

King of the Underworld by RJ Kane

Chapter 272

Chapter Two Hundred Seventy-Two

Stephen

We were in the penthouse going over the plan one last time before we left the building. Our nerves were on edge, but Sephie's more so than the rest of us. We were trying to reassure her as much as we could, but I knew that adrenaline was going to prove useful once the chaos started. She could shoot better than a majority of the guards we had on staff. She was hell in the ring. She also had six attack dogs ready to rip anyone apart that dared to look at her the wrong way.

I found myself thinking about just how much she'd come to mean to me lately. I'd never been close to anyone my entire life. I didn't have many friends growing up. I was always the quiet kid. That carried over into my adult life. When I figured out I was gay, I retreated even further into my shell. It took me years to tell my parents. There were members of my family that still didn't know. It was much more accepted now, but my family was very traditional. It was just easier to come up with reasons. Why I wasn't married with kids yet than it was to have the conversation with them about the truth.

I had resigned myself to keeping that secret from the other guys forever. They were all alpha males. I expected them to have a huge problem with it. I was worried they would see me as weak. My perspective changed when Sephie came along. She was always unapologetically herself and the other guys loved her more because of it. It took me a long time to warm up to her, simply because I was worried she would figure out my secret and tell the others. But the more I tried to put distance between me and Sephie, the more she found ways to show me that being myself was the best way to be. In her own special way, she coaxed me out of my own darkness that I'd put myself in.

As it turns out, she did figure out my secret before the other guys, but she didn't tell anyone. She even swore Adrik to secrecy when she told him. She let me tell them in my own time. And they accepted me even more than they already did once I told them. Secrets kept in the dark can destroy you, but secrets brought to the light have no power over you anymore.

We were gearing up, almost ready to leave. I saw Viktor catch Sephie alone. It looked like he was giving her a pep talk. He'd been worried about bringing her with us, as he ultimately felt responsible for all of us, all the time. But he didn't like the idea of leaving her behind, either. I was sure she was going to be an asset, so I was happy she was coming along. Andrei was right, we'd all be worried about her if she wasn't with us.

We knew our individual roles. Sephie was to stick with Ivan or Adrik if something was to happen to Ivan. The rest of us would step in, when and if needed. Misha was certain that it was going to work out for the best. Our plan was solid. Oscar had provided valuable information on how to make the original plan even better, so we were expecting things to go smoothly.

We walked off the elevator toward the vehicles. We were taking a combination of SUVs and bikes, just in case we needed options. It would also be more difficult to separate us if we had more vehicles. The dealers that were helping us were going to meet us at Sephie's old apartment. Chen had come to the building, with instructions on how to get to the parking garage underneath the building without anyone seeing him. He was taking another SUV, just to add more vehicles to the party. He was waiting on us when we exited the elevator.

"Who's ready to have New Year's celebrations early?" he asked as we got closer to him. He had a good sense of humor, and like Sephie, tended to make jokes when he was nervous. We were all in mission mode, however. His face fell when nobody laughed. "Right. Jokes later," he said, clearing his throat.

Viktor had brought a few guys from the building security team on as well. They were all guys that had been working for us for years. We'd used them before for various things. They knew how to handle themselves and we could trust them. We knew that the two smaller warehouses should be easy to get to, but the warehouse at the docks was covered with armed guards. Even with all the extra people, we were going to be outnumbered.

I had scouted the warehouse at the docks and found a suitable nest where I could even the playing field as much as possible. They wouldn't see us coming, hopefully.

The dealers were waiting at Sephie's old apartment when we got there. The security detail guys had already gone ahead to the two smaller warehouses to get eyes on them. We grabbed the dealers and went to the first warehouse. Conversation was minimal. Our guys had earpieces, like usual, but the dealers didn't.

We pulled up a few blocks from the first warehouse. This was the smallest of the warehouses. They were running the operation 24/7, but there weren't that many people in the warehouse. Only enough to make the brawn along with a handful of guards and that was it. Our plan was to get the explosives attached to the building in strategic spots and get out without being seen. Because this one was an easier job, only a few guys were needed to get everything in place. Andrei and Oscar went with two other guys. The rest of us waited as backup if needed.

Before they left, Sephie had to hug Andrei. She was trying to be tough, but she couldn't help herself. If anything, it was motivation for him to make it back. While the rest of us didn't have a romantic relationship with her like Adrik, there was still a special relationship between her and the five of us. If ever there was unconditional love, Sephie was it. She was something special in our lives and not a single one of us wanted to give that up.

Andrei, Oscar, and the other two guys jogged toward the warehouse. It was approaching midnight, so we had the cover of darkness to help conceal our movements. We could hear everything through the earpieces, but there wasn't much to listen to. Communication was kept to an absolute minimum.

It took maybe 20 minutes and the four guys were jogging back to us. We all chuckled when Sephie exhaled loudly as soon as she saw Andrei come into view. Ivan put his arm around her shoulders, smiling down at her. It was nice to have someone worried for your safety.

We loaded up quickly and drove to the second warehouse. It was much the same as the first. In and out with no problems. We were ahead of schedule on our way to the warehouse at the docks.

I was going to set up in my nest, silently taking out as many of the guards around the perimeter as I could. When I was scouting, I counted at least 10 that I could easily pick off. Once the first line of defense had been neutralized, the rest of the guys were going to come in on foot. This warehouse was almost three times the size of the other two. It was going to need more explosives to blow completely. I could only cover one side of the warehouse from above. Two sides were on the water. The third wasn't accessible without announcing our presence. That made me nervous. I liked having a better vantage point, but I'd covered worse. I would make this work. I found myself feeling overly protective, not only of Sephie but of the other guys too. We really were a family. I was going to make sure we all made it out.

It only took me a few minutes to get into position. "Ready."

"Ready when you are," Viktor said.