

## King of the Underworld Chapter 281 - 290

### Chapter 281

Sephie

Ivan and I were left alone after Sal and Armando left the room. We had no way to know how long we'd been in there, as there were no windows in the room. It must be daylight outside by now. I had a dull headache starting from headbutting the guy that grabbed me off the bike and Sal's weak punch to my face. Ivan, however, looked much worse than I did with the dried blood down one side of his face.

"How's your head, Super Squish?" I asked in Russian. "Do you ever get headaches?"

He chuckled softly. "Nope. Well, let me rephrase that. I might get them, but I don't know it when I do."

I sighed. "That's so useful."

"Do you have a headache coming on, princess?"

I nodded my head. "It's not bad. I think it's more from when they grabbed us than Sal's weak sauce punch. They slammed me

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into the car pretty hard,” I said. “I’m starting to feel it.”

“Starting to feel what? Should I be worried?”

“No, I think it’s okay. Just sore. I’m probably turning pretty colors. I like to live life in technicolor.”

Ivan just laughed, shaking his head at me. “If I haven’t told you this lately, your sense of humor makes life so much better.” I

smiled at him. Just as I turned my head, I heard a beep in my ear. I looked at Ivan, asking. “is your earpiece still working?” He

nodded his head. “Did you just hear yours beep? And follow-up question, why would they beep like that?” I asked.

“Mine beeped. They do that when they connect. It means another earpiece just connected to ours,” he said.

“Sephie? If you can hear me, it’s Chen. Don’t say anything, just clear your throat if you’re okay,” Chen said in my ear. I cleared

my throat and heard him exhale. “Good. We’re looking for you. Ghost is coming for you soon. We’ll be back,” he said. We could

hear Chen talking to Gus and Oscar as they walked away and then the earpieces beeped once more, indicating they’d lost the signal.

“So, now the question is how long has it been? A day and a half? Or three days? This is important information,” I said.

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“We do have the integrity of the data to consider,” Ivan said.

It felt like days before someone came back into the room. Ivan and I had been quietly talking almost the entire time, mostly to keep each other awake and calm. The two guys that had grabbed us walked back in the room. They walked straight to me, cutting the restraints off my wrists, and pulled me up roughly. I felt Ivan’s anger go through the roof when they pulled me to a standing position.

“What are you doing? Where are you taking her?” Ivan asked. I could hear the anger in his voice. Everyone could hear the anger in his voice. The guy that had hit Ivan before punched him once more, only this time he was wearing brass knuckles. The damage was immediately visible on Ivan’s face.

“What the f\*\*k?” I yelled, trying to get free from the guy holding me. I managed to get one arm free and punched him in his nose.

He stumbled backward, holding his nose. The guy that had gone after Ivan went to punch me, but Ivan surprised him by standing up, still attached to the chair, and using his body to slam the guy into the ground. The guy I had punched had recovered and had pulled his gun. Once again, he pointed it straight at my head, whistling loudly at Ivan. “If you don’t sit back

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down, she dies,” he said, coldly. He looked at his buddy, who got up from the floor and grabbed my arms. He pulled them both behind my back, putting another zip tie tightly around my wrists. He pushed me toward the door, then turned to look at Ivan. “I’ll be back for you,” he said. His voice had a threatening tone to it. I don’t like this.

They pushed me out the door, down a short hallway to another room.

Armando was waiting for me when we walked in. This isn’t good. Armando looked pissed when he saw the blood on the one guy I’d punched. “Are you even capable of not hurting people?” he asked me..

“You seem to think that I’m the one that starts it. Tell your guys not to throw the first punch and I won’t break their nose,” I said.

Armando groaned, but nodded to the two men and pointed to one wall of the room. It was at that moment that I saw the ankle shackles connected to a chain that was bolted to the floor. I definitely do not like this. The two guys walked me quickly toward the shackles, shoving me into the wall. One guy kept me pressed against the wall while the other one attached the shackles. Once they were attached, they let go of me and left the room. I knew they were going back for Ivan. My heart sank thinking about what

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they were going to do to him.

I turned toward Armando, to see him holding a knife. He was looking at the knife, not at me. Turning it over in his hands, like he was seriously contemplating what to do next. Finally, his gaze lifted and he looked at me. “You’re going to solve a lot of my problems,” he said as he walked to me. He grabbed my shirt, despite my best efforts to move away from him. My hands were still tied behind my back and now my legs were chained. I didn’t have many options. He pulled my shirt away from my body and used the knife to cut it off of me. He then did the same to my pants, leaving me in my bra and panties.

“Do you know what happens when a girl is sold?” he asked as he was cutting my clothes off. He didn’t wait for me to answer.

“We take pictures of them so the bidding can start. Your bidding is about to start,” he said as he stepped back to look at me. He was visibly angry when he looked me up and down. “They were told not to harm you when they grabbed you,” he said.

I looked down at my stomach, which was a really pretty shade of blue, with a hint of deep purple from where they’d shoved me against the parked car. “Oh no. Is that going to cut into your profits?” I asked as sarcastically as possible. He didn’t answer me.

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but he did glare at me. I laughed. “If you think this is bad, wait until you turn me around. Spoiler alert: your problems are not going to be solved today,” I said.

Curiosity got the best of him and he turned me around, finally seeing my scars. His grip on my arm tightened as the realization that I wouldn’t fetch top dollar set in.

“You mean to tell me that damaged goods won’t fetch top dollar? I’m shocked, Armando. SHOCKED,” I said, still trying to provoke him to anger. I couldn’t do anything to defend myself, but I was hoping for a miracle here and my anger had completely taken over. “Sal isn’t going to be too happy with you when he finds out. You might’ve been able to sell me with just a front picture, but now all the angles are just totally f\*\*ked up so I’m worthless. What’s he going to do to you when he finds out you f\*\*ked this up? What’s he going to think when I tell him you’re the one that gave me these bruises?” I saw the flash of uncertainty across his face before it quickly changed to anger. He stood for a moment contemplating what to do next.

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King of the Underworld by RJ Kane

Chapter 282

Chapter Two Hundred Eighty-Two

Sephie

I could hear them beating Ivan in the other room in my earpiece. He was provoking them as well. I trusted him to have a good reason for doing so, but it was looking more and more like we really were at the disadvantage here. Then, I heard it. My earpiece beeped. They're close.

Armando had been contemplating his next move. He clearly decided that violence was the answer. He walked to me, angrier than I thought was humanly possible for him. "Do you know how long I've waited to do this?" he said as he punched me in the stomach. "Women are meant to be seen, not heard, but you can't keep your f\*\*king mouth shut. EVER." His voice was just below a scream when he punched me a second time. I couldn't do anything but take it, since I couldn't even move my arms to protect myself.

"So, I'm guessing no pictures then?" I asked, just to piss him off more. Armando was stronger than Salvadori, but I'd definitely

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endured much worse. I could take this. Armando backhanded me, forcing me to take a step to the side to keep from falling down.

“My first wife didn’t know when to shut up either. Do you know what happened to her?” he asked as he punched me in the stomach another time. “I beat her to death when she wouldn’t shut up.”

“Did you get her hooked on coke like you did Giana?” I asked. He paused for a moment. He didn’t know we knew about Giana’s

little habit. “You know cocaine is a stimulant, you dumb motherf\*\*ker. If you want them to be quieter, you should’ve gone with heroin. Or got them hooked on another opioid.” I had him confused for a second. Clearly, he didn’t know the difference.

“Seriously? This is news to you? How have you lasted this long in the business? You’re too f\*\*king stupid to be a criminal mastermind. Who’s pulling your strings, puppet?”

Okay, I might’ve gone a little overboard there, judging by his reaction. I also knew that whoever was connected to my earpiece would be able to hear this, so I was trying to get as much information out of him as I could. Armando had lost complete control and was just beating me as severely as he could manage. He finally hit me so hard that I fell to the floor. That opened the door

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for him to kick me. I tried to curl up as tight as I could, but it wasn't easy with my hands behind my back and my ankles chained to the floor. I felt my left shoulder dislocate after one of his kicks and I screamed. I had been able to stay silent, as I didn't want to give him the satisfaction, but I couldn't hold it in when my shoulder came out of its socket. Armando delivered a second kick to the same arm and I felt my bone break.

He had taken a step back from me when we both heard an explosion. It rocked the building. He cursed under his breath. I just laughed at him. "You're a dead man," I said, coughing up blood. I was still on the floor, now trying not to move or think about the severe pain in my arm.

"Sephie?? Can you hear me?" I heard Adrik's voice in my ear. I just cleared my throat, hoping he understood. "I'm coming." he said.

"Fifth floor," I said in Russian. Armando heard me and turned to me once more, delivering yet another kick to my torso. We could clearly hear gunshots now. The two guys that had been beating Ivan in the next room now came to the room where Armando was beating me.

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“A building at the end of the block just exploded. The guys downstairs went to check it out. They found us,” one of the guys said.

“Are you excited?” I asked, trying to sit up just a little. I was starting to have trouble breathing. I think he broke my ribs. They looked down at me, confused. “Excited to see your buddies we killed? Because you’re about to see them again.”

“If you can answer, how many are on the floor with you?” Stephen asked in my ear. Since Ivan was alone now, he said,

“Armando is with Sephie and the two guys that were with me are likely there now too. I haven’t seen anyone else, but we’ve been kept in a room the whole time. Princess, cough once if that’s all you’ve seen.” I coughed once. “Got it, Seph. We’re coming.

Stephen said.

Ivan said, “across the floor from the elevators are offices. I don’t know where they took Sephie, but there’s a short hallway to the side of the front offices. I’m guessing that’s where she is.” I coughed once more.

“Thanks, Seph.”

While Stephen and Ivan had been talking, Armando was trying to formulate a plan with the two guys. He pulled his phone out to

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make a call. Whoever he called didn't pick up, which forced him to slam his phone down to the floor,

"I would suggest running now if you're going to do it. They're coming for you. Run to the roof and jump. Otherwise, you're going to have a long, slow, painful death," I said. "Especially you, Armando. Once Ghost sees me like this, you're going to know pain like you've never known it before." I heard all the guys cursing quietly in my earpiece. I said, in Russian, "his butt hole just clenched a little." I couldn't keep from laughing a little, but it made my ribs hurt to do so, so I ended up cursing loudly.

"What are we going to do with her and the guy in the other room?" one of the guys asked.

"Kill him. Bring her with us," Armando said. One guy came to take the shackles off my ankles, while the other left the room quickly to take care of Ivan. As soon as my legs were free, I kicked the guy in the face as hard as I could. He went tumbling backward. "Oh, for f\*\*k's sake," Armando said as he walked toward me to grab me. He grabbed the arm that he'd broken to pull me up, causing me to scream. He slapped me and told me to shut up. My arms were still tied behind my back, so once again, I was forced to just take it.

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We heard one gunshot from the other room. My heart dropped. "Ivan!" I yelled. Armando slapped me again, yelling, "I told you to shut up!"

I heard Ivan in my earpiece. "Princess, you know I wouldn't leave you alone." "We're coming in now," Stephen said.

"Move to the left when you come through the door. Stay along that wall. They won't be able to see you. You'll come to the room where I am. Move quickly. Armando will be expecting his guy back," Ivan said. I looked at Armando. "You know, I said months ago that you had a savior complex. You like to pick damaged people because you think you can save them. I was only partly wrong. You pick damaged people because they're easier for you to control. You don't have a savior complex; you have a superiority complex. I just haven't figured out if your bumbling idiot persona is an act or if you're actually this stupid. Not gonna lie, I'm leaning hard toward you're just this stupid." I was trying to keep him focused on me to make it easier for the guys to surprise him. I could feel Adrik's anger now that he was closer, but I was in so much pain that it was difficult for me to feel anything other than that. I heard Ivan laugh in my earpiece. "Which brings up my earlier question of

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who is pulling your strings? Is it Giana's father? Ricardo? Both?" I asked. Armando had been looking toward the door while I talked to him, but he spun around to look at me when I mentioned Ricardo's name. Bingo.

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King of the Underworld by RJ Kane

Chapter 283

Chapter Two Hundred Eighty-Three

Sephie

He walked toward me again and I braced myself for another blow. “I’m going to tape your f\*\*king mouth shut,” he said. If I thought I overdid it before, I was mistaken. The look on Armando’s face when he walked back to me actually made me fear for my life this time. He was so angry that I’d figured out who was controlling him that he might actually kill me this time. I saw movement over his shoulder and the other guy in the room dropped to the ground. I could barely hear the gun with the silencer attached. Armando turned when he heard the guy hit the floor, Adrik and Stephen were standing in front of him. “Boss, I’m glad you’re here. Sal had them kidnapped. I’ve been trying to get her out of here,” Armando said, switching flawlessly back to the persona that he was a friend to Adrik. He said it so smoothly, that it was almost believable. It might’ve been if they hadn’t heard him beating me earlier through my earpiece. Ivan walked into the room behind Adrik and Stephen. He pulled his

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earpiece from his ear and held it up for Armando to see. I couldn't see Armando's face, but I'm sure he knew he'd f\*\*ked up.

"Oh, by the way, she has one too," Ivan said.

"We heard everything." Adrik said. He took his jacket off, never taking his eyes off Armando. He walked slowly to me, taking a

knife from one of his pants pockets and cutting the zip tie off my wrists. I tried to hold in the scream when my arm fell limp to my

side. I saw Adrik flinch, but he stayed quiet. Even through my pain, I could feel his anger. It was to a level I'd never seen before,

but he looked like he was in complete control. He wrapped his jacket around me, then put his fingers under my chin. "Can you

give me five minutes, my love?" he asked as he pressed his lips to mine gently. I smiled at him. "Take as long as you need." I

said. He kissed me tenderly once more, then turned back to Armando.

"Ivan, stay with her," he said in Russian. "Stephen, with me." He grabbed Armando's arm, twisting it behind his back painfully as

he walked to the other side of the room, farther away from me and Ivan.

I looked at Ivan as he stood next to me. He looked like Hell. "You look terrible, Super Squish," I said.

"You do too," he said. He might've winked at me, but one of his eyes was so puffy, I wasn't sure he could even see out of it.

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Ivan did his best to keep me distracted while Adrik beat the ever-loving shi t out of Armando on the other side of the room. He noticed me holding my arm and lifted Adrik's jacket to look closer at it. "He dislocated your shoulder, didn't he?" I nodded my head.

"I think he broke my arm, too. I heard it snap," I said, coughing. My ribs were really starting to hurt and I ended up coughing up more blood.

"Did he break your ribs too?" Ivan asked.

"I think so." The more I talked, the harder it was to breath. Ivan heard me wheezing.

"Guys, we gotta get her to the hospital. I think her lung might be punctured," Ivan said. He looked to Adrik, who was still on Armando "Andrei, Misha, Viktor..."

Before he could finish, I put my hand on his arm. "I can stop him," I said I walked toward Stephen, who looked unsure Adrik had Armando un the ground, straddling him, just letting his fists fly in Armando's face. If he wasn't dead, he was definitely unconscious, and definitely was wishing he'd taken my earlier advice. I walked closer and put my hand on his back "Adrik I need you," I said quietly

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His fist stopped muda. He immediately turned to me, jumping to his teet  
Uniled at him, but I was struggling to breathe and just  
walking the short distance made the start taki  
picked me up, walking out at the  
ch made it even harder to  
Stephan adó bạn bull, lola  
He leaned down and  
“What...about...Armando...” I said, in between breaths.  
“I’ll send someone up to get him and take him back to the building.” Viktor  
said in my earpiece. I heard the elevator doors ding  
Viktor, Andrei, and Misha were in the elevator.  
“You guys...are a...sight...for...sore...eyes...” I said, trying to smile at them.  
“Don’t talk, princess. We’ll catch up later. If your lung is punctured, you need  
to breathe as quietly as possible. Talking will make it  
worse,” Ivan said. He noticed my dislocated and broken arm dangling at my  
side and picked it up gently. He placed it in my lap.  
Adrik glanced at Ivan, who said, “it’s dislocated. She thinks it’s broken too.”  
Adrik just held me tighter in his arms.  
Viktor had called ahead to the hospital. Thankfully, Dr. Williams was there  
and was aware that his two least favorite patients.

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were on their way. I laughed to myself thinking about the panic attack he was likely having knowing me and Ivan were coming. in.

I was in the backseat with Adrik, still in his arms. I looked up at him, worried about Ivan having to go to the hospital. “Ivan...” I whispered. He looked down at me, searching my eyes. A small smile crept over his face.

“Ivan will be fine. We need to get you taken care of first,” he said. I was suddenly very tired. I just nodded and rested my head on his shoulder. I was only vaguely aware when we got to the hospital. I could feel the darkness trying to take over. I was too tired to fight it. I felt them lift me out of the SUV and felt them place me on a bed. I felt Adrik’s hand in mine once they put me on the bed, but that’s when everything went completely dark.

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Chapter 284

Chapter Two Hundred Eighty-Four

Adrik

“What the f\*\*k happened?” Dr. Williams asked as we pulled Sephie from the backseat of the SUV. He immediately started to look her over as we transferred her to the hospital bed.

“She and Ivan were kidnapped,” Misha said.

Ivan had walked up. “Her left shoulder is dislocated and that arm is likely broken too. She has broken ribs on that side and I’m almost positive she has a punctured lung. I’m sure there’s more, but that’s all I know for sure,” he said.

Dr. Williams nodded as we walked quickly down the hallway. He looked to Ivan, “and what about you? You also look like holy hell, but I’m not gonna lie, I’m terrified to look at you without her.”

“I can manage until she’s fine, doc,” Ivan said.

“We need to get her x-rayed to find out what we’re dealing with. I can hear her wheezing. She’s having trouble breathing. I know she reacts differently to anesthesia. Anything else I should know about?” Dr. Williams asked Ivan.

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“Yeah, she doesn’t go anywhere without him,” he said pointing to me. “He is to her what she is to me. Keep him with her.”

“Noted.”

We walked onto an elevator while the guys stayed behind. Dr. Williams looked at me, then looked at my hands. “I’m hoping the guys that did this to her are in much worse shape than she is?” he asked.

“I’m just getting started,” I said.

“Good. What about the brawn situation? I heard about the explosions throughout the city. I’m hoping it had to do with taking care of that?” he asked.

“Taken care of. They grabbed her when Ivan was getting her to safety before we blew the warehouses,” I said.

“That’s a small relief,” he said as we exited the elevator. The nurses gave me funny looks as we walked into the x-ray room.

“Make a note in her chart that this man stays with her, no matter what. There’s also five more downstairs that are to stay with her overnight. I don’t want any problems from any of the nurses.” The nurses looked puzzled, but didn’t argue.

Dr. Williams liked to talk while he worked. “What about Ivan? He doesn’t look so good. I’m not sure I believe him that he can. last

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until she gets well enough to work her magic on him. Do you have any other way for me to look at him without him killing me?”

I felt Sephie squeeze my hand faintly. When she did, the memory of Misha recording her playing the piano came into my head. I

knew Sephie put it there. Even unconscious, she was still trying to help Ivan.

“I have one idea that might work. He’s generally okay with minor stuff. If it’s something that would require anesthesia on a normal person, that’s where the real problem is. She’s the only one that’s ever been able to calm him like she does.”

I’ve never seen anything like it in my life. What’s your idea, if you don’t mind me asking?”

“She plays piano. She’s incredibly talented. Ivan gets stuck in his memories when he has to go to the hospital. He’ll wake up fighting like he did with you regularly. It’s a waking nightmare for him. In his mind, he’s back in his past, fighting for his life. In reality, he’s fighting us and we’re just trying to keep him from hurting himself or someone else. She can break him out of it, but it means she can’t sleep while he sleeps. One of the guys recorded her playing the piano and that’s enough to keep him from getting sucked back into his nightmare. He knows she’s close by as long as he can hear her playing,” I said.

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Dr. Williams had continued to take x-rays of Sephie's entire body while I was talking. He stopped briefly to look at me. "That's incredible." He motioned toward Sephie. "I need to turn her onto her side," he said, indicating for me to help him. Her body was covered in bruises already. When he saw her back, he gasped. "Holy shi t," he said, looking to me again.

"Her uncle," I said.

"F\*\*ck," he half-whispered as he continued taking x-rays.

Once he was done, he let me know what needed to happen next. "Her left shoulder is definitely completely dislocated. Her humerus is also fractured. She has five broken ribs and one of them has punctured her left lung. It's difficult to tell from the x- ray, but she does have some blood in her lung and air is escaping into her thoracic cavity. Fortunately, her right lung looks fine..

Unfortunately, she's going to need to stay in the hospital for a few days to make sure her lung doesn't collapse. She'll need a chest tube to help give the air a place to go, so her lungs can re-expand, and oxygen to help her breathe easier. She's going to be in a lot of pain for a day or two," he said..

"Pain meds knock her completely out and make it so she can't eat for days at a time," I said. "The last time she got seriously

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hurt, she took ibuprofen. When she got those scars on her back, she said she just took ibuprofen then too.”

“Seriously?”

“Yeah. We couldn’t believe it either, but apparently that shi t works for her,” I said, smiling at her. I still had a hold of her hand, not wanting to be apart from her.

We left the x-ray room and went to a surgery room so they could fix her arm.

“We’re going to need to sedate her to fix her shoulder. That’s going to be painful if she’s awake. I’ll let the anesthesiologist know about her reaction to normal pain meds.

Redheads really do react differently to drugs than everyone else. That’s a real thing,” he said.

It took them a while to put her shoulder back and set her arm. She would have to wear a cast for a few weeks while her bone healed. They put a chest tube in, which made her breathing quieter. She’d been on oxygen since we got to the hospital, but I could still hear her wheezing. Once the chest tube was in, she started to breathe quietly again. My own anxiety started to calm down once she started to breathe quieter, too.

We went to a room once they were done. “I’ve sent a nurse down to get the other guys. I’d like to take a look at Ivan, if that’s

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possible. He looked rough before,” Dr. Williams said.

Once the guys walked into the room, they all looked exceptionally worried. I said, in Russian, “she’s okay. She’s going to have to stay here a few days, but she’s okay.” I looked to Misha, then to Ivan. “Misha, do you have the recordings of her playing on your phone still? The doctor wants to look at Ivan, but Sephie won’t be awake for a while. They had to sedate her to fix her shoulder so it might be a couple days before she wakes up. You should get looked at before that, Ivan,” I said.

“Yeah, Boss, I have them. Do you think that’ll work?” Misha asked Ivan.

“It’s worth a shot, I guess, but it’s probably best if you guys are there, just in case,” Ivan said. He was visibly nervous.

“I’m not leaving her. Do you four think you can handle him if it gets bad?” I asked

“We make it work,” Viktor said “You don’t need to lose her

I looked at the doctor. “han

po with you, but Itay is going as well, but in case they need to hold the down recording of her playing a hopefully that will help

keep has calm enough Let’s hope you don’t need to do anything invasive on him,” I said, in English.

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“You ain’t never lied. Follow me, gentlemen,” he said, walking out of the room leaving me alone with Sephie.

I leaned over her, kissing her forehead. “I’m so sorry, solnishko. Once again, you were never meant to get hurt. I’m so proud of you, though. I heard you with Armando. You got the information we needed out of him. You continuously surprise me with your intelligence. It’s more than that, though. You’re street smart as well. This business. It takes a certain level of cunning. It takes most people a lifetime to figure it out and you just come by it naturally. You’re just amazing, Persephone. You make me want to work harder every single day to make sure I’m worthy of your love.” I grabbed her hand as I sat next to the bed to watch over her. I felt the faintest squeeze on my fingers. I picked her hand up, kissing the back of it. “Sleep, love. I’ll be right here the whole time.

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Chapter 285

Chapter Two Hundred Eighty-Five

Adrik

It took a little over an hour before Ivan and the other guys came back to Sephie's room. He had a few sets of stitches in various places, but nothing major. I raised an eyebrow, curious how it went. Misha looked proud of himself. "The recording was enough that the doctor could check him over thoroughly. He didn't break anything. Just some stitches," he said.

They had put Sephie in a double room, with strict orders that no one else was to be placed in that room. The doctor was trying to give us an extra bed, since he knew we were all going to stay with her. I appreciated it. Ivan stretched out on the other bed. He looked exhausted. We all looked exhausted. We were quiet for a few minutes, then curiosity got the better of us.

"We know Armando was a part of it, but did you find out about anyone else?" Viktor asked.

"Sal was there the first night. Or first morning. To be honest, I have no idea what day it is. They took my watch, so time was

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meaningless while we were in that room. How long did it take you guys to find us?” Ivan asked. He had a bit of a grin on his face when he asked, like there was a joke we weren’t privy to that he was thinking about.

“From the time they grabbed you until the time we got to you, it was right around 30 hours,” Viktor said.

Ivan chuckled. “She’s gonna be so mad and so impressed at the same time.” We all looked to him for further explanation. “That

was one of her first questions. How long it would take you guys to find us. I said no longer than a day and half. She said three days. She was worried when they found her tracker and pitched it. She didn’t know you’d be able to track us with the earpieces. I

may have neglected to tell her that,” he said, his devious grin on his face.

Andrei snapped his fingers and pointed at Ivan. “Rude.”

“You guys heard her at the last. That’s how she was the entire time. Hell, she shot the guy that grabbed her off the bike in the

face. She had them all worried anytime they talked to her.” He looked at me.

“Did you see her eyes this time?”

I nodded. When Stephen and I got to her, her eyes were as dark as I’d ever seen them. “They were almost black when we got to

her. Were they that dark the whole time?”

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“Yeah, but she kept her cool the entire time. She had one conversation in Italian that I couldn’t understand, but everything else I heard. She was incredible. She was messing with their heads the entire time,” Ivan said. You could hear the pride in his voice when he talked about her.

“What happened when they grabbed you?” Misha asked. I knew he was likely wanting to see how accurate his visions were. I had to admit, I was curious as well.

“They had to be waiting on us. They came out of nowhere and caught me slowing down to turn onto a street. They blocked us. in, but I made a move to drive down the sidewalk. The vehicle in front cut me off. The guys in the vehicles behind us got out and grabbed her off the bike. I didn’t see how she got away, but that’s when she shot the guy in the face. She was on the way to help me when two more guys rushed her and slammed her into a parked car. One of them held a gun to her head, so I stopped. I’d killed two guys that were on me, but I froze when I saw the gun on her. They took everything off us there and threw us in a vehicle, then stopped along the way to drop the helmets and tracker. I’m sure you guys found everything though,” Ivan said.

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“She headbutted the guy that grabbed her before she shot him in the face,” Misha said. “We went to the scene and I was able to see what happened. It was like it was when she and I saw Trino. I’ve never been able to see something happen in the past before.”

Ivan raised his eyebrow. “She really did unlock a new level for you, then.”

“What happened when Sal was there?” Viktor asked.

Ivan laughed. “Oh, dear G od, she’s just so funny without even meaning to be sometimes. She asked what Sal wanted with her.

He told her he was originally just going to use her as bait to draw out Boss so he could kill him, but since she’d killed so many of Sal’s men, she was now in his debt. He said there was also the matter of his son and her making him look like a fool. He kept trying to touch her, but she kept moving away from him, even though we were tied to the chairs. He unzipped her shirt and just stared at her boobs for a minute. She asked if it was his first time seeing boobs. He slapped her and told her she had a smart mouth and that she’d learn to keep it shut. She told him she didn’t care for school and she likely wasn’t going to learn it anytime soon. She said she told Anthony the same thing. Oh, I should mention that she called Anthony his ‘idiot son.’” Sal punched her so

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hard that her chair tipped over backward. The two guys that grabbed us had to set her back upright. When she could look at him again, she told Sal he punched like a weak old man.” Ivan started laughing, but continued. “She said something like she bet he couldn’t even get it up and then asked him how many di ck pills he needed to even have sex.” We all laughed.

“What happened then? I’m sure that didn’t go over well with Sal,” Viktor asked.

“Mando stepped in. He told Sal that they wouldn’t get as much for her if he kept hitting her. So, Sephie was able to get their plan out of them with her di ck joke,” Ivan said. “She’s like a bloodhound when it comes to information. But that’s when Armando looked at her for the first time and saw her eyes. He was visibly frightened when he saw her. She took advantage of it, too. She told them both they were going to die slowly and painfully. It shook them both enough that they left the room immediately. She did the same to the guys that grabbed us. Apparently, they were discussing whether they could get away with stopping along the way and taking turns raping her. It was in Italian, so I didn’t understand it. She didn’t say anything to me at the time, but later, she

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let them know she understood. She told them she was going to enjoy sending them to meet their dead friends.”

We all sat in stunned silence. We knew she was incredible, but she just kept impressing us with her ability to withstand whatever was thrown at her.

“Did Sal come back after that?” Andrei asked.

“No. I was expecting him to. I was surprised when it was just Armando. I’m still not entirely sure which one of them is in charge.

From what Sephie pulled out of Armando at the end there, I don’t think he’s ever been in charge. We need to confirm. with her when she wakes up, but I’m guessing it’s either Ricardo or Giana’s father that have been pulling the strings all along. for Armando,” Ivan said.

“I need to do more digging on Ricardo to see if I can find out more about him,” Viktor said. “Armando is still alive. They took him to a room. Keith and Chris are making sure he stays there.”

I felt Sephie’s hand start to jerk. She started to mumble in her sleep, which likely meant she was having a nightmare. I put my hand on her stomach and felt her body shaking. I started talking to her, trying to coax her out of her nightmare. She was still

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mumbling, but I couldn't understand what she was saying as she was still having trouble speaking. I leaned down, talking softly in her ear, but it didn't stop. The shaking started to get worse. "Get in bed with her, Boss," Stephen said. "She's probably freezing on top of everything else." He and Andrei stood up to help move her over so I had room to lay beside her. We moved all the tubes coming out of her as carefully as possible and I laid down on her right side, which had the least amount of damage Andrei raised her shoulders up so I could slide my arm under her. When he eased her back toward the bed, she tried to turn toward the Andrei and Stephen both saw it and tried to help her roll on her side so she could lay on me as much as possible Her head rested partially on my shoulder, partially in her usual spot on my chest. Her left arm was in a sling that was secured to her waist keep her shoulder immobile, so she couldn't lay across my chest like she normally did. Her body started to relax as soon as her head was on my shoulder and my hand was running up and down her back. I felt my body relax being able to hold her once again. "F\*\*king adorable," they all said at our Stephen said, "You guys should get some sleep. I'm still very much on a caffeine high, so I'll take the first shift. I don't like that

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Sal is still at large.”

“Once he finds out about Anthony and Lorenzo, he’s going to be unpredictable. Let’s hope she doesn’t sleep for three days. We may not have that long.” Viktor said.

“I can buy us a day or two with that,” I said, wiggling my phone out of my pocket. I nodded to Stephen to watch the door to make sure no one came in, then dialed Trino’s number.

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King of the Underworld by RJ Kane

Chapter 286

Chapter Two Hundred Eighty-Six

Adrik

“Jefe, any word?” He picked up on the first ring. He sounded worried.

“She’s fine, Trino. She’s going to need to stay in the hospital a few days though. Armando beat the shi t out of her before we could get to her,” I said.

“I hope he’s already dead.”

“He wishes he was, I can tell you that. He’s still alive though. I plan on drawing it out as long as possible. I want him to suffer.”

“I love this line of thinking, lefe.”

“That being said, Sal is still at large and I’m a little worried about what he’s going to do once he finds out about Anthony and Lorenzo. I’m not leaving her until she can leave the hospital.”

“Say no more, Jefe. I have the perfect solution. I’ll take care of everything. Sal won’t find out until I’m sure that Sephie is okay.

and can leave the hospital. No matter how long it takes.”

“Thanks, Trino. And thanks again for sending Oscar. He’s been an integral part of our fireworks show.”

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Trino laughed. "I love that guy. I've never met anyone who gets as excited to blow shi t up as that dude. He's great."

"He's good at his job, I will definitely give him that," I said.

"Keep me updated on Sephie's condition. How bad is it?" he asked.

"He dislocated her shoulder and broke her arm. She also has five broken ribs and a punctured lung. She's more blue and purple than anything right now, but she got more information out of both Sal and Armando despite everything that was happening to her.

There's another player behind Armando that we don't know much about."

"F\*\*k, Jefe. How did you not kill him?"

"I was well on my way to doing so, but she stopped me. She was having trouble breathing," I said.

"She's even more special than I thought if she could stop you in the middle of that," Trino said.

"You have no idea, Trino. I'll keep you updated and let you know when she can leave. Thank you again for everything, Trino."

"De nada, Jefe."

Viktor ran to one of the vehicles to get a charger for Misha's phone so we could plug it in for Ivan. Nobody had slept in over two days, so nobody wanted to be woken up to him fighting his past. I didn't want to put Sephie in danger either. Knowing her, she

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would wake up just to help him, knowing he was struggling.

I had to admit that listening to her play helped me relax and be able to sleep better, given the situation. Because of her arm in a sling and cast, I couldn't hold her as close as i wanted to. Because of her chest tube, she needed to be partially sitting up. She was as close to me as her arm in a cast strapped to her waist would allow, but I still managed to pull her legs over mine partially so she would feel even closer. It was frustrating and not ideal, but I found myself drifting off to sleep despite everything.

We were all woken up periodically by nurses coming in to check on her. One nurse clearly wa happy with me being in bed with her, but she didn't say anything. Perhaps it was the gun on r hip that she didn't like. Dr. Williams came in that evening to check on her before he left for the day. He chuckled, "one of my nurses went on a rant about you being in bed with her. I told her i could send her home for the day if she had that much of a problem with it. She decided to let it go."

"She doesn't know I basically pay her salary. She'll be out of a job if she doesn't let it go," I said sternly.

"I'll make sure she takes care of everyone else on the floor instead," he said.

"How is she?" he asked pointing at Sephie.

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“She’s been mostly quiet. Like Ivan, she has demons that resurface anytime she gets hurt. She started fighting, but as long as she can feel me next to her, she stays calm.” As I said that, she struggled to snuggle closer to me.

“Let’s make sure you stay next to her, then. She needs to stay quiet so she can breathe easily until her lung has a chance to heal a little more,” he said. He looked toward Ivan, who was still sleeping. “How’s he doing?”

“Good so far. As long as he can hear her playing, he stays calm. I assume he was okay when you checked him out earlier?”

“He was as calm as he was when she was with him. You were right, too. She is incredibly talented”

I smiled, feeling that familiar pull in my chest. I loved it when other people saw the greatness in her too.

“I’ll be back in the morning to check on her again. If something happens overnight, the nurses know to call me,” he said.

“Thank you, Dr. Williams. For both of them. I understand it’s a bit of a unique situation we’ve put you in. I appreciate everything you’ve done,” I said. He nodded his head and left quietly.

Sephie stayed quiet for the entire night, as long as her head was resting on my shoulder. She would periodically try to get closer

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to me, but would struggle to do so each time. Her ribs made it difficult to move without severe pain and her arm in a cast and sling made it awkward for her to lay against me. I tried to hold her as close as possible without hurting her.

Dr. Williams came back the next morning to check on her. He looked at everyone in the room. “You’re all looking slightly more refreshed this morning. I take it you all got a little sleep, at least?” he asked. One of the nurses had brought in an extra bed the night before, so the guys rotated through the beds during the night. Each time a nurse came in to check on Sephie, they would rotate. It wasn’t ideal, but they weren’t going to complain if it meant staying close to her,

There were quiet grunts in response to Dr. Williams’ question. He chuckled. “I’m guessing you guys likely haven’t eaten, either. I can have food sent up. You’ll feel better once you can eat, as well.” He turned to me. “How did she do last night?”

“She was quiet. She’s tried to move closer to me a few times, but struggles to do so. It makes her frustrated, even in her sleep,” I said.

“She’s going to be in a good bit of pain for a while. Her bruising is deep. And I know I don’t have. to tell you how painful broken

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ribs are.” He walked to the side of the bed opposite from me. Het put his hands up, looking at me. “I need to check her,” he said, before he touched her, like he was asking my permission.

I tried to sit up so I wouldn’t be in the way. He lifted the blanket off her, then lifted the hospital gown she was wearing to look at her chest tube. I heard the guys cursing quietly as they saw the bruises that covered her body. Dr. Williams checked everything, then said, “I need to roll her onto her back. She has so much bruising that I want to be sure I didn’t miss something that’s causing her to bleed internally.”

Andrei and Misha stood up immediately to help shift her onto her back. They gently lifted her and turned her so the doctor could have access. As he palpated her abdomen, she started mumbling. He heard her and took note of it, but continued his exam. I

could see her body start to shake the longer she was away from me. Dr. Williams felt it too. “That’s concerning,” he said.

“That’s what happens when she’s away from him,” Ivan said.

“It’ll stop once we put her back on him,” Misha said.

“Intriguing,” he said as he continued his exam. When he was satisfied that there was nothing going on internally that he needed

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to worry about, he stepped back to let Andrei and Misha move her back closer to me. Dr. Williams stood and watched as the mumbling quieted and her body relaxed as soon as her head was on my chest once again. "That's not something I see, ever," he said as he stared at Sephie, like he was completely lost in thought over what he'd just witnessed.

Ivan didn't say a word, but he stood up and walked silently to the bed, standing in between Sephie and the doctor, his arms crossed across his chest. It was enough to break whatever thought pattern was going on in his head. "I'll come back in a few hours to check on her again. From what I can see, she's doing well. She might be able to get the chest tube out earlier than I thought, but she'll still need to stay here for observation for a day once it comes out. We want to make sure it won't need to go back in," he said as he walked toward the door. "I'll have food sent up, as well." He closed the door quietly behind him.

We all looked at Ivan, somewhat puzzled. "Doctors are all the same. As soon as they find something that can't be explained with their science, they want to study it. I'll die before I let that happen to her," he said, clearly bristled. "I've seen that look way too many times before."

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“Let’s hope she continues to make improvements quickly so we can get her out of here,” Andrei said. “I’d also rather get my own food than rely on what he sends up.”

“Fair point. I’ll tell the doctor it’s not needed,” Viktor said. We could hear the edge to his voice as he stood to leave the room. I smiled, as I kissed the top of Sephie’s head. Viktor rarely got angry, but when it came to her, he would destroy whatever he perceived to be a threat, no questions. asked.

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King of the Underworld by RJ Kane

Chapter 287

Chapter Two Hundred Eighty-Seven

Sephie

I knew I was in a hospital by the smell. That's a smell that you don't find anywhere else. I could hear voices in and out. I knew the guys were with me. I felt Adrik's hand in mine. I could hear Ivan telling them what happened. My body reacted when Ivan was going through the events while we were in that room. I heard Adrik talking to me, trying to calm me, but it wasn't working. The shaking got worse. I could feel it, but it also felt like I didn't have control over my own body. There was a disconnect between my brain and my body. I was trying to move, but I couldn't. I felt Andrei's warmer than average hands under my shoulders and Stephen's ice-cold hands on my legs, lifting me gently. I could feel the bed dip beside me as Adrik laid down next to me. I could smell him. I just wanted to be close to him. When Andrei gently eased me back toward the bed, I knew I wasn't close enough to Adrik, but I couldn't move right. I struggled to turn toward him, hoping they would see.

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I couldn't do anything. I couldn't see. I couldn't speak. I couldn't move. But I could hear. And I could feel. Andrei and Stephen did notice my struggle and turned me so I could be closer to Adrik. As soon as they put my head on his shoulder, my body relaxed and the shaking subsided. I wanted to be closer still, but this would have to do for now.

I was in and out of consciousness throughout the...day? Night? I had no idea what day it was. Or what night it was. It didn't really matter, to be honest. My body stayed relaxed as long as I was close to Adrik. I heard the doctor come in and tell Adrik that he wanted to check me. I felt Adrik shift underneath me and I knew I was going to start shaking again. I tried to tell him, but I still couldn't speak. Whatever they sedated me with this time was taking longer to wear off. I didn't like it. I couldn't control my own body.

I felt the doctor's hands checking me over. I felt Andrei and Misha move me. I felt the shaking start once I was, apart from Adrik. I felt Andrei and Misha put me back against Adrik, but then I felt a very weird feeling. It was much the same as when Sal was staring at my boobs and Armando was looking at me half-naked, I didn't like it. It didn't last long, however. I couldn't see and I

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couldn't hear him, but I knew Ivan was standing over me. Since we were grabbed, I'd been able to feel him much the same way I could feel Adrik, just not as strongly. He had his own energy signature. I knew he was standing over me, protecting me. It was a different feeling with Ivan. With Adrik, it felt like he was standing with me, beside me, anytime he was being protective with me, With Ivan, it was like a protective bubble that he put me in, while he stood guard against whatever he perceived to be the threat. The weird, gross feeling went away almost immediately and I knew it was Ivan silently daring the doctor to continue whatever it was that was making me have this feeling. I finally felt the doctor leave the room.

I also heard Ivan's voice talking to the guys, but it was hard to hear anything except Ivan for a few minutes. I knew Adrik was still with me, but the protective bubble that Ivan put me in blocked everything else out.

I woke up again, after sleeping for who knows how long. Adrik was still as close to me as possible, his arm holding me gently but firmly. I knew he was asleep, because his hand was still. When he was awake, his hand would lightly run up and down my back.

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I tried to move my body to see if it would work yet. This time I could open my eyes. Everything was blurry for a moment, but the room started to come into focus. I knew I wouldn't be able to move the arm: that was in a sling and I was laying on my good arm.

I tried to wiggle my toes. It actually worked this time, so I tried to move my foot, then my lower leg. Everything worked. Finally.

I stretched my legs and immediately regretted it. Shooting pain through my entire body caused me to let out something in between a scream, a yelp, and a cough. Adrik was jolted awake, as were the guys. Adrik was immediately concerned and we were quickly surrounded by each one of the guys.

"Sephie, what's wrong?" Adrik asked. He was looking me over, trying to figure out what happened. He noticed. my eyes were open and stopped to look at me, his wide smile stretching across his face. "I missed you," he said. quietly.

I tried to talk, but nothing came out. My throat felt horribly dry. I ended up coughing once, which made me wince in extreme pain.

"You shouldn't try to talk yet, spider monkey. You need water first," Andrei said as he walked to a table next to another bed in the

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room. There was a small pitcher there, with water in it. He poured a small amount of water into a cup and brought it to me. While he fetched me water, Misha and Viktor helped move me and adjust the bed so I could sit up a little more. Sitting up made it easier to breathe, so I was thankful for the change.

Andrei handed me the water, saying, “slowly,” with a stern look on his face. I smiled weakly at him as I drank the water. Oh, that felt good.

“Once you keep that down, you can have more,” Ivan said. “Can you blink?” I blinked my eyes to show him. “Good. Two blinks for yes, one blink for no,” he said. I nodded my head once.

“Are you in pain, solnishko?” Adrik asked. I blinked twice. He cursed under his breath.

“Can you breathe better now?” Ivan asked. Two blinks.”

“Are you nauseous?” Andrei asked. I thought for a minute, then blinked once. I wasn’t happy about not being in control of my body for so long, but at least I wasn’t nauseous this time. He went to refill the cup with water? He poured a little bit more this time, then handed it back to me. I drank it slowly. My body felt weak. And painful.

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“Do you want to know who won the bet on how long it took them to find us?”

Ivan asked, a grin on his bruised. and battered face.

Two blinks. “Technically, neither of us. 30 hours,” he said, smiling at me.

“You were closer,” I managed to say in a whisper. “I’m glad.” I smiled at all the guys and leaned my head toward Adrik. Andrei

refilled my cup yet again. This time, he filled it up completely. I drank part of it, but then handed it to Adrik, who finished it. I was

sure he hadn’t had anything to eat or drink the whole time I’d been out. He drank it quickly, handing the empty cup back to

Andrei. I gave Adrik a sympathetic look for keeping him trapped yet again.

“Don’t you dare try to apologize,” he said. “I would stay here until the end of time with you.” He leaned over and kissed my forehead gently.

“How long?” I whispered.

Viktor looked at his watch. “Right about 24 hours this time, but considering what you went through, I’d say

you’re ahead of schedule, sestrichka,” he said, giving me a wink and his broad, handsome smile.

I smiled back at him, but it was weak. Everything felt weak. And painful. So painful.

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“How much pain are you in, princess? On a scale of 1-10,” Ivan asked. I thought for a minute, taking inventory of my body. I held up 5 fingers, then 3 fingers. “So, like a 13 for normal people, then?” Ivan asked, grinning at

1.

“Do you want some pain meds? The doctor said you were going to be in severe pain for a couple days,” Adrik said. He could tell by the look on my face that I wasn’t happy with that option. He smiled softly at me. “I’m not sure ibuprofen is going to be enough for this time, love.”

“How much longer do I have to stay here?” I whispered.

“You still have a chest tube in, but the doctor said that might be able to come out soon. You have to stay another day after that comes out to make sure your lung stays inflated, then you should be able to leave,” Ivan said.

I peeked underneath the hospital gown that I was wearing, trying to find the chest tube. “Can we take it out now?” I asked quietly as I was looking. Adrik grabbed my hand, pulling me very gently against him. He was laughing at me, but he was also still concerned about me. He looked at his watch. “The doctor should be coming back soon to check on you before he leaves for the

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day. We can ask him then.”

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King of the Underworld by RJ Kane

Chapter 288

Chapter Two Hundred Eighty-Eight

Sephie

I looked at Ivan, noting that he'd been cleaned up and had a fresh set of clothes on. "How?" I asked, pointing at him. I was sure they would know what I was asking, so I didn't feel the need to elaborate or use any more energy than absolutely necessary.

"The recording of you playing worked so the doctor could stitch him up and make sure nothing was broken. We've all been listening to it off and on while Ivan sleeps. So far, he hasn't woken up fighting." Misha said.

I looked at Ivan, remembering him standing over me the last time the doctor checked me. "What made you protect me from the doctor?" I asked, my voice still only barely above a whisper.

He raised his eyebrow. "How do you know that, princess?"

"I can feel you now too. Not as strong though." I stopped to take a breath. "I could hear all your conversations too. I just couldn't move," I said, trying to breathe as deeply as I could.

"Really?" Adrik and Ivan both asked at the same time. I laughed quietly at them, nodding my head.

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“Different, though,” I said. I looked back at Ivan, still wanting to know what the doctor did. “You were right to do what you did. It felt gross whatever he did.”

“He was looking at you the way the doctors at the facility looked at me when they were excited about a new experiment they wanted to try on me,” Ivan said.

“It felt the same when Sal was staring at my boobs. And Armando cut my clothes off,” I said, taking as deep a breath as I could manage after getting the words out. I coughed once, which made Andrei quickly get more water for me. “You’re my favorite, Bubba,” I said as he handed me a full cup of water again. I glanced at everyone’s tense faces at the mention of Sal and Armando while I drank more water. “Armando?” I asked quietly.

“He’s still alive, sestrichka. He’s in a room. Chris said he’s trying to talk his way out by saying Boss has crazy and put him in there for no reason,” Viktor said.

gone

I closed my eyes for a moment, trying not to get angry. I felt Adrik tighten his hold on me. He pressed his cheek against mine, trying to help me stay calm. I took as deep a breath as I could. When I opened my eyes and looked at the guys, they were all

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surprised.

“Holy shi t, you were not lying, Ivan,” Misha said. He looked at Adrik. “Does she feel calm to you, Boss?” I felt Adrik nod his head, his cheek still pressed lightly to mine. I was smiling at them, knowing they were talking about my eyes. I didn’t feel out of control angry, but I was certain my eyes told a different story.

“They were like that the whole time they had us,” Ivan said. “But she never once lost her cool.” He looked at me with a look of pride on his face.

We were interrupted by the doctor coming in to check on me. “Oh, good. You’re awake now,” he said as he walked into the room. The guys took a small step back from the bed, but didn’t leave. They gave the doctor just enough space to do what was needed, but they were making sure to stay close to me while he was in the room. Adrik pulled me closer to him as the doctor approached the bed. Even though it hurt, I was grateful for him doing so. “How are you feeling?” Dr. Williams asked as he looked over my chart.

“Like shi t,” I said quietly. Dr. Williams chuckled.

“How’s your breathing? Can you take a deep breath in?” I did as instructed. My ribs were still incredibly painful, so I couldn’t

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breathe as deeply as I wanted to. “Good.” He looked at Adrik, asking, “have you heard her wheezing at all?” Adrik shook his head no. “What about coughing?”

“Only when she tries to talk too much,” Ivan said.

“That’s to be expected,” Dr. Williams said. “You’re probably going to have a harder time talking and doing normal, everyday things for a few days. Take everything very slowly. It’ll make it easier on your lungs to keep up. I’d like to take the chest tube out and see how you do.” I nodded my head, eagerly. If me staying in the hospital was dependent on that thing coming out, then I wanted it out as soon as possible.

“Can I get out of bed?” I asked quietly.

“After your chest tube comes out, you can walk for short distances. You’ll need to take your IV stand with you, but a little bit of movement will be good for the rest of your body. You’re going to be sore, though. How much pain are you in?”

“I’m okay,” I said. I was worried about him giving me pain meds that would knock me out for days at a time. I would rather suffer through it. Ivan caught my eye. I looked at him sternly, trying to silently tell him to keep his mouth closed.

“Why do I feel like you’re lying?” Dr. Williams asked,

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“I’ve had worse, doc. I’ll be fine,” I said. My tone was short enough that I was hoping he would let the matter drop. I was trying not to maintain eye contact with him, as I didn’t want him to notice if my eyes turned dark. I glanced at the guys, who all had sympathetic looks on their faces. They knew why I was refusing pain meds. Dr. Williams just sighed. “I’ll get a nurse to get your chest tube out shortly. Then you can try going for a short. walk in the hallway. I don’t want you to overdo it though. How’s your appetite? Are you nauseous?” I shook my head no. “Good. We can give you a few snacks and see how you do with those, then you can have more substantial food.” He looked to Viktor. “Or would you rather get food for her too?”

“We’ll take care of it,” Viktor said. I was curious as to what that conversation had been like, but I would wait to ask about that later.

Dr. Williams nodded at Viktor, then said, “I’ll have a nurse come in shortly. I’ll be back in the morning to see how you’re doing.”

He smiled at me before leaving the room.

Once the doctor was out of the room, Ivan looked at me, his broad smile across his face. “Princess, do you know what you’re

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doing with your eyes now?" I looked at him, completely confused. "Your eyes were totally normal when you were talking to the doctor, then you said you were okay and looked at me. Your eyes went dark as ever when you looked at me, then back to normal the next time you looked at the doctor. If you're doing it on purpose, I'm impressed as hell. If you're not doing it on purpose, then your eyes are telling you that you should be."

"I didn't do it on purpose, I don't think. I didn't want you to tell him I'd told you how much pain I'm in. He's going to give me pain meds that make me sick or knock me out. I don't want that. We can't afford to stay in here for a week just so I can wake up pain free like Sleeping Beauty." I stopped to breathe, but then added, "I also didn't want him to notice my eyes changing. You guys don't need another reason to want to hurt him."

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King of the Underworld by RJ Kane

Chapter 289

Chapter Two Hundred Eighty-Nine

Sephie

The chest tube came out quickly. The nurse made me stay in bed for half an hour after it came out, just to make sure my lung would stay inflated and functioning properly. Once the half hour was up, she came in and told me I could get out of bed. I wanted to get out of bed as much for Adrik as I did for me. I still felt guilty for keeping him trapped with me. I knew a short walk would do him good, too.

I'd had bruised ribs before, but never broken ribs. Both were not something I wished to ever have to deal with again. Every single movement caused pain in my ribs. Andrei and Viktor were there to help me sit up on the edge of the bed. My hospital gown wasn't secured, so they all got a full view of the bruises down my left side. I heard collective cursing.

"If

you

won't take pain meds from the doctor, will you let me go get you some ibuprofen?" Viktor asked. "I can get snacks, too," he

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added, grinning at me.

“I’m more excited about the snacks, if I’m being honest,” I said, trying to pull the stupid hospital gown around me. “Can you get me some clothes too? This thing makes me want to murder people.”

“You got it,” Viktor said, laughing at me.

Adrik stood in front of me. “Hold on to me,” he said as he helped me stand.

Once I was standing, he wrapped the hospital gown around me, tying it so it would stay in place. His hand brushed against my skin. “Grab her a pair of my sweatpants and a hoodie.

She’s freezing,” he told Viktor.

“She’s going to be living in your hoodies until her arm comes out of this cast,” Ivan said as he thumped the cast with his finger. “I can’t imagine your tiny little shirts being able to fit over that thing.”

“My shirts are not that tiny. Your shirts are just giant in comparison,” I said grumpily.

“Ok, she needs snacks. I’ll be back as quickly as possible,” Viktor said, laughing. He left the hospital room quickly.

Adrik offered me his arm as I walked slowly to the door. My legs felt fine.

Sore, but fine. That’s a good sign. Being able to walk around always made me feel better, no matter how much pain I was in. Misha and Ivan walked out of the room ahead of us, with

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Andrei and Stephen behind us. It was still early enough in the evening that people were still visiting friends and family that were in the hospital, so the hallway wasn't empty. We got plenty of strange looks as I walked at a snail's pace down the hallway with my giants.

"Can I tell them I'm the go d da mn princess? Will it make them stop staring at me?" I asked Adrik quietly, speaking Russian so we wouldn't be understood. He laughed at me, leaning over to kiss my cheek.

"You can tell them whatever you like, solnishko. Or I can have them all killed for looking at you. Say the word," he said, grinning at me.

"Don't tempt me," I said.

Viktor was back shortly after my excursion into the hallway. "I lied. I'm more excited about the sweatpants

than anything." I said as he handed Adrik a bag with clothes for me in it.

Ivan and Stephen were the closest ones this time, so they helped pick me up and move me to the edge of the bed. I was

impressed with how gentle they all were, given their massive size. Adrik helped me put his sweatpants on. They were a few sizes

too big for me, so he rolled the waistband and tied them tight enough they would stay up. He glanced at the guys, the sweatshirt

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in his hand. They all turned their backs to me, so as not to see all of me. Adrik carefully took the hospital gown off and replaced it with the sweatshirt, leaving my left arm out of the sleeve.

“Sweet, now it looks like I only have one arm,” I said, playing with the empty sleeve. I smacked Adrik with it as he helped me sit back on the edge of the bed. “Oh, this is going to get me in trouble.”

Adrik looked to Viktor. “Definitely needs snacks.” Viktor threw a protein bar at Adrik, who ripped the wrapper open with his teeth and handed it to me. As soon as the protein bar was in my hand, my stomach woke up.

“I don’t know why men think women are that complicated. Keep us warm and give us snacks. It’s not rocket science,” I said, taking a bite..

“I feel like most women are slightly more complicated than you are, spider monkey,” Andrei said.

“That’s fair. Totally fair.”

Once I ate one protein bar and managed to keep it down, I was starving. I ate three more in the span of an hour. Viktor had also brought me some ibuprofen, so I took that, which helped take the edge off the pain. An hour after I took my first dose of

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superprofen, Ivan asked, “what’s your pain level now, princess?” I thought for, a moment, then held up four fingers. “So, an 8 for normal people, then?” he said, grinning at me. I was starting) to feel more like myself, despite my pain. I felt like I could finally smile genuinely back at him.

“Ah, there it is,” Misha said. “Viktor, she’s gonna need more protein bars. Maybe get her some beef jerky or something, too. Clearly protein makes her soul return to her body.”

I laughed, but grabbed my ribs with my good arm. “F\*\*k. Laughing is not an approved activity right now. I’m currently regretting bringing out your hilarious side.” I felt Adrik shift me so I was leaning back against him, his arm around me protectively.

“How much easier is it to talk now, princess?” Ivan asked.

“It’s better. I can breathe a little easier sitting up,” I said. “You want to know about when I was with Armando, don’t you?”

He chuckled, nodding his head. Stephen said, “we all heard that conversation. What happened when you asked him about who was pulling the strings?”

“Ricardo,” I said. “He wasn’t looking at me until I said Ricardo’s name, then he looked at me. I could tell he was livid that I had

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said Ricardo's name, but he was also afraid. There was fear in his eyes. When he walked back over to me after I said all that to him, it was the only time I was actually afraid for my life. If you guys hadn't shown up when you did, he might've killed me." Adrik tried to pull me closer, but it was difficult given my sling. He nodded to Andrei and Ivan, who both stood and walked over to the bed. "Pick her up so she can lay back against me," he said. They lifted me gently, while Adrik moved underneath me. They put me down between his legs so I was leaning back against his torso. He wrapped both arms around me, his legs on either side of mine. I leaned my head back and kissed his cheek. "This is much better," I said quietly

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King of the Underworld by RJ Kane

Chapter 290

Chapter Two Hundred Ninety

Sephie

Viktor took his computer out of one of the bags he brought back. “I still don’t understand how Ricardo could be pulling the strings with Armando. What does he have over him?”

“I don’t think life is as rosy for Armando as we’ve been led to believe. When he first cut my clothes off me, he told me I was going to solve a lot of his problems. He got pissed when he saw how bruised I was from them. slamming me into the car when they grabbed us because I wouldn’t fetch as much money. That’s when I told him about my back. He turned me around and saw my scars and that’s when he lost it.”

“Why would Armando be needing money? He’s worth more than the other bosses,” Andrei said.

“Maybe he’s only worth more on paper. He could be in debt to someone or several people and be struggling to pay them back.

Just because he has plenty of assets on paper doesn’t mean any of those are actual liquid assets. He might be strapped for cash,” Adrik said.

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“The million-dollar question is why he’d be strapped for cash,” Ivan said.

“Princess, you didn’t overhear them. talking at all when they were both there, did you?”

“No, I only heard the other two guys speaking Italian. Sal and Armando kept their conversations completely private when they were both there. Armando never said anything in Italian in front of me. Neither did Sal. Only those other two dudes.” I thought about what I’d said to Armando for a few moments, trying to remember, all the details that the guys might’ve missed. “The exact moment when you guys came into the chat escapes me. Did you guys hear me asking him about Sal?”

“No, what did you say?” Stephen asked.

“I was trying to make him angry when he found out that I was damaged goods, basically.” Adrik clicked his tongue, flexing his arms around my waist. I know he wanted to squeeze me, but he didn’t want to hurt me. “It was part of trying to make him mad. I told him he might’ve been able to sell me with just a front picture, but because I was bruised all the angles were just f\*\*ked up. I asked him what Sal was going to do when he found out that I wasn’t going to fetch top dollar and what he was going to do when

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he found out it was Armando that f\*\*ked it up. That's when he snapped. There's something to Sal and there's something to Ricardo," I said. "And also f\*\*k him for thinking I was damaged goods. That is all."

"What if we're looking in the wrong spot?" Stephen asked. "There's somebody behind Armando and likely has been for a very long time. Seph thinks Lorenzo is really the brains behind Sal. What if Ricardo and Lorenzo are the connection and we've missed it?"

I could hear Viktor starting a new search after hearing Stephen's theory. "What did your father think of Armando?" I asked. Adrik would only speak about his father on rare occasions. Their relationship was strained, but respectful. On some level, Adrik understood what his father did to keep him safe and make sure he could survive this world. On another level, that also meant that Adrik didn't really have a solid father figure in his life. Viktor was more of a father figure to Adrik than Vitaliy. Since handing over the business to Adrik, Vitaliy had basically disappeared. He would resurface from time to time for a few days, but then he would be gone for years. Adrik knew how to get in touch with him, if he needed to. He just never needed to.

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Adrik sighed. “As far as I know, he had a good relationship with Armando. Armando was new to being a boss when my father handed everything over to me. I think Armando just did whatever my father told him to do, not many questions asked. He told me when I took over that Armando would never be a problem. He was under the impression that Armando was an idiot.”

“I think I agree. He’s an idiot, but he’s also a psycho. It’s a very weird combination. You guys heard him confess what he did to his first wife, right?”

“I missed that part. It was hard to hear everything with the guys trying to make me less pretty,” Ivan said, smiling. He motioned like he was flipping his non-existent hair over his shoulder.

“He told me he beat her to death when she wouldn’t shut up. I asked him if he’d gotten her hooked on coke the same way he did Giana. He didn’t know we knew about that, so it stumped him for a minute. I asked him if he knew that coke was a stimulant and told him if he wanted his wife to be quiet that he should’ve gone with heroin or another opioid. He looked genuinely confused. That’s where the idiot part comes in. That’s also when I first asked him who was pulling his strings, because he was

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clearly too stupid to have stayed in this business for this long without help.

He did not like that,” I said.

“Dario was right about Armando’s first wife,” Misha said.

“Yeah, I remembered that part too,” I said. “Now I’m curious to know how Dario knew.”

“It might be worth having another conversation with Dario. He might tell us more when he sees that we have Armando,” Misha said.

“I agree, but I think Sal is his biggest fear, after Massimo,” I said. “Sal is what made him react. Armando just made him angry.”

Viktor, who had been quietly searching for information while we were all talking, got up and brought his computer to me. “Do you feel up to translating this?” he asked.

“For you? Of course,” I said, winking at him. I scanned over the article. “This one is old. From before Lorenzo got banished. It’s talking about how he took over the docks. ‘Injecting new life into the failing import business, it says. He made a deal with an Italian exporter to bring goods into the city.” I looked up from the computer. “I’ll give you guys one guess who the Italian exporter is.”

“Ricardo,” they all said.

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“Winner winner chicken dinner,” I said. I finished reading the article to make sure there wasn’t anything I missed. There was a link to a second article that I clicked to see what else I could find. “Here’s one from a few years later. It says that in the span of 6 months, four boats were found coming into the docks loaded with people.” “It appears Lorenzo has been in the flesh trade longer than we thought,” Viktor said.

“This article doesn’t mention Ricardo, but I’d be willing to bet if we dug a little, those boats belong to him,” I said. Viktor got up and took his computer back, to see what else he could find.

Adrik sighed. “This is much bigger than the bosses trying to take the city from me.”

“Which is why you need to teach them a lesson so no one will ever think about trying it again. There’s a reason history remembers Vlad the Impaler’s name hundreds of years later. Savagery has its place,” I said. Adrik tightened his hold on me. I grinned at Stephen, asking, “Yoden, what was Vlad like in real life? Was he cranky? I feel like he was cranky.”

“All Romanians come across as cranky, Seph. But Vlad? Surprisingly sarcastic. Liked dad jokes, too. Odd combination, but it

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worked with him,” he said with a straight face like it was the Go d’s honest truth.

“What about the impaling? I feel like you helped him come up with that idea.”

“No, that was all Vlad. I just supported his dreams. It’s called enabling. I invented that,” he said, still completely straight-faced.

I tried to hold it in, but I couldn’t help but laugh, which caused me to grab my ribs in pain. “I did this to myself,” I whined as I waited for the pain in my ribs to subside.

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