

King of the Underworld by RJ Kane

Chapter 79

Chapter Seventy-Nine

Sephie

“You’re still mad at him. You have every right to be mad at him, peanut. He should’ve told you the plan, but I know he will never, ever underestimate your strength again as long as he lives. Do you know he hasn’t moved from underneath you for twelve hours now? He got up once to pee and you got sucked back into your nightmare. He hasn’t had anything to eat or drink since then and he won’t move so you can sleep in peace and your body can heal.”

“No, it hasn’t been that long. It’s only been a few hours.”

“Peanut, time is different here. He’ll lay there as long as it takes. I’ve never seen him so determined. And he’s got a bloodlust that is, well, impressive.”

I just looked at him, dumbfounded.

He smiled down at me. “You can remember being in the nothing, the darkness, before you found your way here?” I nodded my head. “Do you remember how every time you heard his voice, when he would tell you he loved you, how you got a little brighter and could see further into the darkness?” Again, I nodded. “It’s because he can’t exist without you and you can’t exist without him. You’re light, he’s dark. One cannot exist without the other. His darkness allows your light to shine. The brighter your light, the darker your shadows. You figured that part out on your own.” He made a fist and pressed it to my chin. “Seriously, chip off the ol’ block, you are.” He looked at me, a look of pride on his face. He cleared his throat and continued. “But Adrik hasn’t figured that out yet. Guys are sometimes slower on the uptake. You’re helping to show him that even though he has very dark shadows, he also has a very bright light. And right now, he’s the spark you needed to remember that your light is always within you. You’re the only one that can ever turn it off. You just momentarily forgot that part. Which is understandable. You’ve had a hectic few weeks. Years,” he added, clearing his throat again. “But what happened needed to happen. Not just for you, but for all of them. Each of them has something special to offer the world, but it never would’ve happened without the events at the ball. Misha, for example, has a gift that warns him when something isn’t right. He started to believe it more after the attack on you two, but the others didn’t. Now they do. That never would’ve happened otherwise. There’s always a reason, peanut. It’s your job to figure it out.”

I stared at him, trying to understand everything he just told me.

“You already know everything I’m telling you right now, peanut. You just have to let go of the fear. Sure, he fucked up. They all did. Big time. You got hurt in the process, but you have yet to quit in situations much worse than this one. Don’t start now. You’ve got a 100% survival rate, remember that. And know that I’ll be there, ready to swoop in when needed. You should see my swoop. I practice a lot, because you know, you never need me. Whatever. It’s magnificent.”

I laughed at him. I definitely got his sense of humor.

He looked down at me, smiling. “You know you need him just as much as he needs you. They all need you and you need all of them. You’re destined for great things. Always have been. Why else would we have given you your name if you weren’t meant for great things?” He hugged me once more, then pulled me toward the piano. He sat me down on the bench. “Now, make an old man happy and play me your song.”

“My song? I don’t have a song.”

“You do. You call it your mom’s favorite song, but it’s really your song. I used to sing it to you when you were a baby. I wrote the melody just for you, hoping that one day you would finish it. I didn’t even tell your mother that it was your song. She just thought it was some melody I had picked up somewhere and sang to you, but it’s yours. It’s always been yours.”

I looked up at him, with tears in my eyes. I suddenly missed all the time I had missed out on with him in my childhood. As if he was reading my mind, he said, “I know, peanut. I miss it too, but can you imagine both of us in the same room at the same time? I don’t think the world is ready for that many emotional support sloths.”

I laughed, tears falling on my cheeks. He sat down next to me, looking every bit a proud father. “Now, play for your old man, peanut.”

I played my song, as he sat next to me watching intently. When the song ended, he leaned his shoulder against mine. “It’s time for you to go back, kiddo. You’ve still got great things to accomplish, one of which is to love that man as hard as he loves you.”

“Will I get to see you again?” I asked.

“I’m always around. Practicing my swooping,” he made a swooping motion with his arm in front of me. He winked at me. “I love you, peanut.”

“I love you too, Dad.”

My eyelids fluttered open slowly. I heard Adrik snoring softly, felt his warm body beneath me. I lifted my head to look at him, but the slight movement jolted him awake. “Sephie? Are you okay??”

I rested my chin on his chest, looking at him. He looked stressed, his blue eyes were now also red. He looked like he hadn’t slept very much, if at all. He sat up a little so he could look at me better. I looked into his eyes, searching. I found what I was looking for immediately. He was looking at me with all the love and adoration as he always had, but now there was fear there. Worry that he had ruined it all.

I wasn’t sure what to say to make it go away, but I remembered what my father had said. “You almost give Adrik a heart attack every time you smile at him.” I closed my eyes for a moment, remembering my dream. When I opened my eyes, he was still looking at me, clearly worried about what I was going to do or not do.

“Sephie?” he asked, his voice cracked with worry.

I smiled at him. Like I hadn’t seen him in days, like I thought he was dead and now he was underneath me, watching over me while I fought my own darkness, like I loved him more than anything in the world.

It took him a moment. He was still concerned and confused, but he couldn’t help but smile back at me. I slowly lifted my very sore body off him, moving so I was sitting on his hips, straddling him. He sat up a little more so he could look me in the eyes. I reached out and ran my fingers lightly over his face, the way I knew he liked. He closed his eyes at my touch, his breath hitched. A single tear fell from the corner of each eye. I leaned into him and kissed him gently. He went to put his hands around me but stopped himself. He was still worried he was going to hurt me or I was going to do something rash. I leaned back so I could look into his eyes again. “I love you, Adrik. I will always love you. I love you more than anything I’ve ever known.” I looked into his eyes, relief washing over him. I added, “but if you ever let me think you’ve died when you haven’t again, I will kill you myself.” He sat up, still wanting to grab me, but uncertain where his hands could go that wouldn’t hurt. He put both hands on either side of my face, looking deeply into my eyes. “I swear I will never leave you out of any plan ever again. I will never withhold information from you again. I almost lost you. I’m so sorry, Sephie. Can you ever forgive me?”

I put my hands on top of his, enjoying the warmth. I closed my eyes, remembering how cold the darkness felt, but how warm it got when I heard his voice. I opened my eyes, his eyes pleading, searching mine. “I forgive you. Besides, you’re my spark. I can’t get rid of you,” I said smiling at him again, enjoying the thought of extra angels on standby in that moment.

He raised an eyebrow at me, but instead of asking what I meant, he just leaned forward and kissed me. He was gentle, at first.

His hands still on each side of my face. I pressed my body against him, timidly, and wrapped my arms around his neck. I deepened the kiss, feeling his body relaxing from the stress he’d been under for the past however many days.

“I love you, solnishko,” he said, pressing his forehead to mine. “I will spend every day of the rest of my life trying to make sure you know that and how sorry I am.”

I kissed his lips once more. “Don’t hang on to this. Don’t keep beating yourself up. You made a mistake. I mean, a big one, but I’m still here. I’ve got a 100% success rate at surviving horrible situations so far. But I have been thinking that we should get a whiteboard or something that says, ‘it’s been this many days since Sephie got seriously hurt. That way we can keep track. You know, data is king and what not.’”

His smile stretched across his face. “There’s my Sephie.”