

King of the Underworld by RJ Kane

Chapter 247

Chapter Two Hundred Forty-Seven

Sephie

Ivan, Viktor, and Misha went to the lobby that afternoon to look at the security footage of Giana meeting with the mystery man. They were hoping to be able to formulate a plan to grab everything the next afternoon so we could get answers as quickly as possible.

"You really think you can make it happen that quick?" I asked Ivan before they went downstairs.

"People are creatures of habit, princess. My guess is she does the same thing each time because it's worked for her before. We just have to learn the pattern so we know where to interrupt it to get what we need," he said,

I squinted my eyes at him. "I don't know how I feel about loving your devious side this much," I said.

Adrik asked me to stay for his first meeting of the afternoon. "You're going to be happy you did," he said, smirking at me. He wouldn't give me anymore details than that.

"That means I have to put shoes back on. Is it going to be worth that?" I asked.

"I think so, but I promise to rub your feet later if you think it's not," he said, his eyebrow raised.

"You have excellent negotiation skills," I said.

Stephen walked in the office as I slipped my heels back on. Vinny was behind him, along with his wife, Anna. Adrik caught my eye, with a clear "I told you" look on his face.

"Vinny!" I said.

"Ciao, bella!" he exclaimed as he opened his arms for a hug.

"And you brought your lovely wife too! How are you, Anna? It's so good to see you again," I said, hugging her after I hugged Vinny.

"I'm good, Sephie. It's good to see you again, too," she said, her sweet smile on her face.

Adrik looked at me. "You've met Anna before?" he asked me in Russian.

I nodded. "She owns the salon where Ms. Jackson gets her nails done. We went there first before they tortured me with shopping," I said, still in Russian.

He smiled at the memory of that day as he extended his hand to Vinny. "Vinny, it's good to see you again," he said, now in English. "And you as well, Anna. Please, come. Sit," he said, after shaking her hand as well. He sat behind his desk, while I chose to lean against the cabinet behind his desk. One downside of wearing a skirt. I couldn't hop up on the cabinet like normal. "How's your father, Vinny? I've heard his treatments have been successful and they're seeing some improvements. Is that still the case?"

"He's doing great, thanks to you, sir. I'm still so grateful to you for everything you've done for our family. I almost didn't come today. I don't want to bother you with one more thing, sir, but it's..." Vinny trailed off, scratching his head. He looked stressed, as well as frightened. Anna also looked stressed.

"What's going on, Vinny? You're both clearly stressed out. Did something happen?" I asked, now concerned.

"It's Anna's salon, sir. It's in Vito's area of the city. He's increased the taxes so much that we can't afford to pay them and still be able to pay her employees and everything that comes with running a business," Vinny said. He looked almost embarrassed about it.

I could feel Adrik's anger rising. I hadn't had a chance yet to tell him my trick that I figured out for controlling mine. It helped me to not feel like I was struggling against it. His anger level was rising quickly enough that I knew he was going to be struggling in exactly 2 seconds. I stood and walked behind his chair, placing my hand on his shoulder.

When I needed to control my anger, I thought about it like a living thing, almost. Smoke was the easiest thing to compare it to. I learned to visualize it first, then I learned I could control it that way. I could easily increase or decrease the amount of smoke, or anger, at will. I also knew if flames showed up, then people should generally run.

I tried thinking about Adrik's anger the same way I thought about mine. The acupuncturist said I could take his anger, so instead of risking scaring the hell out of poor Vinny and Anna, I tried to control his anger the same way I controlled mine. It took just a second after I put my hand on his shoulder, for him to feel calmer to me. He looked up at me, a clear look of surprise on his face for just a moment before he masked it and looked back to Vinny and Anna.

"Have Vito's guys hurt anybody? Did they damage your shop?" he asked. His anger level increased as he thought about these wonderful people being victimized by Vito's thugs. I felt it and tried to visualize containing it the same way I did mine. He took a breath, relaxing slightly.

"They smashed a few windows this past weekend. I gave them everything I had, but it still wasn't enough. Business has been down because crime is increasing in the area. The police can't keep up. It's not their fault, I know. People are becoming scared to go out for fear of getting mugged. Or worse," Anna said.

"I wouldn't let her open the shop after that happened, so we're losing more money, but I don't know what else to do. My sandwich shop is still doing well. This area of the city seems to be unaffected," Vinny said, scratching his head again.

"Do you know of other businesses around your shop that are in the same position as you, Anna?" I asked.

She nodded her head. "Almost all of them. They all had windows smashed over the weekend. They threatened worse next time if we didn't pay. The other businesses closed as well. The amount of money they're demanding is completely unreasonable. There's no way we can stay open and afford to pay what they're asking," Anna said.

Vinny cleared his throat. "Sir, the community members..." He looked unsure about whether he should continue.

"They're talking about revolting against Vito, aren't they?" I asked.

Vinny looked at me, his eyes wide. "You already know?"

Adrik said, "we're aware. This is happening in Sal's part of town already. We heard there was potential for Vito and Niko's areas. of the city, but haven't gotten confirmation about them yet." He sighed. He looked straight at Anna. "I'm sorry they vandalized your business. I'll pay for the repairs for all the businesses, but I want you to remain closed for the time-being. I know it's going to be hard and I apologize for that, but I need a little time to take care of this problem. I can assure you, however, that it will be taken care of."

"Vinny, do you know if the people in Vito's area are organizing?" I asked.

"Yes, they are. Because Anna's shop is in that part of town, they contacted both of us. They're talking about revolting against Vito, just like you said, Sephie," Vinny said.

"Do you know who's organizing it? Are there clearly a few people in charge?" I asked.

Vinny looked at Anna. They had a silent conversation about whether they should give us that bit of information. I could see the struggle on both of their faces. They were fighting against a boss in the underworld and now the King of the underworld was asking them for information about their uprising.

"Vinny, Anna, we want to help stop this. To stop Vito. We're on your side here. I know how difficult this must be for both of you. We'll get the information on who is in charge if you don't feel comfortable telling us. It'll just be a slower process. We just want to meet with them. We're trying to make sure there are minimal casualties in all of this. If a war between the bosses and the people breaks out, they'll capitalize on that chaos. You don't know what they're already planning and believe me, you don't want to. We want to work with the people to make sure you're all safe while this problem is addressed," I said.

Vinny still looked unsure, but Anna looked determined. "I can give you the names of the people in charge," she said.

"It would help even more if you can find out if they'd be willing to meet with us," I said. I had a thought. I looked at Adrik, asking for his phone. I texted Viktor, asking for Chen's number. I wrote it down on a piece of paper and handed it to Anna. "He's working for us. He's trying to help us set up a meeting with the people in Sal's part of the city. It'll be better if it comes from you that we're trying to help, rather than Ghost showing up and intimidating the hell out of everyone," I said, smiling. I had returned my hand to his shoulder after handing Chen's number to Anna. He simply placed his hand on top of mine, laughing softly. "I'll let him know what's happening and that you'll hopefully be getting in touch with him soon. He has a direct line here and can set up a meeting. Like I said, we want to help and we want to keep the people of the city safe."

They both looked at each other, then looked at me, then Adrik. "Thank you both. For everything," Vinny said.

"Thank you for coming to me, Vinny. Like Sephie said, we want to help. I'm trying to ensure this happens as quietly as possible, which is why it's taking so long. My apologies for that, but I'm trying to minimize casualties, to be frank," Adrik said.

Vinny stood up, Anna standing after him. "We're going to get in touch with the people organizing in Vito's area. We'll convince them to call this number, sir. You have my word," Vinny said, extending his hand to Adrik, who was also now standing. Anna moved to thank Adrik and shake his hand. As we walked from behind Adrik's desk, Vinny stopped, opening his arms for me.

"Sephie, my dear. You must come to the shop again. It's been too long. Business has gotten slow because people aren't guaranteed a beautiful woman when they come in," Vinny said, laughing.

"I promise I will come soon, Vinny. But you should be careful what you wish for. I'll make sure Anna is there at the same time and you'll be so busy you won't be able to see straight," I said. Anna rolled her eyes at her husband's comment, but smiled. sweetly at me.

"Thank you, Sephie. And please do come to the shop. If my shop is going to be closed, I'll probably help out there more. It'll be good to see you again," she said.

Adrik slid his arm around my waist. "We will visit soon, Vinny. She gets cranky if it's been too long since she's had one of your sandwiches," he said, making me laugh. He hugged my waist tighter, kissing my temple.

"Um, that's true. It's a thing," I said, still laughing. Vinny and Anna said their goodbyes and Stephen was at the office door to escort them back to the lobby.