

King of the Underworld Chapter 291 - 300

Chapter 291

Sephie

I got up several times throughout the night to walk down the hallway. Everyone's sleep schedule was screwed up, so we would all nap for a few hours, get up and make a few trips up and down the hallway, then nap some more. It was much nicer at night, because the hallways were basically deserted. I did, however, get plenty of odd looks from the nurses since the guys insisted on escorting me each time.

"How bad do I actually look?" I asked Adrik quietly. I'd gone to the bathroom a few times, but I refused to look at myself in the mirror. I knew it wasn't going to be pretty and I just didn't want to put myself through that yet. I could see the bruises on my body, so I was sure my face made a matching set.

"Your face is bruised, but not as bad as your body, solnishko. Maybe it's the Russian that makes them nervous. They all think

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we're talking about them. But I think it's more that we won't let you go anywhere without us. They're not used to seeing a princess in real life," he said, smiling at me.

"Who knew being royalty was such a burden to bear?" I said, flipping my three-day old braid over my shoulder. I was sure my hair was resembling a rat's nest at this point, but I didn't really care. There wasn't anything I could do about it with only one functioning arm, so I was resigned to it being completely out of control. Viktor, who was behind us this time, said, "I can redo that for you. Or you're going to end up with a dreadlock before you can get out of here." I picked up the empty sleeve of Adrik's sweatshirt I was wearing and turned to point it at him. "You, sir, are my favorite."

"Hey, no fair. Just because the rest of us have never had long hair and don't know how to braid doesn't mean Viktor gets to be the favorite," Misha said. I could tell he was just trying to stir sh*t up for the fun of it. We were all going a little stir crazy being stuck here.

As we walked back in the room, Viktor closed the door then said, "I think your ability to see things as they happen, both past and

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present now, trumps my knowledge of how to braid, Misha.”

“Wait, past?” I asked as I walked to the bed. I hated that I felt tired after two trips up and down the hallway, but I needed to sit down. I sat on the edge of the bed, gingerly.

Misha sat on the other bed in the room, across from me. “So, when Boss called you the Game Master, I think he nailed it. You definitely unlocked a new level for me when we saw Trino,” he said.

“How so?” I asked, as I tried to gingerly scoot farther onto the bed.

“I’ve never been able to see things that happened in the past before. But the night you and Ivan were taken, we went to the spot where they grabbed you. I could see everything that happened, like it was happening in front of me. I saw them grab you off the bike. I saw you scream to make the guy that grabbed you think you were weak, then I saw you headbutt him as hard as you possibly could to get free. I saw you shoot him. I saw you try to shoot the guys that were on Ivan, but you stopped. I saw them slam you into the car and point a gun to your head. I saw Ivan kill two of the guys that were on him, but he stopped when they pulled a gun on you. I saw them take everything from you and zip tie your hands in front of you and then throw you into the

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vehicle. It was plain as day to me when it happened and it was like I was watching it in real-time. It's never happened

1

1/3

Chapter Two Hundred Ninety-One

like that before," Misha said, running his hand through his black hair.

"That's pretty incredible, Misha. That's everything that happened as I remember it," I said.

Adrik walked to the bed, putting one arm gingerly around my shoulders, the other under my legs, mindful of the IV tubes still attached to me. He lifted me farther onto the bed so I could lean back against the bed instead of having to keep myself upright.

"That's not all he can do now," he said, as he kissed my forehead once he had placed me on the bed.

"There's more?"

Adrik nodded his head. "He saw the building where they took you. He narrowed down the part of town you were in considerably, which made it easier to find you through the earpieces. But even after Chen connected to your earpiece, we still weren't

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completely sure what building you were in. It only narrowed down the possibilities. It was Keith that randomly told us what building you guys were in.”

“How did you see what building they took us to?” I asked Misha.

“I had to have Boss’s help for that. He thought about you, about finding you, and I was able to see the building. It was what I kind of assume happened when we saw Trino. You were thinking about Trino and it amplified what I could see. Boss was thinking about you and it amplified what I could see,” Misha said. “But it was so dark that I never could see the address on the building.

Keith made it easy for us. He gave us the address.”

“Keith took Armando to the building? Does he know Ivan and I were there?” I asked, I could feel myself starting to get angry at the possibility of yet another betrayal.

Adrik leaned down and kissed my forehead again, laughing softly. “He didn’t know, love. He’s still on the good list. For now.”

“Put your demon eyes away, Seph. Armando wouldn’t tell Keith and Chris why he needed to go to that building. Keith said

Armando was acting funny and that he had a bad feeling about it all, so he gave us the address. At that time, he didn’t know you

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and Ivan had even been taken,” Stephen said, smiling at me.

“I do not have demon eyes,” I said, matter-of-factly. Andrei threw another protein bar onto the bed beside me, his broad smile across his face. “I hate you,” I said as I opened the wrapper and took a bite. I got halfway through the protein bar and then added, “I’m sorry for what I said when I was hungry. I didn’t mean it.”

0 Just to prove there were no hard feelings, Andrei stood up and got me a cup of water. “You’re my favorite, spider monkey. Especially when you’re cranky from hunger.”

“When did you fill Keith and Chris in on the fact that Ivan and I were in that building?” I asked, finishing my middle of the night snack.

“He gave us the address after the first time Armando was there. Keith said he was scheduled to return the following morning, which is when we planned to get you out. We wanted to catch Armando there. We were hoping to catch Sal there, too. We watched Keith and Chris drive up with Armando, but he told them to wait in the vehicle. Once Armando was inside, I made a call to Keith and told them to get out of there. I also told them not to answer their phones should Armando call them. They knew

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something was up, but they still don't have all the details. They just know Armando is in deep sh*t and is in a room," Stephen said.

"That's who Armando called, I bet. He was livid when they didn't answer. He smashed his phone."

"Is that when you told them to jump off the roof? I have to admit that was my favorite part," Stephen said.

"I think it was everyone's favorite part. That was hilarious," Andrei said.

"I'm going to remind Armando that you warned him. People just don't listen to us, gazelle," Misha said, faking being indignant.

"I really want to laugh right now, but it's going to hurt so much," I said, trying to hold back my laughter.

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King of the Underworld by RJ Kane

Chapter 292

Chapter Two Hundred Ninety-Two

Sephie

After my midnight walk and snack, I ended up falling asleep for a few hours again. I was woken up by one the nurses coming in yet again to check on me. The guys were still asleep, Adrik was only pretending to be asleep next to me. I could feel his thumb tracing circles on my back under his sweatshirt. He was growing impatient with the constant interruptions to his sleep. I couldn't blame him. We all were.

The nurse noticed I was awake. "How are you feeling?" she asked.

"I'm okay," I said quietly.

"You're still able to breathe normally?" I nodded my head. She glanced around at the guys, checking to see if they were still sleeping. "Can I ask you a question?" she asked quietly. I nodded my head again, curious as to what she wanted to know. "Are you the girl that kept that guy from killing the doctor and the nurses in the ER a few months ago?"

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I smiled, once again trying not to laugh. I nodded my head again. “You heard about that?” I asked.

Her eyes went wide. “The entire hospital has heard about that,” she said.

“You’re a legend. None of us know how you did it. I

worked a shift with one of the nurses who was in the ER when they were trying to sedate him. She said she’s never seen

anything like it in her life. Nothing worked. They gave him enough to kill a horse and he just kept getting up. They thought he was

on some new kind of drug nobody had seen yet. She was scared for her life, then you showed up. She said you just whispered

something to him and he laid there, perfectly still. There are plenty of theories about what happened, but nobody can come up

with a viable answer.”

I took as deep of a breath as I could. “He wasn’t on drugs. And he’s not a monster. He’s one of my favorite people.” I sighed. “I

don’t have any special powers, either. I simply accept him for who he is.

Everyone has demons. He has more than most people,

and for good reason. He’s been through things no human should have to endure. But I love him for it. I love all his broken parts

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and pieces because they still make the man that would readily give his life to save mine. Sometimes people who've been through serious trauma need an anchor in the storms of their psyche. I'm that for him. And it's not something that you're going to be able to scientifically explain, either. Science is the death of magic and certain things are only explained by magic."

She looked somewhat perplexed by my explanation, like her brain couldn't comprehend my words. I held her gaze until she got frustrated and left. When he heard the door click, Adrik said quietly, "she 100% thinks you're a witch now." It caught me so offguard that I laughed, which quickly turned to me cursing as softly as I could so as not to wake the guys. He opened his eyes, looking at his watch. "It's close enough for your next superprofen that I think it's okay if you take it now. You clearly need it, witch," he said, grinning at me.

"Stop making me laugh. It f**king hurts," I said, holding my ribs with my good arm. I smiled at him, still grinning at me, then said, "okay, don't stop. I love it. And I love you, witch lover."

Adrik moved slowly, so as not to hurt me. He pulled his arm that was around me back to him and propped himself up on his

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elbow. He was still smiling at me as he leaned closer to me and kissed me gently. His lips lingered on mine and I found myself wanting more. I parted my lips, taking his top lip between mine softly. His palm rested against my face, his thumb tracing lightly against my bruised cheek. I leaned into his hand,
1/3

Chapter Two Hundred Ninety-Two

wanting desperately to not be in pain so I could kiss him the way I wanted to. I felt him smile against my lips. “Me too, solnishko.

Me too,” he said as he got up to get my next dose of superprofen and some water. “Are you hungry again?” he asked as he walked back to me.

“No, I’m okay. It works faster if I don’t eat anyway,” I said. Adrik clicked his tongue at me. “Do you have more pain than usual?”

he asked, climbing back into the tiny hospital bed with me.

“It’s nothing specific. My everything hurts. This bed sucks. I’m cold. I want to shower, but I still haven’t figured out how that’s

going to work with this thing keeping my arm strapped down. And I want real food. And I want to leave. Okay, so that was more specific than originally thought,” I said, smiling at him.

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Adrik glanced at his watch. "I think you'll be able to leave in a few hours. I wanted to make sure your lung was okay before I took you home. That's not something we can fix or help with. But it seems like you're doing well without the chest tube, so I think the doctor will release you. If not, I think he can be persuaded. I'm very persuasive when I need to be," he said, sliding his arm around me gently. I laughed softly at him. "Incredibly persuasive," I said as I laid my head as far onto his shoulder and chest as I could manage.

The doctor was back early that morning, which I was happy for. "How are you feeling this morning?" he asked.

"Like I want to go home," I said. I might've been grumpy, so it came across a little harsher than I meant for it to.

Dr. Williams laughed. "How has your breathing been? Still no wheezing? No sharp pains?"

"Only when I laugh, but otherwise I can breathe as well as anybody with five broken ribs can, so I should be able to leave," I said.

The guys laughed at me, but I knew they were just as ready to leave as I was.

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“I want to take a few x-rays before you leave, just to make sure,” Dr. Williams said. “I’ll schedule them for later today and you’ll be able to go home tonight.”

“Or, hear me out here, here’s an alternate plan. You do them now and I leave after. I like my plan better.”

“I like her plan better too, doc. I think you should go with her plan,” Adrik said, seriously. Just for emphasis, every one of the guys stood up, arms crossed across their chests. They didn’t say a word, but it was enough to make Dr. Williams understand.

“It’s a good plan. We’ll go with your plan. I’ll have the nurse come get you right away,” he said, leaving the room quickly.

Once the door closed behind him, I said. “I can’t tell you how much I love you all right in this very moment.”

“You’ll heal faster at home, princess. I know you’re making the best of it, but you’re not happy here. That’s going to delay you getting better,” Ivan said.

“And you clearly need some real food to make you less cranky,” Andrei said, grinning at me.

“I do. That’s a real thing. I know you guys would like to go home as well. There’s no reason you all should suffer just because I’m

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suffering,” I said.

2/3

Chapter Two Hundred Ninety-Two

“Seph, we’re not going anywhere without you. You know that. This was probably the best hospital stay we’ve ever had, if I’m being honest. You make everything better,” Stephen said, his sweet smile stretched across his face.

The nurse came in to fetch me for the x-rays. Andrei and Misha got up to help me out of bed, which surprised the nurse. “Oh, that’s handy,” she said.

“Perks of being a princess,” I said. They all laughed, but she couldn’t tell that I wasn’t serious. I didn’t bother to elaborate, either. I really am cranky.

Adrik stayed beside me, offering his arm for me to lean on as we walked slowly to the elevator. The guys insisted on coming with us, as well, but stayed outside the x-ray room. Dr. Williams was there to take the x- rays of my lung to make sure there was no extra fluid after removing the chest tube. “Okay, so this is going to be uncomfortable because I have to move your arm, but I’ll be

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as quick as possible. I need you to lay on the table. It'll give more support for your shoulder once I take it out of the sling," he said. Adrik picked me up without a word and gently set me on the table. He helped me lay down slowly before moving out of the way so Dr. Williams could put me in the correct position for the x-ray. When he released my arm from the sling and moved it away from my body, I had shooting pains in my shoulder, down to my hip. I wanted to scream, but I wanted to go home more, so I somehow managed to hold it in. When Dr. Williams walked away there were tears streaming down my face. I held still while he took the x-rays. Adrik walked to the table after Dr. Williams was done, before he walked back out, and wiped the tears from my face gently. He looked pained. He said, in Russian, "I felt that too. I know how much pain you're in." Dr. Williams came back to strap my arm in the sling once again. As soon as he moved it again, more shooting pain in my shoulder. This time, I heard Adrik inhale sharply. I was expecting it this time, so I was more prepared, but it didn't hurt any less. Once Dr. Williams was done, Adrik picked me up, the pained look still on his face. "I'm sorry," I said quietly in Russian. "I didn't mean to share that with you."

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“What did I tell you about apologizing to me?” he said, carrying me out of the room. “I love you. All of you. All the time.”

“I’ll have the x-rays in a few minutes,” Dr. Williams called after us. The guys looked worried when Adrik carried me out.

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Chapter 293

Chapter Two Hundred Ninety-Three

Sephie

“What happened?” Ivan asked, clearly bristled.

“He had to move her arm. She’s in severe pain. I don’t know how she’s been handling it. It would’ve cr*ppld me,” Adrik said, still in Russian.

“You can feel her pain now too?” Stephen asked.

“This was the first time,” Adrik said as we got on the elevator to go back to my hospital room. “When he moved her arm, it was a severe shooting pain in my shoulder down to my hip.”

“That’s exactly what I felt,” I said, chewing on my bottom lip. I hadn’t been able to feel Adrik as strongly since I’d been in pain. It was like the pain was overtaking everything. When I was still paralyzed from whatever sedation they’d given me, I couldn’t feel as much pain, so I could feel him more strongly. Ivan, too. I just couldn’t do anything about it because I couldn’t move my own body.

“What’s your pain level now, princess?” Ivan asked.

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“She’s definitely at a 13. Don’t let her lie to you,” Adrik said. “She can take her next dose of superprofen soon, but not soon enough.” He looked down at me. “Are you sure you don’t want to try something stronger now that you’re going home?”

“I can manage. Ivan was right. It’ll be better once I get home and can sleep for more than 2 hours at a time,” I said.

“I can have the acupuncturist come to the penthouse today. It’ll help with pain. At least that’s what they tell me,” Ivan said, winking at me. I smiled back at him, nodding my head.

“Do it. I want to get her home as soon as possible,” Adrik said.

Dr. Williams came to the hospital room shortly after we returned. “Your lung looks good. The blood that was there was completely drained with your chest tube, so you don’t need to worry about blood clots. Your ribs have stayed in place, as well. It actually helps that your arm is secured to your waist. It provides a layer of protection and stability for your ribs right now. I see no reason to keep you here any longer,” he said. Like you had a choice, doc.

I tried to smile as sweetly as possible at him, but I was still in pain. “Thanks, doc,” I said.

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“I’ll have a nurse bring a chair so you can leave,” he said.

“Save her the trip. I don’t need it,” I said. He started to argue with me, but I just looked at him, then looked at all the guys standing around me. “You really think they’d let me leave here in a wheelchair? They’d be more likely to fight over who gets to carry me out of here. Let’s not be dumb, doc.”

His expression was one of amusement and embarrassment. “Right. Come back in two weeks so I can check the

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Chapter Two Hundred Ninety-Three

progress of your shoulder and arm. I’ll have the nurse bring you sleeve for your cast so you can shower. Keep the sling on as much as possible. Only out of it for a shower and that’s it. Your shoulder was completely out of socket. You need to keep it immobile for a few weeks to let the soft tissue heal,” he said, leaving the room. Viktor and Stephen went to pull the vehicles around so we could leave. I had to admit that even though I was still in pain, I was suddenly very happy to be leaving.

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“It’s too early for Vinny’s, but there will be a real breakfast for us soon after we get home,” Viktor said as Adrik helped me into the backseat.

“Viktor, have I mentioned how much I love you lately?” I said, catching his eye in the rear-view mirror. Even though I could only see part of his face, I could tell that I’d just made him melt.

I felt a sense of relief wash over me once we walked into the penthouse. It was nice to be home. Anywhere with Adrik felt like home, but this penthouse and the house, they both felt like they were just as much my space now as Adrik’s. I smiled to myself thinking about how happy I was to be home again.

As soon as we walked into the penthouse, Andrei walked to the kitchen to make coffee. “We haven’t had good coffee in so long.

It’s been so long, spider monkey,” he said dramatically.

Adrik checked his watch. “That works out well. You can take your superprofen. The caffeine will help it take effect quicker.”

Viktor’s phone beeped. “Food is here. I’ll be right back,” he said.

“I’m so happy right now,” I said. My stomach growled loudly, just for emphasis.

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We were quieter than usual as everyone ate and guzzled as much good coffee as humanly possible. I knew the guys were at a clear disadvantage since I could basically sleep whenever I wanted to, but they needed to get back to work. They were going to need all the coffee today.

“How’s Dario?” I asked, still slowly finished my food. Breathing was still laborious, so everything I did was much slower than usual.

“The guards on him say he’s been quiet, but that he seems happy. He’s always grateful when they give him anything. He says to thank Boss all the time. He’s been asking if he can have an update occasionally. I think he wants to know when he can leave,” Viktor said.

“I would like to know how he knew about Armando’s first wife. And why he didn’t tell anybody that Sal was trafficking girls,” I said.

“We can talk to him again soon. I don’t like the thought of bringing him out during the day. He’s well-hidden and I’d like to keep it that way. I don’t want Armando to see that we have Dario. Yet,” Adrik said.

“I’d like to have another discussion with Armando before he sees Dario.”

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“And by ‘discussion’ you mean you’re going to make him wish he jumped off the roof when I told him to?” I said. I couldn’t help but feel some satisfaction at that thought.

2/4

Chapter Two Hundred Ninety-Three

“To put it mildly, yes,” Adrik said, a small smile on his lips.

“Okay, well, don’t hurt your knuckles too much. I’m in no shape to take care of you very well right now. Only one of us is allowed to be hurt at a time,” I said. When he looked at me, I felt that pull in my chest that he gets when he thinks about how much he loves me. I winked at him. “Do you think he’ll tell you anymore about Ricardo?” I asked.

“We’ll see. I’m curious to see how he reacts. I think he’ll be different with me than he was with you. He clearly thought he had the upper hand with you, although it still stuns me that he thought he was smarter than you. He’s always pretended to defer to me.

Never once argued with anything I’ve told him. I don’t know if that was an act or if there’s legitimate fear there, but I intend to find out,” Adrik said.

“I love a good mystery,” I said, putting the last bite of bacon in my mouth.

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Ivan's phone beeped. He took it out, looking at the text. "The acupuncturist can be here this afternoon, princess."

"Good. Did you tell her you need it too?" I asked.

"I did not," he said. "I'm fine. You took the worst of it this time."

"Fine. I will tell her then," I said. I wasn't angry with him, but I wanted to mess with him just to see what would happen. He started to argue with me, but I looked at him, trying to make my eyes go as dark as possible. I wasn't sure how to do it, but since he'd told me they changed so quickly in the hospital, I wanted to see if I could control when it happened. The look on his face told me I was getting control of it. I didn't let him suffer for very long before I laughed weakly at him and tried to change them back to normal.

"You were trying to control it that time, weren't you?" Ivan asked. I nodded my head, still smiling at him. "That's impressive. It worked."

I suddenly felt Adrik's desire for me come on very strongly. I could tell he was trying to hold it back, because I was in no shape for, well, anything, but I knew he was thinking about me changing my eyes the next time we had s*x. I felt my cheeks flush.

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“Do you have enough energy for a shower, solnishko?” Adrik asked. He sounded innocent enough, but I knew he was struggling to hold it together in front of everyone.

“I think so. But that means I’ll probably sleep for like four hours after. Everything is exhausting right now,” I said, trying to hide the grin I knew was growing on my face.

“Let’s get you cleaned up, then you can sleep until your acupuncture,” he said. He looked at the guys. “You guys should get cleaned up as well. Come back when you’re done. I want to see what else we can find on Ricardo and Lorenzo before tonight.”

Everyone’s head nodded in agreement. They set about cleaning up the kitchen as Adrik picked me up, carrying me to bedroom.

Once the door was closed, I grinned at him. “You’re so excited for my new trick, aren’t you?”

He exhaled loudly. “You have no idea, solnishko.”

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Chapter 294

Chapter Two Hundred Ninety-Four

Sephie

The shower was much more painful than I was hoping because of my arm being out of the sling. I tried to hold it against me as much as I could, which helped, but I was glad I had Adrik to help me. It was so painful I ended up in tears by the end of the shower. I was trying to hold everything in, so I didn't push any of the pain to him. While I really enjoyed sharing everything else with him, sharing my pain with him didn't seem fair.

As he was helping me get dressed before putting my arm back in the sling, he had a smirk on his face. "What are you not telling me?" I asked, watching him.

"The more you try to hold everything in, the easier it is for me to feel it. I know you're trying to avoid pushing your pain on to me, but the more you fight letting it go, the easier it is for me to feel. I know how excruciating that shower was for you just now," he said. I was still only in a bra and panties. He had my sling in his hand as he stood in front of me. He gently moved my still wet

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hair from my face and leaned down to press his lips to mine.

“D*mmit,” I said. “That did not go how I planned.”

He laughed as he started to wrap the sling around my waist. “I did warn you before, you know,” he said, dramatically, mimicking Misha. “It’s not fair that you only share the good parts with me. Now I can hold you to that.” He looked extra proud of himself at being able to get around my weak defense system.

For just a moment, my pain subsided and the warmth that I normally feel when thinking about him spread through my body. He felt it too, looking at me somewhat surprised as he strapped my arm back into the sling. “I didn’t realize how much I would miss that feeling,” he said, as he stepped closer to me. He put both hands gently on either side of my face and leaned down to kiss me. Where he had been extra gentle in the hospital, like he was afraid to hurt me, he let himself go slightly. The kiss started gentle, but he sucked my bottom lip in between his, his teeth grazing my lip. The pain in my body retreated once again and I could feel nothing but him. The warm sensation traveling over my entire body was met with the pull in my chest toward him as he

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deepened the kiss, his tongue exploring my mouth gently. I held onto his arm that was still holding my face like he was worried I would break, moaning softly. It felt amazing to have a pain-free moment. When he stopped the kiss, I kept my eyes closed. The pain was still gone. I was worried that if I opened my eyes, it would come crashing back. I heard him laugh quietly. "Are you okay, solnishko?" I finally opened my eyes slowly. "You took all the pain away just now. How did you do that?" I asked quietly.

"It worked?" he asked, surprised.

"Yeah, it's coming back slowly, but not as fast as I thought it would. What did you do?"

"I remembered when you were hurt after the ball, you told me that when we had s*x it made your pain go away. I don't think you're in any shape for that much right now, but that doesn't mean I can't think about it," he said, his devilish grin on his face.

"Devious. I like it. I'll allow it," I said, smiling widely at him. He had moved to pick up my leggings and stopped

1/3

Chapter Two Hundred Ninety-Four

when he saw my smile.

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“I should do that more. Your light just got brighter again,” he said.

“Yes, please.”

Adrik

As soon as I took Sephie’s arm out of the sling, I felt the shooting pain in my left shoulder that she felt when her arm was no longer supported. It shot all the way down to my hip again, just like it did in the hospital. I could tell she was trying to hide it, as she didn’t make a sound, but I could feel it just as strongly as I’d ever felt anything from her. She held onto her left arm with her right the entire shower, trying to give her shoulder some relief. I tried to be quick in the shower, but her long hair made that difficult.

After the shower, I helped her with her bra and panties, her pain level still at an inhuman level. She hadn’t realized yet that I could feel it. The more she tried to hide it from me, the more I could feel it. It was almost a game to me now. She saw me smirking at her, asking what I wasn’t telling her.

“The more you try to hold everything in, the easier it is for me to feel it. I know you’re trying to avoid pushing your pain on to me,

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but the more you fight letting it go, the easier it is for me to feel. I know how excruciating that shower was for you just now,” I said. Her eyes went wide as she realized that her feeble attempt to block me had failed. That was a new one for me. She’d been able to hide her pain both times she’d been seriously hurt before. I was still a little angry with her over it. No matter how many times I told her that I wanted her to come to me, her default was still to try and hide it and take care of herself, rather than feeling like she was burdening me with anything more. Now she couldn’t hide and I, for one, was very happy about it.

“D*mmmit,” she said. “That did not go how I planned.”

I just laughed at her as I started to wrap the sling around her waist. “I did warn you before, you know,” I said, trying to mimic Misha’s penchant for the dramatic. “It’s not fair that you only share the good parts with me. Now I can hold you to that.” I looked at her, quite proud of this latest development. I wanted to be able to take care of her and to know what she needed the same way she did for me.

She stood in front of me, still in her bra and panties, still slightly surprised, but half-grinning at what I was sure was a goofy grin

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on my face. I suddenly got hit with the warmth that she felt when she thought about how much she loved me. I didn't realize how much I'd been missing that feeling. It was so different to the pull that I felt in my chest when I thought about her, but it was so her.

She radiated love, especially for me. The warmth that she felt was a physical manifestation of that. When she would push that feeling to me, it wasn't the feeling of being loved. It wasn't a knowing that she loved me. It was love. She is love.

"I didn't realize how much I would miss that feeling," I said as I took a step toward her. I wanted to pull her to me, but I knew she was still in so much pain that wasn't a good idea. I could still feel her pain, but it was in the background now. The warmth was the dominant feeling. I wanted to make it last for her. I remembered when we were in Italy that she had told me that anytime we had s*x, the pain would subside completely. It didn't take any effort on my part to think about what I wanted to do to her when she was healed. I took her face in my hands and pressed my lips to hers, thinking about feeling her, about what she made me feel. It was difficult to hold myself back, but I kissed her with more passion than I had at the hospital. I sucked on her bottom lip, which I

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knew she loved. I felt her reach up with her good arm and hold onto my forearm. She felt like the pain was lessening and her desire was getting stronger, but I wasn't completely sure it worked. The pain was still there, but it was not as loud. She leaned into me, moaning softly. Before I lost complete control, I stepped back from her. I didn't want to hurt her. She still had her eyes closed when I looked down at her. She kept them closed for a moment. Longer than I thought she would. "Are you okay, solnishko?" I asked, a little worried that something was wrong. She slowly opened her eyes, almost like she was afraid to. "You took all the pain away just now. How did you do that?"

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King of the Underworld by RJ Kane

Chapter 295

Chapter Two Hundred Ninety-Five

Adrik

“It worked?” I was a little surprised my idea had worked.

“Yeah, it’s coming back slowly, but not as fast as I thought it would. What did you do?”

“I remembered when you were hurt after the ball, you told me that when we had s*x it made your pain go away. I don’t think you’re in any shape for that much right now, but that doesn’t mean I can’t think about it,” I said.

She cut her eyes up at me, a small grin on her face that made her look s*xy as hell. “Devious. I like it. I’ll allow it,” she said. She gave me her smile that made my heart threaten to stop. I’d definitely missed that.

“I should do that more. Your light just got brighter again,” I said, grabbing her leggings to help her finish getting dressed.

“Yes, please,” she said, walking slowly to the bed so she could sit. Her breathing was still labored, especially when she got tired.

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She took as deep a breath as she was able to while I helped her with her leggings. “I didn’t know I would miss being able to feel you. I didn’t know it would go away,” she said quietly.

“I don’t think it went away, solnishko. I think it was just drowned out by your pain. I’m still shocked that you’re able to function with the pain levels you’re dealing with right now. I wouldn’t be able to move,” I said.

“Ivan told me that redheads have an insanely high pain tolerance. Apparently he was right,” she said.

“How does he know that?” I asked, going to the closet to grab another one of my hoodies for her and clothes for me.

She waited until I came back to answer. She still couldn’t talk very loudly. “I don’t want to tell more than he wants me to. He said that there were a few redhead boys where he was experimented on when he was a kid. He said he felt worse for them than he did himself, which is saying quite a lot. They tortured Ivan,” she said.

“Ivan hasn’t told me everything. I think you’re the only one he’s ever told everything to. He doesn’t need to. Whatever it was, it shaped him into the man he is today, like you told the nurse. That’s all I need to know,” I said.

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She looked at me, very seriously and slowly pointed her finger at me. “That’s exactly the kind of thing a witch would say,” she said, trying to hold in her laughter.

“That reminds me. How can you feel Ivan now?” I asked, curious.

“It’s very different and it’s definitely not as strong as what I feel with you, but he has his own energy signature. I was starting to feel him when we were grabbed. Like, I could tell when he was getting angry without having to see him. It seems like anger is the easiest one for me to feel. When they took me from the room to Armando, I felt him lose it before he made a move to try and protect me.” I sat on the bed next to her. She chewed on her bottom lip, stopping to catch her breath. “When you’re protective of me, it feels like you’re

1/4

Chapter Two Hundred Ninety-Five

right there with me. Like you’re standing beside me, but your presence is all that’s needed to scare whatever is threatening me away. That’s what it felt like when you pulled me from my nightmare into the darkness. It felt like you were with me, showing me

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how to command the darkness.” She looked at me, again catching her breath.

“With Ivan, it’s completely different. He puts me in a bubble.” I laughed at her description. “I know, sounds weird, but I don’t know how else to describe it. But that’s what it feels like. When the doctor was doing whatever it was to make Ivan feel like he needed to protect me, it felt like I was in a bubble and the doctor could no longer see me. I could still feel you and I could feel Ivan standing guard, basically, but I felt nothing else.

Everyone else was gone and I couldn’t hear anyone talking until the doctor left the room.”

“What about Misha? Can you feel him the same way now that you unlocked a new level for him?”

She thought for a minute. “Not exactly. I could tell who was moving me before I woke up, but I don’t know if that’s the same. I

knew it was Andrei and Stephen that moved me so you could get in bed with me when I started shaking,” she said.

“How did you know it was them?”

“Andrei’s warmer than average and I’d know Stephen’s undead hands anywhere,” she said, smiling. “I haven’t noticed being able to feel anything extra with Misha yet, but he’s probably the next one.”

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I brushed a still damp curl back from her face, kissing her temple. “You never cease to amaze me.”

Sephie was clearly tired after the shower and getting dressed, but she didn’t want to sleep. At least not in the bed. “You told the guys to come back up here so you’re going back out there and I don’t trust my body to not start shaking if I fall asleep without you here yet,” she said.

“Fair enough,” I said, quite happy I didn’t have to be apart from her for any length of time.

“Besides, I want snacks,” she said, grinning at me.

“Then snacks you shall have,” I said, opening the door for her to walk back to the kitchen.

She walked straight to the refrigerator, at her slow pace, and rummaged through until she found something to eat.

“You’re hungry again already, spider monkey?” Andrei said as he walked into the kitchen from downstairs, catching her eating again.

“I didn’t eat for like two days. I have catching up to do. Leave me alone,” she said, turning so he couldn’t see her, but I could. She

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grinned at me, hoping she was making Andrei worried.

“You clearly still have catching up to do. You’re still cranky,” he said. “We’re going to have to get you two sandwiches from Vinny’s for lunch.”

“That marriage proposal is still on the table, Bubba,” she said, turning back to him so she could see his reaction. His cheeks flushed, which made her want to laugh, but she was still trying to hold it in. The other guys came to the penthouse shortly after Andrei. Viktor, Ivan, and Stephen had brought their

2/4

Chapter Two Hundred Ninety-Five

computers to try and find more information on Ricardo and Lorenzo.

“You’re still awake, princess,” Ivan said when he saw her.

“I know, right? Andrei makes a mean cup of coffee,” she said, grinning at Andrei. “It also means you have a short translation window, so let’s get this party started before I pass out again.” Stephen and Viktor both set their computers in front of her. “If I haven’t told you lately, your productivity is admirable,” she said, looking over one of the computers as she finished her snack.

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Stephen had been looking up information on Armando before he took over as boss of his area of the city. Viktor had been concentrating on Ricardo and Ivan had been looking up information on Lorenzo while Sephie was in the hospital.

“Hmmm. This one is about Armando. It’s old. I’m guessing it’s from before he became boss. Huh. He was arrested in Italy.” She kept reading, but she stopped translating. Her eyes got wider as she continued reading. She finally looked up at all of us.

“According to this, Armando isn’t from a wealthy family like he told everyone. He was a poor kid in Italy. He got arrested for petty crimes several times as a kid before getting arrested for murder when he was 16.”

“Do we know for sure it’s the same Armando?” Stephen asked.

She turned the computer around to show us a picture of a much younger Armando, but it was clearly the same man that was going to face a slow, painful death downstairs. “Same guy. His face is now permanently etched into my brain, unfortunately.

There’s no getting rid of his face now,” she said. I walked closer to her, trying to provide some comfort, as well as trying to keep my own anger in check.

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“So, now the question is what family is he pretending to be from?” Viktor asked.

“I’ve always known him as Armando Petrucci,” I said.

“The Armando in this article is Armando Rossi,” Sephie said. Stephen took his computer back to start a new search, so she moved to the next computer. “This one is about Ricardo,” she said as she scanned the article. “It’s more about the boats they found loaded with people. Holy sh*t, this journalist called him out as a human trafficker. See if you can find more articles from this particular journalist,” she said as she slid the computer back toward Viktor. Ivan was still looking through his search. I put my hands gently on her hips and turned her to face me. I was worried she would be getting tired, but trying to push through because the guys needed her to translate. She looked at me, smiling sweetly, already knowing what I was thinking. “I’m okay for now. The couches might be better though, so I can sit against you. I’m cold again,” she smiled sheepishly at me.

“Wait here. I can fix that,” I said. I leaned down and kissed her gently, then walked quickly to one of the spare rooms, taking the blanket off the bed. Her eyes lit up when I walked back down the hallway.

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“I’m about to be so warm. I’m so excited for this development in my life,” she said as she walked to the couches as quickly as she was able. Andrei and Misha followed her to help her sit while Viktor, Ivan, and Stephen gathered up their computers and moved to the couches as well. She leaned back against me and pulled the blanket around her shoulders.

“You’re not going to stay awake for long now,” I said, my fingers lightly running through her hair and over her neck.

“Not if you keep doing that,” she said, leaning her head back to smile at me. Ivan walked over and placed his computer in her lap.

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King of the Underworld by RJ Kane

Chapter 296

Chapter Two Hundred Ninety-Six

Adrik

“Before you fall asleep again, princess,” he said, grinning at her. She looked over what was on the screen, scanning the article.

She got halfway through, then scrolled back up to the top. “This is the same journalist that wrote about Ricardo and called him a

human trafficker. We should check to see if he’s even still alive. He seems to be right on the money about Lorenzo and Ricardo,

which can’t be good for his life expectancy,” she said as she scrolled back through the article again. “The journalist is still trying

to prove his theory about Ricardo, so he looked up information on Lorenzo and found his ties to the business, most notably to the

other bosses in the city.” She scanned all the way to the bottom of the article, then leaned her head back to look at me and

added, “no mention of your father or of you though.”

“Good. My father worked just as hard as I do to stay anonymous, at least when it came to press and business. If that journalist

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would've mentioned my father, I could've told you for certain that he was no longer alive," I said.

Viktor got up and switched his computer with Ivan's in Sephie's lap. "This is the journalist, right?" he asked her.

"Oh. Sh*t. Yeah. He dead," she said. "I'm finding there's a theme of exploding buildings in this business, for various reasons."

Ivan chuckled at her. "That doesn't mean he's dead then, princess. Even if they supposedly found his body. Fires and explosions are the easiest way to fake your own death."

She looked at him for a moment. "I stand corrected. And also, I want to know how you know this and yet, I don't." She thought for a minute. "Can you find out if he's really dead or not?"

"We likely could, but it'll take time. At this point, we already know most of what he's saying," Viktor said.

"Unless he uncovered something bigger and that's why he needed to disappear," she said.

"Fair point," Viktor said, taking his computer back. They spent the next few minutes on new searches. I went back to running my fingers through her hair and along her neck while we waited. I was fairly certain she would fall asleep before they found the next

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article for her to translate. The longer she was in my lap, the warmer she- felt, and the more she relaxed. I shifted slightly and she didn't move. I caught Andrei's eye and pointed to her, silently asking if she was asleep.

"Completely out," he said quietly.

"I knew she was fighting it," I said, laughing quietly.

"How's her pain been since we got home?" Ivan asked.

"The shower was excruciating for her. Anytime her arm is out of the sling means horrible pain for her. She tries to hide it, like she's done in the past, but apparently, that now makes it easier for me to feel it. I don't know what changed, but I felt everything she felt in that shower, no matter how hard she tried to hide it and act like she was fine," I said. I was still somewhat frustrated with her trying to hide her pain from me and Ivan heard it in my voice.

"Don't be mad at her for that. It's a trauma response. She can't help it. Until we came along, everyone in her life to that point, had let her down especially when she was at her weakest. When she did ask for help, it got her uterus taken from her. It's going to take time for her to learn that she's safe enough to ask for help. regularly," he said. I thought for a moment, taking a deep breath

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in which made her move her good arm to find my hand under the blanket. She sighed quietly in her sleep, like she was agreeing with everything Ivan had just said. “See, she knows she can’t argue with me on that one either,” he said, laughing quietly. “The more you can feel that she needs help and give it to her without her asking, the more you’ll reinforce that she’s safe enough to do so on her own. I think your ability to feel her pain now is helping her heal that part of her that still doesn’t feel 100% safe. She says she feels safe with all of us, and that’s true, but there’s still that part of her deep inside that doesn’t when she’s hurt.”

“I think I should make Ivan a vampire too, so he can have enough time to heal the world,” Stephen said without looking up from his computer.

Sephie slept until lunchtime. The guys waited to get Vinny’s until it was closer to the time that the acupuncturist would be there, so Sephie could wake up and eat, then have her acupuncture soon after and didn’t have to try and stay awake again. Andrei also made sure that they ordered two sandwiches for Sephie. “She can eat it later, since she’s hungry every three hours right now,” he said.

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I gently tried to wake her up as Misha ran downstairs to get the food. She started to stir and went to turn toward me, immediately regretting it. “SON OF A M*THERFUCKING W*ORE HOW DID I FORGET I COULDN’T DO THAT,” she yelled. At least she’s awake now.

I couldn’t help but laugh at her response, even though I knew it caused her pain. “I’ll make sure and hold you. down when I wake you up next time,” I said, kissing her temple. She just groaned quietly, holding her arm and ribs.

Andrei walked over to help her get up. “We got Vinny’s, spider monkey. And the acupuncturist will be here soon,” he said, holding out his hand to help her up. “I got you two sandwiches, too. Since your metabolism seems to be working overtime right now,” he said, grinning at her.

“Bubba,” she said, as she used his arm to help herself sit more upright, “I just need you to marry me already. Seriously. How long can a girl wait.” He looked at me, somewhat nervous at my reaction, but I found it funny. She tried not to laugh when she saw his face. He relaxed a little when he saw I was amused by it. He leaned down and picked her up off the couch, helping her stand up.

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She looked back at the blanket, saying, “I’m bringing that thing with me. That’s the first time I’ve been warm in like three days.” I stood up from the couch and wrapped the blanket around her. Misha had returned and was genuinely trying not to laugh at her walking around like a child with her blanket on. “Oh, you can laugh. I don’t care. I’m warm,” she said, sticking her tongue out at him.

Since she was awake again, she worked on translating information that they’d found while she was sleeping. As she was reading one article, Viktor’s computer beeped. “Papa Bear, do you regularly get emails in Italian?” she asked.

“Uh, no. Never. Did I just get one?”

“Mmm hmm. Should I open it?”

“Sure. If it’s a virus, I’ll deal with it,” he said. She opened the email and read through it, her eyes getting wider the more she read.

“Holy sh*t, he not dead,” she said.

“Who? The journalist?” we all asked at once.

“I mean, unless it’s the ghost of the journalist, he just emailed you. He said he monitors the articles you’ve been looking up to

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see if anyone is looking into Ricardo and Lorenzo. He said he's still been watching them and he has more information on them.

He also said he's in hiding and you'll never find him if you try looking any harder," she said.

"Well, that's an unexpected development," Ivan said.

"I want to know what else he knows about them," she said. "Should I respond?"

"Tell him that we know what he knows already," Ivan said. Sephie looked at him, somewhat confused. "But we don't," she said.

"He doesn't know that and most of the time if you tell a journalist that you know more than they do about something, it p*sses them off and makes them prove they know more than you," Ivan said.

Sephie started to type a response, with just her right hand. She glanced up to see us all watching her type with only one hand,

clearly more amused than we should've been about it. "Don't mind me. I'll have this done by the end of the week," she said as

she continued pecking at the keys as quickly as she could. Just as she got the email finished, Ivan's phone beeped to let him know the acupuncturist was in the lobby.

"I'll be right back, princess," he said, walking out of the penthouse.

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Sephie continued to read through what Viktor had found while she'd been sleeping while she waited for Ivan to return. She glanced up at Viktor, "didn't you say that Armando and Ricardo were related, albeit distantly?"

"That's what the records I found showed, but I'm not sure that's entirely accurate now," he said.

"There has to be a reason that Armando chose to use the family name he did," she said. Ivan walked back into the penthouse with the acupuncturist. Viktor pulled his computer back toward him, saying, "I'll see what I can find while you're getting tuned up."

The acupuncturist looked at Sephie, then looked at Ivan, her eyes wide for just a moment. "I know. So many people wish they could look this good and they simply can't," Sephie said, sarcastically.

"See, I told you," Ivan said to the acupuncturist, who was laughing at Sephie. She walked to the spare room that she usually worked on Sephie in, waiting for Sephie to slowly follow her. Ivan and I followed as well, to help her lie down more easily.

Once the door was closed, she looked to Ivan. "You need it, too."

Sephie pointed at him, "told you."

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King of the Underworld by RJ Kane

Chapter 297

Chapter Two Hundred Ninety-Seven

Adrik

The acupuncturist said, “last time, Ivan took the worst of it to save Sephie.

This time, Sephie took the worst of it to save Ivan.”

Ivan immediately took offense and started to argue, but she put her hand up, cutting him off. She walked to Sephie, taking her

hand like she always did. She closed her eyes while pressing on the spot just between her thumb and forefinger. She shook her

head no, then walked to Ivan doing the same thing. “They were going to kill you, Ivan. Sephie made sure that didn’t happen.”

Sephie was somewhat surprised. “I didn’t do anything. Other than run my mouth.”

“You kept the focus on you, Sephie. If Ivan had done that, they would’ve killed him. They needed you. They didn’t need him. You

might not have been completely aware of that, but your soul knew. You listened,” she said, smiling sweetly at Sephie, who now

had stray tears falling down her cheeks.

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Ivan wrapped his giant arm gently around her shoulders, kissing the top of her head. They just stood there for a moment, until the acupuncturist asked another question. “You can feel him now, the same way you can feel your boyfriend, can’t you?”

Sephie nodded, wiping her eyes. “It’s not as strong and it’s different, but I can feel him sometimes now.”

“You’ll be able to feel all of them soon. Especially the one that can see the unseen,” she said. Misha.

“But how though?” Sephie asked.

The acupuncturist smiled at her. “You still don’t realize your potential, Sephie. You’re not like other women. They’re not like other men, for that matter.” She left it at that and motioned for Sephie to lie down. Ivan and I both helped her. She looked at me, then to Ivan. “I need to see under her clothes.”

6

“Ivan’s already seen it. I don’t care, as long as he doesn’t care,” Sephie said, looking at me. I nodded once. The acupuncturist helped Sephie lift the hoodie over her head and pull her leggings off. Her body was still badly bruised, but the bruises were just

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starting to changing colors. Fading from a bright blue and purple to a greenish brown in spots, which meant they were already in the beginning stages of healing. She put her hands on Sephie, much like the doctor did, to check for internal damage. I glanced at Ivan, who was looking at Sephie's bruises in an entirely new light. He looked both shocked and apologetic. He looked to me with a very obvious "I didn't mean for this to happen" look on his face. "You can stop worrying, Super Squish. I'm going to live," Sephie said, without looking at him. She'd closed her eyes as soon as the acupuncturist put her hands on her. I couldn't help but smile at Ivan, who was also smiling at Sephie and shaking his head. "I'm not sure how I feel about this," Ivan said, laughing quietly. I could feel the relief that Sephie got when the acupuncture needles were in for just a short time. Her shoulder and her ribs were still causing her extreme pain. Sephie, however, wasn't saying anything about it. "Her shoulder and her left ribs are still in extreme pain," I told the acupuncturist. She nodded her head. "I'm saving that for last. It's going to hurt for a minute before it feels better, so I need the rest of her body to feel better

1/4

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Chapter Two Hundred Ninety-Seven

first. That way, it's not as bad."

She motioned for Ivan to sit in a chair close to the bed where Sephie was.

"Take your shirt off," she said. "Your upper body is what always takes everything. This time was no different." She got busy sticking needles in him while Sephie's body worked on self-correcting as much as possible. I could feel her relax more, with each minute, as the pain in her body subsided slowly. I could still feel her shoulder and her ribs, but it felt like the pain was staying localized in that area, instead of her entire body with an extra emphasis on her shoulder and ribs.

I hadn't noticed the acupuncturist watching me watch Sephie, until she said quietly, "you can feel her pain now, no? It's stronger than other emotions you've been able to feel?" I nodded my head. Of course she would know that. "Because that's where she needs the most help. Your anger is strongest because that's where you need the most help. Her pain is strongest because she needs the most help there, but she won't ask for it."

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I couldn't help but chuckle. "Ivan just told me that a few hours ago." I looked to Ivan, who had his eyes closed like he was asleep. Just like Sephie. Neither one of them seemed to be aware of our conversation. "They can't hear us right now," she said, a small smile on her face. "She's afraid to be completely vulnerable. She's almost there, but in her past, showing weakness or asking for help while she was hurt got her hurt more. I don't know details, of course, and I don't need to know details. Her soul is asking yours to help her heal by letting you feel her pain when she tries to hide it. She needs to understand that she's going to be taken care of when she's hurt. She's close to knowing that, but there's still a part of her that remembers when she had no one to count on." "How? She's very stubborn and she has a very understandable mistrust of doctors." "She doesn't need doctors. She needs you. She needs Ivan. And she needs the other four waiting outside. You're all together for a very specific reason. You might think that she's helping all of you level up in this lifetime, but by her helping you, you're helping her do the same. You're both much stronger than the last time I saw you, despite her injuries. The others are starting to believe

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how special she is, aren't they?" I nodded my head. "Good. That's the first step. If they can see it in her, they can see it in themselves."

"I'm not sure I understand. I know Misha has a gift, but I don't think the other three do?"

"Not yet. You and Sephie and Ivan are older than the other four. The one who can see the unseen is older than the other three, but not as old as you. Your job is to help them discover their gifts. In turn, they'll help you take care of what needs to be taken care of in this lifetime," she said, as she turned back to Ivan and Sephie. As soon as she stepped away from me, I noticed that Sephie and Ivan were talking to each other like there was nobody else in the room. The acupuncturist turned to look at me before beginning to remove the needles from Ivan and winked. That was strange.

I walked to Sephie, who still had the needles in. She already felt lighter again. She heard my footsteps and opened her eyes when I got closer to the bed. "You look better already," I said. "You can feel it too, can't you?" she asked.

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“Maybe a little,” I said, grinning at her. She smiled her gorgeous smile at me, making my heart threaten to stop. She picked her head up and looked at Ivan. “He feels better, too. There’s less background noise to him,”

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she said.

He laughed, putting his shirt back on. “If ever there was an accurate description of what it’s like in my head sometimes, that’s it.”

The acupuncturist pulled the needles from Sephie. She looked at me. “She’s going to need you for this,” she said. She looked at

Sephie as I walked to her right side, to grab her hand. “This is going to be extremely painful at first, Sephie, but I want you to let

him help you with it. He’s just as strong as you are. He can take it,” she said.

Sephie looked confused and started to ask a

question when the acupuncturist stuck the first needle in her shoulder.

“OH F**K ME” she yelled. I could feel a sharp pain in my left shoulder,

holding my breath to try and withstand the pain. The

acupuncturist looked at me like she was silently giving me instructions and

her words from earlier popped in my head. “She

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needs you.” I focused on trying to take her pain and turn it into a more pleasurable sensation for her. Much like I did after the shower this morning. I could feel my desire for her rise quickly and I pushed that to her as the acupuncturist stuck the second needle in her shoulder. Sephie didn’t yell this time, but she still whimpered softly. It was still a sharp pain in her shoulder, but it was much less than the first time.

The pain in her shoulder slowly started to lessen as the acupuncturist stuck more needles in it. She stopped, saying, “I need to take your arm out of the sling. It’s going to hurt, but not as much as it has before.” Sephie looked at me, clearly worried about having to move her shoulder again.

Ivan stood up and walked to the bed. “I think I can help,” he said. “The pain comes from feeling the weight of the cast. I can hold it so your shoulder doesn’t have to compensate for the weight of your arm. She can have access that way.”

The acupuncturist caught my eye, a very small smile on her lips. “She needs Ivan.” For the first time, when Sephie’s arm came out of the sling, she didn’t feel a shooting pain down her left side. The acupuncturist worked quickly, reaching around Ivan and

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Sephie's cast to put the needles where they needed to go. I expected her ribs to be more painful and just like her shoulder, the first couple of needles were extremely painful, but she handled it well. I felt the relief wash over her after a few minutes. She took the deepest breath she'd taken in days, a smile on her face as she felt her lungs expand completely. I could feel her ribs were still sore, but the sharp pain had subsided for the moment. Once the needles came out and her arm was back in her sling, I helped her back into her clothes. "She should definitely come back regularly for a while. Your pain level is much lower now," I said, helping her stand up to finish getting her leggings back on. "I will not argue with that. I feel almost human again right now," she said, her wide smile causing the familiar pull in my chest toward her. She pulled my hoodie back over her head, trying to somewhat tame her hair when she pulled it out of the sweatshirt. "Remind me to ask Viktor to put his braiding knowledge to good use again." I just smiled at her, standing in front of her, taking in her out of control hair and her light that was now brighter. I leaned down and kissed her deeply, but quickly, as I didn't trust

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myself to be able to stop. She giggled at me. “I love you,” she said as we walked out of the spare room.

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King of the Underworld by RJ Kane

Chapter 298

Chapter Two Hundred Ninety-Eight

Adrik

“So, that sounded extremely painful,” Andrei said as we walked back out from the spare room.

“Only for a minute and only because my shoulder and ribs are in such a poor state at the moment,” Sephie said quietly. “It’s still not like getting stabbed.” She grinned at him, then added, “I assume. I’m happy that I can’t confirm that one.”

Andrei got up, grabbing the blanket she had been using before and wrapped it back around her. “Are you hungry again yet? It’s been at least twenty minutes,” he asked, teasing her.

“Not yet. Ask me again in ten minutes though,” she said, laughing ever so quietly.

“Despite it sounding horrifically painful, you look better,” Andrei said.

“I agree. You don’t look like you’re forcing your smile right now,” Misha said.

“She should come back everyday for a while.” The

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acupuncturist had been scheduling her next session with Ivan, but she'd also been quietly, observing the exchange. As Ivan moved toward the door to the penthouse, she stopped by the couches. "She needs all of you just as much as she needs me right now. The same for all of you. You need her. You're all together for a very important reason," she said, turning to follow Ivan out. Stephen looked up from his computer as he heard the door close behind them. "Now I see why Ivan has been going to her for years. She's just as dramatic as he is," he said. "She's also never been wrong," Sephie said quietly. She walked slowly to Viktor, who looked up from his computer as she got closer, his soft smile that I never saw for anyone other than Sephie on his face. "Papa Bear, would you please help me out with your superb braiding skills?" "For you? Of course," he said as he got up from the couch. "Do you have more you need translated?" she asked as he started to try and tame her unruly hair. "I do, whenever you feel up to it. The journalist responded again. I haven't opened it yet," he said.

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“I have a couple things for you to look at, too. I tried to use a translator while you were getting stabbed, but it didn’t work very well. I still have no idea what it says,” Stephen said. “You would think that I would’ve taken the time to learn Italian in my 900 years. You would think that, but you’d be wrong.”

Sephie smiled. “Don’t be outsourcing my job, Yoden the Enabler. I can’t do anything else right now. I’ll go crazy if you take that away from me too.”

“I wouldn’t dream of it,” Stephen said, smiling at her. Viktor finished her hair and tied it, then handed her his computer so she could read the response from the journalist. She walked back to me, wanting to sit in my lap so she could lean against me again.

“I’m cold again,” she said. Misha and Andrei got up to help her sit down and lean against me again. “What would i do without you guys,” she said sweetly as she started reading.

She was quiet for a few minutes, then said, “Ivan was right. He didn’t like it that I told him we already knew what he knew.” She started opening the attachments that he sent with the email. “He proved it, too.” She starting scanning the documents he sent

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over. Some of them we did know about. Some of them were new to us, but they all solidified the business relationship between Lorenzo and Ricardo.

“Wait, go back to that one,” I said, reading over her shoulder. She clicked back to the document, opening it again. “That’s for an apartment complex in Naples, isn’t it?” I asked her.

She read through it again. “Yes, why?”

“Armando talked to me about this project. He wanted me to go in on it with him, but I wasn’t interested at the time. It was a smaller project than I was looking for when he came to me with it,” I said.

“Looks like he replaced you then,” she said. “Ricardo and Lorenzo are both listed as owners of the project, but I haven’t seen Armando’s name.”

“What if he was trying to get you on the project so you’d be tied to Lorenzo and Ricardo?” Stephen asked. Ivan walked back into the penthouse after escorting the acupuncturist back to the lobby.

“Who did what now?” he asked, taking his place back on the couch with his computer.

“The journalist responded already. You were right. He didn’t like it that we said we knew everything he knew and he proved it. He

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sent over several documents, one of which is a project that Armando pitched to Adrik previously, but Adrik turned down. But Armando's name isn't on this project according to this guy's records," Sephie said.

"That's shady," Ivan said. "What else does that guy know about?"

"So far, just that Ricardo and Lorenzo have been in business for quite some time," I said. "I'm starting to wonder why my father banished him instead of just having him killed."

"It does make you wonder, as Lorenzo didn't seem like he ever went away after he was banished," Sephie said. "He just rebuilt his empire elsewhere. Without supervision."

Sephie ended up sleeping on me for a few hours that afternoon. I could tell she was sleeping better here than she was at the hospital. There was a definite peaceful feeling to her when she fell asleep at the penthouse versus when she was still at the hospital. She was constantly on guard at the hospital.

We continued looking for information while she slept. So far, we'd found that Armando wasn't at all who he'd always said he was.

We'd also found proof that Ricardo and Lorenzo had been in business together for many years and had brought Armando in on

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quite a few deals over the years, as well as Giana's father. Sephie replied to the journalist, telling him that we knew everything

but one deal and he was going to have to do better if he wanted to impress us.

I think having to type that out one-handed is what

wore her out, to be honest. It was painstaking for her.

The guys started to get hungry, so Viktor ordered food before we went

downstairs to have a talk with Armando. I know Sephie

was curious about Dario, too, but I was planning on letting that one wait a day or two. At least until she felt a little better. I didn't

need her for Armando. I did for Dario.

Frankly, I didn't want her to ever have to see Armando's face again. I would make sure she never saw him in person. But I

wanted to see what information I could get from him first.

When Viktor went down to grab the food, I tried to gently wake Sephie up.

This time I held onto her as I woke her up so she

wouldn't try to turn toward me as she was fighting waking up. She started to stir and I felt her hand slide over my arms, finding

one of my hands. "Thank you for saving me from myself," she said, leaning her head all the way back so she could look up at

me.

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Andrei and Misha stood up to help her get up. "Come on, spider monkey. It's been hours since you ate last. You were just starting to be less cranky. Let's not mess that up," Andrei said, offering her his arm so she could pull herself up.

As we ate, Sephie asked, "are you going to talk to Armando?" I nodded. "What about Dario?"

"He can wait a day or two until you're feeling better. I don't want you to ever have to see Armando again, but I need you for Dario," I said. "You got him to talk more than he would have if you hadn't been there. I think he feels more comfortable around you."

"It's because I don't look like I want to kill him right out of the gate," she said, grinning at me.

"Maybe, but you've got the demon eyes now. He had to have noticed when we talked to him last. It was obvious," Stephen said.

"He might've noticed, but he probably doesn't believe his own eyes. People will talk themselves out of quite a bit if they can't explain it. Just ask the nurse that thinks Sephie is a witch now," I said.

Sephie grabbed her ribs, but she let herself laugh. The guys all looked at her, waiting for an explanation. She looked at Ivan, her

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beautiful smile still making the room brighter. “Apparently we’re local celebrities at the hospital,” she said.

“How so?” Ivan asked, his eyebrow raised.

“One of the nurses that came in the middle of the night asked me if I was the girl that stopped the man from killing everyone in the ER. She said the entire hospital had heard about it and there’s rumors going around as to how I stopped you, but nobody can prove anything. They think the most likely explanation is that you were on some new drug that they didn’t know about yet,” she said. Ivan just chuckled and shook his head.

“What did you tell her, gazelle? It’s not like it’s easy to explain to anyone outside this room,” Misha said.

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King of the Underworld by RJ Kane

Chapter 299

Chapter Two Hundred Ninety-Nine

Adrik

Sephie took as deep a breath as she could manage. It was slightly better since she'd had the acupuncture. "I told her that I didn't

have any special powers and that he wasn't a monster, nor was he on drugs.

He's one of my favorite people." She stopped like

she wasn't going to continue her explanation. I knew she didn't want to embarrass Ivan, but he needed to hear what she said.

"That's not all you said, love," I said, trying to get her to finish. Her cheeks

flushed, but she continued, "I told the nurse that

everybody has demons, but he has more than most, for good reason. He's been through more. than anyone should have to

endure, but I love him for it. I love all his broken parts and pieces because they make up the man that would readily give up his

life for mine. Then I told her that I was an anchor for him in the storms of his own psyche and that it wasn't something that

science would be able to explain."

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“She also told her that science is the death of magic and some things are only explainable by magic,” I said. “That’s when I knew that nurse now thinks Sephie is a witch, because she just stood there and stared at Sephie for like two minutes then left without a word.”

“I should’ve given her the demon eyes,” Sephie said under her breath. Ivan was quiet, like he was still struggling with coming to terms with what the acupuncturist told us earlier and what Sephie had just said. Under normal circumstances, Sephie would’ve already gone to him, but given that moving hurt her so much right now, she was forced to watch him from across the kitchen.

“Super Squish...” she said to try and get him to look at her. “I meant every word. And whatever happened when they grabbed us I would gladly do again if it means you’re still here. This,” she said, motioning to her cast and ribs, “is a small price to pay. I would gladly pay it a thousand times for you.” I could see Ivan about to c*ack, so I got up to help her up so she could go to him. She stood up, taking a few steps toward him, but he met her halfway. I still was impressed with how gentle he could be given his

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massive size. She rested her head against his chest, holding him as tightly as she could with one arm. He whispered something to her, which made her laugh quietly, then kissed the top of her head. He walked her back to where she was sitting and helped her sit back down.

“Were they going to kill Ivan?” Misha asked.

“The acupuncturist, who has never been wrong yet and who has no idea what happened, said Sephie took everything this time to save Ivan, just like last time he took everything to save her,” I said.

“It makes sense. They needed Sephie. They didn’t need Ivan,” Stephen said.

“That’s exactly what she said,” Sephie said. “I still say all I did was run my mouth,” she said, grinning at Ivan. He slid his arm around her shoulders, once more kissing the top of her head. When he did, her eyes went wide for a second and she looked up at him. “Do that again,” she said..

“Do what again?” he asked.

“What were you just thinking about just now?”

“How I needed to do a better job of protecting you next time,” he said quietly.

1/4

Chapter Two Hundred Ninety-Nine

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She looked to me, asking, “did you feel it this time?” I shook my head no, but I knew she was talking about Ivan’s bubble. She looked back at Ivan and told him to think the same thoughts again, but to turn up the volume. As he did, I could feel it. Where there had been background noise and I could feel the other four guys. in the kitchen with us, now I couldn’t hear anything but Sephie. It was like the other four were gone. It felt. exactly like how Sephie had described earlier. Like Ivan had put us in a bubble and he was standing guard over us. I looked at her and she knew instantly that I was feeling the same thing she was. She looked back to Ivan, her wide smile on her face. “That’s the same thing that happened when you stood over me in the hospital because the doctor was being a weirdo,” she said. As she talked, Ivan’s bubble disappeared and everything returned to normal..

“What new level did you just unlock for him?” Andrei asked.

“When Ivan gets protective of me, it’s like he puts me in a bubble. That’s what happened in the hospital. I could feel Adrik beside me, I could feel Ivan watching over me, but I couldn’t hear or feel any of you or the doctor until I assume the doctor left,” she

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said.

“I do?” Ivan asked. Clearly he wasn’t aware he was doing this.

“You do. I felt it this time,” I said. “It was like everything but Sephie and you was shut out for me just now.”

“I’m still on board with turning him into a vampire. Especially now that I know he’s got special powers. Next up on the list, Misha.

We’re building an army to make Vlad proud,” Stephen said, without cracking as much as a hint of a smile. “Those T*rks aren’t going to know what hit them.”

Sephie was still tired after dinner, which I was happy about. I wanted her to be able to sleep while I was talking to Armando,

rather than worrying about anything. I left Andrei and Misha with her, hoping Andrei could keep her warm enough that she would

sleep until I got back. I tried to leave Ivan as well, but he said there was no way he wasn’t going. There’s a time and place for arguing with Ivan. This was neither the time, nor the place.

Before we left, I helped Sephie add a pair of my sweatpants to her attire to help her stay warm while I was downstairs, which

gave us a moment alone. “It feels like your pain is slightly better after the acupuncture?” I said, somewhat unsure if I was correct

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or not.

“Mmm hmm. My shoulder and ribs still hurt, but the rest of me hurts much less,” she said.

“Good. Ivan scheduled her to come everyday for a while. Hopefully that will give you some relief,” I said, tying my sweatpants tight enough that they would stay up. She had her good hand resting on my shoulder, watching me as I was bent down in front of her. When I stood up, she was smiling at me.

“I know what you’re about to do and yet here you are, making sure to dress me so I stay warm while you’re gone,” she said laughing.

“I would much rather stay with you, but since I can’t, I still have to make sure you’re taken care of. The rest of it, literally everything else, doesn’t matter without you, Sephie,” I said. I stepped closer to her, my palm against her cheek. “That feeling of not knowing where you were, or even if you were still alive...I never want to have that feeling again and I will destroy anyone or anything that threatens you.” I leaned down and pressed my lips gently to hers. “Armando is both lucky he’s still alive and

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unlucky he's still alive. I would've killed him right then if you hadn't stopped me. If I wouldn't have, Stephen would've finished him. It takes a lot to push that guy to his breaking point, but he was almost as angry as I was. He's unstoppable when he's like that."

She smiled her sweet smile up at me, holding onto my forearm to keep my hand against her cheek. "Ivan told me that Stephen's bloodlust is almost as bad as yours. I'll admit I had a hard time believing it at first. He said that it didn't matter how many men were guarding the building, all it would take was the two of you and there would be no survivors."

"He was right. Viktor, Andrei, and Misha covered the outside of the building in case more people showed up. There wasn't a single guard left alive by the time we got to you and Ivan," I said. As she looked at me, I felt her warmth spreading through my body.

"I knew you would come for me," she said quietly. I leaned down and kissed her again, thinking about how I really wanted to kiss her, about how much she meant to me, and about how I would destroy the entire world to get her back. I could feel her falter,

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which meant her knees were threatening to give out, so I stopped the kiss. When I stepped back and looked at her, her eyes were as dark as I'd ever seen them. I looked at her for a few moments, wondering how long it would last, and completely turned on by them.

"How did Armando and Sal not sh*t themselves when they saw you like this?" I asked, grinning at her.

"Like you said, I don't think they believed what they were seeing. It's a little weird. I admit that," she said.

"I love all your weird," I said as I leaned down to pick her up to take her back out to Andrei and Misha.

On the way downstairs in the elevator, Ivan said, "I got a call from the jeweler when Sephie was in the hospital. I just couldn't tell you about it because she was always with you. He said her ring is finally ready."

"Good. Now she just needs to heal before I can give it to her," I said. "You keep it until then. I don't want to risk her finding it. She already saw the sketches of it on my desk, but didn't pay much attention to them, thankfully."

"I'll take care of it tomorrow," Ivan said.

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Instead of bringing Armando to my office, we left him in the room. I didn't want him to ever know comfort again in the short time he had remaining on this planet. He looked worse than Sephie and Ivan, which made me happy. Armando tried to stay in shape, but he was no fighter. He caused damage to Sephie simply because he was stronger than she was and she was tied up so she couldn't defend herself. He could still only open one eye.

As soon as he saw us walk in, he started lying. "Boss, I don't understand why I'm in here. I was trying to save Sephie," he said.

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King of the Underworld by RJ Kane

Chapter 300

Chapter Three Hundred

Adrik

“I’m guessing that’s how you got past Sephie. If you believe a lie enough, it appears to everyone else that you’re telling the truth,”

Ivan said. “You honestly believe everything you say because you’re too st*pid to know

better.”

Armando turned to look at Ivan, a slow smile creeping across his bruised face.

“No, I got past her because I was overly nice to

her. Damaged ones like her cling to nice. Like they’re trying to prove to themselves that the world isn’t all bad. I could tell she

was damaged right away. As soon as Anthony and the other boss’s sons started to treat her like a wh*re, she took it and never

said a word. She’d been conditioned.”

Ivan backhanded Armando. “When are you going to learn that she’s not damaged?” he said. His anger clearly visible.

“She’s damaged. But I bet she’s amazing in bed. Damaged ones always are,”

Armando said. This time, it was my fist that

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connected to his stomach. He coughed, but didn't stop smiling. "I knew it. That's my one regret. That I couldn't f**k her before you got to her. Is it true that redheads are better in bed? I've never had a redhead. I always wondered if that was true."

"You wouldn't have been able to sleep with her regardless of whether I showed back up or not," I said. I knew he was trying to provoke my anger. I wasn't going to let him.

"Oh, that's where you're wrong. She would talk to me after the meetings. I knew plenty about her before you showed up," he said.

"And you don't think she was smart enough to lie to your face about everything she told you?" I asked. He stopped for a moment, clearly confused at that possibility. "You didn't get as far past her as you think you did, Armando Rossi." As soon as I said his real name, he flinched.

"Didn't know we knew about that, did you?" Stephen said. Armando stayed quiet. What had clearly been bravado when we first came into the room was now turning into fear about what else we knew.

"Sephie asked you who had been pulling your strings. You never answered her, but you told her everything she needed to know,"

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I said. "Does Ricardo tell you when you can eat and sleep, too? Or just everything about business?" I paused, to see if he was going to respond. When he stayed quiet, I continued. "I started to suspect something was off with you when we were in Italy. No one can be as oblivious as you were about simple observations. For someone who is as successful as you are, you really had no clue what was going on or how to solve problems. That's when I started to suspect there was something more to you."

"That's when you went back on the funding from the Naples project," Armando said, piecing things together in his own mind.

"Why would I want to help fund a project with someone as inept as you in charge?" I asked. "Now, however, I realize that you were just trying to get me on projects that would tie me to Ricardo and Lorenzo. You think you could've controlled me by tying me to them, the same way they've been controlling you for years? You clearly don't remember who I am."

1/2

Chapter Three Hundred

"You're not so different from me. You were just born into a better family than I was. We've both done things we're not proud of,

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but we had to do them to survive. Why should I have to suffer because I was born into a poor family? I did what I had to do.

You're no different," Armando said.

"You'd like to think we're not different, but that's where you're wrong. It makes you feel better to think that you're more like me. It probably helps you sleep at night to think you're like me," I said, rolling up my sleeves as I was talking. "Me? I have no trouble sleeping at night." I looked down at Armando, who was beginning to look worried as he watched me and listened to my words.

"Would you like to know how I have no trouble sleeping at night?" I asked. I stood in front of him, my hands now in my pockets.

"Because every single person. I've killed deserved it beyond a shadow of a doubt," I said as my fist connected with his jaw. "You think I'm weak because I wait to act, unlike my father. I watch. I observe. I collect information. Then I pass judgment. And it's devastating. More devastating than the chaos my father would unleash. History will not remember you. Not as Armando Petrucci and not as Armando Rossi. It will be like you never existed." I punched him in his stomach once more. I couldn't get the image of

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Sephie with her hands tied behind her back in that room, with Armando standing in front of her out of my head. I'd seen the chains bolted to the floor, even though she was free of them, I knew he'd had her chained while he beat her. It was the only way he would be able to deliver that much damage without her defending herself. I'd seen the bruises on her ankles.

Armando coughed a few times as I punched him again. I stopped to let him catch his breath. I wanted to see what he would tell us about Ricardo and Lorenzo before I killed him. "What does Ricardo have over you? Is it his money you've been using all these years?" I asked. Armando stayed quiet as I walked away from him. I needed to put distance between us or I wasn't going to stop. I stood and watched him as he tried to think through his options. "They're not coming to save you. They don't care about you. They've been using you to get what they want your entire life. You're just a pawn," I said. As I said that, he looked up at me. Got you.

I stood in silence for a moment longer, giving him the chance to speak. When he remained quiet, I laughed. "You really think they're coming to save you? Sephie was right. You really are that dumb."

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The mention of Sephie thinking Armando was st*pid was enough to get a reaction from him. He tried to get free from the chair he was strapped to, but to no avail.

“Oh, somebody doesn’t like it when a girl thinks he’s st*pid,” Stephen said, looking at Ivan. “What do you think, Ivan? Mommy issues?”

“Definite mommy issues,” Ivan said. He took a step closer to Armando, bending down to look him in the eye. “What’s wrong, Armando? Did Mommy not breast feed you?” Armando spit on Ivan, but didn’t say a word. Ivan just laughed, wiped it off and wiped it back on Armando. “Mommy definitely didn’t teach you manners,” he said, walking away from Armando.

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