



The Watcher Series Extras: 3.1

Not Yours: Bowen's Point of View

SPOILER ALERT: Best not read unless you have read The Nexus.

from Chapter 1 The Sacrifice

Dagan's words had been haunting me for the better part of a week—riding around on my shoulders, digging in their claws. *Not yours...not yours...not yours.* I managed to shove away the thought as I traversed the last staircase to my room.

After stepping inside, there was immediately an odd charge in the air. Aleria stood with her back to me on the steps near the bed. When she sensed my presence, she started slightly, then turned towards me. I couldn't help but grin at her; she had obviously been lost in thought—her lavender eyes looking wide and innocent. But when the expression on her face didn't alter, the horrible feeling I had just shaken returned. Something had changed.

"Are you well?" I asked, as disquiet slinked through my veins, making me feel unsteady on my feet—this was a sensation I hadn't experienced in decades.

I was losing her. *Not yours...not yours,* droned on in my thoughts. But every time those two simple words echoed in that thick head of mine, it only made me want to hang on more. I had been completely bewitched, and there was no going back. I was unsure how this girl had done it. Of course, my brother still pressed that I was in want of nothing more than her blood, that the allure of the Lux was an elixir that couldn't be resisted by man or

monster. But it was more than that. She had intrigued and charmed me from the beginning. The strength and spark that she possessed was impossible to hide. Her moral code was utterly simple, yet she was one of the most complicated creatures I had ever met. And swath that with her ability to keep her humor in the face of adversity, how could I not succumb?

She didn't respond to my question. I almost asked her if she was well once more, but then she held out her hands, entreating me to her.

I went to her, and when she didn't drop her arms to her sides as expected, I placed my hands in hers, lightly caressing her fingers with my thumbs. It was my desire to be touching her at every waking moment—it took *all* my restraint to do otherwise. At that, it too, took all my might to refrain from telling her how I felt. She was not one to be pushed—if I did, she would surely run.

But now, *she* reached for *me*. I swallowed past the lump in my throat, not daring to hope, confusion rising in my mind as I braced myself for something. Aleria was radiating sorrow—it was palpable. She dropped my hands as we stood so close that I could feel her breath feather across the skin at my neck. *Not yours...not yours*, became my chant.

Aleria touched my face, and I suppressed the shudder of surprise that overcame me. Never once had she made such an intimate gesture. Standing still, as if she were an animal that could be easily frightened off, I allowed her to run her fingertips over my cheeks, brow, nose, and lips not once yielding a reaction. Afterwards, she held my face between her palms. I still didn't know what to think; all I felt was sadness and confusion pulsing from her.

At the moment I expected her to pull away and retreat from me, she did the last thing I anticipated: she closed the gap between us and pressed her lips to mine. There was

no quashing my surprise this time. A gasp escaped me as I eased into the softness of her kiss.

She pressed closer, drawing me in. I still felt as if she might run and tentatively put my hands on her hips to test. In response, she ran her hands up my arms and around my neck, and it was then that I felt the emotion I had longed to feel in her break free.

Love, yearning, and desire raged inside her as she ceased being gentle. Her hands twisted in my hair and she tugged me even closer still. When I felt the tip of her tongue brush my upper lip, I gasped again. No longer capable of restraint, I ran my hands up her back, catching my fingers on the soft fabric of her shirt. I didn't pull my hand away but let it slide against the bare skin atop her spine. Pressing my palm flat against her back, I kissed her harder, my breath ragged.

She tasted like the embodiment of all my desires. Like joy was possible in this wretched world. It was as if her innocence and purity could revive the shadow that had settled over my soul. I moaned softly and wanted nothing more than to lift her and carry her the remaining distance to my bed. But that couldn't be, not without defying my mother—and more importantly, without violating Aleria's ideals. She was old-fashioned, and I loved her even more for it; values like hers had died out with people generations ago.

As her emotions stormed, confusion set in once more. She pulled back and wiped at the tears that had spilled down her cheeks.

I gazed at her, but there were no words that could contain what I felt.

She ran her fingers down the side of my face and noticed the crimson that colored her hand. Her voice was choked with tears. "There's blood in my tears."

I tucked a lock of hair behind her ear as I responded. "Is something wrong?"

There seemed to be some emotional struggle, then she captured my face between her hands. "No matter what, know I care about you, and I would never wish to see you hurt."

I bit my lip to silence myself. *No...no...no!!* erupted in my head. These words were not declarations of love; they were goodbye. Squaring my shoulders, I drew in a breath. I was out of time. I had to tell her how I felt; she was slipping through my fingers even still. I needed her to *hear* the words, though it was no secret.

I leaned in and rubbed a tear from her cheek with my thumb. “I love you, Aleria. I always have, and I always will.”

She made an uneven sobbing sound as she sputtered. “D-don’t say that. Please,” she whimpered and looked away from me. She might as well have staked me. I tried to pull her into my arms, but she pushed past me, sprinting into the bathroom.

I stood helpless outside the door and whispered, “Aleria, I love you,” again and again, hoping that she would hear my pleadings. Leaning my forehead against the door, bracing myself with the frame as I waited.

Not yours reverberated like a drum. *Not yours.*

