

King of the Underworld by RJ Kane

Chapter 233

Chapter Two Hundred Thirty-Three

Sephie

"I just never thought the darkness is what would connect us," I said, mostly to myself. I had walked back to sit next to Ivan, so he heard me. My mind was racing trying to understand what we'd just discovered. I knew we were all connected in some way, but I didn't expect it to be the same, somewhat otherworldly experience.

"Doesn't that happen to everyone?" Misha asked. He was clearly still surprised at finding out we'd all been in the same "place" within our heads when seriously injured. For some reason, we all looked at Stephen. If anyone had the answer to that question, it had to be him.

He looked surprised at everyone looking at him. "I have a lot of answers to a lot of questions, but that question is not one of the ones I have an answer to. I've never heard of this many people essentially sharing an experience. In all my 900 years," he said. I had no idea how he managed to keep a straight face all the time, but I found myself admiring him for it. It was impressive.

We were all quiet for a few minutes, everyone's mind racing, trying to comprehend our conversation. Andrei leaned onto his elbows on the counter. He was staring at his hands. "We're all evil, aren't we?" he asked.

I think he meant it as a joke, but I could also hear the legitimate worry in his voice. "Bubbá..." I said.

-Ivan interrupted me before I could say any more. "I don't know about the rest of you, but I enjoy it when I'm in the darkness

It's difficult to leave it sometimes. I'm arguably the most evil out of all of us, so you might be on to something there, Andrei."

I hooked my arm through his and leaned my head against his shoulder. "I don't think any of us are evil. And I think you enjoy the darkness because you know nothing can hurt you there. You've found peace in your darkness, both literally and figuratively. You and Adrik both. You're both fine with the fact that you might be a little evil. You understand that people can be both. Most people are both. The world is both. The point of life is to find the balance between the two." Ivan squeezed my arm that was still hooked through his. "Mine was necessary to remind me of something important," I said. I was finally starting to understand why things had happened the way they had. "You all know how much I hate being cold. My darkness is cold. Like bone-chilling cold. At first, I couldn't see anything at all, not even my own body. I started to hear Adrik's voice and I could faintly see the outline of my body, but nothing beyond it. That's also when I started to hear my uncle's voice. Every time I would hear his voice, it would get darker. When I would hear Adrik, the opposite. It would get lighter. Eventually, it started to get warmer too. You all heard my fight with my uncle. Once I finally kicked him out of my head, I could see. I needed that reminder that my light comes from me. Adrik was the spark to make me remember." I glanced over at Adrik. I'd never explained what had happened when I was stuck in the nightmare loop to him before now. I don't think he realized how much of an effect he had on me when I was trapped in my own mind.

"That's similar to how it happened for me when I was in the hospital. Every time I'm in the hospital, I see the same doctor's face that used to delight in torturing me when I was a kid. I'm trying to kill him when I fight whoever is in front of me. It doesn't matter who the person is, I can't see them. I can only see the doctor," Ivan said.

"But you see Sephie. She's the only one you don't fight," Viktor said. Ivan looked down at me. We knew why he could see me when he couldn't see anybody else. I could see it clearly on his face that he didn't want to share that information with everyone, just as I didn't want to share it either.

"The only thing we can figure out is their shared hatred of doctors. Like Sephie said, their demons recognize each other, if you will," Adrik said. I glanced at him, thankful for stepping in so we didn't need to elaborate. I glanced around to see if the rest of the guys were looking at us. When I was satisfied they weren't, I signed a "thank you" to Adrik.

"Bubba, how did you get out of your darkness after your accident?" I asked.

"I don't know. I just woke up. I don't remember specifics about it. I remember being in it and only able to see my body, but I don't have memories of any sounds. I just woke up in the hospital a few days later. It took me a little bit to remember what had happened after I woke up," Andrei said.

"That's how it was for me, too," Viktor said. "I have a memory of being in it, but nothing further."

"And you just woke up out of yours, too?" I asked. He nodded.

"Same for me," Misha said.

"Me too," Stephen said.

"Interesting," I said. I remembered my dad telling me that Ivan could walk between worlds and that I could too. It felt like something to do with the difference between our experiences and the other guys' experiences, but I wasn't sure how. I was sure, however, that it was one more way we were all connected. It wasn't by chance that they all found each other, and by chance that they found me.

The next afternoon, I was in Adrik's office while he finished up work. I had a book, stretched out on the couch. I could see Adrik peek at me now and then while he was working. He loved it when his schedule was clear and I would come to his office while he worked, just so he could be near me. I had to admit to loving it as well. I always worried I was going to distract insisted that I was the best distraction there was, whether I was there or not. He admitted to his mind wandering more when I wasn't there and he couldn't see me.

Andy stuck his head in the office door, knocking on the door frame lightly. We both looked toward the door. "Do you have minutes, Boss?" Adrik nodded his head, then glanced at me as Andy walked into the office. Adrik was surprised to see him which meant he was unsure of what was about to come out of Andy's mouth. I understood his look and quietly got up from couch, taking my usual spot behind Adrik's desk so I could see Andy as he talked to Adrik.

the office

Adrik stayed quiet, as usual, Andy sat across from Adrik's desk. He looked a little nervous, but the last time he had been intense for him. "I was hoping to discuss something with you, sir. I'm not 100% sure on it yet, but I've also run in somewhat of a dead end on it now. I think it's important enough that you know."

I was now curious what he was going to tell us. I could feel Adrik's anger start to rise. He hated surprises. Andy glanced at Adrik, then to me. He took a deep breath and continued, "I overheard Mike on the phone a few times. Once the night they got me out, once after I was moved here. I don't know for sure who he was talking to, but he used a code that I've heard Anthony use for years."

I stood up and grabbed Adrik's phone from his desk, calling Viktor. I let it ring, then ended the call. They were all in the office within seconds. Andy went pale when they all walked in. "Don't worry, Andy. I just want them to hear this as well. Tell the what you just told us." He looked at the guys, who were still standing, and repeated what he'd just told us. He was still nervous, but he was trying to keep himself composed.

"What's the code?" Ivan asked.

"It's one word. Anthony got it from an old movie when he was younger and he's been obsessed with it ever since. He always wanted to be the stereotypical gangster you see in movies. He has all his guys call him 'sicario' when they talk to him," Andy said.

I felt like I'd been punched in the stomach. I stumbled backward toward the cabinet to catch myself. I was immediately back in the ring with Mike, right before I kicked him the last time.

"Do you want to adjust your opinion of me yet?"

"Fuck you, where."

Then that last word he said to me. The one I almost didn't hear. "Sicario."

My mind was racing. Why would he say that? Why would he basically be telling me he was working for Anthony? Why would Andy be telling us this now? Why not earlier? Was Andy also working for Anthony? I felt my anger rising to the surface as I tried to make sense of who we could trust and who we couldn't.

I didn't hear Adrik get up from his chair. I was snapped back to reality when I felt his arm around my waist. I looked up at him. He was clearly concerned. "Are you okay? What's going on? Talk to me." I glanced quickly at Andy, who was still nervous, but appeared to be concerned as well. The guys were all still standing, but they'd moved to surround Andy.

I responded in Russian. I wasn't sure we could trust Andy at this point, and it was making me angry. "That's the last word he said to me in the ring. I doubt any of you heard it. I almost didn't hear it because he was having trouble talking and he mumbled it. I didn't think anything of it at the time. I thought he was calling me a hitman."

"Why would he call you a hitman, gazelle?" Misha asked, still in Russian.

"That's what that word means, my adorable Russian guardian. I didn't think anything of it then. But why would Andy be telling us this now? Why not earlier? Why does he sit on this information before telling us?" I asked. Adrik's anger was also starting to rise to the surface, but he was running his hand over my back, trying to keep himself calm.

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Ivan, who was also clearly angry, looked to Andy, asking in English, "why are you just telling us this now?" He might've had a threatening edge to his voice that may have made Andy clench a little