

King of the Underworld Chapter 513 - 514

Chapter 513

Sephie

We decided to stay at the house until it was time to meet with Trino the following evening. It meant we had one more day to relax and not worry quite so much about everything else going on.

Because of Stephen's admission about his wavering confidence in his abilities now that Adrik had been leveled up, I decided that today was the day that he was finally going to the lake. Because he and Viktor were almost always the ones that went with Adrik to his office anytime we were at the house, it meant Stephen hadn't been dragged to the lake by me like the others had. And it was starting to show.

"Get your coat, Yoden. We're going on an adventure," I said once everyone had cleaned up from our morning workouts.

"Well, this sounds like a fun addition to my day. Is it like a side quest kind of mission? Multi-day mission? Do I need to find someone to feed my bearded dragon?"

he asked.

I laughed. "I didn't know you had a bearded dragon, Yoden. I've been to your apartment, even. I never saw it."

"I don't. It just sounded like something someone would need to feed when gone for multiple days," he said, laughing as he walked back toward his room to grab his coat.

I looked at Ivan, who was in kitchen with me and having a hard time not laughing at our exchange. "I don't know how you can both love someone so much and hate them just as much all at once," I said.

“Want company, princess? Or this side quest needs to be a solo venture?”

Ivan asked.

“The more the merrier, Squish. I’ve never dragged Stephen to the lake before. Today’s the big day for him. He just doesn’t know it yet.”

“Oh, I’m getting in on that. I’ve been wanting to see this for months now,” he said as he quickly left the kitchen to also go grab his coat.

Adrik walked in as Ivan walked out. He knew my plans already, as we’d discussed it before falling asleep the night before. “I’m stealing Squish, too,” I told him as he walked to me. He wrapped his arms around my waist, pulling me against him. I felt the immediate relaxation of my body as soon as his hands were on me once more.

“You can steal whoever you like, solnishko. It’s to their benefit to go there with you. I’m surprised they don’t all want to go,” he said, pressing his lips to mine gently.

“I don’t think the others know yet,” I said, giving him my most innocent grin. He kissed me one more time, then pushed me toward the back of the house when he heard Stephen and Ivan coming back from grabbing their coats. “Go. I’ll keep the others busy,” he said, a mischievous grin on his face.

“This. This is why I love you,” I said, walking quickly to the back doors. Once outside, the weather was beginning to warm up, but the air still had a bite to it. Enough that I was happy for a warm coat and Ivan’s almost as warm as Andrei’s but not as perfect as Adrik’s body temperature. He wrapped a giant arm around my shoulders as we set off on our mini adventure.

As we walked into the woods, Ivan looked down at me. “I think seeing the stress melt off you helps the stress melt off me when

we come here, princess.”

I chuckled. “It is noticeable how much it affects everyone when we’re here. I do find myself wondering if Adrik will ever even tell Vitaliy about this place. I think we all love our little sanctuary a little too much.”

“Ten bucks says if he does tell Vitaliy, he’ll threaten him and his guys to within an inch of their lives like he’s done everyone who works here,” Stephen said.

laughed. “Always wondered why no one ever ratted the location of this place out. Now I know.”

“You should not be surprised, princess. You know how intimidating he can be on a good day. He sat every single person down and explained, in horrifying detail, what he would do to them should they ever reveal the location of the house or that it belonged to him,” Ivan said. He was definitely proud of Adrik in that moment.

Not gonna lie, I was too.

I thought for a minute, then started laughing. “What do you want to bet that’s the moment that Tori fell madly in love with Adrik?”

Stephen thought for a few minutes, in his usual serious way. “That actually holds up to her personality. I always thought Andrei was too nice for her. I think that’s why she didn’t like him as much as she thought she would once they started dating. He’s so quiet, but he looks like the stereotypical alpha male asshole that bitchy chicks like. She thought she was getting someone who she would get a challenge out of breaking, but she got the nicest guy on the planet instead.”

“Poor Bubba. He didn’t deserve to have to deal with her.” I sighed. “I do wish more women understood that a true alpha male isn’t domineering or an asshole. Confidence is quiet, not in your face. Bubba is an actual alpha male. He doesn’t need to prove

himself to anyone, least of all insecure chicks with murderous tendencies.”

“I think she actually did damage to his confidence,” Ivan said as we came out of the woods to the lake. Ivan headed straight for my favorite spot. I glanced at Stephen, who was still deep in thought, but was also busy taking in the scenery around him. Just the look of innocent appreciation on his face made this outing worth it.

“I am almost positive you are correct, Squish. I think it was actually kind of similar to Ilya’s relationship. I find myself wondering if there was something extra to Tori that we could never confirm. It would explain why you always hated her, but never had a valid reason why. It definitely seemed like the more Andrei gave, the more she took. Same as Ilya.”

“I would be willing to bet she did have something extra. It sometimes makes me sad that I didn’t discover my gift earlier to take care of some of these people. Massimo is another one I regret not being able to break,” Stephen said.

“I’ve caught myself wondering if we’ll get a second chance at Massimo’s soul. I don’t know how quick someone can reincarnate, but somehow I think that soul will make the same mistakes over and over again. Same for Anthony and Lorenzo,” Ivan said.

I couldn’t help my smile. “I had no idea you guys were putting this much thought into everything,” I said, laughing. “That sounded way more rude than I meant for it to. I didn’t mean for it to sound like I was surprised you guys were thinking. You’re very intelligent.” I kept laughing as I just dug myself deeper into a hole.

“At least we don’t have angels telling us we’re weirdos, thank you very much,” Stephen said, feigning indignancy.

“Fair. Totally fair,” I said, still laughing.

Stephen looked at me, his wide, handsome smile that we were starting to see more regularly across his face. He sighed. "Seph, I don't know if you'll ever know how important you are to me, but I think Ivan can also agree that your laughter alone is one of the best reasons we've found to keep going."

"Oh, I've told her already that her laughter was the reason for me to come back anytime I found myself in my darkness," Ivan said.

"I think you guys are giving me too much credit. It's just the spark you needed to remind yourselves of your own light. Nothing more," I said, trying to hold back the tears that were threatening to fall.

"I think it's slightly more than that, but I won't argue with you," Stephen said. "Just this once."

"We've all helped each other. You guys help me with everything just as much as I've helped each of you. Like Ivan said, we're a team. Me and six giant alpha Russian bears. I think Misha was right. I think we should start solving crimes when all this is done."

"Seems like it would be too easy, given that we control most of the crime in the city," Stephen said thoughtfully,

"Dammit. Now I'll never get a giant dog," I said under my breath.

Both Ivan and Stephen laughed. Both looked even more relaxed than they had since we'd gotten our hands on both Niko and

Vito. We sat in comfortable silence for a while, taking in the budding signs that Spring was fast approaching,

Finally, Stephen broke the silence. "If I would've known about this place before, I would've told Viktor to suck it and made someone else be his backup with Boss."

I laughed. "Everything happened when it was supposed to, Yoden. You were justifiably terrified of me in the beginning. It would

not have been the same.” “I’ve been thinking about the differences in everyone’s gifts. I think your gift compliments Boss better than we originally thought, Stephen,” Ivan said.

King of the Underworld by RJ Kane

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Sephie

“How so?” Stephen asked.

“So like with me and Andrei – we’re both sides of the same coin, if you will.

He can see good; I can see evil. I think it’s the same

with you and Boss, just to a higher level. You save the soul; he destroys it,”

Ivan said.

It was suddenly starting to make sense in my head. “Lena told me that when the demon takes over a person, the soul basically

dies. But I don’t think a soul can actually die. What I think she meant was

that the demon takes over that soul and uses it in

multiple lifetimes. That’s why it’s so difficult for someone to get rid of a

demon once they have it. Just like us, they become

connected to their demon. Bond with it, if you will. Except, unlike us, the

demon is running things. And not in a good way. You’re

what stops that cycle,” I said, looking at Stephen.

“The deal that Martin and Ricardo made must solidify that connection so completely that nothing can break it, which is why Boss

is needed,” Ivan said.

Stephen was quiet for a few moments. It was clear that he was struggling, but

both Ivan and I knew enough to let him think

through his thoughts and not push him to share more than he was ready to.

He finally looked up at both of us. “I know. I’ve

thought about all this before. It’s not actually performance anxiety like I said

it was. I’m struggling with believing I’m the good side

of the coin.”

The sharp pain I felt through my chest was not enough to keep me from

quickly moving to Stephen’s side. His arm circled my

shoulders as he pulled me into his death grip while he worked to get himself under control. Ivan could feel his pain through me and it was enough that his anger made a brief appearance at what Stephen had been through in life.

“Tell me you’re okay or I’m coming out there,” I heard Adrik tell me and Ivan. All good. Stephen needed this more than I thought he did. I love you for checking,” I responded. He didn’t say another word, but I felt the pull in my chest that let me know how much he loved me. It was a welcome relief from the pain of Stephen’s past.

Ivan quietly got up and moved to the other side of me so that we were all sitting together, leaning against the long ago fallen tree.

“Don’t want you to get cold while we hash this out,” he said, sending low levels of anger my way just to stoke the fire.

Before I could say anything, Ivan spoke. “I sometimes wonder if evil from women isn’t harder to comprehend than evil from men.

Everyone almost expects it from men, so no one is really surprised when a guy turns out to be evil. But women are the mothers of the world. The protectors. The healers. The nurturers. It’s so much harder to take when a woman is evil.” He picked up a nearby rock and chucked it into the lake. “When I was at the facility, there was only one nurse that was ever nice to me. The rest of them were just as mean as the doctors. That was almost harder to take than the doctors.”

“Women are...complicated. Even for me,” I said. “It’s why I have such a terrible track record with seeing who they really are. Tori and Giana both got past me. It was a hard lesson for me to learn to not give any special passes just because they’re chicks.

Giana was much more of a special circumstance, but even still, she’s still a bitch for the way she handled most of what

happened. It's always been that way for me. Girls have always been worse to me than men, which is saying quite a lot for this punching bag."

Ivan chuckled. "You have been a punching bag, princess. I shouldn't laugh at that, but that's funny."

"No, you can laugh. Inappropriate humor will always win."

Even Stephen chuckled. "The three of us might all be punching bags, if you think about it."

Ivan laughed a little louder. "Maybe that's why I found it funny. Punching bag recognizes punching bag."

"Seph's right though. Women are complicated. Ivan's right, too. It's always harder to take when evil comes from women. Until I met you guys, I'd only told maybe one or two people about my sisters. They were both people I trusted. I thought they would believe me. I was wrong both times. They couldn't believe that my sisters would be that cruel."

"What if the demons that Ricardo and Martin made deals with are female demons?" Ivan said, trying to lighten the mood. "I think we just solved that mystery." He was very confident in his hypothesis. Both Stephen and I couldn't contain our laughter,

"I know I've told you before, but your sisters were wrong about everything they said to you, Stephen. I also know that it's difficult to kick them out of your head for good, so I'll be here to argue with you anytime you start listening to them again," I said, once the laughter died down.

Stephen squeezed my shoulders a little tighter. "It's so weird for me to have people that care about me. I mean, there's Vlad. He cares. But mostly because I'm his enabler and I recognize that he's always been ahead of his time when it comes to problem-solving. I mean, his solution for the poor people of the village has yet to

be improved upon.”

“That one was hard for me to get used to as well,” Ivan said. “It still doesn’t feel real some days. If I couldn’t feel it from the princess, I would have a harder time believing it.”

Stephen chuckled. “Glad I’m not the only one.”

“Really?” I asked Ivan.

“Really. I never really thought about it until just now, but being able to feel what you feel helps me believe all of this is real. I would have convinced myself it was all a dream or all of it was fake by now if I wasn’t getting constant reminders through you of how much we all care about each other. So, you see, princess, the connection you have to all of us is not a hinderance in any way,” Ivan said.

me,

“I completely agree with Ivan,” Stephen said. “I could see it happening to the Wonder Twins because they connected to you first, but I still didn’t believe it was real until I felt it myself. Of course, I still have times where I fight myself. There’s still that part of me that believes everything my sisters would tell but then I feel Seph’s joy when she sees one of us.” He turned to look at me, a sweet smile on his face. “Or the love that just drips off you when you see Boss after he’s out of your sight for like 30 seconds. It’s one of the most amazing things I’ve ever seen. Or felt,” he said. I giggled. It really was that bad.

“I want you all to find that special someone that makes everyone else want to puke because you’re so f*cking adorable.”

“We will. Even though you don’t think you are, you’re helping us with that too. If any of us were to meet that someone right now, it wouldn’t work. We wouldn’t be ready. You wouldn’t have been ready to meet your goddamn prince if it would’ve happened three

years earlier. It will happen exactly when it's meant to happen," Ivan said.

"Squish. You're so wise," I said, leaning my shoulder into his.

"We're like the council of elders right here. Once the city is back to normal, we'll preside over petty squabbles between the people," Stephen said.

"I feel like you have experience with this already. How many feuds over goats have you settled in your 900 years?" I asked, trying to sound serious.

"Countless. Sheep and cows, too. Livestock was a hot topic a few hundred years ago."

We stayed at the lake for a few hours; until our asses got sore from sitting on the ground. Stephen was much lighter after talking things through with me and Ivan. Hell, I was much lighter from talking things through with the two of them.

Ivan offered to be my legs for the walk back to the house. I'd trained them all quite well by this point. They all knew I didn't walk back to the house. I felt a little guilty that they all spoiled me.

It lasted at least five seconds before I readily hopped on his back.

Stephen inhaled deeply as we started back toward the house. "I understand why Andrei and Misha won't shut up about coming here."

I laughed. "This place is magic."

Ivan squeezed my legs as we walked. "Magic that we were all blind to until you came into our lives," he said, sending me a little of his fire, knowing I would always appreciate it. I hugged his neck a little tighter.

I spent the rest of the walk back to the house completely lost in my own thoughts. Adrik was right when he said this entire situation was easier because we had each other. That extended to the guys too. I couldn't imagine my life without them. I

couldn't imagine feeling this confident knowing what we're facing without every single one of them.

We were an unconventional family, but we were a family. We were all willing to die trying to protect it.

-The End-