

King of the Underworld by RJ Kane

Chapter 514

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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-