

ASCENDANT by Susy Smith

EXCERPT

The short, clipped answer sent tiny needle pricks up her spine. He cut the engine then turned, his darkened blue eyes locked on hers, searching. "Lace."

The desperate edge in his voice sliced straight through her. She reached over and ran a hand down his spine then back up, her touch feather light. Her hand wandered to the back of his neck. She stroked his hair, curling the ends around her fingers. He took her face between his hands, thumbs brushing

her temples. She closed her eyes, turned her face into his calloused palm.

"Are you really sure about me?" Her eyelids snapped open. "What?" After everything they'd been through, he still questioned her decision to be with him, her love for him.

"I'd understand if you're having second thoughts or changed your mind." His tormented face tempered the heat racing through her veins. "About what?" "Me. Running. Everything." "Stop. Just stop."

He dropped his hands. "This won't be easy and you," he swallowed hard, "you deserve better."

"Jace," she said on a sigh, "there's no one better than you."

She leaned forward, brushed her lips against his, then slipped over the console into the back seat. Although the pained look never completely left his eyes, his face broke into a grin.

"What are you doing?" With a smirk, she lifted her T-shirt over her head, let the material slide down her bandaged arm. Cool air hit her bare skin and instant heat flared in his eyes. "Appealing to the wolf in you," she said, voice soft and low.