

King of the Underworld by RJ Kane

Chapter 184

Chapter One Hundred Eighty-Four

Sephie

As we all walked to the elevator, Andrei slid his arm around my shoulders. He looked down at me, a smile across his face. “If I haven’t thanked you lately for both introducing me to Tori and also for being the catalyst that got her out of my life, thank you.”

I laughed. “Mostly for being the catalyst to get her out, though. Jesus. I had no idea she was that crazy.”

Misha looked at me, seriously. “You shouldn’t feel bad about Max though, gazelle. You warned him and he didn’t listen. Now he has to live with the consequences of that.”

I sighed, holding Andrei’s arm that was still around my shoulders, leaning against him as we rode the elevator up to Adrik’s office.

“I know. I know. I can’t help but feel bad about it, even though I know he’s doing it to himself. It’s just so much worse than I thought it would be. Chen wasn’t joking when he said Max uses his face to get tips. He practically had a fan club he was so good at it. I mean, I saw him clear a couple grand in a weekend just in tips a few times. If she’s preventing that from happening, no wonder he’s thinking about dealing. He has a nice apartment to pay for.”

“Well, he could break up with her. Problem solved,” Ivan said, raising an eyebrow at me.

I looked at him, wide-eyed. “She might stab him. You didn’t see what she did to broccoli.”

Andrei squeezed my shoulders. He leaned his head down and rested it against mine. “We’re gonna add this to the white board,” he said wistfully, making everyone laugh as we got off the elevator.

Armando and Team America were in Adrik’s office when we walked in. Andrei still had his arm around my shoulders and I was still holding on to his arm. I noticed the look from Mike as we walked in, but he said nothing. Adrik was standing, looking for a file on one of his bookshelves. He turned as we walked in, a clear look of relief on his face. I couldn’t help but smile as soon as I saw him. Andrei squeezed me once then lifted his giant arm off my shoulders so I could go to Adrik.

“How did it go?” he asked as he slid his arm around my waist, pulling me to him. He gave me a quick kiss, his blue eyes softening as he looked at me.

“Chen is still there, but he said he doesn’t know anything. He’s going to talk to two of the other dealers he knows. The third is one of Trino’s guys, so I told him not to bother. He’s mad though. He said he won’t touch brawn and he’s damn sure not selling it if he knows about it. He also said he doesn’t know any other dealer that would sell it either. They have to be replacing the supply without the dealers knowing. It all seems really weird.” I glanced at Andrei and Ivan, across the office, then added quickly, “and Max is miserable and going broke most likely. The end.”

Adrik raised his eyebrow at the last revelation. He thought for a moment, then looked to Viktor. “When are you bringing Andy here?”

Ivan chuckled. “Princess already asked that on the way back.” He then said, in Russian, “fucking adorable.” Adrik glanced down at me, his eyes laughing.

Viktor laughed, then said, “I think we can get him tonight. Mike and his guys can go fetch him. Misha, Stephen, and I will assist, but stay out of sight again, Just in case.”

Adrik nodded his head. “I think we need to find out everything he knows after Sephie approves him.” He looked to Misha, who nodded his head in agreement.

Viktor looked to Mike; they quickly made a plan to bring Andy back from the safe house. This time, Ivan and Andrei were quite happy to stay behind. I thought back to that first week at the house, when I thought I was torturing the guys by forcing them to stay with me. Adrik was right. They preferred it.

Once they left for Operation Fetch Andy, Ivan quietly asked me in Russian, “did you catch Mike’s look when you walked in with Andrei?”

I nodded my head. “I’m not entirely sure of what he thinks is happening, but it definitely makes me want to be even more affectionate with you guys just to see what kind of reaction I can get out of him. Maybe I was wrong about him,” I said, shrugging my shoulders.

Ivan gave me a coy smile. “You were thinking what I was thinking.”

“To the white board, Super Squish!” I said, laughing.

Adrik and Armando were still discussing business while we all waited on Andy to arrive. Ivan and Andrei took the opportunity to start to teach me the Russian alphabet, which was admittedly harder than I thought it was going to be. I was in between them on one of the couches, both of them leaned toward me so they could write different letters on the notepad in my lap, when the extraction team came back. We might have planned it that way, just to see Mike’s reaction. It did not disappoint. He was clearly shocked when he walked into the office and saw the three of us so close together on the couch, but he masked it quickly.

Ivan said quietly, in Russian, “he’s definitely going to need to be checked more forcefully next time.”

Andrei said, “I didn’t notice it before, but I noticed it then for sure.”

As Andy walked into the office, I handed the notepad to Ivan, winking at him. I stood up and followed Adrik as he walked toward Andy. “Andy, it’s good to see you again,” he said, offering him his hand to shake.

Andy grabbed his hand, saying, “it’s good to see you too, sir. Thank you for getting me out.” He was clearly relieved to be here.

I realized that I recognized Andy. “I remember you,” I said. “You used to come with Salvadori to all the meetings.”

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He extended his hand to me, saying, “hello, Sephie. It’s good to see you again, too.” I shook his hand. He had a genuine look in eye. I had a flood of memories of him at the meetings once I saw his face. Andy never once said a word at the restaurant, but his face spoke volumes. In the beginning, when I was still learning to understand Italian well, I would watch his reactions when I couldn’t understand what they were saying.

Adrik noticed my silence. I felt his hand on my back as he said, “please, Andy, sit. We have much to discuss.” Once Andy walked past us, Adrik looked down at me, a concerned look in his eye. I whispered, “I think it’s okay. I’ll let you know.” He nodded once, walking us toward his desk. I hopped up on the bookshelves behind his desk as he sat down in his chair. Partly because I wanted to be able to fully concentrate on Andy, partly because I wanted to confuse Mike. I glanced at him to see his reaction to me not sitting with Adrik. Mission accomplished.