

King of the Underworld Chapter 241 - 250

Chapter 241

Sephie

“Judging from what I felt in my office, it’s a good thing for Giana that I did. It was so strong and so sudden,” Adrik said, his eyes showing nothing but concern.

“I didn’t know I was that angry,” I said, looking down at my hands.

“When I got to you, it changed. There was a calm to you, but I could still feel it. It felt like mine, when I’m using it to intimidate someone. Like it’s just under the surface, only yours is much less chaotic than mine. Yours is focused,” he said, his finger lightly playing with the curls around my face. “But your eyes were dark. That’s one of the reasons I pulled you from the apartment.”

“There was more than one reason?” I asked.

He nodded. “I’m sick of things that stress you out and make you relive your past before you’re ready. Especially when it’s as trivial as this is,” he said.

“So, it’s not just me then,” I said, smiling. I grabbed his shirt and pulled him to me so I could kiss him. He leaned back, smiling at

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me. “It’s not just you, solnishko. This is a ridiculous matter. I’m thinking of telling Armando to just keep her away from us for the time being. We have enough to worry about without having to worry about 12-year-old girl drama,” he said.

“I think that might make him mad. He’s in an awkward spot and you need him. I don’t have an issue with Armando. I wouldn’t have an issue with Giana if she would act her age. Maybe wait on talking to him. Let’s see what today does for her,” I said. “She might keep herself away from us on her own. No need to put Armando into an even more awkward spot.”

Viktor’s phone rang. He checked the number, then walked toward me. “It’s Chen,” he said, handing the phone to me, I put it on speaker. “What’s up, Chen?”

“Sephie. How are you, my girl?”

“Good, Chen. How are you? Everything okay?” I asked, somewhat concerned as to why he was calling.

“Yeah, everything is fine for now, but it might not be for long. DJ has some info from his extensive networks through the city.

Dude knows everything that’s going on in the city, I swear. The people in Sal’s part of the city are about to revolt. They’re organizing to fight back against Sal. Word has it that Anthony and Sal’s long-lost brother are coming back, too.”

“Well, shi t.”

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“Accurate response. DJ seems to think that if Sal’s area starts to revolt, then other areas of the city will follow,” he said.

“Double shi t. If that happens, they won’t even need the brawn. There will be chaos in the city without it. Does DJ happen to know if there’s clear leaders in this organization of the people in Sal’s area of town?” I asked.

“He didn’t say for sure, but I’d bet good money the answer is yes. DJ knows everyone. Everyone knows DJ. He’s like a rockstar of drug dealers,” Chen said, laughing.

“Can you see if he can find out that information? We can meet with them, same as we met with you. We’re trying to keep innocent people from getting hurt. If they revolt, I’m worried that there will be mass casualties,” I said. I glanced up to Adrik, who had a smirk on his face.

“I will get that info for you and get back to you.”

“Sooner is better, as I’m sure you know,” I said.

“Don’t worry, my girl. This public servant offers prompt service,” he said, laughing.

“Thank you, Chen. You’re the best,” I said, ending the call.

I handed the phone back to Viktor, then looked at Adrik curious as to why he was smirking at me. “You’re a natural at this, solnishko. I don’t even need to tell you what to do. You’re already three steps ahead in any situation,” he said, smiling down at

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“Told you. You were made for this shit, gazelle,” Misha said, his broad smile stretched across his face.

Adrik spent as much time in the penthouse with me and the guys as he could before returning to his office for the rest of his

meetings that day. He promised he would make everything as quick as possible so he could get back to me. He also made sure

that Ivan, Andrei, and Misha knew to stay with me the rest of the afternoon.

“They can help me cook dinner,” I said, grinning at Adrik as he pulled me to him before leaving.

“I’ll do anything you want after that breakfast this morning,” Misha said, rubbing his stomach. I couldn’t help but giggle at his

response, which helped Adrik relax too. He was still worried about me. He leaned down and kissed me gently, telling me once

more he would be back as quickly as possible and that he loved me. It made me feel all soft and nougaty inside that they were

all so worried about me. And that they all felt so protective of me. I was starting to get used to it, but it was still a new

phenomenon in my life. I was so used to being on my own and dealing with everything by myself. Used to having my closest

friend ditch me for his latest bedroom conquest. Used to only telling people the bare minimum about me for fear they would

run away.

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We moved to the couches after Adrik left with Viktor and Stephen. Ivan pulled me against him once more, his giant arm holding me close. I looked up at him. "I think I need the acupuncture lady again," I said. He just grinned at me. "I was just about to say that, princess. I can give her a call and see when she can come," he said as he got up from the couch, pulling his phone from his pocket.

When he got up, I got a chill, so I ran back to the bedroom to grab one of Adrik's sweatshirts. When I came back out, Andrei saw the sweatshirt and just opened his arms. "Come here, spider monkey." I grinned at him, running to the couch. He moved so I could lean back against him for maximum warmth.

Ivan walked back to the couches, laughing at me curled up next to Andrei under a new layer of clothing. "She'll be here in two hours, princess. It might help you getting cold so much lately too. I had that problem before and she fixed it," he said.

"She did? No wonder you've kept her a secret for so many years," I said.

Ivan laughed. "I would've shared, but nobody else was interested."

"I didn't know it was a thing that people did until Sephie's concussion," Misha said.

"It seems painful. Why would you want to be stabbed repeatedly? I've been stabbed twice. I didn't enjoy it," Andrei said.

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I laughed. “Bubba, it’s not like getting stabbed. They’re like tiny little needles. It’s more annoying than anything when she first puts them in, but then it all goes away and it makes everything feel better. The first time hurt the worst, but after that, it didn’t hurt much at all.”

“The first time, I had to keep Adrik from going in to save you,” Ivan said, smirking at me.

I sighed. “If I haven’t told you lately, I adore how protective you all are of me. Going from being completely on my own to now having you guys ready to punch a bitch because she was rude to me is a very nice change in my life.”

“You deserve it, gazelle. You deserve to have people around you that love you and want to take care of you,” Misha said. Andrei tightened his grip around me, pulling me closer. I suddenly felt much warmer as I smiled at Misha and Ivan. I grabbed Andrei’s arm and held on to it as we talked.

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King of the Underworld by RJ Kane

Chapter 242

Sephie

I felt Andrei gently shake me. "Spider monkey, it's time for your acupuncture."

I didn't realize I had fallen asleep while we were talking. I was still tired from Adrik keeping me up too late the night before, plus having to deal with Giana unexpectedly, I must've just passed out. Andrei was warm enough that I was sound asleep when the acupuncturist got there.

I rubbed my eyes, still not completely awake. "Sorry, I didn't mean to fall asleep, but thank you for keeping me warm," I said.

"You only fall asleep when you really need it, spider monkey. You've had to deal with a lot. I'm glad you got a quick nap," Andrei said.

Ivan walked in with the acupuncturist as I stood up from the couch, stretching. The acupuncturist looked at me, then looked at Ivan. "You should've called me sooner," she said, almost chastising him. He looked down at her, surprised by her reaction. He looked to me, somewhat worried. She walked to me, taking my hand and leading me to one of the spare bedrooms. Poor Ivan just stood there, still stunned as we disappeared into the bedroom.

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“It’s not Ivan’s fault. He’s the one that suggested we call you again,” I said. She looked up at me while she unpacked her bag, a large smile on her face.

“Sometimes I like to give Ivan a hard time. It keeps him on his toes,” she said, laughing. “But I can tell you’re carrying more than you need to right now.” She took my hand, pressing on the spot that Ivan and Adrik use when I have a headache. She closed her eyes for a moment, then opened them and looked at me, “How are things with your boyfriend?” she asked.

“Good. Really good,” I said. I could feel my cheeks flush as I thought about the night before.

She smiled slyly at me. “You two are very good for each other. But you’re unbalanced. He’s avoiding a piece of him, which is making it grow stronger in you. You’re strong, Sephie, which is why it hasn’t caused a huge problem yet. It will, though, if you, let it go on too long.”

I chewed on my bottom lip while I digested her words. “He’s worried I’ll love him less,” I said. I knew she was talking about his darker side. “He thinks he’s a monster because of it. They all do, if I’m being honest. I don’t know the right words to say to them.”

As she got started stabbing me, as Andrei would say, she said, “monsters choose evil for evil’s sake. I don’t know your boyfriend,

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but I know Ivan. Ivan is not a monster. There's a difference between a dangerous man and a monster. A dangerous man has looked in the face of evil and chosen to be good. A dangerous man knows he has a large capacity for evil, but he chooses to control that side of him. Ivan is dangerous. I'm thinking your boyfriend is also dangerous."

I nodded my head in agreement. "He's been fighting that side of him that is needed to take care of the situation we're facing at the moment, because he's worried that it will change my opinion of him." "Will it?"

"Not in the least. I love him. All of him," I said.

She was quiet as she continued stabbing me. She finally looked at me watching her. "I can talk to him. He listened to me last time. It's obvious he wants to do what is best for you. By him avoiding that side of himself, he's transferring it to you. You can control it now, but it will ultimately become too much for you to bear. You two have a special relationship. It's been getting more so, hasn't it? More Intimate?" she asked.

I couldn't help the smile on my face, I didn't even need to answer. She saw the look on my face and knew the answer. "It will be more so once he restores balance," she said. She had finished placing the needles where they needed to go. She patted my

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arm. saying. "I will go tell Ivan I need to see your boyfriend. I'll be right back."

She left me to my own thoughts about how much more intimacy I could handle. In addition to being able to feel each other's anger, we were starting to feel other emotions just as strongly. Mostly when it comes to sex, but I was noticing it other times now too. It seemed like I would notice these things first, then Adrik would be able to feel the same thing soon after. While I'd been able to essentially read his mind from the beginning, he was now beginning to be capable of doing the same to me.

My mind wandered to the dream I had where my dad had told me that Adrik and I were always meant to find each other. Were we able to do these things because we'd spent so many lifetimes together or was this the first lifetime we'd discovered the ability to do it? I wasn't sure I would ever get the answer to that question, but it made me smile to think about falling in love with him over and over again. I knew what we had was special and there wasn't a day that went by that I wasn't incredibly grateful for it.

We finished the session. Just as we walked out of the spare bedroom, Adrik walked through the penthouse looking for me. He had a wide smile across his face as his eyes landed on mine. He closed the distance between us quickly. "You feel better, solnishko," he said as he pulled me to him. He kissed my cheek, leaning down to my ear to add, "I could feel it too." His smile

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widened once more when he stood up and saw the look of surprise on my face. He pushed a curl from my face. “You look lighter again.”

I giggled. “You do too. There’s some weird acupuncture by osmosis going on here.”

The acupuncturist took the opportunity to motion us back into the spare bedroom. “I can offer some insight into that. Please,” she said, motioning us to the room.

Adrik grabbed my hand, lacing his fingers through mine as we followed her into the bedroom. Adrik was curious once she closed the door. He looked from me to her, a sly grin on his face. “You offered valuable insight last time. I can’t deny I’m very curious to hear what you have to offer this time.”

She smiled at him. “You two are very special. A bond like yours comes around very rarely.” She looked at both of us, a serious look on her face. “You realize this isn’t the first lifetime you’ve spent together, right?” I smiled, nodding my head. Adrik just put his arm around me, pulling me to him. She smiled at both of us. “I told you last time that you each find balance within the other. In Chinese medicine we call it the yin and the yang. There are parts of each in the other, but one is more masculine while the other is feminine. Together, you find balance.” She looked directly at Adrik, even more serious than before. “Right now, you’re fighting

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your masculine, which is causing it to show up more in Sephie. She's very strong, so she's been able to handle it, but it won't always be this way. It will eventually cause problems." She held her hand out, asking for his hand. He placed his hand in hers.

She pressed on the same spot between his thumb and forefinger that she had pressed on me while she closed her eyes. When

she opened her eyes, she looked more determined and slightly surprised.

"She's stronger than I thought. You're very strong, but she's able to handle it."

"What do you mean? Are you talking about my anger?" Adrik asked.

"Yes, that's part of it. Anger can be very useful when used correctly. Your anger is only a piece of it, though. That part of you that

wants to protect her is very strong, but you're fighting the very thing that will resolve your problems. I don't know what's going on.

I don't need to know what's going on, but it's big. It's only going to get bigger the longer you keep trying to suppress the side of

you that can take care of it. Sephie told me earlier that you're worried you're a monster because of it. I will tell you the same thing

I told her. The same thing I've told Ivan, too, for the record. There is a difference between being a monster and being dangerous.

A dangerous man knows how capable of evil acts he truly is, but he accepts that part of himself and chooses good. A monster

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will give in to the evil side of himself every time. You're incredibly strong. You've already faced more evil in your short life than most will in their entire lives. Your hesitancy to use that side of you, even though you're using it for good, will continue to upset the balance you two find in each other."

He looked at me, his eyes were now wide with worry. She laughed. "You're not hurting her. She can handle it. Have you ever tried to ignore an emotion before?" she asked. He nodded his head. "Have you noticed how that emotion never really goes away? It just gets bigger. Or sometimes it will appear to have gone away, but it always comes back as something else and ten times worse. This is what's happening now. But because of the bond you two share, she's showing you what you're ignoring." She looked at me. "You've had more anger lately, haven't you?" I nodded my head. "But you've also been getting cold more?" I nodded again. She thought for a moment. "Can you calm his anger when it happens?"

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King of the Underworld by RJ Kane

Chapter 243

Sephie

“Like no one else has ever been able to,” Adrik answered.

She inhaled, thinking more before she responded. “Sephie, you’re meant to help him control his anger, but not take it on as your own. The increased cold is a sign from your body that you’re taking too much of his fire, if you will. Your body is trying to rebalance itself.” She then looked to Adrik. “You’re meant to be her fire, but to also let her soothe the flames when needed. The more you fight against your fire, the bigger the inferno will get. She’s trying to help you control it, but subconsciously, she knows you’re fighting against it so she’s taking more of it than she needs to. True power lies in surrender. You are who you are and she loves you for that, just as you love her for who she is. The more you fight against accepting that for a universal truth, the bigger this problem you’re facing will get. By surrendering to who you are, who you’ve always been, but consciously choosing good, you’ll realize your true power.”

Adrik was somewhat stunned, as was I. She smiled at both of us, moving to get her bag that was sitting close to the window. As

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she stepped into the sunlight streaming through the window, I could clearly see the outline of a pair of wings behind her. My breath caught, but the vision was gone just as quickly as it appeared. I looked to Adrik to see if he had seen it, but he was curious about my surprise. I decided to keep my mouth shut for the time being about what I'd just seen.

She turned back to us. "It would help if I worked on both of you next time, if you're up for it?" she asked, looking at Adrik. He glanced down at me, a flash of nervousness on his face, but agreed to it.

"It doesn't hurt," I said, smiling sweetly at him. He looked like he wanted to believe me, but he was still very unsure about it. I

extended my hand to her. "Thank you, once again, for helping me feel better. You're an angel." She took my hand and winked at

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We walked out to find all the guys in the penthouse, waiting for us. Ivan got up to take the acupuncturist back downstairs. He smiled at me when he saw me. "Lighter," he said, following the acupuncturist to the door.

"Sestrichka, you look much better. I didn't know it would be such an obvious difference," Viktor said. He looked at Andrei. "You

should try it, Andrei. It might make you prettier too. You could use the help."

"Shots fired, Viktor," I said laughing. "Don't listen to him, Bubba. You're very pretty. You're a pretty, pretty princess." I grinned at

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him as he laughed at us both.

“Shut your mouth, Viktor. She said I was a pretty, pretty princess,” Andrei said, pouting like a kid.

Adrik pulled me closer, his broad smile across his face as he leaned down and pressed his lips to mine. “I fucking love you,” he said, smiling against my lips.

“And I fucking love you. Are you done for the day now?” I asked. He nodded his head, kissing my forehead. “Who wants to help me with dinner?” I asked everyone. They all stood at once and started filing toward the kitchen. I looked at Adrik. “They’re all so eager,” I said laughing.

“You had them wrapped around your finger even before you started feeding them, but now that you’re feeding them, you’ll never get rid of them.”

As we fell into the routine of cooking dinner and talking about the day’s events, Viktor told me that my presence had been missed during one of Adrik’s afternoon meetings.

“Oh yeah? Did you meet with Mando?” I asked, curious.

Adrik laughed. “No, it was one of the businessmen that’s in on the project I have with Mando, Neal is his name. He’s still laughing about your wet dream comment. We’re all meeting with a few restaurants on Monday to gauge interest and to see if we can

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secure occupancy even before the project begins. He requested your presence on Monday,” he said, smirking at me.

“Shut up.”

Viktor laughed. “It’s true. He was disappointed you weren’t around today. He said he hasn’t laughed that hard in a business meeting in a very long time.”

“What did you say, gazelle?” Misha asked.

“They were worried that restaurants wouldn’t want to lease space in their building. I told them it was basically a restaurant’s wet dream because they didn’t even have to do outside marketing. Their customer base was the building.” I said.

“But then she said, ‘oh shit I just said that out loud didn’t I’ as she covered her mouth,” Adrik said, laughing. He stepped closer to me, but I pushed him back, playfully.

“In my defense, I wasn’t supposed to be in that meeting,” I said, laughing.

“Your inability to control your mouth is one of the best things about you, sestrichka. You did warn us about it that first day. I don’t know why you’re surprised by it,” Viktor said. His deep laugh filling the penthouse. I got caught up in the pure joy that was laughing and joking with the guys. I knew our strange family dynamic was misunderstood by just about everyone else, but I loved it.

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We spent the weekend at the penthouse so that I could keep getting acupuncture. She felt it would be helpful for a few days in a row. She also worked on Adrik while she was there. He was somewhat terrified at the thought of it the first time, so he watched while she worked on me first.

“This isn’t helping me feel better about this process, solnishko,” he said as he watched her putting the needles where they needed to go. She asked for him to put his hand out in front of him. He reluctantly did so. She flipped his hand over and placed one needle in his wrist, then she did the same on his other wrist. Without a word, she continued placing needles on me where they needed to go. I could feel the anxiety disappear from Adrik as it happened. I picked my head up and looked at him, to see his reaction. His eyes were wide. “What kind of black magic is this, he said laughing. She laughed, but continued working.

Adrik protested a few times as she worked on him, just as I did. Once he got past the initial pain, it started to feel better and he relaxed. The first time was the worst for both of us. Each time she worked on us got better. He was more relaxed than he’d been in a long time by the time Monday rolled around. I, however, was slightly nervous about being included in this meeting for his building project with Armando.

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“At least it gives me a reason to wear the clothes Ms. Jackson talked me into buying,” I said as I got out of the shower.

Adrik raised his eyebrow at me. “What did you have in mind, malishka?” he asked as he watched me wrap a towel around my naked body.

“Wouldn’t you like to know...”

“Cruel and unusual punishment is what that is,” he said, smacking my ass as he walked out of the bathroom.

I decided on a grey pencil skirt and a white blouse. The best part of the outfit, in my opinion, were the red heels. I usually

avoided wearing heels. I was tall enough on my own, but being surrounded by literal giants meant that I was always the short

one, even with heels. I didn’t have to worry about towering over anyone.

Adrik had gone to the kitchen to return a phone call as I finished getting dressed. I braided my hair, putting on minimal

makeup. I heard him end the call as I walked down the hallway to the kitchen.

He turned to look at me, his mouth open slightly.

He groaned. “I’m not going to be able to take my eyes off you during the meeting,” he said, his sexy smirk slowly appearing on his face.

“Is it too much? I don’t want a repeat of the scummy lawyer in Italy,” I asked.

He pulled me to him, holding me tightly. “I’m not giving anyone a moment of hesitation that you’re mine this time,” he said. He

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grabbed my a ss for emphasis, making me squeal. He took my hands and put them around his neck, wrapping his arms. around my waist. “You look beautiful, Sephie. You always look beautiful, even when you just wake up and have hair that screams I’ve just been properly fu cked.’ That might be my favorite, if I’m being honest,” he said, smiling down at me. “So, every morning, then?” I asked, laughing at his faraway look that broadcasted his di rty thoughts.

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King of the Underworld by RJ Kane

Chapter 244

Adrik

I couldn't keep my eyes off Sephie even on the elevator down to my office. This is going to be the longest meeting ever.

"Am I expected to remember everyone's names? Because that's not a thing I do," she asked, chewing on her lip.

I laughed. "No, love. You have me. That's a thing I do. You don't need to."

She cut her eyes up at me, a mischievous look in her eye. "I knew I kept you around for a reason," she said as the doors

opened. She walked off the elevator like she owned the place. I've never been more turned on in my life.

Armando was already in my office when we walked in. He had a habit of being extra early to large meetings to make sure lastminute details were taken care of. I appreciated it about him, as it meant fewer details for me to have to worry about. He looked

up from the papers in his hand as Sephie walked in. "Sephie, my dear. You look beautiful as always, cara mia," he said, opening his arms for her.

She walked to him. "Mando. It's so good to see you," she said as she hugged him.

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“It’s been too long. I’ve missed you, but I’m very happy you decided to come today,” he said, kissing both her cheeks. Sephie right. Giana had kept herself away from us so far. Armando had taken her to his house over the weekend again, so it had been a few days since I’d seen him, even. Things seemed calm, for the moment, so I wasn’t complaining.

She stepped back, looking between both Armando and me. “What are the specifics of this meeting again?” she asked. She already knew the answer to that question. She was giving Armando a reason to talk to her. I turned so he couldn’t see me and winked at her as Armando began filling in details about the meeting.

Armando was still talking 20 minutes later when Viktor stuck his head in the office. “Everyone is in the conference room,” he said.

He gave Sephie a high-five as she walked by. “You look like you’re about to run this meeting, sestrichka,” he said in Russian as we walked to the conference room.

“I am the go ddamn princess,” she said, her gorgeous smile across her face as she walked into the conference room. I saw her hesitate once she glanced around the room. She turned to me, saying in Russian, “second man from the end on the other side of the table owns the restaurant I used to work at,” she said. I could feel she was still calm. I think it surprised her to see him here more than anything.

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I still stopped her before we walked any further. “Is that a problem? I can get rid of him if it is,” I said.

She smiled shyly at me. “He’s fine. He’s a nice guy. I just didn’t expect him to be here,” she said. “But thank you for always being willing to destroy anything that might be a threat to me.”

I kissed her temple as we continued to the table. “Always, my love.” I kept my eye on the man she had pointed out. He was clearly surprised to see Sephie walk into the meeting. Even more surprised that she sat down next to me. I pulled her chair next to mine, stretching my arm across her lap. I nodded to Armando, who started the meeting.

We were pitching the idea of the building to several restaurant owners, hoping they would sign a contract signifying they would lease space once the building was finished. There was space for at least five restaurants, with the potential for splitting the space up into smaller restaurants if necessary. The location was in a great part of town, so it should’ve been an easy sell. A few of the restaurant owners were hesitant, however. The owner of the restaurant where Sephie used to work was one that was hesitant.

“What kind of guarantees do you have that the building will be full? And what kind of taxes are we going to be hit with if we lease space in this building?” he asked. The tax question was more about which boss that part of the city belonged to. The

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building was in Armando's area of the city, thankfully, so we didn't need to go into details about how that wouldn't matter very soon. Two of the other restaurant owners nodded in agreement to his question. I wasn't sure what areas of the city they were from, but I imagined they were being charged extra taxes right now. "We already have 30% of the office space leased, as well as 50% of the apartments sold or leased. We haven't even broke ground on the project yet. The building will be full by the time it's finished. As for taxes, I don't charge unfair taxes in my area of the city," Armando said.

Sophie stood up, going to a map showing the location of the building.

"Gentlemen, I don't know the location of all of your restaurants, but I do know where yours is, Kevin. You've got at least 15 other restaurants within a 5-block radius of your restaurant. Those are just the ones I could remember off the top of my head. I'm guessing it's a similar situation for the rest of you, give or take." She pointed to the map. "This building will be here." She ran her finger over an entire block of buildings on the map. "These buildings? Apartments. There's one bodega, but no restaurants." She moved to the next block. "These buildings? Office space. Two more bodegas and one coffee shop. No restaurants." She continued for three more blocks around the location

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of the new building. “So that makes 5 restaurants total in this 5-block radius, not counting the restaurant space this building will provide. I’m not the best at numbers, but even I know those are pretty fu cking good odds. You’d be id iots not to jump at this chance, but by all means, keep hesitating if you ha te making an easy profit.” I heard Viktor clear his throat at the door. I knew he was trying not to laugh. I had casually rested my chin in my hand to hide my smile when she got up because I knew whatever she was about to do was going to be great. I glanced at everyone’s faces as she walked back to sit down. My business associates were all trying not to laugh as well. The restaurant owners who were on board originally were also trying not to laugh. The ones who were hesitant all had the look of being fo olish across their faces. Armando caught Sephie’s eye as she sat down, winking at her. The meeting continued. All restaurant owners were on board by the end of the meeting, all signing contracts to lease space in the building once the building was finished. As the meeting concluded and everything was being finalized with the lawyers in attendance, several of my business associates, including Neal, came up to me and Sephie. “Can she please come to every meeting?” Neal asked, finally able to laugh. The others agreed with him, making her blush. They kept laughing amongst

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themselves as they talked with each other and the restaurant owners. The owner of the restaurant she used to work at, Kevin, walked up to her as well.

“Sephie, it’s good to see you again,” he said, extending his hand to her.

“Hi Kevin. How are things at the restaurant?” she asked. I knew she was likely curious about Max.

“They’re good. We had a rough patch after you left, but we’re recovering now. Staffing issues,” he said, dismissively.

“Chef issues, you mean?” she asked.

He laughed. “Of course you’d know. Yes, chef issues. It’s been taken care of now and business is picking back up. Numbers at the bar are almost back to normal now,” he said.

“Good. That makes me happy to hear. I hope no one died while you resolved the chef issues,” she said.

“Oh, you know know. It was very dicey, not gonna lie,” he said, chuckling. “I’m glad to see you doing so well, Sephie. I was very sorry to see you leave the restaurant, but clearly you were meant for bigger and better things. Mostly convincing stubborn restaurant owners to take advantage of great offers in front of them.”

“Oh that? That’s just a normal Monday, Kevin,” she said sarcastically. One of the lawyers interrupted their conversation, pulling Kevin back for more signatures and paperwork, leaving Sephie and I alone. I stepped closer to her. “I’m glad you decided to come, my love.”

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“You’re just saying that because you can’t stop looking at my ass in this skirt,” she said as she turned away from me. “Seriously. Look at it. It looks amazing.” she said. I stepped closer to her, my lips close to her ear. “Careful, love. I’m not above bending your over the desk in my office before everyone has a chance to leave.” I heard her breath hitch. “Shit. That backfired.” She turned to face me, her eyes showing a mix of lust and worry. “You’re so much better at this than I am,” she said. She glanced around the room, then quickly pressed her lips to mine. I laughed quietly, brushing my cheek against her neck. I knew that feeling my facial hair on her neck turned her on, but this time I felt her response. I groaned under my breath, causing her to look at me, somewhat surprised. She searched my eyes for a just a moment, then let out a small gasp. “You felt that too?” I nodded. “We are in so much trouble,” she said, giggling.

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King of the Underworld by RJ Kane

Chapter 245

Adrik

My business associates began leaving the conference room, leaving just a few, along with Armando. Sephie noticed Armando having an impassioned conversation with another associate, in Italian. I glanced at her and she immediately made herself look busy to get closer to them. I watched her get closer so she could hear, but she stayed out of sight of even Armando. The man he was talking to was more of an associate of Armando's than mine. This was the first project I'd worked with him on, so I didn't know him as well as the other men in the meeting. Armando trusted him though, so I allowed him to be brought on as an investor. He was a very wealthy man. Armando said his family had done business with him here as well as Italy. It sounded like they were arguing, but Italians were a passionate lot, so what sounded like arguing might've just been normal, everyday conversation. It was the same for Russians. What sounded like us threatening your life was most likely completely benign. Sephie continued to listen to their conversation until they were finished. She had gathered up some papers and walked

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away from them, so as not to arouse suspicion when Armando and the other man left the conference room.

She walked back to me. She looked slightly tense. I went to ask her what was said and she simply shook her head. “Not here,”

she said in Russian. It must’ve been a serious conversation, then. That didn’t make me happy. She must’ve felt my anger,

because she placed her hand on my chest. “Not yet, either. It might be nothing.” She smiled sweetly at me, then turned to walk

toward Viktor, motioning for me to follow her.

“Viktor, can you make sure the guys come to the office once everyone is gone?

And can you also make sure Armando stays

away for a bit?” she asked him sweetly, still speaking Russian. I always had the impression that she thought of Viktor like a

father. figure. He was the oldest of our little family, as he was a few years older than I was. She would tell the other guys what to

do. She would even tell me what to do sometimes, but she always asked Viktor like she would a parental figure. It was always

sweet to witness. He never denied her. None of us did. But you could see his heart melt every single time she went to him with a

request.

“Of course, sestrichka. I’ll have Chris and Keith distract him,” Viktor responded.

“You’re my favorite, Papa Bear,” she said, grinning at him.

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It took a few minutes for everyone to finish their conversations and leave the conference room. It took longer for them to leave the building, which meant Sephie and I had a few minutes alone in my office. While I had my own thoughts about how we could spend that time, I somehow managed to control myself. As we waited for the guys to show up, I asked her about the conversation between Armando and his associate. She knew I didn't like surprises, so she told me what she'd overheard, taking her normal spot on the edge of my desk.

"I never caught the other man's name, but he was asking Armando about the Mexicans. He made it sound like Anthony and Lorenzo had reached a new deal with them. They still think they can bypass Trino, clearly. He also sounded like he was trying to talk Armando into switching sides, basically. That's what they were arguing about when we first heard them. Armando resisted at first, but by the end of the conversation, I couldn't tell if he was just agreeing with the guy to shut him up or if he was actually considering it. I couldn't see his face. I need to see a face to be able to get more information, but it's Armando, so I want to give him the benefit of the doubt. He doesn't like any kind of confrontation, so it's possible he was pretending to consider it just to be done with the conversation," she said. As she was talking, she had taken her heels off and stood to place them on the floor by

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my desk. When she stood up from bending over, I grabbed her and kissed her passionately. I felt her knees go weak, so I pulled her tighter against me, holding her up. I was almost desperate for her. My tongue forcing its way into her mouth, not giving her a chance to resist. She was momentarily surprised, but then I felt her match my passion. She knew that she could quiet my demons like no other and she was always willing to do so. My lungs finally began to protest the lack of oxygen and I had to stop.

As I caught my breath, I leaned my forehead against hers. "I need help controlling the chaos," I said.

She put one hand on my cheek, her eyes searching mine. "I think I can help. I have an idea," she said. The guys walked in, preventing her from saying more. They all had serious looks on their faces. Sephie rarely asked for all of them at once, so they knew this was important. They walked in and all took a seat. She kissed me gently once more, then walked to the door and closed it. The guys knew it was definitely serious then.

"That's not good," Misha said.

"It's potentially very bad, yes. Or it might be nothing. We don't know yet," she said as she walked back to me.

"Sephie overheard Armando talking to one of his associates after the meeting. They were speaking Italian, thinking that no one

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could overhear them, but Sephie got close enough to hear their conversation,” I said.

“I couldn’t see Armando’s face though, and that’s a big missing piece of whether this is potentially very bad or not bad at all,” she said.

“What were they discussing?” Ivan asked. He was tense, just as they all were. Armando was already on thin ice with the guys because of Giana.

“I heard them talking about the Mexicans,” she said. A couple of them cursed under their breath. “It sounded like Anthony and Lorenzo have struck a deal with the Mexicans, still trying to bypass Trino. I don’t know the Mexicans, but they don’t seem terribly smart. The other man, I don’t know his name, was basically trying to convince Armando to switch sides. At first, he resisted, but by the end of the conversation, it sounded more like Mando was considering it.” More cursing from the guys. “Before you get all murderous, this is where not being able to see his face comes in. We know Mando hates confrontation, so it’s possible he was just pretending to agree with the guy to end the conversation. I want to give him the benefit of the doubt here, but I don’t know,” she said, crossing her arms.

“Are we going to wait to see if Armando comes to you with this one?” Viktor asked.

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“I do want to see if he comes clean, but I’m not willing to give him very long to do it,” I said. I pulled my phone from my pocket. “I think Trino needs to hear about this.” I put my phone on speaker and leaned against my desk. Sephie moved next to me, doing the same.

“Jefe, que pasa?” Trino answered on the first ring.

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King of the Underworld by RJ Kane

Chapter 246

Adrik

“You’re not going to like this, Trino,” I said.

“I love it when you get straight to the point, lefe,” Trino said, laugh

“Sephie overheard Armando talking to one of his business associates. They were speaking Italian so they thought no one could hear them,” I said.

“Doesn’t Armando know she can understand Italian? I mean, he was there when she told me and Martin that she understands Italian. Does he have memory issues?” Trino asked.

Sephie laughed. “I stayed out of his line of sight, Trino. I can be invisible when I need to be,” she said.

He chuckled. “Miha, your talents are endless.”

“Apparently the Mexicans have reached a new deal with Anthony and Lorenzo. They’re still trying to bypass you and have convinced people that’s possible,” I said. “The other man was trying to convince Armando to switch sides.”

We all waited, trying not to laugh too loudly, as Trino went on a cursing tirade. He was nice enough to pull the phone away from

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his mouth, but we could still clearly hear him. When he finally got himself under control, he asked, “and what of Armando?”

“I don’t know the answer to that one, Trino. He resisted at first, but by the end of the conversation, he made it seem like he was.

considering it. But it’s Armando. He doesn’t like confrontation. I also couldn’t see his face, so I can’t say for sure what he was thinking,” Sephie said.

“Put a,” Trino said, which made Sephie laugh. She looked up, realizing I didn’t understand. “He called him a bitch,” she said.

quietly, still laughing about it.

“Are Anthony and Lorenzo still there, Trino?” she asked.

“Si, Miha. I just met with them yesterday. They must be negotiating with the Mexicans over the phone. They haven’t left

Colombia. Not even while I was gone to meet with you. I have people watching them around the clock. The Mexicans wouldn’t

dare set foot in Colombia either, so they have to be speaking over the phone.

Who makes a deal like this over the phone?” Trino

said. We waited for another cursing tirade to finish.

Sephie giggled. “You’re not wrong, Trino, but I think we’ve clearly established that we’re not dealing with the best and brightest

here. I don’t even know the Mexicans but I can tell they’re morons if they think they can bypass you.”

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“You haven’t even been in this world for very long and you already recognize this. These people were raised in this world and they think they can go around me,” Trino said.

“I’m more worried about what this will mean for the Mexicans. I don’t want to start a war between you and them,” I said.

“It could give Trino a reason to get rid of Anthony and Lorenzo, though. Trino finds out they’ve been making deals behind his

back, rightfully loses his shi t and impresses all of us with his dramatic flair when it comes to the death of his enemies,” Sephie

said. She was smiling as she said it, as I’m sure she knew how much she was stroking Trino’s ego. “It also se nds a message to anyone else that tries to bypass Trino,” she added.

Trino was quiet for a moment. “You haven’t been in this world very long and you can run shi t better than I can, Miha. You’re right, though. It can take care of the problem with Anthony and Lorenzo, but I might need help with the Mexicans. They’ve been looking for a way around me for years. I wouldn’t put it past them to declare war, with or without Anthony and Lorenzo,” he said.

“We will help you as much as we can, Trino. You’ve been a huge help to us through all of this. My list of people I can trust is dwindling. You remain loyal to me, I remain loyal to you,” I said.

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“I feel the same, Jefe. And also, I’m scared of your girlfriend’s wrath,” Trino said, laughing.

“I knew you were a smart man, Trino,” Sephie said.

We ended the call shortly after. Ivan chuckled, shaking his head. “Sephie, you’re becoming a genius at strategy.”

“You didn’t hear her in the meeting, Ivan,” Viktor said, laughing. “Strategy and marketing,” he said, looking proudly at her.

“Okay, the building project one was obvious, so I don’t get credit on that one. I just spelled it out plainly for them,” she said. “And the other matter is more because my patience is wearing thin. I also may have wanted to send a message to Armando in the most passive-aggressive way possible,” she said. A sly smile came across her face as she watched all the guys comprehend what she’d just said.

“I rest my case,” Ivan said.

“But it may not be the best fix, either. If Trino takes care of all the bosses that met with him, that might send the message that he’s the one that really has the power and is running things,” she said, chewing on her bottom lip as she contemplated alternative scenarios.

“Not if we take care of the bosses here at the same time,” Ivan said. “Everyone knows that Boss and Trino have a great

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relationship. This only serves to strengthen that. Essentially, they're trying to oust both Trino and Boss with this move. Everyone in the city, with the exception of maybe Mando, will go along with Anthony and Lorenzo. It's a move against Boss, but it's a move against Trino if they make a deal with the Mexicans."

"Trino takes care of the bosses down there, we take care of the ones up here, then everyone gets the message never to try this again," Viktor said. "You have a solid plan, Sephie. Don't doubt your first instinct."

"Add in the doctor and the brawn operation to this equation. The people of the city also get the message that Boss won't stand for that and is doing everything he can to protect the people of the city. Win-win," Stephen said.

I glanced at Sephie, who met my gaze, but we both immediately looked to Misha for confirmation. He had the faraway look in his eye, but looked at both of us shortly after. "Oh, it's a go." His upper body shuddered. "Yep, definite go."

Sephie laughed at Misha's response. "I like it when it's strong enough I can see it, Misha."

"I might also have the cherry on top for all this," Stephen said. He was trying not to smile when he said it, but a devious grin stretched across his face. We all looked toward him, curious as to what else he could add. "I was in the gym with Keith last night

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when they got back from Armando's house. It seems Giana has a problem," he said, tapping the side of his nose.

"How does Keith know that?" Ivan asked.

"He's been suspecting she has a problem for a while now. She dropped her bag at some point, spilling the contents, and a very suspicious vial of white powder fell out. Keith saw it as he was helping her gather her things from the ground. She grabbed it from his view quickly. He didn't say anything about it, but he's been keeping an eye on her since. She's not supposed to go to the lobby by herself, but he said she has been. He started to suspect that she was. He said she would say she was going to Ms. Jackson's apartment, then she would sneak to the lobby. He caught her once, but she didn't see him. He asked the guys in the lobby to let him know anytime she was down there and what she was doing. Apparently, she meets a guy in the lobby, gets a package from him or a food container or something that looks innocent enough and would need to be paid for, then goes back upstairs. Since the guys downstairs didn't know she wasn't supposed to be in the lobby by herself, they never paid super close attention. After Keith started asking questions, they went back over the security footage. She ditched whatever container she gets before she gets on the elevator, after she removes something from it. You can't tell what it is on the footage, but it's small enough

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to put it in her pocket. She meets this guy like clockwork, wice a week. Always the same guy. Always the same time,” Stephen said.

“Okay, so for one? RUDE. But it explains why she would accuse me of being an addict. People always accuse others of what they’re doing. And two? Just to play Devil’s advocate here, what if it’s not just drugs she’s getting from this dude? What else could she be getting from him? What else could she be giving him? Why do I sound like a completely paranoid person right.

now?” Sephie said, chewing on her lip.

Ivan cracked his knuckles. “I love a good mystery,” he said, grinning. “This could actually be fun.”

“I’m almost scared to ask where your mind is going on this one, Super Squish,” Sephie said.

“Pickpocketing is a highly underrated skill, princess. He doesn’t even need to know we know who he is. She doesn’t need to know we’re on to her, either. We get our answers and they’re not any wiser,” Ivan said.

“Devious. Efficient. Orchestrated. Choreographed, even. I’ll allow it,” she said, grinning at Ivan. He simply looked at Misha, who thought for a minute, then nodded in agreement.

“Yoden, do you know when that guy will be here next?” she asked. I feel like this is going to be a present for me. I need to know

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how long I have to wait for it.” I laughed at her, putting my arm around her, and pulling her to me.

“Keith said the guy comes every Tuesday and Friday. Always in the afternoon, because Glana uses the excuse of having tea with Ms. Jackson in the afternoon as her cover,” Stephen said.

“Putu,” Sephie said quietly. I couldn’t help but laugh now that I knew what that word meant.

“I completely agree. I wonder if Ms. Jackson knows she’s being used?” I asked.

“Let’s find out what’s going on for sure and then I’m happy to put a stop to that,” Ivan said. “I can’t believe she would use her as a cover for this.” He was visibly angry.

“Super Squish. You’re going to break so many hearts at the Bingo Hall once they find out about this,” Sephie said.

Right on time.

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King of the Underworld by RJ Kane

Chapter 247

Sephie

Ivan, Viktor, and Misha went to the lobby that afternoon to look at the security footage of Giana meeting with the mystery man.

They were hoping to be able to formulate a plan to grab everything the next afternoon so we could get answers as quickly as possible.

“You really think you can make it happen that quick?” I asked Ivan before they went downstairs.

“People are creatures of habit, princess. My guess is she does the same thing each time because it’s worked for her before. We just have to learn the pattern so we know where to interrupt it to get what we need,” he said,

I squinted my eyes at him. “I don’t know how I feel about loving your devious side this much,” I said.

Adrik asked me to stay for his first meeting of the afternoon. “You’re going to be happy you did,” he said, smirking at me. He wouldn’t give me anymore details than that.

“That means I have to put shoes back on. Is it going to be worth that?” I asked.

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“I think so, but I promise to rub your feet later if you think it’s not,” he said, his eyebrow raised.

“You have excellent negotiation skills,” I said.

Stephen walked in the office as I slipped my heels back on. Vinny was behind him, along with his wife, Anna. Adrik caught my eye, with a clear “I told you” look on his face.

“Vinny!” I said.

“Ciao, bella!” he exclaimed as he opened his arms for a hug.

“And you brought your lovely wife too! How are you, Anna? It’s so good to see you again,” I said, hugging her after I hugged Vinny.

“I’m good, Sephie. It’s good to see you again, too,” she said, her sweet smile on her face.

Adrik looked at me. “You’ve met Anna before?” he asked me in Russian.

I nodded. “She owns the salon where Ms. Jackson gets her nails done. We went there first before they tortured me with shopping,” I said, still in Russian.

He smiled at the memory of that day as he extended his hand to Vinny. “Vinny, it’s good to see you again,” he said, now in

English. “And you as well, Anna. Please, come. Sit,” he said, after shaking her hand as well. He sat behind his desk, while I chose to lean against the cabinet behind his desk. One downside of wearing a skirt. I couldn’t hop up on the cabinet like normal.

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“How’s your father, Vinny? I’ve heard his treatments have been successful and they’re seeing some improvements. Is that still the case?”

“He’s doing great, thanks to you, sir. I’m still so grateful to you for everything you’ve done for our family. I almost didn’t come today. I don’t want to bother you with one more thing, sir, but it’s...” Vinny trailed off, scratching his head. He looked stressed, as well as frightened. Anna also looked stressed.

“What’s going on, Vinny? You’re both clearly stressed out. Did something happen?” I asked, now concerned.

“It’s Anna’s salon, sir. It’s in Vito’s area of the city. He’s increased the taxes so much that we can’t afford to pay them and still be able to pay her employees and everything that comes with running a business,” Vinny said. He looked almost embarrassed about it.

I could feel Adrik’s anger rising. I hadn’t had a chance yet to tell him my trick that I figured out for controlling mine. It helped me to not feel like I was struggling against it. His anger level was rising quickly enough that I knew he was going to be struggling in exactly 2 seconds. I stood and walked behind his chair, placing my hand on his shoulder.

When I needed to control my anger, I thought about it like a living thing, almost. Smoke was the easiest thing to compare it to. I

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learned to visualize it first, then I learned I could control it that way. I could easily increase or decrease the amount of smoke, or anger, at will. I also knew if flames showed up, then people should generally run.

I tried thinking about Adrik's anger the same way I thought about mine. The acupuncturist said I could take his anger, so instead of risking scaring the hell out of poor Vinny and Anna, I tried to control his anger the same way I controlled mine. It took just a second after I put my hand on his shoulder, for him to feel calmer to me. He looked up at me, a clear look of surprise on his face for just a moment before he masked it and looked back to Vinny and Anna. "Have Vito's guys hurt anybody? Did they damage your shop?" he asked. His anger level increased as he thought about these wonderful people being victimized by Vito's thugs. I felt it and tried to visualize containing it the same way I did mine. He took a breath, relaxing slightly.

"They smashed a few windows this past weekend. I gave them everything I had, but it still wasn't enough. Business has been down because crime is increasing in the area. The police can't keep up. It's not their fault, I know. People are becoming scared to go out for fear of getting mugged. Or worse," Anna said. "I wouldn't let her open the shop after that happened, so we're losing more money, but I don't know what else to do. My

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sandwich shop is still doing well. This area of the city seems to be unaffected,” Vinny said, scratching his head again.

“Do you know of other businesses around your shop that are in the same position as you, Anna?” I asked.

She nodded her head. “Almost all of them. They all had windows smashed over the weekend. They threatened worse next time if we didn’t pay. The other businesses closed as well. The amount of money they’re demanding is completely unreasonable.

There’s no way we can stay open and afford to pay what they’re asking,” Anna said.

Vinny cleared his throat. “Sir, the community members...” He looked unsure about whether he should continue.

“They’re talking about revolting against Vito, aren’t they?” I asked.

Vinny looked at me, his eyes wide. “You already know?”

Adrik said, “we’re aware. This is happening in Sal’s part of town already. We heard there was potential for Vito and Niko’s areas.

of the city, but haven’t gotten confirmation about them yet.” He sighed. He looked straight at Anna. “I’m sorry they vandalized your business. I’ll pay for the repairs for all the businesses, but I want you to remain closed for the time-being. I know it’s going to be hard and I apologize for that, but I need a little time to take care of this problem. I can assure you, however, that it will be taken care of.”

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“Vinny, do you know if the people in Vito’s area are organizing?” I asked.

“Yes, they are. Because Anna’s shop is in that part of town, they contacted both of us. They’re talking about revolting against Vito, just like you said, Sephie,” Vinny said.

“Do you know who’s organizing it? Are there clearly a few people in charge?” I asked.

Vinny looked at Anna. They had a silent conversation about whether they should give us that bit of information. I could see the struggle on both of their faces. They were fighting against a boss in the underworld and now the King of the underworld was asking them for information about their uprising.

“Vinny, Anna, we want to help stop this. To stop Vito. We’re on your side here. I know how difficult this must be for both of you.

We’ll get the information on who is in charge if you don’t feel comfortable telling us. It’ll just be a slower process. We just want to meet with them. We’re trying to make sure there are minimal casualties in all of this. If a war between the bosses and the people breaks out, they’ll capitalize on that chaos. You don’t know what they’re already planning and believe me, you don’t want to. We want to work with the people to make sure you’re all safe while this problem is addressed,” I said.

Vinny still looked unsure, but Anna looked determined. “I can give you the names of the people in charge,” she said.

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“It would help even more if you can find out if they’d be willing to meet with us,” I said. I had a thought. I looked at Adrik, asking for his phone. I texted Viktor, asking for Chen’s number. I wrote it down on a piece of paper and handed it to Anna. “He’s working for us. He’s trying to help us set up a meeting with the people in Sal’s part of the city. It’ll be better if it comes from you that we’re trying to help, rather than Ghost showing up and intimidating the hell out of everyone,” I said, smiling. I had returned my hand to his shoulder after handing Chen’s number to Anna. He simply placed his hand on top of mine, laughing softly. “I’ll let him know what’s happening and that you’ll hopefully be getting in touch with him soon. He has a direct line here and can set up a meeting. Like I said, we want to help and we want to keep the people of the city safe.” They both looked at each other, then looked at me, then Adrik. “Thank you both. For everything.” Vinny said. “Thank you for coming to me, Vinny. Like Sephie said, we want to help. I’m trying to ensure this happens as quietly as possible, which is why it’s taking so long. My apologies for that, but I’m trying to minimize casualties, to be frank,” Adrik said. Vinny stood up, Anna standing after him. “We’re going to get in touch with the people organizing in Vito’s area. We’ll convince them to call this number, sir. You have my word,” Vinny said, extending his hand to Adrik, who was also now standing. Anna

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moved to thank Adrik and shake his hand. As we walked from behind Adrik's desk, Vinny stopped, opening his arms for me.

*Sephie, my dear. You must come to the shop again. It's been too long.

Business has gotten slow because people aren't

guaranteed a beautiful woman when they come in," Vinny said, laughing.

"I promise I will come soon, Vinny. But you should be careful what you wish for. I'll make sure Anna is there at the same time and

you'll be so busy you won't be able to see straight," I said. Anna rolled her eyes at her husband's comment, but smiled. sweetly

at me.

"Thank you, Sephie. And please do come to the shop. If my shop is going to be closed, I'll probably help out there more. It'll be good to see you again," she said.

Adrik slid his arm around my waist. "We will visit soon, Vinny. She gets

cranky if it's been too long since she's had one of your

sandwiches," he said, making me laugh. He hugged my waist tighter, kissing my temple.

"Um, that's true. It's a thing," I said, still laughing. Vinny and Anna said their goodbyes and Stephen was at the office door to escort them back to the lobby.

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King of the Underworld by RJ Kane

Chapter 248

Sephie

When Stephen returned, Viktor, Ivan, and Misha were with him. Andrei joined us in the office as well.

“Why did you need Chen’s number?” Viktor asked Adrik.

“It was me. I needed it. I gave it to Anna so that the people who are organizing Vito’s area of the city against him can get in touch with Chen. I figured it was easier to just have one liaison for now,” I said.

“They’re starting to revolt in Vito’s area of the city now too?” Andrei asked.

“They’ve raised taxes so high that the businesses can’t keep up and now they’re smashing windows because nobody can afford to pay,” Adrik said.

“Papa Bear, can I borrow your phone pretty please?” I asked, making the “please” overly sweet on purpose. He took his phone from his pocket, dialing Chen’s number for me and putting it on speaker before handing me the phone. “You spoil me, my gigantic secretary,” I said.

“God help me, I hope this is Sephie,” Chen said when he answered the phone. It made me laugh.

“It’s me, Chen. Do you have a minute?” I asked.

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“For you, my girl? I’ve got at least 5,” he said, laughing.

“You’re a generous public servant, Chen. So, I gave your number to someone from Vito’s area of the city. They’re trustworthy.

They came to us to tell us that the same thing is happening there that’s happening in Sal’s area of the city. We’re trying to get in touch with as many of the leaders of this brewing revolt as we can. We want to make sure they know we’re on their side and want to help. We also want to make sure they don’t fu ck up our plans, if I’m being honest,” I said.

Chen laughed. “I heard that, my girl.”

“I also figured it would be easier if we had just one liaison right now, but if this gets to be too much for you, then we can like you an assistant or something. I’ll even see if I can find a cute one for you,” I said,
hire

“It’s all good, Sephie. I can handle it for now. I’m supposed to hear from DJ today about who’s running the resistance in Sal’s area of town,” he said. He made sure to pronounce “resistance” with an obnoxious French accent.

“Laissez le bon temps rouler, Chen,” I said, laughing.

He laughed loudly. “I can’t believe you remember that. I’ll let you know when these new people call me and what I hear from D] later.”

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“Thanks, Chen. You’re the best,” I said. I could still hear him laughing when I ended the call. I handed the phone back to Viktor.

“How many languages do you speak, gazelle?” Misha asked.

“I don’t actually speak French, so that one doesn’t count. Same for Spanish, I just know a few random words in both languages,”

I said.

“What did you say to him?” Andrel asked, curious.

“Laissez le bon temps rouler means ‘let the good times roll.’ Chen is his surname and is short for Cheney. His family is French.

He speaks it very poorly. Even worse than my Italian. But he told one of his girlfriends that he could speak French to try and

impress her when they first started dating. He said he would speak gibberish to her in a French accent and then he’d always end

with ‘laissez le bon temps rouler.’ I started laughing. “He told her it meant that she was beautiful. She believed him, too. His

terrible French got him laid. It became a joke between us after he told me about it. I just told him he was beautiful, basically,” I

said, still laughing. The guys all laughed with me at my silly story. I hadn’t realized how stressed I was getting until we all had a

moment’s relief. I loved these little moments when we could all have a reprieve, fleeting as they were, from everything piling on

us right now.

“What did you guys find out downstairs?” I asked.

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“Just as I suspected, princess. She’s very much a creature of habit. So is the guy she meets each time. It will be easy to get what we need,” Ivan said.

“Won’t she notice the missing product, though?” I asked. I was very curious about this whole process.

“You can take what you need as well as drop off a replacement at the same time, gazelle.” Misha said.

“But how do you know for sure you’re dropping off the same stuff? You guys aren’t planning on letting her snort something she thinks is her drug of choice that’s gonna kill her, are you?”

Ivan pointed to Viktor, “I told you it was a good idea!” His response caused another round of much-needed uncontrollable laughter.

“Are you guys going to get it from her or have someone else she doesn’t know do it?” I asked once we gained our composure once again.

“Oh, I’m definitely doing this one,” Misha said. He was clearly still very angry with Giana over this whole mess. Maybe even more so after this revelation about her. “I can use her inability to keep herself from staring at me to my advantage. You know how easy it is for me to make her all hot and bothered just by looking at her.”

I giggled. “I do know that. I’m embarrassed for her because of that. What about the guy she meets? Who gets to pick his

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pockets?”

“He’ll be easy. He’s just a punk kid. We can catch him on his way out of the building,” Ivan said.

I couldn’t help but grin. “It’s like an early Christmas!” I said, clapping my hands. “Although, this could be Armando’s unraveling, now that I think of it.”

“What do you mean, spider monkey?” Andrei asked.

“If she’s doing drugs, I don’t know how Armando is going to handle that news. He clearly loves her, but as more time goes by, I think we’re seeing the answer to the question of whether he’s going to pull her up or she’s going to pull him down. It might be too much for him at once, or it might be the wakeup call that he needs right now. I don’t know,” I said, chewing on my bottom lip.

“We should add it to the whiteboard,” Andrei said, grinning at me.

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King of the Underworld by RJ Kane

Chapter 249

Sephie

I felt Adrik stir next to me the following morning. I had moved from his chest at some point during the night and gotten under the covers. I was noticing that it happened anytime I dealt with trying to keep him calm. I was usually colder than normal the T next day. He had rolled over with me and had wrapped his arms around me, pulling me tight against him. I ran my fingers. lightly over his arm that was holding me tightly. He kissed the back of my shoulder. “Good morning, solnishko,” he said. He was still sleepy, so his voice was especially s*xy.

I rolled over to face him, his eyes finally opening when I kissed his lips. “You look almost as excited as I am that it’s morning again,” I said. He groaned, pulling me closer to him. He moved my leg over his hips, his hand rubbing my thigh lightly. I snuggled closer to him, my face in his chest.

“You’re not helping me want to wake up,” he said, moving his hand under his shirt I was wearing to my back. I suddenly felt an intense desire for him. He was working on talking me into morning s ex, granted. It also usually didn’t take much convincing, but

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this was so immediate and sudden that I knew it wasn't mine. I leaned my head back so I could look at him. He opened his eyes, a smirk on his face. "That was me, if you were confused."

"Is that how you normally feel or is there something special about this morning?" I asked, curious.

"It's normal. It's probably not even half of what I usually feel for you because I'm still tired from yesterday," he said. He had closed his eyes again, his hand running up and down my back still.

"Jesus, how do you keep your hands off me?" I asked. He laughed loudly, pulling me closer to him.

"Sometimes I can't," he said. He opened his eyes, revealing their dark blue color. He only gave me a moment before I felt that same intense desire again, only magnified this time. I couldn't fight it. Not that I wanted to. My lips desperately found his. His hands were leaving a trail of fire across my body already. I moaned, enjoying the warmth returning to my body. He stopped to look at me, a questioning look on his face.

"Your hands. It feels like they're on fire. It's amazing. Especially when I'm colder than normal," I said. He rolled onto his back, pulling me on top of him. His palm rested against my cheek, sending waves of warmth down my neck to my chest. I leaned against his hand, closing my eyes. He sat up, his lips finding mine once again. Instead of ripping his shirt off of me, like he

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usually did, he took his time unbuttoning his shirt while he kissed me, almost softly. Every time he touched me, I felt myself get more turned on. I couldn't fight his intense desire that I could feel, but it somehow allowed him to take his time. Where he usually felt almost frantic about needing me, he was patient with his touch. His kiss was slow, but building. He slowly slid the shirt off my shoulders, his hands covering every inch of my bare skin.

"I'm not sure what you're doing to me, but please don't stop," I said, breathlessly. My body was nothing but pleasure, just from his touch. I'd never felt anything like it before. I felt him h*ok his thumbs in my panties, ripping them off. His hands slowly slid down my thighs, then back up toward my hips. My breaths were coming faster as my body temperature increased beneath his hands. I felt his lips on my neck, causing me to moan loudly. He pushed my hips up so he could get his pants off. Instead of lowering me down on to him immediately, he kept me up so his hands could roam over my entire body. Where his hands didn't go, his mouth did. I was completely lost in the feeling. I was putty in his hands. His mouth left a trail of fire down my neck, following his hands. He was kissing, licking, and biting his way over my body. Each time I felt his skin against mine, it was like a new fire was started in that spot on my body.

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It felt like I was already almost over the edge and about to o*gasm. I was desperate to feel him inside me. "Please," I said, trying to catch my breath. "I need you." I was sure he was going to be quick about it, but he grabbed my hips and pushed me down on him slowly, like it was the first time and he didn't want to hurt me. As soon as he was all the way inside me, I felt my o*gasm start. I pushed my hips, down onto him hard, trying to ride the intense waves of pleasure I was feeling. I leaned my head back, grabbing onto his shoulders, unable to do much of anything except writhe in pleasure in his lap. He slid his hand between my breasts and left it there, bringing on a new wave of pleasure. It was so intense that I dug my nails into his shoulders. I felt like I couldn't hang on, even though he was barely moving. I heard him Inhale sharply when I dug my nails into his shoulder. His hand slid up my chest to the back of my neck. He grabbed a fistful of hair and pulled me to him. His lips crashed into mine. He was now desperate for me.

His restraint was quickly disappearing. He wrapped one arm around my hips, pushing me down onto him harder while increasing the rhythm. I could feel his pleasure building with each thrust, just as mine was building once again. I kissed him hard, pressing my body to his, my arms tight around his shoulders. He exhaled loudly and I knew he was close. My hands roamed over his

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muscled back and shoulders. I was trying to make him feel the intense pleasure that his hands were still giving me as I explored his body. I leaned back slightly so my hands could roam over his chest as I continued to ride him hard. I caught a look of surprise as my hand passed over his chest, in the same spot that made my o*gasms so much more intense. I left my hand there, feeling his heart rate increase, as well as his breathing. I knew it was his undoing. He pushed me over the edge one last time before I felt him explode inside me, his arms pulling me tightly against him, desperate to keep me as close as possible. He held me tightly for a few minutes, like he was almost afraid to move. I clung to him just as tightly, trying to catch my own breath.

“Holy shi t, Sephie, is that what you feel every time?” he asked.

“Which part?” I asked, giggling.

“The end.”

“Yeah, that’s mostly normal, although it was way more intense this time. The beginning was not normal. I’ve never felt that before. I’m guessing it was good for you?” I asked, leaning my head back to try and see his face. He loosened his grip on me enough that I could lean back slightly.

He took a deep breath in. “That was amazing. I’ve never felt anything that intense before.”

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I kissed his lips gently. "I can say the same thing. You made me almost have an o*gasm just by touching me."

"Really?"

"Yeah, you probably would have if I hadn't gotten greedy," I said, grinning. He ran his hand up to the back of my neck, grabbing my hair and kissing me deeply. "I like it when you're greedy. You're always allowed to be greedy," he said, smiling against my lips.

He inhaled again, moving to lay down. He opened his arms for me so I could lay across his chest. "Aren't we supposed to be getting up?" I asked as I settled in on his chest.

"Not after that. I'm still not convinced my legs are going to work if I try to stand up right now," he said, his hand running through my hair. I could feel the goosebumps rise over my entire body. I snuggled closer to him, laughing. "I might not be able to think about anything else for the rest of the day," he said.

"I have no regrets," I said, resting my chin on his chest so I could look at him. His handsome smile stretched across his face, which made me smile back at him.

"I love you so much, Persephone. I told you that you have my heart, but I think that wasn't exactly true," he said. He brushed a stray curl from my face. "You are my heart. For without you, I would cease to exist."

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King of the Underworld by RJ Kane

Chapter 250

Sephie

After falling asleep again for a short time, we finally managed to drag ourselves out of bed. I was happy to stay in bed for as long as possible today, but his meetings and my early Christmas present beckoned to us.

Adrik's schedule was quite full that afternoon, so while Viktor, Ivan, and Misha set about to ruin Giana's day, I stayed in the penthouse with Andrei while Stephen was in charge of Adrik's meetings. "Why are you not in on the pickpocketing party, Bubba?" I asked him as I curled up next to him to keep myself warm. I was on my third cup of coffee of the day. It helped keep me warm as well, but I also needed help staying awake. Turns out having mindblowing sex first thing in the morning completely zaps all my energy.

He stretched his giant arm around my shoulders so I could lean against his torso. Since my research confirmed he was, in fact, the warmest of all the guys, he took his heating pad duties very seriously. He would happily offer his body heat anytime I needed it when Adrik wasn't around. I think he was happy to have something that the other guys didn't have once again. Adrik was right.

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Andrei loved being the closest one to me in the beginning. He's been much happier since he was put on heater duty.

"I'm not good at it. I'm actually quite terrible at it, if I'm being honest," he said, seriously. I sat up, turning to look at him. He was serious.

"I can't imagine you being terrible at anything, Bubba," I said, settling back against him once more.

"No, it's true. I am. I get nervous and it makes it obvious that I'm trying to steal something every single time. Pickpocketing is an art," he said.

"Why do you get nervous?"

"I don't know. I don't really like touching other people unless I have to."

I laughed, trying to move away from him. "You should've told me this earlier. I didn't know I've been torturing you."

He laughed, pulling me back against him. "Don't be stupid, spider monkey. You're different. If it's someone I know, it's fine.

You've always been fine. I'm not like super weird about it. I just don't like touching strangers."

"Whew. Glad I made the cut," I said, giggling. "I know how you feel though.

I'm not a fan of it either. It makes me secretly happy

I'll never be able to get pregnant. Have you seen how many people just randomly touch a pregnant woman's stomach? It's

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disturbing. The body count would be so high..." I said, taking another drink of coffee. His whole body shook with his laughter, which shook mine too. I almost spilled my coffee.

"Sephie..."

"Uh oh. This is serious."

"Huh?"

"You used my name instead of calling me spider monkey. You guys only use my name when it's serious. I feel like I'm in trouble."

"Don't ever use my full name. I'll have a panic attack," I said, laughing.

"Spider Monkey Sephle," he said. I could hear the smile in voice. "I know that humor is the way you deal with your trauma and I appreciate it. But I want you to know that I've never met anyone that I admire as much as you. It actually used to be Ivan, but you took the top spot."

"It used to be Ivan?" I asked, curious.

I felt him nod his head. "Ivan doesn't know this, but he was talking in his sleep one time after he got hurt. He didn't have to go to the hospital, but years ago, even just getting hurt and having to be bandaged would send him back to fight his past. He wasn't struggling, so the other guys didn't wake up, but I couldn't sleep, so I heard everything. It was just like when we were all on the plane and heard you struggling against your uncle and everything he beat into you. I don't know all the details, obviously, but I

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know Ivan's mom sent him away to some facility when he was a kid. And I know he was tortured there. But I also know it made him stronger because he got out. Just like it did for you. You're both survivors." "Ivan told me his story when we were in Italy. You've got the basics of it. Why did you never tell him that you know?"

"Ivan's private. He's opened up more since you've been around. All of us have, really. But he was always so quiet before you. I wasn't sure if it would make him angry to know that I knew, so I kept it to myself. It's why his fighting at the hospital never bothered me. It would take all of us to hold him down. Viktor struggles with taking it personally. The other guys do too, just not as much. Adrik doesn't. I think he knows what happened to Ivan too. But I heard the pain in his voice that night when I heard him talking in his sleep. He's haunted by it, but he still shows up every single day. If that's not the definition of courage, I don't know what is." He sighed. "You're the same. You've been through so much and you still show up every single day, making sure everyone around you is happy, despite carrying the enormous pain of your past. I don't know how you do it, honestly, but I admire the hell out of both of you for it," he said, pulling me back against him and kissing the top of my head. bba, you're gonna make me all weepy," I said, sniffing.

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“I just wanted you to know, Sephie,” he said, hugging me tighter to him. We heard the door to the penthouse open and close. I quickly wiped the stray tears from my eyes, looking to see who was coming in. It was Misha, Viktor, and Ivan. Misha and Ivan both had shi t-eating grins on their faces. “Oh, this is gonna be good,” I said, unable to contain my excitement. Viktor had a small kit with him that he set down on the coffee table. “What’s that?” I asked, as I leaned forward to put my now empty coffee cup on the table. “It’s a drug test kit. It’ll tell us for sure what she’s on,” Viktor said. “Scientific,” I said, leaning back against Andrei once more. “And what about the guy? Does she give him anything other than money?” Andrei asked. Ivan pulled a roll of money out of his pocket. It was rolled tight, so it would be easy to hand off. “Let’s find out together,” he said, smiling, as he started to unroll the money. As he did that, Misha handed the small vial of powder to Viktor, who had set up his experiment on the table. “I feel like I’m in science class again,” I said, waiting for the results. Viktor put a small amount of the powder into another container with liquid already in it. He swirled it around. “What’s it supposed to do? Should I duck?” I was curious how this worked.

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Viktor laughed. “No explosions. Andrei is the expert at that anyway, so you’re safe. It changes color,” he said as he held it up to the light. As he did, the once clear liquid turned a dark blue, almost purple color.

Does that mean it’s a girl or a boy?” I asked, not able to contain my laughter. They all laughed.

“It means she’s a coke addict, sestrichka,” Viktor said, still laughing.

Ivan pulled a small sheet of paper from in between two of the hundred-dollar bills in the roll. He looked at it, but then handed it to me. “It’s in Italian, I think,” he said. I glanced at the note, chewing on my bottom lip. I got up and went to the kitchen. I kept a small notepad in one of the drawers to write the grocery list on. I grabbed it and walked back to the couch.

The note didn’t make sense at first glance. It was four sentences that didn’t necessarily belong together. I translated them, exactly like they were written on the note.

Safe impossible, but all documents there

Walls clean in north, west, and south rooms

Fourth window from the east corner

Top of the stairs, third door on right

“Any guesses as to what she’s talking about?” I asked, after reading them what the note said. Ivan picked up the notepad, studying the sentences for a moment.

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“Safe impossible. Is she talking about Armando’s safe at his house?” Misha asked.

“That’s what I thought too. Nobody is getting in that thing without Armando’s permission,” I said. “Have you guys been to his house? Do you know what any of the rest of it could mean?”

“It’s been a while since I was there. I think we should ask Keith about this,” Viktor said.

Ivan, who was still deep in thought, looked to Viktor. “Does Armando have expensive artwork at his house?”

“He does at his house in Italy, that’s for sure,” I said, remembering being completely awestruck at some of the paintings he had on his wall.

“I think she’s planning on robbing him,” Ivan said, running his hand over his goatee.

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