

Episode 24

The uneasy sensation clawing at Valtor's chest wasn't fading.

He'd tried to work this morning, his usual routine. For a dark sorcerer, that meant reviewing political reports across the Magical Dimension, looking for instability. Weak links. Threads he could pull and would unravel, just like Cassandra and Diaspro did under his manipulations. But his focus was shot.

A strange tension kept twisting in his gut—something like anxiety, or worse... fear. It wasn't a feeling he was used to. Not since the days under his mothers' rule. And even then, he'd learned to shove it down.

So, he had stepped out. A walk, a moment to clear his head.

What he didn't expect to find upon his return... was *her*.

There, curled up on his red leather couch, was Bloom.

Peacefully asleep. Her fiery red hair spilled like molten gold over the cushions, catching the morning light that filtered through the arched windows.

He froze in the doorway, staring at her. They hadn't agreed to meet today—certainly not in the morning—and yet there she was, curled up against the cushions like she belonged there.

Before he could stop himself, he was kneeling in front of her. His hand moved instinctively, brushing a stray lock of hair from her cheek.

Beautiful.

The word bloomed in his mind before he could shove it aside. Her features were so soft in sleep—long lashes brushing pale cheeks, lips slightly parted as she exhaled quietly.

He should wake her. Demand an explanation for her intrusion. But he couldn't seem to pull away.

Then her brow creased—just faintly at first. A twitch of discomfort. His hand froze mid-air, afraid he had woken her up.

Bloom: “Hng... n-no...”

The sound barely reached him. A soft, frightened whisper. But it made his chest tighten.

She began to tremble. Her breathing hitched. Her expression twisted in fear.

Bloom: “No—NO—!”

And then she screamed.

Bloom: “AAAAAAHHHHHHHHH!”

The sound ripped through the room—and through him. A sharp pain stabbed into his chest like a knife. Valtor dropped to the floor, one hand clutching his shirt, breath knocked from his lungs. His vision blurred. Tears were spilling from his eyes before he could stop them.

This wasn't the first time this happened. He looked up in shock still clutching at his chest, this pain — It was Bloom's. The realisation hit him like a tidal wave, he was feeling her pain through their connection.

He looked back at her, panicked. Her transformation had triggered. She was glowing, flickering between her fairy and human form. Her Enchantix flared for a moment, then broke apart, leaving only her Magic Winx form behind. Her unstable Enchantix was failing.

But her Magix Winx, it didn't look right.

The usual sky-blue of her transformation had darkened—now a deep dark purple, almost an inky black.

Valtor: “Shit.”

He lunged toward her.

Valtor: “Bloom! Wake up! You need to wake up!”

He grabbed her shoulders, trying to shake her gently, but her expression only twisted more. The transformation was still shifting. She was stuck in between, like her magic couldn't stabilise.

Then her eyes opened.

And it wasn't her.

Instead of bright blue, they glowed a solid gold. Empty. Distant. Terrifyingly cold.

Valtor recoiled. A chill crawled down his spine.

That wasn't Bloom.

Panic surged in his blood. He bent lower, voice sharp with urgency.

Valtor: “Come on, dammit. Stay with me!”

No response. Only shuddering breaths and that golden gaze that stared through him.

He clenched his jaw, trying to think. The pain in his chest was intensifying. Her power was surging out of control. He didn't have time.

He tightened his grip on her arms and closed his eyes.

Valtor: “Alright. Fine.”

He focused, reaching for their connection—just like he had on Pyros. The familiar pull took hold. The room faded, swallowed by darkness.

He opened his eyes to a world drowned in crimson.

Where once her mind had glowed with warm flame and gentle light, now everything was soaked in blood red.

The air felt heavier, like it was pressing down on his skin. The magic here crawled along the floor and walls, thick and choking. Even he—a demon born of darkness—found it hard to breathe.

He turned, eyes scanning quickly.

She had to be here.

Then he heard it. A sound.

A tiny snuffle. Barely audible, but it was enough.

He ran.

And there—far ahead of him—was Bloom. Curled up on the floor, small and shaking. Her arms wrapped around herself, face buried in her knees.

He picked up speed, trying to reach her. But no matter how fast he moved, the distance between them didn't shrink.

Valtor: “Bloom!!”

His voice echoed, swallowed by the red around them. She didn't react. Something was *very* wrong.

But Bloom's fragile, trembling form wasn't alone. Just beside her was another figure. Shadowy and indistinct. He couldn't make out its face, its form—only that it stood unnaturally still. Watching her.

Valtor's pulse quickened. He didn't have time for this!

He stopped running.

Closing his eyes, he took a deep breath, reaching inward, toward the part of his magic that had bonded with the Dragon Flame. He focused on it, called out to it. To *her*. He could feel it—distant, flickering, but still alive. Still Bloom.

The red around him began to ripple.

Power surged through his body, light trailing down his arms as he forced his own energy to reach Bloom across the darkness. His brow furrowed with the effort. Then—

A hand. Warm. Small.

He opened his eyes.

There she was.

Bloom.

Her ocean-blue eyes met his, filled with tears, but *hers*. The real her.

He pulled her to him without hesitation, wrapping his arms around her as their flames reconnected. The oppressive red bled away, replaced by the familiar warmth of her magic, soft gold and glowing embers dancing in the air around them.

Over her shoulder, something shifted.

He glanced back.

That figure—the one that had been watching her—was still there, now barely lit by the returning glow.

And for just a split second, he saw it. A twisted, crooked smile. A face that *almost* looked like hers.

Then everything went black.

Bloom shot upright with a gasp, her eyes wide and blue again.

Her breath came in shallow bursts. She reached out blindly, desperate for something solid. Her hands clutched fabric—something warm, real. Arms wrapped around her.

Valtor: “Are you alright?”

She looked up.

Valtor was holding her. His arms tight around her. His eyes locked on hers—not with his usual smugness, or amusement, but with genuine concern. Something deep and burning.

Her heart skipped.

His closeness, his scent was clouding her thoughts. Her cheeks flushed. Her mind was still reeling, her emotions raw.

She didn't know who leaned in first. Maybe it didn't matter.

Their lips met in the quietest of collisions, soft, slow, tentative. Like they were both waiting for the other to pull away. Neither did.

Valtor's hand rose to cup her cheek, warm and steady. His thumb brushed lightly across her skin, as though grounding himself in the moment, needing to confirm she was real. Then he deepened the kiss — deliberate and unhurried, like he'd thought about this a hundred times and wasn't going to waste a single second.

And Stars, he was good at it.

His touch didn't feel dark or dangerous, it felt like fire, warm and consuming. Fire that wrapped itself around Bloom and demanded nothing but everything all at once. She melted into him, her soft sighs escaping into his mouth.

There was nothing rushed or unsure in the way he kissed her — only hunger restrained by iron will. His other hand slid to the back of her neck, threading into her hair, pulling her just a little closer. Bloom sighed against his mouth, her fingers curling into the fabric of his shirt like she might fall without him.

She felt like she was floating. Like there was nothing else. No nightmares. No deals. No fighting.

Just him.

When they finally pulled apart they both sat there for a moment, breathless.

Bloom's lips were flushed, parted slightly as she tried to catch her breath. Her hair was a mess — tangled from his hands — and her cheeks were painted in the softest pink. Her eyes were glazed, blinking slowly, as if waking up from something far sweeter than sleep.

Valtor just stared.

Like he was trying to memorise her — burn the sight of her into his mind so no amount of time could erase it.

So this is what it feels like, he thought.

And suddenly, he wasn't so sure if he wanted to go back to not knowing.

The realisation of what just happened seemed to hit Bloom like a brick,

Bloom: “Ah-I-I'm so sorry! I don't know what came over me—!”

He didn't let her finish.

He leaned forward again, gently pressing his lips to hers. This time it was brief. Soft. Just enough to silence her flustered apology.

Valtor: “As the absolutely deplorable man I am, I'm not sorry at all.”

His sharp grin flashed, teasing and cocky, but there was warmth behind it. She turned scarlet.

He chuckled under his breath.

But far too soon the moment passed.

Reality settled around them again. The weight of what had just happened returned like a fog.

The warmth between them didn't disappear... but it dimmed. Just enough for the weight of everything else to press in again.

Valtor: "As much as it pains me change the subject... what just happened, Bloom?"

She sobered instantly. Only the flush of her cheeks a reminder of what had transpired between them. Her eyes lowered.

Bloom: "I... I'm not sure. That's never happened before. Not like that."

There was a pause. She didn't say anything else, and Valtor didn't push her.

But he watched her carefully.

Valtor: "Did something happen this morning? Something that made you come here?"

Her lips parted, then closed again. Her hands fidgeted nervously in her lap, fingers knotting together.

Then, with a small, reluctant nod:

Bloom: "Yeah. Something did."

She looked up at him,

Bloom (softly): "I think it's time I told you everything. What really happened last year. With Lord Darkar... and with Professor Avalon."

END