

Episode 19 Part 1

-The Dark Forest-

Valtor: “You’re certain it’s wise for you to be out here with me during broad daylight?”

Bloom and Valtor hovered opposite each other in the open sky, the sprawling expanse of the Dark Forest stretching beneath them. Bloom’s stance was firm, ready for battle, her eyes blazing with focus. Valtor, on the other hand, was as infuriatingly relaxed as ever, his posture casual, hands loosely at his sides. The faint smirk playing on his lips was enough to set her teeth on edge. He knew exactly how much it irritated her, and of course, he relished it.

They were sparring today—her idea. If you asked her why, she’d say it was because she rarely had the chance to spar with someone who she didn’t have to hold back for. But the truth was far more complicated. She needed the space that magical combat offered, the distance that came with hurling fireballs and deflecting spells. It was easier this way, safer. There was no need for accidental touches or unspoken moments, no chance for him to get under her skin like he had before.

Bloom shot a barrage of fireballs at him, each one burning brighter and hotter than the last. She poured all her frustration into the attack, her movements quick and unrelenting. Valtor blocked them easily, raising a shimmering magical shield as though her effort was nothing more than an inconvenience.

Bloom: “Most of the Winx are in Solaria helping Stella and her father fix the political mess Cassandra and Chimera left them with. Which, I might add, is completely your fault.”

She punctuated her words with a sharp jab of her finger, pointing accusatory at his chest.

Although brief, Cassandra and Chimera’s reign threw Solaria’s political climate into complete chaos. The common folk had been ignored, exploited, while Cassandra lavished favour upon the wealthy elite she deemed worthy. To maintain her power and favour of these nobles, she made empty promises to influential families, granting them land, wealth, or titles in exchange for their loyalty. Now that she’s been ousted, they feel slighted and are stirring unrest, threatening rebellion.

To make matters worse, Cassandra forged dangerous alliances with neighbouring kingdoms, promising them Solarian resources and military assistance. These alliances are now a ticking time bomb, as foreign powers demanded the royal family to honour Cassandra’s agreements—or face the consequences.

Needless to say, Stella had her hands full after saving her father. The council of Magix offered little help in resolving the mess Cassandra and Chimera had left behind. So the Winx had stepped in to support their friend, but Bloom couldn’t help feeling guilty for not being by Stella’s side when she needed her most.

Then again, Bloom had proven time and again that diplomacy was not her strongest suit. She could just imagine herself botching a delicate negotiation with her infamous temper or saying the wrong thing at the worst moment. Still, the guilt lingered—until she caught the faintest flicker of relief on Stella’s face when she’d declined to join them. It was subtle, but unmistakable. And while it stung slightly, it also made Bloom think her absence might be for the best.

Valtor: “I fear the damage was already done before our little deal, so nothing I could do anymore. But please, accept my most sincere apologies for any... inconvenience caused to your dear friend Stella.”

He gave a low, mocking bow, his lips curling into a faint smile, clearly enjoying the mayhem he caused by giving Cassandra and Chimera so much power.

Bloom: “You’re such a liar.”

She hurled another fireball directly at his face, aiming to wipe the smug smirk right off of him. But Valtor dodged effortlessly, the flames grazing harmlessly past him.

Valtor: “You wound me.”

Bloom paused, her breath coming in short bursts, her relentless assault starting to take its toll. They’ve been at it all morning and she was starting to feel tired. She lowered her hands to catch her breath, knowing her attacks had done little to phase him anyways.

Bloom: “Either way, with most of the girls in Solaria, Layla on Andros for some official business with the merfolk, and Flora helping Mirta with her fairy magic; no one’s going to miss me.

Valtor raised an eyebrow at that.

Valtor: “And here I thought the Winx would crumble without their brave leader.”

The comment made Bloom bristle. Why did everyone keep calling her that?

Bloom: “I’m not their leader, for your information! And... after what happened with Sky, they’ve not really been expecting much from me. They’ve given me space to ‘work through it,’ as I’ve overheard them say.”

She crossed her arms, her tone biting, but the flicker of vulnerability in her eyes didn’t escape him.

Valtor tilted his head, watching her closely. For a moment, he hesitated. He wasn’t entirely sure why, but the mention of Sky stirred something deeply unpleasant within him. The thought of Bloom shedding tears over someone as unimpressive as the golden-haired prince made his temper flare.

Valtor: “...And have you?”

Bloom blinked, caught off guard by the sudden personal question.

Bloom: “Why do you care?”

Valtor recovered quickly, his voice smooth as silk.

Valtor: “I make it my business to know what might trigger another response from the virus.”

Bloom considered that for a moment. She couldn’t exactly argue with his logic.

Bloom: "Fair enough."* She sighed, her shoulders sinking slightly. *"At first, it hurt—a lot. I felt so betrayed and angry, but now... I guess I feel fine. Almost fine."

Her gaze drifted to the forest beneath her, her voice softening as she continued.

Bloom: "My friends talked to me about it not too long ago, and... I guess getting it off my chest helped. Knowing it wasn't my fault made me feel lighter, like I could finally let it go. It happened. There's nothing I can do to change that."

She hesitated, her expression unreadable for a moment.

Bloom: "And I'm sure Sky's beating himself up about it too."

Valtor raised an eyebrow at her, his skepticism evident. From what he had observed, the prince's remorse seemed... lacking.

Valtor: "How so?"

Bloom exhaled sharply, shaking her head as if the answer were obvious.

Bloom: "I was with him for two and a half years—I know his temper better than anyone. I know how he gets. Although he's never been this angry before, he's always felt bad after a fight, even when it was my fault. Sky doesn't lose his temper often, but when he does... it's like a dam explodes. He can't stop himself from lashing out."

Her voice grew quieter.

Bloom: "That doesn't make it okay, though. And it's part of the reason I broke up with him."

Her hands fidgeted for a moment before she looked back at Valtor.

Bloom: "I knew you weren't lying about the potion heightening his emotions—because I've seen them firsthand. I just... I was too afraid to admit it back then."

She paused, her voice catching slightly.

Bloom: "I guess what I'm trying to say is... I'm done crying over him. I still worry sometimes, though. The burn I gave him... it was bad. I haven't even told the Winx about that part yet."

Valtor: "You losing control and burning him is why you decided to accept my deal."

It wasn't a question. Valtor had come to understand her heroism far too well. She wasn't as haunted by Sky's actions that night as she was by her own.

Bloom: "Yeah... What Sky did wasn't okay, but..." She hesitated, her voice faltering. "The pure excitement, the... glee I felt when I hurt him—it was horrifying. More horrifying than anything he said or did. I don't want to feel like that ever again."

Her arms wrapped tightly around herself, as though she could shield herself from the memory. The gesture didn't escape Valtor's notice. He studied her carefully, his sharp gaze softening—if only slightly.

Finally, he gave a curt nod, his voice cutting through the tense silence.

Valtor: "Then let's get back to training. I think I've given you enough time to recover, princess."

The corners of Bloom's lips quirked up, despite herself. There was something about magical sparring that always thrilled her, even now.

Bloom: "Bring it on!"

Bloom shot high into the air, her wings shimmering as she sought a vantage point. From above, she hurled an Enchantix Sphere straight at Valtor's chest, her movements quick and precise. For once, she didn't have to hold back and it was exhilarating. She'd never admit it aloud, but sparring with Valtor was *fun*. He was the only opponent who truly pushed her limits, making her pour every ounce of her strength into the fight.

Valtor, however, was already a step ahead. Anticipating her move, he sidestepped in the air effortlessly, his silhouette cutting sharply through the sky as he joined her at her height. With a flick of his wrist, he countered, a swirling mass of dark magic roaring toward her.

Bloom's instincts kicked in, immediately summoning her shield. But instead of absorbing the blast, she angled the glowing star shield to redirect the spell, sending it hurtling back toward him. The manoeuvre caught Valtor slightly off guard, and he tilted just in time to avoid a direct hit, the edge of the attack grazing his arm.

Valtor: "Impressive. Finally thinking like a warrior."

Bloom didn't respond. She was already weaving through the sky, circling him, her flame igniting in her palms. She fired off a rapid barrage of smaller, concentrated fireballs, their golden light streaking toward him like shooting stars.

Valtor countered with a wave of his hand, conjuring a whirling black vortex that swallowed her attacks. The vortex spun wildly, crackling with energy, before he released it back toward her as a single, powerful blast.

Bloom flipped backward, narrowly avoiding the attack, her wings carrying her higher into the sky. From above, she clasped her hands together, summoning a massive flame in her palms.

Bloom: "Fine. Let's see you dodge this."

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