

King of the Underworld by RJ Kane

Chapter 296

Chapter Two Hundred Ninety-Six

Adrik

“Before you fall asleep again, princess,” he said, grinning at her. She looked over what was on the screen, scanning the article. She got halfway through, then scrolled back up to the top. “This is the same journalist that wrote about Ricardo and called him a human trafficker. We should check to see if he’s even still alive. He seems to be right on the money about Lorenzo and Ricardo, which can’t be good for his life expectancy,” she said as she scrolled back through the article again. “The journalist is still trying to prove his theory about Ricardo, so he looked up information on Lorenzo and found his ties to the business, most notably to the other bosses in the city.” She scanned all the way to the bottom of the article, then leaned her head back to look at me and added, “no mention of your father or of you though.”

“Good. My father worked just as hard as I do to stay anonymous, at least when it came to press and business. If that journalist would’ve mentioned my father, I could’ve told you for certain that he was no longer alive,” I said.

Viktor got up and switched his computer with Ivan’s in Sephie’s lap. “This is the journalist, right?” he asked her.

“Oh. Sh*t. Yeah. He dead,” she said. “I’m finding there’s a theme of exploding buildings in this business, for various reasons.”

Ivan chuckled at her. “That doesn’t mean he’s dead then, princess. Even if they supposedly found his body. Fires and explosions are the easiest way to fake your own death.”

She looked at him for a moment. “I stand corrected. And also, I want to know how you know this and yet, I don’t.” She thought for a minute. “Can you find out if he’s really dead or not?”

“We likely could, but it’ll take time. At this point, we already know most of what he’s saying,” Viktor said.

“Unless he uncovered something bigger and that’s why he needed to disappear,” she said.

“Fair point,” Viktor said, taking his computer back. They spent the next few minutes on new searches. I went back to running my fingers through her hair and along her neck while we waited. I was fairly certain she would fall asleep before they found the next article for her to translate. The longer she was in my lap, the warmer she felt, and the more she relaxed. I shifted slightly and she didn’t move. I caught Andrei’s eye and pointed to her,

silently asking if she was asleep.

“Completely out,” he said quietly.

“I knew she was fighting it,” I said, laughing quietly.

“How’s her pain been since we got home?” Ivan asked.

“The shower was excruciating for her. Anytime her arm is out of the sling means horrible pain for her. She tries to hide it, like she’s done in the past, but apparently, that now makes it easier for me to feel it. I don’t know what changed, but I felt everything she felt in that shower, no matter how hard she tried to hide it and act like

she was fine,” I said. I was still somewhat frustrated with her trying to hide her pain from me and Ivan heard it in my voice.

“Don’t be mad at her for that. It’s a trauma response. She can’t help it. Until we came along, everyone in her life to that point, had let her down especially when she was at her weakest. When she did ask for help, it got her uterus taken from her. It’s going to take time for her to learn that she’s safe enough to ask for help. regularly,” he said. I thought for a moment, taking a deep breath in which made her move her good arm to find my hand under the blanket. She sighed quietly in her sleep, like she was agreeing with everything Ivan had just said. “See, she knows she can’t argue with me on that one either,” he said, laughing quietly. “The more you can feel that she needs help and give it to her without her asking, the more you’ll reinforce that she’s safe enough to do so on her own. I think your ability to feel her pain now is helping her heal that part of her that still doesn’t feel 100% safe. She says she feels safe with all of us, and that’s true, but there’s still that part of her deep inside that doesn’t when she’s hurt.”

“I think I should make Ivan a vampire too, so he can have enough time to heal the world,” Stephen said without looking up from his computer.

Sephie slept until lunchtime. The guys waited to get Vinny’s until it was closer to the time that the acupuncturist would be there, so Sephie could wake up and eat, then have her acupuncture soon after and didn’t have to try and stay awake again. Andrei also made sure that they ordered two sandwiches for Sephie. “She can eat it later, since she’s hungry every three hours right now,” he said.

I gently tried to wake her up as Misha ran downstairs to get the food. She started to stir and went to turn toward me, immediately regretting it. “SON OF A M*THERFUCKING W*ORE HOW DID I FORGET I COULDN’T DO THAT,” she yelled. At least she’s awake now.

I couldn’t help but laugh at her response, even though I knew it caused her pain. “I’ll make sure and hold you. down when I wake you up next time,” I said, kissing her temple. She just groaned quietly, holding her arm and ribs.

Andrei walked over to help her get up. “We got Vinny’s, spider monkey. And the acupuncturist will be here soon,” he said, holding out his hand to help her up. “I got you two sandwiches, too. Since your metabolism seems to be working overtime right now,” he said, grinning at her.

“Bubba,” she said, as she used his arm to help herself sit more upright, “I just need you to marry me already. Seriously. How long can a girl wait.” He looked at me, somewhat nervous at my reaction, but I found it funny. She tried not to laugh when she saw his face. He relaxed a little when he saw I was amused by it. He leaned down and picked her up off the couch, helping her stand up. She looked back at the blanket, saying, “I’m bringing that thing with me. That’s the first time I’ve been warm in like three days.” I stood up from the couch and wrapped the blanket around her. Misha had returned and was genuinely trying not to laugh at her walking. around like a child with her blanket on. “Oh, you can laugh. I don’t care. I’m warm,” she said, sticking her tongue out at him.

Since she was awake again, she worked on translating information that they’d found while she was sleeping. As she was reading one article, Viktor’s computer beeped. “Papa Bear, do you regularly get emails in Italian?” she asked.

“Uh, no. Never. Did I just get one?”

“Mmm hmm. Should I open it?”

“Sure. If it’s a virus, I’ll deal with it,” he said. She opened the email and read through it, her eyes getting wider the more she read.

“Holy sh*t, he not dead,” she said.

“Who? The journalist?” we all asked at once.

“I mean, unless it’s the ghost of the journalist, he just emailed you. He said he monitors the articles you’ve been looking up to see if anyone is looking into Ricardo and Lorenzo. He said he’s still been watching them and he has more information on them. He also said he’s in hiding and you’ll never find him if you try looking any harder,” she said.

“Well, that’s an unexpected development,” Ivan said.

“I want to know what else he knows about them,” she said. “Should I respond?”

“Tell him that we know what he knows already,” Ivan said. Sephie looked at him, somewhat confused. “But we don’t,” she said.

“He doesn’t know that and most of the time if you tell a journalist that you know more than they do about something, it p*sses them off and makes them prove they know more than you,” Ivan said.

Sephie started to type a response, with just her right hand. She glanced up to see us all watching her type with only one hand, clearly more amused than we should’ve been about it. “Don’t mind me. I’ll have this done by the end of the week,” she said as she continued pecking at the keys as quickly as she could. Just as she got the email finished, Ivan’s phone beeped to let him know the acupuncturist was in the lobby.

“I’ll be right back, princess,” he said, walking out of the penthouse.

Sephie continued to read through what Viktor had found while she’d been sleeping while she waited for Ivan to return. She glanced up at Viktor, “didn’t you say that Armando and Ricardo were related, albeit distantly?”

“That’s what the records I found showed, but I’m not sure that’s entirely accurate now,” he said.

“There has to be a reason that Armando chose to use the family name he did,” she said. Ivan walked back into. the penthouse with the acupuncturist. Viktor pulled his computer back toward him, saying, “I’ll see what I can find while you’re getting tuned up.” The acupuncturist looked at Sephie, then looked at Ivan, her eyes wide for just a moment. “I know. So many people wish they could look this good and they simply can’t,” Sephie said, sarcastically.

“See, I told you,” Ivan said to the acupuncturist, who was laughing at Sephie. She walked to the spare room that she usually worked on Sephie in, waiting for Sephie to slowly follow her. Ivan and I followed as well, to help her lie down more easily.

Once the door was closed, she looked to Ivan. “You need it, too.”

Sephie pointed at him, “told you.”