

King of the Underworld by RJ Kane

Chapter 430

430

Adrik

As we walked back into the penthouse, Vitaliy and Aleksei greeted us. With ich day that passed, I grew more surprised that my father was still in the city. He'd never stayed more than three days since handing everything over to me. It was close to two months that he'd been here this time.

"You all look like something just happened," Vitaliy said as we walked in.

Sephie glanced at him, then at me. "I see where your observation skills come from," she said, her sweet smile across her face. "We just went to check on Viktor again. As it turns out, Stephen's mere presence was enough to make whatever has been on him leave."

"Not his presence, spider monkey. He was here the other night. It was when he spoke," Andrei corrected her.

"I know. But it sounds way more dramatic my way, so I'm sticking with that, she said, grinning at him.

"You had the same thing happen again that happened the other night, sladkay?" Vitaliy asked.

She shook her head no. "Nope, Ivan puts up a bubble around me. It couldn't in again. Both he and Adrik also feel it faster than I do now, so they burn it off right away."

"But Stephen made it leave?" he asked.

"Yeah, apparently I'm not warm and fuzzy enough for whatever was on him.was just trying to be helpful, but it was not appreciated," Stephen said, trying to come across as offended. We could all see his sly smile turning up one corner of his mouth though.

Vitaliy chuckled. I said, "we have been told that now that Stephen has his gift, the fear is going to increase from any demons we encounter. I'm still not convinced it was actually a demon that was on him, because Ivan couldn't see anything, but whatever it clearly knew who Stephen was. As soon as he spoke to Ilya, it left."

"How do you know?" Vitaliy asked.

"I could feel it," Andrei said. "I can't feel it the same way Sephie does, but I Enew it was there. As soon as Stephen started talking, it changed. It was like it got scared and then it was suddenly not there anymore."

I caught Sephie smiling at Andrei as he talked. It was obvious that she was proud of him and was enjoying watching him evolve and get better with his gift. He was quickly becoming much more confident. He stepped in right away the first night Ilya was here to help diffuse what could've been a very volatile situation. He also stood up to Viktor when his anger got the best of him. I'd never seen Andrei stand up to any of the other guys that way before. It was nice to see. He was stepping into his own.

"What about when Ivan put his bubble up this time? Did he cut her off from you two this time too?" I asked.

"It wasn't the same as last time," Misha said. "Last time, he cut her completely off. Like I couldn't feel anything. This time, I could feel her, it just wasn't as strong as it usually is."

"Same for me," Andrei said.

"Since I didn't experience the complete cutoff, I'm just going to agree here. Honestly, I didn't notice either way. I'm still trying to figure out the pancake paradox," Stephen said.

"What did you do differently, Squish?" Sephie asked, grinning at Stephen.

"Mostly just tried to include them in the bubble this time. I don't think they were all the way in, since they could hear everything going on like normal. Or else it doesn't affect their hearing the way it does yours," Ivan said.

"Does it affect your hearing as well?" Vitaliy asked me.

430

I nodded. "It's harder to hear anything outside the bubble. I can still hear Ivan I can still hear Sephie. Everything else is very m uff led. We can both hear through Ivan now though, so it doesn't matter," I said.

Stephen suddenly inhaled. "Because that's how Sephie prefers to read people. She has other ways, but her preferred method is to hear them speak. Ivan hides that, making her look like a normal human once again. Did your eyes change the first time you went to see Ilya?" Stephen asked Sephie.

"I don't think so. He didn't react to them that time, if they did," Sephie said.

"I don't think they did. The darkness from Ilya wasn't as strong the first time. She didn't even feel it that time. I'm still trying to figure out how I felt it before she did, to be honest," Ivan said.

"It was a threat to her. Makes sense you'd pick up on it quickly after that very first time when she couldn't handle it," Stephen said. "Andrei, if you could feel it, did you notice anything different once Ivan put his bubble around Sephie? Either time?"

"It backed off the first time. The second time, you made it leave soon after," Andrei said.

"And then a red panda on the other side of the universe got its pancake," Misha said, somehow managing to keep a straight face.

We all laughed, but Vitaliy just looked at Misha like he was quite possibly the dumbest person he'd ever met. Vitaliy looked back at me, a questioning look on his face. "Your men should not be sampling the product, son," he said seriously, which only served to make us laugh harder.

"Vitaliy, if you haven't figured out by now, most of the dumb s hit we all say orginated with me. It's my fault. Misha's still clean as a whistle," Sephie said, trying to gain control, but still having fits of laughter.

Vitaliy still didn't look as amused as the rest of us, instead choosing to steer the conversation to more serious matters. "And what of Armando? What are you doing with him?"

We all straightened up at the mention of Armando, the mood now as serious as Vitaliy. "He's still alive. Stephen is going to break him eventually." I

said.

"Why not kill him?" Vitaliy asked. He hadn't been present for the conversations about Stephen's gift and the ultimate outcome for the souls he would save by using it.

Sephie inhaled deeply. She crossed her arms across her chest and looked at Vitaliy, now without a trace of the humor and joy that were visible just a moment ago. "Because if Adrik kills him, that soul never learns the lesson it was trying to avoid by taking in the demon in the first place. It comes back, makes the same mistakes all over and more innocent people die in the next go around. If Stephen breaks him, that soul is locked in his body, with the demon, neither of them having control and both of them being tortured in ways we couldn't fathom until Armando's body dies. Armando is young. He's healthy. His body is going to live a very long life, meaning that so will endure a lifetime of torture and will never forget that lesson."

Vitaliy was looking down at his hands as she explained the reason to him. When he looked up at her, he looked surprised.

Misha, who was standing in between them, could see her eyes and understood the meaning behind his look. "Purple means universal truth. That's the latest color to appear. No one wants to argue with the Universe, so Armando is up to Stephen to take care of," he said.

"When does this happen?" Vitaliy asked, still staring at Sephie's eyes.

She looked at Stephen, who looked back at her wide-eyed for a moment before regaining his expert control of his facial expressions. "You're absolutely right. I am feeling haughty after seeing Ilya. Vlad is making progress with customs. He'll be here soon. I'm going to need to show him my portfolio. I'm ready when you are."

Sephie laughed, then looked at me. "You're okay with Stephen breaking him she asked silently.

"Not really, but I won't stop it. Like Misha said, I'll argue with you. I'm not arguing with the Universe." I responded.

"Yoden, what do you think you need from me to make it happen?" Sephie asked Stephen.

"Bold of you to assume I'd know that answer," he said.

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