

King of the Underworld by RJ Kane

Chapter 239

Chapter Two Hundred Thirty-Nine

Sephie

Andrei, Misha, and I were still laughing at each other when we walked up to Ms. Jackson's door. I half-expected her to hear us coming down the hallway, but I still had to knock. She opened the door, just as excited as always that I'd brought eye candy for her.

"Oh my, you brought me two today. You really do love me, child," she said as I hugged her. She stepped back to let us into her apartment. That's when I noticed Giana sitting at her kitchen table. One glance at Ms. Jackson told me that Giana had put her up to this. Misha cursed under his breath beside me. This should be fun.

I felt both Misha and Andrei put their hands on the small of my back, like they were ready for Giana to attack me. I could barely keep from laughing at that thought. I knew they were just being protective. They really were quite good at their jobs. They looked down at me, both had questioning looks on their faces. "We don't have to stay, gazelle," Misha said in Russian.

Ms. Jackson looked at Misha, answering in Russian, "at least give her a chance. She's trying to make things right, at least give her a chance to do so." She crossed her arms across her chest and gave him a stern look that dared him to argue with her.

He cursed under his breath, but didn't argue. I did notice that both Andrei and Misha stayed closer to me than they normally would have in Ms. Jackson's apartment. I smiled to myself knowing they felt so protective of me in such a minor situation. We walked further into her apartment. Both guys stepped in front of me, partially shielding me from Giana. I wasn't quite sure if they thought she was going to come at me or if they were worried I was going to have a go at her. It could go either way, really.

We walked to the kitchen table, but I didn't make a move to sit. I was happy to hear her out, but I also wasn't going to go out of my way to be nice to her. I'd already tried that route and it got me here. Giana looked up at both Andrei and Misha. I couldn't see their faces, but I was sure it was obvious they were angry. Giana asked, "do they both need to be here?"

I laughed. "You've been around long enough, Giana. You know I don't go anywhere without them," I said, flatly.

She took a deep breath, then surprised me by speaking Italian so they couldn't understand. Ms. Jackson, who didn't know I could understand Italian, looked to me then back at Giana then back to me. Misha had to tell her quietly that I could understand Italian.

"Sephie, I do want to apologize to you. I unfairly judged you. You had so much knowledge about that drug and what it does to the people who take it that I thought you were an addict. You don't understand. In my family, addicts are the scum of the earth. I automatically assumed you were one and thought the worst of you instead of finding out the truth," she said,

I answered her in English. I wasn't going to make this easy on her. "Are you asking me for the truth now? Or are you just sorry that you got caught judging me unfairly?" I could feel my anger starting to rise. Her apology was weak and she was still not taking ownership of her actions. "Or are you sorry that having Armando, then Keith, and now Ms. Jackson try to apologize for you isn't working in your favor?"

"I want to know the truth," she said quietly, in Italian.

"You better be sure about that, because the truth won't make you feel any better about this situation," I said. The guys both recognized the edge to my voice and tensed. Giana didn't say anything, she just nodded her head.

"The truth is that I was forced to live with my uncle after my mom died suddenly. He was the addict, not me. I learned about the effects of that drug to survive his repeated beatings. I learned how to wait it out long enough that the drug would make him pass out so I could lock myself in my room, hoping desperately that I would survive the night. I know all about the signs to look for when someone is on that drug because it literally meant life and death for me. I learned how to avoid him until he natted zoo hot it didn't sluve work and he would estch me when I cama hama dalharina s fresh bustina – It'e alen the raston T

don't show my body to just anyone. My back is covered in scars because of the effects of that drug. Yet, you assume it's because I was the addict and instead of owning your mistake, you pretend you're the victim in this situation, blaming your family for your false judgment. You assume that I'm prudish or ultra religious because I don't want people to see my scars so they can judge me unfairly the same way you have. You see, I've dealt with people like you since I was a teenager. Those who find out the truth still find ways to look at me differently, but it's not because of me. This isn't on me, Giana. This is all on you and why you feel the need to try and tear me down to make yourself feel better, because that's exactly what you're doing. You just haven't realized that there's nothing bad you can say to me that hasn't already been said. You're allowed to think whatever you need to about me to make yourself feel better, but do not, under any circumstances, expect me to continue to be nice or friendly toward you until you can own your actions and apologize like a fucking adult, without the help of anyone else."

Her eyes were wide as I talked. Misha had quietly reached down and grabbed my hand as I was talking. He knew I was angry, but he also knew I never wanted to have this conversation in the first place. Giana was too stunned to talk when I finished. Andrei looked at her, saying, "that's not even half of what she's been through in her life. She's survived things that I'm not sure I could've survived. She's also been nothing but nice to you since you've been here. She's the reason you and Mando are together now and this is how you choose to think of her? I hope you feel bad about this, Giana, I really, truly do. Because while Sephie is too nice to tell you how much you've hurt her over this, I don't give a fuck. You hurt her again and I can promise you, we won't be able to hold back next time."

There was an urgent knock at Ms. Jackson's door that interrupted our conversation. Misha and Andrei looked at each other, surprised. Andrei moved to the door, while Misha put himself between the door and me. Andrei looked through the peephole, then back to us, a small smile on his face. He opened the door to reveal a worried Adrik at the door. He walked into the apartment immediately, searching for me. Misha had stepped aside once Andrei started to open the door, so Adrik found me almost immediately. He was by my side in seconds.

I couldn't help the smile that crept across my face. "You felt me get angry, didn't you?" I asked, in Russian. He nodded, pulling me to him. He looked at Giana at the table, a new look of worry on her face since he arrived. He looked back to me, saying, "well, at least I know why you were angry now. I did not expect her to be here."

"We didn't either," Misha said. I could still hear the anger in his voice too.

Adrik glanced at both of them, then to Ms. Jackson who was also stunned at what she'd just witnessed. He looked back at me, then finally to Giana. "We're done here," he said in English as he pulled me with him toward the door. Andrei, who was still standing close to the door, opened it for us, following behind us and Misha.

As the elevator doors closed, Adrik said, "close your eyes, Andrei." His lips crashed into mine as he pressed me against the wall of the elevator. We could hear both of them laughing at us, but I didn't care. This time, I didn't realize how angry I was until he kissed me and I felt it subside. The doors dinged, signaling our arrival to his office floor. He broke the kiss, catching his breath. Andrei and Misha both stepped off the elevator to give us a moment.

"Shit," I said. He looked at me, a curious look on his face. "I didn't know I was that angry until you kissed me," I said, quietly.

He grinned at me. "Your control is impressive, solnishka. It also explains why your eyes are now normal again," he said, kissing my forehead. "Come, you can keep me company while we wait for my 11 o'clock meeting that, luckily, was late today." He grabbed my hand, pulling me toward his office.

"They weren't normal when you got to me?" I asked as we walked to his office.

He shook his head no. "I want to ask Andrei and Misha if they noticed it." We walked into his empty office. He stuck his head outside the door, calling for Andrei and Misha. They both walked in and took a seat. "Did either of you notice anything different about Sephie's eyes when she was down there?"

Andrei said, "Net, I was staring down Glana the whole time, to be honest. I was standing close enough to Sephie that I could feel her, so I didn't need to look at her."

Adrik nodded once, then looked to Misha. "I glanced at her when she was listening to Giana's initial apology. They looked darker, but I thought it was just because of the lighting in Ms. Jackson's kitchen. I knew she was angry though, so I grabbed her hand to try and help calm her down while she told Giana more than she ever wanted to."

I could feel myself getting upset and I heard the elevator ding, likely bringing Adrik's meeting with it. "Let's talk about this, later." They all looked at me with concern on their faces. "Please?" I said, smiling to try and let them know I was okay.