

King of the Underworld by RJ Kane

Chapter 250

Chapter Two Hundred Fifty

Sephie

After falling asleep again for a short time, we finally managed to drag ourselves out of bed. I was happy to stay in bed for as long as possible today, but his meetings and my early Christmas present beckoned to us.

Adrik's schedule was quite full that afternoon, so while Viktor, Ivan, and Misha set about to ruin Giana's day, I stayed in the penthouse with Andrei while Stephen was in charge of Adrik's meetings.

"Why are you not in on the pickpocketing party, Bubba?" I asked him as I curled up next to him to keep myself warm. I was on my third cup of coffee of the day. It helped keep me warm as well, but I also needed help staying awake. Turns out having mind-blowing sex first thing in the morning completely zaps all my energy.

He stretched his giant arm around my shoulders so I could lean against his torso. Since my research confirmed he was, in fact, the warmest of all the guys, he took his heating pad duties very seriously. He would happily offer his body heat anytime I needed it when Adrik wasn't around. I think he was happy to have something that the other guys didn't have once again. Adrik was right. Andrei loved being the closest one to me in the beginning. He's been much happier since he was put on heater duty.

"I'm not good at it. I'm actually quite terrible at it, if I'm being honest," he said, seriously. I sat up, turning to look at him. He

was serious.

"I can't imagine you being terrible at anything, Bubba," I said, settling back against him once more.

"No, it's true. I am. I get nervous and it makes it obvious that I'm trying to steal something every single time. Pickpocketing is an art," he said.

"Why do you get nervous?"

"I don't know. I don't really like touching other people unless I have to."

I laughed, trying to move away from him. "You should've told me this earlier. I didn't know I've been torturing you."

He laughed, pulling me back against him. "Don't be stupid, spider monkey. You're different. If it's someone I know, it's fine. You've always been fine. I'm not like super weird about it. I just don't like touching strangers."

"Whew. Glad I made the cut," I said, giggling. "I know how you feel though. I'm not a fan of it either. It makes me secretly happy I'll never be able to get pregnant. Have you seen how many people just randomly touch a pregnant woman's stomach? It's disturbing. The body count would be so high..." I said, taking another drink of coffee. His whole body shook with his laughter, which shook mine too. I almost spilled my coffee.

"Sephie..."

"Uh oh. This is serious."

"Huh?"

"You used my name instead of calling me spider monkey. You guys only use my name when it's serious. I feel like I'm in trouble. Don't ever use my full name. I'll have a panic attack," I said, laughing.

"Spider Monkey Sephie," he said. I could hear the smile in voice. "I know that humor is the way you deal with your trauma and I appreciate it. But I want you to know that I've never met anyone that I admire as much as you. It actually used to be Ivan, but

you took the top spot."

"It used to be Ivan?" I asked, curious.

I felt him nod his head. "Ivan doesn't know this, but he was talking in his sleep one time after he got hurt. He didn't have to go to the hospital, but years ago, even just getting hurt and having to be bandaged would send him back to fight his past. He wasn't struggling, so the other guys didn't wake up, but I couldn't sleep, so I heard everything. It was just like when we were all on the plane and heard you struggling against your uncle and everything he beat into you. I don't know all the details, obviously, but I know Ivan's mom sent him away to some facility when he was a kid. And I know he was tortured there. But I also know it made him stronger because he got out. Just like it did for you. You're both survivors."

"Ivan told me his story when we were in Italy. You've got the basics of it. Why did you never tell him that you know?"

"Ivan's private. He's opened up more since you've been around. All of us have, really. But he was always so quiet before you. I wasn't sure if it would make him angry to know that I knew, so I kept it to myself. It's why his fighting at the hospital never bothered me. It would take all of us to hold him down. Viktor struggles with taking it personally. The other guys do too, just not as much. Adrik doesn't. I think he knows what happened to Ivan too. But I heard the pain in his voice that night when I heard him talking in his sleep. He's haunted by it, but he still shows up every single day. If that's not the definition of courage, I don't know what is." He sighed. "You're the same. You've been through so much and you still show up every single day, making sure everyone around you is happy, despite carrying the enormous pain of your past. I don't know how you do it, honestly, but I admire the hell out of both of you for it," he said, pulling me back against him and kissing the top of my head.

bba, you're gonna make me all weepy," I said, sniffing.

"I just wanted you to know, Sephie," he said, hugging me tighter to him. We heard the door to the penthouse open and close. I quickly wiped the stray tears from my eyes, looking to see who was coming in. It was Misha, Viktor, and Ivan. Misha and Ivan both had shiteating grins on their faces. "Oh, this is gonna be good," I said, unable to contain my excitement.

Viktor had a small kit with him that he set down on the coffee table. "What's that?" I asked, as I leaned forward to put my now empty coffee cup on the table.

"It's a drug test kit. It'll tell us for sure what she's on," Viktor said.

"Scientific," I said, leaning back against Andrei once more.

"And what about the guy? Does she give him anything other than money?" Andrei asked.

Ivan pulled a roll of money out of his pocket. It was rolled tight, so it would be easy to hand off. "Let's find out together," he said, smiling, as he started to unroll the money. As he did that, Misha handed the small vial of powder to Viktor, who had set up his experiment on the table.

"I feel like I'm in science class again," I said, waiting for the results. Viktor put a small amount of the powder into another container with liquid already in it. He swirled it around. "What's it supposed to do? Should I duck?" I was curious how this worked.

Viktor laughed. "No explosions. Andrei is the expert at that anyway, so you're safe. It changes color," he said as he held it up to the light. As he did, the once clear liquid turned a dark blue, almost purple color.

Does that mean it's a girl or a boy?" I asked, not able to contain my laughter. They all laughed.

"It means she's a coke addict, sestrichka," Viktor said, still laughing.

Ivan pulled a small sheet of paper from in between two of the hundred-dollar bills in the roll. He looked at it, but then handed

it to me. "It's in Italian, I think," he said. I glanced at the note, chewing on my bottom lip. I got up and went to the kitchen. I kept a small notepad in one of the drawers to write the grocery list on. I grabbed it and walked back to the couch.

The note didn't make sense at first glance. It was four sentences that didn't necessarily belong together. I translated them, exactly like they were written on the note.

Safe impossible, but all documents there

Walls clean in north, west, and south rooms

Fourth window from the east corner

Top of the stairs, third door on right

"Any guesses as to what she's talking about?" I asked, after reading them what the note said. Ivan picked up the notepad, studying the sentences for a moment.

"Safe impossible. Is she talking about Armando's safe at his house?" Misha asked.

"That's what I thought too. Nobody is getting in that thing without Armando's permission," I said. "Have you guys been to his house? Do you know what any of the rest of it could mean?"

"It's been a while since I was there. I think we should ask Keith about this," Viktor said.

Ivan, who was still deep in thought, looked to Viktor. "Does Armando have expensive artwork at his house?"

"He does at his house in Italy, that's for sure," I said, remembering being completely awestruck at some of the paintings he had on his wall.

"I think she's planning on robbing him," Ivan said, running his hand over his goatee.