

# King of the Underworld by RJ Kane

Chapter 424

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Sephie

My experiment helped me channel some of the sadness I'd been feeling from Viktor, but it still didn't get rid of it completely. I knew this kind of sadness. I'd felt it when my mom died, but even then, I had an easier time getting over it than this. It was like a cloud was following me everywhere I went. I'd have moments where I felt a little better, but the sadness would always return. Along with the cold. I hadn't been this cold since I was in the hospital after (in and I were taken. I was quickly becoming convinced I was incapable of feeling warm any longer. I doubled up on my warmest clothes, which helped, but not enough. Andrei was happy to be on heater duty anytime I needed him, but even that isn't enough. They'd all tried their best over the weekend to help cheer me up as best they could and I loved them for it. The moments where I got a reprieve were great, but very short-lived.

Ivan walked into the penthouse after I was done playing. I was making yet another cup of coffee when I saw him. "Squish!" I said, immediately running to him.

He caught me mid-air and held me off the floor in a bear hug. "Princess, I missed you."

"I missed you, Squish. Life isn't the same without you here," I said, hugging his a little tighter. His grip on me tightened as well, popping my back in the process. I groaned in relief. "Apparently you're my chiropractor now, too," said, laughing.

When he set me down, Misha asked, "how's Viktor?"

Ivan sighed. "Not as good as I'd like. He won't talk very much about it either so trying to figure out how best to help him is next to impossible. You guys have felt her sadness all weekend, too?" he asked, looking between Andre and Misha.

"Yeah. Stephen can feel it too. We've been trying to find ways to help cheer her up, but nothing lasts very long," Andrei said.

"Her eyes have stayed amber almost the entire time, too. I think I've only seen them change the one time when Boss showed us his demon eyes," Misha said. Even Misha sounded more somber than usual. I think it was beginning to affect everyone.

"They know we can do this now, too, by the way," I thought. "Stephen actually figured it out before we told them. He's wicked smart."

Ivan chuckled, but looked at me curiously. "Yours change when you see ours change, but did you feel anything different when it happened?"

"What do you mean?"

"Did it give you relief from the overwhelming sadness you've been carrying around?" he asked.

"Um, I don't exactly remember. I might have. I get moments of relief, but they're just moments right now. I don't remember ever feeling this way before," I said. "And I don't know how to get rid of it. Nothing I've tried has worked for very long."

Ivan was always good for solutions. He thought for a minute, then looked to drei. "You haven't seen anything weird around her, have you?"

"No, but she's dimmer than she normally is," he said.

I set about starting to make dinner as they discussed possible solutions to our latest unexplainable problem. The fact that Viktor kept himself constantly occupied for so many years was starting to make more sense. Distractions definitely helped, but it was only a temporary solution.

Adrik and Stephen eventually came upstairs, along with Vitaliy and Aleksei. We were all waiting on Viktor to come back with his brother. When they finally walked in, both of them looked like they'd had the world's toughest conversation on the way back from the airport.

Even though things were awkward with Viktor, I was still relieved to see him and greeted him like normal. "Papa Bear!" I said as I went to hug his neck. His brother was somewhat surprised when Viktor wrapped his giant arms around me and picked me up like normal.

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"Sestrichka, this is Iva," Viktor said, motioning to his younger brother.

He smiled warmly at me, finally putting it together. "You must be Sephie," he said, extending his hand to me. "I've heard quite a bit about you."

"It it was good, then he was just being modest. It it was bad, then he was lying" I said, taking his hand. As soon as my palm came into contact with his, much like with Stephen, I was hit with very specific memories from Ilya all at once. These memories revolved around a woman. I could see the evolution of their relationship, I could also see the subtle manipulations that Liter

turned into all-out mental abuse, along with the heartbreak and trauma during the breakup. To say she did a number on him was an understatement. But more than that, I could feel he was struggling against his own darkness. And he was losing. I suddenly felt like someone had thrown into a wall and I was gasping for air.

I must've done something weird, or zoned out, because I suddenly had Adrik and Ivan beside me. I'd put my contacts in before he got there, hoping to not completely scare the poor kid, so I knew it wasn't that. I could feel Andrei, Misha, and Stephen on guard behind me, as well.

Ilya took a step back from me, his eyes the size of saucers, and Viktor stepped in front of him, like he was protecting his little brother from us.

"Viktor, calm down. I can explain what just happened to her and why they reacted that way," Andrei said, quickly rushing to my side as well.

I was having a hard time focusing, between the overwhelming sadness from Viktor and now the darkness from Ilya. It felt a little like I was drowning. I reached for whoever was beside me and felt Adrik's arm go around my waist. Ivan's hand caught mine.

"You're freezing, Sephie," Adrik thought.

"I can feel it...anger," was all I could manage to get out. My body was starting to shake, but I think this time it was legitimate shivering instead of my weird response to trauma. I was getting colder by the second..

"Nun, she needs our anger," I heard Adrik say in my head. As soon as he said that, I could feel them both sending me their anger. They were both holding back. It wasn't enough.

"More. All of it." I told them.

I got hit with a wave of fire. It was so intense that it almost took my breath away, but it helped clear my mind and it pushed the darkness completely back. I could feel my own body again. I realized Adrik was basically holding me up. I stood up on my own, looking between him and Ivan.

"Better," I said.

While Andrei had told Viktor he could explain, he was distracted by feeling Ivan and Adrik's anger through me. He was somewhat stunned into silence. Everyone knew something was happening, they just didn't know what yet.

"Somebody better explain something in the next 30 seconds or we're out of here," Viktor said, his deep voice booming. I'd never heard Viktor angry, but he was clearly angry right now. It almost surprised me to hear him angry.

"She got hit with all your brother's pain and darkness that he's been carrying around since his breakup when she shook his hand. She's also been carrying around your years of sadness that you never dealt with all weekend long. It was too much for her.

When Boss and Ivan felt her start to falter, they got protective," Andrei said. He paused for a moment, looking at Ilya. "You know there's more to it, but I don't know how detailed you want me to get right now."

"He knows enough. You can speak freely," Viktor said. Anger was still prevalent in his tone..

"Her demon tried to save her when she got hit with Ilya's darkness. She's just wearing her contacts, so you couldn't see her eyes go black. Anytime her demon steps forward, it makes theirs do the same. Oh, by the way, they can do it too," Andrei said, sharply. It was almost like Andrei was angry that Viktor was angry.

Viktor cursed under his breath. "When were you going to tell me that you can do that now too?" he asked, looking between Ivan and Adrik. He was clearly frustrated with both of them.

"Check your tone, Viktor. We just found out this weekend. You were already dealing with enough without one more thing on top of it," Andrei said. When Viktor first spoke, Misha and Stephen had quietly stepped behind me. Andrei put himself in between Viktor and me as they were talking.

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I squeezed Ivan's hand, letting it go so I could put my hand on Andrei's back. I didn't have to say anything, he just moved enough to the side so that I could see Viktor, who was still trying to get a handle on everything and was still more angry than anything. I glanced past him at Ilya, who was simply

a rollercoaster of emotion.

"Viktor, none of this really matters right now. What does matter is that Ilya is struggling even more than you know and you have the tools to fix that," I said, flatly. "Both Andrei and Ivan can see it. I can feel it. But you can fix it with that, I turned to walk back to the kitchen. Everyone but Viktor and Ilya followed me.