

# King of the Underworld by RJ Kane

Chapter 290

## Chapter Two Hundred Ninety

Sephie

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

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

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

“Maybe he’s only worth more on paper. He could be in debt to someone or several people and be struggling to pay them back. Just because he has plenty of assets on paper doesn’t mean any of those are actual liquid assets. He might be strapped for cash,” Adrik said.

“The million-dollar question is why he’d be strapped for cash,” Ivan said. “Princess, you didn’t overhear them talking at all when they were both there, did you?”

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

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

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

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

I could hear Viktor starting a new search after hearing Stephen’s theory.

“What did your father think of Armando?” I asked. Adrik would only speak about his father on rare occasions. Their relationship was strained, but respectful. On some level, Adrik understood what his father did to keep him safe and make sure he could survive this world. On another level, that also meant that Adrik didn’t really have a solid father figure in his life. Viktor was more of a father figure to Adrik than Vitaliy. Since handing over the business to Adrik, Vitaliy had basically disappeared. He would resurface from time to time for a few days,

but then he would be gone for years. Adrik knew how to get in touch with him, if he needed to. He just never needed to.

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

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

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

“He told me he beat her to death when she wouldn’t shut up. I asked him if he’d gotten her hooked on coke the same way he did Giana. He didn’t know we knew about that, so it stumped him for a minute. I asked him if he knew that coke was a stimulant and told him if he wanted his wife to be quiet that he should’ve gone with heroin or another opioid. He looked genuinely confused. That’s where the idiot part comes in. That’s also when I first asked him who was pulling his strings, because he was clearly too stupid to have stayed in this business for this long without help. He did not like that,” I said.

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

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

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

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

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

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

“Ricardo,” they all said.

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

“It appears Lorenzo has been in the flesh trade longer than we thought,” Viktor said.

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

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

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

“All Romanians come across as cranky, Seph. But Vlad? Surprisingly sarcastic. Liked dad jokes, too. Odd combination, but it worked with him,” he said with a straight face like it was the God’s honest truth.

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

“No, that was all Vlad. I just supported his dreams. It’s called enabling. I invented that,” he said, still completely straight-faced. I tried to hold it in, but I couldn’t help but laugh, which caused me to grab my ribs in pain. “I did this to myself,” I whined as I waited for the pain in my ribs to subside.