

16: Selene

The restaurant Luna brought us to, is bathed in warm golden hues with a touch of rustic charm, creating an inviting ambiance that drew me in from the moment I stepped through the door. The walls adorned with tasteful artwork and soft ambient lighting create an atmosphere that feels both sophisticated and comfortable.

The aroma of sizzling steak wafts through the air, making my senses come alive. The scent alone is a tantalizing promise of the culinary delight awaiting me. I marvel at the neatly arranged tables covered in crisp white linens, each adorned with a simple but elegant centerpiece – so posh.

As I sit down, the plush cushion of the chair embraces me, and the polished silverware gleams under the gentle glow of the overhead lights. The menu, an exquisite presentation of culinary offerings, showcases an array of steak options, each described with mouthwatering detail – one I won't miss.

Having never experienced a dining setting like this, I feel a mix of excitement and curiosity. The waiter, clad in a well-tailored uniform, approaches with a polite smile, ready to guide me through the menu. My eyes widen as I peruse the selection, taking in the variety of cuts, cooking styles, and delectable side dishes – Imogen and Luna doing the same.

I have never had the pleasure of savoring a perfectly cooked steak, and the anticipation of that first bite heightens my senses, even Kira howls in my head. The thought of sinking my teeth into a juicy, flavorful piece of meat stirs a hunger I hadn't known I possessed but was hiding deep inside.

In this elegant haven, I am about to embark on a culinary journey, indulging in a meal that goes beyond sustenance. The ambiance, the service, and the promise of a heavenly steak combine to create an experience I will remember, marking a delightful contrast to the hardships I have faced in the past.

"Why are you two eating steak?" Imogen makes a face, seeing that both Luna and I ordered the same thing.

Luna shrugs her shoulders at her. "Because steak is the best food out there? I don't know. I love good meat and protein."

Imogen turns to me for my own answer. "Same. I haven't had steaks in ages."

A good tender steak is a culinary masterpiece that elevates the dining experience to new heights. The moment I cut into it, the knife glides effortlessly through the meat, revealing a perfect medium-rare interior that glistens with succulent juices – my stomach growls.

The exterior, expertly seared to a rich golden-brown, offers a delightful contrast in texture. The crust, created through the Maillard reaction during cooking, adds a depth of flavor that intensifies with each bite – Kira moans inside my head too.

The first taste is an explosion of savory richness, with the natural beefy flavors enhanced by the seasoning and cooking process. The meat, cooked to tender perfection, practically melts on my tongue, leaving a lingering, buttery sensation – I suck on my fork.

"Let me snap this quickly." Imogen takes a picture of my steak while I am devouring it.

The juiciness of a good tender steak is unmatched, providing a moist and flavorful experience that keeps me coming back for more. The interplay of marbling and proper cooking techniques ensures that every bite is a symphony of textures and tastes, making it a culinary indulgence that is both satisfying and memorable.

"Heavens, this is amazing!" I say in between bites, Luna nods at me in agreement.

I give a satisfied grin after making sure every space inside my belly is filled with good food and tender half-cooked steak. I have never eaten food as good as this in my entire life and never dreamed I could see myself in this lavish restaurant that reeks of elegance, money, and just the good life.

Imogen touches my stomach, the baby bump. "I know the little bean in there is satisfied."

"Yeah." I almost purr but hold back, the satisfied grin on my face not vanishing for a second.

Luna looks at us with a happy grin, like she is happy just seeing us eating. She knows both Imogen and I come from a good background but are poor. We won't dream about coming to such places, not even to work for them. That is a dream that won't come true.

But here we are, with the rich kid who sponsored us even though I felt like a burden before the meal. That we are taking advantage of her, but she eases down that feeling like she always does and says it was her honour. She says she doesn't have many friends in town as they moved here just recently.

I have told Luna the same thing I told Imogen and Miranda about my guardian throwing me out after I had a one-night stand with someone I can't even remember and fell pregnant. She was very sympathetic, offering me her shoulder to cry on and said she'd always be there for me.

"Thanks for this, Luna. I won't ever be able to repay you for this experience." Imogen hugs Luna as we step out of the restaurant.

"Yeah? Thank goodness I don't want you to repay. Y'all are amazing, truly." She beams at us, guiding us to the Uber waiting outside.

"We'll see you tomorrow?" I ask while Imogen settles in the backseat of the cab, taking her phone out and texting.

"Sure." She kisses my cheek, leaving a sense of safety with it, then waves and makes her way to her Tesla parked upfront.

The next morning, when I woke up and got dressed for the day, Luna was already in the café bustling around the kitchen with the cook, laughing with Miranda as they multitasked. Why didn't they wake me up earlier to give them a hand? It seems like we are having a busy day.

"Morning, sleeping beauty," Luna greeted with a grin from the kitchen while kneading dough expertly, making me wonder why she wanted to work here. She is very good in the kitchen.

"Morning," I yawned, then tied my red hair into a low bun. "Why is the café so busy?"

"Because Imogen decided to tell us about the mini group work she wanted to take place here from their college, late. Now we have to make sure there is enough of everything for twenty of them." Miranda shook her head, tucking a strand of her greying hair into her bun.

My eyes widened at that. Why would Imogen not tell us about it when this is a huge thing for Miranda? They are going to keep the place busy for the first time since I arrived. No wonder Miranda is here with us and not with her ailing husband. Stupid Imogen.

Walking deeper into the kitchen, I got my hands on the cookie dough and started at it. Thank goodness for all the work at the pack house. We used to cook for the children that go to school and make sure to take their lunch too. That made working here much easier.

We were done an hour later, everything sorted and ready for Imogen's group work in thirty minutes. Luna and I both nursed a cup of creamy coffee we made ourselves while Miranda excused herself to go see her husband.

I don't know how I will ever be able to repay Miranda for her kindness, but if I could do anything to make her genuinely happy, I would, and that is seeing her husband healthy. I can see the love she has for that man. I have only seen mating bonds bringing people closer, but Miranda is the denition of in sickness and in health. She loves her husband dearly.

I wish there is something I could do to make him alright. To be able to see how their love would have been if not for this dying illness slowly taking away their time together. I wish. I wish.

"What are you thinking about?" Luna asked, taking a sip and watching me over the rim of her mug.

"Just Miranda and her husband," I shrugged, looking deep into my coffee.

"Oh." Luna looked away too, and I know she is thinking what I am doing right now.

Before we could utter another word, the door to the café was pushed open, and several college students walked in, Imogen leading the group. She gave us an enthusiastic wave, grinning from ear to ear, and that was when I saw Sawyer walking inside and looking right at her.

She came to the counter. "You two look gorgeous this morning. But besides that, I'm sorry for the late announcement. Don't let Miranda see me."

I rolled my eyes while Luna chuckled. "She is not after you for now. Go settle down; we'll come and take orders."

She nodded and went to sit at the table where Sawyer was, beside him actually. I'll ask her if she still thinks he is treating her like he does other girls because he looks really protective of her right then that I wanted to swoon.

"Her boyfriend?" Luna nodded at the pair with a raised brow.

"It's complicated," I chuckled since it isn't my story to tell. She will tell Luna all about it by the end of the day anyway.

We went to take orders, but halfway through, the door to the café was pushed open, and a guy probably around mid-twenties stepped into the café, sniffed the air, then his eyes fell on a brunette who was oblivious to the whole chaos. Actually, only Luna and I noticed the guy; the students were busy.

He strolled towards the girl and murmured "my mate" only Luna and I caught. He said mate! I turned to look at Luna, and she turned to me, then realization dawned upon me right that moment that Luna knows something about my people or she is one of us.

There was a certain look in her eyes that told me the whole story I needed. The question here is, is she a werewolf, or does she know about them? If so, could she smell me even though I have cloaked it?