

Chapter 3

Bree's POV

Cranston and I both have a third drink before we make our way down to the conference room. I'm feeling more than a bit buzzed and I'm surprised Cranston is even standing, considering he was stumbling when he arrived, but somehow, he seems to have rallied. Maybe my lobster mac and cheese helped him.

We open the conference door and both of our dad's are there at the large table, sitting across from each other, two men on either side of them, and a woman with a laptop all the way at the other end.

My stomach ips. What am I doing? Is this for real?

I recognize the two men with my dad as company lawyers, and I assume the one's with Paul are as well.

Another man comes through the door behind us and my stomach ips again.

His name is Reese. He is an outside the company lawyer that both my dad and Paul use for personal use. I've even used him on a few things.

I've also had a crush on him since I met him while I was still in grad school and my dad sent him to me to sign some papers.

He's dressed immaculately in a light grey suit and a baby blue tie. His blonde hair is slicked back and I smell a wiff of his cologne as he walks past me and he smells freaking amazing.

I feel my face go hot.

Cranston gives me a little push forward and I drag my feet towards the end of the table and sit next to Cranston who gives me a tiny wink.

I swear. The only times I've ever been talked into anything reckless was by the man sitting across from me.

The only time I got super drunk was when we both were vacationing in Hawaii at the same time. I had been eighteen and just accepted into my dream college, and he was twenty-two and about to graduate from college.

He convinced me to go to a party that he somehow knew about a few miles away from our resort. It was the only time I ever drank that much in my life. I blame it on the stress from waiting to hear from colleges and freaking Cranston Whittington.

I had woken up on a hammock on the beach, literally on top of Cranston(nothing happened). I was so worried about getting in trouble when I got home, but my parents never even knew I was missing. Still, I always tried to avoid Cranston after that, he's just trouble.

And now I'm about to marry him.

Oh god.

I start to sweat as I look around the room.

"Okay, so everyone knows why we are here. We have a rst draft of the contract for you two to sign regarding the company and certain, erm, stipulations." Reese looks uncomfortable.

He slides the copies in front of Cranston and me and I immediately lean over to read it.

The verbiage looks well done. They bequeath their company to us once we sign our marriage license and as long as we stayed married for twenty years...or if we have a child, only two years.

What. The. f**k.

My head jerks up at the same time as Cranston's and our eyes meet.

I look back down at the contract, certain lines jumping out at me.

"Must live in the same house..."

"...go on two family vacations a year..."

"Grandchildren will have trust funds..."

"...in event of divorce, assets split evenly..."

I jerk my head back up and look at my dad.

"Are you serious?"

He wipes his sweaty forehead with his handkerchief.

"I think it is pretty self-explanatory, dear." It's Paul who answers. Judging by the excited energy radiating from him, this had to have been his idea. He's always the one with the ideas. "It's very generous."

"Yeah, it just costs my soul." I mumble.

I look up at Cranston who is frowning at the contract.

"Cranston, can I have a quick word with you outside?"

He glances up at me and nods.

The moment we step out of the room I poke my nger into his chest.

"There is no way we can go through with this! TWENTY YEARS! TWENTY! And it says we have to stay under the same roof, and go on vacations together, all kinds of stipulations that I didn't even think was legal to make a person do!"

"No one is making you, Bree, it's just a contract that you can or cannot decide to agree to."

He runs his hand through his hair and grabs my hand that is still poking into his chest.

"It's only twenty years unless we have a kid, then it's just two."

"Oooh!" I throw up my free hand that he isn't holding and roll my eyes. "If we have a kid, it's only two years. Just need to have a kid, that's all. No biggie."

Cranston wraps his second hand around mine and bends his knees to lower his eyes closer to mine.

"Hey, hey, stay with me."

I look at him in exasperation. "Can't you see this is crazy. Are we really going to be married for twenty years just for money?"

He sighs and pats my hand with one of his before wrapping it back around it.

"Okay, maybe we can negotiate that part? I mean, that's a big ask, that's longer than any of my dad's marriages. Hell, longer than three of them put together."

I chew on my lip as he moves his face in front of mine to meet my eyes.

"And same house is ne. We'll live in a huge house, you can have your own wing. Hell, you can keep your lover in the wing with you if you want."

I laugh, then quickly groan.

"Cranston..."

He shakes his head and squeezes my hand. "We got this. Come on."

I sigh as I follow him back inside. He drops my hand as we walk through the door and make it back to our seats.

"Okay, so we have a few things we want to change in the contract."

Paul and my dad lean forward eagerly.

"We think that asking us to stay together twenty years is a big ask, no one can tell the future, we need to shorten that number."

"Pssff!" Paul leans back with a grunt. "We gave you a shorter number, two years!"

"If we have a kid!" I can't help yelling at him, then feeling my face ame as Reese shifts beside me.

"I want grandkids, I'm old! Your father is old!"

"Dad, that's not a good enough excuse. That's too big of an ask." Cranston shakes his head.

Paul mumbles to himself and my dad looks at Cranston.

"Okay, that's fair. How about-"

"Fifteen years!" Paul bangs his rst on the table.

"Four." Says Cranston, his body turned to stare down his dad.

"Twelve!"

"Four."

"Ten, and I'm not going any lower, damnit!!"

I look over at my dad who is wiping his forehead again.

Cranston and his dad stare at each other.

"We will do ve or no deal." Cranston stands up and looks at me, gesturing for me to follow. I start to stand up when Paul slams both palms onto the table.

"Fine! Five years!" He crosses his arms in front of him miserably.

I watch Cranston sit back down and give me another small wink.

Hmm. Maybe if he actually shows up, he won't do so bad in the business world.

Negotiations go on for awhile, over two hours, and nally, I'm handed a pen to sign the contract.

I pause, looking at the signature line underneath Cranston's signature. I'm the last to sign.

We have everything planned out, even the wedding and the house we will live in. I didn't want a wedding, it's not a real marriage, a wedding seems like we are bringing others into our deceit. But our dads said they wanted to attend their kids' wedding, so we have an intimate ceremony planned in just one month.

Paul is giving us one of his penthouses that is only two blocks away from the oce. I've been there before, it's huge and swanky with a private roof access with a pool. A little extravagant for my taste, by Cranston really pushed for it.

I glance up and meet Cranston's eyes. He winks and smiles at me.

I sign the paper. Reese ips it over and I sign another, and another.

Finally, I stand up. Paul is smiling, clapping his hands together. My dad is looking relieved.

Cranston is looking at his phone.

I exhale and nod my head to the room.

"Ok. Goodbye everyone." I pick up my purse and walk out of the conference room and make my way to the nearest elevator. I had thought I would go back to work for a few more hours, but not tonight. Tonight, I am going home early. I'm going to open a bottle of wine, and I'm going to try to gure out why the hell I just agreed to marry Cranston Whittington, the city's most eligible bachelor.