys time. That is what I have.”Sera considers this, then nods — the sharp, efficient acknowledgment of someone who disagrees but accepts the logic. She gathers her notes and moves toward the door.“I'll have her monitored. Not overtly — she'd spot surveillance and it would confirm every suspicion she has about being targeted. Routine check-ins disguised as administrative processes.”“Do it.”She leaves. The door clicks shut, and the chamber contracts to just myself and Corwin. The old advisor hasn't spoken through the entire proceeding. He sits in his chair near the hearth, fingers laced over his stomach, watching me with the patient attention of a man who has served three lords and outlasted every crisis by knowing which problems to raise and when.“There's another matter,” he says.

I lower myself into my chair. My shoulders ache, and my skull feels packed with sand. “Go ahead.”“The Alliance's formal response to the Luminary Protocol. It should have arrived four days ago. Standard procedure after a verified claim is forty-eight hours for preliminary acknowledgment, seventy-two for formal ratification.”He pauses.“We've received neither.”The exhaustion recedes slightly, replaced by something colder. “Delayed in transit?”“Possible but unlikely. Alliance dispatches travel by dragon relay — the fastest communication system in the realm. A four-day delay suggests either prolonged deliberation or active obstruction.”“Obstruction by whom?”“Any house with an interest in preventing a white dragon from receiving formal Alliance protection, which means, effectively, every house.” Corwin's tone remains measured, but I hear the warning beneath it. He adds:“Without the Alliance's ratification, our legal position weakens by the day. Cassandra's detention rests on the guest-right violation, but Mintia's formal response will argue diplomatic immunity. If the Alliance hasn't ratified the Protocol by then, we're defending Evelyn with one hand tied.”“What do you recommend?”“Thalissa, the loremaster who verified Aspis. She has direct access to Alliance records, personal relationships with three of the five council members, and enough political independence. If someone is blocking the ratification, she'll know who and why.”“Send for her.”“I'll draft the request tonight. Dragon relay to the Archive at Veranthos — she should receive it within two days.”“Make it urgent. You can use my personal seal.”Corwin nods and rises with the careful movements of a man whose joints protest the hour. He pauses at the door.“You handled Venna correctly. For what that's worth from an old man who's seen too many lords handle similar situations poorly.”“It's worth something, Corwin.”He leaves, and the chamber empties. I sit in the silence and let the exhaustion settle — pressing into my shoulders, my neck, the backs of my eyes. The torches flicker low. Maps are on the table, reports in stacks, and the debris of a house under siege from every direction. I close my eyes,

just for a moment, and hear a knock at the door. “Enter.” Evelyn slips inside. She’s still in her training clothes, hair damp at the temples, and she carries a cloth-wrapped bundle that she sets on the table without ceremony. “I heard about Venna,” she says. I wait for the question, concern, or guilt. She doesn’t offer any of it. Instead she unwraps the bundle — bread, dried meat, a wedge of sharp cheese, a skin of watered wine. “Have you eaten today?” I look at the food and then back at her. The shadows under her eyes match mine. The weariness in her shoulders is a mirror of the weight pressing down on my own. “No,” I admit. She sits across from me in the council chamber, in the chair where Corwin sat minutes ago, and tears the bread in half. She pushes the larger piece toward me without comment. I take it. The bread is still warm. We eat in silence. No strategy or crisis, no house law or treason or ancient prophecies pressing against the walls. Just bread and cheese and two people too tired to pretend they don’t need this — A few minutes where the silence between us doesn’t carry the weight of everything waiting outside that door. Her knee brushes mine beneath the table. She doesn’t pull away, and neither do I. The torches burn low, and for these few stolen minutes, the quiet asks nothing of either of us. 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.

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7-9 minutes

Dreams Beyond Broken Wings — 84

[Evelyn’s POV] A week since the great hall, and the training yard has shifted. The wall hasn’t broken, but it has cracks. Warriors who refused to look at me seven days ago now watch with something closer to assessment. The way you study an unfamiliar weapon before deciding whether to pick it up. Word of Draven’s address has filtered through the ranks. I can feel the change in how bodies orient when I enter the yard. Less turning away, more measured watching. Sera’s testimony carried weight, and whatever she said has softened the ground enough for doubt to take root where certainty stood. I work twice as hard as anyone. Take every hit without complaint, every bruise as payment toward a debt I didn’t create but carry regardless. I offer to spar with anyone who’ll stand in the ring, and today eight warriors accept. The bouts are still formal — nobody’s cracking jokes or clapping my shoulder. But the stiffness has eased into something approaching professional respect. I’m

dripping sweat after my sixth bout when a mid-ranked fighter named Haddon steps in. He's broad across the chest with quick hands, and he favors a high guard that leaves his left side open if you know how to bait the rotation. I know how to bait the rotation. Three exchanges to draw him into the pattern. On the fourth, I feint high, drop low, hook his blade with a wrist-turn I learned from watching Mintia's weapons master through a window I wasn't supposed to be near, and strip the sword from his grip. The steel clatters across packed earth. Haddon stares at his empty hands. The yard goes quiet. "Hold." Sera's voice cuts across the silence from where she's been overseeing the session, leaning against the far post with her arms crossed. She pushes off and walks into the ring, her dark eyes fixed on me. "That disarm. Show it again, slowly." I glance at her, reading the request beneath the request. This isn't curiosity. Sera is handing me something — a chance to be useful in front of people who are trying to decide my worth. "Haddon, reset your guard," I say. He picks up his blade and raises it into high position. "Watch the wrist, not the blade." I move through the technique at half speed, narrating as I go. "He commits to the high guard, which means his grip tightens here —" I tap his wrist. "The rotation creates momentum he can't redirect. You feint to draw the commitment, then drop your center and turn your wrist under his. You're not overpowering the grip. You're redirecting it." I complete the disarm at demonstration pace. Haddon's blade leaves his hand in a gentle arc. *W.W.mOVelWol(r)M.cóm* "The angle is everything," I continue, resetting. "Too steep and you clash, too shallow and you slide off. Sera, would you mind?" Sera raises an eyebrow but draws her training blade and takes position. We run through it twice — once slow, once at combat speed. The second time, Sera adjusts her grip mid-technique and nearly counters. "Interesting." She sheathes her blade. "Where did you learn that combination?" "House of Blue Dragon weapons training. I wasn't allowed on the grounds, so I watched through a window and practiced alone at night." The honesty lands in the yard like a stone in still water. A few warriors exchange glances. Sera holds my gaze for a moment, and I see the calculation complete behind her eyes — the technique is worth teaching, and the story of how I learned it reinforces what Draven told them about my past. "Pair up," Sera orders the yard. "Work the disarm sequence. Evelyn will correct your form." For the next half hour, I move between pairs, adjusting grips and angles. A few warriors study the footwork with genuine professional interest — the kind of focused attention that doesn't care about bloodlines, only about whether the technique will save their life in combat. Seren, the tall woman who sparred with me that first day, asks three follow-up questions about the wrist mechanics. Brennan grins when he strips the blade from his partner on the second attempt. Torren watches from the colonnade, with arms crossed, scarred face unreadable. He doesn't participate, comment, or leave. He stands there, a veteran measuring something against a standard only he can see. Progress measured in inches.

After training, Dorian falls into step beside me on the path back toward the compound. He's quiet for a while — Dorian's silences are never uncomfortable, just spacious — before he speaks. "Finn talked to me yesterday." My heart kicks. I keep my pace steady. "About what?" "About the address Draven gave the senior fighters." He adjusts the strap of his training bag on his shoulder. "He's not ready to talk to you directly. He wanted me to know that, and he wanted me to tell you." "That he's not ready?" "That he heard what Draven said about what your family did to you. All of it." Dorian pauses at the junction where the path splits toward the barracks and the lord's wing. "Those were his words — 'I'm thinking about it.' Coming from Finn, that's a lot." "It is," I say quietly. Finn's grief is rooted in real graves, so I won't push against that. I won't ask him to set it aside because my suffering makes a counterargument. He'll reach his conclusion on his own terms.

"Give him space," Dorian says, reading my expression. "He's stubborn, but he's fair. He'll get there." "And if he doesn't?" "Then you respect it. But I know Finn. His conscience won't let him stay angry at someone who was hurt by the same people who hurt his family." He holds my gaze. "Different targets, same cruelty. He'll see that eventually." I nod. Dorian squeezes my shoulder once — brief, solid — and heads toward the barracks. The corridor near my quarters is dim, the afternoon light fading through narrow windows. I'm reaching for my door when footsteps round the corner ahead.

Venna. She's dressed in unmarked training leathers — no sigil, no rank insignia, no commander's braid. Plain, stripped, and anonymous. The absence of everything she wore to that council chamber screams louder than any decoration could. Our eyes meet. Five paces between us, and the corridor feels smaller than the sea cave. Her expression is a closed door, locked, bolted, nothing coming in or going out. She doesn't slow her stride. She doesn't speak and doesn't look away either — she holds my gaze as she passes with the rigid control of someone who refuses to be the first to flinch. I recognize the set of her shoulders. The careful way she holds herself, every muscle deliberately arranged to project composure. I recognize it because I carried the same posture through the corridors of Mintia for years — shame wrapped in pride, choking on both, too stubborn to let either one show. She rounds the corner and disappears. I stand in the corridor, hand still on my door, and the certainty settles into my gut with the weight of cold iron. That wasn't surrender walking past me. That wasn't a woman who's accepted her sentence and moved on. That was someone recalculating. The same dangerous stillness I've seen in Cassandra — the composure that comes not from peace but from patience, from a plan still forming behind a locked door. Venna hasn't given up the idea of getting rid of me. She's just learning to be quieter about it.

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Dreams Beyond Broken Wings — 85

[Cassandra's POV] *Ww(w).novelW@rm.Co(m)* Two weeks in this gilded cage, and the walls have become my allies. I know the guard rotation by heartbeat. Four pairs, six-hour shifts. The dawn pair is disciplined, the midday one is competent, and the evening pair is professional. But the midnight pair has a weakness, and his name is Emmon. The kind of young man who joined the house guard to prove something to a father who didn't believe in him. Kael identified him on day three and has spent eleven days building a rapport so careful that Emmon doesn't realize he's been cultivated. Kael sits across from me now, reporting in the low voice we've adopted for these evening briefings. "The schedule holds. Dawn shift arrives at the fifth bell, not the sixth — they changed it after the first week but haven't rotated since. Midday overlap runs twenty minutes at the south corridor junction. That's the blind spot." "And Emmon?" "Trusts me enough to carry a sealed note to the kitchens. I told him it was a dietary request for Harath's stomach condition. He didn't open it, didn't question it." "Did the note reach the drop point?" "Kitchen corridor, third stone from the flour stores. I watched the route from the meal hall window. He placed it exactly where I described." I study Kael's face. He delivers the intelligence with steady competence, but that heaviness lingers behind his eyes. "You've done well," I tell him with measured warmth, enough to keep the mechanism oiled. "There's something else." He leans closer. "Three days ago, I left a test message at the secondary drop — the one behind the armory cistern. Venna's cipher and format. I wasn't expecting a response because her channel should be dead." "But?" "Someone answered. Not Venna — the handwriting is different, but they used the cipher correctly. Whoever picked up the channel had access to Venna's encryption method." My pulse quickens, though I keep my face still. "What did the response contain?" "Updated patrol routes for the eastern wall and names of warriors assigned to the restricted corridor near Draven's quarters. Also, the timing of dragon feeding schedules at the sea cave entrance." "Someone inside this household picked up Venna's channel and is running it independently." "That's what it looks like." I rise and pace to the window. The compound sprawls below in moonlight — stone and timber, torches at the gates, the dark line of the sea. "Do you know who?" "No. The responses appear at irregular intervals. No pattern I can identify to narrow down which shift or which section of the compound they're coming from." "It doesn't matter, not yet." I turn back to him. "What matters is that the channel reaches outside these walls. Can you confirm that?" "The primary drop in the kitchen corridor connects to the supply route. Merchants pass through twice

weekly. If someone on the outside is monitoring the chain Venna built, messages are leaving this compound.” “Good! Then we use it.” I move to the writing desk and pull parchment from beneath Harath’s stack of protestations. The cipher is second nature — I designed it myself, taught it to Venna during the summit. Kael watches me write. “What are you telling him?” “The truth. Father needs to understand that politics won’t recover what belongs to our house.” I encode each word with practiced speed. “Evelyn is bonded. The white dragon is real — verified by Alliance loremasters, protected under the Luminary Protocol. Every petition, every territorial claim he files will fail.” “You’re telling him to abandon the political approach.”

“I’m telling him that the political approach was never going to work. The Protocol is centuries old and has never been successfully challenged. Draven’s legal position is unassailable.” I finish the encoding and set the quill down. “Father is a military man. He thinks in formations and siege lines and acceptable casualties. When he reads this, he won’t file another petition. He’ll mobilize.” Kael is quiet for a moment. His jaw works, and I can see the question pressing against his teeth the way it has for days — that unnamed thing he won’t voice. “Say it,” I tell him. “Whatever it is you’ve been chewing on since the great hall.” He meets my eyes. “In the hall, when Evelyn spoke... She said you threw the stone in the training hall. That you staged the entire thing and let your parents blame her.” “WwW.n(O)vεIwOrM.CoM” I did.” “She said the egg bonded to her before the ceremony. That your family stole it while she slept.” “On my suggestion.” He absorbs this. His throat moves as he swallows. “Did any of it bother you at the time?” “Bother me?” I fold the encoded message into a tight square. “The prophecy requires the stronger sister to eliminate the weaker. Every action we took was in service of saving our house from the destruction Evelyn was born to bring.” “And if the prophecy is wrong?” I look at Kael — his broad jaw, his uncertain eyes, the crumbling architecture of a man only now examining the foundation he stood on. “It isn’t. The witch spoke with the voice of something older than houses or bloodlines. Her words have guided our family for twenty years.” “Years of hurting your sister.” “Of protecting our house!” I hold out the folded message. “Take this to Emmon tonight. Kitchen corridor drop, and don’t linger.” He takes the message, his fingers close around it, and he stands. At the door, he pauses. “What happens to Evelyn when your father arrives?” “The prophecy ends in the way it was always meant to.” He leaves without another word. The door clicks shut, and I’m alone with the candle and the dark. WwW.(n)ove①WOrM.cO① I sit at the desk and let my mind drift to the place I’ve been avoiding. The cave in Mintia’s northern mountains. The witch — ancient, blind, milky eyes seeing beyond the physical world. Father’s hand gripping mine, my nine-year-old fingers sweating against his palm. ‘Two daughters of the blue blood. One will save the House—’ I’ve read those words a thousand times, whispered them to myself before sleep. I’ve built my entire identity around the certainty that I am the stronger one: trained, chosen, destined. But lately a different reading surfaces. In the quiet hours when the candle burns low, the words

rearrange themselves without my permission. The stronger must end the weaker. What if stronger doesn't mean what Father taught me? What if it doesn't mean sharper blades and harder fists? What if it means something I've never been taught to recognize because recognizing it would unravel everything? *Ww.NovelWorld.Com* Evelyn stood in a hall full of enemies and named every wound without flinching. She survived exile, abuse, her own sister's blade, and emerged with a voice that commanded lords. Is that strength? I crush the thought and grind it between my teeth. Weakness. Doubt is weakness, and weakness is death. The prophecy is clear, so I am certain. The message is sent. Father will come with steel and fire and the full might of the House of Blue Dragon at his back. And when he does, I will fulfill what I was born to do. The candle gutters. I watch the flame until it steadies, and I steady with it. The prophecy ends the way it was always meant to. 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 — 86

[Evelyn's POV] Cassandra's unfinished sentence won't leave me alone. It plays on a loop — the crack in her composure, the word she swallowed. *Ww.NovelWorld.Com* 'You don't know what you are. You don't know what the—' *Ww.NovelWorld.Com* She stopped herself. Whatever she nearly said frightened her more than silence. It has to be a prophecy. The way Father spoke of destiny, the certainty behind Cassandra's cruelty — not the casual malice of a jealous sister but the conviction of someone fulfilling an obligation. Everything my family did to me had the weight of ritual behind it. The archives are buried three floors beneath the council chamber. Stone rooms lined floor to ceiling with shelves sagging under centuries of records — leather-bound volumes, loose parchment, scrolls in cedar boxes, all smelling of dust and salt damp. *Ww.NovelWorld.Com* Corwin meets me at the entrance. He's agreed to help, but his manner is polite, careful — the courtesy of a man who serves his lord's choices without endorsing them. "What exactly are you looking for?" he asks, leading me through the narrow aisles. "Anything tied to white dragons, sister bloodlines, or the House of Blue Dragon specifically." "That's a broad search. These archives span four centuries, and not all of it survived intact." He gestures at an entire section where water stains have reduced the

parchment to illegible pulp.“Flooding, two decades ago. Political censorship before that: Lord Draven’s grandfather burned records he found inconvenient, and what remains is fragmentary.”“I’ll work with fragments.”He studies me for a moment, whatever assessment he’s running hidden behind those careful old eyes. Then he pulls three volumes from a high shelf and sets them on the reading table.“Start here. Regional prophecy accounts, cross-referenced with dragon bloodline records. If your family’s history intersects with prophetic tradition, it will appear in these indexes.”The work is slow and meticulous — dense text in archaic script, references that lead to missing pages, footnotes pointing to volumes that no longer exist. I read until my eyes burn, chasing threads that dissolve into gaps and silence.Two hours in, I find the first reference. A passage in a compilation of northern mountain traditions, describing a witch who lived in the caves above the highland passes.She spoke prophecies tied to dragon bloodlines, particularly during periods when white or black dragons emerged.The account is third-hand, filtered through two translations, but the core detail is clear: the witch’s prophecies were considered binding by the houses that sought them.My family sought her. I’m certain of it.Another hour yields a second fragment — this one in a damaged folio of Blue Dragon house records that somehow survived the flooding. Most of the page is illegible, brown stains eating through the text.But near the bottom, in ink that has barely held against the moisture, I can make out seven words:Two daughters of the blue blood—The rest of the line is torn. Someone removed the continuation of this passage with intention and precision.My heart hammers. I turn the folio over, searching for continuation on the reverse, for footnotes, for anything. Nothing! The next page begins a completely different record.But in the margin, in handwriting I’ve come to recognize from weeks of reading council documents, a single notation in faded ink:See Thalissa — original text held in Alliance vault. Corwin’s handwriting, written decades ago, judging by the ink’s oxidation.I take the folio and the fragment upstairs. Draven is in his study, bent over correspondence, and he looks up when I enter with the particular alertness of a man who has learned to read urgency in footsteps.“I found something in the archives.” I lay the folio open on his desk. “A prophecy fragment tied to my family’s house. Look at this— The rest is deliberately removed.”Draven reads the fragment, then the margin note. Something darkens in his expression — not surprise but recognition. The look of a man watching a pattern he’s been tracking finally lock into place.“Cassandra tried to kill you because of a prophecy,” he says. “She believes she has to.”

“I think my entire family believes it. The way Father raised her, the way they treated me — it was systematic and calculated, like they were following instructions.”“They were following instructions, interpreting them, at least — filtered through whatever the witch told them and whatever meaning they chose to attach to it.”He leans back in his chair, fingers pressed together.“This isn’t political anymore, Evelyn. Cassandra is trying to fulfill what she believes

is a sacred obligation.”“It makes her more dangerous than any diplomat or soldier. You can negotiate with politics. You can’t negotiate with someone who thinks the gods are on her side.”“No, you can’t.” He taps Corwin’s margin note. “Thalissa has access to the Alliance vault. If the original text exists, she can retrieve it.”“Corwin’s note is decades old, so the text might not still be there.”“Thalissa has already been summoned. Corwin recommended her for Alliance business — the Protocol ratification that hasn’t arrived. The timing works. When she comes, we ask about both.”“And if the original prophecy says what I think it does? If it actually demands that one sister kills the other?”Draven holds my gaze.“We find out what it really demands, not what Cassandra decided it means. Prophecies are interpreted by the people who benefit from specific readings. Your father had every reason to interpret ‘the stronger sister’ as the one he’d already chosen.”“And if he interpreted it correctly?”“We deal with that when it comes, but I don’t make decisions based on prophecies. I make them based on the people standing in front of me.”The words settle into the space between us, warm and steady. I want to hold onto them. I want to believe that whatever the torn page says, it doesn’t have to define what happens next. I gather the folio and the fragment from his desk. “I’m going back to the archives. There might be more references buried in the older records.”“Take Corwin with you. He knows those shelves better than anyone alive, and if there’s material he flagged decades ago, he may remember what else he found.”I nod and turn toward the door, then stop.“Draven, thank you for not telling me prophecies don’t matter.”“They matter. People kill for them, and your sister proved that.” His dark eyes hold mine. “But mattering and being true aren’t the same thing.”I carry the folio back to the archives and spread it open on the reading table. The lamplight catches the torn edge of the page — clean, precise, someone’s careful violence against a text they wanted silenced. Two daughters of the blue blood. The stronger will—Will what? Save? Destroy? Spare? The missing words hang in the silence like a held breath. Every possibility branches from that torn edge into futures I can’t see, each one shaped by the meaning someone chose to erase. (w)(w)w.NovE①W©rm.com Through the bond, Aspis stirs. Her presence rises from the background hum into sharp focus, and her voice carries a resonance that vibrates in my chest like a second heartbeat.“The watching thing knows the words. It wrote them.”The archive holds its breath, and somewhere beyond the compound walls, the sky presses down with a darkness that has nothing to do with night. 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

Dreams Beyond Broken Wings — 87

[Draven's POV] Sera drops the intelligence on the council table like a body. "Aldric is mobilizing, full-scale." She spreads a map across the wood, scout reports pinned at key positions along the southern trade routes. "Blue Dragon warships being provisioned at three separate ports, and warriors recalled from every border post. Minor houses along the Strait of Callos receiving envoys with promises of expanded territory in exchange for naval support." Corwin leans forward, studying the markers. Theron stands at the far end of the table, arms crossed, already running numbers behind his eyes. "How reliable is this?" Theron asks. "Three independent sources, cross-confirmed. Two merchant scouts and a fisherman we've had on retainer since the border skirmishes. The provisioning at Aldric's primary port alone suggests a fleet of twenty to thirty warships." "Timeline?" I ask. "That's what concerns me." Sera taps the nearest port marker. "This level of mobilization takes weeks. Recalling border warriors, provisioning ships, negotiating with minor houses — you don't assemble that machinery overnight. Our earliest intelligence suggests movement began before Cassandra's assassination attempt failed." The implication lands on the table like a blade. "The attack on Evelyn wasn't the primary plan," I say. *www.novelworm.com* "The military response was already in motion. Cassandra's corridor ambush was opportunistic — she saw a chance and took it. But Aldric was preparing for war regardless of whether that blade found its mark." Sera straightens. "Cassandra's message, whatever she managed to send, only confirmed what Aldric was already willing to do." "How long do we have?" "Six to eight weeks before a fleet of that size can reach Black Dragon waters. Possibly less if the minor houses commit naval escorts early." "Six weeks. The number settles into my chest like iron." "Theron, I want every coastal fortification assessed within three days. Anything that needs reinforcement gets priority labor — pull from non-essential projects." I say. "Corwin, draft alliance requests to House Varath and House Callen. They border our territory to the north and east. Neither loves Mintia, and both understand that if we fall, they're next." "Supply lines?" Theron asks. "Stockpile. Grain, weapons, medical stores. Assume a siege of three months and provision accordingly. If the fight ends sooner, we eat well. If it doesn't, we don't starve." Theron nods and begins making notes. Corwin gathers his materials with the quiet efficiency I've come to rely on. But Sera hasn't moved. She stands at the table with her hands flat on the map, and the expression on her face tells me the briefing isn't finished. "There's something else," I say. "The intelligence leak." Her voice drops a register. "Venna's channel was exposed and she's been stripped of access, but the flow of information hasn't stopped. Someone else inside this compound is feeding Mintia real-time operational data using the

coded cipher Cassandra created.”The room goes still.“I’ve been monitoring the dead drop locations Venna used. Three days ago, a message appeared at the secondary point behind the armory cistern — written in Cassandra’s cipher, containing updated patrol routes and guard assignments that reflect changes we made after Venna’s exposure.”“Changes made after,” Theron repeats. “Which means whoever wrote it has current access.”“The intelligence includes internal compound structure: restricted corridor assignments, dragon feeding schedules, the timing of Evelyn’s visits to the sea caves. Whoever the source is has operational knowledge beyond what a low-ranked warrior would possess.”My jaw tightens until the muscles ache. One traitor nearly destroyed us, but two could be fatal.“Do you have suspects?”“I’ve narrowed the access pattern. The information in those messages requires familiarity with senior-level scheduling: not necessarily senior rank, but proximity to it. Someone has access to the administrative corridors where those documents are posted.”She pauses:

“That’s still a pool of roughly forty people. I need time to narrow it further.”“You have it. Silent investigation — no announcements, no lockdowns, nothing that tells the source we’re looking. If they know we’re hunting, they’ll go dark and we lose the only thread we have.”“I’ll report directly to you, no intermediaries.”Sera and Theron file out. Corwin confirms the alliance drafts will be ready by morning, then follows. I sit with the map spread before me. Aldric is coming, a father crossing the sea to destroy the daughter he failed to break. I send for Evelyn, and she arrives within minutes — ink on her fingers, a crease between her brows from hours of reading. She takes the chair across from me and reads my expression before I speak.“How bad?”“Your father is mobilizing a military fleet. Six to eight weeks before they reach our waters.”I watch her process it. Color retreats from her cheeks, her lips press thin, the muscles in her throat work as she swallows. She doesn’t flinch.“What do the defenses look like?”I turn the map toward her and walk through the positions: the coastal fortifications, the cliff batteries, the harbor chains. She listens with the focused attention of someone cataloguing tactical information, her eyes tracking the markers, her fingers tracing approach routes.“You’re reinforcing the western cliffs and the harbor mouth,” she says. “Those are the obvious targets — the deepwater approaches where warships can anchor within catapult range.”“They’re where any competent admiral would strike first.”“My father isn’t a competent admiral, he’s an arrogant one. He won’t come at you where you’re strong — he’ll look for the approach you’ve dismissed.”Her finger slides east along the coastline, past the main fortifications to the shallow inlets beyond the compound.“Here! The eastern shallows.”“The shallows are too shallow, and warships can’t navigate the reef line. We’ve never fortified them because there’s nothing to fortify against.”“Longboats can, if they time the tides correctly.” She looks up at me. “The reef line submerges completely during the spring tide: three days every lunar cycle where the eastern

approach is navigable for shallow-draft vessels. A landing force of two hundred could come ashore at the inlet and flank your cliff positions from behind while the fleet engages the harbor.” I stare at her. “How do you know the tide patterns for our eastern coast?” “I went out with the fishing patrols during my second month here, learned the currents, the reef cycles, the depth charts.” She meets my gaze without apology. “I mapped your entire coastline.” “You what?” “Old habit. When you spend your childhood in a house that wants you dead, you learn every exit before you learn the furniture.” I look at her — ink-stained, exhausted, carrying the knowledge that her father is sailing toward her with a fleet designed to end her life — and something shifts in my chest. Not desire, though that’s there too, constant as Khaira’s heartbeat through the bond. Something more fundamental. The recognition that this woman has been preparing for war since she was old enough to understand she was born into one. The corner of my mouth pulls upward. It’s small, involuntary — the first thing close to a smile that’s crossed my face in weeks. “Show me the rest,” I say, and push the map toward her. She pulls it closer, and her hands move across the coastline with the certainty of someone who has already fought this battle in her head a hundred times. 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 — 88

[Evelyn’s POV] Aspis can’t be contained anymore. I feel it through the bond before dawn — the pressure building like steam in a sealed chamber. She’s too large for the sea caves, wings scraping stone when she stretches, her body coiled against walls that shrink with every passing day. “Today,” she says and it wasn’t a request. “Today, or I tear the cliff open myself.” “Draven’s arranged it. Dawn launch from the eastern cliffs, before the compound wakes.” “I don’t care who wakes or who sees.” “I do. Give me this — one hour of sky without an audience. After that, the world can watch.” She agrees, but the impatience boils through the bond like fever. Draven meets me at the tunnel entrance in the gray half-light. Khaira waits on the overlook above, her black silhouette barely visible against the pre-dawn sky. “Eastern launch point,” he says. “Over open water, away from the compound. The cliff drops two

hundred feet to the sea — enough altitude for her to catch the updraft even if the first wingbeats are rough.”“Comforting.”“You’ll be fine, the bond will hold you.” He catches my arm as I pass. His grip is warm, his dark eyes searching my face. “Are you ready?”“I’ve been ready my whole life. I just didn’t know for what.”He releases me. I descend the tunnel to the sea caves for the last time.Aspis is waiting at the cave mouth where the stone opens to sky. The dawn light catches her scales and sets them burning — a white dragon, luminous, trembling with caged power.Her violet eyes find me and the bond floods with an emotion so raw and overwhelming that my knees nearly buckle. Pure, primal, desperate joy.“Get on.”I climb onto her back. No saddle, no harness — just my legs pressing against warm scales, hands gripping the bony ridge between her shoulders.The muscle beneath me shifts and coils. Her heartbeat thunders against my inner thighs, steady and enormous.“Hold tight.”“Wait — how do we—”Aspis launches.She throws herself from the cave mouth with an explosion of muscle that slams my chest against her spine, and then the world drops away.The cliff face blurs past — gray stone rushing upward as we plummet down. Wind hits me like a wall, and my stomach lurches into my throat.Below, the sea rushes up, dark and vast, waves shattering white against rocks that grow larger with terrifying speed.I scream.The sound rips from my chest, involuntary and absolute — and through the bond, something happens to it.The terror transmutes. The scream twists in my throat, reshapes, and what comes out of my mouth on the next breath is laughter.Raw, gasping, half-mad laughter that the wind tears away the instant it leaves my lips.Aspis spreads her wings.©ŴŴ.NovélwOrm.©(m)The catch is violent — a wrenching deceleration that snaps my body backward, my spine arching, my fingers nearly losing the ridge.Then the updraft hits and we surge upward so fast that the horizon tilts and the sea drops away beneath us like a discarded blanket.We climb. The air thins and cools against my face, against the silver hair streaming behind me — no more dye, no more hiding, just the hair I was born with blazing in the first light of dawn.My lungs burn. My eyes water from the wind. Every cell in my body is electric with a terror so close to ecstasy I can’t tell where one ends and the other begins.(w)ww.ñ©vElworm.Co(m)Through the bond, moonlight power surges unbidden. Silver light crawls up my arms, races along Aspis’s spine, wreathing us both in pale fire that leaves a trail across the sky like a comet’s wake.

I don’t summon or fight it. The power responds to what I feel, and what I feel is beyond anything I have language for.Aspis banks hard to the east. The world tilts — sea on one side, sky on the other, the compound shrinking to a dark thumbprint on the coastline below.I press my cheek against her neck and feel her heartbeat match mine, two rhythms locking into a single pulse that resonates through the bond like a bell being struck.“Do you feel it?” she asks.“Yes.” The word is barely a whisper, stolen by the wind.“This is what we are. This is what they tried to take from us. Every cage, every cave, every year in the dark — it was the price we paid to reach this sky.”She dives. The drop is sudden and savage — wings folding,

body streamlining, the sea rushing up again with beautiful violence. I flatten myself against her spine and hold on with everything I have, the wind screaming past my ears, the moonlight fire streaming behind us like a banner. At the last moment she flares, wings snapping wide, and we level out so close to the water that the spray kisses my face. She skims the waves with her wingtips, banking in long, sweeping arcs, and the joy pulsing through the bond is so intense it saturates every nerve. www.novelworld.com We fly for an hour. I lose track of direction, of time, of everything except air and scale and boundless sky. Aspis tests herself — climbing until the air thins, diving until the sea reaches for us, rolling in spirals that leave me gasping and crying and laughing all at once. By the time we turn back toward the cliffs, my legs are shaking and my hands are raw from gripping the ridge. Every muscle in my body trembles with exhaustion and exhilaration, tangled so tightly I couldn't separate them if I tried. Aspis lands on the sea cliff with a grace that belies her size, a controlled descent, wings beating twice, talons finding stone. The impact jolts through my spine and I slide from her back on legs that barely hold. Draven is waiting on the overlook. Khaira rumbles beside him, a deep vibration I feel through the stone beneath my boots. His expression is unguarded in a way I've rarely seen: the wonder I glimpsed in the cave months ago, but deeper now, layered with something he's not trying to hide anymore. "Well?" he says. I open my mouth, but nothing comes out. My legs are shaking, my face is wet — tears and salt spray and sweat — and the bond is still singing, a sustained note of fulfillment that resonates through every bone. I shake my head. There are no words for what just happened. No words for what it means to spend your entire life in a cage you didn't choose and then, in a single hour, discover what your body was built to do. Draven watches me struggle with it, and the look on his face softens into something I'll remember when everything else goes dark. "Yeah," he says quietly. "That's what it looks like." Behind us, movement at the compound gates. The first warriors emerging for morning drills, faces tilted upward, hands shielding eyes against the dawn. Someone points. Voices carry on the salt wind — sharp, startled, disbelieving. They saw the white fire in the sky. They saw us, so by midday, everyone will know. Aspis stretches her wings against the morning sun. White scales blaze with reflected light, casting prismatic shards across the cliff face. She lifts her head toward the compound, toward the warriors gathering at the gate, toward the world that tried to pretend she didn't exist. Through the bond comes a single pulse — satisfied, fierce, and ancient as the sky itself. "Now they see us." 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

Dreams Beyond Broken Wings — 89

The Alliance loremaster steps from the escort carriage, barely five feet tall, silver hair swept back from a face mapped with more lines than the coastal charts in Draven's study. She carries a cane of dark polished wood, but her grip is casual, decorative. The way she moves tells me her legs work fine. Two Alliance guards flank her. Behind them, a sealed chest bearing the Alliance insignia — a dragon coiled around a scale — is carried by a young attendant who struggles with its weight. Thalissa scans the courtyard with bright, sharp eyes that miss nothing: warriors at their posts, Draven standing at the council entrance, and Sera at his shoulder. Me, standing apart, silver hair catching the afternoon light. Her gaze finds me and holds. Something flickers across her face — recognition, assessment, a calculation completed in the span of a breath. "I'd like to see the dragon first," she says. Her voice is clear and carries easily across the stone, not loud, precise. The voice of a woman accustomed to being listened to. "Aspis," I call through the bond. "There's someone here who wants to meet you." "I felt her enter the territory. She smells like old paper and something older." Aspis descends from the cliff roosts with a grace that stops every sound in the courtyard. Wings wide, white scales blazing, she lands on the flagstones with barely a tremor. Warriors freeze mid-stride. A young sentry drops his pike, and the courtyard holds its breath. Thalissa walks directly to Aspis without hesitation. No fear, no reverence — the businesslike approach of a scholar meeting a subject of study. She reaches up and places her palm flat on the dragon's snout. She closes her eyes. A long moment passes. Through the bond, I feel something brush against my connection with Aspis — a third presence, light and careful, like fingers running along a thread to test its strength. Thalissa is reading the bond, not intruding but listening. Her eyes open. She stares at Aspis for three more heartbeats, then turns to the courtyard at large, speaking to no one in particular. "Extraordinary... and terrifying." She withdraws her hand and walks toward the council chamber without looking back, her cane tapping the stone with an unhurried rhythm. Draven catches my eye across the courtyard, and I follow. The council chamber is arranged for a formal meeting — Draven at the head, Corwin and Sera flanking him, chairs set for Thalissa and myself. The sealed chest rests on the table between us, its Alliance locks catching the torchlight. Thalissa settles into her chair, arranges her cane across her knees, and opens the chest with a key she wears on a chain around her neck. "Two matters," she says, lifting a sealed scroll from the chest and setting it before Draven. "First — the Alliance's formal response to the Luminary Protocol invocation. It was delayed by what I will diplomatically call 'administrative complications' and what I will privately call deliberate obstruction by parties

who prefer the white dragon's status remain ambiguous." Draven breaks the seal and reads. His expression doesn't change, but something in his shoulders eases a fraction. "Confirmed," he says. "Full ratification. Evelyn's bond with Aspis is legitimate and protected under Alliance law. Any attempt to forcibly separate rider from dragon constitutes a violation punishable by collective military response." "Which means Aldric's mobilization, when it arrives, will face not just your defenses but the legal weight of the entire Alliance," Thalissa says. "Whether individual houses honor that obligation is another matter, but the precedent is now formally established." Sera takes the scroll and begins reading the specific provisions. Corwin leans over her shoulder, already drafting implications. "Second matter." Thalissa reaches into the chest again. This time she lifts out something wrapped in oiled cloth — carefully, the way you handle something fragile and irreplaceable. She unwraps it on the table. These are fragments of parchment, centuries old, edges brown and crumbling, the script cramped and archaic. Water stains obscure entire sections, and the pieces don't fit together cleanly.

My heart begins to hammer. "The original prophecy text," Thalissa says. "Held in the Alliance vault since the Seraphine era. I've spent forty years trying to reconstruct the complete passage. This is as close as anyone has come." She arranges the pieces on the table with practiced hands, fitting edges together, leaving spaces for what's missing. The script is barely legible — old dialect, faded ink, stains eating through critical words. But enough survives. I lean forward, my pulse pounding in my temples, and read. "Two daughters of the blue blood. The stronger will break the cycle. The broken one falls, and what was divided is made whole. But if the cycle turns again—"

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The rest dissolves into illegibility. Water damage, age, the slow violence of centuries erasing what someone wrote in a language older than the houses that claim it. I read the visible words again. And again: The stronger will break the cycle. Break the cycle. Not break the weaker, and not destroy the sister, but break the cycle. "Cassandra's interpretation is wrong," I say. My voice sounds distant to my own ears, like it's coming from the far end of a long corridor. "My father's interpretation — the one they built their entire lives around, the one they used to justify everything they did to me — it's wrong. The prophecy doesn't demand that one sister kill the other." "No," Thalissa agrees. "It demands that one sister end a pattern. A cycle of destruction tied to the convergence of white and black dragons — the same cycle that consumed Seraphine's era three centuries ago." "Then what does 'the broken one falls' mean?"

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"That's where interpretation becomes treacherous. 'Falls' could mean dies or fails, or it could mean surrenders. The original dialect allows for all three readings." Thalissa folds her hands on her cane. "What's clear is that the prophecy describes a breaking of pattern, not a breaking of blood. Someone reframed it as fratricide — and that reframing has driven your family's actions for two generations." Draven leans forward. "Who? The witch in the mountains?" "She spoke the words. Whether she did it accurately or adapted

them for her audience is unknowable at this distance—” Thalissa’s bright eyes settle on me with an intensity that presses against my skin. “But someone wanted this prophecy to mean violence. Someone benefited from two sisters being set against each other — from one being built into a weapon and the other being systematically broken.” “Who benefits from that?” I ask. Thalissa holds my gaze. The council chamber is silent enough that I can hear the torches breathing. “The same force that wrote the prophecy in the first place, the one your dragon has been warning you about.” The words land in the silence and stay there, spreading outward like cracks in ice. Through the bond, Aspis sends a pulse of grim recognition. The Watcher. The ancient presence that stirs when white and black share territory, the thing that watches from behind the sky with eyes like dying stars. It didn’t just observe the prophecy but authored it. The interpretation that turned my sister into my executioner — the reading that shaped my entire childhood into a preparation for murder — was exactly what it wanted. Thalissa watches me arrive at the conclusion she’s already reached, and in her ancient eyes I see something that looks very much like fear. 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 — 90

[Draven’s POV] The council chamber empties. Sera takes the ratification scroll, and Corwin escorts the Alliance guards to quarters. Evelyn lingers at the door, face still carrying the shock of the prophecy’s true meaning, before she nods and leaves. Thalissa doesn’t move. She sits in her chair with her cane across her knees, watching me with the patient attention of someone who has been waiting for the room to clear so she can say what she actually came to say. I pour two cups of wine and set one before her. She takes it without comment. “You held back in front of the others,” I say. www.ovèlwóm.com “That would have caused panic. Evelyn needed the prophecy text, but she didn’t need the rest of it — not yet, not in a room full of advisors already stretched to breaking.” Thalissa sips the wine and sets it down. “You, however, need all of it.” “Then give it to me.” “The prophecy and the Watcher are connected. They aren’t separate phenomena — one predicted, one observed. They’re parts of the same mechanism—” She leans forward, the cane rolling slightly on her knees. “The

Watcher is an ancient entity tied to dragon magic at its deepest roots. It appears when white and black dragons coexist in the same era — specifically, when bonded riders of both lines occupy the same territory.”“How?”“Not physically, not at first. It begins as a pressure — a weight on the dragon bonds, a distortion in the sky, a feeling of being observed by something too vast to have eyes. Your dragon Khaira has felt it. Every dragon in this compound has felt it.”She’s right. Khaira has been restless for weeks — pacing her roost, growling at shadows. I assumed it was territorial stress from Aspis’s presence.“It watches and evaluates,” Thalissa continues. “Eventually, it tests. The prophecy isn’t a prediction of what will happen — it’s a statement of conditions. A price that must be paid for white and black to coexist without catastrophe.”wWw.mO(v)ê①W@Rm.C©(m)“A price?”“The cycle the prophecy describes — the pattern of destruction that follows when the two lines converge — isn’t inevitable. It can be broken. That’s what ‘the stronger will break the cycle’ means. But if it isn’t broken, the Watcher’s judgment falls on both riders and everything they’ve built.”“What does that look like?”wwW.m(O)veIlWorm.(c)(o)(m)Thalissa sets down her wine. Her bright eyes hold mine, and I see the weight she carries — decades of research compressed into a truth she wishes she didn’t know.“Three hundred years ago, a woman named Seraphine bonded a white dragon while the Black Dragon lord still flew. The prophecy existed then too — different house and bloodline, but the same pattern. Two daughters of a noble house, a prophecy of cycles, a Watcher gathering at the edges of perception.”“What happened?”“They failed the test. Seraphine and the Black Dragon lord couldn’t break the cycle — consumed by the same rivalries, the same misreadings the prophecy was trying to end. The Watcher’s judgment destroyed both riders. Their dragons turned on each other in a battle that leveled two territories. The Alliance collapsed for a generation.”The words settle into my bones like cold iron. I feel them in my shoulders, my spine, the backs of my hands where they press against the table.ŴŴw.noVelwORM.čöM“Both riders,” I say.“The Watcher doesn’t discriminate. If the cycle isn’t broken, both lines pay the price — white and black alike. Your dragon and Evelyn’s, everyone bonded within the territory.”I absorb this in silence. Through the bond, Khaira stirs on her roost — a low, uneasy rumble that vibrates through my chest.She’s listening and understands more than she’s told me.“What does breaking the cycle actually require?”Thalissa exhales slowly.

“I’ve spent forty years studying these fragments, cross-referencing accounts from the Seraphine era, interviewing every loremaster and hedge-scholar who’s touched this material. I can tell you what the prophecy says. I cannot tell you what it means in practice.”“You’re telling me that you don’t know?”“Prophecies are not instruction manuals. They describe patterns, not procedures. ‘The stronger will break the cycle’ is a statement of outcome, not a blueprint for achieving it.”She picks up her cane and taps it once against the floor — a punctuation mark. “But I believe the answer lies in the bond.”“Which one?”“Aspis’s. The white

dragon carries ancestral memory — fragments of every white dragon that came before her, encoded in the bond itself. It's why Evelyn's dragon knows things she shouldn't know, sees things that haven't happened yet, feels the Watcher's presence before any other creature in this compound. Aspis carries history." "You're suggesting Evelyn dig through her dragon's ancestral memory to find instructions for passing a test set by a supernatural entity that destroyed the last people who attempted it." "The white dragon line has faced this before. Whatever Seraphine knew — or failed to know — may survive in the bond Evelyn carries. It's the only thread I can offer." Thalissa rises from her chair, steadying herself with the cane she doesn't need. "I'll remain in the compound for as long as I'm useful. The Alliance ratification is your legal shield. The prophecy fragments are your map — incomplete, but better than blindness." "And if we fail the way Seraphine did?" "Then I suggest you enjoy the weeks you have left." She says it without humor or cruelty — the flat honesty of a woman who has studied enough history to know how most of it ends. "But I don't think you will fail. Seraphine didn't have what you have." "Which is?" "A white dragon rider who survived being broken and chose to stand up anyway. That's not common or even rare. In three centuries of records, I've never seen anything like what that girl carries inside her." She pauses at the door. "Protect her, Lord Draven. Not from the war but from the people who will try to convince her the prophecy requires her sacrifice. That's how Seraphine fell. She believed the only way to break the cycle was to die for it." She leaves. The cane taps down the corridor, each strike precise, unhurried, fading. I sit alone in the council chamber. The prophecy fragments lie on the table, ancient parchment and cramped script, the visible words staring up at me like an accusation. 'The stronger will break the cycle. The broken one falls.' Through the bond, Khaira sends a single image: both of us — rider and dragon — standing on a cliff edge, the sky behind us dark with something that isn't weather. A war is coming. Aldric's fleet provisioned, warriors recalled, allied houses bribed. A military problem with military solutions, the kind of crisis I was trained for. But behind the war, something older watches. Something that tested the last generation and found them wanting, and burned the world they'd built as payment. And Evelyn — fierce, scarred, silver-haired Evelyn, who mapped my coastline out of habit and survived her family through sheer stubborn refusal to die — stands at the center of all of it. The woman I love is at the heart of a pattern that destroyed everyone who came before her. I press my palms flat against the table and breathe, and the council chamber holds its silence like a held blade.

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