

Season 2 Episode 2

Angels and Demons

There was a deafening silence hanging over the library. Even the birds had stopped their chirping, as if they too sensed the weight of Bloom's words.

Valtor couldn't think. All he could hear was a sharp, incessant ringing in the back of his mind, drowning out everything but rage.

Darkar.

To Valtor, he had always been nothing more than vermin, an insect scuttling in the shadows, lucky enough to be born with power. Yes, Darkar was strong—spawned from the pitch-black void before the Great Dragon first breathed light into the universe—but he was arrogant. He believed he belonged at the top simply by existing. Where Valtor studied, honed, and mastered his craft; stealing only when necessary, Darkar was always looking for the easy way.

And that arrogance is exactly why he failed. His lust for the Ultimate Power blinded him, his overconfidence made him sloppy, and in the end... he underestimated the Winx.

He underestimated Bloom.

Still, even Valtor had to give him credit, no one else could have come back from what Darkar did. Something so invasive, something so cruel, barbaric even by Valtor's standards. To infect a fairy's very magic, to twist it until her soul began to unravel—this wasn't just control. It was annihilation. A corruption designed to rewrite someone from the inside out, erasing who they were and rebuilding them as something else. He had never seen anyone endure it and survive, let alone emerge with their sense of self intact. Bloom sitting here next to him was nothing short of a miracle.

But after all these weeks of getting to know her, it wasn't such a miracle after all. He had seen her powers first-hand, felt her magic pulse through his veins when their powers collided. Yes, she had the Dragon Flame, which undoubtedly helped her, but it was more than that. She was strong not just because of her power, but because of who she was. Determined, fierce and stubborn beyond reason.

His gaze drifted to her. Even with sadness clouding her expression, she radiated beauty and resilience. To anyone else, she'd even look unshaken, like what she had revealed was nothing more than a passing inconvenience. But he knew better.

Bloom was the first to break the silence.

Bloom: "Now you know everything that happened last year."

Valtor: "Do your friends know what's going on? Or Faragonda?"

Bloom sighed, "No. I was already such a burden last year... I know this isn't something my friends can fix so I didn't want to worry them even more. As for Headmistress Faragonda...I tried. But she told me it was all in my head. That since Darkar is gone, the magic he used on me should have died with him."

Valtor let out a sharp, humourless laugh.

Valtor: “Typical. Normally, she’d be right. But Darkar isn’t ordinary. His type of magic doesn’t play by the rules of normal wizards. To assume otherwise is... naïve. Then again, naïve is exactly the word I’d use for Faragonda. She always did love to bury her head in the sand.”

Bloom said nothing. Her lips parted, as though she wanted to defend her headmistress, but no words came. She couldn’t deny the truth in his words.

Valtor: “What happened this morning?”

Bloom’s fingers fidgeted restlessly in her lap.

Bloom: “I-I still have to take Professor Avalon’s classes—the *real* Professor Avalon, I mean. But his face... I can’t help it. Every time I see him, I’m reminded of the other *him*.”

Valtor had to stop himself from releasing a string of curse words aimed at the headmistress of Alfea. What in the stars was Faragonda thinking? Forcing Bloom to sit in the same room with that man, knowing what she had endured? Utterly incompetent.

He clenched his fists in barely repressed fury, reluctant to ask his next question.

Valtor: “Did he... do something to you?”

Bloom’s head snapped up, eyes wide.

Bloom: “Oh, no! The real professor Avalon would never! He’s one of the kindest, most compassionate people I know. It’s just... his face brings back memories I’d rather forget.”

She hesitated, biting her lip.

Bloom: “I’ve been so tired lately, I fell asleep in class. When I woke up and saw him I just... lost it. Right there in front of the entire class. I-I didn’t know where else to go. Before I realized it, I was at Cloud Tower.”

A soft blush decorated her cheeks. Valtor’s chest tightened at the sight. He refused to think about why.

Then a realization suddenly hit him: of course she was tired. He was a demon, he didn’t need much sleep. Nights without rest meant nothing to him. But Bloom wasn’t like him. All those late nights training, pushing herself beyond her limits... of course she was exhausted.

That won’t do. Exhaustion dulled focus. That was reason enough, he told himself. He ignored the other nagging voice, the one whispering that wasn’t the real reason at all.

Her words echoed in his mind, louder with every passing second. The nagging voice growing louder with it. He kissed her. Manipulated her. Still *is* manipulating her. How is that any different from Avalon? The thought sickened him. He wanted to rip Avalon apart for what he had done to her, but when he thought about his own plans—his own hunger for her—he nearly gagged.

What made him any different? Nothing. He wanted her. He lusted after her. He had planned to kill her. That was still the plan. Wasn’t it?

But when he looked at her, sitting next to him so unafraid in his presence, the thought of betrayal curdled into nausea. Something twisted in his chest, foreign and sharp, a feeling he had no name for.

That kiss... it had been everything he imagined and far, far worse, because now he couldn't imagine being without it. Without her. The thought of never touching her again, never holding her close, felt like a wound tearing him apart from the inside.

He *needed* her. He needed her by his side, in whatever way possible, in whatever way she would let him. The thought of never seeing her again, it was as if his very being was yelling at him to not let that happen. Connection or not, this was more.

And in that moment, he knew one truth with absolute clarity:

He didn't want to kill her.

Bloom: "Haaa, Im sorry for being so gloomy after you saved me! Thank you, Valtor."

She laughed, bright and awkward all at once.

"Wow. Never thought I'd say *that* in a million years."

Valtor's lips curved into a smirk.

Valtor: "And I never thought I'd be a knight in shining armour rescuing a damsel in distress. Hardly my style under normal circumstances."

Bloom grinned, playfully nudging.

Bloom: "Well, I guess that makes me special!"

Valtor: "I suppose it does."

He smiled at her, reaching out to brush a loose strand of her wild red hair back behind her ear. His hand lingered a second too long.

What was this woman doing to him?

Her grin softened into something shyer, uncertain. He could see the flicker of interest there, though bound tight by that stubborn moral code of hers together with her loyalty to her friends, to Faragonda.

She cleared her throat, eager to redirect.

Bloom: "Ahem. Well, yes. Thank you again... for, you know, getting me out of there. It was getting kinda dark."

"But... have you found a way to get it out of me yet? Because that was a *very* unpleasant experience."

Valtor exhaled slowly. He *had* an idea. And he already hated the words that were about to leave his mouth.

Valtor: "I may have found a way to keep it under control, for now."

Her eyes brightened with hope, which only made him feel more guilty.

Valtor: "But... you're not going to like it."

Suspicion flickered across her face, her bluebell eyes narrowing.

Valtor: "It involves you taking my mark."

Bloom froze. Then, her jaw dropped, eyes widening almost comically.

Bloom: “What?!”

Her shriek echoed through the library.

Valtor: “Before you refuse, please listen. My mark is a conduit for my magic, its effect depends on the spell I infuse. It’s how I controlled the mermaids on Andros, but also how I strengthened Chimera and Cassandra without controlling them completely.”

“By placing my mark on you, I could make it so it helps you to repress the virus. And as a safeguard, if the virus were to take control, the mark would restrain you before you could harm anyone.”

Bloom’s expression stayed flat, unimpressed.

Bloom: “I’ve had your ‘mark’ on me before. Not exactly my fondest memory.”

Right. He had almost forgotten about that.

Valtor: “That was... an unfortunate accident.”

Bloom shot upright, jabbing an accusing finger at him.

Bloom: “AHA! So you admit it was an accident! I was stuck wearing turtlenecks and scarves for weeks because of you!!!”

Valtor: “Hardly my fault you were being utterly infuriating.”

Bloom: “*Me?!?*”

Her voice cracked high enough to make his ears ring.

Bloom: “I was being infuriating? Says the guy who dosed my boyfriend with a love potion so he’d fall for his ex!”

Valtor: “Oh please, I did you a favor. You should be thanking me for clearing that nuisance out of your way.”

His grin widened, sharp and knowing.

Valtor: “After all... it left room for other possibilities.”

The implication was obvious, and Bloom’s face flushed crimson.

Bloom: “Y-you’re impossible!”

“I don’t need your help to suppress the virus! It’d be a hassle to cover up another mark anyways. And knowing you it probably isn’t even true and you just want to trick me into taking your stupid mark again!”

She spun on her heel, storming toward the door.

Valtor: “Suit yourself, princess.”

She froze, whirling back.

Bloom: “DON’T CALL ME PRINCESS!”

“I’m going back to Alfea now!”

Valtor: “See you next week?”

Bloom: grumbling under her breath “...yes.”

Valtor leaned back, watching her march off, fire still sparking in her every step.

Stars she was beautiful when she was angry.

END