

## King of the Underworld by RJ Kane

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Adril

Sephie and Andrei stayed in the penthouse the entire afternoon. The rest of us finally joined them once we were all done for the day. The penthouse smelled of promises of gastro-intestinal bliss when we walked in. My eyes landed on Sephie immediately. Her smile stretched wide across her face as she freed up her hands to come to me.

"I missed you," I told her as my lips found hers.

"I missed you more," she told me, deepening the kiss.

"How did it go with Andrei?" I asked her as I continued to kiss her. I could hear her giggling in her head.

"I think his level of control might be almost as good as mine," she said, her lips still on mine. I like this multi-tasking thing."

"Me too. Gives me reason to not stop kissing you. I fully support this," I told her, holding her tighter.

She laughed, placing both hands on either side of my face. "I love you so much," she said, her wide smile threatening to stop my heart. Even still.

I pressed my lips to hers once more before she turned around to return to dinner. I felt a moment of disappointment as she went to leave. She looked back over her shoulder, grinning at me. She caught my hand, pulling me with her. Of course, she felt it too.

"Have you found out where Battista is yet?" Sephie asked as she looked between Ivat, and Viktor.

"We're meeting him tomorrow. He's coming here, in fact," Ivan said.

"Oh. That's different," she said, looking at me, her eyebrows raised. She looked to Andrei, who also looked somewhat surprised.

"Do you think he's going to surprise us with something again?"

"That's what I was thinking, too," he said. He thought for a moment, then looked to Viktor. "I think we should have a tune-up before he gets here, if you can manage."

Viktor nodded in agreement. "I can make sure everyone is protected, but I'm finding that your auras get stronger once you've connected to your demons. It's pretty much exactly the opposite of what I was thinking when it first started happening. So owe everyone an apology. I was convinced it would make you all weaker, but it's made you all stronger."

I was surprised that he'd admitted that. We all knew. We'd all forgiven him. He was struggling with everything at the time. It was surprising that he brought it up in front of everyone.

"I know you grew up in a very traditionally religious household. It can be difficult to merge that world with the one you're currently living in," Ivan said.

"That's a lot of what it was. Religion teaches you to avoid evil as completely as you can. Like somehow not even acknowledging evil exists will magically make you a better person," Viktor said.

Sephie smiled her sweet smile at him. We all watched him melt as she smiled at him.

think that's the trick of religion. They want to keep their customers, right? What better way than to convince them a significant portion of each individual is intently wrong and needs forgiveness? I think we know better than most that everyone has both good and evil. It comes down to the choices you make and which aspect of yourself you give attention to."

"That's also what helped me see the error of my ways, if you will," Viktor said. "Watching you help Jessica, someone you didn't even know, made me realize that the line between good and evil is very wide and very grey. I was trying to make it much more black and white than it actually is."

She smiled at him again. "You realize we're doing the same thing with our demons that you did for Kostya, right? It's not as traumatic, of course, but by them helping us, they're clearing their Karma."

He looked at her, his eyes wide. Everyone's eyes went a little wide, to be honest. None of us had thought about it that way.

"How did you figure that out, Sephi?" Stephen asked.

"Bubba and Kostya helped me. I was reminded of Kostya saying something similar when I was helping Bubba connect with his demon today. He was worried he was going to be able to control it, but Bubba was the first one to figure out that my demon was trying to save me when all that happened with Ilya. I was trying to

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convince him that his demon was no different from mine. They all want to help," Sephie said.

"It's true. The longer you guys are connected, the more you'll be able to feel that your demons have their own opinions on things," I said, I glanced at Sephie, grinning at her. "Sephie's demon, for example, is just as opinionated as she is. On literally everything."

They all looked at Sephie, trying to keep a straight face. "I know what you're all thing. We agree on everything. But I promise to let you all witness it if there's ever a time where we don't agree."

"That's all we ask," Misha said, laughing.

"How did it go this afternoon?" Ivan asked Andrei. Sephie was not lying when she said Andrei's control might be rivalling hers. He looked at Ivan, switching his eyes to black without even blinking. It made everyone erupt into loud exclamations.

"That's impressive, Andrei. Sephie told me your control rivalled hers. She was not lying." I said. He was clearly proud of himself, which made me happy to see. Confidence was always something he struggled with. He had no reason to; he was insanely talented at everything he put his mind to. Watching him grow as he trained Sephie was just as fun as watching Sephie improve under his direction. They were both bringing out the best in each other. I was grateful to witness it.

I watched Andrei, studying him now that he was connected, as he talked and laughed with everyone. "Your demon is quieter than the rest, Andrei." Both he and Sephie looked at each other, chuckling.

"She said the same thing this afternoon. She said it felt much like my anger. Quiet, but no less deadly," he said.

"Did you have to go nuclear? None of us felt it. We all felt Sephie, but none of us felt you," Misha said.

Sephie grinned. "He did go nuclear. His nuclear is just so much more understated than everyone else's that nobody felt it. You're all used to mine yelling at you that nobody heard Andrei's whisper. That's how he gets you," she said, laughing at Andrei's cheeks turning red.

"Given that you and Sephie share so much in common with your gifts, I think it's kind of fitting that your demon is somewhat the opposite of hers. Balance seems to be a running theme in all of this," Stephen said.

"We could say the same for your demon and mine, Stephen," I said. "Your gift is complimentary to mine, just as theirs are."

He chuckled. "Honestly hadn't thought about that, but you're right."

"Ivan and Misha kind of \*uck up that theory, though," Andrei said.

"I don't think either one of them get included in any similarities, to be honest," Sephie said. "They're both completely unique. Ivan has his own special assignment and Misha's gift is so unlike anyone else's that I think it makes him just as unique as an. They're similar in their differences," she said, grinning at both of them.

"And Viktor is there for divine information and protection," Stephen said.

"I really feel like we should start solving mysteries once this is all over. Maybe get a giant dog too. And a van," Misha said seriously.

Author's note: If you've stuck with this story for this long, I'd like to thank you again. A few of you have asked about social media. While I generally loathe social media, I recognize it's usefulness. I've created an Instagram account for now where you guys can reach out and ask questions about the story without giving spoilers away to other readers (which I appreciate nobody likes spoilers). You can find me @ry\_kane. I'll consider other social media in the future, but nobody hold their breath. Thank you all for reading and loving these characters so much!