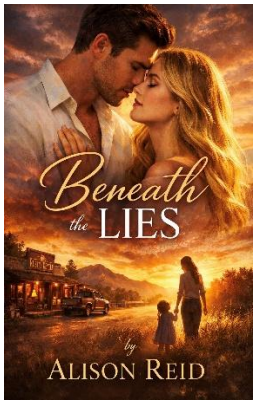
Beneath the Lies

by Alison Reid



She had shown up at his apartment with red, swollen eyes, her face streaked with tears. At first, he had assumed it was guilt—the aftermath of what she'd done with Derek Monroe. He hadn't wanted to believe it. Not his Lily. Not the woman he knew to be sweet, honest, innocent to her core.

She had looked at him desperately and whispered, "Please… tell me it's not true. Tell me you didn't sleep with Cassie."

The words had stunned him.

In that moment, he had thought she was deflecting—trying to twist the blame away from herself, trying to ease her own guilt by accusing him instead.

"Are you kidding me?" he'd demanded, his voice tight, jaw clenched, hurt boiling violently to the surface. "You're trying to turn this on me? How could you, Lily?"

She had stared at him, bewildered, tears spilling freely now. "What are you talking about, Nate? I didn't—"

"You think I don't know?" he'd snapped, pacing the small living room like a caged animal. "I know, Lily. I know you slept with Derek. How could you do that to me?"

She had flinched as though struck. "No! Nate—no! That didn't happen!"

But he hadn't listened. He hadn't stopped. Pride and pain had fused together, blinding him.

"And what about you?" she'd fired back, her voice shaking with disbelief and hurt. "I know you slept with Cassie Monroe! Don't you dare stand there and act like I'm the one who's done something wrong!"

The accusation had stunned him into silence.

He'd opened his mouth to deny it—to swear she was wrong—but the words had lodged in his throat. Not because it was true—he hadn't slept with Cassie—but because the accusation had shaken him. She wasn't confessing. She wasn't apologising.

She was accusing him.

And he couldn't see past that.

The argument had spiralled out of control—voices raised, hearts raw, words thrown like knives. Misunderstanding had shredded the bond they had built over years of shared laughter, quiet moments, and whispered dreams. Every accusation carved deeper wounds, leaving them both bleeding in opposite corners of the same room.

In the end, Lily had stormed out, tears streaming down her face, her small figure swallowed by the night as though it could absorb her pain. Nate had been left standing there, rigid and devastated, staring at the empty apartment that still smelled like her shampoo, still echoed with her laughter, still vibrated with the memory of her presence.

The next morning, she was gone.

He hadn't even heard it from her.

The town gossip had told him first.

Caleb had confirmed it later—quietly, carefully. Lily had left town completely shattered.

"Go after her," Caleb had said.

Nate had stared at him like he'd lost his mind. "She cheated on me, Caleb!" he'd yelled, anger and heartbreak bleeding into one. He'd dismissed Caleb's defence as bias—Caleb had always liked Lily, and Nate had convinced himself his friend's judgment was compromised.

"There is no way in hell that girl cheated on you," Caleb had shot back, furious. "And if you really believe she could do something like that? You don't deserve her."

Caleb had stormed out.

They hadn't spoken for a month.

Nate had been left with nothing but silence. Absence. And the gnawing ache of betrayal—both real and imagined.

And now, years later, seeing Lily standing in that café with a child, all of it came crashing back—the heartbreak, the misunderstanding, the words they could never take back.

His chest tightened.

His hands trembled slightly on the steering wheel.

And for the first time since that night, a terrible, creeping doubt whispered through the cracks in his certainty.

What if I was wrong?

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