

## King of the Underworld Chapter 461 - 470

### Chapter 461

Sephte

The mayor and Adrik continued discussing a few things, mostly options on how to meet in the future. Doug asked, “how long are you planning on staying tonight? It would be easy if you could meet Eric tonight” He glanced around the room once again, then turned back to Adrik. “I haven’t seen Henry. He should be here, but I haven’t seen him yet. It would work out well if you could talk to my district attorney without Henry seeing”

Adrik looked at Ivan. “Have you seen Henry yet?” Ivan shook his head no. Adrik then looked at Battista. He didn’t need to say anything. Battista simply said, “leave it to me,” and left. Doug and Adrik both chuckled, continuing on with their conversation.

It wasn’t two minutes later and Battista came back with Eric, the district attorney, in tow. While they were walking the remaining distance to us, I asked Misha if he could see if he could find out where Henry was. I told him to take Stephen’s place just behind Adrik if he needed a boost, but I suddenly had a nagging feeling about Henry’s whereabouts.

Judging by what little I knew of Henry, he wasn’t the type to turn down any sort of extra attention. Events like this one always came with plenty of extra attention for important people. It didn’t make sense for him to not be here, unless there was something more important for him to take care of

While Adrik was talking to Eric and Doug, I felt Misha move closer to us. He gently tugged on the sleeve of my dress, asking for

my hand that was resting on the back of Adrik's shoulder. I held it out for him, never turning to look at him. Eric, Doug, and Battista were none the wiser to what was happening behind us, It didn't take Misha very long to find Henry. It was the moment Misha had been fearing for months now. We caught Henry with his pants down. Literally. I felt Misha trying so hard not to laugh and it made it even more difficult for me to keep a straight face. I finally had to turn my head, trying to hide my face in Adrik's shoulder. I caught sight of Misha, who was still behind us and we both almost lost it.

I somehow, miraculously, managed to get myself under control. When Henry was brought up again in the conversation, I innocently asked if he was married, suggesting that maybe his spouse was taking longer or perhaps ill. Adrik knew something was happening. He knew I didn't ask questions that I didn't already know the answer to.

"He is married, but his wife is here. I spoke to her earlier," Eric said.

"Then perhaps he has a girlfriend," I said. I said it in a way to make them think I was joking, but Adrik knew we'd caught him participating in extracurricular activities.

It was clear that Eric and Doug at least suspected something as well. They both looked at each other when I made the comment about the girlfriend. I picked up on it, asking them, "do you know who she is or do you only suspect?" They both looked at me, wide-eyed. "Now, now, gentlemen. This isn't the first time anyone here has heard of indiscretions of married men. However, judging by your reaction to my earlier statement, made mostly in jest, you not only know who this other woman is, but she's someone of some importance."

Doug looked at me, then looked to Adrik. "Is she always so observant?"

Adrik looked at me, a small smile on his face. "More, usually. She's been quiet tonight. But we all know she's right. You can come clean on who the woman is or we can find out later."

Eric sighed. "She's one of the representatives for the city. Henry is trying to use her to get rid of Doug, as well as keep his job.

They started the affair when Henry started to really believe he could get rid of Doug."

"Rude," I said.

"I assume his wife is none the wiser? What of her husband?" Adrik asked.

"His wife is clueless. Her wife is also clueless," Eric said, smirking.

"Well, that's a plot twist none of us were expecting. Suddenly no man wants to chastise Henry for making the lesbian switch teams. I did not expect that from him. High fives will abound once this gets out," I said.

They all laughed loudly, which of course, caused everyone in the ballroom to look toward us. Before my panic could get any worse, the guys moved in closer, blocking me from view, while Adrik tightened his hold on me. I silently thanked all of them.

"You wouldn't be wrong in any other case," Eric said, still laughing. "But apparently she has a bit of a reputation. She will apparently sleep with anything she thinks will get her more power and clout."

"Her mother must be so proud," I said, causing another round of laughter.

"The question is, gentlemen, can we use this lovely nugget of information to our advantage? Who is her wife?"

"Her wife is a teacher, but she comes from a wealthy family, which is why the representative married her," Doug said.

I scoffed. "That's easy, then. Tell the wife, take away the family money and the rep goes away. Make it public that it was Henry and she stops helping him because essentially he's the one that's ruined her."

“I f\*\*king love you, princess,” Ivan told me silently.

Doug and Eric mulled over what I’d just said, then they both looked at Adrik I appreciation. Eric looked to me, asking. “do you need a job?”

“Sorry, boys, I’m available for consultations only,” I said, smiling at them.

Eric handed Adrik his card anyway. “If she ever changes her mind, I could use someone who’s this good at strategy.”

Adrik chuckled, but he still took the card. “I’m not sure you could afford her full-time, but maybe we can work something out on a case-by-case basis,” he said, smirking at them both.

Battista was enjoying this conversation as well. He said to me, in Italian, “I would like you all to accompany me to every event like this that I attend. I know you’ve been working on things that cannot be mentioned in mixed company all night, as well as this.

I have to admit, I’ve never had so much fun at a so ul-su cking fundraiser before tonight,” he said, winking at me.

I responded, still in Italian, that I was happy I could be of service and that we did need to have a discussion at some point, but

likely not here. He nodded his head, excusing himself from the conversation.

Doug and Eric remained for a few more minutes,

before excusing themselves as well, leaving us mostly alone once more.

Adrik looked at me, then glanced at Misha. “What did you two see?” he asked.

I quickly shared the movie clip that Misha and I

saw of Henry with his pants down with the representative on her knees in front of him. I would not have pegged her as a lesbian

watching her do that.

He laughed. “Her definition of lesbian is very different from mine,” he said.

Finally, Misha and I were able to laugh about it. Misha

had shared it with Andrei already, so I showed Stephen while Adrik showed

Ivan. Misha and Andrei teamed up to push it to

Viktor. Even he got a laugh out of it.

“It was my worst nightmare finally realized,” Misha said.

“At least it wasn’t someone you really know. Like you weren’t looking for your sister and you found that instead,” I said, still laughing at the whole situation.

“Oh dear God, I’m never going looking for my sister now,” Misha said, his eyes the size of dinner plates. It caused another round of laughter from everyone.

Strangely, it meant that no one else approached Adrik to talk to him. He looked busy. Either that, or every single person in the room had already come up to him. It could go either way, really. Whatever the reason, we enjoyed a few moments of just us, laughing at the high strangeness that seemed to be with us wherever we went now.

King of the Underworld by RJ Kane

Chapter 462

King of the Underworld

462

Sophie

We ended up staying for a little while longer. We decided we wanted to see how long it would take Henry to show up. Of course, there were beta made Even Vitally and Battista pot in on it. They'd been boxy making their men bets from the sidelines the entire night already

"Vitaliy, can I just tell you that I love you even more now that I know you enjoy doing this as well?" I said to him, in Italian, so Battista could also understand. Battista was quickly endearing himself to all of us as well. We still needed to have a conversation about him warning us next time he needed our services, but otherwise, he was proving to be extremely helpful to in. I could see why Vitaliy fostered that relationship over the years.

He smirked at me, raising his glass toward me. I caught myself thinking about how much I enjoyed having Vitaliy around, which is something I never thought I would say. The relationship between Vitaliy and Adrik was quickly approaching a normal father and son relationship as well. I was happy he decided to stay in the city a little longer. At this point, it felt like we could use all the help we could get.

Henry finally made an appearance at the fundraiser. Adrik won the bet pool, calling the precise minute that Henry would show up.

The representa showed up not five minutes after him, looking quite flushed and somewhat messy, which of course, meant that all of us snickered as she walked by. Even Eric caught our attention from across the ballroom, giving us a not so subtle nod as we

all saw both of them arrive almost at the same time  
Even though we were enjoying their arrival, I felt Ivan stiffen when he saw Henry walk past us. He shared what he was seeing with me and Adrik. We could clearly see that not only had his demon found an entry point, but it was now running the show. It was now the shadow behind Henry's face.

I grabbed Stephen's hand, sharing the information with him. He looked around, then leaned in toward me so he could say quietly, "is it wrong that I'm looking forward to that one? He's been on my shit list ever since he decided he was smarter than us."

I laughed quietly. "I don't think that's wrong, Yoden. I think you are the only person that can knock him back a few pegs. In the best way possible," I said. His smile beamed at me as he squeezed my hand, effectively telling me how much he loved me.

Henry surprised us by approaching us shortly after he arrived. We all instinctively tensed when we saw him coming. Battista and Vitally were still standing with us, as well. As he walked toward us, we quickly came up with a strategy for how to handle him.

"I don't think Stephen needs to say anything this time. He's already after us, we don't need to give him another reason right now,

"I said. I tried to send it to everyone at the same time. I wasn't sure if I was that good yet, but I was hoping I would be, just to save time. I saw Andrei reach over and touch Stephen's arm. Stephen looked at me, nodding once. He'd clearly gotten the message.

"That was impressive, princess. I also agree. I think we make him think he's still got the upper hand," Ivan said.

"Agreed. It's going to make his fall off the pedestal he's put himself on that much sweeter for me," Adrik said. I was thankful for

his contacts. I knew without a doubt that his eyes had just switched to black. His anger was obvious.

I felt Ivan's bubble go up as soon as Henry made it to us. He walked to Battista and Vitaliy first, shaking their hands, making a comment about the length of time it had been since he'd seen either one of them.

"I'm surprised Battista knows Henry. And yet, I'm not surprised either. Is there anyone that man doesn't know?" I thought out loud. I heard a couple of them clear their throats to keep from laughing. After Vitaliy shook Henry's hand, he looked straight at me, his face completely hard and tense. I nodded discreetly, indicating we'd already picked up on it. His face softened immediately and he gave me a wink. I couldn't be sure, but I think he was proud at that moment.

"Everyone look at Vitaliy. Just not at once. He's being a cheeseball. He can't not show how proud he is that we already know something is off with Henry," I told everyone.

They all managed to discreetly glance at Vitaliy. I could feel their amusement at his expression, but Adrik was surprised by it. I cut everyone else off and said to him only, "don't be surprised. He's very proud of you. He just sucks at showing it. That's what

I'm here for. I'm gonna drag it out of him if it's the last thing I do."

Adrik chuckled, leaning over to kiss my cheek quickly before Henry walked up to us. Ivan's bubble was still up, but he had learned how to keep it from cutting me off from everyone, which I appreciated, I could feel Adrik's nausea as he shook Henry's hand, but it was fainter than normal with Ivan being a barrier. I shook his hand as well, hoping I didn't get some massive download when I Touched him I'd already seen way more of him than I ever wanted to tonight.



We exchanged pleasantries and made excruciatingly boring small talk Finally, Henry brought up the muyor. “Any progress with that?” he asked quietly.

“We’re still looking for information. Our source found a few things, but not enough yet. He’s still looking.” Adrik said. “What have you decided on the information on Rica

Henry was surprised at the question. He stammered for a moment, which made it obvious he was trying to lie “I haven’t given it to him yet. I’m not sure I can trust him or the DA. I’m thinking of going around him ”

“Bubba, are you seeing what I’m seeing?” I asked, knowing he was likely also snooping through Henry’s head as he talked.

“Oh yeah. He thinks his switch-hitting girlfriend can help him make the evidence we found on Ricardo fit Boss instead. He’s already given her everything “be told me.

“He gave her everything right away, too. He’s much dumber than I thought he would be,” I responded. “I want to get closer to her, I would be willing to bet she’s playing him for something. I want to know her angle.”

“I completely agree, spider monkey.”

“Going around him to who?” Adrik asked Henry. He already knew the answer. We all did. He just wanted to see if Henry would say it.

“I’ve vetted one of the politicians. She can help us. I trust her,” Henry said, confidently.

“I hope you’ve vetted her thoroughly,” I said, with a hint of sarcasm that the guys picked up on. I could hear them all laughing in my head, but outwardly, not a single one of them cracked a smile.

[E30002]-Duplicate purchase

It caught Henry off-guard. He blushed. "I have. I'm very thorough, he said confidently.

"I would hope so. For her sake. Ricardo is a dangerous man. There's no telling what he's capable of," I said.

"You just made him clench a little, spider monkey," Andrei said, laughing

"Good. That was my hope. I want him a little nervous. Can you see where the switch-hitter is? Now I know I need to get closer to

her. You're coming with me."

"This has been the most fun I've had at one of these functions. In the history of ever."

King of the Underworld by RJ Kane

Chapter 463

King of the Linderworld

463

Sephie

Once Henry left us, I explained that I felt I needed to get closer to Henry's switch-hitter. We caught Battista and Vitally up on the plot twist involving Henry that Misha and I had seen earlier. Battista looked at me, completely ammised. "I can introduce you, if you like."

Adrik bristled immediately. "I don't like that idea."

Vitaliy agreed with Adrik. "I don't either. Sladkaya, you don't need to actually talk to her, do you? You just need to be close to her?"

"Right. I don't need to talk to her. But if Andrei and I can get close to her, we can take a peek and see what we can find out," I said. Battista thought for a moment. I'd never seen him smile as much as he had tonight. He was absolutely gleeful at the events that had transpired so far

"You know a doctor from the hospital, no?" he asked me.

I nodded. "Dr. Williams."

"I need his help. We're going to discuss a new wing for the hospital, but we'll need her input," Battista said. "It'll be obvious if all of you follow me, but Sephie has already been seen with just two of you. Sephie introduces me to the doctor, he and I go to the representative while Sephie stays in the background, but close enough she can get what she needs from the representative."

"We should warn poor Dr. Williams that he's part of our plot," I said.

"Why would we do that? He's getting a new wing out of this plot," Battista said, very matter of factly. I just stood and stared at him

for a moment. He laughed. "Money is a means to an end, Sephie. I will gladly spend it on something that will help the people of the city if it means I can be devious." He grinned at me.

There really is something to this generational wealth thing  
"Ivan and Andrei, go with her," Adrik said. He pulled me closer, kissing my temple. "We'll be close by. You'll be able to see us the whole time," he said quietly.

Battista offered me his arm as we set off to find Dr. Williams. As luck would have it, he wasn't far from the representative. This should be easy.

Ivan showed me and Andrei what he could see as we got closer to the representative. Just like Henry, her demon had gained access and was the shadow behind her face. Unlike Henry, her demon was even more defined and more prominent, which I was beginning to learn meant that it had been running the show for quite some time.

Dr. Williams' face brightened when he saw me approach him. "Hello again, Sephie," he said, smiling warmly at me.

"Dr. Williams, I would like you to meet my dear friend Battista. You're going to be very happy to meet him, in fact," I said.

Battista extended his hand to Dr. Williams, introducing himself. He got right to the point, telling Dr. Williams that he had heard about what great work he did for both me and Ivan, which I didn't even know he knew about, and he had decided that the hospital needed a new wing added on.

"Because I'm not a citizen, however, I believe we need to get some kind of approval to move this process forward?" Battista asked, innocently.

Dr. Williams looked shocked. He just stood in front of us for a moment, unable to speak. Ivan laughed. "Remember to breathe,

Doc.”

Dr. Williams looked at Ivan, now snapped back to reality. His mind started racing, as his excitement level increased. He quickly looked around the ballroom, his eyes landing on the representative who wasn't very far away. He pointed to her, saying, “she's the person we need to speak to.”

“I'll let you two do just that,” I said, winking at Dr. Williams. He objected, wanting me to come with them. I smiled warmly at him, saying, “I enjoy this anonymous thing, too. Ivan and I already have a legend told about us among the hospital staff. That's enough for me.” He laughed loudly, but motioned for Battista to follow him to speak to Henry's switch hitter.

As they walked to her and began talking. Andrei and I got to work. Before we started, I told Ivan he needed to lower his bubble.

“You're very quick now, Squish. I have full confidence you'll catch anything before it gets to me, but I need full access to her to go fishing.”

I could feel his discomfort at the thought of lowering his bubble, but he did so. Begrudgingly

Andrei and I quickly snooped through her head as she was talking to Battista and Dr. Williams. She was quite excited for the possibility of getting a new wing on the hospital, but not for the reasons one would think. She was already planning on ways to launder money through the project, taking a significant portion for herself, of course. She was also planning on making the publicity around the project all about her, making it seem like she was the one that made this happen.

She knew everything about Ricardo. She was in touch with Ricardo, just as Henry likely was by now. She was following his

orders when it came to anything to do with the city. She was going to be slightly more problematic to get rid of than I originally thought. But not impossible. She was just more connected than I thought she would be. I should've known.

Instead of waiting for Battista, we quietly left and went to join Adrik and the others once again. Ilya caught us walking back toward the group. "Sephie, something's happening and I can't explain it," he said, urgently.

"To you?" I asked.

He shook his head no. "No, not to me. It's the wait staff that's here. I was by the door to the kitchen a moment ago. One of them is having some kind of attack. They're trying to keep it quiet, but nobody knows what to do. The person is screaming that she can see ghosts."

Ivan quickly told the group to go to the kitchen, as we followed Ilya. We tried to be as discreet as possible, but it was difficult given the size of the men I chose to keep company with. Most people noticed us leaving toward the kitchen, but their curiosity was short-lived as there was an auction starting right at the same moment.

When we got to the kitchen, there was one poor girl being held down by three others. She was still struggling, urgently telling people that she could see things no one else could see. They thought she was being violent and a danger to everyone around her. In truth, she was scared out of her mind.

After a quick glance to Ivan, he removed the three guys holding her down so she could sit up on her own. She was just a little thing. She was definitely younger than me, with blonde hair and pretty grey eyes. I'm sure when she wasn't scared for her life, she was quite adorable. I knelt down in front of her, as calmly as I could, asking her what she was seeing. "There's an older

man out there. He has a ghost standing next to him.”

“The older man, can you describe him for me?”

She described Vitaliy perfectly. It was Lena she was seeing.

“Is that all you’re seeing?” I asked.

“No. She glanced around the room, her eyes landing on Viktor before looking away. There’s another one,” she said in almost a whisper.

“She’s seeing Lena and Kostya. Get everyone else out of here.”

The room was cleared in a matter of seconds.

“What’s your name?” I asked.

“Jessica.”

“Hi Jessica. I’m Sephie. Can you stand up on your own, Jessica?”

She nodded, standing up. I stood up with her, but I was careful not to touch her. If she could see Lena and Kostya, I wasn’t sure what else she would be able to see. I didn’t want to scare her anymore than she already was.

“The other one you see, it’s a little boy, isn’t it?” I asked her.

Her eyes got wide. “You...You can see them too?”

“I can’t right now, but I have in the past. What I’m going to tell you might be difficult for you to believe right now, but you’re not seeing ghosts, Jessica. They’re angels I paused, mostly to gauge her reaction. Her eyebrows Timed as she thought about what

I just said “The two men associated

” with those angels are very special men. Those angels watch over them

There’s nothing to be scared of You have a special gif

You can see things most people can’t

“Angels are real?” she asked.

“Very real. I have more than one that keep watch over me. One is just very busy and pops in and out as his schedule allows,” I

said, smiling at her. "The other one is with me all the time" She scanned the room, her eyes landing on Ivan.

"He looks different from the others," she said. She was trying to be quiet enough that Ivan wouldn't be able to hear.

"He is different. He needs to be to stay with me all the time," I said, I could feel her starting to relax. Her curiosity was overtaking her fear now. "There's no reason to fear what you're seeing. Jessica."

"Nobody else would believe me. They called me crazy. They said I was on drugs or having a mental breakdown," she said, tears

welling up in her eyes. The urge to hug her was getting very strong

"Most people don't believe what they can't see, but you have a very special gift. Unfortunately, you're also going to need to be

very discerning with who you share your gift with. People don't always understand. They see different as a threat, not something

to be cherished. You're going to have to protect yourself." I said.

"How do you know? Why do you believe me?"

I reached out and touched her, letting her see everything she could see.

"Because I'm different, too."



King of the Underworld by RJ Kane

Chapter 464

King of the Underworld

464

Adrik

Ilya had informed her that something was happening in the kitchen, so we all met Sephie there. There were guys holding down a girl in the back of the kitchen. She was struggling as much as she could, but she didn't stand a chance. She was little anyway, but she had three guys holding her.

I don't like this one bit. Every single one of us went on high alert, trying to figure out what was happening. Sephie gave one glance to Ivan and he promptly picked up every single one of the guys holding the girl down and tossed them aside.

Sephie knelt down in front of the girl, trying to find out more information.

We were all surprised that she was seeing my mother and Kostya. I didn't even know my mother followed Vitaliy around.

In the way that only Sephie could, she calmed the girl down while explaining to her what she was seeing. She even told the girl that she had angels watching over her. I didn't expect her to out Ivan, but she did. The girl could clearly see there was something different about Ivan, but she looked fascinated by him rather than the fearful girl we saw when we walked in.

She asked Sephie why she believed her and Sephie reached out and touched the girl's arm. Her eyes went wide as she saw

Sephie. Everything about Sephie. Sephie went to remove her arm, but the girl grabbed her hand. She was completely captivated by what she was seeing

"You're different from the others. How?" she asked Sephie.

“It’s a very long story. My point, Jessica, is that not everything you see that’s different from what we think of as normal is going to be bad. Did you have a bad feeling when you saw the angels earlier this evening?” she asked

The girl shook her head no. “No, it got bad when I told people what I saw. They called me crazy. I kept trying to tell them I wasn’t and explain what i saw, but it got worse. That’s when they held me down.”

We could feel Sephie’s sadness at the way this girl was treated. “You’re going to need to be very careful who you tell about this from now on. For your own safety.”

The girl nodded in agreement. “I don’t want to tell anyone now. They’re going to lock me up. My parents already think I’m crazy,” she said quietly.

Sephie silently asked Ivan if he had a card she could give her. He handed her one. Sephie then handed it to the girl. “Jessica, if you ever get in trouble or they try and lock you up, I want you to call me.”

Her eyes went wide again as she took the card from Sephie. “You would help me? You don’t even know me.”

“No, but I know what it’s like to be going through what you’re going through right now. It’s not easy. Just knowing you have someone to call is sometimes very comforting,” she said.

We could see the tears welling up in her eyes again. She looked at Sephie and quickly hugged her, holding on to her for dear life. Sephie chuckled, but she hugged her back, stroking her hair lightly as the girl worked to calm herself down.

“Can you leave tonight? I think it’s best if you get out of here right now. You’re safe at home?” Sephie asked.

“I’m safe at home; I live by myself. I was working tonight for extra cash though. This isn’t my normal job,” she said.

I walked to her, pulling what Battista, Vitaly, and the rest of the guys had given me earlier for winning the bet pool on when Henry was going to show out of my pocket. "This should cover it. Go home. You don't need to be around those people anymore tonight," I said.

Her eyes went wide again. "You're like her," she said quietly. I couldn't help but smirk at her. I just nodded once.

Sephie turned and looked at Ilya and Misha, who were standing close by. "Would you two mind escorting her to her car?"

"Of course," Misha said.

Sephie turned back to the girl, who was still in shock. "They're going to make sure you get to your car safe. Are you okay to drive yourself home? We can take you home as well if you're worried about driving "

"No, I'm okay. You've done so much already. Thank you," she said. She quickly ran to get her bag and then came back. Misha and Ilya walked her out the back way to take her to her car, As soon as they were gone. I wrapped my arms around Sephie. She leaned into me, her body completely relaxing as soon as she felt my touch. "I love you. You're incredible," I said, kissing the top of her head.

She sighed, looking up at me. "Once Misha and Ilya get back, I think it's time to go. I've had enough fun for one night." Her lips curled up into a half smile as she added, "at least the kind of fun you have in front of people. I have other fun activities I'd like to pursue once we're alone."

"I could not agree more," I said, leaning down to kiss her.

We walked back to find Vitaliy and Battista. We told them both that we were planning to leave once Misha and Ilya came back.

“Come to my house first. Battista can finish telling us his conversation with the representative and you can fill us in on everything else. It won’t take long, but we need a place to speak freely.” Vitaliy said in Russian. I wasn’t happy with the idea of having to wait longer to get Sephie out of her dress, but I also wasn’t mad at the opportunity to look at her in it for a little while longer. It was a conundrum.

Misha and Ilya returned, both of them had grins on their faces.

“Do I want to know what those grins mean?” Sephie asked.

“She was cute. She apparently talks when she’s nervous. She was very nervous,” Misha said.

“Cute enough to get her number?” Sephie asked, unable to hide her own grin.

“You should ask Ilya that question, not me,” Misha said, his wide smile stretching across his face.

“Ilya, you dog. Did you get her number?” Sephie asked.

The shade of red that his face turned was a very clear answer. “What? She’s really cute. I’m a sucker for short blonde girls,” he said.

Sephie looked at him for a few moments, smiling at him. She finally said, “I’m just glad you feel good enough to consider it. She seems like a sweet girl, but you tell me the first moment she shows you otherwise.” We could all feel her hackles going up as she felt protective of Ilya. It wasn’t surprising in the least that she felt that way about the guys, but it did surprise me just a little that she already felt that way about Ilya. I was still happy to see it.

Vitaliy caught it too. He laughed. “Sladkaya, it’s his job to protect you, not the other way around,” he said. She just turned to look at him, squinting her eyes at him, silently reprimanding him for teasing her. We all quietly left the fundraiser, making our way back to Vitaliy’s house. The guys were all happy to ditch our jackets and ties

while Sephie was only able to ditch her shoes. Sephie looked at all of us as we walked into Vitaliy's house. "It's just not fair that you're all still so handsome with just half your tux on," she said, smiling at everyone.

"We can't help it, spider monkey. We just woke up like this," Andrei said, his wide smile across his face.

She walked to him, sliding her arm around his waist as we walked up the steps to the front door. "I just kind of love you," she said wistfully, leaning her head on his shoulder.

King of the Underworld by RJ Kane

Chapter 465

King of the Underworld

465

Adrik

Once we were all convened in Vitaliy's new office, we started to go over the evening's events. Battista and Vitaly weren't aware of what had happened when Stephen got rid of the things hanging around the hospital administrator and the mayor.

"Is that what made them cough uncontrollably?" Vitaliy asked.

"We think so. When it happened, the demons were almost desperate to find a way in. It really agitates them when they hear

Stephen speak, Ivan said.

"I think the coughing is the body trying to reject it," Sephie said.

"Does this mean the mayor is good to go now? We don't need to worry about him further?" Battista asked.

"Not exactly. He still has weaknesses that a different demon can exploit.

Viktor is what fixes that, but we haven't figured out a way to do that subtly yet. It's visually very obvious when he fixes someone," I said.

"It's visually obvious to you. Has anyone who is not you seen him do it yet?"

Battista asked. "You all can see things no one else can anyway. Maybe the average person couldn't see it."

He did bring up a valid point. Viktor hadn't used Kostya around anyone else outside our group yet. I glanced at Ilya, asking, "did you see it?"

"Yeah, but maybe it was just because I'm his brother?" Ilya said.

"Or maybe Kostya wasn't thinking about being discreet," Sephie said. She looked at Viktor, asking, "can you ask him if there's a way that he can do it so no one else would notice?"

Viktor was silent for a few moments. None of us had any idea that he could communicate so quickly with Kostya, but clearly he could. He said, “he thinks he can make it so it’s not obvious. He still needs me to touch the person to make it happen, but that’s easily explained.”

“Want to test it?” Sephie asked, grinning at him.

Viktor smiled his sweet smile that was reserved specifically for her. “Who did you have in mind?”

Sephie looked toward my father’s men, Eduard and Sergel. “I’m really sorry, Sergei, but you need help. You’ve needed help since I met you. I just wasn’t sure you’d let anyone help you.”

Sergei had been with my father since I was a kid. Not as long as Aleksei, but I’d still known Sergei for most of my life. He was a hard man, but he was a good man. Whatever Sephie had picked up on, I was sure that Sergei deserved help with it.

Vitaliy was surprised. He looked at Sephie then looked at Sergei, asking, “this is true?” Sergei was silent, but everyone could tell from his body language that he was clearly fighting something.

Sephie answered for him. “I don’t mean to call you out in front of everyone, Sergei, but you’re struggling. It’s getting louder, which means it’s harder for me to ignore.”

Andrei said, “I can hear it too. You don’t have to deal with all that on your own, you know,”

Misha got curious and did his own searching when Andrei said something. “Sergei, you know that wasn’t your fault, man.”

And then I knew what Sergei was still struggling to deal with. When I was a boy and the other bosses tried to get to my father through me the first time, Sergei was the one that was with me. The attack killed the driver, Petr. It almost killed Sergei. I

somehow managed to survive, but that was the first time I found myself in my own darkness. I was out for days. My father never left my side and he never left Sergei's side."

Sergei struggled to not blame himself for what had happened. He said he felt like he should've been able to see it coming. He was overprotective of me from that point until I hit adulthood. We all thought he had handled it, but clearly he was still carrying around guilt from it. Silently beating himself up for it for almost my entire life.

Sophie went to him, placing her hand on his shoulder. "You are very good at your job. You always have been. You always will be.

What happened that night is not a reflection of you. It needed to happen, Sergei. He needed to go through that experience so he could save me when the same thing happened to me. If he hadn't, I wouldn't be here," she said quietly. Sergei looked at her, his eyes wide. He was trying to comprehend what she'd just told him.

Ivan walked closer to them. "Nor would I, Sergei. He saved her so she could save me. That night had to happen. You kept him alive though. There's no way he could've survived that crash without you shielding him. You did exactly what you were meant to do."

Sophie glanced at Stephen. He walked closer to her and Sergei. She whispered something quietly to Sergei. He nodded his head, then Stephen touched his arm. It took a few moments, but Sergei gasped loudly, like he just jumped into freezing water and his lungs were revolting. Stephen didn't let go Sophie recognized that Stephen was having to work to get Sergei cleared completely, so she grabbed his other hand, giving him the needed boost. It took a few more seconds and Sergei visibly looked better.



She looked at Viktor, who basically traded places with Stephen. Sephie looked at Battista, as well as Eduard, saying, “you two have to watch and let us know if you can see anything.” They both nodded. Battista looked completely fascinated by what was happening.

Viktor touched Sergei and we all clearly saw his aura, much like Andrei could see regularly. It was dim, with plenty of holes in it.

Viktor removed his hand, waited for a moment, then put his hand back on Sergei’s shoulder. We didn’t see Kostya this time, but we could see the effects of Kostya being there. Sergei’s aura lit up while all the holes were being filled in.

I glanced at Battista, asking, “can you see that?”

“See what? He just has his hand on his shoulder,” he said.

I looked at Eduard, asking the same thing. He said, “it just looks like Viktor has his hand on Sergei’s shoulder to me.”

“That’s all you saw the whole time?” I asked. They both nodded. Once Viktor was done, I said, “we have our answer then. They didn’t see anything. I didn’t see Kostya this time, but Viktor still lights them up when he touches someone.”

Sephie turned to Battista. “You didn’t see anything other than Viktor’s hand on his shoulder?”

“I saw nothing. I’m actually disappointed I saw nothing. I would like to see something.” Battista said.

“She can show you,” Misha said. “I’ll help,” he said, offering her his hand.

“I might need both you and Bubba,” she said. She walked over to Battista, asking for his hand. She tried to push what it looked like for all of us to him. It took a few moments, as well as Andrei’s help, but we saw Battista’s eyes go wide as he finally saw what the rest of us saw.

“That is incredible,” he said.

Sephie offered to show Eduard as well, using both Andrei and Misha again. He cursed in Russian, having never seen anything like it in his life, which made her laugh.

“Well, now we know that we can fix someone discreetly. We just need to let Kostya know when he can leave his headlights on and when he has to turn them off. And Ilya’s girlfriend is going to have to learn when to keep her mouth shut,” Sephie said, grinning at Ilya.

He laughed, saying, “you haven’t even met Sasha and you’re already trying to steal his job.”

King of the Underworld by RJ Kane

Chapter 466

King of the Linderworld

466

Adrik

“Can you explain to me, like I’m a child, what you just did?” Battista asked.

Sephie chuckled. “Stephen helps to clear a person, so whatever heavy issue they’ve been struggling to deal with can

successfully be dealt with, basically. In very general terms. Sergei, for

example, has been struggling with something that

happened over 20 years ago. He still carries a tremendous amount of guilt

from it. Anytime you carry around heavy emotions for

too long, they start to cause other problems. For Sergei, it was becoming

overwhelming. It was all he could think about. He was

beating himself up about it, blaming himself for what happened, doubting

himself because he felt like it shouldn’t have happened.

Stephen helped him create a pathway to get all of that out, if you will. Viktor,

on the other hand, helps to strengthen his aura. It

ensures that those negative thoughts and feelings can’t get a foothold in him

again. He might still feel them from time to time, but

they’ll move through him like they should, rather than illegally squatting in

his psyche for 20 years. What you saw was Sergei’s

aura, before and after Viktor fixed him.”

“Those holes that you saw before Viktor fixed him are where demons gain

access to people. Big enough hole, weak enough

person, the demon can get in and start running the show,” Ivan said. He

glanced at Sephie, as they both had the same idea at

the same time. She grinned at him, walking back to Battista.

“Wonder Twins, unite!” she said, motioning for Andrei and Misha to come

back. She grabbed Battista’s hand again, using them to

push what Ivan could see to Battista. “That’s what it looks like when a demon has gained access and is starting to run the show, Her demon has been there for a while. It’s very defined. Sometimes, they’re not as clearly defined. It’s like they’re fuzzy if they’re new. Hers has been there a while.”

“This is how you knew about my business associate?” Battista asked.

“One of the ways, yes,” Sephie said. I could feel her reluctance to reveal everything to Battista.

“You were right when you said we all complement each other. We’ve figured out how to work together to confirm whether someone’s demon is running the show or not. Because we’ve done it a few times now, the demons know who Stephen is. If they haven’t gained full access to a person, he can essentially scare them off. If they have gained access, that’s when the only choice is to break their psyche,” I said.

“Ah, yes. My business associate’s family was saddened to hear of his sudden massive stroke that left him in such a state. They were quite happy to have access to his finances, however,” Battista said, whimsically.

“This is what happened when the people were coughing uncontrollably? Stephen scared the demons off?” Vitaliy asked.

“Yeah. I’m not worried about the hospital administrator, but the next step would be to have Viktor fix the mayor. We did buy him some time with what we did tonight, but he’s still vulnerable,” I said.

“What about the DA?” Battista asked.

“He was fine. Nothing hanging on him. If there was a demon there, it was the most talented one we’ve come across yet. No one picked up on anything,” Ivan said.

“That’s also not to say that it won’t be an issue in the future. They were fine tonight, but that could always change. Depending on

their own. decisions, Sephie said.

“What did you find out from the switch-hitting representative?” I asked Battista.

His mischievous smile crept across his face. “She’s more than happy to have me fund a new wing on the hospital. I suspect that she’s much the same as just about every politician on the planet, however. She’s going to figure out a way to make it all about her and take the credit for everything.” he said.

Sephie and Andrei looked at each other and laughed. “That’s exactly what she was thinking. You just left out the money laundering part. She’s gonna suck as much money out of the project for herself as possible,” Andrei said.

“Sucking is an activity that she seemingly enjoys,” Misha said. Somehow he managed to keep a straight face when he said it.

Clearly, Stephen was coaching him on how to do so. The rest of us erupted into laughter.

Once the laughter died down, Sephie said, “she is connected to Ricardo already though. She has everything on him. He’s helping her use it against you,” she said, looking at me.

I wasn’t surprised, “She might be slightly more difficult to get rid of than we thought,” I said.

“What was your original plan? Vitaliy asked.

“Expose her affair with Henry. Her wife comes from a wealthy family. If we expose her affair, along with Henry, her wife divorces her, the family money goes away. She stops wanting to help Henry, as he’s basically the one that ruined her life,” I said.

“That could still work. It might not destroy her completely, because she’s likely to get help from Ricardo, but that could also work to our advantage. Expose that connection and she goes down when Ricardo goes down,” Battista said.

“Or she has an untimely ‘stroke.’ It could go either way, really,” Stephen said. We talked for a while longer, coming up with a plan for how to get Henry out of the picture, along with his girlfriend, I needed to keep the people of the city on my side; helping the mayor fight corruption was an easy way to do that. The less options that Ricardo had inside the city, the easier he would be to take down as well. On the way back to the penthouse, I pulled Sephie closer to me. “I have to admit that was the most fun I’ve ever had at one of those events.”

“It did go much better this time. I’m very happy it went much better this time,” she told me, as her gorgeous smile stretched across her face.

“We’re all very happy it went better this time.” I told her, kissing her temple.

“Although, I’m not going to lie, getting to look at you all night long dress made me even happier.”  
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“I was thinking the same thing about you in that tux,” she told me, as she turned her face toward me just enough that she could see me out of the corner of her eye.

I reached over and ran my finger lightly down her neck, following the plunging neckline all the way down. I could feel her sending her warmth to me as she closed her eyes and enjoyed my touch.

“I don’t think you should wear any color but this one to any formal event ever again,” I said. “It looked like you were radiating love for me the entire night.” I turned her toward me, pressing my lips to hers.

“The color of the dress just made it obvious for you so you noticed it for the first time. I’m always radiating love for you, no matter what I wear,” she said, reaching up and pressing her palm against my cheek. My breath caught, which made her smile even wider at me. I was suddenly desperate to get home and get her alone.



King of the Underworld by RJ Kane

Chapter 467

King of the Underworld

467

Sephie

Adrik walked to the couches, throwing his tuxedo jacket and tie over the back. He removed his cuff links as he walked back toward me, depositing them in his pocket. It gave him a reason to look me up and down one more time without being blatantly obvious about it. As he was walking toward me, I reached up and pulled my hair down from the intricate ponytail that Ms.

Jackson had put it in. I still had no clue how she figured out how to make a ponytail look so glamorous, but she did.

He groaned quietly as he watched my hair fall over my shoulders. "I love your hair when it's out of control," he said. He stopped in front of me, his hands running up my arms, stopping on either side of my neck. He studied me for a few moments before leaning down to kiss me. It was much quicker than I was hoping for. "Come, I want your contacts out," he said, grabbing my hand and leading me back to the bedroom. "I would like to see your eyes match that dress one last time."

"Who am I to deny you?" I asked, laughing quietly as I followed him to the bedroom. He stood behind me, watching me in the mirror as his hands roamed over my hips and a ss while I took my contacts out. I looked at him once I was finished, asking, "you're not going to take yours out?"

He smiled at me. "I already did. When we were at Vitaliy's house. I couldn't stand them any longer."

"You're so much smarter than me," I said to him, impressed.



He chuckled. "You're getting used to yours better than I am. They still make my eyes itch," he said, brushing my hair back from my neck so he could kiss it. It sent waves of warmth throughout my body, causing me to moan quietly. He turned me around to face him, his sweet smile letting me know that my eyes were deep blue. "I still can't believe how much I miss seeing them change when you have to wear your contacts for any length of time," "I love that you're still so fascinated by them. I would've thought you would be used to it by now and bored with it," I said, enjoying the look of wonderment on his face that he had every time he watched my eyes change.

"I doubt very seriously that will ever happen," he said, pressing his lips to mine kissing me quickly, then kissing first one cheek, then the other. "You keep finding new ways to fascinate me with them," he said, his lips pressing to my forehead. I closed my eyes, just enjoying the sweet moment with him. I felt his lips press to one eyelid, then the other.

"Well, in that case, I hope I never stop," I said, smiling at him without opening my eyes. He grabbed my hand, leading me out of the bathroom. When I opened my eyes, I saw him still enjoying looking at me in this dress. It made me smile to see him enjoying it so much. "I wouldn't mind getting this dressed up now and then if this is always going to be your reaction," I said.

He groaned quietly again. "If we have as much fun as we did tonight, I might start attending more of these terribly boring functions just to make you get dressed up more often. I would not be mad at that. The people of the city would not be mad at that either. They couldn't take their eyes off you," he said, pulling me closer to him. He put the hand he was holding around the back

of his neck. He slid his hand down my other arm, picking it up and placing it in the same position on the other side. He glanced down at my barely covered cleavage, staring at it for a few moments. "Have I mentioned how f\*\*king phenomenal your bo obs look in that dress?" he asked, his fingers tracing lightly over the exposed skin of my breasts.

I giggled. "That might've been the other selling point," I said. "I actually couldn't stop staring at my bo obs in the dressing room.

The guys felt my happiness over how good they looked. They made me come out and show them."

Adrik chuckled. "You're two for two with your choice of dresses. I thought the last one was perfect, but this one might be my favorite."

"You're only saying that because I didn't have to starve myself for weeks before this one," I said, grinning at him.

He laughed. "You're still too skinny from being hurt." Just to illustrate his point, he grabbed me around my hips lifting me off the floor like I weighed nothing. I squealed, which made him smile. "See? It's too easy."

"Or maybe you're just ridiculously strong," I said, wrapping my arms around his neck tighter as he continued to hold me off the floor. He wrapped his arms all the way around me, holding me tightly.

"Or maybe I just love you," he said, looking up at me. I could see the love he had for me. It was obvious. I was the only woman he looked at the entire night. If a woman was speaking to him, he would glance at her to keep from being rude, but otherwise, he only had eyes for me. It had been that way since I first met him. He never once changed.

I held his face in my hands, completely smitten with him. I sighed. I did sometimes wonder what I'd done to deserve him. He

was perfect in every way. I pushed my warmth to him, knowing my eyes were deep blue. His hold on me got lighter. "I love you.

Every little thing about you is perfect for me," I said, as I pressed my lips to his.

He slowly lowered me back to the floor as he deepened the kiss. Once I was standing on my own again, his hands roamed over my back, down to my ass, pulling me closer to him. I slid my hands down his chest, unbuttoning his shirt as I went. While I loved seeing him in his tux all night, I adored seeing him with his shirt off. I untucked his shirt, pushing it off his shoulders, my hands sliding along the well defined muscles of his arms and chest.

He stepped back from me as he grabbed both my hands, placing them by my side. "I've been waiting all night for this," he said, his sweet smile on his face. He ran his hands up my arms and over my collar bones. He smiled when his hand ran over the necklace that had belonged to his mother. He slipped his fingers under the material at my shoulders, pushing the dress off my shoulders. He picked up one hand, pulling the sleeve off that arm, then moved to the other.

He was clearly satisfied finally seeing my naked breasts after having been given just a hint of them for the entire evening. His hands covered each one, gently massaging them before moving down my stomach to push the dress the rest of the way down my hips. He hadn't seen my choice of panties until he pushed the dress all the way down. He inhaled sharply when he saw that I was wearing nothing but a G-string-

"You've been virtually naked under that dress for the entire evening," he said. He didn't know whether to be slightly angry with me or impressed. He took one step back, looking at me from head to toe.

"Turn around," he said, almost sternly. It sent a

shockwave straight to my nether regions. I turned around, loving the loud groan that escaped as he looked at my ass. "I'm glad I didn't know that's what you were wearing underneath, It would've been torture," he said, his hands on my hips. He pulled me back against him, almost forcefully. I loved it. I gasped quietly as his hands were on me once more, leaning into him.

His lips found my neck while his hands massaged my breasts. I lifted my arms behind his head, giving him full access. I loved the feeling of his warm chest against my back. I kept my shoulders against his chest, but moved my hips far enough away that I could slide my arms in between unbuttoning his pants without having to turn around. He laughed. "You're quite talented, solnishko," he said, nibbling on my neck.

I heard his pants fall to the floor and he wrapped one arm around my waist, pulling me back into him. I could feel his hardness pressing into my back. Finally, he couldn't take it any longer and turned me around to face him. His lips were instantly on mine. I pushed his boxer briefs off, not wanting anything between us. He barely made an effort and my panties were ripped off. What little of them there was to begin with, anyway.

He slowly walked us to the bed, his lips never leaving mine. His kiss was slow, but it burned with his desire for me. He reached down, picking me up and wrapping my legs around his waist so he could climb on the bed without breaking the kiss. It made me giggle and hold onto him tighter.

As soon as I was laying on my back, he pressed his hips into me, causing me to moan as I felt his hard cock against my pussy.

He teased me a few more times before slowly sliding all the way in. It sent waves of fire over my entire body. I'd been waiting all night long for this moment. I exhaled loudly as he filled me up.

His lips found mine once again. He gently, but firmly, pressed his hips into mine. He was slow, deliberate with everything he did.

Almost like he didn't want the night to end. I could feel him pushing his desire to me, but he managed to control it this time. It was enough that it was pushing me toward the edge, but he wasn't losing control. I loved it.

I was so lost in how much I loved him, how he made me feel, how he knew just what I needed. I could feel an orgasm building already and he was still barely moving. He pulled back enough to look at me, his s\*xxy smirk on his face. He was trying to see if I really was losing control the way he thought I was. I couldn't do anything but smile at him as I moaned, my body exploding into an orgasm. His lips were on my neck and chest as his hand squeezed my breast, then came to rest in my favorite spot just over my heart. It sent more waves of fire through my entire body, causing my body to spasm once again in another orgasm.

I couldn't get enough of him. I wanted more. I worked my hips against him, demanding more. He responded immediately, thrusting into me. Where he had been slow and deliberate, now he was intense and almost desperate. My body craved more, my hips matching his rhythm. I could feel another orgasm building, even more intense than the last one. He sent me crashing over the edge multiple times before finally finding his own release.

He collapsed on top of me, his breaths heavy, I wrapped myself around him, holding him tightly. I wouldn't have minded staying like that for the entire night. He went to move off me, but I held him tighter. "Not yet," I said. He chuckled, but relaxed again, happy to stay there a little longer.

King of the Underworld by RJ Kane

Chapter 468

King of the Underworld

468

Sephie

I woke the next morning, still completely tangled up in Adrik's embrace. He was holding me just as tightly as I was holding him.

I'm surprised either one of us could move at all the entire night. I loved every second of it.

He felt me stirring and loosened his grip on me slightly. "Good morning," he said without opening his eyes.

I couldn't help but laugh a little at his reluctance to wake up. "I think we need to go back to the house again this weekend. We could all use a break again," I said.

"I will not argue with that plan," he said.

I kissed him gently, trying to coax him awake. He just wrapped my leg around his hips tighter and tightened his hold on me. I

giggled. "Why are you so tired? Did you get new level zapped and you're not telling me?"

"No, I'm not that tired. I just don't want to move from right here. I want to spend the day trying to recreate last night. Repeatedly,"

he said, opening his eyes just enough that he could barely see me.

"I will not argue with that plan," I said, pushing my warmth to him.

That was all the encouragement he needed. He was back on top of me before I even realized what had happened. I laughed at

his exuberance. He finally opened his eyes, his handsome smile across his face as he looked down at me. He leaned down,

kissing me sweetly as he slid inside me slowly. I moaned into his mouth, caught by surprise at how quickly he could make my body explode in pleasure.

I felt the pull in my chest that was from him as he watched me get lost in the feeling of him. He could push the limits of my endurance and he did so regularly, but it was almost more than I could handle when he took it slow. I pushed everything I was feeling to him, wanting him to feel exactly what he was doing to me. I heard him exhale as he breathlessly said my name and I knew he wasn't going to keep control for very long.

"Look at me," he said. He said it gently, but firmly. I felt my pussy clench around him when he said it. He noticed, smirking at me.

I looked at him, loving the look of fascination on his face as he watched whatever show my eyes were giving him. He kept his rhythm slower, but he gradually increased the intensity, knowing that it would drive me absolutely crazy. It only took a few minutes and I was struggling to keep my eyes open as I was overcome with pleasure.

He didn't take his eyes off mine the entire time. His gaze was intense, like he was reading my soul as he made love to me. The first time he'd done it was somewhat unnerving for me, but I found myself loving it this time. Every piece of my soul already belonged to him.

My body exploded into orgasm after orgasm until I finally pushed him to his limit. He collapsed on top of me once again. I wrapped myself around him again, still feeling like I wanted to hold him as tightly as possible, for as long as possible.

"I don't know why, but I feel like I don't want to let go," I said.

"That might be from me. That's how I always feel about you," he said. He sat up so he could look at me.

"Really?"

"Really. It's especially strong after we have s\*x, but I feel it anytime I'm touching you. It's partly why I can't keep my hands off

you.”

I thought for a moment, a small smile on my face. “I still sometimes have no idea of the effect I have on you,” I said.

“You have no idea of the effect you have on anyone,” he said, his wide smile stretching across his face.

I squinted my eyes at him. “What do you mean?”

“Not a single person could take their eyes off you last night and you had no idea,” he said.

“Shu t up.”

He laughed. “It’s true. I’m surprised it didn’t make you panic. Anytime you went anywhere, all eyes were on you. I might’ve really loved that, not gonna lie,”

“Shu t up.”

“It’s true. You can ask any of the guys. Vitaliy’s men saw it too. So did Vitaliy. They’ll all tell you. People couldn’t take their eyes off you. I can’t blame them. I couldn’t either.”

I grinned at him. “I do love that you only have eyes for me. Especially when other women are making a spectacle of themselves to try and get your attention.” I reached up and ran my fingers through his dark hair as we were talking.

“You are always the most beautiful woman in the room, No matter what you do,” he said, pushing the curls back from my face. “I might love that about you. My evil side delights in the fact that you’re mine. While everyone else wishes they were me.”

“There are plenty of reasons for them to wish they were you. Not just because of me. I might be the icing on the cake, but that’s it,” I said, laughing.

“You are the icing. You are the cake. You are the ingredients for the cake, too. You’re everything,” he said, his handsome smile



making me love him just a little more. He sat up, pulling me up with him.

“Come. The guys are in the kitchen now and you smell like s\*x. You need a shower before you’re allowed around them.”

“How did you know they were in the kitchen already?” I asked, as we walked to the bathroom.

He stopped, thinking about it. “I don’t know. I just know.”

I looked at him, trying so hard not to smile. “You liar! You said you didn’t get new level zapped.”

His eyes went wide, thinking he had really made me mad. “I didn’t know!”

I couldn’t hold it in any longer. I laughed at him. He immediately relaxed.

“You can feel them, can’t you?”

He thought about it, then nodded his head in agreement. “Yeah, I can tell you the order they came to the penthouse this morning, even. I don’t know why I know that information, but I know that information.”

I giggled as he pulled me under the warm water of the shower. “I think each time we do something new, it strengthens the connection between everyone. We’ve figured out how to communicate with each other, then everything came together last night.

It’s not the first time we’ve all worked together, but it was the first time we did it multiple times in one night.”

“I did notice that our demons seemed quieter last night. Even around Henry and the switch-hitter, they were quiet. I can’t figure out why that would be.”

I thought for a minute as he worked on washing my hair. “I hadn’t thought about it, but you’re right. They were much more active with Battista’s associate than they were last night. But there were more demons there last night than with Battista’s associate.

That don't make sense. It does seem like they were hiding." It suddenly hit me. I turned around to face him. "What if they knew that girl could see them and they were hiding from her?"

"Could she see them, though? She didn't notice anything about Stephen or the Wonder Twins. It was only you, me, and Ivan that she saw something different about. Ivan has wings, even. Are you sure she was seeing our demons?"

"Well, no. I'm not. But I bet I know who is," I said, grinning.

"Andrei. That kid can't help himself sometimes. Which actually works to our advantage. I bet he knows," he said. He was clearly amused prospect of Andrei snooping through that poor scared girl's head.

"He's gonna be so embarrassed," I said. Can't say I wasn't excited about this pending conversation....

King of the Underworld by RJ Kane

King of the Underworld

469

Sephle

The guys were all laughing as we walked into the kitchen. They all looked to me, like they knew I was about to make their morning even better. I was taken aback by their knowing glances.

“We can feel your f\*\*kery, gazelle. I, for one, am very excited about this development in my life,” Misha said.

Adrik caught my eye, his mischievous grin slowly creeping across his face.

“Apparently, I’m not the only one,” he said, kissing my temple.

“Not the only one for what?” Ivan asked.

“He can feel all of you the same way I can now. He knew you guys were here before I did this morning. He can tell you the order you came up, even,” I said.

They all looked at Adrik skeptically, like they didn’t believe him.

“Ivan, Stephen, Andrei, Viktor, Misha,” he said.

“Okay, so new level unlocked,” Ivan said, laughing.

“We were

talking this morning. It feels like the connection is getting stronger each time we do something new,” Andrei said. “It used to only get stronger for Sephie, but now I think it’s getting stronger for all of us.”

“I agree, Bubba. I think you guys pick up more each time. Not just with me anymore, either. You’re picking up more between each other now, too,” I said.

“We were talking this morning too. It felt like our demons were quieter last night at the fundraiser than they were at the meeting with Battista. We can’t figure out why. There were more demons last night than at the meeting with Battista. It doesn’t make

sense they'd be quiet last night," Adrik said.

"I noticed that too. I was going to bring it up this morning. Any theories?" Ivan asked.

"Sephie thinks it might have something to do with that girl that could see my mother and Kostya. Maybe they knew and were hiding from her?" Adrik said.

I looked at Andrei. "Bubba, did you by chance do any snooping with her? Do you know if she could see everything? Or is she more like you, in that she can only see the good?" I asked.

"I did look when I saw her zero in on Ivan. It worried me, so I tried to see what she saw," Andrei said. He looked at Ivan. "You're going to be shocked, man. I didn't know how much you wanted Battista know, so I didn't bring it up last night."

He pushed what he saw when Jessica looked at Ivan, then me, then Adrik. She couldn't see our demons, but she could very clearly see the outline of a pair of wings behind each of us. My dad had told me that Ivan's wings were black, white, and red.

Jessica could only see the white in his wings, but they looked different to her than what Kostya and Lena looked like. She saw the same difference when she looked at me and Adrik.

We all stood in stunned silence for a few moments. Andrei and Misha worked together to push it to Viktor and Stephen at the same time.

I finally got over my shock and looked to Ivan. "I wonder if she'll be able to eventually see how much cooler yours are than everyone else's." It helped snap him back to reality as well. Adrik quietly slid his arm around my waist. I felt the pull in my chest from him, knowing he was thinking about how much more this made him love me, just as I was for him.

“She saw Boss’s m om and Kostya the same way, but they look different than you guys,” Andrei said. He pushed us the images of both Lena and Kostya that she had seen. “She called them ghosts because she didn’t think anyone would believe her and she wasn’t even sure if angels were real,” he said.

“The ghost angle makes sense, since you can see through them,” Stephen said after seeing what Andrei was sharing with all of us.

“It doesn’t explain why our demons were quiet, though. Just to bring it back around to that,” Ivan said. “I would like to know why that is.”

“Maybe they were quieter because you listened to them last time. They didn’t have to shout this time,” Misha said. “The more I used my gift at first, the more subtle it got. But it was also clearer. Maybe that’s what’s happening. They were louder the first few times, you got the message, now they can be subtle.”

I noticed Viktor getting a glazed over look, but I didn’t feel like he was uncomfortable with this conversation. I was hyper-aware of his comfort level when it came to any discussion of our demons. He was getting better, but I know he still didn’t like it.

He joined us back in the present moment, surprising everyone by saying, “Kostya said he thinks Misha is right. He’s not completely sure, but from what he can tell, Misha’s on the money.”

“Did everybody just hear that? I just want to make sure. Viktor, you might need to repeat it a few more times. Just to be sure we all heard it,” Misha said, his wide, handsome smile across his face.

“Your first time is always the most memorable,” Ivan sald, raising his eyebrow at Misha. The rest of us could do nothing but

laugh. Misha's cheeks got red, but he was laughing with the rest of us. I walked to where he was sitting, hugging his neck while standing behind him. He held onto my arms as we tried to get our laughter under control.

Stephen, always the analyst, was quietly contemplating our conversation and everything that had happened recently while I started breakfast. Finally, he looked up at everyone. "I think we should have another conversation with Dario. I want to make sure we didn't miss anything the last time. It's been a while since we've been in the same room as him and Sephie was the only one that could pick up on something extra the last time."

I studied Stephen for a few moments. "Is there a reason this popped into your head now, Yoden? Have you been thinking about Dario or He just randomly popped into your head this morning?"

"He's come up a few times for me the last week or so. I just can never find the right time to bring it up. I don't necessarily think we missed anything before, but I also want to make sure. Especially if he goes free at the end of this. We need to make sure he's really worthy of that ending," he said.

"I agree," I said, looking to Adrik.

"We can talk to him. Now that Armando is gone, he can be moved to a more comfortable room, since he's going to be here for a while longer," he said.

"Today is a good day to do it. No one else will be in the office," Viktor said.

"Has anything else come up for you about Dario, Yoden? Just that you want to make sure we didn't miss anything?" I asked.

There was always a reason that things like this seemed to "randomly" come up. We just had to find the reason.

Stephen thought for a few moments, analyzing his own thoughts, "I was also thinking about how broken his mind already is. I

want to know more about why that is. Part of me wonders if it was an act, part of me is curious if it was Massimo or Sal that did it to him. And if so, how. There's just something that feels slightly off, but I don't know if it's Dario or something else."

"You're wondering if maybe he was acting broken to get our sympathy? Adrik asked. Stephen nodded. Even Adrik was thoughtful for a few moments. "I'm the one that made the decision that he could go free," said. He looked at me. "You were struggling with your anger after being told that Sal and Armando were going to get into a fight over you. It's very possible I missed something."

He thought for a minute mere, then looked at Viktor. "Have him moved to a more comfortable room than where he's at this morning. We'll go talk to him tomorrow afternoon, when we get back."

Viktor nodded his head, pulling his phone out to give the necessary orders.

Misha asked, "you want to go to the house this weekend?"

Adrik nodded this time. "I think we could all use a break. That seems to be the one place where we can all turn everything off for a bit. Now, we need it even more."

Ivan's sly grin turned up one side of his mouth. "You've been hanging around the princess. You're getting really good at that."

We were now all slightly on edge, wondering if we'd missed something before. I was grateful that Stephen had thought of it, as the rest of us had mostly forgotten about Dario. We hadn't needed him for information, so he was just waiting until we took care of the rest of the bosses before he could go free. With the return of Niko and Vito possible in the very near future, it would help to know everything about Dario.

King of the Underworld by RJ Kane

Chapter 470

470

Adrik

That afternoon, once we'd arrived at the house, Viktor surprised the rest of in by asking if he could take Sephie for a walk, just the two of them, while she was upstairs for a minute.

"I still have making up to do with her from everything that's happened," Viktor said.

"You do," Ivan agreed. "But that's the best place to do it. Make sure you tell her everything, though. She already knows anyway, but she needs to hear you say it."

Viktor chuckled. "You're not the only one that's told me that recently," he said. Apparently, he and Kostya spoke quite often. Much more than the rest of us were aware of. If he was getting that kind of advice from him, I wasn't going to be mad about it though.

Sephie walked into the back room, where the rest of us were. Her smile made the room brighter as her eyes landed on me. It didn't seem to matter how long we spent together, she was always happy to see me after even the shortest time away from me. I loved it. I couldn't get enough of it..

"Sestrichka, I was hoping you'd like to take a walk with me?" Viktor asked. I don't think I'd ever seen him so timid. He was nervous, but at least he was finally trying to make things truly right once again.

"I would love to, Papa Bear. But now I have to go get my coat. Shockingly, I'm cold," she said, grinning at all of us before jogging back upstairs.

"Her lung is getting better and better. She's acting more like her old self," Stephen observed.



“Yeah, I was going to try the short distance with her again in the morning if you want to come too,” Misha said. “Hopefully this time she’ll be able to catch her breath better, but at least I know what to do now if she can’t.”

“Don’t worry, Misha. It’s terrifying for all of us when that happens,” I said. Watching her struggle to breathe was still one of the most horrifying things I’d ever seen. It’s the biggest reason that I was able to turn off my bloodlust so quickly with Armando. I could feel her struggling. Everything else shut off and there was only concern for her.

She walked back in, now with her coat on. She walked to me, leaning down to kiss me before leaving with Viktor. I thought back to how shy she used to be about any sort of affection in front of the guys. It made me smile to see her so comfortable.

“Don’t do anything I wouldn’t do while we’re gone,” she said as they walked out the back doors. She slid her arm through Viktor’s as they walked around the pool toward the gardens, then stopped to look at a few of the rose bushes, noticing that there were the tiniest little buds starting to appear. I could feel the warmth from her smile as she said something to Viktor, making him laugh, as they continued toward the woods.

“He has no idea how lucky he is that she’s so forgiving. I would’ve made him suffer a lot longer,” Ivan said.

I laughed. Mostly because I agreed. “I think we all would have. It’s been really hard on her, especially since she’s so connected to all of us now. She’s not with him and she feels that every time we’re all together. She said it’s a constant reminder of his rejection. She understands why he chose the decision he did, but she’s struggled with how long it’s taken him to be okay with the rest of us,” I said.

“It’s been difficult for all of us, but not to the same level as her. It’s obvious to us that his connection is the weakest, too,” Andrei said.

“Maybe it will get stronger over time. He’s arguably been the slowest out of all of us. Maybe his connection will keep slowly increasing. It seems like he’s talking to Kostya very regularly,” Stephen said, in his usual reasonable manner.

“For her sake, I hope you’re right. As much as she worries that she’s holding you all back from living your own lives, she really enjoys the connection she has with all of you,” I said.

“She does what now?” Ivan asked, completely surprised.

“She’s worried she’s holding you back from living your lives. From finding girlfriends. She thinks Stephen will have an easier time, but only just barely. She brought up the conversation we had about it in Italy, when Ivan pointed out how difficult it was going to be to find suitable girlfriends now that you know her and see what we have. It doesn’t seem to matter how much I reassure her, she’s still worried she’s holding you back,” I said.

Ivan looked like he’d made a connection. “That’s what she was worried about,” he said. We all looked at him, waiting for an explanation. “The last time Viktor had a ‘moment,’ when she broke down you were downstairs talking to him. I could feel her worry about Viktor, but then something else came up. I asked her about it. She admitted there was something else, but she didn’t want to talk about it then so I let it drop. She’s been really happy since, so it slipped my mind.”

“It’s been on her mind for a few weeks now. She feels guilty that you can feel everything she can feel, especially when the falls

apart like she did that night. She doesn't know how to turn it off to spare you from having to feel what she feels. She thinks she's

condemned all of you to constantly be in turmoil with her," I said.

They were quiet for a few moments, mulling over what I'd just told them. I could actually feel their own inner turmoil, trying to find a way to reassure Sephie that she was wrong.

"I think she's been living with the emotional turmoil for so long that it almost feels like a burden to her sometimes, especially

when she can't turn it off or struggles to get her emotions under control. She doesn't realize she's giving us a gift to be able to

feel that along with her," Stephen said. "Especially for me. I spent so many years just completely numb to feeling anything, just

trying to survive. Being able to feel what she feels reminds me I'm alive and that there's something to live for."

"Same," Ivan said.

"I don't think she realizes that she's also showing us how to get control of our emotions when she shares what she's feeling with

us," Andrei said.

"You can feel that too?" I asked.

Andrei nodded his head. Misha agreed with him as well. "It's gotten clearer more recently. It wasn't that way in the beginning, but

the more connected we are to her, the more it feels like she's showing us how to control everything. Even when she fell apart

that night. It wasn't overwhelming like she thinks it was. At least not for me.

Every time, it feels like she's showing me how to

handle it when it happens to me," Misha said.

"I've tried to tell her all of this before, but I think she'll believe it if it's coming from all of you, so make sure you tell her. She wants

you all to be happy and to have what she and I have," I said.

“She’s still showing us how good it can be when it comes to that too. We all see how special your relationship is. It was painfully obvious how different it was, even in the beginning, when I was with Tori. I couldn’t help but compare. Maybe that wasn’t fair to Tori, but I couldn’t help it,”

Andrei said.

“Maybe it wasn’t fair, but you were already at a disadvantage with that hot mess,” Ivan said, which helped lighten the mood.

None of us missed having Tori around, especially not after what she’d done.

“But that’s my point though. She’s showing us how much better it is to just wait until the right one shows up. Along with how to stay grounded while feeling as intensely as she does. She thinks she’s burdening us when in reality, she’s making us all better for when the right ones do show up for us,” Andrei said.