

King of the Underworld by RJ Kane

Chapter 77

Chapter Seventy-Seven

Ivan

We all retired to our rooms for the night. I laid on the bed, trying to sleep. I was physically and mentally exhausted, but there was going to be no sleep in my immediate future. My mind kept replaying the look on Sephie's face in the ballroom as she saw Boss going down. She looked to us for help and we had to run right past her. I glanced over my shoulder as Armando's man grabbed her. I'll never be able to forget her face when she felt him grab her.

Fear. She was legitimately scared for her life, but I think she was more scared for Adrik. I've seen that look before. When the one you love more than life itself is dying in front of you. That's a look I wish to never see again.

When we were on the plane, Sephie had finally passed out from stress, but her mind was replaying the night's events too. We'd never heard her talk in her sleep. She's fallen asleep around all of us at least once and never once had she talked in her sleep. Adrik thought she was awake at first.

She would desperately call for him, but then she would desperately call for me. She knew I was the closest one to her before everything happened. She trusted that I would save her and I ignored her. I could hear her voice calling to him, then me, over and over again while we were on the plane. It felt like it went on for hours. My heart broke & little more each time.

Now I was stuck replaying those scenes. Thinking about how I had let her down. The one woman I had let get close to me again. I knew she and Adrik belonged together, but I couldn't help but love her too. We all did.

After a few hours of staring at the ceiling, I got up to get a glass of water from the kitchen. I stood against the counter,

now staring at the floor, my mind still on the loop of everything that had happened. I knew we had fucked up bad when she wouldn't look at me on the plane. I was the first one to see her. She was so scared that she couldn't see past it. She didn't trust her own brain to recognize me. Or Adrik. We fucked up bad.

I refilled my glass, sighing. I heard footsteps approaching the kitchen. Misha. He looked at me, "you can't sleep either, huh?"

I shook my head no. "I can't stop seeing her, first in the ballroom, then when she was curled up in the seat on the plane when we first got to her, and I can't stop hearing her calling for Adrik and me while she was out."

Misha nodded. "Not gonna lie, I did get some enjoyment out of replaying her decking you," he said, his hand on my shoulder. I knew he was just trying to make me laugh, but I deserved the hit. I deserved so much more than what she did.

He grabbed a glass and filled it. We stood in silence until more footsteps could be heard coming toward us. Viktor. "At least I'm not the only one," he said.

"Yeah, man. I gave up. It's not going to happen," Misha said.

No sooner had Viktor filled his glass with water than Andrei came into the kitchen. That dude probably got it the worst out of all of us. Hits to your junk are one of the worst spots possible. Stephen walked in shortly after Andrei. We all stood in silence for a few moments. Misha broke the silence. "Well, now that we're all here, how are we going to fix this?"

I was proud of that kid. I had no idea how she was doing it but being around Sephie had made that kid step into his own. He was the youngest of all of us, only barely older than Sephie. He had always been good at his job, but he lacked confidence. Sephie managed to somehow get that kid to believe in himself. Even after the attack on the sidewalk. I was worried he was going to take a few steps back in his progress. It was a blow to his ego, really. She pulled him aside one night and read him the riot act in her subtle way and he turned it around after. None of us knew what she said to him, but she was the only one that could've saved him from himself in that situation.

I was surprised at how well he was handling this situation. He told her the truth on the plane. He had argued with us for hours about telling her the plan. He told us he had a bad feeling it would go bad if we didn't. Turns out the kid was right. We were so worried about making it look authentic that we didn't stop to consider what it would do to her. Misha was the only one that thought about that, but four against one meant that he was now paying for our poor decision just like the rest of us.

Andrei sighed. "We can't leave today. There's no way we can move her when she's like this. I don't know how long it's going to take or what it's going to take to make her better, but she can't leave like this."

Everyone agreed. "So, we stay here a couple of days. Shouldn't alter the plan too much, honestly. We still have eyes on Anthony and Lorenzo. We'll know what they're planning. I would prefer to be closer, but we can make this work," I said.

"What about Adrik? He wants vengeance for Sephie. He wants Anthony dead. Will he be willing to push pause for a day or two? I know Sephie means more to him than anything, but his taste for blood is unparalleled when it comes to those that wrong him.

I've never seen him give that up," Viktor asked. Viktor had been with Adrik the longest out of all of us. Before I showed up, even. Adrik was very much like his father when he first took over the business. He would personally take care of people that had wronged him. He had as much blood on his hands as the rest of us.

Stephen spoke. "We don't give him a choice. There are things in life that are more important than vengeance." He paused, adding, "if he's hell bent on getting revenge, then he can send a few of us to take care of Anthony and Lorenzo. Without him."

I considered the options for a moment. I rubbed my face with my hand. My nose still didn't feel right. She had almost broken my nose. If she had been able to eat and train for the three weeks before, she would have, but she had lost some of her strength. I did have a black eye from it though, so she still landed a solid hit. "I don't think it will be that difficult to talk him into staying an extra day or two. Not if she's not feeling better when she wakes up this time."

We stayed in the kitchen talking about variations to the plan until the sun came up. In the original plan, we were supposed to be leaving shortly. We heard nothing from Adrik's room. We weren't sure if he had overslept or if something was wrong. We had ditched our phones before getting on the plane. We had burner phones in our bags, but we hadn't turned them on yet.

I went to his door and knocked quietly. I heard him softly tell me to come in. He was on the bed, in his underwear, on top of the covers, with Sephie laying across his chest, sound asleep. She was just in her t-shirt, giving me a full look at the wounds on her legs. It was bad. He put his finger up to his lips, but motioned me to come in.

I walked next to the bed, as quietly as possible. The other guys were outside in the hallway, looking in through the open door. I saw the slight relief come to all our faces when we saw she was sleeping peacefully on him.

He whispered, "I can't move. Anytime I try to leave, she starts crying out for me in her sleep again, then she'll call for you. Stuck in that loop that she was in on the plane. I come back and put her on my chest, and she sleeps peacefully again." He pointed to her fingers, lightly moving on his chest in a rhythmic pattern. "This is how I know she's in a

happy place. She plays the piano." I couldn't help but smile. Seeing her happy made me suddenly happy.

He looked down at her, lightly running his hands through her hair. She snuggled into him more, making a quiet whimper noise. He looked back at me pain evident in his eyes. "She wants nothing to do with me when she's awake, but she won't let me go when she's asleep."

I sighed. "She will come around. Her subconscious is still clearly attached to you. She just needs time to process everything. It will take her time to forgive all of us." I paused, not really wanting to talk business now. "Boss, we can't leave with her like this. She needs time. We all discussed it this morning. We don't think we should leave with her. Either we stay here for a day or two more and give her a chance to recover, or you stay here with her, and we go on with the original plan."

He was quiet for a moment, thoughtfully running his hands through her long curls. "We'll stay. Nothing matters more than her. I won't ever risk losing her for anything again. They can take my empire. I don't want it if I can't have her."

I stood, placing my hand on his shoulder. I turned and walked back to the expectant looks on the guys in the hall. I closed the door quietly behind me, motioning for everyone to move from the door so we could give her quiet to sleep. We walked back to the kitchen.

"He agrees," I said. "He said he won't risk losing her again for anything and I agree. His empire is replaceable. She is not."

There was a collective exhale. We were all happy to stay a little longer. If she couldn't go with us, none of us wanted to leave.