

King of the Underworld by RJ Kane

Chapter 228

Chapter Two Hundred Twenty-Eight

Adrik

Smith looked to Ivan, somewhat confused. Stephen moved the red dot to Smith's chest so he could see it. Ivan pointed to Smith's chest. "You got a little something there..."

Smith looked down, then immediately back up. He was speechless. I knew Stephen would keep his sight on him for the rest of the meeting, just to prove a point.

Gus laughed quietly. "You du mbass," he said, shaking his head. "Sir, we've been scouring the city trying to find where they're making the brawn. I'm sure you know it takes a specific setup to produce, so they can't produce it just anywhere. To get enough to replace the whole city's supply of regular drugs, they're going to need a massive operation. We've found two smaller operations. One in Vito's area of the city, one in Niko's. Neither of those are large enough, in my opinion, to produce enough to fully replace the supply, but they've been running non-stop since we found them. It's possible, I guess, if they've been working at this for a while."

"The one place we're having difficulty getting near is the docks. It's in Sal's area of the city and it's crawling with his men. My guess is they have a larger operation there, but we can't get close enough to confirm that," DJ said.

"You have the exact location of the smaller operations?" I asked.

"Yeah. We've got guys watching it all the time, since we don't know when they're going to try and replace the supply. We're not depending on Sal to give his dealers the heads up. If they start moving their supply, we want to know," Gus said.

"We're going to need the location of those two. The third is at the docks. We've confirmed that one. It is large enough to replace the whole city's supply. The other two are likely backups," I said. "How many dealers do you guys know for sure will help us?"

"There's a couple hundred in the city, at least. I've only talked to like 50, DJ talked to another like 40-50. Chen? How many have you talked to?" Gus asked.

"At least 40, maybe more. I did not realize there would be a test on that later, so I wasn't keeping track. But I've talked to at least 40, Chen said.

"That's most of the city's dealers. You're sure the ones that work for Sal, Niko, and Vito are with you and against selling brawn?" Ivan asked.

"Yeah, no question. Sal's dealers are actually the most angry about this. There's a couple that are happy at the thought of getting paid for a weekend of not selling, but most of them are pissed off that he would try to bring it back. It almost started a war between the dealers and Sal the last time. We might sell drugs, but we're not tryin' to kill nobody. We'll facilitate bad habits, but we have standards on what we sell. Most dealers know the really bad addicts and we purposely rip them off so they don't overdose. The dealers talk between each other in most areas of the city, too. We know who buys from who and I'm not selling to someone who's already bought from another dealer to keep them from overdosing. It's all about making money, but we're also not in the habit of killing our customers. Addicts are mostly misguided people, man," Gus said.

Smith scoffed. "Speak for yourself," he said, under his breath. We all looked to him, expecting an explanation. "Some of us don't have a choice to sell," he said.

"You work for Massimo, right?" Sephie asked. Smith nodded his head. "Does he have something he's holding over you to make you sell for him or does he just force you to sell?" she asked.

"The first. Other dealers that work for him are just forced to sell," Smith said.

"Does Massimo know anything about this plan? About the dealers revolting?" Ivan asked.

"Not that I know of. I haven't seen him in a few weeks, maybe longer. Word is he's in Colombia right now, but nobody knows why and nobody has heard from him since he's been down there." Smith said. Sephie glanced between me and Ivan. She then glanced at Gus to see if he knew anything. He looked like he might've known something, but we didn't know how much.

I sighed. I needed the dealers once this was all over. I needed them to want to work for me. The fastest route to loyalty was honesty. "Massimo and Dario are in Colombia trying to negotiate a new deal with Trino. They're trying to overthrow me, along with Sal and the other basses."

"Even Armando? I thought you two were close?" DJ asked, completely taken aback.

"No, Mando is good. He's the only boss that stayed loyal to me. The rest of them have their own agenda right now," I said.

DJ was thoughtful for a moment. "This makes everything make so much more sense," he said.

"What do you mean?" Sephie asked.

"The city, by and large, isn't happy right now. It's divided up, right? So, each part of the city has its own boss, except the area around Ghost's building. That's kind of no man's land, if you will, which is why I assume we're meeting here. This is no man's land, but we all consider it to be Ghost's territory. The people here and the people in Armando's area are happy. Like almost obliviously happy. They don't realize there's anything happening in the rest of the city. But in every other area of the city, the people are becoming increasingly unhappy. The people in Sal's area have it the worst right now. They're talking uprising against Sal and his people. They've already gone to the cops to ask for help, but Sal has most of the force on his payroll," DJ said. "It's only a matter of time before the other areas of the city follow suit with Sal's area, if you ask me."

"Why are Sal's people not happy with him? Because of his increase in business taxes?" I asked.

"That's most of it, but crime has increased in his area. Much of that crime is because of his people, too. The guys he has working for him are all thugs and mostly out of control. It doesn't take anything to set one of them off. The people who live in his area have been living in fear for a while now, but they're reaching their limit. They've started fighting back. A couple of his guys got shot a few weeks ago. It's caused a truce. For now. But tension is high in that part of town," DJ said.

"How do you know so much about Sal's part of town when you work for Armando, D[?]" Sephie asked.

"I have family in Sal's part of town. I grew up there. I have a big extended family, so they have a good idea what's going on in different areas of the city. We're everywhere, basically, and we really like to talk," DJ said, chuckling.

Sephie looked at me. I already knew what she was thinking. I said, in Russian, "I know. I think your idea of using the people is still a good one. We might not be able to do this as quietly as we thought. It appears the people are aware of more than we

originally thought. At least in other areas of the city."

"If nothing else, you can get word that we're taking care of their problem," Viktor said, still in Russian. "If you get rid of all the bosses but one, you're going to need the people to be loyal to you. We can't take on the entire city too. You take care of their problem, they continue to love you."

"It was a good option before, it's still a good option. I'd still like to do this as quietly as possible, but it's looking more and more like that might not be possible," I said.

We were quietly contemplating our options for a moment when Smith asked, "so, are you gonna take the laser sight off me or what?"

Just for emphasis, Stephen moved it to his chest once more. We watched as two more sights showed up beside Stephen's.

Sephie, without cracking a smile, said in Russian, "I can't even begin to tell you how much I love you right now, Yoden."

The great thing about the Russian language is that it's harsh. So, even when you were saying something funny or sentimental, to anyone that didn't speak the language, it still sounded quite severe. Smith was completely convinced that she had just threatened his life once again. He swallowed, hard, and kept his mouth shut. I simply raised my eyebrow at him, looking at him as sternly as I could.

"Tell us where the smaller brawn operations are," Viktor said. He opened a map and laid it out on the kitchen counter.

It was exactly the distraction needed to give me a moment alone with Sephie. I pulled her away from everyone to ask her thoughts on everyone. Truth be told, I also needed to touch her. She knew what I was wanting without me asking her. She stepped close to me, her hand finding mine once again. It was such a habit for me that I reached up and resumed my ongoing battle with the curls around her face as she quietly talked to me in Russian.

"I like DJ. A lot. He's very much like Chen. Gus, too. I'm not getting anything bad from those two. Smith, on the other hand, I don't get a good feeling from. I don't think he's necessarily trying to undermine anything, but he doesn't have good reasons to be here. The other two legitimately want to be here. He does not. I can't figure out why he is, but I don't trust him. However, I don't know how to get rid of him at this point either. If he's being forced to sell for Massimo, he could easily be forced to tell him everything about our plan. I don't like it, but I don't think him meeting the same fate as Chucky is necessarily fair, either. I don't think he has a choice in this matter," she said. I could see the concern on her face as she talked. She'd been weighing the options this whole time.

"There's a third option, spider monkey," Andrei said from across the room. He looked like he was speaking to Misha, who was standing next to him. No one had figured out we could all hear each other yet and we liked to keep it that way.

Misha responded, "we just lock him up until this is over. You're right, he may not have a choice in the matter, but he definitely doesn't want to be here. Locking him up is a good solution. He gets to live and we don't have to worry about him betraying us. He goes free once this is over."

"And Massimo is taken care of, so he'll be free of whatever he's got over him," Sephie said. "You're giving this the official approval, my adorable Russian guardian?"

"Da. Officially," Misha said.

She looked to me. She still had a question on her face. Stephen chimed in. "We'll have a team grab him after the meeting. Seph." She looked surprised, not sure how he knew what she was thinking. "What? You're standing right by the window. It was obvious," he said, laughing. "And that's also a question I've had to ask before. I mean, it seems obvious now, but it was not obvious the first time it happened to me either."

Her gorgeous smile spread across her face as she glanced out the window, making the room just a little brighter.