

King of the Underworld by RJ Kane

Chapter 96

Chapter Ninety-Six

Sephie

I gasped, putting my hand over my mouth. He continued, "I kept refusing for close to a year. It didn't matter what they tried to do to me, I wasn't going to fight any of the boys because they didn't have training. They changed tactics and brought in military guys. They said if I wouldn't fight untrained boys, then I could fight trained men. They wanted to see how I would respond to pain and how I would heal from being injured. I finally agreed, mostly because I just wanted to eat again."

I held my hand up, saying "amen to that."

He chuckled, then continued, "the first couple of fights, I got my ass kicked. They were stronger than me and I was weak from malnourishment. As time went on, though, I got stronger, and the tables turned. I started beating the grown men with ease. I almost killed a few of them, a couple of them probably wish I had killed them, and I eventually did legitimately kill one of them. They didn't stop after that happened, either. They kept sending in more guys, week after week. I realized it was never going to stop. Whatever their research was, it was going to continue, unless I got away from them. One night, right before I turned 18, I broke out. I killed 6 people that night in order to escape. I can still see their faces clearly." He closed his eyes. His shoulders slumped forward. He looked tired and small.

I hopped down from the counter. I wrapped my arms around his neck and pulled him to me. "Ivan..." I felt his giant arms around me, holding onto me. He took in a deep breath and held it. I knew he was fighting back tears. Fighting back the memories that had been haunting him all these years. I didn't know what to say, or if there was anything to say that could make this better. So, I stayed silent. I just held onto him, trying to give him what he'd been missing all those years. A safe harbor. His grip on me tightened as he struggled to get control. Eventually, I felt him relax a little and he loosened his grip on me. I stepped back, looking at him. He looked haunted.

I remembered what my father had said to me in my dream. It seemed applicable. "Ivan, look at me." He glanced down at me, but wouldn't hold my gaze for long. I reached up and gently pressed my hands on either side of his face and forced him to look at me. "Ivan, sometimes Karma uses you to deliver justice. You simply handed down their sentences."

He looked at me for a few moments. That haunted look slowly started to disappear. As he mulled over my words in his head, he asked, "how do you do that?"

"How do I do what?"

"You always know exactly what we need to hear."

I shrugged my shoulders. "It's a gift," I said, grinning at him.

He shook his head, laughing quietly. He bent down and hugged me again. When he stood up this time, his face was much softer.

"Does anyone else know this?" I asked.

"Not to this extent. They know about my inability to feel pain and that I hate doctors because of being experimented on when I was a kid."

I simply nodded my head. "You're the only person I've told the entire story to," he said, his hands running through his black goatee.

"I'm honored," I said, smiling at him. "And to think, I used to think you wanted to murder me in my sleep. Now you're all soft and nougaty with me." I poked him in the ribs, as he laughed.

"I would never hurt you again, princess."

"What's this again, bullshit?" I asked, standing up straight to try and look him in the eye.

"The ball. I can't get the picture of your face out of my head as I had to run past you, and I still hear you calling out for Adrik and then for me when you were out on the plane."

"Ivan. Don't do that. Don't beat yourself up. I still standby calling it a stupid plan, but mostly because of the execution. Your intentions were always good. I was never meant to get hurt. All of you guys have always done nothing but protect me and keep me safe. I never once doubted that you didn't mean for me to get hurt in all that. So. Stop that nonsense right now before I kick your ass."

He laughed. It made me happy to see him visibly lighter. He grabbed the jar of honey and offered me his arm. "Come, we'll go get Adrik and I'll show him how to pack your wound. I don't want to do it without him there." He looked down at me, one eyebrow raised. "It's too close to your no-no zone."

I slid my arm through his, laughing. "That's fair. That's totally fair."

When we got back to the gym, Adrik looked worried, but tried to mask it. I smiled at him, as I put my hand on his shoulder and whispered, "I missed you." His handsome smile stretched across his face. He put his arm around me, pulling me to his side.

"Ivan has a way to make us both happy," I said, grinning up at him.

He looked down at me, surprised, then looked to Ivan, who held up the jar of honey. "I'll show you how to pack it with this. It should start healing quicker."

Adrik nodded his head. Then leaned down to kiss my cheek. "If this doesn't work, I'm calling the doctor."

"Yeah, yeah, yeah," I said, rolling my eyes. His hand ran down to my ass, grabbing it forcefully enough that I let out a small yelp. He cursed under his breath as he nodded for Ivan to follow us.

We went to our bedroom. Ivan showed Adrik how to pack the wound with honey and enough gauze that I wouldn't inevitably leak sweet sticky syrup over everything. Once the new bandage was on, Ivan said, "leave this one on for two days. Give it time to calm down. Antiseptic is good, but sometimes makes things worse. It can be too harsh. This will soothe it and help the healing start."