

King of the Underworld by RJ Kane

Chapter 93

Chapter Ninety-Three

Adrik

We walked to lunch, as it wasn't very far from Armando's office building. The weather was nice and since Sephie had more comfortable shoes on, I wasn't quite as worried about her. Her limp was slightly more pronounced today, I think because of the heels she wore. I somewhat felt guilty about enjoying her in heels again though. I liked having her even taller than she normally was.

Armando was busy discussing business matters as we walked through the streets. It was a beautiful city, and the weather was almost perfect, not too hot, not too cool. I listened intently to Armando, responding when needed, but I was also trying to focus on Sephie's reactions to what she saw as we walked. I loved watching her. She found beauty and wonderment in everything. Strangers walking past us would inevitably stare at her, at her beauty, but also at her obvious innocence. It was like they couldn't help but feel drawn toward her.

The same feeling I had when I was near her, just to a lesser degree. I squeezed her hand, wanting to kiss her instead, but I had to pretend to be listening to Armando. She looked over at me, giving me that smile that threatened to stop my heart every time. As we sat at the restaurant, the topic of the earlier meeting came up once again. Armando was still surprised at how well Sephie could size people up. "Sephie, how did you come across this gift of yours? Have you always been able to read people this well?" he asked.

She shrugged her shoulders. "I guess I've always been able to do it. The things I notice seem obvious to me. Like how you missed the subtle cues in the meeting, for example. It doesn't mean you can't read people. You were just trying so hard to will that project into existence to help the people of the city even more than you already do that you were willing to compromise on working with sketchy characters to get it accomplished. You have a big heart. I wouldn't say that's a bad trait to have, but it probably means you get taken advantage of more than you should: You know, by whorish girlfriends who only want you for your money." She winked at him, smiling broadly.

He swore under his breath. "You should market your services, my dear."

The guys were all chuckling, knowing full well how good Sephie was at saying what needed to be said. Ivan looked at Armando. "You haven't seen anything yet. Wait until she gets to know you a little better. She'll find those dark places that you don't want anybody to see, and she'll shine a light directly on them."

"But then she'll show you how it was never a weakness to begin with and how you were beating yourself up for it needlessly," Stephen said.

Sephie looked down, blushing. Armando looked to each of the guys who each had a knowing look on their face, completely in agreement at what Ivan and Stephen just said. He looked to me, nodding. He raised his glass and everyone at the table raised theirs. "To Sephie, the most remarkable woman we've ever met," he said. Her cheeks were almost as red as her hair after he toasted her. I leaned over, kissing her cheek, feeling both proud and lucky that she was mine.

We spent a few hours in the outdoor courtyard at the restaurant. It was a secluded spot where we could talk freely about business. The guys had a clear line of sight on every entrance and exit and could easily see the road in front of the restaurant as well. Since all the guys had been able to listen to the meeting through Misha's earpiece, they gave their opinions on what happened. Like me, they were concerned with who was pulling the strings in the background that we didn't know about, as well as what the politician was afraid of.

Viktor asked what I had been worried about. "Do you think Lorenzo or Anthony could be the one behind the lawyer? Maybe that's who the politician is really scared of?"

I nodded. "I had thought the same thing. I wouldn't put it past them to try and undermine Armando since he went against Salvadori and stood with me. It would be easier for them to try it here than at home."

Sephie turned to look at me, her eyes wide. "If the lawyer is working for one of them, then they know now that you're alive and I'm here and not where they're looking for me." She turned to Armando. "That also means the guys who took me are likely in trouble once Salvadori finds out they betrayed him." She turned back to me. I could see the fear in her eyes, even though she was trying to remain calm.

Ivan spoke up first. "There's a chance that the lawyer won't divulge the physical description of you and Boss to whomever he's working for. You gave fake names and he might not even know of your existence. We don't know for sure yet that he's working for Lorenzo and Anthony." She looked at him, willing herself to believe his words.

Andrei said, "don't worry, spider monkey. They won't get you." She nodded but dropped her gaze. Armando picked up the conversation while I pulled her chair closer to mine. She wouldn't look at me, but I could see her internal struggle she was having. I put my hand on her leg, immediately feeling the shaking. Just as I was about to suggest we make our way back to Armando's villa, his phone rang. His assistant had found information that she felt he needed to see.

"Come, let's return to the office and hopefully shed some light on this little mystery," he said, standing up and folding his napkin on his plate. The guys stood as well. When Sephie went to stand, she flinched, cursing under her breath. Her hand went to her hip, pressing against her wound. I went to help her, but she held a finger up asking for a moment. It took her a second to stand up completely straight. When she did, she had a clearly pained look on her face.

"Solnishko, what's wrong? What can I do?" I asked, trying to help support her.

"No idea. That's never happened before," she said, still pressing on her wound.

"What was it? What happened?"

"It was like a shooting pain through my hip when I went to stand up. I'm okay now. We can go," she said, giving me a tight smile. Andrei stepped in front of her, a small smile on his face. "Spider monkey," he said as he turned his back to her, squatting down to her level and opening his arms. He was offering to carry her back to the office. She put her hands on his shoulders, but then stopped herself.

"I don't think I can jump, Bubba."

I walked behind her, lifting her so she could wrap her arms and legs around Andrei. He gently bounced her a little higher and looked back at her. "Good?"

She nodded to him, then looked at me, mouthing, "thank you," as Andrei walked toward the front of the restaurant with her. I ran my hand through my hair, worried about more than Lorenzo and Anthony. I didn't like seeing her in pain. When we got back to the house, I would insist she change the bandage so we could look at it. She'd been diligent about taking her antibiotics after that first day she missed because she was sleeping, but that didn't mean there wasn't a small infection setting in. I would call a doctor to come to her, if needed. I caught Misha's gaze as we were leaving. He looked just as concerned as I felt.