

King of the Underworld by RJ Kane

Chapter 330

Chapter Three Hundred Thirty

Sephie

"How much work do you have today? Can we go for a walk or do you want me to drag one of the guys with me instead?" I asked Adrik as we were walking down the stairs.

"I will go with you, but you need a jacket," he said, stopping me from walking down another step. He pulled me back toward the bedroom once more to get the jacket that I hadn't thought about.

"I like where this is going, too," I said, grinning at him. I heard him curse under his breath as we walked back up the stairs.

"You are not making this easy on me," he said, shaking his head.

Once downstairs, I realized that it'd been so long since we were at the house that there likely wasn't very much food there. "Can I send someone to get groceries?" I asked Adrik as we walked into the kitchen.

"You can do whatever you like, solnishko," he said, following me to the kitchen island.

"What about me cooking? Am I still banned from that? You guys said I was banned until I had use of both arms again." I held up my left arm. "I can use it again, so the ban should be lifted, right?"

He smiled at me. "Only if you let us help you," he said.

"Deal." I said, right as Stephen walked into the kitchen.

"What kind of deals are being made?" he asked.

"I can cook now as long as I let you guys help me," I announced.

"Oh, Viktor is going to be so happy. VIKTOR!" he yelled at the top of his lungs, which made me jump and laugh at the same time. All of the guys came rushing toward the kitchen like something was definitely wrong. Ivan and Andrei had their guns drawn, even. Stephen was standing there quietly waiting on them.

"What's wrong? What happened??" they all asked urgently once they saw Adrik and I in the kitchen as well.

"Sephie can cook again," Stephen said, his sly smile stretching across his face.

Viktor's deep belly laugh filled the kitchen as he walked over to me and picked me up in a bear hug. "This really is the best day ever," he said, spinning me around once.

"We have to help her, since she's still not 100%, but somehow I don't think anyone will mind," Stephen said.

"I'll do everything. Whatever it takes," Misha said. I couldn't stop smiling at how happy they were about this new development. I made a quick grocery list, handing it to Viktor. I knew this was one task he would happily take care of. Adrik announced that we were going for a walk and would be back shortly. Once we were outside and alone, he was still laughing at Viktor's reaction. "He really does love it love it when you cook for us," he said, shaking his head.

"Because it's his language," I said, grabbing Adrik's hand as we walked.

"What do you mean?"

"Viktor goes around quietly making sure we all have everything we need, that your schedule is always taken care of, that the building is secure, the vehicles are taken care of, food is ordered, he does everything. It's how he shows his love. Me cooking for you guys is that for him. It's the way I show my love for all of you, but it's his language. He understands it, without anyone having to say the words. The other guys love it too, just as you do, but for Viktor, it's silent recognition of everything he does for us returned back to him," I said.

"He does make sure everything and everyone is always taken care of. He's so good at it that sometimes I forget he does it all," Adrik said.

I smiled at his somewhat worried expression. "I don't think you should feel bad about that. That's what he wants. He wants it all to appear effortless and mostly it is, because he's set the systems in place for it to be effortless."

Adrik cut his eyes over at me. "I think Trino is right. You know too much," he said, grinning at me.

"I can keep going." I said, my own grin stretching across my face.

"Please do. Your insights are always fascinating."

"It's also a replacement for the what ifs he's been plagued with ever since his wife and child were killed. He spends more time than he'll ever admit thinking about what could have been and the almost life he lived. In the beginning, it was painful to think about. Now, he's healed enough that it's more curiosity to think about what might have been. Coming home at the end of the day to a home-cooked meal helps him complete his vision for that almost life."

"Has he talked to you about this, solnishko?" Adrik asked.

"Nope. I didn't know about his wife and child until that night that they all found out I can't have kids. That's the only time he's mentioned her around me. I haven't asked either. I really do try not to pry in anyone's head, but I've picked up on a few times when he's been thinking about her. I pieced together the rest."

Adrik walked a few moments in silence. He was thoughtful about what I'd just told him. "Is he still bothered by it?" he asked.

"Not that I can tell. There's some understandable sadness there. I think that's why I pick up on it, but I don't feel like he's still struggling with feel more like he tries not to think about it too much. I'm guessing he struggled with it when it first happened?"

Adrik nodded his head. "Yeah, I don't think you've ever seen Viktor get truly angry, but he almost lost his grip on sanity for a while there. He was consumed by revenge, which as you know eventually led to his landing himself in the Syrian prison. Honestly, it was a suicide mission for him. He didn't expect to live through it. We'd tried to talk him out of it. We thought we had talked him out of it, but he left in the middle of the night without a word to the rest of us. Ivan was pissed. It almost ruined their friendship completely. They had a few heated arguments after we got Viktor out," he said.

"Really?" I asked. Viktor and Ivan seemed very close. I couldn't imagine them ever fighting each other.

Adrik nodded. "Ivan knew that Viktor was trying to get himself killed. Like drug use, Ivan has very strong opinions on suicide. Very strong. He told Viktor if he ever thought about doing anything like that again to let him know. Ivan would put a bullet in his head for him instead of putting everyone else's life in danger."

"Savage. But also, partly true."

"Ivan's never been in love, though. He doesn't understand the hell that Viktor was in after having lost his wife and his unborn child. He's gotten closer to understanding it since you came into our lives. Ivan had a conversation with me about it shortly after we got back from Italy. He said he owed Viktor an apology because he was starting to understand how he felt after his wife was killed. He said what happened on the plane over, when you didn't recognize him and then when you were in your nightmare and kept yelling for me, then him, gave him a glimpse someone you love."

"I had no idea I had that much of a negative effect on him during all that," I said.

what it was like to lose

"Not just him. All of them. Even Stephen. I think it was the first time they all realized how much you mean to them and the first time they'd had to come to terms with the possibility of losing you. You were in so much pain that you probably didn't notice, but during the first few days when you were asleep more than not, they each went through hell. They would come in to check on you when you were asleep in just your shirt, on top of me. They all saw how badly you were hurt, but they couldn't do anything about it. This time was just as difficult for them, but they were able to help you much more. They were happy to move you, to let you sleep on them, to make food for you. It all helped them process the pain of thinking we'd lost you. I saw how much they doted on you. It helped them get through this time much easier than after the ball." He had stopped walking and was standing in front of me, his hands in the usual battle with my curls.

"That's why you're so sad that I'm able to do more stuff on my own again," I said. It all made sense now. He placed his warm palm against my cheek, his thumb rubbing lightly back and forth. He had a small smile on his lips as he looked in my eyes, like he was lost in them. "I will always need you."

Adrik," I said, firmly. His sexy smirk that I adored appeared on his face as he leaned down and kissed me gently, his palm still on my cheek. I smiled against his lips. "You regularly take my breath away with your kiss, but sometimes the sweet ones can completely turn my insides to go," I said, shaking off the goosebumps he had caused.

"Noted," he said, laughing at my antics.

"Let's go back. I'm getting cold," I said. He grabbed my hand and turned to walk back to the house "Nope," I said, stopping him. He turned to look at me, confused. "I'm the goddamn princess. I don't walk back to the house." I walked behind him, jumping on his back. He bounced me higher and kept a tight hold of my legs as he walked us back toward the house, clearly amused with me. I pushed my warmth to him as we walked, knowing he would know I was thinking about how much I loved him.

"Did you walk too far, spider monkey?" Andrei asked when he saw I hitched a ride back.

"Nope. She's the goddamn princess. She doesn't walk back to the house," Adrik said, laughing.

"Solid line of thinking, gazelle. You don't want to waste too much energy and not be able to cook later. I fully support this decision," Misha said,

grinning at me.

"See? Misha gets it," I said, pointing at him as Adrik walked us by the couches. He walked to the kitchen, setting me down on the counter while made coffee.

"This will help you warm up," he said, eventually handing me a warm cup of coffee.

"And make sure I have enough energy to cook," I said, grinning at him.

"I support this!" Misha yelled from the other room.