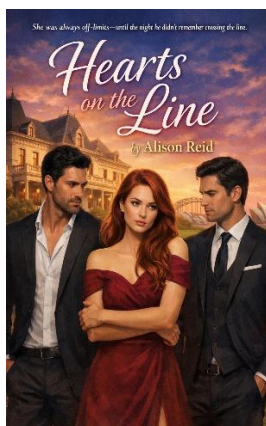


# Hearts on the Line

by Alison Reid



Five years. That’s how long she’d been quietly, painfully in love with Daniel Moore. Her brother’s best friend. The man who never stayed long, never looked too closely, never reached for her the way she so desperately wished he would.

But tonight... there’d been something different in his eyes. A flicker. A hesitation. A crack in that perfectly curated armour.

She turned off the hallway light and padded toward her bedroom, the low hum of distant traffic the only sound. The carpet was soft under her feet, and for a moment, everything felt still—peaceful, maybe. Then she saw him.

Daniel stood at the end of the hallway, near the guest room door, his suit jacket slung over one arm. He’d undone more buttons of his shirt, exposing the hollow of his throat and the slight dip of his collarbone. His hair was messier now, one curl falling onto his forehead.

He looked... disarmed. Unshielded. Like the version of himself he never let anyone see.

“Hey,” he said softly, his voice slurred just slightly at the edges. “Why are you still up?”

Julia froze. “Couldn’t sleep.”

He stepped closer, his green eyes catching the light from the hallway sconces. “That’s a shame. You always looked peaceful when you slept.”

Her heart stuttered. He remembered that? That one time she’d fallen asleep on the couch during movie night when she was twenty-five, her head accidentally resting on his shoulder. He’d said nothing the next day. She thought he hadn’t even noticed.

“I didn’t know you noticed,” she said carefully.

“I notice everything about you, Julia,” he murmured, his eyes never leaving hers.

She laughed softly, unsure whether it was disbelief or fear making her voice tremble. “You’re drunk, Daniel.”

He stepped closer. “Maybe but I’m not blind.”

She backed up slightly, just enough to press against the wall. His arm came up beside her, resting against the doorframe like he needed it to steady himself—or maybe to trap her.

“You’ve changed,” he said, voice low. “You used to hide behind your brother, always watching. Quiet. Sweet.”

“And now?” Her voice was barely above a whisper.

He smiled, a lazy, intoxicated thing. “Now you glow.”

Her breath caught. This wasn’t real. He didn’t say things like that. Not to her. Not unless—unless something had shifted.

She should have walked away. Told him goodnight. Kept the line drawn where it had always been. But she didn’t.

“Daniel,” she said, trying to sound stern but failing. “You should get some sleep.”

He leaned in, eyes flickering between hers and her mouth. “Maybe. But right now...” His voice dipped, dark and velvet smooth. “...I want to kiss you.”

And then he did.

His mouth found hers—tentative, hungry, like he’d been holding his breath for five years and finally let it out in a single kiss. His hand brushed her waist, drawing her just slightly closer.

She kissed him back. There was no hesitation. No fear. Only five years of aching need unravelling in a single, breathless collision.

When he pulled back, silence rushed in. Their eyes locked, breaths unsteady, and her heartbeat thundered so loud it felt like it echoed in her bones.

Daniel blinked slowly, like waking from a dream. “That... probably shouldn’t have happened.”

“Probably not,” she whispered, but her fingers still clung to the fabric of his shirt, curling into it like an anchor. He hadn’t stepped back.

He stared at her a moment longer—then reached up, brushing his knuckles along her jaw. “But I’m not sorry.”

Julia swallowed hard.

When he kissed her again—deeper this time, slower, his hands sliding to her waist—it wasn’t a mistake. There was no hesitation, no blurred lines. Just heat. Hunger. Years of tension unravelling in the space of a heartbeat.

As his lips trailed to her neck, he whispered, “I’ve been wanting to do that for years.”

**Click here to Buy or Read for FREE with Kindle Unlimited**

 [Hearts on the Line](#)