

# King of the Underworld by RJ Kane

Chapter 406

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Sephte

I felt Adrik stir underneath me, but I couldn't bring myself to wake up. Normally, I wasn't aware of when he woke up when I needed to sleep longer. This time, however, I could hear his thoughts as he watched me sleep.

It was like his internal dialogue was now in my head. I heard him thinking. I heard him wishing he could stay with me.

I felt him pick me up, wrap a blanket around me, and carry me out of the bedroom with him. Before the guys made the decision on who was going to stay with me, I knew it was going to be Ivan. I knew he'd been zapped, but I didn't know why yet. I could feel his exhaustion. Wait, I can feel him without seeing him.

I heard him tell Adrik why he'd been extra tired. How he could see not just when a person's demon consumed them, but now when they were looking for ways in, too. That's gotta be slightly comical, in a twisted sort of way.

As everyone left for the day, I felt Ivan fall asleep behind me. His massive arms were holding onto me, keeping me safe while we slept. I found myself back in the darkness. Only this wasn't my darkness. It felt different. It sounded different. I could hear music. Piano music. I recognized the song. It was Ivan's song.

I felt him before I could see him. "Princess?" I turned to find Ivan, looking very confused as to why I was in his darkness.

"Squish," I said, smiling at him. "Did you leave your phone on before you went to sleep with me on the couch?"

"How do you know we're on the couch? You were sleeping?" He said the last statement like a question, as he was beginning to question what his eyes

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"I was. I am. But somehow I'm still aware of everything going on around me knew it was you that was going to stay with me today. I could feel your exhaustion when Adrik walked out with me."

"This is new, isn't it?"

"Yes. Very much so, yes. I could also hear Adrik's thoughts before he got out of bed this morning. I kind of woke up when he woke up, but I didn't move. But normally I'm incapable of not reacting when he touches me, so I wasn't really fully awake. Just aware."

He looked at me thoughtfully, like he was trying to come up with an explanation. "You have been very aware of things happening that you can't see lately. Maybe this has to do with that?"

I shrugged my shoulders. "I dunno. When were you gonna tell me you can see demons all the time now?" I asked, trying to fake outrage to make him worry.

"I was gonna tell you, princess. I'm still getting used to it. Do you know how hard it is to keep a straight face when you see some little demon riding around on someone's shoulder like it's their pet dragon? I'm trying my best to keep it together right now. You always amplify things, too. Maybe I was worried you were going to make me hear them too." He laughed as he said it. He just wanted to give me a hard time.

"Okay, you can make it up to me," I said, cutting my eyes over at him like I was irritated with him. He raised an eyebrow at me.

"At some point, once I get a handle on how exactly I borrow everyone's gifts, I'm gonna need to see this for myself," I said, grinning at him.

"Deal."

"Now answer my original question. Did you leave your phone playing?"

He shook his head no. "No, I've listened to the recordings of you playing so much that they started playing on their own now when I come here. I like it. Makes it nicer," he said. I couldn't help my smile. "The bigger question, I think, is why you're here, princess. Not that I mind, but this is definitely new."

As soon as he asked the question, the scene in front of us changed. His darkness faded away to reveal the very familiar path, in front of the very

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familiar house. I smiled at Ivan, taking his hand, and leading him to the house. "You're in for a treat, Squish."

We walked into the house, hearing the familiar song my dad was playing while he waited for us. Ivan looked down at me skeptically as we walked into the room where my dad was. As the song ended, he said, "I know this is a little strange, Ivan, but I needed to talk to both of you and this saved me some time. I've joined a new aerial acrobatics team and we have practice later. I'm on a time schedule," my dad said as he turned to face us.

I laughed as I went to hug him, leaving Ivan still somewhat stunned and slightly confused. I turned to look at Ivan and as soon as he saw me standing next to my dad, he figured it out. "You're Sephie's dad," he said. "You look like him, princess."

My dad looked down at me, raising an eyebrow as he studied my face. "I think her mother helped way more than I did on her looks, but I'll take the compliment anyway. I plan to tell everyone about this, in fact," he said, grinning at me.

"Clearly, I got my sense of humor from him, though," I said, laughing.

"It's one of my best traits," my dad said.

"Hers too," Ivan added.

"Why did you need to see both of us this time?" I asked.

"Well, now that things are happening a little faster and you guys are getting more information, I can finally tell you a little more.

I'm here to offer a little clarity about everything. Granted, you've all had quite a bit to take in, but you're all handling it better than we ever could've expected," he said.

"I think it's because we have each other," I said, smiling at Ivan. He gave me a wink, his sly grin stretching across his face.

"You're not wrong there, peanut. You're all starting to realize how you each fit into this puzzle. That's why I'm here. Poor Stephen is still unsure about his gift, even with Lena's explanation. He's still fighting to believe he's good enough. You two will be very good for him in the next few weeks. Lena was right. We've all been worried about him for a while."

"Worried about him why?" Ivan asked.

"He almost gave in to his demon. We weren't sure he was going to be able to hold out long enough to discover his gift. You guys haven't seen his inner turmoil because he's so good at hiding everything. He's been struggling for a very long time. It's why his bloodlust is comparable to Adrik's. It's a release for him. A way to get rid of some of the evil he's been carrying around with him for so long."

"But Sephie gave all of that to his sister's right? Should we still be worried about him?" Ivan asked. I found his concern to be very touching.

"He's much better now, yes. He's just struggling to believe he can do it. Because his gift isn't as obvious as everyone else's, he still believes Sephie did most of it. It was him, from start to finish. You technically held onto his memories for him, but you were only a battery for him, much like you are for Misha. What you really did was help him package it all up very neatly so he could give it back to them. The guys all helped, as they can send power to you, but not Stephen yet. He knew, without knowing, that he needed you as a power source. The rest of it was him. He just doesn't know it yet."

"Does he need that kind of juice every time?" I asked.

My dad laughed. "No, peanut. Like Misha, he's going to learn to do it on his own, without you. You just offer clarity for them right now. You're the calming force they need to be able to concentrate. Just like Ivan and Adrik and that for you."

I glanced at Ivan, who looked surprised. "I actually just said this to Adrik last right. You two are always the best about taking new things in stride. It helps me do the same."

"Think you're underestimating your role in it, princess. I think you share your ability to go with the flow with the two of us. I think we're just more connected than the others. At least for now," Ivan said.

"He's right, peanut. Ivan and Adrik are more connected to you than the others and will always remain so. Although your connection with all of them is only going to grow stronger. But those two are connected to you in ways that the others aren't."

Ivan snapped his fingers, pointing at me. "Called it."