

King of the Underworld by RJ Kane

Chapter 210

Chapter Two Hundred Ten

Sephie

We continued talking for another hour or so, running through possibilities on how to handle the situation. We went through every what if scenario we could think of for what would happen if the shipment did get out. We were going to have to trust that the dealers wouldn't sell it if they were successful in getting the shipments switched.

"Of course, that brings up another problem," I said, as we were discussing their success at switching the shipments. They all looked to me, waiting for me to elaborate. "Withdrawals," I said.

The guys caught on quickly, but Armando and Giana were still confused. "What do you mean?" Giana asked.

"When you're a regular drug user, your body needs that drug to function. When you don't give it that drug, your body revolts and makes it painful until you give it that drug. Depending on the drug you've been using, the withdrawals can be, well, dramatic," I said.

"How do you know so much about this?" she asked, her tone had a hint of accusation behind it.

Adrik caught it. I felt him tense. Before I could answer, Ivan said, "everyone knows this." His tone was harsh, but it was exactly what was needed to end that conversation. He continued, "so, we're going to need to give the police and the hospitals a head's up as well, should they be successful with switching the shipments. That's going to create its own chaos in the city." He rubbed his face with his hands. "Fu ck," he said. "It might be worth having a conversation with a few doctors to find out what's needed to be able to handle that scenario."

"I know a guy. He should be able to keep his mouth shut," I said, winking at Ivan. I turned to look at Adrik. "But can we bring him here this time?" He smiled softly at me, nodding his head. "I'll make a call in the morning," he said. I glanced back to Ivan, who was clearly relieved.

We finally ran through all the possibilities that we could think of for the evening. It was beginning to get late, so Armando and Glana took their leave. Chris and Keith got up to go with them, but Keith asked Viktor if they could come back once Armando and Giana were safely in for the night. Viktor nodded his head. I caught the small smile that crept up one side of his face as they walked out.

"They're eager to learn," he said. "They'll be back once Armando and Giana are taken care of."

Ivan said, in Russian, just in case, "I did not like her tone." He was clearly still angry about Giana thinking my knowledge of drugs was because I was a user.

"I did not like her tone, either," Adrik said.

"It's okay. Normal people don't know these things. She's likely led a very sheltered life up until she met Armando. It's not necessarily her fault," I said. I looked to Ivan, grinning, "but I'm very grateful you shut that conversation down as quickly as you did. I'm starting to love your demons, Super Squish." His handsome smile stretched across his face.

They're useful," he said, winking at me.

Keith and Chris walked back into the office. "What did we miss?" Chris asked.

"Oh, we changed subjects and we're talking about demons now," Stephen said, completely straight-faced. While it wasn't a lie, his delivery made it seem like he was joking. Chris and Keith just stared at him, not knowing how to respond.

I couldn't help but laugh. Once I started laughing, I couldn't stop, which made all the guys laugh as well. I wiped the tears from my eyes, saying, "Yoden for the win, ladies and gentlemen." A few more laughs made it out before I finally gained my composure. "Ah, shit. I don't know why that was so funny, but holy hell it was hilarious."

Stephen spoke in his usual calm and quiet manner, "we're all a bit stressed, Seph. It was needed."

Keith looked at me, his face suddenly very serious. "Sephie, is it okay if I ask you a personal question?"

The guys all straightened up, curious as to what he was going to ask. "Sure," I said.

"You've clearly been through some shit in your life. Armando and Giana don't know about that, do they?" he asked, timidly. He glanced around at the guys, making sure he wasn't overstepping his bounds.

"No, they don't know. Very few people outside this room have seen my back and I'd like to keep it that way. Why do you ask?"

"I noticed the tension it brought up when she kind of implied your knowledge of withdrawals was because you'd been a user," he said. He was trying to be careful and choose his words wisely as he spoke, as he could tell it was a sensitive subject.

"I wasn't a user. I was forced to live with one for a few years though. I have a feeling that Giana has led a sheltered, mostly privileged life. Her brain struggles to comprehend that everyone doesn't live like she does. She has her own set of problems that come with that, though. It's neither better nor worse than what I've dealt with. In her mind, her problems are just as bad as what I've had to deal with. Doesn't make her a bad person. Life will eventually find a way of opening her eyes to other possibilities. Or it won't and she'll become even more close-minded and judgmental. It could go either way, really," I said, shrugging my shoulders.

Keith was quietly contemplating my answer. Stephen looked at Keith. "You'll come to find that Sephie's assessment of people is always spot on. It's why we rely on her to tell us if we can trust someone or not," he said. His cheeks flushed slightly when Keith looked at him as he was talking.

"That's why Mike hated her," he said. I could see him putting pieces together in his mind.

"People who carefully craft a persona only want the world to see what they want the world to see. People like Sephie and to a lesser extent, me, can see past that persona and see people for who they really are. It generally angers them because they know they've been caught and their whole house of cards is in danger of crashing down," Ivan said.

"Don't sell yourself short, Super Squish," I said, grinning at him.

We spent a little while longer in the office, talking through more possibilities, Keith and Chris were full of questions that they didn't want to ask in front of Armando. I couldn't blame them for wanting to appear completely competent in front of Armando, but I had to laugh to myself. Armando was so relaxed about his security that he likely wouldn't have known the difference.

I had gotten up and pulled Adrik to one of the couches at one point so I could lay down. I was starting to get tired, but didn't want to interrupt the discussion until it was done. They continued to talk as Adrik ran his hands through my hair, my head in his lap. I found myself drifting between being awake and asleep. I would still catch parts of the conversation, here and there, but I eventually gave in and fell asleep.

Some time later, I felt Adrik gently, but urgently, shaking me to see if he could wake me up. He had a worried look on his face when I opened my eyes. I looked at him, confused. "What's wrong?" I asked, sitting up.

You were talking in your sleep, solnishko. You don't remember?" he asked, now clearly worried.