

King of the Underworld by RJ Kane

Chapter 68

Chapter Sixty-Eight

Sephie

I had gone with Ivan the day before the ball to pick up my dress. I needed to try it on one more time, just to make sure all the alterations were good. Ivan was even more comical in the dress shop than Viktor was. Ivan was so serious all the time, he looked like he was mad at all the dresses. I asked him if he wanted to see the dress before we got there. He said he did, so I swore him to secrecy.

"You can see it, but Adrik doesn't know what it looks like, so you're not allowed to tell him. I want it to be a surprise. I'll hurt you if you tell him," I said, as threatening as I could.

"I saw what you can do. I won't say a word to him," he said, his hands up in surrender, a small smile on his face.

When I came out of the fitting room, he was speechless. He just stood and looked at me for a moment. "Princess..."

"You think he'll like it?" I asked, showing him the 360 view.

"He will love it. You look like a princess."

I laughed. "Do princesses wear black?"

"Maybe not. But Queens of the Underworld do."

I raised an eyebrow at him, then smiled widely at him.

We dropped the dress off at Ms. Jackson's apartment. She was going to help me get ready, as I really had no girlfriends and I had no clue about makeup or how to put my hair up into anything other than a bun, a braid, or a ponytail. Ms. Jackson said she knew exactly what to do, which was 100% more than I knew, so I trusted her.

When we walked into her apartment, Ivan surprised us both by asking her, "when's your next Bingo night, Ms. Jackson?"

She laughed. "Are you offering to be my date?"

"Yes, ma'am. Anytime you want one, you have a standing date."

I hung my dress up on the door frame of her spare room, my mouth open in shock.

She cut her eyes to me and just smiled. She walked to him and put her arm through his. "You guys get through the ball and we'll talk," she winked at him.

As we were leaving her apartment, Mr. Turner was walking down the hall toward his door.

"Miss Sephie, Mr. Ivan, how are you both today?"

"Great, Mr. Turner, how are you? How was work?"

"Oh, it was fine. Fine. They're getting ready for tomorrow night. You're all going to be there, right? It is a special night for your boss, after all."

"Yes, Mr. Turner. We'll all be there," Ivan said.

"Good, good. You know there's supposed to be a lot of people attending. I feel better knowing you'll all be there," he said as he looked from Ivan to me and back to Ivan. Ivan nodded his head and put his arm around my shoulders.

"Don't worry, Mr. Turner. She's going to be safe. We can't live without her anyway. We've got everything covered," he said, a small smile on his lips.

"That's what I like to hear, young man," Mr. Turner said as he tipped his hat to us, continuing to his apartment.

Ivan left his arm around my shoulders and walked us to the elevator. I wrapped my arm around his waist when we stepped into the elevator. "Ivan the Squishy," I said, leaning my head against his shoulder.

I had more acupuncture the morning of the ball, per Adrik's request. He said he wanted to make sure I would be okay and able to handle the evening's event. Since it made me feel so much better, I wasn't going to argue with him. I skipped breakfast and only ate a few bites here and there at lunch. I was paranoid about fitting into the dress, since it had been taken in.

I went to Ms. Jackson's apartment in the afternoon. Misha escorted me down. Once I was in the apartment, he left me with Ms. Jackson. He said one of them would be back to get me, but they needed to get ready to go as well. I had to admit, I was looking forward to seeing them all in tuxedos.

Ms. Jackson went to work on my hair. She had looked at my dress and said I needed to wear my hair up. I did not argue with her. It took her a while to get my mass of hair contained. She was much more skilled than I was and once she was done, she had braided a few small strands at the front of my head and worked those into an intricate updo in the back. She left a few stray curls around my face, as she said it was somewhat my signature and I didn't look right without them.

Once my hair was done, she got to work on my makeup. She knew I hated wearing makeup, so she kept it very light. She made me look like a classic movie star. "Makeup is meant to accentuate what you've got, not make you look like a completely different person," she said as she worked on my face like she was a makeup artist in a former life.

"How did you learn how to do all this?" I asked, my eyes closed as she applied God knows what to my eyelids.

"When I was a spy, my cover was as an American movie star. I had to be glamorous all the time, so I learned to do my own hair and makeup to play the part. Once you learn a few tricks, it becomes quite easy."

"Ms. Jackson, you've lived such an interesting life. How did I never know this about you?"

"Well, child, I don't really broadcast that I used to be a spy to many people. There are probably still Russians out there that are still looking for me. I barely made it out of there alive, but that's a story for another time."

"I would love to hear it. When you get back from Bingo," I said smiling at her. "Have you decided which one you're taking to Bingo first? Are you going big and walking in with like three of them at once, like you're the boss, applesauce?"

She put her hand over her mouth as she laughed at the thought. Her cheeks flushed. "I hadn't thought about that option, but now that you mention it, I might as well go big or go home."

"Be fierce, Ms. Jackson. You own that fucking Bingo Hall."

She continued laughing as she finished my makeup. She took a step back, to admire her work. "Okay, child. Take a look and tell me what you think," she said holding up a mirror.

I checked myself out in the mirror. "Ms. Jackson! You're a miracle worker! I look like a girl! Like a real girl!" I was grinning from ear to ear as I looked at my reflection. It still looked like me, just enhanced. "It's so perfect!"

She smiled at me, crossing her arms across her chest. "Let's get you in your dress so I can see the whole picture."

She helped me into the dress. I was so nervous she wasn't going to be able to zip it up, but it fit perfectly. I exhaled, relieved that no additional help was needed to get me into the dress. She handed me my shoes and stepped back to take in the full picture.

As I slipped into my shoes, I turned to look at her. She was leaning against the chair I had been sitting in. I could see the tears welling up in her eyes as she looked at me, almost like a mother would look at a daughter.

"Persephone, I am so proud of you. You are one hell of a woman and you're living up to your namesake."

I felt the tears collecting in my eyes. "Oh, Ms. Jackson. I'm going to ruin all your hard work." I quickly dabbed the tears from my eyes so it wouldn't mess anything up. I walked to her, bending down, and hugging her tightly. "Thank you. For everything. I love you, Ms. Jackson."

"Oh, child. You deserve it all. And more."

We heard a knock at her door. I stood up, still dabbing my eyes. "That'll be one of the guys to take me upstairs."

She took both of my hands in hers and looked me in the eyes. "I know you're going to be nervous tonight; anybody would be. But I want you to remember who you're named for and walk in like you own the damn place. Queens don't bow to anyone but their King. Remember that."