

King of the Underworld Chapter 401 - 410

Chapter 401

Sephie

I heard Adrik's sharp inhale beside me as he listened to Battista's words. I glanced at Misha, who was also shaking off the goosebumps he felt. Ivan's sly grin caught my eye, as well, as I glanced around the room.

"I'm not entirely sure of the dynamics of the group, but I would be willing to bet that you're all connected somehow and that you all complement each other. You've been able to stay one step ahead of everything that's happening as it's happened. The fact that Trino is still alive is a testament to how powerful you all are. We didn't find out about Martin's deal until it was almost too late.

We set in motion a plan to ensure Trino's safety, only to find you had already gotten to him. His men are loyal to Martin, as we now know you found out much earlier than we did. I'm not completely convinced we would've gotten to him in time," Battista said.

"She even made it so he could see his dying mother one last time," Vitaliy said. Battista looked at me surprised.

"And clearly you know things we do not," Battista said.

"I didn't know his mother was dying until after I told him to leave, to be fair said.

"My point still stands," Battista said, crossing his arms across his chest. "Now, we have information about the mayor. You're going to need him on your side. His police commissioner is trying to frame him, but Henry is the one that's on the take, not the

mayor. The people in the city like this mayor, as well. He needs something to ensure they'll love him. Why do I feel like you've already got just the thing to endear him further to the people?"

Adrik chuckled. "We're still holding the doctor that created brawn. I think his face is mostly healed now. I had to wait to turn him over until he was recognizable."

"We're all still impressed that you didn't kill him," Stephien said quietly. "That was a stressful night."

I felt Adrik's arm tighten around me. His other hand held mine a little tighter as well. I knew he was still working through me being taken. We all were, judging by the looks on everyone's faces as I scanned the room.

"You have to get to the mayor. The journalist you're working with, he's one of ours. He'll have the information you need on Henry by the end of the week. We know you asked him to look at the mayor, but we helped him find the information on Henry. He must be exposed, at the hands of the mayor, and the doctor needs to be arrested publicly. Because Henry is connected to Sal, we can connect him to Dr. Moretti as well. It will be a very neat package for the people. Your dealers have already spread the word on the street that you are responsible for stopping the brawn operation, as well as capturing the doctor. The people know more about what's going on than you might think, but they need a big win to stay loyal to this mayor," Battista said.

I was sitting on the end of the bed that evening, thinking about everything that had happened over the last couple of days. I felt Adrik's warm hand. on my face. "You should stay asleep in the morning, love. I can see it. You're exhausted again," he said, his

thumb rubbing lightly against my cheek as I leaned into his hand. I was still lost in my thoughts as he pulled me up to follow him

to bed. He watched my eyes, his usual mesmerized expression on his face.

“You’ve had so much to think about that you haven’t asked me what new thing your eyes did today,” he said, crawling into bed and pulling

me into his lap.

“They did something new?”

He nodded. “When we were at Battista’s. You have a new color. Andrei’s going to be so happy,” he said.

“Shut up. They did not turn purple or orange,” I said.

“It wasn’t orange. And I wouldn’t exactly call it purple either, but it wasn’t your normal blue. Maybe violet, maybe indigo, but it was different,” he said, pushing a curl back from my face. He was still very amused while watching me consider everything. “Your

mind is going so fast right now. Take a breath, love,” he said quietly.

I sighed, finally looking at him. “I can’t help it. I can’t get it to stop. Distract me?”

He put his hands on either side of my face, pulling me gently toward him. His lips softly brushed mine. “I thought you’d never ask,” he said, smiling against my lips. I felt my body start to relax as he pressed his lips against mine, capturing my bottom lip in

between both of his. His tongue lightly ran over my lip before plunging into my mouth. I felt his desire for me come on suddenly and strongly. His kiss was urgent. He was making sure i could think of nothing else but him and I loved him for it.

Once I fell asleep more from exhaustion than anything, I found myself not on the familiar path outside the familiar house, but in the room that Adrik and I stayed in at Vitaliy’s house in Panama. I recognized it, but was confused as to why I would be there..

“Hello, sweet girl.” I heard Lena’s soothing voice behind me: Her blue eyes that were so strikingly similar to the ones I’d fallen in love with were smiling at me as I turned around to see her. “I promised not to scare the men again, so your father told me how to make this happen.” She laughed softly. “I really did make them mad, but they were also so worried for you. I felt bad about that.

There’s also the matter of them all being able to feel you. I wasn’t aware they were so connected to you or that I would send your emotions into turmoil when I came to you last time.”

I smiled at her. “They really do worry over me for everything. I kind of love them for it, I’m not gonna lie.”

“They all love you, Sephie. Even Vitaliy. He’s so much more like he used to be when he’s with you. He’s a very sweet man. He just doesn’t want anyone to know it. He’s why I’m here. He’s been talking to me when he’s alone.”

I smiled, thinking about Vitaliy finally being able to tell her all the things he’s kept inside for so long. “You need me to give him a message, don’t you?”

She nodded. “You told him I was resourceful and I am, but he doesn’t always pay attention to signs, so I’m here. I’m not able to see him in his dreams yet, but I will be soon, if you help him. He’s blocking me, because he doesn’t believe it’s possible. He’s jealous that I came to you instead of him, but he doesn’t realize I came to you because I can’t get through to him. He has to be open to it for me to speak to him. He’s not right now. And he’s cranky about it on top of that, so it’s nearly impossible for me to talk to him

“I just need to tell him to let you in? Can I tell him to stop being a cranky stubborn ba stard?” I said snickering..

She laughed. "I would love it if you did. I was with you when you went to the hotel the second time. I haven't heard him laugh so loudly as when you told him to tighten up and stop being a cheeseball since before Adrik was born. It made my heart very happy, sweet girl. You're good for him. You're good for Adrik, too. I knew he was special, but you bring out his full potential. His men, too. You bring out their full potential. I saw what you did for Stephen. He's a special case. We've all been rooting for him for so long. It was very questionable whether he could be saved. I'm not sure you realize how close he was to giving in to the evil that he's been carrying around for so long."

I felt a pain in my chest as I thought about everything Stephen has had to endure in life, but then I immediately felt my anger when I thought about his sisters. She put her hand on my shoulder. "Sephie, I'm allowed to tell you this because you're still not sure you actually did it and we're under a bit of a time crunch here. You took Stephen's pain and allowed him to transfer it to them. You took the evil he's been carrying around from his sisters, and what they did to him when he was a child and you helped him give it back to them. That's what broke them. The human mind can only withstand so much. Once the psyche is completely broken, they're useless to the evil forces inside them, but it also traps those demons in that body. It creates a sort of hell for both until the body dies. That's Stephen's gift. He knows how to break the person. He used you to deliver it because he doesn't know how yet."

"I knew he was always going to be the one to mind fuck people, but that sounds extra horrific."

She had a sympathetic smile on her face. "It does sound horrific, but it's also the only way to save that person's soul. You're

ultimately doing them a favor. Not in this lifetime, but in the next. If they continue to give in to evil, it will eventually consume them. The middle sister was close to that happening. That's when Ivan can see them when they're close to being corrupted or have already been consumed. When that happens, the soul dies. There's no chance at another life after that. What you've done and what Stephen will eventually learn how to do is to give the soul another chance. Not in this body, but the demon will separate from the soul when you and he break their psyche and the soul will have a chance at coming back and trying again in a new life. So, it sounds horrific, but it's the only way to save the soul when the person isn't strong enough to get rid of the evil on their own. Not many people are. You're saving souls, Sephie. Stephen will too since he learns how. Ivan is going to help. You three have known more evil than most people and are best equipped to deal with it. The others will provide support for you in their own ways, as well."

King of the Underworld by RJ Kane

Chapter 402

402

Sephle

I inhaled deeply, thinking about what she'd just told me. I sat down on the end of the bed. She sat down next to me, placing her hand on top of mine. "I know it's a lot, sweet girl, but you can handle it. You all can handle it. You're the strongest group of people we've ever seen. Just what you've all lived through while still holding onto the good inside you proves that. You're all meant for such great things."

"I know. I'm actually glad that you told me this. I think Stephen is still struggling with everything, but this will help him. It helps me too. I still think his sisters deserve everything that happens to them, but I've found myself feeling the slightest bit guilty over what happened. Battista made me wonder if maybe it wasn't their fault."

"Everyone has a choice, Sephie. Remember that. Every single person, no matter what happens to them, can choose good or they can choose evil. You can be influenced, of course, but it's still your choice. It's only your choice. They made their choices and now they must live with those consequences. As you've told at least two of the guys, Karma will use you to deliver justice.

You didn't decide their sentences, but you delivered them, Sephie. And you saved their souls in the process. So that's enough of feeling guilty," she said. Her tone was very maternal, almost like she was chastising me.

"Damnit. Scolded by a ghost," I said under my breath.

She laughed. "You're so much like your father. But you're also very stubborn. I need you to believe in yourself, sweet girl. They

all need you to believe in yourself.” She paused, looking at me like a mother would look at a daughter. She smiled sweetly at me, taking my hand, and inspecting my ring. “He is quite possessive of you and I think it’s one of his best qualities. You’re going to need to be patient with him. Your connection with him is going to get even deeper, but it’s going to also get deeper with all of the guys. He might find he struggles with jealousy at first.”

I looked down at my hand, smiling. “I kind of think he’s adorable when he gets jealous. I don’t want to make him jealous on purpose. He has nothing to worry about, but I find it very endearing when it happens.”

“He does have to share your time with five other very attractive men. It’s understandable, but you’re also quite good at making sure he knows he has nothing to worry about.” She brushed a curl back from my face, her sweet smile still on her face. “I do miss him. I know I talk about Vitaliy more than Adrik, but I miss Adrik just as much. He just doesn’t need me as much. Especially now that he has you. You’re so good for him.”

“He’s good for me, too. I can’t live without him now that I have him,” I said.

“You two are meant for great things. But for now, it’s time for you to go back. Adrik is trying to wake you up. I seem to have caught you when you’re not decent as well, so he can’t move you.”

“Jesus, again?! How do I keep getting embarrassed in my own dreams??”

Her laugh was the last thing I heard as everything faded to black in front of me. I felt Adrik’s hands on me, lightly running through my hair, over my back. I heard his voice softly urging me to wake up. I took a deep breath, picking my head up to rest my chin on his chest so I could see him.

His sweet smile was the first thing I saw when I opened my eyes. “Were you talking to your dad again? You were laughing,” he

said, his fingers lightly running down my face.

I shook my head no. “No, this time it was your mother. She still feels bad for how she came to me when we were in Panama, so she learned how to come to me in my dreams like my dad does. She had a message for Vitaliy and she gave me insight about Stephen.”-

He raised his eyebrow, curious as to what information I now had. “What message for my father?”

I was actually surprised he asked about that first, but I grinned at him. “I get to tell him to stop being a cranky stubborn bas ta rd.”

He laughed. “Please let me be there when you do.”

“I would never deny you such a pleasure,” I said.

“What insight about Stephen did she give you?” he asked. I explained everything she’d told me about Stephen’s gift. As I talked, he moved so I could see the goosebumps on his arms and across his chest. I laughed quietly. “We’ve always said he was the best at knowing how to mind f u ck someone. We just didn’t know the part about saving them. It’s so much better once you know that part. I know we were all strangely okay with the possibility of

1/2

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him being a serial killer, but I adore the kinder, gentler vampire that he’s become. I’m glad he gets to stay that way.”

“Me too. You should tell him today. I can keep the others busy so you can have time with him.”

“Can you spare Ivan, too? I think he’s going to prove helpful for Stephen in this.”

“Of course. I’ll make sure the Wonder Twins don’t get too jealous,” he said. He rolled us both over so he was on top of me.

“This. This is why I love you so much,” I said, pulling him down to me so I could press my lips to his.

He smiled against my lips. “All this time I thought it was my giant c ock.”

“That is also why I love you so much,” I said, laughing. I wrapped my arms and legs around him as we both laughed at our

silliness. “You’re my favorite. Tell the others,” I said, in between laughs.

“You’re my everything,” he said, smiling down at me.

King of the Underworld by RJ Kane

Chapter 403

403

Sephle

While we were all in the gym that morning, Andrei was helping me in his normal patient way, even when I was cranky that I still didn't feel as strong as I did before Ivan and I were taken. I always tested his patience, but he never got frustrated with me. He really was such a good trainer.

"So, I need to steal Stephen again. I know what his gift is, but I think he needs convincing of it. I also need Ivan's help. I don't want you and Misha to get jealous that you two haven't gotten to babysit for a few days."

He laughed. "We always prefer hanging out with you, but I know Stephen has reeded you. We've all seen the change in him since he saw his sisters. It's been good for him. I also saw what he had to endure as a kid. It's a lot. I know he needs you. And I think you're right. I think Ivan can help. They've both seen the face of evil."

"You, however, are capable of seeing the good in people. That's the glow you see. You're seeing auras, Bubba."

"How do you know?"

"I knew what you were seeing when you first told me, but my dad confirmed it. You and Ivan are kind of opposites. He can see evil, but you can see good. I think it's why you only see it sometimes on Ivan, me, and Adrik. We're all both. The acupuncturist is only good, so you see it on her all the time."

"Stephen has it now, too. After you broke his sisters. I noticed it the next day. It's not as bright as you three, but it's there."

I smiled. "I need to tell Stephen first, but I'll give you a sneak peak at what he can do if you promise not to tell."

He readily agreed, looking at my thoughts. I replayed part of the conversation had with Lena for him. “You can talk to Boss’s mom now too?” he asked, surprised.

“She had a message for Vitaliy. She felt bad for the way she came to me last time, because it worried you guys so much. She learned how to come to me the same way my dad does.”

He continued to look, taking in everything she’d told me about Stephen. “Who. That’s heavy. But bad as s.”

I giggled. “I completely agree, Bubba.”

Ivan and Stephen were with me in the penthouse later that afternoon, helping me make dinner. Andrei was helpful in distracting Misha and Viktor was on his normal master of schedule duties.

“Viktor is going to be so happy tonight, Seph,” Stephen said, smiling.

“I know. I’m surprised he hasn’t had a meltdown because it’s been so long since I cooked. I feel bad about that. I’m going to have to make him cookies again to make sure he doesn’t hate me,” I said.

“He could never hate you, princess. But he does love you a little less when you don’t cook,” Ivan said, laughing.

“It’s funny ’cause it’s true,” I said.

We laughed and talked, but eventually the conversation came back around to Stephen’s sisters and everything that had happened.

“Have you heard anything from your parents?” Ivan asked, curious.

Stephen couldn’t hide his grin. “My mom called me. Apparently, they’re still mostly catatonic. She wanted to know what happened. She said my oldest sister wouldn’t talk about it. in fact, she said my oldest sister is barely talking at all. She went between being worried about them to angry at me.”

“Did she ask how you were at all?” I asked. I could feel my anger coming to the surface, once again feeling protective of

Stephen.

He chuckled. "Don't be mad, Seph." He no sooner said it than his eyes went wide as he looked at me.

Ivan caught on immediately to what just happened. "You felt her anger, didn't you?"

Stephen nodded. "That was so weird."

I laughed. "Welcome to the club, Yoden." I walked to him, sliding my arms around his waist. He hugged me tightly, his vampiric vice-grip quickly becoming one of my favorite things about him.

"Sh it's about to get so much weirder for you," Ivan said, laughing.

"I can actually help with that," I said. Stephen loosened his hold on me, looking down at me.

"What do you mean?" he asked.

"Have you figured out the details of what happened to your sisters yet? It explains your gift," I asked him.

He thought for a moment. "I showed you my memories, asking you to give it back to them. You did the heavy lifting. I just let you peak into my head finally," he said. He looked almost confused as he talked. I couldn't help but smile at him. This was why Lena told me. He was still in complete denial of what happened. "You're not wrong, Yoden, but you played a much bigger role than you think you did."

"I don't understand," he said.

Ivan, who was really very quick to catch on, suddenly got it. "He's the one that broke them. He just needed you to make it happen the first time."

I grinned at Ivan, then looked back at Stephen as he fully comprehended what Ivan had just said. "That's your gift, Stephen. You know how to completely break people. You'll be able to do it without me at some point, but Ivan is right, you just used me to

make it happen. Bonus points, too, because I didn't need to touch you in order to borrow your gift."

Stephen looked worried. "But I don't see how this is a good thing. I might be a serial killer after all."

"Oh, honey, no." I wrapped my arms back around his waist. "Let me explain before you start beating yourself up." I went through the details of everything Lena had told me in my dream. Ivan looked impressed. Stephen still looked worried. "It does sound horrific, but you're thinking on too small of a scale, Stephen. You're saving their souls. I'm still undecided if your sisters deserved another chance in the next lifetime, but ultimately that's what you gave them. When someone gives in to the evil, to their demon it eventually consumes them. That's when Ivan is able to see them. He can see when they're totally consumed or right before they're totally consumed. When that happens, the soul will eventually die. There are no more chances then. The demon won. While they're still broken in this lifetime, you kept the soul alive. The soul gets another chance to make it right in the next lifetime. Although it's going to take quite a number of lifetimes for your sisters to clear their Karma, you gave them the chance to do that. Without you, their souls would've been consumed completely and would've eventually died."

"I saw it on your middle sister right away. Your older sister, too, when they went to leave. Hers was hiding when I first saw her, but Sephie brought it out," Ivan said.

In his normal quiet way, he contemplated everything we'd just said. "I never thought I'd be relieved to know that I didn't completely destroy them, but I am. I've dreamed about killing them in so many different ways it's alarming

You never gave in to the evil you've been carrying all these years. I haven't told you guys yet, but Andrei can see auras. Much like Ivan can see the evil in people, Bubba sees the good. He can see yours now, Stephen. He said it showed up the day after you saw your sisters." Stephen still looked skeptical, but he wasn't quite as worried. "We don't always understand why we do things, but our souls know. Your soul knew what needed to happen. and you listened to it. That's the important lesson here."

"They brought those consequences on themselves, Stephen. You didn't condemn them, but you did hand down their sentence," Ivan said.

Stephen was thoughtful for a few minutes, but he finally looked between me and Ivan. He had an uncharacteristic grin on his face. "Wait until Vlad

King of the Underworld by RJ Kane

Chapter 404

404

Adrik

After the guys had gone back to their apartments after dinner, Aleksei retired to his room while Vitaliy remained in the kitchen for a few more minutes, talking to Sephie. Once it was just the three of us, she caught my eye grinning slightly. She then looked at Vitaliy. "Have you been talking to
7 Lena?" she asked innocently enough.

He still looked at her skeptically, but he nodded. "You said she's resourceful and she can get messages to me but so far, I've heard nothing. I'm not sure it's working the way you thought it would."

She couldn't hide her smile. "That's because you're being a cranky stubborn bastard about it," she said matter-of-factly.

He looked at her, surprise evident on his face. "Explain," he said, squinting his eyes at her, like he wanted to be mad at her, but was physically incapable of doing so. He looked almost mad, but his lips were turned slightly upward like he was fighting the smile that was threatening to show itself.

"You're jealous that she came to me and not to you, but she only did so because she can't get through to you. She's been trying, but you don't believe it's possible. If you don't believe it's possible, then it's not possible. She also sad she's been leaving you clues, but you're not paying attention to those either, so she finally came back to me to ask for help. If you would get over yourself and be open to seeing her again, you could talk to her all night every night, but you're too busy being cranky and stubborn. So cut that sh

it out,” she said, firmly.

Surprisingly, he looked at me. “Part of me wants to tell you to control your woman. The other part of me appreciates her waiting until no one else was around to tell me this,” he said, a sly smile across his face.

I laughed loudly. “Like I’d be able to control her if I wanted to. Which I do not for the record,” I said, unable to hide my smile as she grinned at me.

He simply laughed, shaking his head as he got up to walk to his room for the right. She looked at me, still grinning. “He’s going to be so surprised when it works and he figures out I’m right.”

“I think he’s still getting used to having someone who isn’t afraid of him more than anything. It still surprises him,” I said, pulling her with me to the bedroom. “How did it go with Stephen?” I asked once we were alone.

“I think it went well. It took him longer to believe everything than the others, but his gift isn’t as immediately obvious. He did feel my anger today for the first time. That kind of freaked him out,” she said, trying not to laugh. “It was barely registering for me, but he felt it right away. Ivan caught on immediately to what happened. That guy. He’s so observant. He figured out Stephen’s gift before Stephen did. I’m always impressed with how well you and Ivan handle everything weird that happens. You two are always the best with everything. It helps me, if I’m being honest, so please never stop.”

“I wouldn’t dream of it. I also think you help us more than you realize. I never really thought about it until you let Vitaliy touch you after you guys searched for Henry. He was shocked that we were able to feel your anger and not be consumed by it. It hit me

that you also share your control with us when we feel your emotions. I think it's similar with me and Ivan when it comes to everything weird that's been happening. You share your capacity for taking it all in stride with both of us. Out of all of them, Ivan seems to have the strongest connection with you next to me. I think he gets extra perks because of that."

"Your mother told me that the connections with all of you are about to get much deeper." She stopped me from buttoning up my shirt that I had just put on her as we were talking. She grabbed both of my hands, looking me in the eyes. Her eyes were swirling. We still weren't entirely sure what it meant when they couldn't pick a color to stick to, but I loved watching it happen. It was like staring into the universe every single time I was able to witness it.

"She said you're going to struggle with being jealous at first when the connections with the guys deepen. You're so good at sharing me with all of them. I want to make sure I always honor that. I want you to tell me when you feel like you need more time. I don't ever want you to feel jealous, even though I think it's adorable when you do."

I smiled at her, still hypnotized by her eyes. "I know they need you, too. You're very good at making sure I don't have a reason to feel jealous, but I promise I will tell you if I start feeling that way. I try to remind myself that there's only one of you. The odds are not in your favor. You have way more responsibility trying to take care of all of us than we do trying to take care of one of you."

She continued to button up my shirt, her eyes still swirling, with her heart-stopping smile across her face. "I'm beginning to think that your eyes swirling mean something specific, but I can't figure out what that is. You don't feel like you're in complete turmoil

right now. You feel happy, but your eyes can't pick a color. I'm not complaining. I love it. It might be my second favorite thing they do."

"What's the first?" she asked, clubbing into bed.

"When they turn blue." As soon as I spoke the words out loud, I was hit with her warmth that meant she loved me. I looked in her eyes after lying down so she could lie across my chest and they were the deepest depth of the ocean blue. I sighed, feeling completely spellbound in her eyes. "I'll never get tired of that."

"Please don't," she said as she laid across my chest, her warmth still spreading through my body. I held her close as I listened to her fall asleep, thinking about how words were no longer adequate to describe the love I have for her.

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King of the Underworld by RJ Kane

Chapter 405

405

Adrik

I woke up later than usual the next morning. I could hear that everyone was in the kitchen already. I ran my hand through Sephie's hair and she didn't move. She must need a late day again. There's been a lot happening. It zaps her more than everyone else. I could see it when she broke Stephen's sisters, but she fought it for a few days again. Looks like she lost her fight this morning.

I watched her sleep for longer than I normally would have. I really wanted to stay asleep with her this morning, but I had an early meeting that I needed to be at. It did not make me happy to do so, but I carefully moved her so I could get out of bed. She curled up under the covers, still sound asleep.

The shaking started as I was getting ready. I hurried, picking her up with me as I left the bedroom. The guys all knew what was happening as soon as they saw me carrying her. They immediately began arguing over who got to stay with her this time.

Watching them argue with each other while trying to remain quiet enough to not wake her up was comical. Surprisingly, Ivan worked out this time.

"If I could feel what it's like to be hit by a truck, I'm fairly sure that's what I feel like now," he said, as he positioned himself on the couch so I could lay her on him.

"I'm surprised it's taken you this long to feel that way. You seemed to be immune from getting zapped any time anything new happened. Did something else happen that we don't know about yet?" I asked.

“I’m seeing everyone’s demons now. It started after Stephen’s sisters,” he said quietly.

thought you could only see them when they started to consume the person?”

“I did too. It’s hard to explain, but I saw them take over the person. Now I can see them waiting to be let in, if you will, Like they’re riding around on people’s shoulders sometimes. If it wasn’t so disturbing, it might be funny. They’re like pets on some people,” he said.

“That’s a new level, for sure. But it seems very useful. Stephen was right. He needs to turn you into a vampire so you have time to save the whole world.”

He laughed quietly as he finished tucking in the blanket around Sephie. Since Ivan wasn’t quite as warm as Andrei, we used an extra blanket to keep her from getting cold. She snuggled in next to him, still sound asleep, hugging his arm as she continued her dreams. I looked from her to him. “I know you’re going to, but make sure you tell her that when you guys wake up. She’s had conversations we don’t know about lately. She’ll likely have insight, We’ll talk about it more tonight, too,” I said.

He nodded as he yawned, laying his head down so he could fall back asleep for the morning.

We finished breakfast as quietly as we could, then left the penthouse. Vitaliy followed me to my office, wanting a few minutes alone. “She was right, you know,” he said, once it was just the two of us. I laughed. “She’s right about literally everything. You’re going to need to specify.”

“I didn’t believe it could happen so it wasn’t happening. After she chastised me last night, I tried to believe it could happen and it did. I saw your mother last night.”

He had a look on his face that I'd never seen my father have. He was still in his memories as he was standing in front of me, but he looked more at peace than I'd ever seen him. I stayed silent for a few moments, not wanting to break him out of his thoughts.

Finally, he remembered he was in my office and looked at me, almost embarrassed. I couldn't help but smirk at him.

"I had someone tell me when I first met Sephie that she will show you the best parts of yourself if you let her. That statement was completely correct, but when she loves you, those best parts become better than you ever thought possible. You just have to let her love you. She does the rest."

Vitaliy stood silent in my office, contemplating what I'd just said. "I'm very proud of the man you've become," he said. With that, he turned and left my office, leaving me stunned.

My meetings felt like they were dragging on the entire day. I couldn't get my mind off of everything happening with Sephie and the rest of us. I could

1/3

feel what she was trying to do to Stephen's sisters. I fully supported it. I got just a glimpse of the pain that Stephen had been carrying around his entire life because of them. I wanted to see their destruction as much as Sephie did. If she hadn't been successful in breaking them, I would've offered to have them killed before they left the city.

When it comes to those five men, I would do anything. My life was in their hands every single day. I trusted them. I loved them like brothers. I would make sure they were always protected.

I found myself thinking about Viktor more than usual. He was the last one to realize his gift and it seemed like it wasn't going to

happen anytime. soon. Sephie was right. He really did love his job and I'd noticed he would send one of the other guys to stay with her, rather than taking the opportunity himself. Not because he didn't love her. He very much did. But he loved his duties too. I think he loved the distraction of his duties more than anything. Sephie had a habit of finding the dark parts of you that needed light shone on them. Viktor was avoiding that. I could order him to spend time with her, but that felt rude. Viktor was a bit of a father figure to me, especially when I was younger and Vitaliy was still in charge. Viktor gave me the guidance I never got from Vitaliy, even though Viktor was only a couple years older than I was. I sighed. If he wasn't ready, then he wasn't ready. I wasn't going to change that about him.

Before I knew it, it was late afternoon and I still hadn't seen Sephie or Ivan. The Wonder Twins were also starting to get worried. They came into the office during a break in my schedule. "Have you seen Ivan or Sephie yet?" Misha asked, the worry evident on his face.

7

"No. I was just thinking about that. You guys haven't felt anything, have you?" I asked. They both shook their heads no. I looked at my watch. I still had half an hour before my next meeting. Viktor and Stephen walked into the office as I was contemplating going to check on her. "Let's go check. She doesn't usually sleep this long. Ivan either, but he finally got new level zapped, so maybe that's it."

We were all worried when we walked into the penthouse, but that worry was increased when we found Ivan and Sephie still on

the couch. They'd been sleeping almost the entire day. That never happened. I could hear Sephie mumbling quietly, but her body was still. I knelt down in front of them, my hand on her cheek, trying to wake her. I heard him mumbling when I got closer.

I felt nothing out of the ordinary from her. She felt like she did when she was sleeping. I looked at Andrei. "Can you feel anything from her? She's mumbling. That usually is not a good sign. I don't feel anything from her, though."

"No, Boss. She feels like she does when she's sleeping," he said.

"Can you take a look in her head and see what's going on?"

His eyes glazed over as he looked in her head. After what felt like the longest moment of my life, he looked at me, now clearly present again. "They're- dreaming. The same dream, though. She's in a house, but she's with Ivan. They're with someone else, but that's all I could see before everything went to black."

I very clearly heard Sephie say, "don't worry, my love. I'm fine. So is Squish."

My eyes were on her when I heard her voice. Her mouth didn't move.

I looked at the guys. "Did any of you just hear that?" They all looked at me like I might've been crazy.

"Hear what?" they all asked.

"I just heard her tell me they were fine. Like she was standing next to me. Except she's not. She's asleep."

Stephen, in his normal serious way, said, "it was only a matter of time before she was able to communicate telepathically with you. You guys have been doing it silently for a while. Maybe she's learning how to talk to you now

Viktor's phone beeped, alerting him to my next meeting. He looked to me.

"Tell them I'll be a few minutes late. She said she's

fine, but I still don't like that she's not awake. I'm going to stay a few more minutes in case she wakes up."

I stayed, kneeling in front of her, my hand on her cool cheek, watching her sleep in Ivan's protective embrace. Neither of them looked troubled. They both looked like they were sharing a joke that the rest of us knew nothing about.

I finally heard her say, "miam, there's the warmth I love," as she opened her eyes, revealing the deepest depth of the ocean blue that I adored. Once again, her lips never moved. She reached up, placing her hand on top of mine. I'm fine. He's fine, too. I'm sorry I worried you. I forget time is

2/3

405

different when talking to my dad." Ivan started to stir as well. She sat up, still fighting to wake up completely. "Your next meeting is waiting for you. He's irritated that you're late, for the record. Go. I'll come down after you're done with this meeting and fill you in. Especially since you're wondering how I knew that," she said, grinning at me.

King of the Underworld by RJ Kane

Chapter 406

406

Sephte

I felt Adrik stir underneath me, but I couldn't bring myself to wake up.

Normally, I wasn't aware of when he woke up when I needed to sleep longer. This time, however, I could hear his thoughts as he watched me sleep.

It was like his internal dialogue was now in my head. I heard him thinking. I heard him wishing he could stay with me.

I felt him pick me up, wrap a blanket around me, and carry me out of the bedroom with him. Before the guys made the decision on who was going to stay with me, I knew it was going to be Ivan. I knew he'd been zapped, but I didn't know why yet. I could feel his exhaustion. Wait, I can feel him without seeing him.

I heard him tell Adrik why he'd been extra tired. How he could see not just when a person's demon consumed them, but now when they were looking for ways in, too. That's gotta be slightly comical, in a twisted sort of way.

As everyone left for the day, I felt Ivan fall asleep behind me. His massive arms were holding onto me, keeping me safe while we slept. I found myself back in the darkness. Only this wasn't my darkness. It felt different. It sounded different. I could hear music.

Piano music. I recognized the song. It was Ivan's song.

I felt him before I could see him. "Princess?" I turned to find Ivan, looking very confused as to why I was in his darkness.

"Squish," I said, smiling at him. "Did you leave your phone on before you went to sleep with me on the couch?"

"How do you know we're on the couch? You were sleeping?" He said the last statement like a question, as he was beginning to

question what his eyes

53w.

“I was. I am. But somehow I’m still aware of everything going on around me knew it was you that was going to stay with me today. I could feel your exhaustion when Adrik walked out with me.”

“This is new, isn’t it?”

“Yes. Very much so, yes. I could also hear Adrik’s thoughts before he got out of bed this morning. I kind of woke up when he woke up, but I didn’t move. But normally I’m incapable of not reacting when he touches me, so I wasn’t really fully awake. Just aware.”

He looked at me thoughtfully, like he was trying to come up with an explanation. “You have been very aware of things happening that you can’t see lately. Maybe this has to do with that?”

I shrugged my shoulders. “I dunno. When were you gonna tell me you can see demons all the time now?” I asked, trying to fake outrage to make him worry.

“I was gonna tell you, princess. I’m still getting used to it. Do you know how hard it is to keep a straight face when you see some little demon riding around on someone’s shoulder like it’s their pet dragon? I’m trying my best to keep it together right now. You always amplify things, too. Maybe I was worried you were going to make me hear them too.” He laughed as he said it. He just wanted to give me a hard time.

“Okay, you can make it up to me,” I said, cutting my eyes over at him like I was irritated with him. He raised an eyebrow at me.

“At some point, once I get a handle on how exactly I borrow everyone’s gifts, I’m gonna need to see this for myself,” I said, grinning at him.

“Deal.”

“Now answer my original question. Did you leave your phone playing?”

He shook his head no. “No, I’ve listened to the recordings of you playing so much that they started playing on their own now when I come here. I like it. Makes it nicer,” he said. I couldn’t help my smile. “The bigger question, I think, is why you’re here, princess. Not that I mind, but this is definitely new.”

As soon as he asked the question, the scene in front of us changed. His darkness faded away to reveal the very familiar path, in front of the very

1/3

familiar house. I smiled at Ivan, taking his hand, and leading him to the house. “You’re in for a treat, Squish.”

We walked into the house, hearing the familiar song my dad was playing while he waited for us. Ivan looked down at me skeptically as we walked into the room where my dad was. As the song ended, he said, “I know this is a little strange, Ivan, but I needed to talk to both of you and this saved me some time. I’ve joined a new aerial acrobatics team and we have practice later.

I’m on a time schedule,” my dad said as he turned to face us.

I laughed as I went to hug him, leaving Ivan still somewhat stunned and slightly confused. I turned to look at Ivan and as soon as he saw me standing next to my dad, he figured it out. “You’re Sephie’s dad,” he said. “You look like him, princess.”

My dad looked down at me, raising an eyebrow as he studied my face. “I think her mother helped way more than I did on her looks, but I’ll take the compliment anyway. I plan to tell everyone about this, in fact,” he said, grinning at me.

“Clearly, I got my sense of humor from him, though,” I said, laughing.

“It’s one of my best traits,” my dad said.

“Hers too,” Ivan added.

“Why did you need to see both of us this time?” I asked.

“Well, now that things are happening a little faster and you guys are getting more information, I can finally tell you a little more.

I’m here to offer a little clarity about everything. Granted, you’ve all had quite a bit to take in, but you’re all handling it better than we ever could’ve expected,” he said.

“I think it’s because we have each other,” I said, smiling at Ivan. He gave me a wink, his sly grin stretching across his face.

“You’re not wrong there, peanut. You’re all starting to realize how you each fit into this puzzle. That’s why I’m here. Poor Stephen is still unsure about his gift, even with Lena’s explanation. He’s still fighting to believe he’s good enough. You two will be very good for him in the next few weeks. Lena was right. We’ve all been worried about him for a while.”

“Worried about him why?” Ivan asked.

“He almost gave in to his demon. We weren’t sure he was going to be able to hold out long enough to discover his gift. You guys haven’t seen his inner turmoil because he’s so good at hiding everything. He’s been struggling for a very long time. It’s why his bloodlust is comparable to Adrik’s. It’s a release for him. A way to get rid of some of the evil he’s been carrying around with him for so long.”

“But Sephie gave all of that to his sister’s right? Should we still be worried about him?” Ivan asked. I found his concern to be very touching.

“He’s much better now, yes. He’s just struggling to believe he can do it. Because his gift isn’t as obvious as everyone else’s, he

still believes Sephie did most of it. It was him, from start to finish. You technically held onto his memories for him, but you were only a battery for him, much like you are for Misha. What you really did was help him package it all up very neatly so he could give it back to them. The guys all helped, as they can send power to you, but not Stephen yet. He knew, without knowing, that he needed you as a power source. The rest of it was him. He just doesn't know it yet."

"Does he need that kind of juice every time?" I asked.

My dad laughed. "No, peanut. Like Misha, he's going to learn to do it on his own, without you. You just offer clarity for them right now. You're the calming force they need to be able to concentrate. Just like Ivan and Adrik and that for you."

I glanced at Ivan, who looked surprised. "I actually just said this to Adrik last right. You two are always the best about taking new things in stride. It helps me do the same."

"I think you're underestimating your role in it, princess. I think you share your ability to go with the flow with the two of us. I think we're just more connected than the others. At least for now," Ivan said.

"He's right, peanut. Ivan and Adrik are more connected to you than the others and will always remain so. Although your connection with all of them is only going to grow stronger. But those two are connected to you in ways that the others aren't."

Ivan snapped his fingers, pointing at me. "Called it."

King of the Underworld by RJ Kane

Chapter 407

407

Sephie

My dad laughed at Ivan. He continued, “you’ll always have the deepest connection with Adrik. That’s how you two are able to communicate without words now. That’s going to continue to get stronger the more you practice. But you also have a deeper connection with Ivan than the rest of them. You’ve spent more lifetimes with Ivan than you have with the others. There’s a familiarity with him that you don’t have with the others. It’s what helped you see through his gruff exterior when you first met him.

He might’ve made you nervous, but some part of him felt familiar to you. It’s the same for Adrik. He’s felt closer to Ivan faster than the others. Because you three have spent the most time together.”

Ivan chuckled. “I’ve never had a woman see through me as quickly as she did.” “It happens to be one of her many gifts, but it’s also because her soul recognized yours. You two have a special bond, made stronger over each lifetime you spend together.”

“You told me last time that my eyes are a warning system. Do you know why they swirl? Like they can’t pick a color to stick to?” I asked.

My dad chuckled. “They can’t pick a color because you can’t pick an emotion, peanut. You’ve been right all along that each color coincides with an emotion. The white is the most shocking because you struggle the most with your fear, but you’re slowly learning to get a handle on it, with help from all of them. The newest color is unique and a new way to confirm universal truths.

It’s going to come in handy in certain situations. Battista was right about your demon eyes, too. Actually, Stephen was right to

name them that to begin with. Your eyes go black because your demon is stepping forward. The difference between you and others, though, is that you control your demon, not the other way around. Essentially, you've forced your demon to use its powers for good, which is somewhat hilarious to think about. You gained the demon," he said, looking down at me, like he would if he were bragging about my scholastic achievements.

"So she was being serious when she said the best way to defeat your demons was to make friends with them?" Ivan asked.

"She was serious. She didn't know she was serious, to be fair, but she was serious. Battista said he didn't understand how it worked, because he's never seen it happen. But Sephie isn't the only one that can do it. Just like she's not the only one that can walk between Heaven and Hell," he said, looking at Ivan with one eyebrow raised.

I grinned at Ivan, knowing he was putting it together in his head. I looked at my dad, knowing he would understand my question.

"I was right about Adrik too, then?" He nodded his head. "You're right about pretty much everything, peanut."

"Not about Armando. He got past me," I said.

"He was a special case. His demon was running the show, but it was also smart enough to step back when Armando was around you, which is why you missed it. It's also what made Armando appear as morose as he did. He wasn't aware of things that happened when the demon was in control. That's what you pick up on when watching people, when you get bad feelings about them. It's their demons you're detecting. But sometimes if a demon is savvy enough, like in the case of Armando, they can get

past you. That's also partly why he was so savage with you. Armando was scared of you, but his demon was equally as scared of you once he saw your black eyes. Now that you have Stephen, that fear is going to increase on any demon you encounter.

Which is why Ivan's gift evolved to be able to see them at any point not just when they consume the person. Andrei will help with that, too, since he's the balance. He sees good, Ivan sees evil. You two will figure out whether a person is ruled by good or evil by looking at them, which will confirm what Adrik can learn by touching them. He won't always be able to touch someone, so you two are backups to that."

As he explained this to me, it suddenly hit me what needed to happen to Armando. I looked at my dad, who had an amused expression on his face. He pointed to Ivan. "Show him," he said.

"Show him what?" I asked, confused.

"Your eyes." Ivan stepped closer to see as my dad explained, "Adrik didn't want to call them purple because he didn't think she liked that, but as a man who really doesn't care about the nuances of colors, purple seems accurate to me. It means it's a universal truth."

"Andrei is going to be so happy," Ivan said..

"Shut up. That's what Adrik said too," I said, laughing.

"What were you thinking about, princess? What made that happen?" Ivan asked.

1/3

"Stephen needs to break Armando. You have to help me convince Adrik not to kill him."

He scoffed. "That's easier said than done, but I'll help. I have to admit that I want him dead just as much as he does."

“Maybe you’ll both get some consolation when I remind you that once broken, the soul and the demon are stuck together in the body until the body dies. Neither are in control. Both are in their own Hell for the duration. The soul will undergo its own torture, just as the demon will. It’s not pretty, but it’s not meant to be. It’s meant to be a lesson that the soul never forgets ever again.

Armando’s soul will get a chance at clearing some of the awful karma it’s collected in this lifetime if Stephen breaks him. If Adrik kills him, the soul will never have to endure that lesson and will likely make the same mistakes over and over again. You’re giving his soul a second chance, yes, but you’re also saving future generations from repeating things done in this lifetime that should never be repeated.”

I very clearly heard Andrei’s voice in my head. I looked at Ivan, then to my dad to see if either one of them heard it as well. My dad smiled at me. “You heard him?” he asked.

“Heard who?” Ivan asked.

“Andrei,” I said. “I just heard his voice.”

“They’re worried about you because you’re both still sleeping. Adrik asked Andrei to look in your head to make sure you’re okay.

You’re both mumbling in your sleep. Side effect of talking to both of you at the same time. You can tell Adrik you’re fine without leaving, peanut.”

“I can?”

He laughed, but nodded his head. “Concentrate on what you can feel from him then think about pushing your words to him, the same way you push your thoughts and emotions to him. He’ll hear you.”

“Oh, this is gonna freak him out,” I said, giggling. “Don’t worry, my love. I’m fine. So is Squish.” I waited to see if I could hear his

answer. My dad watched, a small smile on his face. I couldn't help but giggle again. "He doesn't believe he just heard me. This is going to be fun."

"Wait 'til you figure out you can do it with Ivan too," my dad said, grinning at both of us. "Perks of your connection. You just haven't figured it out yet. Consider it my early Christmas present." Ivan's eyes got wide as he looked to me, just as I looked at him.

"We're going to be so much trouble," I said under my breath.

My dad laughed. "You two should go now. I've kept you here almost the entire day. You'll need to catch everyone else up to speed, as well. Ivan, Sephie has helped all of you realize your gifts, but Viktor is reluctant. He also knows that Sephie is helping everyone realize their gifts, so he's avoiding her."

"I knew it!" I said, slightly irritated about it.

My dad laughed. "He's scared. Rightfully so, but he's also ready. He just doesn't think he is. You and Adrik can help him the same way Sephie has helped the rest of you. I'm not completely convinced she's going to be able to help him realize his gift and I'm not just saying that because I bet on you and Adrik." He looked to me, before he said, "but I do owe you a high five for getting Stephen in before the end of the month. You really saved me on that one."

Ivan looked amused. "Clearly her sense of humor is not all she got from you," he said.

"Chip off the ol' block, this one," my dad said as he put his arm around my shoulders. He extended his hand to Ivan. "It feels weird to thank you for taking my job, but I know she's in very capable hands with you. I'm still around, watching, but now I'm

doing even less than I was before. But thank you, for always watching over her.”

“I wouldn’t have it any other way,” Ivan said.

My dad turned me to face him, wrapping his arms around me. “We’ll see each other again soon, peanut. Lena wanted me to tell you thank you. She finally got to talk to that cranky stubborn bastard because of you,” he said, laughing.

“That makes me happy. He needed that. And thank you, Dad, for always being here to provide insight,” I said. I took a step back from him and everything faded to black. Ivan disappeared too and I knew I was back to my own darkness. I could feel Adrik’s hand on my cheek, making my entire

2/3

body feel warm enough again. “Mhm there’s the warmth I love,” I thought before opening my eyes to see him kneeling in front of me, a look of concern on his face. I assured him I was fine, apologizing for not realizing the time. “Your next meeting is waiting for you. He’s irritated that you’re late, for the record. Go. I’ll come down after you’re done with this meeting and fill you in. Especially since you’re wondering how I knew that,” I said, grinning at him.

King of the Underworld by RJ Kane

Chapter 408

408

Sephle

I had enough time for a quick shower before Adrik was done with his meetings for the day. I was deep in thought during my shower, thinking about everything I'd learned, along with everything that had happened lately. As I turned the water off, I heard Adrik's voice, very clearly in my head. He was wondering what I was thinking about; he could feel my emotions going crazy "Jesus, she's all over the place," he thought. Since I'd never seen it happen, I got out of the shower to see if my eyes were swirling. They were. Now I understand why he's so mesmerized by this. The colors of my eyes were never still, never doing the same thing twice.

I tried to take a breath. I didn't feel out of control, but Adrik was becoming on more sensitive to me lately, so clearly he was feeling everything I was feeling at the moment. Instead of continuing to stew over everything in my head, I decided to experiment on Ivan. He was still in the penthouse, along with the Wonder Twins and Stephen. I had no idea if it would work, but tried to ask him a question while I was still in the bedroom getting ready.

"Do you think we should tell the others that you have a stronger connection with me or do you think they'll be jealous?" I thought about asking Ivan the same way I got Adrik to hear my thoughts. I wasn't sure if it would work, but I heard his answer shortly after.

"I think we should wait on that, princess. I also think we should wait on telling them this is a thing that's happening now. I

understand why Boss wanted to wait to tell everyone about your eyes. This is really fun.”

“We are in so much trouble, Squish.”

I walked down the hallway to the kitchen, laughing to myself about being able to talk to Ivan as well as Adrik. The guys were standing in the kitchen, waiting for me.

“You look better again, spider monkey,” Andrei said. “You got zapped worse this time, I think. I don’t know how you fight it. It sucks.”

doesn’t feel as bad as the first time when Adrik and I both got zapped.

“I think I’m getting used to it, so apparently it doesn’t feel as bad as it looks or when it happened with Misha. Those two were the worst,” I said, hugging his waist.

“The sh itty part is that it only happens to us once and it happens to her all the time,” Misha said.

“It’s not that sh itty, my adorable Russian guardian. It just makes me tired. It doesn’t kick my as s. And if that’s what it takes to help you guys, then I’ gladly do it. Although, I have to say, you should all be jealous of Squish. It took him a really long time to get zapped. I didn’t even help him on this one. He just did it. He’s totally superhuman.”

“You got a new level?” Stephen asked.

Ivan nodded. “After you broke your sisters, it started happening. It went from being able to only see a person’s demon when they were completely consumed by it, or right before that happened, to now being able to see the denons all the time. Like I can see them riding around on people looking for ways to get in. It looks like some people have a pet demon riding around on their shoulder,” he said, trying not to laugh at his explanation.

“How do you keep a straight face,” Stephen asked, completely serious.

“It’s so hard, man. So hard.”

“We should go downstairs. Adrik’s meeting just left. His last meeting had to reschedule, so he’s free. We have much to discuss,

gentlemen,” I said, grabbing Misha’s arm and walking toward the door.

Once we were on the elevator, Andrei asked, “you both were talking to your dad, weren’t you?”

I nodded my head. “I heard you in my head, but you disappeared quickly. Not sure if it was my doing or my dad’s doing. You saw us?” I asked.

*I could see the house and see you and Ivan standing inside talking to someone else, but I never saw him completely. I just figured it had to be him, since none of us could feel anything out of the ordinary from you. You felt like you normally do when you’re happily sleeping.” he said.

1/3

408

“That method of talking to me is much easier on you guys than the way that Lena first came to me. She still feels bad about that, for the record. She’s still apologizing for it. She didn’t realize we were all so connected or that it would send my emotions into turmoil.”

As we walked into Adrik’s office, he was already looking at the door, like he was waiting on me to walk through it at that exact moment. I smiled to myself, knowing it’s because he was waiting on me. His expression softened immediately when he saw me.

He stood up from his desk, closing the distance between us quickly. “I’ve missed you so much,” he thought as I felt his warm hands on my cheeks, pulling me closer to him. His lips pressed against mine. I felt the pull in my chest, showing me just how

much he missed me. It only took a second and he lost the tiny bit of control he had. His lips parted, his tongue demanding entry into my mouth. He devoured me with his kiss, his passion for me making my knees weak.

“You really did miss me.” I thought as he stepped back from me, pulling me with him toward one of the couches. He raised his eyebrow, looking at me with a surprised look on his face, but he didn’t say a word. “It’s our newest trick I’ll tell you about it later, but keep it quiet for now. This one is special to you and Ivan.” He nodded discreetly as he sat down on the couch, pulling me into his lap.

“So, what valuable insight did your father have for us this time? And how did you both get to see him?” Adrik asked.

“I don’t know about that one. You’ll have to ask him, but he did say he was saving time by talking to both of us. He’s a very busy man,” I said, trying to sound very serious. It was very difficult to sound serious about aerial acrobatic training.

“Very busy,” Ivan said, snickering.

I took a deep breath and started to explain everything he’d told me and Ivan leaving out the part where I could communicate with Ivan and Adrik telepathically. For now.

Before I told them about what needed to happen with Armando, I decided to show them how I came to that decision. “So, Bubba, you’re about to be really happy. My eyes did decide on a new color recently.” Andrei looked excited. “Purple or orange?” he asked.

I thought about what I was sure needed to be done about Armando, then looked at Adrik first. It was obvious that they’d changed to their new color by his expression. I showed everyone else. They all jumped up to get a closer look.

“That’s so weird, but so cool,” Andrei said.

“What emotion does this one represent?” Stephen asked.

“I wouldn’t say it’s an emotion on this one. This one is confirmation of universal truths. It first happened when Battista told Adrik he was the King of all the Underworlds.”

Adrik caught on that I was leading up to something else, though. “That’s not what you’re thinking about now, though. You weren’t worried when you thought about that. You’re worried now.”

Ivan said, “only because she’s not sure how you’re going to take what she’s about to tell you. But for the record, I agree with her.

Just let her explain it fully and I think you’ll agree with her too.”

I felt Adrik’s arms tighten around me as he braced himself for what I was going to say. He really did hate surprises. “You can’t kill

Armando. Stephen needs to break him the same way he broke his sisters.”

I immediately felt his anger levels rise to insane levels.

King of the Underworld by RJ Kane

Chapter 409

409

Adrik

I've never wanted to kill someone as much as I've wanted to kill Armando and now she's telling me I can't? I usually agree with her on everything, but this is going to be the one time I definitely do not agree. He's going to suffer. More than he already has.

Then I'm going to watch the life drain from his face.

"I know you want to kill him. In fact, I love you more because you want to kill him. But let me explain." I heard her voice in my head once again. I glanced around at the guys, who could tell something was happening, but they weren't sure what. They all looked slightly on edge, like they were waiting to jump in. Sephie had turned to face me, her eyes were completely black, but she was smiling at me.

"Let her explain before you completely explode," Ivan said. I looked to him, not completely understanding how he knew I was as angry as I was. "She had to get angry to get you to think. We can feel her response to you. If it went anyone else, I'd suggest we all leave, but my money's on her, not gonna lie."

I glanced around the room. Stephen's eyes were wide. "This is so weird," he said. "How does she not kill everyone?" he asked almost in a half-whisper.

Sephie giggled, her eyes still focused on me. "Let me explain?" she asked. I nodded once. I tried to calm down, but I still felt like I was ready to rip someone apart. She shifted again in my lap, so she was straddling me. I could bear her dirty thoughts as she did, which helped my anger subside, but only slightly. She placed her hands on my chest, saying, "I know you want to call him. I

wanted to as well, but there's a better way. If Stephen breaks him, he'll spend the remainder of his life being tortured in the worst way possible. Worse than what you can do to him. Armando was a healthy man. He's not that old. He still has a long life ahead of him. If Stephen breaks him he's going to spend every single day for the rest of that long life in complete and utter torture. He'll be locked inside that body with the demon, either of them having control, and only having each other to torture. If you kill him, his soul comes back and he makes the same mistakes over and over again. Which means innocent people will die at his hands, whether directly or indirectly. Don't think of it like saving his soul. Think of it like saving theirs. If Stephen breaks him, he'll have to endure a very difficult lesson designed to make sure he makes better choices the next time around.

As she was talking, her eyes faded from black to the new purple. I felt my anger subside as I watched the colors change. This might be my favorite color transition.

"Um, Seph, I hate to be a Debbie Downer over here, but how do we know his demon is even still there?" Stephen asked.

"It is, but Ivan will be able to see it. If he can't, then I just have to show it my eyes. That will bring it out. It's scared of me too."

"NO." While my anger was starting to subside, it surged again at the thought of Sephie having to be in the same room as

Armando. There's absolutely no way I would let her see him ever again. I would figure out another way to find out that

information. She had glanced at Stephen briefly, but looked back at me when she felt my anger rising again. She had an amused

look on her face that quickly turned to wonderment. "Blink, love," she thought, grinning at me. I didn't have time to wonder what

she meant before her lips crushed into mine, her desire overtaking everything else. She was quick with her kiss, but it was enough that my anger was back to a manageable level “I’ll tell you that one later, too.”

“Okay, so Ivan will be able to see it. Maybe mention me if you have to. Show it a picture, maybe. Whatever. It’s still there. It is, however, smarter than the average demon. It knew enough to step back whenever Armando was around me. That’s how he got past me. That’s also why we all think he’s a fucking moron. He’s not aware of anything that happens when the demon is in control,” Sephie said.

That makes everything make so much more sense.

Sephie pressed her lips to mine once more, her eyes changing to the deep blue that meant she loved me before turning back around to face everyone else. She took both of my arms and wrapped them around her waist as she crossed her legs in between mine. She glanced at Stephen, who still looked skeptical and mostly worried. “Don’t worry, Yoden, I’ll help you. You can do it You did it three times already. You just don’t believe it was you. I was only your battery. Actually, we were all your battery. Same as when Misha uses me and Andrei. You just needed a power boost. The rest was you.”

He thought for a moment, then looked at her. “I guess if I have to have a test subject, he’s the best one. There’s really no way to fuck this one up.”

She laughed. “You’re not going to fuck it up at all, Yoden. You haven’t spent years studying how best to mind fuck someone for nothing.”

Once we were alone later, I asked her about everything we didn’t discuss in front of the guys. “How can I hear you in my head

now?”

409

She grinned at me. “Really, it was the next logical step, I think. It’s not like we haven’t been reading each other’s minds already.

We just have sound now. Although, I am now painfully aware that I affect you when I’m not with you. I heard you say ‘Jesus, she’s all over the place earlier when I was in the shower, thinking about everything that’s happened lately. Yeah, so, sorry about that,” she said.

I chuckled. “Don’t be sorry. I like being able to feel you. That’s what worried me today. It’d been too long since I felt anything from you. Same for Andrei and Misha. They came to check on you at the same time I was beginning to worry about you.”

“We forget that time is different when I talk to my dad. I didn’t mean to worry you,” she said. “I think it took longer because Ivan was with me this. time, too.”

You said being able to talk to me was special to me and him. You can do it with him now too?”

She nodded. “Only you two. You were right when you said you and he have a stronger connection than the others. Your connections are going to remain that way. His won’t be quite as strong as yours, but it will be more than the other guys. I think the connection between you and Ivan will get stronger as well. We’ve spent the most time together over lifetimes. The connection gets stronger each time.”

“How do you do it?” I asked.

“Do what? Talk to you?” I nodded. “Same way I push my emotions and thoughts to you. Just concentrate on pushing the words to me instead.”

“Like so?” I thought. She grinned. “Like so,” she said, pressing her lips to mine.

“And you think Ivan and I will be able to do this as well?”

“Among other things,” she said, her smile stretching across her face. “I’m not the only one with demon eyes now.”

“Shut up.”

She laughed. “That’s why I told you to blink earlier before I kissed you. I saw yours change. My dad literally just told me about it today and it already happened. You’re like in the gifted program. You’re clearly an over-achiever,” she said.

“How?”

“So, Battista was right in that the black eyes are a warning to other demons that I own them, but he was missing part of it. He’s apparently never seen it happen before, but you can do it and Ivan can do it. Remember my dad told me we could all walk between Heaven and Hell?” she asked. I nodded. “The difference between us and everyone else is that we control our demons when they step forward. We’re forcing our demons to use their powers for good. It’s virtually unheard of, which is why Battista didn’t have all the details about it. The black eyes are a warning to other demons that we know all their secrets. My dad did warn me that now that we have Stephen, the fears going to increase tremendously once other demons see us. They apparently get aggressive when they’re afraid.”

“And this is something Ivan can do too?”

“Well, not yet, I don’t think. You figured it out before he did, even though he found out about it before you did. See? Overachiever,” she said, grinning at me. “Although I’m not sure yet how you figured it out.”

“I’m not either. I was so angry at the thought of you seeing Armando again, thinking about ways to keep that from happening. If

you needed to show him your black eyes, I thought there must be a way to make it happen with me so you would never have to see him again.”

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She chewed on her bottom lip as she thought about what to say next. “It’s not dissimilar to how it started with me. I was also insanely angry the first few times it happened with me. It took me a while to figure out how to control it, but it still sneaks up on me quite often,” she said.

4

Adrik

I felt Sephie stir next to me. I knew it was morning. I did not want it to be morning. I knew I didn’t have anything important until early afternoon, so I could stay in bed with her for once. I didn’t even open my eyes; I just pulled her closer to me, pulling her leg over mine. “I’m not getting up yet. You’re not allowed to leave yet, either,” I thought. I heard her quietly giggle as she snuggled in closer to me. She pressed her body completely against mine. I heard her sigh as she relaxed once more, falling back asleep.

It was sometime later when I woke up again. She was still asleep next to me, her body completely tangled with mine. I heard

Ivan’s voice, but I heard it in Sephie’s head. This is weird.

“Princess, are you two okay? You never sleep this long, but nobody is brave enough to come check on you.”

I couldn’t help but laugh. I was thankful they weren’t going to come in to check, as I hugged Sephie’s naked body a little tighter. I

concentrated on Ivan, trying to push my words to him the same way Sephie had shown me with her. “She’s fine, Ivan. It’s my

fault. I didn’t want to wake up this morning.” I wasn’t sure it had worked, but I heard his reply a few moments later.

“You got new level zapped, Boss. Don’t think I didn’t see your eyes change last night.” I could tell he was laughing when he thought that.

“Right. Because being able to talk to you when you’re G od knows where is completely normal, too,” I thought. I could hear him laughing. “We’ll be out

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I pulled Sephie closer, running my hands through her hair. She made her coking noises, snuggling into me even more. “I like it best when you sleep in with me. The guys try their best, but nobody keeps me warm like you do,” she said. She finally opened her eyes, revealing my favorite deep blue.

“It’s the thoughts you make me think. It warms me up. They don’t have the same thoughts. Because they know I would kill them for thinking about you the same way I think about you,” I said.

She laughed loudly. “Gross.”

I couldn’t help but laugh at her response. “Come, we should get up. The guys are worried. Ivan checked on you once already.”

“Ivan came in here?” she asked, surprised.

“No. I could hear him in your head. He was asking if you were okay. He said none of them were brave enough to come in here, which I appreciate.”

“You heard him in my head?”

I nodded. “I answered him, since you didn’t wake up. You were right.

Apparently he and I can communicate with each other the same way you and I do. He also caught my eyes changing last night. He said I got new level zapped when I told him it was me that didn’t want to wake up this morning.”

“He’s right. I think you did. I’m not surprised he caught your eyes changing, either. He’s very quick to notice the newest weird

things now,” she said. “Poor Viktor is going to be terrified once he learns you and Ivan can do it too.”

I sighed. “I don’t know what to do about Viktor. I think you’re right. I think he’s avoiding spending time with you.”

“He is. I’m not sure I’m going to be the one to help him. My dad said it needs to be you and Ivan. My dad keeps assuring me that

Viktor isn’t scared of me, but he’s terrified of finding out what he can do. He knows I’m the one that’s helped everyone else

unlock their gifts and he doesn’t want to know what his is yet.”

“How do we help him then? I don’t know the first thing about how you’ve helped everyone else. You just do it, it seems. How are

we going to do that for him?” I asked, thinking of how Ivan and I could possibly get Viktor to realize his gift.

“That, my love, is the million-dollar question,” she said, climbing over me to get out of bed. “One that I do not have the answer to just yet.”

Viktor walked into my office that afternoon. “I heard from the journalist. He said he has the information we need. Do we still keep up the charade that Chen is the one he’s been talking to this whole time? Did Battista tell him wh he’s really been helping?”

I thought for a few moments. “I’ll call to confirm with Battista, but my first instinct is to keep up with the charade. Chen seems to enjoy it and I’d still like to keep us as anonymous as possible.”

Viktor chuckled. “Chen loves it. Who knew that kid would enjoy pretending to be somebody else so much? I’ll make the arrangements.”

Once he walked out of the office, Ivan walked in the office, closing the door behind him. “That looks serious,” I said, watching him close my office door.

“Eh, I’d rather not be overheard and I don’t know how I feel about it looking like we’re in here staring at each other without saying anything yet. We have to ease into this one,” he said, laughing as he sat down. “What’s on your mind?”

“Sephie talked to you about Viktor?” he asked.

“Briefly, yes. When we woke up this morning. I had noticed that he’s been avoiding spending any time with her after she brought it up. He always sends somebody else. I think she might be starting to take it personally,” I said.

“She’s definitely taking it personally, but she’s also trying to not let it bother her. Her dad confirmed that he’s been avoiding her.

She was not the least bit surprised. But her dad also said it might be up to the two of us to help him figure it out, Ivan said.

“That’s what Sephie told me this morning. The bigger question is how the fuck do we do that? She’s the one that’s done it for everyone else. Even she doesn’t know how she’s done it. She just does.”

Ivan was thoughtful for a few moments. “I think we should have a conversation with her. She’s inadvertently nailed everyone’s gifts before they’ve gotten them. I think she was the first one to say that Stephen could mind fuck someone. She nailed me being able to see demons. She also hyped Andrei up enough that he finally started to trust himself and trust what he was seeing.

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King of the Underworld by RJ Kane

Chapter 410

410

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