

# King of the Underworld by RJ Kane

Chapter 173

## Chapter One Hundred Seventy-Three

Viktor

“That is what pregnant women do, but I will never be a pregnant woman, so there’s that,” Sephie said, in response to Misha’s comment about her being pregnant. As soon as she got the words out of her mouth, I felt a huge relief, then promptly felt guilty for feeling that way. Adrik pulled her closer to him, trying to comfort her, but she assured him that she was okay. “They’re going to find out eventually,” she said to him.

Ivan looked at all of us. He had gotten closer to Sephie since the day that Massimo’s men tried to grab her and he ended up in the hospital. He was always protective of her, but that had increased significantly since his time in the hospital. The rest of us weren’t sure what had happened between those two, but we could all plainly see that they shared something the rest of us likely couldn’t understand.

“The reason Sephie hates doctors as much as me is that we both had things done to us against our will by doctors,” he said. Misha’s face immediately fell. This was going to eat at him for a while. Poor kid was sensitive. Andrei was too, to an extent, but I think he could turn it off better than Misha could. I had a feeling that’s part of the reason Misha enjoyed picking Sephie off when they sparred. He needed the practice dealing with his emotions in tough situations just as much as she did.

“Sephie, I’m so sorry. I didn’t mean to…” Misha said to her. Yep, this one is going to stick with him for a while.

She gave him a big smile, trying to let him know that everything was okay. Clearly, Adrik and Ivan knew, but the rest of us had no idea. I suspected this is what happened that night at the house when she got upset and disappeared upstairs. It was obvious that was a rough day for both her and Ivan.

Before I knew I was saying it out loud, I said, “I hate to be relieved about this, Sephie, but I am. My wife was pregnant when she was killed because of me. Ever since you came into our lives, I’ve been terrified of letting that happen again.”

The guys all knew I was married when I first started working for Adrik. They also knew what happened to my wife. My revenge that landed me in a Syrian prison was for my wife. I hadn’t told Sephie yet. It simply hadn’t come up, but I had legitimately been worried about trying to protect her and any children they had in the future. I knew Adrik didn’t care for kids, really, but he was so different with Sephie that I could see him changing his mind easily if she wanted children.

It’s a difficult thing to admit that you’re relieved when someone isn’t able to have children. I felt guilty about admitting it out loud.

Sephie looked at me, not as surprised as I thought she would be, and said, “that’s what landed you in a Syrian prison, isn’t it?”

The other guys just looked at her, with the surprise that I expected from her. I nodded my head. “I ended the cycle of vengeance, but I was so focused on ending it that I got sloppy and got caught.”

“And you’ve been struggling with the guilt ever since she was killed, which is why you pour yourself into making sure we’re all safe, as well as making sure we have everything we need always,” she said.

I could feel the tears welling even more in my eyes. I nodded as she walked toward me. She slid her arm around my shoulders, saying quietly, “Papa Bear, you’re the best security master there is. You take care of everything like no one else and if you decide in the future to give it another try, you’re going to make the most amazing father. In the meantime, you can keep practicing on us.”

I felt the tears fall as I thought about what could have been. My life would look very differently if my wife were still alive. I’m not sure I would be at the same place I’m at now. I’d come to terms with it years ago, but I still had moments where it was almost like I was missing the life that would’ve happened. Even though I didn’t know what it would’ve been like. Or if I still would have been with my wife. We were young and got married probably before either of us were really ready. There are so many what ifs that I used to obsess over. I’d finally come to a point where I put that almost life to rest, but occasionally, like now, I would remember the life that didn’t happen.

Sephie hugged my shoulders tighter, just offering her comfort for a moment. I wrapped my arm around her, pulling her in for a hug, as I tried to get control of myself. “I know you’re still going to worry sometimes, but you can feel confident in knowing that you’re doing a fantastic job of keeping us all safe,” she said.

I’m still not entirely sure how she knows exactly the thing that we all need to hear, at exactly the moment that we need to hear it, but she’s quite possibly psychic. I was so driven to constantly make sure every detail was always taken care of, for fear of something slipping through the cracks and someone getting hurt. Since Sephie had come into our lives, I had many sleepless nights trying to find the holes in my security that allowed the attacks to happen. I was constantly worried about it. Each attack on her was a blow to my confidence. I’d been mentally spiraling out of control because I thought the same fate that had happened to my wife was inevitably going to happen to Sephie and there would be nothing I could do about it.

I tried to hide it the best I could around everyone else, but Sephie notices everything. Of course, she would notice this too.

“I’m beginning to think you’re psychic, sestrichka,” I said, trying to lighten the mood. She kissed my cheek, squeezing my shoulders once more.

“Nah, I’m just that weirdo that notices everything,” she said, giving me her wide smile that always made the room a little brighter whenever I saw it.

“I’m still getting you a crystal ball for Christmas,” I said, smiling at her.

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“YES! I can side hustle the shit out of that. I’ll read your palms too,” she said, throwing her arms up in the air like she’d just won a prize.

She had impeccable timing with her silliness. She always knew when we needed a break from serious matters and she would always do or say something hilarious to make us all laugh, effectively making us forget for a moment the gravity of a situation.