The Millionaire's Marriage Contract / Chapter 6 Chapter 6 Bree's POV Ugh. I try to open my eyes but the light hurts my head. I let out a groan and go to turn my head into the pillow, but instead I turn my face into something rock hard. I lift my hand up and feel it. My eyes ing open and I sit up. Oh my god! I did it again! I'm freaking laying on my couch on top of Cranston Whittington. Argh! My head! Oh s\*\*t, what time is it? I turn to the large clock on the wall behind me. 7:22. Oh no! I try to sit up, but one of my legs is slightly pinned under Cranston's and his arm is heavy on top of me, I wiggle and nd myself completely on top of him when his eyes open. "Well, good morning." He places his arms around my waist and grins at me. "Cranston! I'm late for work! This is all your fault! It's just like Hawaii!" He grins again. "You mean, that you had too much fun and wanted to hook up with me?" I slap him on the chest and roll off, falling heavily onto the oor. "Uph!" I sit up and realize for the rst time that I don't have a shirt on. I cover my chest with my arms and sit up to look at Cranston, who is sitting upright. "Where the hell is my top? What happened last night?" My eyes take in Cranston's fully dressed body before looking back up at his face. "Oh, you mean with your top?" He yawns and stretches his arms over his head. "Yes! Yes, I mean with my top!" My voice is shrill and high pitched. "Oh, yeah that. You got it stuck on your head and I helped you remove it." I close my eyes and let out a deep breathe, relaxing slightly. "Then you said we should have s\*x, so..." "What?" I yell, looking down at my skirt before looking back up at a grinning Cranston. "Of course, I told you no, maybe another night." "Agh!" I jump up and run into my small bedroom, running to my closet to grab a dark green wrap dress and quickly changing into it before rushing into the bathroom. I gasp in horror as I look at myself in the mirror. I look worse than Cranston's bleach blonde bimbo yesterday, with make-up smeared under my eyes and my hair a wild messy mane sticking straight up. I quickly clean my face and brush my teeth. I run back out into my living room while brushing my hair, looking around for my black heels that I couldn't nd in my room. "Looking for your heels?" Cranston asks from my kitchen, holding a cup of coffee while he leans casually against the kitchen counter. "Wha-" "They're right there behind you, against the hallway." He points behind me and takes a sip of his coffee. "Would you like a cup of coffee?" I look at him like he's insane and spin around to scoop up my shoes, hoping on one foot as I make my way to the door as I put on one shoe at a time. "I can't believe I drank that much! That never happens! I'm going to be so behind at work!" "I'm sure it'll be ne." Cranston walks towards me. "Easy for you to say! I actually care about my job, I've worked hard for it!" I grab my purse off the oor and open my door, glancing back at him over my shoulder. He puts his hand on his chest and looks around. "Oh, I should probably leave when you do." I give him a come on look and he empties his coffee mug into the sink, rinses it out, and follows me out the door. I jab at the down button a few times in my impatience, swooping my hair back into a quick bun and then jabbing it a few more times. "I hear that if you push an elevator button ten times in a row, it really makes it speed up to your oor." I glance at Cranston's straight face. The elevator door pings open. He gives me a look that says, 'heeey, what do you know,' and holds his arm out for me to go in rst. I quickly press the main oor button and rummage through my purse for my mascara. I dig it out along with my mirror, which Cranston takes from me and holds it up for me. I nish swiping my lashes right as the elevator door pings open again. Cranston hands me my mirror as we head out of the lobby. I dump it in my purse and we're out onto the street. It feels slightly weird that we are parting, not sure  $\overline{\mbox{why}}.$ "Well, I'll see you in a month." I lift my hand and take off towards work. I know that was kind of a lame way to end such a long time that we just spent together, including the entire night on the couch together, but I have a feeling there are lots of weird awkward moments ahead of us in our contract marriage. "See you later, Bree." I glance behind me at Cranston who is standing in the same spot with his hands in his pockets, watching me walk away. I slightly bump into a lady in front of me and turn back around, digging out lipstick and swiping it on as I go. I dig around my purse and feel my phone vibrating. Oh god. I close my eyes briey before I pull it out and unlock the screen. So. Many. Notications. I groan out loud as I scroll down, people around me giving me weird looks. I pick up my pace as the crowd thins and I can see my building doors just ahead of me. As I walk through the building and wave at security, I furiously type out email responses and send text to Erica. B: In lobby, coming up. E: I've been so worried about you! B: Can you send email to Linda regarding release video? I tap on email after email, nearly missing my oor when the elevator opens and I remember to step out just as the door started to close. "Bree! Calvin has been looking for you, he says he needs an answer by 9:00 on if you want to release video A or B." Erica meets me outside of the elevator with a fresh French vanilla latte. I take it gratefully, and take a big sip. She also grabs my hand and shakes a bottle and four little brown pills fall into it. I look at her. She raises her eyebrows into her bangs. "Advil, thought you might need some." "Oh my gosh, thank you." I throw them in my mouth and swallow with a sip of my latte. She can't hide a grin as we walk to my oce. "Wanna talk about it?" Actually, I really do, but I can't. So, I just sigh and tell her I drank a little too much last night. I sit at my desk and kick off my shoes, turning my computer on while I take another sip of coffee. "So, want to tell me who you went with?" Erica sits on the edge of my desk, her tablet held against her chest. "Uh, just a friend." "Ooh. So, a friend that's a boy or a girl?" My screen turns on and I type in my password, glancing at her in confusion. She's acting weird. "Uh..." "Oh my gosh, I know you went with Cranston Whittington to Elvin Gregor's newest art showcase!" "What? How?" My hands are frozen over my keyboard. She grins and ips around her tablet. My mouth falls open as I see a picture of me, holding a glass of champagne in one hand, the other wrapped around Cranston's waist, I'm smiling at him and he's looking down at me, his arm around me, and smiling back. It's like some perfect poised picture for the tabloids and I can't stop staring at it. Then I read the headline out loud. "City's hottest bachelor takes new girl to Art Show?" Ugh. I look up at Erica, who is beaming back at me. "You look ah-mazing! You look so happy too! And just look at the way Cranston is smiling at you, the way he looks at you, that man is smitten! Why didn't you tell me you were seeing him?" She turns the tablet around as she speaks to look at the picture again. I rub my forehead with my ngers. I haven't seen Cranston in eight years. Eight! Now he's back and he's everywhere! Erica is still talking. "I mean, you all look like a celebrity couple, both so gorgeous and looking so happy together, it almost looks staged." I look up at her. "Let me see that again." She hands it over as I look at the picture. She's right. It does look staged. He's looking way too lovey-dovey at me. Did he stage this? Did he know someone would be there to take pictures? Is this part of the marriage contract? I look at my own face again. I am so happy as I smile up at him. Had he just told a joke? Someone knocks at the door and I jump, handing Erica back the tablet. Candace, the oce administrator, sticks her head in my oce door. "Someone named Laura Amos is here for an 8:00 meeting." Erica and I look at each other in surprise. I don't have an 8:00 meeting today. "Uh..." "It's okay, I can let myself in." A short, super skinny woman in maybe her mid-fties squeezes through the door. She has a huge pink gingham tote and a light pink skirt suit that looks tailored to t her tiny frame. She has sleek blonde hair in a razor-sharp bob and bright pink lipstick. She gives me a huge smile and clasps her hands together in front of her. "Oh, here's the bride herself! We don't have much time Bree, so I wanted to come right away and get the plans started so I can get right to work." Erica and I both stare at her. Erica slowly turns her head to me, her eyebrows completely disappeared into her bangs. "Uh, Bree...are you a bride?" I feel my face ame. I massage my forehead again. I can't believe I let Cranston take me out last night. I'm already behind on work and now this Laura lady barging in... "Oh honey, don't do that." Laura comes over and sits in the chair across from my desk. "Wrinkles." She digs in her giant tote and comes out with a tablet. "Okay, let's talk venue." I look at Erica with wide eyes that I hope are telling her, 'help me!' She holds out her hands as if to say, 'what the hell is happening?' "Oh, wait a minute, where's the groom? I told him to meet us here at 8:00." "Wait, what? You did?" I'm so confused. I go to grab my phone to text Cranston to see if he knew about this, but then I realize, I don't have Cranston's phone number. For one crazy minute, I want to laugh. I'm getting married to someone in less than a month, with our wedding planner sitting across from me, and I don't even have his phone number. I look at Erica. She looks concerned at me. "Oh, there he is." I don't know who jerks their head to the door faster, Erica or me. Cranston's standing in the doorway with a grin, wearing another plain black tee that atters his wide chest and narrow waist. He's holding a brown to go bag. "Hey, I grabbed you a breakfast burrito on the way over, thought you might be hungry." I swallow. "Oh, uh, thank you." I try not to look at Erica as her head tilts my way and I can see she's trying to get my attention. I nally make eye contact and her eyes are huge as she jerks her head towards Cranston and widens her eyes even more. "Okay! We are all here! Now we can get started!" Laura sits up straight and smiles at us. Erica gives me one last glance and says, "I'll be outside if you need me." Cranston starts walking over to us but I throw a hand up and start fumbling under my desk for my shoes, slipping my feet in and standing up to walk towards him, hitting my hip hard against the desk corner. Oh god dang it that hurt! I try not to show that pain as I grab Cranston's arm and pull him towards the door. "I just need one moment and I'll be back," I throw over my shoulder at Laura and pull Cranston down the hall and into a nearby empty conference room. "What is going on? Who is she?" I smack his arm with the back of my hand. "And how did you get a new shirt and a freaking breakfast burrito here so quickly?" He grins at me. "She's our wedding planner, my dad sent her, and I usually don't share all my secrets so easily, but since we aren't keeping any from each other." He glances around before leaning in. "I had my assistant bring these to me." He wiggles his eyebrows at me as he lifts the bag and tugs on his top with his other hand. I roll my eyes. Of course. "Have a burrito, it'll help with the hangover." I look doubtfully at the brown bag as he pulls out a tin foil wrapped burrito and hands it to me, along with some napkins. It smells delicious. He pulls out a second, unwraps it, and takes a huge bite. He closes his eyes. "Mmm, that's good." He looks at me and gestures towards the burrito still unwrapped in my hand. "Eat! I promise, you'll feel better." I unwrap the end and take a small bite. Oh god. Yup, that's amazing. "Told you." Cranston grins at me. "You're right, maybe I should start sending my assistant on personal errands to go get me breakfast burritos every morning." "Why not?" He nishes off his burrito and balls up the foil, tossing it across the room where it bounces off the wall and lands in a small trash bin. "Nice shot." "Thanks, it was the only game I could play when I was younger and my dad didn't have a baby-sitter. He brought me to the oce and I just crumpled up papers and threw them in the waste basket for hours." "But, what about your mom?" "She modeled, remember? She wasn't around a whole lot until I was about nine." Hmm. I didn't think I knew both of his parent's were so busy. I remember seeing him at the oce when I was little and came to have lunch with my dad, but I didn't realize he was there so much. His mom was always on vacations with us, I had just assumed she was always around at home too. I take the last bite of my delicious burrito and ball up the tin and start to put it in the brown to-go bag. "Uh-uh! Take a shot, let's see what you got." "There is no way I can make this ball of foil get into that trash bin from here." I laugh at his 'what the hell' face. "Fine." I squint at the trashcan while aiming the ball towards it. I take the shot...and miss the bin by four feet, the foil ball bouncing off the wall and landing on the carpet. "Oh, so close!" Cranston grins. I laugh. "Bree?" We both turn to see Erica at the door, holding it so just her head is visible, looking at us. "Laura is waiting for you in your oce, she says you are on a tight deadline..." "Oh!" I wipe my hands again with the napkins and walk over to the foil ball on the oor and drop them in the waste bin. "We're coming now." Erica holds the door open while we walk out, her eyes are bulging as she tilts her head at I don't know if it was the burrito or the advil, but I'm start to feeling better as I walk down the hall and back into the oce. The moment Cranston and I step into the oce, Laura throws her hands up and gives us a tight smile. "THERE you are! Good! Sit down, let's go over a few things, won't take long." She pats the desk in front of her and we both take a seat, me at my oce chair, Cranston on the edge of the desk beside me, touching my back as he leans over to look at different things on Laura's tablet. We spend the entire hour going over things that I had no idea even mattered. Since the wedding is small, and it's nearly impossible to book a venue at such short notice, we decided to have the wedding on a yacht, Cranston's idea. Laura seemed highly offended that I didn't have many opinions on the actual ceremony itself, but I've just never been big on being the center of attention. Not to mention that the idea of everyone watching me marry someone with the intention to divorce in ve years, seems like a con, and I really don't care what ower arrangements we have. Cranston, on the other hand, has an opinion on everything. No surprise there, he loves the limelight, and this is a huge social event for him. Finally, it's after 9:00 and Erica taps on the oce door. "Sorry to interrupt, but Calvin keeps asking if you've made up your mind about which video..." "Oh, yes! Uh, I'm sending it now." I turn to my computer and start unlocking the screen "I'll be on my way, we got a lot of great groundwork covered today." She puts her tablet and phone back in her bag. "Just text me any questions or ideas you have, and I'll see you for your dress shopping Monday, Bree." "Ok!" I wave absently at her as I'm scrolling through e-mails to nd Calvin's videos. "Ta-ta!" She leaves and Cranston stands from my desk and walks around the room, randomly picking up things to look at. "Oh, sorry Cranston, but I really have a lot of work to do today..." "No problem." He ips through a book from the shelf and doesn't move. "So, if you could maybe just...you know...go?" Cranston glances up at me. "Sure." He puts the book up and walks back to my desk. "Want to have dinner tonight?" What is he doing? I look up at him, slightly exasperated. "Cranston, I really need to work late tonight to make up for the work I missed yesterday and this morning." He shrugs. "Restaurants are open late. You have to eat at some point." I shake my head. "Not tonight, I'll see you some other time." I look back to my computer and click on Calvin's "Ok, I'll see you soon." He leans over and kisses me on the forehead quickly before striding across the room. I shake my head and keep watching the video when I remember. "Wait, Cranston!" He stops with his hand on the doorframe and looks back at me. I blush. "Um, do you think maybe we should exchange phone numbers?" Cranston grins. He pulls out his phone and types away at it before looking back up at me. "See you later Bree." My phone pings. I grab it as he slips out the door. This is your ancé. Got your number from my assistant. XOXO I shake my head as I put it back down and look at my computer. "Uh, knock knock." Erica comes into the oce and rmly closes the door behind her. "Okay, who are you and what have you done with my boss? And why are you smiling? Is it because you are in love with Cranston Whittington and are getting married in a month?" She places her hands on my desk and leans over to stare at me. "Oh, uh...yes?" I avoid her eyes. "I don't know what the hell is going on here, but you clearly aren't telling me something." Erica looks suspiciously at me. "Well, you know me, I like to keep my personal life private." I click on the video for the fth time, not quite taking it in. She snorts. "Whatever you say, boss lady. Got the video picked out?" Oh hell. "Yes, the second one. Video B." "Good, that's the one I liked too." Shew! The day goes by slowly, trying to answer all the emails I had missed the day before along with the new ones that never stopped lling my inbox. I skip lunch again, but at least I had the breakfast burrito earlier to hold me over. "Do you need me for anything else? Want another coffee? Diet soda?" Erica is leaning into my oce door. It's after 7:00 and already dark outside. I run my hands over my face and lean back from my desk. "No, you go. Thanks for staying late." "No problem! Hey, you should actually take the weekend off, go spend it with your ancé." "Maybe." I already know that I won't. I have plans to work on the European release for our new product. I want to get a head start on it before the meeting on Tuesday, especially if I have to go dress shopping Monday. "Hey, where are you and Cranston going on your honeymoon? Hopefully somewhere exotic and for a minimum of two weeks!" "Honeymoon?" I hadn't even thought of that. "Well, it's a busy time, we probably will postpone..." "No way! You absolutely cannot do that. Everyone who ever postpones their honeymoon, never ends up going. It's a bad way to start your marriage. You have got to go!" She holds up a hand. "You know what, leave that to me. I'll help." "What? No, that's not something you have to do, it's personal, not even work related." "I don't care, I'll do it because you're my friend and you need a vacation." She smiles at me and holds up her hands as I protest. "Not listening! Good night! Byeeee!" She disappears and once again, I'm the only one left on the oor working. I sigh and turn back to my computer. I open an email and Cranston pops into my head. I wonder what he will do this weekend. Will he be going out with another girl? I feel a weird sensation at the thought. It can't be jealousy. I mean, it's a fake marriage, like he said, no lovey-dovey feelings, just a contract. So, he is totally free to go out with whoever he wants.

I push Cranston out of my head and continue reading the email.

reason seems very unappealing to me tonight.

"Hey, thought I'd nd you here."

I'll keep working. No point to just go sit at home alone.

Half an hour later and I'm considering calling it quits for the day. I glance at the clock and think about my empty apartment, which never really bothered me before, but for some