



250 The Bombshell

Eve 1

The word—mutt—hit harder than the restraints
ever could.

Harder than the steel slab beneath my spine.
Harder than the accusations. Harder than the
venom from the Montegues.

Because it came from him.

Hades.

My mate.

The man who once whispered my name like a
prayer and held me like a promise.

And now?

He called me a mutt.

It wasn't just a slur—it was a sentence. A
rejection of everything I was, everything I had
left.

I flinched like he'd slapped me. My throat
constricted as my heart thundered against my



ribs, not in rage... but in grief.

He didn't believe me.

He wouldn't.

My mouth opened—no sound came. I tried again, barely breathing the words.

"Hades... please."

He looked at me, but it wasn't him anymore. Not the man I remembered. Not the man who once stood between me and anyone that would hurt me. His eyes now... were void. Fractured. Something darker had taken root in him.

"You have to believe me," I whispered, voice breaking as the burn clawed up my throat. "You knew me. You told me you did—how can you not see what this is?"

"You have lied to me, again and again, yet here you are pleading for your words to hold substance to me."

"I didn't..."

He put me off when he wiped out something that made my words die in my throat. Black and



still wholly undamaged despite the height that it has fallen.

"No lies?" He taunted. "Tell me, Princess."

"It... it... I don't... it was..." My words were a mess and mind worse. "I should have told you about it."

He chuckled darkly, the sinister words making my blood slow to a crawl. "Oh should you have now? Then why didn't you tell me? Explain to me how you rushed down to the bathroom to ... retrieve your little secret right after whispering another man's name over dinner?"

His voice cracked like a whip, venom coiling around each word.

I froze.

My mouth parted, but I couldn't force sound past the lump rising in my throat. It was like drowning—except I was fully conscious, aware of the silence strangling the room, the way his words echoed off cold steel and sterile light.

"I heard you," Hades went on, each step he took closer to me another blow I couldn't deflect. "I



saw the tremble in your hands. The wine. The slip. You said his name, and then you excused yourself to the bathroom."

He was towering over me now, the weight of his presence pressing against every inch of my soul. I shrank back into the slab, the cold of it biting through my bones—but nothing, nothing was colder than the way he looked at me.

"And in that moment," he continued, voice low and cruel, "you chose him. You chose to lie. To protect whatever game the two of you were playing."

"No," I croaked, barely able to speak past the tightness in my chest. "You don't understand."

He laughed.

Short. Empty. Broken.

"Don't insult me," he hissed. "You were hiding. You were plotting. You were—"

"I was confused and scared!" I screamed. "I could trust you back then..." 1

"I want you want me to now," 1



The words tore out of me like shrapnel. "I didn't know who to trust. I didn't know what that card meant or why he had given it to me. I thought if I brought it to you without understanding it first—it would complicate things. They were strained and that night when we got back you were drunk and all the things you said only confused me more."

"Again you look for someone else to blame, first Felicia then me."

"I am not blaming you," I began to struggle more and more against the binds, my claustrophobia awakening little by little. "I was at fault for making the wrong choices here. I was the one who was reluctant, a coward..." tears prickled my eyes. "...I was anxious," I whispered, breath hitching, "because for the first time in years, something felt right. You felt right."

The words trembled on my lips, barely more than a breath—too fragile for a room this cruel. Too soft for the man who once kissed the war off my skin, and now couldn't even look at me without disgust.

"I didn't want to ruin it, Hades," I confessed. "I



didn't want to hand you something that could destroy us—not yet. That dinner, that night... it was the first time I felt like I belonged in something warm again, like I wasn't just a weapon or a burden or a mistake." 1

Tears spilled freely now, no use trying to stop them. "I told myself I'd give it to you the next day. I told myself I just needed to understand what was on it first, just a little time—just one night more."

I closed my eyes, my voice raw and cracking. "Because I knew what truth could do. I knew it could twist a single breath into a war. That it could turn your arms from a haven into chains. And I—I didn't want the moment to end. I didn't want you to look at me the way you're looking at me now." I just wanted peace, no conflict or drama especially something involving the life and family that had spat me out. It was ironic now, thinking about because my family was still a subject of conflict not too long ago. It had been a losing battle.

I opened my eyes.

He was staring at me like I was nothing.



Like the girl who once curled up next to him on cold nights never existed. Like I hadn't held him when the ghosts of his past tried to crawl into his lungs. Like every touch, every whisper, every 'Red' he ever murmured had meant nothing.

The silence in the room was suffocating.

Lucinda's judgmental stare cut into me from the side. Montegue stood as still as stone. Felicia looked smug—because this was what she wanted. For me to fall apart. For him to see me as the villain she needed me to be.

But I didn't care about any of them.

Just him.

And he was colder than winter.

"You made a choice," Hades finally said, his voice devoid of heat, of anything. "You let lies sit longer than truth because they were more convenient. And now you want sympathy because you were comfortable in my arms for a night?" 1

"I was terrified," I whispered. "You say comfort like it's a luxury I've always known. But for me..."



it was sacred. It was new. And I didn't know how to keep it from crumbling." and then Jules had died, pushing the thoughts of the device away until James had mentioned it again.

I was sobbing now, softly, hopelessly. "But you're right. I made the wrong choice. I should've told you. I should've chosen truth over comfort, over fear."

He didn't even flinch.

Didn't blink.

Didn't soften.

And in that moment, I felt it.

The collapse.

Like I was falling through my own ribcage, into a space where all the light I'd tried to build was gutted.

"I'm sorry," I breathed, the words so small, so broken. "I'm sorry I failed you. I'm sorry I let fear win. I'm sorry I didn't hand you that card and trust you to love me through it. I'm sorry I ever thought I could keep you and protect you at the same time." 1

He stared at me.

And the room remained still, cold, unmerciful.

Like even the air had made up its mind.

Like the verdict was already carved in stone.

And all that was left for me—

Was the wait for judgment to fall.

"What is in it?" He finally asked.

I blinked my tears away, my mouth dry as I spoke. "I have no idea." I answered. "I never found out."

His voice softened. "Really?" His gaze was unreadable.

"I really have no idea

Hades' expression didn't change—not immediately. But something in his stillness sharpened. A flicker of something that wasn't quite surprise and wasn't quite rage—but something far more dangerous.

Calculation.



He took a slow step forward.

"You didn't know," he said, almost to himself. The softness in his voice wasn't compassion—it was disbelief masquerading as patience. "You had it for weeks. You hid it. You ran off with it, kept it tucked away, never once thought to hand it over..."

He tilted his head, eyes narrowing. "And you expect me to believe you never looked? Never even tried?"

I opened my mouth. "I—"

"I was hoping," he cut in, quiet and deadly, "that maybe, just maybe, there was a reason. That you had something to say. Some truth left to give."

I froze, confused. "What are you—"

"But you've made your choice," Hades said. "Again."

He reached into the inside pocket of his coat and withdrew a small, sleek tablet. No flourish. No warning. He simply tapped the screen, and it came to life—no sound, just light.

And the way his gaze pinned me as it glowed



between us?

I already knew I wouldn't survive whatever came next.

He didn't show me.

He didn't need to.

"You see," Hades said calmly, "we recovered the files. The corrupted sectors. The fragments. All of it."

His next words struck like a bullet.

"And they were all about Elliot."

The air left my lungs.

"I—what?"

He took another step. "Photos. Patterns. His class schedule. Hobbies. Routines. Guardian details. Even coordinates matching his school route. Some as recent as the week before his disappearance." 1

My lips parted. My throat locked up.

"I—I didn't—"

Hades' voice dropped to a growl. "You didn't know?"

I shook my head, trembling. "No! I didn't... I never collected anything—I wouldn't—I never—"

"Then how do you explain that?" He nodded toward the tablet. "How do you explain your fingerprints on a drive filled with intel about a boy you've purposefully trying to build a rapport with? A boy who just so happens to be the son of my dead brother?"

My heart was in my throat.

"I don't know how that got there," I said, voice breaking. "I swear, Hades, I never—he's just a child, I would never—"

"But you did," he snarled. "You kept the card. You chose and lied to my face. You lie now. You thought the encryption would work?"

"No," I whispered, helpless. "I didn't know it was about him. I never even opened the files—"

"Then you were either complicit or careless," he spat. "And I don't know which one I hate more."

Silence.



Tearing. Crushing. Devastating.

"I gave you a chance, Princess," Hades said softly. "Right here, in this room. I gave you one more night to give me the truth. And all you gave me was another lie."

I was shaking now. Physically trembling. "I didn't know. I didn't know..."

He leaned down, just enough so his voice hit like a blade against my skin.

"Then know this," he said. "You were my mate once."

His eyes, so cold they could shatter stone, locked on mine.

"Now, I will carve your name out of my heart... and make sure the world sees what kind of monster you really are. The same one your family saw." 2

Something in my shattered, something that could never be repaired.

Then he turned.

And left me choking on the ruins of the only love



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I ever believed in and in the corner of the white room, glanced Felicia smirking. 5

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