

King of the Underworld by RJ Kane

Chapter 45

Chapter Forty-Five

Sephie

I woke up and slowly stretched, fully expecting to feel Adrik's body next to mine. Instead, I felt the cold bed. I sat up, not realizing it was as late as it was, searching for him. I reached for my phone on the bedside table and saw his note.

*Sephie,

You were sleeping so peacefully that I couldn't bring myself to wake you before leaving. Know that I'm counting the minutes until you're in my arms again.

-A*

I checked my phone. It was 12:30. They've probably been gone for a while already. I decided to get dressed to go see who the lucky guy was that got to stay with me today.

It didn't take me long to find that answer. Andrei was reading a book, sitting on the top stair when I came out of the bedroom. He closed his book and stood up. "Good morning, sestrichka. How did you sleep?"

"It's not technically morning anymore, Bubba. That's how well I slept," I said, rubbing the last bit of sleep from my eyes.

"You must be hungry, Sleeping Beauty. You slept through breakfast. It's not like you to skip a meal," he said, squatting down in front of me with his arms out to the side so I could hop on his back.

"You spoil me, Bubba. But I fucking love it and hope you never stop. Walking is highly overrated," I said as I hopped on his back.

"I'm going to have to make some kind of agreement with Tori so you can keep doing this when you two get married. Like grandfather me into your relationship."

He just shook his head as he walked downstairs, again like he wasn't carrying me. "She will be okay with this. Or she won't and I'll deal with it," he said shrugging his shoulders.

He deposited me on the counter as he opened the fridge. "How long has everyone been gone?" I asked, swinging my legs like I was a kid.

He placed a sandwich from Vinny's next to me on the counter. "Long enough that I had Tori grab us lunch."

My arms shot up above my head, "YES! It's official. You're my favorite. Misha had a good one-day run, but his reign is now over."

"He almost won and got to stay home today. We had to go best 3 out of 5 so I could beat him."

I raised my eyebrow and cut my eyes at him as I unwrapped the sandwich.

"We played paper, rock, scissor to decide who got to stay home with you," he said grinning.

"He gave you the rock thinking it was going to win every time, didn't he?"

Andrei laughed. "Almost every time. He's too predictable."

"Poor Misha. He's so young. So inexperienced," I said in between bites. "Besides, I wanna know about you and Tori. Did you get some time with her this morning while I was still asleep and everyone was gone?"

He blushed and nodded his head. "We had a little time this morning to speak in the kitchen after everyone was gone. She's the one that told me about Misha getting you Vinny's yesterday. We had lunch together, since you were still sleeping."

"I owe her a high-five later."

He smiled. "You like her?" cocking his head to the side as he waited for my assessment.

"I don't know her very well, but she seems nice, Bubba. Girls are sometimes weird with me, but she's been nice. I think it's because she works for my boyfriend."

"How are girls weird with you? Doesn't everyone love you?" he asked.

"Ha! Oh, no. No, they do not. Not everyone. I have a long list of people that would gladly clap for my demise. Most of those are girls. You can ask my friend Max. He's never had a girlfriend that liked me."

Andrei looked very serious as he threw away the wrapper from my sandwich. "I don't understand. You're so...you. How could anyone hate you?"

His innocence made me smile. I shrugged my shoulders. "I don't know, Bubba. It's a mystery because we both know I'm perfect in every way." I grinned at him.

He was still looking at me seriously. "Da. You are. I read that on the internet so it must be true."

I laughed. He couldn't hold a straight face any longer and started laughing as well. He leaned closer to me so he could whisper, "she's not as funny as you. She doesn't think my jokes are funny."

I covered my mouth and faked being shocked. "Your jokes are supposed to be funny?"

He clutched his heart. "It hurts. It hurts right here." He bent over and clutched the counter just as Tori walked into the kitchen.

She saw him bent over the counter looking like he was maybe having a heart attack, possibly dying, all while I sat on the counter and laughed at him.

Going out on a limb here and marking this one down as one of the reasons girls didn't like me.

Tori rushed to him. "Andrei!" she said as she grabbed him. It only made him laugh, which embarrassed Tori. Her face turned red as she looked at both of us.

"We were joking. He faked being hurt by my sarcasm. No harm done," I said.

She looked to Andrei, who was still laughing, and walked off in a huff. His face got serious. He looked to me, but I just shrugged my shoulders. "Don't look at me, Bubba. I would've thought that was funny. I'm offended she didn't laugh, if we're being honest, but you should still go talk to her. I'll stay right here until you get back."

"You promise you'll stay? I'll be right back. Like two minutes, tops."

"Go," I said, shooing him toward the direction Tori had left.

It was more like ten minutes before Andrei came back. He had his head down, looking slightly defeated.

"That bad, huh?" I asked, still sitting in the same spot he had left me in.

He just exhaled loudly, running his hand through his hair.

"Come on, let's go for a walk. You can tell me about it," I said hopping off the counter.

"You want to walk? You don't want a ride?"

"Bubba. You're already in trouble. I don't think we should add to it. Come on, let's go," I said, hooking my arm through his and pulling him toward the back door.

Once we were outside and a safe enough distance away that she wouldn't be able to overhear our conversation, I asked, "so she's mad because you were having fun with me?"

He just looked at me, somewhat surprised. "Da. She said we're all acting so different now that you're here. He paused and then added, "she's right about that. We are acting different, but I thought she liked the change? I'm so confused. Now it seems like she doesn't."

I thought as we walked slowly past the gardens. The sweet floral aroma was heavy in the air as it was warm today, with very little breeze. I replayed the conversation Tori and I had in the kitchen the day before, when she asked me what my secret was for getting them to all come out of their shells.

I sighed. "I don't know, Andrei. Maybe she's jealous? Maybe she wanted you all to act differently for her? Maybe she thought we were laughing at her? Maybe it doesn't have anything to do with us and she's just having a bad day? Women are complicated."

He rolled his eyes. "You are so right. She has nothing to be jealous of and I told her that we weren't laughing at her. Maybe she's just having a bad day. It has nothing to do with us because we're perfect in every way." He nodded his head like he was confirming his last statement.

I grinned at him. "I mean, that explanation is good for me. Will it be good for her, though?"

"Ugh. This is why I don't want a woman sometimes. They're too stressful."

"You'll hear no arguments from me on that one. This is why the only female friend I have is 50 years older than I am. Ohhh, you can have Ms. Jackson. She's got a good sense of humor!"

He had to stop walking because he was laughing so hard. "Can you...imagine.... I would break her. This is a bad plan."

I thought for a moment. "That is not the visual I was planning to have in my head this afternoon, but you make a solid argument. I'll concede. It was a bad plan. Looks like you're stuck trying to make up for whatever it was that we did wrong."

He hooked his arm through mine this time. "Let's keep walking for a little longer first."

"Procrastination for the win!" I said, happily walking farther away from the house with him.