

King of the Underworld by RJ Kane

Chapter 426

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Sephle

Viktor and Ilya were both in the kitchen the next morning when Adrik and I walked out. The rest of the guys hadn't made it upstairs yet. I caught myself wondering if that was on purpose or just a coincidence.

Viktor stood up, taking a step toward Adrik. "Boss, I need to apologize. I didn't know what to do, so I ran. I was worried about Ilya too. I wanted to get him away from everything until..." he trailed off, like he didn't want to finish the thought.

Adrik, in his usual silent way, didn't respond right away. Even though Viktor knew his tactic, it was still effective. He continued talking. "I also owe you an apology, Sephie. I've been avoiding you because I knew you'd force me to deal with things I wasn't prepared to deal with. Turns out I didn't need to worry about you," he said, trying to smile at me.

I looked at him for a few moments. He still looked troubled, but he looked better. I glanced at Ilya, who looked nervous, but he actually looked much better than the first time I saw him. He caught me looking at him, but he looked away quickly, almost like he was embarrassed. I looked back to Viktor, asking, "you fixed him, didn't you?" Viktor's cheeks flushed, but he nodded his head.

"Good. It would've killed him." I looked at Ilya. "If you'd like to give me the name of the girl, I'll happily kick her ass for you. And I'm going to say this, even though you're probably going to think I'm crazy at first, but she wasn't entirely human. Consider yourself lucky you got away from her when you did." His eyes went wide as he glanced to Viktor.

Viktor just laughed. "She could probably tell you your life story after she shook your hand the other night. I didn't tell her anything."

Ilya looked at me again, saying, "I feel bad for the way we met last time. I didn't mean to cause any problems."

You shouldn't feel bad. You needed it to happen, so it did," I said, leaning against the counter after putting the coffee on.

Adrik walked to me, pulling me against him. "You're going to have to decide, Viktor. You can't keep running from the decision," he said, matter-of-factly.

"I know, Boss. No more running. I promise. I saw what it did for Ilya," Viktor said.

"You've technically seen it twice now. The question is, do you believe it now?" asked.

Viktor chuckled. "I do."

"Have you talked to the guys yet? You know they're irritated with you. Mostly because you lost your temper with Sephie," Adrik asked.

Viktor looked at me, obviously remorseful. "I know. I talked to them this morning before we came up here. They're giving us time before they come up. I'm sorry I got angry, Sephie. I didn't understand that you'd felt everything that Ilya was feeling. I just saw Boss and Ivan's eyes and freaked out when they locked in on Ilya."

"I mean, you wouldn't have stood a chance against those two. No offense, Ily I'm sure you can hold your own. Just not in that situation," I said. "I understand."

I felt Adrik sigh. "I need to know that you're all the way in on this, Viktor. Whatever this is. If you want out, that's fine. You're free to go and no hard feelings. But if you stay, then you're all in."

I watched Viktor before he answered. There was still doubt there, but it was much less than what it had been. I could still feel the sadness he'd been carrying around since his wife and child were killed though.

"Don't answer, Viktor. You're not allowed to make a decision yet," I said. He looked at me, surprised. "I need you to ask Kostya to fix you the same way you fixed Ilya before you decide. The sadness and the grief that you've been carrying around for years have become so integrated in who you are that you almost don't know life without them now. You can't make important decisions when everything is clouded by grief. I felt what you've been dealing with. I had to go to very extreme measures to be able to get rid of it. Ivan met not be able to see anything on you, but that doesn't mean it's not there. You have a cloud you need to be rid of before you can decide and we all know there's only one soul that can fix that."

Viktor was quiet for a moment Adrik said, "she's right. From the morning after you left with Ivan until the night she met Ilya, her eyes stayed amber and we could all feel the sadness from you through her. She couldn't shake it. She feels everything intensely, but she also has remarkable control. She

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couldn't shake this. She'd get moments of relief, but they were just moments. You need to be rid of that too. It's okay to let go. You don't love them any less by moving on with your life. I think that's what Kostya has been trying to help you with all along."

Ilya stood up, walking to Viktor. He quietly put his hand on Viktor's shoulder. "They're right, you know." He glanced to me and Adrik, trying to silently tell us he would take care of it. "Come on. I'll be there the whole time," he said as he pushed Viktor toward the door.

Once I heard the door close behind them, I said, "it's going to take a few more days. Apparently, that's why they were gone. Ilya was out for almost two days after Viktor fixed him. I don't know if everyone reacts that way, but somehow I think Viktor is going to need some extra sleep."

"How did you know?" Adrik asked.

"I could still feel his sadness. He tries to push it to the background, which is why I didn't pick up on it all the time before. But now that I knew what to look for, I could still feel it. He's learned ways to contain it, if you will, but it's still there and just as strong."

Adrik pulled me closer, kissing my temple. "We don't always realize how lucky we are to have you."

The other four guys walked into the penthouse, looking very concerned when they didn't see Viktor and Ilya there. I couldn't help but smile. "Don't worry. We talked to them. I made Viktor fix himself before he makes a decision on whether he stays or goes.

Apparently, that's why they were gone for so long. It knocked Ilya out for a couple of days. I expect the same to happen to Viktor, so nobody panic if we don't see them for a few more days."

"He told you that?" Misha asked.

"No. I might've snooped in Ilya's head when no one was paying attention," I said, grinning at him.

"Devious. I'll allow it."

We didn't see Viktor or Ilya the next morning when everyone came upstairs for breakfast. We were all hoping it meant he was recovering.

"Princess, I've been thinking," Ivan said, as we were cleaning up.

"Me too, but I still don't quite know how we're going to get our hands on that many pancakes or if red pandas even like pancakes," I said. There was silence as they all tried to figure out just what the fuck I was talking about. I just grinned at them as I watched their confusion.

"I'm so glad you're back to normal now, gazelle," Misha said, his wide smile stretching across his face.

I looked to Ivan, who still looked somewhat confused, but mostly amused. "What have you been thinking about, Squish?"

"I think there's a way to keep what happened with Ilya from ever happening again," he said.