

## **King of the Underworld Chapter 271 - 280**

### **Chapter 271**

Adrik

I heard Sephie chuckle quietly behind me. I could feel her relaxing more now that she'd seen him speak. Andrei spoke up to answer his question. "Bombs. The two smaller warehouses are easily accessed. You guys will take care of those. The warehouse at the docks is crawling with Sal's people. It's going to be harder to get close enough to that one to plant explosives, so we'll take care of that one."

Oscar looked at Andrei. "You can make them all go boom at once. We can still plant the explosives on the smaller warehouses, but then be available to help at the docks. I've seen firsthand how many of Sal's guys are at the docks. That's a big job. You're going to need extra help there."

"Remote charges aren't as reliable as I'd like," Andrei said.

"You can confirm with Trino, because you shouldn't take my word for it, but I figured out a reliable system in Colombia for remote

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charges. Worked like a charm every time. I'll show you how. That's why Trino sent me here," Oscar said. "Then, we can set the smaller warehouses to go boom at exactly the same time as the one at the docks. Maximum chaos. That strategy is what helped Trino rise to power in Colombia."

"Of course Trino would send us his explosives expert," Sephie said in Russian.

"If it turns out I was wrong about him, I'm going to kill him myself for making me like him so much."

We all laughed, which

put the dealers at ease. "We'll check with Trino. No offense, of course," I said to Oscar.

"None taken, jefe. He told me to tell Sephie that my flair for the dramatic was almost as good as his should you question whether I was telling the truth," he said.

"Point in your favor, Oscar," Sephie said in English.

I grabbed her hand, pulling her to the bedroom while I called Trino to confirm Oscar was telling us the truth. This time, he picked up on the first ring. "Jefe, que pasa?"

"Trino, did you send your explosives expert up here?" I asked.

"Si, Jefe. Oscar. He's been one of my trusted guys for years. He was instrumental in my rise to power, too."

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“Trino, if it turns out I was wrong about you and you’re not this awesome in real life, I’m going to kill you myself for making me like you so f\*\*king much,” Sephie said. She sounded serious, but she had a wicked glint in her eye when she said it.

“Miha. I would never lie to you. I’m really this awesome. Maybe not as awesome as Jefe, but I need a goal to aspire to,” he said, laughing. “I’m guessing you’re moving forward on your plans to get rid of the brawn if you’ve met Oscar?”

“Yeah, I want to move quickly. I’m worried you’re facing a war and want to be available to help. We should be able to move quickly. Brawn first, bosses next.”

“Good. I could use Oscar when he’s done there.”

We ended the call soon after. Sephie looked more relaxed than she had when we first got to the apartment. “Your thoughts on Oscar so far?” I asked.

“I feel like he’s telling the truth, but not just because Trino confirmed it for us. I think he can be trusted,” she said. She was still feeling unsure, but I could also tell that she was trying to be confident. I pulled her to me, holding her tightly. “Misha and Andrei were right, love. You’ve been right more times than you’ve been wrong. I’ve come to rely on your unique set of skills and I still

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have complete confidence in them. When you can't feel confident in yourself, you can borrow mine," I said. I felt her inhale deeply and her body completely relaxed. She looked up at me, that spark that I love so much evident in her eyes. "Thank you," she said sweetly. She stood on her toes, pressing her lips to mine. She wrapped her arms around my neck, burying her face in my neck. She stayed there for a few moments before finally relaxing her hold on me. "We should get back," she said, reluctantly. "One more minute," I said, pulling her back to me as she giggled at me. She didn't resist. She just rested her head against my chest as I held her close.

The guys had been working on revising the plan while Sephie and I were in the bedroom. They heard Trino's confirmation on the phone through their earpieces, so they knew Oscar could be trusted. He was giving Andrei a tutorial on how he set up remote detonation to work reliably when we walked back out to the living room. Oscar looked to us, expectantly. Sephie smiled at him. "We appreciate you being here, Oscar. Especially given what Trino's facing at the moment. We promise to get you back to Colombia as quickly as possible. He's going to need you again," she said. While Oscar had seemed relaxed the entire time he'd been in the apartment, he was visibly relieved that he got Sephie's

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approval. "Trino told me how important your opinion of me was. I'm glad I'm in," he said, smiling broadly at her.

"Knowing Trino, he also told you what will happen if you ever betray us. Whatever he told you, I can guarantee it was not an embellishment," she said. She crossed her arms across her chest, looking at him seriously.

Oscar laughed. "He did tell me. I'm not that stupid. You have nothing to worry about," he said as he went back to the conversation with Andrei about how to set up the detonators.

We eventually came to an agreement on a new plan for the three warehouses.

The only variable we weren't entirely sure on yet was Sephie. Ivan and I had discussed it briefly before, but neither of us liked the options we came up with. We had discussed leaving Ivan with her at the penthouse, but that left them vulnerable and we needed him at the warehouse. He briefly discussed bringing her with us, but I wasn't happy about that plan either. I didn't like the idea of putting her in danger just to keep her close to me. She hadn't brought it up again, but I knew she was still worrying about it.

After the dealers left the apartment, Ivan brought the subject up once more.

We needed to make a decision. "The biggest question now is what to do with the princess during this," he said.

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She glanced nervously at him, then to me. “What are the options?” she asked. She was definitely still worried about it. We could all see it written all over her face.

“So far, we’ve only come up with two options. I stay at the penthouse with you or you come with us. I can’t say I’m happy about either option,” Ivan said.

“But they need you. You can’t stay behind,” she said immediately. It was no surprise that she was thinking of the guys before she was thinking of herself. She started to chew on her lip as she tried to come up with a solution. “What if you took me to the house and left me there? No one will know where I am. There are plenty of guards. I’ll be safe there.”

“Absolutely not. I’m not leaving you alone,” I said.

“Then that only leaves one option,” she said.

Stephen, in his quiet way, said, “this might be a big help to us. She’s a hell of a shot. She’s fast and she can easily defend herself. It’s not like she’s going to be deadweight if she comes with us.”

“I was just thinking the same thing,” Andrei said. “I would be more worried about her if she wasn’t with us. With us, we all know she’s going to do just as much damage as we could do and we know where she is at all times.”

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Viktor also agreed with Stephen and Andrei. “You know I don’t like anyone to be distracted. We would all be distracted if she wasn’t with us,” he said. “She’s been training with us for long enough now. She can handle herself and we’ll be able to keep an eye on her, the same as we keep an eye on each other.”

I inhaled deeply. They were right. I just didn’t want to put her in danger because I couldn’t leave her alone. I ran my hand through my hair, looking at the floor. I was still struggling with the decision. I felt her hand in mine. “Misha, what do you think?” she asked.

I watched as he ran through possibilities in his mind. He clearly looked nauseous. “What was that one? That was a definite no whichever one it was,” she said.

“That was you and Ivan staying at the penthouse. I think you’re coming with us, gazelle,” he said. Just to make sure, he ran through that possibility in his head, that faraway look in his eye once more. He ran his hands quickly over his arms, his upper body shuddering with the goosebumps he was obviously feeling. That settles that.

I looked down at Sephie. She looked unsure, but she wasn’t arguing with the decision either. She had the same look when the guys were trying to talk her into going up against Mike. She easily dominated in that situation. I had faith in her abilities. They

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were right; it would be better to know she was safe with us rather than worrying about her while we were away from her. I smiled to myself thinking about how protective they'd all come to be of her. She meant so much to all of us. We would do everything in our power to ensure she was always safe

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King of the Underworld by RJ Kane

Chapter 272

Chapter Two Hundred Seventy-Two

Stephen

We were in the penthouse going over the plan one last time before we left the building. Our nerves were on edge, but Sephie's more so than the rest of us. We were trying to reassure her as much as we could, but I knew that adrenaline was going to prove useful once the chaos started. She could shoot better than a majority of the guards we had on staff. She was hell in the ring.

She also had six attack dogs ready to rip anyone apart that dared to look at her the wrong way.

I found myself thinking about just how much she'd come to mean to me lately. I'd never been close to anyone my entire life. I

didn't have many friends growing up. I was always the quiet kid. That carried over into my adult life. When I figured out I was gay, I retreated even further into my shell. It took me years to tell my parents.

There were members of my family that still didn't

know. It was much more accepted now, but my family was very traditional. It was just easier to come up with reasons. why I

wasn't married with kids yet than it was to have the conversation with them about the truth.

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I had resigned myself to keeping that secret from the other guys forever. They were all alpha males. I expected them to have a huge problem with it. I was worried they would see me as weak. My perspective changed when Sephie came along. She was always unapologetically herself and the other guys loved her more because of it. It took me a long time to warm up to her, simply because I was worried she would figure out my secret and tell the others. But the more I tried to put distance between me and Sephie, the more she found ways to show me that being myself was the best way to be. In her own special way, she coaxed me out of my own darkness that I'd put myself in..

As it turns out, she did figure out my secret before the other guys, but she didn't tell anyone. She even swore Adrik to secrecy when she told him. She let me tell them in my own time. And they accepted me even more than they already did once I told them. Secrets kept in the dark can destroy you, but secrets brought to the light have no power over you anymore.

We were gearing up, almost ready to leave. I saw Viktor catch Sephie alone. It looked like he was giving her a pep talk. He'd been worried about bringing her with us, as he ultimately felt responsible for all of us, all the time. But he didn't like the idea of

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leaving her behind, either. I was sure she was going to be an asset, so I was happy she was coming along. Andrei was right, we'd all be worried about her if she wasn't with us.

We knew our individual roles. Sephie was to stick with Ivan or Adrik if something was to happen to Ivan. The rest of us would step in, when and if needed. Misha was certain that it was going to work out for the best. Our plan was solid. Oscar had provided valuable information on how to make the original plan even better, so we were expecting things to go smoothly.

We walked off the elevator toward the vehicles. We were taking a combination of SUVs and bikes, just in case we needed options. It would also be more difficult to separate us if we had more vehicles. The dealers that were helping us were going to meet us at Sephie's old apartment. Chen had come to the building, with instructions on how to get to the parking garage underneath the building without anyone seeing him. He was taking another SUV, just to add more vehicles to the party. He was waiting on us when we exited the elevator.

"Who's ready to have New Year's celebrations early?" he asked as we got closer to him. He had a good sense of humor, and like Sephie, tended to make jokes when he was nervous. We were all in mission mode, however. His face fell when nobody laughed.

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“Right. Jokes later,” he said, clearing his throat.

Viktor had brought a few guys from the building security team on as well.

They were all guys that had been working for us for

years. We’d used them before for various things. They knew how to handle

themselves and we could trust them. We knew that

the two smaller warehouses should be easy to get to, but the warehouse at the

docks was covered with armed guards. Even

with all the extra people, we were going to be outnumbered.

I had scouted the warehouse at the docks and found a suitable nest where I

could even the playing field as much as possible.

They wouldn’t see us coming, hopefully.

The dealers were waiting at Sephie’s old apartment when we got there. The

security detail guys had already gone ahead to the

two smaller warehouses to get eyes on them. We grabbed the dealers and went

to the first warehouse. Conversation was

minimal. Our guys had earpieces, like usual, but the dealers didn’t.

We pulled up a few blocks from the first warehouse. This was the smallest of

the warehouses. They were running the operation

24/7, but there weren’t that many people in the warehouse. Only enough to

make the brawn along with a handful of guards and

that was it. Our plan was to get the explosives attached to the building in

strategic spots and get out without being seen.

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Because this one was an easier job, only a few guys were needed to get everything in place. Andrei and Oscar went with two other guys. The rest of us waited as backup if needed. Before they left, Sephie had to hug Andrei. She was trying to be tough, but she couldn't help herself. If anything, it was motivation for him to make it back. While the rest of us didn't have a romantic relationship with her like Adrik, there was still a special relationship between her and the five of us. If ever there was unconditional love, Sephie was it. She was something special in our lives and not a single one of us wanted to give that up. Andrei, Oscar, and the other two guys jogged toward the warehouse. It was approaching midnight, so we had the cover of darkness to help conceal our movements. We could hear everything through the earpieces, but there wasn't much to listen to. Communication was kept to an absolute minimum. It took maybe 20 minutes and the four guys were jogging back to us. We all chuckled when Sephie exhaled loudly as soon as she saw Andrei come into view. Ivan put his arm around her shoulders, smiling down at her. It was nice to have someone worried for your safety. We loaded up quickly and drove to the second warehouse. It was much the same as the first. In and out with no problems. We

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were ahead of schedule on our way to the warehouse at the docks. I was going to set up in my nest, silently taking out as many of the guards around the perimeter as I could. When I was scouting, I counted at least 10 that I could easily pick off. Once the first line of defense had been neutralized, the rest of the guys were going to come in on foot. This warehouse was almost three times the size of the other two. It was going to need more explosives to blow completely. I could only cover one side of the warehouse from above. Two sides were on the water. The third wasn't accessible without announcing our presence. That made me nervous. I liked having a better vantage point, but I'd covered worse. I would make this work. I found myself feeling overly protective, not only of Sephie but of the other guys too. We really were a family. I was going to make sure we all made it out. It only took me a few minutes to get into position. "Ready." "Ready when you are," Viktor said.

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Chapter 273

Chapter Two Hundred Seventy-Three

Stephen

While it was somewhat macabre, I got enjoyment from counting out loud whenever I took out one of the guards. “One...two...three...” So far no one else in the warehouse had noticed. “Four...five...” Still business as usual in the warehouse. “Six, seven, eight...that last group shouldn’ta been f\*\*king around on duty, but I appreciate them making my job easier.” I heard quiet. laughter over my earpiece. “Aaaaand...nine. Almost to a personal best, folks.” More laughter through my earpiece. “Oh, number ten found number nine. That’s not helpful, number ten. But wait, there’s more. Eleven...twelve...go. Now.”

I could see everyone moving from my vantage point. The people inside the warehouse were slowly becoming aware that something was going on. I was trying to pick them off as they came out of the building. Andrei and Oscar were systematically moving around the building, setting up the explosives. The two guys that went with them for the first two warehouses were moving in the opposite direction around the building. Everyone else was providing cover for them.

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I kept an eye on as much as I could through the scope of my rifle. Things were happening quickly, I caught sight of one guy that had taken cover as he came out of the warehouse. He was on the phone. His call ended abruptly, thanks to me. “We may have a problem. Someone made a call. Everybody watch your 6.”

“One wall to go,” Andrei said.

The people inside the warehouse had barricaded themselves inside, thinking that was going to save them. I took a moment to find Sephie. She was between Adrik and Ivan, her gun pointed at the warehouse like she belonged here. She was one of us now.

I checked the alley leading to the warehouse. Quiet, so far. I could hear gunfire at the back of the warehouse, where Andrei and Oscar were. “Remind me to thank Trino for sending Oscar. He just saved my ass,” Andrei said. “All charges set. On our way back.”

I did another sweep of the perimeter. This time, there was movement up the alley. “We’ve got company. Their backup just arrived. Don’t know how many yet, but I’ll try to get as many as I can. They’re coming up the alley,” I said.

I counted five guys trying to quickly make it to the warehouse. They were being smart about moving up the alley, so I couldn’t,

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get a clear shot. Whoever made the call must've warned them I was here.

"They're on to me. It's difficult for me to get a clear shot on any of them." I looked further down the alley to see more guys coming.

"More guys coming too. I count 15 total. So far. I need help drawing them out so I can get a clean shot. They're using cover as much as possible. Oops. Make that 14."

Misha and Viktor moved closer to the alley, along with several of the security detail guys to try and keep the new group from

advancing any closer. The alley was the easiest entrance point. The pressure from Misha and Viktor caused the new arrivals to

make mistakes, which gave me a clear shot. "Down to 11. I haven't seen anymore coming yet. I also haven't checked the other

access points. Be careful down there." As soon as I said that, I heard Ivan say, "we've got more coming from the west side."

Shit. That's directly beside where Ivan, Adrik, and Sephie were. "How many? Can you tell?" I asked.

"Looks like just a handful. We should be able to hold them off. Andrei's back," he said.

There was steady gunfire in both directions now. I was slowly working on picking off the guys in the alley. I checked on the group coming from the other direction, toward Ivan. I couldn't get a clear shot on any of them. I went back to the alley just in time to see

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more guys arrive. “Shi t. We’ve got more incoming up the alley. At least 20 this time.”

“Almost clear this way, but I don’t like that more are showing up. We need to get out of here,” Ivan said.

“We can go around the warehouse,” Andrei said.

“I can’t cover you that way,” I said.

“You won’t need to. I can blow the building as soon as we’re clear. Bait the rest of the guys toward the building, we won’t have to worry about being followed,” Andrei said.

“We’ll do it. Ivan, get Sephie out of here. Stephen, cover Ivan and Sephie as far as you can. The rest of us are going around the warehouse. Andrei will detonate as soon as we’re clear,” Adrik said.

No one had time to object. Ivan grabbed Sephie’s hand and was moving quickly toward the exit to the west. It was clear. There was a bike close, so they’d be able to leave quickly. Misha and Viktor were falling back toward the rest of the group, drawing the guys in the alley toward them. Everyone moved together, slowly, toward the back of the warehouse. I covered Ivan and Sephie until they got on the bike, then I lost sight of them. I went back to covering the alley. I managed to get a few more guys, but I would need to move soon or I’d be caught in the blast.

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“Stephen, get out of there,” Adrik said as they neared the back of the warehouse.

“You ain’t gotta tell me twice,” I said, laughing to myself.

It went quiet as I broke down my rifle. It took me exactly 45 seconds to get it broken down and ready to move. I was on my way down the stairs within a minute. As soon as I hit the ground floor, my bike was waiting on me. I’d pulled it inside the building to hide it from sight. “Clear,” I said as I pulled out of the building. I was one block over from the warehouse, so the street was quiet.

I still didn’t waste any time getting out of there.

“3...2...1...” Andrei said. I felt the explosion when it happened. I expected it to knock out our earpieces, given that there were explosions throughout the city at the same time, so I wouldn’t know that everyone made it out until we were back at the penthouse. The plan was to regroup at the building, then we were going to grab Dr. Moretti in the wee morning hours, so he wouldn’t know what hit him.

This was the worst part of any plan. The waiting. The not knowing. I expected Ivan and Sephie to be waiting on me when I got to the building. Then we’d wait for the rest of the group to show up. I tried not to be nervous, but I always failed miserably.

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I pulled into the parking garage. No bike. Shi t. Ivan and Sephie should be here. Where the f\*\*k are they?

I only had to wait a few minutes and the rest of the group showed up. “We’ve got a problem. Ivan and Sephie aren’t here,” I said as they pulled up. Adrik went nuclear right away.

“They should be here already. Where the f\*\*k are they? Did you see anything before you left?” he asked, His anger, much like my own, turned him into a beast. He wasn’t Adrik anymore. He was his anger personified. I knew his anger wasn’t directed at me, but he was still a sight to behold. The dealers were visibly apprehensive. They’d never seen this side of Adrik. He looked like he was ready to snap at any moment. Every muscle in his body was flexed, every vein engorged with blood. If I really was a vampire, I’m sure I’d be able to hear his heartbeat loud and clear. His eyes had an intensity to them when he was angry that made you feel a sort of primal fear. You felt like he was a predator and you were definitely the prey.

“I covered them until they got on the bike. I lost sight of them after that. The explosion knocked out the earpieces so I didn’t hear anything either,” I said.

Viktor pulled his phone from his pocket. “I gave Sephie a tracker just in case,” he said as he checked his phone. “I’ve got a

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location. She's moving ”

Misha had gone to one of the SUVs to grab new earpieces for everyone. “What direction?” he asked as he handed us all new earpieces. It was easier than waiting for them, all to reset themselves. Faster, too. We didn't have time to waste.

“They're headed to the north end of the city,” Viktor said.

“That's Sal's area of the city,” Andrei said, a clear look of worry on his face.

“He's a dead man.” Adrik said as he grabbed a helmet and climbed on a bike.

We all followed quickly. Even the dealers jumped into two SUVs, ready to help us out once more. Looks like taking care of Salvadori was getting bumped up on the schedule.

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King of the Underworld by RJ Kane

Chapter 274

Chapter Two Hundred Seventy-Four

Stephen

We followed Sephie's signal. As we got closer, it was obvious that she had stopped moving. It was going to take all of us to keep Adrik from rushing into whatever was waiting for us. It was highly likely that they were going to use Sephie to set a trap for Adrik.

We got within half a block of Sephie's signal and Viktor stopped us. "She hasn't moved for a few minutes. I think it's best we see what we're walking into first. We don't know if Ivan is still with her or how many guys they have."

"You and Andrei go check it out. I won't be able to hold myself back if I go," Adrik said.

Viktor nodded and he left with Andrei on foot to get a better look at where Sephie was. They were only gone a few minutes. The looks on their faces when they returned made us all panic. Viktor held up the tracker he'd given Sephie, along with the helmets they were wearing when they left the warehouse.

"Hopefully this means Ivan is still with her, at the very least," I said.

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We could all tell that Adrik was slowly losing control of his anger. I'd seen him when he'd lost control a few times. The carnage that he left in his wake was impressive. He wouldn't hesitate to burn this city to the ground if it meant finding her. Lord help the people of the city if something happened to Sephie. There would be no survivors.

Adrik looked toward Misha. "Anything?" he asked, almost desperately. Misha got that faraway look in his eye that meant he was running through scenarios in his head.

"They're still alive as far as I can tell, but that's all I've got right now," he said. "F\*\*K," Adrik said. "She could be anywhere."

"We'll find her. Ivan will protect her, as long as he's with her. They don't know who they're dealing with when it comes to both Ivan and Sephie. Ten bucks says they escape before we can find them," Viktor said, trying to put Adrik at ease.

"We're going after Dr. Moretti right now. I need to beat someone within an inch of their life right now," Adrik said, getting back on his bike. Might be a change of plans for the doctor, too. We had planned on holding him until the bosses were taken care of and then turning the doctor over to the police. They would get the credit for capturing him and he would have a very public trial for his crimes against the city. We might be improvising on that plan now.

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It didn't take long to make it across town to the doctor's house. The house was quiet. He was being watched 24/7 to make sure he didn't try to escape. The guys watching him said he'd gotten home about an hour before we arrived and had been in the house since. There were a few lights on in the house. The rest of the block was quiet. We waited to see if we could see movement in the house. He walked by an open window eventually, giving us the confirmation we needed it was him.

Adrik didn't say a word, he just moved quickly toward the house. Even when he was so angry he couldn't see anything but red, he was still a skilled assassin. He moved silently and quickly to the house. He was inside in seconds, moving like a ghost through the house. The doctor didn't know what hit him. His face was unrecognizable by the time we got in the house. It took all four of us to pull Adrik off the doctor. We managed to push him to the next room while the other guys that were with us got the doctor secured and removed him from the house. They would take him back to the building and put him in a room.

Adrik started to calm down, but only slightly, after the doctor was removed from the house. We walked back outside, back to the bikes. He was slowly becoming distraught as his mind played out every scenario around Sephie being captured. We needed to

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find her quickly or there was going to be tremendous fallout when he fully unleashed his chaos.

I caught Misha on the way back to the bikes. I took my earpiece out and clicked it off, motioning for him to do the same. He did, but had a concerned look on his face. “I have an idea, but I need your help,” I said.

“I’m listening,” he said, puzzled.

“It involves the high strangeness we’ve all witnessed with Sephie and well, all of us. We have to convince Boss that he can find Sephie on his own. He can feel her. I know he can. We just have to convince him he can. I need your help to do that,” I said.

Misha thought for a minute, then a small smile crept over his face. “Stephen, you might be a genius.”

Sephie

“We’ll do it. Ivan, get Sephie out of here. Stephen, cover Ivan and Sephie as far as you can. The rest of us are going around the warehouse. Andrei will detonate once we’re clear,” Adrik said.

I didn’t even have time to object to leaving him before Ivan had grabbed my hand, pulling me away from Adrik. There was no time to say anything to him before we were gone, I knew I would see him in a few minutes, but there was a gnawing feeling in the pit of my stomach about leaving him. I didn’t like it.

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We were moving so quickly that I didn't have time to say anything to Ivan either. I just went with Ivan, knowing he would keep me safe until Adrik could make it back to the building. We ran to the bike that was waiting for us and were leaving in under two minutes.

It was quiet on the route we took. We were out of sight of Stephen now, so we were on our own until we made it back to the building. I was still nervous, even though I was trying not to be.

"At least you're not bleeding profusely this time," I said, as I held onto Ivan just a little tighter as we were speeding through the streets weaving our way back to the building.

He chuckled, patting my leg. He slowed to make a turn onto a new street and we were suddenly surrounded. There was an SUV in front of us, blocking the turn, and two more quickly blocked us from behind and the side. Ivan made a move to drive down the sidewalk to get away, but the vehicle in front of us moved at the same time, blocking our path. It gave them just enough time for two guys to jump out of the SUV behind us and catch up to us. One of them grabbed me from behind, ripping me off the bike.

"Ivan!" I screamed as they grabbed me. He stopped immediately and jumped off to try and get to me. I had screamed on

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purpose, to make the guy that grabbed me think I was helpless. I felt his grip on me relax slightly as he assumed he could easily manage me. I was still wearing my helmet, so I leaned forward as far as I could, then crashed my head into his as hard as I possibly could. He stumbled backward, his grip on me completely loose now. I got free, turned to face him, and promptly shot him in the face.

There were more guys on us. I turned to see Ivan fighting three guys. I pulled my helmet off to see better, but I couldn't get a clear shot of any of them without risking shooting Ivan. I did consider trying it, since I knew he wouldn't feel anything, but I decided against it. I ran toward him to help. Two more guys rushed me when I got closer to Ivan. They both slammed me into a parked car. One of them put a gun to my head, which made me freeze. The other guy grabbed my gun. The guy that had the gun to my head whistled loudly, which caused Ivan to look toward me. He stopped as soon as he saw they had a gun to my head.

He'd still managed to kill two of the guys that were on him, though.

"Hands where I can see them or she dies," the guy with the gun said to Ivan. He put his hands up immediately. They searched him, taking his weapons from him. "Get in," he said, motioning to one of the SUVs. They picked me up off the car and searched

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me as well. They found the tracker in my pocket and took it. They threw me in the SUV with Ivan; they zip tied both of our hands in front. The guy that held a gun on me looked at me and said, “you try anything and he dies.” He then looked at Ivan. “You try anything and she dies.” They all got back in their vehicles and started driving. Once we were moving. Ivan reached over and pulled me closer to him. He looked over at me, saying quietly in Russian, “we’re going to get out of this. Don’t worry, princess.”

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King of the Underworld by RJ Kane

Chapter 275

Chapter Two Hundred Seventy-Five

Sephie

I felt strangely calm when I looked at him. I could see the look of surprise on his face and raised an eyebrow at him. I was confused as to why he would be surprised.

“Your eyes are almost black, princess. Keep that. It’s going to prove useful,” he said, winking at me.

Game on, motherf\*\*kers.

I held onto Ivan as best I could, with our hands zip tied, as the vehicle we were in sped through the city. While Ivan had been driving south, toward the penthouse, we were now driving north. I wasn’t sure who’s part of town we were headed to, but I was sure it wasn’t going to be good. The vehicle made a stop several blocks from where they had grabbed us. One guy got out and left our bike helmets on the ground. I saw him toss the tracker Viktor had given me before we left the building in between the helmets. We continued our way north.

Despite our situation, I was still able to remain calm. I wasn’t sure if it was Ivan’s doing. He looked almost happy about getting

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grabbed. I knew he would be able to withstand whatever they put him through. I also knew that Adrik would not stop until he found me and I knew without a shadow of a doubt that he would find me. I didn't know how. I just knew he was coming for me, along with the other four guys. Whoever had made the dumb decision to grab me was going to regret that life choice.

We eventually pulled into a parking garage of an older building. It was non-descript. It looked like every other building in the city.

The garage was mostly empty, which likely meant the building was mostly abandoned. This doesn't bode well for us. It would take Adrik a year to search every abandoned building in the city to find us. They pulled us from the vehicle, ushering us to the elevator. Well, at least that still works. We went up to the 5th floor. It looked like it was an office building in a previous life. They took us across the floor to a room on the opposite side of the floor as the elevator. I saw Ivan taking mental notes of our surroundings as we walked. He was silently calm beside me. He made sure to stay close enough to me that I could feel his presence as we were led through the maze of desks that had been left behind.

They opened the door to the room and I instantly recognized it. Shit. It was the same room, exactly, that I was in when I had the

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nightmare my first night at the house. It felt like a lifetime ago. I was afraid I knew what was going to happen. Ivan glanced at me, noticing a change in my expression, but he said nothing. I knew he would wait until we were alone to ask me anything.

The only difference between the room before us and the one in my dream was there were now two chairs, instead of just one.

They put each of us in a chair and cut the zip ties off our hands, only to zip tie us to the chair instead. Ivan watched everything.

like a hawk, I knew he was looking for weaknesses. If anyone could find a way out of this, it was him.

The men that had grabbed us walked out of the room, leaving us alone. Ivan scooted his chair closer to mine. "What is it about this room, princess? I saw the look on your face when we walked in," he said quietly, in Russian.

"I've been here before," I said. He raised an eyebrow, shocked. "No, not like that. I had a nightmare the first night I was at the house, after Anthony choked me at the restaurant. It started at my uncle's house, then faded to this room. I was tied to a chair and everything. Anthony came in. Of course I said something smart to him and he punched me. That's when he told me he was going to use me as bait. I screamed and woke up, so I don't know anything past that."

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“Well, at least we know who grabbed us,” he said. “I should be able to grab a knife when they come back, if I can get them close enough to me. Princess, look at me.” I turned my head to look at him. “They’re going to use me to scare you. To intimidate you into doing whatever they want you to do. They’ll likely torture me to try and break you. I’ve been in this situation before. I’m going to have to pretend that I can feel what they’re doing. They can’t know that I don’t feel pain, so I have to put on a show. It’s just a show. Got it?” he said, winking at me.

“This is why you’re my protector, Super Squish,” I said.

“Just like you screamed when they grabbed you, we need them to continue thinking they have an advantage over us. They’ll get sloppy at some point. We just have to outlast them. I can handle whatever they’re going to do to me. I need you to do the same, princess,” he said.

I felt my anger getting stronger. I looked over at him again, only to see surprise in his eyes once again. I laughed. “How dark are they now?” I asked.

“You look scary, princess. Keep it up.”

They left us alone for what seemed like forever. Ivan and I talked quietly to pass the time. Ivan picked ridiculous subjects to help

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me stay calm. We still inevitably ended up talking about how long it would take the others to find us.

“I realize we have no whiteboard here and we really don’t even have a way to tell how much time is passing, since they took your watch. Di ck move, by the way, but how long do you think it’s going to take them to find us?” I asked. We kept our conversations to Russian only, even though it didn’t really matter at this point.

Ivan chuckled. “I say no longer than a day and a half.”

I contemplated his answer. I would’ve liked a shorter prediction, but I decided to take the over instead of under. “I say three days.”

Ivan clicked his tongue at me. “Princess, you’re not being pessimistic on me now are you?”

“I like to call it being realistic. It’s a big city and they have no way to find us.”

“You underestimate your bond with your go ddamn prince. He’ll find you.”

As I was about to answer, the door to the room opened. I kept my mo uth shut, now feeling nervous to see who was going to walk through the door. I fully expected Anthony to walk through the door, just like he had in my dream. Two of the guys that had grabbed us walked in and closed the door behind them. Given that we’d killed three of their buddies, they didn’t seem to be

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terribly happy with us. They didn't say a word, they simply leaned against a table across the room and watched us.

Ivan said, in English, "are you boys going to stare all night or are you going to tell us what you want with us?"

The two men looked at each other, then looked back at Ivan, but still didn't say a word. They'd been speaking Italian when they grabbed us, so it made me wonder if their English wasn't that great. I translated what Ivan had said to Italian. Both men were surprised to hear me speak Italian.

"Yeah, I know, right? It means I understood everything you as sholes were saying when you grabbed us. I don't forget easily.

When we get out of here, and we will get out of here, I'm going to enjoy sending you to meet your dead friends," I said. I could feel my anger rising as I thought about what they said about me when they grabbed me. They actually had a discussion about whether they could get away with having their way with me before they brought us to the building. They only decided against it because Ivan was with me and they'd have to explain killing him. They had orders to bring us both alive.

One of them, a clear smirk on his face, said, "strong words from someone who's tied to a chair."

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“Ask your buddy how much stronger my actions are than my words, Oh, wait. You can’t. I shot him in his go ddamn face,” I said. I had to admit, I was actually enjoying this little exchange. They had grossly underestimated me when they grabbed me.

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King of the Underworld by RJ Kane

Chapter 276

Chapter Two Hundred Seventy-Six

Sephie

“Princess, careful. I don’t know what you’re saying, but I know you’re verbally owning them right now,” Ivan said to me in

Russian. He said it quietly, so the two guys barely heard him.

Ivan was right. I was supposed to be making them think they had the upper hand with me, so I tried to show restraint.

“You never answered his question. What do you want with us?” I asked in Italian.

“We’re just following orders. Our boss is very interested in you and the men you keep company with,” one of them said.

“Who’s your boss?” I asked.

“Patience, dear. You’ll find out soon enough.” With that, they both got up and walked out of the room, closing the door behind them.

Ivan looked at me, waiting for me to tell him what had just been said. Before I could tell him, he said, “your Italian is better when you’re angry.” His wide smile spread across his face.

I laughed. “You didn’t understand what they were talking about when they grabbed us. They were trying to decide if they had

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enough time to pull over and take turns raping me. They decided against it because they would've had to kill you and they couldn't come up with a reason to cover. I told them when we get out of here, I would enjoy sending them to meet their dead friends." I glanced at Ivan, his anger visible on his face where not two seconds ago, his smile had been. "I asked them again. what they wanted with us. They said they were following orders and whoever they're working for is very interested in the men I keep company with. It's gotta be Sal or Armando." "Agreed. It could be both of them, for all we know." "That wouldn't surprise me either. They said we'll find out soon enough," I said.

Ivan sighed. "They really are using you as bait. I would rather get out of here before that happens, but I also want to see who is behind this. If we leave now, we won't know for sure who ordered this." "Oh, I'm all for waiting for the big reveal. If it's Armando, I want to know beyond a shadow of a doubt that he deserves to die."

I heard Ivan laugh quietly again. "Misha was right, you know. You're so much like us now that it's scary."

I laughed this time, too. "He told you about that, huh?"

"Yeah, except for Stephen and the really big stuff like my past, there aren't many secrets among us. And now that Stephen told

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us, there aren't many secrets with him either."

"That guy. I used to think he was a serial killer and I was still strangely fine with that possibility. Now that I know he's just a vampire, it all makes sense," I said, laughing.

"We all thought that and we were all hine with it. Have you heard about him when he gets pushed too far?" Ivan asked.

"Stephen? He can be pushed too far? Really?"

"He's similar to your go ddamn prince. The bloodlust is almost as bad in Stephen. I've only seen it happen a couple of times, but there was no stopping him when it happened. I'm counting on it happening when they find us. They could just send him and your go ddamn prince in here and nobody would walk out of here alive. Doesn't matter how many people are in this building with us."

"I might enjoy seeing that," I said.

We kept talking quietly for a while longer, just trying to pass the time. I needed to pee, after what I assumed to be a few hours of sitting in this chair. I groaned. "Shi t, I need to pee. Think they'll let me use the bathroom?"

"If they do, use the opportunity to get a feel for where everything is. I know where the stairs are, where the elevator is. Look for

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things that can be used as weapons and distractions. Like fire extinguishers and paper towel dispensers in the bathroom, if they're metal."

"If they let me use the bathroom, then they'll be more likely to let you use it too. Can you lift a knife off one of them if they let you out of the chair?"

"Possibly. You can too, princess. Use a distraction, like tripping and bumping into them to grab what you need."

I chewed on my bottom lip, nervous about trying to lift something off of one of them, worried about what would happen to me or Ivan if they caught me.

It wasn't very much longer and the same two men came back into the room. I told them that I needed to pee. They both walked to the chairs we were tied to. One of them pulled a gun and pointed it at Ivan.

"You try anything and he dies," he said, flatly. The other guy cut my restraints and pulled me out of the chair. He kept a tight hold of my arm the entire way to the bathroom. There was no way I was going to be able to grab anything off of him, so I looked around while we were walking. There was a fire extinguisher on the opposite side of the floor from the room we were being kept in. It was by the elevators.

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Luckily, the guy didn't follow me into the bathroom, so I had a chance to be alone for a minute. I took note of everything in the bathroom that we could possibly use to our advantage. I heard a beep in my ear. My earpiece. They missed it when they searched me. I pulled it out of my ear. I had no clue how it worked, but there was a blue light blinking on it. Normally, there was a blue light that remained on when they would hand it to me. It was never blinking. I looked it over, pressing the only button on it, just to see what would happen. It beeped quietly three times in a row, then went silent, but the blue light was still blinking. No idea what that means. I put it back in my ear, just in case. The guy that escorted me to the bathroom stuck his head inside the door and yelled at me to hurry up. I quickly finished up and walked out of the bathroom. He grabbed my arm once more and practically drug me back to the room with Ivan. When we walked into the room, Ivan was bleeding from a cut above his eye. "What the f\*\*k? I didn't do anything wrong. Why did you hurt him?" I asked, trying to appear as frightened as possible, rather than showing the extreme anger I was feeling. "He has a smart mouth," the guy with the gun said. "Almost as smart as yours." I glanced to Ivan as they shoved me back in the

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chair. He was totally fine. He didn't look it, but I knew he wasn't feeling like he just got hit with the butt of a gun.

They zip tied my wrists back to the chair once more. The guy with the gun put it back in its holster once I was secured to the chair again. He looked at me then punched Ivan once more before walking out of the room, once again leaving us alone.

"Are you going to tell me what your smart mouth said to him?" I asked, trying not to smile.

"I asked him how good his English was. When he didn't answer, I asked him if he wanted to die quickly or if he was okay with me dragging it out," he said. "Then he hit me with the butt of his gun."

"Rude. I knew their English was better than they were letting on," I said. "I bet that was a test to see if I really could speak Italian."

"Which means it's likely Sal that we're waiting on. Armando knows you can understand Italian."

"Is it wrong that I'm slightly disappointed it's not Armando? I really want a definitive decision on that f\*\*ker," I said. "Maybe Sal just didn't believe that I could understand Italian so he tested it just to be sure. It could still be both of them."

We heard voices outside the door. More than just the two guys that had been watching us. "Looks like we might find out the

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answer sooner rather than later,” Ivan said.

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King of the Underworld by RJ Kane

Chapter 277

Chapter Two Hundred Seventy-Seven

Sephie

The door opened once more. The two guys who grabbed us walked in first, followed by Salvadori, followed by Armando. Oh, he's dead. They glanced at Ivan, who had blood that was drying on his face, then looked to the two guys who had grabbed us. They just shrugged their shoulders like it wasn't their fault.

Sal walked toward me. The look on his face was difficult to read. He looked happy, but he also looked angry. "You, my dear. You can't keep yourself from killing my men. That's not very lady like of you," he said as he ran a finger down the side of my face and my neck. I felt nauseous at his touch. I could feel Ivan's anger, much the same way I could feel Adrik's, but it wasn't quite as strong of a feeling. But I didn't need to look at him to know he was not happy that Sal was touching me.

"Your men are anything but gentlemen toward me. Maybe if they weren't constantly trying to harm me, I would be nicer to them,"

I said, trying to move away from his hand as far as I could.

Sal laughed, turning to look at Armando. "You were right, Mando. She is a firecracker."

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“What do you want with me?”

“Well, my dear, it started out innocently enough. You were going to be the bait to draw out Ghost so we could kill him,” he said. I tensed at him mentioning Adrik. “But now that you’ve killed so many of my men, I can’t let that go unpunished. There’s the matter of my son, as well. You’ve made him look like a fool. You seem to be in my debt, you see,” Sal said. His fingers were still running down my neck. He caught the zipper of my shirt, unzipping it as far as it would go, which thankfully was only halfway down. He stood and stared at my bra for a moment, like it was the first time he’d seen a woman’s breasts.

“Is this your first time seeing boobs?” I asked. I didn’t expect him to slap me, but he did. Hard. My head jerked to the side with the impact of his hand. Ivan threatened him, but Sal ignored him.

“You do have a smart mouth. You’ll learn to keep it shut,” Sal said.

“I told your idiot son the same thing. School really wasn’t my thing. I’m probably not going to learn that anytime soon,” I said, looking at Sal with every ounce of hatred I could muster. His fist made contact with my face once more. This time, it was exactly like it had been in my dream. He punched me so hard that my chair tipped over backwards. I heard Ivan yell at him and I could

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hear him struggling in his chair. The two guys that grabbed us came over and set me back upright. "You punch like a weak old man," I said as soon as I was upright once again. "I bet you can't even get it up. How many di ck pills do you have to take to even have s ex?" Ivan laughed loudly beside me, which caused Sal to focus his anger on Ivan instead of me. Sal punched Ivan, squarely across the jaw, but Ivan's massive frame barely budged. He stayed quiet for a moment, looking at Sal. He turned his gaze to me, saying, "you were right. He punches like a weak old man." "That's enough!" Armando said sternly. He had been quiet since they walked in the room. He looked uncomfortable. Good. He should be uncomfortable. His time is coming. "You're not going to get anything for her if you wreck her face," Armando said. So, Dario was right. Sal was planning on selling me to the highest bidder. My anger was a raging inferno inside, but that thought made me laugh. This du mb f\*\*k. Armando walked to stand next to Sal. He hadn't looked me in the eyes since walking into the room, but he did once he stood next to Sal. The look of surprise on his face was evident. Clearly, my eyes were still dark. I held his gaze, letting even more of my anger come to the surface, secretly hoping that my eyes would go still darker. I said, in Italian,

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“You’re both going to die. Slowly. Painfully.” I maintained eye contact with Armando until he looked away. He looked more nervous than when he’d come into the room. Even Sal looked uncertain about what to say. They looked at each other and walked out of the room without another word.

Once they were gone, Ivan asked in Russian, “how’s your face, princess?”

“I mean, it’s felt better, but I’m okay. Lucky that he really does punch like a weak girl.”

Ivan laughed. “What did you say to them?”

“I told them they were both going to die slowly and painfully. I’m guessing by the look on Armando’s face, my eyes are still dark?” I asked, looking at Ivan.

“Um, yeah. Every time you look at me, they get darker. They’re going to be black by the time this is over with.”

“Or I’m going to spontaneously combust. It could go either way, really,” I said, laughing.

“Judging by that interaction, I would guess Sal is in charge and Armando is going along with him for whatever reason. Maybe Sal has something over him?”

“Yeah, but remember who Armando is sleeping with. I don’t think he’s as innocent as he’s trying to get us to believe. He only

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came to my defense because Sal beating me further would've meant a lower price for me. I'm done with him. There's no getting out of this for him, as far as I'm concerned," I said.

"I agree. We might be able to play them off each other, though. If we can get them fighting each other, it might give us a chance to get out of here. You're doing great, princess. I'm proud of you," he said, winking at me.

"I would not be doing this well if you weren't here with me, Super Squish. You're my favorite. Don't tell the others."

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King of the Underworld by RJ Kane

Chapter 278

Chapter Two Hundred Seventy-Eight

Adrik

I was pacing up and down the sidewalk opposite Dr. Moretti's house. I was so angry that I almost couldn't think. I needed Sephie to help keep me calm and she was missing. We had no idea where she and Ivan were or how to even begin looking for them.

"I have the info from when they left the warehouse to where they were grabbed and then where we found their helmets and the tracker. Let's retrace their movements. We're bound to find something," Viktor said.

That was a weak plan, but right now, it was the only plan we had. They could be anywhere in the city now. We didn't even know for sure if Ivan was still with Sephie. They would have to kill him to get him away from her, I knew that, but there was a very real possibility that he was already dead.

I caught Stephen looking at Misha, then he looked at me. "Boss, you can find her. You don't need the tracker. The connection you two have, that's your tracker. I don't know how it works when you two feel each other, but you can find her. Misha can help," he said.

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I stopped, thinking about what he'd just said. "It's never worked when we've been this far apart before. We've always been relatively close," I said.

"Maybe I can amplify it the same way Sephie did for me when we saw Trino in trouble," Misha said. "I don't have a clue how she did it, but I'm willing to try everything I can to see if it works."

"We should go to where they were grabbed. Misha might be able to see something there," Stephen said. I simply nodded once and headed to my bike.

It was still very early in the morning. Most of the city was asleep, which made it easier for us to move through town. We made, it to the corner where Sephie's tracker had stopped for a few minutes. As we got closer to the spot, we could see bodies. My heart immediately dropped into my stomach. Please don't let one of them be Ivan. Stephen pulled ahead and checked the bodies. He shook his head no and I exhaled, momentarily relieved.

Misha got off his bike and looked over the scene. Ivan's bike was still there, but it wasn't wrecked. There were tire marks on the street in front of the bike, as well as behind. They blocked them in. Misha walked to Ivan's bike, turning to look at the one dead body well behind the bike. He pointed to the body, saying, "he grabbed Sephie. She got loose and shot him." He looked back

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toward the bike. There were two more bodies closer to the bike. "Ivan," he said, pointing to the bodies.

He stared at the bike for long enough that I thought he'd lost whatever it was he was seeing. Just when I was about to say something, he turned to look at a car parked on the street. He bent down to look at the front fender of the car. It was slightly dented, like the car had hit something at some point. He put his hand on the car and inhaled sharply. We could tell by the look on his face that he was seeing something we couldn't see.

"She went to help Ivan and they rushed her, pushing her into the car. They held a gun to her head to stop Ivan. They took her tracker and all the weapons and put them in their vehicle." He pointed up the street. "They went that way," he said.

At least we knew that Ivan was with her, for now. I was now worried about her being hurt, though. "Is she hurt? Can you tell?" I asked Misha.

"I think she's okay. Or her adrenaline is masking it. She walked to the vehicle okay, even after they shoved her into the car really hard," he said.

"Let's go where we found the helmets. Maybe Misha can give us the direction they went after ditching the tracker," Stephen

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said. We all climbed back on the bikes, following Viktor to where we found their helmets earlier.

It only took a few minutes to reach the spot where we found their helmets. Misha got off his bike again, surveying everything the same as he did before. He stood for a few moments, looking at everything. He finally looked to me, clearly frustrated. "I can't see anything this time. I know they went north when they left here, but that's all I can see this time. Sorry, Boss."

"North means Sal's area, which means it was likely Sal that grabbed them," Viktor said.

Stephen climbed off his bike. "Boss, come here. I have an idea," he said as he walked toward Misha. At this point, I was ready to try anything. Just because we'd narrowed down the area of the city they were headed to didn't make it any easier to find them.

"So, when Sephie touched Misha, his visions amplified. What happens when you do it while you're thinking about trying to feel Sephie?"

It was worth a shot. I inhaled, extending my hand to Misha. It was easy to think about Sephie and finding her. I was already desperate to feel her in my arms again. I felt Misha squeeze my hand tighter. "They took them to an old building, but it's so dark

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that I can't see an address. Keep thinking about her," Misha said, then added, "they're in a room. It's an old office building. I can't see very much clearly, but they're both alive."

"So, the north side in an abandoned office building. That narrows it down," Andrei said, somewhat sarcastically, but with apparent frustration in his voice.

We stood in silence for a few minutes. Viktor looked at Misha, a look of hope on his face. "Misha, when they took the tracker from Sephie, did you see them take her earpiece?"

"No. Ivan's either. They still had them when they got in the vehicle," Misha said.

Viktor then looked to me. "The range on the earpieces aren't as strong as the tracker, but we might be able to pick them up if we can get close enough."

"How close do we need to be?" Andrei asked.

"Those things have about a two-mile radius," Viktor said.

"It's worth a shot," I said.

"I also suggest waiting until daylight. If they're holding them in an abandoned building, having people drive by at this time of the night is going to be obvious. They'll see us coming. For once, the darkness won't provide the cover we need. We should wait

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until daylight so there are other people out and about,” Viktor said. “We divide that part of town up into a grid and work it until we get a signal. We can get the dealers to help on foot, too. They’ll blend in easier.”

“F\*\*k! I know you’re right, Viktor, but pausing the search does not make me happy,” I said, trying to control my anger.

“You’re not the only one, Boss. We all want to find her, but we need to be smart about it. We don’t want them moving her. Or worse,” Andrei said.

“We’re gonna find her, Boss. Now that we know Ivan is with her, that helps. I don’t feel like she’s dead, either,” Misha said. He paused to look at me, then added, “add that to the list of sentences I never thought I’d say in my life. Seriously, though, you would feel it if something happened to her. I know it.”

“I don’t think she’s dead either. There’s a pull in my chest that I feel anytime I’m away from her until I get back to her. It’s still there and it’s getting stronger,” I said.

“We might be able to use titat to help find her,” Stephen said. “How strong does it get?”

“I’m not sure. I haven’t been this far away from her, ever. It gets stronger when she’s hurt though. I told her it feels like my heart

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is urging me to destroy whatever caused her pain.” I ran my hand through my hair. I was definitely not expecting to be having this conversation in the middle of the street at 3 am.

“She’s told us about that before. She feels it, too, and we all feel it with her, just to a lesser extent than you,” Andrei said.

“Let’s head back to the penthouse. I think if you can focus on that pull, it’ll help us know where we should start looking once the sun comes up,” Stephen said. I nodded once.

As we drove back to the penthouse, I caught myself thinking about how surprising it was that it was Stephen that had come up with this plan. I would not have bet on him to take charge of this situation before Sephie. Just like with Misha, she was slowly bringing out the absolute best in Stephen. He had talked more since she came into our lives than he had in the previous few years that he’d been working for me. We were all somewhat relieved and admittedly slightly disappointed to learn that he wasn’t a serial killer.

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King of the Underworld by RJ Kane

Chapter 279

Chapter Two Hundred Seventy-Nine

Adrik

Viktor stopped by the office and grabbed a map before meeting the rest of us in the penthouse. Andrei started making coffee for everyone. We were all quieter than usual, worried about finding her. I was having trouble controlling my thoughts. I kept thinking about them hurting her, which would cause my anger levels to rise even more. It was taking every bit of control I had to keep my anger in check, using the trick that Sephie had showed me.

Viktor put the map on the kitchen island, marking the spots where they were grabbed and where we found their helmets. Sal controlled the north side of town. It had been a booming area years ago, but had seen a decline in the past few years. There were plenty of abandoned buildings in his area, which would not make our search any easier.

As I looked at the map, feeling completely overwhelmed at where to start looking, Stephen said, "Boss, focus on that pull you feel. Close your eyes if you have to, but focus on the pull you feel toward her." My anger was at such a level that paying attention to anything else was proving to be difficult. The pull in my chest was a normal

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feeling when I was away from her. It had become so normal that I didn't pay much attention to it when I was away from her.

Stephen could tell from the look on my face that I was struggling.

"Think about her, then. Think about finding her, specifically. Think about how relieved you're going to be to see her once again.

Think about feeling her in your arms when you find her," Stephen said.

His words were helping my anger subside enough that the pull in my chest grew stronger. My demeanor must've changed,

because Stephen nodded to Misha, who grabbed my hand again. Misha's eyes went wide as soon as he touched me.

"Keep thinking about her, Boss. Feel that pull in your chest. Focus on that," Stephen said.

Misha said, "I know the area. I still can't see the address on the building, but I know the area. They're not that far from the docks." He let go of my hand and pointed to an area on the map. "They're somewhere in here."

Viktor marked it on the map, taking a closer look at the area. "This makes it easier than having to search the entire north end of town, but there's more abandoned buildings than not in this area."

"How easy is it going to be for us to search the area without being seen?" Andrei asked.

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“Not as easy as I was hoping. There won’t be many people in this area. We’re going to need Gus and his guys to help us search.

They’ll be able to blend in with the few people that are going to be out and about better than we can,” Viktor said.

“What if we use a distraction? Drop another building in the area. It might make them nervous enough that they move them, then we can catch them as they come out,” Andrei said.

We all thought for a moment on Andrei’s idea. “I want to make sure we’re not dropping the building they’re in first, but I’ll level that end of town if it means getting her back,” I said.

Once the sun came up, Viktor called Chen “Any word on Sephie?” he asked as he picked up the phone.

“We’re narrowing down where we think they took her. We need your help. We have a way to search for them, but the part of town they’re in is mostly abandoned buildings. We’re going to stick out. We need you to get Gus and his guys to help us search,”

Viktor said

“How many guys do you need?”

“As many as you can get,” Viktor said. “We’ll meet at the apartment building. Two hours.”

The parking lot of Sephie’s old apartment building was full when we showed up two hours later. Chen had gathered 20 willing to

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help us search.

“How did you get this many guys on such short notice?” I asked Chen.

guys

“They’re all grateful you stopped the brawn operation last night. They want to help,” he said. “Most of them are Trino’s guys.

Apparently that guy will sing her praises to anyone who will listen.” He gave me a tight smile. “But we all want to find her and stop the other bosses, especially Sal.”

Viktor took over and laid out the plan for the search. The earpieces would connect to each other automatically when you were within range. All the guys had to do was be close enough to Sephic and Ivan’s earpieces and their earpiece would beep to connect. No connection, no beep. It was as simple as that. The city was already a grid, so Viktor just assigned groups of guys to each section of the grid. All they had to do was walk down the street, waiting for the beep in their ear that told them which building Sephie was in. Without getting caught, of course.

“Everybody’s packing, right?” Gus asked when we were ready to leave.

Everyone nodded their heads yes. “If anyone stops you, you’re there to make a deal. Find a homeless person if you have to. Whatever you need to do to make it believable, but try to stay under the radar as much as possible.”

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While they were searching, we couldn't do anything but wait. I paced. My adrenaline was still going full force. There was no chance on me being able to sleep until we found Sephie and Ivan. At one point, Andrei got up and looked through the cabinets in the kitchen. We had left all her dishes and kitchen appliances when we moved her stuff from her apartment. He found her coffee maker, then found some coffee still in the pantry. He sniffed it, then shrugged his shoulders and set about making coffee. "This is probably going to suck, but I need something and I'm sure you all do too," he said as he poured himself a cup of coffee. We watched as he took the first sip. "I've definitely had worse."

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King of the Underworld by RJ Kane

Chapter 280

Chapter Two Hundred Eighty

Adrik

Everyone else grabbed a cup after Andrei was the guinea pig. I really didn't need the caffeine boost, but I wasn't going to turn it down either. It was another two hours before guys started returning to the apartment. The first ones back had no luck. Viktor marked off their areas on the map, further narrowing down where they were holding them.

Gus returned with Chen and Oscar. "We got them," he said walking to the map, showing Viktor where they had picked up the signal from Sephie and Ivan's earpieces.

Chen looked at me, saying, "I heard them, sir. They were speaking Russian, so I don't know what they were talking about, but I heard both of them when the earpiece connected. I talked to Sephie very briefly. I wasn't sure if she could speak English where they were, so I just asked her to clear her throat if they were okay. She did. I told her you'd be there soon to get her."

The flood of relief that washed over me almost made me stumble to the ground. Chen grabbed my arm to help keep me steady.

He looked sympathetic. "I understand, sir," he said quietly.

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“We have it narrowed down to two blocks and those two blocks don’t have quite as many abandoned buildings as the rest of the area,” Viktor said. “Andrei’s idea might work.”

“Is his idea to blow another building as a distraction, because that’s the kind of idea I fully support,” Oscar said. Andrei just nodded his head, a small smile on his face. Oscar clapped his hands once, rubbing his palms together. “Building demolition is my love language. When can we get started?”

“We need to make sure the building we choose isn’t where they’re keeping them, first,” Viktor said, somewhat sternly.

“Of course, of course. Do you know how quickly I’d be dead if I harmed a hair on that woman’s head? I’m not that dumb. What do you guys need us to do?” Oscar said.

“Searching the buildings on those blocks will be a little easier, since it’s more populated, but it still won’t be easy,” Gus said. He looked to DJ, then asked, “DJ, I know you know people in this part of town. Can you find out if anyone has seen anything suspicious on these two blocks? Somebody might’ve seen them bringing Sephie and Ivan to the building. If it’s Sal that took them, they might’ve seen him showing up to the building.”

We heard Stephen’s phone beep. He took it out, reading the text message. His eyes went wide, then he walked to the map. He

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pointed to a building. “They’re here,” he said.

“How do you know?” I asked urgently, walking to look at the map.

“It was Keith. He said Armando has been acting weird. He left the house really early this morning, wouldn’t tell Keith where they were going, just gave him an address. He made Keith and Chris wait in the vehicle while he went in the building. Keith said he has a bad feeling about whatever Armando was doing,” Stephen said. “And for the record, Keith and Chris don’t know about Sephie being taken.”

The building he took Armando to was in between two occupied buildings. There was, however, another abandoned building at the end of the block. Andrei’s plan could work.

“Tell Keith to keep us informed of Armando’s movements to that building. Don’t tell him why. We still don’t know if Armando is on to Keith and is feeding him information He might still be trying to play both sides,” | said.

Stephen texted Keith, then got an immediate reply. “He said Armando is scheduled to go back to the building tomorrow morning again, but again won’t tell Keith and Chris why.”

I looked to Andrei. “How quickly can we make this happen? If we can catch Armando at the building, we can take care of him right then.”

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“I just need a few hours and Oscar’s help setting everything up.” Andrei said.

“It’ll be ready by tonight,” Oscar said.

“I don’t think it’s just Armando that set this up either. I have a feeling Sal is behind this too,” Viktor said. “Maybe we can catch both of them at the building.”

“Agreed. I need to let Trino know we have a good shot of taking Sal out, which means he should take care of Anthony and Lorenzo at the same time,” I said. “Gus, Oscar, does Trino know Sephie was taken?”

“Si, Jefe. We called him to let him know the warehouses were taken care of. We told him they grabbed her. He said to tell you he’d do whatever you needed,” Gus said.

I nodded, taking my phone from my pocket. I walked to the bedroom to have a private conversation with Trino. Now that we had confirmation that Sephie was alive, I was quickly becoming overcome with emotion. My anger had receded to a manageable level, but I was now feeling every single other emotion all at once. I didn’t trust myself completely to keep it together right now.

“Jefe, tell me you found her,” Trino said when he picked up the phone.

“We have her location, but it’s going to take a little longer to get her out. We know for sure Armando is behind it, but they’re in

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Sal's part of town, so it's likely he's behind it as well."

"What do you need? I have to ask this question, but are you sure she's still alive?"

"She is. We had the dealers that helped us with the warehouses search that part of the city. The guys that grabbed her and Ivan didn't get their earpieces. The dealer that Sephie has known for years, Chen, is the one who found her. He heard her and Ivan talking. They're okay. He told her I was coming to get her." My voice cracked when I said I was coming to get her. I was fighting back tears.

Trino let out a long exhale. "Jefe, this is good news. What's the plan?"

"We have word that Armando is scheduled to go back to the building tomorrow morning. We're going to drop a nearby building to create a little chaos, hoping to flush them out. My hope is we'll catch Armando and Sal at the building. They won't make it out," I said, my anger level now rising once more.

"I'll take care of Anthony and Lorenzo at the same time. I have them locked up for safe keeping. After the attempt on me by the Mexicans, I'm not f\*\*king around. I grabbed them right away. They've been waiting for their sentencing ever since," he said.

"Sounds good, Trino. Even if we can only get Armando tomorrow morning, Sal will panic when he gets word that you've taken

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care of Anthony and Lorenzo. He'll be easier to take out then if he's not at the building in the morning."

"Let the dominoes fall, Jefe."

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