

King of the Underworld by RJ Kane

Chapter 212

Chapter Two Hundred Twelve

Sephie

“Don’t apologize, Sephie. I want to be here for you. If you’re struggling with your past because you’re being forced to relive it right now, I want to be here to help you through it. You don’t have to go through it alone this time. The guys, too. They also want to help.” He lifted my chin so I would look at him. “You’re not alone anymore, Sephie.”

The tears were streaming down my face at this point. I still didn’t know what to do. He already had so much on his shoulders, they all did, that I didn’t want to bother them with what had happened in the past. I’d become accustomed to keeping my past locked up tight. When it came down to it, I was still worried he was going to look at me differently.

“I won’t look at you differently, Sephie. You’re never going to find what it is that you’re constantly searching for. Don’t get me wrong, I kinda love when you search, but it’s pointless. What you’re searching for doesn’t exist. It will never exist,” he said.

I squinted my eyes at him. “How did you do that?”

He laughed. He leaned down and kissed my lips. “You were searching, love. It was easy to guess what you were thinking.” The timer on his phone went off. He leaned down and kissed me once more, then walked to the freezer and grabbed ice. He didn’t bother trying to get me to put my hands in the ice water this time. He just soaked a towel and wrapped my hands up.

“Still have it, for the record,” I said, trying to make myself not pull my hands away from the cold towel.

He laughed, but he wouldn’t let me take my hands away, either. He stood in front of me, his arms crossed across his chest, watching to make sure I kept them in the towel until he was satisfied. “Sephie, do you know how reliant I’m becoming on having you around?” he asked.

I shook my head no. “What do you mean?”

“You’re what’s kept me from ordering the destruction of half the city in the pursuit of destroying the other bosses.”

“Maybe that’s not a good thing. It would be over with by now that way,” I said,

“Not necessarily. I would’ve unleashed my own chaos on the city. Chaos is loud. It’s disordered. There’s always collateral damage. Usually more than necessary. You don’t want chaos in these kinds of situations. Chaos is unpredictable, too.” He unwrapped my hands from the cold towel, pulling me down from the chair. He kept my hand in his as he led me to the bathroom. “Violence, on the other hand. Violence is quiet. It’s effective. Because it’s quiet. No one sees it coming until it’s too late. You can control the collateral damage with effective violence. You can predict the outcome when you use calculated violence. Without you, there would’ve been chaos. With you, there’s going to be calculated violence. See the difference?” he asked as he grabbed my hips and lifted me onto the counter in the bathroom.

“I think so,” I said. I was still somewhat puzzled.

He started to rub the amica cream on the knuckles of one hand as he continued. “When I was younger, my anger couldn’t be controlled. I left a path of destruction wherever I went. Viktor helped me rein it in, but it’s never been truly controlled until you came into my life.” I was watching his face as he was talking. He was watching what he was doing, but he would glance at me periodically. “You don’t even realize what a savage monster you’ve tamed, without even trying.” He chuckled. “Hell, you don’t even need to see me or be near me to know that I’m about to lose control now. When you were in the ring with Mike? As soon as those words came out of his mouth, I was ready to kill him. There would’ve been no stopping me, either, and I knew it. I wanted it. I’ve gotten to that point before and it took all five guys to pull me off the guy. Ivan was still an arm down, so they had no chance. I knew that. I was basically salivating at knowing I was going to beat him to death for saying that to you. Then you turned and looked at me.” He paused, to switch hands. He stole a glance and couldn’t help but smile when he saw I was still looking at him. “That’s all it took. I was still angry, sure. But that bloodlust that has never been controllable before, it just

disappears when you look at me. I have no idea how you do it, but I know that I will die trying to protect you because of it.” He looked in my eyes for a moment. A faint smile on his face as he lightly pushed a few curls back from my face. “Part of protecting you, Sephie, is helping to keep you safe from your own darkness and the demons you think live there. You’ve taught all of us how to be friends with our demons. Let me help you learn to be friends with yours.”

I couldn’t help but remember Ms. Jackson’s words from so many months ago. “You offer him something that he’s never had before. He’ll die to protect it. To protect you.

Adrik

I kept my usual battle with Sephie’s curls going as I watched her think about what I’d just told her. She would glance at me periodically, so I knew she wasn’t zoning out again. I was trying to think of the right words to say to her. I knew she kept her past locked up and she’d been forced to open it all up since meeting me.

It’s one thing when you can somewhat control when and how you tell someone about your past. It’s quite another when you’re forced to divulge information before you’re ready. Sephie hadn’t been able to control telling us about any of her past, because of circumstances outside her control. That alone can be traumatic. Then you add in having to relive her trauma and I was worried it was becoming too much for her.

She looked at me and I felt my heart skip. She still had that half-confused, doe-eyed look on her face that just made her irresistible. “Ms. Jackson told me months ago, when you first moved her to the building, that I offered you something you’d never had before, and you’d die to protect it.” She had a small smile on her face. “How did she know?”

I chuckled, brushing another curl back from her face. “She’s had me pegged since the first night I came to your apartment. She saw me get out of the vehicle and look at your apartment building. She told me she could see it plainly that I was in love with you then.” I twirled her curl around my finger, looking at her innocence. “She’s right, you know.”

I could see the smile creep across her face. “She told me you were in love with me when we got home from the grocery store that day. I didn’t fully believe her until you moved them downstairs.” Her gaze dropped to her hands. Her fingers started to fidget, first on her pants, then she moved to my shirt and the buttons as she lifted her gaze slightly. I could see that her mind was going a mile a minute. She sighed, then looked me in the eyes again. “I’m not keeping you out on purpose.” She dropped her gaze again, still fussing with the buttons on my shirt. “The stuff that’s happened to me... It’s just... It’s a rough story and I can clearly see how it affects everyone that finds out about it. It’s like having my own trauma reflected back to me. Then I feel bad and want to comfort the other person because I just traumatized them with my story. Meanwhile, my wounds just got deeper.”

I started to say something, but she stopped me. She placed her hand on my chest, looking at me again. “You’re different,

though. And I didn’t realize it until just now. I don’t know how you do it, but you don’t reflect it back to me. Ivan, too.” She thought for a moment, then almost whispered, “I think my dad was right.”

“Your dad was right about what, solnishko?”