

King of the Underworld

Chapter One

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Sephie

I hear my white noise app cut off on my phone and my alarm slowly getting louder. I wait for the chiming bells to stop before I roll over and hit the screen. With a deep breath, I muster the energy to get out of bed and drag myself to the shower.

Another glorious day in the life of waiting tables. I stop myself from skipping to the shower I'm so excited at the prospect of being yelled at by angry customers again today. People are just cranky lately.

After my shower, I make myself a quick breakfast, even though it's late afternoon. Working the late shift means I miss the normal breakfast time, but let's be real. Bacon can be enjoyed any time of the day.

Once the dishes are done and washed, I grab my keys and my bag, locking the door on my way out. I live by myself. It's maybe not the best neighborhood, but all my neighbors are really nice, and we keep an eye on each other. When I turn around after locking my door, I see Mr. Turner walking up the steps to his apartment across the hall from mine.

"Hello, Miss Sephie. Going anywhere exciting?" He's slowly climbing the stairs, with his groceries in hand. It's Thursday, after all. Mr. Turner always stops by the grocery store on his way home on Thursdays.

“Hi, Mr. Turner. On my way to work. How was your day? Have any excitement at the hotel today?”

“No, not today, but I’m thankful for boring days, if I’m being honest.”

Mr. Turner worked the door at the most expensive hotel downtown. He’s been the doorman for 32 years and knows every single influential person in the city as a result.

“Boring days give you more time to find my Mr. Perfect, right? I like boring days too,” I chuckle.

Mr. Turner laughs as he reaches his door and sets his groceries down to unlock it. “Don’t you worry, Miss Sephie, I’ll find you the perfect man one day. You deserve it.”

“I don’t know about that, but I’ll take all the help I can get. Have a great night, Mr. Turner. I’ll see you in the morning and as always, if you need anything, you call me.” I waved goodnight to him as he walked in his apartment.

My smile lingers as I jog down the steps to the parking lot. Having great neighbors really can make a huge difference in your living situation.

Once I pull into the restaurant’s parking lot, I find my normal parking space taken. I grumble to myself as I am forced to park farther away from the building now. I am nothing, if not a creature of habit. Not getting my normal parking space means this is going to be a rough night. *Hooray for Thursdays.*

When I step out of my car, I notice the storm clouds slowly rolling in. Inhaling deeply, I breathe in the sweet scent of incoming rain and relish the last moment of sanity before my shift starts. *I can do this.*

It's not just any Thursday. It's the last Thursday of the month, which means that all the crime bosses in the city meet at this restaurant to discuss "business." They reserve the back room and request that I serve them each time. I don't know if it's because I'm quiet, keep my head down most of the time, or if it's because I can remember what each boss likes and doesn't like, but they always request me. They always give me a fantastic tip, so it makes having to wait on known criminals somewhat manageable. Their tips are single-handedly funding my savings account, which means I'll be able to move out of my questionable neighborhood sooner, rather than later.

"Hey Sephie. Are you coming inside or are you just going to stand by your car with your eyes closed like a psycho all night?"

"Shut-up, Max. I'm coming, I'm coming," I say as I run to catch up to him. Max is the bartender and has his own fan club of women that come to the restaurant solely to be served drinks by him. His drinks aren't special. He's even admitted to watering down their drinks most days. They just want to stare at him while he smiles at them as he serves them their Cosmopolitans.

Max is tall, muscular, but a slender muscular. He looked like he could play in the NBA, not the NFL. His dirty blonde hair was shorter on the sides, but he was letting it grow longer on top. He said the women loved slightly longer hair these days, so he was conducting market research to see if longer hair got him more tips. Max had a boyish charm about him, but he knew how to use his emerald green eyes to get the ladies. One look from him and most women would swoon. I was apparently immune to that look. He tried it often on me, but I would laugh every time. He said I was good for his humility, if nothing else.

“Were you meditating just now? Do you need to find inner peace before the meeting tonight?” he teased as he opened the back door for me.

“I was trying to find the strength not to smack you, a-hole,” I laughed as I walked into the kitchen.

“Oh. You wound me.”

“I’m positive you will be able to find a woman to nurse your wounds, in...approximately 30 minutes,” I say as I look at my watch to see how long we have before the bar opens. From Thursday to Sunday, the women flock to the bar to see Max.

“But none of them will ever have my heart the way you do, my little gingersnap,” he says as he stands in front of me, leans into me, and gently tucks a loose curl behind my ear. He adjusts my thick braid over my shoulder and pretends to adjust the collar on my shirt.

I stare deeply into his big green eyes, as his fingers linger on my neck. Then I immediately break character into a fit of laughter as he also breaks and starts laughing.

“Go to work, Max.”

The black SUVs start arriving around 8 pm. Max is completely swamped with single women vying for his attention at the bar but still takes the time to run back to the kitchen like he’s a 5-year-old and yells, “THEY’RE HERE” and then runs back to the bar. I shake my head, laughing at his antics, take a deep breath, and steady myself for the night ahead.

The six bosses each come to this meeting with at least 2-4 additional people. Some are bodyguards, some are their children, and some are underbosses. The bosses are all very respectful, as are the bodyguards and the underbosses. It’s the children that I loathe.

Sons of mafia bosses have the biggest egos I've ever encountered and worse, they feel entitled to act however they please. They're handsy, they're rude, and they all think that I should be throwing myself at them, simply because of who their fathers are.

Luckily, they don't come to every meeting, but they'll definitely be here tonight. Apparently, this meeting is extra important as the main boss. *the overlord? I don't know what to call him. Lord King Boss? Feels right* – the Lord King Boss – will be here tonight. He rarely makes appearances in public, so I'm a little at a loss as to what's so important that he would show up tonight, but I'm sure I'll get snippets throughout the night. Because I'm always the one that takes care of this meeting, I know more about the goings on in the city than I probably should. I keep that information to myself, of course. I'm not an idiot.