

## Excerpt – Liberty Divided Isle of Fangs Book 2

Liberty nestled deeper into the beach towel lying on the soft white sand. A cool breeze drifted over her exposed flesh, even though the warmth of the sun beamed down. Ryan's strong hands rubbed sunscreen onto her back and shoulders.

*Heaven.*

She almost didn't think about the insanity her life had become. Or her run-in with Eli the night before. Or the fact that she missed home, missed her mom so much it was a physical ache. She would call her mother when she got back to the house. But right now, she just wanted to bask in mindless bliss...

"Liberty?" Ryan's hands slowed.

"Hmmm?" she murmured, not opening her eyes. Why did he have to spoil the moment with talking?

"Are you going to let Eli continue training you?"

She let out a heavy sigh. Especially talking about *that*.

She rose and reluctantly dislodged Ryan's skilled hands. "No. I don't trust him."

Ryan sat back on his haunches and beseeched her with his dark brown eyes. "If you don't, you could get hurt. Or worse. And it would be my fault."

She stood and brushed sand off her black two piece. "How would it be your fault?"

Ryan rose to his feet. "Because I told you the truth about him. If I hadn't, you'd still let him train you."

"Ugh. Do we have to talk about Eli on such a beautiful day?"

"Not if you at least promise me you'll consider it."

She hesitated then, realizing it wasn't a commitment, said, "I'll consider it."

He smiled, his white teeth flashing against his bronze skin. "That's all I ask." He took her hand. "Now, come with me."

He tugged lightly, and she followed him down the beach until they were knee-deep in the warm, translucent blue-green water.

"Look."

She followed Ryan's gaze, and let out a gasp. She could see all the way to the ocean floor. What appeared to be hundreds of tiny fish—ranging in hues from jade to orange to one that was the color of a rainbow—swarmed around a purplish cactus-like mound.

"Is that coral?" she asked.

"It is. *Pocillopora*, one of the hundreds of species found in the Pacific."

"My God," she whispered in awe. "It's unbelievable."

"So are you." Ryan took her hands and tugged her to him. Their bodies lightly bumped, his warm and hard and damp, hers wanting to melt into him.

He caressed her knuckles with his thumbs. "I'm bloody bonkers over you, you know that right?"

She nodded. "I like you too, Ryan. A lot." The way her pulse rate accelerated and goose bumps pebbled her flesh, she was feeling more than just 'like,' but she wasn't ready to go there. Not yet.

“I know you have feelings for Eli, too.”

*Eli* again. She opened her mouth to protest, but he placed a finger over her lips. “You hate him right now, because he hurt you. But I’ve seen the way you look at him. The way he looks at you. I know there’s something there, and it’s okay. Because I’m a very patient bloke. You mean too much to me to give up so soon.”

She smiled. “We’ve known each other barely a month.”

“I know. That’s what makes it so bloody great, right? That we could be this in sync this soon.” He slipped his hands around her waist, pulled her closer.

Her breathing slowed, her heart thumping so loudly she was sure he must have heard it. Her lips tingled in anticipation of his kiss.

“Yeah.” Her voice cracked. “Bloody great.”

He smiled. “You’re gorgeous, love. The golden highlights in your chestnut hair shimmer in the sunlight. Your green eyes look like emeralds...a beautiful day with a beautiful girl. It doesn’t get any better.” His voice lowered. “You know, this is something you could never share with Eli.”

A pang of sympathy pierced her heart. What must it be like to live for centuries in the dark? To never feel heavenly sunlight on your face?

She frowned. “Is this your way of one-upping him?”

Ryan grinned. “I guess so. Sorry. Not exactly the way to be the better man, is it?”

She laughed and ran a hand over the *carpe diem* tattoo in his right bicep. “It’s not a competition. If it were, you’d be in the lead.”

His eyes roamed her face and settled on her lips. He cupped a hand behind her head, his fingers firm on her scalp, the other hand pressing into the small of her back. He bent his head, touched his lips to hers, and all thoughts of Eli fled.

While they kissed, small fish bumped against her legs—which felt a little creepy and cool at the same time. Ryan’s lips on hers, the deep growl in his throat fusing with the sighs coming from hers, was so different, so...magical. A few months ago, she never could have imagined she’d be standing in the South Pacific kissing a gorgeous guy. Of course, she never imagined she’d be out of Oklahoma. Let alone a world away.

She lifted on her tip toes, parted her lips, and Ryan’s tongue slipped inside. Her knees nearly buckled as she was swept away in a torrent of desire she’d never felt before—most definitely not with Cam. On one hand, she hated PDA, knew she should pull away. On the other, this was the most amazing, scariest, and at the same time perfect thing she’d ever experienced, and she didn’t want it to stop.

Somewhere in the back of her mind she wondered...if they were alone, exactly how would this end? Would she give up her virginity to him? The way she felt at this moment, she would be powerless to resist.

A large bump against her legs made her freeze. *That* was a big ass fish.

She shuddered and broke the kiss. “What the...?”

“What is it?” Ryan’s muscled chest rose and fell with short breaths.

“Some kind of huge...” Liberty looked down, and her heart stuttered to a halt. Trembles shook her body, and a scream tore from her throat.

A woman's pale face stared up at her from just below the surface of the water.