

King of the Underworld by RJ Kane

Chapter 459

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Adrik

Before we could make it across the ballroom to talk to the mayor, I was stopped at least twenty times by different people wanting to speak to me. I could feel Sephie's delight at me having to be polite and courteous to that many people. They were all people I'd either helped out or done some kind of business with. Most of the time, when anyone would approach me in public, it was to thank me for something I'd done for them. Tonight was no different.

Surprisingly, Vinny and Anna were among those who stopped us on our way to the mayor.

"Vinny!" Sephie said when she saw him. She couldn't hide her excitement to see him. Or his wife. She loved both of them. "I was not expecting you two to be here, but I'm so glad you are."

"Since the hospital has taken such good care of my father, we try to give back whenever possible," Vinny said. "Now that I'm opening a second restaurant, thanks to you sir, we can increase that."

I smiled at Vinny. He really was a very good man. "That's what it's all about, Vinny. When business owners thrive, the community thrives."

"We can't thank you enough for the second location, sir," Anna said. "It really has been a dream of ours for several years now. You've brought that to life."

"Just be glad that we're not living in that building. Your profits would be cut considerably by me having a sandwich for breakfast, lunch, and dinner," Sephie said, patting her partially exposed stomach.

Vinny raised his eyebrow looking at her skeptically, "you could use more sandwiches if you ask me, bella." Just to be a brat, she pushed her stomach out like she had a belly, telling Vinny that's what she looked like after eating one of his sandwiches. It made me happy to see her finally relaxing while we were here. It helped the rest of us relax as well. The guys stayed close, giving us enough room to talk to people, but not enough that Sephie couldn't easily see every single one of them.

Before we could even finish our conversation with Vinny and Anna, someone else had approached me wanting a moment to talk. I was beginning to feel like Vitaliy when he first came back to the city. Everyone wanted to talk to me. This is why I don't come to these functions.

We'd made it halfway to the mayor, but no further as it seemed like every single person at the function wanted to speak to me.

"Boss, it appears that the mayor is also trying to make it to you, but he's having the same issue. People are stopping him to talk to him before he can make it over," Ivan said quietly.

"Let him come to you. I don't know why, but that needs to happen." Sephie told both me and Ivan.

"That should be easy. I can't even finish one conversation before the next person is already waiting. I'm going to be here all night," I said, somewhat frustrated.

I felt Sephie push her warmth to me; she cut Ivan off from the conversation before saying, "but you look so smashingly handsome doing it. I wouldn't mind watching that for a little longer."

I was in the middle of a conversation with someone who was thanking me for helping their family in their time of need. I glanced over at Sephie, who was standing a step away from me. Her eyes were normal, because of her contacts, but her dress matched her eyes when they changed to blue almost perfectly, giving her the appearance of radiating love for me.

"You're not allowed to wear a dress in any color other than that one ever again," I told her as I continued with my conversation. I could hear her laughing in my head as she smiled and pretended to be interested in the conversation along with me. She took the step closer to me that meant I could slide my arm around her waist, holding her close to my side while we talked to a seemingly endless stream of people.

I caught sight of Battista during one of my many conversations. He approached Ivan, saying something quietly to him. Ivan responded, then Battista walked toward Vitaliy. My father's men were spread out more throughout the ballroom than my guys. I'd explained the situation to Vitaliy while we were waiting for Sephie to come upstairs from getting help getting ready. He knew how nervous we all were to be here tonight, so his guys were basically running backup for us so my guys could concentrate on Sephie and only Sephie.

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"Your mother warned me that this was going to be difficult for all of you, but she didn't go into details," he'd told me as we discussed it. "Whatever you need from us to make sure sladkaya is comfortable this time will happen. That was the end of the discussion as far as Vitaliy was concerned. It made me happy that he was so willing to protect her, just like the rest of us.

"Boss, Battista figured out what's happening with you trying to get to the mayor. He's going to bring him over shortly, but he did say he and Vitaliy were betting on who was going to make the most progress between now and then. Apparently it's somewhat of a race that they're watching from the sidelines," Ivan told me.

"Slowest race ever," Sephie responded. She was still tucked into my side, happy to stay close to me. She would catch one of the guy's eyes and make funny face now and then. She had conversations with all of them, probably trying to make them laugh as they remained close by. I felt her getting antsy next to me at one point and turned to look at her. "I have to pee. I drink water when I'm nervous and I was nervous all afternoon," she told me. She had a guilty look on her face like she'd definitely done something wrong that I couldn't resist. I laughed, leaning down to kiss her quickly.

"Ivan, she needs an escort to the bathroom. Take Andrei too," I told him. I looked at her, smiling up at me, "try to behave yourself this time."

She slid her arm through Ivan's, glancing back at me as they walked away. "Never!" she said as she turned away from me.

She stopped to briefly talk to Battista and Vitaliy before they continued on to the restroom. I counted down the seconds in my head before she returned, I tried to appear like I was listening to the person standing in front of me, but I kept glancing in the direction they'd just walked, waiting for them to return.

When I saw her again, my breath caught. She had no idea how beautiful she was. Every head turned to watch her as she walked past, Ivan and Andrei were trying to keep her distracted as they walked back to me, to help keep her from worrying over everyone watching her. She was laughing with them as they walked, her arm through Ivan's again. She looked absolutely gorgeous as she walked across the ballroom and every single person there noticed, except one. Sephie still had no clue how mesmerizing she was. I loved that about her.

Her smile widened as she made it back to me. She reached up and kissed Ivan's cheek, thanking him and Andrei for the escort, then stepped back to me. I couldn't help myself, I put my hand on her cheek, gently pulling her to me and kissed her.

Passionately. In front of everyone. I didn't care. In fact, I might've liked it. I'd just seen the looks on every single man's face in this place, as well as the women. I'd never been more proud that she was mine.

"I wasn't even gone that long. I beat my previous record, evert. But you clearly missed me," she said as I finally got myself under control. She was smiling at me, though. I could feel her warmth, as well. I knew her eyes were matching her dress.

"I clearly love you," I told her as I greeted the next person who wanted to speak to me.

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