

King of the Underworld Chapter 501 - 510

Chapter 501

Sephir

“No, it’s never happened before. I’ve always been able to find an answer, but everything was fuzzy that time. It’s been getting clearer for me every other time, too,” he said. He was clearly perplexed.

“Have you tried to look for that same answer again?” Stephen asked.

“Yeah, same result each time,” Misha said.

My mind was racing. I unwrapped Adrik’s arms from around me so I could walk to the remaining cookies I’d made for

Andrei. They all smirked at me, knowing I had a serious sweet tooth if something was bothering me. “What? Sugar helps me think, I said, biting into the cookie.

“They need frosting next time,” Misha said. “They’re just boring without it.”

“Noted, my adorable Russian guardian,” I said. As I finished the cookie, I had an idea pop in my head. “Were you looking for Sal’s kids specifically?” I asked. Misha nodded his head. “What if the outcomes on them aren’t clear

because no one knows what will happen to Sal yet? Like we don’t know if Stephen will be needed or if Adrik will be needed. Make sense?”

“That falls in line with what Misha was looking for, actually. We said there was a possibility they would never move against us if they find out what really happens to Sal.” Ivan said.

I felt Adrik getting itchy because I was no longer next to him, so as I walked back to his side, I said, “there’s also the possibility that no one knows what will happen when Adrik is needed.”

Everyone was quiet as I settled into Adrik's arms once more, loving the contentment I could feel from him once he had his arms around me again. "Do you think Kostya can find that answer?" Ivan asked.

"We can ask him. Lena might be able to find out too. Those two are the most accessible, if you will," I said. "I'm not entirely sure anyone like us has ever existed before, though. There may not be answers to be found."

Andrei yawned as everyone mulled over what had been said. "We can worry about it all tomorrow. I think everyone should get some sleep tonight," Adrik said. Sleep was definitely the last thing on his mind right now, but it sounded reasonable enough to everyone else.

As soon as the door closed behind them, Adrik's lips were on mine. He was desperate for me, like he hadn't seen me in months. "What is wrong with me," he said against my lips. "I cannot get enough of you right now."

"Please never do," I said, pulling him with me toward the bedroom. I didn't think the wards outside the door needed another performance tonight. I would prefer if no one heard me this time. By the time we made it to the bedroom, we were both completely naked. A trail of clothes remained between the kitchen and the bedroom, waiting to show us the way out should we need it at any point. We were both giggling at our inability to control ourselves.

His hands were everywhere at once, making sure there was as little distance between as possible. His desire felt different. It was almost primal. I broke the kiss long enough that I could look at him. His eyes were swirling between his usual blue and black.

I smiled at him, switching my eyes to black. It was all he needed to stop the internal struggle he was having. He smirked at me as he roughly grabbed me, picking me up. When he got closer to the bed, he all but threw me on it. Flying through the air is now a surprising turn on for me, He usually struggled to maintain control and would force himself to go slow, at least in the beginning. He still worried he would hurt me most of the time. Tonight was not that way. He flipped me onto my stomach and pulled my hips toward him. He was inside me and I was moaning before I even knew what had happened.

He was rough, but I loved it. I could feel his fingers digging into my hips as he held me tightly. The scar from the night of the ball was usually numb, but when he held my hips, I could feel his fingertips pressing into my skin. As strange as it sounded, it was nice to have something to feel there.

He was pounding into me, his rhythm unrelenting. I was beginning to question if I'd be able to walk the next day, but I wanted him to keep going. All I could do was grab the sheets and hang on as he showed no signs of stopping.

I felt his hand move up my back. Same as my hip, I didn't normally have much feeling over my back because of my scars. He discovered that if he ran his fingertips over my scars, I could feel it. He was apologetic when he first did it.

He thought I was sleeping when it happened. He didn't want to make me uncomfortable by exploring my scars. I surprised him by telling him I really liked it as he gave me something to feel there, other than extreme pain, since it had happened.

With his hand on my back now, I could feel everything like normal. Like there were no scars. His hand left a trail of fire over my back and I loved it. I wanted more. "Your hand. Use the other one too," I told him. Thank *od for being able to talk to him silently. There was no way I'd have been able to get that out in between screams otherwise.

He moved both hands to my back, letting them roam while he pulled me back to him with each thrust. It started an entirely new wave of pleasure through my body. I was completely on fire under his touch. I could feel everything on my back like it wasn't completely scarred. My body completely exploded. I was no longer in control. He was in complete control of my body, forcing it to ever higher levels of pleasure with each touch, with each thrust of his hips. He owned me in those moments.

Adrik could feel what I felt. Even through my pleasure, I could feel his gratification at being able to push me to new heights. He always took pleasuring me as a challenge. Like he was trying to beat his personal best each and every time.

I fully supported it.

He didn't let up, he just kept pushing my body to feel more pleasure with each time he pushed into me. It felt like I could do nothing but or*asm. There was no ending, there was no beginning. There was just pleasure.

I finally felt him find his own release and he collapsed onto the bed beside me. I had to work to catch my breath for the first time in a long time as I rolled over next to him. He immediately began to worry when he noticed. His eyes were still

black, which somehow managed to calm me. I just focused on his eyes, finding peace in the fact that he would destroy anything and everything that ever thought to cause me harm. I couldn't help but smile at him as my breathing finally returned to normal once again.

"That hasn't happened in a while," he said, concern very evident on his face.

"Um, se* like that hasn't happened ever. I don't know why you're surprised I couldn't catch my breath," I said, grinning at him.

He chuckled. "Maybe you're right."

I got up, pulling him up with me. He reached down and picked me up, walking us both to the shower.

"I might've made it difficult for you to walk," he said, a boyish grin on his face.

"You definitely did, but I loved every minute of it."

As we stood under the hot water, he was watching me. "What happened when I put my hand on your back?"

"Mmm, you brought all the feeling back. It felt almost like I didn't have scars. Same for the scar on my hip. I have feeling there when you grab my hips."

He smirked down at me. "Well, then I'll have to grab you more," he said, holding me against him tighter..

"Please do. I'm a fan," I said, giggling at the look of surprise on his face.

He leaned down and kissed me. "You never cease to amaze me with how perfect you are for me."

"It's like we were meant to be or something," I said, grinning at him.

His face turned serious as he looked down at me, brushing a curl from my face. "Sephie, I've never been more sure that

I can get through anything life throws at me now that I have you by my side.

All of this....s*it that's happening with the

other bosses? It doesn't worry me in the slightest. I find myself enjoying the process, simply because you're with me. I know you will always be there to make my path in life even brighter with your light."

My breath caught. I looked up at him, my fingers lightly running over his facial hair I felt the pull in my chest from him so strongly. A smile slowly stretched over my face as I looked at him, thinking about how completely I loved him. I felt the same as he did. I knew I could get through anything as long as I had him. I stood up and kissed him sweetly, then rested my head on his chest as his arms completely enveloped me. He sighed as I pushed all my warmth to him, his body completely relaxed and content to have me in his arms.

King of the Underworld by RJ Kane

Chapter 502

502

Adrik

Sephie was still sound asleep and very much tangled up with me when I woke the next morning. I went to move and she latched on tighter, without waking up. Apparently, she wanted me to stay for a while longer. Who was I to deny her?

I fully expected her to stay asleep, but she eventually started to stir as I held her, thinking about everything that was going on lately. I felt guilty, as it was likely my emotions that were all over the place that woke her up.

She opened her eyes, smiling sweetly at me. I had to admit to adoring seeing her eyes turn blue first thing in the morning. She hid her face in my chest, pulling me closer to her if that was even possible. After a few quiet moments, she finally inhaled and went to stretch. She winced when she did.

“Yeah, that’s my fault,” I said, trying to look apologetic and not show how proud I was of it.

She giggled. “You can be proud. I enjoyed it immensely,” she said. “But you might ht to carry me everywhere today.”

I got out of bed, pulling her into my arms. “I like this idea. If I keep you so sore you can’t walk, then you’ll have to go everywhere with me and you can’t get away.” I said, walking her to the bathroom.

She cut her eyes over at me, but didn’t say anything for a moment like she was legitimately considering this option in her life. It made me laugh. “I adore you for even pretending to consider this,” I said, kissing her as I set her down.

“What? It’s a good plan,” she said. I kissed her one more time, then went to the closet, I was still laughing when she finally joined

me in the closet. She was still completely naked from the night before, giving me plenty to think about the rest of the day. She caught me looking at her, but I tried to cover.

“You’re still excited that Ivan agreed to spar with you more often,” I said.

“You’re still excited that I’m still not wearing any clothes,” she said, smiling at me. “We’re both correct.”

G*d, I love her.

Vitaliy surprised us all by showing up with his men in the gym when we went down. We had just arrived in the gym and they walked in.

“Did you plan this last night and I missed it?” Sephie asked me.

“Nope. I told you he’d be back to get an explanation of why we feel different,” I said, laughing. I could hear her laughing in her head.

“To what do we owe this pleasure, Vitaliy?” Sephie asked as she walked over to him to give him a hug.

“Ivan said you two were going to spar this morning. I didn’t want to miss it,” he said, smiling at her. “My guys could use new partners, as well. Ilya wants to see how his progress is coming, too.”

Sephie had told me the night before that Ilya was happy working for my father. She’d shown me what his face looked like as he was talking to her about it earlier in the evening. It was evident that he was very excited with his new situation. It was good to see.

Ivan walked over to Sephie, throwing his arm over her shoulders. “Who do you think should spar with Ilya this time, princess?”

“I get to decide? Why do I get to decide?” she asked.

“You made such a good match last time that it got him a job. You might get him a promotion this time. Choose wisely,” he said, teasing her.

She elbowed him in the ribs, but she said, “I think it should be Bubba this time.” She looked between me and Ivan, saying, “I think they both want to prove how much they’ve improved. It be a very good match.”

*Should we warn Vitaliy he’s going to want to promote him now or should we just let him figure it out?” Ivan asked.

She giggled, then called Andrei over to make sure he would want to spar with liya. He just smiled widely at her when she asked him. She knew all of us so well by this point that she didn’t need to snoop in anyone’s head. She just knew.

Andrei pulled her to the side while Sergei and Misha got in the ring. As her trainer, he took everything she did very seriously. I think it made him nervous when she sparted with Ivan. He knew Ivan wasn’t going to hurt her, but Ivan also had more training than everyone but me. Sometimes reflexes can be detrimental in such situations. He was trying to keep her from hurting herself, so he made sure she was warmed up and limber before she got in the ring with Ivan.

Ivan caught me watching them. “I think I make Andrei nervous when I spar with the princess,” he said, chuckling,

“I was just thinking that. He takes his job as her trainer very seriously. I do appreciate it, not gonna lie,” I said.

“it used to worry me, too. I had to hold back so much with her in the beginning, but the last time I was in the ring with her, I was surprised at how much she’s progressed.”

“She’s been excited about this ever since you agreed to it. I have to admit to being quite curious to see if there’s a difference since my last level-up gave her so much extra too.”

“S*it. I didn’t even think about that. I better stretch too,” he said, walking over to join Andrei and Sephie.

Vitaliy took advantage of me standing alone. He walked up, asking quietly, “how do you feel so different to me now?”

I laughed quietly. “I got a new level unlocked.” I glanced toward Sephie, who was still warming up. “It’s actually a much better effect if Sephie is here when I tell you the specifics of it.”

“I need your demon eyes, for added emphasis. It’ll only take a moment,” I said to her. She was standing next to me a few seconds later. Vitaliy looked surprised to see her appear without me saying anything..

He snapped his fingers. “I forget you can do that now.”

“It’s quite useful,” I said. I glanced at Sephie, then looked back at my father.

“I can no condemn souls and demons to Hell,” I said, flatly.

Sephie slid her arm through mine, as she said, “he’s the King of the Underworld now

Vitaliy’s eyes went wide as he looked at her eyes. She glanced at me, knowing I enjoyed the red almost as much as the blue, then looked back at Vitaliy

“What does this color mean, slatkaya?”

“It’s not so much a meaning as it is homage to the King,” she said. “This one isn’t actually me doing it. It’s my demon. Turns out she loves him just as much as I do.”

Vitaliy cursed under his breath. “If I hadn’t seen it with my own eyes and felt it with my own hands, I wouldn’t believe it. Why did this happen? Who do you need to use it on?”

“Ricardo and Martin, specifically. Maybe Sal too, we’re still waiting to see, but he’s recently made a deal as well. Ricardo and Martin are confirmed.”

He ran his hand through his hair. “We apparently have much to discuss.” He looked at Sephie, saying, “I appreciate you letting Jessica come to dinner last night, but we obviously missed out on very important conversations because she was there.”

“Don’t worry, Vitaliy. She’ll be okay with everything soon. It’s just a little overwhelming for her right now. I didn’t want to jump straight to him being the King of the Underworld the first time she came to dinner,” she said, laughing.

Vitaliy looked surprised again. “They turn red every time you call him that?” She shrugged her shoulders. “I don’t actually know the answer to that question. You tell me,” she said, laughing.

Vitaliy laughed at her. I kissed her temple, then pushed her back toward Andrei and Ivan. She ski*ed back over to them to continue her warm up and stretching session.

“How do you deal with her constantly surprising you with the most amazing things?

I laughed. “You do get used to it after a while. Hang around her long enough and she’ll unlock some new level for you, too,” I said, laughing at his shock.

A la

King of the Underworld by RJ Kane

Chapter 503

503

Adrik

Andrei and Ilya got in the ring together, after Viktor and Aleksei were done, as well as Eduard and Stephen. Sephie was right.

They both wanted to prove themselves. It was an even better match than Ilya and Misha had been. Training Sephie had made Andrei pay attention to his own technique. He was also faster now, as he had to stay ahead of her at all times. Aleksei was quite impressed with both of them..

“We should do this more regularly. I think it’s good for all of them,” he said as he stool and watched.

“You guys are always welcome. Sephie talked Ivan into sparring with her once a week for the foreseeable future. Show up when you want in,” I said.

He looked surprised. “She asked to spar with him more?” I nodded my head.

“She’s no scared to do so?”

I laughed. “Those two have a special relationship. She couldn’t be scared of him if she tried. She knows he’s the biggest challenge. She’s determined to get good enough that he doesn’t have to hold back with her.”

Aleksei’s sly smile stretched across his face. “I remember someone else who was much the same when he was younger,” he said, putting his hand on my shoulder. “It’s why you’re the only one that doesn’t need to get in the ring very often.”

“I do see some of the same determination in her that I’ve always had. For her, though it’s so no one can ever hurt her again. She has survival as added motivation.”

“Heaven help the next person that tries to hurt her. We’ll all go after them,” he said, seriously before he walked back to talk to Vitaliy.

I watched the rest of Andrei and Ilya’s match, looking forward to seeing Sephie and an. I never thought I would be waiting to watch my fiancée fight one of my guys, but I couldn’t imagine it any other way. She was perfect for me. Other women didn’t exist for me.

Andrei and Ilya were both pleased with themselves when their match was over. They both stepped out of the ring near me, as Sephie and Ivan were now standing with me waiting their turn. Sephie’s gorgeous smile was making the entire gym bright. “Ilya! Your training is much better! Bubba is deceptively fast now, too. He’s so close to teaching me how to kill people with just my thumbs. So. Close,” she said emphatically as she hugged Andrei’s neck. Ilya was all smiles. “My goal is to be able to keep up with Ivan at some point,” he said Ivan raised an eyebrow at him. Sephie grinned at him.

“Keep sparring with Bubba then. He’s an amazing trainer,” she said, following Ivan into the ring.

I put my hand on Andrei’s shoulder. “Training Sephie has made you better than ever you’re much faster now,” I said.

He chuckled. “I have to be to stay ahead of her. It’s the only advantage to being so much smaller than the rest of us.”

Ivan and Sephie had a quick conversation in the middle of the ring before starting. They were both clearly happy about being in the ring together. We all saw Sephie flip her switch. She wasn’t angry. She’d long ago figured out how to keep the power without the anger, but she switched to serious in a second. Ivan’s smile faded quickly as he soon realized that my level-up was giving

her an unexpected advantage

Andrei looked at me, his eyes wide. I looked at Misha, Stephen, and Viktor across the ring, all looking just as shocked as they watched her. Not only was she just as fast as Ivan now, but she was perfectly countering every single one of his moves. I'd starred with Ivan plenty of times. He was not holding back. She was making him work, even more than she did last time.

Vitaliy and his men were just as shocked as all of us. Vitaliy walked to me, asking, "how?"

"When I leveled up, she got a significant upgrade though me because we're so connected. Ivan got some through her, but not as much."

I just heard Vitaliy cursing as he watched them. Both of them were having fun, but it really looked like they were trying to kill each other. More than ever before, I could feel Sephie's power. She had figured out how to let her demon help her, without stepping forward. Her eyes were normal, but her demon was definitely helping her. And enjoying every second of it.

Their match went on much longer this time than the last time they'd sparred. Sephie's endurance was definitely no longer an issue. She felt incredible. She looked incredible. She was incredible.

When they finally agreed to end the match, with no clear winner this time, everyone else in the gym applauded. Every single one of them was impressed with how well she'd done against Ivan.

Ilya was still standing close enough that I could hear him when he told Andrei, "I think I should make her my goal, not Ivan. I think she could kick my a*s,"

Andrei laughed. "I know she could," he said, a very obvious look of pride on his face

king her up and holding her in the air for a few moments. He was proud of

Sephie hugged Ivan when they were done. He wrapped his massive arms around her as well. When he set her down, she turned to Andrei, running to the edge of the stage straight to him. He wrapped his arms around her, picking her up as well. He swung her around a few times, as she thanked him and he told her how proud he was of her. It was a very sweet moment, as both of them were elated with her performance.

He finally set her down and she walked to me. Her beautiful smile was still spread wide across her face. "I think I might've gotten a bigger boost from you than we first thought," she said, tucking herself in my side.

"I think you figured out how to let your demon help you, too," I said, kissing her temple.

"You felt that?" she asked. "Of course you felt that. I don't know why that surprises. Did my eyes switch?"

I shook my head no. "Not that I saw. They looked normal the whole time, but she was definitely helping you. And very happy about it."

She giggled. "She was very happy about it. She might've enjoyed that more than I did even."

Ivan walked up to us. "Princess, I don't think anyone but your goddamn prince has made me work that hard."

"I did have help. Full disclosure," she said, grinning at him. The rest of the guys join us.

"What help?" Misha asked. He looked at me, thinking I was going to be the answer to this question.

"Her demon," I said.

"Really??" Misha asked. He looked quickly to Andrei and then to Stephen. They both nodded at him. "New life goal," they all said at once,

“Your eyes never changed though, sestrichka,” Viktor said.

“That’s the interesting part. She figured out how to let her demon help without her stopping completely forward,” I said.

“You’re going to have to teach me how to do that as well, princess,” Ivan said.

Vitaliy had overheard the conversation. He was always very curious about how everything worked. “Explain,” he said. He was a man of many words, if nothing else.

“When we use our demons, we relinquish a little bit of control, so to speak. That’s why our eyes turn black. It’s their power, but we’re still mostly in control. Just from behind the scenes, if you will. Sephie figured out how to use her demon’s power without her demon needing to step forward. It’s why her eyes didn’t change. She got a significant power boost and someone on the street would never know where it came from,” I said.

“Will you all be able to do that at some point?” Vitaly asked.

“Not sure. We only just found out she could do it,” I said.

“That’s how most everything works with us. She figures out she can do it and then shows the rest of us how to do it as well,” Ivan said.

“She gives us new life goals to aspire to,” Misha said, grinning at her.

“How do you know you can do these things, sladkaya?” Vitaliy asked Sephie. She shrugged her shoulders. “Nobody told me I couldn’t, I guess,” she said, making everyone laugh, Vitaliy’s laugh might’ve been the loudest, even.

She was getting better about panicking when all the attention was on her, but she was very shy about it still. I felt her shrink against me slightly. I just wrapped my arms completely around her, holding her tightly against me. “I love you so much, Persephone. I felt her relax and take a deep breath, content to have my arms around

her.

“Um, Boss. I hate to

up, but she needs to stretch again. It seems to help herbs from getting tight,” Andrei said.

Sephie stood up straighter and kissed me quickly, saying, “I have to listen to him or he won’t let me play with Ivan again.” We were all laughing as she walked away. following Andrei.

Ivan looked at me, still amused, but quite serious. “I’ve seriously never seen her look so good. I don’t get many challenges, but she was a legit challenge today.”

“I could tell. You rarely have to put in effort. It was hard to tell who was putting in re effort a few times there, her or you,” I said, still very proud that she’d made him work that hard.

He chuckled. “I know I was a few times. She’s quick.”

“Good. It’ll be good for both of you to do this regularly, then. Can’t have her shield getting soft,” I said, walking further into the gym to get my own workout in before we went back upstairs. I smiled to myself the entire workout, thinking about nothing but Sephie the entire time.

Author’s Note: It is in my best interest to finish this story. If you’ve ever wondered why so many authors disappear from this platform and never finish their stories, I feel confident in saying it’s because they can’t handle the pressure and nagging from the readers. You can argue about how we should “grow thicker skin” as one reader commented after coming unhinged at me, but I would like to point out the very real fact that creativity does not work well under pressure. It needs space. Space I am currently not getting. I appreciate you all for reading. I do not appreciate those of you who feel like you have license to micromanage my

time. I've worked on this story every single day for the past 6 months and there are still mistakes that many people enjoy condescendingly pointing out. I've also been working multiple jobs while trying to have a life. It is in my best interest to finish this story and make it the best it can possibly be. For those of you that are waiting patiently, I see you and I appreciate you. For those of you that are displaying classic signs of addiction, please understand that I am petty enough to withhold all chapters until I've finished this story just to teach you patience. My creativity does not, nor will it ever, care about your need for instant gratification. I will say it one more time: it is in my best interest to finish this story. Give me the space to do so and stop demanding to know when the next update is going to be. I update each week.

King of the Underworld by RJ Kane

Chapter 504

504

Adnk

My mind was wandering to Sephie for most of my meetings throughout the day. Thankfully, I didn't have many and the ones I did have weren't very serious. She never failed to impress me with each new thing she came up with.

I felt her close to my office when my current meeting was wrapping up. Our connection was so strong now that it was getting easier to tell where she was and who she was with at all times. I did have a few moments of guilt that it took me so long to find her when she and Ivan were taken. If it happened now, I'd be able to find her immediately. I did take some solace in that.

I felt her warmth as she broke me free from my thoughts before my meeting had officially ended. She knew.

As soon as my associate walked out of my office, she walked in, her wide smile stretched across her face. She was carrying coffee. Our inability to satiate our s*xual appetite was cutting into our sleep. We were both tired.

"I love you so much right now," I said, as she handed me the coffee.

"I know," she said, grinning at me. "You need to be sharp. We're leaving to meet with the mayor and DA after your next meeting is over."

"Oh?" I asked, loving that she knew my schedule before I did. She knew I liked it what she got bossy, so she would be extra bratty sometimes just to drive me a little more crazy.

"Mmm hrum. We're meeting in a parking garage, apparently, like some kind of clandestine secret meeting, so I get to check that

off my bucket list. I'm gonna need everyone to be completely on point," she said, trying to hide her smile that was threatening to show itself.

I laughed, pulling her into my lap. "You might need to stop. Literally everything you do turns me on right now. I don't want to have to suffer through my last meeting with a b*ner," I said, my lips next to her ear. I felt her breath hitch.

"You like it when I'm all bi*chy and bossy," she said, grinning at me.

"I very much do," I said, as we both heard the elevator doors ding to signal the arrival of my last meeting of the day. I kissed her quickly, then said, "you're welcome to stay for this one. It's Neal."

"I'll say hello, but I promised Ivan I would help him be even more aware of what's going on around him," she said. "The Wonder Twins are going to be my g*inea pigs."

Viktor walked in with Neal as Sephie stood up to greet him. They exchanged pleasantries and after she had asked him a few questions about the building project, she politely excused herself.

Neal sat down across from my desk, a small smile on his face. "Please don't take this the wrong way, but the more time you two are together, the more beautiful that woman gets."

"I could not agree more," I said.

On the way to meet with the mayor and DA, we were all very serious, very focused. Stephen had gone ahead with a team of his own and set up across from the building, but once we were in the parking garage, his cover would be limited. We weren't necessarily worried about Doug or Eric, but we still wanted to be prepared for anything. To the point that even Sephie was armed for this meeting.

We had also agreed to have Kostya on standby. Viktor and Kostya had devised a way to make it happen very quickly, so Viktor

just needed to quickly touch both of them and Kostya could fix them. If I was going to rely on these two, I wanted to make sure I did everything in my power to keep them loyal. I did not want another Henry to deal with.

We'd decided that Viktor was going to check both for weapons when we first arrived. It would be quick, it wasn't out of the ordinary to do in these kinds of situations, and they likely wouldn't question it. Kostya could fix them and they would never be the wiser.

Eric and Doug arrived shortly after we did. They were supposed to be inside the building in a "meeting. Because the men that Henry had following both Eric and Doug were not well trained, they never followed them into a building. They would wait outside until the two men emerged and would pick up the trail from there. It was a rookie move. There are plenty of ways to ditch a tail once you enter a building.

Or, have secret meetings, in our case. "It did make our lives somewhat easier, so I was always grateful for ineptitude.

The guys were on high alert and didn't leave Sephie very much space as we walked teet Eric and Doug. She enjoyed it. She never once got irritated with them for feeling overprotective of her. She would tease me about it occasionally, but only just laughs. I knew she secretly loved it. She had spent so many years never feeling truly safe when she was with her uncle especially, but even after she had gottes away and was on her own. Now that she had it, she was never letting go of it.

Viktor walked ahead of the group to check both Eric and Doug, making it look like las checking for weapons. The rest of us watched as their auras lit up while Kostya was fixing them. He made quick work of it. Luckily, neither man needed tooh work.

Doug's aura had started to heal itself after Stephen had scared off the demon that was trying to attach to him.

We weren't sure exactly how it worked, but we were noticing that a person could heat their own aura, given enough time. It seemed to work even if the person wasn't necessarily conscious of it needing to be done. Dario's likely healed tremendously since

he'd been hiding at the building. We were all surprised to see how strong it was when Andrei showed us, especially given how broken that man was when he first got back from Colombia.

To their credit, Eric and Doug were both good sports about being checked for weapon you're still worried about two desk

joc*eyes," Eric said, laughing quietly once Viktor

"One can never be too careful," I said. "Tell me about your plan for Dr. Moretti."

"I'm guessing you guys have enough firepower to level this building and Kostya were done.

Eric had a small smile on his face. "We're getting closer to figuring out a way to chat him with the back-room procedures. We can't find anyone else that can recognize him, but we have an extensive victim list, thanks to Dr. Williams at the herital. That,

plus a money trail that we're slowly uncovering points directly at Dr. Moretti.

The brawn, as well as his very clear ties to Salvadori

will land him in jail for sure. It will buy us some time to find more about the illegal procedures, which should keep him in jail."

"With what you gave us on the connection to Salvadori and Dr. Moretti, it gives us rounds to look more seriously at the

connection to Henry. I know you said he's mostly been paid in cash, but there are still ways to find details. We're working on that

one, as well. It's slightly more difficult, since Henry is trying to do the same to us, from his position," Doug said.

I was quiet for a moment, making them think I was mulling things over in my head. They had not told me anything I didn't already know, so far. "Niko and Vito are coming back within the next two weeks. They're in need of more cash flow, so they're coming back to try and force the underbosses to collect taxes. We need the people to stop it. They'll be informed. They're the reason the underbosses stopped in the first place. This gives you both an excellent opportunity to appear tough on crime. Dr. Moretti can be the first domino to fall, revealing the other connections to Sal and Henry once he's in custody. The wild card in that scenario is Henry's allegiance to Sal. If he uses the police to stop the people, the plan won't work."

Eric looked from me to Sephie, who was standing just behind me and between me and Ivan. "How much of this was your plan?" he asked her.

"It was a group effort," she said.

"That job offer is still on the table," Eric said. He looked to Doug, both of them thinking over the plan I had just laid out for them.

They both nodded in agreement.

"I like it. I do, however, want your word that in the event that we get a judge that's all's pocket, unbeknownst to us, and the doctor goes free that you'll take care of him," the mayor said. "I don't want him walking free in this city ever again."

"That will not be a problem," I said.

"Do you know when Niko and Vito are coming back?" Eric asked.

"No specific date yet, but we have people watching them. We'll let you know as soon we know. Once they're here, everything needs to happen quickly. Sal and Ricardo don't need any extra time to react to what's happening here," I said.

king round the clock to find a concrete connection between Henry and Sal

“We’re ready to move on Dr. Moretti as soon as you hand him over. We have people. Once Henry goes down, most of the police chiefs go down with him, as well as his girlfriend,” Eric said.

“That does seem to be one of her favorite positions,” Sephie said, mostly under her bath, but still loud enough that we all caught it. We even heard Stephen Laughing through our earpieces

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Chapter 505

505

Adrik

“If anything changes, let us know. We’ll do the same. If you have any information we can use that links Henry and Sal, we’ll be happy to take it off your hands.” Eric said.

“Might be worth another look at Sal’s paperwork,” Ivan said silently.

“Agreed.”

“We’ll take another look and see what we can find,” I said. Eric extended his hand to me. I felt Sephie’s hand gently grab my free hand when I went to shake hands with Eric, followed by Doug. She was borrowing my gift. She had likely been snoopire: through their heads the entire time and was making sure her assessment was correct. Since we’d dealt with so many betrayals, she liked to be as confident as possible in her opinion on someone. It meant using everything she had at her disposal to form that opinion.

As we walked back to the SUVs to leave, Stephen said in our earpieces, “Boss, get in the vehicles, but don’t leave until I say.”

“Is there a problem?” I asked.

“I’m not sure. Henry’s guys have reinforcements we weren’t expecting,” he said. “Eric leaving now. His usual tail is leaving with him, along with a few of the new guys.”

Doug had gone into the building before leaving, which meant we now had to wait for him to come back out and leave. There was only one entrance/exit into the parking garage, so we would be seen if we left before him, meaning Henry would be able to piece it together that we were meeting with the mayor and the DA behind his back.

Viktor sent a quick message to both Eric and Doug alerting them to their newest addition in followers. We only had to wait a few minutes and Doug was back in the garage being picked up by his driver. We waited for Stephen to tell us whether all the tails outside left with him or not.

“Doug is leaving. His usual tail is gone. All but one tail left with the mayor. They suspect something is up. He’s waiting to see who else comes out of the garage,” Stephen said.

“Just one person? You’re sure?” Ivan said.

“Just one. He’s parked not far outside the entrance of the garage, waiting. He showed up with everyone else. They’re not discreet in the slightest. They all had a meeting on the sidewalk, then dispersed to their separate cars. He’s the only one left.

Stephen said.

“I could go have a conversation with him,” Ivan said, knowing full well that was not going to happen.

“I have an idea,” Sephie told me. “Stephen, how many car lengths between where this idiot is posted up and the entrance to the garage?”

“One, two...five,” he said.

“And what does the car look like that he’s in?” she asked.

“Dark blue sedan, four door,” he said.

“Which side of the exit is he on?”

“South”

“Misha, can I borrow you?” she asked, extending her hand toward Misha, who was in the front seat. He turned to look at her, curious where she was going with this, but also excited to see the end result.

“What are you thinking, Seph?” Stephen asked.

“There’s a restaurant in the building next door. I can smell it. I’m looking for a delivery truck,” she said.

Stephen chuckled. "You're a genius," he said.

She grabbed Misha's hand, borrowing his gift as they searched the area for a delivery truck large enough to block our watcher in, allowing us to leave without him following us. Preferably without him seeing us to begin with.

"Got it," she and Misha said together. "Stephen, there's a truck a block and a half away to the south. Can you and your guys borrow it?"

"Nothing would make me happier right now," he said. He quickly gave orders to the team that was with him and they put their plan in motion. Stephen was very capable, but one of his greatest attributes was his speed. Once he knew the objective, he wasted no time in completing his assignment.

It was under ten minutes and he was back, saying, "be ready. The truck will be here in two minutes. Kyle is driving. I want to see if we can provoke your watcher into an argument before you guys leave."

We could hear what was happening through the earpieces. Kyle parked the truck alongside our tail's car, effectively blocking him in. He then went to the back of the truck, opened it up, and proceeded to act like he was about to make a delivery. Just as we hoped, our watcher got out of his car, trying to get Kyle to move the truck. He pretended to not understand English very well, drawing out the conversation, while giving us instructions in Russian.

"Not yet. He's pretty pi*sed, but he can still see the entrance. I can bait him to the lack," Kyle said in Russian, as he pretended to not know what the guy was saying to him.

We waited for his signal, leaving quickly when he said, "now." We could hear them arguing as we pulled out onto the street and turned down a side street, completely out of view.

Stephen was laughing as he said, “this might be making Kyle’s day. He loves a reason to yell at someone. We’re going to return the truck and we’ll meet you at the penthouse.”

We didn’t have to wait long for Stephen to join us. He was still laughing when he waded into the penthouse. Sephie had tried to not be worried after we lost contact with him, but she couldn’t help herself. She was visibly relieved when he walked in, walking quickly to him to give him a hug. It never failed to make me smile when I saw just how tightly he held onto her. He had taken so long to warm up to her in the beginning, for good reason, but now she was an anchor for him, just as she was for everyone else.

“Very good call on the delivery truck, Seph. Kyle said to thank you as well. He said that was the most fun he’s had in a while. He really enjoys making people angry.” he said as he relaxed his tight hold on her. She chuckled. “Please tell me he’s still sitting outside the parking garage waiting for us to leave.”

“He was when we left. I almost wanted to leave someone to see how long he would stay there,” he said.

“You, sir, are a little bit evil,” she said. “I’m totally here for it.”

As strange as it sounded to say, it was kind of the perfect end to our day.

Sephie managed to make us laugh through every tough situation we found ourselves in now.

“Would you still call me evil if you knew I ordered Thai for us on my way back here feel like you shouldn’t have to cook dinner if you save the day,” he said, his uncharacteristic smile that was slowly becoming more characteristic for him slowly spreading across his face.

She grinned at him. “Same order as last time?” she asked, clearly hopeful he would say yes.

“Of course,” he said.

“You’re my favorite. Don’t tell the others,” she said, once again hugging Stephen’s neck.

“I wish I would’ve known I could do this when I was a kid. I would’ve been much more rebellious,” Misha said, shaking his head as he thought about the day’s events.

“You would’ve spied on the girl’s locker room all day, don’t kid yourself,” Andrei said, teasing him.

“Shots fired, Bubba,” Sephie said, laughing. She looked at Misha and said, seriously, he’s not wrong though.”

Once again, we found ourselves narrowly escaping trouble, faced with a seemingly insurmountable hurdle ahead of us, but we were all laughing with each other like it was completely normal and not the least bit stressful. Because of her.

It had been a few days since meeting with Doug and Eric when Viktor walked into my office, followed closely by Ivan. “We just got word from Battista that Niko and Vito are coming back. They’ll be here in two days,” Viktor said.

“Is Battista still here?” I asked.

“No, he’s on his way back too, though. He said he’s bringing his friend, the arms dealer,” Ivan said, a mischievous grin on his face.

“We need to meet with the same leaders we met with before. Is Chen still the one setting that up?” I asked.

Viktor nodded. “He still won’t let me put him on the payroll for it, either.”

“I can take care of that. He thinks I’m overpaying him for his contractor work so he’s reluctant to take anything more. Truth be told, I’m not. He does fantastic work. I’ll just add to that. And have Neal hand his name out to a few more people,” I said. Chen

was a good guy. I was grateful to have his help in all of this. I always took care of those who helped me.

“I’ll set it up right away. You want them here?” Viktor asked.

I thought for a moment. Last time we met with them, it was in my office.

Something didn’t feel right about that this time, but I didn’t know what. I looked for Sephie, to ask her opinion on it.

“You have a question, “I heard her say to me as I was looking to see where she was.

“I do. We need to meet with the people who have organized the resistance against the bosses. Something doesn’t feel right about them coming here this time, though, “I told her.

She was quiet for a moment, then she said, “that’s because it’s not. They’re watching the building to see who comes in and out.

We should meet somewhere else to protect them.”

Before I could answer her, I heard Misha’s voice, through her head, as well.

“Same for me, Boss. Somewhere else is the way to go.”

“Thank you both,” I responded. I looked to Viktor and Ivan, saying,

“apparently, they’re watching the building to see who comes in and out. I don’t want to put them in danger by coming here. We need to meet elsewhere.”

Viktor nodded, leaving to make the necessary arrangements while Ivan stayed in the office. “Do you want me to have them removed?” he asked.

“No. Leave them. We’ll make sure they don’t follow us, but if we remove them, Henry will know we know.” I couldn’t help but smile a little at the situation. “I think he still thinks he’s smarter than us,” I said.

“I know he thinks that. Wait until Stephen hears about this,” he said, laughing. “He’s gonna be so pis*ed.”

I laughed with him, looking forward to Stephen’s reaction when he learned that Herby was still trying to outmaneuver us. He was definitely looking forward to being able to break Henry. Stephen was so quiet most of the time, but much like Ivan, we wild occasionally find people that simply rubbed Stephen the wrong way. Henry was definitely one of those people. Henry had no idea what was coming for him.

I found myself enjoying that fact more than I probably should.

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Chapter 506

506

Adrik

Sephie's old apartment was proving to be more useful than I ever would've imagined it would be. I originally kept it in case she ever changed her mind. I knew she was never going to change her mind at this point, but I still kept her apartment for the convenience of an out of the way meeting spot when I needed one.

Chen met us downstairs. If nothing else, he was always early to every meeting he attended with us, proving once again that one could be professional no matter their profession. He was slightly taken aback, as Vitaliy and Battista were with us this time, which meant all of Vitaliy's men were with us as well.

"You guys are multiplying. This must be serious," Chen said as he walked up to us in the parking lot of the apartment building.

"Why use 6 Russians when 12 will do?" Sephie said, her mischievous grin on her face.

"Hey, you miscounted, pretty lady," Boris said in his very thick Russian accent. Battista's arms dealer turned out to be exactly who we thought it would be. Boris was so tough and crot*hety on first impressions that he made Vitaliy look like a nice guy.

"My bad. We have a baker's dozen, Chen. Because one can never have too many Russians on their side when the s*it hits the fan," Sephie said, grinning at Boris. Like all of the men in her life, she found a way to politely put Boris in his place when he tested her. Mostly polite. Afterward, he's shown her nothing but respect.

"This maybe lesson your country don't learn too well," Boris said, laughing as he walked to join the rest of Vitaliy's men, who were unloading weapons from the back of their vehicles.

Sephie and Chen looked at each other, trying not to laugh. “My entire life, I’ve beented that Russia is the enemy. Now I find out these people are just as crazy as we are, only much larger, Chen said thoughtfully.

“It’s the governments that are the enemy, Chen. Never the people,” I said, pulling Sephie with me toward the stairs to her old apartment. She looked at the building as we walked. I could feel her emotions as she remembered her life before she met ree.

“It always looks so run-down when I see it now. It never used to seem that bad to me when I lived here,” she told me as we followed Andrei up the stairs.

“When it’s all you have, you cherish it. It did its job. It got you through until you found me I told her.

She turned to look at me, her sweet smile on her face. “I never thought about it like that before, but you’re absolutely right. I might love this dingey little apartment a little more right now,” she said.

“I, for one, am grateful for it. It’s proven to be very useful,” I said, pulling her closer as walked into her apartment.

“I, for one, am grateful for you,” she said, reaching up to kiss my cheek. Misha, who had followed us up the stairs, said, “I can feel you two being disgustingly cute right now.”

Ivan, who was still in the parking lot, but heard Misha over his earpiece, started laughing. “I am so glad I’m not the only one that’s happened to,” he said.

Sephie’s cheeks turned red. She went to apologize, but Misha stopped her before she could even get it out. “Don’t apologize, gazelle. I’m having jealousy issues. That’s why I brought it up,” he said, grinning at her. She went to him, laughing as he ached down and picked her up in a bear hug.

As everyone else finally made it upstairs, Sephie's apartment got very small, very quickly. We eventually decided that Vitaliy's men would stay outside, mostly to give us more room. We asked that all the leaders from the resistance in the city were there tonight, not just the ones from Niko and Vito's area of the city. We wanted to make sure things were as quiet as we'd been told and we also wanted to make sure this everyone was as prepared as possible. It was clear that Sal cared nothing for the people of the city, given his brawn operation, so the idea that he would use the people of the city to cause more chaos was not off the table for him.

Stephen, who was across the street monitoring things from above, alerted us to everyone's arrival. Surprisingly, Dr. Williams showed up along with the rest this time. He was just as surprised to see us standing in the apartment as we were to see him walk through the door.

Battista laughed, telling Sephie in Italian, "I knew I liked that doctor for a reason other than his willingness to accept massive donations." She couldn't help but laugh before sharing the translation with all of us silently.

"Dr. Williams, it's nice to see you here. Unexpected, but nice," Sephie said as she went to shake his hand.

"That feeling is mutual, although I don't know why I would be surprised. Of course it's you," he said. "I think you enjoy your legend in the hospital more than you let on and you're looking to add to it."

"I mean, who doesn't want to be immortalized with a few legends told about them? no different," she said, nonchalantly. Dr.

Williams just laughed quietly, shaking his head as he moved off to the side.

Both Ivan and I were somewhat uncomfortable with so many people in such a small room. I stepped quietly behind both of us. I felt her hand find mine, which helped me keep step forward to begin the meeting. Sephie, of course, felt it. After speaking briefly with the doctor, she put the murderous aura under control. I squeezed her hand lightly before taking one of the chairs. We discussed Niko and Vito coming back, as they were scheduled to arrive the following day. "The reason you're here, gentlemen, is that it will send a much bigger message to Sal, as well as the underbosses that are left in the city, if you stop them from collecting taxes once they return. We can and will support your efforts as much as possible, making sure you have everything you need to resist. The message will be much clearer if coming from you, however," I said. "The only request I make is that you leave Niko and Vito alive and hand them over to me." "What happens after they're gone? Are we just going to be fighting you next?" one older gentleman asked. I chuckled. "That would be somewhat foolish of me to provide you weapons for this or not expect you would use them on me should I attempt the same thing later," I said. "Things will go back to the way they've been for years before the other bosses got greedy. I don't need your taxes. Your communities do. The more money you make, the more you can invest in your local areas of the city. That's what we want and that's what will happen once the other bosses are taken care of." "How do we know you won't change your mind?" someone else asked. "You don't," Sephie said. "But you do remember how good things were a few years ago, compared to now. This is a much bigger conspiracy than exorbitant taxes. Without the other bosses to harass you, you'll essentially be left alone. Just like you were

before.” She took one step closer to me, pointing at me, as she said, “he is not the problem here. The other bosses are the problem.”

Dr. Williams, stepped forward, adding, “he’s the one that found the doctor that’s been terrorizing this city for a decade. You’ve all heard of someone that’s had some back-room procedure done on them. He’s the same doctor that created brawn, which has been plaguing the city for years as well. This man found that doctor when the police couldn’t. He’s on our side. He wouldn’t be here right now if he wasn’t.”

“Why hasn’t the doctor been arrested then?” someone asked.

“He will be, soon. We needed to make sure we had enough solid evidence that he would be convicted,” I said. “We have that, so now he can be handed over.”

We continued our discussion, as well as making a strategy for how to handle the undebosses when they come to collect taxes once more. It would be dangerous, but the people had strength in numbers. It didn’t hurt that Boris had access to enough power to completely level a block of the city in under two minutes.

He was also willing to donate his supplies to the cause, which he very rarely did. Sephie had been worried that he would also supply the bosses with extra firepower, since I had told her he enjoyed arming both sides of a conflict.

“Most conflicts do not include Ricardo De Luca,” Boris had said. “Whatever it takes to make sure his side is crushed, I will happily provide,” he had told her.

She had studied him for a few minutes before answering, “is it wrong that I find your hatred of Ricardo to be one of your finest qualities?”

Boris had laughed, but Vitaliy actually spoke up in Boris's defense, telling her, "he's such a bad guy, slatkaya. Maybe a little

rougher than some of us, but not a bad guy

My father had known Boris for most of my life. Boris had helped him get out of a few ticky situations, even. Vitaliy spoke the truth.

Boris wasn't all bad. He just preferred everyone think the worst of him. It meant less effort he had to put in to nang an

impression. When everyone thinks the worst of you, it's easy to prove them right or wrong. Boris was simply saving his energy.

Once a plan was in place, the weapons were loaded into their vehicles and everyone

separately. Dr. Williams hung back for a few minutes before taking his leave, wanting to check in with Sephie one more time. He fought it most of the time, but there was still a scientific fascination with her

after her time in the hospital that he couldn't always suppress. It irritated Ivan

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Chapter 507

507

Adril

I admittedly stayed a few steps away from Sephie on purpose because I was enjoying the irritation I felt from Ivan when Dr.

Williams approached Sephie again. I felt his bubble go up around her. I was sure there was no reason for it other than he didn't like it when the good doctor showed too much interest in her.

"I know you said you've been healing well, but you were very beat up. Still no issues with your lung?" Dr. Williams asked Sephie.

She looked surprised when she felt Ivan's bubble, but at least he allowed her to hear Dr. Williams through him. I wouldn't have

been surprised if he cut her hearing off completely just to be a s*it. I was going to be her ears if he did, just because I was

enjoying this a little too much. She answered Dr. Williams, saying, "only if I exert myself a little too much do I have problems

catching my breath, but it happens very rarely. My arm and shoulder are mostly back to normal and my ribs only hurt if I do way

too much. I have very good trainers who insist that I properly stretch just so that doesn't happen though." She threw a glance at

Andrei who was listening in on the conversation and winked at him.

"How often do you struggle to catch your breath? Is it frequent?" he asked.

Andrei walked over, catching on to what was happening as well. He wasn't as irritated as Ivan, but he wasn't thrilled about this

conversation either. "It's only happened twice in the last month. Both times she was doing more than she should've been doing."

Andrei said, smirking at her.

Dr. Williams looked from Andrei to Sephie, silently asking for confirmation.

"It's true. Sometimes I forget and try to be normal,"

she said, shrugging her shoulders. "But they all take very good care of me, so nothing to worry about, doc."

Dr. Williams ran a hand through his hair, looking between her, Ivan, and Andrei. "Well if it continues to happen, don't hesitate to come in for a check-up," he said.

"No offense, doc, but I would rather avoid that. That being said, they will drag me to the hospital kicking and screaming if they have to should they think something is wrong with me."

He laughed, studying her for long enough that both Ivan and Andrei stepped slightly in front of her. It was enough of a move to break him from whatever thoughts he was having. I was still enjoying watching when I noticed Andrei's demon was angry Andrei still looked completely calm, but his demon was raging.

It was completely different from everyone else. He was actually much more frightening I would much rather deal with someone who was visibly angry than to deal with Andrei. He was completely cool, outwardly, but I could tell he was thinking of at least 47 different ways to kill the doctor in that moment.

As Dr. Williams pulled out of the parking lot, I walked to the three of them. Sephie knew Andrei was mad; they were having a silent conversation between the three of them. When she felt my arm around her waist, I could feel the worry as she looked up at me.

"Tell me what he was thinking." I said. She chuckled softly, amused that I already knew what was going on.

"I felt Ivan's irritation through Sephie, so I paid attention. The doctor has some weird fascination with Sephie since he saw her shaking in the hospital when she was away from you. It's turned into somewhat of an obsession, but he can't bring himself to ask her about it." Andrei said.

“That’s what has you ready to follow him and rip his head off?” I asked.

Sephie looked up at me, grinning. “You can feel him too?” she asked.

I shook my head no. “Andrei? No. Andrei’s demon? Absolutely. He’s going complete aehit in there right now.” Sephie giggled.

“No, it was him replaying checking her over in the hospital in his mind that did it. When he lifted her hospital gown to check for internal injuries.” Andrei told me.

I felt Sephie grab both of my arms and wrap them around her waist as she held onto them. Her grip tightened as she felt my anger making an appearance, which only served to make Andrei and Ivan even more angry.

“Boys,” Sephie said, sternly. “You all intimidate the absolute f*ck out of that man. It will never be an issue unless I’m left alone in a room with him.” She paused, then added, “under heavy sedation, since he clearly knows how to paralyze me.” Her body shuddered at the thought.

I looked at Ivan. “Your bubble was just because he irritates you? Or did you actually see something on him?”

Ivan laughed. “No, he’s clean. I’m just irritated with him. I didn’t know what he was thinking about, but I knew he’s been strangely fascinated with her. That’s not a good combination in my world.”

“You were right to do so. I knew he was fascinated by her. I did not think it was to that extent or I would’ve come over,” I said, still smoldering.

Sephie was somewhat indignant with us. “You three act like I can’t handle myself.” She held her thumb and forefinger up, with barely any space between them. “I’m this close to being able to kill him with just my thumbs,” she said, giggling

“It’s not a matter of whether you can handle yourself, love. It’s more a matter of his disrespect. It’s not something I tolerate. I

know he wouldn't stand a chance against you," I said, turning her to face me. I pushed a few curls out of her face, enjoying that they immediately returned.

"He also suspects something is different about her eyes. I didn't think he ever caught it, but he did a few times when she was in the hospital and when she went back for check-ups," Andrei said. "He only ever caught glimpses, but his curiosity is getting the better of him."

"We should only ever be in situations where we're wearing our contacts around him, and hear me out here, we just all show up one day and switch them to black and enjoy watching him s*it himself," Ivan said.

I laughed, along with Sephie. "See? I told you that idea would work for someone at some point," I said, pressing my lips to hers.

Once we were back at the penthouse and alone, I brought the subject up again with Sephie. "I don't want you to think that I think you can't take care of yourself," I started. Her sweet laugh cut me off. She immediately pressed her lips to mine, wrapping my arms around her waist and pressing her hands on my chest.

"I don't think that. I was teasing. I absolutely adore how protective you all are of me. It's a massive confidence boost for me.

Honestly, you're all lucky that I'm not more of a s*it than I am. I could just be a major bi*ch to everyone knowing that you guys would clean up my mess," she said, grinning at me. "I know that no matter who's with me, I'm always safe. From anything and anyone. Hell, I even know that about Vitaliy's men, too."

I smiled at her, some of the irritation from earlier managing to come back. She searched my eyes for a moment, then asked, "you're just irritated with him? Not anything else?"

“Having my mind go back to your time in the hospital was unexpected,” I said.

“I see,” she said, chewing on her bottom lip. She looked up at me, her eyes wide and innocent. “I think we need to take your mind off that.” She raised her hand to my face, her finger running lightly over my facial hair. “How should we do that?” she asked, one side of her lips curling up into a smirk, her bottom lip still between her teeth. In one instant, I completely forgot everything but my need for her.

*uck. I love her.

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Chapter 508

508

Sephie

Adrik had kept his schedule purposely light the rest of the week, given that Niko and Vito were scheduled to be back. He wanted to be available in the event we were needed for anything. He made sure he had extra people throughout the city, just in case.

Because we both knew he didn't necessarily have to get up at a decent hour, as Nike and Vito weren't scheduled to land until later that afternoon, we both woke up much later than usual. It didn't help that he spent much of the night before claiming me after the doctor incident in the parking lot of my old apartment building. I was deliciously sore this morning, but I can't say I minded it. I thoroughly enjoyed his protective streak. I was already considering ways to make it appear on a more regular basis, I enjoyed it so much.

I groaned when I stretched, my muscles protesting being stretched. I heard Adrik chuttle next to me. "My fault," he said, rolling over so he was on top of me.

"I know you're not even the slightest bit sorry for it, either," I said, running my hands through his messy morning hair.

"Not even a little," he said.

I laughed. "You realize he's only fascinated by me because of the relationship I have with you, right?" I asked. He raised an eyebrow at me, asking for more of an explanation. "Bubba missed it because he was so angry at the other stuff. I don't blame him. I almost missed it, too. He's completely fascinated that you were able to control my shaking just by touching me. He saw me

lose control when I came back with Ivan to get his stitches out and start shaking. He knows Ivan and Viktor helped me, but he also knows you completely stopped it. He knew I was about to lose my s*it on him the one time he chastised me for not eating at my check-up. That's when he caught a better glimpse of my eyes, but he knows you somehow contained that as well. He's almost just as fascinated with you as he is with me, but really, I think he doesn't understand our relationship. He just knows on some deeper level, he would like to." I kept running my fingers through his hair while I talked. His eyes closed, enjoying my touch.

His eyes opened, softening as he looked at me. I could feel the pull in his chest as he thought about the doctor being jealous of what we have, rather than him being jealous of the doctor.

"Full disclosure, I didn't tell you last night on purpose," I said. "I might have to find ways to make you jealous more often."

There were times when Adrik would smile at me with the look of a man that had no worries in the world, even though I knew he had the weight of the world on his shoulders pretty much at all times. He had a boyish grin that would make my knees weak every single time I saw it. He gave me that grin just before his lips found mine.

I couldn't help but wrap my body around his, I felt my warmth spread through my entire body, thinking about just how much I loved this man. So completely, in fact, that others were fascinated by it and wanted to study it.

I felt the familiar stretch as he slowly slid inside me, needing once more to make mes. To prove to me that he was mine and I was his. I laughed quietly against his lips, pulling him closer to me as he pushed deeper inside me. He knew exactly how to

make my body putty in his hands and he used that information freely. My breath was heavy, my body sore, but already pushed to extreme levels of pleasure from two strokes from this man. And he knew it. He broke the kiss, leaning up enough that he could look at me, his boyish grin still across his face. It made his features softer and se*y at the same time. If I wasn't already completely in love with him, I would think he might be trouble from the look he was giving me.

His hand trailed down my body, leaving fire in its wake. I moaned at the pleasure his touch ignited, the warmth helping to wake up my already sore body. He felt my body starting to come alive and increased his rhythm. His hand ran down my leg; looking behind my knee, he pulled my knee up toward his shoulder as he drove into me. He kept his control, as he could feel how sore I was already, but he still managed to push me over the edge almost immediately.

I grabbed his shoulders, trying to hang on as my back arched and my body gave in completely to him. It was my favorite way to wake up. Sore muscles aside, this man could make my body feel things I never thought possible. His rhythm increased slightly just before he found his own release, groaning quietly as he collapsed on top of me.

"Definitely going to need to find ways to make you jealous on a regular basis," I said, after a few minutes of silence. His body vibrated as he laughed quietly on top of me.

He got up, pulling me with him. "If we can have a repeat of last night, I'll happily be jealous more," he said, picking me up to carry me to the shower.

“You drive a very hard bargain, but I accept,” I said, leaning my head on his shoulder

That afternoon, we moved to the house. It took us three times as long to get there, as Henry still had people watching the building. They would try to follow us each time we left. Adrik was enjoying it. He would have at least 10 different SUVs all leave it the same time, all heading in different directions. The tails would inevitably pick the wrong ones to follow, leaving us to go where we pleased. The other SUVs would just drive around the city for hours, keeping the tails busy while we went wherever we needed to go..

I had to admit to enjoying it almost as much as Adrik. The more Henry tried to find about Adrik, the angrier I got at him. I was very much looking forward to the day that Stephen could break him.

Once at the house, we had a few hours of relaxation before Niko and Vito were set to arrive. Adrik wanted to be at the house so Henry wouldn't see us should we need to step in and help with the situation pertaining to the underbosses collecting taxes.

Vitaliy's team was ready as well, along with Boris, to step in and help if needed. Given the ample firepower that our side now had at their disposal, we were hoping we wouldn't be needed, but we were ready just in case.

It was easy to turn it all off and just enjoy a few quiet moments at the house. Adrikave the house staff the rest of the week off, just so we could be alone and didn't have to worry about anything. We still ended up discussing the situation at hand. We couldn't help ourselves.

“So what happens after Stephen breaks Niko and Vito? Do we send them to the same home that Armando is in? It can be our collection home of zombie bosses,” I said.

“Somebody else besides Stephen has to deliver them, though. They might catch on if he shows up with them,” Ivan said..

“I’ll allow someone else to deliver each of them. I needed to drop Armando off for me I don’t have the same need when it comes to Niko and Vito,” Stephen said.

“It is fun to make up back stories on all of them, not gonna lie there,” I said, laughing

Ivan’s phone beeped, alerting him to Niko and Vito’s arrival. He glanced at it, telling everyone, “they’re here. Now we just have to wait and see how long it takes them to stir up trouble.” Both he and Viktor sent the necessary messages to the necessary people letting them know Niko and Vito had landed and were back in the city.

Now, the waiting really began.

King of the Underworld by RJ Kane

Chapter 509

509

Sephie

The hardest part of waiting was feeling like we needed to be ready to leave at a moment's notice. If things got bad in any part of the city, we all felt like we should be there as quickly as possible. It made trying to do anything else next to impossible.

The first day was spent largely sitting around trying to stay "available" just in case. The second day, we finally got tired of doing nothing, so we went about our day as normally as we could. Even though we all felt like we were waiting for the other shoe to drop, we still managed to have a good time. It was one of the countless things I adored about the guys. I knew we were at least going to have fun doing whatever it was that we were doing.

We ended up on the couches in the back room that afternoon. There was a storm rolling in, with dark clouds above us. We could hear the thunder in the distance. Otherwise, I would've dragged them all to the lake with me.

"Okay, so now that we're all in one spot, I have an experiment," I said, trying to think of ways to pass the time. Adrik and Ivan were able to still talk to me, no matter where they were. Adrik was able to find me anywhere now. Even I couldn't do that yet. I think he was making sure that he could find me quickly in the event that we were ever separated again. I loved him a little more for it.

"What kind of experiment and does it involve dissection at any point?" Misha asked.

I chuckled. "No dissection. At least not that I know of," I said, thinking for a minute. "Look, I'm not going to rule it out now that you

mention it.”

The other guys looked at Misha like he was in deep sh*t, which just made him laugh. “Okay, gazelle, what’s your experiment?”

Save me before they all beat me for giving you ideas,” he said.

I grinned at all of them. “Adrik and Ivan can both still communicate with me and with each other even when we’re not together, but I haven’t been able to do it with you three yet. I want to see if we can make it happen.”

Misha clapped his hands together, like he usually did when there was f*ckery afoot. “This is like an advanced level hide and seek game. I’m completely on board with this,” he said, jumping up from the couch. He ran from the room toward the gym. Once he got farther down the hallway, he yelled, “count to 20! I know the perfect spot!” We were all too busy laughing at him to bother counting to 20. Ivan said, “I think we should just wait and see how long it takes him to come back. Tell him it didn’t work.”

“You’re a little bit evil, Squish. He’s clearly bored,” I said, still laughing at Misha’s exuberance.

“And stressed. We all know he turns up his antics to relieve stress,” Stephen said.

“I’m wondering if this will work as well. I’ve heard Misha before, but I think it was through your head that I heard him. He was with you when we were talking,” Adrik said.

I concentrated on Misha, trying to see if he could hear me the same way he could when we were in the same room. I waited to see if he answered. When I heard nothing from him, I looked at Adrik and Ivan, seeing if either of them could get through to him.

There was now a chance that Adrik would be able to do it, even if I couldn’t, since his latest level-up.

Misha eventually came back after ten minutes. He was still smiling, clearly enjoying being a test subject. "I could hear you, but

I'm guessing you guys couldn't hear my response?"

"No, I didn't hear anything. I thought it didn't work because I never heard a response from you," I said. "Could you hear Adrik and Ivan too?"

"I heard you, then I heard Boss, then I heard Ivan. I answered all three of you, but I'm guessing that's where it went wrong,"

Misha said.

"Interesting. I wonder if it will always remain that way or if you just need to strengthen your connection with your own demon before you can do it too?" I asked to nobody in particular.

"It might always stay like it is now. Your dad said the connection between the three of us is always going to remain slightly different. Maybe this is a perk reserved for the three of us," Ivan said, his hand rubbing his goatee as he contemplated.

"It's still useful to know we can at least get messages to you when we're not with you, Adrik said to Misha. "Even if you can't answer yet. We still need to figure out how to get messages to Stephen and Viktor without someone needing to touch them."

"I think half the time Stephen already knows what we tell him," Ivan said, Adrik laughed. "I've been telling Sephie that for months now."

Stephen laughed as well. "Sometimes I do, sometimes it's new information. It's always appreciated, though."

"I still haven't figured out how to get around the need to touch you to relay info, though," I said, chewing on my bottom lip.

"I think it still has to do with my aversion to having anyone in my head," Stephen said, giving me the side-eye.

I grinned at him. "Maybe. It's also how you get information from people when you're helping fix them, too, so it makes sense it's

the way you get messages. I do find it hilarious that you were so opposed to physical touch when I first met you and now we're forcing it on you to get messages to you whether you like it or not," I said, laughing.

"It's because I'm a vampire. You're all so freakishly warm that it felt like fire at first. I still have a strong dislike of fire most of the time," Stephen said, making us all laugh.

"We'll take this into account once Vlad finally makes it out of customs," Ivan said.

The following morning, we finally started to hear grumblings from the city. Adrik had extra guys placed throughout the city to keep an eye on things. Every one of the leaders knew to keep us informed of what was happening when they could, as well. We were most worried about police intervention, as we weren't sure how much Henry would use the police against the people.

Ivan and Viktor started getting reports of small skirmishes between business owners and some of Niko's guys mid-morning. Our guys started sending word shortly after.

"No casualties on our side. Niko lost a couple guys, which will likely only increase the violence. He'll want retribution," Ivan said, after getting off the phone with one of our guys.

"No police yet," Viktor said, walking back into the room from taking a phone call as well. "I'm thinking Henry won't intervene until it's quite obvious his side is losing."

"Everyone's still on alert in the city?" Adrik asked. He was stressed about this. He hated the fact that the people were involved in any way, but it was the only way to make the entire plan work, start to finish. Ivan nodded his head. "Everyone in Niko and Vito's areas are on high alert. Everyone else is waiting, much like we are. The hospitals have all been alerted as well. They're ready, if need be."

“Good,” Adrik said. I could feel his tension from across the room. I walked to him, sliding my arm around his waist. He relaxed, but only slightly, as he pulled me to him.

“Maybe the underbosses will back down again, since they’re met with resistance right away,” I said. I didn’t believe what I was saying. It felt like this was going to get ugly before they backed off, but I was trying to stay positive.

I felt Adrik stiffen as Misha said, “I don’t think that’s going to happen, gazelle.” I didn’t need to look at him or know anymore details. I could feel his nausea. I knew whatever outcome he’d just seen wasn’t a good one.

“Could you tell if Henry got involved?” Adrik asked.

“I didn’t see police, but that’s not to say they won’t eventually step in. They must really be hard up on cash. Niko and Vito are going to go through every single underboss trying to make this happen,” he said.

“As sh*tty as it will be, that actually still works in our favor. Then we don’t need to worry about what to do with the underbosses once this is over,” Ivan said.

Both Viktor and Ivan’s phones started ringing, cutting our conversation short. Adrik pulled me closer, his hand running up and down my back in an attempt to keep himself calm. He used to feel like he was ready to explode anytime his anger was threatening to come to the surface. Now, he felt completely cool. Completely in control. And completely lethal.

I knew if we had to step in, it would not end well for Niko and Vito, or any of their underbosses. They would all be dead by nightfall.

Ivan came back first. “Same situation in Vito’s area of the city. Small skirmish, but Boris’s supplies put the odds in our favor. Vito

lost two guys, three more injured. A few injuries on our side, but no lethal wounds.”

Viktor came back in, confirming everything Ivan’s guy had told him. “Injured are on their way to the hospital. One gunshot, one head injury, and one broken bone. Vito’s guys got out of there quick when their guys went down. They’re scared.”

Adrik sighed, but was quiet for a moment. “Tell Sal’s area to be ready next. My money is on those underbosses for the next attempt.

King of the Underworld by RJ Kane

Chapter 510

510

Sephie

Before we came to the house, Ivan had the brilliant idea to let Dario get in touch with a few of his underbosses. They all knew Massimo had been killed, but no one ever got confirmation on what had happened to Dario. He gave them the same story he was planning to give Sal – he had gotten away from Trino after Massimo was killed and he was in hiding.

When he talked to his underbosses, he made it seem like he was in contact with Sal. They somewhat knew what was going on, but because Dario had been gone so long, they weren't entirely sure of the details. Dario told them that Sal had betrayed him and Massimo and was the reason for Massimo's death. He was trying to come for the city and was planning to take them all out.

Niko and Vito were with Sal, but Sal was planning on turning on them too. It was all fabricated lies, but it was also believable enough that the underbosses knew not to cooperate with Niko and Vito or any of Sal's men. It meant Dario's area of the city was mostly safe, for the time being. It also increased the chance that Dario's guys might take out more of the other bosses' guys for us.

"Your ability to create chaos within the chaos is one of my favorite things about you, Squish," I had told Ivan after Dario was taken back to his room.

"It's one of my best qualities," he said, winking at me.

Viktor had given the guys that were on Dario instructions to allow him to speak to his underbosses, should they try to contact him. It needed to be believable that he was in hiding, but could also be reached. They called him shortly after we got word of the

skirmish in Vito's area of the city. The guys on Dario called Viktor immediately, informing him of the news Dario had gotten.

When he walked back into the kitchen, he had a small grin on his face. "Vito actually showed up to meet with Dario's underbosses. They're holding him for us."

"Just Vito? Niko is still out there?" I asked.

Viktor nodded. "Dario told his guys he was working with us now, because of Sal's betrayal. I can send a team to fetch Vito and take him to a safe house until it calms down."

"You already have it all set up, too, don't you?" I asked, smiling at his efficiency.

He smiled his sweet smile at me. "I was hoping this might happen, yes. The safe house is ready to go and the team is waiting for me to say the word to go pick him up," he said.

"You're so efficient," I said.

Adrik looked to Misha, asking for confirmation to send the team to go get Vito. His eyes went black as he checked for outcomes.

As Misha was checking, Adrik said quietly, "I feel like extra guys are needed."

Once Misha came back to the present moment, he said, "you're right, Boss. Extra guys are needed, but it'll work out. They'll get Vito out and take care of his remaining underbosses as well."

"Send them," Adrik told Viktor.

All was quiet as we waited for news. I passed the time by starting dinner.

Even if we had to abandon it, it gave me something to do to keep my mind busy. Misha and Andrei both seemed happy to have a distraction as both offered to help me.

Both of them had helped me so much in the kitchen, I barely needed to give them instructions any longer. Misha moved into the sous chef role. He found he really enjoyed cooking. He was really quite good at it, too. He'd made suggestions for a few recipes

that made them even better.

Andrei was more the taste-tester and clean-up guy. It was still a very important role for any kitchen. He was listening to Misha make suggestions on changes to make to spices for one dish and laughed, saying, “this is how I know Misha is going to be the first to get married. Women love men who can cook.”

“Don’t sell yourself short, Bubba. Women also love men who are willing to wash the dishes for them so they can concentrate on cooking. You’re just looking for two different types of women,” I said.

Misha grabbed a mushroom from the bowl, popping it in his mouth. “I think you’re right. I just have no idea what either of those types of women are,” he said, grinning at me.

“I don’t think you need to overthink it. If I learned anything from my time as Max’s friend, it was that nobody has a clue what they want. Men or women,” I said.

Adrik had walked into the kitchen from his office upstairs as we were talking. He smirked at me as he walked over to give me a kiss. “They always say you find your person when you least expect it. I used to think that was b*llshit. Turns out it was exactly right. Keep working on making you a better version of yourself than you were yesterday and your perfect person will appear.”

“I can’t say I disagree with him,” I said. “But just make sure she’s a tough chick, because I might be planning on giving her hell to make sure she’s good enough for you.”

Misha chuckled. “Between you and Ivan, they’re going to need some kind of superhuman resolve to date me.”

“That’s the point, my adorable Russian guardian,” I said, grinning at him. Andrei laughed. “I’m just waiting to see what kind of woman Ivan ends up with. She’s going to have to be a clone of Sephie and that might not work so well.”

“Might not work why?” Adrik asked. I could feel his hackles going up, thinking Andrei was throwing any kind of shade my way. It made me laugh.

“He doesn’t mean it as an insult to me. He means that stubborn women don’t usually get along with each other,” I said. “But I don’t think anyone needs to worry. Whoever can put up with him and can climb his very high walls will earn my respect.”

Viktor walked into the kitchen, inhaling deeply. “Oh, I’m going to be so happy soon,” he said, rubbing his belly. “Vito is at the safe house. Extra guys were a good call, but they got out unharmed. Vito lost another two bosses. I think that might be all his underbosses gone now. We’re still waiting for final counts.”

“And Dario’s men?” Adrik asked.

“They’re good. They said to give them a call if needed, otherwise they were staying out of this fight,” Viktor said.

“What about Massimo’s underbosses? Do we know what they’re doing?” I asked.

Ivan walked into the kitchen, answering my question. “We do know. They’re sitting this one out along with Dario’s men.

Massimo’s area of the city pushed back harder than the other areas at first. Without Massimo to tell them otherwise, they feel like this isn’t their fight.”

“Let’s hope they don’t change their minds anytime soon,” I said. “Misha, do you know where Niko is?”

Misha’s eyes switched to black without him blinking as he checked the city, trying to find Niko. We could see his grin slowly appear as he found him. His eyes slowly faded to their normal green as he rejoined us in the present moment. “He knows something happened to Vito. He just doesn’t know what, yet. He’s scared, but he’s still trying to send his underbosses back out.

It looks like he's more scared of Sal."

"If he sends his underbosses out again, that's the perfect chance to pick him up too," Ivan said.

"That's what I was thinking. Do you have his exact location?" Adrik asked Misha. He nodded. "Can you see if his underbosses are actually going to listen to him and go back out?"

Misha's eyes went black one more time as he checked on that outcome. His eyes didn't switch back to their normal green this time. He was fully in boss mode. We could all feel it. "We need to move quickly, but there's a small window when he'll be incredibly easy to grab."

We didn't say another word. Andrei and I shut everything down in the kitchen until we returned and we were out the door within two minutes, on our way to grab Niko.

Viktor and Ivan coordinated extra guys to meet us close to Niko's location. Adrik wanted to stay out of sight as much as possible, but he was also nervous about Niko getting away. We would serve as backup for the extra guys. He wanted it to look like the people of the city had revolted, more than he had stepped in. It was just one more way to give a f*ck you to Sal and Ricardo. If the people of the city rejected them, it was a very big hurdle to them ever coming back. And Sal knew it.

Misha-spent the drive to Niko trying to get as many details of the layout of the building he was in as possible. He shared everything with Andrei and Ivan. They relayed the information to the guys that met us a block away.

We stayed behind while they left to grab Niko. The whole thing was over in under twenty minutes and Niko was on his way to a separate safe house from Vito

