

# Brother's Best Friends Are My Mates

Lino

## Chapter 1 My Friend Has Two Mates

Lia

The lunch I packed for myself remained mostly untouched. I picked up part of the sandwich, took a bite, and struggled to swallow. It felt like ash in my mouth, making me want to spit it out.

Folded and shoved into my pocket was the invitation for my coming-of-age ceremony that was delivered to me two weeks ago. With trembling hands, I pulled it out and read it word by word.

Official Invitation Dear Lia Brown,

It is with boundless joy and honor that we invite you to attend your Coming-of-Age Ceremony, a momentous occasion marking this significant milestone in your life. This celebration is a testament to your growth, achievements, and the exciting future that lies ahead.

Event Details:

· Date: Monday, the 6th of October · Time: 9:00 AM We encourage you to arrive promptly at the clinic to ensure the smooth progression of the event and to fully immerse yourself in the process.

The ceremony afterward will include heartfelt speeches, special performances, and a formal acknowledgment of this pivotal transition.

Please RSVP to confirm your attendance. You may respond by contacting the office.

We look forward to celebrating this momentous occasion with you and honoring your journey into adulthood. Should you have any questions or require additional information, do not hesitate to reach out.

Warm regards,

Aspen School The words filled me with a myriad of emotions, all of which were negative. I wanted to curl in on myself, ignoring the overwhelming anxiety that I was unable to shake. All my friends were so excited, and happy to be finding out who their potential mate could be.

My nerves were on edge and had been for the past few weeks. I had my coming-of-age ceremony in a little less than a week. It would mark my transition into a full, fledged adult werewolf and more importantly, give me a mate.

Footsteps reached my ears, gravel and leaves crunching from under their weighted steps. I whipped my head around so fast that my long, blonde braid nearly smacked me in the cheek.

“Simone!” I called out, my hand grasping my still-pounding heart. “You scared me.”

She giggled, plopping herself beside me on the bench.

“What are you doing out here, Lia? I’ve been looking everywhere for you to share my good news!”

I chewed lightly on my lower lip, anxiety reaching its peak.

“Yes, you had your coming-of-age ceremony today. How was it?”

“It was amazing!” she cried. “I found my mates!”

These ceremonies weren’t always a guarantee after you took the medicine which increased your scent production. It could take weeks to meet your chosen mates if they existed.

“I’m glad you found your mate. Who is he?”

“Mates, Lia. I found my mates.”

My ocean-blue eyes widened to the size of saucers. “What?”

One mate was the most common result. Two weren’t unheard of but it was much rarer.

“I have two mates,” Simone giggled. “You know Max and Xavier from the nearby college?”

“They’re on the rugby team…”

“Yes, well they are going to be my mates!”

Simone was glowing, cheeks flushed and eyes sparkling. I hated that she was going to be stuck mated to two guys from the college rugby time. Most of them were brutish jerks, using their size and status to get what they wanted.

I should know; my older brother Michael was on the team. He went from high school to the college rugby team. Along with his four friends Colby, Rain, Matt, and Jesse, they helped the team win trophy after trophy and championship after championship.

Our parents used to insist on going to every single game. After they died, I kept up the tradition but hated every minute of it.

“You’re coming to my celebration tonight, right?”

“Of course! Simone, you are my best friend.”

She pulled me into a hug, a gasp escaping her when she noticed my crumbled invitation on the picnic table.

“Lia, you still haven’t RSVP’d. What are you thinking?!”

The disappointment in her eyes was fierce. It was enough to make me squirm in my seat and look away. I didn’t want to disappoint anyone, let alone one of my best friends. No, my only friend.

Most times, I kept to myself. Simone was able to break down those walls I had up.

“I don’t want to do the coming-of-age ceremony,” I blurted out.

The air became so tense I swear you could cut it with a knife. I managed to meet Simone’s gaze, wishing she could understand where I was coming from.

“Lia, that’s not funny.”

“I’m not joking,” I admitted, voice soft. “I don’t want to do it. I’ve never wanted to do it but everyone acts as if it’s the most normal thing to do around here.”

“Because it is!”

I shake my head. “It’s not to me.”

“Do you know what happens when you don’t go through with it? You become a social pariah,” Simone whispered, horror flashing across her face. “Remember Alison Larson who graduated a year before us? She refused the ceremony and had to move to a different state to escape the backlash.”

“You’re the only one I’m close to here,” I admit.

“Did you forget about Michael?”

Hearing my brother’s name caused guilt to overwhelm me. I loved my brother more than anything, even though sometimes he seemed more annoyed by my presence than anything else.

“How could I forget about my brother, Lia? That’s ridiculous.”

“Well, I bring it up because it’s relevant! If you leave then you’ll never see him again.”

My shoulders slumped in defeat.

“Fine, I’ll sign it and return it today.”

Simone sighed in relief. “Thank you, Lia. I know it’s scary and you’re nervous about who might be picked to be your mate but once it’s over you can get back to your normal life.”

I wanted to ask Simone how it was possible to get back to normal life when I was going to have a mate, someone constantly at my side, but I held back. Simone was so happy and practically glowing. The last thing I wanted to do was ruin her happiness.

\*\*\*

I played nervously with a loose thread on my regulated red tartan skirt, my hand hovering just inches from the door to the clinic. With a heavy sigh, I knocked as loudly as I could,

“Come in!” the nurse called out.

When Nurse Wu saw me, she frowned.

“I see you’ve finally come around to returning the paper. For a moment I thought you weren’t going to return the paper and attend your coming-of-age ceremony.”

I frowned. “Yes, how scandalous it would be of me to do such a thing.”

“Go ahead and be sarcastic, but you know I’m right, Lia. You will be a laughingstock.”

“Yes, you’re not the first person to point this out to me.”

She rolled her eyes. “Go on and get back to class.”

I let the door slam shut behind me, rage rushing through me. Why was everyone so insistent on following this tradition?

A small part of me did want it but I was afraid of who I would end up being mated to. My parent’s mating ceremony worked out and so did my brothers. He found a lovely young woman named Madison who graduated in the same class as him.

Not everyone found their mates. If they did, they would go into the database and be encouraged to try the ceremony again in a few years. It happened to my brother’s core friend group.

When this happened, no one batted an eye. They accepted this because at least the person tried to complete the mating ceremony. I wished they could do the same to people who chose not to go through it.

I entered class a little late, taking my usual seat beside Simone. She leaned close to me, keeping her voice below a whisper.

“Did you submit the paper?”

“Yes, I’ll be having the ceremony next week,” I whispered back.

She squealed, trying her best to muffle the sound so our teacher didn’t look back and see that we were doing nothing but paying attention.

“I can’t wait to see who your mates are going to be, Lia.”

“Mate.”

“Well, I have two mates now,” she pointed out.

“Yes, but the norm is to have one mate. Not two.”

“Once I heard of a girl having three.”

I paled, shifting uncomfortably in my seat. “Three mates at once?”

“Imagine it!” Simone said, giggling a little too loudly.

The teacher cleared her throat, glaring daggers at us. Laughter exploded across the classroom, making my cheeks heat up in embarrassment. I was pale so the blush would be more than noticeable to anyone in the room.

“Let’s talk later,” I mouthed back to Simone.

I didn’t want to get into any trouble when my coming-of-age ceremony was so close. No need to give them something else to use against me.