

## Episode 19 Part 2

**Bloom:** *"Let's see you dodge this!"*

Bloom's entire body flared with light as she summoned every ounce of her Dragon Flame. Similar to when she fought Icy in her first year, but much stronger, a blazing dragon erupted from her body; its deafening roar echoed around the battlefield while wrapping its snake like body around Bloom. The sheer intensity of the heat turning the air around them into a shimmering, molten haze. The battlefield lit up in fiery golds and oranges, before her dragon roared towards Valtor like a tidal wave of heat and destruction.

But Valtor, as always, was ready. His eyes narrowed in focus as he raised both hands, summoning a barrier. The dragon slammed into the shield with deafening force, creating shockwaves that rippled through the air and sent loose debris scattering across the ground.

For the first time, Bloom saw him falter. He was pushed out of the sky by the sheer force of her attack, his boots scraped against the ground as he slid back under power of her attack, beads of sweat trickling down his forehead.

And then the flames dissipated.

Bloom's eyes gleamed as she spotted her opening. Without hesitation, she dove straight for him, her wings folding tightly behind her to cut through the air like an arrow. Her hands blazed with fiery magic, ready to strike.

Valtor's lips curved into a dangerous smile. He had been waiting for this.

At the last possible moment, he sidestepped with effortless grace, twisting his body out of her trajectory. Bloom's momentum carried her forward, and before she could recover, his hand shot out like lightning, catching her wrist mid-air and twisting it behind her back in one fluid motion.

**Valtor:** *"You're getting stronger, Bloom. But you have one glaring weakness."*

His grip on her wrist tightened as a tendril of magic snaked up her ankle, tugging her off balance.

**Valtor:** *"You always assume your opponent will play fair."*

More tendrils erupted from the ground, coiling around her legs and arms, binding her movements with ease. In seconds, Bloom found herself suspended mid-air, her wrists pinned above her head by Valtor's magic.

Valtor chuckled, his tone infuriatingly smug.

**Valtor:** *"You need to learn to expect the unexpected. Only naïve little fairies like you bother with rules and fairness. But your enemies?"* He leaned in closer, his voice dropping to a low purr. *"They'll exploit every weakness you have."*

Bloom glared at him, her eyes burning with frustration.

**Bloom:** *"Fine, I get it! Now let me down, Valtor!"*

**Valtor:** *"Oh? But I do so enjoy the view of you tied up and at my mercy."*

Bloom's glare deepened, her anger simmering just beneath the surface. She focused all her energy into her stare, as though sheer willpower might somehow make him burst into flames.

**Valtor:** *"And while you're here," he continued, as though completely unbothered, "I think it's the perfect time to move on to your next lesson—a fairy's greatest weakness."*

The shift in his tone sent a chill down Bloom's spine.

**Bloom:** *"W-what do you mean?"*

Valtor circled her slowly, his gaze predatory.

**Valtor:** *"I suspected as much back in the Museum of Magix. Your lack of reaction told me everything; you've never been taught just how precious your wings truly are, have you?"*

**Bloom:** *"I—"*

The memory of that day came rushing back. The guilt of betraying her friends still weighed heavy on her heart. She could vividly recall their horrified expressions when Valtor had mentioned ripping out her wings. At the time, the concept had felt foreign to her—laughable, even. How could taking away someone's ability to fly be worse than stealing their sight?

But the way he spoke now, the dark edge to his voice, made her wonder if she'd underestimated the severity of his words.

Valtor's teasing demeanor faded, replaced by a cold seriousness as he began his tale. His voice dropped low, each word deliberate, like a knife carving into the silence.

**Valtor:** *"Long ago, during the dark ages, there were fairy hunters—Witchers, they called themselves. Faragonda, in her infinite wisdom, has chosen to erase that chapter from history, conveniently leaving it out of her curriculum. For once, I can't entirely blame her."*

He stepped closer, his gaze locked on Bloom's wings as he continued.

**Valtor:** *"But every fairy already knows. They grow up with the stories. Tales of Witchers creeping into their homes at night, ripping daughters from their mothers' arms, and selling them to the highest bidder. Young, beautiful fairies like you would always fetch the highest price."*

His voice dropped to a whisper as his gloved fingers brushed ever so lightly along the edge of her delicate wings. Bloom's breath hitched, her body freezing under his touch. She hated herself for it, but she couldn't stop the simultaneous rush of terror but with a hint of morbid curiosity.

**Valtor:** *“There was only one problem,”* he murmured, his voice like silk. *“Keeping a powerful fairy down for her buyers was... difficult. They needed an innovative solution.”*

He paused, letting the words hang in the air, his lips curling into a faint, sinister smile.

**Valtor:** *“Wing cutting. A fairy’s power lies in her wings. They are not just tools for flight—they are a manifestation of her very essence. Hence why your wings grow with every new transformation. The larger the wings, the greater the power.”*

Bloom’s stomach twisted at his words, but Valtor wasn’t done.

**Valtor:** *“So the Witchers took them. They carved them right out of their victims’ backs using dark magic-infused knives. The wings were preserved, mounted into elaborate frames to adorn the walls of their buyers’ homes. And the fairies?”*

He leaned closer, his tone cruelly calm.

*They would gaze upon them, day after day, a broken reminder of who they used to be and who they now belonged to.”*

Bloom’s eyes widened in horror, her lips parting as a tremble overtook her.

**Bloom:** “How... utterly cruel and barbaric!”

Valtor tilted his head slightly.

**Valtor:** *“Hm, it is an evil that goes even beyond what I’m capable of. Taking a fairy’s wings is a process of excruciating pain, the likes of which no one can imagine. Comparable to ripping someone’s soul out of them in the most brutal and crude way possible.”*

He let the words settle, watching her, before he spoke again, softer this time.

**Valtor:** *“But the wings themselves are not the only weakness. It is the point where they meet—the center of your back—that is most vulnerable. The nexus, where all your power converges before it manifests as these beautiful creations of magic and light.”*

His hand hovered just above her back, and Bloom stiffened. When his gloved fingers finally ghosted over the centre of her wings, touching a point between her shoulderblades with the faintest featherlike pressure, her entire body jolted as if struck by lightning.

The sensation was unlike anything she’d ever felt— the intensity of it was terrifying but with it came a hint of pleasure. She felt heat pool in her belly, a gasp escaping her lips before she could stop it, the sound soft but damning.

Her cheeks burned with humiliation as she clenched her fists, silently cursing herself for reacting so openly once again.

Valtor's lips curved into a slow, wicked smile. He knew exactly what he was doing.

He had taken advantage of this vulnerability countless times before, using the sensitivity of a fairy's nexus to his benefit. How easily they melted to his touch, their strength reduced to nothing as they whispered their deepest, darkest secrets to him. His time gathering intel for the witches had its occasional... perks.

But this was different. Being the one to teach *Bloom*—to reveal secrets Faragonda had hidden, to leave his mark on her in a way no one else could—it was intoxicating. Every whisper of knowledge, every boundary crossed, wove her more tightly into his web. She was falling deeper into his clutches with every passing day, though even he wasn't certain anymore for what purpose.

To kill her? To use her? To control her?

The thought twisted in his mind, each option less satisfying than the last. Every moment spent with her seemed to erode the clarity of his original plans, leaving behind something far more dangerous—something he wasn't ready to name.

He lingered just a moment longer before withdrawing, feigning an air of indifference. He wiped the knowing smirk from his face, replacing it with a calm, almost instructive tone.

**Valtor:** *“Be careful in the future, Bloom. Turning your back on an opponent can quite literally be your downfall.”*

He released the spell, the magic holding her dissolving into nothingness. Bloom stayed frozen, her eyes fixed on the ground below her, unwilling to face him. Her face burned as fiercely as her hair, the heat of embarrassment and anger flooding through her.

Valtor stepped away, his slight smirk returning the moment her gaze dropped. He knew the effect he had on her—and he savoured every second of it.

END