

King of the Underworld Chapter 481 - 490

Chapter 481

Adrik

While we ate lunch, the guys took the opportunity to talk to Sephie about her worry that she was condemning them to always feel what she felt.

“So, Boss told us all that you’re worried you’re condemning us to always have to feel what you feel because we’re so connected to you now,” Andrei said, after glancing at Misha and Stephen.

Sephie looked surprised, but she didn’t deny it. “I don’t know how to turn it off without making it worse,” she said.

“Why would you want to turn it off?” Misha asked.

“Because you guys don’t need to be in constant emotional turmoil just because I am,” she said quietly. We could all feel her sadness as she thought about the situation.

Stephen cleared his throat, but paused for a moment before he spoke. He’d been hanging around Ivan a little too much. His flair for the dramatic was growing. “Seph, I’m not sure I could describe the level of Hell that it is to be completely numb to everything and everyone day in and day out. It’s effective for survival, sure. But it’s not living. What you think of as emotional turmoil is really just a kickass reminder from you that it’s better to live than to simply survive. I will take your emotional turmoil over being numb every day of the week and twice on Sundays,” he said, in the serious manner that only he could deliver.

She chewed on her bottom lip, thinking about his words,

“It’s true, spider monkey. I also don’t think you’re taking into account the ridiculous control you have of your emotions. You share that with all of us. To you, it might feel out of control. To us, you’re very much in control. You’re also showing us how to do it each time it happens. That’s not something that most men know how to do. I definitely did not. I just shoved everything down and then eventually blew up when no one was around. I prefer your method, if I’m being honest,” Andrei said.

“Same,” Misha said. “Except for the blowing up part. I chose to make jokes about anything and everything. Mostly inappropriately.”

Sephie giggled. “I mean, it’s effective. I still do the same.”

“The point is, gazelle, that we prefer the connection. You’re not condemning anyone. Given the choice to have the connection or not have the connection, we would all choose the connection every single time,” Misha said. I was honestly surprised he was so sincere. I didn’t know that kid had it in him. “Although, we’re going to have to figure out how to apply this knowledge to future girlfriends or this is just gonna be weird.” Yep, there’s that mostly inappropriate humor we all love.

Sephie laughed again. “I think we can find a way to apply it to normal, boring people. Or else you’re all going to have to find weirdos like me.”

“It would not be the worst thing in the world,” I said, smirking at her.

“I have to agree with them, princess. Much like Stephen, I spent most of the time just being numb or angry before we met you. I prefer feeling everything.” Ivan said. As he said it, even I could feel the love he had for her. It wasn’t just him, either.

“Even your demon agrees with that, Ivan,” I said. “I can feel it.”

“Upon further review, we’re going to need to start looking for weirdos like Sephie. What normal person is going to be okay with a statement like that?” Misha asked, laughing at the absurdity of it all. His laughter was infectious; we all joined in, enjoying a moment of relief.

She had gotten up to clean up from lunch. I stood up with her, pulling her to me. “When I first met you, Ms. Jackson told me that you would show me the best parts of myself if I let you. She was absolutely correct. But what she didn’t know was that you’d make those best parts even better. That’s what the connection is for all of us. You’re doing what you always do and showing us how to be better just by being you,” I said, kissing her temple.

Viktor, who had been quiet up to this point, chimed in. “What’s happening to us isn’t your fault, either, Sephie.” We all turned to look at him, surprised he would say such a thing. He looked slightly offended we would think it came from him. “That’s what she told me yesterday when we were gone. That if I needed someone to hate, it should be her since she’s the reason all of this has happened since we met her. I’m pretty sure she didn’t believe me yesterday, which is why I brought it up again.”

Surprisingly, I could feel everyone’s anger immediately. Sephie did too. Her eyes turned black, causing mine and Ivan’s to also go black. We all sat in stunned silence, brewing in our own anger that she would still be blaming herself for everything that had happened. Misha finally broke the silence. When he did, he was more angry than I’d ever seen that kid.

“Sephie, you’re going to cut that shi t out right now,” he said. His face was starting to turn red, even. I expected Sephie to get angry in response to his tone, but i could easily feel her happiness. I looked down at her, noticing her grin starting to curl up one

side of her mouth.

“His eyes,” she told me. When I looked at Misha, his eyes were much darker than his usual green.

“Get angrier, my adorable Russian guardian,” Sephie said to him calmly. Her statement caught him by surprise, but Andrei caught on to what was happening.

“Dude, your eyes are changing,” he told Misha.

“You’re going to need to go nuclear for it to happen the first time. We all did. It’ll get easier after that,” she said.

We watched as Misha let go completely and let his anger fully take over. I could feel it clearly. I wasn’t even sure I was feeling it through her this time. It felt as clear as anything I got from her. She was right, too. There was an element of f**kery behind his anger. Like he was already looking for ways to destroy you, but he wanted to make it entertaining while he did. I could even feel the difference now between Misha and his demon. It was like everything I felt from Misha was now as clear as everything I felt from Sephie and Ivan.

“You’re feeling everything just as clearly as I am, aren’t you?” she asked me.

“Yeah. It feels just as clear from him as it does you or Ivan now,” I responded.

“New level indeed,” she said, laughing in her head. She brought Ivan into the conversation, asking him what he felt.

“Misha feels much like you and Boss now. You two are still stronger, but he’s very similar now,” Ivan told us.

Misha’s eyes had turned almost black as he let his anger completely take over. Sephie recognized that he was struggling to contain it, however. We all felt her anger increase to insane levels as she walked to Misha. She just put her hand on his shoulder, showing him how to control his own. His eyes went wide as he figured out how she did it.

“That’s how you control it so easily,” Misha said in a half-whisper, still watching what she was showing him.

She smiled sweetly at him. “Now you try,” she said. We could feel Misha’s anger levels slowly lowering, but then they spiked again. She giggled as she knew he was just playing with us now.

Once Misha was calm once more, I said, “Sephie was right. There is an element of f**kery to your anger that nobody else has.”

“You could feel it too?” Misha asked.

I nodded my head. “You’re just as clear as Sephie and Ivan are for me now.”

“He can even tell the difference between you and your demon already,” she said.

I laughed. I hadn’t even told her that part. “I don’t know why it still surprises me that you read my mind, but it still sometimes

does,” I said. She just grinned at me. She hugged Misha’s neck, explaining to him how the rest of us had progressed through this

particular development in our lives. To say that Misha was excited for this would be an understatement. He looked like a kid on

Christmas morning he was so happy this had happened.

Stephen looked at Viktor. “So, yeah. I think it’s time I helped you one more time. Just to be safe,” he said. Viktor just nodded and

stood up to leave the kitchen without a word. I looked to Sephie, wanting to know what he was feeling.

“He’s not as worried as I thought he was going to be. He’s happy. He

recognizes that it’s all something we want to happen and

he’s happy for us. Stephen really is helping him. I think after this time, he’ll be fine with it and able to laugh about it,” she said.

There was an audible exhale from everyone still in the kitchen.

King of the Underworld by RJ Kane

Chapter 482

King of the Underworld

482

Sephie

When Viktor came out from Stephen helping him one more time, he looked remarkably better. He'd looked better each time

Stephen had helped him, but it looked like he was finally relaxed and happy this time. The rest of us were in the back room, on the couches, being ridiculous about something when they walked in.

"Papa Bear, you look much better this time," I said, smiling at him. The smile I got in return was enough to tell us all everything we needed to know.

"Even I can tell you feel better now and I don't usually pay attention," Misha said.

"I think I got it all this time," Stephen said. "I was somewhat concerned for my effectivity the other two times."

"He's been holding on to it for a long time. You could've asked for a boost, like with Sergei," I said.

"I know. Maybe I wanted to see if I could do it on my own," Stephen said, grinning at me.

"Independent. I'll allow it," I said.

"Okay, who has Andrei next or Stephen next?" Misha asked.

We all looked at both Andrei and Stephen. That was a tougher decision to make than I would've thought. They were both progressing at rapid rates. Andrei has had his gift for longer, but Stephen jumped in with both feet once he discovered his. It could go either way.

"My money is on Andrei," Ivan said. Adrik agreed with him.

“I’m going with Stephen,” I said, which shocked everyone. “I know it should technically be Andrei that gets it next, but he’s been more cautious about his gift the entire time. I also think he’s more worried about controlling his anger when it happens, so it’s going to take him longer. Stephen has more experience with that. I think he’s going to be more willing to take that leap much sooner than Bubba,” I said.

“You know that feeling that I assume one has when they’re a kid and their parents tell them they’re proud of them? That’s what I’m feeling right now,” Stephen said, his uncharacteristic smile stretching across his face.

“She’s not wrong, Stephen. I agree with her. My money is on you, too,” Andrei said.

“Apologies for snooping, but I noticed your uneasiness when I told Misha to get angrier. I’ll show you what I showed him when you’re ready. You’ll be just fine, Bubba,” I said to him silently.

“I know you’ll help. I’m more worried about not breaking anything. The few times it’s happened, I’ve always smashed something.

Or someone. That’s what I’m most worried about,” he told me.

“We won’t let that happen. But now you have to wait until Stephen figures it out so we’ll win the bet pool,” I said to him. I could hear him laughing along with me in my head, but neither of us gave any outward signs we were having this conversation. I did have to admit to enjoying my little private conversations with all of them probably more than I should.

We spent the afternoon relaxing and enjoying spending time together. They all got up and followed me to the kitchen while I started dinner. They all chipped in to help when needed, but continued on with the conversation.

Viktor's phone beeped. He pulled it from his pocket, chuckling as he read the message. "It's Trino. He wants to know if I can help him find a security team. He said he's not having the luck he thought he was going to."

"At least he can admit he was wrong," Adrik said, laughing.

"We do need to figure out how we're going to tell him about everything," Ivan said.

"Let's just spring it on him. Let's wait until Stephen and Andrei can switch their eyes too and then just all show up one day like that. I feel like that's the best plan," I said, trying not to laugh.

Misha, who was standing next to me helping, looked at me. "It's like you took the words right out of my mouth, gazelle," he said, his handsome smile beaming at me.

Adrik laughed. "As much as I would like to see that, I think we are going to need slightly more fact than that. But let's keep that shelved. I'm sure there's someone we'll be able to use it on at some point."

Misha glanced at me, then looked to Adrik. "Are we soulmates now too? Did that just happen? Because I feel like it did."

I elbowed Misha in the ribs. "I don't share. They all erupted into laughter as I finished up dinner.

I felt Adrik's warm hands around my waist as everyone helped themselves to food. He was watching everyone with me. "I might love it when you get possessive," he told me.

"I might love you," I responded, turning toward him, I was still laughing about the exchange as he leaned down and pressed his lips to mine. I turned around, leaning back against him once more as we watched everyone laughing and eating.

"We definitely needed this," he said.

“I agree. I’m glad we stayed one more night. We need to be better about coming here more regularly. I have a feeling once Trino gets security set up, it’s going to get chaotic real quick.”

He sighed. “I think you’re right. We’re going to need to come up with a plan for everything. It all needs to happen quickly, so we don’t miss our chance at Ricardo and Martin.”

I pulled his arms around me a little tighter. “We’ll think about that tomorrow. Let’s enjoy tonight,” I said.

Trino stopped by the office toward the end of the day so Viktor could start going over setting up a security team for him. He had Chris and Keith show up as well so they could meet Trino and talk about their options.

It’d been a few weeks since any of us had seen Trino. He had plenty of his own people in the city. We were all sure he preferred them to having to listen to Russian any more than absolutely necessary. Gus and Oscar were with him when he arrived. He also surprised me by bringing a woman with him. I was with Andrei and Misha at their desks when Viktor stepped off the elevator with all of them. They felt my surprise, immediately turning to see.

“He brought her for your approval,” Andrei said. He could barely contain his grin..

I thought for a minute. “This could actually prove useful to us if she’s not Trino worthy. It’ll give him a first-hand look at what we can do now,” I said. “I mean, I hope she’s a nice girl and all. Just saying. I’m not hoping we have to expose her darker side.”

Misha laughed. “I mean, I am. Not even gonna try to pretend I’m not.”

I cut my eyes over at him. “I do love your love of the f**kery, Misha.”

“It’s my best quality.”

Viktor took Trino and the other three into the conference room. Chris and Keith arrived shortly after, also joining them in the

conference room. The elevator doors dinged once more, signaling Ivan's arrival. He immediately locked eyes with me once the doors opened.

Andrei chuckled. "He feels the f**kery."

Misha and I were still laughing when Ivan walked over. "What are you three getting into? Because I want to be a part of it," he said in Russian as he walked up.

I discreetly nodded toward the conference room. He turned to look, seeing the newest member of Trino's posse. "That is unexpected," he said.

"Can you see anything on her?" I asked. I tried to sound innocent, but it failed. It failed miserably.

Ivan laughed. "Now I understand. He studied her for a few minutes. "I don't see anything yet, but that doesn't mean there is nothing there."

"Sophie is pretending to hope that nothing is there, I don't give a f**k. I want there to be something there," Misha said.

"I'm Team Misha on this one. I would love it if there was something there. I haven't gotten to intimidate a love interest in a very long time, Ivan said. Misha just held his hand up so Ivan could high-five him. I looked at both of them as sternly as I could muster. "Only if there's a reason, Trino's very lonely. He just lost his mother. He needs someone to console him," I said. "Just not if she's a legit demon," I added, grinning at both of them.

King of the Underworld by RJ Kane

King of the Underworld

483

Sephie

Once Adrik had finished with his last meeting of the day, we waited for Stephen to come back after escorting that last meeting back to the lobby and we all joined Adrik in his office. Both Adrik and Stephen knew we were up to no good, just like Ivan did.

“One part of me loves that you’re all automatically in on it whenever something funny happens, but another part of me is frustrated because it kills the suspense,” I said as we walked into the office. I quickly shared an image of Trino and his new lady friend to Adrik before Viktor brought them all to his office.

“That was unexpected,” he said. He thought for a minute, then added, “he wants your approval, no doubt.”

“I think he needs all of our approvals. He just doesn’t know it yet,” I said.

“Diabolical. I might love you a little more right now,” Adrik said, standing up and walking toward me.

I giggled as he wrapped his arms around me. We heard Viktor’s deep voice talking to Trino as they walked to the office door.

Adrik quickly said to everyone, “I don’t care that she’s a potential love interest. Everyone gets thoroughly vetted now. That means Gus, Oscar, Chris, Keith, AND Trino. I’m taking no chances. You guys see or feel anything suspect on anyone, you let me know,”

I glanced over to see Andrei discreetly touch Stephen’s arm, so he got the message as well. We were still trying to think of ways to communicate with him that didn’t involve touching him, but we hadn’t figured out how to make it happen quite yet. He still

required physical touch to get the message, but it happened instantly and someone could just brush his arm and convey the information to him.

We all carefully studied everyone as they walked in the office. Viktor was at ease with everyone, as everyone was at ease with Viktor. The woman that was with Trino seemed nervous, but she was walking into an office with six more giant men she didn't know who were hired based on their abilities to intimidate people with one look. I could understand her apprehension.

"Trino. Now I understand why you've been MIA," I said, smiling at him as he walked in, his arm around her.

He smiled at me, walking to me and Adrik. After he shook Adrik's hand, he said, "Miha, I want you to meet Emilia." She smiled shyly, extending her hand to me.

"Keep your hand on me, please. I'm borrowing your gift," I told Adrik as I went to shake her hand. I didn't feel Ivan's bubble, which was a good sign for her. Bad sign for Misha. When my hand touched hers, I felt nothing but a moment of joy from her.

Poor Misha was going to be so disappointed....

Emilia was practically a midget compared to the rest of us. She even made Trino look tall, but she was beautiful. She had jet black hair, olive skin, and golden-brown eyes. Her smile, while nervous, was genuine. Trino noticed me looking her over. He couldn't keep the smile from his face as he said, in Italian, "you know I want your approval, Miha."

My mouth fell open. "Since when did you learn Italian?" I asked him, still in Italian.

"It's closer to Spanish than Russian. Baby steps," he said, smiling proudly at me.

“That gives me hope for learning Spanish easily,” I said.

“If you picked up Russian that quickly, Spanish will be a breeze,” he said.

“Noted.” Trino was still smiling, but he was also looking very expectantly at me. I couldn’t help but laugh. “So far, so good, Trino. I need to hear her speak to give you the complete okay,” I told him. He nodded, pulling her with him toward one of the couches.

I quickly gave the guys a translation of what he’d just said to me. “I’m impressed he learned Italian,” Ivan said.

“Apparently he hated the thought of being left out of most of the conversations between us and Vitally if I didn’t insist on English for him,” I responded.

“Misha, stop pouting. There will be other chances,” Adrik said.

Misha couldn’t keep from laughing at being chastised for that. Everyone else looked at him, wondering why he was laughing. “So remember that one time when Giana cussed Martin out in Italian? Yeah, that was a good time,” he said, trying to cover. It was so absurd that it made me also laugh, which made the rest of the guys laugh. Trino and his group just thought they were being left out of a joke.

“Nice save, kid,” Ivan said, still laughing in his head.

“I gotta work on that, Clearly,” Misha responded, pretending to shove Stephen over so he could sit down next to him. To everyone else, it looked like they were clowning around. In reality, he’d just let Stephen in on our conversation. Even Stephen had trouble hiding his smile once he learned what Adrik had said.

“So, Emilia, how did you meet Trino?” I asked. She immediately looked petrified that I’d asked her anything. Poor thing was scared out of her mind.

I could feel Andrei zero in on the fact that she seemed overly scared. Before, I could never tell when he was actively fishing through anyone else's head. I could feel him in mine, just as he could feel me when I went snooping through his, but I had never felt anything when he looked at anyone else. I knew he was just being thorough with her, which I appreciated.

She cleared her throat, looking at me. "We...we met kind of by accident," she said. She glanced up at Trino, like she wasn't sure she should say anything further.

Oscar laughed. "Trino literally ran into her on the street and knocked her down. She got up and cussed him out. Most romantic meeting ever," he said.

Trino was laughing with Oscar. "She ripped me a new one. I think she might've bruised my sternum from her finger poking me as she cursed me and pretty much my entire family in Spanish."

I raised my eyebrow, glancing around the room quickly. I could see that everyone else shared in my so far favorable impression of Emilia. I looked between Oscar and Gus, asking, "and what did he do in response?"

They both laughed. "He didn't say anything at first, then he asked her to dinner. We were sure she was going to smack him, but she accepted instead," Gus said.

I looked to Trino, unable to hide my smile. "I like her," I said, in Italian.

"Me too," he said, his smile stretching across his face.

"Bubba, did you find anything?" I asked. He glanced at me, shocked that I knew he'd been looking. I laughed, internally. "You were very discreet. I can feel you looking now, apparently

He exhaled, visibly relaxing. He shared what he could see of her aura, as he said, "nothing out of the ordinary. She actually really

likes Trino. He told her everything right away. She knows who he is. She doesn't know the extent of what we're facing, but she's fine with who he is. Sorry, Misha."

"She needs Viktor though. I can see that," I said, looking at what Andrei could see.

Ivan looked to Viktor, asking him in Russian, "how long does it take Kostya to fix someone? Like could you do it from a handshake?"

Viktor thought for a moment, then said, "it's possible that's all it would take. Unless there's extensive damage. It takes longer in that case."

"Judging by the others we've seen, I would not call this extensive damage," Andrei said.

"Can Kostya be ready to help you tonight? Headlights off this time," Ivan asked.

Viktor simply nodded. "I say we look at everyone. Viktor can fix as many as possible tonight without drawing too much attention to it. We can come up with a plan on how to tell Trino everything later," Ivan told us all.

Adrik steered the normal conversation toward Trino's security team, giving the rest of us time and space to go through everyone else in the room. Everyone checked out, much to my relief. I was beginning to get slightly paranoid at the constant betrayals we couldn't seem to get away from.

The longer we talked, the more relaxed Emilia got too. She laughed along with everyone, she gave Trino a hard time a few times, and she seemed to be more at ease than when she first arrived. She whispered something to Trino at one point. He looked to me, asking where the bathroom is.

I stood up, along with Ivan and Andrei. “I can show her,” I said. While she had been relaxing, she was once again petrified that Ivan and Andrei had stood up with me. I laughed. “Don’t worry. They’re just very protective of me. They’re much nicer than they look.”

King of the Underworld by RJ Kane

Chapter 484

King of the Underworld

484

Sephie

As we walked across the floor to the bathroom, Emilia very shyly asked me, “how long have you known Trino?”

I thought for a few minutes, glancing at Ivan and Andrei. “I actually don’t know the answer to that question. I’m terrible about keeping up with information like that. Like six months or so? Sure, that seems right.” I said, shrugging my shoulders.

She laughed. “We’ll go with that,” she said as she walked into the bathroom. I waited outside with Ivan and Andrei. Most everyone in the office had gone home for the day, but there were still a few overachievers still working and Andrei both put themselves between me and anyone left in the office without me having to say anything.

Ivan said, in Russian, “I haven’t seen anything on her. I also don’t have my usual murderous rage when it comes to chicks around her.”

“If ever there was a glowing endorsement, that should be it,” I said, laughing. “She needs Viktor, but otherwise, I think she checks out. So far, everyone in the office has checked out from what I can see.

Although I think we need to have a discussion about how much Keith hearts Stephen,” Andrei said

I giggled. “I caught that too. Like maybe a little stalkery, even. Does Stephen still hang out with him?”

“When would he have time? He’s always with us now,” Ivan said, his sly grin curling up one side of his mouth,

“And this is how Keith came to hate us all so he decided to revenge move to Colombia,” I said as Emilia walked out of the

bathroom. Her eyes were little wide when she heard us speaking Russian.

“Don’t worry about that either. We were actually making jokes. Russian is just such a coarse language that anything sounds like a threat.”

“You could say the same for Spanish and Italian, honestly. My neighbor is Arabic though. They win the prize for harshest language ever,” she said as we walked back to the office.

“You might have a point there,” I said, laughing quietly. Adrik’s eyes landed on mine as we walked back through the door. Since

he couldn’t see that my eyes changed, I pushed my warmth to him.

We heard Ivan laughing in our heads. “I can feel you two being f**king adorable right now,” he told us. I glanced at Ivan,

completely surprised he could feel that and also apologetic he could feel that.

“Don’t apologize, princess. I think I’m just extra sensitive to you both right now. It’s not a normul occurrence,” he told us.

I climbed in Adrik’s lap, wrapping his arms around me as Ivan sat down on the couch with us, I did catch Trino kissing Emilia’s

hand as she sat down next to him. It was a very sweet moment.

One that was short-lived, as Adrik asked, “have you heard anything on Martin?”

Trino sighed, then cursed in Spanish. I don’t know why his cursing tirades always made me laugh, but they did. I think it only

served to increase his anger each time, but I just couldn’t help myself. He

finally said, “he’s still trying to take over while I’ve been

gone. There are some pendejos that are working with him now, but some have stayed loyal to me. There are more that have

stayed loyal to me in my network than are working with him, which is advantageous to their survival rate.”

“And what of the Mexicans?” I asked.

A devilish grin stretched across Trino’s face. “That’s where it gets really good. Since he switched sides, they’re trying to work with him again. But now he won’t work with them. My people tell me he’s severed ties with Sal and Ricardo. Something about him not getting payment he was owed. He’s du mb enough to think he can take over everything on his own.”

We couldn’t help but laugh. “We’re the reason he didn’t get that payment. We put her on a plane with a new ID so no one could find her,” Ivan said.

Emilia’s eyes went wide. “You’re talking about him getting paid with a girl?” I laughed. “It was not our idea. We’re the ones that stopped it. Her godfather was the one that arranged it, for the record. We’re very pro-not using any humans as payment for anything.”

Trino cursed again. “Giana was the payment? Really?” he asked.

We all nodded. “Martin wanted in on Lorenzo’s human trafficking. He threatened to kidnap and sell her if she didn’t obey. She was payment for something happening in the city, but we never got that detail. She’s safe now. As long as she’s smart, no one will ever find her.” Adrik said.

Trino sat in stunned silence for a few moments, clearly shocked that Martin was capable of such things. He finally looked at

Adrik, anger clearly visible on his face. “I’m going to enjoy ki lling him.”

Adrik felt me tense, but he just chuckled. “Yeah, so about that. It’s slightly more complicated than that.”

“What do you mean?” he asked.

Adrik hesitated, not sure how to answer without just spilling everything right then. I squeezed his arms, answering for him. I said, in Italian, “remember those times we saved you from dying and then that one time my eyes went black in front of you?”

Trino nodded, saying, “that is not something I could easily forget.”

“The answer is connected to all of that. It’s much bigger than you know.

Much, much bigger. We don’t know how much you want

us to say in front of...everyone,” I said, glancing quickly at Emilia,

“How bad is it he asked.

“Worse than you could ever imagine,” I said.

He leaned forward, resting his elbows on his knees as he considered his

options. He glanced toward Chris and Keith, asking, “do

they know?”

“Not yet. We’ve been trying to come up with a way to break it to you slowly,

but that’s one of the tests they have to pass to be

your security. Your last security team almost met with an untimely end

because of their issues regarding me,” I said.

He scoffed. “You would’ve done me a favor, honestly.” He looked at Gus, then

that, then glanced at Chris and Keith one more

time. Finally, he looked at Emilia. He looked back to me. “She’s passed your

approval process so far, Miha?” I nodded. “Good.

We’ll see how she does in the advanced round,” he said, leaning back and

sliding his arm around her shoulders.

“You’re sure?” I asked him in English.

“Miha, I owe you my life. You’re the reason I got to see my mother one last

time. Whatever you’re about to tell me, pales in

comparison to those two things, Trino answered in English.

“Oh boy,” I said, getting up to close the office door.

I laughed. “It was not our idea. We’re the ones that stopped it. Her godfather

was the one that arranged it, for the record. We’re

very pro-not using any humans as payment for anything.”

Trino cursed again. “Giana was the payment? Really?” he asked.

We all nodded. “Martin wanted in on Lorenzo’s human trafficking. He

threatened to kidnap and sell her if she didn’t obey. She

was payment for something happening in the city, but we never got that detail. She's safe now. As long as she's smart, no one will ever find her, Adrik said.

Trino sat in stunned silence for a few moments, clearly shocked that Martin was capable of such things. He finally looked at

Adrik, anger clearly visible on his face. "I'm going to enjoy killing him."

Adrik felt me tense, but he just chuckled. "Yeah, so about that. It's slightly more complicated than that."

"What do you mean?" he asked.

Adrik hesitated, not sure how to answer without just spilling everything right then. I squeezed his arms, answering for him. I said,

in Italian, "remember those times we saved you from dying and then that one time my eyes went black in front of you?"

Trino nodded, saying, "that is not something I could easily forget."

"The answer is connected to all of that. It's much bigger than you know.

Much, much bigger. We don't know how much you want of...everyone," I said, glancing quickly at Emilia.

"How bad is it?" he asked.

"Worse than you could ever imagine," I said.

He leaned forward, resting his elbows on his knees as he considered his options. He glanced toward Chris and Keith, asking, "do they know?"

"Not yet. We've been trying to come up with a way to break it to you slowly, but that's one of the tests they have to pass to be your security. Your last security team almost met with an untimely end because of their issues regarding me," I said.

He scoffed. "You would've done me a favor, honestly." He looked at Gus, then Oscar, then glanced at Chris and Keith one more time. Finally, he looked at Emilia. He looked back to me. "She's passed your approval process so far, Miha?" I nodded. "Good.

We'll see how she does in the advanced round," he said, leaning back and sliding his arm around her shoulders.

"You're sure?" I asked him in English.

"Miha, I owe you my life. You're the reason I got to see my mother one last time. Whatever you're about to tell me, pales in comparison to those two things." Trino answered in English.

"Oh boy," I said, getting up to close the office door.

King of the Underworld by RJ Kane

Chapter 485

King of the Underworld

485

Sephir

As I walked to the door, I quickly updated the guys on my conversation. Ivan grinned as he got up and went to Adrik's bathroom to take his contacts out. I could feel the excitement from all of them. They were looking forward to the shock they were about to deliver.

When I returned to the couch, Adrik stood up, pulling me with him to the bathroom. We walked in as Ivan walked out. It took just a minute to take our contacts out and then we sat down with everyone once again. Since Misha's eyes had only changed once so far, he hadn't gotten contacts yet.

Andrei quietly leaned over and explained what was happening to Viktor, in Russian, so Chris, who was sitting close by, wouldn't understand.

As Adrik pulled me back into his lap, he said, "it started with Sephie and her ability to know things she shouldn't necessarily know. Not just the conversations in Italian. She knew details about the other bosses that most people would've missed. Over time, that ability grew. She started reading my mind very early on in our relationship, as well as all of the guys. It seemed like the stronger the connection got with her, the more she was able to do. Then Misha's ability to see the outcome of a plan morphed into being able to see you under attack the night the Mexicans came for you. One by one, we've each discovered a gift, if you will, that we have that nobody else does. It sounds somewhat crazy, but you've seen the result of it several * times now."

“It’s why I’m sitting here right now, Jefe,” Trino said.

“It is, but it’s much more than just that,” Adrik said. He squeezed me just a little tighter, glancing at Ivan. “Martin and Ricardo have both made deals to get further ahead in this lifetime.”

“What kind of deal?” Trino asked.

“Deals that have eternal consequences,” I said. I knew my eyes had switched to black without needing to see anyone else’s. I

saw the surprise on Trino’s face, followed quickly by the sheer terror as he looked at Adrik and Ivani’s black eyes. I glanced over at Misha. His eyes now changed with ours as well.

“Misha, you’re going to need contacts now, too. Yours are already changing with ours,” I told him.

“No deal! I’m not wearing contacts,” he said. I could hear him laughing my head. How he managed to keep a straight face, I’ll never know.

Trino took a deep breath, trying to gain composure. “I knew Miha’s eyes changed, but I had no idea the rest of you could do it. I also don’t know what it means. I just know that I kinda wanna run when I see it.”

“I feel like running is a good life choice,” Gus said, his eyes still the size of dinner plates.

“Martin and Ricardo have both made deals with very powerful demons. We are what can stop them,” Adrik said.

I grinned, telling Trino, “brace yourself for what I’m about to say next, Trino, because you’re not ready for it. He is the true King of the Underworld now,” I said. I could see Trino’s color drain from his face, which confirmed that my eyes had turned red again.

Stephen glanced at me, then looked back at Trino. “That’s not even the scariest color, Trino, She’s got others that are much more

disturbing.” The way he said it made it seem like my eyes changing colors was the most normal thing in the world. Normal really is relative

All Trino could do was curse under his breath for a few moments. Finally, he composed himself enough to simply ask, “how?”

We spent the next hour or so explaining everything to Trino. We didn’t leave much out. He now knew about Armando. He knew of the end game for Martin and Ricardo, as well as the other bosses. We told him everything

To our surprise, once he got over his initial shock, he became quite curious about how it all worked. I ended up showing him what Andrei could see, as well as what Ivan could see. We showed him what it looked like when Viktor used Kostya to fix

someone as well, telling him that they all needed Kostya and Viktor’s help.

We even gave him a glimpse at what Armando looked like after Stephen broke him, just because he asked.

“Jefe, I remember telling you that Sephie was always meant to meet you when I first met her. I had no idea how accurate that was,” Trino said,

scratching his head. “I wish my abuela was here. She would be so excited right now.”

“What’s an abuela” Misha asked.

“Babushka,” I told him.

“Sweet, I’m trilingual now.” he responded.

“It’s a lot to take in, Trino. It’s been a lot for us to take in, even. It hasn’t always been easy, but we’ve had help along the way. The demons that Martin and Ricardo made deals with are very old and very powerful. They could wreak a tremendous amount of havoc if they’re allowed to remain for much longer. It might seem like Martin is fighting a losing battle right now, but I wouldn’t put

it past him to start recruiting other demons to hit cause to strengthen his numbers. Same for Ricardo. We haven't gotten word yet that any of the other bosses have made deals, but that's not to say it hasn't already happened or won't happen in the future.

We've been told that you're a key figure in this. You know I reward those who stay loyal to me. That will never change," Adnik said.

Trino exhaled loudly. "After knowing this, I would be a fool to not remain loyal, And not just because I'm scared of your girlfriend, fefe –

I held my hand up, showing him my ring as I cleared my throat. "Future wife, thank you very much."

He cursed as he jumped up to come for a closer look. "Dios mio, Miha. Does your arm get tired carrying that around?"

"We've increased the weight training to compensate," Andrei said, very seriously.

Trino laughed. "It's perfect. Congratulations." He leaned in closer, saying quietly in Italian, "I might need the number for that jeweler sooner rather than later." He winked at me as he went to sit back down beside Emilia.

Ivan looked at Chris and Keith, who were still sitting in mostly stunned silence. "What about you two? Still in or you'd still like to

run right about now? I'll open the door for you if it's the latter," he said.

"If I hadn't seen it with my own eyes, I would think you're all full of shit. I knew there was something different about Sephie when

I saw her go against Mike. No offense, Sephie, you're incredibly talented and fast, but you're still a girl. It never made complete

sense in my head that you dominated him so easily," Keith said. "Now it does."

“Except that really was all Sephie. Her demon only started stepping forward well after that happened. She really is that good,”

Ivan said.

“Okay, right back to not making sense,” Keith said.

“She could still do the same to you both. She would just break a sweat now because you’re catching up in your training,” Andrei said, slightly miffed.

“I love you both, but you’re not helping them feel any more comfortable right now, I told both Ivan and Andrei, trying not to laugh at how white both Chris and Keith had gone.

“Shit. My bad. I got confused. I forgot we were trying to make them feel better,” Ivan said, cutting his eyes at me.

“I still love you. It is slightly irritating they would think I’d need help with that hot mess,”

“While I do find it somewhat offensive you would think she’d need help to beat someone as clearly inept as Mike was, it’s not what matters at the moment. What matters is that you can handle knowing this is going on and you still want to be a part of it,”

Adrik said, making me laugh quietly.

“What exactly is the plan? Are they coming here? Are we going there?” Chris asked. He glanced around the room, adding, “I’m only asking because I need to make arrangements for my mom if I’m going to be gone for an extended period of time. If I’m moving somewhere, then she comes with me.”

“Your mother will be taken care of. Whatever she needs. Don’t worry,” Trino said. “But he does bring up a valid question. Do you have a plan?”

King of the Underworld by RJ Kane

King of the Underworld

486

Adrik

“We’re still working on the plan, to be completely honest. We have people watching Ricardo in Italy. We’ve also gotten word that Niko and Vito are planning on coming back to the city. Since they’ve all been gone, the underbosses have stopped enforcing taxes. The people pushed back enough and the underbosses heard what happened to Lorenzo, Massimo, and Anthony. We think the cash flow is drying up, which is why they’re planning on coming back to the city,” I said.

“And what will happen when they come back? If you grab them, then it might mean you ruin your chance at getting Ricardo,”

Trino said. His eyebrows were furrowed. He was thinking deeply on this matter.

“That’s also what we think, which is why we haven’t made a solid plan yet.

We’ve been keeping tabs on Martin, but I think you know more about him than we do. Whatever we decide, it all needs to happen quickly. Martin can’t get word that Ricardo has been taken care of and vice versa,” I said.

We ordered dinner and kept talking for several more hours. To her credit, Emilia actually had a few good ideas along the way.

She didn’t seem intimidated by the subject of the conversation and the longer she spent with us, the more relaxed she became.

Even after finding out everything about us. Trino noticed. It was evident he fell a little more in love with her throughout the evening.

“Watching Trine and Emilia makes me feel like I need to apologize to everyone. We really are disgusting,” I told everyone

silently.

Sephie laughed, making the others look at her. She took a page from Misha's book and said, "remember when Trino used to beg me to come to Colombia to help him find a girlfriend? Turns out he needed to come here instead. Trino smiled broadly at her.

"Nice save, princess."

After a few more minutes, the conversation turned back to the matter at hand. Stephen, who had been quiet for most of the evening, asked, "what are you thinking about the Mexicans once Martin is taken care of? Is that going to be enough to make them stop? There's still the potential for war with them, I think."

"Once I'm back in power, they'll heel if they know what's good for them. The messages I sent when I took over are still fresh for most of them. They're only doing this now because they have the backing of Sal and the other bosses. That's the only reason they're bold enough to move against me. They know Jefe supports me, so they know if they want to keep their lives, they'll do the same," Trino said.

Stephen seemed satisfied with his answer, but both Sephie and I knew he was still mulling over something in his head. Misha, too. There was more to that question, but since he didn't continue the conversation, I let it drop as well.

"What about Dario? What happened to him?" Trino asked.

"He's still here. I've kept him well hidden. When I agreed to let him go, it was before most of this had happened. Sephie and Misha were the only ones that had any extra knowledge about people. We're going to talk to him again to make sure we didn't miss anything. As long as he checks out, he can still go free at the end of this," I said.

"You think he was lying?" Trino asked.

“Not necessarily. But I want to make sure we didn’t miss anything. Now that we know what we’re dealing with on a larger scale, the likelihood that he was lying is much higher. Demons are tricky. That’s why it took us so long to pick up on Armando. His demon was savvy enough that it knew to step back anytime he was around Sephie,” I said.

“That’s why Armando appeared to be a moron, for the record. He had no recollection of anything that happened when his demon was running the show,” Ivan said.

Trino inhaled deeply. “That makes so much more sense. I was really wondering how someone as wealthy as him could be that f**king stupid. Does Giana know about all this? I wonder if she ever saw the differences in him.”

“If she did, we don’t know about it. He got her hooked on coke, so it’s possible she was just high as f**k for most of the time while she was with him,” Sephie said.

Emilia turned to look at Trino, surprise evident on her face. She said something to Trino in Spanish; her tone was deadly. He raised his eyebrows, trying not to laugh at her as the rest of his group snickered.

“She just told him she’d kill him if he ever did that to her, Sephie told us. “I picked up a few words and pieced it together. I have to say, I like her.”

Trino responded in Spanish, pulling her closer to him. He was clearly trying to reassure her that he would never do such a thing.

Trino enjoyed partying, but he was never known to partake in his own product. The most I’d ever seen him do was have drinks while he was at a club. I had a feeling even that would calm down if he stayed serious about Emilia.

“Di sgusting.” Ivan said, laughing in his head.

“In the most adorable way possible.” Sephie added. “Is it wrong that I find her threatening his life really endearing?”

The rest of us couldn’t help but laugh quietly. The others were beginning to suspect that there was some kind of communication they were missing out on. We might’ve left that part out when we told Tring everything. It was the only detail we kept back.

We were still deep in discussion, even as it was approaching midnight. I was thankful for the extra sleep Sephie and I had gotten over the weekend. It was coming in handy now.

“Gus, Oscar, what are the people in the city saying now? Do you know?” Sephie asked.

“They’re happy the bosses are gone, from what we can tell,” Gus said, looking to Oscar to see if he agreed.

Oscar nodded in agreement. “It got dicey with a few of the underbosses right after Sal left with the other two bosses. I’m sure that’s also a reason they stopped collecting taxes. One of them almost died because the people in that part of town came together and ambushed him and his guys. They’re much happier now that things are quiet.”

“They know Jefe was the reason that the brawn operation got shut down and they know he’s the reason the other bosses have run. They fully support him, from everything we’ve heard,” Gus said.

“We’re close to handing over the doctor that created brawn to the police. The DA came across some evidence that clearly shows Sal paid him to create brawn in the first place. He thinks he can prosecute him. There are a few other things that need to happen at the same time, but it will all benefit the people and make them happy with the mayor,” I said.

“It’s important to keep the people happy. I relied heavily on them when I took over. I have a feeling I’ll rely heavily on them when I go back to take care of Martin.” Trino said.

“You’ll have our help as well,” I said. Trino sighed. It was obvious the betrayal by Martin was still weighing heavily on him.

“Don’t worry. Trino. It’s all going to work out eventually. It’s just going to be messy first,” Sephie said, grinning at him.

King of the Underworld by RJ Kane

Chapter 487

King of the Underworld

487

Adtrik

We finally made it upstairs around 2 am. Both Sephie and I were exhausted.

“While I know it needed to happen, I would’ve preferred to end the conversation like two hours ago,” Sephie said. “How does he stay up so late and still have so much energy?”

I laughed. “I can almost guarantee that he does not get up anywhere close to the same time we do, solnishko.” I watched her climb in bed and joined her after turning off the lights. As she laid across my chest in her favorite spot, I asked, “you still have a good feeling about everyone that was here?”

“Mmm hmm. I do want to know why Stephen brought up the Mexicans again though. I’m not sure what he was thinking, but I know he had a reason. I try to refrain from fishing with him as much as possible, Viktor too.” She paused, then giggled. “We also need to have a talk about how in love Keith is with Stephen still. Not sure how much time Stephen is spending with Keith anymore, but Keith is still very infatuated with him.”

“Stephen’s changed since he figured out his gift. He’s not so shy anymore. He’s got a quiet confidence to him that’s really evident now. I’m sure Keith has noticed. He probably finds it very attractive,” I said, running my hands over her back and through her hair.

“He is a s*xy beast now. You’re right,” she said, snuggling into me more. I could feel her happiness and contentment. It made me feel the same. Even though we were facing the biggest hurdle we likely ever would, I was finding myself enjoying every single

moment with her.

When I woke the next morning, Sephie was just starting to stir next to me.

Neither one of us had thought to close the blinds the night before so we could sleep a little longer. I was surprised that she woke up at all. I expected her to sleep in, but she lifted her head, resting her chin on my chest.

“Good morning. I think,” she said. She was still very sleepy, which made her a thousand times more adorable. She was so

sleepy she didn’t catch me trying not to laugh at her struggling to wake up.

“You can go back to sleep, love. I know you’re still tired,” I said. “I’m still tired too.”

“It’s not fair that you have to get up and I don’t, though. Feels rude,” she said, tolling over to stretch beside me. “What kind of day do you have today?” she asked as she yawned, stretching her arms and legs, making her joints pop

“It’s light and I want to keep it that way. I want to talk to Dario tonight. That keeps getting pushed off, but I want to get it off my

mind. It’s kind of been eating at me since Stephen brought it up,” I said.

Sephie rolled back toward me, once again laying across my chest. She rested her chin on my chest so she could look at me. “Me

too. I’m still not convinced we made the wrong decision before, but I think we can find out more now. Do you want me to make

Viktor schedule a nap for you this afternoon?” she asked, trying to hide her grin from me.

I laughed, flipping her onto her back. “Only if you take a nap with me. I wouldn’t say no to that,” I said, pressing my lips to hers.

She wrapped her arms and legs around me, holding me tightly.

“I wouldn’t say no to that either. I’m still feeling extra needy when it comes to you lately. Like I don’t want to be any farther apart from you than absolutely necessary,” she said.

I smiled at her. "I feel the same," I said. I sat up, pulling her up with me. "It's strange, though. I can feel you just as well when we're apart as I can when we're in the same room now, so it's almost like we're never really apart. But I still want you with me at all times. I've been thinking of ways to get you to come to more meetings." She grinned at me. "There is that meeting with everyone on the building project at the end of the week that I must attend now. And if I have to sit through all your meetings, that's much less time I have to spend spreading the f**kery around with all of the guys. I feel like the world will suffer as a result."

God, I love her.

I laughed as she threw my shirt she'd worn to bed at my head. "See? F**kery," she said, grinning at me.

I waited until she was pulling her shirt over her head and grabbed her, picking her up. "I love your f**kery, Sephie. I would never deny the world such a thing." I said as I carried her out of the closet with me. She giggled as she tried to finish putting her shirt on in my arms. She finally gave up, instead wrapping her arms around my neck and resting her head on my shoulder. I could feel her contentment at being in my arms. It made it that much harder to let her go.

She sighed as I set her down so she could finish putting her shirt on before we walked out to the kitchen. We both knew that the guys were waiting on us already. She was still grinning at me as she straightened her shirt. When I went to open the bedroom door, she hopped on my back.

"The f**kery. It abounds," she said, wrapping her arms around my neck once again.

The guys all looked just as tired as we were when we walked into the kitchen. Andrei was already making coffee for everyone as

I deposited Sephie on the counter.

“Is it wrong that I want you to call Trino to wake him up since we all have to be up right now?” Misha asked.

Sephie caught my eye, her mischievous grin still on her face. I stood in between her legs, leaning in to kiss her. “You were right.

It does abound,” I said, laughing with her.

“My schedule is light today and I want to keep it that way. Do what you absolutely have to do today, but try to get some rest. I do want to talk to Dario tonight to get that out of the way. I don’t want it to get pushed back again,” I said to everyone. I had turned to face them. Sephie wrapped her arms around my waist and rested her chin on my shoulder.

*Stephen, what were you thinking about the Mexicans last night? I know there was more to your thought process than what you said. Just like I still think there’s more to why you brought up Dario,” Sephie asked.

“Something just doesn’t feel right about the Mexicans, I don’t know what though,” he said.

“Same for me. There was nothing specific that I was trying to find last night, but there was plenty of uneasiness when thinking about the Mexicans. I think we need to be careful with them,” Misha said, Sephie looked at Andrei, who was standing beside us. “Bubba, have you gotten anything about either of those things?”

He shook his head no. “Not exactly. There’s something nagging at me about Dorio, but I don’t know what. I haven’t thought much about the Mexicans, but when Stephen brought it up last night I noticed that Emilia got a little tense. She’s Mexican. She had an uncle that was killed when Trino first came to power,” he said.

I immediately felt Sephie's worry come on strongly. "How does she feel about that? Could you tell?" she asked.

"Either she's a very good actress or she's mostly okay with it. I didn't find anything nefarious, if that's what you're worried about," he said.

We felt her worry lessen, but only slightly. I turned toward her, only to find her eyes swirling. The white was clearly present in all her colors. "I'll find a time to bring it up to Trino. I can't imagine she would've been able to get that past all of us if she's holding a grudge against Trino for it and wants some kind of revenge," I said, placing my hand against her cheek.

She chewed on her bottom lip as she contemplated everything.

"It's worth keeping an eye on, at the very least. Trino has been the only one that's stayed loyal. I would hate to see him taken down by someone he loves," Ivan said.

King of the Underworld by RJ Kane

Chapter 488

King of the Underworld

488

Sephle

We were all in Adrik's office, waiting for Viktor to bring Dario back.

Everyone was still tired from our late night with Trino the night before, but we'd all been on edge about Dario ever since Stephen brought it up. I, for one, was happy to get it checked off the list of things we needed to be worrying about.

Viktor walked in with Dario a few minutes later. He looked much better than the last time I'd seen him. He had shaved his head; his hair was neater, He looked a little happier than last time. I caught myself studying him more closely as he walked in the office.

I watched Adrik as he shook hands with him, not seeing anything out of the ordinary.

Viktor had said that Dario had been grateful the entire time he'd been at the building. He never complained. He always asked the guards that were on him to send word to Adrik that he appreciated everything. He was really happy to get moved to a better room over the weekend, telling the guards he liked the bed better in the new room. He'd requested a few books to read, but otherwise, he was quiet and kept to himself.

The last time we saw him, he looked frightened. Scattered, even. He couldn't focus on one thing for very long. I was surprised when he wouldn't look at any of us in the eyes for very long. It took me a bit to get him to look at me when we talked to him before. This time, he seemed more confident again. Calmer. It seemed like his time away from Massimo had been good for him.

He greeted everyone politely, taking a seat across from Adrik's desk. I was on the cabinet behind his desk in my favorite spot to watch people. I glanced at Ivan when Dario sat down. He shook his head no. "I can't see anything. He doesn't even have anything hanging around him," he told me.

Andrei shared what he was seeing. Surprisingly, his aura didn't look that bad. It was in need of repair, but compared to the man

we'd seen before, I was surprised at how strong his aura was this time.

I didn't feel Misha's nausea, either, which was also a favorable sign for Dario, "How are things working out with the other bosses?" Dario asked. He'd been kept in the dark about everything that had

happened with the other bosses. He didn't know about any of it.

Adrik inhaled deeply. "There are only three left, along with Ricardo."

Dario chuckled. "What of Lorenzo?"

"Dead."

"What three are left, if you don't mind my asking?"

"Niko, Vito, and Sal."

Dario was quiet for a few moments. He looked visibly relieved to learn that Massimo was no longer among the living. "What happened to Massimo?"

"Trino lit him on fire and threw him off a cliff," I said, flatly.

Dario clearly didn't believe me at first. He thought I was joking.

"She's telling the truth. I can show you the video if you like," Adrik said.

"I would, actually, I think that's a fitting end to the horrors that man caused during his life," Dario said.

Adrik scrolled through his phone to find the video and tossed it to Dario. He replayed it several times, obviously enjoying it."

"I never thought I would outlive him," he said, almost in a whisper.

"What do you know about Ricardo De Luca?" Adrik asked.

“He’s close with Armando. Always has been. I think Sal has done business with him as well. There was always something about him that Massimo didn’t like, so we kept our business with him to a minimum. He was never into the illegal side of things, from what I know,” Dario said.

“Did Massimo ever say what it was he didn’t like about him?” Ivan asked.

“No, not specifically. It was much the same as with Sal. It like Massimo didn’t want competition. He enjoyed knowing he was the most evil.”

“What do you know about Anthony? Did you know his mother? Was Sal with her or was she just a fling that resulted in pregnancy?” I asked.

Dario looked directly at me for a moment before he answered. “You already suspect something or you wouldn’t be asking me.

Anthony wasn’t Sal’s kid. He was Massimo’s kid. Massimo was married at the time that his mistress got pregnant. She tried to break up his marriage, so he cut her off to get back at her. Sal found out and took her in. Raised Anthony as his own, just to have insurance against Massimo. He told Massimo he would kill Anthony if he ever tried to move against him.”

“But how did that work? If Massimo cut Anthony’s mother off, why would he care if Sal killed Anthony? Misha asked.

“It was more the principal of it for Massimo. Not that he had any love for Anthony. He just didn’t want to live a life knowing that Sal had killed one of his children,” Dario said.

“Wow,” I said, under my breath. “Did Anthony know Massimo was his real father?”

“That, I don’t know. He should’ve at least suspected. He didn’t look anything like Sal’s other kids. He did look like Massimo’s other kids.”

“How many other kids did Massimo have?” I asked.

“Two others beside Anthony. One girl, one boy. Neither were interested in the business, Last I knew. Both are spoiled completely rotten and just want to spend money without having to work to earn it.”

“What about Sal? How many kids does he have, besides Anthony?” Ivan asked.

“Sal has a lot of kids and grandkids, too. He started having kids when he was still young, so he has quite a few with a few kids of their own now.” He thought for a moment, like he was counting in his head.

“I think he has 10 kids, unless I’ve forgotten one.

Anthony makes 11,”

“No, he has 10 kids. Along with the one less brother,” I said.

“Really?” Dario looked to Adrik, who confirmed my statement. “Huh. How did Sal take that?”

“Not well. He fled to Italy, with Niko and Vito close behind him,” Adrik said.

“What of their underbosses?”

“They’ve basically abandoned the bosses they work for. They stopped collecting taxes very shortly after the three bosses left.

They all heard what happened to Anthony, Lorenzo, and Massimo. They all knew that no one has seen you or Armando in months. They’re scared,” Adrik said.

“Is Armando dead too?” Dario asked.

“Yes,” Adrik said. We decided it would just be easier to tell everyone that he was dead rather than come up with an excuse for

what happened to him. Saying “he’s locked in his body with a demon being horrifically tortured until his body dies” just didn’t

seem like a plausible answer to the question of where Armando was,

“You work quick,” Dario said. “I can’t say I’m disappointed about that.”

“Anything strange?” Adrik asked everyone silently.

“Nothing from me. He doesn’t even have anything hanging around him,” Ivan said.

“Nothing from me. I checked. He really will live a quiet life if we let him go. Nobody will ever see him again,” Misha responded.

“He could use Viktor, but I found nothing that warranted worry. He’s actually much better this time than he was last time we talked to him,” Andrei said.

7

*I agree with Andrei. I think giving him hope again helped him cope with everything he’s been through. I don’t get anything had from him at all. Bubba, can you check with Stephen?” I asked, since Andrei was sitting close to Stephen. He leaned over and brushed Stephen’s arm. Stephen shook his head no. He looked to me, giving me a quick thumbs up.

“You’re still going to be able to leave once this is over. I can’t tell you how long it will take, though. Ricardo is a different sort of monster. It’s as much for your safety that I’m keeping you here as it is anything else,” Adrik said.

“I can get information from Sal, if you need it. He’ll think he’s going to get my area of the city if he helps me. I can tell him I got away from Trino and have been in hiding. I’m happy to help speed this process along as much as I can, Dario said.

“He really does want to help, not just because he wants to disappear. He wants payback from Sal. I’m not entirely sure why yet though,” Andrei said, silent

I started to fish further in Dario’s head, looking for the answer to that question.

King of the Underworld by RJ Kane

King of the Underworld

489

Sephie

What I found in Dario's head was not wholly unexpected, but it was surprising that it came from Sal and not Massimo. The reason he was so willing to help us get information from Sal was because Sal had been the one to tell Dario's family about his family dying when he was younger. Sal is the one that told them Massimo killed Dario's parents, but Sal also framed it like Dario knew about the plan and was in on the plan.

"Bubba, you're seeing this too, right?" I asked, Andrei.

"Yeah, I knew Sal was evil, but this is past even what I thought he was capable of. Why would he do this?"

"I'm not entirely sure, but I want to ask him about it."

I quickly shared what we'd found with Adrik, who was equally as shocked as Andrei and I. "That's a good reason to want revenge on a person," he said.

"I agree. I want to ask him about it and see his reaction. Just ask him why he wants to help us take down Sal. It can't be just because he wants to go free," I

told Adrik

Adrik looked at Dario. "Is there another reason you're offering to help take down Sal, Dario?" Adrik's gaze was intense enough that 9 times out of 10, when he would ask a direct question like that, the person would always give a truthful answer. There was something about Adrik that usually compelled people to tell him the truth. That attribute had only grown stronger lately. His intimidation factor was ever present, even when he didn't mean to. Most people got the feeling that he was looking at their soul

when he stared at them. It made many people uncomfortable.

Dario adjusted his position in the chair he was in, contemplating his answer. He decided the truth was the best option. “Sal is the one that told my family about Massimo killing my parents when I was young. That wouldn’t have been the end of the world, except he made it seem like I knew about the plan and went along with it. My family was so disgusted with me that they left. Massimo is to blame for a lot of things, and he’s partially to blame for that too, but Sal is the real reason my family left me and won’t speak to me.”

“Why would he do such a thing?” Misha asked, completely appalled at Sal’s behavior.

Dario shrugged his shoulders. “Evil doesn’t need a reason.”

“Dario, you keep talking about Massimo and Sal and referring to them as evil. Granted, they’ve done many evil acts. That’s not being argued here. I’m just curious if you’ve ever seen anything else that makes you think of them as evil?” I asked.

He looked slightly uncomfortable at my question; he didn’t answer right away. Everyone picked up on his unease.

I could feel Andrei looking further through Dario’s mind, as well as feel Misha’s nausea as Dario thought about Massimo and Sal.

Ivan still felt normal and Stephen still felt normal, so it wasn’t anything to do with Dario himself, but he knew more about Massimo and Sal than he was saying.

He opened his mouth to speak, but then stopped himself, trying to find the words to say.

“Dario, do you know if either of them made any deals? Like say, for their souls?” I asked, just to see what would happen.

His eyes went wide as he looked at me. “How did you know about that?” he asked.

“There’s a lot of things I know that I shouldn’t,” I said. “Which one was it? Sal or Massimo?”

“Sal, Massimo never knew about it, from what I know. He would’ve wanted his own deal had he known.”

We all breathed a sigh of relief to know that Massimo hadn’t made a deal with a powerful enough demon that he would reincarnate into roughly the same person each time. Now that we all know what we knew, I was slightly disappointed that we’d let Trino kill Massimo. It would’ve been better had Stephen broken him, the same as Armando.

“Do you know the details of that deal?” Adrik asked.

He shook his head no, as he said, “no, not specifically, Sal just told me that he made a deal with something very powerful. He tried to talk me into doing the same. Said he could get my family back, even. He also promised I could have exponentially more power if I did it.”

“So why did you say no?” Ivan asked.

*Something didn’t feel right. It wasn’t that long ago that Sal told me about it. After that night at the restaurant when Ghost came back, for sure. I think it was when he found out that Sephie knew everything about Massimo. He said then he was going to use her to get to Ghost so he could kill him and that he had enough power to do so now,” Dario said, “It was shortly after that when Massimo and I went to Colombia, so I never heard any more about it.”

Adrik laughed. “His demon also oversold and underdelivered.” A few of us snickered at Sal thinking he would be successful in overthrowing Adrik.

“What do you mean? His demon?” Dario asked.

“That’s what he made a deal with. Basically, he literally sold his soul,” Adrik said.

“That would imply he had one to begin with,” Dario said thoughtfully. While he was not trying to be funny when he said it, it did make all of us laugh. We unwittingly made him nervous by laughing at him, until we assured him none of it was a joke.

“Dario, there are things happening that are not easily explained and Sal and Ricardo are at the center of them. There is a network of people around the world trying to take them down. Not just us,” Adrik said,

Dario thought for a few minutes, then looked at Adrik. “I can get information. I don’t know what else I can do, but I can at least do that. If what you’ve said is true, then he must be stopped. His entire family must be stopped. His children take after him in every way. Even the girls. Anthony was not an anomaly.”

Adrik looked at Ivan, the two of them clearly having a silent conversation that the rest of us weren’t privy to. I didn’t get anything but honesty from Dario, nor did Andrei. He passed Misha’s tests as well. We really could use all the help we could get at this point. If he was able to get information directly from Sal, it would make our lives much easier. Battista didn’t even know about Sal’s deal yet. We clearly needed some more help.

Adrik sighed. “I have no issue with you talking to Sal on the phone, but anything past that is not going to be safe for you. I’m not worried about betrayal, even. That would mean you’re dead with the rest of them. I’m worried about your life being in jeopardy if they know where you are.”

Dario looked surprised at Adrik’s statement. Like he wasn’t expecting Adrik to be worried for his safety. He thought for a few moments, then said, “Sal knows how paranoid I am. He also knows how secretive I can be. If I tell him I’m in hiding, he likely

won't ask anything past that, as he knows he won't get an answer. He knows what happened to Massimo?"

"We're not sure. He had already fled to Italy when Massimo was killed," Adrik said.

"Eh. Then I tell him what happened to Massimo. I tell him I escaped and made it somewhere safe, but they're looking for me. I want to know what he's going to do to make it safe for me to return to the city. Then maybe I offer my area and Massimo's area for helping me. He won't be able to turn that down. He's too f**king greedy," Dario said.

"It could work," Ivan said in Russian, after thinking about it for a few minutes. "We need information on Sal. Anything helps, at this point."

Viktor agreed with Ivan, adding, "just on the off chance that Sal can trace his call, we can make it look like he's anywhere in the world but here. Sal won't be able to tell the difference."

Adrik looked to Misha, who was checking on outcomes. He finally returned to the present, saying, "he'll be useful. There's multiple ways this plays out. though."

"We can discuss that later. The important issue is whether to let him talk to Sal and whether that benefits us or hurts us," Adrik said.

"It will benefit us in each scenario," Misha said.

Adrik looked back to Dario, asking him in English, "you're sure you want to help us get information from Sal? You can say no. It changes nothing about our deal. You still go free at the end."

"I want to help. I'm tired of ignoring the evil he's done. If I can help hurry along his comeuppance. I'll gladly do it," Dario said.

Adrik simply nodded once. The conversation ended shortly after and Dario was taken back to his room. Once Viktor came back,

we moved upstairs to
the penthouse since that was the only spot we really felt comfortable
discussing; anything these days.

King of the Underworld

Sephie

“What were you two discussing I asked, looking between Adrik and Ivan.
Ivan’s mischievous grin spread across his face. “I thought the whole point of
being able to communicate telepathically was that
no one else would notice when it happened?”

“No one else but her,” Adrik said, pulling me to him. He turned me toward
him, his palm resting on my cheek. “Much like what
you witnessed in Battista’s associate’s head, I don’t think you need the details
of that conversation, solnishko.”

He didn’t need to say anymore. I knew it was not something I was going to
enjoy knowing, so I happily let it drop.

“It’s so weird when she doesn’t argue,” Ivan said, trying to sound serious.

Adrik put the back of his hand on my forehead, like he was checking my
temperature. “She doesn’t feel like she’s got a fever, but
that doesn’t mean she’s not coming down with something “

I playfully punched him in the ribs as I turned and walked toward the
bedroom to take my contacts out. He caught me as I got
halfway down the hallway, wrapping his arms around me as he walked us both
back to the bedroom. I could feel his happiness at
having me in his arms. I knew he could feel mine, as well.

He waited patiently while I took my contacts out, then spun me around to
face him. His lips immediately found mine, kissing me
deeply. He broke the -kiss, leaning back far enough that he could see my eyes.
The sweet look of satisfaction on his face told me
they were deep blue. He caught me

smirking at him. “What’s that look for?” he asked as he traded places with me to take his contacts out.

“You get a look of satisfaction on your face when my eyes turn blue. And only when my eyes turn blue. It’s the only color I’m 100% positive on each time it happens, just by the look on your face,” I said. I wrapped my arms around his waist and rested my head in between his shoulder blades while I waited for him to take his contacts out.

“That’s because it’s my absolute favorite,” he said as he turned around to face me.

“You’re my absolute favorite,” I said, standing on my toes to kiss him again. He groaned softly as he pulled me against him completely. His lips were still on mine as he slowly walked us out of the bathroom, toward the bedroom door again. I could feel his reluctance to let go of me as we made it to the bedroom door. It made me giggle.

“You’re not the only one who’s feeling extra needy lately, apparently,” he said, finally coming up for air.

“What is wrong with us,” I said, wistfully as I pulled his arms around me tighter as we walked back to the kitchen.

I started on dinner as we discussed our conversation with Dario, as well as the conversation with Trino from the night before.

I finally looked to Stephen, asking, “how about now? Does anything still feel off to you about Dario after talking to him tonight?”

In his normal serious way, he thought for a moment before replying. “No, I think it was Sal’s deal that was the reason we all needed to have that conversation. I don’t know how Battista found out about Ricardo and Martin, but he clearly doesn’t know about Sal yet.”

“Maybe because his deal is so new? Although, I guess technically, so is Martin’s deal. Maybe Sal made a deal with a much less powerful demon so it didn’t show up on whatever demon radar Battista has at his disposal?” Misha asked.

I was still interested in knowing why Stephen thought about Dario and why something felt off. It seemed slightly out of character, but not in a bad way. In a he might’ve leveled up and we hadn’t caught it way. I caught Adrik studying Stephen as he talked. He clearly suspected something else as well. “Stephen, you’re beginning to be able to sense demons, aren’t you?” he asked.

“I think I might be, yes. It’s hard to tell, because you’re all still normal to me, but I’m thinking that’s why I brought Dario up. I think

I knew about Sal’s deal, without knowing about Sal’s deal,” he said.

“Is that why something feels off to you about the Mexicans as well?” I asked.

He thought for a moment. “Maybe. It’s a different feeling with them.”

“Misha, do you think you can find any clarity for that?” Adrik asked.

“I can try.” Misha said. He looked to me expecting me to help, but Adrik vetoed the idea, surprising everyone.

“Misha, now that you’re connected to your demon, you can use it as your battery source. If you still need an extra boost now and

then, you can use Sephie and Andrei, but you can do this on your own now,”

Adrik said. His tone was soft enough that Misha

knew he was encouraging him, but firm enough that Misha knew better than to not at least try it on his own before asking for more help.

Because he was much more discreet about using his gift now, he no longer got the faraway look in his eye. However, since he

was relying on his demon as an extra battery source, his eyes turned black while he was trying to find the answer. When he

came back to the present, he was surprised to see all of our black eyes staring back at him.

I laughed. “Your eyes turn black because you’re using your demon as a power source. Ours are just here for emotional support”

www

He laughed, his eyes changing back to their normal green. “I didn’t see any deals being made, but there is some kind of black magic

OF something like it being used by the Mexicans. Mostly against Martin, from what I could tell. I've really gotta learn Spanish if we're going to keep spying on these people."

Adrik didn't even need to look at me for me to know what he was thinking.

"Show me, Misha. Maybe I can pick up a few words," I said, extending hand to him. Adrik just smirked at me, loving that I read his mind.

Misha showed me what he found. The entire time I watched what he'd found, I didn't feel his nausea once. When the movie was over, I looked at him, somewhat confused. "No nausea?" I asked.

He looked surprised. He hadn't thought about it. "No, now that you mention it. No nausea."

"What if what they're doing isn't black magic, but white? What if they somehow know of Martin's deal and they're trying to protect themselves? I caught a few words but not enough to know for sure. What you saw, though, was them praying to Santa Muerte, or the Saint of Death. She's a well-known saint for drug cartels, especially in Mexico. They pray to her to avoid authorities. Maybe they're praying to her to avoid Martin?" I said.

"I'm sure Trino would know," Adrik said. "You can show him and see what they're saying."

"I do think learning Spanish should be higher on my priority list," I said. "But that somewhat explains why Misha didn't feel any nausea when he saw it happening."

"Yeah, I didn't even notice that and it's my own warning system," Misha said, slightly embarrassed.

I laughed. "Don't feel bad. You were understandably excited that it worked to use your demon as a battery source. You were distracted."

His wide smile stretched across his face. "I was excited. Not gonna lie."

"It was just as clear as when you use Sephie and Andrei?" Adrik asked.

Misha nodded. "Yeah, it was like having one of them help me."

"It'll get easier as you do it more often and it'll get clearer too. The more you rely on your demon and let it help you, the stronger the connection will get," Adrik said.

"Quick question: does that also mean it's going to want more pancakes? If so, I'm going to need to start running more to compensate," Misha said, somehow managing to keep a straight face through that entire sentence.

to all tephani, nending der from the hard