

King of the Underworld by RJ Kane

Chapter 219

Chapter Two Hundred Nineteen

Misha

I could see something was different about Giana when she and Armando walked into the office while the doctor was talking to Sephie. Giana had a look of contempt on her face watching Sephie talk that she'd never had before. I didn't like it. I could feel myself starting to get angry as I watched her watching Sephie talk to the doctor about brawn.

When the doctor asked Sephie how she had experience with the original formula of brawn, her entire demeanor changed. It was obvious. She immediately looked at the floor and her shoulders slumped. Adrik didn't even need to see her to know it happened. He just turned his chair toward her and extended his hand toward her. She got up, her eyes still on the floor, and moved to his lap. Before she sat down, she just said "my uncle."

This week has been rough on her. We've all seen it. She's looking like she looked after she and I were attacked, just without the concussion. How she looked after the ball, just without the hole in her hip. She was struggling. Adrik and Ivan seemed to know how to help her best, which was good, but Andrei was right. It was frustrating for the rest of us. We wanted to help her too, we just didn't know how. It was even making Stephen angry and that guy rarely gets angry.

I noticed Giana's eyes went wide when Sephie mentioned her uncle. Armando looked at her, a stern look on his face, almost like he was silently saying "I told you so." I waited for her to look at me. I knew she would. She was practically incapable of not staring at me at some point anytime she was around me. I'd caught her staring so many times it should've been embarrassing for her, but she kept doing it. Even after she got with Armando. It was so comical that I'd discussed adding it to the white board bet pools. How many times I could catch her staring in one day.

When she did finally look at me, I made it obvious that I'd seen her look of disgust and I gave her my own look of disgust in return. It did not matter to me if she was with Armando or not, she was going to find out that when it came to Sephie, all bets were off. She quickly looked to the floor, but I kept watching her until the doctor got up to leave.

Once the doctor was out of the office, Adrik moved Sephie to one of the couches, but I kept my eyes on Giana. She was arguing with Armando, but they were speaking Italian and talking quietly. I'm assuming so Sephie couldn't hear what was being said. Giana got up quickly and rushed out of the office. We all looked to Armando. Clearly something had just happened. He looked frustrated, and maybe a little angry, but he made an excuse about her not feeling well.

That's bullshit. If she didn't feel well, he would've gone with her.

In the way that only Ivan can, he called her out. "Embarrassment will do that."

Everyone was waiting for him to expand on that when Viktor walked back into the office. Ivan smirked, enjoying the moment, then said, "Giana left here last night convinced Sephie knew about withdrawals because she was a user. She found out today that wasn't the case and now she's embarrassed about it, but she's not mature enough to own up to her mistake yet, so she ran instead."

Nailed it. I knew Ivan was wise before the attempted kidnapping of Sephie, but somehow that experience made him infinitely more so. Or he's finally just letting us all see it. Ivan has always been insanely private, but it's clear that he's opened up to Sephie. They share similar trauma. It can be comforting to find someone who can relate, even if it's just a little bit, to what you've been through. I know Ivan has been through serious trauma. He talks in his sleep when he's troubled, just like Sephie does. He has horrible past experiences with a doctor, just like she does. I don't know the details, but I know I likely don't want to know the details. It's hard enough knowing what happened to Sophie.

Armando looked to Ivan, surprised. "You've been hanging around Sephie, haven't you? How did you know that?"

Sephie smiled her smile that could light up the room at Ivan. "Ivan has a very special set of skills," she said.

Armando nodded his head in agreement. He looked thoughtful for a moment, then looked at Sephie and said, "Sephie, I want to apologize on behalf of Giana. We argued for several hours last night. She was convinced that you'd been on drugs because you have so much knowledge about them."

I felt my anger rise to the surface. This bitch. How could anyone think that about Sephie? She doesn't even drink alcohol! And what does it matter if she was on drugs at one point? She's clearly not anymore, so who the fuck cares? Doesn't she know that people can change and improve their lives?

Before I really thought about it, I said, "and if she was? What then? Does that mean Giana gets a license to be a bitch to her? It changes nothing about who Sephie is today if she was or wasn't." I was angry, but I shouldn't have said that to Armando.

Surprisingly, he agreed with me, telling me he'd said the same thing to her the night before. He also said he wasn't sure where any of it was coming from in respect to Gianni. I saw Sephie and Ivan having a silent conversation. I think he was checking to see if she was okay. She's had to deal with so much, this week especially. We were all worried that her nightmares were going to come back. Sephie nodded once to Ivan, letting him know she could handle it. He looked at Armando, his face serious. "I do. She's still so insecure with herself that this is her way to tear Sephie down to make herself feel better. You need to be careful with her, Mando. She'll eventually do the same to you, if you don't stop it. She wouldn't have lasted five minutes in Sephie's life over the last few years. She doesn't know what happened, but on some level, she knows Sephie is stronger than she could ever be and instead of letting it inspire her to be better herself, she lets it make her more insecure about herself. She'll drag you down to her level if you don't demand she rise to yours or get lost."

Armando looked somewhat surprised at Ivan's words, asking how he and Sephie got to be so wise. When you're forced to live a life full of hardship, you learn more lessons about life in general. This was true of both Sephie and Ivan. Sephie, in her own always sarcastic way, told Armando as much.

I've always been the youngest of the group, until Sephie came into our lives. I was excited at first, because I finally felt like I wasn't the baby. Then I realized that she might be younger than me in years, but she's much older than I am in terms of experience. Sure, I've got experiences that she doesn't have, but that woman has been through more in her young life than I'll likely experience in the rest of mine. I find myself looking up to her. Just like Ivan pointed out, Sephie inspires me to be better. All of us to be better. I don't know how she's done it, but she's brought the best out of all of us. Even Stephen. None of us knew that guy was carrying around his secret for that long. We were becoming used to the idea that he may or may not be a serial killer and we were all strangely fine with that fact. Turns out he was just uncomfortable to tell us that he was gay. But because of Sephie, he's come out to us and now he's coming out of his shell around us. That guy is fucking hilarious and none of us knew it because he was afraid to be himself around us. Sephie showed him how much better life can be when you just decide to always be yourself. I constantly question whether that would've ever happened if Sephie hadn't come into our lives. I question whether a lot of things would have happened if she hadn't come into our lives.

And now this insecure bitch is trying to tear Sephie down because she's too scared to put in the work to make herself better. I didn't realize I said it out loud, but I cursed in Russian, my anger taking over for a moment.