

RIVETED EXCERPT

Church

She kissed me.

Her lips touched mine and she destroyed me. This tiny ray of light that seemed determined to chase the darkness inside of me away unraveled me with nothing more than the brush of her very soft lips against mine.

I should've pulled away, either that or gone all in. The attraction between us was only going to end one way, with me inside of her as we scorched through one another, so a real kiss with tongues and teeth and grabbing hands was inevitable, especially if she was holding the door wide open in invitation. I was already struggling with the friend thing and this wasn't helping at all. I stood there, holding her, feeling her as she rubbed her mouth over mine, the barest hint of pressure as she took a taste, as she feathered her lips against mine like she was trying to memorize the shape, the feel, the flavor of them. It was the singularly softest touch I'd ever experienced and yet it had the power to make my knees weak and my blood pop with a desire so sharp it felt like it could pierce right through my skin.

Her hand cradled my jaw, her fingers shaking with some of the same things I was feeling. This thing that lived between us was hungry and tired of being ignored. It buzzed around us, electric and hot, refusing to be cooled by the chill in the night air that surrounded us. If we weren't careful the passion that was hungry and needy between us would consume us, devour us, and leave us nothing more than hollow husks filled with fading satisfaction and jagged disenchantment because no matter how good we were together it couldn't and wouldn't last. I didn't want any part of me to be responsible for burning her out. I liked that her light chased my shadows away and that meant I wasn't going to have any kind of hand in dimming her internal glow.

Her breasts pressed into the center of my chest as she leaned more fully into me and I could feel the pointed peaks of her nipples stab into my skin. The sensation made my dick twitch behind my zipper and had all the available blood that was still above my belt rushing south. I'd always liked the way Dixie was built. She was on the shorter side, but every single part of her small frame was curved and lush. She looked like a woman that you could grab ahold of without having to watch yourself. She was delicate but in no way did she come across as fragile or breakable. She looked like she could take everything I had to give her, all the pent-up longing, all the nights of frustration I spent hard and alone, all the denied hunger that made me want to eat her up and then go back for seconds and thirds because I knew there was no way I was going to have my fill of her honeyed lips and velvety skin in one go.

There was so much of her to experience, and I wanted to know what all of it felt like, tasted like, sounded like. I wanted to watch her come from every possible position I could get her in, and then I

wanted to find some new ones, ones no man had ever had her in before, and watch her come in those, too. Because I knew once I got her she would let me have her in ways she hadn't let anyone else. Her eyes, so pretty and dark, made me all kinds of promises, and I wanted to take her up on every single one of them. But there wasn't anything I could promise in return, and that always kept me from crossing the invisible line.

She ran the tip of her nose along the edge of my jaw and that little nuzzle made my entire body shudder. She had the ability to bring down all the walls I'd so carefully built up around us in order to keep both of us safe. She didn't have any clue the kind of damage I could do if I ignored all the warning bells ringing loudly in the back of my mind. I knew the ways in which I could wreck the women in my life that I cared about and there was no way on God's green and often unforgiving Earth that I would subject her to that. I barely survived the loss of the last woman I loved. I knew if I let Dixie sneak her way inside my heart and something happened to her there would be nothing left of me. There wouldn't be anyplace left for me to run.