

King of the Underworld by RJ Kane

Chapter 445

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Sephie

Stephen surprised both Misha and I by asking if he could go with us for a run the next morning. “I figure I need to take advantage of it now while you’re still keeping it short and slower so I can ease myself into it. I know Boss doesn’t like the idea of just Misha running with you when we’re at the penthouse, but he might eventually warm up to the idea of both of us going with you. I just need to get better at it.”

“That, my favorite enabler, might be one of the more thoughtful things anyone has done for me lately,” I said.

The three of us set out for a short run. Misha, who used to dread going the long route at the house, was now slightly disappointed that we were taking the short route. I could feel his sullen mood before we left the house. “Don’t worry, my adorable Russian guardian. My lung is getting better really quickly. We’ll be able to go the long route again soon,” I said, hooking my arm through his as we walked around the pool and past the gardens.

“I never thought I would be disappointed with the short route, but here we are” he said, laughing at himself.

Stephen was able to keep up without much trouble the entire time. It wasn’t as easy for him as it was for Misha, but Misha had also started out much in the same spot as Stephen was in now too. As we slowed to a walk, Stephen said, “I’m probably going to regret that tomorrow.”

I was still working to catch my breath, but managed to say, “you’ll be fine, Stephen. You kept up the whole way.” Misha looked down at me, suddenly alarmed that I hadn’t caught my breath yet. I smiled at him, but stopped walking to try to make it easier.

“I’m okay. I’m not panicking,” I assured them. I just needed a minute of not moving.

Misha glanced at Stephen, clearly worried. Misha hadn’t seen me not be able to catch my breath before. He was used to me running for hours and barely breaking a sweat. I could feel his worry turning to panic with each second that I struggled to control my breathing. “You’re not helping,” I said, in between breaths.

“I can’t help it, gazelle. I’ve never seen you like this. I don’t know what to do and I don’t like it,” Misha said. “I think I should carry you back to the house,” he said. “Boss is going to kill me if you come back broken.”

“He makes a solid argument there, Seph. It’s easier for you to catch your breath if you’re not moving. It’ll also help him feel less panicked, which will help you feel less panicked. I can see the white swirling in your eyes, but I think it’s from Misha, not you,” Stephen said.

“How?” I asked, as Misha squatted down in front of me so I could hop on his back.

“Everything from you always has heat behind it. Your fear and panic slightly less than other emotions, but it’s still warm. Much warmer than I am. This isn’t warm enough to be from you. You said he runs cooler like I do, so it must be from him,” Stephen said as we continued walking to the house.

“You’re getting better, Yoden,” I said.

He flashed me a grin. “I’ve been thinking about what you told me last night, po. I have ideas,” he said.

I squeezed Misha’s neck a little tighter, asking if he was ready to be a guinea pig. He turned his head so he could see me out of the corner of his eye. “I just have one question. Do I get pancakes later if I say yes?”

We were still laughing when we got to the house. Adrik was concerned when he saw Misha carrying me back. I knew it wasn’t worth me trying to keep it from him. “I did struggle to catch my breath. I think we might’ve went a little too far this time. Misha helped me out by carrying me back,” I said as Misha deposited me on the kitchen counter. Ivan had walked in right after us, mirroring Adrik’s concern when he saw Misha carrying me.

“I think you’ve done too much this week, princess. You might be overdoing it,” Ivan said.

“I agree. You’re still at risk for pneumonia again,” Adrik said, handing me a glass of water.

Misha was still somewhat worried and mostly shocked. “I haven’t seen her not be able to catch her breath before. That was alarming.”

“Did you panic?” Adrik asked. “I didn’t feel anything.”

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“She didn’t, but Misha did.” Stephen said. “She stayed calm while she worked to catch her breath, but he made her eyes swirl with white because she could feel his panic.”

Adrik looked at me, surprised. “That’s three times now that your eyes have changed in response to someone else and not you.”

“You’re looking at me like I have an answer as to why that is,” I said, trying not to laugh at him.

“Sephie feels everything so much more intensely than the rest of us, it makes sense that her eyes would be more responsive to everything around her as she becomes more responsive to everything around her,” Stephen said.

“Yeah, what he said,” I said, grinning at Adrik. He clicked his tongue as he stepped in front of me, standing between my legs, his hands on my thighs.

“What happened when you felt his panic?” Adrik asked.

“I told him he wasn’t helping.”

“It didn’t make yours worse?” he asked.

“My panic didn’t make an appearance at all. I think it might have if Misha had continued to panic. I could feel that coming on, but once he started carrying me, he calmed down,” I said.

Adrik looked at me thoughtfully. “Good. You’re learning to control it,” he said as he pulled me to the edge of the counter quickly. It made me wrap my legs around him to keep from feeling like I was going to fall. He wrapped one arm around my waist, picking me up off the counter, and walked out of the kitchen with me..

“Okay, bye!” I called out to the guys as we left. We could hear them laughing as we went up the stairs.

It took until Sunday afternoon before Stephen felt ready to try to help Misha with his anger toward Giana. “I might’ve been overanalyzing everything. Try not to be surprised,” Stephen said after they came back.

“And?” I asked, looking between him and Misha. Misha looked even happier than normal.

“I think it worked. I don’t feel anything when I think about Giana now and I couldn’t be happier about that,” Misha said, laughing.

“Was it easy?” I asked Stephen. He had said he felt like he didn’t need anyone help this time for this one. He really had been thinking about it since finding out he’d be able to do it. I was sure he had a complete standard operating procedure written out in his head on what needed to happen.

“Yeah, much easier than breaking a person. I don’t know how much Viktor is carrying around, but I might be able to do it on my own with him too. Misha was easy. It really was just his anger for Giana and nothing else,” Steplan said.

“That’s because he’s too adorable to be bothered by anything else,” I said, grinning at Misha.

I sighed, hopeful that Viktor would get even more relief from the trauma of his past and that it would help him to feel more comfortable around all of us. I wanted all of us to feel comfortable around him as well. I didn’t want to constantly feel irritated when I was around him and I knew the guys didn’t either. One more step in whatever this was that was happening to all of u