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### Chapter 351

Adrik

As soon as Sephie and I were alone that evening, she went straight to the bathroom to take out the contacts she'd been wearing all day. This was the first day she'd had to wear them this long and they were starting to irritate her eyes. "It's taken all my selfcontrol not to scratch my eyes constantly for the past hour," she said, on her way to the bathroom.

"You wore them a lot longer today than you ever have before. Maybe we need to put a time limit on them," I said, following her.

As soon as they were both out, she did rub her eyes for a moment. She walked to me, her sweet smile on her face. As she got

closer, I could see her eyes had changed to deep blue. "I've actually missed that today," I said. "Your eyes are gorgeous on a normal day, solnishko, but I find myself loving when they change."

"I find myself loving you, my future husband," she said. We hadn't had a chance to discuss how I introduced her to my father and I could tell she'd been waiting to give me a hard time about it.

"I..." I stammered, running my hand through my hair.

She giggled. "You don't need to justify it. I liked it. I just didn't expect it," she said as she pulled me down to kiss her. "I also didn't expect you to be so nervous around your father. Is that normal or is that because you didn't tell him I was coming too?"

Of course, she would have figured out I didn't tell anyone she would be with us. "Sephie, I didn't tell them because I just didn't think about it. You're always with me. Just like the guys are always with me."

"Oh, I'm not mad about it. I thought it was hilarious how they all looked at you when they saw you being affectionate with me. It

was like they weren't sure you were the same Adrik they've known for years. I don't think I would've seen that same reaction if you'd told them. But that doesn't mean I still can't give you shi t about it," she said, grinning at me. I watched as her eyes went from blue to green. God, I love her.

"What did you and my father talk about when he kidnapped you?" I asked as I pulled her shirt off and started to unbutton her pants.

"A few things. You're going to worry when I say this, but I don't mean it in the way you think I do," she said. She was helping to unbutton my shirt, likely to keep her hands busy as I could see her start to worry over how I was going to react. "You're not as different from your father as you think you' are."

I slid my shirt off, thinking about what she just said, and watching her watch me. Her eyes were changing again, but it was like they couldn't pick a color to stick to. "Okay, how do you mean it?" I said, holding my shirt out so she could slip into it.

She grinned at me as she put my shirt on. "When he shook my hand, you saw the reaction he had, didn't you?" I nodded my head, remembering his surprise when he took her hand. "It's because he can feel there's something different about me. He knows there's something different about you as well. He told me. The only way he could know there was something different about you and I is if there's something different about him as well."

I was quietly buttoning up my shirt on her as she talked, thinking about what she was telling me. I still couldn't look away from her eyes, as they kept changing while she talked. "Did he tell you what was different about him?"

“No, but he said your mother knew I was coming. She also knew the guys were coming. When he told me that you and I were different, I felt compelled to tell him that it wasn’t just us. I didn’t get into specifics, but he said that I’d just made your mother a very happy woman. She used to tell him that you would find me and find others that are special like you and you’d be able to realize all the dreams your father had when he ran the city, plus some.” She put her hands on my chest while I wrapped my arms around her waist, holding her close to me. I was still loving being able to hold her against me completely now that she didn’t have her cast in the way. I had no idea how much I would miss the little things between us.

“She said that? Really?” I asked. “I don’t really remember my mother. She died when I was very young. I can barely remember what she looked like.”

“I know. He knows too. Your mother was for him what I am for you. That’s why he lost control of his anger. His control died with her. He told me he worries that his anger became your anger. I told him yours was different than his, but didn’t go too much into details. He was very much lost in his memories when we talked. I think that’s the first time he’s allowed himself to think about your mother in a long time.”

“It’s definitely the first time he’s smiled in decades. And I’m not sure I’ve ever heard him laugh. I think that’s one of your superpowers. Getting grumpy men to laugh,” I said, holding her tighter while I grabbed her ticklish spot just above her hips, making her giggle and squirm in my arms.

“I don’t know how long you plan to stay down here, but I think it would be a good idea for you and your father to have a talk

tomorrow. I can go with you, if you like. He seems to let his guard down around me. He also said he recognizes that you have a hard time seeing past his gruff exterior. Much like you and much like Ivan, it's mostly an act. He's a cheeseball in there."

I laughed loudly. "I don't think anyone has ever, or will ever, compare my father to cheese."

"He's like gruyere. Hard on the outside, soft, creamy, and maybe a little salty on the inside"

I couldn't stop laughing, which made her laugh with me. I picked her up, carrying her to the bed. "Now I'm going to struggle to not think about him as cheese when I talk to him"

"You. Are. Welcome," she said as she settled in across my chest.

The following morning, we woke early to get a workout in before everyone else. My father still kept in shape, as did his security guys, so he had a gym in his house, much like the ones we were used to at home. Sephie still couldn't workout like normal, but she was slowly making progress. Andrei was so patient with her and somehow expertly kept her temper under control when she would get frustrated at not being able to do much.

Her ribs would still bother her occasionally. Her lung was almost back to normal, but she would still sometimes struggle to catch her breath. Andrei saw it one time when she talked him into letting her do more. He also saw that it scared her again. Ivan and I immediately felt it, shielding her so Andrei couldn't see her eyes change. I suspected he either knew they were changing already or that he would be the next one to figure it out.

After that happened, he made her go back to lighter exercises that wouldn't tax her lungs so much, even though she protested.

He gently, but very firmly told her to sh ut up. He was her trainer for a reason and that was that. I think she was impressed that he put her in her place so adeptly.

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She'd reached the point now that she could do very light sparring with him, which made her happy. Her upper body was still weaker than normal and with her ribs still causing her pain, they concentrated on her legs. She was more powerful there anyway.

As the rest of us were finishing up, she and Andrei were off to the side practicing drills. Since she had to go slow, he was working on her form and making it perfect.

My father and Aleksei walked into the gym, noticing Sephie and Andrei immediately. They nodded to us, but were watching her.

Andrei gave her a break while they discussed something and he adjusted her form slightly. When she tried again, we could see the lightbulb moment she had. She practiced a few more times, then they had another sheat discussion. I could tell she was trying to talk him into letting her go faster. He would roll his eyes at her, disagreeing with whatever she was saying, but she kept at it until he finally relented. We all saw him tell her sternly, “one time.” He held up one finger to make sure she understood. She grinned, clapping her hands. He gave her instructions, she nodded her head, then he gave her the okay to begin.

After the ball, when she'd injured her hip, she lost some strength in her legs. It took her a while, but she gained it all back. This time, she lost strength in her upper body, but her legs were as strong as ever. Having to slow down and only being able to work on details was actually making her stronger and faster. Andrei was expecting each kick she delivered, but he still had to work to stay ahead of her to keep her from kicking him and not the pads.

My father had walked over to me while he watched her. “That’s how she trains when she’s hurt?” he asked.

I laughed, nodding my head. “We had her fight one of Armando’s security guys who had a problem with her having any kind of authority over him. We just wanted to knock him down a few pegs. She killed him,” I said, glancing at him. His eyes went wide.

“Turns out he was working for Salvadori’s son, too. He was a plant. She knows things before anyone else most of the time.” I

was curious to see how my father would react to hearing me say that out loud.

After talking to Sephie about him the night before,

I was feeling less nervous around him.

Ivan had walked closer, hearing our conversation. “When they tried to kidnap her the first time, she killed more guys than the rest

of us did. She saved my life that day,” Ivan said. “It’s one of the reasons

Salvadori hates her so much. She has a tendency to kill

his guys. Frequently.” He laughed at the thought of Sal being pissed.

I watched as Vitaliy casually put his hand on Ivan’s shoulder as he responded.

I could see the brief look of surprise when he

touched him. I knew what he was doing. I think Ivan did too, as he saw it as

well. “They all are. We just don’t know how Viktor

and Stephen are yet. You don’t need to check,” I said, laughing at Vitaliy’s

surprise that I had caught on to what he was doing.

Sephie and Andrei had finished and were walking back toward us. She walked right to me, tucking herself into my side, smiling

warmly at Vitaliy. She immediately caught on that something had just

happened. She looked at me, searching my eyes. She

laughed, looking at Vitaliy.

“You thought I was lying, didn’t you?” she asked, clearly amused at his guilty

expression. He cursed under his breath. “We have

much to discuss later, old man,” she said, pulling me toward the door. We heard the guys’ laughter as they followed us out of the gym.

A few hours later, Sephie, Vitaliy, and I went for a walk. She managed to talk everyone else into not following us this time, although it was more difficult than she thought it would be. She ended up having to compromise, promising that we would stay within sight. It made me smile to see how protective they were of her in new situations. Aleksei noticed too, asking me quietly,

“are they always this protective of your girlfriends?”

“Never. She’s the only one. I didn’t ask them to be this way, either. Not after the first day. They worry about her almost as much as I do,” I said.

He was quiet for a moment. “I used to worry about your mother much the same way. That speaks to Sephie’s character.”

“Give her time, Aleksei. She’ll have you wrapped around her finger too,” I said. Sephie was done with her negotiations and on her way to me. Aleksei smiled at her, telling her Vitaliy would be out in a minute. Her heart-stopping smile stretched across her face.

“I don’t think she needs that much time,” he said before turning to leave.

Vitaliy walked outside shortly after, his hardened expression softening when he saw Sephie. I’d seen my father’s rough features soften very few times in my life, but it was obvious when he looked at her that he was completely defenseless against her. I was fairly certain that he would do anything she asked of him.

She grabbed my hand, walking toward Vitaliy. “I’d very much like to walk with an old man, if you’re up for it,” she said.



He smiled down at her. "How could I refuse?" he asked, offering her his arm. She slid her arm through his, while still keeping a hold of my hand with her other arm.

"So happy I have two functioning arms right now," she said, grinning up at me.

Once we walked far enough away from the house that we wouldn't be overhead, she elbowed him in the ribs lightly. "I can't believe you thought I was lying to you about the guys being like me and Adrik. Rude," she said, trying not to laugh. Even though she had her contacts in, I knew her eyes were solid green right now, which made me smile to myself. I watched my father actually blush as she chastised him.

"Forgive me, sladkaya. It's been so long that I have convinced myself it was all a fairy tale. I haven't found anyone like Adrik until you. And I've known Ivan for years. He wasn't like you when I knew him before. He's changed," he said.

"How did you know I was different?" Sephie asked him.

He walked in silence for a few steps. We could see him considering how to explain it. "It's like a judgment system, if you will.

When I touch someone, I can tell certain things about them," he said.

"Whether they're good or bad, you mean?" she asked.

"Yes, on a basic level. Most people are both, as I'm sure you know, but some are ruled by good and some are ruled by evil. I can tell the difference. Salvadori, for example, is ruled completely by evil. With you and Adrik, and now Ivan, it's completely different.

There's an electricity there, almost. It feels like I can feel your power, if that makes sense," he said.

"You should touch Misha and Andrei later. You'll feel it with both of them, too. Viktor and Stephen also have something, we just don't know what it is yet. They're both timid about realizing it," I said,

“Are they all like you, then?” he asked me.

“No, not even a little. We all complement each other though,” I said.

“How?”

“Misha started with being able to predict outcomes. Like a gut instinct. It’s now evolved into him being able to see things as they happen or before they happen. Sephie helped him with that. Andrei is like her,” I said.

“Like you how, sladkaya?” he asked her.

“I have a knack for reading people’s minds. Andrei just discovered he can do it too. He’s still a little insecure about it, but he’s getting better,” she said, smiling at him.

Vitaliy walked a few more steps, mulling over what we’d just told him. “Ivan feels very similar to you two. What does he do?”

Sephie chuckled. “That one is a little harder to explain, but he’s my protector.”

“He’s her shield,” I said. “I never told you, but Ivan is built different. He feels no pain. I could shoot him point blank and he wouldn’t feel it. It’s that ability that saved her life the first time they tried to kidnap her. It almost killed him, but she killed the guys coming after them so he could get them to safety before he collapsed. She also has a special ability to calm him. Ivan has a horrific past when it comes to doctors. He gets stuck in his memories anytime he goes to the hospital. It usually takes the rest of us to hold him down so that he doesn’t hurt anyone or himself and we’re having to fight him with everything we have, but she can do it on her own just by touching him and whispering to him. Viktor’s still jealous of it,” I said, laughing.

“Ivan was experimented on as a kid, wasn’t he? His inability to feel pain was a highly sought-after trait in Russia years ago,” he said.

“You know about the facility?” Sephie asked, clearly surprised.



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“Not specifically, but I know of its existence. I still have friends that are very high up in very strategic organizations. They’ve talked about it before,” he said.

“Is it still going on?” she asked.

“No, not for at least ten years now. There was a kid that escaped one night. He must’ve killed 15 people to get out. They got nervous and shut the program down, thinking that he would come for them.” “That was Ivan,” she said.

“Really?” Vitaliy asked, clearly surprised.

“Really. He told me all about it. If you can find the doctors that used to work there, I’ll happily kill them myself,” she said. I could feel her anger come to the surface as she thought about what was done to Ivan when he was younger.

Vitaliy put his opposite hand over her hand that was still holding his arm as we walked. He stopped and turned to both of us.

“How do you control that?” he asked, completely shocked. I knew he was referring to her anger, but she was at a loss. It wasn’t at nuclear levels, so she likely hadn’t even noticed.

“Control what?” she asked. She looked between us, trying to figure out what he was shocked about.

He took her hand once more. “Your anger. You feel like a raging inferno right now,” he said.

I chuckled. “This is nothing, which is why she’s confused as to what you’re talking about. She’s keeping it under wraps because

of you. But I bet if we turn to look, Ivan will be worried about her. He can feel it too,” I said.

Vitaliy turned to look behind us. I could tell by his expression that Ivan had moved closer to us. I turned to look and sure enough, he was closer, ready for whatever she needed. She looked as well, signaling to him that she was okay. We could see him relax and return to the others.

“How?” Vitaliy asked.

“We’re not entirely sure. Adrik can feel everything I feel now and same for him. I feel everything he feels. Even when we’re apart, we can still feel each other. It’s partly why they found me and Ivan so quickly. When Ivan and I were taken, I started to be able to feel his anger, which is how it started with Adrik. Then I panicked one night and Ivan was able to feel that too. He isn’t able to feel everything yet, but I expect he will eventually. But all of them have an awareness of me, especially when it comes to protecting me. They don’t need to see me to know exactly where I am,” Sephie said.

“Ivan felt your fear the other night, solnishko. He said he would need to be admitted to an asylum if he felt things as strongly as you do,” I said.

“I agree with Ivan,” Vitaliy said.

She cut her eyes at both of us, shrugging her shoulders. “This is how I’ve always been. I don’t know any different.”

“What about the other two?” he asked.

“We’re not sure. They haven’t shown any signs that we know of yet, although Stephen is very adept at breaking people’s minds already. It wouldn’t surprise me if it had to do with that whenever it happens,” I said.

“That’s a useful skill to have,” Vitaliy said.

“I think they’re both closer to figuring it out, but there’s still something holding those two back,” Sephie said.

Vitaliy looked at her thoughtfully. “You know what it is on at least one of them, don’t you?”

“I have my suspicions but I try to not pry in people’s heads without their permission. Stephen has a very dark spot in his past. I’m sure it has to do with whatever that is. Viktor is still mourning, even though he tries to pretend like he’s not,” she said.

“His wife, no?” he asked.

She nodded her head. “He’s still heartbroken. He hides it well, but he’s still working through that pain.”

“He will for a while. It’s not something you easily get over. I still have days where it feels like my heart is breaking open because I miss her so much,” he said, moving away so we wouldn’t see the tears in his eyes.

Sephie stepped toward him, placing her hand on his arm. When he turned his head toward her slightly, she hugged him. I

watched my father, who never showed any emotion other than anger, crumble in front of me. He clung to her like she was his

lifeline. They stayed silent for several minutes, until finally his hold on her loosened. She stepped back slightly, but kept her

hands on his shoulders. “You’ll find her again and you’ll get to fall in love with her all over again. She sacrificed this lifetime for

Adrik, but the next will be the reward for that.” She was quiet for a moment, then she said, “you know she’s still around, right?”

You can still talk to her. She watches over you. She always has.” She glanced at me, then turned back to him. “She says she

misses you too and that you’ll always be her luchik.”

He inhaled sharply, looking to me. “Did you tell her that?” he asked.

“Tell her what?”

“That’s what your mother used to call me,” he said.

“I didn’t know that. I can barely remember her.”

Sephie smiled sweetly at him, stepping away from him to me. “She told me, Vitaliy. Don’t ask me how. It’s never happened before and it might never happen again, but she just told me to tell you that.” Sephie was quiet for a second, then she laughed.

“She might’ve also just told me to tell you that she was right and you should’ve listened to her.” Sephie looked up at me, grinning.

“I like your mother. She’s fun.”

Vitaliy laughed. I’d seen him laugh more in the last two days than I’d ever seen him laugh in my entire life. He cursed under his breath, looking at Sephie with a look of wonderment in his eyes. “You would’ve loved her. You’re very similar. I’m surprised she didn’t have you yell at me for not knowing she was watching over me.”

“You weren’t ready to know, Vitaliy. Now you are. She can’t be mad at you for what you didn’t know,” she said.

He glanced between Sephie and L. “I admit that I did doubt your mother was right when she told me you would find the absolute perfect woman, but she was definitely right,” he said.

“That’s why she’s stuck with me,” I said, pulling her to me.

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When we walked back to the house, the guys were all outside where they could see us, along with Trino and Aleksei. A couple of my father's other security guys were there as well. My guys were visibly relieved when Sephie came back. Ivan looked at her, likely wanting to know what had made her anger show up earlier. He raised an eyebrow at her, silently asking what had happened. She walked to him, wrapping her arms around his waist. "Have I mentioned lately how adorable you are when you get all twitchy when you're worried about me, Squish?" she said, kissing his cheek.

Aleksei laughed. "Squish?" He looked at Ivan. "You let her call you that?" She looked at Ivan, stepping back slightly, worried that she'd made a mistake. He wrapped his arm around her shoulders tighter, keeping her there. "She's the go ddamn princess. She can call me whatever she likes," he said.

Sephie laughed, saying, "Ivan has had more nicknames than the rest of them, I think. Squish is just my favorite. Would you prefer I only called him Vanya? Is that it? You're jealous because no one ever gave you a more creative nickname than Alyosha?"

Aleksei's cheeks blushed. "My mother called me Alyosha."

"It's very Russian and it's very traditional. I would expect nothing less. I, however, am not so traditional and prefer the fun side of life, so I'm going to keep calling him Squish if you don't mind. And even if you do, f\*\*k off," she said, smiling at him.

In 30 years, I've never heard my father laugh as loudly as he did when he heard Sephie put Aleksei in his place. Everyone was



laughing, even Aleksei. Russian men, particularly older Russian men tended to be hardened and didn't waste time on being overly polite. They understood frankness. They respected it. Much like with Ivan in her apartment kitchen, we all witnessed her earn Aleksei's respect.

"Come, we will talk business while Alyosha licks his wounds," Vitaliy said as he walked to the couches and tables on the patio outside the house. Ivan kept Sephie back for just a minute, having a quiet conversation with her. He still looked concerned, but whatever she said to him made him smile. She was still smiling when she turned to join me on the couch near my father. She happily climbed in my lap to free up more space on the couches for someone else. Ivan took advantage and sat next to us.

I glanced at him, making sure he was good from earlier. He leaned over saying, "checking on her contacts. I don't know a few of these guys. We're all still a little jumpy from Trino's guys."

I nodded once. "Good call," I said as she looked back at both of us. "Adorable. And twitchy," she said.

"I know Sal and Lorenzo orchestrated this coup attempt, but we didn't get around to where they are now. And what of the other bosses? I know Armando is being held, but what of everyone else?" Vitaliy asked.

"Trino took care of Sal's son, Anthony, as well as Lorenzo and Massimo," I said.

"Vitaliy, I don't know if you know about Trino's flair for the dramatic, but it's f\*\*king impressive," Sephie said..

"Explain," my father said.

Sephie glanced at Trino, grinning at him. Trino looked at Vitaliy and said, "I like the theater. I wanted their deaths to make a statement."

Vitaliy looked to Sephie for clarification. “He lit Massimo on fire and threw him off a cliff. Then he chopped off Anthony and Lorenzo’s heads and delivered them to Sal.”

Vitaliy looked at Trino, almost in admiration. “That is impressive,” he said. Trino laughed. “We do things a little differently in South America. That’s tame compared to what I have planned next.”

“Where is Sal now?” Vitaliy asked.

“He fled to Italy a couple days after he got Anthony and Lorenzo on his doorstep. He had tunnels under his house that he used to escape. My guys were watching him,” Trino said.

“He’s with Ricardo. We’re not completely sure, but we think Ricardo has been behind all of this, along with Lorenzo from the beginning,” Viktor said.

“Ricardo De Luca?” Vitaliy asked.

“You know him?” I asked.

“Da. He was close associates with Giovanni, before Armando took over for bith. They were in business together regularly. He pitched me a couple of ideas, but I never was interested. I never liked him, although he was never in the illegal side of things,” he said.

“We think he’s been behind Armando the entire time. Armando isn’t who he says he is. He’s from a poor family in Italy. His m om was a crack wh ore, even. Very different story from the one he’s been giving everyone else. Ricardo and Giovanni are related, but distantly. He’s the connection between Armando and Giovanni. He likely placed him with Giovanni in the hopes that he would take over from Giovanni and he could control him,” Ivan said.

“Ricardo has also been in business with Lorenzo for years. Once you banished Lorenzo to Sicily, he set up extensive networks

throughout Europe. He's been rebuilding his fortune over there with Ricardo's help," Viktor said.

"Why would Ricardo care about controlling Armando if he's not part of that side of the business?" Vitaliy asked.

"That's the question we can't figure out. Either he is and we just haven't found it yet or there's another reason. Armando said he's basically obsessed with Boss. Ricardo has been trying to beat him in business for years, but has never been able to. Boss always has a bigger project going than Ricardo and is always more successful," Ivan said.

Vitaliy looked at me, nodding his head once. "This is why I turned the business over to you so early. I knew you wouldn't f\*\*k it up like the other bosses' children." I chuckled.

"Was Sal in the flesh trade when you were still running things?" Sephie asked Vitaliy

"If he was, I didn't know about it. That's abhorrent. I wouldn't allow it," he said.

"That's how Lorenzo rebuilt his fortune in Sicily. Those are his networks throughout Europe. According to Dario, Sal has been in it for years, too. That's what caused me to find Sephie. I went to their meeting because I'd heard about Sal's son trying to bring it to the city," I said.

"What happened at the meeting?" Vitaliy asked.

"Um, it got a little derailed," Sephie said. She looked at Vitaliy, almost like she was going to be in trouble. She said, "see, I have this problem with my mouth. I can't not be a dick sometimes. It tends to get me in trouble."

He looked amused, as he asked again what happened. She sighed. "The bosses knew he was coming and that they were in

trouble. It wasn't just about Anthony. The other bosses had raised taxes so they were all in for it. Anthony was supposed to create a diversion, which involved me and was mostly successful, but nobody expected your son to react the way he did when Anthony used me as a distraction. It kind of set off a chain of events that night."

"What did he do to you?" Vitaliy asked, clearly starting to get angry. Sephie looked at the floor. I could feel the light shaking start in her legs.

"First he smacked her as so hard that she fell over the table," I said. "She quickly left the room, which gave me the opportunity to teach that kid some manners. Later, he caught her coming out of the kitchen and tried to touch her. She refused so he choked her."

"Boss knew something was wrong when she hadn't returned and neither had he. Anthony had her off the floor by her neck when we found him. Viktor and I took him outside and almost beat him to death that night. He didn't like that," Andrei said.

"Was this before or after he told you his name?" Vitaliy asked Sephie.

"After," she said.

"I'm surprised you didn't kill him, then," he said, nonchalantly.

"At the time, I was more worried about her. And I still had an ounce of respect for Salvadori, although that was short lived," I said.

"And what about your guy?" Vitaliy asked Trino.

Trino cursed in Spanish, disgusted at the thought of Martin. "That's also Sal's fault," Sephie said. "Sal convinced Martin to help them overthrow Trino. He involved the Mexican cartels, too. Either Ricardo or Lorenzo or both decided to use the cartels as their army. They needed manpower and they knew it. Overthrowing Trino was the payment for the cartels helping them, but Ricardo

knew there likely wouldn't be enough of them left at the end of it all to worry about that. When Tino stayed loyal and wouldn't negotiate, they changed their plan slightly. Somewhere along the way, they convinced Martin to help them overthrow Trino, with Sal's goddaughter as payment.

"The same goddaughter that was sleeping with Armando when she first met Martin, let the record reflect," Misha said. I

wondered to myself if he would ever get over his hatred for her

"This is all connected nicely, I must say," Vitaliy said.

Sophie snapped her fingers, pointing at him. "Same, Vitaliy. Same." He laughed at her, shaking his head.

"It all points back to Salvadori. And apparently Ricardo," he said. "I still have a few contacts in Italy. I'll see what I can find out about Ricardo."

"We have a way to get rid of him and make the people of the city think the mayor and police are actually doing something, but we also think the mayor is in Sal's pocket. The police commissioner is not, but he can only do so much. The people are ready to revolt against the other bosses. They still love Boss though. They will stand with him if he gets rid of all the other bosses," Ivan said.

"That's your plan? Get rid of all the other bosses?" he asked me. I nodded my head. "What do you need from me?" he asked.

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\*Sephie

I could feel Adrik's surprise when his father asked him what he needed. We had come to Panama for Trino, nothing more. I knew Adrik wasn't planning on asking his father for help. In his mind, this was his problem and he was going to deal with it. His father, however, was more than willing to help his son finally realize the plans he could never materialize when he was in charge of the city.

"We might've just f\*\*ked up part of their plans. We got Sal's goddaughter out of the picture, so now Martin has no payment for whatever his part in this plan is. That just happened yesterday, so we're waiting to see how he handles that when he finds out," Ivan said.

"She was being held at my building. Martin's plan was to get her away from the building and grab her. I'm taking it as a move against me since it's my guys that are on her," Adrik said.

"How do you know this?" Vitaliy asked.

"We have the messages between Martin and Giana to prove it. We've also overheard conversations between them," I said. I caught Misha and Andrei looking at me. Both were clearly surprised I would tell him that. The exchange did not go unnoticed by Vitaliy.

Vitaliy looked at Trino. "What's his relationship like with the Mexican cartels?"

"Not good. If it weren't for Sephie, he'd be dead. He went to try and negotiate with them while I was still in the city. I enjoy making personal deliveries, Trino said, a sly smile creeping across his face.

Vitaliy was quiet for a minute, then he ordered all of his guys but Aleksei to leave. Once they had left, he looked at me, asking, “how?”

I glanced to Misha and Andrei, then looked at Ivan, asking them if they were okay with what I was about to say. They all nodded.

Adrik whispered, “you can tell him.”

“It wasn’t actually me. It was Misha. Me and Andrei are just batteries for him.” I said. They weren’t aware yet that we’d already told Vitaliy about what they could do.

“Don’t let her lie to you. She plays a bigger role than she’ll admit to. She keeps the focus on her to protect them,” Ivan said.

Trino looked surprised. “It’s not just you, Miha?” I shook my head no. “You were right to make it appear that it was only you when

I was there. My guys couldn’t have handled knowing it was more than just you. They would’ve killed me on the flight home.”

I felt Adrik and Ivan both starting to get angry. “I knew they had a bigger problem with me than you were letting on,” I said. “What about Gus and Oscar though?”

He laughed. “Oh, those two love you as much as I do. Your friend Chen has told them what you did for him and how awesome you are. They have to listen to me tell them how awesome you are. Then they both witness it firsthand. Literally every time they see you. Shi t, you’re the reason Oscar got to bl ow up an extra building. For that reason alone, he’s always going to love you.”

“Good news for Gus and Oscar. They won’t mysteriously drop dead from a random bullet through their head,” Stephen said. He’s definitely still angry about this.

“Wait until they find out what happened with mi madre. You won’t ever have to worry about them,” Trino said.

“Her threat still stands. We’re also happy to add to it at any point,” Stephen said.

Misha had his faraway look. I knew he was checking the accuracy of Trino’s statement. “They won’t be a problem,” he said.

Vitaliy looked to Misha. “How long have you had this?”

“I can’t say for sure, really. it’s changed. It started with a gut instinct. I would know that a plan was going to go horribly wrong. It’s developed into me being able to see things as they happen for other people. But it can change, depending on decisions made or not made. It’s not an absolute,” Misha said.

“And she helped you?” Vitaliy asked. He was clearly curious how everything worked.

Misha nodded his head. “Boss called her the Game Master. She shows you your potential when you’re ready. She also helps make everything clear for me. I can see more when she helps.” Misha looked at Trino. “It happened the night the Mexicans tried to kill you. When you didn’t answer when Boss called, Sephie knew something was wrong. I was checking to see what I could find and she grabbed my hand. That’s when we saw you under attack. We could see the way out, but knew you needed a diversion. That’s when Sephe made the kitchen blow up so you could get out.”

Trino laughed. “I knew there was no logical explanation for that kitchen to blow the way it did. You know the entire house blew once we were out, right?”

“What? I made sure you had plenty of time to get away,” said. I still had a hard time believing I was the one that made those explosions happen, but now was not the time to argue that point.



Trino cursed in Spanish, which always made me laugh. “Now I understand you telling my guy that you saved his life.”

Vitaliy, now curious, looked to Andrei. “And what of you?”

Andrei, who still wasn't completely comfortable with his newfound ability looked a bit like a deer in the headlights when Vitaliy wanted to know what he could do. I couldn't help but laugh. “Bubba's like me. He can pick up on things people need said, but won't. He notices more than most people do, too.”

“And how long have you had this?” Vitaliy asked.

“Not very long at all. It just started happening. I'm still not very good at it,” Andrei said.

“You're very good at it, Bubba. You just don't trust yourself and you have a bad habit of comparing yourself to me, who's been doing it much longer,” I said.

“Andrei has a really good track record so far. He's also my backup for when Sephie doesn't want to tell me things because she thinks she's bothering me,” Adrik said, holding me a little tighter.

“That's a very good skill to have. Women can be...complicated,” Vitaliy said, giving me a sly smirk as I squinted my eyes at him.

Adrik laughed quietly at our exchange. “You have a unique advantage that I never had when I was in charge of the city. Your mother was right. You're going to realize everything I couldn't,” he said, looking at Adrik.

“I still haven't figured out how it's all going to work. I just know that with Sephie and these five, it's definitely possible. I'm not going to stop until all the bosses are dead,” Adrik said.

“Save Dario,” I said.

“Why him?” Vitaliy asked.

“His brain is completely broken. He wants out. He wants to disappear. He’s given us very useful information. I told him I’d let him go once this is over and the other bosses are taken care of,” Adrik said.

“And what’s your opinion of that plan?” Vitaliy asked me.

“I agree. Dario has been mentally tortured by Massimo and Sal for his entire life. He’s completely lost his entire family because of them. He has nothing. He wants nothing, except to be left alone. There’s an overwhelming sadness to that man because of everything he’s been through,” I said.

“I always suspected that Massimo was really the one in control between those two. They always made it seem like Dario was in charge, but no one could ever prove it was Massimo,” Vitaliy said.

“Sephie did,” Ivan said.

Vitaliy looked surprised, yet again. “How?”

“She speaks Italian, too, but the bosses never caught on that she could understand their conversations. She said when the bosses would meet at the restaurant she used to work at, occasionally Massimo and Dario would stay after to have their own meeting after everyone else left. She would hang around and listen because they never considered her anything above a servant. Since they were speaking Italian in front of her, they also spoke very freely. Sophie knows where Massimo buried all the bodies, literally and figuratively,” Ivan said.

“You speak Italian?” Vitaliy asked.

I responded, in Italian, telling him that I did understand it better than I spoke it, but he likely wouldn’t know the difference. It was his turn to surprise me when he responded in Italian, telling me that I spoke it just fine and that he could, in fact, tell the difference. I felt my cheeks blush as he caught me being a shi t. He laughed loudly.

“One reason I handed everything over to my son when I did was so that I wouldn’t need to learn Spanish as well. The Colombians and the Mexicans were not big players yet when I was running the city. Now, they are. It’s beneficial to know what your associates are saying about you,” Vitaliy said in English.

“Guess I’m learning Spanish now, too,” I said, laughing  
Trino laughed, “I know a guy.”

“And what of the dealers in the city? Where do their allegiances lie?” Vitaliy asked.

“All my dealers are loyal to Jefe and will remain so if they wish to keep existing,” Trino said.

“The rest of the dealers are also loyal to him. They helped us stop the brawn operation. They were ready to revolt against the bosses before we stepped in and told them our plan to stop it,” Ivan said.

“This drug. It seems ridiculous. Why would you want to kill your customers so easily?” Vitaliy asked.

“That’s a solid question. The story has always been that the dealers are the ones that created the drug and the bosses are the ones that stopped them from selling it. In reality, the opposite is true,” Viktor said.

“It’s another black mark against Sal,” I said. “He employed that son of a bitch doctor to make it and he’s the one that tried to force his dealers to keep selling it. It almost caused a war between the dealers and bosses when it was around the first time. The dealers were a big reason the second edition didn’t go anywhere.”

“They made another version?” Aleksei asked.

“They revamped it, trying to increase the aggression. That was the original plan to get Anthony and Lorenzo back to the city.

Create extreme chaos. and they’d be able to slip in unnoticed,” Ivan said.

“Unfortunately for them, we found out about it and were able to stop it,” Stephen said.

“Jefe likes to stay one step ahead of the other bosses,” Trino said, nodding toward Adrik.

Vitaliy was quiet for a few moments, clearly contemplating everything we’d just told him. He sighed, then looked to Adrik. “You still don’t have very many contacts in Italy, do you?”

Adrik chuckled, but shook his head no. “To be fair, I haven’t needed them until now.”

“You will use mine, then,” Vitaliy said, matter-of-factly. “It will be easier now that you have slatkaya. None of them speak very good English and they’re too stubborn to learn Russian.”

“I mean, no pressure,” I said.

Aleksei laughed. “Italian men are suckers for beautiful women. You’ll be fine.”

Vitaliy also couldn’t help but laugh. “Alyosha is right. You need not worry, slatkaya.”

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Chapter 356

Sephie

That night, once Adrik and I were alone in our bedroom, he was working to undo my pants as I was trying to quickly get my contacts out of my eyes. They were helpful and kept me from worrying about anyone seeing something they shouldn't, but I was finding that I didn't like wearing them for long periods. They made my eyes itch.

I was giggling at him trying to get my pants off while I was distracted. "You're going to make me drop one of these things and then I'm screwed," I said, trying to hurry and be careful at the same time. "I'll have them make you extras when we get home," he said as he knelt down to slide my pants down my legs. "At least we know you won't need to worry about my father seeing anything. It'll probably make him love you even more. Aleksei, too. He was surprisingly okay with our conversation this afternoon."

I laughed. "I think your father has been waiting a very long time to have that conversation." I pulled the second contact out and put it in the container. I turned around to face Adrik, rubbing my eyes. He took advantage of my hands being busy and picked me up, setting me on the bathroom counter.

"I think my father is just as in love with you as the rest of us," he said. His hands were roaming over my body as he waited for me to stop rubbing my eyes so he could pull my shirt off.

"Told you. He's a cheeseball in there," I said, laughing. When I pulled my hands from my eyes, he quickly pulled my shirt over my head and then his lips were on mine.

“Enough talking,” he said, smiling against my lips. He wrapped his arms around me, pulling me closer to him. I wrapped my legs around his waist, pulling him closer to me as he sucked my bottom lip into his mouth, biting down on it gently. It caused me to inhale sharply, my desire for him coming on strongly. I pushed my hips into him, feeling that he was completely aroused already. His warm hands made quick work of my bra, throwing it over his shoulder. He placed his hands over each breast, gently squeezing as he deepened the kiss. I moaned quietly in his mouth, loving the trail of fire that spread over my body when he touched me.

His hands moved down to my hips, pulling me even closer to him. I smiled as he ripped my panties off. “That’s why I brought extras,” I said, laughing. He was smiling as he kissed down the side of my neck. My breaths were quicker as he teased all my favorite spots with his mouth. I was so completely lost in what he was doing that he was still completely clothed. I momentarily snapped out of my euphoria and started to unbutton his shirt, but he stopped me.

“I won’t be able to control myself if you take my clothes off and I want to take my time,” he said, his voice husky with desire. As he said it, his lips were against my neck, his teeth grazing my skin lightly. I could feel his stubble against my skin, loving the contrast between the softness of his lips. and the roughness of his facial hair. A small moan escaped my lips as I felt him push all of his desire to me.

He knew that I struggled to control myself when he pushed his desire onto me. It was so overwhelming that it almost consumed me. I made an attempt once more to get his shirt off, but he took both hands in his. “I will hold you down if I have to,” he said

firmly, his lips right by my ear. His words were an unexpected turn on. My hips pressed into him involuntarily as my need for him grew. He looked at me for a moment. I recognized the look that meant my eyes were changing. He let go of my hands, his warm hands once again leaving a trail of fire everywhere they touched. One hand went to the back of my neck, pulling me to him. His lips found mine once again as his other hand moved between my legs. As soon as I felt his fingers in my wetness, I moaned. His touch was light, at first. Too light. I wanted more. His fingers worked slowly, exploring my pussy. I pushed my hips into him, trying to get more pressure, more friction. He groaned into my mouth. "You're always so eager," he said, quietly. He pulled back slightly so he could look at me, his sexy smirk on his face. He knew he was driving me crazy. He was clearly enjoying it. Just as I was about to say something, he pushed two fingers inside me roughly. Instead of words coming out of my mouth, I moaned loudly. He chuckled as he leaned in and kissed my neck again. He pulled his fingers out and went back to exploring lightly. He stopped briefly, putting his hands on my hips. He pulled me to the edge of the counter, his hands holding my thighs that were still wrapped around him. He put his hand in between my breasts and pushed me back lightly before pressing my knees up toward my shoulders. He knelt down in front of me, putting my feet on his shoulders. I had to lean back on my arms to keep from falling against the mirror. He kissed my inner thighs, taking his time, clearly still enjoying my torture. I felt his warm breath as his tongue started to explore where his fingers had previously been. His lips wrapped around my cl\*t, sucking lightly. I ran my hand through his hair

as he worked his tongue back and forth. I could feel myself starting to slowly build, but I still needed more. I grabbed his hair in my fist, trying to push his head toward me. He understood, increasing the pressure. I felt him slide his fingers inside me once more, curling upward, as his tongue continued to work over my cl\*t.

My breaths were coming quick, moans escaping as he pushed me closer to the edge. Each time I moaned, he increased the pressure of both his tongue and his fingers until I finally couldn't take anymore and crashed over the edge. His fingers didn't stop as I rode out my o\*gasm. He stood up, his lips crashing into mine.

He didn't stop me when my hands went to unbutton his shirt. I worked feverishly to get it off, along with his pants. His fingers were still inside me, pushing me toward another o\*gasm. He only briefly stopped to let his shirt fall to the floor before slamming back into me. I was close enough to another o\*gasm that all I could do was hold on to his shoulders as his fingers f\*\*ked me.

When he felt my o\*gasm start, he put his hands on my hips. and slammed into me with his co ck instead of his fingers. It was exactly what I needed. I was trying not to scream as he slammed into me repeatedly, pulling my hips toward him each time he thrust into me.

I grabbed his neck, kissing him to help m\*ffle my loud cries of pleasure. I was breathing so hard at this point that I had to break the kiss as he was unrelenting in his rhythm. I felt his lips on my neck, then I felt his teeth as he bit down a little harder than usual. It sent waves of pleasure throughout my body. Much like I couldn't control myself when he pushed his desire onto me, he struggled to control himself when I pushed my pleasure onto him when I was having an o\*gasm. He was learning to get a handle



on it, but only sometimes. Because he spent so long teasing me this time, my o\*gasm was especially intense so I decided to return the favor and shared it all with him. I'd learned that I could regulate how much I shared with him, to help him learn to control it. I didn't hold back this time. Turnabout is fair play, after all. I heard him groan. "F\*\*k, Sephie," he said as he increased the intensity even more. His thrusts came harder and faster. I knew he was feeling everything I was. I also knew he wouldn't be able to last much longer. I wrapped my legs around him tighter, the walls of my pu ssy clamping down on him as he kept drilling into me. He grabbed me roughly, his fingers digging into my hips. I loved when he lost control. I loved being able to make him lose control. I felt another o\*gasm start before the previous one was completely done. His grip got tighter, his thrusts harder and I finally felt him explode inside me as I was coming down. He grabbed my face in both hands, kissing me roughly. Both of us trying to catch our breath. He picked me up off the counter and walked us both to the shower. We were both sweaty. "At least I won't feel bad about sk\*pping cardio tomorrow," he said as he turned the water on. His arms kept a hold of me, not wanting to let go just yet. He stood to the side of the water stream until it warmed up. His hands roaming over my back, his lips on mine. I' was happy to stay in his arms for as long as he wanted to keep me there.

## King of the Underworld by RJ Kane

### Chapter 357

Adrik

I woke sometime in the middle of the night. Sephie was laying across my chest. She'd tried her best to wear me out before we finally went to sleep, but my brain just didn't want to stop. I don't know why I was so surprised that my father was so different with Sephie. I'd never seen him act the way he did around her. It was a welcome change.

My father had always been a cold man. He made sure I had everything I needed, but there was never any warmth between us.

As I was growing up, I eventually came to realize that I was a reminder of my mother for him. I think it caused him pain to see me and have to constantly remember that he'd lost her. Now that I have Sephie, I can understand the pain he was in. If my mother was even half of what Sephie is for me, I'm impressed my father didn't lose his sanity when she died.

I inhaled deeply, lost in my thoughts. I felt Sephie snuggle into me more, effectively breaking me out of my head for a moment. I watched her sleeping peacefully on my chest, her fingers playing their song on my heart.

She'd been able to hide her eyes from everyone but Ivan so far, although I suspected that Andrei had at least a small clue that something had changed. It was only a matter of time before the others picked up on the fact that her demon eyes hadn't made an appearance in a while. I was fairly sure they'd already noticed. They just weren't saying anything yet. I knew we were eventually going to have to tell them, but I was enjoying having this secret with her for a little longer. I also didn't want her to have

to wear the contacts anymore than she absolutely had to, since they seemed to make her eyes itch after wearing them for long periods.

I felt her stir and she picked her head up off my chest, resting her chin on me so she could look at me. She smiled sweetly at me.

The moonlight coming in through the window made her porcelain skin look almost like it was glowing. "Wanna tell me about it?"

she asked. Of course she knew I was lost in my head.

I smiled back at her, my hand lightly running over the features of her face.

She closed her eyes, still smiling at me, enjoying my touch. "I didn't mean to wake you," I said quietly.

"I could feel you," she said. "You're all over the place."

I laughed. "Accurate."

She stretched beside me, then moved so she was straddling me. I sat up a little more so I could easily look at her. Even though my mind was everywhere all at once, seeing her climb on top of me while still naked did not hurt..

She laughed when she saw where my mind immediately went. She just picked my hands up and placed them on her breasts.

"Nobody likes cold boobies. They were extra warm from being on you. Now they're going to freeze," she said.

"And now I've suddenly forgotten everything I was thinking about," I said, squeezing her breasts as she laughed at me.

She put her hands on my chest, her eyes searching mine. Even in almost complete darkness, she could read my mind. She looked at me, a puzzled look on her face. "You seem happy about seeing your father this time. Why is it keeping you up?"

I moved one hand to the side of her face. I was actually trying to get her to close her eyes so she'd stop searching. I didn't want

to deny her, but I also didn't think she'd want to have this conversation right now. I knew she was going to chastise me for it, too.

She did close her eyes as she leaned into my hand. My thumb rubbing lightly against her cheek.

"You're not going to distract me, although I appreciate the effort," she said. A sly smile creeping over her face. She sighed, then said, "you have a better understanding of why your father is the way he is now that you have me." When I didn't answer immediately, she opened her eyes. "And now you're even more worried about losing me."

She was quiet for a moment. She chewed on her bottom lip as she was trying to find the words to say. "I sometimes forget, with everything that's happened, how hard all of this has been on you. You're almost as good as me at hiding things." She smiled sweetly at me, her fingers reaching out to run lightly over my face through my stubble. She thought for a few minutes, then sighed. "I think everything was supposed to happen the way it did. You would've kept sending me away to try and protect me, thinking that you brought this danger to me if Armando and Sal hadn't grabbed me and Ivan. I never told you, but when we were at the warehouse and you told Ivan to get me out of there, I had a bad feeling. A very bad feeling, but it all happened so quickly that I couldn't say anything. I knew then that being apart from you was wrong, without really knowing it. You did what you thought was best, but it's still coming from an insecure place within you because there's still a tiny part of you that doesn't believe I love all of you."

"Was," I said. She raised an eyebrow, silently asking for more of an explanation. "There was a small part of me that didn't believe

you loved all of me. That went away when we got to you and Ivan. Even though I knew you were in excruciating pain, I knew you could feel my anger. It was completely out of control at that point, but I could feel that you wanted it to be so. When I walked to you to put my jacket around you, I could see how much you craved my anger at that moment. I could also see how much you loved me, despite my demon being fully on display. I'd always tried to keep that part of me away from you, worried that it would scare you. But you never backed down. You never looked at me differently. You only loved me more."

"I know who you are, Adrik. I've always known who you are. I've always known that side of you exists. You don't get to be the Lord King Boss without it." I chuckled at her title for me. "You still have the biggest heart of anyone I know. You all do. You're all worried that you're monsters. I worry that I'm a monster sometimes too. I don't have a pristine track record either, but you still love me in spite of it. And I still love you. All of you. Forever and always. So when you're worried that you're a monster and you can't see that even your demon has a good purpose or find any of your own love to give that side of you, you can borrow some of my love. I've got plenty. With your name on it." She grinned at me. I could feel the warmth spread through my body that meant she was thinking about how much she loved me. Even though I couldn't see them clearly, I knew her eyes had turned completely blue as well.

She squealed as I grabbed her and quickly threw her down on the bed, moving so I was on top of her. I leaned down, kissing her softly. My hand on her cheek, my thumb rubbing lightly. I felt her desire for me come on very strongly. I knew that my gentle

kisses made her melt every single time. She surprised me by grabbing my cock and positioning me against her pussy. She moaned softly as I slid inside her. I would never tire of showing her just how much I loved her.

I heard her inhale sharply as I slid all the way inside her. It still happened every time and I still couldn't get enough of it. She angled her hips so she could take every bit of me. She exhaled, arching her back as I felt her pussy squeeze around me. I slowly starting to move inside her, loving the sound of her quiet moans as she felt the friction start to increase.

She wrapped her legs around my waist and tried to roll us both over. She ended up giggling when she couldn't do it, which made her pussy vibrate and clench around me. I grabbed her and pulled her on top of me, sitting up at first because I loved being able to look at her eyes. She kissed me deeply as she rocked her hips against me, but she placed her hands on my chest and pushed me back so I was lying down.

The moon was full enough that it gave just enough light through the windows that I could see her. She grabbed my hands, placing them on her breasts and moving them over her body as she arched her back and started to ride me. I loved watching her get lost in the feeling and loved it even more when she took charge.

She took one of my hands and placed my thumb over her clit, her fingers on top of mine, directing me to touch her exactly how she wanted. I could feel her orgasm building. I could feel everything she felt. Her rhythm increased, her hips grinding into me as she kept building to release. I moved my hand from between her legs and put hers in place of it. I wanted to watch her touch herself. I saw a small smirk as she knew what I wanted. She did not disappoint.

Keeping one hand in between her legs, she ran her other hand over her body. She cupped her full breast, wrapping her fingers around her nipple and squeezing. It sent a pulse of electricity through her body that I felt, making my hips jerk upward. She moaned loudly as she quickened her pace, riding me harder. Her breasts now bouncing with her movements, her breaths coming heavy and quick. I grabbed her hips, helping push her down on me harder. It was her undoing. Her entire body exploded into pure bliss around me.

In one swift motion, I flipped us so she was on her back once more. Trying to keep her orgasm going and unable to control myself any longer, I drilled hard into her. She grabbed my shoulders, her nails scraping over my flesh as she tried to hold on. Her lips were next to my ear, breathlessly saying my name as she urged me to keep going. Whatever she wanted, she could have.

Her arms fell limp to the bed as she gave in completely to her pleasure. All I could hear were her loud cries of pleasure. I felt her push everything she was feeling to me as we both exploded into pure bliss. Every cell in my body was on fire in the best way possible. Her touch sent chills down my spine. I never wanted it to end.

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Chapter 358

Sephle

Adrik and I were the last ones to breakfast the following morning. Everyone gave us knowing looks and I suddenly worried that I'd been too loud the night before. Adrik felt my sudden panic. He slid his arm around my waist, his lips next to my ear. "Nobody heard you. But if they did, they're just jealous." He was clearly amused at the possibility of them hearing me. It was an ego boost for him. It was insanely embarrassing for me.

"Good morning, princess," Ivan said. I was fairly certain he felt my momentary panic as well. He was becoming quite good at feeling as much from me as I could feel from him. "We made bets as to whether you would wake up late today or not. You're due for a late morning."

"Sh ut up."

"No, it's true, gazelle. It's been a few weeks since you've slept in. I think you're past due, actually," Misha said.

I couldn't hide my amusement at them apparently knowing my schedules better than I did. "I had no idea I was so predictable," I said, sitting in an empty chair beside Viktor. He put his giant arm around my shoulders, hugging me sweetly. He kissed the top of my head, saying, "you're allowed to sleep in whenever you like. You waste a lot of energy taking care of all of us, sestrichka."

"I would not call that a waste, Papa Bear."

"I, for one, am relieved that you didn't sleep in this morning, spider monkey. I was going to feel bad about letting you go full speed yesterday morning if you had," Andrei said.

I laughed, but before I could respond, Aleksei looked at me, half-confused, half amused. "Do they all call you different names?" I



smiled at him, nodding my head. "I assume there's a reason for such strange names?" he asked, wanting further explanation.

Clearly, Alyosha was jealous at our imaginative nicknames.

"There's a story for all of them," Misha said. Both Aleksei and Vitaliy looked at all of us curiously, wanting to hear why they called me by the names they did.

"The first day I stayed with her while Boss was working, she jumped on my back so I had to carry her around every chance she got. She still does it. That's why I call her spider monkey," Andrei said as he smiled and winked at me. I knew he'd come to love carrying me around as much as I did. Half the time, he'd offer first.

"She likes to go for runs and since I'm the only one that runs on a regular basis, I was forced to go with her. She almost killed me that first time. She's like a gazelle. I like to remind her that she almost killed me as often as I can," Misha said, his wide smile stretching across his face.

Ivan laughed. "Much like she put you in your place yesterday, Alyosha, she put me in mine very quickly after first meeting her. I had called her princess to try and piss her off. I was giving her shi t while she was trying to help me. She adopted it right then and she's been the princess ever since."

"Why would you try to piss her off?" Vitaliy asked.

Before Ivan could answer, I said, "Ivan has a very special set of skills that he enjoyed using on your son's past girlfriends."

"How so?"

"His demons pull their demons out for the world to see, so everyone else can see the person as Ivan sees them. He just didn't realize that I have many of the same demons he does and I'm very good friends with them, so it didn't work on me." I laughed,

remembering that morning in my kitchen. “He’d been hurt and needed stitches. It was before I knew of his aversion to doctors. I was offering to clean him up and trying to talk him into going to the hospital but he was giving me shi t. I gave him shi t back so he let me clean his wound, but I told him he needed stitches. He said he wasn’t going to the doctor and then taunted me about stitching him up. He didn’t know that I really could stitch him up, so I told him I was going to enjoy the pain it would cause since I had nothing to numb the area. I also didn’t know that was not a thing that happens with him. I was just trying to pi ss him off the same way he was trying to pi ss me off, honestly.”

“It was the first time we’d seen Ivan laugh in years when she told him she wished she had a lollipop to give him and thanked him for not killing this princess when she was done,” Viktor said, his arm moving around my shoulders once again.

Stephen laughed loudly. “I didn’t know about the lollipop comment. I would’ve paid to have seen his face.”

Vitaly and Aleksei were also laughing. “You really have nothing to worry about when it comes to my contacts in Italy, sladkaya.

You’ll be able to handle them just fine,” Vitaliy said, still laughing. He was quiet for a moment, looking at all of us thoughtfully.

Then he said, “the more I learn, the more impressed I am.” Then he stood up and walked away from the table, leaving everyone slightly stunned at his words. I glanced to Adrik, who was more stunned than anyone, his mouth slightly open, his eyes wide.

It was Aleksei that broke the stunned silence. He looked at Adrik, “she offers him a sweet reminder of things long lost to him. This was the father were too young to remember.” He placed his hand on Adrik’s shoulder as he, too, got up to walk away from the table, once again leaving us all in

silence.

you

“Jesus I haven’t seen this kind of melodrama since Vlad first came to power,”  
Stephen said, completely straight-faced. We all  
erupted into laughter, which inevitably grew as we looked at Trino’s confused  
expression.

## King of the Underworld by RJ Kane

### Chapter 359

“Adrik

My father called his contacts in Italy that afternoon. He requested Sephie’s presence, so that he could introduce her. I knew his contacts and they knew me, but because of the language barrier, I never had much contact with them. I had never had a real need for them until now.

“I’m going to call Battista. He’s the most useful. If he can’t get anything for you, I’ll call one of the other ones,” Vitaliy said. He looked at Sephie with a mischievous glint in his eye and said something to her in Italian. She laughed, but she looked almost nervous when she glanced at me. As my father looked away to make the call, I searched her eyes, trying to find out what he’d just said to her.

She was still much better at reading my mind than I was at reading hers, but the more I tried it with her, the easier it got. I found my answer before Battista answered the call. Vitaliy had told her that Battista was a notorious womanizer and would openly flirt with her in front of me, especially since he knew I didn’t speak Italian. I never worried about Sephie around anyone else, but that didn’t mean I wanted to see anyone else flirting with her. She smiled sweetly at me, noticing my clenched jaw. She pulled my arms around her waist as Vitaliy told Battista the reason for his call. Battista knew of Ricardo, but said that he never liked him. Apparently, Ricardo had a bit of a reputation in the business world in Italy. He’d screwed a few too many people over early on in his career, so there were quite a few very influential people that refused to work with him. Battista was one of those people.

Battista was so wealthy that most people didn't know he existed. Much like me, much like Vitaliy, he worked hard to be as anonymous as possible. But Battista also had generational wealth behind him. That plus the success he'd had in business gave him the opportunity to be a very powerful, very influential person. Instead, he chose to remain behind the scenes, choosing a quieter life. He had extensive networks throughout Italy and he kept a finger on the pulse of literally everything that happened in the entire country, but he stayed in the shadows. Only stepping in when absolutely necessary.

Most of my father's contacts throughout the world were much the same. They were all very influential people that no one knew about. Just the few people in my father's network alone made up well over half the world's total wealth. And the common citizen didn't even know they existed.

Battista was happy to help us out, especially if it meant Ricardo was going down. Sephie laughed at one particularly impassioned rant from Battista. She quietly said, "he's almost as imaginative as Giana is about the insults for Ricarda."

Vitaliy and Battista talked for a few more minutes, then I heard Vitaliy say Massimo's name, followed soon after by Sephie's name. She looked to me, somewhat surprised, then looked back at Vitaliy. He looked proud as he kept talking to Battista. Battista asked a question, to which Sephie answered. It was difficult to tell, but I think Battista was shocked at her answer. He was laughing at the end of it, which made Sephie laugh as well.

Once the call ended, Vitaliy said, "he's going to see what he can find out about Sal and Ricardo. He'll be able to find information on Niko and Vito too, if they're still there. Battista has the most connections in Italy. He'll be able to find the most information, but

he'll likely want to deliver it in person. That means he needs to come to the city or you need to go to Italy."

"I won't go to Italy if Sal and Ricardo are still there. Not until Sephie is completely healed. I won't put her in danger again," I said, firmly.

Vitaliy put his hand up, like he was trying to calm me down. "You won't need to. He'll come to the city if I agree to meet him there.

He still owes me a very large debt. He'll come to the city if it means paying that back."

I felt Sephie's hand timidly in mine. "I can travel. I'll be okay. We can go there if we have to," she said, quietly.

Before I could answer, Vitaliy said emphatically, "no. He's right. No one is putting you in danger. Sal clearly has it out for you. And that was before he lost his son and his brother. Even though it was Trino that killed them, he'll likely find a way to blame it on you just to have another reason to come after you."

"Da mmit. Scolded," she said, under her breath.

"No one is going anywhere right away anyway. It takes time to collect information. He'll need a few days, at the very least," Vitaliy said, taking a softer tone with her. He looked at me. "What are your plans with Trino? He's going to stay in the city for now, no?"

"For now, yes. His entire security team is compromised. We need to get him a new team before he can go back to Colombia. The Mexicans are after him, as well. It's just as big of a mess down there as it is in the city," I said.

"His security is compromised because of slatkaya?"

"Totally accountable," Sephie said, raising one hand.

Vitaliy scoffed. They were never loyal to him in the first place, then."

I laughed, which made him look at me. "She said the very same thing to Trino when we found out."

“Smart girl,” he said, winking at her.

“I think it’s time we go back to the city. It’ll take time to get a new security team for Trino. He has very loyal dealers, but I’m not sure they’re adequate enough for the security he needs. Viktor can help him with it, but they need to be in the city for that to happen. I also feel safer with Sephie at my building.” I said. “You’re always welcome. We have room for you and your guys at the building, although it won’t be as warm as it is here right now.”

Vitaliy looked lost in thought for a few moments. “I haven’t been to the city in years. Maybe it’s time I paid a visit.”

“Aleksei will be happy. He can go to that restaurant he’s been missing.”

Sephie said.

Vitaliy laughed. “It’s not the food he misses at that restaurant, sladkaya. It’s the waitress. She’s likely not working there any longer.”

“That dog,” Sephie said quietly, shaking her head and laughing quietly.

## King of the Underworld by RJ Kane

### Chapter 360

Sephie

We had made plans to return to the city the following morning. Vitaliy had agreed to come back with us, but he was going to come up a couple days behind us. He said he needed to take care of a few things in Panama before leaving.

I had quietly snuck off to the bedroom to take my contacts out for a few minutes. I told Adrik where I was going and what I was doing, so he wouldn't worry about me. I knew he was going to worry about me anyway. I didn't want to interrupt his conversation, but my eyes were itching so bad that I couldn't take it. I needed some relief for at least a few minutes. Contacts were highly overrated.

I sat down on the end of the bed, rubbing my eyes, finally getting some relief. I felt a slight breeze, so I opened my eyes. I didn't remember a door or window being open. When I looked up, there was a woman standing in front of me. At first, I was startled, but she looked familiar somehow. She smiled sweetly at me, then asked, "you can see me?"

I nodded my head, wondering why she would ask that question as I could see her standing plain as day in front of me. She caught on to my confusion. "You're the only one who's been able to see me. Or hear me. You really are special," she said.

I gasped. "You're Vitaliy's wife. Adrik's mother. You're Lena. How can I see you right now?" Her smile widened. She took a step closer to me and I saw her eyes. The same eyes that I adored on her son. "This has never happened before," I said, completely taken aback.



“I wanted to thank you,” she said. “I keep an eye on Vitaliy, but I don’t always stay with him. I have other responsibilities. That’s how I met your father. He told me I could make this happen.”

“He always talks to me in my dreams. Never when I’m awake. Except that one time when he swooped in, but even then, I didn’t see him. Did he show you his swooping?” I asked, grinning at her.

She laughed. “You’re very much like him.” She walked closer to me, sitting on the bed beside me. I felt the bed dip as she sat down, like she was completely real. I could see that Adrik got her smile, along with her eyes. The softness in his face came from her as well. He favored his father, but she made his father’s harsh good looks softer.

“He has your eyes,” I said as I was taking in the details of her face.

“I think that was the hardest thing for his father to get over. He used to say he could get lost in my eyes. Seeing the same eyes on his son just reminded him of his loss.”

“He’s still very much in love with you,” I said.

She laughed quietly. “And I’m still very much in love with him. The love we have is much the same as the love you have for my son. It’s not an average relationship. It’s...” she paused like she was trying to find the words.

“Eternal,” I said.

“Exactly. I should’ve known you’d already know,” she said, smiling sweetly at me. She reached out and grabbed my hand.

Surprisingly, she felt warm. Similar to Adrik’s touch. “Sephie, I want to thank you. I knew you were coming for my son, but I had no idea the role you would play in my husband’s life as well. Or how you would bring them together.”

I scoffed. “I haven’t done anything. I don’t think there’s anything to thank me for.”

She reached up and brushed a curl from my face, just like Adrik does almost constantly. “Sweet girl. You’ve already set it in motion. You just have no idea. You’ve already brought them closer than they’ve ever been and this is just the beginning. Part of what makes you unique is your ability to know what the people you care about need, even before they do. Even without you being aware of it. I know you’ve heard stories about my husband and what a cold man he’s been. It’s because most of his light died with me. He was almost overtaken by his own darkness. But you. You’ve given him a spark and I cannot thank you enough for doing so.”

“Eh, I think Adrik was right. I’m just really good at getting grumpy old men to laugh. That’s all,” I said, grinning at her. Curiosity got the best of me, so I asked, “were you special like Vitaliy and Adrik too?”

“No. Adrik’s power comes from Vifaliy. Just like yours comes from your father. But much like you, I accepted Vitaliy for who he was completely. There is much to be said for being someone’s safe harbor. Vitaliy, much like Adrik, has a giant heart for those he cares about. He just has a difficult time showing it. Adrik is much better and even better still, since meeting you. Vitaliy still very much struggles with it.”

“I knew he was a cheeseball in there,” I said, chewing on my bottom lip. She laughed. “Please promise me you’ll tell him that. I can’t wait to hear him laugh.”

“I promise I will tell him. And I have a feeling you’re more special than you think. You calmed Vitaliy’s storms. That’s no small feat,” I said. She smiled sweetly at me, brushing another curl back from my face as we both studied each other.

“It’s time for you to get back. They’re worried about you. Adrik worries about you the way Vitaliy used to worry about me. Ivan is

almost as bad. Those men are good men, Sephie. All of them. I know you know, but they need to know that the Universe knows how good they are. Please tell them I'm sorry for making them worry," she said, squeezing my hand gently.

"Why would they be worried about me? It's only been a few minutes."

"Sweet girl. You forget. Time is different here. It's been much longer for them, which is why I need to apologize. Tell them I promise not to do this again. They're going to be angry," she said, smiling.

"They're not the boss of me," I said, laughing. "I'll tell them you apologize if you tell my father I miss him and I'd like to see him again."

"I will, Sephie. But you can tell him yourself. He constantly checks on you. Even with Ivan taking his job, he's still around. All you have to do is ask," she said. She stood up, her hand lingering on my cheek for a moment before she walked away toward the door. With each step she took toward the door, she faded a little more until she was gone completely and I was left alone in the bedroom again.

"Sephie? Sephie, love. I need you to wake up. Please wake up. Please come back to me," Adrik said. I could hear the panic in his voice. "She's not responding. She's never zoned out this completely before. I don't know what to do."

"Can you feel anything from her? I don't feel anything bad, at least, but I don't feel anything good, either," Ivan said. "Her eyes are going apeshit though."

I giggled. She was right. They're gonna be mad.

"Sephie??" Adrik said, frantically.

It took me a minute to focus. My eyes were open, but I couldn't see anything in front of me. I reached up and rubbed my eyes.

“I’m okay. I’m sorry. She’s sorry, too. She said it’ll never happen again.” When I opened my eyes, I could see Adrik and Ivan standing in front of me, both of them clearly panicked.

“Who’s she? And what won’t happen again?” they both asked, as I was hit with anger from both of them. Yep. They’re mad.