

King of the Underworld by RJ Kane

Chapter 27

Chapter Twenty-Seven

Sephie

I took a deep breath. Adrik glanced my way, his eyebrow raised. I just started my story. The faster I told him, the faster it would be over. I told him everything. How my father had died when I was young, so I was raised by my mother. I had no siblings, as she never remarried or even dated after my father's death. I then went into how she was killed in a car accident one night when I was 15. I was sent to my uncle, as I didn't have anyone else. He was my father's brother, but I didn't know him. I'd only met him at my father's funeral. I was 5 when my father died, so I didn't remember much about that day.

The first year living with Grant was mostly okay. He had a drinking problem but tried to keep it under control now that I was living with him. He had no kids of his own. He had a string of girlfriends that would be at the house. Sometimes it was a new girl every single day. They would help clean up the house a little. Sometimes they cooked. Most of the time, they just drank with him.

My mom had taught me how to cook, so I ended up doing most of the cooking and cleaning when his drinking became so bad that he was having trouble functioning. He lost his job around the time I had turned 16 and that's when things got bad.

His drinking got infinitely worse, and he started taking out his frustration on me. At first, he just berated me for things that he had broken when he was drunk and didn't remember, but he never hit me. He never yelled at me in front of the women, but sometimes he would get me confused with them and would yell at me like I was one of them. He would call me all kinds of names, like I was a sl*t, a wh*re, how I would end up pregnant, how nobody would ever love me, that kind of stuff.

As his drinking got more out of control, the women stopped coming around. The yelling got worse, and he eventually started hitting me. The first couple of times, he felt h*rrible about it and would go overboard trying to apologize for days after. The first couple of times, he just smacked me, so it didn't really leave a bruise.

His tolerance for alcohol kept increasing, to the point that it was taking massive amounts to get him drunk. That's when he started taking pills. The pills made him violent. I would lock myself in my room when he took them or leave the house altogether. I really didn't know anyone at the time, but I knew I was safer roaming the streets than I was at home. I would walk around or hide until he passed out and then I would sneak back into the house. Sometimes he would sleep for a day or two after he got high, so I had some relief.

I came home a few times, thinking he would be passed out, only to find him still awake and still very high. That's when the beatings got worse. He punched and kicked me. He would always kick me in the stomach, no matter how tight I tried to curl into a ball. Made me pass out a few times.

I knew I needed to get out of there but wasn't sure how. I had a little bit of money from my mom that I had managed to hide from Grant. I started looking for apartments to rent, far away from him. I didn't have a car and he would've killed me for taking his car, so I would ride the bus to the other side of the city. That's how I found my apartment. The landlord must've known that I was in a tight spot because he rented it to me when I was still 17. He didn't ask many questions, either.

That's when I met Ms. Jackson, too. I would take a few things from my uncle's house and leave them at the apartment. I didn't want him to notice that I was moving my stuff, so I had to do it slowly. I didn't have much stuff anyway, which made it easy. Ms. Jackson was nice to me right away. She invited me in for lunch when she saw me bringing more stuff one day. She told me I looked like I hadn't eaten in a week and needed to eat at least a sandwich when I tried to decline her offer.

Each time I showed up, she would feed me. She knew something was going on and that I was in trouble, but she never really asked. I showed up one time with fresh bruises. She didn't ask about them, she just placed a pocketknife in front of me while I was eating. "You take this and keep it on you at all times," she told me. I tried to say no, but she wouldn't take no for an answer. "It's going to come in handy one day," she said.

It was that very night when I got back that I got the scars. Grant was higher than I'd ever seen him and angrier than I'd seen him. He was yelling at me for something he had broken a few days before. I knew better than to talk back to him, but I couldn't help myself. I said something smart to him and he snapped.

I'll never forget the look in his eyes when I talked back to him that night. It's like his eyes went completely black and the person standing in front of me was no longer human.

He grabbed me by my hair and dragged me down the stairs to the basement. I hated the basement. It was creepy, there was hardly any light down there, and it smelled of mildew. There was no reason for me to go down there, so I stayed away.

He dropped me in the middle of the floor and kicked me hard in the stomach, knowing I wouldn't be able to get up after. I curled up into a ball, knowing that more was coming. I heard him, walk to the table and pick something up. When he came back toward me, I was not prepared. He had a whip. He hit me so hard the first time that my shirt tore open and so did my skin. He just kept hitting me over and over. So many times in a row that he was out of breath.

Sometimes when he would beat me, he would get out of breath, and it would give me a chance to get away from him. I was waiting for that moment in the basement. My back was on fire. I was bl*ody. I knew I had to get out of there that night or he was going to kill me. I tried to move and felt something hard in my pocket. The knife that Ms. Jackson had given me. As discreetly as possible, I maneuvered the knife out of my pocket into my hand. I knew I had one chance and only one chance to get away from him.

He walked back toward me and drew his leg back like he was going to kick me. Just when his foot should've made contact with my stomach, I grabbed his foot and sliced his Achilles' tendon with every bit of strength I had left. I needed to make sure he couldn't run after me. He crumpled to the floor, screaming in pain. I used every bit of strength I had left and ran up the stairs. I ran to my room to grab my bag with the last little bit of my stuff in it. I caught my reflection in the mirror and realized I was covered in blood and my back was basically ground chuck. I didn't have time to change, so I grabbed a jacket and threw it on. I screamed when the material touched my back.

Running toward the front door, I saw his car keys. I grabbed them and ran outside. I jumped in his car and d*ove away as fast as possible.

When I d*ove up to my apartment building, I saw Ms. Jackson's lights were still on. I knocked on her door. I didn't know who else to go to, but I needed help. She could at least call an ambulance for me. I didn't even have a phone at the time.

Instead, she took me inside, cleaned me up and stitched me up. She didn't ask me anything other than "did you use the knife?" When I nodded, she said "see, I told you it was going to come in handy one day."

I smiled at the memory of how she helped me that night. How she nursed all my wounds without asking me to relive it. She let me sleep on her couch, as I didn't even have a bed. I slept for a full 24 hours. That was the first time in years that I could actually relax. She kept an eye on me the whole time. She also made a few calls and had a bed delivered to my apartment while I was asleep.

I laughed, telling him she also sold my uncle's car and had the cash for me when I woke up. She said she knew I stole it and it would be the only way he could find me, should he try, so she got rid of it.

Adrik was standing quietly beside me this whole time, listening to my story. I had been avoiding looking at him. It was just easier to get through the story that way. He stood in front of me, taking my hands in his and wrapping my arms around his waist. He then pulled me to him and held me tightly. I rested my head against his chest, inhaling his scent to help me stay calm.

After several minutes in silence, he cupped my face in his large hands, forcing me to look at him. "You are remarkable," he said, hugging me to him once again.