

King of the Underworld by RJ Kane

Chapter 119

Chapter One Hundred Nineteen

Adrik

Misha sat back down, exhaling. He was deep in thought for a few moments. I felt Sephie's fingers on my neck and chest, playing with my collar the way she did when I would carry her anywhere. Her head still resting on my chest. She sighed, her body continuing to relax the longer we sat there.

"I get that familiar feeling that Sephie was talking about and I feel the same feeling of impending doom that I felt that day on the sidewalk right now," Misha finally said. "But I don't know if the familiar feeling is because we were all forced to smell that perfume for a few months or if it was something to do with the day of the attack. I did not see her on the sidewalk. At least I don't remember seeing her."

"It's possible she was there, just ahead of you, or she was a part of the sea of people that were suddenly around you two. It would've been difficult to pick her out of the crowd. The bigger question is whether she was there by chance or by design. And we still need to figure out the link to the ball. None of us saw her that night. We would've remembered that," Stephen said, scratching his chin.

"Maybe one of the women in the bathroom wore the same brand of perfume? If they said they knew one of Adrik's exes, then maybe it was Vanessa. Maybe they wear the same perfume? Although I don't know why you would double up on that hot mess of a scent," Sephie said, her fingers still lightly running over my neck, down my chest where my shirt was open. I wasn't sure if she knew she was driving me crazy and was enjoying it, or she had no idea. Either way, she was driving me crazy.

"That's entirely possible. That would explain why you remembered that exact moment in the elevator," Stephen said. "That's a satisfactory explanation for the night of the ball. There were a lot of people there, but we definitely would've seen Vanessa if she were there. I also can't see her getting an invitation to that event. It's, uh, a little above her," Stephen said, somewhat sheepishly.

Ivan chuckled. "It's a lot above her, let's be honest."

"I'm sure she's a perfectly nice girl. You know, when she's not trying to seduce other women's boyfriends," Sephie chuckled. She sat up straighter, stretching her back. I had pulled her sideways into my lap. I turned her so she could lean back against my chest and wrapped my arms around her waist. She held onto my arms around her, crossing her legs in between mine.

Ivan shook his head no. "You haven't seen her other side, princess. She's definitely not a nice girl. She's the opposite of a nice girl, especially with me."

Sephie looked at Ivan, "that's because your demons irritate her demons. That's your superpower, Squishy. Your demons bring out the worst in everyone, those parts that they try so hard to cover up, so others can see them the same way you do. You just need to remember that your demons work for you now instead of the other way around."

Ivan looked stunned. He thought for a moment, then a sly smile appeared on his face. "I feel vulnerably diagnosed, but you're right." He winked at her.

She giggled. "You're my favorite. Don't tell the others."

In unison, everyone else said, "hey!"

I was worried how Sephie would sleep that night, but she slept through the night with no issues. She spent the entire night on my chest, which may or may not have helped her avoid nightmares, but I wasn't complaining. I woke up several times, worried about her, and each time, she was still sleeping soundly on my chest. I wasn't going to risk moving her, so I would run my hands through her hair or over her back and would feel her snuggle into me more, which would help me drift back to sleep.

Three Days Later

Sephie was sitting in between my legs, leaning back against me, with my arms wrapped around her as Stephen tried once again to walk her through the day she and Misha were attacked. He put her into a deep meditative state, then walked her through the events leading up to the attack. This time, however, when they got to the moments just before they were both hit, her body stayed relaxed, allowing her to continue.

"Sephie, you see Misha just in front of you. He looks back to you, then what happens?" Stephen prompted her.

"I feel arms around me, pushing me to the ground. I feel my face smash against the concrete. I'm stunned, but I feel the arms loosen around me, so I flip over like Viktor showed me and get the person off me. I can see his eyes. There's something weird about his eyes. He smells weird too. It doesn't match. He's wearing dirty clothes, like he might be homeless, but he smells like expensive perfume. I toss him off me. I can't find Misha at first, but then I see him punch the guy who attacked him. I see red at this point. It's like I'm not entirely in control of my body. I didn't think about jumping on the guy and punching him. I just did it. I was so angry that I wanted him dead in that moment. I feel someone pull me off, but I still can't see anything but red. I feel a hand on me, but this one doesn't make me mad. I can hear familiar voices, but it takes me a minute to snap out of it and see Misha in front of me. I realize it's his hand on me. That's why it didn't make me mad. Once I snap out of it, I start to feel the pounding in my head. I'm only vaguely aware that I'm bleeding. Misha keeps his hand on me. It's like a lifeline to reality. I close my eyes and I can smell that god awful perfume again. I open my eyes, but I can't see very clearly. All I can really focus on is Misha's hand on me. It's keeping me here. I can see the darkness coming. I've seen it before many times. I know what it is, and what it does, but it stays back as long as Misha's hand is on me."

I glance in Misha's direction and his eyes are red. He had no idea he had this much of an effect on her that day. His jaw is clenched. I can tell he's fighting back breaking down. None of us knew she was struggling this much to stay conscious when it happened. It's a testament to her strength that she remained conscious as long as she did. I tighten my hold on her waist as I think about how incredibly strong she is for everything she's been through.

"I can vaguely remember the ride back to the penthouse. We got out and I was walking next to Ivan when the darkness took over. I reached for him, but I don't know if I made contact or not. Everything went dark. I feel really cold." She inhaled. I felt her tense and felt her body lightly shake, but it never got worse.

"Sephie, you did good. You're safe now. No one will hurt you like that ever again. Do you understand?" Stephen asked.

"I understand. Does Misha understand it wasn't his fault either? Does he understand that I would've killed that guy if he hadn't pulled me off him? Or how he kept the darkness away for so long?"

Misha put his head down, cursing. We saw his shoulders heave as the sobs racked his body.

"He knows now, Sephie. I want you to count backward from ten and when you get to one, you'll open your eyes and remember everything."

She counted and opened her eyes when she reached one. She looked to me first, but immediately searched for Misha. He still had his head down, still struggling with everything she had just said. She jumped up and went to him, wrapping her arms around him. He held onto her as he sobbed. I felt the tears in my own eyes. None of us knew.

She was whispering to him, so that only he could hear. He would nod his head, then grab onto her tighter. They stayed like that for several minutes before he finally got control. She wiped his tears and kissed his cheek before walking back to me. She wiped her own eyes once she turned away from Misha. I pulled her back down in my lap, holding her closely, and kissing her temple. "I'm so sorry, solnishko. I didn't know. You hid it so well that we all thought you were handling it well. I had no idea." She didn't say anything, she just put her arms on top of mine and pulled my arms tighter around her.

"So, the connection to the smell was on the actual guy that attacked you. That means that he was close to either Vanessa or someone else that wears that exact brand and wears so much of it that it lingers on others. That narrows down the list of potential suspects to, well, Vanessa," Stephen said.

"Now we need to figure out whether she was there by chance or by design," Ivan said. "The tail we put on her hasn't come up with anything useful so far. She still loves to shop. That's all we know so far."

"Keep it on her. We know she's not the brightest. She might be trying to be careful right now, but that won't last. She'll slip up and give us something useful," I said.

"Did you at least tell whoever is following her to stay upwind from her?" Sephie asked. Right on time, she made us all laugh and forget about the growing conspiracy we were uncovering