

Episode 16

Bloom's breath caught in her throat, her body frozen in place, unable to look away from the scene unfolding before her.

Valtor seemed completely unperturbed as he wrapped long strings of white cloth tightly around his arms. But it wasn't the cloth that held her attention, even though she had no idea what it was for. It was everything else—the way his bare torso rippled with powerful muscles, and the effortless strength in his hands as they pulled the fabric taut. She had always known he was a good looking man, but she didn't know his physique also rivaled that of a Greek god. He'd even give Riven a run for his money!

Valtor: “Is that what you'll be wearing?”

Bloom was jolted out of her rather embarrassing train of thought—honestly, since when had she become so fixated on Valtor's looks? She quickly shifted her attention to her cute, sporty outfit, completed with some pink high heels and leg warmers.

Bloom: “Stella says a fairy should always be fashionable no matter the circumstances!”

Valtor couldn't help the roll of his eyes at the ridiculous notion.

Valtor: “Fine, whatever suits you, but don't think I'll go easy on you.”

Bloom suddenly realized she had no idea why they were in the middle of the forest, with Valtor standing half-naked in front of her.

In her defense, he wasn't exactly the conversational type, and frankly, she didn't feel like talking to him more than necessary.

Bloom: “What is it we're doing here again?”

Valtor: “Combat training. You need to be able to continue fighting even if your Enchantix gives out. Strengthening your physical abilities will also stabilize your magic. The stronger the host, the stronger the magic.”

Bloom couldn't argue with his logic, even if she wasn't thrilled about it. She despised fighting without magic. Even though she grew up on Earth with no powers, she couldn't imagine being normal again. It made her feel... helpless**. ** Vulnerable in a way she hated. But given her current situation, she had no choice.

Her shoulders slumped in reluctant defeat.

Bloom: “Ugh, fine.”

Valtor: “Let's see what that tiny fist of yours can do. Go ahead, hit me with everything you've got.”

Bloom gave him a deadpan stare.

Bloom: “Excuse me? With all my strength?? What if I break something?!”

Valtor raised a single eyebrow, clearly amused.

Valtor: “I highly doubt it.”

Bloom huffed. **That's it.** All concern for *breaking something* went out the window. She squared her shoulders, steeling herself.

Bloom: "Fine, but don't say I didn't warn you."

She gathered every ounce of strength she had, winding up her fist before launching it straight into his chest. The impact landed with a solid thud, but Valtor didn't budge an inch. Silence hung in the air for a brief moment before Bloom let out a pained yelp, clutching her throbbing hand.

Bloom: "What are you made of, steel?!"

This time Valtor didn't bother hiding his laughter, his chuckle was rich and deep, eyes gleaming with amusement.

Valtor: "Looks like raw physical strength isn't your forte. It seems you'll need to rely on strategy in a physical fight. Please tell me that it's not entirely hopeless."

Bloom shot a fiery glare at his infuriatingly smug face, resisting the urge to punch him again—this time, just for the satisfaction of it.

Bloom: "Just so you know, I can fight! We've trained with the Specialists plenty of times. What I lack in brute strength, I make up for with speed and accuracy."

Valtor raised an eyebrow, clearly entertained by her confidence.

Valtor: "Is that so? Then show me."

Bloom: "Huh?"

Valtor: "Try to land a single blow on me. I'll give you five minutes. If you can hit me without using magic, I might just be impressed."

A confident smirk spread across Bloom's face, a familiar determined spark in her eyes.

Bloom: "Ha! Easy! I've hit you so many times in the past, what difference does no magic make? Don't forget I punched you in the jaw before."

Valtor's amused expression didn't waver. He didn't even bother to brace himself, clearly not taking her seriously.

Bloom took a deep breath, narrowing her gaze, her body tensing in preparation.

She lunged at him, aiming straight for his face—because let's be honest, he deserved a punch to the jaw. But Valtor simply sidestepped, his movement smooth and effortless, as if he were dancing rather than dodging an angry redhead's fist. Frustrated, Bloom whirled around, wasting no time as she swung at his side. Yet again, Valtor evaded her, taking a subtle step back, making her miss by mere inches.

Valtor: "Too predictable, princess."

Bloom's infamous temper flared, and she spun to face him with a snarl, only to find he wasn't there.

Valtor: "Not fast enough." he whispered, his breath warm against the nape of her neck.

Before she could dwell too much on how disturbingly close he was, Bloom acted on instinct. As she turned to face him, she slid her leg out, aiming to trip him up. But he was two steps ahead,

effortlessly sidestepping her attempt while, in one fluid motion, he swept her other leg out from under her, sending her crashing to the ground.

Bloom: “Ouch.”

Valtor’s chuckle rumbled softly as he looked down at her, amusement twinkling in his eyes.

Valtor: “Come on, Bloom. Surely you can do better than that.”

Bloom’s frustration soared. She was *this close* to unleashing her Dragon Fury and wiping that smug look off his stupidly perfect face. But before she could carry out her impulsive—albeit rather fun—plan, another idea sparked in her mind. A sly smile almost crept onto her lips, but she quickly masked it.

Bloom: “Ouch, I really hurt myself...”

She looked up at him with tear-filled eyes, channeling her best impression of a wounded, innocent fawn.

Valtor: “Don’t tell me you’re giving up that easily.”

Bloom: “But I really did hurt myself! I think I sprained my wrist when I caught myself. It was already sore after punching you...”

Valtor rolled his eyes, but despite his scepticism, he moved closer and bent down, his tone slightly softened.

Valtor: “Fine, show m—”

Before he could finish, Bloom sprang up from the ground. Using all her strength, she launched herself at him, tackling him with the force of a seasoned rugby player. Caught off guard, Valtor staggered before crashing to the ground, with a triumphant Bloom sitting astride him.

Bloom: “Hah! Rule number one: Never let your guard down around an enemy!”

In her excitement, Bloom wriggled slightly on top of him, completely oblivious to the compromising position she’d put herself in.

Bloom: “I knew I could take you dow—”

As quickly as she had tackled him, she found herself flipped onto her back, her head meeting the ground with surprising gentleness. A little disoriented, she blinked up at the figure looming over her, Valtor’s piercing gaze boring into hers.

Valtor: “I could say the same to you, princess. Your little act was impressive, I must admit, but cheating does defeat the purpose of our little game.”

A shiver crawled up Bloom’s spine at his words, her breath hitching as she realized she was completely trapped—her wrists pinned above her head in his firm grasp.

For the first time, his touch was unfiltered by the barrier of his gloves. Every sensation, every prickle where his skin met hers, was overwhelming. His touch burned, an almost unbearable heat searing through her, yet she couldn’t find the strength to pull away. The burning was intoxicating, like a drug slowly erasing her logical thoughts.

Valtor: “You shouldn’t rile me up like that, little fairy. Even I have my limits.”

His voice was a low growl in her ear, and she could feel the unmistakable pressure against her thigh. Bloom's breath quickened while a rosy blush spread over her cheeks.

Bloom: "I-We..."

His touch was erasing all her inhibitions. As his hand wandered to her ribs, all she could think about was wanting more—needing more. She arched her back, seeking friction, brushing her body against him even more.

Valtor's restraint snapped like a frayed thread. A deep, guttural groan rumbled from his throat.

Valtor: "Hng. You don't learn, do you?"

His grip tightened, holding her still.

A soft moan escaped her lips, and *Stars above*, it was intoxicating. His control crumbled further with every ragged breath she took.

The awareness that this fairy beneath him was supposed to be his *enemy* faded into nothingness. All he could think about was tasting those lips.

His thumb traced along her lower lip, slow, deliberate, sending another wave of heat coursing through her veins.

Bloom: "Valtor, p-please..."

Her voice was breathless, barely a whisper, laced with pure desperation.

And that was what snapped him out of it. Like cold water crashing over him, hearing his name from her lips shattered the haze clouding his mind.

He wrenched himself away, standing abruptly. His back was to her now, as if not looking at her might stop the *need* clawing at his insides. Without a backward glance, he spoke, his voice controlled but strained.

Valtor: "I'll see you next week in Cloud Tower."

And then, he was gone.

Bloom lay there, chest rising and falling with uneven breaths. She stared after him, still dazed, still burning where his hands had been.

And then—*reality hit her*. Her face flushed a deep crimson.

Bloom: "WHAT DID I DO?!"

If there was ever a time for the ground to open up and swallow her whole, *it was now*.

END