

King of the Underworld by RJ Kane

Chapter 221

Chapter Two Hundred Twenty-One

Misha

“Can we take the long route today?” I asked Sephie as we were stretching for our run the following morning.

She looked at me, a serious look on her face. “Misha, is something wrong? You’re volunteering to torture yourself now? Is there something I need to know?”

I chuckled, then shrugged my shoulders. “It’s been a while since we’ve been able to go for a run. I didn’t realize how much I’ve grown to enjoy it.”

She slid her arm around my waist. I was so much taller than she was that her head fit right in my armpit. I would usually try to get her to sniff my armpit whenever I could to annoy her, but this time I surprised her by wrapping my arms around her and picking her up. It always made her laugh and I really needed to hear her laugh right now,

When I set her down, she was still laughing. “We can go for as long of a run as you like, my adorable Russian guardian. But we should maybe tell someone that you’re going to need two lunches instead of one.”

“Maybe three,” I said, contemplating how far it was around the entire lake.

We didn’t usually talk when we ran until the end when we were walking back to the house to catch our breath. It was actually one of the things I liked about running with Sephie. By myself, I would always listen to music because I didn’t like the quiet. But with her, it was completely different. We were quiet, but it wasn’t the same quiet. It wasn’t a lonely quiet. I found myself thinking through lots of things when I would run with her where I couldn’t when I ran by myself. It didn’t make sense, really, but I felt like she was a calming force anytime she was around.

I managed to keep up with her the entire time, which was a huge confidence boost for me. I had struggled to make it the entire way the last time we took the long route, but this time felt easier. Maybe it was because I was missing it more.

As we neared our stopping point for the walk back to the house, Sephie looked at me, grinning. Her smile was infectious.

“Misha, I’m so happy that you suggested we come to the house. And I’m even happier you wanted to take the long route this morning. I didn’t realize how much I needed this,” she said as she turned toward me with her arms open for a hug. Seeing the smile on her face made me so happy. I bent down and picked her up into a bear hug, making her laugh again.

“It makes me happy to see you happy, gazelle. This week has been rough for you. I’m really glad I could give you at least a little bright spot,” I said, spinning her around. I loved hearing her laugh.

As I set her down, she said, “it’s been a rough week for everyone, not just me. I clearly saw the pain on your face after I fell asleep in the office and started talking in my sleep. Misha, I never meant to put that on you, or any of the other guys.” Her smile faded and she looked at me seriously as we walked back to the house.

I was trying to find the right words to say to her, I knew she didn’t like to open up. I understood. Her story was not a happy one. “Sephie…” I started to speak, but she cut her eyes over to me.

“Uh oh, it’s serious. You used my name Instead of culling me gazelle,” she said smiling.

I cleared my throat, looking at her as seriously as I could manage, which arguably wasn’t that serious, “Sephie,” I said, trying not to smile. I put my hand on her shoulder to stop her. I wanted to get this out before we got back to the house. I wanted to capitalize on my alone time with her. She looked at me, surprised, but she stopped and turned to face me. I continued, “Sephie, I look up to you. Maybe more than I’ve ever looked up to anyone in my life. You might be younger than me, but you’re leaps

you keep us all laughing, you catch on to things so quickly, and you bring the brightest light into my life. Now that I know what you’ve been through and that you’re still, well, you? It makes me want to work harder to be worthy of your friendship. To be even half the person you are. I look at you and Boss and I’ve never seen anything like what you two have, but I know I want my owry version of it. You do so much for all of us. I just want to be able to give back and be able to be the same for you that you

are for me”

I could see the tears welling up in her eyes as I talked. I felt my own tears threatening to fall, but I needed to say this. I needed her to know how much she meant to not just me, but to all of us. Guaranteed, every single one of the guys had thought about having this conversation with her, if they hadn’t had it already. Now that I’d started to tell her what I’d been thinking about, I wasn’t sure I could stop it. “It’s hard for us to hear about what happened to you in your past, not because we can’t handle it, per se. Although I must admit that I’ve wondered if I could’ve survived everything you have and still been able to see the humor in the world. I can’t imagine what it was like to go through everything you’ve been through, but it hurts knowing you had to endure it. Simply because you mean so much to me, to all of us, and we want nothing but the best for you, always. Hearing that you’ve had to go through what you have is frustrating, like Andrei said, but only because we know there’s nothing we can do to take that pain away from you. What I can do, however, is always be here when you need someone to talk to. Or not talk to. Or to take the long route with. Whatever you need, Sephie. Whenever you need it. I’ll be here. So will the other guys. I love you and want to always see you happy, if only because of the joy you bring to my life when you are happy. I know the other guys feel the same way, if they haven’t already told you,”

She had a few tears falling down her face as she listened to me. For once, she looked like she didn’t know what to say. She just smiled and wrapped her arms around me, resting her head on my chest. She took a deep breath, but didn’t let go, so I kept my arms around her. “Misha, you only ever have to worry about being you. Each of you has a special role to play in my life, just as I have a special role to play in yours. You bring your own uniqueness to my life and I couldn’t imagine my life without that now. It seems silly to say. I haven’t even known you for a year yet, but I can’t imagine my life without you and the other guys in it. You guys always say I’ve brought so much to your lives, but I can say the same for you. You’ve all brought so much to my life. I can’t even begin to tell you what it means to me to always feel safe with all of you. That right there is worth more than anything to me. But you’re so much more than that. You love the fuckery as much as I do and quite frankly that’s my favorite thing about you. Your Intuition is quickly becoming unparalleled, too. I saw your faraway look right before you ordered Adrik to. come to the house,” she said as she looked up at me, grinning. “It’s starting to work on positive outcomes too, isn’t it?”

I just shook my head. “Of course you would notice.” I grinned down at her. She kept one arm around my waist and I kept one arm around her shoulders as we started walking toward the house again. “It hasn’t happened as much, but I get different feelings when it’s a positive outcome. It’s helpful, really. It makes it clear so I can tell the difference.”

“So, negative outcomes are still like a feeling of dread or nausea?” she asked. I nodded my head. “What are positive outcomes then?”

“So far, it’s been goosebumps over my arms and upper body,” I said.

She stopped. She looked lost in thought for a moment before she looked up at me. “That’s a powerful sign, Misha. My mom used to tell me that was the way to know a universal truth. Did you get goosebumps when you thought about us coming to the house yesterday?”

“Yep.”

“Were you just thinking about coming to the house or was there something more specific?”

I thought for a moment. “I was thinking about how you’ve been looking like you did after the attack on us, just without the concussion. And then how you looked after the ball, just without the hole in your hip. I thought about how coming here and being able to go to the lake always seems to recharge you somehow. Then I thought I should suggest we come to the house and that’s when it happened.”

She giggled. “That’s why you were so frank about coming here. You never give orders, but you sure as hell it gave Adrik an order.